INTRODUCTION
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The Bottineau Transitway is a proposed transit project that will provide for transit improvements in the highly traveled northwest area of the Twin Cities. The Bottineau Transitway is located in Hennepin County, Minnesota, extending approximately 13 miles from downtown Minneapolis to the northwest serving the neighborhoods of north Minneapolis and the suburbs of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park.

The Bottineau Transitway will connect north Minneapolis and the region’s northwest suburbs with a regional system of transitways that consist of light rail transit (LRT) on the Blue Line (Hiawatha) and Green Line (Central Corridor and the planned Southwest line), bus rapid transit (BRT) on the Red Line (Cedar Avenue) and Orange Line (I-35W South), the Northstar commuter rail, and express bus routes. The Bottineau Transitway also will maintain or enhance local and express bus service throughout the Corridor surrounding the Transitway.
Figure 1.1: Bottineau Boulevard Transitway Map-
The Bottineau Transitway is a 13-mile corridor that connects downtown Minneapolis to north Minneapolis and the communities of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park. The transitway will consist of 11 station stops with a northern terminus at Target Corporation’s Brooklyn Park campus and a southern terminus at the Interchange in downtown Minneapolis, which will provide seamless connections to the Blue Line (Hiawatha), the Green Line (Central and Southwest).
PURPOSE OF THE PRE-PLANNING STUDY

This pre-planning report is intended to be a resource for those involved in land use planning along the Bottineau Corridor. The Bottineau Transitway has the potential to transform much of the surrounding corridor because significant transit improvements have been shown to improve lives by shortening commute times, providing greater access to economic opportunities, reducing transportation costs, promoting healthier lifestyles, and encouraging more sustainable development patterns.

Transit by itself, however, does not change development patterns. Such change requires the coordination and cooperation of local and regional officials, transit planners, land use planners, local residents, business owners, property owners, and a myriad of other stakeholders working in concert, sometimes over many years. Coordination and cooperation, furthermore, require a solid foundation of objective information in which to evaluate conditions and make informed decisions.

The purpose of the pre-planning report is to provide Bottineau Corridor stakeholders with a foundation of objective information with which to build upon when engaging in future more detailed planning efforts, especially at the station area level. As a pre-planning study, the report is not prescriptive. In other words, it does not reveal where and how change should occur. Instead, it summarizes past planning efforts and carries forward relevant findings. It documents existing conditions and notes where important issues may need to be addressed. It provides the first step in the creation of station typologies, which provide a framework for understanding the desired intensity and character of station areas. It presents best practices for transit-oriented development (TOD) planning to help local practitioners apply what has worked in similar communities with similar issues. It establishes a corridor-wide vision so that stakeholders from a wide variety of backgrounds and interests can have a shared set of goals in a common language from which to make important decisions. Finally, it provides a plan for community engagement so that under-represented populations, typically not heard from in traditional planning studies, can be identified and reached out to and included in the decision-making process.
A NOTE ABOUT THE LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (LPA)

Throughout this report there are references to the Bottineau Transitway and Bottineau Corridor. In many ways the terms are interchangeable in that both describe a geographic area that is impacted by the transit improvement. For purposes of this report, a transitway is more narrowly focused than a corridor in that it refers to the geographic areas directly impacted by the physical and audible components of the transit line (i.e., rails, stations, power lines, road crossings, etc.). Therefore, a transitway can extend anywhere from a few feet up to several blocks away from the rails depending on conditions.

A corridor, or transit corridor to be more precise, is the geographic area that is influenced not only physically but also economically by the transit line. In other words, it is those areas in which people re-order their travel patterns, change their buying habits, invest their time and money differently, and generally adopt a new way of living because of convenient access to a new and improved level of transit service. Moreover, the influence is measured less in impacts such as noise or vibration, but in changes to the intensity and type of surrounding land uses. Depending on local connections to and from stations, this area of influence can extend as minimally as a few feet, but may also extend upwards of a mile or more. In most instances, though, the generally accepted distance is roughly a 10-minute walk from a station.

The pre-planning study commenced in early 2012. At that time, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) process had yet to identify a locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the alignment of the transitway. Therefore, the pre-planning study accounted for four different possible route alignments, each with a different configuration of stations. As a result, many materials produced for analysis, such as maps, include all of the potential alignments. This explains why some maps included in this report show routes with the labels A, B, C, D1 and D2. It wasn’t until midway through the study that the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority formally recommended the B, C, D1 alignment, which served to narrow the areas of analysis.
RELATIONSHIP TO THE TRANSIT PLANNING PROCESS

Transit planning for the Bottineau Corridor began in 1988 with the Hennepin County Comprehensive LRT System Plan. Ever since then, the Bottineau Corridor has continuously been considered a strategic location for improved transit service. From 2000 to 2005, a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project was studied. After the success of the new Hiawatha LRT line, however, the focus shifted to light rail transit (LRT). From 2008 to 2010, an alternative analysis was prepared to study transit improvement alternatives along the Bottineau Corridor. The study considered a range of alternatives that would improve regional mobility and meet long-range transit needs. The alternatives analysis was the first step in securing funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

This was followed in 2011 by a scoping process for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The DEIS began shortly thereafter. The DEIS is a critical step in receiving Federal funding for the transit project. It focuses on a wide range of impacts along the transitway including everything from noise and vibration impacts to economic impacts to traffic impacts. At the time of this report, the DEIS was still in the process of being reviewed by local stakeholders before submittal to the FTA.

Once the DEIS is approved by the FTA, the project will move into preliminary engineering, which typically requires two years to complete. Then the project will move into final design, contingent on approval of a final environmental impact statement (FEIS), and then eventually construction.

Although land use planning does not follow as straightforward a path as the transit planning process, it is important that each process be interrelated. The pre-planning study can help provide transit planners a better understanding of the potential land use issues that may arise during their analyses and vice versa. The “Bottineau Land Use Planning Framework” report, summarized later in this chapter, included a nice graphic illustrating the relationship between transit planning and land use planning in the Bottineau Corridor, which is noted below in Figure 1.5.

![Figure 1.4: The Bottineau Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) focuses on a wide range of impacts along the transitway including everything from noise and vibration impacts to economic impacts to traffic impacts.](image)

![Figure 1.5: Bottineau Transitway Planning Timeline](image)

Source: Bottineau Land Use Planning Framework
RELATIONSHIP TO REGIONAL PLANS

Metropolitan Council 2030 Transitways Plan (2010)

As of 2010, the Metropolitan Council adopted a long-range transportation plan that identified the Bottineau Corridor as a key transitway.

Figure 1.6: Metropolitan Council 2030 Transitways Plan (2010) - The Bottineau Corridor is one of many transit corridors planned for the region. At full build out, the Bottineau Corridor will be connected via transit to opportunities throughout the region.
CORRIDORS OF OPPORTUNITY
Supported through grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Living Cities Integration Initiative, Corridors of Opportunity is a broad-based initiative to accelerate the build out of a regional transit system for the Twin Cities in ways that advance economic development and ensure people of all incomes and backgrounds share in the resulting opportunities. Specific aims of the Corridors of Opportunity are to:

- Stimulate economic development
- Strengthen neighborhoods
- Engage historically under-represented communities
- Support distinctive places to live, work and play
- Provide people of all backgrounds with better access to opportunities

Corridors of Opportunity supports nearly two dozen planning and implementation activities involving seven of the region’s existing and planned transitways, including the Bottineau Transitway. These activities focus on achieving impact in the six areas shown below:

- Corridor-wide Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Strategies
- Affordable Housing and TOD Investment
- Small Business Support and Investment
- Community Outreach and Engagement
- Demonstration Projects
- Tools + Policy Studies
- Previous Corridor Studies
PREVIOUS CORRIDOR STUDIES

The Bottineau Land Use Planning Framework is a recently created study (February 2012) for the Bottineau Partnership and Policy Advisory Committee (with funding from the McKnight Foundation) that looked at the FTA expectations for land use and economic development with an eye on finding ways to increase the FTA score, thereby making the transit project more likely to receive federal funding. The report analyzed best practices for land use planning and recommended an approach for Bottineau Corridor land use planning which was divided into three phases (planning, policy and implementation). It is anticipated that these three land use planning phases would parallel the transit planning phases. Much of the work included in this report laid the groundwork for the pre-planning study and will undoubtedly be a key resource for subsequent planning efforts.

The Smart Growth Market Analysis for the Northwest Corridor was created in 2002 for Hennepin County Transit and Community Works. This report included a market assessment for development in the CSAH 81 corridor through the year 2020 if a BRT is constructed. In addition it set out development principles and land use guidelines for communities to follow in order to achieve the corridor’s potential if BRT is constructed. The age of this document and the significant economic changes that have occurred in the ten years since it was written, reduce the usefulness of the market information for planning. In addition, since the focus was solely on BRT impacts, and the HCRRA determined on the recommendation of the PAC to not include a BRT alternative in the DEIS, if the transit mode chosen is not BRT, there will be further uncertainty to the projections caused by the different modal option. Although this report has historical value, it is recommended that the information be updated and revised when the alignment and mode choice are known.

The Northwest Corridor Planning and Design Framework was created in 2002 to explore the potential for transforming CSAH 81 into a corridor of connected, livable communities. The study envisioned a corridor of diverse, walkable centers linked by transit and roads that provided for growth and improved quality of life. The findings were divided into five major categories (natural systems, road networks, transit services, land use patterns and community jurisdictions). The study found that new financing mechanisms, urban design models and practices for integrating roads, transit and land use will need to be developed.

The Northwest Corridor Development Approach was created in 2003 and attempted to identify ways to influence land use and development patterns in order to realize the full benefit of the public improvements in the corridor. The study reviewed previous activities in the corridor, looked to the experience in other location, created technical information tools to communicate redevelopment issues and tested redevelopment ideas in demonstration scenarios. A series of tools were developed to illustrate key ideas, types of recommended housing, common development situations and a fiscal impacts model.
PREVIOUS SMALL AREA STUDIES

In response to significant new and planned transportation infrastructure (rebuilding of CSAH 81 and the Bottineau LRT/BRT), 63rd Avenue/Bottineau Boulevard Land Use and Transit Oriented Development Plan (2011) provides a vision for how TOD goals and principals could be applied to an area that originally developed in an automobile-oriented fashion. Key sites and strategic connections were identified to illustrate how the area may intensify over time but with minimal impact on uses not likely to change.

Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan (2006) is a plan that addresses the future transformation of an older industrial area that is located approximately a half-mile south of the Van White station area in area between Glenwood Avenue and the BNSF rail line/Interstate 394. Due to its proximity to downtown Minneapolis, visibility from Interstate 394, and the potential to introduce significant new greenways and open space, the area is envisioned to transform into a mix of higher density housing and commercial uses. Furthermore, significant new infrastructure is imagined to create important north-south connections through this area to the Van White station area at Highway 55.

The Transit-Oriented Development Design Guidelines: Penn Avenue and West Broadway Avenue (2006) presents TOD Guidelines for the area around Penn Avenue and West Broadway. It envisions significant new investment occurring in the area as a result of new fixed-guideway transit, particularly high-density housing with ground level retail and office space.

The Minneapolis Near North Master Plan (2000) addressed the build-out of Heritage Park, which is located just east of the Van White station. Heritage Park is a major redevelopment area that was cleared of large tracts of public housing over 10 years ago. The plan called for substantial amounts of new mixed-income and age housing in a variety of housing types situated around new parks and open space. A significant portion of this plan has been implemented.