

# Hennepin County Bottineau Transitway Health Impact Assessment Summary



Prepared by Crystal Myslajek

## **Overview of the Bottineau Transitway**

The Bottineau Transitway (METRO Blue Line extension) will bring light rail transit (LRT) to the northwest area of the Twin Cities. The 13-mile corridor will start in downtown Minneapolis, pass through the cities of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale and Crystal, and end in Brooklyn Park.

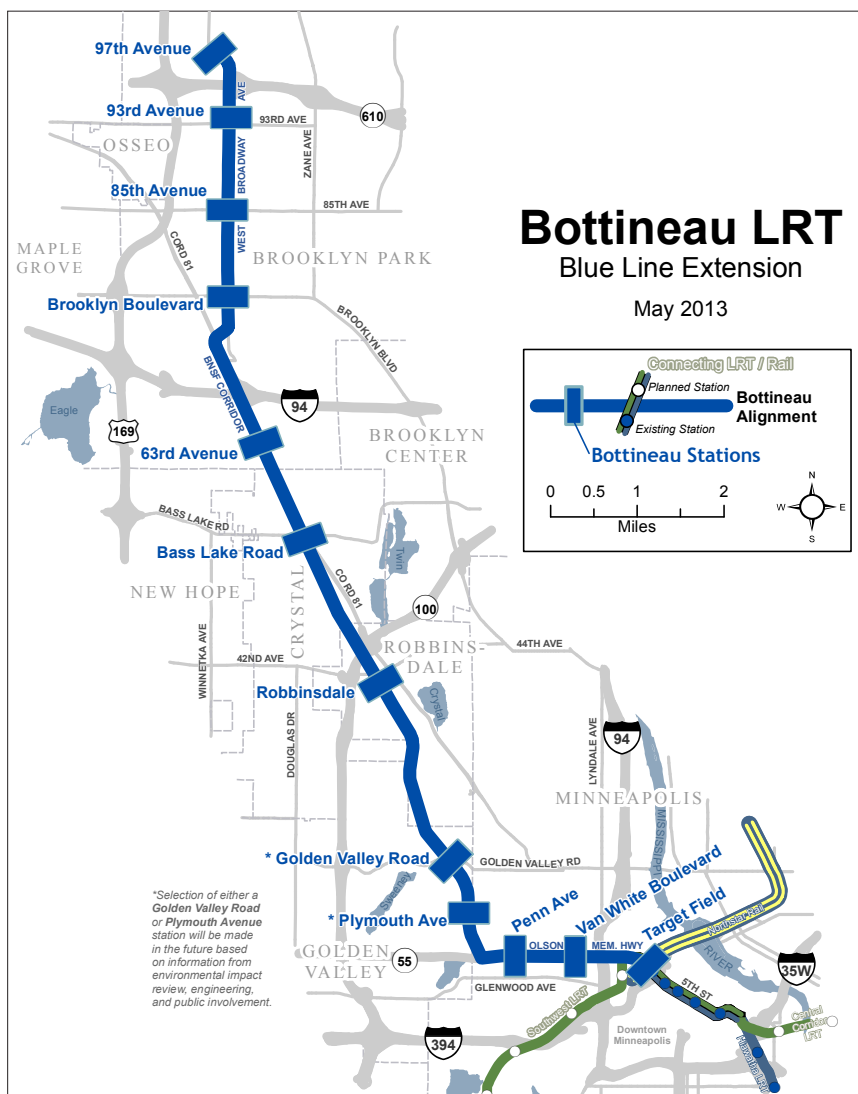
This extension of the METRO Blue Line (Hiawatha LRT) will connect to the METRO Green Line and Green Line extension (Central Corridor and Southwest LRT) and Northstar Commuter Rail at Target Field Station in Minneapolis.

As part of the overall planning for the transit line, Hennepin County conducted a health study, known as a Health Impact Assessment (HIA), to review the connections among health, transit and land use.

## Where health, transit and land use intersect

Health begins in the environments where we live, learn, work and play. Transportation projects, such as highways, public transit and sidewalks, shape these environments. The Bottineau HIA found that the Bottineau Transitway **offers real potential to improve health for communities** living near the transit stations. People from all over the region who travel on the light rail line could also benefit.

The new transitway could have health benefits for communities by improving physical activity levels, job access, housing and transportation costs, traffic safety, education access and access to healthy food.



## Physical activity

### The Bottineau Transitway could increase people's daily physical activity

Nationally, **people who use transit get 24 minutes of exercise per weekday** just by walking to and from transit. The station areas of the transitway could include improved environments for biking and walking, such as more crosswalks and paths. Research shows that streets that are safe and comfortable for pedestrians and bicyclists encourage people to get exercise as part of their daily routine.

The Bottineau Transitway will improve access to Theodore Wirth Park with proposed station options near Golden Valley Road or Plymouth Avenue. Studies show that when people have access to parks they are more likely to be physically active.

### Why this matters for health

Research shows that exercise is vital for good health. However, about half of adults and three-quarters of children living in Hennepin County do not get recommended levels of exercise.

## Employment

### The Bottineau Transitway could improve access to jobs for communities in the station areas

Increasing transit connections to jobs throughout the region expands people's options for employment. The light-rail line also encourages economic growth and more jobs in communities surrounding the transit stations.

The construction and day-to-day service of the Bottineau Transitway will also create jobs in the construction, and operation and maintenance fields.

### Why this matters for health

When people have quality jobs that provide a living wage they tend to live longer and have better physical and mental health. Many factors affect whether a person is employed and what kind of job he or she has. One important factor is transportation.

Currently, jobs are spread throughout the region, making it difficult and expensive for workers with limited car access to reach potential jobs. In some areas of the Bottineau Corridor, **nearly 60 percent of households do not own a vehicle.**

## Housing and transportation costs

### The Bottineau Transitway could make the combined costs of housing and transportation more affordable

**Transportation and housing costs are the two largest expenses for American families.** Sometimes neighborhoods that have low housing costs can be expensive to live in because people have to drive most places and end up spending more on transportation.

The Bottineau Transitway could help make the combined costs of housing and transportation more affordable because **neighborhoods with access to transit, walkable streets and a variety of services have lower transportation costs.** The new transitway also has the potential to raise property values, which could spark economic development and increase housing options in station areas.

Cities, communities and developers should work together to keep housing options affordable in station areas. These efforts can ensure that neighborhoods near the transit stations continue to be affordable for low-income households.

### Why this matters for health

Households that have lower transportation costs have more left over in their budgets for resources that promote health like nutritious food and health care. Budgets that are less burdened by transportation costs can also help to reduce stress and prevent homelessness.

## Traffic safety

### The Bottineau Transitway could improve traffic safety

Transit is one of the **safest forms of transportation available.** More people riding transit means people will be using a safer mode of transportation and will be less likely to be involved in traffic crashes.

The neighborhoods surrounding the transitway stations could include improved environments for walking and biking, such as more crosswalks and bike lanes. Such investments can **reduce the risk of traffic-related injuries and deaths.**

Research shows that streets that are safe and comfortable for pedestrians and bicyclists encourage more people to walk and bike. When more people are walking and biking there are **lower rates of traffic accidents** involving pedestrians and bicyclists.

### Why this matters for health

Injuries from motor vehicle crashes can impact quality of life and have huge costs for the people involved and their families. **In 2011, 5,089 people were injured in crashes in the cities along the Bottineau Transitway.**

From 2001 to 2011 there were 5,094 total lives lost in collisions in the State of Minnesota. In 2011 alone, there were more than 72,000 motor vehicle crashes resulting in 368 deaths statewide. Out of the 368 deaths, 40 were pedestrians.

## Education access

### The Bottineau Transitway will provide access to educational and vocational institutions

The Bottineau Transitway will connect riders to North Hennepin Community College and other educational and vocational training institutions in the project area.

**“I live 11 miles from the college and with my old vehicle it costs me \$8/day in gasoline. There are no transit options that will serve my area and having a car is the only reason I am able to attend college.”**  
North Hennepin Community College student

### Why this matters for health

When people have more education they have better chances of securing jobs that pay well and do not expose them to dangerous or unhealthy conditions. They also gain knowledge and skills that help them access health information and resources. Currently, some students living in Hennepin County find that limited car access and high transportation costs are barriers to attending college.

## Access to healthy food

### The Bottineau Transitway could improve access to healthy food

Investments in station areas could encourage the placement of grocery stores nearby. The Bottineau Transitway could also help households decrease their transportation costs, freeing up more of their income for nutritious foods.

**“I use public transportation every day and it has probably saved me thousands of dollars on parking fees. With the money I save, I’m able to buy healthier food. ... Also, using public transportation puts less wear and tear on my car, freeing up even more money that I don’t need to use on car repairs.”**  
Hennepin County resident

### Why this matters for health

Good nutrition is vital to health, disease prevention and childhood development. When people have access to healthy food options they are better able to include healthy food in their diets.

**Less than one-third of residents living in cities along the Bottineau Transitway eat recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables.**

## Better Health for All

### The Bottineau Transitway could help promote better health for disadvantaged communities

In Hennepin County, **low-income communities and communities of color have higher rates of preventable health problems** such as obesity and type II diabetes than do white and higher income populations.

These differences in health are the result of a wider set of forces: economics, social policies, politics, and our built environment. It is important that the health-promoting benefits of the transitway reach these communities. The health impacts of the Bottineau Transitway on these populations will **depend on efforts to ensure their access to the light rail.**

## Recommended Actions

Based on the Bottineau HIA findings, Hennepin County staff and the Bottineau HIA Advisory Committee developed a set of recommended actions.

The list below outlines the top five recommended actions for Hennepin County, the Metropolitan Council and the cities along the Bottineau Transitway to advance the light rail line's positive impacts on health. Additional recommendations are listed in the full report at [www.hennepin.us/bottineauhia](http://www.hennepin.us/bottineauhia).

---

### Recommended Action 1

**Responsible parties:** Cities, Hennepin County and Metropolitan Council

Conduct additional analysis to identify low-income and transit-dependent populations along the proposed route that could easily connect to light rail via the bus or another transit service.

**Rationale:** Conducting additional analysis could help ensure more transit-dependent, minority and low-income populations have access to the new light rail line's wide range of health-related benefits.

---

## Recommended Action 2

**Responsible parties:** Cities, Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council

Continue public outreach efforts with populations living along the corridor in upcoming phases of the Bottineau Transitway project, especially traditionally under-represented minority, non-English speaking and low-income communities.

**Rationale:** Conducting extensive public engagement efforts could help the light rail line and transit areas better serve traditionally under-represented communities and improve access for them.

---

## Recommended Action 3

**Responsible parties:** Cities, Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council

Target residential and commercial growth in the station areas and implement zoning, parking requirements and building codes that encourage higher density, mixed-use development that will benefit current and future communities.

**Rationale:** Targeting growth in the station areas will help increase transit-accessible job opportunities and increase housing options in neighborhoods that have lower transportation costs. Higher density, mixed-use development is more accessible for transit-dependent populations, requires less driving and can also result in better environments for walking.

---

## Recommended Action 4

**Responsible parties:** Cities and Hennepin County

Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements into station area plans.

**Rationale:** Incorporating pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure into the station area planning will improve traffic safety and facilitate pedestrian and bicycle access to the transit stations. In addition it will help increase opportunities for physical activity. Facilitating pedestrian and bicycle access can also improve economic growth for surrounding businesses.

---

## Recommended Action 5

**Responsible parties:** Cities and Hennepin County

Preserve existing affordable housing and support the development of affordable and mixed-income housing near transit locations using strategies that have been successful for other transit-related investments throughout the nation.

**Rationale:** Preserving existing affordable housing and supporting diverse housing options could help ensure more transit-dependent, minority and low-income communities have access to the new light rail line and ultimately experience improved health.



## Stay involved

The findings from the Bottineau HIA will be used during station area planning for the Bottineau Transitway. Planning will begin for the station areas in the Minneapolis and Golden Valley segments of the transitway in early 2014.

Hennepin County is partnering with Nexus Community Partners and others to engage communities along the Bottineau Transitway and incorporate health considerations into the planning process.

For more information about how you can stay involved, please contact Denise Engen by phone at 612-348-4454 or email [Denise.Engen@hennepin.us](mailto:Denise.Engen@hennepin.us).

## Review the final report

A variety of outreach methods were used to gather public input on the Bottineau HIA, including convening an advisory committee, stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions and a public comment period. The HIA process also included extensive review of related literature, data sources and previous reports and studies conducted in the region.

*The full, 125-page Bottineau HIA report is available online at [www.hennepin.us/bottineauhia](http://www.hennepin.us/bottineauhia).*

Physical copies of the final report and copies of this summary are available at the following Hennepin County Library locations: Brookdale, Brooklyn Park, Golden Valley, Rockford Road and Sumner.

---

The Bottineau Transitway Health Impact Assessment was supported by a grant from the Health Impact Project, a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts, with funding from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation. The opinions expressed are those of the author and contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Health Impact Project, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts or the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation.

---



**Hennepin County**  
Public Works

Hennepin County does not discriminate and provides equal access to employment, programs and services without regard to race, color, creed, religion, age, sex (except when sex is a bona fide occupational qualification), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, public assistance status, socio-economic status, education, ethnicity and/or national origin. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the Human Resources Department, A-400 Government Center, 300 S. Sixth St., Minneapolis MN 55487, or call 612-348-2163. (9/09)