

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

## Interstate 35W and Lake Street Improvement Project

I-35W from approximately 42<sup>nd</sup> Street to Downtown Minneapolis

City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota

Prepared by the Federal Highway Administration  
and the Minnesota Department of Transportation

In Cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration, Metropolitan Council,  
Metro Transit, Hennepin County, and the City of Minneapolis

Submitted Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 4332 (2) (c)  
and Minnesota Statute 116D

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Appendix B	Purpose and Need Memorandum (On CD-ROM)
Appendix C	Preferred Alternative Memorandum (On CD-ROM)
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Appendix F	Correspondence
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## **1.0 REPORT PURPOSE**

This Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared as a part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and state environmental review process to fulfill requirements of both 42 USC 4332 and M.S. 116D. At the federal level, the EA is used to provide sufficient environmental documentation to determine the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or that a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is appropriate. At the state level, the EA is used to provide sufficient environmental documentation to determine the need for a state EIS or that a Negative Declaration is appropriate.

This EA documents:

- The need for the proposed project,
- Alternatives considered,
- Environmental impacts and mitigation, and
- Agency coordination and public involvement.

At the state level, this document also serves as an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW). Minnesota Rules 4410.1300 allows the EA to take the place of the EAW form, provided that the EA addresses each of the environmental effects identified in the EAW form. This EA includes each of the environmental effects identified in the EAW form.

Hennepin County and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) are the project proposers. MnDOT is the Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) for this project. Preparation of an EAW is considered mandatory under Minnesota Rules 4410.4300 subp. 1, and under the following subsection(s):

- 4410.4300 subp. 22 (B) – construction of additional travel lanes on an existing road for a length of one or more miles, and
- 4410.4300 subp. 22 (C) – for the addition of one or more new interchanges to a completed limited access highway.

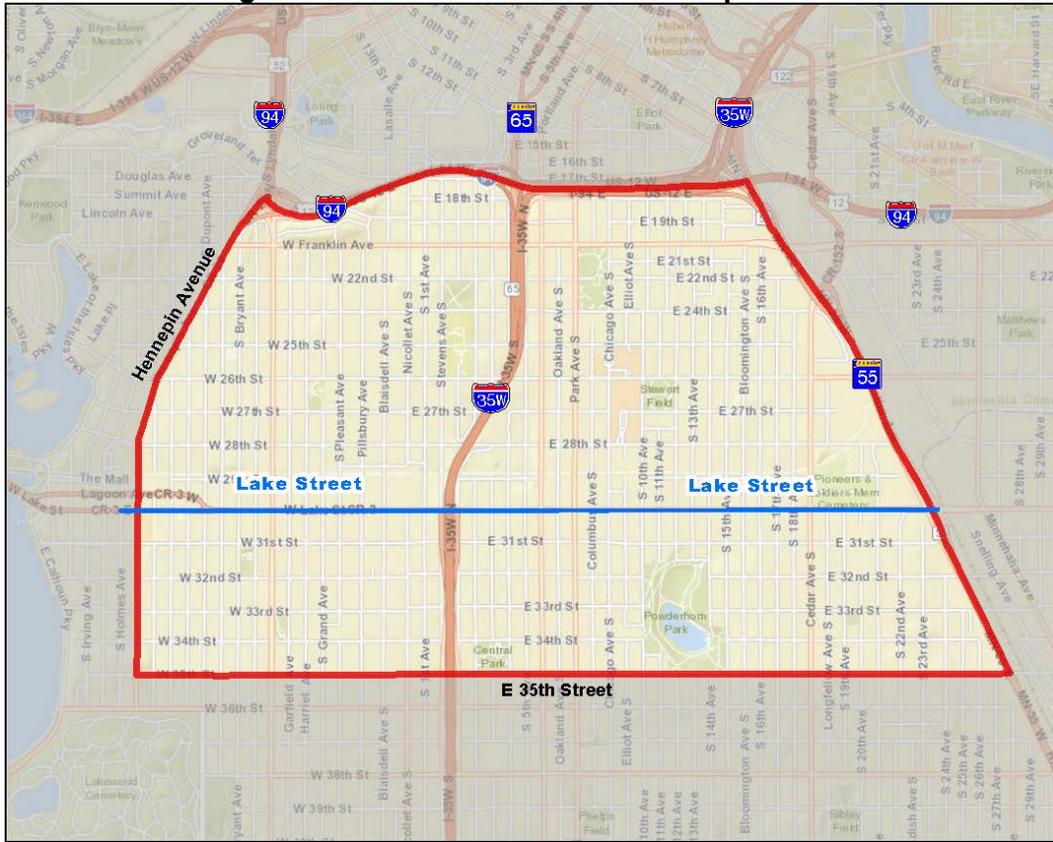
This document is made available for public review and comment in accordance with the requirements of 23 CFR 771.119 (d) and Minnesota Rules 4410.1500 through 4410.1600.

## **2.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND**

The background section describes the project setting and establishes the context for the proposed improvements.

The proposed project is approximately three miles long and is principally located along I-35W from roughly 42<sup>nd</sup> Street to downtown Minneapolis. The affected project area includes several neighborhoods made up of a diverse group of residents, the Lake Street Business District, and the Midtown Greenway. Based on recent socio-economic data, there are approximately 38,800 residents and 27,700 jobs in the I-35W/Lake Street area (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1 – I-35W/Lake Street Area Map**



## 2.1 KEY TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

Interstate 35W, Interstate 94, and Highway 65 are an integral part of the highway system in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (see Table 1 for a corridor summary and Figure 2 for a map). These highways provide access to downtown Minneapolis as well as serve interregional through trips. Local traffic traveling between surrounding communities, commercial developments, and industrial centers are also served by this network.

**Table 1 – Freeway Transportation Corridors Summary**

Highway:	Interstate 35W	Interstate 94	Minnesota Highway 65
Average Daily Traffic (ADT) <sup>1</sup> :	210,000	181,000	38,000
Functional Classification <sup>2</sup> :	Principal Arterial	Principal Arterial	Principal Arterial

Lake Street is a heavily traveled commercial street lined with retail and service establishments (see Table 2 for a corridor summary and Figure 2 for a map). The surrounding area includes both single and multi-family housing, and is home to major institutions including Wells Fargo Bank Home Mortgage Headquarters, and three major hospitals: Abbott Northwestern, Children’s,

<sup>1</sup> ADT is an estimate of the total number of vehicles using a specific segment of roadway (in both directions) on any given day of the year.

<sup>2</sup> Federal taxonomy for roadways based on their primary function – mobility for through trips or access to adjacent lands. In the Twin Cities, a four-class system is used to designate roads (principal arterials, minor arterials, collectors and local streets).

and Allina. Other local transportation corridors affected by this project to a lesser extent include: Franklin Avenue, 26<sup>th</sup> Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Street, 31<sup>st</sup> Street, and 35<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as the Midtown Greenway Corridor.

**Table 2 – Lake Street Transportation Corridor Summary**

Route:	Lake Street (CSAH 3) <sup>3</sup>
ADT:	20,200
Functional Classification:	Minor Arterial

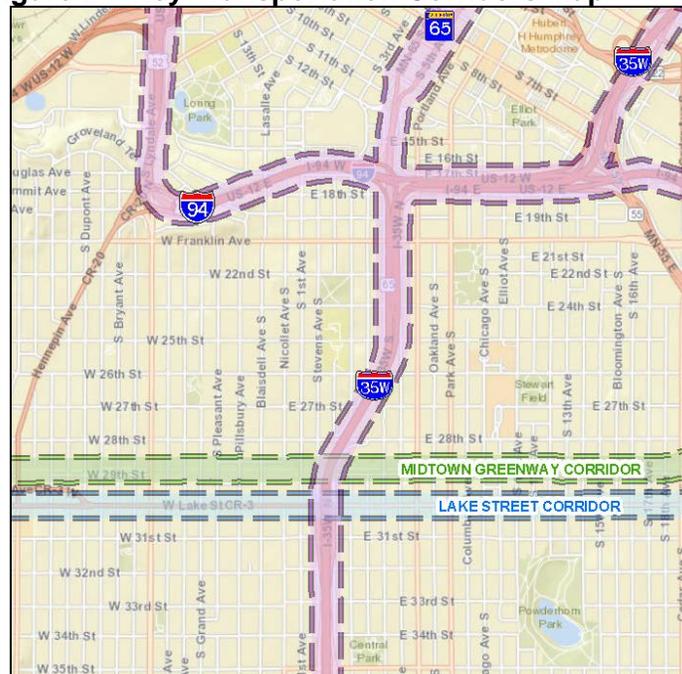
The I-35W corridor and the Lake Street corridor are also vital components of the region's transitways (see Table 3). North-south transit services on I-35W extend from Burnsville into downtown Minneapolis. East-west transit services on the Lake Street corridor extend from downtown Saint Paul to the Uptown Transit Station in Minneapolis.

**Table 3 – Transit Corridors Summary**

Transit Corridor:	I-35W	Lake Street Corridor
Number of Routes:	26	2
Average Weekday Ridership <sup>4</sup> :	14,000	14,900

The Midtown Greenway (see Figure 2) is a six-mile, multi-use corridor connecting the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes and Mississippi River trail systems. For much of its length, the Greenway parallels Lake Street and sits within the Chicago, Milwaukee, and Saint Paul Railroad Grade Separation Historic District. The corridor serves about 4,300 bicyclists and pedestrians per day<sup>5</sup>.

**Figure 2 – Key Transportation Corridors Map**



<sup>3</sup> Hennepin County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 3

<sup>4</sup> Source: Christina Morrison, Metro Transit BRT/Small Starts Project Office (12/2/13).

<sup>5</sup> Daily estimates based on City of Minneapolis September 2011 weekday counts.

## **2.2 RECENT PROJECTS IN THE AREA**

In 2011, the Urban Partnership Agreement<sup>6</sup> and Crosstown Commons<sup>7</sup> projects were completed, which:

- Constructed a MnPASS lane on I-35W from Burnsville to 26<sup>th</sup> Street in Minneapolis,
- Reconstructed Highway 62 from Penn Avenue to Portland Avenue, and
- Built a new median transit station at I-35W and 46<sup>th</sup> Street.

This series of projects was a similar partnership of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), MnDOT, Metropolitan Council, Metro Transit, Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis, and other local agencies.

In 2006/2007, the Lake Street Reconstruction Project was completed from Dupont Avenue to the Mississippi River with the exception of the I-35W area between Blaisdell Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

## **2.3 PLANNED PROJECT IN THE AREA**

The METRO Orange Line<sup>8</sup> is currently being planned as a 17-mile Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line along I-35W with all-day bus service between Minneapolis, Richfield, Bloomington, and Burnsville (see Figure 7 in Appendix B). Planning is also underway for a potential future six-mile extension of the METRO Orange Line from Burnsville to Lakeville.

## **3.0 PURPOSE AND NEED**

The purpose and need section defines the transportation problems that the project will address. It also helps decide where a project will begin and end by defining the “who, what, where, when and why” of the transportation needs.

### **3.1 PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The purpose of this project is to improve the condition of highway infrastructure, and improve travel mobility and reliability for all users.

### **3.2 NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The project need identifies transportation deficiencies that currently exist or are reasonably expected to occur within the project area. The needs section discusses the transportation problems which led to the initiation of the project (“primary needs”). In addressing these needs the agencies also look for other transportation problems or opportunities for system improvements within the area that may be addressed concurrently (“secondary needs”). The three project needs are:

- Transit access and mobility (primary need),
- Condition of highway infrastructure (primary need), and
- Regional access and mobility (secondary need).

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<sup>6</sup> [www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/congestionpricing/agreements/minneapolis.htm](http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/congestionpricing/agreements/minneapolis.htm)

<sup>7</sup> <http://dot.state.mn.us/projects/crosstown/maps.html>

<sup>8</sup> [www.metrotransit.org/metro-orange-line](http://www.metrotransit.org/metro-orange-line)

## **Transit Access and Mobility**

The I-35W corridor south of downtown Minneapolis is an important transitway for the region. It averages 14,000 riders per day on 26 different routes with service operated by three transit providers: Metro Transit, Southwest Transit, and the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority. These routes predominantly run during the morning and afternoon peak hours from Burnsville to downtown Minneapolis. The Lake Street corridor is also a vital component of Metro Transit's high-frequency network. On weekdays, Metro Transit's Route 21 averages 14,000 riders, and its express peak service, Route 53, averages 900 riders.

Where these two transit corridors intersect represents a transit-dependent community. Within a half-mile of the existing bus stops, forty-six percent of residents, or 6,000 people, do not have access to a vehicle. Despite the community's reliance on transit services, and the corresponding heavy usage, the northbound I-35W and Lake Street connections were discontinued in 2011 for reasons cited below.

After constructing the new 46<sup>th</sup> Street median station in 2011, buses traveling on northbound I-35W were required to weave from the left-most lane to the right shoulder to access the Lake Street bus station. After departing the station, those same buses needed to cross over to the left again in order to access downtown Minneapolis.

As congestion on the corridor continued to increase, this movement added up to five additional minutes in travel delay and grew more and more unsafe, leading the transit agencies to discontinue service to the northbound Lake Street stop during the AM peak period to avoid these substantial traffic delays. In place of the lost service, riders are able to connect using other local routes, however, this introduces additional delay and unreliability.

Additionally, two stairways to the freeway level are the only means of accessing the Lake Street and I-35W connection services. This is considered a significant impediment for people with disabilities rendering transit services inaccessible for some.

For more detailed information on this need, see the Purpose and Need Memorandum in Appendix B.

## **Highway Infrastructure**

The I-35W corridor carries two bridges of special interest: the Braid Bridge<sup>9</sup> and the Flyover Bridge<sup>10</sup>.

The Braid Bridge was built in 1967 and carries 52,000 vehicles per day. This two-lane bridge is *braided* over northbound traffic and joins southbound traffic near 24<sup>th</sup> Street.

The Flyover Bridge was built in 1966 and carries 22,000 vehicles per day. This single lane bridge *flies* northbound I-35W traffic over I-94 where it joins the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue entrance ramp from downtown Minneapolis and connects onto I-94 westbound towards the Lowry Tunnel.

To comply with federal requirements, MnDOT completes a safety inspection on all bridges every two years. As part of this inspection, condition ratings on a scale of 0 to 9 are provided for the

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<sup>9</sup> Bridge #27871, see Appendix B for condition report.

<sup>10</sup> Bridge #27842, see Appendix B for condition report.

bridge deck<sup>11</sup>, superstructure<sup>12</sup>, and substructure<sup>13</sup>. The Braid Bridge's substructure is rated 4, and the Flyover Bridge's superstructure and deck are both rated 4.

For more detailed information on this need, see the Purpose and Need Memorandum in Appendix B.

## **Mobility, Reliability, & Safety**

I-35W carries more than 210,000 vehicles per day, making it the busiest highway in Minnesota.<sup>14</sup> In the morning peak hour, northbound I-35W carries up to 9,000 vehicles per hour. Constraints near the closely spaced interchanges and at downstream segments limit the capacity of the freeway. This heavy demand and limited capacity, especially during the peak hours, makes I-35W one of the most congested segments of highway in the state with over four to seven hours of daily congestion (see Figures 3 through 5).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The roadway portion of a bridge, including shoulders.

<sup>12</sup> The superstructure consists of the components that actually span the obstacle the bridge is intended to cross. It includes: bridge deck, structural members, parapets, handrails, sidewalk, lighting and drainage features.

<sup>13</sup> The substructure consists of all parts that support the superstructure. The main components are: abutments, piers, footings, and piling.

<sup>14</sup> Source: MnDOT Traffic Forecasting & Analysis's 2013 Traffic Volume Table ([www.dot.state.mn.us/traffic/data/data-products.html#volume](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/traffic/data/data-products.html#volume)).

<sup>15</sup> MnDOT defines congestion as traffic flowing at speeds less than or equal to 45 miles per hour (MPH). See congestion report ([www.dot.state.mn.us/rtmc/reports/2014congestionreport.pdf](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/rtmc/reports/2014congestionreport.pdf)). The *Metropolitan Freeway System Congestion Report* is prepared annually by MnDOT to document those segments of the freeway system that experience recurring congestion.

Figure 3 – AM Peak Period Congestion Map

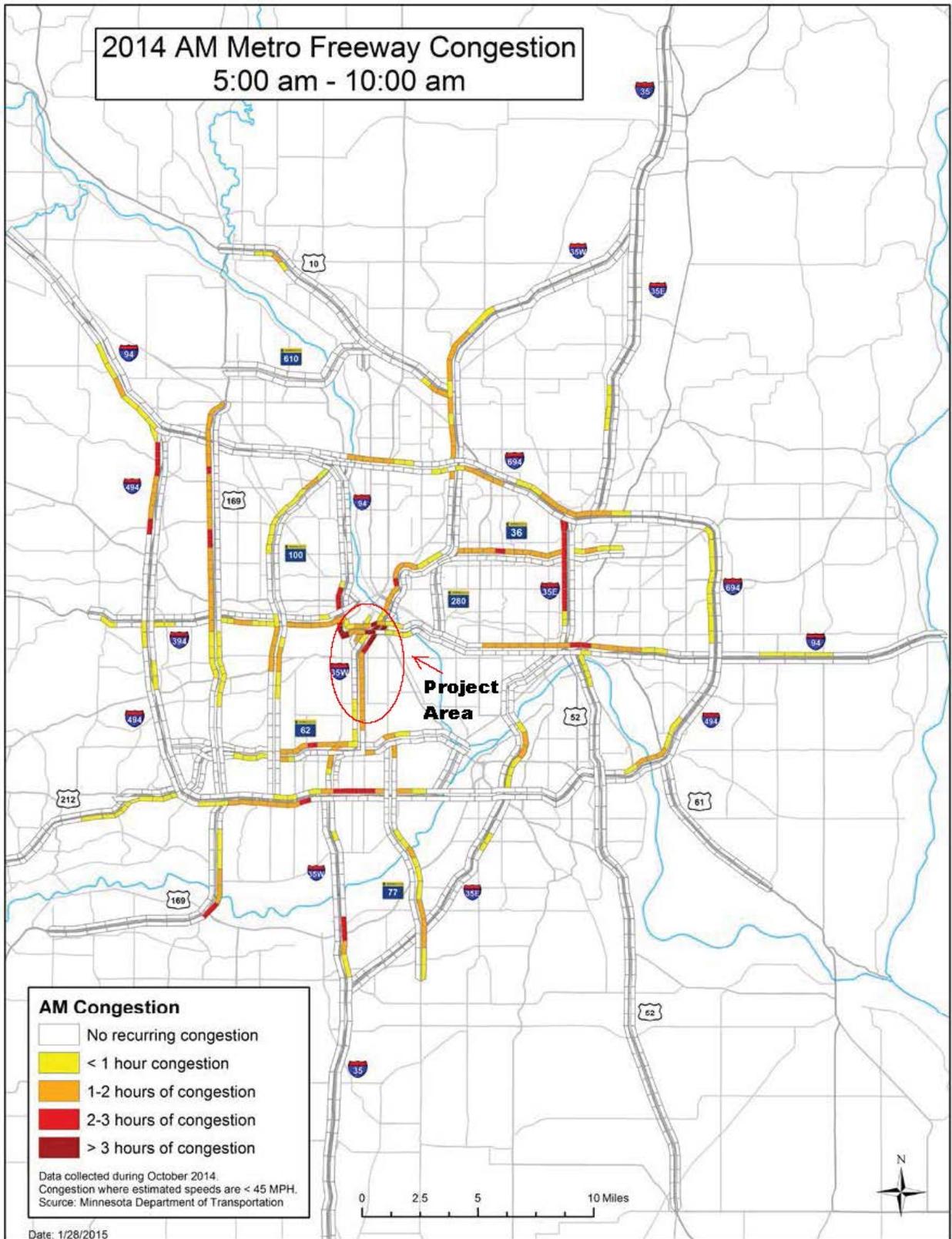


Figure 4 – PM Peak Period Congestion Map

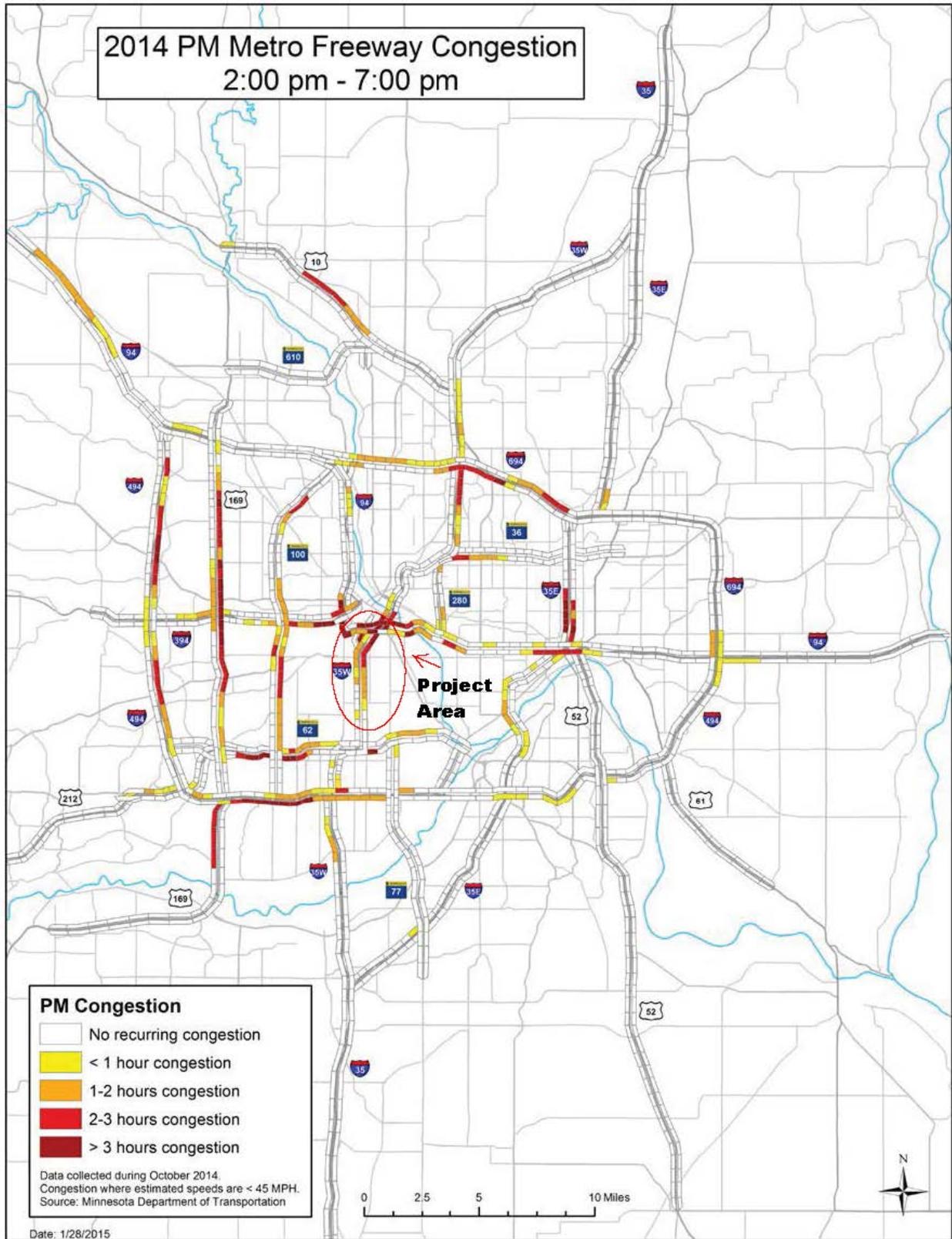
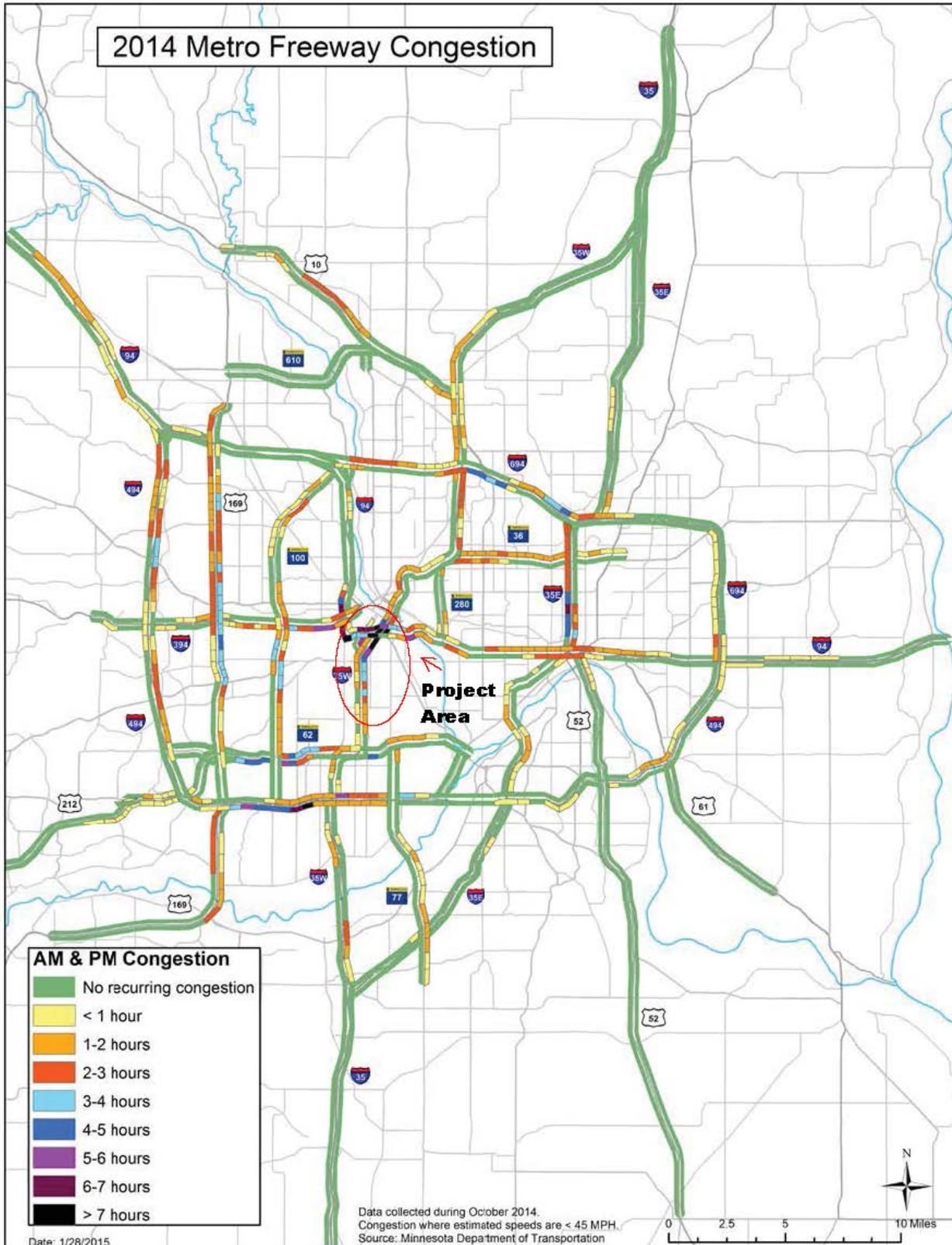
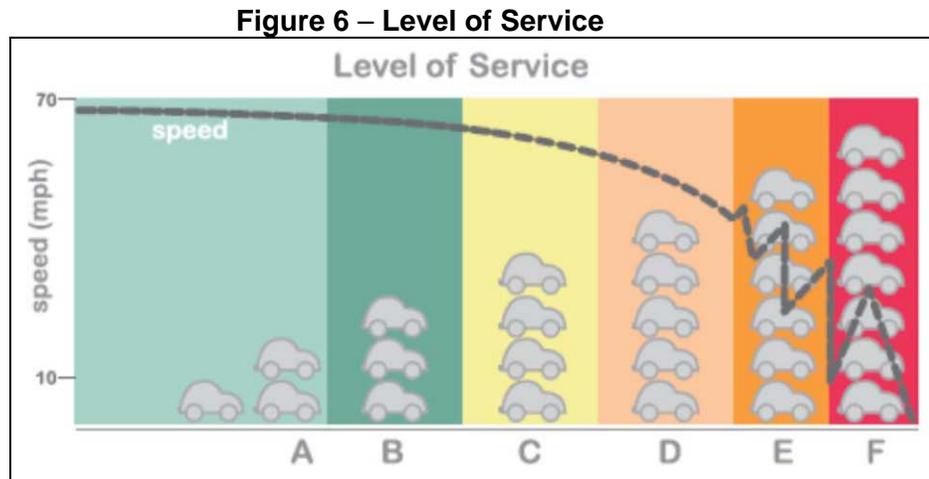


Figure 5 – Daily Hours of Congestion Map



Another way freeways can be ranked is by level of service or LOS,<sup>16</sup> as illustrated in Figure 6.



In addition to volumes exceeding capacity, there are some substandard highway geometrics which are contributing to I-35W's poor performance. These include closely spaced entrance and exit ramps or tight-merges, and limited sight-distance at major curves which causes travelers to slow down.

In addition to closely spaced entrance and exit ramps, I-35W at Lake Street is a partial interchange. The missing movements at Lake Street are an entrance ramp from Lake Street to northbound I-35W and an exit ramp from southbound I-35W to Lake Street. Southbound I-35W traffic destined for the Lake Street area must either exit and navigate near downtown Minneapolis, or travel further south to the 35<sup>th</sup> Street exit ramp and backtrack. A similar indirect pattern is needed for northbound traffic which must either backtrack to the 35<sup>th</sup> Street entrance ramp, or use local streets to access I-35W near Franklin Avenue.

During the AM and PM peak periods (7-9AM and 2-6PM), a high percentage of traffic from northbound I-35W continues along westbound I-94 beyond the Hennepin/Lyndale Avenue and westbound I-394 exit ramps (62.7 and 77.9 percent, respectively). Traffic destined beyond the I-394 exit ramp needs to be in the left two most lanes along I-94; this creates a major weaving problem with the high exiting volume to the Hennepin/Lyndale Avenue and I-394 exit ramps.

To help assess this need, traffic models were developed to simulate no build and forecasted traffic patterns on the regional and local road network. The assumed no build years are 2018 and 2038. The detailed forecast methodology, traffic analysis, and results are documented in Appendix E and H of the *Draft Interstate Access Request*. An electronic copy of this document is included on the CD-ROM provided with this EA (see Appendix G).

The modeling results indicate that travel demands and existing congestion levels will slightly increase between now and 2018 on both the regional and local network. However, by 2038 both the regional and local system will be severely congested (see Figures 7 through 10).

<sup>16</sup> LOS is defined by the letter grades of “A” through “F”. LOS A indicates the best traffic operation, with vehicles experiencing minimal delays. LOS F indicates that demand exceeds capacity and that drivers experience significant delays. LOS D is generally perceived to be acceptable to drivers.

Figure 7 – Year 2038 I-35W No Build AM Peak Level of Service Map

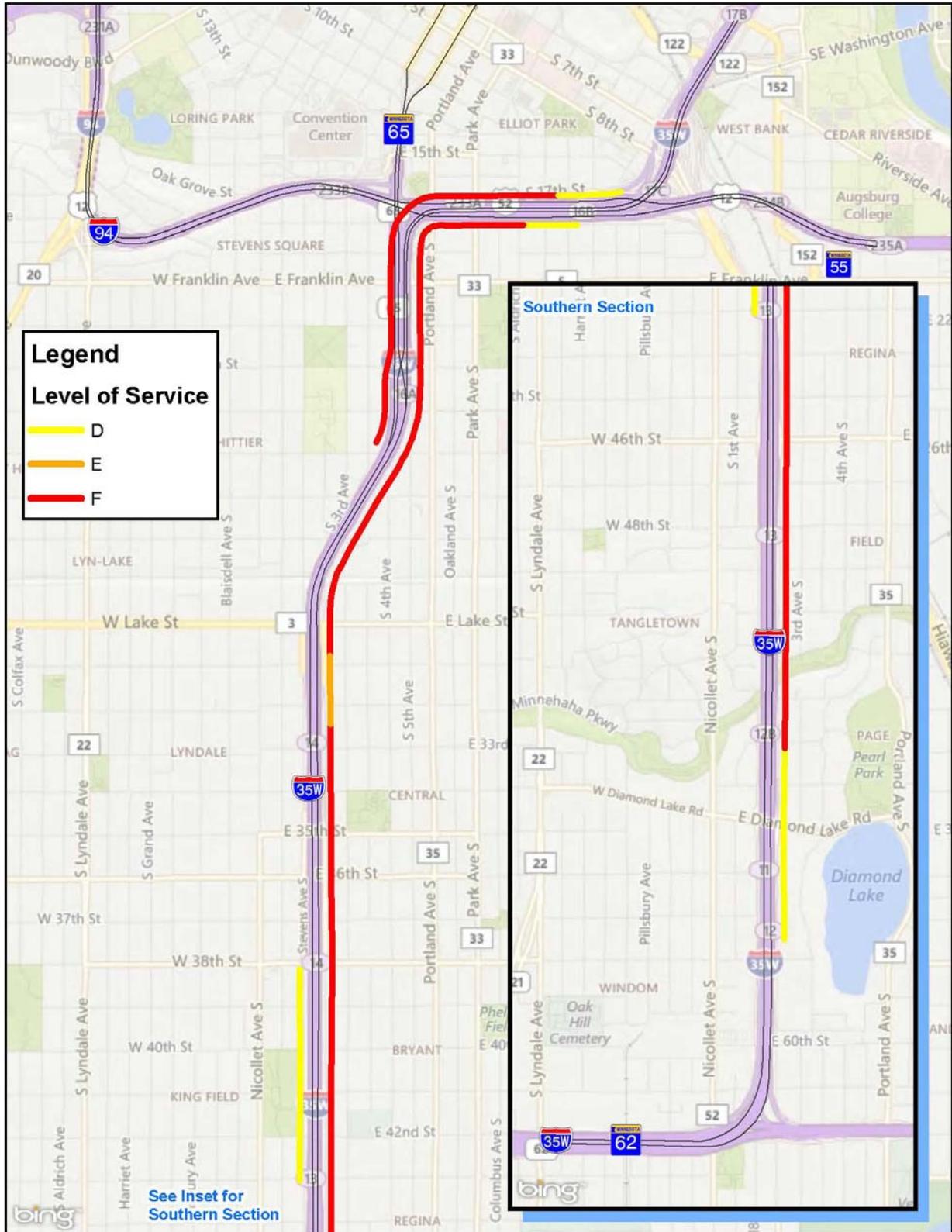


Figure 8 – Year 2038 I-35W No Build PM Peak Level of Service Map

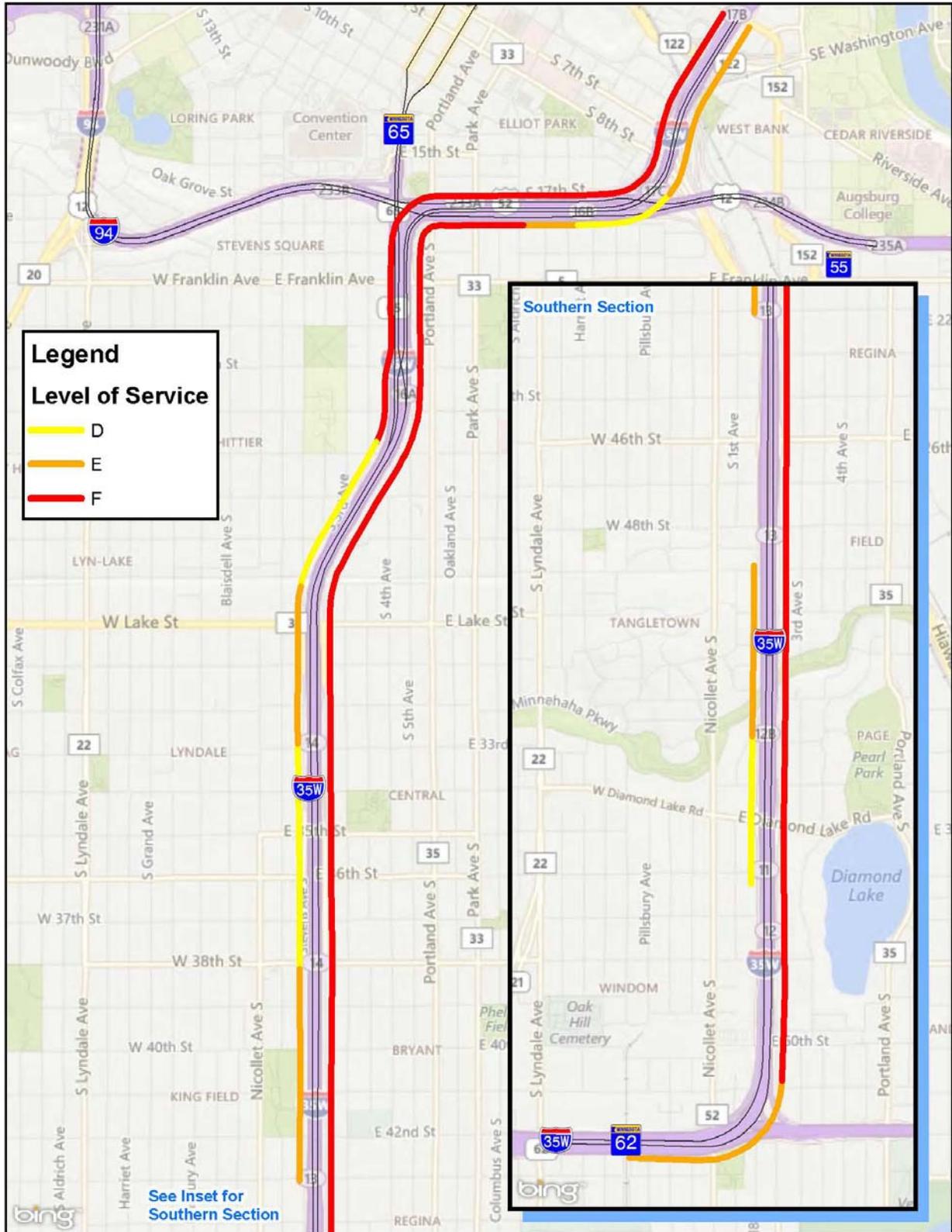


Figure 9 – Year 2038 I-94/TH 65 No Build AM Peak Level of Service Map

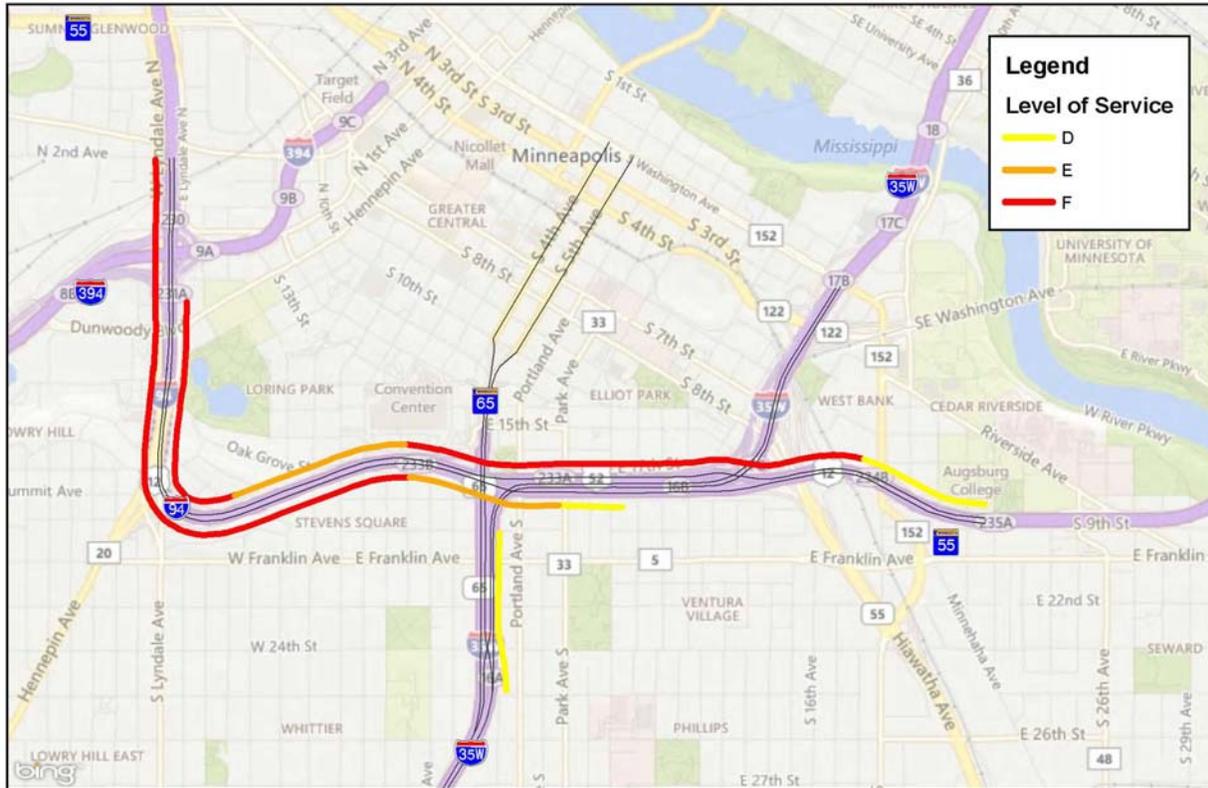
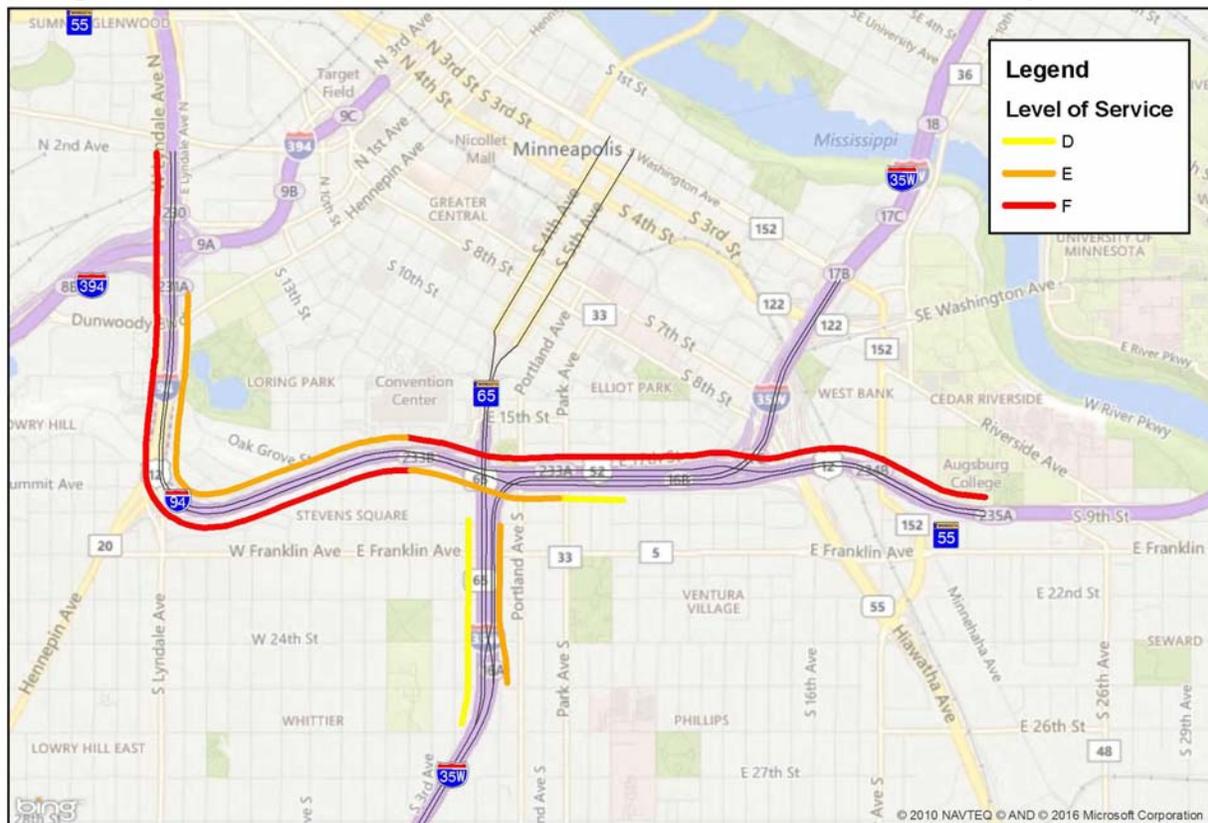


Figure 10 – Year 2038 I-94/TH 65 No Build PM Peak Level of Service Map



In addition to unreliable travel on the highway, heavy congestion affects transit on shared facilities such as Lake Street. Metro Transit defines “on-time” as departing between one minute early and five minutes late. The system-wide on-time performance goal was 88 percent with 2 percent of trips departing early, and 10 percent late. Routes 21 and 53 currently operate outside of this goal with 13 percent late, and 11 percent late.

Heavy congestion also contributes to crashes. In 2007, MnDOT completed the *Downtown Minneapolis Freeway Study*. This report documents safety concerns in the I-35W/I-94 Commons. The report states that there are more freeway crashes here than in any other place in Minnesota, with an average of three to four crashes per day. These are predominantly property damage only/congestion-related crashes. The afternoon peak-hour crash rate is fifteen times the Metro urban freeway average and the annual crash costs exceed \$22 million, not including the costs of delay.

Crashes in the project area were evaluated between 2011 through 2013. Within that time period, there were a total of 1,426 crashes within the project area that are related to the freeway mainline and freeway ramps.

Typical urban freeway segments in the Twin Cities metro area have a crash rate<sup>17</sup> of 1.1 crashes per million vehicle miles traveled, and a severity rate<sup>18</sup> of 1.4. The crash rates along northbound I-35W vary from 1.2 at the southern project limits to 4.4 near the northern project limits. The severity rate also ranges from 1.6 near the southern limits to 5.6 near the northern project limits. The crash rate and severity rates along westbound I-94 are 7.7 and 10.4 where westbound I-94 and I-35W connect and are substantially higher than the average statewide urban freeway segments.

Crashes at local intersections were also evaluated from 2009 to 2013. A critical crash rate<sup>19</sup> was calculated for each intersection on Lake Street, 31<sup>st</sup> Street, and Franklin Avenue. All intersections evaluated exceed the critical crash rate. Figure 11 shows the crash rate and severity crash rate for all intersections.

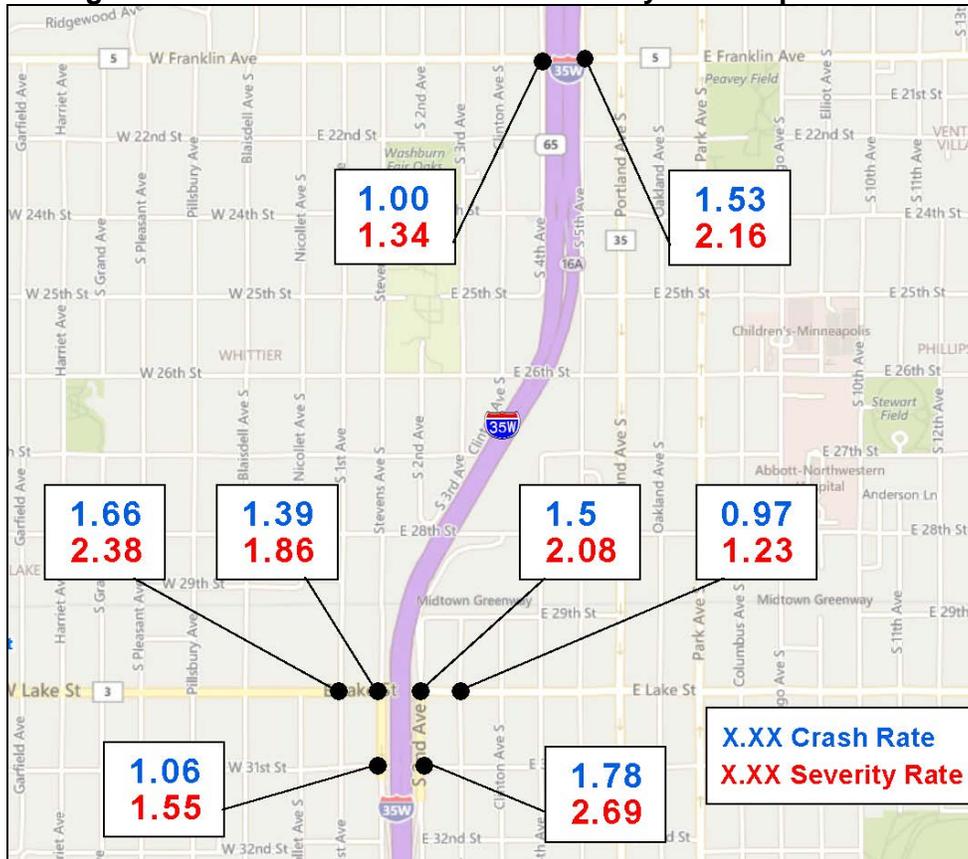
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<sup>17</sup> The number of crashes expected or observed along a roadway segment during a time period normalized to the roadway segment length and the traffic volume over the same period, typically expressed in terms for crashes per million vehicle miles of travel.

<sup>18</sup> Severity rate is a weighted average taking into account fatal crashes, personal injury crashes, and property damage crashes.

<sup>19</sup> Critical crash rate: The critical crash rate is a statistical value that is unique to each intersection based on vehicular exposure and the average crash rate for similar intersections; an intersection with a crash rate higher than the critical rate indicates a sustained crash problem at the intersection.

**Figure 11 – Intersection Crash and Severity Rate Map**



For more detailed information on this need, see the Purpose and Need Memorandum in Appendix B.

## 4.0 ALTERNATIVES

A project's purpose and need also act as "measuring sticks" to evaluate alternative actions. This section of the EA discusses the alternatives that were evaluated and identifies a Preferred Alternative.

### 4.1 LOGICAL TERMINI

To ensure a meaningful evaluation of alternatives, the project's influence area extended on I-35W from approximately 46<sup>th</sup> Street into downtown Minneapolis, on I-94 from 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the Lowry Tunnel, and on Lake Street and the Midtown Greenway from Stevens Avenue to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. To complete certain analyses, these limits were scaled as appropriate.

### 4.2 ALTERNATIVES UNDER CONSIDERATION

There are two alternatives under consideration in this EA: the No Build Alternative and the Preferred Alternative.

The Preferred Alternative includes a set of transportation demand management (TDM) strategies aimed at reducing the demand for roadway travel, particularly in single occupancy vehicles. These TDM strategies are outlined below and address a wide range of externalities associated with driving, including congestion, poor air quality, less livable communities, reduced public

health, dependence on oil, reduced environmental health, and climate change and greenhouse gas emissions. TDM strategies are designed to reduce total travel demand or peak period demand, which may disproportionately contribute to these externalities.

- Congestion Pricing – MnPASS is the brand name for Minnesota’s congestion pricing system. The support of MnPASS is due to its proven ability to safely provide increased trip reliability as well as user choice in a cost-effective manner.
- High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes – MnPASS lanes also incentivize ridesharing by enabling ride sharers to avoid congestion and tolls.
- Transit Improvements – Transit improvements, which include MnPASS lanes and a new multimodal transit station, can increase the availability, efficiency, convenience, and comfort of transit. MnPASS lanes provide a transit advantage and substantially improve bus travel time and travel time reliability. Because commuters respond more readily to travel time savings and travel time reliability when choosing travel modes than they do to other factors, it is anticipated that the guarantee of a faster and more reliable trip will result in additional riders in the corridor during peak periods.
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements – Physical improvements, such as sidewalk and trail connections, can act as incentives for pedestrian and bicycle modes of travel.

These TDM strategies have been incorporated into the Preferred Alternative and are consistent with the Metropolitan Council's *2040 Transportation Policy Plan*. Federal regulations (23 CFR 450.320) require metropolitan planning organizations to develop and implement a Congestion Management Process (CMP) as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process.

## **No Build Alternative**

Under the No Build Alternative, no major capital improvements are made to the existing transportation system. Normal maintenance activities, however, are assumed to continue. The No Build Alternative is identified because it provides a basis of comparison for other alternatives, particularly the Preferred Alternative. The No Build Alternative would not meet the project's purpose and need. Specifically:

- There would continue to be no northbound transit service at Lake Street, and other impediments to transit usage would persist,
- The structural condition of the Braid Bridge and Flyover Bridge would continue to deteriorate requiring frequent and extensive maintenance activities, and
- Inefficient travel patterns and congestion levels would continue to grow, impacting other roadways.

## **Preferred Alternative**

The Preferred Alternative (see Figures in Appendix A) generally provides for the reconstruction of I-35W from approximately 42<sup>nd</sup> Street into downtown Minneapolis, on I-94 from 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Nicollet Avenue, and Lake Street from Blaisdell Avenue to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

As it relates to the project's Purpose and Need, the Preferred Alternative would:

- Construct a median transit station at I-35W and Lake Street,

- Replace the structurally deficient Braid and Flyover bridges, and
- Implement a new southbound MnPASS managed lane, extend the existing northbound MnPASS managed lane, construct a new exit from I-35W southbound to Lake Street, and construct a new exit from I-35W northbound to 28<sup>th</sup> Street.

Building the proposed transit station in the median of I-35W would re-establish the Lake Street transit connection services. The proposed transit station is enclosed and provides access to the freeway level through stairs and elevators on the north and south side of Lake Street. Construction of a multi-use trail connection between the Midtown Greenway, the transit station, and 31<sup>st</sup> Street is also proposed. A stairway, with an integrated bicycle track, from Stevens Avenue street level to the Midtown Greenway level, will also be constructed.

Replacing the I-35W Braid Bridge will provide a new structure and will allow traffic exiting the downtown central business district to shift to the left side of the freeway. This will also allow a new lane from westbound I-94 to the proposed southbound Lake Street exit ramp. By shifting the Braid Bridge to the right side, the bridge can also be relocated from 24<sup>th</sup> Street to 19<sup>th</sup> Street. With these two changes, the existing curve on I-35W can be improved from a 35 mph design to 40 mph.

Replacing the I-35W Flyover Bridge will provide a new structure and will allow I-35W to enter I-94 on the left side. An origin-destination study determined that 78 percent of the vehicles using the bridge continued through the Lowry Hill Tunnel. Therefore, reconfiguring this movement reduces the friction between tunnel traffic and vehicles exiting at Hennepin and Lyndale Avenue. The 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue entrance from downtown Minneapolis will be maintained as part of the project.

Extending the MnPASS managed lane for northbound and southbound traffic would improve system connectivity and reliability from Burnsville to downtown Minneapolis. Constructing new access from I-35W southbound to Lake Street would provide for better overall operations by reducing the number of vehicles exiting at 35<sup>th</sup> Street, and eliminating some inefficient travel patterns. Additional access from I-35W northbound to 28<sup>th</sup> Street would also be provided for vehicles currently exiting at 31<sup>st</sup> Street but destined for the hospitals. This exit ramp will be designed and staged to not preclude access from Lake Street to northbound I-35W, which is not a part of this project.

Across the project most of the pavement will be replaced and numerous bridges will either be replaced or repaired including: the Highway 65 bridges, Franklin Avenue, 24<sup>th</sup> Street pedestrian bridge, 26<sup>th</sup> Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Street, Midtown Greenway, Lake Street, 31<sup>st</sup> Street, 38<sup>th</sup> Street, and the 40<sup>th</sup> Street pedestrian bridge. Right-of-way acquisition, noise walls, retaining walls, conversion of local streets to one-way operations, storm water features, aesthetics and other livability elements are also proposed as part of the project.

For more detailed information on the Preferred Alternative, see the Preferred Alternative Memorandum in Appendix C.

### **4.3 ADDITIONAL ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

To avoid, minimize, mitigate, and enhance the project, the following location and design alternatives were evaluated, but not carried forward. For more detailed information on dismissed alternatives, see the Dismissed Alternatives Memorandum in Appendix D.

## **Multimodal Transit Station**

The design of the multimodal transit station was studied for type, location, and platform configuration at the freeway level, as described below.

Three transit station alternatives were considered: on-line, in-line, and off-line. An on-line station is similar to the 46<sup>th</sup> Street station, and the Lake Street proposal. An on-line station does not require many lane maneuvers to operate. An in-line station remains in the freeway footprint but requires additional maneuvering. An in-line station is similar to the pre-existing Lake Street bus stations located on the shoulder. An off-line station requires leaving the freeway and using local routes. This operation requires several turns, impacts service speeds, and introduces traffic delays. The in-line and off-line stations would not have been compatible with the I-35W corridor vision.

Four transit station platform location alternatives at the freeway level between Lake Street and the Midtown Greenway were considered but three of them were dismissed because the sites failed to maximize convenience and minimize travel times for connection services for the transitway.

Three primary freeway level platform configuration alternatives, or eleven sub-alternatives, were considered. These included variations of shared center platforms, split platforms, and off-set split platforms. Size, safety, operations, and experiences from the 46<sup>th</sup> Street station screened out the additional configurations.

## **Structurally Deficient Bridges**

Rehabilitating the Braid and Flyover Bridges was dismissed for several reasons. Both bridges are concrete box girder bridges with single column piers. Rehabilitation would involve upgrading this column/pier cap configuration into a redundant system. In addition, both bridges have experienced considerable concrete spalling and distress in the box girder due to corrosive salts that have leached into the concrete through the years. Rehabilitation of the box girder superstructure of both bridges to retard active corrosion and repair damaged concrete would be much more expensive than to replace both bridges.

Replacing the Braid Bridge at its current location was dismissed because it is not compatible with the proposed southbound MnPASS lane, center transit station at Lake Street, or the proposed southbound I-35W exit to Lake Street.

The current configuration of the Flyover Bridge, which provides for the ramp entering westbound I-94 on the right hand side, was dismissed based on the findings from an origin-destination study, traffic demand forecasting, and freeway modeling.

## **Interstate Access and Operations**

Other mobility improvements were considered.

An entrance ramp from Lake Street to northbound I-35W was considered. This would have completed the partial interchange but was dismissed based on impacts to several residential properties and cost.

Relocating or vertically separating the 35<sup>th</sup> Street entrance and 31<sup>st</sup> Street exit on northbound I-35W was considered but dismissed based on neighborhood impacts and cost. Previous attempts in the project area related to improving the weaving section resulted in considerable resistance.

## Business Relocation Avoidance Alternatives

As discussed in the Right-of-Way and Relocation Section of this EA (see page 74), the proposed southbound exit and/or the off-street trail connection to the Midtown Greenway requires the displacement of one business and one non-profit, member operated grocery store. Avoiding impacts to this business and non-profit organization would require a corridor alignment shift to the east, which would displace several commercial and residential properties on the east side of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

The proposed southbound exit from I-35W to Lake Street via Stevens Avenue requires closure of all driveways and the public alley on the west side of Stevens Avenue south of the new ramp connection. Access to the existing NICO Plating site is impacted, primarily by the loss of egress from the site onto Stevens Avenue. Access and material handling mitigation has been identified to construct the project and keep the business in place. A portion of the existing public alley and portions of the two commercial lots will be conveyed to NICO Plating to restore their ability to maneuver trucks to and from their loading docks. Mitigating access changes to this existing industrial business while avoiding the complete vacation of the public alley allowed the remaining commercial businesses on the block with frontages on Lake Street to not be displaced.

### 4.4 COST, FUNDING, SCHEDULE, AND BENEFIT/COST ANALYSIS

The estimated total project cost is \$294 million. This includes inflation and contingencies. Of this amount, the cost can be broken down as \$30 million for design, \$4 million for right-of-way and utilities, and \$260 million for construction.

This total will be paid for through a combination of federal (63.5 percent), state (7 percent), Metro Transit (14.75 percent), regional (1.25 percent), county (6.25 percent), and city (7.25 percent) funds.

This project is in the approved *2016-2019 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)* under sequence numbers 1686 and 1826.

The anticipated schedule for the proposed project is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4 – Proposed Schedule of Project Activities**

Activity	Anticipated Completion
EA/EAW	March 2016
Public Hearing/Opportunity for Public Hearing	April 2016
EIS Need Determination	June 2016
Design and Right-of-Way Acquisition	December 2016
Planned Letting Date	June 2017
Begin Bridge Construction	Fall 2017
Begin I-35W Mainline Construction	Spring 2018
Construction Substantially Complete	Fall 2021

A benefit/cost (B/C) analysis was completed for the proposed project in May 2015. The purpose of the analysis is to bring all of the direct effects of a transportation investment into a common measure (dollars). This process recognizes that benefits accrue over a long period of time while costs are incurred primarily in the initial years of the project.

The primary elements that can be monetized for transportation projects are travel time, changes in vehicle operating costs, changes in crashes, remaining capital value, and facility maintenance costs. Decision-makers often weigh the B/C analysis results against other non-monetized effects and impacts of the project, such as environmental effects. Existing monetary value estimates vary extensively for most environmental effects. Until the estimates converge on a consensus value or range, it is MnDOT policy<sup>20</sup> to avoid monetizing environmental effects and perform the B/C analysis (focusing on transportation-related benefits and costs) as part of environmental documentation. Therefore, monetary value was not included in the project's B/C analysis for changes in noise, emissions, ecological diversity, natural resource consumption, or health.

Projects are considered cost-effective if the B/C ratio is greater than 1.0. The B/C analysis can also provide an indication of the economic desirability of an alternative, but results must be weighed by decision-makers, along with the assessment of other effects and impacts.

The B/C analysis conducted for this project evaluated the difference in transportation user costs against the No Build Alternative. Only the Preferred Alternative was evaluated against the No Build Alternative; other screened alternatives were not evaluated and thus have no known B/C ratio. The analysis concluded that the Preferred Alternative would result in a B/C ratio of 45.27. Table 5 summarizes the results of the B/C analysis for the Preferred Alternative.

**Table 5 – Summary of Benefit-Cost Analysis**

<b>Scenario</b>	<b>Preferred Alternative</b>
Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) & Vehicle Hours Traveled (VHT) Benefit	\$ 10,798,614,003.60
Crashes Benefit	\$ 416,008,684.53
Operating/Maintenance	\$ (839,445.32)
<b>Total Benefit</b>	<b>\$ 11,213,783,242.81</b>
Total Construction Costs	\$ 317,412,884.24
Remaining Capital Value (RCV)	\$ 69,717,192.70
Total Cost minus RCV	<b>\$ 247,695,691.54</b>
<b>BC RATIO</b>	<b>45.27</b>

As identified in Table 5, the project results in a very high monetized value for the VMT and VHT benefits; with an approximate benefit of 10.8 billion dollars. The VMT portion is approximately 1.2 billion dollars and the vast majority of the benefit is from the VHT portion of approximately 9.6 billion dollars. Several factors might have contributed to the higher than expected benefits:

- The largest benefit from the project is the VHT benefit which is derived from the improved roadway network with reduced weaving demands, additional capacity, and a new portion of the MnPASS system along southbound I-35W. Previous studies showed that the system improvements in the study area would generate a substantial amount of benefits.
- The improved access under the Preferred Alternative provides shorter route choices for certain areas of South Minneapolis that under the existing conditions can be circuitous routes. This will reduce the overall VMT for the Preferred Alternative.

<sup>20</sup> Source: MnDOT Benefit-Cost Analysis for Transportation Projects Guidance ([www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/program/benefitcost.html#section6](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/program/benefitcost.html#section6)).

It should be noted that the regional travel demand model is accepted by transportation officials as the best available tool for this analysis. However, it is also acknowledged that it does have limitations in its ability to precisely predict traffic measures of effectiveness including VMT and VHT results. For example, the current four-step travel demand model includes a static time of day distribution for all model scenarios (Existing, No Build, and Build). Under the No Build scenario, where congestion is the most prevalent, future drivers may choose to change their departure times in order to improve their trip time; this is not able to be accounted for in the current four-step travel demand model. This feature has been incorporated into the new activity based travel demand model, however it is being validated and not available for implementation at this time. It should also be noted that while the travel demand model has a static time of day distribution, the route choice model does include an extensive iterative process for vehicles to choose their shortest path.

For additional information, see the Benefit/Cost Memorandum in Appendix G.

## 5.0 SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This section discusses the environmental impacts of the Preferred Alternative using the State's Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) form. The EAW is a standard format used in Minnesota for environmental review of projects meeting certain thresholds at Minnesota Rule 4410.4300. Federal environmental regulations not addressed on the EAW form are addressed in Section 5.1 (Additional Federal Social, Economic, and Environmental Issues).

### ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

**Note to reviewers:** Comments must be submitted to the Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) during the 30-day comment period following notice of the EAW in the EQB Monitor. Comments should address the accuracy and completeness of information, potential impacts that warrant further investigation and the need for an EIS. MnDOT, as the RGU, is required to evaluate and respond to these types of substantive comments. Public comments are particularly valuable and helpful for the RGU when they:

- List any inaccuracies in the EAW or other accompanying documents;
- Show potential environmental impacts that haven't been identified by the proposer or the RGU;
- Show that certain environmental impacts have been identified, but haven't been adequately addressed; and
- Suggest possible mitigation measures that should be added to the proposal.

#### Question #1: Project Title

I-35W and Lake Street Improvement Project (SP No. 2782-327)

#### Question #2: Proposer

Hennepin County and MnDOT are the proposers for this project. The contact person for each Proposer is:

James Grube  
Hennepin County Project Manager/County Highway Engineer  
1600 Prairie Drive  
Medina, MN 55340  
Phone: (612) 596-0307

Scott Pedersen  
MnDOT Project Manager  
1500 West County Road B2  
Mail Stop 050  
Roseville, MN 55113  
Phone: (651) 234-7726

#### Question #3: Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU)

MnDOT is the RGU for this project. The person collecting EA/EAW comments for the RGU is:

Rick Dalton  
MnDOT Environmental Coordinator  
1500 West County Road B2  
Mail Stop 050  
Roseville, MN 55113  
Phone: (651) 234-7677  
richard.dalton@state.mn.us

## Question #4: Reason for EAW Preparation

Required:

- EIS Scoping  
 Mandatory EAW

If EAW or EIS is mandatory give EQB rule category subpart number(s) and name(s): **4410.4300 subp. 22(b)**  
**4410.4300 subp. 22(c)**

## Question #5: Project Location

County <u>Hennepin</u>	City/Twp <u>Minneapolis</u>	
Section <u>3 &amp; 10</u>	Township <u>28N</u>	Range <u>24W</u>
Sections <u>27 &amp; 34</u>	Township <u>29N</u>	Range <u>24W</u>

At a minimum attach each of the following to the EAW:

- County map showing the general location of the project (**see Figure 1 in Appendix A**);
- U.S. Geological Survey 7.5 minute, 1:24,000 scale map indicating project boundaries (photocopy acceptable) (**see Figure 1 in Appendix E**);
- Site plans showing all significant project and natural features. Pre-construction site plan and post-construction site plan. (**see Figures 2A through 2C in Appendix A**)  
(**See Figure 3 – NRCS Soils Map in Appendix E**)

(**See Figure 4 – Location of Potentially Steep Slopes in Appendix E**)  
(**See Figure 5 – I-35W Wetland Review Map in Appendix E**)

## Question #6: Description

- a. Provide the brief project summary to be published in the *EQB Monitor* (approximately 50 words).

This project generally extends from 42<sup>nd</sup> Street to I-94 along I-35W in Minneapolis. The scope includes construction of a Lake Street multimodal transit station; a pedestrian/bicycle connection between the Midtown Greenway and the transit station; replacement of existing roadway pavement and numerous bridges; completion of MnPASS lanes; a new exit to Lake Street, a new exit to 28<sup>th</sup> Street; stormwater treatment areas, and construction/replacement of noise walls.

- b. Give a complete description of the proposed project and related new construction, including infrastructure needs. If the project is an expansion include a description of the existing facility. Emphasize: 1) construction, operation methods and features that will cause physical manipulation of the environment or will produce wastes, 2) modifications to existing equipment or industrial processes, 3) significant demolition, removal or remodeling of existing structures, and 4) timing and duration of construction activities.

### Project Features

A detailed description of the project can be found on page 16, under the Preferred Alternative sub-heading.

## Construction Methods

The construction work will consist of removing the existing roadway material and topsoil within the proposed project's construction limits, excavating material from under the proposed new roadway areas, laying storm sewer, and placing and compacting material for the new roadway embankments. It is anticipated that the material excavated on the project will be re-used for overlay, aggregate or embankment purposes where appropriate and in accordance with best management practices established in MnDOT's Standard Specifications for Construction.

Bridge construction will involve placing approaching roadway embankments, driving pile, constructing abutments and piers, installing bridge girders, and constructing the concrete deck.

Noise walls will be installed on concrete posts. The posts are inserted in holes drilled in the ground and backfilled with select granular material around the posts.

Material will also be excavated and placed for water ponding areas related to stormwater and runoff management (see EAW Item 11 – Water quality: surface water runoff on page 38 for information).

Best management practices (BMPs) will be used to control construction related sedimentation, and turf areas will be re-established (see EAW Item 10 – Erosion and Sedimentation on page 32 for more information).

Some trees and vegetation will be removed as part of the project. Tree and vegetation removal are discussed in EAW Item 13, beginning on page 49.

Pile driving for bridge construction and other components of project construction will result in noise, vibration, and dust impacts, as would use of heavy equipment (dozers, front-end loaders, backhoes, and vibratory rollers) for these activities. Noise impacts related to the operation of construction equipment would vary in location and duration. Noise and dust are discussed on page 55. The use of jack hammers and pavement sawing equipment is anticipated, but is prohibited during nighttime hours (see "Noise during Construction" under EAW Item 17 – Noise, on page 55). Noise impacts related to the operation of construction equipment will vary in location and duration.

## Construction Staging and Transportation Management Plan

The staging of construction activities will be confirmed during the final design stage of the project. MnDOT has examined four construction staging alternatives, which are identified below. Traffic modeling analysis was conducted to estimate the tradeoffs between duration of construction and impacts to road users.

1. Full Closure of I-35W
2. Directional Closure of I-35W
3. Staged Construction Maintaining 6 Lanes of Traffic (2 General Purpose Lanes and 1 MnPASS Lane in Each Direction)
4. Staged Construction Maintaining 5 Lanes of Traffic (2 General Purpose Lanes Each Direction and a Reversible MnPASS Lane)

The analysis results concluded that the Full Closure Alternative and the Directional Closure Alternative were not viable due to the increased average delay on I-35W during construction and the high daily user costs. It was also concluded that the Staged Construction Alternatives (identified as 3 and 4 above) were more appropriate. The completed analysis will also provide guidance on diversion of trips to alternative routes and impacts associated with the construction.

MnDOT will be working with a consultant to develop refined staging and traffic control plans. This effort will include coordination with local businesses, school districts, school bus service, emergency service, transit service, the City of Minneapolis, and Hennepin County. This consultant will also develop a baselined construction schedule to assist in the optimization of the construction and the minimization of the impacts associated with the construction.

Each of these elements will inform the development of a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) for the project. The TMP will outline the construction schedule, traffic impacts, detour routes, allowable lane closures, and document the coordination with the groups above that will enable and inform staff throughout construction. The TMP will lay out strategies for managing project work-zone impacts. The plan will include both construction traffic operation controls and public information components. It will address issues such as transit, pedestrian and bicycle crossings, access by emergency services to properties adjacent to this project, and access to adjacent businesses. I-35W is expected to be open to traffic, however delays can be expected that are typical with highway construction projects.

#### Bridge Demolition

Construction of the new bridges will require dismantling and removing the existing bridges that are proposed for replacement. Bridges over I-35W will be demolished during nighttime hours or over a weekend period when I-35W traffic can be detoured around the bridge locations. Demolition of bridges supporting I-35W may occur during daytime hours depending on the traffic volume of the local streets and available detours. Traffic will not be allowed on the local streets when bridges above them are being removed.

Typical bridge demolition techniques include using a concrete breaker attached to a backhoe to remove the deck, piers, and abutments along with lifting and removing the existing concrete beams with a crane. Concrete broken in place may be dropped on the roadways below the bridges or caught at the point of demolition using plywood or similar materials. All debris will be removed from the site, in compliance with state and federal regulations, after bridge demolition is complete. Roadways under the bridges will be protected from falling debris such that they can be reopened to traffic after bridge demolition and clean up.

#### Bridge Construction

The piers and abutments for the project's bridges will likely be constructed using traditional techniques. These techniques include excavating for the foundation, driving piles where needed, forming the shape of the members, and placing reinforced concrete as prescribed in the design plans. Where construction is close to a roadway such as at the piers in the I-35W median, shoring will be placed to support the excavation and the work zone will be separated from traffic by temporary barriers. Pier and abutment construction will likely occur during daytime hours with minimal lane closures, during hours when traffic volumes are minimal.

Most pier and abutment construction for the proposed bridge replacements will not be started until the existing bridges have been removed because the new bridges will be located

in roughly the same location as the existing bridges. There are however, alternative techniques to construct portions of piers and abutments near existing piers and abutments.

Typical construction techniques of roadways carried by bridges, consisting of placing prefabricated beams on already constructed piers and abutments, is likely for the proposed bridge replacements. Beam placement over I-35W will be done during nighttime hours while I-35W traffic is detoured. Beam placement over local roadways will also be done when those roadways are detoured but may be done in daytime hours. Once the beams are placed, the remaining operations such as forming and pouring the deck and barriers will likely occur during daytime hours with minimal lane closures to the roadways under the bridges.

Accelerated bridge construction techniques may also be used to construct roadways carried by bridges. Many accelerated bridge construction techniques use prefabricated members which would have no additional impacts to the travelling public than already discussed, however the impact to the travelling public on roadway bridges over the freeway will be decreased as the duration of the necessary road closures would be less.

#### Impact on Infrastructure and Public Services

The project corridor contains public and private utilities, including gas, electric, telephone, cable television, water, and sanitary sewer. The proposed project will require utility relocation and/or modification. A subsurface utility engineering (SUE) investigation will be completed prior to project letting. This will create certified SUE plans that will accurately show all existing utilities within the project limits. MnDOT will coordinate efforts with local utility companies and Metropolitan Council Environmental Services regarding any relocations or impacts to utilities within the project area. No disruptions to services or permanent changes are anticipated.

#### Project Schedule

The project is planned for letting in June 2017, with bridge construction beginning in fall 2017, and I-35W mainline construction beginning in spring of 2018. Planning has begun for how to best phase the construction of the project, which is expected to last a total of three to four years. See the project schedule in Table 4 on page 19.

#### c. Project Magnitude

Total project acreage: **152.1 acres**

Linear project length: **3.1 miles**

Number and type of residential units: **Not Applicable**

Commercial building area (in square feet): **Not Applicable**<sup>21</sup>

Industrial building area (in square feet): **Not Applicable**

Institutional building area (in square feet): **Not Applicable**

Other uses – specify (in square feet): **22,393 (Transit Station)**

Structure height(s): **Approx. 65 feet (Transit Station)**

d. Explain the project purpose; if the project will be carried out by a governmental unit, explain the need for the project and identify its beneficiaries.

#### Purpose and Need for Project

Refer to the Purpose and Need Section on page 4.

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<sup>21</sup> The project is not proposing any commercial development.

## Project Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries of the project will include transit users and motorists in the immediate area and region since the roadway, bridge, trail, and transit station improvements are anticipated to improve operations and safety conditions. The Preferred Alternative also provides a solid foundation for future regional BRT service, enhances local bus service at Lake Street, and provides a quality connection to future transit service in the Midtown Greenway. It also provides for improved and more accessible pedestrian and bicycle connections with associated gains in safety, accessibility, and multimodal connectivity within the regional transit system. The local benefits associated with the Preferred Alternative include: improved transit service, livability improvements and enhancements, new opportunities via freeway connections, and improved community connections along bridges spanning the freeway corridor.

- e. Are future stages of this development including development on any other property planned or likely to happen?

Yes  No

If yes, briefly describe future stages, relationship to present project, timeline and plans for environmental review.

The entrance ramp from Lake Street to northbound I-35W and its associated components are not a part of the proposed action. To provide continuity, the proposed continued project development will be such that the implementation of the northbound ramp is not precluded in the future.

## METRO Orange Line BRT

The METRO Orange Line is a 17-mile planned highway BRT line that will connect Minneapolis, Richfield, Bloomington, and Burnsville along I-35W (see Figure 7 in Appendix B). The Orange Line will provide frequent, all-day service in both directions, seven days a week. The Orange Line alignment would use a combination of existing center-running highway managed lanes, bus-only shoulders, transit-only guideway, high-occupancy vehicle ramp bypass lanes, and short segments of operating in mixed traffic on local streets. The project includes street improvements, upgraded transit stations, park & ride facilities, and improved bus routes.

The proposed route will upgrade and replace the existing local bus Route 535 with enhanced service and amenities. No changes to existing express bus routes are planned. Orange Line service will have competitive running times for station-to-station trips and offer a new option for reverse-commuters (riders traveling from urban areas to suburban destinations). The continued improvement of station-to-station Orange Line service is justified by existing population and employment densities, income and auto deficiencies densities, access to critical transit connections, and expected growth.

METRO Orange Line is currently in FTA Small Starts Project Development, and the project is completing a Documented Categorical Exclusion (DCE) under 23 CFR 771.118(c)9 for the FTA. The infrastructure for the Lake Street Station is included in this EA, however, BRT transit service to that station is considered under the Orange Line DCE.

Both the proposed project and the METRO Orange Line project have independent utility, which means that either project could be constructed absent the other project. For example, if the proposed project is completed and the METRO Orange Line project is not, the

multimodal transit station would still be used to restore peak-hour transit service to I-35W at Lake Street. If the proposed multimodal transit station is not built, the METRO Orange Line project could still be implemented but operate at a reduced service capacity or effectiveness.

- f. Is this project a subsequent stage of an earlier project?  Yes  No  
 If yes, briefly describe the past development, timeline and any past environmental review.

While the proposed project is a separate project, it connects to and is supportive of traffic congestion reduction investments that have been made by MnDOT and the Metropolitan Council through the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Urban Partnership Agreement program (see Figures 3 and 4 in Appendix B).

**Question #7: Cover Types**

Estimate the acreage of the site with each of the following cover types before and after development:

	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>		<b>Before</b>
Wetlands	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Lawn/Landscaping	<u>60.9</u>
Deep water/streams	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Impervious Surfaces	<u>91.2</u>
Wooded/forest	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Stormwater Pond	<u>0</u>
Brush/grassland	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Other (Describe)	<u>0</u>
Cropland	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>		
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>152.1</u>

**Question #8: Permits and Approvals Required**

List all known local, state and federal permits, approvals, certifications and financial assistance for the project. Include modifications of any existing permits, governmental review of plans and all direct and indirect forms of public financial assistance including bond guarantees, Tax Increment Financing and infrastructure. *All of these final decisions are prohibited until all appropriate environmental review has been completed. See Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4410.3100.*

Permits and Approvals

See Section 6.1, Permits and Approval Requirements, for a list of permits and approvals that may be required for this project.

Anticipated Funding

Project funding is discussed on page 19.

## Question #9: Land Use

- a. Describe:
- i. Existing land use of the site as well as areas adjacent to and near the site, including parks, trails, prime or unique farmlands.

### Land Use and Development

The project area is in a fully urbanized area of Minneapolis. The land use around the project area is a mix of industrial, commercial, institutional, parkland, trail, and multi-family and single-family residential. Figure 2 in Appendix E shows land use, based on Metropolitan Council data.

### Farmlands

The provisions of the Farmland Protection Policy Act do not apply to this project, since the right-of-way to be acquired falls within the Twin Cities urban boundary as defined by the 2010 Census. None of the right-of-way to be acquired lies within an agricultural preserve.

### Designated Parks, Recreation Areas, or Trails

The "Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act of 1966" section on page 92 provides a full description of the parkland analysis conducted for this project.

- ii. Plans. Describe planned land use as identified in comprehensive plan (if available) and any other applicable plan for land use, water, or resources management by a local, regional, state, or federal agency.

The proposed Lake Street multimodal transit station, MnPASS lanes, pedestrian/bicycle connection, and additional interchange capacity supports the regionally adopted long-range transportation plan, and the local comprehensive plans approved by the Metropolitan Council, as outlined below. The multi-purpose trail connection is compatible with the existing regional trail in the Midtown Greenway as well as future fixed rail transit in the Midtown Greenway.

### Metropolitan Council's 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area

The project is referenced as a Regionally Significant Project in the Metropolitan Council's 2016-2019 TIP for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area<sup>22</sup>. Federal law requires that all transportation projects that will be partially funded with federal funds must be in an approved TIP and meet the following four tests: fiscal constraint; consistency with the adopted regional transportation plan; air quality conformity and opportunity for public input.

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<sup>22</sup> The 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) can be viewed at: [www.metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Planning-2/Key-Transportation-Planning-Documents/Transportation-Improvement-Plan-\(TIP\).aspx](http://www.metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Planning-2/Key-Transportation-Planning-Documents/Transportation-Improvement-Plan-(TIP).aspx)

## Metropolitan Council's 2040 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP)

This project is consistent with the regional TPP<sup>23</sup> which identifies it as a managed lane recommendation; this plan lays out existing and planned regional transit corridors (see Figure 6 in Appendix B), including the METRO Orange Line and Midtown Corridor. The regional TPP places importance on investing in multimodal transportation choices and supports the development of a transportation system that accommodates the mobility needs of users of all modes including motorists, transit vehicles and riders, pedestrians of all levels of functional ability, bicyclists and freight movers. The Midtown Greenway is a designated element of the Metropolitan Council's Regional Bicycle Transportation Network.

## Metropolitan Council's THRIVE MSP 2040

The City of Minneapolis is designated as an "Urban Center" geographic planning area in *THRIVE MSP 2040*<sup>24</sup>. The project is consistent with the following *THRIVE MSP 2040* strategies for growth accommodation in Urban Center communities: "Invest in transit improvements in corridors that serve existing transit demand and that can effectively guide a significant level of future growth", and "Ensure that local comprehensive plans accommodate growth in and around transit stations and near high-frequency transit services, commensurate with planned levels of transit service and station typologies identified in the 2040 TPP."

## City of Minneapolis' Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth

The project is consistent with the following policies from the *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*<sup>25</sup>, the City's adopted comprehensive plan.

- Policy 2.1: Encourage growth and reinvestment by sustaining the development of a multimodal transportation system. Subparagraph 2.1.3: Ensure continued growth and investment through strategic transportation investments and partnerships.
- Policy 2.6: Manage the role and impact of automobiles in a multimodal transportation system. Subparagraph 2.6.5: Encourage the design and completion of needed improvements to the street network, including the freeway system, which promote the efficient, safe movement of traffic.

The project is also consistent with several adopted City Plans including: *Nicollet Avenue: Revitalization of Minneapolis' Main Street* (adopted 2000)<sup>26</sup>, *Midtown Minneapolis Land Use and Development Plan* (adopted 2005)<sup>27</sup>, *Midtown Greenway Land Use and Development Plan* (adopted 2007)<sup>28</sup>, and *Access Minneapolis Transportation Action Plan* (adopted 2005 – 2011)<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> *2040 Transportation Policy Plan*, Metropolitan Council ([www.metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Planning-2/Key-Transportation-Planning-Documents/Transportation-Policy-Plan-\(1\)/The-Adopted-2040-TPP-\(1\).aspx](http://www.metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Planning-2/Key-Transportation-Planning-Documents/Transportation-Policy-Plan-(1)/The-Adopted-2040-TPP-(1).aspx))

<sup>24</sup> *THRIVE MSP 2040* can be viewed online at: [www.metrocouncil.org/Planning/Projects/Thrive-2040.aspx?source=child](http://www.metrocouncil.org/Planning/Projects/Thrive-2040.aspx?source=child).

<sup>25</sup> See [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/planning/cped\\_comp\\_plan\\_2030](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/planning/cped_comp_plan_2030)

<sup>26</sup> See [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/convert\\_261301.pdf](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/convert_261301.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> See [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-085287.pdf](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-085287.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> See [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/planning/cped\\_midtown-greenway](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/planning/cped_midtown-greenway)

<sup>29</sup> See [www.minneapolismn.gov/publicworks/transplan/](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/publicworks/transplan/)

## Hennepin County's 2030 Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Systems Plan, and Bicycle Transportation Plan

The *Hennepin County Comprehensive Plan* provides planning elements (including transportation) that have been revised and updated since 1982. Prepared in 2008, this *Hennepin County Transportation System Plan* identifies the county's vision for transportation, updates previous planning efforts, and outlines recommendations for transportation decisions in the future to accommodate population growth. The plan identifies the automobile as the primary mode of transportation and focuses on roadway issues, but also addresses improvement of a multimodal transportation system. The proposed project will enhance the multimodal transportation system in Hennepin County. The Midtown Greenway is a designated element of the *Hennepin County Bicycle Transportation Plan*.

- iii. Zoning, including special districts or overlays such as shoreland, floodplain, wild and scenic rivers, critical area, agricultural preserves, etc.

There is no shoreland zoning district within the project limits.

The project area is not located within a coastal zone or coastal barrier.

No wild and scenic rivers exist within the I-35W project limits.

Flood Insurance Rate Maps from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) were reviewed. There are no officially mapped floodplains in the project area. Therefore, the project does not encroach on any designated floodplain area. Furthermore, the locations susceptible to flooding are not located within a flood prone area connected to a river, lake, or wetland. The locations susceptible to flooding are considerably higher than and/or hydraulically decoupled from the nearby water courses. The potential for flooding stems from the capacity limits of a manmade drainage system, a floodplain assessment is not warranted.

- b. Discuss the project's compatibility with nearby land uses, zoning, and plans listed in Item 9a above, concentrating on implications for environmental effects.

While state highways are not subject to the city and county plans cited in EAW Item 9a, the compatibility of the proposed project with local planning efforts is a consideration. Overall, the proposed transit station and additional interchange capacity supports the Metropolitan Council's *THRIVE MSP 2040* and the *TPP*, and the local comprehensive plans approved by the Metropolitan Council.

Lake Street is designated as a "Commercial Corridor" in the *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*. Commercial Corridors carry large traffic volumes and must balance substantial vehicular through-traffic capacity with automobile and pedestrian access to commercial property. Development and revitalization of the Lake Street corridor helps to strengthen surrounding urban neighborhoods that are located adjacent to the project area.

The *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* also identifies the Wells Fargo/Hospitals area as one of four growth centers in the city, where there is a concentration of employment activity accompanied by a wide range of complementary activities taking place through the day (e.g., residential, office, retail, entertainment, and recreational uses). Growth areas are supported by excellent transit service.

The MnDOT Interchange Review Committee, in a letter dated May 1, 2015, determined that the Preferred Alternative is largely consistent with the qualifying criteria found in Appendix F

– Highway Interchange Request Criteria and Review Procedure of the Metropolitan Council's *TPP*. The proposed access from southbound I-35W is consistent with policy as it is a step towards completion of a full access interchange at 31<sup>st</sup> Street/Lake Street; the northbound entrance ramp is not proposed with this project. This project does not preclude the northbound entrance ramp from being constructed with a future project.

The Committee also noted that the 28<sup>th</sup> Street exit ramp does not directly conform to policy based on interchange spacing, providing a full interchange access, and functional classification. However, proper ramp spacing is provided under the current project design and with the future northbound Lake Street entrance ramp. The functional classification of 28<sup>th</sup> Street is a B-Minor arterial; the City of Minneapolis classification of 28<sup>th</sup> Street as a high volume Activity Area Street that serves dense activity centers, employment centers, and growth centers as defined by the City's Comprehensive Plan. However, 28<sup>th</sup> Street is part of a one-way pair of streets along with 26<sup>th</sup> Street, also a B-Minor arterial. This one-way pair of streets is vital to South Minneapolis area for the east-west connections and combined carry a substantially higher daily traffic volume (vehicles per day) than either Lake Street or 31<sup>st</sup> Street. At this time there is no plan to add additional ramp access on 28<sup>th</sup> Street and it would remain a partial interchange.

The project is compatible with nearby land uses as it includes a set of TDM strategies (see pages 15 and 16) aimed at reducing the demand for roadway travel, particularly in single occupancy vehicles. TDM strategies are designed to reduce total travel demand or peak period demand, which may disproportionately contribute to externalities associated with driving, including congestion, poor air quality, less livable communities, reduced public health, dependence on oil, reduced environmental health, and climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.

- c. Identify measures incorporated into the proposed project to mitigate any potential incompatibility as discussed in Item 9b above.

Without the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue connection from Lake Street to 28<sup>th</sup> Street, many of the arterial intersections will see a substantial increase in traffic as vehicles use both 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Lake Street to find a northern route. The majority of the intersections will operate near capacity, so the increase in traffic volume will likely have a safety impact.

The proposed action is compatible with planned land uses in the project area.

## **Question #10: Geology, Soils and Topography/Land Forms**

- a. Geology – Describe the geology underlying the project area and identify and map any susceptible geologic features such as sinkholes, shallow limestone formations, unconfined/shallow aquifers, or karst conditions. Discuss any limitations of these features for the project and any effects the project could have on these features. Identify any project designs or mitigation measures to address effects to geologic features.

Bedrock underlying the project area is Paleozoic aged limestone (Platteville and Glenwood formations) and sandstone (St. Peter) from Middle Ordovician. Bedrock depths throughout the project area are variable with 50 to 150 feet of overburden cover. Just to the west is a north/south trending bedrock valley running under Lake Calhoun and Lake Harriet. Overburden depths to bedrock are up to 400 feet. On average, bedrock depths are approximately 75 feet below ground surface. There are no foreseeable limitations to the

project due to bedrock/bedrock aquifer features at this stage of preliminary site investigations.

- b. Soils and topography – Describe the soils on the site, giving NRCS (SCS) classifications and descriptions, including limitation of soils. Describe topography, any special site conditions relating to erosion potential, soil stability or other soils limitations, such as steep slopes, highly permeable soils. Provide estimated volume and acreage of soil excavation and/or grading. Discuss impacts from project activities (distinguish between construction and operational activities) related to soils and topography. Identify measures during and after project construction to address soil limitations including stabilization, soil corrections or other measures. Erosion/sedimentation control related to stormwater runoff should be addressed in response to Item 11.b.ii.

Soils within the project area are Pleistocene aged outwash and terrace deposits from the Grantsburg sublobe of the Des Moines lobe. These soils are predominantly associated with glacial ice/meltwater deposits consisting of sand, loamy sand, and gravel. Loess (windblown silt) may be present up to 4 feet thick overlaying the glacial soil deposits. Slopes within the project area do not exceed the 12 percent limit. The native project area topography has been altered by urban construction with slopes ranging from 0 to 8 percent. Figure 3 in Appendix E contains the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) soils map showing the project corridor area soils and potentially steep slopes.

The soil permeability across the project area is variable from moderate to highly permeable outwash sands and terrace deposits.

According to the 'Quaternary Hydrogeology' Plate generated by the Minnesota Geological Survey (MGS) for the Hennepin County Geologic Atlas (C-4, 1989) reports a water table elevation from 830 to 810 feet above mean sea level (MSL) (creating approximate water table depths ranging from less than 5 to 55 feet). Areas with high ground water tables are located in low areas near the Highway 55 tunnel going under I-35W and from East 40<sup>th</sup> Street to the southern end of the project limit. These areas may have water from less than 5 feet to 10 feet below ground surface. Water table elevations in the area will likely fluctuate on a seasonal and localized basis.

The project will grade approximately 112.6 acres and will move approximately 340,000 cubic yards of fill soil (280,000 cubic yards of cut and 60,000 cubic yards of fill). The earthwork quantities are based on preliminary design and related construction limits. These estimates are subject to change as final design progresses.

## Question #11: Water Resources

- a. Describe surface water and groundwater features on or near the site in a.i. and a.ii. below.
- i. Surface water – lakes, streams, wetlands, intermittent channels, and county/judicial ditches. Include any special designations such as public waters, trout stream/lake, wildlife lakes, migratory waterfowl feeding/resting lake, and outstanding resource value water. Include water quality impairments or special designations listed on the current MPCA 303d Impaired Waters List that are within 1 mile of the project. Include DNR Public Waters Inventory number(s), if any.

There are no lakes, streams, wetlands, intermittent channels, or ditches within the project limits. The entire drainage from the corridor discharges into the Mississippi River. There are no other lakes or streams connected to the project area. Local soil survey maps indicate no hydric soils and National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) mapping indicates no wetland resources within the project area (see Figure 5 in Appendix E). The following sources were used to verify the absence of wetlands within the project area:

- NWI mapping;
- The County Soil Survey;
- MnDNR Minnesota Land Cover by County mapping;
- MnDNR Minnesota Public Waters and Wetlands Inventory (PWI) mapping;
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Floodplain mapping;
- MnDOT Video Road Log;
- Recent Aerial Photographs; and
- Historic Aerial Photographs.

There are no receiving waters located within one mile of the project that have been designated as “impaired” by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The runoff from the corridor drains entirely to the Mississippi River via the stormwater tunnel. Based on MPCA data, this particular reach of the Mississippi River, from Lower St. Anthony Falls to Lock and Dam #1, has an approved Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Plan for Mercury (in fish tissue) impairment. Fecal coliform is the only other listed impairment. Information from the MPCA website indicates that a TMDL for fecal coliform is underway.

- ii. Groundwater – aquifers, springs, seeps. Include: 1) depth to groundwater; 2) if project is within a MDH wellhead protection area; 3) identification of any onsite and/or nearby wells, including unique numbers and well logs if available. If there are no wells known on site or nearby, explain the methodology used to determine this.

### Groundwater

Regional groundwater flows to the east with a slight northern component, toward the Mississippi River. The regional water table elevation is estimated between 815 and 820 feet above mean sea level (amsl) with the elevation decreasing toward the Mississippi River (MGS, 1989).

Well logs reviewed on the MDH CWI online mapping program indicate that wells in this area are primarily finished at approximately 200 feet below ground surface (bgs), and access the Prairie du Chien Group and Jordan Sandstone aquifer.

The Prairie du Chien Group and Jordan Sandstone form the most heavily used aquifer in Hennepin County. This aquifer lies beneath the St. Peter Sandstone in the center of the Twin Cities basin and directly underlies the glacial drift elsewhere (MGS, 1989).

The Prairie du Chien Group (approximately 120 feet) consists of dolomite with fractures, joints, and solution cavities that control the flow of water through it. The Jordan Sandstone portion of the aquifer (approximately 160 feet thick) consists of quartzose sandstone which is highly permeable (MGS, 1989).

The project design includes two filtration basins and a series of structural pollution control devices (SPCDs) placed throughout the entire study area, which will be constructed within the project right-of-way and the proposed roadway profile. See EAW Item 11.b.ii – Water quality: surface water runoff on page 38 for more information about stormwater basins and infiltration to groundwater.

Water Wells

Review of the Minnesota Department of Health County Well Index shows several wells within 500 feet of the proposed project limits, but outside the right-of-way area or area of construction (see Table 6 – Nearby Wells, below).

**Table 6 – Nearby Wells**

Unique Well No.	Well Address or Approximate Location	Well Depth (Feet)
225885	16 <sup>th</sup> Street/5 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	257
225886	16 <sup>th</sup> Street/5 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	260
227767	19 <sup>th</sup> Street/4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	200
227766	19 <sup>th</sup> Street/5 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	200
227765	19 <sup>th</sup> Street/5 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	200
200650	2419 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue South	203
235777	2753 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	485
201080	1 <sup>st</sup> Avenue/Lake Street	240
201078	2932 Stevens Avenue South	221
201077	16 East Lake Street	340

Source: I-35W Transit/Access Project Modified Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (April 21, 2014).

The CWI does not represent all wells in the state, but it is the single most complete listing of state wells. If any unused or unsealed wells are discovered in the project area during construction, they will be addressed in accordance with Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4725.

Wellhead Protection Areas (WHPA)

The Minnesota Department of Health's (MDH) WHPA database was reviewed to determine if any WHPAs were located within the project area. The purpose of a WHPA is to protect the surface and subsurface area surrounding a public water supply from contaminants entering the public drinking supply. According to MPCA's Petroleum Remediation Program (PRP) and

MDH CWI online mapping programs, one wellhead protection area is located in the project corridor. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Stevens Square Handpump is a transient non-community inner wellhead management zone located in the Stevens Square Park in the northwestern portion of the site.

#### Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMA)

The project does not lie within a DWSMA.

- b. Describe effects from project activities on water resources and measures to minimize or mitigate the effects in Item b.1. through Item b.iv. below.
- i. Wastewater – For each of the following, describe the sources, quantities and composition of all sanitary, municipal/domestic and industrial wastewater produced or treated at the site.

Sanitary wastewater will be generated by employees of the multimodal transit station. Estimates of peak daily sanitary wastewater production are minimal. Wastewater will enter the city sanitary system and ultimately be treated at the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) Metro wastewater treatment plant prior to discharge to the Mississippi River. There is no industrial wastewater anticipated to be generated from the multimodal transit station.

- 1) If the wastewater discharge is to a publicly owned treatment facility, identify any pretreatment measures and the ability of the facility to handle the added water and waste loadings, including any effects on, or required expansion of, municipal wastewater infrastructure.

Wastewater treatment will be performed at the MCES Metro plant, and sanitary flows from the project will be conveyed to the Metro plant via MCES interceptor 1-MN-330 or 1-MN-341. These project flows will not require any additions or modifications to the Metro plant.

#### Metropolitan Council Environmental Services Wastewater Sewer Interceptors

The Metropolitan Council's internet base map was reviewed for sewer interceptors located in the project area. Gravity wastewater sewer interceptors cross I-35W near 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Streets (1-MN-330) and 36<sup>th</sup> Street (1-MN-341). Because the proposed project profile on I-35W has minimal to moderate impacts below the current grade, it is anticipated that the interceptors can be left as-is. MnDOT will coordinate with the Metropolitan Council on the proposed project plan to ensure that the interceptors are not impacted during construction.

- 2) If the wastewater discharge is to a subsurface sewage treatment systems (SSTS), describe the system used, the design flow, and suitability of site conditions for such a system.

Not Applicable.

- 3) If the wastewater discharge is to surface water, identify the wastewater treatment methods and identify discharge points and proposed effluent limitations to mitigate impacts. Discuss any effects to surface or groundwater from wastewater discharges.

Not Applicable.

## ii. Stormwater

- 1.) Describe the quantity and quality of stormwater runoff at the site prior to and post construction. Include the routes and receiving water bodies for runoff from the site (major downstream water bodies as well as the immediate receiving waters).

All surface runoff from the I-35W project area discharges into the Mississippi River through a system of near surface storm sewer pipes and inlets, drop shafts and a relatively deep tunnel, which is located considerably above the river's water level (e.g., over 50 feet).

There are two distinct aspects associated with the stormwater quantity. One aspect is related to the measures needed to offset the potential increase in runoff rates due to the proposed roadway improvements, specifically the increase in impervious surface. A second aspect relates to the potential for flooding along the corridor, a potential that is already present under existing, pre-construction conditions.

### Stormwater Quantity – Runoff Control

Overall, the project increases the impervious surface area by 9.1 acres which, relative to the surface of the entire corridor, translates into a fractional increase in impervious surface.

The *Preliminary Drainage Report for the I-35W Corridor Drainage Study* dated on December 8, 2014 (see Appendix G) provides a preliminary design document addressing the stormwater treatment and rate control needs directly related to the project improvements, based on the requirements and policies of the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO), City of Minneapolis, and the MPCA specifically, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System – State Disposal System (NPDES-SDS) permit.

In order to offset the increase in runoff rates due to the increase in impervious fraction within the highway corridor, two filtration basins are being proposed to meet the requirements of the MPCA Construction Stormwater Permit. The 24<sup>th</sup> Street Basin is located on the west side of I-35W, between East 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and East 24<sup>th</sup> Street. The 33<sup>rd</sup> Street North and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South basins are located on the west side of I-35W, between East 32<sup>nd</sup> Street and East 34<sup>th</sup> Street. Stormwater from the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street North Basin is piped to the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Basin. Both basins were designed to maximize the footprints between the project right-of-way and the proposed roadway profile. Typically, filtration basins do not provide substantial runoff volume reduction. However, in this case, the soils investigation work completed within the vicinity of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street found the soils to be predominantly sandy, with infiltration potential. MnDOT's technical memorandum TM No. 14-06-ENV-01 outlines allowable infiltration locations along MnDOT roadways.

### Stormwater Quantity – Flooding Risk Reduction

The project area has experienced flooding conditions in the past, particularly at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. To better assess the potential for flooding and possible mitigation solutions, a supplemental study was developed to determine the best options to reduce flooding risks along the I-35W project area. The supplemental study, titled *Flood Risk Reduction through Underground Detention*, completed in 2015 (see Appendix G), assessed the peak water levels along the I-35W corridor for various rainfall events, ranging from 5 to 50 years. The model developed in conjunction with this supplemental study was validated against various real storm events. The model indicates that flooding at this particular area appears to be associated the limited capacity of the drainage tunnel flowing south to north along I-35W. To a lesser extent,

capacity limits may also result in flooding at 46<sup>th</sup> Street. As a side note, other locations, particularly sag points, may experience flooding conditions attributable to intake capacity limits rather than conveyance capacity within the tunnel. The project design will assess the intake capacity in accordance to the MnDOT Drainage and Roadway Manuals.

Given that over 95 percent of the drainage area and runoff volumes contributing to the tunnel consists of adjacent urban land outside the highway corridor, when substantial rainfall levels are considered (e.g., 5-year level or greater) the proposed roadway improvements and the mitigation measures described above, make only a marginal difference with respect to flooding levels, relative to existing (pre-construction) conditions. In other words, the basins discussed above are adequate to provide runoff rate control to offset the changes in impervious surface within the corridor and not increase the flooding levels. However, because most of the runoff routed through the I-35W Tunnel originates from urban land adjacent to the highway and not the I-35W corridor in itself, the proposed basins have a negligible impact when the entire system (over 3,100 acres) is analyzed in conjunction with large rainfall events. Given the topographic constraints, there is simply not enough surface space within the I-35W corridor to create surface detention that could substantially reduce the already existing flooding risks. With this in mind, the focus shifted towards underground detention storage options.

The supplemental study (*Flood Risk Reduction through Underground Detention*, in Appendix G) looked specifically at implementing detention storage within the corridor's right-of-way to temporarily hold stormwater underground when the levels within the tunnel and the pipes discharging to the tunnel approach the ground level. The flood mitigation study recommends that substantial underground space be constructed in the form of two parallel box culverts, spanning south and north of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street sag point. The model indicates that this option has the potential to eliminate flooding when 10-year rainfall events are considered. The study also points out that the exact location, choice of product, and design details are not unique but subject to further refinement and optimization during the final design stages.

### Stormwater Quality

Stormwater treatment features were designed to mitigate the project's impact on pollutant loading. The recommended features include the two filtration basins mentioned above and a series of Structural Pollutant Control Devices (SPCDs) placed throughout the entire project area.

In addition to providing runoff rate control, the two filtration basins in the project corridor were designed to meet the water quality requirements. The basins provide detention storage which translates to runoff rate reduction and pollutant removal as well.

The most common pollutants associated with highway runoff are heavy metals, nutrients, organic matter, chlorides, and suspended particles. The net amount of nutrients and organic matter is not expected to increase given that there is no projected increased in open soil, grassed area within the corridor and no fertilizer will be applied as part of future maintenance. The main traffic-related pollutants as identified in a study conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) titled *Results of the Nationwide Urban Runoff Program*, (December 1983), consist of copper, lead, zinc, and phosphorus. These pollutants are largely tied to the total suspended solids (TSS) whose removal rate represent a standard metric of assessing the stormwater quality treatment. Another common pollutant is chloride, introduced into highway runoff primarily through winter deicing practices. The amounts vary

depending upon the application rates and the number of ice/snowfall events in a given year, but overall no substantial net increase is expected.

The basins also remove suspended sediment. Combined, the filtration basins and SPCDs remove over 90 percent of the TSS (see Table B11 in Appendix B of the *Preliminary Drainage Report for the I-35W Corridor Drainage Study*).

## 2.) Discuss any environmental effects from stormwater discharges.

The runoff from the corridor drains entirely to the Mississippi River via the stormwater tunnel. For this particular reach of the Mississippi River, MPCA data indicates two impairments: (1) elevated levels of mercury in fish tissues and (2) occasional presence of fecal coliform. Mercury impairment is being addressed based on an approved TMDL Plan, while a TMDL for fecal coliform is in the process of being developed. No other impairments are listed and overall aquatic biota is described as healthy. As indicated above, the runoff from the highway corridor represents only a small fraction of the total runoff at the point of discharge. The runoff from the project corridor will not contribute additional pollutant loads. Instead, the proposed filtration basins that capture a substantial fraction of the runoff, will help remove pollutants from the runoff prior to discharging into the Mississippi River.

## 3.) Describe stormwater pollution prevention plans including temporary and permanent runoff controls and potential BMP site locations to manage or treat stormwater runoff.

The two filtration basins provide a storage volume of about 65,000 cubic feet, almost double the amount required by MPCA water quality volume target. The NPDES-SDS permit requires the retention of one inch of stormwater runoff over net new impervious surface, which in this case translates into approximately 34,900 cubic feet. Whenever possible, the NPDES-SDS permit indicates that infiltration as the preferred treatment method. However, due to concerns regarding the structural integrity of the roadbed, it was determined that filtration would be used as an alternative. During project construction stages, the two basins could function as sedimentation ponds to help retaining the sediment particles and improve runoff control.

## 4) Identify specific erosion control, sedimentation control or stabilization measures to address soil limitations during and after project construction.

Erosion and sedimentation on all exposed soils within the project corridor would be minimized by utilizing the appropriate BMPs during construction. Implementation of BMPs during construction greatly reduces the amount of construction-related sedimentation and helps to control erosion and runoff.

Detailed drainage plans and erosion control plans to reflect the approach in each stage of the project will be submitted as part of the application for a NPDES Construction permit, to be obtained from the MPCA prior to construction commencement. A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that includes erosion control and sediment management practices would be created as part of design and implementation of proposed improvements. Erosion control measures would be in place and maintained throughout the entire construction period.

Due to the highway corridor being mostly at an elevation lower than the adjacent urbanized land, the drainage path will be largely confined within the construction limits. Thus, the focus of sediment control will be less on perimeter control and mostly on preventing erosion in the

first place and providing adequate inlet control at all stormwater intake points, during each construction stage. Placement of a silt barrier and sedimentation boom at the outlet is also expected. The location and the elevation of the outlet is above the level of the Mississippi River, which will help protect the integrity of the silt barrier from high water flows.

Soil stabilization methods would be applied to all exposed side slopes and stock piles of erodible or loose granular materials. Upon completion of construction in each segment, all disturbed areas would be sodded or seeded, leaving temporary erosion control structures in place until vegetation has been established.

The construction areas will be inspected periodically to verify the functionality of the BMPs and assess the risks for erosion and sediment mobilization. The plan will be reviewed at each construction meeting and ad hoc adjustment will be implemented based on the specific circumstances.

iii. Water appropriation – Describe if the project proposes to appropriate surface or groundwater (including dewatering). Describe the source, quantity, duration, use and purpose of the water use and if a DNR water appropriation permit is required. Describe any well abandonment. If connecting to an existing municipal water supply, identify the wells to be used as a water source and any effects on, or required expansion of, municipal water infrastructure. Discuss environmental effects from water appropriation. Identify any measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate environmental effects from the water appropriation.

Based on available groundwater information, no dewatering of the project area is anticipated during the construction process.

There is no planned water appropriation on this project.

The proposed transit station will be connected to the existing City of Minneapolis water system. No new appropriation for ground or surface water is proposed. It is anticipated that there will be more than an adequate supply of water in the area for the proposed transit station.

#### iv. Surface Waters

a. Wetlands – Describe any anticipated physical effects or alterations to wetland features such as draining, filling, permanent inundation, dredging and vegetative removal. Discuss direct and indirect environmental effects from physical modification of wetlands, including the anticipated effects that any proposed wetland alterations may have to the host watershed. Identify measures to avoid (e.g., available alternatives that were considered), minimize, or mitigate environmental effects to wetlands. Discuss whether any required compensatory wetland mitigation for unavoidable wetland impacts will occur in the same minor or major watershed, and identify those probable locations.

No wetlands are adjacent to or affected by the project.

- b. Other surface waters – Describe any anticipated physical effects or alterations to surface water features (lakes, streams, ponds, intermittent channels, county/judicial ditches) such as draining, filling, permanent inundation, dredging, diking, stream diversion, impoundment, aquatic plant removal and riparian alteration. Discuss direct and indirect environmental effects from physical modification of water features. Identify measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate environmental effects to surface water features, including in-water Best Management Practices that are proposed to avoid or minimize turbidity/sedimentation while physically altering the water features. Discuss how the project will change the number of type of watercraft on any water body, including current and projected watercraft usage.

Surface waters are not anticipated to be impacted, altered, or indirectly impacted with the proposed improvements. No impacts to the number or type of watercraft on any water body are anticipated.

## **Question #12: Contamination/Hazardous Materials/Wastes**

- a. Pre-project site conditions – Describe existing contamination or potential environmental hazards on or in close proximity to the project site such as soil or ground water contamination, abandoned dumps, closed landfills, existing or abandoned storage tanks, and hazardous liquid or gas pipelines. Discuss any potential environmental effects from pre-project site conditions that would be caused or exacerbated by project construction and operation. Identify measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects from existing contamination or potential environmental hazards. Include development of a Contingency Plan or Response Action Plan.

A demolition survey and asbestos/lead-based paint survey will be necessary for all structures, including buildings, to be removed prior to demolition.

The bridges in the project area planned for demolition are being examined for regulated waste removal. Bridges with asbestos containing material will be noted in the special provisions of the bridge removal plan sheets, including disposal requirements. The final regulated waste report can be obtained by contacting MnDOT's Office of Environmental Stewardship.

### Potential Environmental Hazards

The presence of contaminated properties (defined as properties such as soil and/or groundwater that are negatively affected by pollutants, contaminants, or hazardous wastes) is a concern in the development of highway projects because of the liabilities associated with ownership of such properties, the cleanup costs, and the safety concerns for construction personnel. Contaminated materials encountered during highway construction projects must be properly handled and treated in accordance with state and federal regulations. Improper handling of contaminated materials can exacerbate their impact on the environment. Contaminated materials also cause adverse impacts to highway projects by increasing construction costs and causing construction delays.

### *Affected Environment*

The project involves earthwork and excavation along the shoulders and edges of the existing roadway. Earthwork completed along the section of I-35W between Highway 62 and Diamond Lake Road encountered the following types of contamination: arsenic and copper contaminated soil along the base of the existing noise walls; and fill soils containing debris and contaminated with polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons and petroleum compounds. Work on this project may encounter similar types of contaminated fill materials. The construction plan will contain special provisions for managing such contamination (e.g., a contingency plan), should it be encountered during construction.

The noise walls present along this section of I-35W are treated with chromate copper arsenate (CCA). Based on sampling and analysis of soils collected from the base of such noise walls on other MnDOT projects, soils within 3 to 6 feet laterally and vertically from the base of these noise walls likely are contaminated with concentrations of copper and arsenic that would require offsite disposal or managed onsite reuse. The project will involve disturbance of in-place noise walls or disturbance of soils within six feet of the noise walls; therefore, the construction contract will contain special provisions for management of the treated wood and contaminated soils, as well as for management of dust emissions from work with those materials. The proposed management and air mitigation plans for contaminated materials will be submitted to the MPCA for review and approval prior to construction.

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was performed to provide information on potentially contaminated properties within the project impact area and vicinity. Potentially contaminated properties are identified through review of historic land use records and aerial photographs, federal EPA, MPCA, and county/city records, as well as through reconnaissance of current property conditions. MnDOT categorizes sites of potential concern identified by the Phase I ESA into high, medium, and low environmental risk levels. In general, sites with high environmental risks are properties that have documented releases of chemicals or hazardous or regulated substances (e.g., active and inactive state and federal cleanup sites, active and inactive dump sites, and active leaking underground storage tank sites), strong evidence of contamination (e.g., soil staining, stressed vegetation), or storage of large volumes of petroleum or other chemicals (e.g., bulk storage tank facilities). Sites of medium environmental risk are properties at which smaller volumes of petroleum, chemicals, or hazardous materials are frequently stored and used (e.g., registered underground and aboveground storage tanks, vehicle repair facilities, metal working shops), but at which no evidence of spills or releases exists, or properties with documented releases that have been "closed" (signifying no further cleanup actions deemed necessary) by the MPCA. Closed sites, such as closed leaking underground storage tank sites, are considered medium risks because residual soil or groundwater contamination may exist. Low environmental risk sites include properties at which minor volumes of chemicals or hazardous materials have been used or stored (e.g., hazardous waste generators, and possibly some farmsteads and residences).

Two Phase I ESA reports were completed in 2014 to cover the entire project corridor, as depicted in Figures 6A through 6K in Appendix E. The Phase I ESA documentation is on file and available for review at the MnDOT Office of Environmental Stewardship at 395 John Ireland Boulevard in St. Paul, Minnesota.

### *Environmental Hazards Review*

MnDOT reviewed MPCA databases to check for known contaminated sites in the project area. The databases that were searched included leaking underground storage tank facilities, landfills, salvage yards, voluntary investigation and cleanup (VIC) sites, Superfund sites, and dump sites. A review of these MPCA files is a component of a Modified Phase I ESA. A complete Modified Phase I ESA, which was conducted for this project, includes at least two other components: research on historic land use, and site reconnaissance. It should be noted that the MPCA database files are continually being updated. Although this information is the most up-to-date available, some of the information may be incomplete or inaccurate.

### *Environmental Consequences*

The Modified Phase I ESA completed for this project identified a total of 98 sites of environmental concern located within or adjacent to the project area. Of these, 25 were ranked as high risk and 55 were ranked as medium risk. High- and medium-risk sites with documented and suspected releases have the potential to adversely affect groundwater and soil within reconstruction areas.

Figures 6A through 6K in Appendix E provide the location of these sites of concern and are color coded in accordance with individual risk profiles (red=high; yellow=medium; green=low). Tables 7 and 8 identify each site of concern.

A Phase II ESA has been conducted in reconstruction areas adjacent to sites identified as medium- to high-risk, specifically focusing on the areas listed in Table 7. The Phase II ESA documentation is currently in draft form.

**Table 7 – Known or Potentially Contaminated Properties That May Be Affected by the Project (Low Rank)**

Site ID	Current Site Use	Rank	Rationale for Ranking
03	Parking lot and ramp	Low	Historic demolition/reconstruction.
05 (Figure 6K)	McKnight Childhood Development Center	Low	RCRA-GEN.
06	I-94	Low	Historic veterinary clinic, rusted transformer box.
12	Residence	Low	RCRA SQG.
14	Catholic Opportunity Center	Low	Historic building demolished in 1914 possibly because of fire.
23	I-35W and I-94	Low	Historic heating boiler.
27	Apartments and vacant lot	Low	Stressed vegetation, topsoil and gravel piles observed.
29	Apartment, Oak Grove Care Center	Low	RCRA SQG.
41	Hope Community, Inc., residential	Low	Historic demolition/reconstruction activities.
43	Playground, parking lot	Low	RCRA SQG
46	Vacant apartment building	Low	Historic tin/carpenter/upholstering shops.
50	Residential	Low	Historic carpenter shop.
54	Residence	Low	Spill.
59	7 <sup>th</sup> Day Adventist Church	Low	RCRA SQG.
60	Apartment complex	Low	Spill.
61	Residential, apartments, I-35W	Low	5-gallon uncovered paint buckets observed.
63	Krav Maga Minneapolis	Low	Weather strip manufacturing/Industrial stormwater permit.
93	Vacant lot	Low	Spill.

Notes: Underground Storage Tank (UST), Aboveground Storage Tank (AST), Leaking UST (LUST), Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), RCRA Generator (RCRAGEN), Small Quantity Generator (SQG), Very Small Quantity Generator (VGN), Conditionally Exempt Generator (CEG), No Further Remedial Action Planned (NFRAP), Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB)

**Table 8 – Known or Potentially Contaminated Properties That May Be Affected by the Project (Medium & High Rank)**

Site ID	Current Site Use	Rank	Rationale for Ranking
01	Convention Center	High	VIC, Leaks, USTs, historic filling stations, repair and painting shops, Spills, RCRA SQG.
01 (Figure 6I)	Steven's Square	Medium	UST (Tank 2718).
02	Minneapolis Fire Station 6	Medium	UST.
02 (Figure 6J)	Sabathani Community Center	Medium	UST, closed LUT.
03 (Figure 6J)	Former Gas Station	Medium	Historic use and storage of petroleum products.
04	TH65 and East 15 <sup>th</sup> Street overpass	High	Historic dry cleaner and repair shop.
04 (Figure 6J)	Friendship Store	High	Active VIC, Active LUST.

Site ID	Current Site Use	Rank	Rationale for Ranking
05	Apartment complex	High	Leak, UST.
07	I-94	Medium	Historic auto repair.
08	I-94 and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Avenue South overpass	Medium	Historic filling station.
09	I-94 and TH 65	High	Historic dry cleaner, historic auto repair, USTs.
10	Apartments, health/ religious/ recreational centers	Medium	Historic motor garage, UST, Spill, RCRA SQG.
11	Serakos & Associates, Public Accountants	Medium	UST.
13	Apartments	Medium	UST, RCRA SQG.
15	Alex Used Cars and other retail stores	Medium	Historic filling station, USTs, RCRA SQG.
16	Apartments	Medium	Leak, Unpermitted Dump Site, UST, historic underground fuel room, RCRA SQG.
17	Apartments	Medium	UST, Spill.
18	Apartment complex	Medium	USTs.
19	Residence	Medium	Spill, drum labeled "used oil filters" observed.
20	Apartments	Medium	Leak, UST, AST, Spills.
21	Apartment complex and I-94	Medium	Historic factory.
22	I-94 and TH 65	Medium	Historic laundromat, welding, auto repair and machine shops.
24	I-35W and I-94	High	High Historic dry cleaner.
25	William Grant Battle Center, residential, apartment complex	Medium	Historic machine and carpenter shop.
26	TH 65 and I-35W	High	Historic dry cleaning, historic auto painting.
28	Inner City Church of Minneapolis	Medium	USTs.
30	Hennepin County Chemical Dependency Center	Medium	Leak, UST, Spill, RCRA SQG.
31	Social Security Administration Field Office, Spectrum Community Health	Medium	Historic garage/filling station/auto repair/machine shops, USTs, RCRA SQG.
32	Giant Wash Coin Laundry, Stevens Square Art Center, food market, apartments, residences.	High	Dry cleaner/laundromat, RCRA SQG.
33	Store fronts, Apartments, Temple	Medium	Historic laundromat/cleaners/tin shop/filling station, UST, AST, poor housekeeping observed.
34	I-35W	High	Historic dry cleaner/repair shop/USTs.
35	Vacant/Unknown	High	VIC, Leak, USTs, historic filling station and laundry facility, RCRA SQG.
36	Twin Cities Child Care Center	High	Leak, UST, historic dry cleaner/auto repair/filling stations.
37	Apartments	Medium	Leak, UST.
38	Hennepin Elementary School, Electric Fetus, residences	High	Historic poison/insecticide company/chemical factory/ink manufacturing, historic auto painting, RCRA SQG.

Site ID	Current Site Use	Rank	Rationale for Ranking
39	I-35W	Medium	Historic commercial garage.
40	Midwest Market/ apartment complex	Medium	Leak, UST, historic filling station/machine/auto repair shops.
42	Residential	Medium	Two removed fuel oil USTs.
44	K & J Auto Repair, Cylinder Head & Motor, Engine Rebuild, commercial and residential properties	Medium	Historic TV/appliance repair shop, auto repair, UST, RCRA SQG, stressed vegetation observed.
45	I-35W	Medium	Historic greasing/filling station/painting shop/USTs.
47	I-35W	Medium	Historic paint/printing/auto service shops/filling stations/USTs/Spill/Industrial Well
48	High rise apartments	Medium	Historic auto repair shop, Leak, UST.
49	Whitier Health Center, Arches of Arts, condominiums	Medium	UST
51	Residential and I-35W	Medium	Historic painting shop.
52	Ummah Child Care	Medium	Historic auto repair, UST, RCRA SQG.
53	Ebenezer Care Center	Medium	UST, RCRA SQG.
55	Apartments, residential, I-35W	Medium	Residential AST observed.
56	I-35W	Medium	Historic filling station/auto repair shop/USTs.
57	Wells Fargo Home Mortgage	High	VIC, historic gas stations/bulk oil facility/metal plating/spray painting, historic manufacturing, Leak, USTs, ASTs, Spill, RCRA SQG.
58	Condominiums	High	Leak, UST, RCRA SQG.
62	Tawakal Auto, Oscar Auto Body, residences	High	VIC, Leak, Brownfield, UST, historic chemical fire/auto painting/auto body and auto repair, RCRA SQG.
64	Park	High	Historic cedar pole yard.
65	I-35W	High	Historic brass foundry/machine and welding shops/pole yard/filling station/USTs.
66	Wells Fargo, parking ramp	High	Unregistered tanks with oil companies and historic filling station, VIC, Leak, UST.
67	Paved trail	High	VIC, Brownfield, historic oil/refinery/coal oil companies, USTs, Spill.
68	Miller Towing, Paramount Auto Body and Glass, Enterprise Car Rental, other retail stores	Medium	Historic auto service/repair/machine shops, Leak, AST, USTs, RCRA SQG.
69	Restaurants, Pillsbury Market, apartments	High	Historic plating warehouse/auto repair/truck and body shop/filling station/machinery service, UST.
70	Kmart, Sullivan Foods	Medium	UST, historic filling stations and auto repair shops, RCRA LQG.
71	NICO Products, Carefree Rental, retail stores	High	Superfund, VIC, Leak, historic plating company/auto repair/machine shops, Spill.
72	I-35W	Medium	Historic machine shop/auto greasing/filling station/service garage/steam laundry.

Site ID	Current Site Use	Rank	Rationale for Ranking
73	McDonalds, residential	Medium	Historic auto repair shop and filling station, USTs, Spill.
74	Flour City Welding Company, Autozone Parts Store, CART ambulance garage, Ford warehouse	Medium	Historic manufacturing/auto repair/filling station, USTs, welding, RCRA SQG.
75	Colin Powell Youth Center, Cristo Ray Jesuit High School, other retail stores	High	VIC, Leak, historic oil company/machine shop, historic UST/AST, Spill, RCRA SQG.
76	Trujillos mini storage, The Shamrock Group, Whole Builders Design Cooperative	Medium	Historic auto repair/paint/greasing shops, Leak, UST, AST, Spill, RCRA SQG.
77	Dukes Cars & Towing/auto repair, Solid Rock Church, A & J Fish & Chicken	Medium	Historic filling station/auto repair/auto painting shops, USTs, RCRA SQG.
78	Valvoline Oil Change, residences	Medium	Historic oil company/filling station, Leak, USTs, ASTs, RCRA SQG, RCRA violations, Spill.
79	West Lake Auto Maintenance, Wendy's, grocery, residences	Medium	Historic filling station/auto body/repair garage, USTs, RCRA SQG, Spill.
80	Brito Auto and Paint, other retail stores and restaurants	Medium	UST, historic filling/greasing station/auto service, active auto body and paint shop, RCRA SQG, Spill.
81	Business Center, Apartments, Wells Fargo	Medium	Historic railroad building/UST/tin shop/paint store, UST, RCRA SQG.
82	Stop N Shop fuel station/car wash, Coin Laundry, Retail Center, Office Max	Medium	UST, historic laundry/auto repair/printing/machine shops, historic/active filling station, RCRA SQG.
83	Hibachi Buffet, Pearl Vision, Chinese Restaurant, US Post Office	Medium	Leak, UST, historic filling stations.
84	I-35W	Medium	Historic radiator repair and tin shops.
85	Shanine's Plaza, other retail stores/restaurants	Medium	Historic filling station/auto repair/battery service/USTs.
86	Tires for Less, vacant warehouse, retail shops, residences	High	VIC, historic manufacturing and metal plating, RCRA SQG.
87	Warehouse, retail stores, residences, vacant lot	High	VIC, Leak, historic auto repair/printing/sheet metal/tin shops, Spills, RCRA SQG.
88	Urban Ventures, Rapid Oil Change, Prosper Industries Inc., Lake Plaza, commercial/retail stores, residences	High	VIC, Brownfield, historic manufacturing/auto repair/service garages/sheet metal shops, UST, Spill, RCRA SQG.
89	Auto Body Window Tinting, Portland Lake Auto Sales & Service, Payless Auto Body, abandoned building	Medium	UST, historic/current auto body shops, historic filling station, RCRA SQG.
90	Midas, residences	Medium	Historic auto repair, AST, RCRA SQG.

Site ID	Current Site Use	Rank	Rationale for Ranking
91	Church, apartments, residences	Medium	UST, RCRA SQG.
92	MN Adult & Teen Challenge, residences	Medium	UST

Notes: Underground Storage Tank (UST), Aboveground Storage Tank (AST), Leaking UST (LUST), Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), RCRA Generator (RCRAGEN), Small Quantity Generator (SQG), Very Small Quantity Generator (VGN), Conditionally Exempt Generator (CEG), No Further Remedial Action Planned (NFRAP), Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB)

### *Mitigation*

A Phase II ESA has been conducted in reconstruction areas adjacent to sites identified as medium- to high-risk. Impacts from contaminated properties will be mitigated by: 1) modifying the project design where warranted, 2) avoiding purchase of a contaminated property, and/or 3) avoiding encountering contaminated materials during construction. If contaminated materials cannot be avoided, a plan will be developed to properly handle and treat any contaminated materials encountered during project construction in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations.

In addition, coordination and consultation with the MPCA's Brownfield Programs will take place, as appropriate, to obtain written assurances that acquisition of contaminated properties, if applicable, and construction and cleanup activities in contaminated areas, will not result in long-term environmental liability regarding the contamination.

- b. Project related generation/storage of solid wastes – Describe solid wastes generated/stored during construction and/or operation of the project. Indicate method of disposal. Discuss potential environmental effects from solid waste handling, storage and disposal. Identify measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects from the generation/storage of solid waste including source reduction and recycling.

All regulated solid wastes generated by construction of the proposed project will be disposed of properly in a permitted, licensed solid waste facility or a similarly regulated facility elsewhere. This includes the removed noise barriers. Project demolition of concrete, asphalt, and other potentially recyclable construction materials will be directed to the appropriate storage, crushing or renovation facility for recycling or reuse.

- c. Project related use/storage of hazardous materials – Describe chemicals/hazardous materials used/stored during construction and/or operation of the project including method of storage. Indicate the number, location and size of any above or below ground tanks to store petroleum or other materials. Discuss potential environmental effects from accidental spill or release of hazardous materials. Identify measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects from the use/storage of chemicals/hazardous materials including source reduction and recycling. Include development of a spill prevention plan.

The noise walls present along this stretch of I-35W are treated with CCA. See the Potential Environmental Hazards sub-heading on page 41 for information related to potential soil contamination near the noise walls.

The bridges planned for removal in the project areas are being examined for regulated waste. All regulated material and/or waste will be managed on this project in accordance with MnDOT special provisions. The MPCA regulates asbestos management activities and

disposal activities. The disposal of asbestos regulated waste will be in accordance with MPCA rules.

Toxic or hazardous materials would not be present at the site, except for fuel and lubrication necessary for the construction equipment during construction. If a spill were to occur during construction, appropriate action to remediate would be taken immediately in accordance with MPCA guidelines and regulations. See EAW Item 12 (a) for a discussion of existing recognized environmental conditions (e.g., hazardous substances or petroleum products) identified in the project area.

If a spill of hazardous or toxic substances should occur during or after construction of the proposed project, it is the responsibility of the transport company to notify the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Services, to arrange for corrective measures to be taken pursuant to 6 MCAR 4.9005E. Any contaminated spills or leaks that occur during construction are the responsibility of the contractor and would be responded to according to MPCA containment and remedial action procedures.

- d. Project related generation/storage of hazardous wastes – Describe hazardous wastes generated/stored during construction and/or operation of the project. Indicate method of disposal. Discuss potential environmental effects from hazardous waste handling, storage, and disposal. Identify measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects from the generation/storage or hazardous waste including source reduction and recycling.

No above- or below-ground storage tanks are planned for permanent use in conjunction with this project. Temporary storage tanks for petroleum products may be located in the project area for construction equipment during roadway, bridge, ramp, and transit station construction. 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 guidelines and regulations.

### **Question #13: Fish, Wildlife, Plant Communities, and Sensitive Ecological Resources (Rare Features)**

- a. Describe fish and wildlife resources as well as habitats and vegetation on or near the site.

The project area has been previously disturbed by land use development and road construction. Wildlife in the area is limited to those species that have adapted to live in developed areas. These species include those commonly occurring in Minnesota, such as raccoons, squirrels, rabbits, and various birds.

Woody vegetation along this segment of the I-35W corridor and within the proposed area may fall into Highway Project Development Process (HPDP) Category 1 – Native Plant Community, as these species are likely to be self-seeded.

- b. Describe rare features such as state-listed (endangered, threatened, or special concern) species, native plant communities, Minnesota County Biological Survey Sites of Biodiversity Significance, and other sensitive ecological resources on or within close proximity to the site. Provide the license agreement number (LA-\_) and/or correspondence number (**ERDB N/A**) from which the data were obtained and attach the Natural Heritage letter from the DNR. Indicate if any additional habitat or species survey work has been conducted within the site and describe the results.

The MnDNR reviewed Minnesota Natural Heritage Information System data to determine whether any rare plant or animal species, native plant communities, or other significant natural features are known to occur within an approximate one-mile radius of the I-35W project area. In response to MnDOT submission of the MnDNR Questionnaire, MnDNR found no occurrences of rare species or natural communities in the project limits.

The "Section 7 of Endangered Species Act of 1973, as Amended" section on page 91 provides a full description of the federally-listed (endangered, threatened, proposed, candidate) species analysis conducted for this project.

- c. Discuss how the identified fish, wildlife, plant communities, rare features and ecosystems may be affected by the project. Include a discussion on introduction and spread of invasive species from the project construction and operation. Separately discuss effects to known threatened and endangered species.

No impacts on fish, wildlife and ecologically sensitive resources are expected from this project. No birds protected under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act will be destroyed or harassed by this project. No migratory bird nests, such as swallow nests, are known to exist on the bridges along this section of I-35W.

Depending on construction limits, there may be tree loss and other vegetation impacts related to this project (construction limits are shown on Figures 2A through 2C in Appendix A).

During construction, there will be no spreading of the noxious and invasive weeds that have been identified within the project area, specifically, leafy spurge and burdock. These species, along with the areas of contaminated soil where they are identified, will be buried three feet deep within the project site, near where they are growing (e.g., on the same side of the road).

The MnDNR has determined that the nature and location of the proposed project will not adversely affect any known occurrences of rare features (see Appendix F for the MnDNR email dated March 21, 2013).

- d. Identify measures that will be taken to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to fish, wildlife, plant communities, and sensitive ecological resources

Tree and vegetation removal within the construction limits and along proposed noise barriers will be unavoidable. Efforts will be made to protect trees and vegetation that lie just outside the construction limits and to minimize impacts to them by limiting construction activities in these areas through the use of temporary fencing and other available methods.<sup>30</sup> General

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<sup>30</sup> See MnDOT *Standard Specifications for Construction*, item 2572.3, for additional information.

guidelines for the protection and restoration of vegetation can be found in the *2014 Standard Specifications for Construction*, Section 2572 (Protection and Restoration of Vegetation).

If marketable timber that is removed from the project exceeds a volume of 100 cubic yards, written proof will be obtained from three wood-using industries or individuals indicating that the wood is not wanted, before disposing of or wasting the removed trees.<sup>31</sup> If disposal is necessary, no wood will be burned or buried. An acceptable method of use of wood from removed trees is to chip or grind up all wood debris taken from clearing and grubbing operations (as long as it does not contain invasive or noxious vegetation) and use it on the project for erosion control and compaction control within and around the project limits.

#### **Question #14: Historic Properties**

Describe any historic structures, archeological sites, and/or traditional cultural properties on or in close proximity to the site. Include: 1) historic designations, 2) known artifact areas, and 3) architectural features. Attach letter received from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Discuss any anticipated effects to historic properties during project construction and operation. Identify measures that will be taken to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to historic properties.

The "Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as Amended" section on page 91 provides a full description of the historical and archaeological analysis conducted for this project.

#### **Question #15: Visual**

Describe any scenic views or vistas on or near the project site. Describe any project related visual effects such as vapor plumes or glare from intense lights. Discuss the potential visual effects from the project. Identify any measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate visual impacts.

##### Project Area Changes

The project will remove and replace several of the existing bridges in the I-35W project corridor area; this includes the Braid Bridge, which will be reconstructed to land on the right side of Highway 65 and its location will shift from approximately 24<sup>th</sup> Street to 19<sup>th</sup> Street. The replacement bridges will use wingwall, abutment face, pier, railing and lighting treatments that have been used on the recently replaced bridges within the adjoining I-35W Crosstown Commons Corridor to the south. The intent of the project is to continue with the designs used in the Crosstown Commons in order to provide visual continuity throughout the I-35W corridor in Minneapolis. Motorists and/or people on adjacent properties will notice the aesthetic treatments of the new bridges.

The construction of a multimodal transit station in the center of the freeway will be noticeable to I-35W motorists and from adjacent properties. The proposed concrete box superstructure associated with the transit station bridge responds to the need for large openings and the unique loading and framing required for the station canopy. The concrete box also provides aesthetic qualities that are inherent to the bridge type for the under-bridge plaza and pedestrian area. With several of the typical elements of this bridge hidden

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<sup>31</sup> See MnDOT *Standard Specifications for Construction*, item 2101.3D (D1), for additional information.

(abutment face) or not present (retaining walls), the most likely opportunities for additional aesthetic features are coatings/surfaces on the bridge underside and piers as well as lighting.

The pavement on the interstate will be modified to accommodate the proposed number of lanes. This change will be noticeable to I-35W motorists, but less noticeable from adjacent properties. The project also incorporates a westerly alignment shift and an 11- to 12-foot lane width transition area on the Lake Street Bridge. The placement of the transition on the Lake Street Bridge reduces effects on the Healy Block Residential Historic District on the east side of the freeway.

I-35W will have new overhead sign-bridges. I-35W motorists, and possibly people on adjacent I-35W properties, will notice the new overhead signs.

The project includes the replacement of 13 existing noise barriers and the possible construction of seven new noise barriers. Many of the existing noise barriers were constructed around 1974 and some are currently in poor aesthetic and functioning condition. It is MnDOT standard practice to replace any existing noise barrier in-kind, regardless of the cost effectiveness or acoustic reasonableness as the existing noise barriers represent a prior NEPA commitment from a previous project. Many of the 13 existing noise barriers are not impacted by the construction of the project but are proposed to be replaced in-kind as part of the project. The new and replacement noise walls will be of the same design used in the recently reconstructed I-35W Crosstown Commons corridor immediately south of the project in order to provide visual continuity within the I-35W corridor. Currently, noise walls within the project corridor are constructed of horizontal wooden planks with concrete posts spaced at regular intervals along the freeway-facing elevation and regularly spaced wooden battens along the non-freeway-facing elevation. New and replacement walls within the project will consist of horizontal wooden planks with alternating sections of regularly spaced concrete posts and wooden battens. Residents directly adjacent to potential new noise walls will not be able to view the Interstate once the noise barriers are constructed. The view of adjacent properties for motorists driving along I-35W and I-94 will be blocked by the seven new noise barriers, if constructed.

Motorists will notice the new and revised interstate access, specifically listed below. They will notice a change in landscaping with the removal of some trees and shrubs as part of the construction activities.

- New access from northbound I-35W to service E. 28<sup>th</sup> Street
- New access from southbound I-35W to service Lake Street including:
  - Revisions to the southbound I-35W and eastbound I-94 system connection
  - Revisions to the southbound I-35W and southbound Highway 65 system connection
- Revised access to westbound I-94 from the northbound I-35W system connection including:
  - Maintained access to I-94 westbound through service from 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Residents will notice that trees and shrubs have been removed along I-35W and from some local roads, due to construction activities.

### Project Construction

Visual impacts associated with construction would include the introduction of heavy construction equipment and disruption of the landscape. These impacts would be noticeable

to drivers traveling through the area. This may present an adverse visual impact, however it is temporary and after construction will be removed.

### Visual Quality Manual

A Visual Quality Manual has been developed in cooperation with project partners (see Appendix G). The purpose of the *I-35W Transit/Access Project Visual Quality Manual*<sup>32</sup> is to ensure that the visual environment of the proposed project integrates with the surrounding neighborhoods, both natural and cultural on I-35W. A Visual Quality Management process has been followed, which uses public involvement to develop construction plans for the corridor. The Visual Quality Manual provides guidance on streetscape features, landscaping, public art, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and other features that create corridor continuity and neighborhood livability.

MnDOT is committed to implementing the preferred recommendations of the Visual Quality Advisory Committee (VQAC) that are defined in the Visual Quality Manual. The document will be used to direct the architectural and aesthetic treatments of the final design. Any deviation from the manual will require approval from MnDOT's Visual Quality Manager. Substantial changes will require an opportunity for the original VQAC to review and comment.

### Public Art Framework

The visual quality process for this project included development of a Public Art Framework, which was published in a separate but related document to the Visual Quality Manual (see Appendix G). The Public Art Framework is intended to guide public officials, architects, landscape architects, artists, engineers, and the public in creating a high-quality, socially relevant, and meaningfully inclusive artistic environment.

## **Question #16: Air**

- a. Stationary source emissions – Describe the type, sources, quantities and compositions of any emissions from stationary sources such as boilers or exhaust stacks. Include any hazardous air pollutants, criteria pollutants, and any greenhouse gases. Discuss effects to air quality including any sensitive receptors, human health or applicable regulatory criteria. Include a discussion of any methods used to assess the project's effect on air quality and the results of that assessment. Identify pollution control equipment and other measures that will be taken to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects from stationary source emissions.

This project will not have stationary source air emissions concerns.

- b. Vehicle emissions – Describe the effect of the project's traffic generation on air emissions. Discuss the project's vehicle-related emissions effect on air quality. Identify measures (e.g., traffic operational improvements, diesel idling minimization plan) that will be taken to minimize or mitigate vehicle-related emissions.

A detailed response to this question is provided in the Air Quality Report and the Quantitative Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSAT) Air Quality Analysis Report in Appendix G.

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<sup>32</sup> The *I-35W Transit/Access Project Visual Quality Manual* (January 2015) is included on the CD-ROM provided with this EA.

## Conformity to Minnesota's State Implementation Plan (SIP)

The project area is designated by the EPA as being in attainment (or complying) with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for all air pollutants. However, while the project area is in attainment with the carbon monoxide (CO) NAAQS, the project area was formerly a nonattainment area for CO and is currently a "maintenance" area for this pollutant. Therefore, Transportation Conformity rules (40 CFR 93, Subpart A) apply only to vehicle emissions of CO in the project area.

In addition to addressing hot-spot analysis, Transportation Conformity rules require that a project be in conformance with the regional emissions budget for CO. When a project has been included in the analysis prepared for the area's Long Range Transportation Policy Plan (LRTPP) and is listed in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) list of planned projects, it is presumed to conform with the regional CO emissions budget. The proposed project was addressed in the latest approved LRTPP and is listed in the latest TIP, and therefore conforms to the regional emissions budget for CO.

### Carbon Monoxide (CO) Analysis

For existing conditions and for both the No Build and Preferred Alternative, the maximum annual average daily traffic (AADT) levels at signalized intersections will be less than the MnDOT CO hot-spot screening threshold of 79,400 entering vehicles per day (vpd) for signalized intersections. Therefore, signalized intersections affected by the project are not required to conduct a hot-spot analysis. The Air Quality Report provided in Appendix G explains the CO hot-spot screening procedures in greater detail.

On November 8, 2010, the EPA approved a limited maintenance plan request for the Twin Cities maintenance area. Under a limited maintenance plan, the EPA has determined that there is no requirement to project emissions over the maintenance period and that "an emission budget may be treated as essentially not constraining for the length of the maintenance period. The reason is that it is unreasonable to expect that our maintenance area will experience so much growth within this period that a violation of CO NAAQS would result." (USEPA Limited Maintenance Plan Option for Nonclassifiable CO Nonattainment Areas, October 6, 1995) Therefore, no regional modeling analysis is required, however federally funded projects are still subject to "hot spot" analysis requirements. The limited maintenance plan adopted in 2010 determines that the level of CO emissions and resulting ambient concentrations will continue to demonstrate attainment of the CO NAAQS.

### Mobile Source Air Toxic (MSAT) Analysis

A quantitative evaluation of MSAT has been performed for this project. Results of the air toxics analysis show a reduction in long-term emissions for air toxics related to the project in the traffic study area, the full report is provided in Appendix G. Table 1 in the report presents the emissions for each MSAT included in this analysis (acrolein, benzene, 1,3-butadiene, diesel particulate, matter plus diesel exhaust organic gases, formaldehyde, naphthalene, and polycyclic organic matter) for the three scenarios: Base Year (2011), 2038 Build Alternative, and 2038 No Build Alternative. Table 2 in the report shows that the emissions from the Preferred Alternative scenario are slightly higher than for the No Build scenario (2 percent increase between Build and No Build). As shown in Table 3 of the report, the difference is diminished when normalized to a total MSAT per million vehicle miles traveled basis (the Build and No Build scenarios are equal).

- c. Dust and odors – Describe sources, characteristics, duration, quantities, and intensity of dust and odors generated during project construction and operation. (Fugitive dust may be discussed under item 16a). Discuss the effect of dust and odors in the vicinity of the project including nearby sensitive receptors and quality of life. Identify measures that will be taken to minimize or mitigate the effects of dust and odors.

The proposed project would not generate substantial odors during construction. Potential odors would include exhaust from diesel engines and fuel storage. Dust generated during construction will be minimized through standard dust control measures such as applying water to exposed soils and limiting the extent and duration of exposed soil conditions. Construction contractors will be required to control dust and other airborne particulates in accordance with MnDOT specifications. After construction is complete, dust levels are anticipated to be minimal because all soil surfaces exposed during construction would be in permanent cover (e.g., paved or re-vegetated areas).

### Question #17: Noise

Describe sources, characteristics, duration, quantities, and intensity of noise generated during project construction and operation. Discuss the effect of noise in the vicinity of the project including 1) existing noise levels/sources in the area, 2) nearby sensitive receptors, 3) conformance to state noise standards, and 4) quality of life. Identify measures that will be taken to minimize or mitigate the effects of noise.

#### Noise During Construction

The construction activities associated with implementation of the proposed project will result in increased noise levels relative to existing conditions. These impacts will primarily be associated with construction equipment and pile driving.

Table 9 shows peak noise levels monitored at 50 feet from various types of construction equipment. This equipment is primarily associated with site grading/site preparation, which is generally the roadway construction phase associated with the greatest noise levels.

**Table 9 – Typical Construction Equipment Noise Levels at 50 feet**

Equipment Type	Manufacturers Sampled	Total Number of Models in Sample	Peak Noise Level (dBA)	
			Range	Average
Backhoes	5	6	74-92	83
Front Loaders	5	30	75-96	85
Dozers	8	41	65-95	85
Graders	3	15	72-92	84
Scrapers	2	27	76-98	87
Pile Drivers	N/A	N/A	95-105	101

Source: EPA and FHWA.

Elevated noise levels are, to a degree, unavoidable for this type of project. MnDOT will require that construction equipment be properly muffled and in proper working order. While MnDOT and its contractor(s) are exempt from local noise ordinances, it is the practice to require contractor(s) to comply with applicable local noise restrictions and ordinances to the extent that is reasonable. Advanced notice will be provided to affected communities for any

abnormally loud construction activities. It is anticipated that nighttime<sup>33</sup> construction may be required to minimize traffic impacts and to improve safety. However, construction will be limited to daytime hours as much as possible. This project is expected to be under construction for three to four years. The staging of construction activities and the need for nighttime construction would be determined during the final design stage of the project.

Any associated high-impact equipment noise, such as pile driving, pavement sawing, or jack hammering, will be unavoidable with construction of the proposed project. Pile-driving noise is associated with any bridge construction and sheet piling necessary for retaining wall construction. High-impact noise construction activities will be limited in duration to the greatest extent possible. The use of pile drivers, jack hammers, and pavement sawing equipment will be prohibited during nighttime hours.

### Traffic Noise Analysis

This project is a federal Type 1 noise project<sup>34</sup> requiring a traffic noise analysis. An electronic copy of the *Traffic Noise Analysis Report* for the proposed project is included on the CD-ROM provided with this EA (see Appendix G). This report includes background information on noise, information regarding traffic noise regulations and Minnesota noise standards, a discussion of the traffic noise analysis methodology, documentation of the potential traffic noise impacts associated with the proposed project, and an evaluation of noise abatement measures. A detailed explanation of the voting system can be found in Section 5.3.3 of the MnDOT Noise Policy (effective date: June 1, 2011). In summary, a simple majority (greater than 50 percent) of all possible voting points (not just the ones that reply) for each potential noise abatement measure must vote "down" the abatement measure to have that measure removed from further consideration.

### *Federal and State Noise Regulations*

FHWA's traffic noise regulation is described in 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 772 (Procedures for Abatement of Highway Traffic Noise and Construction Noise). 23 CFR 772 requires the identification of highway traffic noise impacts and the evaluation of noise abatement measures, along with other considerations, in conjunction with the planning and design of a federal-aid highway project.

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<sup>33</sup> The MPCA defines daytime hours as from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and nighttime hours as from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. (Minnesota Rules 7030.0020 Subp. 10).

<sup>34</sup> 23 CFR 772.5 (FHWA) defines a Type 1 project as follows:

- (1) The construction of a highway on new location; or,
- (2) The physical alteration of an existing highway where there is either:
  - (i) Substantial Horizontal Alteration. A project that halves the distance between the traffic noise source and the closest receptor between the existing condition to the future build condition; or,
  - (ii) Substantial Vertical Alteration. A project that removes shielding therefore exposing the line-of-sight between the receptor and the traffic noise source. This is done by either altering the vertical alignment of the highway or by altering the topography between the highway traffic noise source and the receptor; or,
- (3) The addition of a through-traffic lane(s). This includes the addition of a through-traffic lane that functions as a HOV lane, High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane, bus lane, or truck climbing lane; or,
- (4) The addition of an auxiliary lane, except for when the auxiliary lane is a turn lane; or,
- (5) The addition or relocation of interchange lanes or ramps added to a quadrant to complete an existing partial interchange; or,
- (6) Restriping existing pavement for the purpose of adding a through-traffic lane or an auxiliary lane; or,
- (7) The addition of a new or substantial alteration of a weigh station, rest stop, ride-share lot or toll plaza.
- (8) If a project is determined to be a Type I project under this definition, then the entire project area as defined in the environmental document is a Type I project.

Under federal rules, traffic noise impacts are determined based on land use activities and predicted worst hourly L<sub>10</sub> noise levels under future conditions [see page 4 of the Traffic Noise Analysis Report in Appendix G]. For example, for residential land uses (Activity Category B), the Federal Noise Abatement Criterion is 70 dBA (L<sub>10</sub>). Receptor locations where noise levels are “approaching” or exceeding the criterion level must be evaluated for noise abatement feasibility and reasonableness. In Minnesota, “approaching” is defined as 1 dBA or less below the Federal Noise Abatement Criteria. A noise impact is also defined as a “substantial increase” in the future modeled noise levels over the existing modeled noise levels. A “substantial increase” is defined as an increase of 5 dBA or greater from existing to future conditions.

In Minnesota, noise standards have been established for daytime and nighttime periods. The MPCA is the state agency responsible for enforcing state noise rules (see page 3 of the Traffic Noise Analysis Report in Appendix G). The MPCA defines daytime as 7:00 AM to 10:00 PM and nighttime as 10:00 PM to 7:00 AM. The state noise standards for daytime and nighttime periods are based on land use activities such as residential uses, commercial uses, or industrial uses. Minnesota state noise standards apply to the outdoor environment (e.g., exterior noise levels). The state noise standards apply to the proposed project area.

#### *Traffic Noise Analysis Methodology*

Traffic noise impacts are evaluated by modeling the traffic noise levels during the hours of the day and/or night that have the loudest traffic scenario. Traffic noise modeling uses existing and forecast traffic volumes, as well as characteristics of the roadway and surrounding environment, to predict traffic noise levels at representative receptor locations. Modeled traffic noise levels at receptor locations along a project corridor are then compared to state daytime and nighttime standards. If modeled traffic noise levels are projected to exceed state daytime and/or nighttime standards with the future Build Alternative, then an impact is identified and noise abatement measures (e.g., noise barriers) are considered.

Traffic noise levels were modeled for existing (2012) conditions, the future (2038) No Build Alternative, and the future (2038) Build Alternative using the MINNOISE V31 software model, a version of the FHWA “STAMINA” model adapted by MnDOT. Traffic noise levels were modeled at a total of 1,458 representative receptor locations throughout the project area. The Existing and No Build models only include 1,445 receptors that exist today. The Build condition removes 3 receptors due to construction, but adds 13 receptors along a proposed trail connection between the Midtown Greenway and 31<sup>st</sup> Street; therefore the Build Condition has a total of 1,455 receptors. The majority of the receptors represent residential land uses, though there are both scattered and pockets of commercial properties through the project.

#### *Traffic Noise Analysis Results*

The traffic noise analysis concluded that construction of the proposed project would result in increases in traffic noise levels as compared to existing conditions. Existing (2012) daytime modeled noise levels at the modeled receptor locations range from 49.3 dBA (L<sub>10</sub>) to 78.8 dBA (L<sub>10</sub>); nighttime noise levels range from 48.8 dBA (L<sub>10</sub>) to 79.1 dBA (L<sub>10</sub>). Modeled noise receptors exceeded State daytime standards (L<sub>10</sub>) at 633 of 1445 modeled receptor locations under existing (2012) conditions. Modeled noise receptors exceeded State nighttime standards (L<sub>10</sub>) at 1,243 of 1,445 modeled receptor locations under existing (2012) conditions.

Future (2038) No Build daytime modeled noise levels at the modeled receptor locations range from 49.7 dBA (L<sub>10</sub>) to 79.2 dBA (L<sub>10</sub>); nighttime noise levels range from 49.3 dBA (L<sub>10</sub>) to 79.6 dBA (L<sub>10</sub>). Modeled noise receptors exceeded State daytime standards (L<sub>10</sub>) at 711 of 1,445 modeled receptor locations under No Build (2038) conditions. Modeled noise receptors exceeded State nighttime standards (L<sub>10</sub>) at 1272 of 1445 modeled receptor locations under No Build (2038) conditions.

Future (2038) Build daytime modeled noise levels at the modeled receptor locations range from 49.7 dBA (L<sub>10</sub>) to 79.2 dBA (L<sub>10</sub>); nighttime noise levels range from 49.2 dBA (L<sub>10</sub>) to 79.5 dBA (L<sub>10</sub>). Modeled noise receptors exceeded State daytime standards (L<sub>10</sub>) at 715 of 1,455 modeled receptor locations under Build (2038) conditions. Modeled noise receptors exceeded State nighttime standards (L<sub>10</sub>) at 1,279 of 1,455 modeled receptor locations under Build (2038) conditions. Modeled noise levels (daytime and nighttime) range from -4.1 dBA to 3.9 dBA from the existing (2012) conditions.

### *Noise Abatement Measures*

There are existing noise barriers throughout the majority of the I-35W corridor (see Figure 14 in Appendix A). A portion of the barriers were constructed in recent years as part of the Crosstown Project or the Urban Partnership Agreement I-35W Project. The barriers identified below are recently constructed and in good standing condition. They are not impacted by construction of any part of the proposed project and shall remain in-place.

- Along northbound I-35W, between 46<sup>th</sup> Street and 35<sup>th</sup> Street
- Along southbound I-35W, between 46<sup>th</sup> Street and 38<sup>th</sup> Street

The rest of the existing noise barriers were constructed around 1974 and some are currently in poor aesthetic and functioning condition. It is MnDOT standard practice to replace any existing noise barrier in-kind, regardless of the cost effectiveness or acoustic reasonableness as the existing noise barriers represent a prior NEPA commitment from a previous project. Many of the existing noise barriers listed below are not impacted by the construction of the project but are proposed to be replaced in-kind as part of the project (as shown on Figure 14 in Appendix A). The existing northbound I-35W noise walls that will be replaced in-kind are:

- Wall eE – 35<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge to 35<sup>th</sup> Street Entrance Ramp (Approximately 648 feet)
- Wall eF – 35<sup>th</sup> Street Entrance Ramp to 31<sup>st</sup> Street Exit Ramp (Approximately 1,530 feet if Wall eG is voted in/1,424 feet if Wall eG is voted down)
- Wall eL1 – 26<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge to 24<sup>th</sup> Street Pedestrian Bridge (Approximately 1,355 feet)
- Wall eL2 – 24<sup>th</sup> Street Pedestrian Bridge to Franklin Avenue Bridge (Approximately 1,177 feet)
- Wall eM – Franklin Avenue Bridge to Portland Avenue Bridge (Approximately 753 feet)

The existing southbound I-35W noise walls that will be replaced in-kind are:

- Wall wE – 35<sup>th</sup> Street Exit Ramp to 35<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge (Approximately 592 feet)
- Wall wF – 31<sup>st</sup> Street Entrance Ramp to 35<sup>th</sup> Street Exit Ramp (Approximately 1,503 feet)

- Wall wG – 31<sup>st</sup> Street Bridge to 31<sup>st</sup> Street Entrance Ramp (Approximately 534 feet)
- Wall wJ – 28<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge to Greenway Bridge (Southbound Lake Street Exit Ramp) (Approximately 625 feet)
- Wall wK – 26<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge to 28<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge (Approximately 1,456 feet)
- Wall wL1 – 24<sup>th</sup> Street Pedestrian Bridge to 26<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge (Approximately 1,261 feet)
- Wall wL2 – Franklin Avenue Bridge to 24<sup>th</sup> Street Pedestrian Bridge (Approximately 744 feet)
- Wall wM – 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Bridge to Franklin Avenue Bridge (Approximately 1,564 feet)

The noise analysis has determined that seven noise barriers (out of 21 potential new noise barriers evaluated for reasonableness and feasibility) were found to be both cost and acoustically effective, as identified below and as shown in Figure 14 in Appendix A.

MnDOT policy includes a maximum noise barrier height of 20 feet; existing noise barriers being replaced in-kind can exceed this value. With a limited height, many receptors behind existing and proposed barriers may still be above state noise level thresholds; as well any receptor not able to be protected by a noise barrier due to not meeting feasibility or reasonableness criteria.

Future (2038) Build, with all proposed and replace in-kind noise barriers, daytime modeled noise levels exceeded State daytime standards ( $L_{10}$ ) at 666 of 1,455 modeled receptor locations under Build (2038) conditions. Modeled noise receptors exceeded State nighttime standards ( $L_{10}$ ) at 1,261 of 1,455 modeled receptor locations under Build (2038) conditions.

TDM scenarios were considered, however noise barriers were chosen as the most cost-effective noise mitigation measure for this project. One of the primary purposes of the facility is to move people and goods, traffic management measures with restrictions of vehicles types or vehicle speeds would be inconsistent with that primary purpose.

Whether the seven noise barriers are constructed will be determined by a vote of those individuals in the barrier-proposed neighborhoods who would directly benefit from the barriers, referred to as the “benefited receptors.” The benefited receptors were identified during the noise analysis as those who would receive a minimum 5 dBA reduction in traffic noise from a noise barrier. Benefited receptors have been invited to vote on the proposed noise barriers. They have been notified of meeting(s) to discuss the proposed barriers and the voting process. The voting process began in January 2015 and will remain open through the public review period for this EA document. If approved by the benefited receptors, the seven proposed noise barriers would be constructed.

The following new northbound I-35W noise wall locations are subject to the Noise Solicitation Process:

- Wall eG – 31<sup>st</sup> Street Exit Ramp to 31<sup>st</sup> Street Bridge (Approximately 719 feet)
- Wall eI – Lake Street Bridge to Greenway Bridge (Approximately 590 feet)

The following new southbound I-35W noise wall location is subject to the Noise Solicitation Process:

- Wall wB – 36<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge to 38<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge (Approximately 1,367 feet)

The following new eastbound I-94 noise wall locations are subject to the Noise Solicitation Process:

- Wall sE – 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue Bridge to 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Bridge (Approximately 903 feet)
- Wall sJ – Chicago Avenue Bridge to 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue Bridge (Approximately 1,092 feet)

The following new westbound I-94 noise wall locations are subject to the Noise Solicitation Process:

- Wall nD – 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue Bridge to Nicollet Avenue Bridge (Approximately 302 feet)
- Wall nJ – 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue Bridge to Chicago Avenue Bridge (Approximately 1,065 feet)

The solicitation forms were mailed on January 29, 2015, to the benefited property owners and residents adjacent to the seven proposed noise barriers. The invitations included a banner in Spanish, Hmong, and Somali explaining whom to contact for translation assistance, or for general help in understanding the noise barrier impacts. A general information meeting, which included both voting and non-voting parties, was held for each proposed noise wall location in February and March, 2015. Each meeting included an overview of the MnDOT noise policy and an explanation of how the noise wall voting process would occur. Preliminary design information and visualization materials on the proposed noise barriers were also presented. Another round of meetings occurred in March and May, 2015 for those eligible to vote on a specific noise wall (benefitted receptors). The noise solicitation process meeting dates/locations are summarized in Table 10.

**Table 10 – Summary of Noise Solicitation Process Meeting Dates/Locations**

Proposed Noise Wall	Minneapolis Neighborhood Location	General Information Meeting Date (Location)	Voting Meeting for Benefitted Receptors Date (Location)
Wall eG	Central	February 11, 2015 (CANDO Office)	March 23, 2015 (3139 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue South; private home)
Wall eI	Phillips West	February 25, 2015 (Phillips West Neighborhood Organization)	May 13, 2015 (Phillips West Neighborhood Organization)
Wall wB	Kingfield	March 4, 2015 (Martin Luther King Recreation Center)	May 11, 2015 (Martin Luther King Recreation Center)
Wall sE	Stevens Square-Loring Heights	February 12, 2015 (Stevens Square Building)	May 12, 2015 (Stevens Square Building)
Wall sJ	Ventura Village	February 19, 2015 (Center for Changing Lives)	May 7, 2015 (Center for Changing Lives)
Wall nD	Loring Park	NA <sup>1</sup>	May 21, 2015 (Market BBQ)
Wall nJ	Elliot Park	February 10, 2015 (Elliot Park Recreation Center)	May 5, 2015 (Elliot Park Recreation Center)

<sup>1</sup> Given the low number of benefitted receptors for Wall nD, the noise solicitation process proceeded directly to a voting meeting with property owners.

### *Statement of Likelihood*

The traffic noise analysis for the seven proposed noise barriers is based upon preliminary design studies completed to-date. Final mitigation decisions will be subject to final design considerations and the viewpoint of benefited residents and property owners. If it subsequently develops during the final design stage that conditions have substantially changed, noise abatement measures may not be provided. Affected benefited receptors and local officials will be notified of plans to eliminate or substantially modify a noise abatement measure prior to the final design process. This notification will explain any changes in site conditions, additional site information, any design changes implemented during the final design process, and noise barrier feasibility and reasonableness. A final decision regarding barrier installation will be made upon completion of the project's final design and the public involvement process.

### **Question #18: Transportation**

- a. Describe traffic-related aspects of project construction and operation. Include: 1) existing and proposed additional parking spaces, 2) estimated total average daily traffic generated, 3) estimated maximum peak hour traffic generated and time of occurrence, 4) indicate source of trip generation rates used in the estimates, and 5) availability of transit and/or other alternative transportation modes.

Not Applicable – Traffic is not generated by the proposed project<sup>35</sup>; rather, this project is proposed to accommodate future increases in traffic forecast for the area roadways.

While traffic is not specifically generated by the proposed project, the improved I-35W roadway network does draw both existing and future traffic onto the facility from the surrounding network.

Existing demands have limited access to and from I-35W and must take circuitous routes to complete their trips; the additional access and improved freeway capacity of the Preferred Alternative provides faster routes and thus generates additional freeway trips while reducing arterial trips.

Longer, regional trips utilizing I-35W will see an improved corridor from the proposed project and thus induce additional vehicular trips through the project area. However this induced traffic demand will not be new trips generated by the proposed project, rather trips being rerouted from the local arterial system.

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<sup>35</sup> The proposed project will not generate new trips in the same way as a new business because the freeway is not a destination or end point like a business.

- b. Discuss the effect on traffic congestion on affected roads and describe any traffic improvements necessary. The analysis must discuss the project's impact on the regional transportation system. *If the peak hour traffic generated exceeds 250 vehicles or the total daily trips exceeds 2,500, a traffic impact study must be prepared as part of the EAW.* Use the format and procedures described in the Minnesota Department of Transportation's Access Management Manual, Chapter 5 (*available at: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/accessmanagement/resources.html>*) or a similar local guidance.

The project proposes new and revised access, specifically:

- New access from northbound I-35W to service 28<sup>th</sup> Street
- New access from southbound I-35W to service Lake Street including:
  - Revisions to the southbound I-35W and eastbound I-94 system connection
  - Revisions to the southbound I-35W and southbound Highway 65 system connection
- Revised access to westbound I-94 from the northbound I-35W system connection including:
  - Maintained access to I-94 westbound through service from 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Traffic forecasts for all roadways in the project area were developed for a forecast year of 2038 and year of opening 2018 based on the Twin Cities Travel Demand Model (TCTDM). The forecasts were developed to determine operational and safety benefits of the Preferred Alternative compared to the No Build Alternative. The existing and anticipated future traffic conditions in the study area and the impacts to the interstate and local road system are documented in the *Draft Interstate Access Request*. An electronic copy of this document is included on the CD-ROM provided with this EA (see Appendix G).

#### Freeway Capacity Key Findings

Tables 11, 12, and 13 show the traffic results which compare the No Build Alternative and the Preferred Alternative. The tables illustrate that there will be a beneficial impact to the metropolitan transportation system.

#### *Southbound I-35W 2038 PM Peak Comparison for No Build and Preferred Alternative*

The proposed southbound Lake Street exit ramp will provide relief to existing weaving demand issues experienced between the 31<sup>st</sup> Street entrance and the 35<sup>th</sup> street exit. Currently, the 35<sup>th</sup> Street exit experiences queues that commonly spill back onto the freeway during off-peak and peak periods. The demand to exit at 35<sup>th</sup> Street is forecast to be reduced by 22 percent in the PM peak period as well as on a daily basis which will substantially reduce southbound weaving conflicts between 31<sup>st</sup> Street entrance and 35<sup>th</sup> Street exits. The existing weaving length will be slightly extended and a full escape lane will be included; providing a capacity benefit as well as a safety benefit.

**Table 11 – Southbound I-35W 2038 PM Peak Comparison for No Build and Preferred Alternative**

Location		No Build Alternative			Preferred Alternative		
From	To	Speed (mph)	Density (vplpm)	LOS	Speed (mph)	Density (vplpm)	LOS
<b>Begin SB I-35W</b>	Washington CD Rd Entrance	9	117	F	51	28	D
Washington CD Rd Entrance	WB I-94 Entrance	10	120	F	40	42	E
WB I-94 Entrance	SB TH 65 Entrance	33	62	F	44	40	E
SB TH65 Entrance	Lake St Exit	57	34	D	55	31	D
Lake St Exit	Lake St Transit Exit				60	26	C
Lake St Transit Exit	Lake St Transit Entrance	48	41	E	60	30	D
Lake St Transit Entrance	31 <sup>st</sup> /Lake St Entrance	49	38	E	52	32	D
31 <sup>st</sup> /Lake St Entrance	35 <sup>th</sup> /36 <sup>th</sup> St Exit	52	35	E	52	28	D
35 <sup>th</sup> /36 <sup>th</sup> St Exit	35 <sup>th</sup> /36 <sup>th</sup> St Entrance	59	34	D	60	31	D
35 <sup>th</sup> /36 <sup>th</sup> St Entrance	46 <sup>th</sup> St Exit	54	36	E	56	33	D
46 <sup>th</sup> St Exit	46 <sup>th</sup> St Transit Exit	63	22	C	64	24	C
46 <sup>th</sup> St Transit Exit	46 <sup>th</sup> St Transit Entrance	64	24	C	64	27	C
46 <sup>th</sup> St Transit Entrance	46 <sup>th</sup> St Entrance	56	24	C	61	24	C
46 <sup>th</sup> St Entrance	60 <sup>th</sup> St Exit	40	40	E	51	34	D
60 <sup>th</sup> St Exit	TH 62 Exit	52	30	D	54	31	D
TH 62 Exit	<b>END SB I-35W</b>	64	19	B	64	19	B

Source: *Interstate Access Request for the I-35W Transit/Access Project* (May 2015).

The proposed southbound Lake Street exit ramp and auxiliary lane will also more efficiently serve regional demands. The daily total network vehicle miles traveled and vehicle hours traveled are reduced by 11,000 miles and 9,300 hours, respectively.

*Northbound I-35W 2038 AM Peak Comparison for No Build and Preferred Alternative*

The proposed northbound 28<sup>th</sup> Street exit ramp will provide relief to existing weaving demand challenges experienced between the 35<sup>th</sup> Street entrance and the 31<sup>st</sup> Street exit. The proposed auxiliary lane extension from the 31<sup>st</sup> Street exit to the 28<sup>th</sup> Street exit lengthens the weaving distance providing a capacity benefit as well as a safety benefit.

**Table 12 – Northbound I-35W 2038 AM Peak Comparison for No Build and Preferred Alternative**

Location		No Build Alternative			Preferred Alternative		
From	To	Speed (mph)	Density (vplpm)	LOS	Speed (mph)	Density (vplpm)	LOS
35 <sup>th</sup> /36 <sup>th</sup> St Exit	35 <sup>th</sup> /36 <sup>th</sup> St Entrance	30	55	F	29	60	F
35 <sup>th</sup> /36 <sup>th</sup> St Entrance	31 <sup>st</sup> /Lake St Exit	33	48	F	28	53	F
31 <sup>st</sup> /Lake St Exit	Lake St Transit Exit	37	43	E	29	45	F
Lake St Transit Exit	28 <sup>th</sup> St Exit				36	42	E
28 <sup>th</sup> St Exit	Lake St Transit Entrance	37	47	F	45	37	E
Lake St Transit Entrance	<b>NB I-35W/TH 65 Split</b>	37	45	F	41	40	E
<b>NB I-35W/TH 65 Split</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> Ave Entrance	17	94	F	18	87	F
5 <sup>th</sup> Ave Entrance	EB I-94 Entrance	29	60	F	29	58	F
EB I-94 Entrance	EB I-94 Exit	47	34	D	48	32	D
EB I-94 Exit	Washington Ave Exit	52	24	C	52	24	C

Source: *Interstate Access Request for the I-35W Transit/Access Project* (May 2015).

The proposed northbound 28<sup>th</sup> Street exit ramp and auxiliary lane will also more efficiently serve regional demands. The daily total network vehicle miles traveled and vehicle hours traveled are reduced by 44,500 miles and 8,600 hours, respectively.

*Westbound I-94 2038 PM Peak Comparison for No Build and Preferred Alternative*

Table 13 shows an improvement in the total length of congestion along westbound I-94 with the Preferred Alternative. The proposed left side entrance for the flyover ramp from northbound I-35W to westbound I-94 will reduce the length of congested flow to begin around the 5<sup>th</sup> Street exit ramp; this is a reduction in congested segment length of approximately one mile. The Preferred Alternative will also better serve traffic through the Lowry Tunnel.

**Table 13 – Westbound I-94 2038 PM Peak Comparison for No Build and Preferred Alternative**

Location		No Build Alternative			Preferred Alternative		
From	To	Speed (mph)	Density (vplpm)	LOS	Speed (mph)	Density (vplpm)	LOS
<b>Begin WB I-94</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> St Exit	45	43	F	60	23	C
5 <sup>th</sup> St Exit	SB I-35W Exit	20	67	F	38	36	E
SB I-35W Exit	Washington CD Rd Entrance	17	72	F	27	55	F
Washington CD Rd Entrance	11 <sup>th</sup> St Exit	16	71	F	30	48	F
11 <sup>th</sup> St Exit	NB I-35W Entrance	15	91	F	31	55	F
NB I-35W Entrance	4 <sup>th</sup> Ave Entrance				31	55	F
4 <sup>th</sup> Ave Entrance	Lyndale/Hennepin Exit	42	39	E	36	50	F
Lyndale/Hennepin Exit	WB I-394 Exit	42	40	E	38	53	F
WB I-394 Exit	TH 55 Exit	53	17	B	53	19	B
TH 55 Exit	<b>END WB I-94</b>	54	16	B	54	18	B

Source: *Interstate Access Request for the I-35W Transit/Access Project* (May 2015).

The biggest benefit of the proposed left side entrance access change is the total traffic throughput. Under the No Build Alternative, traffic demand through the Lowry Tunnel was forecast to be approximately 6,300 vehicles per hour; however only 5,300 would be served which is over a 15 percent reduction due to congestion. Under the Preferred Alternative, all 6,300 vehicles will be served through the Lowry Tunnel.

Arterial Capacity Key Findings

Under the Preferred Alternative, all intersections operate acceptably during both peak hours (see Tables 14 and 15). All approaches operate at a LOS D or better.

**Table 14 – Arterial Roadways 2038 AM Peak Comparison for No Build and Preferred Alternative**

Intersection	Approach	No Build Alternative		Preferred Alternative	
		Approach (Delay/LOS)	Intersection (Delay/LOS)	Approach (Delay/LOS)	Intersection (Delay/LOS)
Lake Street @ Stevens Avenue (signalized)	SB	35.5 / D	8.3 / A	23.9 / C	13.5 / B
	EB	5.2 / A		4.5 / A	
	WB	4.9 / A		6.8 / A	
Lake Street @ 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue (signalized)	NB	37.4 / D	19.5 / B	35.7 / D	13.2 / B
	EB	11.2 / B		5.9 / A	
	WB	3.7 / A		3.2 / A	
31 <sup>st</sup> Street @ Stevens Avenue (signalized)	SB	30.3 / C	20.7 / C	29.8 / C	18.6 / B
	EB	13.9 / B		11.6 / B	
	WB	16.6 / B		9.6 / A	
31 <sup>st</sup> Street @ 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue (signalized)	NB	23.2 / C	19.8 / B	23.3 / C	15.8 / B
	EB	20.2 / C		6.3 / A	
	WB	10.2 / B		8.9 / A	
28 <sup>th</sup> Street @ Clinton Avenue (signalized)	NB	11.8 / B	5 / A	8.2 / A	5.1 / A
	EB	2.8 / A		3.7 / A	
28 <sup>th</sup> Street @ 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue (signalized)	NB	20.2 / C	5.9 / A	17.5 / B	5.7 / A
	SB	36.7 / D		35 / D	
	EB	2.9 / A		2.9 / A	
Franklin Avenue @ 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue (signalized)	NB	17.2 / B	7.5 / A	11.4 / B	6.3 / A
	SB	29.5 / C		30.1 / C	
	EB	6.5 / A		5.2 / A	
	WB	4 / A		4 / A	
Franklin Avenue @ 5 <sup>th</sup> Avenue (signalized)	NB	47.6 / D	20.4 / C	34.2 / C	14.7 / B
	EB	20.3 / C		9.5 / A	
	WB	7.4 / A		12.6 / B	

Source: Interstate Access Request for the I-35W Transit/Access Project (May 2015).

**Table 15 – Arterial Roadways 2038 PM Peak Comparison for No Build and Preferred Alternative**

Intersection	Approach	No Build Alternative		Preferred Alternative	
		Approach (Delay/LOS)	Intersection (Delay/LOS)	Approach (Delay/LOS)	Intersection (Delay/LOS)
Lake Street @ Stevens Avenue (signalized)	SB	40.4 / D	23.7 / C	34 / C	22.1 / C
	EB	18.6 / B		16.4 / B	
	WB	23.2 / C		14.1 / B	
Lake Street @ 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue (signalized)	NB	17.4 / B	12.8 / B	19.9 / B	9.2 / A
	EB	5.1 / A		7.1 / A	
	WB	14.6 / B		6.6 / A	
31 <sup>st</sup> Street @ Stevens Avenue (signalized)	SB	27.6 / C	53.8 / D	33 / C	28 / C
	EB	12.6 / B		12.8 / B	
	WB	97.6 / F		31 / C	
31 <sup>st</sup> Street @ 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue (signalized)	NB	20 / C	110.8 / F	23 / C	17.3 / B
	EB	17.5 / B		9.9 / A	
	WB	300 / F		15.8 / B	
28 <sup>th</sup> Street @ Clinton Avenue (signalized)	NB	4.6 / A	2.8 / A	6.2 / A	6 / A
	EB	2.4 / A		5.9 / A	
28 <sup>th</sup> Street @ 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue (signalized)	NB	38.2 / D	16.6 / B	35.5 / D	16.7 / B
	SB	21.7 / C		23.4 / C	
	EB	8.7 / A		10.7 / B	
Franklin Avenue @ 4 <sup>th</sup> Avenue (signalized)	NB	300 / F*	300 / F*	24.8 / C	10 / B
	SB	300 / F*		36.5 / D	
	EB	300 / F*		12.8 / B	
	WB	9 / A		3.2 / A	
Franklin Avenue @ 5 <sup>th</sup> Avenue (signalized)	NB	288.4 / F	97.5 / F	50.5 / D	35.9 / D
	EB	84.8 / F		21 / C	
	WB	21.6 / C		41.2 / D	

\* Delay exceeds greater than 300 seconds (5 minutes).

Source: *Interstate Access Request for the I-35W Transit/Access Project* (May 2015).

The draft IAR concluded that:

- The proposed southbound Lake Street exit will efficiently serve the forecasted demands on the arterial system. The intersection improvements will add capacity and theoretically reduce crashes by reducing congestion. Demands and long queues at the 35<sup>th</sup> Street exit will be relieved.
- During the morning peak period, access from northbound I-35W to area employment centers is currently provided by the 31<sup>st</sup> Street exit with 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue distributing traffic to 31<sup>st</sup> Street, Lake Street and 28<sup>th</sup> Street then on to destinations generally north of Lake Street and east of I-35W. Afternoon traffic patterns from the 31<sup>st</sup> Street exit serve a greater demand to residential areas west of I-35W.
- The proposed northbound 28<sup>th</sup> Street exit will reduce congestion and improve safety on the 31<sup>st</sup> Street exit and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue by containing the queues on the freeway exit ramp approaching 31<sup>st</sup> Street rather than the freeway mainline.
- The northbound approach of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to 31<sup>st</sup> Street is a local frontage road that merges into the 31<sup>st</sup> Street freeway ramp prior to the intersection signal. While the delays at the intersection can be optimized to achieve acceptable delays, the maximum northbound queue has potential to spill on the freeway. In the No Build scenario the maximum queue extends over 600 feet from the signal and would impact the freeway operations. In the proposed Build condition, the ramp queue will

be reduced to approximately 400 feet and not have any impact on the freeway operations.

#### Safety: Elimination of Trail User and Auto Conflict Points

The proposed off-street trail connection improves bicycle and pedestrian safety by eliminating trail user and auto conflict points by reducing the number of intersections that users traverse to zero to access Lake Street or the Lake Street multimodal transit station. Without the connection, the route traverses 4 or 6 intersections depending on direction of travel. Historical data (2009-2013) provided by the City show a total of 17 bicycle and 7 pedestrian crashes at these intersections. The removal of intersection conflicts by the trail connection substantially reduces exposure for pedestrians and bicycles traveling between the Midtown Greenway and Lake Street at intersections on Lake Street (20,200 ADT), Blaisdell Avenue (9,700 ADT), 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue (7,400 ADT) and Stevens Avenue (4,500 ADT). The connection design separates bicyclists from pedestrians the full length to the transit station plaza reducing bicycle and pedestrian conflicts which presently occur at the switchback access to the Midtown Greenway and on sidewalks. Personal security on the connection will be enhanced by providing escape routes, lighting, strategically placed landscaping, and emergency call button pylons. A high level of activity on the Midtown Greenway, connection and transit plaza will further enhance user security.

#### Safety-Related Improvements on the Freeway and Arterial Network

Section 4.6 of the draft IAR shows that the project is projected to result in a substantial reduction in crashes for the local and regional roadway networks. The access and capacity improvements on the freeway system, and improvements to the arterial network provide safer facilities for all users through a reduction in the number of safety conflicts.

As described in the draft IAR, the proposed southbound exit ramp to Lake Street will provide a reduction in crashes on both the freeway and arterial systems. On the freeway, the exit will be constructed with a full auxiliary lane between the westbound I-94 entrance and the Lake Street exit. This new auxiliary lane will provide needed capacity and reduce congestion and congestion-related crashes along the freeway. On the arterial system the exit will reduce backtracking through many signalized intersections in South Minneapolis as traffic will have more direct access to destinations.

As described in the draft IAR, the proposed I-35W exit ramp to 28<sup>th</sup> Street will provide a reduction in crashes on both the freeway and arterial systems. On the freeway, the exit will be constructed with a full auxiliary lane from the 35<sup>th</sup> Street entrance ramp to the proposed 28<sup>th</sup> Street exit ramp. This extension will reduce weaving crashes along the freeway; the northbound weaving section was reduced from 580 to 530 feet. On the arterial system the exit will reduce traffic demands through signalized intersections that experience high crash rates.

#### *I-35W Mainline*

The proposed design along both northbound and southbound I-35W will address some of the existing design and congestion problems and help reduce crashes along the corridor.

The main improvement for northbound I-35W will be the construction of a full MnPASS lane. The northbound 28<sup>th</sup> Street exit ramp includes the extension of the existing auxiliary lane between the 35<sup>th</sup> Street entrance and the 31<sup>st</sup> Street exit ramp from approximately 580 feet to approximately 2,500 feet; this more safely serves the weaving demands. The auxiliary

lane is also estimated to provide over 20 percent reduction in crashes for the added lane. The northbound I-35W flyover ramp design will remove the spillback congestion from I-94 along Highway 65 and reduce the number of congestion related collisions.

Southbound I-35W has many improvements that will reduce both congestion and safety problems. The southbound exit ramp to Lake Street will shift traffic demands from the 35<sup>th</sup> Street exit, which will reduce the weaving volume between 31<sup>st</sup> Street and 35<sup>th</sup> Street. The proposed southbound exit ramp includes an auxiliary lane from the I-94 Commons to the proposed exit; the proposed design also increases the radius of the existing 35 mph curve to 40 mph. Shifting southbound I-35W to the right side of the freeway will better align southbound Highway 65 and reduce the existing weaving traffic demands that occur as high occupancy vehicles from downtown shift towards the left side of I-35W prior to the existing MnPASS lane. The added capacity of the MnPASS lane will alleviate congestion along southbound I-35W and improve safety.

#### *Westbound I-94 Mainline*

The proposed design along westbound I-94 fixes some of the geometric deficiencies along the mainline and the left side entrance of the northbound I-35W flyover ramp relieves congestion. Geometric deficiencies on westbound I-94 include unbalanced lane utilization, limited sight distance due to vertical curves and bridge pier locations, and heavy weaving demands. These improvements should reduce the congestion along mainline I-94 and improve the safety and crash rates.

#### *Highway 65 Mainline*

The proposed design along Highway 65 is not substantially different than the existing condition. However the northbound flyover ramp entering on the left side of westbound I-94 with a full auxiliary lane will remove the majority of the congestion that spills upstream along Highway 65 today. The reduction in congestion along the flyover ramp and along northbound Highway 65 will reduce the crash rate (see Section 4.6.1.3 of the draft IAR).

#### *Lake Street and 31<sup>st</sup> Street*

The proposed design along Lake Street will add more storage for the westbound to southbound movement as well as improve the signal timing in order to relieve congestion. The proposed design at 31<sup>st</sup> Street will add a left turn signal phase to relieve congestion; it should be noted there will be available width under the proposed 31<sup>st</sup> Street bridge to add turn lanes along 31<sup>st</sup> Street with a future project. The northbound 28<sup>th</sup> Street exit ramp will also reduce the volume along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue which will reduce congestion and improve safety.

#### *Franklin Avenue*

The proposed design will include a separated eastbound left turn lane and convert 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and Franklin Avenue to a northbound one-way with on-street parking removed on the west side. Parking would be retained on the east side, with the exception of approximately 200 feet south of Franklin Avenue to accommodate an additional lane at the intersection. These improvements will reduce the congestion at both intersections and substantially reduce crashes.

## *Stevens Avenue*

The proposed design includes the conversion of Stevens Avenue between the Midtown Greenway and Lake Street to a one-way street in the southbound direction, with on-street parking removed on both sides of the street. North of the Midtown Greenway, Stevens Avenue will remain a two-way street.

- c. Identify measures that will be taken to minimize or mitigate project related transportation effects.

The proposed improvements will address present and future congestion as identified in the traffic analysis. No mitigation measures are being proposed for the loss of on-street parking on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Stevens Avenue.

## **Question #19: Cumulative Potential Effects**

(Preparers can leave this item blank if cumulative potential effects are addressed under the applicable EAW Items)

- a. Describe the geographic scales and timeframes of the project related environmental effects that could combine with other environmental effects resulting in cumulative potential effects.

In addition to the state definition of cumulative potential effects described above, cumulative impacts are defined by the federal Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) as “impacts on the environment that result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions” (40 CFR 158.7). The findings below pertain to both cumulative potential effects and cumulative impacts. In the discussion that follows, the terms “cumulative potential effects” and “cumulative impacts” are used interchangeably.

Cumulative potential effects are not necessarily causally linked to the reconstruction of I-35W or to related improvements. Rather, they are the total effect of all known actions (past, present, and future) in the vicinity of the project with impacts on the same types of resources. The purpose of cumulative potential impacts analysis is to look for impacts that may be individually minimal, but which could accumulate and become significant and adverse when combined with the effects of other actions.

### Scope of Cumulative Potential Effects

The purpose of the cumulative impacts analysis is to look at past, recent, and future actions to determine whether impacts from the individual projects, while insignificant on their own, could become significant when accumulated. The cumulative impacts analysis is limited to those resources, ecosystems, and human communities affected by the Preferred Alternative. In the case of the proposed project, this is limited to potential impacts from stormwater runoff and traffic noise.

The geographic scope of this analysis varies by the resource under examination, but in general is limited to an area in close proximity to the project limits. The focused scope of this analysis considers impacts to these resources from previous, current, as well as planned future projects.

## Past Actions

Past actions in the project area include decades of residential, institutional, industrial and commercial development. In addition, there has been extensive highway infrastructure development, including the recent Urban Partnership Agreement improvements. All these have resulted in the current state of the “built” environment in the vicinity of the project.

- b. Describe any reasonably foreseeable future projects (for which a basis of expectation has been laid) that may interact with environmental effects of the proposed project within the geographic scales and timeframes identified above.

## Future Actions Anticipated

The projects listed below that were considered as future actions in this analysis are consistent with the 2009 Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (MEQB) rule amendments regarding cumulative potential effects. The projects: 1) are being constructed, or are planned, or are projects for which a basis of expectation has been laid; 2) are located in the surrounding area; and 3) Might reasonably be expected to affect the same natural resources.

### *MnDOT Metro District 10-Year Capital Highway Work Plan (2015-2024)*

Projects planned for 2015 through spring 2016 include repairing the stormwater tunnel beneath I-35W from 39<sup>th</sup> Street to just north of Lake Street and sealing and grouting the stormwater tunnels beneath I-35W from Lake Street to 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and beneath I-94 from Willow Street to Portland Avenue South. Projects planned for 2019 include a thin mill and overlay for I-35W from Portland Avenue to Washington Avenue.

### *METRO Orange Line BRT*

The METRO Orange Line is a 17-mile planned highway BRT line that will connect Minneapolis, Richfield, Bloomington, and Burnsville along I-35W (see Figure 7 in Appendix B). All-day, frequent BRT service will complement local and express bus routes along I-35W, providing competitive running times for station-to-station trips and a new option for the reverse-commute market. The Orange Line will provide 10-minute peak frequency and 15-minute off-peak frequency, at least 20 hours per day, seven days per week. The Orange Line alignment would use a combination of existing center-running highway managed lanes, bus-only shoulders, transit-only guideway, high-occupancy vehicle ramp bypass lanes, and short segments of operating in mixed traffic on local streets. The project includes street improvements, upgraded transit stations, park & ride facilities, and improved bus routes. Construction will begin in 2017. The METRO Orange Line is anticipated to open in 2019.

### *South Quarter Phase IV Residential Development (the block bounded by East 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Portland Avenue, East Franklin Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue South)*

The northwest corner of the Franklin Avenue and Portland Avenue intersection is in the process of being redeveloped. The residential development consists of 90 new dwelling units in two buildings.

### *Midtown Corridor*

Metro Transit, in partnership with Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis, conducted an 18-month Alternatives Analysis (AA) to identify possible transit improvements in the Midtown Corridor. The study ran concurrent with the Nicollet-Central Modern Streetcar project (both projects interface in the area of Nicollet Avenue and Lake Street). The planned

improvements in the 4.4-mile Midtown Corridor include arterial BRT on Lake Street and rail (modern streetcar or light rail) in the Midtown Greenway. The project schedule depends on securing federal and local funds. The Midtown Corridor is part of the City's adopted long-term modern streetcar network.

#### *Planned Reopening of Nicollet Avenue at Lake Street*

The area at Nicollet Avenue and Lake Street is a designated activity center in *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*. In the 1970s, Nicollet Avenue between 29<sup>th</sup> Street and Lake Street was vacated for the development of a Kmart store. As a result, there is currently a major interruption in the street grid at the intersection of Lake Street and Nicollet Avenue.

The City of Minneapolis is currently actively pursuing the reopening of Nicollet Avenue in coordination with the redevelopment of the Kmart Site. It is anticipated that redevelopment may include other commercial and housing development of various types to achieve the objectives of the City's adopted land use plans and the *Lake and Nicollet Redevelopment Plan*. Funding for a portion of the cost to reopen this street is included in the City's capital improvement program. There are no specific development proposals under consideration by the City at this time.

#### *Nicollet-Central Modern Streetcar*

The City of Minneapolis and Metro Transit are proposing to construct the Nicollet-Central Modern Streetcar, an approximately 3.7-mile modern streetcar corridor that would extend between Lake Street and 8<sup>th</sup> Street NE, along Nicollet Avenue, Nicollet Mall, Hennepin Avenue, Hennepin and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenues NE, and Central Avenue NE, and would use the Hennepin Avenue Bridge for the Mississippi River Crossing. If Nicollet Avenue is not reconnected prior to construction of modern streetcar, then the modern streetcar alignment will run temporarily on 29<sup>th</sup> Street W and Blaisdell Avenue S until Nicollet Avenue is reconnected between 29<sup>th</sup> Street W and Lake Street. The proposed modern streetcar service includes stops approximately every 1/4 mile (about every two blocks), modern streetcar vehicles, off-board fare collection, improved transit stops/shelters, signal adjustments for improved transit speed, and other transit passenger amenities. The line will run in mixed traffic, with the rails embedded in the street. The line will utilize double tracks in most locations, enabling directional traffic. The City of Minneapolis and the Metropolitan Council are collaborating to advance the environmental review process.

#### *Other Future Actions*

The City of Minneapolis was contacted regarding other projects planned near I-35W. Even though no planned projects were identified, the possibility for impacts on future development in the vicinity was evaluated in the following assessment of cumulative potential effects.

- c. Discuss the nature of the cumulative potential effects and summarize any other available information relevant to determining whether there is potential for significant environmental effects due to these cumulative effects.

Impacts from the project are discussed throughout this document. The main project impacts will involve stormwater quality and quantity, and traffic noise. Cumulative impacts to these resources from the proposed project and from anticipated future projects listed above are discussed in the sections that follow.

## Stormwater Quality and Quantity

### *Existing Conditions*

As discussed in EAW Item 11 on page 34, storm water runoff from I-35W drains via roadway gutters to the I-35W/I-94 stormwater tunnel, which is then discharged into the Mississippi River immediately east of the I-35W bridge pier on the south bank of the Mississippi River.

### *Impacts from Proposed Action*

The proposed project will result in additional areas of impervious surface, as discussed in EAW Item 11 (page 34). The proposed project will treat stormwater runoff and/or provide infiltration through best management practices being incorporated into the project design. These BMPs will help mitigate the adverse effects of the increased impervious surfaces. They will improve the quality of stormwater being discharged compared to the quality of stormwater discharge under the existing condition.

### *Impacts from Other Actions*

Future developments and/or roadway projects may result in increased impervious surfaces and/or stormwater quality/quantity (discharge rate) effects. However, these projects will be required to provide mitigation in conformance with NPDES and/or watershed regulations, minimizing surface water impacts.

### *Cumulative Potential Effects*

Federal, state, and local surface and groundwater management regulations require mitigation be provided in conjunction with proposed development and roadway projects. Given the design standards and management controls available for protecting the quality of surface waters, it is likely that potential impacts of the project, along with other foreseeable actions, will be minimized or mitigated to a substantial degree. Therefore, adverse cumulative effects on water quality and quantity rates are not anticipated.

## Traffic Noise

### *Existing Conditions*

Existing traffic noise levels for 1,445 receptors along the I-35W project corridor area can be found in Tables 4 and 5 in the Traffic Noise Analysis Report of this EA. The existing modeled L<sub>10</sub> daytime noise levels vary from 49.3 to 78.8 dBA, and the existing nighttime noise levels vary from 48.8 to 79.1 dBA. The residential daytime L<sub>10</sub> state standards are 65 dBA daytime and 55 dBA nighttime. Traffic noise is discussed in EAW Item 17, beginning on page 55.

### *Impacts from Proposed Action*

Changes in daytime traffic noise levels (L<sub>10</sub>) are projected to range from -4.1 dBA to 3.9 dBA, from existing to future (2038) Build conditions, without the proposed noise barriers.

### *Cumulative Potential Effects*

Noise will increase in some areas of the proposed project due to increased traffic; however, because the noise analysis of the I-35W project corridor area was based upon projected 2038 traffic levels, the impacts from other development projects in the vicinity are accounted for in the results.

Conclusion

The potential impacts to resources identified can be avoided or minimized through existing regulatory controls, as described above. During the development of this EA, no potentially significant cumulative impacts to the resources affected by the project have been identified.

**Question #20: Other Potential Environmental Impacts**

If the project may cause any adverse environmental impacts not addressed by items 1 to 28, identify and discuss them here, along with any proposed mitigation.

No additional adverse environmental impacts are anticipated other than those previously addressed or discussed in Section 5.1 – Additional Federal Issues, beginning on page 74.

**RGU Certification**

The Environmental Quality Board will only accept **SIGNED** Environmental Assessment Worksheets for public notice in the EQB Monitor.

**I hereby certify that:**

- The information contained in this document is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.
- The EAW describes the complete project; there are no other projects, stages or components other than those described in this document, which are related to the project as connected actions or phased actions, as defined at Minnesota Rules, parts 4410.0200, subparts 9b and 60, respectively.
- Copies of this EAW are being sent to the entire EQB distribution list.

**Name and Title of Signer:**

*for* Ann Jabr *Ast/ Division Director* *3/23/16*  
 Lynn P. Clarkowski, P.E.  
 MnDOT Chief Environmental Officer

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Environmental Assessment Worksheet** was prepared by the staff of the Environmental Quality Board at Minnesota Planning. For additional information, worksheets or for *EAW Guidelines*, contact: Environmental Quality Board, 658 Cedar St., St. Paul, MN 55155, 651-296-8253, or [www.mnplan.state.mn.us](http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us).

## 5.1 ADDITIONAL FEDERAL SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Discussed below are the federal issues not discussed in the state EAW.

### Right-of-Way and Relocation

The project would require acquisition of land for public transportation right-of-way as well as permanent and temporary easements during construction (see Table 16). Preliminary construction limits and MnDOT right-of-way lines are shown on Figures 7A-C in Appendix E.

**Table 16 – Right-of-Way Acquisition Summary**

Right-of-Way Acquisition Type	Number of Parcels
Full Acquisition	3
Partial Acquisition	16
Temporary Acquisition	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>

Public right-of-way, on a temporary or permanent basis, will also be required to construct the project (see Figures 2A-C in Appendix A). MnDOT is allowed to acquire public right-of-way from city streets, sidewalks, or alleys, where necessary, to improve safety and/or to construct public roadway projects, under Commissioner's Orders.

#### Access Modification at Wells Fargo, 2840 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue South

To the east of I-35W, the proposed improvements will sever the MnDOT-owned frontage road (2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South/Clinton Avenue) over the Midtown Greenway to 28<sup>th</sup> Street. The portion of the roadway south of 28<sup>th</sup> Street will be realigned to provide access to the Wells Fargo parking facilities and will change in function to a private driveway.

#### Access Changes at NICO Plating, 2929 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue South

The proposed southbound exit from I-35W to Lake Street via Stevens Avenue requires closure of all driveways and the public alley on the west side of Stevens Avenue south of the new ramp connection. Access to the existing NICO Plating site is impacted, primarily by the loss of egress from the site onto Stevens Avenue.

The NICO Plating site has five loading dock doors and two drive-in doors on the south end of building that face east to Stevens Avenue. Truck demand to the docks at the south end of the building is reported by the owners to be approximately 100-200 per day ranging in size from single unit trucks to semi-tractor trailer combinations with up to 53 foot trailers (WB-67 design vehicle). The owners report that 89 percent of trucks enter the site from 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 93 percent of the trucks exit the site to Stevens Avenue.

The NICO Plating north docks that face Stevens Avenue are less frequently used. The driveway will remain in operation. The existing site is designed to serve a single unit truck through the site from 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. The project does not have negative impact on the north loading dock area.

Access and material handling mitigation has been identified to construct the project and keep the business in place. Access to the south end of the NICO site will be maintained from 1<sup>st</sup>

Avenue through the public alley which will be reconfigured as an “L” shape with the east end rerouted to access Lake Street approximately 100 feet west of Stevens Avenue. The southbound exit to Lake Street causes acquisition of one commercial lot at the corner of Lake Street and Stevens Avenue (currently occupied by Good Grocer). Rerouting of the public alley causes acquisition of the second lot from the corner (currently a parking lot). A portion of the existing public alley and portions of the two commercial lots will be conveyed to NICO Plating to restore their ability to maneuver trucks to and from their loading docks. A new driveway is proposed for truck egress to westbound Lake Street.

A portion of the shipping and receiving area and loading dock addition will need to be reconfigured to facilitate truck access and on site truck circulation. The southerly three shipping and receiving doors (one drive in door and two dock doors) are proposed to be shifted westerly approximately 20 feet to accommodate truck movements. This impacts shipping receiving floor space by 700-800 square feet. Building modifications appear to be feasible without complete shutdown of the NICO plant operation with four of the seven existing shipping and receiving doors not impacted by modifications.

Incoming trucks currently stage or wait for access to the loading docks in the public alley. The enlarged NICO site provides opportunity for trucks to stage adjacent to the segment of realigned public alley and/or in the existing east-west alley segment as they do today.

Four existing on-site parking spaces located near the existing alley will be displaced. An area for replacement parking spaces is available on the enlarged site adjacent to the realigned alley.

Five existing commercial lots on the block with frontages on Lake Street and also served by the existing public alley will not be impacted.

Residential Relocations

There will be no residential relocations; however, a strip of right-of-way along I-35W will be needed from a single family residence at 2827 Stevens Avenue South to construct the southbound exit ramp from I-35W to Lake Street. The project will remove the small residential garage that is adjacent to the alley. The larger garage building on the site will not be impacted. The property owner has been conferred with and has conveyed to the project partners that this smaller garage is an inconsequential building on the property.

Business/Non-Profit Organization Relocations

The project will cause the displacement of one business and one non-profit, member operated grocery store (see Table 17).

**Table 17 – Business Displacement Properties Summary**

<b>Name of Business (Address)</b>	<b>Type of Business</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Building Area (square feet)<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Year Operations Began</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>
<b>Krav Maga Minneapolis</b> (2835 Stevens Ave S)	Martial Arts Instructors	Tenant Occupant	4,258	2010	2+
<b>Good Grocer</b> (122 Lake St E)	Food Grocery	Tenant Occupant	5,781	2015	5

Source: City of Minneapolis Property Info (<http://apps.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/AddressPortalApp/Search?AppID=PIApp>).

The displacement of Krav Maga Minneapolis is necessary to construct the southbound exit ramp from I-35W to Lake Street. The displacement of Good Grocer, a non-profit, member operated

grocery store, is necessary to construct the southbound exit and the off-street trail connection to the Midtown Greenway. As discussed on page 19, avoiding impacts to this business and non-profit organization would require a corridor alignment shift to the east, which would displace several commercial and residential properties on the east side of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

#### Billboard at 2835 Stevens Avenue South

The displacement of the existing billboard at the above referenced address is necessary due to the construction of the southbound exit ramp from I-35W to Lake Street. Negotiations will proceed under the assumption that the existing billboard will be relocated on the remaining property. It is feasible to relocate the billboard on the remaining portion of the impacted parcel; however details of the relocation have yet to be determined. Details of the billboard relocation will develop during the negotiation process with the owner and Clear Channel.

#### Mitigation

Right-of-way acquisitions and relocations will be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Uniform Act), as amended by the Surface Transportation and Uniform Relocation Assistance Act of 1987 and 49 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 24, and effective April 1989 (revised January 2005). Relocation resources are available to all relocatees without discrimination.

#### *Relocation Potential and Services under the Uniform Act*

The relocation potential for the displaced business and non-profit organization was evaluated based on the availability of similar commercial properties within the community. A search of the MNCAR Public Commercial Listing<sup>36</sup> was conducted to assess the future potential for identifying suitable replacement properties for the business/non-profit organization whose properties may be acquired for the proposed project. The number of displaced properties was compared with the number of comparable properties available, assuming similar properties may be available at the time of construction. MNCAR search results were also used to assess the availability of suitable commercial properties within the Lake Street Area zip codes where displacements are anticipated to occur. Although this methodology cannot predict the future availability of suitable properties, it does provide a sense of the degree of difficulty associated with relocating a small number of properties (low) as compared to relocating a large number of properties (high).

This MNCAR exercise was performed only to assess the ability to relocate the displaced business and non-profit organization in current real estate market conditions. As the project proceeds to construction, the displaced business and non-profit organization would receive relocation assistance in accordance with their needs and current market availability.

The search for available commercial property indicated that there was an adequate supply of commercial properties of varying compatibility to the non-profit organization and business being displaced by the project. This includes office space and commercial land for sale or rent within the 55404, 55407, and 55408 zip code areas. Appendix G shows the listings of available properties. Although it is unlikely that the current available replacement sites will be available when the acquisition and relocation phases are initiated, Hennepin County and MnDOT anticipate that other sites will be available.

The founder of Good Grocer has indicated that the non-profit organization wishes to relocate within the community. The same sentiment is assumed for Krav Maga Minneapolis. To date, no

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<sup>36</sup> Minnesota Commercial Association of Real Estate ([www.mncar.org/public-commercial-listing](http://www.mncar.org/public-commercial-listing)).

unique relocation situations are known or anticipated for Krav Maga Minneapolis. Special relocation considerations for Good Grocer include the fact it is a grocery store and it is located on a transit line that provides access to those who may not have automobiles.

For the business/non-profit organization displacements, the following would be provided:

- Relocation advisory services
- Minimum 90 days written notice to vacate prior to requiring possession
- Reimbursement for moving and reestablishment expenses

Although the law requires a minimum of 90 days written notice to vacate for business displacements, the displaced owners would have been previously contacted by a right-of-way agent and an appraiser. Relocation advisory services would ensure that relocation activities are coordinated with the owners.

There are a number of other reimbursable/incidental expenses related to relocation that may also be provided to the business and non-profit organization if determined to be actual, reasonable, and necessary.

## **Social Impacts**

The assessment of social impacts considers changes in vehicular, commuter, bicycle and pedestrian travel patterns and accessibility, impacts on community facilities and public services, businesses, highway and traffic safety as well as overall public safety, and impacts on transportation sensitive populations.

The I-35W project corridor area borders several diverse Minneapolis neighborhoods and is home to several large employers such as Wells Fargo Mortgage and several hospitals. The Minneapolis neighborhoods include Elliott Park, Ventura Village, Phillips, Central, Lyndale, Whittier, Stevens Square/Loring Heights, Loring Park, Bryant, and Kingfield neighborhoods. The project will not limit access to these neighborhoods.

There are also several public service and community facilities (listed below) that are located adjacent to the project. However, no direct physical impacts are anticipated to any of the properties.

- Phillips Eye Institute, an Allina Health Hospital specializing in the diagnosis, treatment and care of eye disorders and diseases (3<sup>rd</sup> largest specialty eye hospital in the U.S.), located at 2215 Park Avenue South
- Children's Health Care and Specialty Center located at 2525 and 2530 Chicago Avenue South
- Abbott Northwestern Hospital (the Twin Cities' largest not-for-profit hospital), an Allina Health Hospital, located at 800 East 28<sup>th</sup> Street at Chicago Avenue
- Sister Kenny Rehabilitation Institute, a national leader in rehabilitation, located at 800 East 28<sup>th</sup> Street (at Abbott Northwestern Hospital)
- Minneapolis College of Art and Design, a private college, located at 133 East 25<sup>th</sup> Street
- Minneapolis Institute of Arts, a free museum operated for the benefit of the general public, located at 2400 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue South
- Richard R. Green Central Park School, a Minneapolis Public School, located at 3416 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue South
- Christo Rey Jesuit High School, a private school, located at 2924 4<sup>th</sup> Ave South

- St. Mary's University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus located at 2500 Park Avenue

The project will not limit access to these community facilities. Additional access from I-35W northbound to 28<sup>th</sup> Street would be provided for vehicles currently exiting at 31<sup>st</sup> Street but destined for the hospitals. It is important to note that the proposal for new access to and from I-35W began with a study initiated by Allina Health System and Abbott Northwestern Hospital in 1997. Abbott Northwestern Hospital, a destination for more than 5,000 vehicles per day, identified accessibility as the top issue raised by patients and visitors. Under existing conditions, accessing the Abbott Northwestern Hospital campus from the north or south is currently a circuitous route for emergency personnel, employees, and visitors (see Figure 2 in Appendix B).

Constructing new access from I-35W southbound to Lake Street would provide for better overall operations by reducing the number of cars exiting at 35<sup>th</sup> Street, and eliminating some inefficient travel patterns.

Improving the accommodations for transit users has been an important consideration in the planning and scoping phase of the project. By 2019, the fully-accessible multimodal transit station at Lake Street is estimated to attract more than 139,000 annual additional riders with roughly 42,000 new riders boarding on the freeway level, and 97,000 annual new riders using local buses at the Lake Street level. The multimodal transit station will facilitate many new trips and transfers that are not possible in the current transit system. The proposed multimodal transit station would re-establish the I-35W/Lake Street transit connection services and provide safe access to the freeway level through stairs and elevators on the north and south side of Lake Street.

The proposed project is intended to enhance community cohesion and identity. The project features are expected to strengthen community identity and social integration. A new and improved multimodal transit station at Lake Street, will result in safer, more convenient transit service in the area. A fully-accessible station and streetscape enhancements add value to the street and surrounding properties, and improve personal safety and comfort. Livability<sup>37</sup> improvements and enhancements are also proposed along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South and Stevens Avenue South. There is also potential for substantial transit-oriented redevelopment and infill development in the station area, however, these are expectations based upon collaborative planning processes and there is no guarantee that such development will occur. The improved transit service will also provide for more opportunities for residents to reverse commute to jobs. Extending the MnPASS managed lane for northbound and southbound traffic would improve system connectivity, and reliability from Burnsville to downtown Minneapolis.

Transportation sensitive populations, including non-drivers, transit dependent, the elderly, and persons with mobility impairments, that rely on public transportation will benefit from the proposed project. The project is expected to provide more reliable travel times for those riding transit buses and other specialized transport services on I-35W and Lake Street routes.

The proposed off-street trail connection improves bicycle and pedestrian safety by eliminating trail user and auto conflict points. This is accomplished by reducing the number of intersections that users traverse to zero to access Lake Street or the Lake Street multimodal transit station.

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<sup>37</sup> Livability is the sum of the factors that add up to a community's quality of life—including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment and recreation possibilities.

The project will cause the displacement of one business and one non-profit, member operated grocery store. Avoiding impacts to this business and non-profit organization would require a corridor alignment shift to the east, which would displace several commercial and residential properties on the east side of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. Given the proposed displacements, the project has the potential to create job losses through relocations. Job loss impacts could be avoided or minimized by the project partners working with the business or non-profit organization to find a suitable location in which to continue operations. The acquisition and relocation program would be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended. Relocation resources would be available to the relocated business and the non-profit organization without discrimination.

Impacts on employees of each business and non-profit organization displaced by the project would be avoided and mitigated if the business or non-profit organization were to be relocated so that no loss of jobs would occur. To accomplish this, the project partners would work with the affected business or non-profit organization to find a suitable location in which to continue operations. The new location would need to be nearby the current location so that employee commutes, currently unknown at this time, would not be substantially affected. Also, any new structures or building/site improvements for the displaced business and non-profit organization would need to be completed prior to relocation so that disruption of business operations would be minimized and no loss of jobs would occur.

MnDOT will develop a Transportation Management Plan during the final design stage of this project to inform community facilities, emergency services, public service providers, and others of local detours, access closures, and other project information that could affect the operations of these public services.

## **Economic Impacts**

The proposed project will increase mobility along I-35W that provides direct access to regional job centers and to local communities and residential areas. I-35W serves as an important component of the state and regional transportation system, supporting local and regional economic development. The two new connections to the freeway will enhance local access and bring more people to destinations along the Lake Street corridor and surrounding areas. The extension and expansion of managed lanes will ensure that transit will be a reliable and preferred mode of transportation along the I-35W corridor.

Improvements to the transportation system will also provide the infrastructure needed to support the economic revitalization objectives identified in the locally-adopted comprehensive plan for the Lake Street corridor; however, these are expectations based upon collaborative planning processes and there is no guarantee that such development will occur. In 2007, the Minneapolis City Council created the Great Streets Program as a targeted effort to help businesses develop, expand, and succeed along key commercial and transit corridors within the city in a manner consistent with City land use and growth policies. Coordinated public sector investments in business development, increasing housing densities along transit corridors, as well as road and transit infrastructure and public facilities, have demonstrated revitalization and job creation results in a number of corridors in the city. The Great Streets Program identifies Target Areas for coordinated investment within the City and provides a variety of City resources for business development and commercial real estate development in these areas. This project is in the Franklin Avenue and Lake Street Economic Target Areas.

The new multimodal transit station is anticipated to provide a catalyst for substantial transit-oriented redevelopment and infill development in the Lake Street interchange/station area. The

new station will also be an architectural icon that will attract people, businesses and customers to the Lake Street area, adding value to the surrounding businesses and properties. The *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* also identifies the Wells Fargo/Hospitals area as one of four growth centers in the City, where there is a concentration of employment activity accompanied by a wide range of complementary activities taking place through the day (e.g., residential, office, retail, entertainment, and recreational uses). Growth areas are supported by excellent transit service. Development and revitalization of the Lake Street corridor will help to strengthen the surrounding urban neighborhoods that are located adjacent to the project area.

The project will cause the displacement of one business and one non-profit, member operated grocery store. A review of the local commercial real estate market indicates that there are a sufficient number of replacement sites available to relocate the eligible displaced business and non-profit organization. Displacement of this business and non-profit organization is not expected to have a major economic effect on the community impacted by this project.

The project is not anticipated to divert large traffic volumes from commercial routes. In fact, the southbound exit ramp to Lake Street will relieve the 35<sup>th</sup> Street exit ramp of the commercial traffic that must currently use the 35<sup>th</sup> Street interchange and travel through residential areas to gain access to the commercial district.

#### Fiscal Impacts

The project will require acquisition of some private property. The acquisition of this right-of-way is not expected to seriously impact the local tax base. Based on demographic trends and forecasts, in addition to local land use plans, it is reasonable to expect redevelopment in the Lake Street interchange/station area, thereby resulting in a net increase in the local tax base.

#### Indirect Effects

Indirect effects are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth-inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density, or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems. As described in the response to EAW Item 9 (a) on page 29, the proposed improvements are compatible with future land use plans. Therefore, the proposed project has a low potential for indirect effects to the project area's resources.

### **Safety and Security**

The proposed action is anticipated to draw more people to the area, which raises potential concerns regarding safety and security of transit patrons and area residents, and maintaining safe and secure operations of transit. The Metropolitan Council, as the owner and operator of the proposed multimodal transit station, follows safety and security policies that establish minimum requirements for facilities based on local, state, and national codes or standards. These codes and standards include, but are not limited to, the applicable parts of:

- The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 130, Standard for Fixed Guideway Transit or Passenger Rail Systems
- The Uniform Building Code, 2007 Edition as amended by the City of Minneapolis
- Uniform Fire Code, 1997 Edition as amended
- The 2007 Minnesota State Building Code
- The Life Safety Code as well as ISO standards

- American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) Standards

In addition, the FTA provides safety and security oversight for major capital projects (*Safety and Security Guidance for Recipients with Major Capital Projects*, covered under 49 CFR part 633, "Project Management Oversight"). The design of the project should meet the following minimum objectives:

- Design for minimum hazard through the identification and elimination of hazards through the use of appropriate safety design concepts and/or alternative designs;
- Use of fixed, automatic, or other protective safety devices to control hazards, which cannot be eliminated;
- Use of warning signals and devices if neither designs or safety devices can effectively eliminate or control an identified hazard; and
- Provide special procedures to control hazards, which cannot be minimized by the aforementioned devices.

Safety and security aspects of the proposed transit station will be developed in accordance with the Metropolitan Council's policies and procedures. Metropolitan Council's *Regional Transitway Guidelines and Station and Support Facility Design Guidelines User Guide Supplement* (February 2012) provide technical guidance for the design of transitway facilities. According to this guidance, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles should be used for all passenger facilities. This approach is consistent with the Minneapolis zoning ordinance, which requires adherence to CPTED principles.

Metro Transit has several mechanisms to ensure the safety of passengers using their transit facilities. These mechanisms include cameras on all transit vehicles, plainclothes security personnel, radio dispatch available to drivers when needed, and an emergency telephone number. At this time, safety and security policies and procedures have not been developed specifically for the METRO Orange Line transitway. Safety and security plans will be developed by Metro Transit for the transitway as the METRO Orange Line project moves into final design.

The project area is entirely located within the municipal boundaries of the City of Minneapolis, and public safety services are provided by the police, fire departments, and emergency response units of Minneapolis. Emergency medical services are generally concentrated within the two city centers of Minneapolis and St. Paul and at the University of Minnesota. Safety and security within the proposed transit station is the joint responsibility of the operator and the local law enforcement authority. Metro Transit has its own licensed police force to address public safety on and near the transit system. Transit police routinely patrol the bus routes and bus stop areas.

Construction worker safety will be an important concern throughout the corridor during all phases of project construction. The implementation of standard worksite and construction worker safety practices, as established by government regulations and codes, as well as standards adopted by the Metropolitan Council, will help to minimize the potential for accidents or other safety problems. A worksite safety and health plan is required and will include the possibility for worker-vehicle conflicts in restricted work spaces under traffic conditions, work in deep and confined spaces during utility relocations and construction, and the potential for exposure to potential contaminants during soil excavation and drilling work.

Public safety, particularly the proximity of pedestrians, bicyclists, and interested spectators to open excavations along the corridor will be addressed using means such as protective safety barriers, warning signs, public information efforts, portable foot bridges over sidewalk

construction, pedestrian and vehicle separation barriers, and similar BMPs. Similarly, adverse safety impacts to pedestrians and bicyclists resulting from turning vehicles at congested crosswalk or trail areas during construction will be addressed in project design and in development of traffic control plans. Applicable safety and security precautions would be specified in the construction plans and programs developed by MnDOT and the Metropolitan Council.

## Considerations Relating to Pedestrians and Bicycles

The Preferred Alternative will perpetuate existing bicycle and pedestrian movements in the project area and will make the improvements discussed in Section 3.2.

I-35W is a barrier<sup>38</sup> to pedestrian and bicycle mobility since some streets do not connect across the Interstate. As a result, streets and greenways that do cross I-35W tend to carry higher volumes of pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Table 18 provides a summary of existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities within the project area as well as Estimated Daily Traffic (EDT) for each mode.

**Table 18 – Existing Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Crossing I-35W Within Project Area**

Corridor	Existing Bicycle Infrastructure	Existing Pedestrian Infrastructure	Bicyclist EDT <sup>1</sup>	Pedestrian EDT <sup>1</sup>
E. 42 <sup>nd</sup> Street	None (Moderate ADT) <sup>2</sup>	Sidewalk	N/A	N/A
E. 40 <sup>th</sup> Street Pedestrian Bridge	Path	Path	130	420
E. 38 <sup>th</sup> Street	None (Moderate ADT) <sup>2</sup>	Sidewalk	140	200
E. 36 <sup>th</sup> Street	None (Moderate ADT) <sup>2</sup>	Sidewalk	130	130
E. 35 <sup>th</sup> Street	None (Moderate ADT) <sup>2</sup>	Sidewalk	N/A	N/A
E. 31 <sup>st</sup> Street	None (Moderate ADT) <sup>2</sup>	Sidewalk	280	450
Lake Street	None	Sidewalk	230	920
Midtown Greenway	Path	Path	4,050	250
E. 28 <sup>th</sup> Street	None (Moderate ADT) <sup>2</sup>	Sidewalk	130	360
E. 26 <sup>th</sup> Street	None (Moderate ADT) <sup>2</sup>	Sidewalk	320	240
E. 24 <sup>th</sup> Street Pedestrian Bridge	Path	Path	90	200

<sup>1</sup> Estimated Daily Traffic – Daily estimates based on City of Minneapolis September weekday counts.

Source: *Minneapolis Bicyclist & Pedestrian County Report 2014*

[www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@publicworks/documents/images/wcms1p-104971.pdf](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@publicworks/documents/images/wcms1p-104971.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Moderate Average Daily Traffic (ADT) = 5,000 – 15,000

<sup>38</sup> When the freeway system was created in the 1960s, many of these new roadways created barriers to a community's cohesiveness and some freeways severely impacted access to community facilities. Because of past adverse community impacts, new projects assess their proposed changes to the project area communities. As a note, past project changes are not considered when assessing a new project's impact to a community.

The proposed bridge design can accommodate levels of pedestrian and bicycle traffic that are anticipated on each bridge. Pedestrian and bicycle accommodations for the project's bridge replacements were discussed at length with representatives from the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County.

The transit station provides a safe connection for all transit users between the different levels. The location of the station provides convenient accessibility to the Midtown Greenway via the proposed off-street trail connection for existing pedestrian/bicycle riders and future modern streetcar riders. The Greenway access has been conceptually defined as an on-grade trail connection between the Greenway and Lake Street adjacent to Stevens Avenue. The project enhances the connection between the Midtown Greenway and Lake Street and will accommodate high levels of pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Separation between pedestrian and bicycles on the proposed off-street trail connection has been maintained as much as possible to minimize conflicts. Transit station access has been designed for those carrying bicycles on buses. Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) will be installed at all signalized intersections where pedestrian travel is permitted.

#### Compliance with Accessibility Requirements

The project requires providing accessibility to a program, activity or service, and by law, the project must comply with provisions set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, or by state or local access codes if they contain more stringent requirements. The project will comply with the required accessibility provisions.

This project includes permanent buildings and/or transit shelters. All plans and details related to these facilities will be processed with State Building Code for compliance to MN Chapter 1341. The proposed multimodal transit station will be equipped with elevators to access the north-south express bus routes above on I-35W.

The project also includes signals, intersections, and ramps which will be made accessible to and usable to people with disabilities. Pedestrian accommodations will meet ADA/Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) requirements.

### **Environmental Justice**

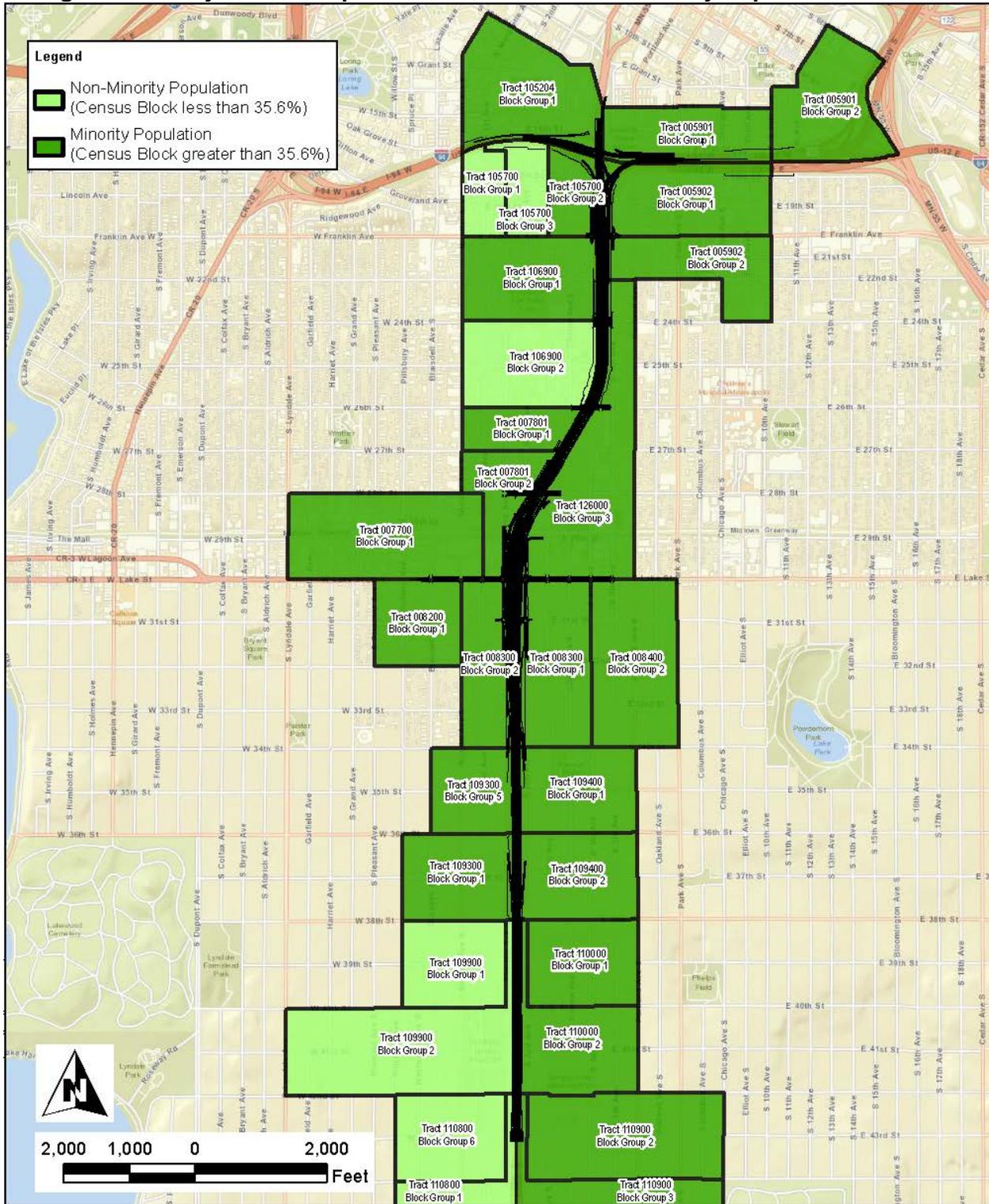
The purpose of Executive Order 12898 is to identify, address, and avoid disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations.

For more detailed information on this subject area, including a demographic profile that locates minority and low-income populations in the project area, see the Environmental Justice Memorandum in Appendix G.

#### Project Area Demographics

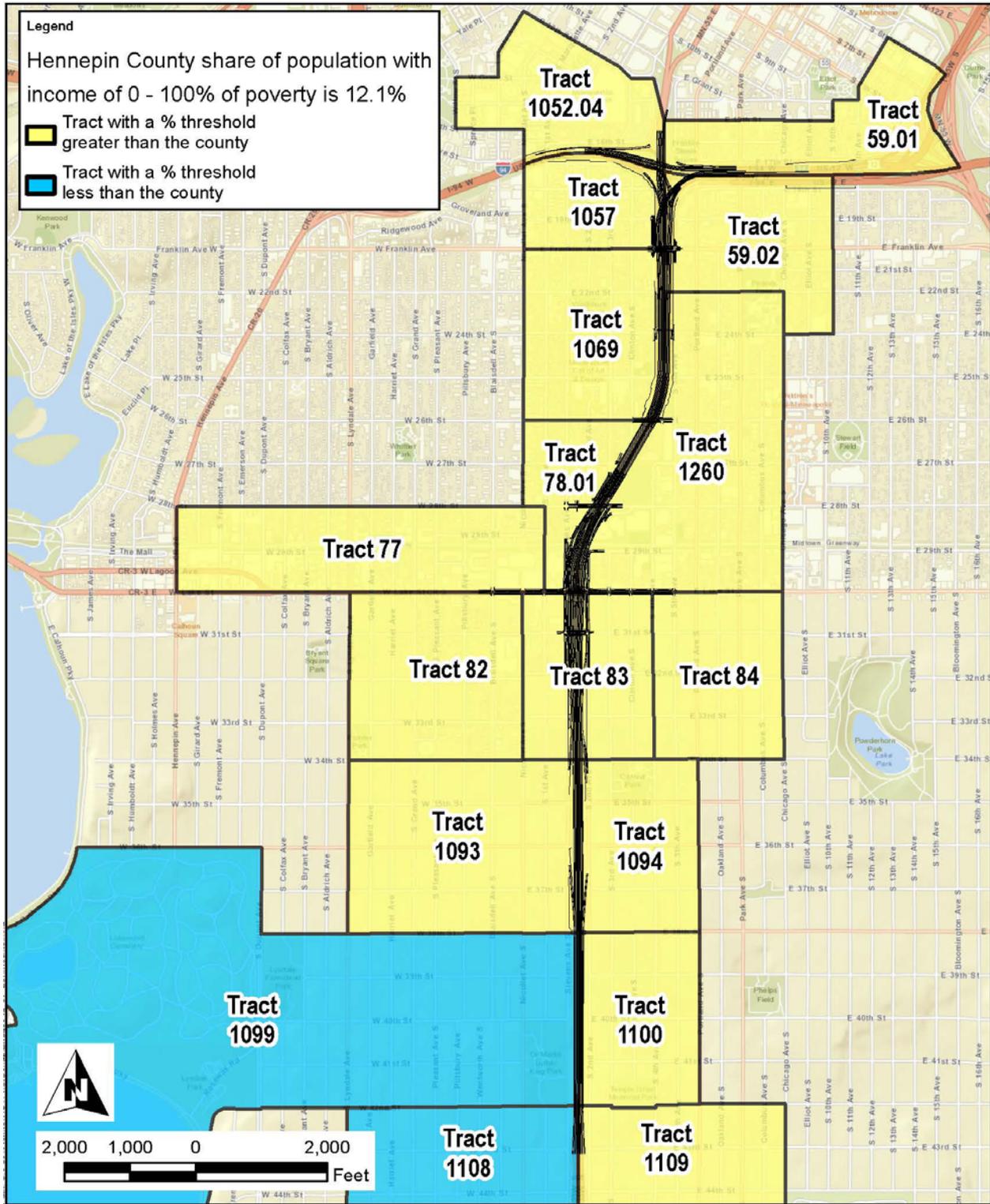
A map locating project-area minority populations and Census block groups is shown in Figure 12. Approximately 77 percent of the project area is comprised of minority populations (see dark green shaded areas on Figure 12).

**Figure 12 – Project Area Map of 2010 Census Blocks: Minority Populations**



A map locating project-area low-income populations and Census tracts is shown in Figure 13. Approximately 88 percent of the project area is comprised of low-income populations (see yellow shaded areas on Figure 13).

**Figure 13 – Project Area Map of 2010 Census Blocks: Low-Income Populations**



Based on the information summarized above, Hennepin County has determined that minority and low-income populations are present within the project area.

The proposed transit station is also located within the South Minneapolis Concentrated Areas of Poverty (CAP). This area consists of 18 contiguous census tracts where more than 50 percent of

residents are people of color and more than 40 percent of residents have incomes less than or equal to 185 percent of the federal poverty line. The area surrounding station has twice as many low-income individuals and three times as many minority individuals as the Metropolitan Council's seven-county region as a whole.

Since business and non-profit organization relocation impacts have been identified for the project, additional efforts were made to supplement census findings.

Krav Maga Minneapolis, a business that provides self-defense training classes, will be displaced by the project. To determine if environmental justice persons or populations exist within this business, Hennepin County sought permission from the building owner to speak directly with the affected business (tenant). While the necessary authorization was not granted for the current phase of project design, a commitment was made for future stages. According to the Krav Maga Minneapolis website<sup>39</sup>, there are two individuals that own and operate this business. For purposes of this EA, it is assumed that some percentage of staff are minority persons. It is also assumed that the business believes they provide services uniquely important to minority or low-income communities.

Good Grocer, a non-profit, member operated grocery store, will also be displaced by the project. The non-profit's mission is to help area residents who are "food insecure." Based on an interview conducted with the founder of Good Grocer in February 2016, it was determined that:

- The grocery store is not minority-owned;
- The grocery store has five paid staff (40 percent of their employees are minority persons); and
- There are over 400 people, with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds mirroring the community, who volunteer<sup>40</sup> their time to assist in the operation of the grocery store.

The founder of Good Grocer also believes that they provide services uniquely important to minority or low-income communities.

Outreach efforts were also made during the preparation of this EA to contact and engage the public, including minority and low-income populations (see Section 6.0 of the EA for a full description of the project's outreach efforts).

### Environmental Justice Analysis

Executive Order 12898 requires that the proposed action be reviewed to determine if there are disproportionately high or adverse effects on these populations. Disproportionate is defined in two ways: the impact is "predominantly borne" by the minority or low-income population group, or the impact is "more severe" than that experienced by non-minority or non-low-income populations.

Next, the potential adverse effects of the proposed project were considered in order to assess whether the effect falls disproportionately on environmental justice populations. Issues that were considered when evaluating the potential for environmental justice impacts, either beneficial or adverse, included social impacts (e.g., community facilities and access), safety and security,

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<sup>39</sup> [www.kravmagampls.com/about-us.html](http://www.kravmagampls.com/about-us.html)

<sup>40</sup> At Good Grocer, a "Member" is anyone who chooses to volunteer at least 2.5 hours once every four weeks in exchange for 25 percent savings on their groceries.

traffic noise, traffic, transit, visual quality, air quality<sup>41</sup>, right-of-way, and short-term construction impacts. The impacts to minority and/or low-income populations and to the general population were evaluated for each of these issues.

### *Social Impacts*

The proposed project is located within existing MnDOT right-of-way, except for 11.6 acres that fall within the construction limits outside MnDOT right-of-way. The project will preserve community cohesiveness by maintaining and improving accessibility to the interstate system, the local road network, transit stops, the Midtown Greenway, and other vital community resources. Discussion of various social impacts in this EA concludes that changes in local and regional access are largely beneficial and do not disproportionately affect low-income or minority populations.

The project will cause the displacement of one business and one non-profit, member operated grocery store. As such, the project has the potential to create job losses through relocations. Job loss impacts could be avoided or minimized by the project partners working with the business or non-profit organization to find a suitable location in which to continue operations. The acquisition and relocation program would be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended. Relocation resources would be available to the relocated business and the non-profit organization without discrimination.

Impacts on employees of each business and non-profit organization displaced by the project would be avoided and mitigated if the business or non-profit organization were to be relocated so that no loss of jobs would occur. To accomplish this, the project partners would work with the affected business or non-profit organization to find a suitable location in which to continue operations. The new location would need to be nearby the current location so that employee commutes would not be substantially affected. Also, any new structures or building/site improvements for the displaced business and non-profit organization would need to be completed prior to relocation so that disruption of business operations would be minimized and no loss of jobs would occur.

The proposed displacements have the potential to disrupt the availability of certain private facilities and services in the community. Within the community, it has been determined that:

- There are seven grocery markets/stores located within one mile of the displaced business.
- There are three self-defense training centers located within one mile of the displaced business.

The potential disruption of private facilities and services in the community accrue to the population in general and do not disproportionately affect low-income or minority populations. The impact of displacing the business and non-profit organization will not be a disproportionately high and adverse effect because (1) there are close-by alternatives and (2) mitigation will include a strong effort to relocate the business and non-profit organization in the community.

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<sup>41</sup> The project includes a set of TDM strategies aimed at reducing the demand for roadway travel. TDM strategies are designed to reduce total travel demand or peak period demand, which may disproportionately contribute to externalities associated with driving, including poor air quality.

### *Safety and Security*

A fully-accessible station and streetscape enhancements will add value to the street and surrounding properties, and improve personal safety and comfort.

### *Traffic Noise Impacts*

EAW Item 17 – Noise, summarizes the anticipated noise impacts of the proposed project. Noise levels were modeled for 1,455 receptors throughout the project area. Of the sites modeled, 715 receptors were identified above the MPCA daytime L<sub>10</sub> standards. The L<sub>10</sub> daytime standard is the noise level used to determine whether noise abatement meets MnDOT's Noise Policy.

The noise analysis examined noise barriers throughout the corridor for all residential areas equally, regardless of whether the area housed low-income or minority populations. Numerous noise barriers were modeled attempting to shield impacted noise receptors throughout the project area. Each modeled noise barrier was examined equally against MnDOT's cost effectiveness threshold of \$43,500; refer to the Traffic Noise Analysis Report in Appendix G for details of each noise barrier calculation.

Based on the traffic noise analysis, MnDOT intends to construct seven new noise barriers as part of the project. As discussed, noise mitigation would result in a reduction of daytime traffic noise levels, bringing them within state standards at 37 of the 211 locations in those neighborhoods where new noise walls are proposed.

Due to the relative close proximity of the receptors to the freeway mainline, the proposed noise barriers are unable to fully mitigate to the low state level thresholds for residential receptors. The exposure to noise in the community accrue to the population in general and do not disproportionately affect low-income or minority populations.

MnDOT policy includes a maximum noise barrier height of 20 feet for all new noise barriers. With a limited height, many receptors behind existing and proposed barriers may still be above state noise level thresholds; as well any receptor not able to be protected by a noise barrier due to not meeting feasibility or reasonableness criteria.

TDM scenarios were considered, however noise barriers were chosen as the most cost-effective noise mitigation measure for this project. One of the primary purposes of the facility is to move people and goods, traffic management measures with restrictions of vehicles types or vehicle speeds would be inconsistent with that primary purpose.

Construction of the Preferred Alternative would result in increased traffic noise levels; however, noise levels would be reduced with installation of the seven new proposed noise barriers. Installation of the barriers will depend upon the outcome of the barrier voting process (noise solicitation process). The noise barriers would bring traffic noise levels into compliance with state standards in most of the modeled locations, so that no disproportionately adverse effects from traffic noise on minority populations or on low-income populations are foreseen.

### *Traffic Impacts*

Traffic impacts are largely beneficial and accrue to the population in general throughout the project corridor. Under the Preferred Alternative, all intersections operate acceptably during both peak hours. All approaches operate at a LOS D or better. New connections to the freeway, southbound exit to Lake Street and northbound exit to 28<sup>th</sup> Street, will enhance local access and bring more people to destinations along the Lake Street corridor and surrounding areas.

The proposed on-street parking impacts and one-way conversions (5<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and Franklin Avenue, and Stevens Avenue between the Midtown Greenway and Lake Street) will not be predominantly borne by minority and/or low-income individuals or will be appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude than the effect that will be experienced by the general population.

### *Transit Impacts*

The project will provide benefits to environmental justice populations with an increase in the level of transit service and improved service reliability, with more frequent service and greater transit capacity for riders. More importantly, the improvements will restore peak-hour transit service to I-35W at Lake Street, which is currently restricted due to the inability to serve the existing stops. Transit access to downtown Minneapolis job opportunities and other job centers along the I-35W corridor will be substantially improved for environmental justice populations. The extension and expansion of MnPASS Lanes will ensure that transit will be a reliable and preferred mode of transportation along the I-35W corridor.

Within a half-mile radius of the proposed multimodal transit station, more than 6,000 residents do not have access to a vehicle, representing 46 percent of residents. Often, areas with lower income and zero-car households use transit more than higher income households or households with one or more autos. The transit station area has the highest residential density of any location along I-35W, at 23 persons per acre. Over 8,000 jobs and 12,000 households are located within a 10-minute walk, or approximately a half-mile, of the proposed multimodal transit station. In terms of affordable housing, the transit station area census tracts contain 30 percent of the County's affordable housing units<sup>42</sup> on three percent of the County's land area. The proposed transit station will greatly increase reliable, frequent transit access to this concentration of affordable housing.

### *Air Quality Impacts*

State of Minnesota air quality standards will be met throughout all segments of the project corridor.

### *Right-of-Way and Relocation Impacts*

The Preferred Alternative will primarily be constructed within existing right-of-way, however, it will cause the displacement of one business and one non-profit, member operated grocery store. These relocations would constitute adverse impacts to environmental justice and non-environmental justice populations. Business relocation avoidance alternatives are described on page 19.

For relocation impacts, the relocation analysis in this EA states that a recent market search conducted in the Lake Street area reveals adequate available replacement resources to accommodate relocation of the displaced business and non-profit organization. Relocating the business and non-profit organization within their existing general vicinity would substantially reduce the impacts of these displacements to environmental justice populations.

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<sup>42</sup> An affordable housing unit is defined by the Metropolitan Council as affordable to a household earning less than or equal to 60 percent of the Area Median Income (regardless of whether it is a rental or ownership unit, and regardless of whether the affordability is naturally occurring or is required due to public subsidies).

Overall, minority and low-income workers at a displaced business/non-profit organization would not experience adverse impacts that would be appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude than non-minority and non-low-income workers at the same business/non-profit organization.

To date, no unique relocation situations are known or anticipated for Krav Maga Minneapolis. Special relocation considerations for Good Grocer include the fact it is a grocery store and it is located on a transit line that provides access to those who may not have automobiles. As the acquisition/relocation process begins, a relocation agent will meet with the business and non-profit organization to identify any such situations. All acquisitions and relocations will be made in compliance with the Uniform Act and special advisory services will be made available.

For the proposed right-of-way impacts, the project partners will continue to convey and explain property rights and potential relocation benefits to the soon-to-be displaced non-profit organization and business.

#### *Short-Term Construction Impacts*

Construction staging will be used to minimize construction impacts to the greatest extent practical. Short-term construction impacts accrue to the population in general throughout the project corridor and do not disproportionately affect low-income or minority populations.

#### Environmental Justice Finding

The purpose of Executive Order 12898 is to identify, address, and avoid disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations. Based on the available data, low-income and/or minority populations are located along the project corridor. The project's robust public engagement efforts (see Section 6.0 of the EA) have provided for the full and fair participation of all members of the community including members of environmental justice populations.

The environmental justice analysis indicates the project impacts are distributed evenly throughout the project corridor and the proposed improvements will provide benefits for all who utilize the I-35W project corridor. Therefore, the proposed action will not have disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects on any minority population or low-income population.

Even with all practicable noise mitigation, some areas will experience daytime noise levels that exceed state standards. As noted, MnDOT proposes noise barriers with consistent heights adjacent to residential areas along the project corridor where noise barriers were found cost effective. Benefited receptors adjacent to the proposed noise barriers currently have an opportunity to reject the noise barriers during the noise barrier public involvement process (e.g., the noise solicitation process). All populations receive equal protection from noise impacts, following MnDOT Noise Policy.

#### *Notifications Made Available to Non-English Speakers*

Hmong, Spanish, and Somali have been identified as the non-English languages commonly spoken in the project area. MnDOT will mail flyers to addresses within roughly 500 feet of I-35W announcing the availability of the EA for review and comment, and the date of the public meeting during the EA comment period. The flyer will be printed with a banner in Spanish, Hmong, and Somali explaining whom to contact for translation assistance, or for general help in understanding the project.

MnDOT has also invited benefited receptors to vote on the proposed noise barriers. The invitations included a banner in Spanish, Hmong, and Somali explaining whom to contact for translation assistance, or for general help in understanding the noise barrier impacts.

Upon request, MnDOT will provide translation assistance for non-English-speaking project-area residents at the EA Public Meeting and at project-related meetings, including any future meeting(s) for noise barrier benefited receptors, and for those who need assistance in understanding the EA document.

## **Section 7 of Endangered Species Act of 1973, as Amended**

MnDOT's Office of Environmental Stewardship (OES), acting as a delegate of the FHWA, was contacted to review the project area for federally-listed endangered, threatened, proposed, candidate species or listed critical habitat. For federally-listed threatened or endangered species, Hennepin County is within the distribution range of the Northern long-eared bat (threatened), Higgins eye pearlymussel (endangered), and Snuffbox (endangered).

This project includes work on several bridges. Tree and vegetation removal within the construction limits will also occur as part of the project. As such, the potential impacts to Northern long-eared bat habitat were reviewed by MnDOT OES. While the proposed bridge and tree removal work is inside the range of the Northern long-eared bat, it was determined that the project area lacks suitable summer habitat due to its location in a high density urban area. No potential impacts to Northern long-eared bat hibernacula are anticipated.

Based on the nature and location of the proposed project, MnDOT's OES has made a determination of no effect, and therefore, the coordination provisions of Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act have been met (see Appendix F for MnDOT's OES correspondence dated December 17, 2015).

## **Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as Amended**

The MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit (MnDOT CRU) is reviewing the project on behalf of the FHWA for impacts to historic properties pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (36 CFR 800), and as per the terms of the 2014 amended Section 106 Federal-Aid Highway Program Programmatic Agreement among the FHWA, the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office (MnHPO), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Under Section 106, historic properties are defined as buildings, structures, districts, sites, landscapes, traditional cultural properties or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The MnDOT CRU initiated Section 106 consultation with the MnHPO in October 2013 and has consulted with the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission and Hennepin County throughout the review. The MnDOT CRU, in consultation with the MnHPO, has defined the project areas of potential effects (APE) for architecture/history and archaeological resources and has completed identification of historic properties within the APE. The following 15 historic properties have been identified within the project APE (see Figures 8 and 9 in Appendix E):

- Stewart Memorial Presbyterian Church (HE-MPC-4358);
- Dunn House (HE-MPC-4378);
- Healy Block Residential Historic District (HE-MPC-4899);

- Chicago, Minneapolis and St. Paul Grade Separation Historic District (Midtown Greenway) (HE-MPC-9959 to -9963);
- Minerva Apartments (HE-MPC-5007);
- W. J. Jennison House (HE-MPC-4234);
- 24<sup>th</sup> Street Commercial Buildings (HE-MPC-4414);
- Washburn-Fair Oaks Heritage Preservation District;
- Hudson Apartments (ME-MPC-5030);
- Apartments at 335-349 18<sup>th</sup> Street East (HE-MPC-5029)/1800-1804 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue South (HE-MPC-4867);
- Clinton Flats (HE-MPC-5028);
- Amos B. Coe House (HE-MPC-4806);
- Stevens Square Historic District (HE-MPC-4965);
- Benjamin S. Bull House (HE-MPC-0424); and
- Apartment Buildings at 1801, 1807 and 1811 Elliot Avenue South (HE-MPC-4085).

The MnDOT CRU has determined, and the MnHPO has concurred, that there are no known archaeological resources within the APE and there are no portions of the APE that have the potential for containing unidentified and historically significant resources (see correspondence in Appendix F).

The MnDOT CRU has assessed adverse effects to historic properties and has determined, and the MnHPO has concurred, that there will be no adverse effects to 14 of the 15 properties. While the MnDOT CRU made a determination that the section of the Chicago, Minneapolis & St. Paul Grade Separation District within the APE is a non-contributing segment of the district due to loss of historic integrity, the MnHPO has requested that the MnDOT CRU defer its final determination of eligibility and assessment of adverse effects for this historic property until the CRU completes a reevaluation of the entire district in conjunction with an unrelated project. Because the reevaluation of the CM&StP Grade Separation District cannot be completed by the time a NEPA decision is required, the MnHPO has agreed with the FHWA that development of a project specific Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (PA) is appropriate pursuant to 36 CFR 800.14(b)(1)(ii). The PA also provides for MnDOT CRU and MnHPO review of final project design in the vicinity of historic properties to ensure the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* are met. A draft of the Section 106 PA is included in Appendix F.

## **Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act of 1966**

The Section 4(f) legislation as established under the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 USC 303, 23 USC 138) provides protection for publicly owned parks, recreation areas, historic sites, wildlife and/or waterfowl refuges from conversion to a transportation use. Parks, parkways, and recreation facilities in the City of Minneapolis are owned and maintained by the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board (MPRB).

To determine whether Section 4(f) applies to the proposed project, Section 4(f) properties must be assessed to determine whether a use of the property is anticipated. The "use" of a protected

Section 4(f) property, as defined in 23 CFR 774.17, occurs when any of the conditions of “Direct Use”<sup>43</sup>, “Constructive Use”<sup>44</sup>, or “Temporary Occupancy”<sup>45</sup> are met.

### Midtown Corridor, Midtown Greenway, and the Historic District

#### *Midtown Corridor*

The Midtown Corridor, owned by the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA), is the former Canadian Pacific/Soo Line rail corridor purchased by the HCRRA in 1993 for the purpose of constructing light rail transit (LRT) or other transportation systems and associated facilities. The corridor is located approximately one block north of Lake Street between France Avenue and Hiawatha Avenue, and approximately three blocks north of Lake Street between Hiawatha Avenue and the Mississippi River. The corridor is approximately 100 feet wide between France Avenue and Hiawatha Avenue. Between Hiawatha Avenue and the Mississippi River, the corridor consists of approximately the southerly 30 feet of the active Canadian Pacific/Soo Line rail corridor. In regard to park and recreational lands, the provisions of Section 4(f) do not apply to the Midtown Corridor because it is designated as a transportation corridor.

The Midtown Corridor also includes a total of forty-five bridges. Historic bridges are protected under Section 4(f) in the event that their existence or historic integrity (the criteria for which they are designated historic) is adversely affected by a transportation project. No adverse effects to any historic bridges have been determined under the project’s Section 106 process.

#### *Midtown Greenway*

The Midtown Greenway, owned by the HCRRA, is approximately the northern one-half of the Midtown Corridor between France and Hiawatha Avenues and the 30 southern feet of the Canadian Pacific/Soo Line rail corridor between Hiawatha Avenue and the Mississippi River, where cycling and walking trails have been installed. The trails are operated and maintained by the City of Minneapolis.

The Midtown Greenway was constructed on HCRRA property under a temporary agreement between the HCRRA and the trail permittee (City of Minneapolis). As documented in the Midtown Greenway’s interim use agreement, HCRRA permitted the trail as a temporary use with the stipulation that it may be used until HCRRA develops the corridor for a LRT system or other permitted transportation use. The authorized temporary occupancy of transportation rights-of-way for recreational trail purposes is not protected under Section 4(f) because the limited use permit includes a standard reversionary clause which generally states that no long-term right is created and that the recreational activity is a temporary one that will cease once completion of the transportation project resumes.

#### *CM&StP Grade Separation District*

The CM&StP Grade Separation District, located within the Midtown Corridor partially shown in Figure 8 in Appendix E, is a 2.8-mile-long transportation district formed by a depressed railroad

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<sup>43</sup> A direct use of a Section 4(f) resource occurs when property is permanently incorporated into a proposed transportation facility.

<sup>44</sup> A constructive use of a Section 4(f) resource occurs when a transportation project does not permanently incorporate land from the resource, but the project’s proximity results in impacts so severe that the protected activities, features, or attributes that qualify the property for protection under Section 4(f) are substantially impaired.

<sup>45</sup> Temporary occupancy results when Section 4(f) property, in whole or in part, is required for project construction-related activities.

trench that follows a straight, linear path from Humboldt Avenue South (on the west end) to Cedar Avenue South, where it then curves northward to meet 28<sup>th</sup> Street East at its eastern terminus. The CM&StP Grade Separation District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005. The historic district is located within the Midtown Corridor and includes the Midtown Greenway.

The defining characteristics of the historic district are the trench edge that delineates the depressed corridor, the bridges and the visual tunnel they create, and the industrial nature of the corridor, including the hard edges of the trench, the track beds, the commercial elevations, and the volunteer foliage.

To a lesser degree, defining characteristics include retaining walls, fencing, lighting, railroad crossing signals, and utility poles.

Section 4(f) applies to those properties that are considered contributing to the eligibility of the historic, as well as any individually eligible property within the district. The MnDOT CRU has made a determination that the segment of the National Register of Historic Places-listed CM&StP Grade Separation District is non-contributing due to loss of historic integrity. The SHPO has requested that the MnDOT CRU defer its final determination of eligibility and assessment of adverse effects for this historic property until after the CRU completes a reevaluation of the entire CM&StP Grade Separation District as part of Phase III of the Local Historic Bridge Study.

If the reevaluation results in no change to the CM&StP Grade Separation Historic District's National Register of Historic Places listing, MnDOT CRU will work with Hennepin County and MnDOT Metro District to ensure that potential direct or indirect adverse effects to the CM&StP Grade Separation District are avoided and that the project is designed in conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (SOI Standards)*, specifically in regard to new construction within, adjacent to, or near historic properties and their environments, and with HCRRA's *2008 Cultural Landscape Management and Treatment Guidelines for the Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul Grade Separation Historic District of the Midtown Corridor, Minneapolis, Minnesota (HCRRA Treatment Guidelines)*.

#### 28<sup>th</sup> Street Tot Lot

The 28<sup>th</sup> Street Tot Lot is located on 28<sup>th</sup> Street directly west of I-35W in the Whittier Neighborhood. The City of Minneapolis leases the tot lot land area from MnDOT. The lease agreement states in part:

*"This Lease shall be subject to cancellation by either party at any time during the term hereof by giving the other party notice in writing at least 30 days prior to the date when the cancellation will become effective. Furthermore, this lease shall be subject to cancellation by the Landlord if the Premises become needed for highway purposes (as determined solely by the Landlord) by giving Tenant notice in writing at 30 days prior to the date when the cancellation will become effective. In the event of cancellation, any unearned rent paid by Tenant will be returned."*

The authorized temporary occupancy of transportation rights-of-way for park purposes is not protected under Section 4(f) because the limited use permit includes a standard reversionary clause which generally states that no long-term right is created and that the park is a temporary one that will cease once completion of the transportation project resumes.

The tot lot will be reduced in size as a result of I-35W off-ramp construction but will be reestablished on the remaining parcel. The transportation-related improvements will be

separated vertically from tot lot users. The MPRB have indicated that they wish to keep the tot lot as an active site after the project. The project will be responsible for site restoration (e.g., earthwork and surface paving) and other defined costs. MPRB will be responsible for replacing the play equipment, which is currently programmed for year 2020, in MPRB's capital improvement program. Prior to committing to a specific park amenity for this area, the MPRB intends to engage the community to determine what would best serve the public's park and recreation needs. In addition to community engagement, future park improvements to this area will require Park Commissioner approval.

#### Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park (4055 Nicollet Avenue South)

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park is a 4(f) property being impacted by the proposed project. The 18.6-acre park is bounded by Nicollet Avenue to the west, I-35W to the east, 40<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street to the south.

The proposed project will replace the 40<sup>th</sup> Street Pedestrian Bridge over I-35W. The proposed alignment and design of the pedestrian trail bridge will require the relocation of an existing trail within the limits of park. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park de minimis 4(f) letter in Appendix F includes a location map which identifies the location of the existing bridge, the proposed location and design of the pedestrian-trail bridge at 40<sup>th</sup> Street, and the impacts to the park with respect to the proposed design of the new pedestrian bridge.

The agreed-upon trail realignment within the park is consistent with the definition of a de minimis impact under Section 4(f) [e.g., it will not adversely affect the features, attributes, or activities qualifying the park for protection under Section 4(f)]. Based on consultation with MPRB staff, a de minimis impact finding to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park is proposed since the impact does not adversely affect the activities, features, and attributes of the park (see the FHWA letter seeking concurrence from the MPRB in Appendix F). The FHWA will make a determination regarding the proposed de minimis finding following the public comment period for the EA (presuming MPRB concurrence is obtained).

#### Franklin Steele Square Park (1600 Portland Avenue South)

Franklin Steele Square Park (1.57 acres) is adjacent to this project, however, the project will not use Section 4(f) lands or properties. The park is located in the northeast quadrant of Highway 65 and I-94.

#### Clinton Field Park (2433 Clinton Avenue South)

Clinton Field Park (1.45 acres) is adjacent to this project, however, the project will not use Section 4(f) lands or properties. The park is located in the northwest quadrant of 25<sup>th</sup> Street E. and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.

### **Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (LWCFA or LAWCON)**

The project has been reviewed for potential Section 6(f) impacts. The project will not cause the conversion of any land acquired, planned, or developed with funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON). Therefore, no Section 6(f) impacts would result from this project.

## Section 404 of the Clean Water Act

The project will not involve placement of fill into waters of the U.S. (defined in 33 CFR 328). As such, the provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act do not apply to the proposed action.

## 6.0 PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The Preferred Alternative has been a collaborative effort between FHWA, MnDOT, Metropolitan Council, Metro Transit, Hennepin County, and the City of Minneapolis. The project's public involvement activities included efforts to engage diverse populations living in the areas that would be served by the project. These activities included presenting information about the project at neighborhood meetings and providing opportunities for the public to participate in the project's alternatives analysis and station-area planning activities. Specific examples of public involvement activities undertaken by the project are:

- Conducting numerous public presentations and discussions with neighborhood<sup>46</sup>, community and civic organizations<sup>47</sup>.
- Holding numerous public open houses and public hearings<sup>48</sup>.
- Conducting general information sessions at neighborhood council meetings.
- Publishing project materials in multiple languages including Hmong, Spanish, and Somali.
- Giving presentations at various meetings with project stakeholders.
- Hennepin County established a Project Management Team (PMT) along with a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) made up of representatives from its partner agencies including the City, Metro Transit, Metropolitan Council, MnDOT, and FHWA. The purpose of the TAC is to provide technical input for the project and assist in the resolution of technical issues. The PMT and TAC met monthly for the duration of the project.
- A Project Advisory Committee (PAC)<sup>49</sup> was established to participate in the overall guidance of the study, discuss proposed alternatives, and make recommendations to the Hennepin County Board and Minneapolis City Council. The PAC is made up of approximately 20 representatives of neighborhoods along the corridor, business associations, civic groups, and nearby major employers.
- A Policy Advisory Group was formed which included the Mayor and several Minneapolis City Council Members, two Hennepin County Commissioners, the MnDOT Metro District Engineer, and the Metro Transit General Manager.

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<sup>46</sup> Neighborhood organization meetings included the Bryant Neighborhood Organization, Central Area Neighborhood Development Organization, Kingfield Neighborhood Organization, Lyndale Neighborhood Organization, Phillips West Neighborhood Organization, Stevens Square Loring Heights Neighborhood Organization, Ventura Village Neighborhood Organization, and Whittier Alliance.

<sup>47</sup> Business and community organization meetings included: Lake Street Council, Midtown Greenway Coalition, Midtown Community Works, Nicollet-Lake Business Association, Phillips Partnership, Chicano Latino Affairs Council, Latino Economic Development Center, African Development Center, and West Bank Community Coalition. Community events included the GoLatino! Event.

<sup>48</sup> Included direct mailings to property owners, businesses and residents immediately adjacent to the corridor (well over 10,000 addresses) and distribution of posters and flyers to businesses and other locations in the project area.

<sup>49</sup> The PAC consisted of: Abbott Northwestern Hospital, Bryant Neighborhood Organization, Central Area Neighborhood Development Organization, Children's Hospitals and Clinics, Commissioner Gail Dorfman appointee, Commissioner Peter McLaughlin appointee, Council Member Elizabeth Glidden appointee, Council Member Robert Lilligren appointee, Council Member Meg Tuthill appointee, K-Mart, Kingfield Neighborhood Association, Lake Street Council, Lyndale Neighborhood Association, Minneapolis Mayor appointee, Midtown Community Works Partnership, Midtown Greenway Coalition, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Nicollet-Lake Business Association, Phillips Partnership, Phillips West Neighborhood Organization, Stevens Square Loring Heights Neighborhood Organization, Ventura Village Neighborhood, Wells Fargo, and Whittier Alliance.

- Coordination with City of Minneapolis Advisory Committees (Pedestrian, Bicycles, Persons with Disabilities).
- Coordination with Metro Transit Police and the Minneapolis Police Department.
- Review of the project layout and profiles with MnDOT's Layout Advisory Committee (LAC).
- A Cost Risk Assessment Value Engineering (CRAVE) study was performed by Hennepin County in cooperation with MnDOT and FHWA in accordance with FHWA and MnDOT guidelines for Federal-aid highway projects on April 15-19, 2013.
- The Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO) coordinates water drainage and quality in the project area. The project consultant team and MnDOT's Metro Water Resources Section staff have met with MWMO staff and will continue to work with them as water treatment and storage plans develop.

Additionally, the project staff made special efforts to publish materials and discuss the project with speakers of languages other than English; Hmong, Spanish, and Somali. These additional outreach activities were specifically intended to engage environmental justice populations.

The project's public involvement efforts for the proposed action also includes:

- Release of the EA/EAW document for public review;
- The Public Meeting on the EA/EAW;
- Meeting for "Benefited Noise Receptors" to discuss the proposed noise barriers and their direct effects on specifically-identified ("benefited") neighborhoods.

The EA/EAW Public Meeting will be held in the winter of 2015, during the public comment period, to discuss the project and mitigation of impacts with the general public and project-area residents.

\*Note: Upon request, MnDOT will provide translation assistance at the EA/EAW Public Meeting and project-related meetings for non-English-speaking project-area residents. A notice of the EA/EAW Public Meeting will be distributed to project area residents, and a notice of the noise barrier information meeting will be sent to those identified as benefited receptors, as the benefited receptors are eligible to vote on installation of the noise barriers. For those identified by MnDOT who may speak a language other than English, most specifically, Hmong, Spanish, or Somali, notices will include a banner in multiple languages that directs the reader to translation assistance.

The project website can be viewed at: [www.35lake.com](http://www.35lake.com).

## **6.1 PERMITS AND APPROVAL REQUIREMENTS**

Permits and approvals that may be required for the proposed project are listed in Table 19.

**Table 19 – Agency Permits and Approvals**

<b>Unit of Government</b>	<b>Type of Approval or Permit</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Federal</b> FHWA  MnDOT CRU on behalf of FHWA MnDOT OES on behalf of FHWA	EA Approval EIS Need Decision Interstate Access Request Section 4(f) De Minimis Determination Section 106 Preliminary Determination ESA Section 7 Determination	Completed To Be Requested To Be Requested Pending Completed Completed
<b>State</b> MnDOT  MPCA  MDH SHPO	Interchange Planning-Level Review EA Approval EAW Approval EIS Need Decision Geometric Layout Approval Construction Plan Approval National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System – Construction Stormwater Phase II Permit Sanitary Sewer Extension and/or Change Noise Exemption Water Main Plan Review (if needed) Section 106 Consultation	Completed Completed Completed To Be Requested To Be Requested To Be Requested To Be Requested  To Be Obtained To Be Applied For To Be Requested Ongoing
<b>Regional</b> Metropolitan Council	Controlled Access Request <sup>1</sup>	To Be Requested
<b>Local</b> Hennepin County City of Minneapolis MPRB Mississippi Watershed Organization	Layout Review Municipal Consent Section 4(f) De Minimis Concurrence Plan Review	To Be Requested To Be Requested Pending To Be Requested

<sup>1</sup> Minnesota state law (MS. 473.166) requires that the Metropolitan Council approve any controlled access highway in the metropolitan area before construction or right-of-way acquisition begins. This is to ensure that proposed highway projects are consistent with regional policies and plans.

## **6.2 PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AND PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE EA**

Comments from the public and agencies affected by this project will be requested during the public comment period described in the transmittal letter distributing this EA/EAW. A combined public information open house/public hearing will be held after this EA/EAW has been distributed to the public and to the required federal, state, and local agencies for their review.

At the public meeting (hearing), preliminary design layouts and the EA/EAW will be available for public review. Information on impacts and mitigation will be displayed. The public will be given the opportunity to express their comments, ideas, and concerns about the proposed project. These comments (oral and written) will be received at the hearing and during the remainder of the comment period (written comments only), and, will become part of the official record.

### **Report Distribution**

Copy(ies) of this document have been sent to agencies, local government units, libraries and others as per Minnesota Rule 4410.1500 (Publication and Distribution of an EAW).

## **Process Beyond The Hearing**

Following the comment period, MnDOT and FHWA will make a determination as to the adequacy of the environmental documentation. If further documentation is necessary, it could be accomplished by preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or by including a clarification in the Findings of Fact and Conclusion, whichever is appropriate.

When the environmental documentation is determined adequate, MnDOT will choose a project alternative, either the No Build or the Preferred Alternative.

If an EIS is not necessary, as currently anticipated, MnDOT will prepare a "Negative Declaration" for the state environmental requirements. MnDOT will also prepare a request for a "Finding of No Significant Impacts" (FONSI) that will be submitted to the FHWA. If the FHWA agrees that this finding is appropriate, it will issue a FONSI.

Notices of the state decision and availability of the above-mentioned documents will be placed in the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (MEQB) Monitor. MnDOT will also distribute future environmental review process documents for this project (e.g. Negative Declaration) to the EA distribution list and parties who submitted written comments on the EA.

