INTRODUCTION

Physical, economic, and demographic conditions are constantly changing and evolving. Furthermore, what may appear to be a seemingly small change in the physical environment, demographic make-up, or economic activity can have profound impacts on land use. Therefore, it is important to periodically take stock of current conditions for two critical reasons. First, an assessment of current conditions provides a benchmark or point of reference from which to compare against historical trends. In other words, it allows us to answer questions such as ‘where have we been’ and ‘how are we doing.’ Second, and maybe more importantly, it allows us to reflect on our current state and ask, ‘are we okay’ and, if not, ‘where do we want to go.’ In order to help answer such questions, this chapter presents information on a range of corridor-wide physical, economic, and demographic conditions that provide objective information for stakeholders to plan and prepare for the future.

The chapter begins with a review of the key Bottineau Corridor demographics in relation to other strategic transit corridors in the Twin Cities metro area. As the transit system in the region becomes more fully built out, it will be important to understand not only who and what the Bottineau Corridor can connect to in the broader region but also how it can differentiate itself in a crowded market place.

This is followed by a review of corridor-specific conditions including, transportation, land use, employment, property valuation, and construction trends. The maps associated with these conditions were prepared prior to the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority’s formal recommendation of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). Therefore, analysis includes discussion of alignments A and D2, even though they are not part of the LPA.

TRANSITWAYS COMPARISONS

The Bottineau Corridor is one of seven existing or planned transit corridors in the Twin Cities designed for high-speed commuter rail, light rail or bus rapid transit service (see Figure 3-1). Although many additional opportunities exist to complement these seven corridors with arterial BRT, local streetcar, and traditional bus service, these seven corridors will form the backbone of an enhanced transit system that will better connect the region. Moreover, these seven corridors comprise the Corridors of Opportunity, an initiative born out of $5 million in grants from HUD and the Living Cities Integration Initiative to support and encourage the integration of transit planning with regional goals for increased economic competitiveness, social equity, public health, and sustainability.

As these seven corridors receive improved transit service they will work in tandem to help grow the region and attract investment by better connecting many of the region’s assets and amenities to one another, reducing the costs of living, and encouraging healthy lifestyles. At the same time, however, these corridors will also compete with one another in capturing future growth. Therefore, it is important to gauge how these corridors compare against one another in order to better understand where strategic investment may need, or not need, to occur.
Figure 3.1 - 2012 Corridors of Opportunity
The Bottineau Corridor is one of seven strategic corridors in the Twin Cities metro area that will offer high-speed transit service. As the backbone of a regionally connected system, these corridors will help grow the region but will also compete with one another in capturing that growth.
Figure 3-2 presents information for five different demographic variables, each comparing six of the seven corridors to one another. Although any number of variables could be analyzed, these variables were selected to illustrate how evaluating such metrics can illuminate our understanding of the differences and similarities among corridors. To be consistent in the comparisons, data was collected from the U.S. Census for a one-mile buffer around each corridor. This assumes the majority of land use changes driven by transit service within any corridor will occur within this buffer. Furthermore, the buffers do not include either downtown Minneapolis or downtown St. Paul because they are major hubs and overlap with multiple corridors.

Relative to other transit corridors, the Bottineau Corridor has a good population base and a high rate of homeownership. English proficiency is in the middle. Income is similar to other corridors, but low. Employment, however, is well below the other corridors.

**Population**
The Bottineau Corridor has a population of roughly 93,000. This is similar to the other three LRT corridors (Hiawatha, Southwest, and Central), and well above the two BRT corridors (Gateway and Cedar). Therefore, Bottineau is well positioned to attract riders who live along the corridor.

**Homeownership**
Approximately 65 percent of the households that live within one mile of the Bottineau own their housing. This is well above the rate for the other three LRT corridors, which suggests that housing in the Bottineau Corridor is more likely to be stable and consist of longer term residents than other corridors.

**Employment**
The Bottineau Corridor has approximately 37,000 employees who work within a mile of the corridor. This is the lowest of the six corridors and is significantly below the other three LRT corridors. Therefore, unless additional employment is added along the corridor, ridership driven by employees commuting to jobs along the corridor will be low compared to other corridors.
**Per Capita Income**
Per capita income in the Bottineau corridor is about $26,000. This is similar to the Central, Hiawatha, and Gateway corridors, but well below the Cedar and Southwest corridors. The presence of lower income persons indicates a great opportunity to increase social equity for corridor residents by increasing access to living-wage jobs and reducing transportation costs. Conversely, though, lower incomes also mean the purchasing power of residents is lower, which may require public incentives to catalyze certain types of business investment, such as chain retail operations.

**English Proficiency**
English proficiency, which is defined as persons who speak English “well” or “very well”, is at 80 percent in the Bottineau Corridor. This is in the middle when compared to the six transit corridors. English proficiency among residents will influence community involvement strategies as well as the types of educational and service needs.

**Figure 3.5 - Per Capita Income Comparisons among the Corridors of Opportunity**

![Per Capita Income Chart]

Source: 2006-2010 US Census (ACS)

**Figure 3.6 - English Proficiency Comparisons among the Corridors of Opportunity**

![English Proficiency Chart]

Source: 2006-2010 US Census (ACS)
TRANSPORTATION

The Bottineau Corridor closely parallels CR 81 and Hwy 55 providing good visibility and access to the stations from these two highways. This can be beneficial, both to support ridership and to support redevelopment above and beyond what would be expected from TOD demand.

In addition, the Bottineau Corridor is intersected by 3 major highways (100, 694, & 610) which provide a large number of nearby automobile commuters who could potentially be diverted to the corridor with convenient park and ride facilities.

The communities that will host the corridor are already well served by transit service, with both express and local service common in the areas south of 85th Avenue.

There is an airport centrally located on the line in Crystal. This airport serves private and corporate air travel and is not expected to be a significant generator of transit trips. However, in the past, there have been discussions of redevelopment of portions of the airport property which could present significant TOD opportunities due to its advantageous location and large size.

Pedestrian and bicycle transportation facilities are not well suited to display at the corridor level and therefore are addressed in the station level analyses, which are presented in Appendix XX.
LAND USE

The Bottineau Corridor has a wide range of land use patterns that provide a variety of opportunities. The nature of the development in the corridor changes significantly at I-694. South of I-694, the land use pattern is dominated by older, smaller lot, single family homes. Larger pockets of employment and retail areas can be found near the Bass Lake Road and Robbinsdale stations. Significant institutional users can be found at stations such as Golden Valley Road, North Memorial and Van White. In these fully developed areas, vacant and underutilized land is rare. As mentioned previously, if the Crystal Airport were to redevelop, it would be a very large in-fill redevelopment site.

North of I-694 there is a very different land use character due to its more recent development and the influence of the interstate highway system. Although some areas south of I-694, such as the Robbinsdale station area, developed around trolley service about a century ago and still retain some of that character, the areas north of I-694 do not have that legacy. Tracts of land are much larger, scale of development is larger and uses are spread over a much larger land area.

This land use pattern north of I-694 creates some very attractive destinations, such as the Target Campus, Arbor Lakes and some large industrial parks. However, the existing land use pattern will create some challenges getting transit users from the station to these centers of shopping and employment. Unlike the developments south of I-694, these centers tend to generally be large structures surrounded by large surface parking facilities which can be a challenge to TOD.

Large amounts of vacant land currently exist in Maple Grove and Brooklyn Park which could provide opportunities to develop large-scale TOD at some locations. However, both Maple Grove and Brooklyn Park are attractive areas for greenfield development. Therefore, some highly desirable TOD sites could be developed for non-TOD purposes in the long time period until the transit line is operational.

One final area of note is the Zane Avenue corridor in Brooklyn Park. This area is another one where the existing land use patterns could be supportive of ridership on the Bottineau Corridor due to the concentration of residential density along Zane Avenue. However, due to the distance involved, additional support to link these areas such as feeder buses and strong trail connections will be important.
EMPLOYMENT

Just off the corridor, there are some attractive employment destinations along the railroad tracks in Golden Valley, Crystal and New Hope as well as the former Brookdale retail area. These sites are too far away from the proposed stations to be considered walkable, so other vehicular connections would be necessary to make them available to Bottineau Corridor transit riders.

Figure 3.9 - Bottineau Corridor Employment Clusters
PROPERTY VALUATION
Existing property valuation is important for redevelopment planning since it can be difficult to redevelop without substantial subsidy as property approaches higher per square foot valuations.

Although alignments A and B have areas with valuations that are more feasible for development/redevelopment, due in part to the undeveloped parcels along these alignments, there are pockets of other developed areas along the entire length of the corridor that also have valuations that would be attractive for redevelopment.

The most challenging valuations for redevelopment are in Robbinsdale, along Brooklyn Boulevard, and near North Memorial.

Although areas with higher valuations can be difficult to redevelop, intensification can still occur through remodel/reuse/expansion at high value locations, particularly if the proximity to transit service means that they do not need to maintain the same level of parking to support the use.
From a valuation perspective, residential redevelopment/ intensification pressures could occur at 63rd Avenue, 71st Avenue, and 93rd Avenue where there are well located residential parcels that have valuations that could be attractive for redevelopment.
NON-RESIDENTIAL VALUATION
Nonresidential development pressures will likely be concentrated at the outer edges of the alignments where large undeveloped areas remain.

In the fully developed portions that lie south of I-694, nonresidential redevelopment opportunities are smaller in scale and more scattered.

As mentioned previously, significant reverse commute potential exists if the “last mile” issue can be addressed with connecting transit or strong bicycle/pedestrian connecting routes to some of the large employment centers that lie near but not close to the proposed transit stations.

As with residential, it is anticipated that there would still be change and investment in high value areas. However, the change may be more in change of use rather than tear down, unless there is public support to finance the likely development gap.
**HOUSING**

**Age of the Housing Stock**

The age and condition of the housing stock plays an important role in the value and, thus, affordability of housing. Older homes, for example, are often less expensive than newer homes because of higher maintenance/repair needs, and they often lack the space, features, and amenities desired by today’s market. Figure 3-9 depicts the general age of the housing stock within one mile of the Bottineau Corridor. For the most part, the further one travels from downtown Minneapolis, the newer the housing stock. Therefore, between downtown and Robbinsdale, the majority of the housing stock is more than 60 years old. However, there are large areas of redevelopment in which the housing stock is much newer, particularly in the neighborhoods adjacent to the downtown. In Crystal and southern Brooklyn Park, the housing stock is typically between 40 and 60 years old. This is the time in a house’s lifecycle when many major repairs are needed, such as new roofing, siding, as well as needed modernization. In northern Brooklyn Park, the housing stock is mostly less than 40 years old, including many newer subdivisions that are still in the process of being built out.
HOUSING PRICES

The median sales price of homes within one mile of the Bottineau Corridor was $123,000 in 2012. As displayed in Figure 3-10, this was about 27% below the metro-wide median sales price of $167,900. Although sales prices in the Bottineau Corridor have always been somewhat below the metro-wide median, the gap widen considerably during the recession of 2007-2009. Prior to the recession, the gap in value had closed to only about 10%. During and immediately after the recession, the gap widen to as much as 36%. This indicates that the market forces that drove down the value of housing everywhere during the recession, disproportionately affected the housing stock along the Bottineau Corridor. The encouraging news, however, is that in recent years that gap has begun to narrow somewhat.

Figure 3.14 - Median Home Sales Prices 2001-2012 for the Twin Cities Metro Area and the Bottineau Corridor

*Corridor is defined as being within one mile of the transit line
Source: Minneapolis Area Association of Realtors
There are 15 senior housing facilities located along the Bottineau Corridor, some with multiple levels of care. In total, there are nearly 1,800 total units, providing both subsidized and market rate housing in both independent and assisted living environments. The Robbinsdale and 63rd Avenue stations each have a particularly strong concentration of senior housing. In the Robbinsdale station area, there are nearly 600 units of senior housing, and the 63rd Avenue station area there are just over 500 units of senior housing.

### Table 3.1 - Senior Housing Located along the Bottineau Corridor by Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Type of Senior Housing</th>
<th>Number of Units</th>
<th>Nearest Station</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Commons</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>Assisted Living/Memory Care</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>Van White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Feeny Manor</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>Assisted Living/Memory Care</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Van White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow Terrace</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>Van White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilac Parkway</td>
<td>Robbinsdale</td>
<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Robbinsdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbins Landing</td>
<td>Robbinsdale</td>
<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>Robbinsdale</td>
</tr>
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<td>Lee Square</td>
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<td>Broadway Court</td>
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<td>Independent Living</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Robbinsdale</td>
<td>Independent Living</td>
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<td>Robbinsdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Robbinsdale</td>
<td>Assisted Living/Memory Care</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>Robbinsdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park Haven</td>
<td>Brooklyn Park</td>
<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>Brooklyn Blvd</td>
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<td>Calibre Chase</td>
<td>Crystal</td>
<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Bass Lake Rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Crystal</td>
<td>Crystal</td>
<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Bass Lake Rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>Independent/Assisted Living</td>
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<td>85th Ave</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waterford</td>
<td>Brooklyn Park</td>
<td>Independent Living</td>
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<td>63rd Ave</td>
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<td>Brooklyn Park</td>
<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>63rd Ave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford Manor</td>
<td>Brooklyn Park</td>
<td>Assisted Living/Memory Care</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>63rd Ave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony James</td>
<td>New Hope</td>
<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>63rd Ave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadway Village</td>
<td>New Hope</td>
<td>Independent Living</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>63rd Ave</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Stantec
CONSTRUCTION TRENDS

One important gauge of economic activity is to know what types of non-residential uses are being constructed. Figure 3-8 illustrates where such construction dollars have recently been spent in the Bottineau Corridor and Hennepin County. According to the figure, between 2003 and 2010, nearly one-third of all non-residential construction dollars spent in the Corridor was on institutional projects, which includes government buildings, schools, and hospitals. Within all of Hennepin County, the proportion was closer to 22 percent. Although institutional projects contribute significantly to the economy, they often follow a consistent pattern because many such projects are planned years in advance in hopes of spreading out government spending as much as possible. Therefore, when an area, such as the Bottineau Corridor, skews heavily toward such projects it can be an indicator that private sector construction, which generally falls within commercial and industrial categories, is lagging.

![Pie charts comparing non-residential construction values by type of use in Hennepin County and Bottineau Corridor (2003-2010)](source: Metropolitan Council)

**Figure 3.16 - Non-Residential Construction Values by Type of Use 2003-2010**

When compared to Hennepin County in recent years, non-residential construction in the Bottineau Corridor has skewed toward institutional uses, such as government buildings, schools, and hospitals. Although such projects are significant contributors to the economy, such an imbalance can be indicative of lagging private sector investment which tends to fall into commercial and industrial categories.