



Memorandum

To: Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (BCWMC)
From: Barr Engineering Co. (Barr) (Karen Chandler, PE; Jim Herbert, PE)
Subject: Item 4G: Provide Comments on the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the METRO Blue Line Extension Project – Minneapolis and Robbinsdale, MN
BCWMC July 18, 2024 Meeting Agenda
Date: July 11, 2024
Project: 23270051 1030 003

4G Provide Comments on the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the METRO Blue Line Extension Project – Minneapolis and Robbinsdale, MN

Recommendations

- Consider approving the comments on the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) presented in this memorandum and direct either the BCWMC Chair, Administrator, or Engineer to submit the comments online.

Background

The METRO Blue Line Extension project is a light rail train project running northwest from downtown Minneapolis (Target Field Station) to Brooklyn Park. The BCWMC previously reviewed the project when it was proposed to run through Theodore Wirth Park, near Bassett Creek. There were multiple floodplain and wetland impacts as part of those previous BCWMC reviews. However, due to issues with the rail line, the Metropolitan Council realigned the METRO Blue Line Extension project. With the realignment, the project will no longer run through Theodore Wirth Park. In the BCWMC, the project will now run north (paralleling the east side of I-94), then west along 21st Ave N. and then northwest along County Road 81/Bottineau Blvd. This realignment avoids impacts to the Bassett Creek floodplain and wetlands in the watershed.

As a result of the realignment, the Metropolitan Council and the Federal Transit Administration prepared a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for the METRO Blue Line Extension project. The Engineer received an email from the Metropolitan Council on June 14, 2024, announcing the release of the SDEIS and the opportunity to comment on the SDEIS. The SDEIS is available on the project website at BlueLineExt.org.

Separate from the SDEIS, the Metropolitan Council designers requested that the Engineer review the 30% design drawings for the realigned project. In response to that request, the Engineer performed a preliminary review of the drawings and provided separate comments to the Metropolitan Council regarding the drawings.

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Comments on the SDEIS

Based on the Engineer's review of the SDEIS and the Engineer's separate review of the 30% design drawings for the project, we developed the following suggested comments on the (SDEIS) for the METRO Blue Line Extension project:

- With the realignment of the METRO Blue Line Extension project, the project alignment no longer follows Bassett Creek in Theodore Wirth Park and there are no longer any floodplain impacts and it appears there are no longer any wetland impacts within the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (BCWMC) jurisdiction.
- For clarity, all references to "Bassett Creek" and "Bassett Creek Tunnel" should be changed to "Bassett Creek Old Tunnel" as only the Bassett Creek Old Tunnel crosses the project alignment. Examples of where this change should be made are in Section 5.3.2.2 Waterways and Public Waters (including Table 5-6) and Section 2.3.3 in Appendix A-5 Water Resources – Technical – Report (including Table 2-2); there may be other locations in the SDEIS where this change should be made.
- The Minneapolis Page 6 drawing in Appendix A-E Conceptual Engineering Drawings should show and label the location of the Old Bassett Creek Tunnel.
- Separate from the SDEIS, the BCWMC Engineer also performed a preliminary review of the 30% design drawings. Layout 2 of 23 of the design drawings shows a blue shaded line that should be labeled as the "Old Bassett Creek Tunnel."
- Through the BCWMC Engineer's preliminary review of the 30% design drawings, we heard that there are plans to modify the Bassett Creek Old Tunnel as part of the METRO Blue Line Extension project. The BCWMC is less concerned regarding the Bassett Creek Old Tunnel because the City of Minneapolis and MWMO manage the Bassett Creek Old Tunnel infrastructure. However, the BCWMC has some interest because the Old Bassett Creek Tunnel serves as an overflow for Bassett Creek during high flows. In 2000, the BCWMC, MWMO, and the City of Minneapolis entered into a joint and cooperative agreement that defines the responsibilities of the parties with respect to the New Bassett Creek Tunnel and the Old Bassett Creek Tunnel. The agreement requires accommodation of a 50 cfs overflow from Bassett Creek to the Bassett Creek Old Tunnel during the 100-year flood.

Recommendation for Commission Action

1. Consider approving the above suggested comments on the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS).
2. Direct either the BCWMC Chair, Administrator, or Engineer to submit the comments online. The online submittal form is shown on the attached page.