



BLRT Q&A: Municipal Consent and FEIS Processes

- 1. Is the EIS being finished/published before or after municipal consent voting?** The municipal consent and environmental review processes are separate, but often run concurrently. Under the currently proposed timelines, the Final EIS will be published in the summer of 2016. Hennepin County and the cities in which the route is proposed to be located will be able to vote on municipal consent plans after they are provided to municipalities. The municipal consent process is anticipated to be complete by early March 2016.
- 2. How will residents continue to be informed about the Project?** Information on proposed Project design and potential effects of the Project was shared with the public at open houses on February 26, June 3, and August 12, 2015. At each open house, updated information was shared to reflect current levels of progress in design and analysis. Information on the Project will continue to be shared through municipal consent hearings, technical and community advisory committees, project updates at city councils, property owner meetings with Outreach staff as well as through community meetings, website updates/newsletters. The Council's efforts to involve and inform the public will continue up to and beyond the day that passenger service begins on the Blue Line Extension.
- 3. What is the difference between the Final EIS and the Record of Decision ("ROD")? How do they relate to each other?** The Final EIS is a document that contains a description and discussion of the Preferred Alternative that Project sponsors propose to build. The Final EIS also describes the Project's potential benefits and impacts, as well as mitigation that may be implemented to offset adverse impacts. Finally, the Final EIS provides responses to comments received on the Draft EIS. The ROD is the determination by the Federal Transit Administration ("FTA") that the preferred alternative meets the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA"). The ROD is the final step taken in the environmental review process and sets forth the basis for FTA's decision-making on the Project, including a summary of alternatives evaluated and all mitigation commitments made.
- 4. Originally, it was our impression that municipal consent hearings would occur in summer 2016. It now appears that the hearings will take place in winter 2016. Is it correct to say that the process was shortened? If this is not correct, what was the reason for the confusion?** The BLRT Project development schedule has identified municipal consent occurring in the first quarter of 2016. The general timeline for the municipal consent process has not changed.

5. **What will be in the municipal consent plans?** Municipal consent plans are required to include the physical design components of the preliminary design plans. This includes track alignment, station location, and other design details (e.g., bridge structures and retaining walls) generally at the 15 percent design level. The plans will reflect decisions made through the issues resolution team (“IRT”) process and the scope of the Project as recommended by the Corridor Management Committee and acted on by the Metropolitan Council.
6. **Will environmental impacts be addressed in the municipal consent plans?** Not specifically; however, if measures to avoid environmental impacts have been identified at the 15-percent level of design, the municipal consent plans would reflect those avoidance measures. For example, the municipal consent plans will provide detail on the proposed siting of the Operations and Maintenance Facility in Brooklyn Park to avoid impacts to parkland identified in the Draft EIS. Also, the municipal consent plans will include bridge structures in Golden Valley and Robbinsdale to avoid and minimize floodplain and wetlands impacts. Lastly, the plans will include certain mitigation measures such as the addition of enhanced pedestrian crossings on TH 55 to facilitate safe connections across this busy roadway for local area residents. And, in the cities of Robbinsdale and Crystal, where noise impacts were identified in the Project’s Draft EIS, municipal consent plans will reflect improvements to at-grade crossings shared by LRT and freight to make these intersections quiet-zone compliant under federal regulations thereby avoiding severe noise impacts.
7. **What is the role of the cities in the municipal consent process?** All corridor cities, in addition to other entities like Hennepin County and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, are represented on the Project’s Corridor Management Committee and will have an opportunity to provide input on the scope of the Project prior to the start of the municipal consent process.
8. **Why aren’t all the Project’s mitigation measures identified in the municipal consent plans?** Municipal consent plans are based on preliminary design plans and are not intended to contain all mitigation measures. The environmental review process specifically recognizes that mitigation measures will be refined if, and when, the Project being considered for implementation is funded and advances further in the design and construction phases. The Final EIS will, for instance, identify the total number of and general locations for installing traction power substations (TPSS’s). However, the final siting of the TPSS’s will be identified based on input from affected communities and opportunities identified during the engineering and right-of-way acquisition process, which will begin if the project moves forward for implementation. The ROD may acknowledge the need for mitigation associated with siting TPSS’s (e.g., screening treatments). However, the details of any mitigation

would be developed in coordination with final design activities occurring after the ROD is issued, but before final plans are released for construction.

- 9. How are elected officials, community members, and staff informed of design plans and changes?** Public and agency involvement has been and will be a continual process as the Blue Line Extension project advances. As plans advance in development to the 60 percent and 90 percent level, the Council intends to share them with local municipalities for review and comment. Although not required as part of municipal consent, this process of ongoing design review was part of the successful development of the Green Line (Central Corridor) project.
- 10. What assurances do elected officials and community members have that environmental mitigation or avoidance measures will be implemented after municipal consent is granted?** If the final design plans incorporate a substantial change from the preliminary design plans with respect to location, length, or termini of routes; general dimension, elevation, or alignment of routes and crossings; location of tracks above ground, below ground, or at ground level; or station locations, under current law the Council is required to submit the changed component of the final design plans to the governing body of each city (and the County) in which the changed component is proposed to be located. Also, environmental mitigation as documented in the FTA's ROD will be monitored by the FTA as the Project advances and the Council will be required to report on the progress of its implementation of mitigation measures.
- 11. If the elected officials do not approve the municipal consent plans, what are the consequences?** Failure to approve or disapprove the plans in writing within 45 days after the municipal consent hearing is deemed to be approval, unless an extension of time is agreed to by the Council. If a local unit of government disapproves the municipal consent plans, it must provide a description of specific amendments to the plans that, if adopted, would cause the local unit to withdraw its disapproval. The Council then determines what amendments to the plans, if any, it will make to accommodate the objections. The requirements of the municipal consent process are established in Minnesota Statutes Section 473.3994.

For more information about the Blue Line Extension Project:

Website: BlueLineExt.org

Email: BlueLineExt@metrotransit.org

Twitter: [@BlueLineExt](https://twitter.com/BlueLineExt)