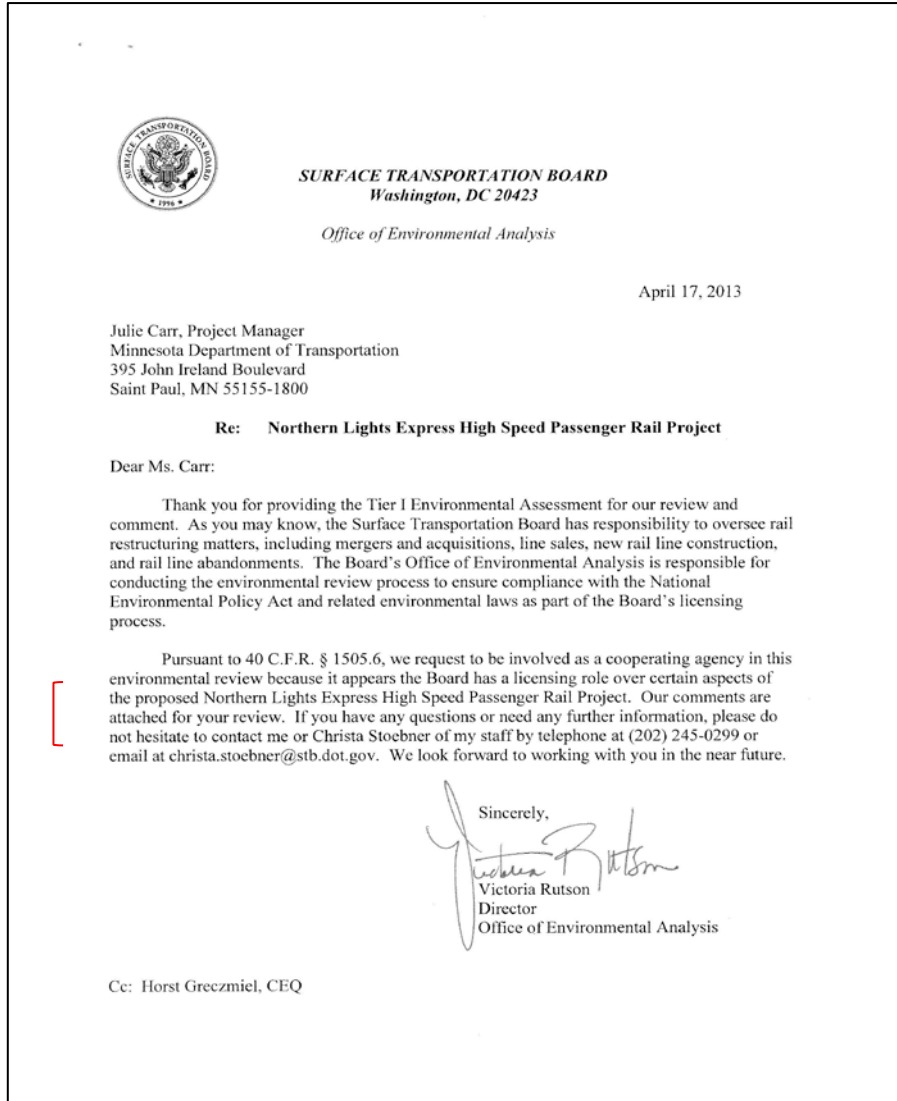


Comment

Response

A FRA has invited STB to be a cooperating agency.



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**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
COMMENTS ON THE
NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED PASSENGER RAIL PROJECT
TIER I ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

Board Jurisdiction

Below is a brief description of the Surface Transportation Board's jurisdiction and how it may apply to the Northern Lights Express High Speed Passenger Rail Project.

Operation of High Speed Passenger Trains

Because a portion of the line travels through Douglas County in Wisconsin, the proposed operation of high speed passenger trains between Minneapolis and Duluth would require a license from the Board, which has jurisdiction over transportation that is part of the interstate rail network.¹ 49 U.S.C. § 10501(a)(2)(A).

Trackage Rights

A rail carrier must obtain Board approval to operate over a line owned by another carrier. Accordingly, the operator of the proposed Northern Lights Express would need to obtain trackage rights authority in order to operate over the existing BNSF line. Typically, trackage rights are categorically excluded from National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review under the Board's environmental rules at 49 C.F.R. § 1105.6(c)(4).² However, Minnesota DOT and the Alliance are proposing eight round-trip trains on the line per day, and this operational change of 16 additional trains would exceed the Board's thresholds established in 49 C.F.R. §§ 1105.7(e)(5). In such a case, the Board typically prepares an Environmental Assessment. See 49 C.F.R. § 1105.6(b)(4)(i).

Improving, Upgrading, or Realigning an Existing Rail Line

Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. § 10901, a rail carrier must seek Board authority to construct a new line of rail or to extend an existing line of rail. However, Board approval is not required to improve, upgrade, or realign an existing line without extending the territory or markets that the railroad serves. See *Tex. & Pac. Ry. v. Gulf, Colo. & Santa Fe Ry.*, 270 U.S. 266, 278 (1925); BNSF

¹ In a decision served on June 27, 2007, the Board issued a declaratory order finding that the planned construction and operation by DesertXpress Enterprises, LLC of a high-speed steel-wheel passenger rail line between Southern California and Las Vegas would require Board approval under the Interstate Commerce Act and would be subject to the Federal preemption provided in 49 U.S.C. § 10501(b). *DesertXpress Enterprises, LLC—Petition for Declaratory Order*, FD 34914 (STB served June 27, 2007). The Board reaffirmed this determination in a decision issued on May 7, 2010. *DesertXpress Enterprises, LLC—Petition for Declaratory Order*, FD 34914 (STB served May 7, 2010).

² An historic review, pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, may be still required under 49 C.F.R. § 1105.6(c).

Comment

Response

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Ry.—Petition for Declaratory Order, FD 35164 et al., slip op. at 8 (STB served May 20, 2009); Union Pac. R.R.—Petition for Declaratory Order—Rehabilitation of Mo.-Kan.-Tex. R.R. Between Jude & Ogden Junction, Tex., 3 S.T.B. 646 (1998); Denver & Rio Grande W. R.R.—Joint Constr. Project—Relocation Over Burlington N. R.R., 4 I.C.C.2d 95, 97 (1987). Based on the information provided, the planned track improvements and rehabilitation (including signal upgrades) would not require Board approval.

Spur, Industrial, Team, Switching, or Side Track

Board approval is not required to construct or operate spur, industrial, team, switching, or side track (known as “excepted track”), as long as the purpose and effect is not to extend the railroad’s territory. See 49 U.S.C. § 10906. In addition, Board approval is not required for an acquisition, abandonment, or discontinuance of spur, industrial, team, switching, or side track. See 49 U.S.C. § 10906.

There is no single test for determining whether a particular track segment should be categorized as a line of railroad or as excepted track. Rather, the agency and the courts have adopted a case-by-case, fact-specific approach to make this determination. Primarily, the Board looks at the intended use of a track, and at a track’s physical characteristics.

Constructing Connecting Track and Parallel Track

Whether or not Board authority would be needed for construction of connecting track depends on whether the connection is proposed for operational efficiency (no authority needed) or to allow the carrier to reach new markets (authority needed).

A carrier can build connecting track that falls outside the Board’s jurisdiction if it is just for operational efficiency. In this scenario, constructing connecting track would be akin to double tracking or other track improvements that do not typically require Board authority.³ Conversely, a railroad can build connecting track that falls under the Board’s jurisdiction if the connecting track would reach new markets – just as construction of a new mainline to reach new shippers would require Board authority. Board authority to construct connecting track in this circumstance can be obtained in one of two ways:

- a) The class exemption at 49 C.F.R. § 1150.36, which applies if the construction is within existing right-of-way or on land already owned by the railroad.
- b) A construction application under 49 U.S.C. § 10901, which applies if the construction is not on an existing right-of-way or land owned by the railroad, or a party argues that the class exemption should not apply in a specific case.

If Board authority to construct the connecting track is sought, NEPA applies. For rail line construction projects, OEA may prepare an EIS, but an EA is typically prepared for construction

³ Canadian National Railway Company and Grand Trunk Corporation—Control—EJ&F West Company, FD 35087 (STB served April 23, 2008).

Comment

Response

cases involving connecting track within existing rail rights-of-way or on land owned by connecting railroads. 49 C.F.R. § 1105.6(b)(1).

In order to determine whether connecting track requires Board authorization, we would need the following information:

- How long (in miles) would the proposed connecting tracks be?
- Would the proposed line operate in the same manner as the existing one?
- Would the track only be used for overhead traffic or also for local traffic?
- Who owns the land where the connecting track would be constructed?
- Would the proposed connecting track enable carriers to reach new markets or new competitive territory?

Comments on the Environmental Assessment

Page	Comment
2-8	Under Table 2.1 Anticipated Permits, Approvals, and Agreements, the Surface Transportation Board should be included in the list of approvals that may be required because certain aspects of this proposed project may require a license from the Board. We have provided a description of the Board's jurisdiction and actions that require Board authorization with our comments.
4-81	The Surface Transportation Board requests to be listed as a coordinating agency and included in the Section 106 process. In addition, a Programmatic Agreement is discussed on page 4-83 and in Appendix I-1 of the EA. As a Federal agency with responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), it would be appropriate for the Surface Transportation Board to be involved in any revisions of this agreement and to become a signatory to this document.
4-87	Page 4-87 of the EA discusses the U.S. Department of Transportation regulation known as Section 4(f), which provides protection for publicly owned parks, recreation areas, historic sites eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and wildlife and/or waterfowl refuges from conversion to a transportation use. We note that the Board is an independent agency, and its governing statute is the Interstate Commerce Act and not the Department of Transportation Act. Accordingly, the Board is not subject to Section 4(f) requirements.

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A MnDOT would include the Surface Transportation Board in the list of approvals that may be required.

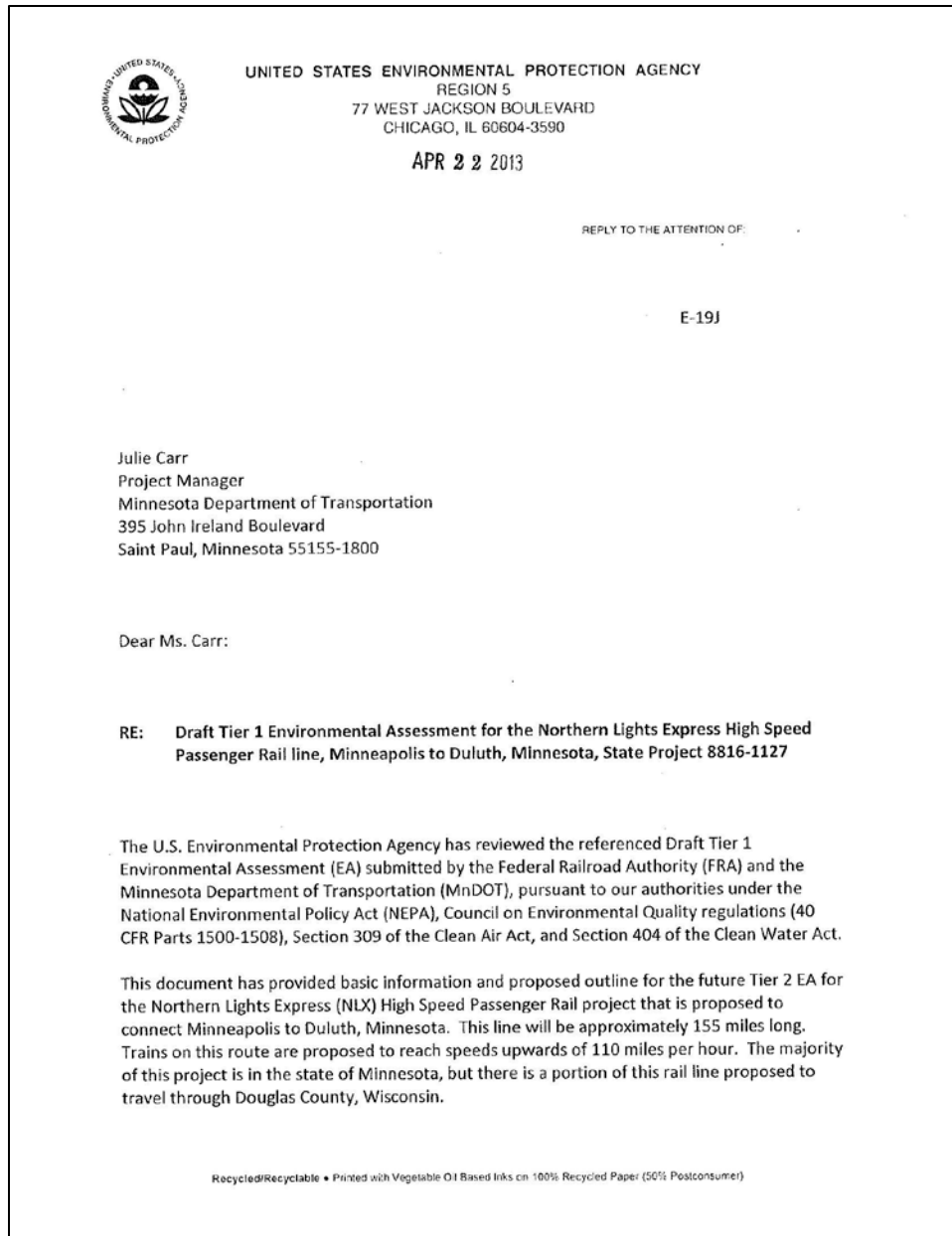
B MnDOT would coordinate with the Surface Transportation Board regarding Section 106 process, as directed by FRA. Surface Transportation Board involvement in project would be addressed by FRA is separate correspondence.

C Comment noted.

Comment

Response

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Comment

Response

The current corridor is an existing freight rail line that is owned and operated by BNSF. The current right of way for the existing BNSF tracks ranges from 50 to 150 feet in width. The project proposes that in addition to changes, upgrades and extensions of the track, there will be at least 6 stations, lay-over facilities, improvements to at-grade street crossings, and bridge crossing upgrades/improvements, as well as other necessary discrete projects.

Since this is a Tier 1 Draft EA, finalized details are not presented. A Tier 1 selected alternative will be refined for analysis in Tier 2. Specific information is contingent upon the final placement of the track, the footprint of the rail line and associated buildings and ancillary facilities. The Tier 1 Draft EA designated the preferred route as Route 9. Section 3.0 (Alternatives) states, "seventeen alternative corridors were identified as part of the Level 1 process." This section provides only a brief discussion of the 16 routes that were eliminated during the level 1, 2 and 3 analyses. The Tier 1 Draft EA states that a "weighted scoring system" was used to eliminate all other route alternatives except for the Route 9 option. No detailed explanation was provided defining what these 17 routes included, nor was there any significant information as to why 16 of them were eliminated. The explanation and reasoning for elimination provided in the Tier 1 Draft EA is vague and does not provide substantial justification. We ask that the method and justification for elimination and retention of route options be discussed in greater detail in Tier 2.

To assist the FRA and MnDOT in enhancing the next phases of this project, and to focus Tier 2 analysis, EPA provides the following comments:

1. Updated consultation records and information pertaining to required permits need to be addressed. This project may need coordination with several agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Coast Guard, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and other state and federal agencies. The Tier 1 Draft EA indicates that the project has potential issues, including water-way crossings, bridge repair and upgrading, wetland impacts, and floodplain fill, among others, which will require coordination and permitting from the relevant agencies. The Tier 1 Draft EA states that these concerns will be addressed throughout the engineering process so as to minimize the negative impacts. In future NEPA documents for this project, up-to-date coordination letters, agreements, permit requirements, and any other relevant information should be presented.
2. Section 4.0 (Potential Impacts) mentions that there is a potential for up to 97 acres of wetland impacts, dependent upon the final placement of track lines and ancillary facilities. We ask that wetland delineations, avoidance, minimization and mitigation sequencing, and permit information be included in greater detail in the Tier 2 analysis.
3. The Tier 1 Draft EA document includes a detailed agreement between the Minnesota and Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO), FRA and MnDOT. The Tier 1 Draft EA acknowledges the possibility for numerous impacts to native, historical and

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The greater detail about the alternatives selection process is found in Appendices C-1 and C-2 in the EA. The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would not revisit the route selection. Appendix B of the Tier 1 EA includes FRA correspondences, dated July 29, 2011 concurring with the identification of Route 9 as the Preferred Alternative.

B

MnDOT would coordinate with appropriate agencies during the Tier 2 Project Level NEPA and obtain permits from relevant agencies as required during the permitting process.

C

MnDOT would include wetland delineations, avoidance, minimization and mitigation sequencing, and permit information as required during Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments. MnDOT would continue to coordinate with appropriate agencies until permit requirements are completed.

D

MnDOT would include current information pertaining to the SHPO agreements and compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments.

Comment

Response

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sacred sites. In future EA documents, current information pertaining to the SHPO agreements should be updated and any changes to the agreements should be noted. Once the final layout of track lines and facility placement are determined, the analysis and possible mitigation for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act should be completed and included in the Tier 2 Draft EA.

F

4. The purpose and need for the project, as described in the Tier 1 Draft EA, is based upon future anticipated highway usage and cost-benefit analysis for travel options between Minneapolis and Duluth. In the next level of analysis, more detailed information that clearly justifies the purpose and need for this project should be provided. That information should clearly illustrate the expected benefits of high-speed rail versus highway transport for this route. This section should also address any environmental benefits that this project could potentially have, (e.g., energy savings, emission reductions due to mode shift, etc.) including direct and indirect benefits in Minneapolis and Duluth. The Tier 1 Draft EA does not address the reason for needing the high speed rail to run from Minneapolis to Duluth.

G

5. There are six (6) proposed stations that may be built, upgraded, or converted. Three of the six have no information provided in the Tier 1 Draft EA. The Tier 1 document notes that the analysis will be provided in future documents. In Tier 2, information pertaining to all stations, termini, and ancillary facilities should be included. This analysis should include noise, air emissions (especially diesel), storm water run-off, parking, integration with local transit, implications for local traffic, and any impacts to sensitive populations.

H

6. The Executive Summary and the Air Quality section predict a decrease in automobile and bus passenger-miles per year and resultant decreases in air pollutants, including greenhouse gases. Neither section provides much detail or discusses the energy use, air quality, and climate change impacts (positive or negative) of the project. In the Tier 2 analysis, these topics need to be addressed. These predictions should account for the increased diesel fuel usage for the rail system.

I

Section 4.6 Air Quality, does not address several factors that this project should consider with respect to air quality. The air quality analysis in Tier 2 should examine idling time at these stations, and the associated emissions of the locomotives while idling, land-use/human population at that location, and the baseline air quality condition (attainment/non-attainment/maintenance) at those stops. EPA invites FRA to use of spatial data tools such as NEPAAssist (<http://nepassisttool.epa.gov/nepassist/entry.aspx>) to help convey the potential impact of rail system pollutant sources upon receptors near these stops.

7. The cumulative impact section of the Tier 1 Draft EA did not provide detailed analysis. Cumulative impact analysis needs to be conducted once the corridor is finalized, and should cover the entire corridor from Minneapolis to Duluth, including the cumulative impacts that may be specific to Douglas County, Wisconsin.

E Continued from previous page.

F Existing transportation modes between Minneapolis and Duluth have inherent problems including congestion near the Twin Cities and during inclement weather. Passenger rail service can provide an additional travel alternative. The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would further analyze and refine the purpose and need.

G MnDOT would include all necessary analysis pertaining to stations, termini, and ancillary facilities in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments.

H The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would conduct more detailed air quality analysis, including general conformity modeling, if needed, to determine air quality impacts.

I MnDOT would provide a cumulative impact analysis consistent with NEPA regulations in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments.

Comment

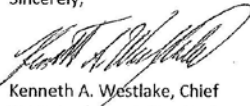
Response

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We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this project in Tier 1. Early coordination will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the projects and therefore can result in a project that achieves the best outcome for the environment and human health, while meeting the stated purpose and need.

We are available to discuss these comments to the Tier 1 Draft EA at your convenience. Please feel free to contact me at 312-886-2910 or Shanna Horvatin of my staff at 312-886-7887 or horvatin.shanna@epa.gov to discuss these comments.

Sincerely,




Kenneth A. Westlake, Chief
NEPA Implementation Section
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance

Comment

Response

A



 Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

 Northeast Region • 1201 East Highway 2 • Grand Rapids MN • 55744

April 16, 2013

Julie Carr
 State Program Admin Coordinator, MNDOT
 395 John Ireland Blvd. MS 480
 St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Northern Lights High Speed Passenger Rail Project EA/EAW

Dear Ms. Carr:

The Minnesota DNR Northeast Region has reviewed the Northern Lights High Speed Passenger Rail Project EA/EAW and has the following comments for your consideration.


Please consider including wildlife friendly erosion mesh where needed in construction areas and to incorporate railroad track escape mounds for turtles, especially in counties with Blanding's and/or Wood turtles. Essentially this requires a mound of gravel/crushed rock between tracks at prescribed intervals so turtles don't get trapped and can climb out. The problem is not usually a result of getting run over by trains, but from getting stuck and perishing from overheating. The Minnesota DNR can assist you in locations for these mounds.

Michael Musnick is a citizen scientist who studies wood turtles in the Great Swamp, a stretch of wetland about 60 miles north of New York City. He found turtles dying in the railroad tracks and proposed a solution of tiny turtle bridges to New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority. The Transportation Authority tried a pilot project with the modifications. As of the time of the video in 2009, Musnick had not found any more dead turtles along that stretch.

If you wish to view additional information, please see NPR Science Friday.
<http://www.sciencefriday.com/videos/watch/10242>
<http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=113208985>


Thanks for the opportunity to comment, please feel free to contact me or Rian Reed (218) 999-7826 with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Craig L. Engwall
 Northeast Regional Director
 1201 East Hwy 2
 Grand Rapids, MN 55744
 (218) 999-7913
craig.engwall@state.mn.us

cc: Melissa Doperalski, MNDNR

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Comment noted.

Following completion of the Tier 1 Service Level NEPA document and the associated decision document, the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would include MnDOT coordination with the DNR, where necessary, on measures to minimize the potential for impacts to species of concern, including Blanding's and Wood turtles.

Comment

Response



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

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800-657-3864 | 651-282-5332 TTY | www.pca.state.mn.us | Equal Opportunity Employer

April 16, 2013

Ms. Julie Carr
Project Manager
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155-1800

Re: Northern Lights Express High Speed Passenger Rail Environmental Assessment

Dear Ms. Carr:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Northern Lights Express (NLX) High Speed Passenger Rail project (Project) extending between the cities of Minneapolis and Duluth, Minnesota. The Project consists of the construction of a high speed passenger rail line. Regarding matters for which the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has regulatory responsibility and other interests, the MPCA staff has the following comments for your consideration.

Section 4.4 Wetlands

There are three areas where the Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification program will have a vested interest: 1) Best Management Practices (BMPs) to be employed to ensure that there is no loss of water quality to the Rum and Kettle Rivers; both are wild and scenic rivers; 2) The NLX track will also cross several trout streams, details of the impacts of these crossings will be necessary along with BMPs to be used, and; 3) Crossing the St. Louis River and the Area of Concern (AOC) at Grassy Point. Grassy Point is in the AOC and targeted for future restoration. The MPCA would strongly encourage any mitigation needed on the St. Louis River to be within the AOC. We would also stress that any mitigation required should happen within the same watershed where the resource is impacted.

Section 4.5 Water Resources

- A majority of the Nemadji River system originates in Minnesota and the NLX corridor traverses the watershed within the Minnesota portion of the Lake Superior Basin. Therefore, the second sentence of the first paragraph on page 4-33 should be changed to state (“... and the Lake Superior Basin in Minnesota and Wisconsin.”).
- Table 4.9, page 4-35 should be edited to include:
 - Stewart Creek is a **trout stream**.
 - Miller Creek (Minnesota) is a **trout stream** and is **impaired**.

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A MnDOT would coordinate with the appropriate agencies during the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments and obtain permits from relevant agencies as required during the permitting process.

B This technical update is noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.

C This technical update is noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.

Comment


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E
F

Ms. Julie Carr
Page 2
April 16 2013

Section 4.8 Hazardous Waste/Contaminated Material/Solid Waste (page 4-76)

- Please clarify the rationale for excluding numerous identified sites from Appendix I that appear to meet the criteria listed on pages 4-76 & 4-77.
- The reconstruction and rehabilitation of bridge structures includes several potential sources for pollution: materials from the bridge (e.g., paint chips and concrete), materials used in rehabilitation (e.g., sandblasting and grouting materials), and materials used in equipment (e.g., fuels and lubricants). MPCA staff anticipates that there will be a greater degree of detail provided in the Tier 2 environmental assessment documents.
- The avoidance, minimization and /or mitigation measures listed on page 4-78 should also address spill recovery and containment measures for materials used at the site, including fuels and lubricants.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this Project. Please be aware that this letter does not constitute approval by the MPCA of any or all elements of the Project for the purpose of pending or future permit action(s) by the MPCA. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Project proposer to secure any required permits and to comply with any requisite permit conditions. If you have any questions concerning our review of this EA please contact me at 651-757-2508.

Sincerely,

for Karen Kromar
Planner Principal
Environmental Review Unit
Resource Management and Assistance Division

KK:bt

cc: Ken Westlake, USEPA
Craig Affeldt, MPCA, St. Paul
Jim Brist, MPCA, St. Paul
Pat Carey, MPCA, Duluth
Tom Estabrooks, MPCA, Duluth

Response

D “Multiple Activity” sites were researched to determine the types of activities that have occurred at each location. Multiple Activity sites for which all activities were considered low risk were eliminated from the search results. Low risk sites include properties where minor volumes of chemicals or hazardous materials have been used or stored. Other types of sites (small hazardous waste generators, stormwater permits and wastewater discharge) were removed from the search results due to low potential for contamination, or because the MPCA activity is not relevant to studying the impacts of the project.

E The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would contain greater detail on environmental impacts identified in preliminary engineering, including consultation and coordination with federal and state agencies through final design and permitting as necessary to minimize impacts.


F Appropriate measures would be taken during construction to avoid spills that could contaminate groundwater or surface water in the project area. In the event that a leak or spill occurs during construction, appropriate action to remediate the situation would be taken immediately, in accordance with MPCA and/or WDNR containment and remedial action procedures, as appropriate (see section 4.8 of the EA).

Comment

Response

State of Wisconsin
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
810 W. Maple Street
Spooner WI 54801

Scott Walker, Governor
Cathy Stepp, Secretary
Telephone 608-266-2621
Toll Free 1-888-936-7463
TTY Access via relay - 711



April 16, 2013

Julie Carr
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155-3198

Subject: Northern Lights Express High Speed Passenger Rail
Environmental Assessment Comments

Dear Ms. Carr:

We have reviewed the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed Northern Lights Express High Speed Passenger Rail (NLX) project. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with our comments regarding the EA, which are summarized below.

Culverts: The EA states that existing culverts under new track areas would be extended and installed at the same or comparable size as the existing culverts. Please note that extending culverts located on streams or wetlands may not meet the conditions of the permit required for wetland and waterway projects. Many of these structures may be currently undersized or set incorrectly into the streambed, thus causing impacts to stream morphology and preventing fish/aquatic organism passage. Culvert extensions would likely exacerbate these problems. In addition, these culverts may be located within mapped floodplains, and extending the structures could cause an increase in backwater flood elevations. As required by NR 116, Floodplain Management, if the backwater elevations would potentially be increased, coordination would be required with the Douglas County Zoning Administrator on this issue.

Bridge Rehabilitation: The EA also states that bridge rehabilitation work could cause short-term impacts to the waterway flow. As required by NR 116, if these structures are located on waterways within a mapped floodplain and the work would cause temporary increases to the backwater flood elevations, coordination would be required with the Douglas County Zoning Administrator. In addition, some of these waterways are used by recreationists and anglers, so it may be necessary to provide safe navigation through or around the site during construction activities.

Storm Water Management: In the areas of new track or station construction, it may be necessary to submit a storm water management plan to meet the post-construction performance standards of NR 151.24.


Thank you for providing us with an opportunity to review the EA. If you have any questions regarding our comments, please feel free to contact me at (715) 635-4229 or amy.cronk@wisconsin.gov.

Sincerely,
Amy Cronk
Amy Cronk
Environmental Analysis & Review Specialist

cc: Steve LaValley, DNR Water Management Specialist, Superior
Bruce Moore, DNR Stormwater Engineer, Ashland
Amy Adrihan, DOT Northwest Region – Superior
Steve Rannenberg, Douglas County Zoning Administrator

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- A MnDOT would coordinate with the Douglas County Zoning Administrator if proposed culvert replacements and extensions may potentially increase backwater flood elevations.
- B MnDOT would coordinate with the Douglas County Zoning Administrator if proposed bridge rehabilitation work may potentially increase backwater flood elevations.
- C MnDOT would submit a storm water management plan for areas of new track or station construction if it is needed to meet the post-construction performance standards of NR 151.24.

Comment

Response



City of
BRAHAM

"Building A Better Tomorrow"

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April 11, 2013

Ms. Julie Carr
MnDOT Project Manager
MnDOT
395 John Ireland Blvd
St Paul MN 55155-1800

RE: Proposed Northern Lights Express High-speed Passenger Rail

Dear Ms. Carr:

On behalf of the City of Braham, I am submitting comments for consideration from both the City and the community with regards to the Northern Lights Express High-Speed Passenger Rail proposed to go through the City of Braham. No other community stands to suffer as much of a negative impact from this project as the City of Braham, therefore consideration of these comments and concerns merit special attention on the part of those planning this project.

The foremost concern is with the safety of the Braham community. We have requested a quick stop in Braham for the purpose of slowing the trains to a stop, which would substantially reduce the safety concerns. We were told that the trains would slow down to approximately 90 mph while going through Braham. Unfortunately, slowing from 120 mph to 90 mph does nothing to reduce the safety concerns of the community, should the train derail or throw rocks in the downtown and residential areas.

There is a daycare center next to the existing rail, which raises additional concern of safety from derailments and flying rocks, and noise issues of the trains screaming by at 90-120 mph. The City's downtown park, Freedom Park, also is next to the proposed track. Along with the safety concern, this project, as it stands, will destroy the center of our downtown park, which has our historical structure gazebo in it. The City's annual Pie Day is held in Freedom Park, drawing thousands of people to Braham. Local farmers also use the park for their Farmer's Market every year from May-Oct. Braham is a small community with low-moderate incomes that struggles because of its small tax base, and the negative impact to our downtown by the proposed project is substantial. The

The City of Braham is an equal opportunity provider.

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Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).

Safety concerns such as derailment and flying debris would also be addressed, as needed, during the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments.

Refined noise studies would be done, if needed, based on preliminary engineering as part of the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments.

Vibration levels typically decreases very rapidly as the distance from the vibration source increases. The vibration levels from high-speed trains are generally much lower in level than freight trains (see section 4.7.4 of the EA). Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would analyze potential vibration impacts in further detail, if needed.

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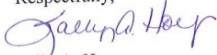
Comment

Response

B

vibration from the trains traveling 90-120 mph will have a negative economic impact to the City because people will not want to live next to a track that has a high-speed trains screaming past. With the right planning that provides a quick stop in Braham, the Braham community could support the proposed NLX Passenger Rail. At the April 23, 2012 public meeting, SRF Consulting prepared public information that noted Freedom Park, nearby businesses, and residences would be negatively impacted by the proposed rail, due to the nearness of the tracks, vibration, speed, and noise.

We feel that the negative impacts to our city need to be mitigated with an effort on the part of those planning this project by putting this quick stop in Braham, alleviating huge safety and economic concerns, and giving our locals and visitors the opportunity to benefit from this project too. In a meeting held at City Hall on February 17, 2012, SRF Consulting told the City representatives that Braham would be more negatively impacted by this project than any other community along the path of the proposed rail. Yet, no consideration has been given by those planning this project to correct this. With such dire safety and economic concerns with the project as it is currently proposed, unless more consideration is given to the Braham community, the City of Braham cannot support this project moving forward as it stands.

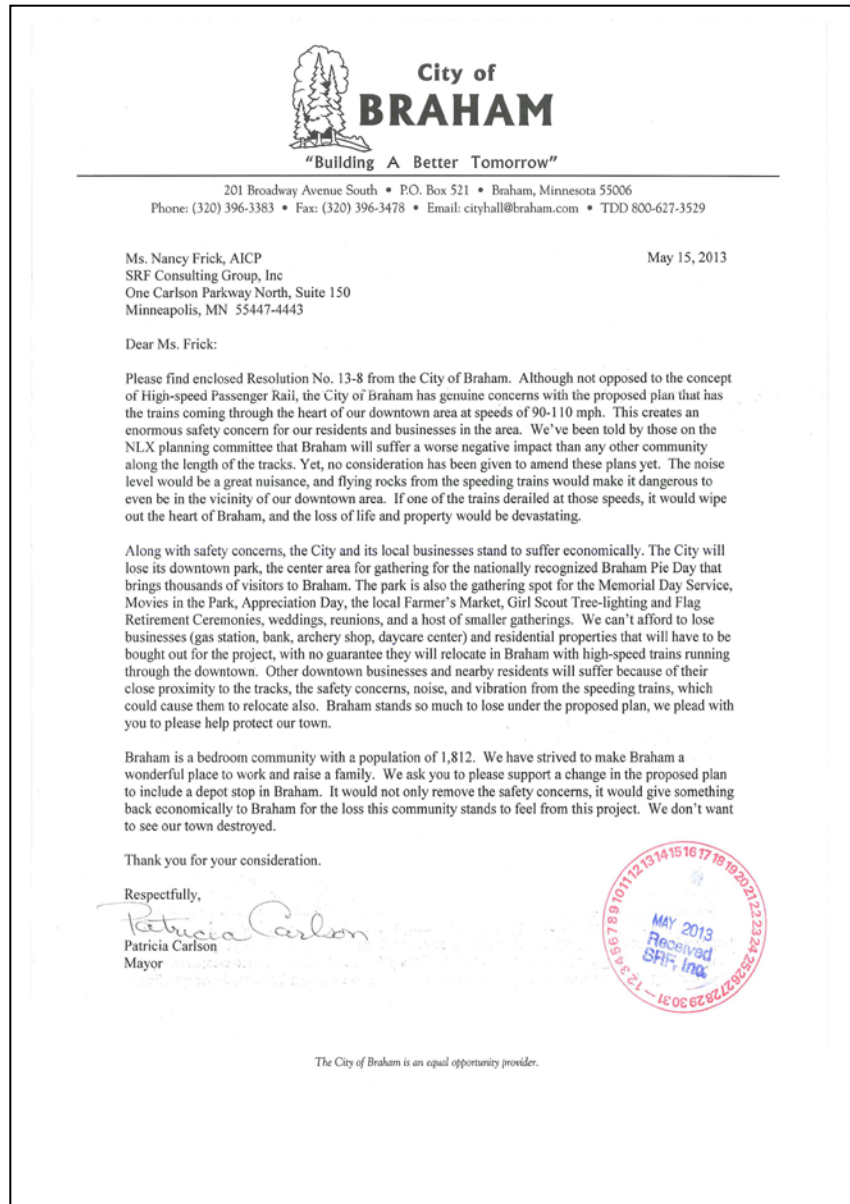
Respectfully,

Sally A. Hoy
Braham City Administrator

cc: US Congressman Rick Nolan

B

When projects are developed, stops are determined by ridership. For an effective high speed rail corridor, competitive time must be attained or the project would not achieve the necessary public benefit to be deemed eligible for future public funding.

Comment



Response

Responses to comments from the City of Braham are addressed on the previous two pages.

Comment

RESOLUTION NO. 13-8

A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE CITY OF BRAHAM'S CONCERNS WITH THE PROPOSED NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS (NLX) HIGH-SPEED PASSENGER RAIL PROJECT

WHEREAS, although the City of Braham is supportive of the concept behind the proposed Northern Lights Express High-Speed Passenger Rail, the negative impact on the City from the proposed project are substantial, and warrant addressing:

- In a meeting held at the Braham City Hall on February 17, 2012, Mayor Patricia Carlson and City Administrator Sally Hoy were informed that Braham would be more negatively impacted by this project than any other community along the route of the proposed rail. Present at this meeting were: Nancy Frick and Jeanee Witzig from SRF Consulting; Bob Manzoline, Executive Director of Minneapolis-Duluth Passenger Rail Alliance; Frank Pafko, MnDOT Chief Environmental Officer; Larry Southerland, Isanti County Commissioner; and Colleen Vaughn, with the Federal Railroad Administration by conference call; Braham Mayor Patricia Carlson, and Braham City Administrator Sally Hoy.
- At the April 23, 2012 public meeting, SRF Consulting presented public information that noted Braham's Freedom Park, along with nearby businesses and residences by the proposed rail would be negatively impacted due to speed, vibration, and noise from the trains.
- The trains are proposed to run through downtown Braham at 90-110 mph, and a derailment at these speeds will have a devastating effect because of the tracks running through the heart of Braham, with businesses and houses located near the tracks.
- Rocks thrown from the trains at these speeds will be a continuous safety concern for anyone in the downtown and nearby residential areas, being detrimental to health, safety, and the local economy.
- The proposed tracks will destroy the City's downtown Freedom Park, a central gathering location for many City events throughout the year, including the annual Pie Day that draws thousands of people to Braham, Braham Area Chamber of Commerce's annual Appreciation Day, Memorial Day Service, Movies in the Park, Girl Scout Tree Lighting and Flag Retirement Ceremonies, weddings, reunions, and other gatherings. The City does not have another park large enough to hold these events, and moving to any smaller location will result in the downtown businesses suffering a major loss from not having the public drawn to the downtown area for these events.
- The local Farmer's Market is held in Freedom Park, where the local farmers benefit from the traffic on Main Avenue. Relocation to another park will have a negative impact due to lack of visibility.
- Local businesses and residential properties along the track will need to be bought out, and many of them could relocate to another community, which would be detrimental to the Braham Community. Braham is a low-moderate income community, has suffered \$300,000 in LGA cuts, and does not have a large tax base, as it is. Any losses from this proposed project would have a negative economic impact on the community.

Response

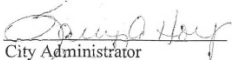
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Comment

- Many working families who rely on the present daycare located next to the proposed track stand to lose their daycare provider, should this property owner be bought out and move out of town.
- In a struggling economy, and due to its location, the City of Braham has had to build itself around being a quiet, safe, bedroom community. The high-speed passenger trains speeding through Braham will destroy the atmosphere that Braham is known for, and can very easily destroy the community, because people will not want to live, work, or shop close to high-speed trains screaming through Braham.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Braham, Kanabec and Isanti Counties, that because the Northern Lights Express High-Speed Passenger Rail Project, as it is proposed, will have more negative impact on the City of Braham than any other community along the route, it hereby earnestly requests that consideration for the City of Braham be given, and the project to include the trains stopping in Braham, resulting in:

- The trains stopping in Braham will remove the health and safety concerns with speeding trains coming through the downtown.
- The majority of people living in the 300 new homes in southeast Braham commute to work, and would benefit from the trains stopping in Braham.
- Visitors for Braham events, such as the annual Pie Day or Appreciation Day, could ride the train
- Many Braham organizations hold events in Duluth or the Twin Cities. Just one example is the Braham Area Girl Scouts taking trips to Duluth. Getting on the train in Braham would alleviate eleven vehicles being driven. Braham has 24 organizations that are actively involved in volunteerism in the community.
- The Braham Community Center, owned and operated by the non-profit organization Tusen Tack, will be completed by Nov. 2013, and will have the potential to draw many people to Braham for events. This organization has worked very hard since 2007 to bring this community center to fruition, securing a \$600,000 SCDP Grant, Initiative Foundation Grant, and USDA loan guarantee to help build it. The high-speed passenger train stopping in Braham would have a positive impact on making this community center a success.
- Braham can be a destination for passengers on the trains. In 1990, the late Governor Perpich proclaimed Braham to be the Homemade Pie Capitol of Minnesota. Since then, the community celebrates Pie Day annually the first Friday in August. This event has gotten national recognition, and draws in thousands of visitors, many from other cities, states and countries.
- Braham is a growing community. The population of the City of Braham has grown from 1276 in the 2000 Census to 1793 in 2010 Census. This is a 40% increase in 10 years, a factual sign that people are moving to Braham because it is a bedroom community that caters to the needs of family living. We believe a large majority of these people have moved up from the Twin Cities, still work in the cities, and would benefit greatly from passenger rail stopping in Braham.

Attest: 
City Administrator


Mayor

Response

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Comment

April 12, 2013

Ms. Julie Carr
 MnDot Project Manager
 MnDot
 395 John Ireland Blvd
 St Paul, MN 55155-1800

Dear Ms. Carr,

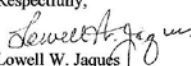
As a member of the Braham city council I am writing to express some concerns regarding the proposed Northern Lights High Speed Passenger Rail which is expected to travel through our community.

A My first concern is for the safety and well-being of our community, especially for those homes and businesses that are bordering the rail right of way. Flying debris in the wake of a fast moving train will be a daily concern. The disruption caused by frequent noise and vibrations from high velocity trains will make daily living and doing normal transactions difficult. The only reasonable solution to these problems is to make Braham a regular stop thus reducing the speed and ancillary associated problems that are sure to accompany it. A modest reduction in the speed of the trains will not do the job.

B My second concern is keeping all three of the crossings that we now have in town. Our population is split on both the East and West side of the tracks and in order to continue to function normally as a community we need to have unrestricted flow from one side of town to the other.

C My third concern is for the continued access to the Braham Area Sportsman's Club which is located North of the city limits. There is no alternate access that is reasonable to allow passage to the developed site that includes substantial buildings and a trap range and a rifle range. Much work and effort has been involved to create this valuable site and it deserves an access from Highway 107 to remain in place.

As presently proposed I see few if any benefits from this project for the residents of the city of Braham. We are largely a bedroom community for a population of commuters who have already figured out transportation to and from work. For almost all of them taking a train would almost certainly add hours to their day and no convenience. Please at least consider the negative effects to our community and moderate these effects by adding us as a stop.

Respectfully,

 Lowell W. Jaques
 PO Box 65
 Braham, MN 55006-0065

Response

- A** Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).
- If needed, the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would further investigate the potential for debris impacts to properties and conduct further noise and vibration studies.
- B** Counties, cities, and townships would be invited to participate in evaluating their at-grade crossings during an on-site diagnostic review to determine the appropriate treatment. The diagnostic reviews are expected to take place in 2014.
- C** Private at-grade crossings, such as the Braham Area Sportsman's Club, are subject to further discussion and will be worked out on a case-by-case basis. By law, no property can be landlocked and access must be provided.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Tuesday, March 26, 2013 12:30 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Tuesday, March 26, 2013 at 12:30:24

A
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I

Comments: On p1 ES-3, there is an extra "is" in the 1st line of the 2nd paragraph. I didn't see where the report listed the locations of the 14 at-grade crossings to be closed. There is fencing proposed in Fridley and decorative fencing is mentioned as a possibility. Maintenance of fencing must be clearly addressed. We have concerns that BNSF will not maintain it. It is also interesting to note that Fridley has many parks along the BNSF line (Springbrook Nature Center, Community Park, Locke Park, and Edgewater Gardens Park) that attract wildlife and the BNSF ROW serves as a wildlife corridor in our fully developed City. Installing a fence where there is not one now, will trap wildlife.
Map on 2-2 is illegible.
On p. 2-4, Ramsey needs to be added to the Northstar stops.
On p. 2-6, it should be noted that the Central BRT line is slated to serve Fridley and Coon Rapids to Northtown Mall. On the bottom of p. 4-2, the last paragraph ignores suburban development in Fridley, which is not low-density and rural. The southern portion of Anoka County is not agricultural.
On p. 4-3, it should be noted that Six Cities WMO has disbanded and is covered by other organizations listed.
On p. 4-61-62, it doesn't mention residences in Fridley. I'm puzzled by the 61' distance to track comment. In Table 4.25, I don't understand how you can say 0 Fridley residences are affected.
On p. 4-69, Vibration may be less for passenger train traffic due to less weight, but since the 2 new tracks will be closer to residences than existing track, what impact will closer distances have on over 50 single-family and multi-family residences along BNSF tracks in Fridley.
It should be noted that the Mississippi River National Recreational Area runs along the river in Fridley and Coon Rapids too.
As far as visual impacts on p. 4-98, it should be noted that Segment 3 abuts some industrial/Commercial, but also residential property, and serves as the Northstar passenger rail line.
P. 4-99, the City would prefer to debate the fence issue.
On p. 4-103, it needs to be corrected that the Fridley Community Center is next to Commons Park - not Community Park and is located about 3/4 mile east of the train station/RR tracks (east of University Ave). Plus, there are 3 at-grade crossings in addition to the 3 grade-separated crossings in Fridley mentioned.

Name: Julie Jones, Planning Manager
Phone: 763-572-3599
Email: julie.jones@fridleymn.gov
Organization: City of Fridley
Street address: 6431 University Ave NE
City: Fridley
Zip: 55432

A This technical correction is noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.

B The 14 at-grade crossing reference is an estimate that equates to 30% to 40% of anticipated private crossing closures discussed in section 4.2 of the EA.

C Fencing was a concern that was identified in previous consultation with agencies. During Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments, MnDOT would coordinate with agencies and local jurisdictions to determine how fencing would be addressed.

D Comment noted.

E These technical updates are noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.

F-I continued on next page.

Response

Continued from previous page.

F **Noise:** Section 4.7.4 of the EA describes the noise analysis methodology which follows FRA protocols. The methodology is detailed in the *NLX Environmental Assessment Noise and Vibration Technical Report and Addendum*, April 2011, available on the project website <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/nlx/>. The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would analyze potential noise impacts in further detail, as needed.

Vibration: Vibration levels typically decrease very rapidly as the distance from the vibration source increases. The vibration levels from high-speed trains are generally much lower in level than freight trains due to lighter equipment. The track standards for a high-speed train system are typically higher than for freight service, resulting in smoother rails. .

The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would analyze vibration impacts, if needed.

G This technical correction is noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.

H Urban fencing is intended for safety reasons. MnDOT would communicate with affected communities in order to address concerns.

I These technical updates are noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.

Comment

Attachment #1 - NLX Environmental Assessment
City of Minneapolis Comments
(Updated 4/16/2013)

General Comments:

A

Overall:

The City of Minneapolis supports the Route #9 alignment of the NLX corridor.

B

Layover Facility:

Any potential rail storage within the City of Minneapolis will need to be designed, enclosed, landscaped, and mitigated for noise and air quality impacts in a manner that meets or exceeds the standards for these items defined in the City's Municipal Code of Ordinances. A layover facility must be compatible with nearby properties, neighborhood character, and natural features.

C

O and M facility:

The City of Minneapolis does not support an O and M facility site within the city due to the large building footprint required for rail maintenance.

D

Ridership:

The EA states a ridership of 938,000 rides per year by 2020, which is a robust estimate. If projections hold true, NLX will exceed the Northstar Corridor in ridership. Refined station boarding and alighting numbers would be helpful in determining if the projected ridership numbers are accurate.

E

Stormwater Management:

It is expected that the NLX project will work with the city and appropriate watersheds to acquire any necessary stormwater or erosion control permits.

F

Cedar Lake Trail:

More clarity needs to be provided by the project with regard to the Interchange platform. It is uncertain whether an extended platform will result in modifications to the Cedar Lake Trail. If the Cedar Lake Trail needs to be relocated, the project must pay for any costs to do so. Impacts to the Cedar Lake Trail during construction of the NLX line must also be minimized.

G

Specific Comments:

P. ES-7: More detail needs to be provided regarding the new connection track through the Harrison Junction in Minneapolis. The EA document states that 3,000 feet of new track is needed between the Interchange and University Avenue NE. There is limited right-of way in this area. More information is needed to determine if property will need to be acquired, to assess any noise or vibration concerns from nearby residents/businesses, and to determine if existing infrastructure (road crossings or bridges) is impacted due to the extra track.

Response

A

Project support noted.

B

The Tier 1 Service Level EA addressed layover track at the south and north project termini. It described the need for future layover facilities, but has not identified a southern (facility) location which, if needed, would be studied during the Tier 2 Project Level Assessments. The Tier 1 Service Level EA did identify a layover facility location for Duluth however, environmental analysis and further study would occur during the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessment.

C

Opposition to Operations and Maintenance facility within the City of Minneapolis noted.

D

The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would include additional analysis of projected NLX ridership.

E

MnDOT would coordinate with the City and appropriate watersheds to acquire any necessary stormwater or erosion control permits, as required during the permitting process.

F

MnDOT, Hennepin County, City of Minneapolis, and private land owners in the area of the Interchange reached agreement in 2012 on easements, including compensation paid to appropriate parties for land rights that preserves the Cedar Lake Trail and land for an expanded passenger rail terminal. NLX design assumptions in the Interchange are consistent with these agreements.

G

The Tier 1 Service Level EA is a corridor-level analysis that addresses concept-level engineering improvements. The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would address a more detailed analysis of project elements such as right of way, noise, vibration, crossings and bridges, due to additional track.

Comment

H

P. ES-8: The EA document states that the Northstar Corridor Platform at the Interchange must be lengthened to 900 feet. More detail is needed. Once again, it is not clear if this project would impact the existing Cedar Lake Trail.

I

P. 4-4: This comment relates to the following statement: "Within the two terminal metropolitan areas, impacts to land use due to construction of new tracks would be minimal with all improvements located within or immediately adjacent to an existing active freight rail corridor." It should be stated that in addition there are benefits to the station areas with increased economic development expected.

J

P. 4-5: It should be noted that the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District is not only on the National Register but it is also a local historic district.

K

P. 4-8: The name of the Minneapolis comprehensive plan is *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* and it was adopted in October 2009, not October 2006.

L

P. 4-61: Noise and vibration mitigation may be required for homes and businesses near the line. While there are currently freight trains within the NLX alignment, the new passenger trains will increase the number and frequency of trains using the BNSF Wayzata Spur and the BNSF mainline. Table 4.23 states that there is one residence within 30 feet of the proposed NLX track subject to noise and vibration impacts. This table also states that there are 4 residences within the city that are subjected to moderate noise impacts. It is expected that the project will work with these property owners to mitigate any negative impacts as the result of this project.

Response

H Please see response to comment F on previous page.

I This technical update is noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.

J This technical update is noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.

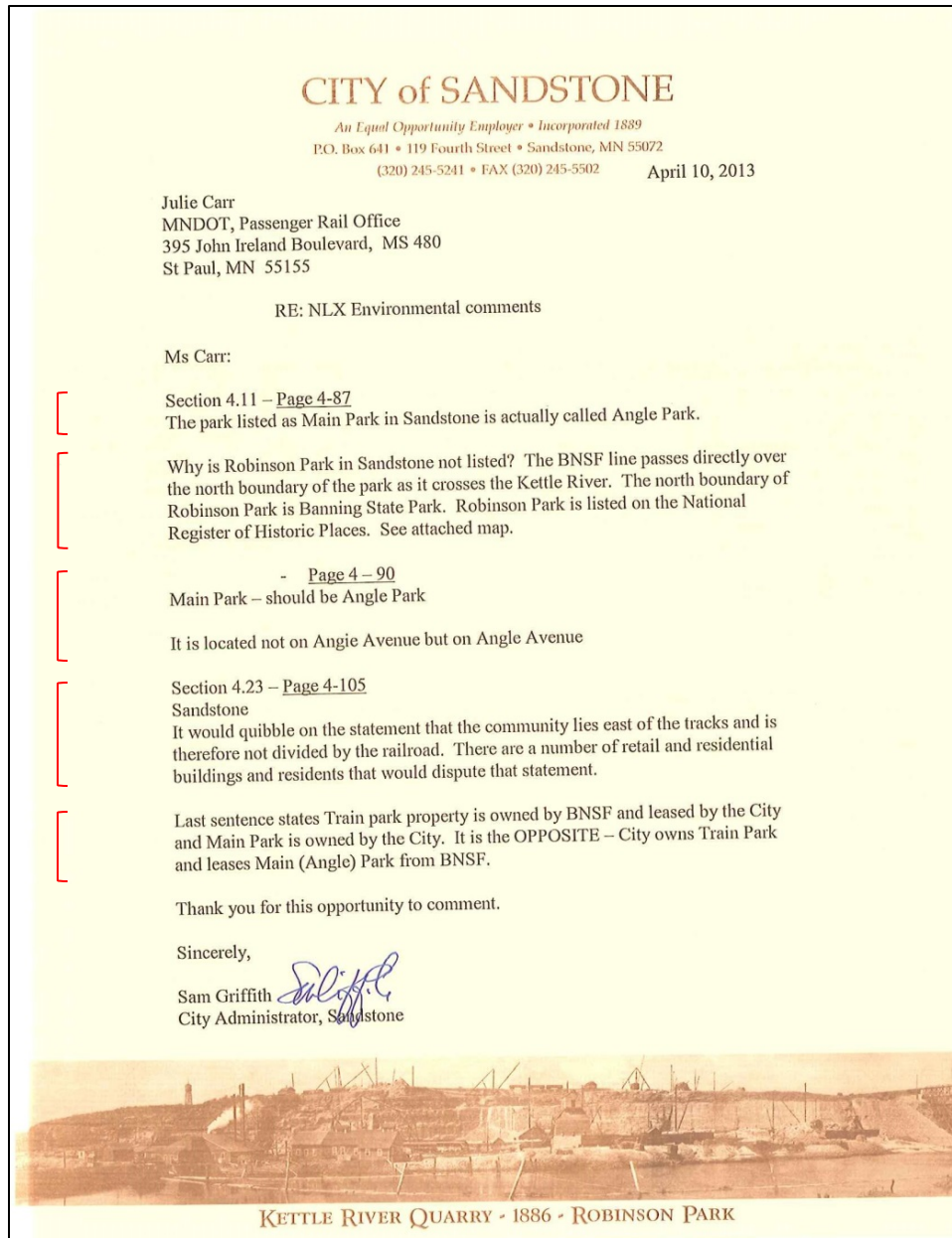
K This technical update is noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.

L **Noise:** Section 4.7.4 of the EA describes the noise analysis methodology which follows FRA protocols. The methodology is detailed in the *NLX Environmental Assessment Noise and Vibration Technical Report and Addendum*, April 2011, available on the project website <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/nlx/>. The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would analyze potential noise impacts in further detail, as needed.

Vibration: Vibration levels typically decrease very rapidly as the distance from the vibration source increases. The vibration levels from high-speed trains are generally much lower level than freight trains (see section 4.7.4 of the EA). In addition, track standards for a high-speed train system are typically higher than for freight service, resulting in smoother rails. The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would analyze potential vibration impacts, in further detail, if needed.

Comment

Response



- A** This technical correction is noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.
- B** It is noted that the park area abutting the rail corridor in the south is Robinson Park (not Banning State Park). This technical correction is noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.

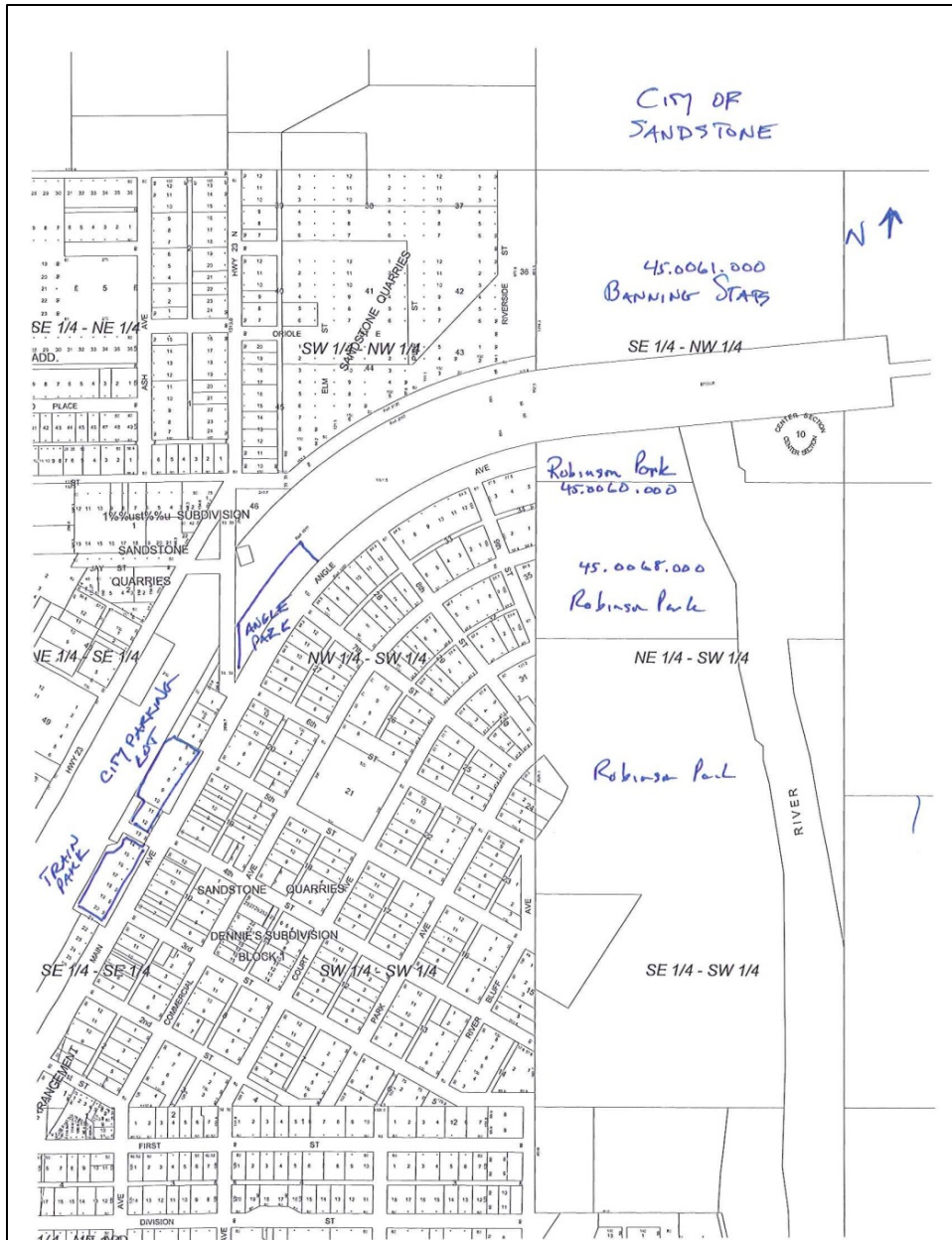
 No direct impacts to this park land are anticipated; noise impacts identified in the EA as being to Banning State Park would be to Robinson Park.

 Robinson Park does not appear, by that name, on the Minnesota Historical Society’s on-line listing of National Register properties; however, it contains the Kettle River Sandstone Quarry, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The effect on historic properties would be determined in the Tier 2 Project Level environmental studies.
- C** This technical correction is noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.
- D** It is noted that, while the tracks are not within the City limits, there are a number of retail and residential buildings located west of the tracks, which effectively are part of the Sandstone community.
- E** This technical correction is noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.

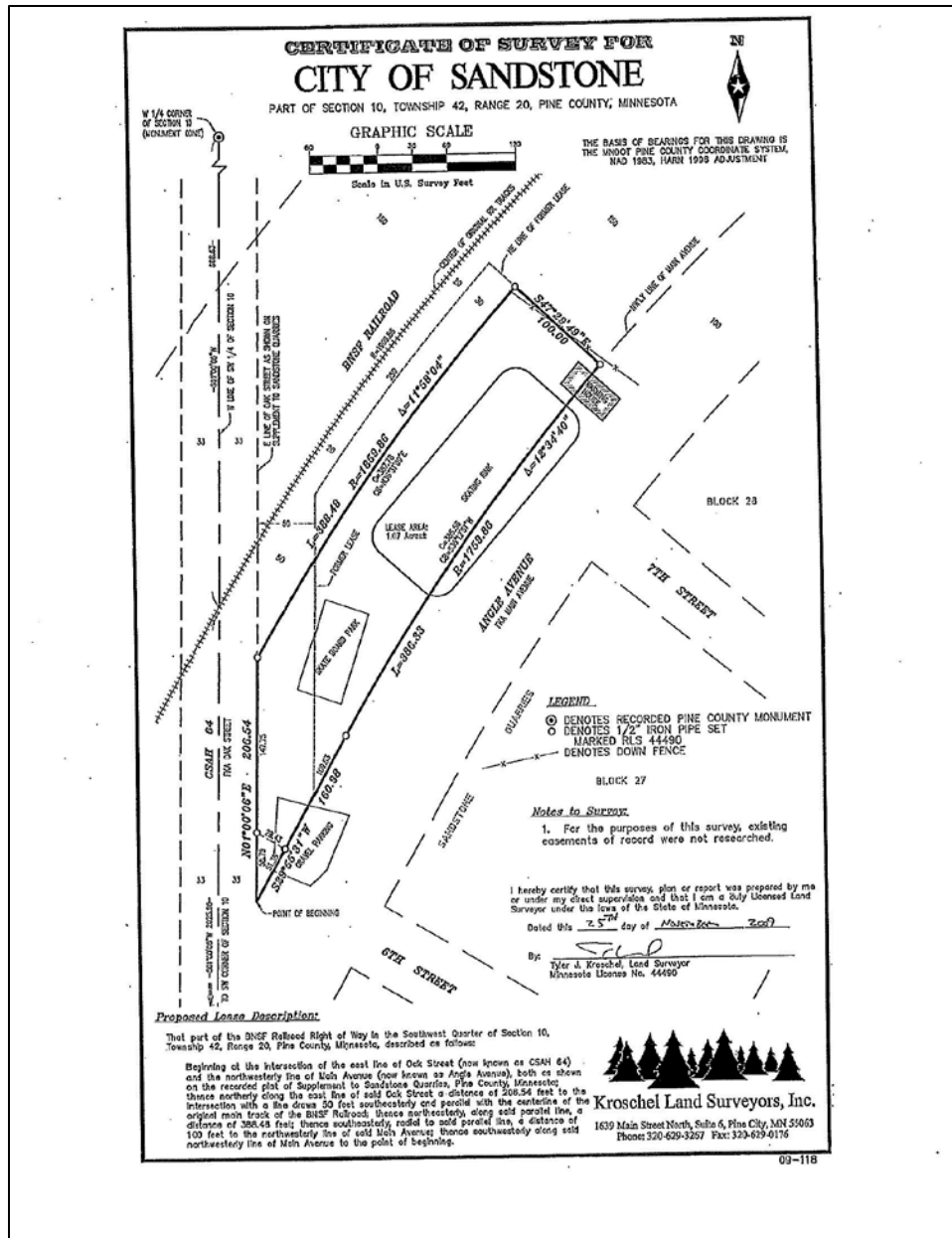
Comment

Response

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Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@irmuxs287.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, April 15, 2013 2:21 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Monday, April 15, 2013 at 14:21:14

Comments: The EA identifies the Six Cities WMO as a LGU within the proposed project space. The SCWMO has dissolved. Areas of the project which were previously in the SCWMO work space are likely within the Coon Creek Watershed District Boundaries

Name: Tom Gile

Email: tgile@cooncreekwd.org

Organization: Coon Creek Watershed District

1

A This technical update is noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.

Comment

Response



Hennepin County
Regional Railroad Authority
701 Fourth Avenue South, Suite 400
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1843

612-348-9260
Fax: 612-348-1842
www.hennepin.us/hcrra

April 17, 2013

Julie Carr
Project Manager
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1800

Subject: Comments on NLX Environmental Assessment

Dear Ms Carr:

As a member of the Minneapolis – Duluth/Superior Passenger Rail Alliance since 2007, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority has supported the exploration of an efficient, cost-effective service between the Twin Cities and Duluth. This project has the potential to increase mobility and economic development for the State of Minnesota and we are pleased to see MnDOT making progress on the development of this project.

Attached are Hennepin County comments regarding the Environmental Assessment for the Northern Lights Express (NLX) High Speed Passenger Rail project.

Sincerely,

Joseph Gladke, P.E.
Manager of Engineering and Transit Planning

Photo: Duluth, MN
Photo: Superior, MN
Photo: Duluth
Photo: Superior
Photo: Duluth
Photo: Superior
Photo: Duluth
Photo: Superior

A Project support noted.

A

Comment

Comments on Northern Lights Express (NLX) Environmental Assessment (EA) Document
 Comments from Hennepin County, Minnesota
 April 17th, 2013

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Chapter	Page(s)	Subject	Comments
ES	ES-5, 3-6	Selected route	Hennepin County supports the selection of Route 9 of the NLX corridor.
ES	ES-11, 3-28	Ridership projections	More detailed and updated ridership information is desired to confirm accuracy of ridership projections.
ES	ES-10	Coordination of projects	It is acknowledged that the NLX project is currently under environmental evaluation as is the MWRRRI. Based upon the schedule (3-30), it appears that the assumption is that NLX will happen prior to MWRRRI service. Based upon some of the layover facility language, it appears that the assumption is that MWRRRI service will occur first. Assumptions should be clearly stated with corresponding opportunities/conflicts considered.
ES	ES-10	Layover facility requirements	Can the service operate without a layover facility on the south end? For the north end, it mentions that the facility would have the capability to provide FRA-mandated daily equipment inspection. How would minor repairs be handled if there is no place to work on the trains? There are concerns about potential vandalism to the equipment if it is stored outside overnight. Since Northstar trains currently layover at the existing platform, consideration should be given to the need to move these trains to a different layover site if NLX trains want that platform space for mid-day service.
2	2-6	Metro Transit ridership	Ridership data is from what year? No mention of Northstar as Metro Transit operation.
3	3-10, 3-23	Minneapolis Wye improvements	Can the new double track section be added on the NW corner of the wye without impacting the facility located within the wye?
3	3-17	Interchange location	The referenced Interchange location at 5th Street and 3rd Avenue is incorrect and should be changed to 5th Street North near 5th Avenue North.
3	3-28	Rolling stock	"...assumed tilting trains that are FRA Tier-I Compliant." Only Talgo Series 8 rolling stock meet this criteria in 2013. Midwest HSR corridors in MI and IL have ordered new bi-level cars for 110mph service - probable standard equipment for future Midwest HSR corridors. Floor height above top of rail is different for these cars. Amtrak wants to standardize on 2 ADA-compliant platform heights - neither work for Talgo. Could NLX become "isolated corridor" with no possibility of running Duluth-Chicago in the future if equipment does not match Amtrak standard ADA platform heights?
4	4-62	Noise impacts	"In Minneapolis there is one multi-family residential building, located west of the tracks east of 1st Street N, consisting of four residences, predicted to have moderate noise impact. These noise impacts are due to the proximity of the proposed alignment to the buildings, approximately 30 feet away. Trains currently do not sound their horns in this area." This doesn't seem to take Dock Street Apartments (located just NE of the existing Northstar Platform) into account.
4	4-95	Cedar Lake Trail	"The proposed passenger rail phase of the Interchange site in downtown Minneapolis would not impact any existing parks or trails. Planning for the Interchange site has been done cooperatively with the planning for the future extension of the Cedar Lake Trail." What is meant by the "future extension of the Cedar Lake Trail"?

Response

A	Project support noted.
B	The Tier 1 Service Level NEPA document evaluates the impacts of the project as a whole, with a focus on corridor-wide and more qualitative impacts. Following completion of the Tier 1 Service Level NEPA document and the associated decision document, the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would include additional analysis of projected NLX ridership.
C	Preliminary engineering would further analyze scheduling and location of a potential layover facility for NLX. Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would concentrate on NLX facility needs and would not evaluate facility needs for other high speed rail lines. However, corresponding opportunities and conflicts would be identified.
D	The Tier 1 Service Level EA addressed layover track at the south and north project termini. It described the need for future layover facilities, but has not identified a southern (facility) location which, if needed, would be studied during the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments. The Tier 1 Service Level EA did identify a layover facility location for Duluth however; environmental analysis and further study would occur during the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessment. Minor repairs would be conducted at a light maintenance facility, the location for the light maintenance facility would be determined during the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessment. Potential vandalism concern is noted. Further analysis of current Northstar train layover and its impact on NLX would be addressed as part of preliminary engineering.
E	Metro Transit ridership data information was current from the Metro Transit website at the time the EA was prepared. Northstar is discussed earlier in Section 2.2.3 of the EA.
F	Preliminary engineering would include additional analysis on whether the new double track section can be added on the NW corner of the wye without impacting existing facilities.
G	This technical correction is noted in the Finding of No Significant Impact and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.
H	Equipment specifications and platform height would be further defined in preliminary engineering. The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would include additional analysis regarding type(s) of rail car, platform height, compatibility and ADA compliance.
I	The Dock Street Apartments were not constructed during the time of the Tier 1 noise and vibration analysis. This site would be included in future noise and vibration analyses for the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental assessments, as needed.
J	At the time the text was prepared, the Cedar Lake Bike Trail Extension was proposed. Platform extension would not directly impact the trail.

Comment

Response



April 17, 2013

Julie Carr, Project Manager
Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT)
395 John Ireland Boulevard
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1800

RE: Northern Lights Express High Speed Passenger Rail Environmental Assessment, Minneapolis to Duluth, Minnesota State Project 8816-1127
Review File No. 21102-1
Council Districts 2, 7, and 9

Dear Ms. Carr:

Metropolitan Council staff has reviewed the Tier 1 Service level Environmental Assessment (EA) for this project to determine its adequacy and accuracy in addressing regional concerns, potential impacts that warrant further investigation, and the need for an environmental impact statement (EIS).

This project includes constructing the necessary infrastructure for, and operation of, an approximately 155-mile long, high-speed intercity passenger rail service between Minneapolis and Duluth, a portion of which will travel through Douglas County in Wisconsin, and that will reach speeds of at least 110 miles per hour. The EA sets the foundation for subsequent Tier 2 Project Level EAs to be completed as additional design details are developed.

A

The Council staff finds that an EIS is not necessary for regional purposes. However, Council staff offers the following technical comments which should be addressed:

Environmental Services (Roger Janzig, 651-602-1119)

B

This project extends through Minneapolis, Fridley, Coon Rapids, Andover, Oak Grove, & Bethel. The construction of the new Northern Lights Express Rail may have potential impacts on multiple Metropolitan Council interceptors in multiple locations. To assess the potential impacts to our interceptor system, prior to initiating this project, preliminary plans should be sent to Scott Dentz, Interceptor Engineering Manager (651-602-4503) at the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review and comment. (Note: The EA states that the Tier 2 review will address the layover facility in Minneapolis, the station in Coon Rapids, and a light maintenance facility.)

Section 4.1.2 "Compatibility with Local Plans" (Freya Thamman, 651-602-1750)

C

As a general note, in section 4.1.2 "Compatibility with Local Plans", some of the referenced plans were drafts and have now been adopted. For example, the Hennepin County Transportation Systems Plan (HCTSP) was adopted in 2011 and *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* in 2009. MNDOT may want to check with County/City staff for the most current documents.

Transportation (Jonathan Ehrlich, 651-602-1408)

D

Metropolitan Council forecasting models were not used to develop the ridership projections for this project. Given the existing volumes on I-35, it is possible the ridership projections may be optimistic.

www.metrocouncil.org

390 Robert Street North • St. Paul, MN 55101-1805 • (651) 602-1000 • Fax (651) 602-1550 • TTY (651) 291-0904

An Equal Opportunity Employer

A

Comment noted.

B

MnDOT would send preliminary plans to the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services for review and comment prior to initiating the project.

C

The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would reference the most current local plans.

D

The Tier 1 Service Level NEPA document evaluates the impacts of the project as a whole, with a focus on corridor-wide and more qualitative impacts. Following completion of the Tier 1 Service Level NEPA document and the associated decision document, the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would include additional analysis of projected NLX ridership.

Comment

E

Julie Carr, Project Manager
April 17, 2013
Page 2

Transit (John Dillery, 612-349-7773)

The trains would bring more daily passenger trips to the downtown Minneapolis station aka, the "Interchange" than does the current highway-dominated system with its dispersed travel pattern, so it is likely the project would result in more trips on the transit lines sharing this downtown facility. Not everyone coming in on the trains will walk or take a taxi to their final destination.

The proposed train trip times would feature a round trip well-timed to serve the major work day in downtown Minneapolis and would also be useful to students commuting to major college and university campuses near downtown Minneapolis. The NLX service would make Cambridge and even Hinckley commuter cities to the Twin Cities.

The station at Foley Blvd. in Coon Rapids could attract commuters away from the existing Route 850 Foley Blvd. Park & Ride Express bus line, depending on the fare level. The trains' travel time of 15 minutes from Foley Blvd. to Downtown Minneapolis is competitive with the Route 850 travel time of 20 to 25 minutes to the north end of downtown, allowing for the distance from the station to the center of downtown. The proposed schedule for the Northern Lights Express service would also attract business travelers between the Twin Cities and the Twin Ports.

Regional Parks and Open Space (Jan Youngquist, 612-602-1029)

The Metropolitan Council (Council) oversees the metropolitan regional parks system, which is protected by the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*. The Council has authority to review proposed development projects to determine whether they will have a substantial effect on the use of regional parks system facilities.

As defined in the *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*, impacts on the use of regional parks system facilities include, but are not limited to: traffic, safety, noise, visual obstructions, and impaired use of the facilities or interference with the operation and maintenance of the facilities. Proposed development projects that have a substantial effect on the regional parks system would not be in conformance with the Council's *2030 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.

The proposed Northern Lights Express (NLX) will cross several regional parks system facilities along its route, including Central Mississippi Riverfront Regional Park (which includes West River Parkway and Nicollet Island), Rice Creek West Regional Trail, Coon Creek Regional Trail, Bunker Hills Regional Park, and the planned Central Anoka County Regional Trail.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) does not provide sufficient information for Council staff to make a determination of the impact to Bunker Hills Regional Park. The EA indicates that there will be 16 trains daily passing through the regional park at speeds of 90 miles per hour between approximately 7:15 am and 11:45 pm. Bunker Hills Regional Park is a 1,670 acre park located in Coon Rapids and Andover that provides recreational opportunities including camping, horseback riding, trails, a water park, archery, picnicking and cross country skiing. The regional park hosts approximately 825,000 visits annually.

The NLX is proposed to follow the existing BNSF corridor through Bunker Hills Regional Park, with a dedicated parallel track or siding to be constructed within the existing railroad right-of-way. Based on this information, the EA states that there will be no impact to the regional park.

Response

E Comments noted.

The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would include additional analysis of projected NLX ridership and travel times.

Comment

Response

Julie Carr, Project Manager
April 17, 2013
Page 3

Winter use of Bunker Hills Regional Park includes trails for cross-country skiing and skijoring (a combination of cross-country skiing and dog sledding where the person is on skis instead of a sled). These trails are within approximately 50 feet of the BNSF corridor, as shown on the attached Bunker Hills Winter Map. With the proposed construction of a train siding within the corridor, there will be a second set of tracks located close to these trails.

Section 4.7 of the EA describes the Federal Railroad Administration noise impact criteria and the analysis that was conducted along the NLX route. Parks are defined as a noise sensitive Land Use Category 3 for high speed train noise. The EA indicates that noise measurements were conducted at representative sites to determine baseline noise conditions for comparison with projected noise from the high speed train.

F

The location of the receptors where the noise measurements were conducted was not included in the EA, however. It does not appear that receptors were located in the vicinity of Bunker Hills Regional Park. The noise impact summary indicates that there are no Land Use Category 3 impacts in Coon Rapids and that a school building in Andover with a distance of 237 feet of the track will experience a noise level increase of 18 dBA. The analysis does not take into account any Land Use Category 3 impacts to the regional park where people and dogs enjoy outdoor recreation within 50 feet of the high speed train corridor, however. Without an estimate of the projected noise level of the project within the regional park, it is unclear what the startle or surprise factor to people and dogs along the trails will be.

G

Council staff requests that additional noise modeling be conducted to determine the noise impacts to Bunker Hills Regional Park, prior to proceeding with the Tier 2 Project Level EA analysis. The analysis from the noise modeling will inform the Council's decision on whether there is a substantial effect on the regional parks system.

If you have questions about these comments, please contact Ann Braden, Principal Reviewer, at 651-602-1705.

Sincerely,



LisaBeth Barajas, Manager
Local Planning Assistance

cc: Tod Sherman, Development Reviews Coordinator,
Lona Schreiber, Council Member District 2
Gary Cunningham, Council Member District 7
Edward Reynoso, Council Member District 9
Freya Thamman, Sector Representative
Raya Esmaeili, Reviews Coordinator

N:\Comm\Dev\LA\Agencies\MnDOT\Letters\MnDOT 2013 NLX high speed passenger rail Tier 1 EA 211031.doc

F The location of receptors where the noise measurements were taken is provided in the *NLX Environmental Assessment Noise and Vibration Technical Report and Addendum*, April 2011, available on the project website <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/nlx/>.

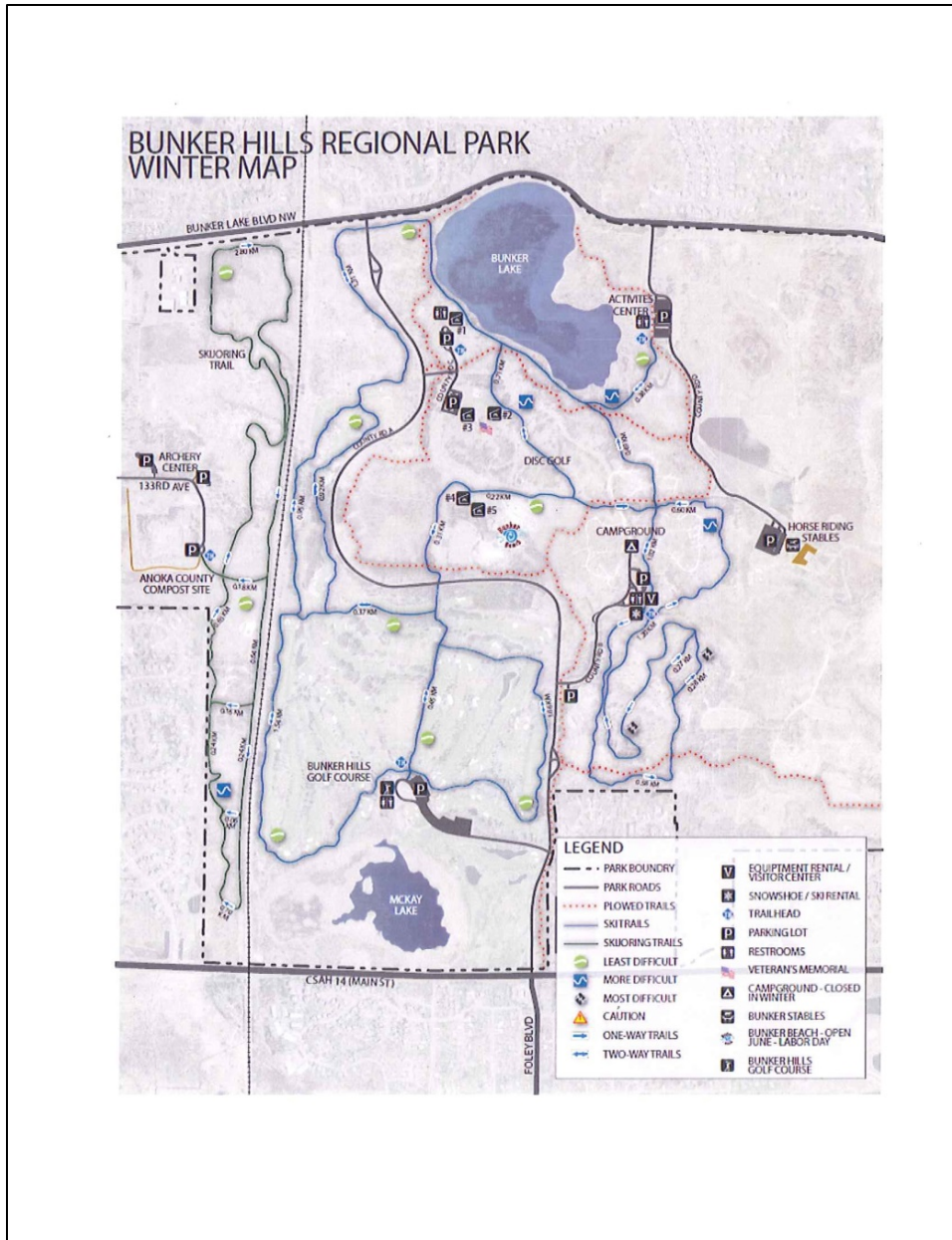
The closest receptor was in Coon Rapids, approximately 4 miles to the south at a residential property proximate to the corridor. The L_{dn} was 62 dBA and the L_{eq} was 47 dBA.

G Additional noise analysis would be done, as necessary, during Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments when more refined engineering information is available.

Comment

Response

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Comment

Response

Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project

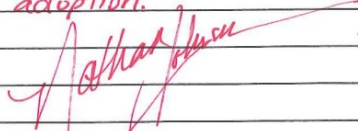
— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: Nathan Johnson, City Planner
ADDRESS: 315 Main St S, Ste 100 Pine City, MN 55063
EMAIL ADDRESS: njohnson@pinecitygov.com

COMMENTS: The City recognizes that over 1/3 of its residents commute to the Twin Cities MSA for work. The update to the City's comprehensive plan has a city goal of maintaining a staff liaison present at all NLX Alliance meetings, and another to keep informed of progress of other transit routes feeding into "The Exchange" and the "Union Depot" and learn from them. Two public hearings are scheduled, for April 23 and May 1, 2013, to hear feedback on the plan prior to its adoption.



NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

A Comments noted. MnDOT would reference the most current version of the Pine City Comprehensive Plan during completion of the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments.

A

Comment

Response

A

Transcription of a Voice Mail Message

Voice mail to: Julie Carr

Voice mail from: Gary Loonsfoot

Date Received: March 25, 2013

Time Received: 12:26 pm

Message:

["Hi, Julie, this is Gary Loonsfoot with the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community. I am the THPO Coordinator here. I am calling in regards to the Northern Lights Express High Speed Passenger Rail Environmental Assessment. We have no problems with it here at the KBIC. If you run across any cultural or significant findings, be it traditional/ceremonial; please give me a call at (906) 353-4178. Thank you."

A Comments noted. MnDOT would coordinate with the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community if any cultural or significant traditional / ceremonial findings arise.

Comment

Response



LEECH LAKE BAND OF OJIBWE

Carri Jones, Chairwoman
Donald Finn, Secretary-Treasurer

Robbie Howe, District I Representative
Steve White, District II Representative
LeRoy Staples Fairbanks III, District III Representative

March 21, 2013

Minnesota Department of Transportation
Attn: Julie Carr, Project Manager
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155-1800

RE: **Proposed Northern Lights Express High Speed Passenger Rail**
Hennepin, Anoka, Isanti, Kanabec, Pine, Carlton and St. Louis Counties,
Minnesota
Douglas County, Wisconsin
LLTHPO No. 13-058-NCRI

Dear Ms. Carr:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above-referenced project. It has been reviewed pursuant to the responsibilities given the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended in 1992 and the Procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (38CFR800).

I have reviewed the documentation; after careful consideration of our records, I have determined that the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe does not have any known recorded sites of religious or cultural importance in these areas.

Should any human remains or suspected human remains be encountered, all work shall cease and the following personnel should be notified immediately in this order: County Sheriff's Office and Office of the State Archaeologist. If any human remains or culturally affiliated objects are inadvertently discovered this will prompt the process to which the Band will become informed.

Please note: The above determination does not "exempt" future projects from Section 106 review. In the event of any other tribe notifying us of concerns for a specific project, we may re-enter into the consultation process.

You may contact me at (218) 335-2940 if you have questions regarding our review of these projects. Please refer to the LL-THPO Number as stated above in all correspondence with this project.

Respectfully submitted,

Gina M. Lemon
Tribal Historic Preservation Officer

115 Sixth St NW, Cass Lake, MN 56633
Telephone: 218-335-8200 Fax: 218-335-8309

A Comments noted. MnDOT would follow all state laws and protocols.

A

Comment

Response

1

To:
Julie Carr
MnDOT Project Manager
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Saint Paul, MN
julie.carr@state.mn.us

From:
Alliance for Metropolitan Stability
2525 E. Franklin Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55406
Contact: Joan Vanhala, 612-332-4471 joan@metrostability.org

April 9, 2013

The [Alliance for Metropolitan Stability](#) is a Minneapolis/St. Paul-based, 26 member [coalition](#) advocating for public policies that promote racial equity in land use. Our mission is to advance racial, economic and environmental justice in the way growth and development happens in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. By invitation of Harrison Neighborhood Association (HNA), we have provided organizing and technical assistance with their efforts to preserve the [Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan](#) as a premier transit oriented development opportunity for this environmental justice neighborhood. In coalition with HNA, we have helped to organize other regional allies such as [JSAIAH](#), [Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing](#), and [Housing Preservation Project](#) to support their efforts.

A

We understand that the current Northern Lights Express (NLX) environmental assessment does **NOT** include a layover facility at the south terminus (Minneapolis) and will be fully address in the Tier 2 Project Level EA.

Alliance for Metropolitan Stability comments on the NLX EA:

B

1. NLX EA Chap. 4.2 Transportation page 12 *"While the location of the layover site in Minneapolis is subject to ongoing discussion among agencies with interests in NLX and MWRRRI and has not yet been selected, it would be in an existing rail use area and likewise would be designed to minimize impacts to other rail uses and to ensure sufficient parking and access for facility employees."*
 - Linden Yards East has been publicly stated by MNDOT as the preferred location for the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative rail layover and maintenance facility. Should this site be included in the NLX Tier 2 EA the Harrison Neighborhood Association has requested an environmental justice scoping for Linden Yards East – see attached letter. This letter was submitted to local, regional, and federal agencies in 2011 and is still relevant to any future proposed use of Linden Yards East.
2. NLX EA 4.13 Socioeconomic Impacts Page 102 *"Minneapolis, MN (population 382,578)
The southern NLX corridor terminus is located in downtown Minneapolis. From the proposed passenger and commuter rail stage of the Interchange in downtown Minneapolis, the track travels eastward over the Mississippi River and across Nicollet*

A The Tier 1 Service Level EA addressed layover track at the south and north project termini. It described the need for future layover facilities, but has not identified a southern (facility) location which would be studied during the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments..

B Currently there are no facilities identified in the southern terminus of the NLX project. If potential NLX facilities are identified in the southern terminus area, Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would address project elements including environmental justice as required by NEPA.

Comment

Response

2

Island before turning northward towards Fridley. Community facilities near the corridor in Minneapolis include churches, schools, community centers, libraries, and emergency services. Three churches, two school facilities, and Firefighters Hall and Museum are within one block of the existing track."

C

- Please enter into the public record, the attached document - Alliance for Metropolitan Stability's comments on the Interchange Feasibility study February 2012.

3. NLX EA Appendix L Environmental Justice page 377

D

- The analysis of the environmental justice communities is inadequate because it is too broad – the analysis includes all each county's demographics and does not analyze the area of impact of the NLX project. A more targeted analysis to the NLX corridor is a more accurate accounting of impacts to environmental justice communities.

4. Appendix M Public Involvement page 385:

E

- The NLX newsletter and flyer are inadequate for community outreach. The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability had signed up for the NLX email alerts for 2 years and as of yet have never received any information about the NLX project. We have been monitoring the progress of the NLX project on behalf of the Harrison Neighborhood Association, an environmental justice community. The Department of Transportation Environmental Justice website http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/environmental_justice/ej_at_dot/ clearly states:

The US DOT is committed to the principles of EJ, which include:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decisionmaking process.
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities within the city of Minneapolis, we refer you to the Neighborhood & Community Relations department (<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/ncr/>) which has maps, contact information, and demographic information of all the communities within the NLX project corridor. These neighborhood associations should be listed as community facilities in Appendix J. All potential affected neighborhood associations within the city of Minneapolis should be on your notification email list.

F

C

The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability's comments on the Interchange Feasibility Study dated February 2012 are included in this document. As these comments are on a separate project, no response is indicated.

D

The Tier 1 Service Level Environmental Assessment evaluates the impacts of the project as a whole with a focus on corridor-wide and more qualitative impacts. Pursuant to Executive Order 12898 an Environmental Justice analysis was completed and is included in Section 4.14. Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would address all environmental elements including Environmental Justice as required by NEPA.

E

The Tier 1 Service Level Environmental Assessment is a corridor-level analysis that addresses concept-level engineering improvements; for NLX, all improvements are within the existing rail corridor. The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would address project elements and more detailed analysis where there is potential for impacts, including public involvement as required by NEPA. Project updates and newsletters would be available at mndot.gov/nlx for preliminary engineering and Project Level Environmental Assessments.

F

MnDOT would include all potential affected neighborhood associations on the project update notification list. MnDOT would coordinate with neighborhood associations to identify locations where the community gathers and/or accesses services to include in the assessment of impacts for the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments.

Comment

Comments submitted on the Interchange Draft Environmental Assessment, January 2012 located in Minneapolis, MN

To:

Marisol Simon
Federal Transit Administration Region 5
200 West Adams Street
Suite 320
Chicago, IL 60606

Ed Hunter, Project Manager
The Interchange Project Office
200 Minneapolis Grain Exchange Building
400 S. Fourth St.
Minneapolis, MN 55415

From:

Joan Vanhala, Coalition Organizer
Alliance for Metropolitan Stability
2525 E. Franklin Avenue
MPLS, MN 55406
612-332-4471

February 16th, 2012

The [Alliance for Metropolitan Stability](#) is a Minneapolis/St. Paul-based, 26 member [coalition](#) advocating for public policies that promote equity in land use. Our mission is to advance racial, economic and environmental justice in the way growth and development happens in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. By invitation of Harrison Neighborhood Association (HNA), we have provided organizing and technical assistance with their efforts to preserve the [Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan](#) as a premier transit oriented development opportunity for this environmental justice neighborhood. In coalition with HNA, we have helped to organize other regional allies such as [ISIAH](#), [Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing](#), and [Housing Preservation Project](#) to support their efforts.

The focus on our comments will be toward both the future rail storage needs of the Interchange and the proposed Bassett Creek Valley Storage/Layover Facility also known as Linden Yards East. We understand that the Interchange Draft Environmental Assessment covers a geographic area that does not include the Harrison neighborhood or Linden Yards East but our concerns are related to the Interchange EA page 10 section 2.1 "Purpose of the Project : During development of the EA, the following goals were established to provide multi-modal transportation improvements that complement the context and existing features of the study area:

- Address existing (and future) LRT operational needs;
- Enhance access, and connections to the existing (and future) transit network;
- Promote pedestrian safety; and
- Enhance neighborhood access and connectivity."

We are focusing on the "Enhance access, and connections to the existing (and future) transit network" section in our comments.

Referenced by the Interchange Environmental Assessment is the document "[The Interchange in Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station Study, Phase II](#)" prepared for Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority by Parsons Brinkerhoff, September 8th, 2010. In this document is the assessment for a proposed Storage/Layover Facility¹. On page 55 This study states "As described previously, the track and platform configurations at the intermodal station facility are constrained by the existing site and by the potential for future development. Therefore, any necessary storage of rail equipment must occur at another location." and "The key criteria for selecting the location of a facility include:

- ◆ Accessibility by rail from The Interchange

¹ [The Interchange in Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station Study, Phase II](#); Chapter IV: Rail Capacity Analysis pages 54 - 65

Response

February 16, 2012 Alliance for Metropolitan Stability comments regarding the Interchange Draft Environmental Assessment (Included per Alliance for Metropolitan Stability request). As these comments are on a separate project, no response is indicated.

Comment

Response

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Comments submitted on the Interchange Draft Environmental Assessment, January 2012 located in Minneapolis, MN

- ◆ Sufficient physical space
- ◆ Property availability
- ◆ Compatible adjacent land uses, existing and potential future uses²

In this study is an analysis of the Bassett Creek Valley Yard Site, also referred to the Linden Yards East Site³. Also it is important to note that "A new roadway and overpass is planned that will carry Van White Boulevard over the west end of the site." on page 57.

For over 10 years, Harrison Neighborhood Association and Northside residents have been planning for the redevelopment of Bassett Creek Valley to provide quality affordable housing, living wage jobs, avoid displacement, and build community assets that will directly benefit the current residents. Over 650 residents and other stakeholders participated in the planning process. This resulted in the Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan⁴.

In April 2010, Harrison Neighborhood Association was successful in protecting the redevelopment of Bassett Creek Valley, when the Minneapolis City Council struck language committing the City to negotiate an agreement to sell Linden Yards East to Hennepin County for a commuter rail storage facility to accommodate up to 14-16 commuter diesel trains. Instead, City Council directed staff to study joint development strategies, if the area is identified for rail storage and provide a final report by December 2010.

Harrison Neighborhood Association has been told by Interchange project staff that Linden Yards East was the preferred site for the rail storage/layover facility. Harrison Neighborhood Association has also been told by Interchange project staff that the build out of this storage/layover facility would be project by project (each project including in their plans their storage/layover needs) to accommodate: "the following future long-term planned services:

- Southwest LRT
- Bottineau LRT
- Red Rock Corridor (Commuter Rail) and on other corridors extending to the south or east/west of the Twin Cities
- Intercity Rail: Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (High Speed), Northern Lights Express (NLX), and optionally Amtrak intercity service."⁵

On June 22, 2011, HNA sent a letter requesting a comprehensive environment justice analysis (scoping) to FTA, EPA, MN Dept. of Transportation, Hennepin County, and city of Minneapolis. The FTA region 5 was the only responder. In this letter they made clear these important points:

- Harrison is an environmental justice community
- Rail storage would jeopardize the implementation of the Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan
- Environmental study on an as needed basis would segment the storage/layover facility and would not adequately assess the cumulative impacts requiring the need for a comprehensive environmental justice scoping of the proposed storage/layover facility at the Bassett Creek Valley site.
- In the 1992 Hollman v. Cisneros consent decree settlement called for reducing the isolation and enhancing the economic development of the largely minority Near North Minneapolis community by directly linking that area to the more affluent South Minneapolis⁶. That link is now being created through the completion of [Van White Boulevard and Memorial bridge](#), which will also intersect with Linden Yards East and provide the Van White transit stop along the planned Southwest LRT Corridor.

² [The Interchange in Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station Study, Phase II](#); Chapter IV: Rail Capacity Analysis page 55

³ [The Interchange in Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station Study, Phase II](#); Chapter IV: Rail Capacity Analysis page 57

⁴ Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan http://www.minneapolismn.gov/cped/planning/plans/cped_bassett-creek

⁵ Page 55, The Interchange Final Draft Environmental Assessment

⁶ City of Minneapolis, city council action CPED 12/13/2011 pg 3, Background information, retrieved 2/16/12 http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@citycoordinator/documents/webcontent/convert_268723.pdf

Comment

Response

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Comments submitted on the Interchange Draft Environmental Assessment, January 2012 located in Minneapolis, MN

- In 2007, the City of Minneapolis incorporated this vision for BCV and Linden Yards in its Comprehensive Plan.
- February 2008 the zoning in the Bassett Creek Valley area, including the proposed site for the Storage/Layover Facility was changed to Office Residential 3 (OR3) to set the stage to implement the master plan.
- In 2008, the City of Minneapolis awarded exclusive development rights for Linden Yards to Ryan Companies.

The conflicting land uses being proposed for Linden Yards East and West/Bassett Creek Valley is delaying progress on the development of the Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan. Yet Interchange project staff have stated that the need for the rail storage/layover facility may not be until 20 or 30 years from now.

This delay would put on hold the opportunity for transit oriented development at the Southwest LRT Van White Station with expected redevelopment outcomes of the Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan:

- 3,000+ housing units
- 2.5 M sq ft commercial space (office and retail)
- 5000 - 6000 jobs
- 40 ac. new green space
- After TIF repayment future projected tax revenue of \$82 - \$128 M⁷

We support the Harrison Neighborhood Association's request for a full environmental justice scoping for the Interchange project's proposed rail storage yard at Linden Yards East with a written response to their request from the Interchange project staff for an environmental justice scoping of the rail storage/layover facility that was studied in The Interchange in Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station Study, Phase II prepared for Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority by Parsons Brinkerhoff, September 8th, 2010.

"Agencies should develop effective public participation strategies that assure meaningful community representation in the EIS process."⁸ With 5 potential projects generating the need for a rail storage yard creates a complex process of tracking environmental studies, environmental assessments and environmental impact statements. This creates an excessive burden for a small neighborhood organization. We request that the Interchange project staff assign a planning staff person to Harrison Neighborhood Association to ensure ongoing timely communication. The segmenting of the projects being planned for this site not only is a disservice to the environmental justice community but also to the planning agencies involved. We recommend a series of meetings with Harrison Neighborhood Association, Interchange project staff, city of Minneapolis, Southwest LRT project staff, and MN Department of Transportation to discuss community issues, Interchange project issues, city of Minneapolis land use issues, SWLRT Van White station area issues and to develop action steps to ensure coordinated efforts moving forward.

⁷ "Revitalizing Bassett Creek Valley: Potential Costs and Opportunity Losses of Locating a Train Storage Facility in Linden Yards vs. Mixed-Use Development" prepared for Harrison Neighborhood Association by graduate students at the Hubert Humphrey Institute, December 6, 2009

⁸ Federal Transit Administration website Environmental Justice http://www.fta.dot.gov/12347_2238.html retrieved 2/14/12

Comment



June 22, 2011

Mayor R.T. Rybak
City Hall, Room 331
350 South Fifth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Peter McLaughlin
Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority
300 S 6th St
A-2400
Minneapolis, MN 55487-0241

Susan Haigh
Metropolitan Council
390 Robert St. North
St. Paul, MN 55101-1805

Minnesota Department of Transportation
Transportation Building
395 John Ireland Blvd
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Marisol Simon
Federal Transit Administration Region 5
200 West Adams Street
Suite 320
Chicago, IL 60606

Norm West
US EPA Region 5
Office of Enforcement and Compliance
Assurance (E-19J)
77 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604

**RE: Environmental Justice Issues at Bassett Creek Valley / Linden Yards
development in Minneapolis**

Dear Officials:

We write as three organizations deeply concerned about the future of the Bassett Creek Valley area of Minneapolis. As all or most of you are aware, the Bassett Creek Valley is home to one of the largest publicly owned underutilized parcel of land remaining near downtown Minneapolis. It also provides the key as-yet-to-be-developed link between economically struggling North Minneapolis and wealthier neighborhoods immediately to the south. In addition, as a result of siting decisions on the Southwest Light Rail Line, it will now also house the Van White Boulevard LRT station area, making this area even more strategic as an area to redevelop. The proposed Bassett Creek Valley (BCV) Master Plan / Linden Yards development is the product of years of community planning and an effort to capitalize on all these opportunities.

503 Irving Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55405 or 612-374-4849, f: 612-374-9777
www.hnampls.org

Response

June 22, 2011 letter from the Harrison Neighborhood Association (Included as an attachment to comments from the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability). As these comments are on a separate project, no response is indicated.

Comment

Response

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One of the key goals of the BCV Master Plan is to set the stage for the economic revitalization of the adjoining Harrison neighborhood to the north. The Harrison neighborhood is an economically struggling, predominantly minority lower income neighborhood which should stand to gain much from the Linden Yards project. We write now, however, because we believe that a series of recent and pending decisions by public agencies are substantially jeopardizing the economic promise of the project, which in turn would pose a major adverse impact for the Harrison neighborhood.

In particular, a pending decision to locate the commuter train storage yard at Linden Yards East would substantially compromise the Bassett Creek Valley (BCV) Master Plan, by undermining the Master Plan strategy to use high intensity development in Linden Yards. This creates a threefold adverse impact. First, it effectively reduces or eliminates tax increment funding to finance redevelopment for the larger neighborhood. Second, it removes much of the potential to develop housing, both affordable and market rate. Third, it dramatically reduces the potential for Linden Yards to create a catalytic effect for the larger area. The primary impact of these lost opportunities and the compromising of the BCV Master Plan will fall upon the predominantly minority and low income Harrison neighborhood. This presents a serious question of Environmental Justice. Although it is possible the train storage yard decision may not be made for some time, having the pending decision looming over Linden Yards creates it's own problems, necessitating that the Environmental Justice review be done now.

As far as we know, no public entity is viewing the collective impact of the pending decisions in terms of their potential Environmental Justice impact. We respectfully request that a comprehensive full Environmental Justice analysis be conducted regarding the siting of the proposed commuter train storage and maintenance facility. As far as we can tell, all of the agencies to which this letter is addressed have some role in making or funding the decisions in question, have Environmental Justice obligations, and therefore should share responsibility for this analysis.¹

Background

Historically the Bassett Creek Valley area has been largely industrial but also at times provided inexpensive housing for immigrant groups and beginning after 1900, increasingly housed African Americans. In the 1930s and again in the 1950s, public housing was concentrated at Sumner Olson on the northern edge of Bassett Creek. In 1992, public housing residents took various governmental agencies to federal court, alleging a pattern of racial discrimination in the siting and operation of public housing. The case was settled in 1995, resulting in the Hollman v. Cisneros consent decree, a

¹ We are aware that the Southwest LRT corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is planned for public release in the near future. Perhaps these issues will be addressed in the DEIS, but to the extent they are not, they should be addressed as discussed herein. In any event, whether EJ concerns get addressed in the DEIS or as part of a separate process as called for herein, the commuter train storage yard location decision should be deferred until these concerns are fully aired and resolved.

503 Irving Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55405 or 612-374-4849, f: 612-374-9777
www.hnampls.org

Comment

Response

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sweeping court approved settlement, providing for, among other things, the demolition of the Northside public housing projects, and the redevelopment of those units in various locations across the metro area, in order to provide largely minority public housing residents with integrated housing in high opportunity locations. Part of the settlement called for development of a new mixed income project to be built on the original project site, now known as Heritage Park.

In addition, a key aspect of the settlement called for reducing the isolation and enhancing the economic development of the largely minority Near North Minneapolis community by more directly linking that area to the more affluent Walker Art Center/Dunwoody location in South Minneapolis. The Dunwoody Institute, in particular, provides an important community asset because this well respected vo-tech school offers a career pathway out of poverty and will serve the North Minneapolis community better once the Van White Boulevard link is completed. That link is now being created through the completion of Van White Boulevard, which will also intersect with the Linden Yards development and provide a transit stop along the planned Southwest LRT Corridor.

On a parallel track, residents of the Bryn Mawr and Harrison neighborhoods began working with the City to plan for redevelopment of the Bassett Creek Valley, culminating in the adoption of the Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan in 2000, and its updating in 2007. One goal of that Master Plan was to create conditions for the economic revitalization of the Harrison neighborhood, centered along Glenwood Avenue, and located between Heritage Park and the proposed Linden Yards development, the centerpiece of the Master Plan. The Plan calls for the transformation of BCV “from a relatively isolated and obsolete industrial area ...to a vibrant urban village of retail, office, residential, industrial, civic and residential uses that fit like a glove with the adjacent neighborhoods. Master Plan, p. 4-1. The build-out, anticipated to take 25 years, could include between 2600-6100 dwelling units. Attached to this letter are two maps, one showing the larger BCV Area, and the other showing the Linden Yards proposal in some detail.

Most importantly, the Master Plan explicitly recognizes that one of the purposes of the Linden Yards proposal is to generate additional financial resources to meet broader community needs. Phase 1 encompasses the Glenwood Avenue/ Van White Boulevard intersection and Linden Yards, and is intended to provide the catalyst for Phase 2, that will cover the larger surrounding area and “which will need market stimulation and financial infusion of phase 1 projects before they ‘ripen’ for development.” (MP at 6-9). The Plan provides that the Linden Yards area is to be intensively developed so that: “the tax increment from this project will also generate ‘seed money’ for more financially challenged redevelopment in phase 2.” (MP at 6-11). The plan repeatedly emphasizes that building to the highest possible density is necessary for overall financial feasibility and that “implementation needs to be coordinated to allow stronger ‘districts’ to help support districts with gaps” and “revenue sharing needs to occur across district boundaries in order to allow financially stronger districts to support weaker ones.” (MP at 5-7). Secondly, because of this need to rely on high intensity development in Linden Yards to generate resources to support the rest of the project, “implementing the plan cannot be viewed as a series of independent projects but rather a series of interrelated

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actions” and “every investment must be evaluated for its impact on achieving the vision for the future of Bassett Creek Valley.” (MP 6-1). The Plan notes that “failure to consider the implementation relationships between elements of the plan will lead to missed opportunities and increased risk for the City.” (MP at 6-2).

In 2007, the City of Minneapolis incorporated this vision for BCV and Linden Yards in its Comprehensive Plan. In 2008, the City of Minneapolis awarded exclusive development rights for Linden Yards to Ryan Companies. As part of that decision, the City Council reaffirmed that excess funds generated through tax increment financing should be used for the benefit of the larger BCV Master Plan area. In 2009, the City rezoned the area consistent with the Master Plan. Further progress on the project beyond the planning stage has been stalled, however, largely due to the state of the economy.

Finally, the selection of the route for the Southwest LRT Corridor means that Linden Yards will be even more strategically positioned, with the Van White Boulevard Station Area being located in the middle of Linden Yards.

Governmental decisions affecting Linden Yards and Harrison Neighborhood

The pending decision which most directly threatens the success of the Linden Yards project is where to place the commuter train storage yard needed for a layover yard facility for trains running in and out of the proposed downtown Interchange. According to the Intermodal Station Study Phase II, there are two locations which could be feasible for a train layover site: the Bassett Creek layover site (Linden Yards) and farther to the west, the Cedar Lake layover site². The study concludes that although both locations are feasible, the Bassett Creek Linden Yards site is preferable. Locating the train storage yard in this location, however, means that it replaces half of the Linden Yards project, Linden Yards East. Locating the storage yard in the middle of the planned Linden Yards development, along with the retention of the Impound Lot, severely compromises the community vision for BCV, removes the site where the affordable housing component of Linden Yards would have been located, and effectively eliminates the financial resources that would have been generated by the original development plan. The community most adversely affected by this decision is the community which stood the most to gain from the Linden Yards development—the Harrison Neighborhood. The Linden Yards location is also the only one under consideration which adversely affects an Environmental Justice community.

We recently learned in a public meeting that the storage yard would also be needed for storage of high speed rail should the proposed high speed rail lines to Duluth or Chicago ever become reality. Since neither of these lines have been approved nor may they ever be approved, we face the prospect that the storage yard decision may hang over Linden Yards for perhaps years while advocates for these lines seek approval and funding. That

² Although the study discusses just these two locations, it is not at all clear that other more remote locations have been ruled out as infeasible.

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causes at least two problems. First, the prospect of train storage and diesel fumes as a neighbor greatly increases the challenge for Ryan Companies to attract any companies to locate at Linden Yards, very likely putting a damper on all potential development on the site. Second, while this decision remains unresolved, other public decisions appear to be assuming the storage yard will be placed on Linden Yards East thus narrowing the options and potentially dictating the outcome. The Southwest LRT Station plan clearly places the storage yard at the Van White station area rather than the Penn station area, for example.³

The train storage yard decision is not the only public decision which is effectively compromising the BCV Master Plan vision. The Master Plan also calls for the removal of the City's auto impound lot, in order to provide space for another phase of the Linden Yards development. However, the City has recently decided not to relocate the Impound Lot for the foreseeable future, and has in fact considered investing in upgrading the Impound Lot in its current location. If the City takes that action, it effectively ensures that the impound lot will remain at this location for some time to come, further limiting the intensity of the development called for in the BCV Master Plan.

In addition, pending decisions about the design of a bridge on Van White Boulevard are threatening to create further problems. To complete the section of Van White Boulevard linking the Harrison Neighborhood to the Dunwoody Institute/ South Minneapolis area, a bridge needs to be constructed as part of the Boulevard which will cross over the Southwest LRT line, the Cedar Lake Trail, and the BNSF Freight Line. The City's current proposed bridge design causes two problems.⁴ One problem is that for southbound travelers on Van White Boulevard, there will be no easy way to exit directly on to the Linden Yards West project area—which is the only part of Linden Yards that could be developed in the near future. This defect seriously threatens the ability of Ryan Companies to market the Linden West site for the commercial uses intended there. Secondly, the bridge is planned for one lane each way, unlike the rest of Van White Boulevard, which will be two lanes in each direction. This traffic choke point will effectively limit traffic along Van White Boulevard. That in turn threatens the entire vision of high density development in this area, as the inability to travel easily in and out of the project area may well prevent development at the density levels needed to make the project and the Master Plan vision work.

³ While an environmental impact analysis will need to be done when and if the train storage yard decision is made, it will not be the same as the Environmental Justice analysis we are calling for. In addition to the problems caused by the delays of waiting for such a decision, that kind of environmental impact analysis will not ensure full consideration of all the social justice impacts of the decision, nor will it necessarily include consideration of the cumulative impact of all the public decisions on BCV, including the impound lot decision and the bridge design decisions, among others.

⁴ We understand that it is possible that the bids could come in sufficiently under budget so as to allow construction consistent with the original bridge design, which would obviously be the preferable outcome.

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In short, these public decisions threaten to substantially undermine the vision for this area as articulated in the BCV Master Plan and the City's Comprehensive Plan. As the Master Plan notes, "development intensity in Linden Yards is essential to generating financial resources that achieve the challenging but necessary acquisition, demolition, infrastructure and amenity investments in other parts of the Valley." (MP 6-11) Undermining that development intensity directly threatens the development potential Harrison neighborhood has been counting on.

Why these issues raise Environmental Justice Concerns

In 1994, the President issued Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations." The order provided that "to the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law...each federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations..." Section 1-101. Pursuant to this order, the U.S. DOT adopted its own order on Environmental Justice in 1997. 62 Fed Register 18377 (4-15-97). In 1998, MNDOT issued its own Environmental Justice Draft Guidance, based in turn upon the USDOT order. The Guidance provides that in applying Environmental Justice principles to particular situations the following analytical steps should be followed: 1. Determine if a minority or low income population is present within the project area; 2. Determine whether project impacts associated with the minority/low income populations are disproportionately high and adverse; 3. If so, determine if there are there mitigation measures or alternatives to the proposed action that would avoid or reduce the adverse impact on minority/low income populations.

As a threshold matter, the obligation to consider Environmental Justice (EJ) in this situation clearly applies. The fact that the commuter train storage yard is at least partially federally funded means that EJ obligations attach not only to US DOJ but to the recipients and subrecipients of these funds. FTA Circular 4702.1A. Moreover, the duty to consider EJ applies at all stages of the planning process, "and should be integrated into every transportation decision—from the first thought about a transportation plan to post-construction operation and maintenance." FTA Environmental Justice Website, Questions and Answers, www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ej2000.htm.

The following analysis does not claim to provide a complete application of the EJ Draft Guidance to BCV /Linden Yards; that is for the agencies to which this letter is addressed to perform. The analysis does, however, demonstrate that there is ample indication of the need to conduct this kind of analysis before further public decisions are made.

1. **The Harrison Neighborhood constitutes a minority and low income population within the Bassett Creek Valley project area.** The Harrison neighborhood directly abuts the proposed Linden Yards development on its northern border, and is fully contained within the area defined as Bassett Creek Valley for purposes of the BCV Master Plan. According to 2010 census data,

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40% of Harrison residents are African-American, 29% are white, 17% are Southeast Asian, 9% are Hispanic, and 5% are other. Thirty-seven per cent (37%) of the Harrison population lived in poverty in 2010.

- 2. The impact of a decision to place the train storage yard at Linden Yards East is disproportionately high and adverse to the minority and low income residents of Harrison neighborhood.** The first question under this element of the Draft Guidance is whether the anticipated adverse impact is high. The stakes for Harrison in connection with these transportation-related decisions are quite high; the entire development the community has been planning for over a decade would be in jeopardy. The elimination of Linden Yards East as a development site (other than train storage) effectively eliminates the tax increment funding needed to realize the full BCV Master plan, eliminates much of the planned-for housing development, and greatly undermines the location's potential as a catalytic development for the larger area. Secondly, to determine if the adverse impact is disproportionate, the adverse effect must be borne predominantly by a minority or low income population. That is clearly the case here, as Harrison neighborhood is over 70% households of color with 37% of households below the poverty level. By contrast, the minority population city-wide is 30.4%, and the poverty population city-wide is 21.5%, according to the City website.

Of the two neighborhoods included within the BCV Area, Harrison is far and away more affected by the failure or success of the Linden Yards project. The only other neighborhood contained within the BCV Master Plan Area, Bryn Mawr, has for the most part only park areas directly near the Linden Yards site, while both residential and commercial areas of Harrison neighborhood directly adjoin Linden Yards. Under the Master Plan, as well as under the Hollman Decree, one of the main purposes of development within the BCV Area is to spark economic development within the long neglected section of the Harrison neighborhood along Glenwood Avenue. Harrison neighborhood residents have also supported the Linden Yards development because of the jobs and affordable housing it would provide.

It is important to note that one solution has been proposed which would in theory allow both the location of the storage yard at Linden Yards East and still allow development on that same parcel as well. The proposal would be to build a "plinth", or platform over the train storage yard, and then develop on top the plinth. It is highly debatable whether this solution would reduce the impact of the train storage yard, however; not only are there a host of unanswered questions about the compatibility of building residential or commercial space over a diesel train yard, but the likely enormous cost of such a plinth could well consume all the excess financial resources generated by the Linden Yards development to further adjoining neighborhood investment. The City and Ryan Company are currently undertaking an engineering feasibility study of the plinth concept, but this study will necessarily leave many key questions unresolved.

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In short, it appears that the impact of placing the storage yard at Linden Yards East is both adverse and disproportionately high for the Harrison neighborhood.

- 3. There appear to be viable mitigation measures or alternatives available which would avoid or reduce the adverse impacts imposed by placing the train storage yard on Linden Yards East.** Under MNDOT's test, if mitigation measures or alternatives exist which would avoid or reduce adverse effects on minorities/low income groups, those measures must be employed unless they are "not practicable". P. 13. MNDOT then refers to the USDOT definition of practicable: "in determining whether a mitigation measure or alternative is practicable, the social, economic (including costs) and environmental effects of avoiding or mitigating the adverse effects will be taken into account. MNDOT also adds an additional test of practicability when the affected population would be protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. (That would be the case here, where Harrison neighborhood, the affected population, is over 70% persons of color.) In that case, alternatives can only be rejected as impracticable where the costs associated with the alternative are more severe than those of the proposed action, or where other alternatives would have costs of extraordinary magnitude.

While the Intermodal Station Study indicated that the Bassett Creek site was the preferred site, it also indicated that either site, Bassett Creek or Cedar Yards, contained sufficient space to be feasible. A key question for determination becomes costs associated with selection of an alternative site. Note, however, that even if there are additional costs associated with the alternative site, those costs must be compared with the full costs of the Bassett Creek/Linden Yards site, including the social and resulting economic costs. Moreover, even if the costs of Cedar Yards are more severe than the Linden Yards site, there is still an obligation to identify all potential alternatives, including other feasible locations farther from the Interchange.

Conclusion

The issues presented here are complex, and further analysis is needed. What is clear at this point, however, is the following: a series of public decisions are seriously compromising the prospects for the realization of the Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan. The most serious of these decisions and the one currently pending, the location of the train storage yard, threatens to dramatically reduce the size and viability of the proposed development, as well as the generation of financial resources intended to benefit the adjoining neighborhood. Even having this decision unresolved, perhaps for several years, places a major cloud over any development potential in the area. The neighborhood interests clearly jeopardized by this decision are overwhelmingly minority and low income.

Based on these circumstances, a full Environmental Justice review should be undertaken now. We understand construction of the bridge over Van White Boulevard may need to

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Comment

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proceed in the near future. We have no objection to that project proceeding as long as it is done in a way that does not preclude other locations for the train storage yard.

Sincerely,

<hr/> <p>Maren McDonell Board President Harrison Neighborhood Association 503 Irving Avenue North, Suite 100 Minneapolis, MN 55405</p>	<hr/> <p>Tim Thompson President Housing Preservation Project 570 Asbury Street, Suite 105 Saint Paul, MN 55104</p>
<hr/> <p>Russ Adams Executive Director Alliance for Metropolitan Stability 2525 Franklin Ave E, Suite 200 Minneapolis, MN 55406</p>	<hr/> <p>Jodi Nelson Executive Director MICAH 2233 University Ave. #434 Saint Paul, MN 55114</p>
<hr/> <p>Doran Shrantz Executive Director ISALAH 2720 East 22nd Street Minneapolis, MN 55406</p>	

Enclosures

Cc : County Commissioner Mark Stenglein
Councilmember Don Samuels
Mike Christenson, Director of CPED

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Comment

Response

A

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs289.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Tuesday, March 19, 2013 8:33 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Tuesday, March 19, 2013 at 08:32:58

[Comments: Crossing gates and flashing signals will be important to retain at the rather busy Henriette crossing at CSAH 12 (mile 85.87), but they are not listed as so.

Name: Lisa Krahn
Phone: 320-679-4700
Email: lisak@7countyseniors.com
Organization: Seven County Senior Federation
Street address: 47 Park St N, Ste 7
City: Mora
Zip: 55051

1

A Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).

Comment

Response

David P Lingo
8225 38th Ave N
New Hope, MN 55427

Ph: 763-544-5213

To: Mn DOT
395 John Ireland Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Attn: Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation Planners

Subject: Northern Lights Express



Ladies and Gentlemen:

After reading materials about the development of the NLX rail proposal, and some of the on-line public comments regarding its cost and apparent limited need, I have a few comments I submit for your consideration:

First, I am a member of the National Association of Railroad Passengers. I ride Amtrak frequently and am committed to a robust investment and development of America's passenger rail network. I am retired.

A

Regarding the NLX, it strikes me that the \$900+ million cost estimation is beyond what is necessary. For this line up to Duluth, I think a more saleable plan may be to fix the tracks and install the current day's version of the old Budd Car. A run twice daily in each direction between Duluth, Minneapolis, and terminating at St. Paul's nicely renovated Union Station would make sense to most people. It wouldn't need to run at 110 mph, but with track improvements and comfortable equipment, the one-way trip could be accomplished in 2-1/2 to 3 hours and I think that would provide a suitable and cost-effective alternative for most people wanting to go between these cities. I think such a plan could be sold to the legislature and the public.

B

Twin Cities to Rochester is a different matter. Mayo Clinic and Rochester have BIG plans, which I hope our legislature will ultimately support. Mayo is a huge economic generator for this state. Unlike Duluth, its feedstock is people, literally from all over the world; both professionals and patients. These thousands of people need transportation delivering them into the Mayo apparatus. It makes much more sense to me to spend big bucks installing a new high-speed passenger transit system

A The project's purpose and need is to provide an alternative mode of travel that has competitive travel time compared to highway travel (see section 1.0 of the EA). Preliminary engineering and Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would further analyze cost, ridership, operations and environmental impacts.

B Comment noted.

Comment


Response

C

between the Twin Cities, (MSP airport?) and Rochester. I can envision all kinds of utilization for this sort of passenger service with heavy use daily in each direction. This sort of new rail system would be worthy of billion-dollar development.

Lastly, I fully support and encourage development of improved Amtrak passenger service between Twin Cities and Chicago, the sooner the better; better track, new equipment, and more frequent service. This is beyond due, and we could use these improvements yesterday. Rather than relying on the Empire Builder to arrive on time in St. Paul over 2000 miles from Seattle, this route should be augmented by an additional train to originate here in Twin Cities east-bound to Chicago. Amtrak also desperately needs new equipment, which I'm sure you already know but I'm just supporting this as a customer.

Thank you for considering my comments.


David Lingo
Email: davelingo@aol.com

C Comment noted.

Comment

Response

Comments: Northern Lights Express
11 April 2013

Elizabeth Herberg
Rush City, Minnesota

A

I oppose the construction of the Northern Lights Express line from Minneapolis to Duluth and would like to have the following taken into consideration:

1. There has already been a failed rail transit route from Minneapolis to Duluth that was closed due to lack of ridership and burgeoning costs. In this new proposed assessment, it is assumed that the failed ridership was due to the lack of speed and frequency of trains. However, it is much more basic than that -- and increasing the speed and the number of routes will not address the root causes of the failure:
 - a. How does someone get around Duluth or Minneapolis without a car? If a family is traveling to Duluth for a weekend, how would one expect them to haul their bags, food, and other easily transported goods if they had only drove their car?
 - b. Lack of mobility at the destination. Again, traveling outside a zone of a few miles of the depots will be impossibly expensive and inconvenient. Auto mobility is a deeply ingrained cultural American desire that, while there may be a nostalgic moment to take a train to the "City," will quickly wane when the reality of how much it costs to get a taxi, rent a car or slug around on nearly non-existent public transport sets in.

B

Ridership levels in the assessment are significantly over estimated and are based on flawed premises and analysis only to inflate ridership.

- 2) The costs will always be more than projected.
 - a. Back on Feb. 22, 2008, MPR noted that the Northern Lights project was estimated at \$400 million. Now, that estimate has doubled to \$800 - \$950 million. There is no reason for a project to more than double in estimate in a mere 5 years. No rail transit line *in the country* comes close to covering its operating costs, much less its total cost. Average light-rail fares cover less than 30 percent of operating costs. Transit fares have not contributed a single penny to rail capital costs for at least 60 years.
 - b. And we know costs will run over because we've already experienced that with our own Minneapolis-St. Paul Hiawatha light-rail line that went so far over budget that the transit agency cut bus service and asked drivers to accept reduced health benefits, which led to a short strike. The result was an 8 percent loss of transit riders.

Costs will be higher than estimated and deliver little value to the communities and tax payers.

C

- 3) Speed estimates will not be obtained and will be problematic for the many communities that the train would travel through.
 - a. It's already been tried. For example, Washington state received \$800 million from the federal government to improve the trip between Seattle and Portland. But that investment has only made the three-hour forty-minute ride 10 minutes shorter. Washington's trains max out at 79 mph and average in the low 50s. In a January report in the same series, CNN found that \$52 million spent on tracks in Vermont only shaved 28 minutes off of schedules — not a great return on investment, considering the amount of public funding devoted to these projects.

A

Project opposition noted.

B

Concerns about project viability, cost, and connecting transportation at station locations are addressed in Appendices C-1 and C-2. The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would include additional analysis of projected NLX ridership, travel times, costs and interconnectivity.

C

See response B above.

Comment

Response

D

b. These trains will be dangerous and disruptive to the many small communities. With the number of routes being projected, many small communities will find their rural culture disrupted while trains pass through, even at the likely 50 miles per hour rate. The only entity that will see any economic benefit will be the Hinckley Grand Casino, where the success for the entire project hinges since projections more than double in terms of revenue with this one stop. Every other community, not so much.

Speed will not be reached (lowering ridership) and communities will be negatively impacted.

D Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).

Further economic and cost analysis would be evaluated during preliminary engineering.

Comment

Response

To: Julie Carr, MnDot Project Manager

From: Michael D. Kubesh, Pine County taxpayer-Resident

A

B

C

D

The NLX Tier 1 EAW makes me feel like there is a severe and definitive lack of salient facts pointing to a certainty of efficient success. There is no responsible reason enough information cannot be included in the Tier 1 EAW to determine if the project is fiscally intelligent. The bits of data omitted from consideration would give an unbiased observer the conclusion the NLX project should never have been initiated. They are: Why did Amtrak discontinue service in 1985? Because of unsustainable ridership levels due to other more competitive modes of transportation, and the beginning of a more independent and mobile society made up of multi-car families. **The study gives vehicle counts on various freeway locations but does not say who, what, why, when or where these vehicles are going or how many people are in them. Besides, the traffic counts very factually and strongly point to a definite need for LRT from St. Paul to Forest Lake, Minneapolis to Forest Lake, and Minneapolis to Cambridge. All of which have been "screened from further consideration".** The costs associated with project have not been disclosed in this study. They damn well should have been along with a reason the contract terms with BNSF Railway have not been disclosed. If these are not currently known then I would say "Houston, we have a problem!" Why did the initial cost of the project balloon from \$125,000,000 to a now conservative estimate of \$1,000,000,000? Fare prices have not been disclosed. They should be. At a NLX community information meeting in Hinckley a NLX consultant stated the fare price is going to be about 50 cents a mile and one or two people might benefit from riding the train instead of driving a POV but three or more would be better off taking a car. In other words schools cannot afford to send students anywhere on the train because buses are far more efficient based on cost per mile and site-specific drop-offs and pickups. Jobs: the EAW states there will be more jobs but fails to identify the actual jobs or their true locations. A less politically correct person advised me the entire project is "all a crock of shit". I therefore suggest the entire project should be discontinued. There is no need for more transit options on the NLX corridor. If there were a need people would have advocated loudly for it and if it was profitable, private enterprise would have rushed to fulfilled that need. There is no clamoring and private enterprise has not rushed to fill this "phantom need". There are more than enough affordable modes of transportation available to those who desire to travel: private vehicle, car pooling, limo, plane, bus, motorcycle, bicycle, hitchhiking, taxi, or shuttle. Therefore it's up to the traveler to decide which mode of transportation is most appropriate based on the free market forces of supply, demand and affordability. If travelers cannot afford any of the currently available modes of transportation individually or in combination no public or private entity is obligated to alter their circumstances using excessive amounts of resources. The free market forces should be allowed to prevail. A train will not enhance people's access to cultural or entertainment experiences because the standard of living people enjoy in America ensures they are not lacking unless they choose to be.

Fed DOT Bureau of Transportation statistics say rail and mass transit are subsidized to the tune of more than \$100 per 1000 passenger miles compared to \$10 for general aviation and \$4 for intercity buses. Randall O'Toole of the Cato Institute says in 2006 Amtrak received 22 cents per passenger mile subsidy. For NLX that would be a 50% subsidy in 2006 dollars.

A

Project opposition noted.

B

The selected alternative (Route 9) was chosen as a result of a three-level analysis process based on how well each of the initial 17 alternative corridors met the project's purpose and need (see Appendices C-1 and C-2 of the EA).

C

Initial cost estimates were based on high level concept engineering. The project development process involves progressively more detailed engineering that informs revised cost estimates.

D

Additional economic analysis would be completed as part of the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessment.

Comment

E

F

Questions:

Why did Amtrak discontinue service from Mpls to Duluth in 1985? What has changed to guarantee ridership numbers?

Who or what entity is going to be the "Agent of Record and Responsibility" for administration, operations and financial management (subsidy requisitions and apportionments-tax burden assignments)? MnDot?

Whose idea was it to begin a quest for high speed rail from Minneapolis to Duluth? The traveler? Businesses? Or an individual with a strong personality?

What or who decided to screen light rail transit options from further consideration (St. Paul to Forest Lake/Mpls to Forest Lake/Mpls to Cambridge) and what were the criteria. Was screening of LRT from further consideration a data or politically driven decision? Was an EAW done?

Why hasn't private enterprise put a high speed train on tracks here or elsewhere?

How did the initial cost estimate for the NLX project begin at \$125 million and balloon to \$1 billion and counting?

Once upon a time HSR was said to be self supporting. What happened?

Why hasn't the general public clamored for high speed rail in the past?

In detail, what was the methodology used to determine vehicle counts? Were the counts done 24-7 over varied days and months or was it just a snapshot in time? Were semis, buses, construction vehicles, delivery vehicles included? How many people per private passenger vehicle and what was their destination and purpose? The EAW cited traffic count study specifically points to a need for LRT north of the Twin Cities to Forest Lake and Cambridge.

Why were Capital costs not included in this EAW? Are they known? I sure hope so! How else would the efficiency quotient be established or the ever increasing estimate of total costs to build?

Was any consideration given to world demographics? Globalization's effects on the economy, Aging population-less travel -specialized transport, declining standard of living, lower birth rate-fewer passengers, more efficient vehicles, true-not hoped for attendance at venues of culture, and entertainment.

What is the actual job builds by name, pay and education requirement for each affected community.

What formula is being used to determine economic stimulus? Was \$7 per dollar spent used as a rollover formula? This is not an accurate formula because products are made in China so the dollar exits the community where it was spent quite fast. Estimate it at \$3.25 for each dollar spent in the originating community.

Response

E It is anticipated that the State of Minnesota, Department of Transportation would be responsible for the administration and operation of the high speed intercity passenger rail service.

F The project's purpose and need is to provide an alternative mode of travel that has competitive travel time compared to highway travel (see section 1.0 of the EA). Preliminary engineering and Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would further analyze cost, ridership, operations and environmental impacts.

Comment

F

Why are venues in cities the size they are? Because only so many people will make the effort to visit them. People choose to live where they do for a variety of reasons and nobody is culturally deprived unless they so choose and no train can fix that no matter how fast it goes.

Projected fuel use is down 16 billion gals from 2007 to 2012, according to a DOE- USDA study.

Estimated fare price is \$.50 per mile, the ACELA line in the north east corridor is that price. Compare to a 20 mpg car with \$.50 mile govt. estimated cost. How much money does a no car person have to spend after they arrive?

Why no speed listing for Hinckley to Duluth, why no eight runs per day? How many people are expected to ride train from the population watershed north of Hinckley since no stations if Hinckley is destination? Rock creek south will drive to either Hinckley or twin cities.

What % of train riders would be prior users of alternate modes of transportation costing jobs for bus drivers, taxis, mechanics, dispatchers, shuttle drivers, charter bus manufacturers?

What happens when train fails?

What is amount of acres available north of Minneapolis -St. Paul for development?

What is the anticipated rate of build out per year?

What is the primary focus of train riders traveling in each direction?

Were any communities or peoples identified as culturally or entertainment deprived due to lack of competitive transportation modes? If so, then what public or personal initiatives were engaged to mitigate the situation? Are we trying to force-feed people culture and sports? People live where they do for more than just access to culture. What % of people living in the metro area utilize nearby cultural and entertainment amenities.

What demographic voiced approval of the train in 6th ridership survey? Did they know the cost of a ticket, how much the project costs, who would be paying for it and were they willing to submit to an unknown increase in taxes if the train needed additional revenue?

How efficient are specialized medical transports? Motor vehicle transport to train, motor vehicle transport to appointment, motor vehicle transport back to train, motor vehicle transport home.....

What % of riders would not be a captive audience?

There is a 51% +liberal voting demographic in the train's service area. How will this affect future subsidies to maintain operations if a right leaning, budget cutting administration achieves power in the federal or state government? Is NLX it too big to fail in the event adverse political climates were to

Response

F See response F above.

Comment

Response

F

occur, such as sequestering? Meaning, would a local entity be made responsible for the financial burdens surrounding the project? As in who picks up the tab for the difference?

What are the demographics surrounding the six daily flights out of the Duluth airport, the Jefferson bus line riders, and shuttles now traveling I35?

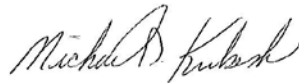
What behaviours are expected/needed to occur for the Twin Cities to realize economic stimulus from train riders? What is preventing that from occurring now?

What would be the net loss of jobs in a community such as the Twin Cities with more money going to tourism up north instead of more usual expenses?

The bottom line is this: Facts and figures and political exhibitionism dance around this project like a deer crossing the road in front of a car at midnight. The reason is simply because there is no other train up and running with a demographic like NLX, therefore no believable truths are known. Look at the home build out rate surrounding the cities. There is so much undeveloped land close in it will be forever before Pine County has enough people to ride the train in and be close to efficient. When there is a clear and present need the involved parties will have to pay for it. We cannot afford to pay for an uncertain futures phantom need. We the people are not prepared to be a guinea pig for people with strong ideas about what we need and no idea about what we want. A rider survey may have been done, sure. But, were there specific dollar sign related questions in the survey? Such as if you knew the cost of the train is one billion dollars would you want one/ride one? If the ticket cost fifty cents per mile would you ride? If the train is running on a track shared with freight trains would you ride? Let somebody somewhere else pay to be a guinea pig.

Sincerely

Michael D. Kubesh



25624 Mallard Rd.

4-15-2013

Hinckley, Mn 55037

320 279 0811

F See response F above.

Comment

Response

To; Julie Carr; Project manager

From; Glenn Farrell
200 1st. Ave.NW.
Isanti, Mn. 55040

As a resident of the City of Isanti for 15 years and Isanti county for 28 years. After 26 plus years working for MnDOT Metro district and commuting to the twin cities for work on both state and county roads all those years. I understand from both sides very well the need for mass transit. My concern is living in the city of Isanti. Between county road 5 and Main street. And west of the rail road tracks property about 100 feet. How much more train traffic going through town twice a day is going to be a problem to us living here. Since I moved into town in 1997 there were only a few trains going through town. I understood there would be some train noise and was able to live with that. Then in 2005 the city of Isanti decided they had to build their new city hall on the lot right south of my property in an east west direction. A year or 2 later they let federated coops build east of the tracks in a north – south direction. This created a funnel effect for the noise on my place. This intensified the noise level when each train passed, and to go to the city about it. Answer I got was if I didn't like it move. I do not know how the other 13 households along this street have afforded it. Some lost their homes. Some sold and moved. The rest of us cannot afford to just up and move because of mean actions by the government without any thought of the people it is going to affect along the way. When these trains go through town we have to hear the bells from intersections, Co.rd.5 and Main Street then the train horn blasting three times, and some trains stay on their horns blasting all the way between the 2 intersections, just to make sure they wake people from a sound sleep. Then there is the fact that the community center is west of the rail road tracks. They have a lot of senior activities there but all the senior housing is on the east side of the tracks. Any seniors walking to activities at the center the seniors have to cross the tracks twice to get to and from each time they go. We also have school kids in elementary school that are in walking distance that cut across the track to get to and from school during the same times of the day as your commuter train would be going through our town. So the only thing I can see the Commuter rail is going to do for Isanti is create a lot of danger for our walking population and noise for the people that live along the tracks. As our town grows the problems are only going to get worst and out way the benefits of the commuter rail.

Thank You

Glenn Farrell
763-444-0275

A Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).

The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would analyze potential noise impacts in further detail, as needed.

A

Comment

Response

**Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project**

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: Curtis Andersen
ADDRESS: POB 509, Cambridge MN 55008
EMAIL ADDRESS: andenz04@icomm.net
COMMENTS: _____

A

[Several years ago I thought this would be
running by 2013, at half the present estimated costs.

B

[I am looking forward to riding the train to Duluth

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

- A** More detailed cost analysis would be done in preliminary engineering.
- B** Project support noted.

Comment

Response

**Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project**

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: Bonnie Boese

ADDRESS: 538 S Elm Cambridge, MN

EMAIL ADDRESS: bonnie.boese@anokaramsey.edu

COMMENTS: 1. Glad to see that a station is being

targeted for the Cambridge City Ctr. Having
it in the city limits would make getting
there much easier.

2. If the schedule was set up well,
8 trains a day could allow students to
go from Cambridge Campus to Croon Rapids
one way and from Cambridge to Lake Superior
College/UMD/St. Scholastica
the other.

3. Glad Cambridge is still on the list!

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

A Support for Cambridge City Center station noted.

A

Comment

Response

**Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project**

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: PETER & DIANE DRAXTEN

ADDRESS: 425 261ST AVE N.E. ISANTI, MN 55040

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

COMMENTS: YOU HAVE OUR 'GO AHEAD' --- WHAT'S THE
HOLD UP.

P.S. WE PRACTICALLY LIVE ON THE
TRACKS, PLEASE SOUND YOUR HORNS.

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

A Project support noted.

B Comment noted.

A

B

Comment

Response

**Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project**

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: JEREMY ELLINGSO
ADDRESS: 2687 319TH LN NE CAMBRIDGE MN 55008
EMAIL ADDRESS: jeremy@jeremyellingson.net

COMMENTS: I THINK BRINGING NLX THROUGH THE AREA WOULD BE OF GREAT BENEFIT TO THE COMMUNITY & SURROUNDING AREA. THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS SEEM MINIMAL. IT WILL REDUCE CO EMISSIONS IN THE LONG RUN, CUT DOWN COMMUTE TIME FOR MANY, SAVE MONEY FOR MANY. WE AS A METROPOLITAN AREA ARE WAY BEHIND OTHER LARGE CITIES WHO HAVE ALREADY PUT IT INTO PLACE. AS A PERSON WHO DRIVES A LOT FOR MY JOB, I WELCOME THOUGHT OF HOPPING ON THE TRAIN TO GO TO MPLS OR DULUTH VS. DRIVING. I WOULD ~~BE~~ PROBABLY GO MORE OFTEN, THUS INCREASING REVENUE OVERALL FOR THE STATE.

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

- A** Project support noted.
- B** Project support noted.

A

B

Comment

Response

**Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project**

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: Hollinshead, Mathews
ADDRESS: 2114 Pinchurst Ave. St. Paul 55116
EMAIL ADDRESS: mathews.hollinshead@mac.com
COMMENTS: We would have bought or visited in Duluth/North Shore years ago but for the long drives.

For those accessing destinations beyond Duluth there should be a car sharing concession or rental car op whenever trams arrive/depart Duluth - perhaps at the Twin Cities + stops in between as well.

Please accelerate start date I'm 64 1/2, I don't want to drive where there is another option.

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

A

B

- A The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments include additional analysis of projected ridership, costs, and intermodal connectivity for passengers continuing beyond the immediate vicinity of station locations.
- B Project support noted.

Comment

Response

**Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project**

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

651-269-8860

NAME: John Hottinger

ADDRESS: 214 Oak Grove Place St Paul, MN 55105

EMAIL ADDRESS: john@minnesotaworldsfair.com

COMMENTS: A bid will be made on behalf of Minnesota to bring a world's fair to MN in 2022-23. Expected to bring 12-15 million people to MN over 4 months - will lead to tremendous expansion of permanent tourism. Duluth is focal point for Canadian visitors; N. MN focal point of expanded tourism; Duluth will ~~have~~ have virtual experience for the fair.

This would add tremendous value and ridership to 2022 and onward into the future

A

A Project support noted.

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

**Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project**

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: Doug & Shilley Janke
ADDRESS: 746 Birch St. S. Cambridge
EMAIL ADDRESS: dazjanke@hotmail.com

COMMENTS: The light rail and future fast trains are a throw back to the days of street cars and commuter trains, only better. We're retired now but how nice it would have been to ride the train to the cities instead of all that driving. I gotta think alot of people would take advantage of just that and I think more people would make out faster if commuting was easier. For the rest of us, I along with many others, would love riding the train to Duluth or hop off in Hinckley for the casinos. Right now our grandson and some of his friends attend UMD and their families live in Blaine. There must be alot of those kids and how nice it would have been to have the train available to them.
It's long overdue.

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

A Project support noted.

A

Comment

Response

**Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project**

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: Wendy Johnson
ADDRESS: 615 11th St. S.W. #101 Pine City MN 55063
EMAIL ADDRESS: Wendylovespc@gmail.com
COMMENTS: 2 Sides to every story. 1st thoughts, to bad
We waited so long that some of the tracks
were tore out, or in great need of repair.

For the most part I am all for this.
Youth of today have a different outlook
on life. where I would have & did buy a car
as fast as I could & do not take public transp.,
they do. IF it will get people from
point A to point B Safer & reduce
traffic on our roadways I am all for it.
Also I see it as a revival of some of
these little towns along the way, (economic
boom) for them. Thank you!

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

A Project support noted.

A

Comment

Response

**Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project**

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: Howard Lewis
ADDRESS: 343 S. Cypress St Cambridge, MN
EMAIL ADDRESS: howardlewis@me.com
COMMENTS: Have you seen the article about
the NLX in the Cambridge-Chicago Star?

[It had a few negative comments
about NLX that should be addressed.

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

A The Tier 1 Service Level NEPA document evaluates the impacts of the project as a whole, with a focus on corridor-wide and more qualitative impacts. The preliminary engineering and Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would further analyze ridership and project costs discussed in the newspaper article.

A

Comment

Response

4-15-13

(Pg 1)

Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: Helen Nestrud (License DayCare in home)
ADDRESS: 305 N main @ Brabam, MN 55006
EMAIL ADDRESS: Nestrudh@yahoo.com

COMMENTS: My dayCare business is located at 305 N. Main in Brabam. I have several families under my care. I feel the High Speed Passenger Rail will be a hazard to my DayCare.
My concern is the added noise level that will occur. I fear the horns/train may damage the childrens hearing. The noise level will make it impossible for children to take naps and disrupt their entire day.
If a train should ever derail near my home, it would be very disastrous. I have always strived to have a very safe environment for all my dayCare children.
Not only having this train being nearer

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

A
B
C

A Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).

B A refined noise study would be done, if needed, based on preliminary engineering as part of the Tier 2 Project Level NEPA.

C Safety concerns such as derailment would also be addressed, as needed, during the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments.

Comment

Response

4-15-13

Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: Helen Nestrud (pg 2)

ADDRESS: 305 N Main Brainerd, MN 55006

EMAIL ADDRESS: Nestrudh@yahoo.com

COMMENTS: Can't see to my home/daycare, the flying rocks are another concern. I feel they will be a safety hazard to my children.

The Northern Light Express High Speed Passenger Train being close to my home will have a very negative effect on my business.

Sincerely,
Helen Nestrud

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

D See response A about fencing.

E The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would include additional analysis of impacts to adjacent residences and businesses if needed, and impact minimization and mitigation, if warranted.

D

E

Comment

Response

4-15-13

**Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project** (Pg 1)

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: Ron + Helen Nestrud

ADDRESS: 305 N. Main Braham, MN 55006

EMAIL ADDRESS: Nestrudh@yahoo.com

COMMENTS: Our home is located on the west side of the existing rail line. We have several concerns about the proposed High Speed Rail.

① The added noise the train will bring, adding 16 more trains + more hops. We already experience vibrations from freight trains in our home. The walls + windows vibrate when a train goes by with high speed. We have already fixed several cracked walls + within a year they need repair again. The new train will only add to the existing problem.

② We are concerned a train may derail at 110 miles per hour. We already had several derailments in our area.

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013 (Next page)

A

B

C

- A Refined noise studies would be done, if needed, based on preliminary engineering as part of the Tier 2 Project Level NEPA.
- B Vibration levels typically decreases very rapidly as the distance from the vibration source increases. The vibration levels from high-speed trains are generally much lower in level than freight trains (see section 4.7.4 of the EA). Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would analyze potential vibration impacts in further detail, if needed.
- C Safety concerns such as derailment and flying debris would be addressed, as needed, during the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments.

Comment

Response

4-15-13

**Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project**

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

(Pg 2)

Comment Sheet

NAME: Ron + Helen Nestrud
ADDRESS: 305 N main Braham, MN 55006
EMAIL ADDRESS: Nestrudh2@yahoo.com

D

COMMENTS: ③ The trains also cause rocks to fly in our yard. We feel the new train will only compound this problem. I would not feel safe in my back yard or near the back windows when a train goes by.

E

④ We feel the Northern Lights Express High Speed Passenger Rail will be too close to our home + will greatly decrease the value of our property.

Sincerely,
Ron + Helen Nestrud

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

D

See response C above.

E

In order to address impacts at Braham, the track alignment has been modified as discussed during the April 3, 2012 City Council Meeting and April 23, 2012 Open House in Braham. By narrowing the track centers, the refined footprint avoids all direct property impacts and keeps the footprint within the existing railroad right of way (see Appendix E of the EA).

**Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project**

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: Charlie Rike
ADDRESS: 565- 4th Street S.E. Pine City, MN 55063
EMAIL ADDRESS: RIKE@Q.COM

COMMENTS: I have always been in favor of High Speed Rail and even though I am 50 old I will probably never the chance to ride on this Great NLX between Minneapolis & Duluth. I say the sooner the better, we all know the longer we wait the more expensive this will be. Having been lucky enough to visit Europe a few times, I seen years ago how far ahead of us their transportation system is & how so very efficient it is. Even President Eisenhower learned that during WWII and that is why he started our Inter state Hiway system. It is about time we also have Nation wide High Speed Rail for the future of our kids, Grand kids & generations to come -
Thank you for this opportunity !!

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

A Project support noted.

A

**Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project**

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: J. W. Tengquist
ADDRESS: H. Mahley Minn
EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

COMMENTS: What are plans for this
when govt and all the people
are broke trying to find extra
etc? I remember the great
depression of 20's to 41 when
war started I was fortunate
to have farm and some animals
to tide us over we ate well, took
some produce to mpls. It paid for
a few cents a trip but we survived
Too many of people now are dependent
on govt. we will not be as fortunate
this time hard to believe we are
throwing everything away back to this

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

A Project opposition noted.

A

Comment

Response

Northern Lights Express
High Speed Passenger Rail Project

— ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OPEN HOUSE / PUBLIC HEARING —

April 4, 2013
6:00-8:00 p.m.
Armed Forces Community Center
Cambridge, MN

Comment Sheet

NAME: Carmen Vanderpost-Johnson
ADDRESS: 1837 Liberty Street Morg Mn 55051
EMAIL ADDRESS: civercottage68@gmail.com

COMMENTS: _____

My daughter goes to Helen Nestor's daycare
in Brahman. It is right next to Kline's gas
station in the blue house right next to the
railroad tracks.

A

[My concern is of safety - #1 Flying rocks
#2. derailment
Please put up a tall fence to protect
the children.

B

[I support the train. My husband works as
an engineer for BNSF. I just want a safety,
precaution in place for the kids. Thank you.

NOTE: Comments should be received by April 17, 2013

Carmen

P.S. If it wont be safe for Helen's daycare, buy her
house. they can move to a safer one than.

A Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).

B Project support noted.

Comment

Response

Transcription of a Voice Mail Message

Voice mail to: Julie Carr

Voice mail from: Anonymous

Date Received: April 11, 2013

Time Received: 11:01 a.m.

Message:

“Yeah, I was just reading the article in the paper about the high speed rail and I was just wondering why it’s going through Cambridge when I have heard all the studies say that it should be going up through Rush City/North Branch area instead; it’d be cheaper. And I’m in Cambridge all the time and I think it’d be ridiculous. Trains back up traffic so far on highway 95 that you’re sitting there for a half hour trying to get through that town. And I think light rail would be a huge, huge mistake. And I’d like to know who is planning this out. If it’s because the politician is from that area that it’s going through his district and not coming through the area it should be going through. That’s the problem with politics these days, nobody listens. Thank you.”

A

B

A Alternatives analysis was conducted prior to selecting the Minneapolis to Duluth route (Route 9). Greater detail about the alternatives selection process is found in Appendices, C-1 and C-2 in the Tier 1 EA. Appendix B of the Tier 1 EA includes FRA correspondences, dated July 29, 2011 concurring with the identification of Route 9 as the Preferred Alternative.

B Project opposition noted.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs289.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, March 18, 2013 10:18 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Monday, March 18, 2013 at 10:17:45

A
B

Comments: We are not in support of this proposal. We are concerned about the increased frequency of trains along this corridor. The environmental assessment didn't adequately address the impact of increased train frequency and speeds (90MPH through Andover!) on the safety of auto, bicycle, and pedestrian (especially children) traffic. The environmental impact statement suggests that, for the most part, noise and vibration levels will not be higher than existing freight traffic. However, increased frequency of the same noise and vibration levels will still have an adverse impact to those living near the tracks, both from a personal standpoint (sleeping, outdoor enjoyment, etc.) and a property value standpoint.

City: Andover

Zip: 55304

A Project opposition noted.

B Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).

Vibration levels typically decrease very rapidly as the distance from the vibration source increases. The vibration levels from high speed trains are generally much lower in level than freight trains (see section 4.7.4 of the EA).

Section 4.7.4 of the EA described the noise analysis methodology which follows FRA protocols.

Refined noise and vibration studies would be done, if needed, based on preliminary engineering as part of the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs289.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, March 18, 2013 10:30 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Monday, March 18, 2013 at 10:30:22

A
B

- Comments: 1. The survey of potential rider usage was done in 2007. Should there be another one done now to confirm or deny rider interest before moving ahead with approvals?
- 2. Am concerned about the 97 acres of wetland along with 2 native prairies impacted. Is it feasible to shadow the I35 corridor to minimize/eliminate impact?
- 3. I'm concerned about the number/size of contaminated areas that will be dug up. Again- could something closer to the I35 corridor minimize/eliminate further contamination issues?

Name: Sue Ramthun

Email: sramthun@chartermi.net

Organization: Mn citizen

Street address: 117 18th St SE

City: Rochester Mn

Zip: 55904

- A** Ridership analysis and forecasting would be done as part of the preliminary engineering and Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments.
- B** The proposed route is being built on existing freight rail track. Tier 2 project level Environmental Assessments and preliminary engineering would analyze and refine the project footprint in order to minimize and/or avoid impacts to wetlands, prairies and contaminated sites.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs289.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, March 18, 2013 11:46 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Monday, March 18, 2013 at 11:45:57

A
B

[Comments: I like the Northern Lights plan. I used to ride Amtrak to Duluth. I miss it.I would definitely ride it! I also support the expansion of the Northstar Line to St. Cloud. Like to also see a line also from Minneapolis to Rochester which could help people get to the Mayo Clinic. I feel all 3 would have passenger volumes which would support expansions.

Name: Dominic Tacheny

Phone: (651) 227-5808

Email: dta.tacheny@comcast.net

Organization: none

Street address: 352 Page Street East

City: St. Paul

Zip: 55107

A Project support noted.

B Comments noted.

Comment

Response

A

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, March 18, 2013 3:02 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Monday, March 18, 2013 at 15:02:28

[Comments: I support this project. I believe I would use the Northern Lights Express from Cambridge or Hinckley to go both north or south. I would like to see a Grasston or Braham stop added as well.

Name: Victoria Dahlin
Phone: 7634392865
Email: victoriadahlin@yahoo.com
Street address: 1476 Orchard Street
City: Braham
Zip: 55006

1

A Project support noted. When projects are developed, stops are determined by ridership. For an effective high speed rail corridor, competitive time must be attained or the project would not achieve the necessary public benefit to be deemed eligible for future public funding.

Comment

Response

A

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs289.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, March 18, 2013 4:45 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Monday, March 18, 2013 at 16:44:41

Comments: My family loves the idea of a train from Minneapolis to Duluth. We are Minnesotans currently spending a year in Switzerland where train and public transit is the norm. It is wonderful and so convenient and reliable -- great for young and old alike!

Name: Kimberly McGuire
Street address: 236 Washburn ave n
City: Minneapolis

1

A Project support noted.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs289.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, March 18, 2013 7:01 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[] on Monday, March 18, 2013 at 19:01:29

[Comments: I do NOT want to see this rail line built. The cost is too high, it will need to be subsidized in order to operate it, gangs and other criminals will use it to spread their illegal activities at taxpayers' cost and misery, and it is doubtful that it will move any significant goods or services. Get our roads, highways, and bridges rebuilt or upgraded FIRST.

A
B

A Project opposition noted.

B Infrastructure, operating and maintenance costs would be further analyzed in preliminary engineering.

Crime aboard high speed passenger trains has not been a significant issue nationwide.

Comment

Response

A

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs289.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, March 18, 2013 7:21 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Monday, March 18, 2013 at 19:21:16

[Comments: This project would be redi clouds waste of taxpayer money. There is not enough need fort the cost and environmental impact.

Name: Joe Konradt
Phone: 218-390-9952
Email: Joe.Konradt@yahoo.com
Street address: 4232 London Rd
City: Duluth
Zip: 55804

1

A Project opposition noted.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@imuxs287.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, March 18, 2013 7:38 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[] on Monday, March 18, 2013 at 19:37:54

[Comments: Trains stopped running between Minneapolis and Duluth because no one was riding. What makes anyone think they will now. Our nation is broke and ideas like this are one of the reasons.

A Project opposition noted.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, March 18, 2013 8:48 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Monday, March 18, 2013 at 20:48:28

A

[Comments: I am in full support of this rail project. Think of the environmental benefits gained by reducing car traffic! Let's go!

Name: Rachel Wagner

Phone: 218-343-5583

Email: rachelsusan.311@gmail.com

Street address: 2302 Minnesota Ave

City: Duluth

Zip: 55802

1

A Project support noted.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Tuesday, March 19, 2013 8:31 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Tuesday, March 19, 2013 at 08:31:27

A

[Comments: At what point in time will the NLX become self sustaining? If it's within my, (or your), lifetime, build it.

Name: Roger W Johnson

Email: roger.johnson@xcelenergy.com

City: Hopkins

Zip: 55343

1

A Further analysis of ridership and project cost would occur in preliminary engineering.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs289.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Tuesday, March 19, 2013 5:05 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Tuesday, March 19, 2013 at 17:05:08

A

Comments: So what about the folks who need to get to St. Paul? How come everything on these projects leads into Minneapolis? I35E is just as much of a headache as is 35W (and Hwy 65) so what gives? I am guessing that my taxes are going to be paying for this regardless! By the time DOT gets anything going for the east metro commuters, I will be long retired and probably even dead.

B

I can't even get a bus from Hugo to St. Paul! Everything that I am aware of goes into Minneapolis!!! When the CR14 bridge was rebuilt over 35E (at mile marker 123) there is an area on the schematic PDF that indicates a Park & Ride development on the northwest corner (less than a mile from my home) but NO ONE has made any moves to get that rolling. I am happy for the animals that receive the hay and corn grown there (they are getting that, right?) but there are other fields that can and do meet that need. When do the people on the 651 side of the Metro area get any attention? Do the powers-that-be think just because we all fit in one area code, we don't need mass transit to assist in getting to work and cutting fuel use along with commute times and pollution?

Name: Bonnie

Email: bonnielass_2001@yahoo.com

City: Centerville

Zip: 55038

A

The selected alternative (Route 9) was chosen as a result of a three-level analysis process based on how well each of the initial 17 alternative corridors met the project's purpose and need (see Appendices C-1 and C-2 of the EA).

B

Comments noted.

Comment

Response

A

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@irmuxs287.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Tuesday, March 19, 2013 6:36 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Tuesday, March 19, 2013 at 18:35:39

Comments: It would ease highway congestion and save gas driving up 35W. It would be a whole lot safer going up to Duluth on a Friday night after work. My sons and their families go to Duluth several times a year. Side point being - my Grand-kids would love to go to Duluth by train. We have taken the train to Seattle and Milwaukee, and I use to work on the Empire Builder.

Name: Steve Peterson
Phone: 612-791-4366
Email: stevepeterson06@comcast.net

1

A Project support noted.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Tuesday, March 19, 2013 10:43 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Tuesday, March 19, 2013 at 22:43:21

A
B

- [Comments: I support proposed NLX commuter rail project as proposed.
- [Support rail station on Foley Blvd, Coon Rapids.

Name: William Fischer

Organization: Private Citizen

City: Minneapolis & Coon Rapids

Zip: 55414, 55448

A Project support noted.

B Support for Foley Station in Coon Rapids noted.

Comment

Response

A

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Wednesday, March 20, 2013 8:36 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Wednesday, March 20, 2013 at 08:36:06

Comments: The disseminated EA serves to establish the requisite assessment and analytical projective appraisals, effectively laying the groundwork for proceeding with future development phases of NLX. We strongly advise termination of additional project phases on environmental grounds until track electrification can be readily implemented commensurate and concomitant with regenerative locomotive and electrical grid capacities stemming from renewable sources. We strongly compel the MPCA to prohibit further public investment in climate altering transport technologies, including hydrocarbon-sourced passenger rail development. We strongly advise any future development phase of NLX to proceed in an environmentally defensible manner, utilizing primarily renewable and abundant wind energy.

Name: Kristofer Gunnar Paso
Email: kgpaso@gmail.com

1

A Project opposition noted. Electric rail would require significant cost in infrastructure that diesel would not.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Wednesday, March 20, 2013 10:58 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[] on Wednesday, March 20, 2013 at 22:58:26

A

[Comments: please consider electric rail rather than standard diesel/oil. long term this just makes sense and it'll contribute less to global warming thanks!

Name: Nicholas

Phone: Hiivala

Organization: University of Maryland

A Suggestion to use electric rail instead of diesel is noted. Electric rail would require significant cost in infrastructure that diesel would not.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@irmuxs287.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Saturday, March 23, 2013 1:35 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Saturday, March 23, 2013 at 13:34:55

A

Comments: I live near a crossing that is just the arms and I don't think that 90mph is a safe speed to be going through residential neighborhoods. I think that this project should be abandoned. I am very against increased train traffic in my back yard that will cause even more vibration in my house. Are you going to pay for increased sound proofing or repairs to my house due to increased vibration? Please Please abandon this proposal. This rail line should not be used for passenger trains, it runs through too much residential area.

Name: Jennifer MacPherson

Phone: 7632086519

Email: jenmac777@hotmail.com

Street address: 14399 Vale St NW

City: Andover

Zip: 55304

1

A

Project opposition noted. Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).

Vibration levels typically decrease very rapidly as the distance from the vibration source increases. The vibration levels from high-speed trains are generally much lower in level than freight trains (see section 4.7.4 of the EA). Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would analyze potential vibration impacts in further detail, if needed.

Comment

A

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs289.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Sunday, March 24, 2013 7:58 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Sunday, March 24, 2013 at 07:57:31

Comments: As a 16 year resident living parallel to BNSF tracks I am absolutely opposed to having additional increased noise and vibrations; along with the increased speed being a massive safety concern. We moved here years ago for the beauty of Andover; the nature and the peacefulness. Adding more trains and at a high speed just takes away from many positive qualities of living here.
Please consider how much of a change this will be for those living so close to BNSF tracks and the people of Andover.

Thank You,
The Fisher residents

Name: John and Annette Fisher
Phone: 763-670-0665
Email: jandafisher@usfamily.net
Street address: 14423 Vale St. NW
City: Andover
Zip: 55304

1

Response

A Project opposition noted.

Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).

Vibration levels typically decrease very rapidly as the distance from the vibration source increases. The vibration levels from high speed trains are generally much lower in level than freight trains, due to lighter equipment.

The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessment would analyze potential noise and vibration impacts, in further detail, if needed.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs289.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, March 25, 2013 8:26 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Monday, March 25, 2013 at 08:25:39

Comments: As a Andover resident in the path of this project. I am requesting that this project be abandoned. It WILL further decrease my home value and will force me to sell and move to another county. Thank you, Brad Leifermann

Name: Brad Leifermann

Phone: 612 741-7318

Email: bradleiferfish@yahoo.com

Street address: 926 143rd Ave. N.W.

City: Andover

Zip: 55304

1

A Project opposition noted.

The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would include additional analysis of potential impacts to adjacent residences and businesses, if needed.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Tuesday, March 26, 2013 9:37 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[] on Tuesday, March 26, 2013 at 09:36:43

A

[Comments: Good overall. Unless I missed it while scanning the document, there was no mention of the geology of the red clay area just south of Duluth/Superior. This is a zone that is highly erodible where landslides HAVE occurred impacting both highways (like MN 23) and the railroads. This MUST be addressed!

A Soil suitability in areas of new track would be investigated during preliminary engineering.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@imuxs287.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2013 10:06 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Thursday, March 28, 2013 at 10:06:15

[Comments: I am concerned about the high rate of speed proposed, i.e. 90 to 110 mph. I propose that the speed be reduced to 50 mph or less through the twin cities metro area. I am not providing my name because, after initially filling out the "helpful but not required" fields, I read the disclaimer. I do not want my information to go to the news media, etc.

1

A Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).

Comment

A

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: JOE JORGENSEN <josephcjorgensen@msn.com>
Sent: Saturday, March 30, 2013 4:03 PM
To: Carr, Julie (DOT)
Subject: Light Rail

I am beginning to wonder how sane the people behind this adventure are. They cannot get enough riders to cover the cost of the mini train in central Minnesota to cover the daily operational costs, much less complete the proposed full run to St. Cloud.

Now you want to run a speed train from Minneapolis to Duluth, MN. stopping in the already train plagued city of Cambridge, MN but why not state, city and county fathers you've done poorer investigation of needs and how to pay for them. (Viking's new stadium ring a bell)

And once you jam this thing down the public's throat and the ridership does not materialize who pays for the operations and up keep? I smell another of the pipe dream tax increase seems that our state house and senate are famous for. Raise cigarettes and cigars another \$ 5.00 a pack in tax, then when 100,000 smokers quit you will pat yourselves on the back for the decrease in cigarette smokers in the state, and then go into panic and blame mode because we have such a large short fall in funds to pay for some pipe dream that when finally sorted out was not needed in the first place.

Just the thoughts of a concerned citizen.

Joe Jorgensen

Sent from Windows Mail

1

Response

A Opposition noted.

Initial cost estimates were based on high level concept engineering. The project development process involves progressively more detailed engineering that informs revised cost estimates. The source of revenue for operating and maintenance cost would be addressed as part of the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessment and preliminary engineering

Comment

Response

A

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Tuesday, April 02, 2013 5:31 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Tuesday, April 02, 2013 at 17:31:21

Comments: I have been PRAYING for mass transportation from Duluth to the cities. It will make commuting easier with less fossil fuel used (each person driving to the cities vs taking a rail line) I know if it was made available I will be able to WORK in the Twin Cities and commute back to Duluth. Good paying jobs are hard to find in Duluth. The positive economic impact will be huge.

1

A Project support noted.

Comment

Response

A

B

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: craig.mueller@usbank.com
Sent: Friday, April 05, 2013 9:42 AM
To: Carr, Julie (DOT)
Subject: NLX route

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Hi -
Regarding the proposed 'NLX' project, my first impressions - "Wow, this should be great."
After seeing the route plan, I resent any tax money going to this...

The route starting in Coon Rapid????
With 35E/35W as a main corridor to the north, why Coon Rapids?? any location within a few minutes of 35E/35W makes sense, but not Coon Rapids.

I'm not a highway engineer, but at least have common sense..

Craig Mueller

U.S. BANCORP made the following annotations

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1

A

Project opposition noted.

B

The south terminus is in Minneapolis (see section 1.0 of the EA). There is a station proposed in Coon Rapids.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@imuxs287.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Friday, April 05, 2013 2:16 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Friday, April 05, 2013 at 14:16:26

[Comments: Approximately 50 percent of Pine County has no access to internet. The comment period should be extended. Also, the comment sheets should have been mailed to each resident. There should also have been a public notice posted in every county since it involves the use of taxpayer dollars.

1

A

A The distribution of the EA followed state rules. A press release was sent to newspapers in each county along the corridor on March 15, 2013. The Tier 1 Service Level Environmental Assessment was also distributed to various libraries and county offices in accordance with state laws and typical practice for a project of this magnitude.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Friday, April 05, 2013 2:48 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[] on Friday, April 05, 2013 at 14:48:16

A

[Comments: We don't need this or want this..it will only cost the tax payers millions and millions..we don't need higher taxes!!! I hope and pray it won't go thru...

Name: Al & Cheri Holm

Street address: 33762 Duxbury Rd.

City: Sandstone

Zip: 55072

A Project opposition noted.

Comment

A

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs289.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Saturday, April 06, 2013 8:27 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Saturday, April 06, 2013 at 08:26:46

Comments: We live close to the RR tracks in Andover and my wife and I are concerned about safety of children and pedestrians, as wells as the increased frequency of noise and vibration from the proposed eight additional Northern Lights Express trains per day. We ask that the train speeds be reduced to 50MPH through Andover. The proposed 90MPH is just too fast for trains traveling through residential areas in the Twin Cities. 90MPH speeds WILL result in loss of life in Andover and other residential areas.

Name: Michael & Teresa Falls
Phone: 763-226-9553
Email: mfalls1025@gmail.com
Street address: 907 142nd Ave NW
City: Andover
Zip: 55304

1

Response

A

Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).

Vibration levels typically decrease very rapidly as the distance from the vibration source increases. The vibration levels from high speed trains are generally much lower in level than freight trains, due to lighter equipment. ▽

The Tier 2 project level Environmental Assessment would analyze potential noise and vibration impacts in further detail, if needed.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Saturday, April 06, 2013 8:51 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Saturday, April 06, 2013 at 08:51:15

Comments: I have lived in Pine County in the Hinckley/Sandstone area for the past 35 years. I live here for the rural, small town setting and lack of big city activity. I am against the NLX for a litany of reasons, here are a few. 1. The visual deterrence. 2. The cost, our state is not financially well. 3. We already have 4 prisons, as well as a large Casino and have all the negative activity we need. 5. As many of us here see it, this only brings the Metro problems here faster. Our property values are already in the tank, high unemployment and poverty abound here. NO THANKS! Keep your problems in the Cities. Let the inmate visitors and scumbags find their own way up here. We already give them enough in tax money.

Name: John Stafne Sr.

Phone: 320-630-9597

Email: dawnstafne@yahoo.com

Organization: Citizen of Hinckley

Street address: 35422 Hinckley Rd

City: Hinckley MN

Zip: 55037

A Project opposition noted.

A

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dotstate.mn.us
Sent: Monday, April 08, 2013 10:12 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Monday, April 08, 2013 at 10:12:03

A

[Comments: This will not benefit Pine County. It is destined to fail like the AMTRACK that passed through here years ago. For the taxpayer money you are spending you could purchase buses and let people ride free for the next 50 years. Poor Idea, waste of money

Name: Dean Dronen

Phone: 3204294274

Email: dean.dronen@co.pine.mn.us

Street address: 21695 Groningen Road

City: Sandstone, MN

Zip: 55072

A Project opposition noted.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, April 08, 2013 12:33 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Monday, April 08, 2013 at 12:33:12

Comments: This project does nothing for rural counties in which the train will be passing through. Should it proceed through it will require large sums of taxpayer money from each county to subsidize it's operation. No such trains have made a profit anywhere in the USA. Pine county only has 36,000 souls and not that many taxpayers, and Pine is now under tremendous strain to fund a 14 million dollar per year budget just to fund daily county government operating expenses. How can Pine County afford the NLX train on top of our present budget? This train is not needed here, not even for the Hinckley Casino, and we do not want it. If the Metro area and Hinckley Grand Casino want it, they should pay. Thank you for this avenue to communicate my thoughts on the NLX.

Name: Terry N. Croup

Phone: 320-420-1598

Email: WA3FLR@aol.com

Street address: 33454 Township Xing

City: Hinckley

Zip: 55037

1

A Project opposition noted.

The source of revenue for operating and maintenance would be addressed as part of the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessment and preliminary engineering.

A

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs289.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, April 08, 2013 3:37 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Monday, April 08, 2013 at 15:37:10

A [Comments: The pristine environment of the entire Minnesota "North Shore" could also be protected if the NLX would connect with a bus service that would run up and down Highway 61, to Grand Marais and back. So many people with destinations along the lake could use that train/bus combination rather than their cars.

B [Organization: citizen who wants the NIX

1

- A** Interconnectivity with other modes would be addressed in preliminary engineering and Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments.
- B** Project support noted.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@irmuxs287.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Monday, April 08, 2013 7:02 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Monday, April 08, 2013 at 19:02:11

A

Comments: It is ridiculous to assume there will be many riders on the NLX. It will obviously need taxpayer support and the counties involved cannot afford subsidies. It will not bring any business to the cities where it stops, except perhaps to the casino in Hinckley. That is already costing Pine County enough money. I would not ride the train to Duluth or the cities as there would be no convenient way to get where I wanted to go when I got there. Can you imagine trying to bring groceries back on the train? The bus that goes to and from Duluth and the airport is useful and doesn't need public subsidies!

Name: Virginia Rootkie

Phone: 320-384-6001

Email: vrootkie@yahoo.com

Organization: private citizen

Street address: 13496 Cross Park Rd.

City: Brook Park, MN

Zip: 55007

1

A

Project opposition noted.

Interconnectivity with other modes and revenue sources would be analyzed during preliminary engineering and Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2013 11:03 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Thursday, April 11, 2013 at 11:03:10

Comments: We live on the street right next to the rail line where you propose to have additional trains traveling in excess of 90 mph. Are you kidding? if that train derails, you're going to take out the homes right next to the tracks and most likely those across the street and more. Plus there are many small children and irresponsible middle/high school kids in the neighborhood. I have I mentioned the noise and that the vibration that the trains already cause are impacting the structural integrity of our homes. If anything, the amount of traffic, the size of the loads and the speed of the trains should be reduced in this area.

Name: Cathleen Reiman

Email: sayheycate@gmail.com

Street address: 1092 144th Lane NW

City: Andover

Zip: 55304

A Project opposition noted.

Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).

Vibration levels typically decrease very rapidly as the distance from the vibration source increases. The vibration levels from high speed trains are generally much lower in level than freight trains, due to lighter equipment.

The Tier 2 project level Environmental Assessment would analyze potential noise and vibration impacts in further detail, if needed.

Comment

Response

A
B

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: Pat Cunningham <artibus@comcast.net>
Sent: Saturday, April 13, 2013 6:37 PM
To: Carr, Julie (DOT)
Subject: NLX Twin Cities Depot

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Julie,
My name is Pat Cunningham.
I have been following the project of returning passenger rail service between the Twin Cities and Duluth. I believe the project will provide reliable transportation between the two significant destinations in Minnesota.
The purpose of this note is to make a recommendation that the Twin Cities depot should be the re-modeled Union Depot in St. Paul – not a depot in Minneapolis.
I am not privy to all the variables in the decision, but it would appear there has been significant investment of making the Union Depot a major transportation hub for the Twin Cities, and it should be utilized as fully as possible.

Sincerely,
Pat

1

- A** Project support noted.
- B** The selected alternative (Route 9) was chosen as a result of a three-level analysis process based on how well each of the initial alternative corridors met the project purpose and need. The elements of ridership and intermodal connectivity that support the project terminus at the Interchange in Minneapolis are presented in Section 2.2 of the Tier 1 Service Level Environmental Assessments.

Comment

Response

A

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@irmuxs287.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Sunday, April 14, 2013 4:19 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Sunday, April 14, 2013 at 16:18:35

Comments: I think this is a very good environmental assessment. The economic analysis, however, considering externalities as well as all costs and benefits, cannot be understated. For these reasons, the total benefits surely outweigh the costs, so I strongly support the Northern Lights Express high speed rail.

Name: Kristen Peterson
Email: pete8840@umn.edu
City: Maple Grove

1

A Project support noted.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@imuxs287.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Tuesday, April 16, 2013 9:14 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[] on Tuesday, April 16, 2013 at 09:14:24

Comments: I oppose the construction of the Northern Lights Express line from Minneapolis to Duluth and would like to have the following taken into consideration:

1. There has already been a failed rail transit route from Minneapolis to Duluth that was closed due to lack of ridership and burgeoning costs. In this new proposed assessment, it is assumed that the failed ridership was due to the lack of speed and frequency of trains. However, it is much more basic than that -- and increasing the speed and the number of routes will not address the root causes of the failure:

a. How does someone get around Duluth or Minneapolis without a car? If a family is traveling to Duluth for a weekend, how would one expect them to haul their bags, food, and other easily transported goods if they had only drove their car?

b. Lack of mobility at the destination. Again, traveling outside a zone of a few miles of the depots will be impossibly expensive and inconvenient. Auto mobility is a deeply ingrained cultural American desire that, while there may be a nostalgic moment to take a train to the "City," will quickly wane when the reality of how much it costs to get a taxi, rent a car or slug around on nearly non-existent public transport sets in.

Ridership levels in the assessment are significantly over estimated and are based on flawed premises and analysis only to inflate ridership.

2) The costs will always be more than projected.

a. Back on Feb. 22, 2008, MPR noted that the Northern Lights project was estimated at \$400 million. Now, that estimate has doubled to \$800 - \$950 million. There is no reason for a project to more than double in estimate in a mere 5 years. No rail transit line in the country comes close to covering its operating costs, much less its total cost. Average light-rail fares cover less than 30 percent of operating costs. Transit fares have not contributed a single penny to rail capital costs for at least 60 years.

b. And we know costs will run over because we've already experienced that with our own Minneapolis-St. Paul Hiawatha light-rail line that went so far over budget that the transit agency cut bus service and asked drivers to accept reduced health benefits, which led to a short strike. The result was an 8 percent loss of transit riders.

Costs will be higher than estimated and deliver little value to the communities and tax payers.

3) Speed estimates will not be obtained and will be problematic for the many communities that the train would travel through.

a. It's already been tried. For example, Washington state received \$800 million from the federal government to improve the trip between Seattle and Portland. But that investment has only made the three-hour forty-minute ride 10 minutes shorter. Washington's trains max out at 79 mph and average in the low 50s. In a January report in the same series, CNN found that \$52 million spent on tracks in Vermont only shaved 28 minutes off of schedules -- a not a great return on investment, considering the amount of public funding devoted to these projects.

1

Comments from Elizabeth Herberg have been addressed previously.

Comment

Response

b. These trains will be dangerous and disruptive to the many small communities. With the number of routes being projected, many small communities will find their rural culture disrupted while trains pass through, even at the likely 50 miles per hour rate. The only entity that will see any economic benefit will be the Hinckley Grand Casino, where the success for the entire project hinges since projections more than double in terms of revenue with this one stop. Every other community, not so much.

Speed will not be reached (lowering ridership) and communities will be negatively impacted.

Name: Elizabeth Herberg

City: Rush City

2

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Comment

A

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@irmuxs287.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Tuesday, April 16, 2013 11:02 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Tuesday, April 16, 2013 at 11:02:05

Comments: Based upon the size, scope, cost, and impact within the communities in which the proposed route affects, large concerns abound. Ridership figures and revenue generated through the NLE line do not seem to support the negative impact such a rail service requires. Please rethink continuance of the line altogether. At minimum, this is a request to reduce speeds through the Metro (including Andover) below 50 MPH, and no more than 4 trains per day (2 trains per day back and forth).

Name: Kraig Kliber
Email: kkliber1@yahoo.com
City: Andover
Zip: 55304

1

Response

A

Project opposition noted.

The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments will include additional analysis of projected ridership, costs and benefit cost analysis. Reducing the number of daily trains and the top speed would decrease the viability of the project.

Comment

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@irmuxs287.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2013 7:29 AM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
() on Wednesday, April 17, 2013 at 07:28:40

Comments: This isn't a good idea, the noise level, safety concerns and wait time for those who travel across the tracks will add extra aggravation to an already noisy location will drive those who live here out.

Name: Stacie

Phone: 763-442-9712

Email: S.kliber@yahoo.com

Street address: 14347 tamarack st NW

City: Andover

Zip: 55304

1

Response

A Project opposition noted.

Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).

The Tier 2 project level Environmental Assessment would analyze potential noise impacts in further detail, if needed.

At the expected speed and train lengths and NLX train would pass any given property in seconds. Crossing wait times at non-station communities would be shorter than typically experienced with an average freight train.

Comment

Response

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@imuxs287.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2013 2:09 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
[] on Wednesday, April 17, 2013 at 14:08:59

A
B
C
D
E

- [] Comments: Fully gated safe crossings are needed for all crossings along the NLX route
- [] Quiet Zones - must be in place before NLX construction for Braham, Cambridge, and likely other communities. There will be significant negative impact to property values if Quiet Zones are not in place.
- [] Stations - needed for Cambridge and Hinckley, should also be consideration for occasional stops in Braham, Sandstone, others
- [] Freedom Park - even with Quiet Zone, there would still be safety issue that needs to be mitigated and NLX project should fund relocation of park if needed.
- [] Braham Sportsmens Club - NLX needs to provide safe, gate crossing or alternate access.

- A** Counties, cities and townships would be invited to participate in evaluating their at-grade crossings during an on-site diagnostic review to determine the appropriate treatment. The diagnostic reviews are expected to take place in 2014.
- B** Comment noted.
- C** When projects are developed, stops are determined by ridership. For an effective high speed rail corridor, competitive time must be attained or the project would not achieve the necessary public benefit to be deemed eligible for future public funding.
- D** Safety enhancements such as flashing light signals with gates, fencing in urban areas, track improvements and communication systems upgrades would be addressed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments (see section 3.2.2.2 in the EA).
- E** Private, gated crossings such as the Braham Area Sportsman’s Club, are subject to further discussion and will be worked out on a case-by-case basis. By law, no property can be landlocked and access must be provided.

Comment

Carr, Julie (DOT)

From: nobody@oituxs288.dot.state.mn.us
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2013 11:07 PM
To: *DOT_NLX
Subject: NLX comments from website

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by [redacted] on Wednesday, April 17, 2013 at 23:07:06

Comments: SUMMARY
Main point: I see convincing evidence in the EA that the no-build option was not taken seriously, which puts the entire EA and the evaluation process of the project in question.

The projections for increased traffic along the corridor seem unrealistic. Therefore, the remainder of the project justification seems to rest on the ideas of increased accessibility and economic benefit based on goals rather than need. Time-savings are unlikely with a train whose best average speed under ideal conditions from MSP to Duluth is 68mph as calculated using the assumptions and figures presented in the EA. This is something not evident in one of the biased visuals painting a prettier picture than would exist in reality. The lack of impacts stated for a no-build option do not support claims that traffic along this corridor would possibly double in a very short timeframe.

I lived in Boston for 7 years and used the mass-transit system quite frequently, and as a civil engineering graduate of MIT I observed the benefits and pitfalls. In general, Boston does need a subway and commuter rail system extending out even into New Hampshire, and it justifiably needs a spoke-and-wheel system of commuter rail intermodal stations along the I-95/Rt. 128 outer ring. But even there, whether growth follows transit is an open question despite the fact that proponents of rail are perennially convinced that it is true. Geographically, with Boston proper situated on a small peninsula with limited paths into and out of and around downtown, the system is necessary, and in some cases I'm sure transit has enhanced station-centric growth. Whether this is true in the Twin Cities and along the corridor to Duluth is doubtful in my opinion.

Remarks on specific sections follow:

2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROJECT

2.1 Project Purpose

â€¢ Competitive travel times? With limited mobility at termini, added expense of vehicle rental, boarding/disboarding times this is doubtful when the best case is a 68mph average speed end-to-end.

â€¢ Opportunities for rail-oriented development â€¢ land use patternsâ€¢ this is a continual justification for rail as it supposedly concentrates "desirable" high-density around stations, but realistically what are the chances a business will relocate to near the station, and as well that residents would choose to live in a high-density residential unit near the station to commute to the Cities or Duluth?

â€¢ Impetus for station-area joint developmentâ€¢ same pipe dream, admittedly viable in a dense cosmopolitan city like Boston or a European city, but realistic in rural Minnesota? Even in Boston the development is not particularly mass-transit-station-oriented, and most of the destinations pre-dated the transit system, but wherever this growth doesn't occur, proponents will say that the system simply isn't "big enough yet".

2.2 Project Need

â€¢ Limitations in travel modes? What limitations exist except for the lack of passenger rail service, discontinued less than 30 years ago? Calling this a limitation begs the question, because the purpose of a project evaluation is to decide whether it is or not, and I don't see justification.

1

Response

The No Build Alternative would perpetuate the existing condition, i.e., no high speed passenger rail service between Minneapolis and Duluth. The existing track configuration would remain.

The purpose of the Tier 1 Service Level EA is to evaluate the service-wide environmental impacts of the alternatives developed to meet the project's purpose and need. In addition, the EA is used to provide sufficient environmental documentation to determine the need, under Minnesota state law, for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Negative Declaration and No Significant Impact (FONSI). At the Wisconsin state level, Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter TRANS 400 directs the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) to follow NEPA for both NEPA and Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA) purposes when federal funds are involved in the proposed action.

MnDOT prepared the Tier 1 Service Level EA in compliance with requirements of 42 USC 4331, et seq (NEPA), FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (64 FR 28545), MS 116D, and Section 1.11 Wisconsin Statutes, Wisconsin Administrative Code, TRANS 400. The document also serves as a Minnesota Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW).

Comment

Response

â € How reliable is rail in very low temperatures (snapped rails) on a partially shared line with freight? How frequently will passenger trains have to pull off on a siding to wait for a freight train to pass? Will passenger have priority?

2.2.1 Travel Demand

â € What passenger prices will be required for people to endure a trip (stops included from MSP to Duluth) of potentially 3.5 hours when they can drive there in equal or less time? Has Amtrak or that route in particular ever been profitable? My last Amtrak ticket, St. Paul to Boston, was in the range of \$130-150, and took 36 hours. I took the train anticipating a fun experience (it was not), where on the other hand I've gotten plane tickets for less and endured only a 4 hour trip from home to destination in a western Boston suburb).

â € How is travel demand calculated? Linear regression like DOT's calculate traffic? This is the crudest of methods. Does anyone think I-35 traffic would double between MSP and Duluth in the next 17 years if we didn't build this thing?

2.2.3 Intermodal connectivity

â € Connection with the Empire Builder is not a justification. A trip by car to Chicago is 5-6 hours. By train it is 8 or more, although admittedly Chicago has a public transit system that is well-justified and reaches most areas a tourist or business person would desire to goâ † although having one's own vehicle in Chicago in all my experience outweighs any hassles. Empire Builder and Lakeshore Limited heading to Boston is an expensive and miserable 36-hour trip.

â € "Regional Plans" citing a recreational train between Duluth and Two Harbors as "identifiedâ † for future passenger rail service" is not much of a justification for anything. Who intends on going from MSP to Two Harbors by train? What are you going to do there other than spend a few hours and head back to Duluth? This is a recreational attraction â you might as well cite the Duluth Harbor Lift Bridge as a justification for this project.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

3.1 Alternatives Analysis

â € "Markets" does not simply equate to "ridership". How was ridership derived from markets?

â € How was "conflict with freight, future rail use" calculated? By the total length of the project, or by its impacts on travel time?

â € Where is the no-build option compared with the build options? I propose the following addition to your comparison matrix with your maximum raw score apparently 5.

///

Evaluation Criteria	Criteria	Weight	No Build	My Justification
-----Score-----				
-----Raw---Weighted-----				
Travel Time	9	5	45	Same as existing, no improvements with best option
Proximity to markets	9	4	40.5	Roads already go where people want to go. Allowance for congestion.
Conflict with freight	5.4	5+	27	Should be a bonus for zero impact
Conflict w/ ex. owner	7.6	5+	38	Should be a bonus for zero impact
System connectivity	6.6	4	33	Allowance for lack of passenger rail, congestion.
Capital cost	8.8	5++	44	Costs nothing, but I don't know how you would score this.
Politic/public support	6.4	2.5	16	For sake of argument assume you have 50% public support.
Total			232.4	
Weighted average			4.40	"Route 9" is only 4.15

\\

Notice that I've given scores of 5 to the conflicts and capital cost, which is highly conservative considering the cost of your cheapest alternative is almost a billion dollars, and I've granted no-build a poor score on public support. Even with such generous scores taken away from no-build, it still beats out Route 9 by a significant margin. I

See response above

Comment

realize these categories are for comparison between build alternatives, so there are others that ought to be included when comparing to the no-build, but I don't see in the EA where this comparison is really made.

Figure 3.16

â€¢ "Speed Profile â€” Route 9 â€” 2:17 Schedule"

o This is a highly misleading graph for two reasons: 1) because it measures speed over distance instead of time, which gives an upward-biased impression of an "average" speed to the viewer - which is much higher than the best-case average speed of 68mph end-to-end; what the red lines mean is unclear; 2) in conjunction with the maps and figures on pages 1-2, 3-8, and 3-9 (the maps showing all the cities on the route, which will not fully display for me as downloaded from the MnDOT website, so might contain a legend I can't see) it sets up the reader to gloss over the fact that the train is only making 4 stops between MSP and Duluth.

o A simple calculation for 155 miles over 2:17 gives an average speed of 68 miles per hour. A car leaving most locations of interest in the Twin Cities at train departure time might easily beat the train to any location of interest in Duluth â€” even during rush hour â€” and they would travel from a place where they had their vehicle, to a destination where they would also have their vehicle, luggage, and anything else they needed to bring. They would have flexibility at both locations. I would venture to guess that a car trip from Rochester to Duluth might even beat the train from MSP to Duluth on more occasions than proponents would like to think.

o In reality, this is the most optimistic possible schedule, excluding embark/disembark times (security, baggage, etc.) and transit to and from stations. The earlier stated vehicle trip time of 2:30 is fair for those entering or leaving MSP by car, but it's still not clear to me how train service to downtown MSP improves travel times over car for someone going anywhere but downtown MSP. A trip to St. Paul would require an hour-long trip on the new University Ave light-rail line. A trip to the Mall of America would require taking the Hiawatha line for something on the order of I imagine another half-hour at best.

4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

4.2 Transportation

â€¢ High-speed corridor, "sealing" the corridor: This is where Figure 3.16 Speed Profile is more applicable.

â€¢ To be fair and consistent, under your projections of doubling transit between MSP and Duluth in the next 17 years, shouldn't the no-build option state the possibility of double emissions, noise, and other related impacts of vastly increased traffic along the corridor? IF YOU TOOK THE NO-BUILD OPTION SERIOUSLY, the train would be weighed against the need for interstate expansion including noise walls, improvements at interchanges (ramps, signals, bridges, etc.), and right-of-way acquisition and any local agreements for all these things. If vehicular traffic is going to double in 17 years, then ALL the communities along the general route ought to experience development at their I-35 accesses as traffic there ought to increase. Does anyone believe that in 17 years all the towns along I-35 will either wilt (because somehow access to I-35 doesn't prompt development, yet a train will) or (because if there's increased traffic, it has to be for some reason), businesses will spring up everywhere along the route to take advantage of this huge growth in traffic? This doesn't add up, and doesn't explain why a train would have any different impact. Even in Rochester and Olmsted County, questionably optimistic projections for 50% growth are at least in the 25- to 35-year timeframe. It used to be Duluth was a larger city than Rochester too...

4.7.4 Finding

â€¢ Again, the no-build option with your projections of 50% to 100% increase in trips along the corridor in the next 17 years should result in possibly double the noise, pollution, and other impacts along I-35. I just don't think you took the no-build option seriously, otherwise you would have included this very proper impact (assuming your assumptions are correct) as a factor which ought to be weighed against or in favor of a build option.

4.9 Cultural Resources

â€¢ Impacts of No-Build. None listed. What about throngs of vehicles on I-35 giving businesses along the route opportunities for growth?

4.13 Socioeconomic Impacts

â€¢ Impacts of No-Build. Suddenly we're losing a bunch of "positive impacts to communities due to improved regional accessibility" and "related economic benefits".

3

Response

See response above

Comment

Response

4.15 Economics

â € Reduced maintenance on highways is minimal, if any, as a justification for a build option. Impacts on highways - including that from frac sand trucking â are primarily driven by truck traffic, and on the state highway system, even very high agricultural trucking or concentrated frac sand truck traffic would have minimal effect on mainlines, interstates with 36" or 40" or deeper pavement structures. Cars have very little effect at all using up very few ESALs, and you're talking about passenger service here, not freight. I've been on I-35 the parts of the year where I-94 heading north out of the Cities is bumper-to-bumper with folks hauling boats and campers and their families north. Maybe heavier traffic in winter would keep the road cleaner of snow.

â € Time savings, as I've mentioned, is unlikely as I've pointed out above, and therefore not a benefit of a build option.

Chris Culbertson
Bachelor of Science, Civil Engineering, MIT
720 Hickory Lane
Mantorville, MN 55955
507-951-7406

Name: Chris Culbertson

Phone: 507-951-7406

Email: chris.m.culbertson@gmail.com

Street address: 720 Hickory Lane

City: Mantorville

Zip: 55955

See response above

Comment

Response

From: nobody@cituxs289.dot.state.mn.us
To: [DOT_NLX](#)
Subject: NLX comments from website
Date: Thursday, April 18, 2013 9:33:00 PM

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by
 () on Thursday, April 18, 2013 at 21:32:59

Comments:

Northern Lights Express High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail
 Tier I Environmental Assessment
 Submitted by
 Minnesota Department of Transportation,
 Minneapolis-Duluth/Superior Passenger Rail Alliance

Comments on the Tier I Environmental Assessment
 Submitted by
 Diane Saunders
 Duluth, MN
 April 18, 2013
 Contact:
 (218) 464-4670
 dianes2780@charter.net

ã
 The Northern Lights Express (NLX) project proposes to provide a high-speedã intercity passenger rail service between the City of Minneapolis and the Cities of Duluth, Minnesota, and Superior, Wisconsin, via a 155-mile-long corridor owned by Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF).
 The Tier I Environmental Assessment States, in part, under the Purpose and Need Section:
 ã The proposed action offers an opportunity for a viable alternative to vehicular travel between Minneapolis and Duluth by providing: competitive travel times; safe, reliable and accessible service; and amenities to improve passenger travel quality and comfort. In addition, the proposed project could provide: improved overall system continuity in the state and interstate transportation networks, in conformance with statewide and regional transportation plans; opportunities for rail oriented development ã land use patterns that encourage more efficient development of land in combination with more efficient use of transportation facilities; an impetus for station-area joint development, downtown redevelopment and economic development for growth in travel and tourism in all the communities along the route, contributing to the viability and vitality of the region; and transportation improvements that avoid or minimize environmental impacts.ã Executive Summary, page ES-4.

I would like to point out that a train which takes 2 ¼ hours to travel from Minneapolis to Duluth or Duluth to Minneapolis, is making the trip in approximately the same time as it takes to drive between the two cities by way of automobile on Interstate-35, as stated on page ES-5: ã An alternative mode of travel needs to have a competitive travel time as compared to the estimated highway travel time for the 155-mile distance between Minneapolis and Duluth of two hours and 30 minutes (during uncongested conditions).ã

While there may be little to no serious environmental impact by this project in terms of the natural environment, there will most definitely be a serious impact on the human environment from this project, in that a train that does not satisfy its very reason for existence will take resources away from other more pressing projects which will have a favorable impact on the human environment.
 Further, I want to point out the project has few, if any lasting benefits to the public. The average speed of the NLX has been stated by NLX's chief technical advisor, Ken Beuler, to be approximately 79 miles

A The travel times are based on concept level functional analysis as described in the Northern Lights Express Technical Memorandum: Functional Analysis of Routes 9, 11, and 11a (Level 2 Analysis) December 2010, provided as Appendix C-2 of the EA.

If needed, the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments would include additional analysis of train speeds and travel times to verify that the proposed action meets the project purpose and need.

B Project opposition noted.

A

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Comment

Response

C

per hour (mph). Further, the proposed train would share the track with the BNSF Railroad, thereby decreasing the safety of the train. Additionally, NLX is proposed to use diesel-powered locomotives for power to pull the train, thereby emitting into the air pollutants from diesel engines which are known to be emitters of oxides of nitrogen, carbon monoxide, and other dangerous toxic substances. Also, the route will have numerous at-grade crossings which will further reduce the safety of the train.

C Project opposition noted.

D Comment noted.

For the purposes of this comment, I define a truly high speed intercity passenger rail to be electrically-powered trains which operate at speeds in excess of 150 mph to as high as 224 mph, and that said trains receive their high voltage electricity for operations from an overhead catenary/pantograph system.

Summarized below are some of the benefits a truly high speed intercity passenger rail train would bring to the public and the environment.

D

1. A High-speed rail systems in other nations have dramatically reduced air travel and significantly reduced intercity car travel. In California, similar results would ease congestion on the roads and in the skies and reduce the need for expensive new investments in highways and airports. High-speed rail service has virtually eliminated short-haul air service on several corridors in Europe, such as between Paris and Lyon, France, and between Cologne and Frankfurt, Germany.

A C The number of air passengers between London and Paris has been cut in half since high-speed rail service was initiated between the two cities through the Channel Tunnel.

A C The recent launch of high-speed rail service between Madrid and Barcelona, Spain, has cut air travel on what was once one of the world's busiest passenger air routes by one-third. [Emphasis is mine]

A C Even in the northeastern U.S., where Amtrak Acela Express service is slow by international standards, rail service accounts for 62 percent of the air/rail market on trips between New York and Washington, D.C., and 47 percent of the air/rail market on trips between Boston and New York. [Emphasis is mine]

A C High-speed rail service between Madrid and Seville has reduced the share of travel by car between the two cities from 60 percent to 34 percent.

2. Truly High-speed rail saves energy and protects the environment. In California, high-speed rail could cut our dependence on oil while helping to reduce air pollution and curb global warming.

A C Continual improvement A Japan's Shinkansen system is estimated to use one quarter the energy of air travel or one sixth the energy of automobile travel per passenger. The energy efficiency of Shinkansen trains has continually improved over time, such that today's trains use nearly a third less energy, while traveling significantly faster, than the trains introduced in the mid-sixties.

A C More efficient A On Europe's high speed lines, a typical Monday morning business trip from London to Paris via high-speed rail uses approximately a third as much energy as a car or plane trip. Similar energy savings are achieved on other European high-speed rail lines. [Emphasis is mine]

A C Replacing oil with electricity makes zero emissions possible A Energy savings translate into reduced emissions of pollutants that cause global warming or respiratory problems A particularly when railroads power their trains with renewable energy. In Sweden, the country's high-speed trains are powered entirely with renewable energy, cutting emissions of global warming pollutants by 99 percent.

3. Truly High-speed rail is safe and reliable. In California, reliable service via high-speed rail could be an attractive alternative to oft-delayed intercity flights and travel on congested freeways.

A C There has never been a fatal accident on Japan's Shinkansen high-speed rail system or during high-speed operation of TGV trains in France, despite carrying billions of passengers over the course of several decades. Not one single accident at speed!

A C Truly High-speed rail is generally more reliable than air or car travel. The average delay on Japan's Shinkansen system is 36 seconds. Spain's railway operator offers a money-back guarantee if train-related delays exceed five minutes. [Emphasis is mine]

4. Truly High-speed rail can create jobs and boost local economies. California's high-speed rail system could help position the state for economic success in the 21st century while creating short-term jobs in construction.

A C Construction of truly high-speed rail lines creates thousands of temporary jobs. For example, about 8,000 people were involved in construction of the high-speed rail link between London and the Channel Tunnel. Additional, more permanent jobs are created in operations, maintenance, ticketing and customer service, on-train service jobs, and in front office jobs in advertising, marketing, management, clerical staff, and other jobs to support the project.

A C Well-designed high-speed rail stations located in city centers spark economic development and encourage revitalization of urban areas:

A C A study of the Frankfurt-Cologne high-speed rail line in Germany estimated that areas

Comment

Response

See response above

D

surrounding two towns with new high-speed rail stations experienced a 2.7 percent increase in overall economic activity compared with the rest of the region.

• Office space in the vicinity of high-speed rail stations in France and northern Europe generally fetches higher rents than in other parts of the same cities.

• The city of Lyon experienced a 43 percent increase in the amount of office space near its high-speed rail station following the completion of a high-speed rail link to Paris.

• Property values near stations on Japan's Shinkansen network have been estimated to be 67 percent higher than property values further away.

• Several cities have used high-speed rail as the catalyst for ambitious urban redevelopment efforts. The city of Lille, France, used its rail station as the core of a multi-use development that now accommodates 6,000 jobs. The new international high-speed rail terminal at London's St. Pancras station is the centerpiece of a major redevelopment project that will add 1,800 residential units, as well as hotels, offices and cultural venues in the heart of London.

• Truly High-speed rail can expand labor markets and increase the potential for face-to-face interactions that create value in the growing knowledge economy. A British study projects that the construction of the nation's first high-speed rail line will lead to more than \$26 billion in net economic benefits over the next 60 years. [Emphasis is mine]

5. Truly High-speed rail lines generally cover their operating costs with fare revenues. In California, a financially sustainable high-speed rail system would deliver on the promise made to voters in Proposition 1A that the system will not require operating subsidies from taxpayers.

• Truly High-speed rail service generates enough operating profit that it can subsidize other, less-profitable intercity rail lines in countries such as France and Spain, as well as in the U.S. Northeast.

• Two high-speed rail lines – the French TGV line between Paris Gare du Nord and Lyon and the original Japanese Shinkansen line from Tokyo to Osaka – have covered their initial costs of construction through fares.

6. Properly planned truly high-speed rail can encourage sustainable land use and development patterns. In California, focusing new development around high-speed rail stations can reduce pressure to develop in outlying areas, create new centers of commerce and activity, and enable riders to access high-speed rail stations by public transportation, by bike, or on foot.

• Cities throughout Europe have paired the arrival of high-speed rail with expansion of local public transportation options – in some cases, using new high-speed rail lines to bolster local commuter rail service.

• By putting stations in smart locations and providing transit connections, high-speed rail can encourage greater shifts in development patterns and transportation choices.

• Proper land-use policies in areas that receive high-speed rail stations, coupled with effective development of station areas, can ensure that high-speed rail does not fuel new sprawl. (Next Stop: California: The Benefits of High-Speed Rail around the World and What's in Store for California, by Tony Dutzik, Frontier Group Erin Steva, California Public Interest Research Group (CALPIRG) Education Fund, June 2010).

The German Deutsche Bahn ICE3 Intercity Express train, built by Siemens, at London's St. Pancras Station, October 20, 2010, after a successful trial run through the Channel Tunnel. (See, www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1321787/German-rail-giant-Deutsche-Bahn-sends-200mph-ICE3-train-London.html)

Comment

Response

E

F

SUMMARY

To summarize my comments, I believe the NLX project is not the project which should be pursued, for the reasons above. If the Alliance wants to bring rail service back to the Northland, it should be pursuing a truly high speed intercity passenger train which:

- A. Operates at a speed in the range of 150 to 200 mph.
- B. Operates on dedicated, grade-separated track (one for northbound and one for southbound trains).
- C. Has no at-grade crossings except in an urban setting where the train would be operating at much slower speeds while entering Superior, Duluth and the Metro between Blaine and Minneapolis.
- D. Is powered by electricity supplied to the train by way of an overhead catenary and pantograph system. Trains in Europe and Asia which operate in cold climates similar to Minnesota use this system safely and reliability every day, including in Winter.

To continue pursuing this project as currently proposed will not be in the public interest.

Name: Diane Saunders
Phone: 218-464-4670
Email: dianas2780@charter.net
Organization: none
Street address: 1123 E 4th ST #1
City: Duluth
Zip: 55805
.....

E Project opposition noted.

F Comment noted.

Comment

Response

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NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL

PUBLIC COMMENTS
4/4/2013
1

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS
HIGH SPEED PASSENGER RAIL PROJECT
OPEN HOUSE/PUBLIC HEARING

CERTIFIED

* * * * *

PUBLIC COMMENTS
TAKEN ON THE 4TH DAY OF APRIL, 2013
AT THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY CENTER
CAMBRIDGE, MINNESOTA
5:30 P.M.
* * * * *

Taken before Cheryl M. Lippman, RPR
www.nwcourtreporters.com
nwcr@nwcourtreporters.com
1-800-628-7551

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Comment

Response

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NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
4/4/2013
2

1 INDEX
2
3 Minnesota World's Fair Document Included as Exhibit by
4 Mr. John Hottinger.
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Comment

Response

A

B

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
4/4/2013
3

1 AILENE CROUP: First of all, the U.S., the
2 county, the state, every municipality I know of
3 are in trouble financially. The NLX is a billion
4 dollar boondoggle. I've been going to every
5 meeting, I've maybe missed five in six years.
6 The residents along this corridor have not been
7 told this is going to cost them millions in tax
8 dollars. They've been ignoring telling people
9 this. They've said it would pay for itself in
10 three years, and by them, I'm talking about the
11 NLX Alliance.

12 Pine County, where I'm from, is the poorest,
13 or one of the poorest counties in the state. We
14 have 30,000 residents. The capital costs and the
15 operating costs, which we know will be millions,
16 there are no trains, passenger, light rail, or
17 commuter in the United States that pay for
18 themselves or break even. Our poor county, who
19 has a \$14,000,000 levy this year, could
20 potentially see that double or triple,
21 conservatively. We have foreclosures, many week
22 after week after week, and people are not being
23 told what's going to happen. It took two
24 reporters digging for two months to find that
25 this is not going to pay for itself. We're going

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A Initial cost estimates were based on high-level concept engineering. The project development process involves progressively more detailed engineering information that informs revised cost estimates. The source of revenue for operating and maintenance costs would be addressed as part of the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments and preliminary engineering.

B See response A above.

Comment

Response

C See response A above.

C

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
4/4/2013
4

1 to be on the hook for operation costs, and we're
2 gonna be on the hook for the bond. We don't have
3 enough retail in Pine County for a sales tax to
4 be placed on retail items, or any items, to pay
5 for that bonding, the only option is property
6 tax, and we're taxing people right out of their
7 homes. We don't want it. We weren't asked if we
8 wanted it, they just went ahead with it and
9 continued the subterfuge that this was going to
10 pay for itself in three years. My name is Ailene
11 Croup, A-I-L-E-N-E, C-R-O-U-P, and it's 33454
12 Township Xing, spelled X-I-N-G, Hinckley,
13 Minnesota.

14 Okay. So a piece of information I found
15 from the MnDOT report of the MnDOT meeting with
16 23 individuals there in December, which I knew
17 nothing about, says there's going to be a
18 build-out, and by build-out, supposedly they mean
19 they're gonna start putting the train on the
20 tracks, and it's not gonna be at the 110 miles an
21 hour that they said. In order to get FRA
22 funding, they had to prove there was a need and
23 they could do the speed. They used 1,000,000
24 visitors a year -- it was 4,000,000 visitors,
25 excuse me, to -- I -- to the casino in Hinckley

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Comment

Response

D

E

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
4/4/2013
5

1 as the need, they used 110 miles an hour as the
2 speed to prove it could run, it could operate and
3 make a profit. Okay. So 4,000,000 visitors.
4 We're not -- they're projecting 800,000
5 visitors -- or 800,000 passengers on that train a
6 year. That would mean a ticket would have to be
7 \$33, one-way ticket \$33, and it would take 30
8 years to pay the bond, which is the billion
9 dollars to put it on the track -- track, and the
10 operational costs, those are separate. The
11 operational costs, if they're anything like the
12 Northstar Rail in Minneapolis, or the Downeaster
13 out in the Eastern United States, who they have
14 patterned this NLX after, are subsidizing.

15 Our county wants out. Residents want out.
16 We want to know when the drop-dead date is to
17 pull out of NLX without having to pay any more.
18 And the native casinos, they can choose not to
19 fund any of this. They're supposedly a partner,
20 but they can pull out anytime they want to,
21 they're not bound to anything, doesn't matter
22 whether or not they're -- they're a member of the
23 joint powers, and we're stuck holding the bag,
24 that poor county, 30,000 people, who have a tax
25 levy of 14,000,000 this year, who can't afford

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D Ticket prices have not yet been determined but would be informed by cost of service, relationship to ridership and funding considerations.

E Project opposition noted.

E

1 it.

2 Why are our tax dollars paying for the

3 environmental study for the new tracking to the

4 casino when it's going to a private business that

5 we will not get tax dollars from? The Twins were

6 private, also, for the Northstar Rail, they --

7 they're a private company that goes right to

8 their stadium, the Northstar Rail does, they

9 paid, granted not a huge amount, but they did

10 pay, and they do pay taxes, so --

11 That's about all I have to say, except for

12 we want -- we want out, and this is a contingency

13 of people that are asking to be let out. We want

14 to be out of this contract just the way Anoka

15 did, they won't have to pay anything more, and

16 county does not want to have to pay.

17 BRENT UZELAC: My name is Brent Uzelac, it's

18 U-Z-E-L-A-C, and my address is 1607 Fraser Drive,

19 Grand Rapids, Minnesota 55744. Great. Well, I

20 guess we'll -- I'll have conversation with you

21 about this, right? I just want to tell you a

22 quick story and what -- what (sic) this means so

23 much to me, I appreciate you taking the time to

24 do this. I grew up in Grand Rapids, Minnesota,

25 as a town of about 10,000 people -- try not to

Comment

Response

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NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL

PUBLIC COMMENTS

4/4/2013

7

1 make this the world's longest story -- and my dad
2 was a teacher, my grandfather came over, he was a
3 miner from Serbia, and I was kind of in the long
4 line of teachers, and I broke the mold that I
5 came down here because my passion was with the
6 Web, and today I'm a Web architect; and there's
7 not a lot of Web architecture jobs in Northern
8 Minnesota, they're not in Duluth, they're not in
9 Grand Rapids, they're not in Bemidji, they're not
10 to be found. But all my family's up there, my
11 mom, my dad, my friends, uncles, aunts, and so it
12 is a lot of miles, and it's a lot of missing of
13 people when you're down in the Twin Cities, and
14 so my job is how I pay for everything and how I
15 get ahead and feel that I'm -- you know, went to
16 school for everything I did, but I spend a lot of
17 miles on the road so I can see my -- trying to
18 see my family.

19 I think Northern Minnesota is one of the
20 nicest areas I've ever lived, and so what the
21 Northern Lights Express means to me -- and it's
22 nice to be able to talk about this so I don't
23 have to type -- write it so I can express this
24 properly -- is it's not just connecting Duluth
25 and Minneapolis together, that's very important,

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Comment

Response

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
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8

1 but it is a way to finally connect families and
2 connect people together, because the metro is
3 always going to be an amazing place, full of
4 amazing jobs, amazing opportunities, and all
5 those great things, and Northern Minnesota's
6 gonna be a place of, how do you say, there's
7 different career opportunities, and there's
8 different lifestyles, you know, it's a little bit
9 more relaxed, and all that good stuff, so for me
10 to be able to have my job and to get home is
11 substantial.

12 And when I think about the kind of
13 investment that this project is, I can hear
14 people now talking about who's gonna pay for it,
15 how we're gonna do all these different aspects to
16 make things either a reality or not, I can't
17 think of a better investment than when you look
18 at all the statistics of the -- how congested the
19 Twin Cities is, how important it is to Cambridge,
20 where people can finally move and be 45 minutes
21 away from the city, how important it is to get to
22 Duluth, or how badly Duluth needs this
23 connection; and even if it's UMD students to the
24 U of M, or my parents trying to get down to
25 the -- the U of M for medical needs, any of those

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A Project support noted.

A

Comment

Response

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
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9

1 kinds of things. So I won't go on all day, but
2 it is a really important project when you think
3 about the human piece of this, so -- what else is
4 there to share?
5 I've been watching it for, I think, three,
6 four years now since I've learned about it, and
7 I -- I think I check almost every week for news
8 to see if this project's gonna become a reality.
9 And just this public hearing alone, just being
10 able to come up here, I wanted to make sure a
11 voice was being said about the families that are
12 spread across the place and -- or the state, and
13 I just think it's incredibly important that we
14 are able to make progress in connecting the state
15 better. That's it. I just want to go home.
16 HARV LINDSTROM: Okay. I'm Harv Lindstrom,
17 address is 650 Lake Street Northeast, Pine City,
18 Minnesota 55063. I am the president of the
19 Hinckley-Pine City Flames Snowmobile Club, we're
20 headquartered out of Beroun, Minnesota. The
21 reason I'm making comment is that we have
22 snowmobile trails, we have 106 miles of
23 snowmobile trail in Southern Pine County, and we
24 are on both sides of this proposed railroad bed.
25 We need to have a tunnel, one or two, depending

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A The Tier 2 Project level Environmental Assessments would address fencing, crossings, and safety.

A

Comment

Response

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
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10

1 on where the tracks go, that allows our
2 snowmobilers to go from the east side to the west
3 side of this rail bed. We have people that come
4 up. With the higher gas prices, people aren't
5 going as far north anymore, the diehards are, but
6 a lot of 'em are now stopping in Pine City where
7 we have a -- a parking space at the boat landing
8 on the Snake River, and they'll get on our trails
9 there, they can go into Chengwatana Forest, they
10 can go west into 107, Henriette over to Mora,
11 they can come back through Hinckley, and if they
12 want to go from the west side to the east side,
13 if you do the rail bed with the fencing up,
14 they're -- our trail system's gonna get cut in
15 half, you know, traveler -- sledders will only be
16 able to ride on one side or the other, they'll
17 have to pack up and physically transport to the
18 other side. So it's urgent that the people that
19 are designing this thing keep in touch with us as
20 far as locating a tunnel to get from one side of,
21 you know, the rail bed to the other. To us,
22 that's very important.

23 And economics, it's been well-proven that
24 snowmobilers spend a lot of money, and tourism is
25 the backbone of some small communities, and if

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Comment

Response

1 the -- the railway splits our trail system,
2 people are gonna go someplace else instead of
3 coming to Pine County to -- and it's probably
4 gonna be the same situation in Northern Pine
5 County with the Northern Riders Snowmobile Club.
6 They have trails on either side of this proposed
7 rail bed, and if there's no tunnels for them to
8 get from one side to the other, they're gonna
9 have the same issue, and depending on how far
10 north this system goes, there's gonna be the same
11 issues up and down the line 'cause snowmobile
12 trails go north and south and east and west,
13 both, so we've got to get from one place to the
14 other. That will do it.

15 PETER DRAXTEN: My name is Peter Draxten, I
16 came to this meeting 'cause I've missed the past
17 ones, but I want to vote positive, I want this
18 thing to go. I don't know how else to state it.
19 My wife and I are train people. We support the
20 261 in Northeast Minneapolis, we've taken that
21 to -- to Winona and back, and -- actually, to
22 La Crescent, enjoyed every bit of it. We tend to
23 get a little weepy when we think we waved at the
24 last Amtrak years ago, I forget how long ago, and
25 we want it back, we'll use it. We live in

B Comment noted.

A Project support noted.

B

A

Comment

Response

1 Cambridge, we'll most likely board there, go to
2 our ocean, Lake Superior, and enjoy Duluth and
3 Superior, and then come back to plan our next
4 trip up there.

5 We have nothing negative to say about this.
6 We live on the track, approximately a block,
7 block and a half from the BN track -- or BNSF. I
8 don't know what else to say, put me in the plus
9 column. I think rail travel makes sense, very
10 cost-effective, doesn't cost anything to run a
11 train as far as the -- the fuel used. You don't
12 have to drive without -- out there on the highway
13 with all the other screwballs. Get where you
14 want to go and enjoy it. Go to Hinckley.
15 That -- that's about it.

16 MATHEWS HOLLINSHEAD: My name is Mathews
17 Hollinshead, H-O-L-L-I-N-S-H-E-A-D, as in David,
18 2114 Pinehurst Avenue, St. Paul 55116. I
19 support the Northern Lights Express as soon as
20 possible, with as much frequency as we can get.
21 I just want to provide a couple of personal
22 perspectives. My wife and I have visited Duluth
23 and the North Shore quite a bit. We were
24 considering buying a second home in Duluth or
25 further up the shore, but the long drives

A Project support noted.

A

Comment

Response

B

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
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13

1 deterred us, and they also deter our visiting
2 more often. Those are the most scenic parts of
3 the state for us, and we would be up there
4 several times a summer if there were a way to get
5 there without driving.

6 A second comment I have is there needs to be
7 connections for people who are taking the
8 Northern Lights Express. There needs to be
9 seamless connections to the use of a car on
10 either end, so I suggest that there should be a
11 rental car operation at the exact station, don't
12 have to take a city bus, don't take a taxi, don't
13 have to walk too far, the -- more than most
14 people would want to walk, it should be right
15 there, as convenient as it is, for instance, with
16 Hertz at the Amtrak station, or with the rental
17 car guests in the airline terminals. That's
18 because I think, like us, most people who would
19 take this train will need to get from where the
20 train comes into the station at either end, and,
21 by the way, on stops along the way, to someplace
22 else, and it'll be longer than walking distance,
23 so rental car is one option, but the rental car
24 companies are gonna wanna make a profit, so I'm
25 not sure they'll do it. Another option would be

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B The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments include additional analysis of projected ridership, costs, and intermodal connectivity for passengers continuing beyond the immediate vicinity of station locations.

Comment

Response

C

D

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
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14

1 [car sharing. We have a car sharing program in
2 the Twin Cities where you can rent cars by the
3 hour. There are commercial car sharing programs,
4 zip car, and others where you can also rent cars
5 by the hour. I don't think this train will be
6 all that useful without such a provision.

7 A third comment I have is I went to Mayo
8 Clinic for some major medical, and the -- the
9 breaking-the-ice conversation I had with the --
10 the new GP that I'd never seen before was how
11 long the drive was, and how nice it would be, he
12 said, since I go up to the Twin Cities from
13 Rochester quite a bit, wouldn't it be great if I
14 could just put my car on the train and get it at
15 the other end, and do my business in the Twin
16 Cities, and come back here to Rochester where I
17 live and work. Well, Amtrak has an Auto Train,
18 I'm sure anybody who's in this business knows,
19 from Virginia to Florida. There used to be auto
20 trains in several places around the country, and
21 the Eurostar is an auto train over in Europe. It
22 sounds far-fetched, but I would seriously suggest
23 for the Northern Lights Express that a study be
24 made of the viability of having at least one or
25 two of the trains per day or per week be auto

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C Comment noted.

D Comment noted.

Comment

Response

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
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15

1 trains for people who want to take their cars
2 with them and who are going up beyond Duluth to
3 Grand Marais, or to Grand Rapids, or to who knows
4 where; or if they're coming down to the Twin
5 Cities, if they're driving around the Twin Cities
6 to see their family, or shop, or to go to the
7 theater, or whatever they're gonna do, or to go
8 to a hospital, medical, like in Rochester, so
9 those are my three comments. I'm a very strong
10 supporter of the Northern Lights Express, and I
11 think we should build it and get it started as
12 quickly as possible. Thank you.

13 DAVE OSTENSON: My name is Dave Ostenson,
14 O-S-T-E-N-S-O-N, and I am in opposition to the
15 high speed rail system because Pine County is
16 struggling with their budget -- with budget
17 issues, having recently built a new multimillion
18 dollar courthouse and jail facility, and the
19 taxpayers of Pine County struggle on paying their
20 property taxes, and one of our commissioners has
21 not been paying his property taxes, and the
22 liabilities of this project rest solely on the
23 taxpayers to which this proposed line will be
24 built. And 90 out of the 150 miles of the
25 proposed HSR, which is the high speed rail line,

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A

B

A Project opposition noted.

B Initial cost estimates were based on high-level concept engineering. The project development process involves progressively more detailed engineering information that informs revised cost estimates. The source of revenue for operating and maintenance costs would be addressed as part of the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments and preliminary engineering.

Comment

Response

B

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
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16

1 from Minneapolis to Duluth, lies within Pine
2 County, so the Pine County taxpayers will have to
3 subsidize the railroad, so that's one reason I am
4 in opposition.

5 Anoka County has pulled all funding and
6 planning of this project. Douglas County, the
7 City of Superior, has funded this project with
8 the total amount of \$7,500 since 2008, and they
9 have not funded this project since 2008, and yet
10 they remain a voting member of the alliance
11 board, so, again, I'm in opposition of the
12 proposed line because of that.

13 Also, Pine County has funded this project
14 with over 130,000 since 2007, and on -- in the
15 April 2nd meeting of the Pine County
16 commissioners, they discussed a wheelage tax, an
17 additional tax for licenses in order to fund
18 fixing up county roads. Well, Pine County would
19 have sufficient amount of funds for the county
20 roads if they would reclaim their \$130,000 that
21 they donated from their transportation fund to
22 the NLX Alliance.

23 Okay. Let's see. Okay. Now, I like riding
24 on the railroad because I lived in Europe for ten
25 years, and I enjoyed the rail -- the traveling by

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See response B above

Comment

Response

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
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17

1 rail, but I don't believe that the taxpayers of
2 the state of Minnesota or of these counties
3 should be responsible for the liabilities and the
4 building of this railroad. The building of the
5 railroad should not come from the state and
6 federal governments or the county taxpayers, but
7 it should come from a private entity, whether it
8 be a business that has the capital to build a
9 railroad, or an individual like Bill Gates, or
10 George Soros, or David Rockefeller, any of those
11 could have the capital to build a railroad. If
12 they -- if they have the money and think they can
13 make a profit, they would build a railroad, but
14 it's just if we don't get a profit, the taxpayers
15 of each of these counties are gonna be on the
16 hook for the -- facilitating the rest of the
17 expenses. Okay.

18 Let me go to Anoka County. Okay. The
19 Northstar expenses for the Northstar line was
20 17,200 -- \$17,283,000 in 2012. The passenger
21 fares brought in only \$3,036,000, this means that
22 the taxpayers had to pay 14,240 -- no,
23 \$14,247,000, and Anoka County, as a member of the
24 taxpaying funds of -- had to pay \$7,000,000 in
25 2012 just to subsidize this train. I wanted to

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Comment

Response

A

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
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18

1 get that in.
2 MARILEE STOREST: My name is Marilee
3 Storest, I live in 1721 East 3rd Street, Duluth,
4 Minnesota 55812. I just feel that I grew up
5 riding the North -- Great Northern train from
6 Duluth to Minneapolis, and I just think it's just
7 a wonderful thing for disabled people, senior
8 citizens, people that don't like to drive in the
9 Cities, businessmen that can't drive, you know,
10 have disabilities, they can't drive to the
11 Cities, for tourists that like to come to Duluth.
12 I'm from the North Shore, Duluth. Yeah, I
13 think it benefits -- benefits both city and all
14 the cities along the -- along the tracks
15 economically, environmentally, it will take the
16 impact off the freeway. It's convenient.
17 Parking is such a hassle in the Cities, and I
18 don't like -- I don't like driving in the Cities.
19 I've only been back in Minnesota for, like, 20
20 years, I don't really like driving in the Cities.
21 I think it's just a -- and with the impact of
22 times to come where we have to have a cleaner way
23 of traveling, I think the train is gonna be good.
24 I mean, every other area has these trains, the
25 East Coast, the West Coast, you know, the

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A Project support noted.

Comment

Response

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
4/4/2013
19

1 Midwest, lower Midwest has these trains, that,
2 and I think it's time that Duluth and
3 Minneapolis, you know, get a train, too. That's
4 about it.

5 RUSSELL BEHLING: Russell Behling, 4712
6 Anderson Road, Duluth, Minnesota. My question
7 would be how does Northern Lights Express come up
8 with the ridership numbers they do? I mean,
9 what -- what is the template for the future
10 numbers they see -- well, that we see projected
11 by them? That's my real question. And with the
12 claims of, I believe, 110 miles an hour, is what
13 they're claiming this train will go, what kind of
14 acceleration and deceleration issues are they
15 gonna wind up with; i.e., if they're gonna be
16 making all of these stops, what good do -- does
17 the 110 mile top speed give you relative to
18 driving on the highway in your car? You can go
19 70 miles an hour legally for the -- most of the
20 way from Minneapolis to Duluth or Duluth to
21 Minneapolis. Those would be my questions, and
22 I'm just asking those, so --

23 TERRY LOVGREN: My name is Terry Lovgren,
24 and I just want to emphasize the fact that I
25 don't believe this railroad is a good project for

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A

B

A The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments include additional analysis of projected ridership, costs, and intermodal connectivity for passengers continuing beyond the immediate vicinity of station locations.

The methodology for ridership, cost and benefit estimates is provided in the Northern Lights Express Technical Memorandum: Functional Analysis of Routes 9, 11, and 11a (Level 2 Analysis), December 2010, provided as Appendix C-2 of the EA.

B The travel times are based on concept level functional analysis as described in the Northern Lights Express Technical Memorandum: Functional Analysis of Routes 9, 11, and 11a (Level 2 Analysis) December 2010, provided as Appendix C-2 of the EA.

If needed, the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments and preliminary engineering would include additional analysis of train speeds and travel times to verify that the proposed action meets the purpose and need of the project.

Comment

Response

A

B

C

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
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1 Minnesota. You know, I've -- I've ridden public
2 transportation out West, and I've ridden out East
3 where there -- there is a real congestion, and
4 people don't have the cars because there's no
5 room, really, to have cars in those areas, and
6 there, it's a -- it's a good project, it's a good
7 thing to have, but here we don't have -- we don't
8 have the density of people to make this something
9 that's really gonna be a benefit to Minnesota,
10 and I -- I am having a real hard time with the
11 tax dollars that are gonna be spent on -- in this
12 railroad in Pine County, or the -- the light rail
13 and -- or not even Pine County, I'm sorry, in
14 Minnesota.

15 I understand that it's a good thing down in
16 the metro area, and there's public transportation
17 in Duluth, but to take public transportation when
18 we've had the Amtrak and the Greyhound bus shut
19 down from Duluth to Minn -- Minneapolis area, if
20 they can't make it, I -- I don't see how light
21 rail is gonna make it, so I just wanted to say
22 that.

23 JOHN HOTTINGER: John Hottinger, 214 Oak
24 Grove Place, St. Paul, Minnesota, I'm a former
25 state legislator, a consultant, an attorney, and

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A Project opposition noted.

B Initial cost estimates were based on high-level concept engineering. The project development process involves progressively more detailed engineering information that informs revised cost estimates. The source of revenue for operating and maintenance costs would be addressed as part of the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments and preliminary engineering.

C Project opposition noted.

Comment

Response

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
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21

1 the reason I'm talking this evening is because
2 I'm a director of a nonprofit organization known
3 as the Minnesota World's Fair. What that
4 organization is attempting to do is bring a
5 World's Fair to Minnesota in 2022-'23. The
6 expected attendance would be between 12 and
7 15,000,000 people over four months in the
8 Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area. Part of the
9 basis for that estimate is the fact that
10 55,000,000 people live within one day's drive of
11 the Twin Cities, including many in Canada. At
12 the time of 2022, according to Google, we can
13 expect the technology that will allow virtual
14 experiences of something like the World's Fair in
15 remote places. One of the areas being considered
16 for a remote experience is Duluth, and likely to
17 be a key place. Having a high speed rail line
18 between Duluth and the metropolitan
19 Minneapolis-St. Paul area would be an incredible
20 enhancement, drive up ridership, not only during
21 the four months of the World's Fair, but also on
22 a continued basis because you'd get two sets of
23 travelers, you'd get travelers from Canada and
24 the northern part of Minnesota who use Duluth as
25 a gateway to the World's Fair with this much

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Comments from John Hottinger about the World's Fair have previously been noted/addressed.

Comment

Response

1 easier access.

2 Secondly, you get people who come to the
3 World's Fair where Minnesota tourism will be
4 dramatically promoted who find the high speed
5 rail an easy access to the variety of tourism
6 attractions in Northern Minnesota and in Southern
7 Canada, that will be a continued and valued
8 resource that will enhance the ridership of the
9 high speed rail.

10 We look at high speed rail as enhancing, of
11 course, the value of having the World's Fair in
12 Minnesota, and I think in looking at the value of
13 this particular route, the World's Fair will be a
14 great asset. Thank you. And I've left behind
15 some materials as an exhibit giving additional
16 information on the World's Fair.

17 GERALD LOVGREN: Okay. I'm Gerald Lovgren,
18 I'm a lifelong resident of Hinckley, Minnesota,
19 my address is 40697 Two Rivers Road. I am kind
20 of appalled at the -- the spending that keeps
21 going on. The ridership of this, I've grown up
22 watching Amtrak and the Greyhound bus service,
23 and different attempts to -- for this
24 transportation, and they've all failed. Bus
25 service is -- has actually gone to next to

A Project opposition noted.

A

Comment

Response

B

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
4/4/2013
23

1 nothing, ridership hasn't been there. We'd see
2 trains go through Hinckley all the time, and the
3 lights would be on in the evening, and there
4 would never be anyone on the train, would be one
5 or two people in a car.

6 They have talked about the cost of riding
7 the new NLX, it possibly being maybe \$30. You're
8 not going to get people commuting to the Cities.
9 The people that are commuting are mostly -- from
10 our area are mostly construction workers, and
11 people that are involved in that type of a thing
12 where they're going to different places. They
13 would -- it would not work to commute to the
14 Cities on that, and then they would get down
15 there, they'd have to keep a car at the other end
16 or have another source of transportation that's
17 going to wherever they're working. My mind just
18 went blank. I just -- I had a -- a lady here
19 tonight that said, well, our taxes aren't gonna
20 go up, and I said, well, where's the funding
21 coming from, and she said federal, and I said
22 that's our taxes. And taxes are getting to the
23 point, we're one of the poorest counties in the
24 state, we have friends and neighbors that are
25 struggling, they're losing their places, and

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B Ticket prices have not yet been determined but would be informed by cost of service, relationship to ridership and funding considerations.

Comment

Response

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
4/4/2013
24

1 different -- their -- their jobs are not the
2 greatest jobs in the world, they're getting by,
3 and they just cannot afford to have this increase
4 in taxes. I just hope that -- that the --
5 whoever's involved in this planning really
6 considers this, I think it's really important,
7 and I appreciate the ability to come and make
8 comment on this. Thank you.

9 Oh, something else that I -- I was -- wanted
10 to add. The -- this type of a transportation is
11 great if you have high population densities, we
12 don't have that. I think the ridership is just
13 gonna be another one of those subsidized,
14 extremely subsidized deals that is not going to
15 work, and if you're out on the East Coast where
16 there's a lot of population centered, like in New
17 York and Boston and -- trains are a very good way
18 to get around in -- in areas like that, or in
19 places in -- like in Europe, but it -- it just
20 isn't gonna happen to be profitable, and I -- I
21 ask that this be really considered, not to
22 mention they're talking about environmental
23 impact, and all this stuff, and -- thank you.

24 LOREN DAVIS: We own a business in Downtown
25 Cambridge, and we fully support this project. I

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C

A

C

The Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessments include additional analysis of projected ridership, costs, and intermodal connectivity for passengers continuing beyond the immediate vicinity of station locations.

A

Project support noted.

Comment

Response

1 think that it would be good for the communities
2 that it will run through from Minneapolis to
3 Duluth, and hopefully connect to other light rail
4 or high speed rail, like to Madison, Wisconsin,
5 or Chicago at one point in time, hopefully, and
6 the economic impact, I'm sure, will help the
7 communities that it runs through.

8 MATHEWS HOLLINSHEAD: This is Mathews
9 Hollinshead, St. Paul, Minnesota, my address is
10 on the sign-up sheet. The additional comment I
11 wanted to make is that my wife and I -- I forget
12 whether I said this in my first comment, but my
13 wife and I love the North Shore, and we love
14 Duluth, and Northern Minnesota. We contemplated
15 buying a second home, or a cabin, or even
16 retiring there, but we won't do it because of the
17 drive. If there were a passenger rail connection
18 to Duluth, and we could, you know, have the
19 property there, or in the North Shore with a car
20 or get to it somehow from the station in Duluth,
21 that would change everything, we'd be much more
22 interested in investing there and spending time,
23 and, obviously, money there, so I think there are
24 others like us, and I hope that's a useful
25 argument. Thank you.

A Project support noted.

A

Comment

Response

A

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
4/4/2013
26

1 NATHAN JOHNSON: My name is Nathan Johnson,
2 and I'm speaking on behalf of myself, not the
3 City of Pine City. I would like to be on record
4 that I strongly support NLX in bringing the line
5 to fruition. I think that we need to build our
6 communities in East Central Minnesota, where I
7 live and work, for the future and think about the
8 future generation. These folks are not so
9 concerned about ownership of homes, they rent in
10 a lot of cases, they aren't so concerned about
11 cars, purchasing them, they lease or car share,
12 and take transit, and we want to be able to have
13 the types of jobs and the types of modes of
14 transportation that are relevant to the younger
15 generation. We don't want our communities to
16 grow old and die off, we want to keep them
17 vibrant, attract jobs, attract people to the
18 region. We understand, living in Pine City, that
19 we are within about ten miles of the state's
20 largest tourist attraction outside of the
21 metropolitan area, the Grand Casino Hinckley.
22 Anything we can do to tie into what's happening
23 with NLX I think is going to make Pine City more
24 viable, and, therefore, I support the project.
25 Thanks.

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A Project support noted.

Comment

Response

A

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
4/4/2013
27

1 PHILLIP QUALY: I am Phillip, with two Ls,
2 Qualy, Q-U-A-L-Y, state legislative director for
3 the United Transportation Union, Minnesota
4 Legislative Board, representing railroad
5 conductors, switchmen, remote control locomotive
6 engineers on the Amtrak, Burlington Northern
7 Santa Fe, Canadian Pacific, Union Pacific,
8 Canadian National, and several other roads in
9 Minnesota. We think this is a great project. We
10 think the NLX team is doing great advance work
11 for this project, and it can be built.

12 Burlington Northern Santa Fe is a strong
13 partner, they run great operations with Northstar
14 Commuter, Seattle Sounder, and other passenger
15 services across United States, and they're just
16 top -- a top-flight service provider. We're
17 familiar with this railroad line, we think it's a
18 good candidate, and we hope all parties work
19 together and keep safety/security first and
20 foremost.

21 We had -- the UTU, United Transportation
22 Union, had a chance to see the TEMS report prior,
23 and we thought that was a good informative report
24 on projected ridership and train frequencies and
25 time, and we think those set attainable goals.

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A Project support noted.

Comment

Response

NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL

PUBLIC COMMENTS
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1 And this project will tie Northern Minnesota
2 together with the Twin Cities and open up all
3 sorts of economic opportunities. People will
4 ride this, we've seen it across the nation, these
5 routes are successful, and we think 110 miles per
6 hour goal speed is -- is the correct next step,
7 so -- we also want to point out that while
8 Northern Lights Express might choose to have an
9 independent, or a MnDOT operation, Amtrak is --
10 ridership is up 55 percent in the United States
11 since 1997, with 31,000,000 passengers last year.
12 Last year, 2011, Amtrak returned on the operating
13 dollar -- 74 cents on the operating dollar
14 covered costs. When you factor in Amtrak's real
15 estate and vendor revenues, Amtrak returned 86
16 cents on the dollar. This past year, 2012,
17 Amtrak improved that to 88 percent on the
18 operating dollar. We don't know of any other
19 public mode of transportation, air or surface,
20 that has a smaller operating subsidy than Amtrak.
21 Amtrak is proving to be a successful carrier.
22 They have the congressional authority and
23 mandates to work with the Class 1 carriers, they
24 are self-insured, and we look forward to more
25 improved Amtrak service in the state of

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NORTHERN LIGHTS EXPRESS HIGH SPEED RAIL PUBLIC COMMENTS
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1 Minnesota, possibly first between Chicago,
2 Milwaukee, St. Paul, and St. Cloud corridor, but
3 should that become the case in the next two years
4 through St. Paul Union Depot with additional
5 Amtrak service, perhaps Amtrak might be -- well
6 be a candidate for Northern Lights Express.

7 Whomever Northern Lights Express chooses to
8 operate and run their railroad operations, we
9 know that we trust that they will assure that
10 it's done in a safe, secure, efficient manner,
11 and MnDOT has done great work to date, and we
12 look forward to this project moving forward.

13 (Public Comments concluded at approximately
14 8:09 p.m.)

15 * * * * *

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Comment

Response

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1 STATE OF MINNESOTA)
)ss.
2 COUNTY OF WASHINGTON)

3 Be it known that I took the Public Comments in
4 the above-entitled hearing on the 4th day of April, 2013,
5 at Cambridge, Minnesota;

6 that I was then and there a Notary Public in
7 and for the County of Washington, State of Minnesota, and
8 that by virtue thereof I was authorized to administer
9 an oath;

10 that the Public Comments at said hearing were
11 recorded in stenotypy by myself and reduced to print
12 by means of Computer-Assisted Transcription under my
13 direction, and that it is a true record of said comments
14 given to the best of my ability;


15 that I am not related to any of the parties
16 hereto nor interested in the outcome of the action.

17 Dated this 15th day of April, 2013.

Cheryl M. Lippman

19 Cheryl M. Lippman, RPR
20 Notary Public,
21 Washington County, Minnesota
22 My commission expires 1-31-2018
23
24
25

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John C. Hottinger, Director
214 Oak Grove Place, St. Paul 55105
The Minnesota World's Fair *651-269-8860*
john@minnesotaworldsfair.com

Objective: Bring World's Fair 2022-23 to Minnesota

In 2022-23, it will have been nearly 40 years since the world beat a path to the United States for a World's Fair, the "intellectual equivalent of the Olympics." It's time for a U.S. community to invite the world to experience first-hand a cultural, trade-expanded, creative, inclusive and innovative future.

World Fairs attract millions of visitors who explore and discover pavilions, exhibitions and cultural events staged by hundreds of participants including nations, international organizations, communities and businesses.

Model U.S. World's Fair

- o 1962 Century 21 Exposition in Seattle catapulted a sleepy lumber town into a key world city.

Recent and future World Fairs/Expos

- o 2010 Shanghai, China
- o 2012 Yeosu, South Korea
- o 2015 Milan, Italy
- o 2017 Astana, Kazakhstan
- o 2020 Five countries competing: Brazil, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, United Arab Emirates
- o 2022-23 Minnesota (Work in progress)

Traditionally, it takes 10 years to plan, design, and fund such a mega-event and major economic development project. After more than two years of preparation, the initial design charrette for the Minnesota World's Fair was completed in mid-December. The group – assisted by internationally-respected leaders in world fair design and planning – made recommendations about proceeding with site selection, organizational structure, theme, and other components of assembling a credible proposal to bring the 2022-23 World's Fair to Minnesota.

Building for the Minnesota World's Fair:


- Fund a detailed feasibility study followed by theme and final site selection process.
- **\$400,000 to fund the feasibility study.** (\$100,000 already raised.)
- **\$4-5 million to prepare a world class plan.**
- Leadership and committed support from the business, cultural, government, agriculture, technology, architectural, development and arts communities.
- Include 100s of volunteers, advisory group members, developers, planners, architects and other experts.

Potential Benefits:

- A "world mission" of 100+ countries to Minnesota
 - o Dignitaries, political and business leaders
- Elevating the knowledge of Minnesota around the globe
- Worldwide opportunity to see our state's assets – creativity, innovation, productive businesses eager to grow in the world marketplace, arts, education, recreation, and environment.
- Hundreds of millions in investment by foreign countries and thousands of construction and event jobs
- New permanent and iconic infrastructure: transportation, housing, business park for trade, culture, arts and entertainment centers.
- Local event market (one-day drive): 55 million people.

The Minnesota World's Fair *213 E. 4th St. #405 St. Paul 55101* *651-269-8860*

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The Minnesota World's Fair

Founding Management Team

Steve Heckler, President - Placed bid to design, and manage USA Pavilion in Yeosu Korea. Current Projects: Festival of Nations, Director, Founder and Executive Director of the Twin Cities Jazz Festival, owner of HSR Events (manages several large events and conventions).

John Hottinger, VP Legal and Government Relations - Former Minnesota Senate Majority Leader; past Chair of The Council of State Governments and the Midwest Legislative Conference; Seven-year board member Northeast-Midwest Institute, Washington, D.C. Principal in Hottinger and Gillette LLC.

Cristina Gillette, VP for Operations - Former member for ISD 197 school board (Eagan - Mendota Heights - West St. Paul) and former chair of East Metro Integration District school board; Principal in Hottinger and Gillette LLC with offices in St. Paul, Minneapolis and Washington, D.C.

Seann Nelipinath, VP for International Relations - President, Chamber of Commerce of India.

Expert Consultants

Barry Howard, President/Creative Director, Barry Howard Limited, Santa Barbara, California - A pioneer in the field of interpretive design with international prominence through the creation and design of myriad cultural attractions, museums, visitor centers, Worlds Fair pavilions and major exhibitions for more than thirty years; a trained theatrical designer, he brings a strong sense of dramatic environment and insight into the psychology of audience response; his respect for social evolution combined with his insightful historical perspective has chronicled the American experience and explored the future horizon; his propensity for thinking "outside of the box" and adapting cutting-edge communications technology to user-friendly, interactive and immersive experiences has become legendary in the design profession.

Clive B. Jones, Principal, Knowledge Based Consulting Group -- San Francisco Bay Area, with affiliates in Europe, the Middle East and Asia Pacific; expertise: educational and museum attractions, entertainment industry market analysis, database marketing, financial planning, and applications of new technology; Board member and past Chairman of the Technology and Research Committees of the Pacific Asia Travel association; Board and Leadership Forum member of the World Tourism Organization Business Council; has conducted a number of assignments directly for the World Tourism Organization and other tourism and recreation organizations developing master plans, investment strategies, and marketing programs.

Gordon Linden, International Exposition Consultant and Advisor - An architect and urban/regional planner with an MBA in management; over 40 years of experience in project design and management; led and collaborated on a variety of unique and challenging projects ranging from International Expos and Olympic Games to tourism plans and visitor attractions; recently coauthored "*The Expo Book: The Past, Present and Future of Organizing International Expositions*" (www.theexpobook.com) which was launched at the U.S. Pavilion at Shanghai's Expo 2020, the most attended international exposition in history with over 70 million in attendance. He helped develop Turkey's bid for the 2020 World Fair.

The Minnesota World's Fair 213 E. 4th St. #405 St. Paul 55101 651-269-8860

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Minnesota World's Fair Charrette - Executive Summary	2012
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The Minnesota World's Fair Charrette
December 13-14, 2012
Crowne Plaza Hotel, St. Paul, MN


Charrette – An intense period of collaborative and creative brainstorming, involving key founders and advisors for a proposed project.

On December 13 and 14, 2012 a charrette was convened in St. Paul by the non-profit organization The Minnesota World's Fair. The charrette was held with the purpose to shape the vision of a Minnesota-based World's Fair by bringing together founders, consultant/experts on World Fair's, and informed Minnesota-based advisors. This group offered suggestions for proceeding with site analysis, theme, organizational structure, and assembling a credible and successful proposal.

The two-day proceedings involved a group of 14 people including three founding members of The Minnesota World's Fair non-profit, three World's Fair consultants, and the remaining is a varied group of local expert advisors. The local advisors attended based on their areas of expertise, with length of participation ranging from 1 hour to 2-days. The list of participants is as follows:

Founding Members	World's Fair Consultants	Local Advisors
Steve Heckler Cristina Gillette John Hottinger Seann Nelipinath --traveling for the project in Middle East	Barry Howard Gordon Linden Clive Jones	Tim Griffin, Riverfront Corp. Rob Jacobs, former Olympic Committee Patrick Boylan, Metropolitan Council Bob Breck, Science Museum of Minnesota Jeff Heegaard, Haberman Tim Korby, Donohue and Associates, Inc. Gail Junnila, Explore Minnesota Adam Johnson, Visit St. Paul

Comment

 Minnesota World's Fair Charrette

The group's discussion was professionally facilitated and recorded by Donna Rae Scheffert, Leadership Tools. The agenda covered the following areas:

World's Fair Background Information. The discussions began with a presentation on World's Fair background information, by Gordon Linden, author of "The Expo Guide". The group focused on the many benefits to Minnesota, including developing world recognition to MSP and providing a legacy economic development project.

Site Analysis. The site-analysis identified a variety of potential sites in Minnesota and provided some of the criteria for the choice of a site. A site analysis committee will be formed to continue to develop the criteria and possible sites.

Organizational Structure. The Minnesota World's Fair would be one of the largest business development projects in the state's history, so much of the discussion was about seeking pathways that would help the project succeed through organizational and strategic efficiency, clarity in accountability and mindful financial management. Establishing an advisory board to guide the organizing team is a critical next step.

Theme. A key to success will be finding a theme that has global appeal yet helps define Minnesota. Many potential themes and sub-themes were discussed, as well as the criteria for choosing a theme. One significant issue identified, is the challenge to choose a theme that will be relevant in ten years.

The outcome of the charrette included identifying the next steps for completing a detailed proposal for a successful Minnesota World's Fair. The most immediate need is to complete a feasibility study. To do so, the organizing team must raise \$350,000 - \$400,000 of funding to do a thorough and detailed study that will demonstrate the project's capability for success - a capability that will ultimately be built on the resources, skills, assets and willingness of Minnesotan's citizens and businesses.

For More Information:

Cristina Gillette
The Minnesota World's Fair
213 4th Street East, 4th Floor
St. Paul, MN 55101-2670
612-860-6101

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MINNESOTA
WORLD'S
FAIR

Minnesota World's Fair 2022-23?

What are our chances?

It appears that the Greater MSP area will not bid for the 2024 Olympics, a sporting event, held in London for 17 days last summer which sold seven million tickets with public sector funding of almost \$14.5 Billion including a massive new stadium. The focus was properly on the 10,800 athletes who participated.

If Minneapolis would have proceeded with a bid for 2024, there would have been an expensive competition to beat other American cities and then another very expensive competition to win against much larger world cities. Rio de Janeiro will host in 2016 and in 2020 it will be either in Istanbul, Madrid or Tokyo.

Here is another great idea for vaulting Greater MSP to a higher level of world attention and attractiveness; an event often described as either "the largest cultural event in the world" or "the intellectual equivalent of the Olympics": **A World Fair in 2022 or 2023.** And it won't require another expensive, big Olympic stadium that will be left virtually vacant after the 17 Days of Summer.

The Minnesota World Fair (or Expo) would be a cultural event for four months in summer likely to sell up to 10-13 million tickets. U.S. public sector funding would primarily help implement an already vibrant transportation plan in Greater MSP and a couple of very large shell buildings for the exhibits of smaller countries. Most of the public investment is made by the more than 100 countries which would participate, with the larger countries building their own Pavilions. In addition, a few large corporate participants would build their own Pavilions. And, the focus would be on culture, world interaction and the strengths of the host area.

In addition, the World Fair in 2022-23 would have a much higher likelihood of landing in Minnesota, than an Olympics. World's Fairs – more frequently called World Expos outside the United States – are held four times per decade. The largest ones ("Registered") last longer than Minnesota weather would easily permit. The last Registered World Fair drew 70 million people to Shanghai over six months in 2010 and the next one is scheduled in Milan in 2015. The smaller ones ("Recognized") usually run about three months. The 2012 World Fair – in direct competition with the London Olympics – was held in **Yeosu, South Korea** a city of about 300,000 people. It attracted eight million attendees over three months, despite being located a three-hour bullet train ride away from the nearest major airport in Seoul.

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In 2017, the World's Fair will be held in the modernizing city of **Astana, Kazakhstan**. Astana is steadily becoming a major tourist destination in Central Asia. One of its landmark tourist attractions is the Bayterek Tower, which is the leading and most recognizable symbol of the city. (See photo below.) Astana, a city with many parallels with Greater MSP, has a population of about 750,800 people split in two by the Ishim River. The old buildings that



remained from the Soviet era are now being removed and replaced with totally new structures resulting in significant construction work throughout the city. Most of the recently completed structures had been accredited to internationally acclaimed architects and designers.

Astana is the second coldest capital city in the world after Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, a position held by Canada's capital, Ottawa, until Astana attained capital city status in 1998. Astana has an extreme continental climate with warm summers (featuring occasional brief rain showers) and long, very cold, dry winters. Summer temperatures occasionally reach 95°F while -22°F to -31°F is not unusual between mid-December and early March.

Astana has much better transportation outlets than Yeosu with an international airport and a major railway hub. It is a sister city of Pittsburgh, PA.

Current possible competitors for the 2022-23 World Fair are: Canary Islands (Spain), Copenhagen (Denmark), Newcastle (Australia) and Sorlandet (Norway). For more details on potential bidders go to www.expobids.com/2022-2023.htm Other potential USA cities have talked with the Minnesota organizers and have pulled back from any effort for 2022-23 (see same website for prospective 2025 bids from Houston and San Francisco.)

The World's Fair in Minnesota is a viable, realistic and enormous opportunity for allowing Greater MSP to be the host of a "World trade mission to Minnesota."

- Cheaper to host, longer lasting and higher attendance than the Olympics.
- A cultural and intellectual event that highlights two of the biggest strengths of the area.
- Help add to a world-class airport by leveraging a world-class transportation system.
- Attendees and performers include foreign dignitaries and business leaders, a wide variety of cultural, arts and entertainment icons and tourists that will expand world familiarity with our diverse and beautiful environments all across the Midwest.

For over two years a dedicated group of founders has been working towards this goal.

Comment

Response

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- We attended the Yeosu World Expo for over a week to get an understanding of the logistics, atmosphere, and management of that effort. Guided by the managers of the U.S. Pavilion and with the exceptional assistance of the State Department, we met with representatives of the attending countries including leaders from Spain, Japan, United Arab Emirates (Dubai), and Italy, and received tours in many of the over 100 pavilions.
- We've talked with top officials of the U.S. State Department about improving relationships with the Committee that decides what country will host World Fairs.
- We've launched a process for hiring a government relations firm with the best relationships in Washington to meet our goals and for a number of other promotional and professional personnel for future implementation of our bid.
- We've started building the broad-based and inclusive organizing committee that will shape the bid effort and the follow-up implementation of the World Fair itself.
- We've held our first two-day design charrette which engaged our national experts and local design and planning leaders in an initial exchange of ideas and proposed designs.
- We're doing fundraising, fundraising and more fundraising to raise the money to do a world-class and successful bid.

AND, we've retained some of the world's best experts on how to plan and run a world fair to help us:

- ✦ **Barry Howard, President/Creative Director, Barry Howard Limited, Santa Barbara, California** – A pioneer in the field of interpretive design with international prominence through the creation and design of myriad cultural attractions, museums, visitor centers, Worlds Fair pavilions and major exhibitions for more than thirty years. Mr. Howard's respect for social evolution combined with his insightful historical perspective provides the foundation upon which the office has, over the course of many projects, chronicled the American experience and explored the future horizon. In addition, his propensity for thinking "outside of the box" and adapting cutting-edge communications technology to user-friendly, interactive and immersive experiences has become legendary in the design profession. Guest lecturer Harvard School of Design.
- ✦ **Clive B. Jones, Principal, Knowledge Based Consulting Group** – Based in San Francisco Bay Area, with affiliates and expertise in Europe, the Middle East and Asia Pacific, including Australia. Expertise: real estate, educational and museum attractions, and entertainment industry market analysis, product development, database marketing, financial planning, and applications of new technology in projects that have served as gathering places for local and regional residents as well as tourists. Past Chairman of the Technology and Research Committees of the Pacific Asia Travel association and served on its Management Committee and Board. Serves on the Board of the World Tourism Organization Business Council and as a member of its Leadership Forum.
- ✦ **Gordon Linden, International Exposition Consultant and Advisor** – An architect and urban and regional planner with an MBA in management with over 40 years of



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experience in urban and regional project design and management. He has led and collaborated on a variety of unique and challenging projects ranging from International Expos and Olympic Games to tourism plans and visitor attractions. He recently co-authored "*The Expo Book: The Past, Present and Future of Organizing International Expositions*" a theme park and visitor attraction industry publication (and on the web at www.theexpobook.com). He helped develop the 2020 World Fair bid for Turkey.

✦ **Urso Chappell** – A graphic designer, writer, branding specialist and consultant on World Fairs who wrote the official World Expo 2012 blog. In 1998, he founded ExpoMuseum.com which has become the preeminent online world's fair source. In 2009, he co-founded [The World's Fair Podcast](#) and recently opened ExpoBids.com at to keep track of past and future World Fair bidding.

So, What Does Minnesota Do Next?

With two years of foundational work already finished, the next steps are straight forward:

1. Complete a **feasibility study in the summer of 2013** – the national experts will lead the way in coordination with local experts, especially in the areas of arts, architecture, engineering, design, land use, development and in consultation with all layers of Minnesota business, state and local government. This will cost around \$400,000 in with an additional \$300,000 to keep operations of the organizing committee growing and building the infrastructure for the bid in Minnesota and Washington.
2. If **feasible**, prepare a sophisticated and detailed bid proposal to present to the Bureau of International Exhibitions in Paris which sanctions World Fairs. Currently, the reasonable expectation would be that the bidding process – plus the lobbying efforts with foreign nations to get their supportive vote for our bid – would cost in the neighborhood of \$10 million over the next three years. This would also include the cost of running a **Welcome to Minnesota** office as the base of operations to assist and connect with the foreign dignitaries, business and arts leaders and government officials from the many countries who will come to visit, study the proposed site and get familiar with our area, community leaders and sponsoring businesses.
3. **Build the Fair!!** Welcome the visitors and provide them a magnificent common theme for the future and an intense exposure to Minnesota. Expected cost will be determined from the feasibility study and will be paid for by a combination of gate and concession receipts, business sponsorships, foreign government investment and on-site construction, and local private and government contributions.



Comment

Response

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Minnesota World's Fair Consultant Clive Jones Statement
E-mail To Prominent Twin City Businessperson in Hospitality/Travel Industry
December 2012

I was in MSP to participate in a two day charrette regarding a potential World's Fair for Minnesota in 2022. I was joined by designer Barry Howard and planner Gordon Linden - who has literally written the book on World Expositions. The local participants included three of the founders (Steve Heckler, Cristina Gillette, and John Hottinger) as well as a dozen or so from the community, government, cultural institutions and private sector (one of them - Rob Jacobs was involved in the Olympic bid and is probably known to your friend). The charrette was moderated by a professional facilitator and I think we made a lot of progress with the idea and how it could happen.

Although a summary of the charrette is still being prepared, some key conclusions and direction were developed for the project as follows

First, there appears to be a strong market opportunity for a successful event lasting 5 to 6 months. This conclusion comes from the size of the regional market (55.4 million) that exists within a one day drive of MSP and the likely draw of the event itself. By 2022, there will not have been a World's Fair in the US for nearly 40 years - and we anticipate that there is a large pent up domestic demand that would respond to and visit such an event - for many, this will be the first US World's Fair in their lifetime.

It should also serve as a triggering cue to visit Minnesota for US visitors from out of the regional area and for international visitors - positioning Minnesota as a Gateway to their US itinerary. Equally important is the attendance potential, we think there will be a large pent up demand from the foreign countries, corporations, and organizations that typically go to World's Fairs (generally well over 100 countries can be expected to participate) and they will relish this event as a long overdue way to increase their visibility to the US domestic market, its

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businesses, and international travelers - and they will create high quality pavilions and exhibitions accordingly - which will drive further attendance. A virtuous circle.

We also spent quite a bit of time looking at potential sites and there are several riverfront opportunities that are especially attractive with good access from current and proposed transportation systems. These will be evaluated further as the project moves forward.

Whereas it is a bit early to come to conclusions on what the appropriate theme would be for the World's Fair, it was generally felt that it should be positive, look to the future, and relate to Minnesota's many strengths in health, culture, education, and inclusivity. To be successful, the theme must also be broad enough that each participating country and business can interpret it from its own viewpoint and strengths. Our very preliminary conclusion has an umbrella theme of "A Healthy Future" with subthemes related to the components of health (environment, arts and culture, medicine and wellness, education, inclusivity and understanding, food and agriculture, creativity and innovation, etc). This certainly needs to be defined further and local leaders in each of these areas will be important to identify and bring on board.

The outcomes or legacy of such an event are numerous and range from marketing exposure/ positioning MSP as a World City (much like Seattle achieved after the 1962 Fair) and post World's Fair uses of the facilities and land (examples could be a convention center and headquarters hotel, cultural and performance venues, and private real estate opportunities where available). It is also common that there is an icon building/ structure that will serve as a remembrance of the Fair and an identity symbol.

I appreciate your initial positive reaction to the idea and certainly there are major tourism and hospitality aspects that run throughout such an event. In the meantime and as we discussed, you might want to meet with the founders group and get a further briefing on what is happening, the timeline, and next steps. I have copied them on this email so you can work out a meeting.

Response

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