NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR RAIL PROJECT

Environmental Assessment/Draft 4(f) Evaluation
December 22, 2005

Minnesota Department of Transportation
in cooperation with the
Northstar Corridor Development Authority
***the* Metropolitan Council**
and the
Federal Transit Administration

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S.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This federal environmental assessment (EA) document has been prepared under 23 CFR 771.129 and 23 CFR 771.130 by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), the Northstar Corridor Development Authority (NCDA), and the Metropolitan Council of Twin Cities on behalf of the United States Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration to update information found in the *Northstar Corridor Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS and FEIS)*, dated October 2000 and March 2002, respectively, and the *Record of Decision (ROD)*, dated December 2002. This reevaluation document addresses whether there have been significant changes to the proposed action, the affected environment, and the anticipated impacts or the proposed mitigation measures required. If there have been no significant changes in any of these areas, the FEIS document may still be considered valid. However, if there have been significant changes, in any of these areas, then a supplement to the FEIS must be issued, or a new FEIS document shall be prepared.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has the primary responsibility for the Northstar Corridor project. Mn/DOT is the project sponsor and federal grant applicant for the Northstar Corridor Rail project and works in partnership with NCDA and the Metropolitan Council for the construction and operation of the service.

S.1 Purpose and Need

As presented in the DEIS and FEIS, the purpose and need for the Northstar Corridor Rail project is as follows:

Three factors affect the demand for transportation services in the Northstar Corridor:

- Population and employment growth in the corridor counties
- Driver behavior
- Changes in the origin and destination of trips made

The purpose of the Northstar Corridor Rail project is to meet the future transportation needs of the corridor.

- Address the imbalance between travel demand and travel supply
- Address the lack of multimodal transportation choices
- Improve the coordination between transportation investments and land use development
- Address the lack of corridor wide transit services
- Address the lack of non-motorized facilities

Reasons for Proposed Changes to Preferred Alternative

In response to the FTA's guidance on measuring cost-effectiveness, Mn/DOT and the NCDA have worked to redefine the project to enhance the travel time savings for commuters, and to reduce the capital and operating costs by shortening the length of the line (from an 81.8 mile system to a 40.1 mile system) and reducing the number of stations. The result is an efficient and cost-effective project.

In addition, the inclusion of a third mainline from milepost (MP) 15.1 to MP 21.1 (located in the cities of Fridley and Coon Rapids) was specifically defined and required as part of the Capital Improvements Engineering Agreement between the BNSF and the NCDA. Since the DEIS/FEIS, the design and limits of the proposed third mainline have changed to reflect specific capacity

requirements, rail operations, and avoidance/minimization of sensitive resources in proximity to the rail corridor.

S.2 Alternatives

Preferred Alternative Evaluated in FEIS

The preferred alternative described and evaluated in the FEIS and defined in the ROD includes the following system elements (See preferred alternative figure in Appendix A.2):

- Commuter rail service on the existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) rail line, from downtown Minneapolis to a northern terminus at Rice, Minnesota, for a length of 81.8 miles.
- Eleven commuter rail stations at the following locations (from south to north): Downtown Minneapolis, Northeast Minneapolis (7th Street location), Fridley, Coon Rapids-Foley, Coon Rapids-Riverdale, Anoka, Elk River, Big Lake, Becker, St. Cloud, and Rice.
- A vehicle maintenance facility at the Elk River South location.
- A layover facility at Rice.
- A Light Rail Transit (LRT) connection from 3rd Avenue North to 6th Avenue North (including tail tracks) on 5th Street (north side of street), and an LRT station immediately west of 3rd Avenue North. One alternative alignment would end at the platform (with no tail tracks); however, tail tracks were evaluated in the FEIS to disclose impacts of the total length.
  Note: The impact and mitigation measures associated with LRT from 1st Avenue North to 3rd Avenue North were documented in the Hiawatha LRT Reevaluation and ROD.
- All of the proposed track improvements evaluated in the DEIS (retained for the purpose of environmental evaluation); except for the potential triple track from Coon Creek to I-694 (mileposts 20.7 to 15.6) and the potential siding from milepost 20.7 to 18.8. Proposed track improvements potentially could change from those evaluated in the EIS, depending on the outcome of the BNSF negotiations.
- A bus operation plan that will reduce bus service frequencies on existing express service routes that duplicate commuter rail service. Existing bus routes will also be modified to connect to commuter rail stations and service frequencies will be modified to provide strong connections to commuter rail.

An MOS of the preferred alternative for the Northstar Corridor was defined and evaluated in the FEIS. Specifically, the MOS for the corridor was defined as commuter rail service from downtown Minneapolis to the proposed Big Lake station (40.1 mile system). Station locations were proposed at Downtown Minneapolis, Northeast Minneapolis, Fridley, Coon Rapids-Foley, Coon Rapids-Riverdale, Anoka, Elk River, and Big Lake. Under the MOS, a layover facility was proposed at Big Lake, along with a maintenance facility at the Elk River South site. The LRT connection defined for the preferred alternative was the same under the MOS.

Proposed Changes to the Preferred Alternative

Since the issuance of the ROD for the Northstar Corridor (December 2002), Mn/DOT, the NCDA, and the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities have been studying and refining system components of the originally identified preferred alternative. Based on this analysis and designing a system that is cost effective, several changes to the preferred alternative, specifically the MOS, have been identified. A summary of the proposed changes and reasons for the proposed changes is presented herein:

- MOS defined as Downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake (40.1 mile system) with stations at Downtown Minneapolis, Fridley, Coon Rapids-Riverdale, Anoka, Elk River and Big Lake

- Maintenance and layover facility at Big Lake
- Shift location of Big Lake station to the south side of BSNF mainline and to the east of CR 43
- Include third mainline track (from MP's 15.1 to 21.1) on the west (railroad south) side from MP's 15. 1 to MP 16.6, then transitioning to the east (railroad north) side to MP 21.1.
- Light Rail Transit alignment on the south side of 5th Street from 3rd Avenue North to the Intermodal Station
- Minneapolis Intermodal Station located under and north of 5th Street North (shifted approximately 400 feet to the north from location studied in the FEIS).

S.3 Environmental Consequences

The revised preferred alternative has the potential to affect residents, the economy, and the environment of the Northstar Corridor. The potential impacts of the revised preferred alternative, compared to the preferred alternative defined and evaluated in the FEIS and ROD, have been assessed and documented in this EA.

A general summary of each of the areas evaluated, as compared to the preferred alternative defined and evaluated in the FEIS, are presented Section 4.0 of the EA. Table S.1 summarizes the impacts of the revised preferred alternative.

Table S.1 — Summary of Impacts — Revised Preferred Alternative

Attributes	Degree of Impact		
	Not Significant	Possibly Significant	Significant
Social Impacts			
Land Use and Economic Development	X		
Community Facilities and Services	X		
Displacements and Relocations	X		
Archaeological and Historic Resources	X		
Visual and Aesthetic Conditions	X		
Environmental Justice	X		
Safety and Security	X		
Environmental Impacts			
Farmlands	X		
Wetlands		X	
Floodplains	X		
Wild and Scenic Rivers and Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area/MNRRA	X		
Vegetation and Wildlife	X		
Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species	X		
Water Quality and Utilities	X		
Hazardous Waste and Contaminated Materials	X		
Air Quality	X		
Noise and Vibration	X		
Transportation	X		

S.4 Public and Agency Involvement

The ROD for the Northstar Corridor Rail project documents the public involvement activities that took place during the EIS process (see Appendix A-1). The summary of these activities, in compliance with the NEPA process, are herein incorporated by reference.

Representatives of the Northstar Project Office (NPO) has routinely met with counties, cities, and townships in the MOS corridor (downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake) regarding station design specifics. These meetings cover issues that are unique to the station site; including access, land use, and public safety. Mn/DOT and its partners have coordinated with the City of Big Lake regarding the new station location and the maintenance facility. Additionally, they have also worked with the City of Elk River about moving the originally proposed maintenance facility out of Elk River. Both Big Lake and Elk River are supportive of the proposed maintenance facility in Big Lake. As noted in Section 6.0 (4(f) Evaluation), representatives of the NPO have met with the City of Fridley and Anoka County Parks regarding avoiding and /or minimizing impacts to the Rice Creek Regional Trail/Mississippi River Regional Trail and the Springbrook Nature Center.

In compliance with the design review called for in the Northstar Corridor Programmatic Agreement, representatives of the NPO have met with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) regarding design considerations associated with the LRT alignment on 5th Street, the LRT station and the Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal station.

EA Public Review and Comment Period/Public Informational Meetings

The Northstar Corridor Rail Project EA/Draft 4(f) Evaluation will be available for public review and comment on January 2, 2006. The comment period for the EA will run from January 2 to February 16, 2006. During the 45-day review and comment period, Mn/DOT and its partnering agencies will host three open house/public hearings.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Report

This federal environmental assessment (EA) document has been prepared under 23 CFR 771.129 and 23 CFR 771.130 by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), the Northstar Corridor Development Authority (NCDA), and the Metropolitan Council of Twin Cities on behalf of the United States Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration to update information found in the *Northstar Corridor Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS and FEIS)*, dated December 2000 and March 2002, respectively, and the *Record of Decision (ROD)*, dated December 2002. This reevaluation document addresses whether there have been significant changes to the proposed action, the affected environment, and the anticipated impacts or the proposed mitigation measures required. If there have been no significant changes in any of these areas, the FEIS document may still be considered valid. However, if there have been significant changes, in any of these areas, then a supplement to the FEIS must be issued, or a new FEIS document shall be prepared.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has the primary responsibility for the Northstar Corridor project. Mn/DOT is the project sponsor and federal grant applicant for the Northstar Corridor Rail project and works in partnership with NCDA and the Metropolitan Council for the construction and operation of the service. Cooperating agencies identified during the EIS process for the project include: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR), and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MnPCA).

The scope of this reevaluation effort is to report changes compared to the project described in the Northstar FEIS and ROD. The reevaluation contains the following elements:

- Project History
- Purpose and Need
- Alternatives
- Affected Environment
- Environmental Consequences
- Mitigation
- Public and Agency Involvement
- Permits and Approvals

1.2 Proposed Action

As previously stated, should there be no significant changes to the proposed action, affected environment, anticipated impacts or proposed mitigation measures, the FEIS will be considered valid, and the requested FTA action will include the approval of the Revised Northstar Corridor ROD to reflect the changes of the preferred alternative (revised preferred alternative) identified and evaluated in the Northstar Corridor FEIS (March 2002). At the state level, Mn/DOT, as the responsible governmental unit (RGU), will reevaluate the adequacy of the Northstar Corridor FEIS. The Northstar Corridor Revised ROD would reflect the redefined Minimum Operable Segment (MOS) as the preferred alternative for Phase I of the overall 81.8-mile Northstar Corridor Rail project.

1.3 Project History

General Overview of Planning Process

Examination of commuter rail in the Twin Cities began in 1997, with the initiation of the *Twin Cities Commuter Rail Feasibility Study*. The feasibility study was conducted in two phases, with study documents published in January 1998 and January 1999, respectively. The Northstar Corridor was included in this study.

In May 1998, the NCDA undertook a Major Investment Study (MIS) to identify transportation solutions to meet future transportation needs in the Northstar Corridor. This study concluded that commuter rail service in the corridor is feasible, and identified commuter rail as part of the Locally Preferred Transportation Investment Strategy (LPTIS), along with expanded feeder bus services, roadway improvements, river crossings, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) initiatives, and bicycle/pedestrian improvements.

The Northstar Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which evaluated potential transportation alternatives for the Northstar Corridor, was published in October 2000. As a result of actions taken through the Advanced Corridor Planning Process and comments received on the DEIS, a supplemental environmental information document to the DEIS was distributed in January 2001 that evaluated the impacts of a proposed Northeast Minneapolis Station at 7th Street Northeast. Based on the analysis documented in the DEIS, supportive technical reports, and issues raised throughout the study's public involvement process, a preferred alternative was selected and fully described in the FEIS, which was published in March 2002. The commuter rail alternative, with modifications, emerged as the preferred alternative and was carried forward to be evaluated in the FEIS. The FEIS defined and evaluated an MOS of the preferred alternative. The MOS of the preferred alternative reflected a 40.1 mile system from Downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake. A ROD was issued by the FTA in December 2002 for the full system from Downtown Minneapolis to Rice (approximately 81.8 mile system), along with a state environmental adequacy determination issued by Mn/DOT.

Table 1.1 provides a summary of the major Northstar Corridor milestones from 1998 through May 2005.

Table 1.1 — Northstar Project Milestones

Northstar Project Milestone	Date
Alternatives Analysis/MIS Initiated	May 1998
Alternatives Analysis/MIS Completed	March 2000
Draft EIS Completed	October 2000
Supplement to Draft EIS Completed	January 2001
Categorical Exclusion Documents Completed for Big Lake, Elk River and Coon Rapids-Riverdale Commuter Coach Facilities (3 separate documents)	February 2001
Preliminary Engineering Completed	June 2001
Final EIS Completed	March 2002
Record of Decision/Adequacy Determination	December 2002
Preliminary Engineering Validation Report Completed	May 2005

Commuter Bus Service

Following the release of the DEIS, Mn/DOT and the NCDA initiated commuter bus service that demonstrates the viability of the transit service in the Northstar Corridor. Northstar commuter coach is operated by the NCDA. The service is similar to the proposed Northstar commuter rail service. The Northstar commuter bus currently stops at existing park-and-ride lots at the Elk River and Coon Rapids-Riverdale stations and travels to/from the 5th Street transit station in downtown Minneapolis during peak hours. The Northstar commuter bus stations at Big Lake (currently serving as a park and pool lot), Elk River, and Coon Rapids were each evaluated through federal categorical exclusion documents, as they were projects with independent utility. As the projects were under construction or programmed for construction, they were considered part of the no-build alternative in the FEIS.

Preferred Alternative Evaluated in FEIS

The preferred alternative described and evaluated in the FEIS included the following system elements (See preferred alternative figure in Appendix A.2):

- Commuter rail service on the existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) rail line, from downtown Minneapolis to a northern terminus at Rice, Minnesota, for a length of 81.8 miles.
- Eleven commuter rail stations at the following locations (from south to north): Downtown Minneapolis, Northeast Minneapolis (7th Street location), Fridley, Coon Rapids-Foley, Coon Rapids-Riverdale, Anoka, Elk River, Big Lake, Becker, St. Cloud, and Rice.
- A vehicle maintenance facility at the Elk River South location.
- A layover facility at Rice.
- A Light Rail Transit (LRT) connection from 3rd Avenue North to 6th Avenue North (including tail tracks) on 5th Street (north side of street), and an LRT station immediately west of 3rd Avenue North. One alternative alignment would end at the platform (with no tail tracks); however, tail tracks were evaluated in the FEIS to disclose impacts of the total length.

  Note: The impact and mitigation measures associated with LRT from 1st Avenue North to 3rd Avenue North were documented in the Hiawatha LRT Reevaluation and ROD.
- All of the proposed track improvements evaluated in the DEIS (retained for the purpose of environmental evaluation); except for the potential triple track from Coon Creek to I-694 (mileposts 20.7 to 15.6) and the potential siding from milepost 20.7 to 18.8. Proposed track improvements potentially could change from those evaluated in the EIS, depending on the outcome of the BNSF negotiations.
- A bus operation plan that will reduce bus service frequencies on existing express service routes that duplicate commuter rail service. Existing bus routes will also be modified to connect to commuter rail stations and service frequencies will be modified to provide strong connections to commuter rail.

An MOS of the preferred alternative for the Northstar Corridor was defined and evaluated in the FEIS. Specifically, the MOS for the corridor was defined as commuter rail service from downtown Minneapolis to the proposed Big Lake station (40.1 mile system). Station locations were proposed at Downtown Minneapolis, Northeast Minneapolis, Fridley, Coon Rapids-Foley, Coon Rapids-Riverdale, Anoka, Elk River, and Big Lake. Under the MOS, a layover facility was proposed at Big Lake, along with a maintenance facility at the Elk River South site. The LRT connection defined for the preferred alternative was the same under the MOS.

Proposed Changes to the Preferred Alternative

Since the issuance of the ROD for the Northstar Corridor (December 2002), Mn/DOT, the NCDA, and the Metropolitan Council have been studying and refining system components of the originally identified preferred alternative. Based on this analysis and designing a system that is cost effective, several changes to the preferred alternative, specifically the MOS, have been identified. A summary of the proposed changes and reasons for the proposed changes are presented in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 — Summary of Proposed Northstar Corridor Changes Since the FEIS

Proposed Change	Primary Reason for Change	Impact Evaluation	Comments*
Minimum Operable Segment (MOS), Downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake (40.1 miles) Stations at: Downtown Minneapolis, Fridley, Coon Rapids-Riverdale, Anoka, Elk River, and Big Lake	Funding availability, transportation system user benefits, ridership, and improved cost effectiveness	FEIS evaluated MOS of the preferred alternative from downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake (layover facility at Big Lake). Stations at: Downtown Minneapolis, Northeast Minneapolis, Fridley, Coon-Rapids-Riverdale, Coon Rapids-Foley, Anoka, Elk River, and Big Lake Maintenance facility at Elk River south site	Northeast Minneapolis and Coon Rapids-Foley stations have been removed from MOS. As noted below, maintenance facility is now proposed at Big Lake.
Defer construction of Northeast Minneapolis and Coon Rapids-Foley stations (not included in revised MOS)	Funding availability, improved cost effectiveness	DEIS and FEIS evaluated both stations.	
Maintenance Facility at Big Lake	Avoids deadheading trains from Elk River South to the end of the line at Big Lake Increases service to the end of the line Provides greater transportation system user benefits to the system Improved cost effectiveness Avoids cost of separate layover facility at the end of the line	DEIS evaluated a maintenance facility at Big Lake (approximately 18 acres in size).	
Shift location of Big Lake Station to the south side of BNSF mainline and the east of CR 43	Eliminates grade crossing with the BNSF mainline (safety improvement) Allows for shorter station track lead that would not cross CR 43 Accommodates expansion of parking	DEIS evaluated an 18-acre maintenance facility in Big Lake (within the proposed footprint for the station/ maintenance facility). DEIS/FEIS evaluated a Big Lake station on the north side of the BNSF mainline and west of CR 43.	With the combination of the maintenance/layover facility (including access road) and station on the south side of the BNSF mainline/east of CR 43, the proposed overall site is approximately 37.5 acres.

Continued

Proposed Change	Primary Reason for Change	Impact Evaluation	Comments*
Third Mainline Track (MP's 15.1 to 21.1) on the west (railroad south) side from MP 15.1 to the MP 16.6 then transitioning to the east (railroad north) side to MP 21.1.	Rail Passenger Capital Improvements Engineering Agreement approved by BNSF. Agreement requires the inclusion of a third mainline from MP 15.1 to 21.1 Shift in alignment of Third Main to the east (railroad north) side to reduce potential noise impacts, and avoid/minimize right-of-way, floodplain, wetland and 4(f)/6(f) impacts.	DEIS evaluated the impact of a Third Mainline from MP 15.6 to 20.7, plus a proposed siding from MP 18.8 to 20.7. Third Mainline proposed on the west (railroad south side) of the existing BNSF mainline tracks, with the siding on the east (railroad north side). Third mainline and siding were not included in the Preferred Alternative defined and evaluated in the FEIS/ROD.	ROD states that: "Proposed track improvements potentially could change from those evaluated in the EIS, depending on the outcome of the negotiations with BNSF."
Light Rail Transit Alignment on the south side of 5th Street	Avoids dead-ending 5th Avenue North Maintains roadway connectivity to nearby residential development Improves vehicle circulation Minimizes effects on historic structures on north side of 5th Street	ROD states that the vehicle circulation and possibility of locating LRT tracks on south side of 5th Street North will be studied to improve vehicle circulation and mobility.	
Minneapolis Intermodal Station located under and north of 5th Street North	Proposed land redevelopment in vicinity Reduced need for two points of vertical circulation	FEIS evaluated station between 5th Street North and 7th Street North, with vertical circulation at both streets.	

* Northstar Corridor FEIS/Final 4(f) Evaluation incorporated by reference the findings of the Northstar Corridor DEIS/Draft (f) Evaluation.

As the design has progressed on the other components of the proposed Northstar Corridor Rail project, modifications to the stations and the track alignment have taken place to minimize potential impacts, provide the most efficient transportation system, and meet the needs of the local communities as well as local, regional, state, and federal requirements. Design modifications include such elements as shifting the Fridley station platform approximately 200 feet to the north (from the location defined in the FEIS), shifting the pedestrian overpass at the Coon Rapids station, realigning access points into stations to improve vehicular circulation, and reconfiguring the proposed stormwater detention pond at the Anoka station to minimize impacts to the Rum River scenic easement. Design modifications and their associated impacts will be evaluated in this EA, as appropriate

The FEIS evaluated a proposed park-and-ride facility at the Anoka Station to accommodate approximately 260 parking spaces. As reflected in Figure 3.5, the Northstar Project has identified and evaluated a station platform and required stormwater detention pond at the project site. The City of Anoka is currently taking the lead in the development of a park-and-ride facility at this location. The Northstar Project would be a funding partner for the proposed parking structure near the station site. Figure 3.5 outlines the approximate boundary of the parking facility proposed by the City of Anoka. In an effort to disclose potential impacts, the EA reflects updated information on the project area, where appropriate. If the project definition changes substantially

from what was proposed and evaluated in the FEIS and in this EA, the City of Anoka will work with the appropriate agencies in the preparation of required environmental documentation. Appendix A-1 includes a City of Anoka resolution regarding the project. The proposed parking structure is part of an overall City lead commuter rail transit village (CRTV).

As noted in Table 1.2, the DEIS evaluated an 18-acre maintenance facility site in Big Lake. The Elk River South site was identified as the preferred maintenance facility location in the FEIS. Based on the efficiency factors reflected in the "primary reason for change" column of the table, the revised preferred location for the maintenance facility is at Big Lake. As presented in the farmland, threatened and endangered species and water quality/utilities sections of this EA, no significant impacts to these resources would result from locating the facility in Big Lake. More specifically, the Loggerhead Shrike nesting areas (Becker area and between Clear Lake and St. Cloud), referenced in the DEIS are not within the Big Lake facility boundaries and were not identified in either the state or federal database review conducted for the EA. The farmland analysis also indicated that the proposed revised preferred alternative would not impact prime, unique or locally important soils. Both the Elk River South and Big Lake maintenance facility locations would be located on currently undeveloped land. The Elk River South site would have impacted research plots on Cargill property. In terms of existing utilities, both the Elk River and Big Lake sites would be served by utilities from adjacent roadways (approximately same distance to extend). The Elk River South site also required a lift station. The water quality/utility section of the EA summarizes the current and future utility services required for the Big Lake Maintenance facility.

2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

2.1 Purpose and Need

As presented in the DEIS and FEIS, the purpose and need for the Northstar Corridor Rail project is as follows:

Need for Transportation Improvements

Three factors affect the demand for transportation services in the Northstar Corridor:

- Population and employment growth in the corridor counties
- Driver behavior
- Changes in the origin and destination of trips made

The purpose of the Northstar Corridor Rail project is to meet the future transportation needs of the corridor. The following section summarizes the specific components of the project purpose in response to identified transportation needs:

- Address the imbalance between travel demand and travel supply
- Address the lack of multimodal transportation choices
- Improve the coordination between transportation investments and land use development
- Address the lack of corridor wide transit services
- Address the lack of non-motorized facilities

Goals of the Northstar Corridor Rail Project

The following goals have been established for the project:

- Improve mobility and safety within the corridor
- Minimize adverse environmental impacts and foster positive environmental excellence
- Encourage transportation-supportive land use development patterns
- Provide a cost-effective and efficient transportation system

The Northstar Corridor Rail project objective is to transport commuters to work in downtown Minneapolis, in a safe, fast, and reliable manner.

Benefits of Northstar Corridor Project

This project provides a cost-effective way of adding capacity to the transportation system, while successfully avoiding the highway chokepoints that include and surround downtown Minneapolis. The proposed commuter rail line serves downtown Minneapolis, terminating at the proposed Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal station, with a convenient connection to the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit (LRT). The cost of improving TH 10 between Big Lake and Blaine/I-35W is estimated at $570 million (2007 dollars). In addition, those improvements do not address the congested entry points to downtown Minneapolis.

The connection of Northstar Commuter Rail to the Hiawatha LRT will provide a seamless connection from the Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal station through the core of the downtown to the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and continue to the Mall of America. These represent some of the largest trip generators in the Twin Cities area.

Two other characteristics of the Northstar Corridor that will contribute to the success of the commuter rail project include:

1. The transit-oriented development (TOD) already occurring in the corridor in the anticipation of Northstar Corridor project, and
2. The strong business, government, and citizen support for the project.

Reasons for Proposed Changes to Preferred Alternative

In response to the FTA's guidance on measuring cost-effectiveness, Mn/DOT and the NCDA have worked to redefine the project to enhance the travel time savings for commuters, and to reduce the capital and operating costs by shortening the length of the line (from and 81.8 mile system to a 40.1 mile system) and reducing the number of stations. The result is an efficient and cost-effective project. This redefined project is supported by the Governor, Mn/DOT, the Metropolitan Council, and the NCDA.

In addition, as noted in Table 1.2, the inclusion of a third mainline from MP 15.1 to MP 21.1 was specifically defined and required as part of the Capital Improvements Engineering Agreement between the BNSF and the NCDA. Since the DEIS/FEIS, the design and limits of the proposed third mainline have changed to reflect specific capacity requirements, rail operations, and avoidance/minimization of sensitive resources in proximity to the rail corridor.

6.0 DRAFT SECTION 4(F) EVALUATION

6.1 Introduction

Section 4(f)

Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Act of 1966 prohibits the use of land from publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife or waterfowl refuges, or historic sites for any federally funded transportation program, unless it is determined that:

- There is no feasible and prudent alternative to using such land; and
- The project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the land resulting from its use. The word "use" refers to taking or acquiring of land or property for construction of a permanent transportation facility, or if not taken or acquired, the substantial impairment of the land or property for its intended purpose as a publicly owned park, recreation area, refuge, or historic site.

Methodologies and Assumptions

Project History

The Mn/DOT statewide Geographic Information System (GIS) database, the MnDNR Public Recreation Information Maps (PRIM), on-site field review, and consultation with appropriate municipal and county representatives were used to identify public lands within the Northstar Corridor.

Three sites within the Northstar Corridor were identified in the DEIS/Section 4(f)/6(f) evaluation based on this review. The Springbrook Nature Center and Rice Creek West Regional Trail are both located in the City of Fridley. Phase 3 of the Cedar Lake Trail, a proposed extension, would be located in downtown Minneapolis, adjacent to the BNSF railroad tracks. The appropriate agencies were contacted to determinate if the potentially impacted trails/nature center would have either a 4(f) or 6(f) designation.

As stated in *Section 2.4-3* of the FEIS, the potential track capacity improvements from MP 15.5 to 20.7, included under the commuter rail alternative in the DEIS/Section 4(f)/6(f) evaluation were not included in the preferred alternative defined and evaluated in the FEIS. With the removal of the track improvement in this area (from the FEIS), the previously documented impacts to the Springbrook Nature Center and Rice Creek West Regional Trail were avoided, and were therefore not included in the Final 4(f)/6(f) evaluation included as a separate section of the FEIS. The 4(f) evaluation included as a separate section of the FEIS was limited to the Proposed Cedar Lake Trail – Phase 3.

As documented in the 4(f)/6(f) evaluation of the FEIS *(Section 8.3.1),* the proposed stormwater pond at the Anoka station site was located within a scenic easement for the Rum River. As the stormwater pond is identified as a permitted action within the scenic easement, it was not considered a 4(f) resource.

With regards to historic sites, SHPO has concurred that with the implementation of the guidelines set forth in the Northstar programmatic agreement, the project will not adversely affect historic sites listed or eligible for listing on the NRHP.

Revised Preferred Alternative

Since the completion of the FEIS/Final 4(f)/6(f) evaluation, additional information regarding the right-of-way boundaries of the BNSF and the Springbrook Nature Center has been identified. Additionally, the proposed track improvements in the vicinity of the Nature Center are limited to a third mainline. The original track improvements studied in the DEIS included a third mainline and siding through this area. Based on the design of the third mainline through this area, there will not be encroachment into the Springbrook Nature Center facility. Representatives of Mn/DOT and its partners have coordinated with the Springbrook Nature Center staff and the City of Fridley to confirm the right-of-way boundary information and potential impacts. By avoiding impacts to the Springbrook Nature Center, the revised preferred alternative would not impact any 6(f) resources.

With regards to the Proposed Cedar Lake Trail – Phase 3, the City of Minneapolis has not moved forward with the construction of the proposed trail in the downtown area. At this time, no land has been purchased or set aside for the proposed trail. Hence, it is not considered a 4(f) use at this point. Representatives of Mn/DOT and its partners have been in close coordination with the City of Minneapolis regarding design alternatives to accommodate the proposed trail near the Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal station.

This 4(f) evaluation is limited to the impacts to the Rice Creek Regional Trail in the City of Fridley. Under the revised preferred alternative, there would not be any impacts to 6(f) resources.

6.2 Section 4(f) Evaluation

Public Lands

Site Description:

The Rice Creek West Regional Trail is located in the City of Fridley, crossing under the BNSF railroad tracks where Rice Creek enters Locke Lake, and heads south adjacent and parallel to the east side of the railroad tracks. The Rice Creek Regional Trail continues north, on the east side of the BNSF tracks, until it reaches the Fridley Community Park, where it heads east through the park. South of the Rice Creek/Locke Lake crossing, the trail, referenced as the Mississippi River Regional Trail, parallels the west side of the tracks, and crosses over Mississippi Street Northeast on a newly constructed pedestrian/bikeway structure adjacent to the BNSF bridges. It continues on the west side of the railroad tracks until 61st Street, where it heads west crossing East River Road (See Figure 6.1).

Activities and Use:

The Rice Creek West Regional Trail/Mississippi River Regional Trail is a paved bikeway/pedestrian trail. Based on 2004 statistics compiled by the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities, the Anoka County portion of the Rice Creek Regional trail documented 393,900 uses, and the Mississippi River Regional trail documented 134,200 uses.

Relationship to Similar Adjacent Lands:

The Rice Creek West Regional Trail connects with the Mississippi Rive Regional Trail that combines regional and local trails and facilities. This trail offers linkage from Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park through the cities of Coon Rapids, Fridley, and Columbia Heights, into Minneapolis.

Access:

Access points to the trail are all along the bikeway/pedestrian trail.

Ownership/Clauses:

The trail was constructed by the Anoka County Department of Parks and Recreation with funding from the Metropolitan Council. The Department has an agreement with the BNSF to lease the land in the vicinity of the potential track improvements (see agreement between Anoka County Department of Parks and Recreation following the text and figures in this section).

Unusual Site Features:

There are no unusual site features.

Location and Amount of Taking:

Potential track improvements under the revised preferred alternative include adding a third mainline on the east side (railroad north) of the existing tracks between MPs 16.6 and 21.1 (within the cities of Fridley and Coon Rapids). A portion of this new track will have temporary right-of-way impacts to the Rice Creek Regional Trail during the construction of the new bridge over Rice Creek/Locke Lake. The potential impacts would be within a section of the trail where an existing lease agreement between the BNSF and Anoka County is in place. Specifically, up to 350 feet of trail would be temporarily closed to allow for construction of the new bridge to accommodate the third main, and construction staging/access (See Figure 6.2). It is anticipated that based on the required construction activities in this location, the trail would be closed in this area for up to 8 weeks. During construction, the trail crossing under the existing BNSF bridges will be closed. Based on the location of the trail in relation to the existing BNSF tracks, including the existing BNSF bridges over Rice Creek/Locke Lake, along with the area required to accommodate construction of the third mainline (including new bridge over Rice Creek/Locke Lake), there are no feasible or prudent alternatives to the temporary closure of the trail in this area. Upon completion of construction, the trail would be reopened.

Alternatives Including Proposed Action and Avoidance Alternatives and Their Impacts

As stated in the methodology section, the proposed third mainline track improvement was eliminated from the DEIS to the FEIS phase of the project. Since the approval of the FEIS, the BNSF has entered into a Capacity Improvements Engineering Agreement with the NCDA that specifically calls for the inclusion of a third mainline from MP 15.1 to 21.1 to provide adequate track capacity for safe and effective rail operations.

The original third mainline alignment was located on the west side (railroad south) of the existing mainline. As presented in the DEIS/Draft 4(f)/6(f) evaluation, a third mainline alignment on the west side (railroad south) would permanently impact up to 540 feet of the trail, all of which is on leased land from the BNSF. The trail was proposed to be relocated onto Rice Creek Way and Ashton Avenue, returning to the existing bike/pedestrian path through the City Park, to maintain continuity with the new bike/pedestrian crossing over Mississippi Street Northeast.

In an effort to avoid permanent impacts to the trail, representatives of Mn/DOT and its partners have worked with the BNSF to develop the proposed third mainline alignment on the east (railroad north) side of the existing mainline. Locating the third main in the area avoids any direct impacts to the Rice Creek Regional Trail, while providing safe and efficient train operations through this area.

Measures to Minimize Harm

As noted above, the impacts to the trail would be temporary in nature, limited to an eight-week construction period. Measures to minimize disruption could include staging construction during low-use periods on the trail. Based on consultation with the Anoka County Parks, during the construction period, trail closure signs will be posted in the Community Park of Fridley (along the trail), and to the south at the Locke Park entrance point of the trail. Trail users to the south (near Locke Park) will be directed onto East River Road (existing trail route). Based on surrounding land uses and conditions on the east side of the trail, a detour to access the west side of the trail is not considered feasible. Hence, the trail closures signs would be posted over a quarter of a mile away from the actual closure site. In effort to provide adequate trail closure information to facility users, advance "closure signs" will also be posted at the following trail locations (see Figure 6.3):

- Trail crossing at University Avenue (east of trail closure)
- Mississippi Street Northeast bridge crossing (south of trail closure)
- East River Road (multiple locations to the north and east of trail closure)

Mn/DOT and its project partners will also work closely with the Anoka County Parks department regarding the issuance of timely and informative press releases regarding upcoming trail closures associated with construction of the Northstar Corridor Rail project in this area.

Coordination

Mn/DOT and other representatives from the NPO have met on an ongoing basis with representatives from the City of Fridley and the Anoka County Parks Department regarding potential impacts to the trail. As noted above, the measures to minimize harm have been developed in consultation with the Anoka County Parks department.

5.0 PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT/PERMITS AND APPROVALS

The ROD for the Northstar Corridor Rail project documents the public involvement activities that took place during the EIS process (see Appendix A-1). The summary of these activities, in compliance with the NEPA process, are herein incorporated by reference. An overall summary of Northstar Corridor project public involvement activities is summarized below.

The public information tools used throughout the project development process include the following:

Project Updates

The *Northstar Update* is published on a regular basis and sent to over 10,000 households that have requested a copy. The mail list includes residents, businesses, and elected officials inside and outside the corridor. It highlights key events and activities and helps to keep people informed about the Northstar Corridor Rail project and the actions taken by the NCDA. It also provides a source for representatives to use as a briefing to take to their local jurisdictions.

Corridor wide Mailings

The Northstar corridor has over 300,000 residents who receive the corridorwide mailings. These mailings have updated information about the Northstar Corridor Rail project, including cost, number of stations, and focus areas relevant to a specific time period.

Fact Sheets/Information Kits

Fact sheets and information kits provide basic information about the Northstar Corridor Rail project, including: route, station, ridership, timeline, funding, rail cars, and contact information. They are routinely updated and handed out at meetings, open houses, presentations, and workshops.

Web Site

The Northstar Corridor Rail project web site was established in 1998, and has been an efficient and effective way to communicate information about the project. The web site posts information about the corridor, a route map, answers to frequently asked questions, a selection of public comments about the Northstar Corridor Rail project, and updates on project news and events. There is an e-mail address on the site that allows users to contact a staff person directly for responses to their questions. The web site address is www.Mn-GetOnBoard.com.

Presentations

Hundreds of presentations geared toward specific audiences using PowerPoint have been given. These presentations have assisted in 20 different Chambers of Commerce passing resolutions regarding the project.

Information Booths

The NCDA co-hosted an information booth with the Hiawatha LRT project at the state fair in 2002. Since 2001, the NCDA has hosted information booths at fairs in counties located in and adjacent to the Northstar Corridor. The NCDA also has hosted information booths at many conferences and public gatherings since 2001.

Community Action Groups

Private citizens have formed five volunteer advocacy groups. These groups write letters to the editor, speak at community events, attend special events, and act as media spokespeople.

Surveys

The NCDA has conducted four surveys of Northstar Corridor residents. The most recent statewide survey was conducted in February 2004. The purpose of the survey was to gauge opinions on the state's transportation system, options for addressing transportation challenges, and monitoring support for Northstar Corridor Rail project. The corridor surveys also monitored support, evaluated the effectiveness of the NCDA's public information program and gathered information for system planning purposes. The results of the survey show strong support for the Northstar Corridor Rail project.

Agency Coordination

Representatives of the Northstar Project Office (NPO) has routinely met with counties, cities, and townships in the MOS corridor (downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake) regarding station design specifics. These meetings cover issues that are unique to the station site; including access, land use, and public safety. Mn/DOT and its partners have coordinated with the City of Big Lake regarding the new station location and the maintenance facility. Additionally, they have also worked with the City of Elk River about moving the originally proposed maintenance facility out of Elk River. Both Big Lake and Elk River are supportive of the proposed maintenance facility in Big Lake. As noted in Section 6.0 (4(f) Evaluation), representatives of the NPO have met with the City of Fridley and Anoka Parks regarding avoiding and /or minimizing impacts to the Rice Creek Regional Trail/Mississippi River Regional Trail and the Springbrook Nature Center.

In compliance with the design review called for in the Northstar Corridor Programmatic Agreement, representatives of the NPO have met with the Minnesota SHPO and the Minneapolis HPC regarding design considerations associated with the LRT alignment on 5th Street, the LRT station and the Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal station.

Permits and approvals for the project are listed in Table 5.1. To facilitate identification of anticipated permit action, the known permits that would be required are italicized below.

Table 5.1 — Agency Approvals and Permits

Government Agency	Type of Review, Approval, or Permit
Federal	
Federal Transit Administration	Revised Record of Decision Section 4(f)
Department of Interior	Section 4(f)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	*Section 404 Permit*
State	
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	*Work in Protected Waters Permit*
	Design Approval of Stormwater Pond Easement
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	401 Water Quality Certification
	NPDES Permit
	Response Action Plan (to be determined)
State Historic Preservation Office	Design Review Defined in Section 106 Programmatic Agreement
Minnesota Department of Transportation	State Environmental Determination on the Adequacy of the FEIS
	Design Review Defined in Section 106 Programmatic Agreement
	Wetland Conservation Act LGU Authority
Minnesota Department of Health	Abandonment/Capping of Existing Wells

Continued

Government Agency	Type of Review, Approval, or Permit
Local	
Cities in Corridor	*Land alteration permits for grading and site activities*
	Utility Permits
	Design Review Defined in Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (City of Minneapolis HPC)
	Erosion Control Plan
	Station Area Site Plan Review
	Plat Approval for Station Parcels/Maintenance Facility
	Easement/ROW Vacation Approval
	Utility Plan Reviews

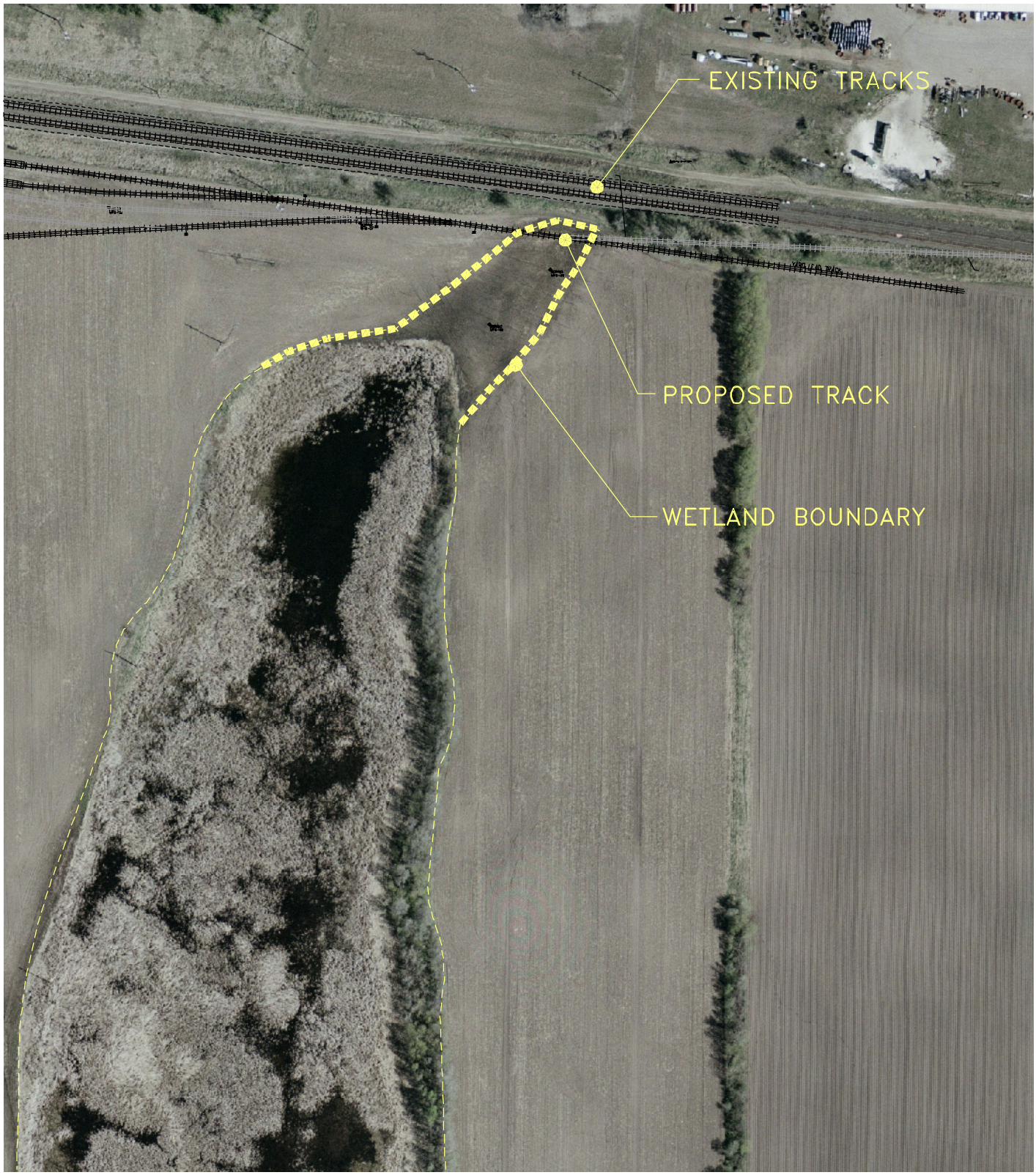
EA Public Review and Comment Period/Public Informational Meetings

The Northstar Corridor Rail Project EA/Draft 4(f) Evaluation will be available for public review and comment on January 2, 2006. The comment period for the EA will run from January 2 to February 16, 2006. During the 45-day review and comment period, Mn/DOT and its partnering agencies will host open house/public hearings as presented below:

January 25, 2006
5:30 PM Open House/7:00 PM Presentation/Comments
Coon Rapids Civic Center, Room B
1155 Robinson Drive
Coon Rapids

January 26, 2006
5:00 PM Open House/6:30 PM Presentation/Comments
Heywood Facility
560 Sixth Avenue North
Minneapolis

January 30, 2006
6:00 PM Open House/7:30 PM Presentation/Comments
Big Lake High School Cafeteria
501 Minnesota Avenue
Big Lake



NORTH

0 75 150 300

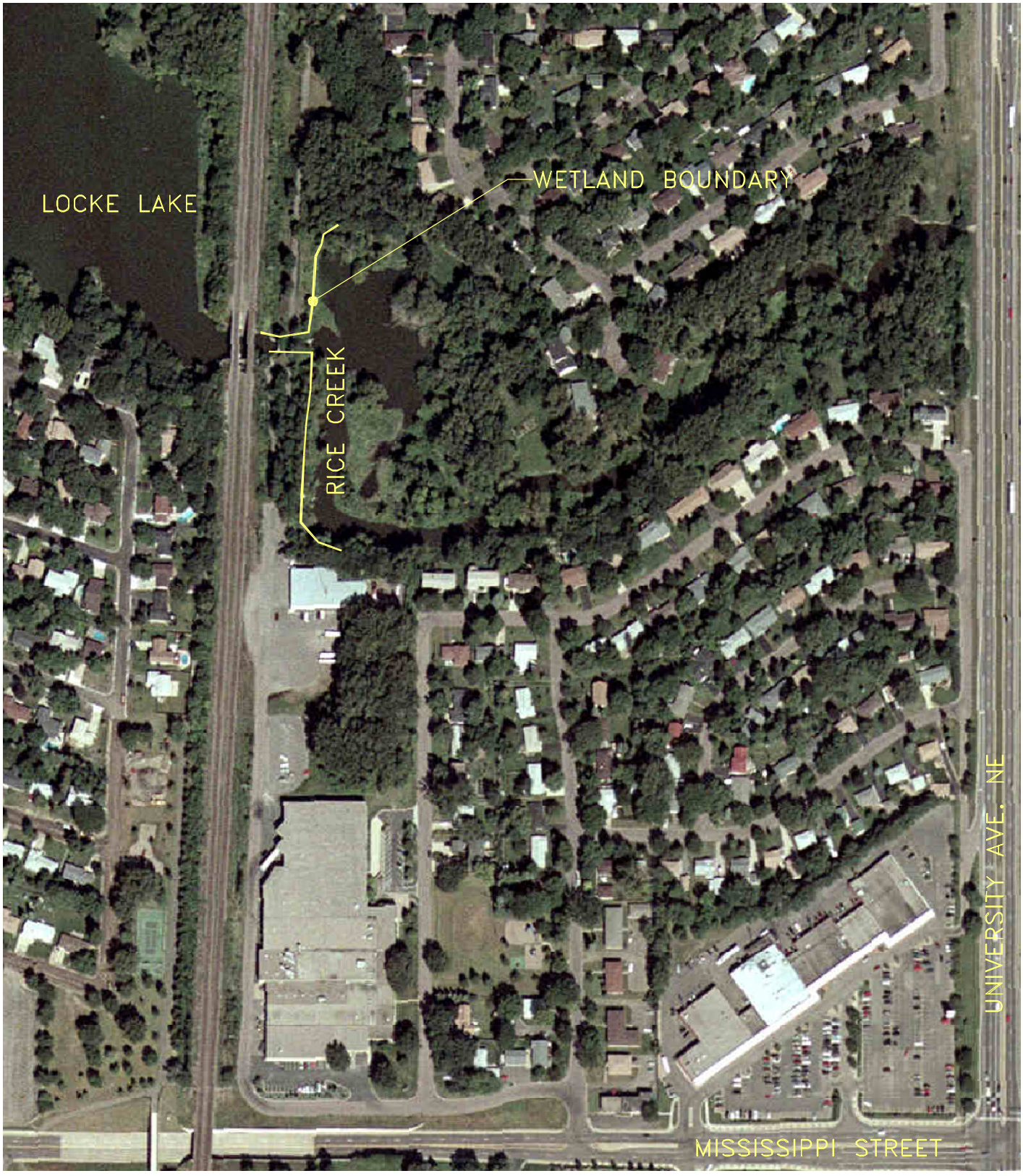
SCALE IN FEET

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FIGURE 4.1

WETLAND #19 BIG LAKE MAINTENANCE FACILITY AREA



NORTH

0 75 150 300
SCALE IN FEET

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FIGURE 4.2

WETLAND #17 (EAST OF TRACKS)

SUPPLEMENTAL DELINEATION AT RICE CREEK

TOD adjacent to the proposed Northstar commuter rail stations is already occurring and gaining momentum. Station area TOD plans range from medium to high density residential units above street level retail, to town homes and senior housing, as well as to commercial office space and include structured parking areas. The cities of Anoka and Elk River have adopted development plans for the Commuter Rail Transit Village and the Elk River station respectively, which include all of these components. The cities of Fridley and Coon Rapids have each developed three different plans that include various combinations of these components and are currently in the process of evaluating options. Proposed plans for land adjacent to the Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal station include either a 1,000 condominium development alongside a professional baseball stadium, or a primarily residential project with 3,000 condominiums and no stadium. Appendix A.1 provides a summary of mix-use developments that are recently completed, under construction or proposed. TOD is occurring around the proposed station sites in response to market demand.

Each station area in the Northstar Corridor has unique character, displaying a wide range of cultural activities, office development, housing development, retail businesses, educational institutions, industrial employment, transit use, and parking.

A summary of station area planning activities for each of the stations included in the MOS is described in the following sections. This information is considered an update to the land use/economic development information presented in the DEIS and FEIS documents.

The area around the six stations is zoned for medium and high-density residential housing and office/retail. All six cities have a planned unit-zoning district, which would allow them to accomplish any and all transit supportive features.

Downtown Minneapolis

Master plans adopted by Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis include plans for mixed-use development, including high-density residential within a half-mile of the Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal station. Both entities also support a proposal for a Minnesota Twins ballpark adjacent to the downtown station site. Hennepin County is in the process of conducting an intermodal study to develop transit station design concepts in downtown Minneapolis that preserve long-term opportunities to accommodate expanded commuter rail on long-distance passenger rail and ensure convenient intermodal connections to light rail and buses.

The Minneapolis Downtown Parking Overlay District encompasses the downtown station area and therefore restricts the establishment or expansion of surface parking lots. The City of Minneapolis has also adopted a Pedestrian-Oriented Overlay District that supports compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development.

Fridley

The City of Fridley is considering a plan for redevelopment of the 11-acre parcel adjacent to the proposed station. In addition, the Fridley Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) is moving forward on the Islands of Peace Redevelopment Project. The potential redevelopment area consists of 13 privately held parcels and city park land comprising approximately 12 acres. The Fridley HRA envisions a mixed-use, mixed-income, mixed housing type development, which is connected by a trail to the proposed Fridley station site.

Coon Rapids

The City of Coon Rapids is considering a plan for redevelopment of the 23-acre parcel adjacent to the proposed station. A current development plan being reviewed by the City includes medium- and high-density residential units, senior housing, and retail/office space.

Anoka

The City of Anoka adopted an approach for developing the North Central Business District (NCBD) in March 2003 and *Development/Redevelopment Standards, Guidelines, and Incentives Manual* for developers in October 2003. The City of Anoka completed the Commuter Rail Transit Village (CRTV) Plan in March 2004. The City updated and refined the CRTV Master Plan in the spring of 2005. Appendix A-1 includes a copy of a resolution adopted by the City of Anoka that expresses their intent to pursue a joint agreement with the NCDA concerning the Anoka Station. Phase I of the CRTV Station Area Refined Concept Plan is also included in Appendix A-1.

Elk River

The City of Elk River amended its comprehensive plan to change the land use designation near the station from light industrial and low density residential to community commercial and medium-density residential and approved final plats for the residential component of the Elk River Station development.

Big Lake

The City of Big Lake amended its comprehensive plan to include medium-and high-density residential development adjacent to the station. On June 8, 2005, the City of Big Lake adopted a resolution stating its support for the Northstar Commuter Rail Project, and relocation of the station. The City of Big Lake has expressed interest in partnering with the NCDA to explore options for TOD around the proposed new station location.

Regional Policies/Planning

Since the completion of the EIS process for the Northstar Corridor (December 2002), the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities has adopted the 2030 Regional Framework, January 2004.

The 2030 Regional Framework provides the following policy directions to encourage the concentration of development around established activity centers and regional transit:

- Growth is accommodated by promoting higher density development overall, clustered mixed-use growth and development in activity centers and along transportation corridors, and reinvestment in the developed area and the core of the region. This makes the most cost-effective use of new and existing incentives, regional services, infrastructure investments, and services.
- Expanded choices in housing locations and types are encouraged, allowing market forces to respond to changing market needs, including meeting increased demand for multi-family, lifecycle, and affordable housing with better links to jobs, services, and amenities.
- Land use patterns are encouraged with cluster housing, businesses, retail and services in walkable, transit-oriented centers along transportation corridors.

- Reinvestment and revitalization in developed communities is encouraged by providing grants and other incentives to cities and businesses to reclaim infill and redevelop underutilized lands and structures.
- Regional policies recognize the growing market demand for multifamily housing with improved connections to work places, retail, services, and entertainment through mixed-use concepts and easily accessible transportation options.

Change of Impact Summary

As previously discussed, each of the communities where station locations are proposed have taken action, are planning for transit supportive land use, or have already undergone development activities. The proposed shift in the location of the Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal station would improve the development potential for either mixed-use or a professional baseball stadium. In short, the proposed land use next to the commuter rail station was a key factor in shifting the station approximately 400 feet to the north.

The Big Lake station evaluated in the FEIS would have been located on land which was originally undeveloped (industrial land use and zoning designation). However, as noted in the FEIS, the initial phase of the Northstar commuter coach facility (4.1 acres) was constructed at the Big Lake station located west of CR 43/north of the BNSF tracks. Under the revised location on the south side of the BNSF mainline and to the east of CR 43, the commuter rail station/maintenance facility and layover facility would be located on land currently under agricultural use.

In summary, the revised preferred alternative will continue to support TOD in the corridor. No significant changes from the FEIS would occur under the revised preferred alternative.

4.2 Community Facilities and Services

General Background/Methodology

Community facilities and public services contribute to the social fabric of each community. These facilities are visited both by necessity and choice and provide essential services. The way in which these facilities are used, accessed, and their ability to deliver services in the most beneficial manner can impact the well being of the community.

As part of the DEIS/FEIS, the following facilities were inventoried and evaluated:

- Government buildings
- Schools
- Churches
- Day Care Centers
- Hospitals
- Non Profit Activity Centers
- Parks/Recreation Facilities
- Existing and Proposed Trails and Bicycle Paths.

All community facilities within three blocks of proposed commuter rail stations and the maintenance facility were identified. The area of potential impact for the proposed track improvements is located adjacent to, or within a corridor that is used for the same activity. Only the facilities that are immediately adjacent to the areas and not separated by an existing physical barrier were identified.

For the analysis in the DEIS/FEIS, it was assumed that the following types of activities or actions would have the potential to impact community facilities:

- Physical changes that impact access;
- Connectivity and circulation patterns including pedestrian and bicycle access, traffic levels, and traffic pattern changes;
- Displacements that would have an impact on community character and cohesion;
- Improved mobility or access to transit services provided to the community; and
- Noise and vibration levels.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 of the FEIS *(page 3-40/41),* summarize the community facilities within the defined area of potential impact for the proposed stations and track improvements.

Impacts

MOS of Preferred Alternative Evaluated in FEIS

The FEIS identified potential community facility impacts at the Downtown Minneapolis, Minneapolis Northeast, Anoka, and Big Lake station locations. The FEIS concluded that there would be no impacts to community facilities associated with the proposed LRT connection or the vehicle maintenance facility at the Elk River south site. A summary of the impacts is presented in Table 4.1

Table 4.1 — Summary of Community Facility Impacts Disclosed in Northstar EIS

Project Component	Impacts Disclosed in DEIS/FEIS	Mitigation Measures
Big Lake Station	Day-care facility is located near the station. People will experience improved transit accessibility. During construction dust, noise, and fumes may have a temporary impact. ***See FEIS Table 3.2-4, page 3-44***	The contractor will coordinate with the day-care provider to minimize disruptions and maintain safety to their operations.
Anoka Station	Minor increase in risk to people parking along the road at the Grant Street Athletic Complex due to traffic going to/from the commuter rail. ***See FEIS Table 3.2-4, page 3-44***	"Watch for Pedestrian" signs will be posted.
Minneapolis Northeast	Preferred Alternative will provide improved transit accessibility for the users of several public facilities located within walking distance of the proposed station.	
Downtown Minneapolis Station	Proposed extension of Cedar Lake Park Trail-Phase 3 impacted.	Trail could be moved 50 feet east between North 7th Street and approximately 200 feet south of North 5th Street.

Revised Preferred Alternative

Under the revised preferred alternative, the improved transit accessibility in the vicinity of the Northeast Minneapolis station would be removed, as the station is not included in the alternative.

The planned Cedar Lake Trail (Phase 3) identified in the FEIS is not developed at this time, nor has land been purchased for the trail. Under the revised Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal station location, the planned Cedar Lake trail would be shifted to the east and south to accommodate the commuter rail platform. The trail would be parallel and southeast of the station and the existing BNSF track. Mn/DOT and the NCDA have been working closely with the City of Minneapolis in the development of a revised trail alignment through this area.

The day-care facility in proximity to the Big Lake station is no longer operating near the proposed site. Similar to the impacts and mitigation identified in the FEIS, the lead agency for the park-and-ride facility at Anoka should provide "Watch for Pedestrian" signs at appropriate locations near the Grant Street Athletic Complex.

At the Fridley Station, the Mississippi River Regional Bike Trail will be maintained through the west side of the station site. During construction, an 8-foot temporary trail (approximately 300 feet in length) will be constructed on the east side of East River Road to provide continual trail continuity through this area. Trail users would access the existing trail to the north of the station (See Figure 3.3).

In the vicinity of the proposed third mainline, the Rice Creek West Regional Bike Trail will be temporarily closed during the construction of the additional bridge structure to accommodate the third mainline over Rice Creek/Locke Lake. Additionally, up to 350 feet of the trail will be temporarily closed during construction of the third mainline. Construction activities in this location are anticipated to take six to eight weeks to complete. During construction, the trail crossing under the existing BNSF bridges will be closed. Trail closure signs will be posted on the trail in the City of Fridley Community Park and near the Locke Park entrance point to the trail. In addition, advance trail closure signs will be posted at University Avenue, Mississippi Street Northeast and along East River Road. The 4(f) evaluation presented in Section 6.0 provides additional information regarding the temporary trail impacts and mitigation measures.

The DEIS evaluated a third main track from MP 15.6 to 20.7, along with a siding from MP 18.8 to 20.7 (east/north side of mainline). The proposed track was originally located on the west (railroad south) side of the existing mainline. However, as presented in the alternatives section of the EA, based on more detailed design, the preferred alignment of the third mainline would be on the west side (railroad south) from MP 15.1 to 16.6, transition to the east side (railroad north) of the mainline at approximately MP 16.6, then stay on the east side (railroad north) from MP 16.6 to MP 21.1. Locating the proposed third main on the east side (railroad north) after crossing Mississippi Street, avoids direct impact to the Rice Creek West Trail previously documented in the DEIS. In addition, locating the third main on the east (railroad north) at the Locke Lake/Rice Creek crossing avoids potential impacts to Locke Park.

Two City of Fridley parks are located directly to the east of the BNSF right-of-way along with the Springbrook Nature Center. Facilities provided at Plaza Park include a basketball court, playground equipment, and sitting benches. Facilities provided at the City of Fridley Community Park include: picnic area and shelter, park building, playground equipment, walking/biking trail, baseball diamonds, and football field. Both the Springbrook Nature Center and Fridley

Community Park have received Land and Water Conservation Funds (LAWCON), and hence are defined as 6(f) resources. Based on current right-of-way limits, the third main would not encroach on these park facilities.

The DEIS included a 4(f)/6(f) draft evaluation associated with potential impacts to the Springbrook Nature Center in Fridley. Potential right-of-way impacts were identified based on the inclusion of both a siding and third main track, along with general right-of-way boundaries. Based on more detailed assessment of current BNSF right-of-way boundaries, along with the removal of the siding from MP 18.8 to 20.7, the proposed third main near the Springbrook Nature Center would be within existing BNSF right-of-way boundaries. Hence, there would not be impacts to the Springbrook Nature Center under the revised preferred alternative. The revised preferred alternative will therefore not impact previously identified 6(f) resources.

In summary, the revised preferred alternative would not result in significant adverse impacts to community facilities within the Corridor.

Mitigation — General

The FEIS included a section pertaining to corridor-wide mitigation measures. This section updates the information included in the FEIS.

Commuter rail stations have been designed to provide a variety of amenities for the storage and safe use of bicycles in station areas. Bicycle storage facilities will provide secure, sturdy, and convenient equipment for locking bicycles. The number of bicycle storage facilities varies by station, according to the anticipated ridership and space constraints. The minimum will be five lockers and ten bicycle rack spaces per station.

Several provisions are included in station design for the accessibility of pedestrians and bicyclists, including a network of paved paths. The paths will connect major on-site and off-site pedestrian origination points to the station and platform. All paths will be as short and direct as possible; with a clear line of site to the platform. Pedestrian paths will be visible from on-site access drives and parking areas, as well as from adjacent streets. Regular pedestrian paths have been designed to be six to eight feet wide. Crosswalks, walkways adjacent to parking and drop-off facilities, and pedestrian track crossings will be wider and have been designed in accordance with level-of-service capacity standards. Other site elements, such as ticket vending machines, have been strategically placed so their operation would not interfere with pedestrian flow but are readily accessible.

All stations will provide for the accessibility of commuter rail and light rail patrons with disabilities.

4.3 Displacements and Relocations

MOS of Preferred Alternative

The MOS of the preferred alternative defined and evaluated in the FEIS included the following property acquisitions (see Table 4.2):

Table 4.2 — Potential Property Acquisitions Disclosed in the FEIS (MOS of Preferred Alternative)

Acquisition Area	Number of Parcels to be Acquired	Land Use of Parcels	Residential Structures to be Displaced	Business Structures to be Displaced
Minneapolis Downtown Station and LRT Connection	1	Parking Lot	0	0
Minneapolis Northeast Station	7	Railroad right-of-way Developed commercial	0	1
Fridley Station	10	Undeveloped Residential/Commercial	0	0
Coon Rapids-Foley	4	Commercial/Residential	1	1
Coon Rapids – Riverdale*	0	Commuter Coach Facility Undeveloped commercial/industrial	0	0
Anoka Station	7	Undeveloped commercial/industrial	0	1
Elk River Station*	0	Commuter Coach Facility Agricultural	0	0
Big Lake Station and Layover Facility*	4	Commuter Coach Facility Undeveloped commercial	0	0
Elk River South Maintenance Facility	2	Agricultural/Commercial	0	0
Total	**35**		**1**	**3**

* The Coon Rapids - Riverdale, Elk River, and Big Lake stations were assumed to be included under the no-build alternative in the FEIS, as the land had been purchased and programmed for development. The parcels identified for Big Lake reflect the proposed expansion area for the commuter rail alternative.

Based on the level of design at the time the DEIS was prepared, the proposed Coon Creek siding and third mainline were estimated to impact (partial and full take) up to 25 and 61 parcels, respectively.

Revised Preferred Alternative

The proposed project will require acquisition of property for stations, the maintenance facility, and other infrastructure necessary for the operation of commuter rail and the LRT connection in downtown Minneapolis. For the project, the BNSF will retain fee title to its right-of-way.

As of November 2005, the property acquisition for the proposed project is identified in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 — Potential Property Acquisitions under the Revised Preferred Alternative

Station	General Location	Current Use	Partial Take	Full Take	Fee	Easement
Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station	E Side of BNSF Tracks, S side of 5th Street	Commercial Parking Lot	2 parcels		X	
	NE Corner of 5th Street N and 2nd Avenue N	Vacant				
	419 5th Street North	County Property	1 parcel	1 parcel	X	
	East side of BNSF under 3rd/4th Street freeway ramps	Commercial parking/ Office building	2 parcels		X	Partial temporary/ Permanent easement
Fridley	West Side Station Site	Vacant		10 Parcels	X	
	East Side of Station Site	Vacant		3 Parcels	X	
Elk River	SW of Railroad Tracks	Commercial Parking Lot	1 Parcel			X
Big Lake	East of CR 43, South of Railroad Tracks	Agricultural	2 Parcels		X	
Maintenance Facility	East of CR 43, South of RR Tracks, East of Station	Agricultural	3 Parcels		X	
	West of 172nd Street	Agricultural	1 Parcel		X	
Track Improvement	Construct Double Track Through Northtown Yard (43rd Avenue to 35th Avenue)	Industrial	To be determined based on current BNSF ROW limits		X	
		Total	**12**	**14**		

The proposed LRT connection on 5th Street would require closing access to an alley off of 5th Street, located between 1st Avenue North and 2nd Avenue North. Although this area is out of the Northstar Corridor study area (3rd Avenue North), the impact is being disclosed due to its proximity.

Under the revised preferred alternative, the proposed third mainline from MP 15.1 to 21.1 would be located within the existing BNSF right-of-way. No right-of-way impacts are anticipated in this area. If for some unforeseen reason the proposed track improvements require construction outside the existing BNSF right-of-way, Mn/DOT and its project partners will work with the affected property owner to restore the impacted site.

Property Acquisition

Mn/DOT and the county regional railroad authorities are authorized to acquire, own, manage, and dispose of real estate property for the project. Mn/DOT will have the responsibility for the acquisition of real estate for the project. Such property will be transferred to the owner of the

Northstar Corridor Rail Project prior to construction. Mn/DOT property acquisition staff will oversee property acquisition activities to ensure compliance with state and federal requirements.

Relocation Assistance

At the completion of the preliminary engineering and advanced design for the project, no relocations have been identified as necessary for the project. However, if any relocations are required, the Northstar Corridor real estate program will conform to the *Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970*, as amended (42 U.S. C 4601 et seq.) and 49 C.F.R. Part 24 promulgated pursuant thereto. The authority for this assurance is found in *Minnesota Statutes Sections 117.51 through 117.53 and 645.32(2). FTA Circular 5010.1C*, dated October 1, 1998 will apply to any real estate acquisitions.

The Northstar Corridor project will comply with all laws and policies relating to relocation assistance.

BNSF Property

Northstar Corridor Commuter Rail service will operate on BNSF tracks, along with freight railroad service. BNSF will continue to own the railway. Rights for Mn/DOT to operate commuter rail service on BNSF property may be established by agreement or easement. Additionally, easements will be necessary for the commuter rail station platforms and walkways. All access rights and easements will be negotiated with the BNSF.

4.4 Archaeological and Historic Resources

Federal legislation requires governmental agencies to consider their impacts to historic and archaeological resources before undertaking a project. *Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966* (NHPA 1992, as amended) mandates that federal agencies, or their designee, consider the effects of their actions on historic properties. A historic property is defined as any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The Section 106 process consists of steps for: 1) identifying and evaluating historic properties; 2) assessing the effects of an undertaking on historic properties; and 3) consultation for methods to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects.

Preferred Alternative Evaluated in FEIS

Archaeological Resources

The preferred alternative defined and evaluated in the Northstar Corridor FEIS would not result in impacts to archeological resources. Hence, no further studies and/or mitigation were required.

Architectural Resources

Under the preferred alternative defined and evaluated in the FEIS, four station areas (Downtown Minneapolis, Minneapolis Northeast, Anoka, and Rice) having potentially eligible architectural resources were identified during historic research and/or field survey. The downtown Minneapolis LRT Connector and the Railroad Corridor alignment were also identified as having potentially eligible architectural resources, and were also evaluated. A summary of the findings is presented herein:

Downtown Minneapolis Station

The proposed Downtown Minneapolis station is adjacent to the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District, part of the NRHP. Adherence to the provisions set forth in the Programmatic Agreement is anticipated to result in no adverse effects on the district.

Minneapolis Northeast Station

One property, the Northwestern Furniture mart (Bank's Building) at 601-615 1st Avenue NE, has been determined eligible for the NRHP by State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) opinion. Located west of the proposed station, the Furniture Mart is one of the most prominent extant buildings representative of Minneapolis' early 20th century furniture manufacturing district.

Adherence to the provision of final design review of the station by SHPO should result in no adverse effect finding on the Northwestern Furniture Mart Building.

Anoka Station

The Old Milk Factory building overlooking the Anoka station area has experienced extensive alternations that preclude its eligibility for the NRHP. Buildings at the Anoka Regional Treatment Facility, eligible for the NRHP, are somewhat removed from the station area site and buffered from it by a grove of deciduous trees on the treatment facility grounds.

Downtown Minneapolis LRT Connection

The proposed LRT line would pass through and adjacent to the NRHP Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District on the 5th Street North alignment. The bulk of the large district is located to the northeast of 5th Street North. The proposed LRT line would pass through the Minneapolis Warehouse Preservation District at 1st Avenue North.

Adherence to the provisions set forth in the Programmatic Agreement is anticipated to result in no adverse effects on the district

Railroad Corridor Alignment

The section of the BNSF in the Northstar Corridor from Minneapolis to Rice has been determined eligible for the NRHP by the SHPO. Because the track improvements would not change the location of the main line, and the increase in number of trains traveling along the line would not affect the track, there would be no adverse effect from the track improvements to this railroad corridor segment.

Mitigation

A Programmatic Agreement (See Appendix A.1) has been developed to outline a process for further consideration of the design of project components within or adjacent to historic properties. Mitigation measures identified for the preferred alternative defined in the FEIS/ROD include the following:

- Final design review and concurrence by SHPO of Rice station and Minneapolis Northeast station to assure they will not result in an adverse effect to the Rice Mill & Grain and Northwestern Furniture Mart, respectively.
- The design of the Minneapolis Downtown Commuter Station will take into account its visual relationship to the Minneapolis warehouse district. In addition, programmatic aspects of the design, which influence the design of 5th Street North Bridge between 3rd and 5th Avenues North will be considered.
- The design of the new 5th Street North bridge between 3rd Avenue and 5th Avenue North will meet the Secretary of Interior's standards for new construction in historic places.

- The design of the new 5 th Street North bridge between 2nd and 3 rd Avenues will meet the Secretary of Interior's standards for new construction in historic places.
- The potential relocation and reuse of the St. Cloud Northern Pacific Depot will meet the Secretary of Interior's standards and will ensure the continued eligibility of the depot on its new location.
- The design of all LRT system elements between the 5th Street North Bridge LRT station and the Hiawatha LRT project will address the Warehouse District. These elements include (but are not limited to) signage, track and traffic lanes, curbs and sidewalks, overhead cables and support posts, and landscaping.

Revised Preferred Alternative

As stated previously, a Programmatic Agreement (PA) has been executed between the Minnesota SHPO, Mn/DOT, and the FTA for the Northstar Corridor. The Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) and the St. Cloud HPC are consulting parties to the agreement. The PA calls for final design review and concurrence by the SHPO for the Rice and Minneapolis Northeast stations. As both of these stations are not included in the revised preferred alternative, this review requirement will not be needed. Additionally, the potential relocation and reuse of the St. Cloud Northern Pacific Depot is not included in the revised preferred alternative. Hence, this impact would be avoided.

In accordance with the requirements set forth in the Northstar PA, Mn/DOT and its partnering agencies have been in consultation with the SHPO and the Minneapolis HPC regarding the design of the LRT connection, the LRT station on 5th Street, and the Downtown Minneapolis commuter rail station. Specifically, six meetings with the aforementioned parties already have taken place from March to November 2005. Modifications to the LRT connector and commuter rail station design have occurred as a result of these meetings. Mn/DOT and its project partners will continue to consult with the SHPO and Minneapolis HPC as final design plans progress in the downtown Minneapolis area.

The Big Lake station and maintenance/layover facility includes land that was not previously surveyed during the EIS. An 18-acre site was evaluated during the DEIS, as a potential maintenance facility location. Mn/DOT has determined that the revised project will not impact any historic properties (See Appendix A.1 for letter). The SHPO concurred with this determination on December 19, 2005 (See Appendix A.1 for letter)

Change of Impact Summary

The proposed revised preferred alternative would minimize impacts to surrounding historic resources, as the previously identified and evaluated Minneapolis Northeast and Rice stations are not a part of the revised preferred alternative. Additionally, Mn/DOT, SHPO, and the Minneapolis HPC have been in ongoing consultation regarding the design elements of the LRT alignment, LRT station on 5th Street North, and commuter rail station, as specified in the Northstar PA.

No additional mitigation is required under the revised preferred alternative.

4.5 Visual and Aesthetic Conditions

The visual impact assessment conducted for the Northstar EIS and this EA considers the following:

- Visual resources of the natural, cultural, or built environment that would be impacted by the proposed project
- Views that would be impacted by the proposed project
- Change in visual quality and viewer response that would result from the proposed project

Compatibility or contrast with the existing built environment and natural environmental context is assessed for the proposed revisions to the preferred alternative from two perspectives. First, the visibility of the project is evaluated from the perspective of the surrounding environment, and those sites considered particularly sensitive to changes in setting or view are reviewed. Second, the view afforded users of the proposed services is determined and evaluated. Unless otherwise noted, the existing conditions and impact evaluation *(Section 3.5.2 and 3.5.3, pages 3-73 through 3-85)* defined and evaluated in the Northstar FEIS remain unchanged and are incorporated by reference into this EA.

Existing Conditions

An update to existing conditions is presented below for the Downtown Minneapolis, Coon Rapids-Riverdale, and Elk River stations. New existing condition information is also presented for Big Lake facility area.

Downtown Minneapolis Station

The proposed Downtown Minneapolis station is located directly under and to the north of 5th Street North, parallel to the BNSF mainline tracks (east side). The station platform area would be located on approximately 0.7 acre of land, which is currently part of a large surface parking lot. Views to the east include: the 5th Street Garage and 4th Street parking ramp; the west view includes the Hennepin County Environmental Services building and the Ford Centre; the south view includes existing surface parking; and the north view includes the surface parking and bridge structures (3rd and 4th Streets North).

Coon Rapids –Riverdale Station

The proposed station is located on a 9.67 acre parcel of land, 7.01 acres of which was recently developed as a commuter coach facility (454 spaces). Views to the north include the back of the Riverdale Commons regional shopping center. Views to the west and east are of single-family homes.

Elk River Station

The proposed Elk River station is located along the northeast side of the railroad tracks and on the north side of Twin Lakes Boulevard. The site was recently developed as a commuter coach facility (311 parking spaces). Since the Northstar FEIS, high-density residential development activities have taken place to the northeast of the station (east side of Twin Lakes Boulevard). Views to the south of the station include primarily industrial land uses. TH 10 is not in the immediate viewshed. Views of the site would be primarily from the industrial park to the south and the new residential development to the northeast.

Big Lake Station and Maintenance Facility

The proposed commuter rail station and vehicle maintenance/layover facility would be located on 37.5 acres of land to the south of the BNSF tracks and to the east of CR 43. The land is currently under agricultural use. To the west of CR 43, a park-and-ride facility was constructed in 2002 with 97 spaces. Viewsheds from the station and maintenance facility include a grain elevator, veterinary clinic, and industrial uses to the north, undeveloped land and residential development to the west of CR 43, and agricultural land to the south and to the east.

Visual Impacts

Visual impacts are changes in the existing conditions within the visual environment that may be brought about by construction of the proposed alternative. The changes that may result from the construction of the revised preferred alternative may detract from the visual environment, or they may enhance it. Since these are subjective criteria, this assessment will focus on those changes to the visual environment that may be measured in terms of high impact, moderate impact, or low impact. Enhancements and detraction are factors that may be impacted by subsequent design and mitigation considerations.

Visual Impacts Identified in the FEIS

The MOS of the preferred alternative evaluated in the FEIS identified the Minneapolis Northeast Station at 7th Street NE and the Fridley Station as facilities that would result in "moderate" visual impacts. Additionally, the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement defined specific design considerations at the Minneapolis Downtown Station, Intermodal Connector, and Minneapolis Northeast Station.

The proposed stormwater pond that would serve the Anoka Station was located within the MnDNR scenic easement, and would therefore be within the viewshed of the Rum River.

Visual Impacts Under the Revised Preferred Alternative

Downtown Minneapolis Station and LRT Connection

Views of the downtown station would be compatible with the surrounding uses in the area providing additional transportation options in this transportation corridor. The shift in the commuter rail station to the north increases the view of the facility from the Ford Centre building. As specified in the Programmatic Agreement between the FTA and SHPO, the design of the station will take into account its visual relationship to the Minneapolis Warehouse District. Additionally, the design of the 5th Street Bridge between 3rd Avenue and 5th Avenue and between 2nd and 3rd Avenues will meet the Secretary of Interior's standards for new construction in historic areas. The design of the LRT system elements between the 5th Street bridge LRT station and the Hiawatha LRT project will also consider effects to the Minneapolis Historic Warehouse District.

As documented in Section 4.4 of this EA, over the past several months Mn/DOT and its project partners have been in consultation with the SHPO and the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) regarding the specific requirements of the Programmatic Agreement as it pertains to the design of the downtown station and LRT connection/station.

Fridley Station

Views of the station area from the surrounding residential areas would change from open grassy areas to a station facility and park-and-ride lot. As documented in the FEIS, this would result in a moderate visual impact as the station would be compatible with the adjacent industrial land uses and surface parking lots. The current station plan calls for a shift to the north of the park-and-ride

facility (east side of tracks) to provide improved accessibility to the station platform. The station platform has also shifted approximately 200 feet to the north. The park-and-ride lot still stays a sufficient distance away from the local residents to minimize visual impacts. This shift in location would result in negligible visual impacts.

Coon Rapids – Foley Station

This station is not a part of the revised preferred alternative.

Coon Rapids-Riverdale Station

The station would have a low visual impact as a commuter coach facility (454 spaces) and is compatible with the regional shopping land use adjacent the site. The FEIS included a pedestrian overpass at the west end of the station platforms. The current plans call for an overpass structure at the east end of the station platforms. The shift in the overpass location will actually reduce the visual impact, as it will be buffered by existing trees immediately to the south of the site (and north of the residential neighborhood).

Anoka Station

Since the preparation of the EIS, additional design pertaining to the proposed stormwater pond has occurred. The current design significantly minimizes encroachment into the Rum River scenic easement boundaries (See Figure 3.5). Mn/DOT and the NCDA will continue to work closely with the City of Anoka and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) regarding the final design the treatment pond, particularly as it relates to the visual impacts to the Rum River.

As noted in Table 3.2 and Figure 3.5, the City of Anoka proposes to construct a parking structure to accommodate up to 450 parking spaces at the Anoka station. The proposed structure would be two levels. The structure is part of an overall CRTV plan being developed by the City of Anoka. The structure would not be within the Rum River scenic easement, and would be considered consistent with the existing and proposed land use in the area. The proposed facility is anticipated to have low visual impacts.

Elk River Maintenance Facility

The Elk River Maintenance Facility (south of tracks) is no longer part of the preferred alternative. Hence, the potential change in land use from agricultural to industrial at this location is no longer an impact.

Elk River Station

This station would continue to experience a low visual impact as it was constructed as a commuter coach facility prior to the construction of the residential development to the northeast.

Big Lake Station and Maintenance Facility

There would be moderate visual impact at this station as it is located to the south of the BNSF mainline and industrial/commercial land uses. The proposed station would change the existing land use (currently agricultural). Land uses to the north and northeast of the site are consistent with the proposed station and maintenance facility.

Rail Improvements

In general, the proposed track capacity improvements would have minimal impact on visual quality because commuter rail would be located on existing BNSF tracks already used by freight traffic. The addition of up to 18 trains per day would have a low visual impact.

Mitigation Measures

Measures of mitigation will mainly be implemented at the station locations. Station area landscaping will be designed to complement the character of the surrounding community.

Change of Impact Summary

Visual impacts documented in the FEIS for the MOS have been reduced with the proposed revisions to the preferred alternative. Specifically, potential visual impacts at the Minneapolis Northeast station have been eliminated, as well as potential visual impacts to the Rum River.

4.6 Environmental Justice

Executive Order 129898 on Environmental Justice requires that federal agencies consider and address disproportionate adverse environmental effects of proposed federal projects on minority and low-income communities. The intent of the Department of Transportation Final Order on Environmental Justice (DOT Order 5608.1, Environmental Justice (February 15, 1997) is to integrate the goals of Executive Order 12989 into DOT operations. In addition, Mn/DOT has developed *Guidance for Environmental Justice* that provides steps and procedures when addressing environmental justice.

The *Northstar Corridor EIS Environmental Justice* impact analysis was prepared in accordance with both Executive Order 12898 and Mn/DOT's guidance. As documented in the FEIS *(page 3-87),* the census block groups in the Northstar Corridor (full system) did not exhibit high percentages of either low-income or minority populations. Additionally, the preferred alternative defined and evaluated in the FEIS was determined to not disproportionately impact populations addressed in the environmental justice analysis.

The overall conclusion regarding environmental justice impacts documented in the FEIS for the original preferred alternative would be consistent for the revised preferred alternative. A summary of the findings is presented herein.

Benefits and adverse impacts to minority and low-income areas in the corridor are representative of the areas served by the revised preferred alternative. The revised preferred alternative would have several positive impacts on minority and low-income populations at proposed station sites throughout the corridor. These positive impacts include increased mobility and access to system linkages, improved access to educational and business facilities, better access to jobs, improved bicycle and pedestrian connectors, and visual enhancements at station areas. The revised preferred alternative is also expected to encourage redevelopment opportunities in station areas, which could potentially improve and revitalize adjacent communities. Additionally, the revised preferred alternative would provide an additional transit mode for residents in the central city to access job concentrations in the outlying areas (reverse commute).

4.7 Safety and Security

Section 3.7 of the FEIS *(pages 3-92/93)* identifies safety and security measures that will be incorporated into the design of the Northstar Corridor project. Section 3.7 is incorporated into this EA by reference.

The referenced Fire/Life Safety Committee, which will oversee applicable components of the project to ensure that a safe transit system is designed and constructed, began meeting in September 2005. Specific design recommendations and provisions have been and will continue to

be incorporated into the design of the system. Additionally, the proposed shift of the Big Lake Station and Maintenance Facility to the east of CR 43 will eliminate the previously required at-grade crossing of CR 43.

The revised preferred alternative will not significantly change the previously documented safety and security impacts/mitigation measures identified in the FEIS.

4.8 Farmlands

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) was signed into law in 1981 and is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The FPPA requires that farmland impacts be taken into consideration in federally funded projects. Specifically, prime, unique, and statewide or locally important farmland should be evaluated.

Prime farmland is defined as land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, oilseed, and other agricultural crops with minimum external inputs such as fertilizer or excessive labor. Prime farmland does not include land already in or committed to urban development or water storage (7 USC 4201).

Unique farmland is land other than prime farmland that is used for production of specific high-value food and fiber crops, as determined by the USDA. Farmland of statewide or local importance is determined by the appropriate state or unit of local government.

MOS of Preferred Alternative Evaluated in FEIS

Prime and statewide important farmlands are identified based on soil type, as mapped in the County Soil Survey. The list of designated prime and statewide important soil types was obtained from each county NRCS office. Soil types identified as prime or statewide important were highlighted on the soil survey, and overlaid on the potential commuter rail track improvements, proposed commuter rail station, and maintenance and layover facilities.

In the FEIS, only a small percentage of the mapped soil units in the Downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake segment of the Northstar Corridor were identified as prime or statewide important. Most of the sandy soils in the area are too droughty to meet these classifications. The FEIS stated that the Downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake portion of the preferred alternative would not impact prime or statewide important farmlands, as none of the applicable soils met the definition as set forth by the FPPA.

Revised Preferred Alternative

The revised Big Lake station site, Big Lake Maintenance Facility site, and a third mainline track between MPs 15.1 and 21.1 were evaluated for farmland impacts under the revised preferred alternative.

Soil survey mapping was reviewed in the corridor, including new impact areas. There is only one area of prime farmland in the corridor, and it was present in an area where Northstar Corridor operations would occur within existing BNSF right-of-way. Therefore, no prime farmland would be affected by the revised preferred alternative.

There are two areas of statewide important farmland that would be intersected by the third main starting near Foley Boulevard. However, this area is zoned urban and is in urban use; therefore it

does not meet the criteria of the FPPA for prime/statewide important farmland. No soil types in the corridor were identified as unique or locally important.

4.9 Wetlands

Federal wetland regulations are administered by the COE under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The COE has permitting authority on all activities that require fill in wetlands. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MnPCA) has certification authority for all COE permits under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, which requires that the project comply with Minnesota state water quality standards. The MnDNR has regulatory authority over activities within selected wetland and waters, as identified on the public waters maps.

In 1991, the state of Minnesota enacted the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA). This legislation authorized Local Government Units (LGUs) to administer state wetland regulations. The WCA requires that activities resulting in the draining or filling of wetlands must be avoided or minimized. Impacts that are unavoidable must be replaced at a ratio of at least two acres of wetland creation/restoration for every acre of wetland impact. The WCA is administered by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and LGUs.

Preferred Alternative Evaluated in DEIS and FEIS

Potential wetland basins were identified through the use of USFWS National Wetland Inventory maps, MnDNR Protected Waters and Wetlands maps, current aerial photography, topographic maps, and County Soil Surveys. An on-site review was conducted in October and November 1999 to verify the presence of wetland sites and establish boundaries. The field investigation analyzed a 200-foot wide corridor along the potential track improvement segments. The stations site and maintenance facility site reviews included the proposed site area and immediate vicinity, approximately 100-feet from the edge of site.

For purposes of the DEIS, ten wetlands were identified and delineated in the vicinity of the proposed commuter rail stations, maintenance facility, Transportation System Management (TSM) park-and-ride facilities, and potential track improvements throughout the original corridor from Minneapolis to Rice. The DEIS also provided wetland delineation maps for each site in Appendix 7.4. Wetland impacts are listed in Table 4.4

Table 4.4 — Wetland Impacts Identified in DEIS

Wetland ID	Facility	Wetland Impact (Acres)
1	St. Cloud East Station	4.45
2	Elk River Station	0.07
3	Elk River North Maintenance Facility	0.25
5	Access Road (south of Twp 177)	0.49
10 – 13	Siding & Track (south of TH 610)	0.88
16	Siding & Track (at Springbrook Nature Center)	1.05
17	Siding & Track (at Rice Creek)	0.04
	Total	**7.23**

The FEIS defined a preferred alternative that did not include a third main and siding, and incorporated design modifications to other track improvements to avoid area wetlands. It also identified a MOS from downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake (40.1 miles). Therefore, the wetland impacts of the MOS from Minneapolis to Big Lake were reduced from those identified in the

DEIS. The one remaining wetland identified at the Elk River Station site was reviewed under a separate environmental document for the Northstar commuter-coach bus facility, and was not included in the FEIS under the preferred alternative (assumed under no-build alternative). As documented in the FEIS, the MOS would not directly impact any wetland areas.

Updated Information

Since the FEIS, the preferred alternative has been revised to include a maintenance facility at Big Lake instead of Elk River. A maintenance facility in Big Lake was evaluated in the DEIS; however, the revised facility includes a larger section of land. In addition, the Big Lake station has been shifted to the south side of the BNSF mainline and a third mainline is proposed between MPs 15.1 and 21.1, primarily on the east side of the existing mainline in Fridley. Each of these areas was evaluated for wetland impacts. Impacts associated with potential track improvements were assumed to extend 75 feet east from the centerline of the western most existing mainline. This impact limit is 5 feet narrower than was evaluated in the DEIS for the potential track improvements on the east side of the existing tracks.

Wetland boundaries identified in 1999 were reviewed for changes. Wetlands 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, and 17 were reviewed and verified in the field on October 19, 2005 (See Figures in Appendix A.2). A supplemental wetland delineation was also conducted to determine the location and boundary of the Rice Creek wetland basin (extension of Wetland 17). The original delineation did not cover the Rice Creek area east of the rail line in this location. The area at the Big Lake maintenance facility was delineated for wetlands (Wetland 19) on June 13, 2005. Field review included the evaluation of vegetation, soils, and hydrology in accordance with the *COE Wetlands Delineation* manual (January 1987). All wetlands were classified in accordance with the guidelines in the *Classification of Wetlands and Deep Water Habitats of the United States* and in *Circular 39*, published by the USFWS.

Revised Preferred Alternative

The revised Big Lake station site, Big Lake maintenance facility site, and a third mainline between MPs 15.1 and 21.1 were evaluated for wetland impacts. Moving the Big Lake station site to the south side of the BNSF mainline would not impact any wetland areas. Therefore, the wetland evaluation addresses impacts associated with the Big Lake maintenance facility and third mainline improvements. The analysis has been conducted in accordance with *Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, Executive Order 11990 and U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Order 5660.1A* regarding protection of wetlands.

Big Lake Maintenance Facility

Wetland 19 is a large wetland basin located on the east edge of the proposed facility location and extends to the south (See Figure 4.1). The majority of the area on the north end of the wetland consists of plowed cropland with remnants of corn, cattail, and soft stem bulrush. Soils observed in the basin were dark gray, faintly mottled loamy sand to 16 inches, underlain by black loamy sand to 24 inches in depth. Hydrology was determined through secondary indicators of mapped hydric soils and topographic position. Farm Service Agency aerial slides showed wetland signatures that corresponded to the delineated boundary in five of nine normal precipitation years. The basin was defined by the adjacent upland plowed cropland, absence of hydrologic indicators, and topography. This wetland is identified as MnDNR Protected Water Wetland 65W. The MnDNR has been requested to and is currently field verifying the Ordinary High Water (OHW)

mark (MnDNR jurisdictional boundary). Based on the OHW, appropriate permitting agencies will be coordinated with for the wetlands impacts/mitigation at this location.

The Big Lake maintenance facility includes construction of an east tail track that will impact 0.13 acre of Wetland 19 just south of the existing tracks. The maintenance facility itself will not impact any wetlands.

MPs 15.1 to 21.1

Track improvements will impact wetlands 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, and 17. These wetlands have not been changed in size or character from those described in the DEIS. A summary of the wetlands is provided below for reference.

- Wetlands 10 and 11 are bisected by the existing rail corridor. These wetlands are dominated by reed canary grass. Wetland hydrology was not present at the time of the delineation; however, at the review in 2005, the hydrology was observed with some inundation.
- Wetlands 12 and 13 are located just south of wetlands 10 and 11. These wetlands are wide ditches that are dominated by reed canary grass and willows. The soils had hydric characteristics in the upper portion of the profile. Saturated soils were present with some inundation at the time of the 2005 review.
- Wetland 16 is located just south of 85th Avenue Northwest in Fridley. The existing rail corridor bisects this wetland. The eastern portion of this wetland is on the Springbrook Nature Center property. Vegetation in the basin is varied, and includes cattails, sedges, reed canary grass, and willows. The soils were saturated near the surface. Strong hydric indicators were identified in the upper portion of the profiles evaluated. This wetland is identified as MnDNR 688P.
- Wetland 17 is located at the inlet to Locke Lake in Fridley (See Figure 4.2). The rail corridor crosses Rice Creek at this location. The wetland area is limited to a narrow fringe along the lake and the creek. Rice Creek and Locke Lake are MnDNR Protected Waters. The lake is identified as MnDNR 77P.

The potential track improvements from MP 15.1 to 21.1 will impact six wetlands for a total of 1.96 acres. Most of these wetlands are concentrated either north of 85th Avenue (Wetlands 10 through 13) or south of 85th Avenue in the vicinity of the Springbrook Nature Center (Wetland 16). Wetland 17 is at Rice Creek (MP 16.9), which is approximately 2 miles south of 85th Avenue.

Table 4.5 — Wetland Impacts of Revised Preferred Alternative

Wetland ID	Facility	Wetland Impact (Acres)
10 – 13	Third Main (south of TH 610)	0.86
16	Third Main (near Springbrook Nature Center)	1.03
17	Third Main (at Rice Creek)	0.07
19	Big Lake Maintenance Facility	0.13
	Total	**2.09**

Wetland Mitigation

Federal and state regulations require that drain, fill, and certain types of excavation impacts to wetlands be avoided and minimized to the extent practical. Several mitigation techniques are commonly used to avoid or reduce wetland impacts associated with transportation projects. Examples include shifting the location of construction for track improvement, increasing side slopes to narrow the construction limits, minor shifts in the access road, shifting station locations, and bridging. The feasibility of avoiding area wetlands and minimization techniques is presented below. Mn/DOT will create wetland mitigation on-site to the extent possible. Any off-site mitigation will be taken from the Mn/DOT wetland bank.

Big Lake Maintenance Facility

Wetland 19 will be impacted by construction of an east tail track. . The railroad corridor is currently in place so realignment is not a practical avoidance measure. Furthermore, reducing the width of the construction limits by increasing the side slopes is not a feasible option to avoid wetlands in this location, given existing slopes and elevations.

MP 15.1 to 21.1

Wetlands 10 through 13, 16, and 17 will be impacted by construction of the proposed third main. The railroad corridor is currently in place so realignment is not a practical avoidance measure. Reducing the width of the construction limits by increasing the side slopes will be evaluated to minimize wetland impacts adjacent to track improvements. Impacts to wetland 17 will be minimized by the construction of a new bridge along the east side of the tracks crossing between Rice Creek and the inlet to Locke Lake. This area of the wetland is narrow and has been previously disturbed.

Mitigation for Stormwater Impacts

In addition to direct avoidance of wetland impacts, the proposed project will incorporate permanent stormwater management controls and Best Management Practice (BMP) measures to minimize water quality impacts. All station facilities will be designed so that surface runoff is treated through National Urban Runoff Program (NURP) ponds. BMPs such as silt fence and temporary sediment basins will be installed prior to site grading and will be maintained through the duration of the construction activities. To the extent feasible, graded areas will be seeded in a timely manner when construction is complete.

Wetland Replacement/Wetland Mitigation Plan

Wetland impacts that cannot be avoided must be replaced at a minimum ratio, as specified in the state regulations (WCA). Provided that the wetland can be replaced in-kind (within the county, within the watershed, or replacing with the same wetland type), the replacement ratio is anticipated to be 2:1. The first 1:1 must be new wetland credit (restored or created wetland); the second half of the replacement can be public value credit (potentially stormwater ponds and upland buffers).

There is one location within the project corridor that has high potential for providing the wetland replacement requirements for the project. Land that is acquired for the Big Lake maintenance facility appears large enough and will be pursued as an option to provide on-site wetland mitigation adjacent to existing wetland 19 in conjunction with a proposed stormwater pond. If the site cannot accommodate the total amount of replacement required, Mn/DOT will pursue utilization of wetland bank credits for the remaining mitigation need. A final wetland mitigation plan will be in place prior to the issuance of a final environmental determination by FTA.

4.10 Floodplains

State and local governments regulate floodplain impacts in accordance with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regulations and mapping. FEMA regulations require that facilities constructed within the 100-year floodplain must have at least one foot of freeboard over the flood elevation and must not increase upstream flooding by more than one foot from existing conditions. Fill impacts to the 100-year floodplain must be replaced.

MOS of Preferred Alternative Evaluated in FEIS

Analysis of potential floodplain impacts was conducted in accordance with Executive Order 11988 and U.S. DOT Order 5650.2 regarding the protection of floodplains. National Flood Insurance Rate Maps were evaluated to determine the location of the 100-year floodplain. The documented floodplain areas are associated with rivers, ditches, or large wetlands. The existing rail corridor crosses many areas mapped as 100-year floodplains. The FEIS evaluated the two floodplain areas where actual construction activities were proposed.

The first floodplain area is located in Coon Rapids, just south of TH 610. The main channel is identified as a DNR protected watercourse (see Figure in Appendix A.2). Most of the 100-year floodplain located south of TH 610 is located to the east of the existing rail corridor. A large portion of this floodplain was excavated as part of the TH 610 construction. According to the COE, the 100-year flood elevation on the east side of the rail corridor is 872 feet. According to the Coon Rapids city engineer, the 100-year flood elevation on the ponds is 868 feet. The city has requested that the COE revise the 100-year flood elevation, but to date this has not been completed.

The second floodplain area in the corridor is in the city of Fridley, in the area associated with Rice Creek and Locke Lake (see Figure in Appendix A.2). The documented 100-year flood elevations are 825 feet on the downstream side (west) of the railroad bridge and 827 feet on the upstream side (east) of the railroad bridge.

The preferred alternative evaluated in the FEIS avoided both of these floodplain areas by not including a third main track from MPs 15.6 to 20.7 or a siding from MPs 18.8 to 20.7.

Revised Preferred Alternative

The revised Big Lake station site, Big Lake maintenance facility site, and a third mainline track between MPs 15.1 and 21.1 were evaluated for floodplain impacts. Analysis of potential floodplain impacts was conducted in accordance with Executive Order 11988 and U.S. DOT Order 5650.2 regarding the protection of floodplains.

The Big Lake maintenance facility and associated track is not located within the 100-year floodplain, and therefore would not incur floodplain impacts. The two areas of 100-year floodplain that were evaluated in the FEIS were reevaluated under the revised preferred alternative. Each of these impact areas is described below.

Floodplain South of TH 610

Similar to the DEIS and based on the current FEMA mapping, the track improvements south of TH 610 may impact up to 2,800 linear feet of floodplain adjacent to the tracks. For purposes of calculating floodplain impacts, a footprint of 75 feet east from the centerline of the west track and presence of the 100-year floodplain at the toe of the slope is assumed. In addition, the COE elevation of 872 feet is assumed. Based on these assumptions, the volume of floodplain fill would total 318 cubic yards. This represents a worst-case scenario. If the City's requested elevation of 868 feet is found to be accurate, the floodplain fill impact would be reduced to approximately 118 cubic yards

Rice Creek/Locke Lake Floodplain

The BNSF main line tracks currently bridge Rice Creek. The proposed design for the track improvements plans for a new bridge to be constructed, on the upstream side (east) of the existing bridges. Floodplain impacts would result from fill for the bridge abutments and pilings.

Bridge construction may also require the shifting of a regional/paved trail (Rice Creek West Regional Trail) that crosses under the current bridge. The trail may have to be realigned to the north, toward Rice Creek. Reconstruction of the trail may result in fill impacts within the 100-year floodplain.

The addition of track adjacent to Locke Lake may result in a small amount of floodplain fill. Preliminary review of aerial photos indicates that the floodplain is close to the existing tracks at one location, approximately 1,000 feet north of the Rice Creek Bridge.

The precise volume of floodplain fill requires detailed survey information and preliminary bridge design. Based on very preliminary estimates and an east side flood elevation of 825 feet, the estimated floodplain fill volume is 100 cubic yards.

Mitigation Measures

Bridge and culvert crossings will be designed to accommodate 100-year flood flows and to minimize backwater conditions. Rail profiles will be designed to minimize overtopping. Site specific flood impacts and mitigation will be prepared during final design, as required by local regulations. The volume of floodplain fill will be restored on-site, to the extent feasible.

4.11 Wild and Scenic Rivers and Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area/Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA)

The FEIS identifies and evaluates the original preferred alternative's impacts to Wild and Scenic Rivers the Mississippi River Critical Area, and the MNRRA. The evaluation of impacts remains unchanged from the FEIS, with the exception of the proposed revised stormwater detention pond at the Anoka Station site. Specifically, the FEIS identified a stormwater pond for the Anoka Station that was partly located within the MnDNR scenic easement for the Rum River. As part of the FEIS process, Mn/DOT and the City of Anoka met with representatives from the MnDNR to discuss the pond design. The FEIS noted that Mn/DOT would continue to work with the MnDNR to design ponding that adheres to easement covenants and limits impacts to the viewshed of the Rum River.

As engineering analysis progressed on the Northstar Corridor, a revised ponding design has been proposed that reduces the encroachment of the scenic easement (see Figure 3.5). As noted above,

Mn/DOT will continue to work with the MnDNR on the final design of the pond to ensure it is designed to minimize impacts to the Rum River.

4.12 Vegetation and Wildlife

Section 4.3 of the FEIS (*page 44-11 through 4-16*) documented the affected environment, impacts and proposed mitigation measures for the full system (80.1 miles from downtown Minneapolis to Rice), and the MOS of the preferred alternative (40.1 miles from downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake).

Plant communities were identified and general cover types determined in the FEIS using a combination of aerial photographs and on-site field surveys that were conducted by the MnDNR. The proposed facilities associated with the commuter rail alternative were field surveyed. The FEIS includes a discussion of the general cover types found within the corridor. While the general description of the habitat types has not changed, reference to the types has been incorporated herein. The importance of the cover type relates directly to the variety, quality, and quantity of wildlife habitats within the study area. The cover types documented in the FEIS included:

- Farmlands
- Grassland habitat
- Prairie remnant habitat
- Wetland habitat
- Woodland habitat
- Rural residential
- Wildlife Management/Nature Center and Park Reserve Areas

The FEIS analysis indicated that a small amount of farmland, grassland, and woodland habitats in the study area would be impacted. Considering the entire study area, the amount of impact to each habitat type represents a small fraction of the total amount of that habitat type available.

The FEIS indicated that a good quality prairie remnant (3.6 acres), located just north of the TH 10 crossing north of Elk River, would be impacted by the proposed track improvements. The National Heritage Program (NHP) verified this remnant during the railroad right-of-way study in 1998 (DNR Biological Report No. 61, 1999). This remnant is within BNSF right-of-way.

The mitigation measures presented in Section 4.3.5 (*page 4-15*) of the FEIS remain unchanged for the revised preferred alternative. They are incorporated herein by reference to the EA.

Sections 4.8 and 4.9 will address potential farmland and wetland impacts and mitigation documented in the FEIS, compared to the impacts and proposed mitigation under the revised preferred alternative.

Change in Impact Summary

The revised preferred alternative would not result in a change in the impacts and mitigation measures described and evaluated in the FEIS.

4.13 Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

MOS of Preferred Alternative Evaluated in FEIS

For the FEIS, information on rare, threatened, and endangered species (RTE) was taken from data provided by the MnDNR Natural Heritage Program (NHP). Information on habitat type was taken from the *Minnesota's Endangered Flora and Fuana (Coffin and Pfannmuller, 1998)* as well as information provided by the NHP. The MnDNR did an extensive review of potential RTE species along the existing BNSF rail corridor in 1998.

The Mn/DOT wildlife biologist was also contacted to obtain information on federally listed RTE species.

The FEIS identified the following impacts associated with the MOS of the preferred alternative.

Plant Species and Communities

The recorded dry prairie (central) sand-gravel subtype and the lakebed are within the Springbrook Nature Center. Both zones are east of the existing tracks, within the interior of the park. No impacts are anticipated as a result of project construction.

Wildlife Species

The Blanding's turtle has been observed west of Elk River in the Orono Lake wetland complex, in Big Lake, at Coon Creek, and at Springbrook Nature Center. Of these observations, two are located in proximity to the potential track improvements (west of Elk River and Big Lake). While the potential track improvements are not expected to affect nesting habitat for the turtle, they may inhibit turtle movement.

Updated Information

As part of the EA analysis, the MnDNR was contacted to provide updated Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) data for the revised preferred alternative study area. Additionally, the Mn/DOT wildlife biologist was contacted to provide updated in formation on the federally listed RTE species. Copies of the correspondence are included in Appendix A.1.

Revised Preferred Alternative

One species was identified on the request for federally listed threatened and endangered species, the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). As stated in the Mn/DOT letter dated November 30, 2005, according to the information provided by the Natural Heritage Database (updated October 13, 2005) maintained by the MnDNR, there is a bald eagle nest on an island in the Mississippi River approximately 750 meters west of the existing rail line. There are no other known occurrences of federally-listed threatened and endangered species within the immediate project area. The eagle nest is 0.46 mile from the proposed construction area, and there is no direct line of sight to the existing railroad tracks. Due to the location and nature of the proposed project, Mn/DOT has concluded that the project will have no effect on federally-listed threatened and endangered species.

According to the MnDNR NHIS, there are 28 known occurrences of rare species or native plant communities within the one-mile radius of the area searched for the Northstar Corridor project (see Appendix A-1). Several of the records are for the same species (e.g. eight for Blanding's turtle). Based on the proposed revised preferred alternative, potential impacts would be limited to the Blanding's turtle.

The NHIS report indicates the wetland complexes within the corridor are known to support the Blanding's turtle, which are listed as threatened in Minnesota. This species of turtle lives primarily in shallow, calm, well-vegetated bodies of water adjacent or close to areas of sandy uplands. Females nest in the sandy upland areas and may travel up to one mile from their home wetland to find adequate nesting sites.

Adhering to erosion and sediment control measures during construction will minimize the risk of impacts to the Blanding's turtle habitat. A silt fence will be installed at the construction limits of the track improvements to keep turtles out of the construction zone. Access roads will be kept to the minimal width required to meet capacity and safety standards. Project area water bodies and wetlands will be protected from direct road and development runoff via stormwater treatment ponds and naturally vegetated buffers.

4.14 Water Quality and Utilities

MOS of Preferred Alternative Evaluated in FEIS

Existing utility and water quality conditions were evaluated based on site visits and review of existing topographic and utility maps. Water quality impacts generally originate from the following:

- Erosion of exposed soils during construction
- Reduced infiltration and increased runoff from the construction of new impervious surfaces
- Pollutants from automobiles that collect on impervious surfaces and are washed off by stormwater runoff
- Increased stormwater runoff that overburdens existing drainage systems, causing flooding
- Fill or construction in floodplains, which affects flood levels in streams and rivers

Sanitary sewer service is required for the layover facility and the vehicle maintenance facility. The purpose of the layover facility is to provide for light cleaning and inspection. The vehicle maintenance facility will be a full-time operation.

Water service is required at the layover facility, vehicle maintenance facility, and at each of the proposed stations. The water service requirements at the layover facility and the vehicle maintenance facility are the same as described above for sanitary service. The proposed stations will use water service for wash-down of the platforms.

The affected environment section of the FEIS includes a description of the existing conditions of each of the stations and maintenance/layover facilities proposed under the original preferred alternative. The existing condition information remains valid for the components of the revised preferred alternative, with the exception of the Big Lake station/maintenance facility because it was not included in the original preferred alternative (see next section).

Impacts and Updated Information under Revised Preferred Alternative

Updated information pertaining to the system components of the revised preferred alternative are presented on the following page.

General Discussion

Platform drainage has changed at each site. In the FEIS, there were catch basins proposed to be placed on the platform. Based on refinement of the station design, the platforms are proposed to be sloped to drain away from the tracks. Additionally, each site will have ballast drain pipes that will drain the water that collects between the platform and the tracks, as well as water that the platform will block from draining downstream.

Each site will require coordination with the BNSF railroad to relocate their utilities in the BNSF right-of-way.

Downtown Minneapolis

No changes have been made from the FEIS.

Fridley

In the FEIS, the location of the pond on the east side was on the far south; upon further evaluation, in order to drain the platform it is proposed to move that pond to the far east side of the parking area with another smaller pond located nearer to the handicap parking and tunnel. The storm system on the east side will be modified, but the outlets will remain the same. The storm system on the west side has not changed.

Coon Rapids

The existing storm drainage system has no significant changes from the FEIS. The station would utilize as much of the existing system as possible with a new proposed system in the platform area.

Both Coon Rapids and Elk River have an electrical transmission line that runs through them. Both sites have been designed to accommodate the large poles associated with the transmission line.

Anoka

A change to the design of the stormwater treatment pond has been proposed.

The FEIS contemplated a stormwater treatment pond to the west of the station, on the opposite side of Fourth Street. This site was close to the Rum River in an undeveloped publicly-owned parcel, and was partly within a Conservation Easement held by the MnDNR. The original design would have required construction of a new outlet to the Rum River, within either a pipe or an improved channel. The basin was designed to intercept and treat flows from an urban watershed along Grant Street as well as station flows.

The City of Anoka is proposing zoning changes to increase development densities in the project area. City staff requested that the capacity of the stormwater basin be increased to accommodate somewhat larger future flows from the Grant Street basin. As a result, there was a need to slightly increase the size of the basin. The new design of the basin accommodates this increase in a different footprint within the same undeveloped parcel as the original concept.

The new design of the stormwater basin provides for a reduction of environmental impacts compared to the original design, including:

- Reduced construction impact within the conservation easement. Although there is still some need to encroach within the conservation easement, the extent of impact is reduced from 32,794 square feet (0.75 ac.) to 5,286 square feet (0.12ac.).
- Reduced utility impacts — the original design required relocation of an existing 18” sanitary trunk sewer. The new design avoids impacts to the sewer.

- No new outlet required to the Rum River – the revised design utilizes the existing culvert to discharge to the river, eliminating the need to trench or cut a new channel through existing vegetation to the water's edge.
- Increased water quality treatment capacity as discussed above.

Elk River

Based on further review, no significant change will be required from the FEIS.

Big Lake

This is a new site with a new storm drainage plan and stormwater treatment pond to serve the station and the maintenance facility. An existing water main is available at CR 43 immediately adjacent to the site. There is an existing sanitary sewer main in CR 43 adjacent to the site; however, the city is also planning near-term construction of a new trunk sewer in CR 43 that will probably serve as the point of connection for the maintenance facility. The station does not require sanitary sewer service. Gas, telephone, and electric service are also available from CR 43.

The new site is located on an existing agricultural field (with a center pivot irrigation system), which has few utilities on it. There is one underground fiber-optic line that will need to be relocated during construction.

The original location of the Big Lake station was in the northwest quadrant of CR 43 and the BNSF railway tracks. The new location is in the southeast quadrant. The new location eliminates the need for the station track to have a grade crossing at CR 43 because trains will now stop short of the highway. New roadways will be constructed as part of the project to connect both the station and maintenance facility to CR 43.

A single stormwater conveyance and treatment system will serve both the Big Lake station site and the maintenance facility. Flows will be collected in an underground pipe system within the station, and then discharged into an open vegetated channel at the east side of the station. This channel will convey the flows approximately 2,000 feet easterly to the maintenance facility site. There, another underground system will carry the station flows as well as flows from the maintenance facility under the employee parking lot, discharging to a stormwater treatment basin at the east edge of the site. This basin will be designed to provide treatment capacity for the entire combined area of the station and maintenance sites. The treatment basin will outlet toward an existing wetland area to the east, which replicates the existing natural drainage pattern of the site area.

Mitigation Measures

Water quality degradation from erosion, sedimentation, and the release of pollutants during construction is not expected to be significant and will be minimized through the use of BMPs. Construction BMPs will include the use of silt fence, barrier berms, plastic coverings for exposed ground, sediment traps, hay bales, temporary sediment detention basins, and rock construction entrances to clean debris off truck tires. In addition, construction activities will be coordinated to minimize the amount and length of time the soil is exposed. To ensure the effectiveness of BMPs, regular maintenance will be performed as appropriate. Appropriate construction BMPs for the proposed facilities will be determined based on final engineering plans and will comply with appropriate regulatory requirements. This will include compliance with various city stormwater management ordinances or policies.

The proposed station sites will create new impervious surface. The increase in impervious surface area will increase stormwater runoff rates and volume, and impact stormwater runoff quality. All project-required ponds have been designed according to the EPA's National Urban Runoff Program criteria and applicable watershed district guidelines.

Planned utility service disruptions will include an advance notice to affected property owners and the following mitigation measures:

- Formulate a detailed public utility relocation plan for all relocated utilities
- Avoid utility disruption by altering service
- Minimize extent of the utility disruptions
- Plan for utility service disruptions to occur, to the extent possible, during periods of no-usage or minimal usage
- Coordinate the relocation of private utilities to minimize impact to customers

4.15 Hazardous Waste and Contaminated Material

MOS of Preferred Alternative Evaluated in FEIS

The FEIS concluded that based on the findings of the preliminary site and field review, additional assessment was recommended at the following stations (MOS): Anoka, Coon Rapids-Foley, Fridley, Minneapolis Northeast, and Downtown Minneapolis. The work would include clarification of the locations of hazardous material releases with respect to the proposed project sites, and status of site cleanups for contaminated properties on or adjacent to the parcels to be acquired.

With regards to track improvements, it was concluded that since the proposed track improvements would require minimal excavation or earthwork, the potential for encountering hazardous materials would be low and hazardous materials are not expected to be significant. Capping or removing of contaminated material would occur if such materials are encountered. The FEIS indicated that with regards to railroad operation, the commuter rail project could result in a slight increase in the potential for hazardous material spills along the right-of-way because of the increase in rail traffic compared to existing conditions. In the event of a hazardous materials spill from a commuter rail train, BNSF environmental response procedures will be followed to minimize adverse impacts. BNSF also has programs in place that address proper containment and management of fuels, lubricants, and other potentially hazardous substances handled during rail operations, including train storage and maintenance.

Prior to the construction of corridor improvements, BNSF will develop and implement a construction contingency plan that addresses hazardous substance identification, notification, management, and disposal — in the unlikely event that hazardous substances are encountered during construction and operation.

Revised Preferred Alternative Updated Information

Based on the preliminary impact assessment and mitigation measures defined in the Northstar Corridor FEIS, Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESA) were completed at the Fridley and Anoka station sites. A summary of the findings from the referenced ESAs is presented in the following paragraphs as updated information to the FEIS.

Fridley Station

A Phase I ESA was completed for this site in July 2005 (Braun Intertec, July 2005). The site is currently grassy and undeveloped. The Phase I ESA found that the west site area was a former rail yard. Air photos from the 1930s and 1940s indicate a number of spur tracks in the area, but no buildings. The east site area has not been developed. The Phase I ESA included information from a 1999 report conducted for the City of Fridley HRA. The 1999 report described the results of the test pits and soil sampling completed on the property. The test pits identified an area of buried demolition debris containing brick, concrete, glass, steel, wood, plastic, shingles, and metal containers. Soil analytical testing indicated low levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), diesel range organics (DRO), and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). The proposed station area is listed as a MnPCA Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup (VIC) site.

Based on the findings of the Phase I and a site visit conducted on August 11, 2005, mitigation at the site should include:

- Conduct extensive file review for the subject property
- Complete a Phase II/Drilling Investigation at the west site area prior to acquisition. Along with sampling for VOCs, PAHs, and DRO which have already been identified at the site; samples should also be analyzed for metals and asbestos.
- Develop a response action plan (RAP), and obtain approval from the VIC program for the RAP.
- Obtain liability assurances as applicable from the MnPCA VIC program to protect the new owner and subsequent owners from liability for the site's existing contaminants.

Anoka Station

A Phase I ESA was completed on the site in July 2005 (Braun Intertec, July 2005). The site is currently primarily open space with a gravel and bare earth surface. There are gravel and crushed bituminous piles, demolition debris piles, a large pad mounted transformer on skids, and a four-stall garage on the site. The Phase I ESA found that the site was occupied by several fuel storage businesses in the 1950s through the 1970s. More recently, the site was used as a storage yard by the local municipal electrical utility. A number of petroleum release sites surround the property. Three of the petroleum release sites directly adjoin the property.

As the Anoka station parking facility will be developed by the City of Anoka, they will be the lead agency responsible for the required remedial actions at the parking structure site. For the Northstar Commuter Rail project, investigations will be completed to check for potential groundwater contamination in the proposed pond area. If contamination is found, a clean up plan will be developed and the required MnPCA approvals will be obtained.

Phase I ESAs have not been completed for the Downtown Minneapolis, Coon Rapids-Riverdale, Elk River, and the proposed revised Big Lake station and maintenance facility sites. A summary of recommendations for those sites is presented herein as updated information to the FEIS.

Downtown Minneapolis Station

The Northstar FEIS recommended the preparation of a Phase I ESA at the Downtown Minneapolis station site. A Phase I ESA will be completed at the proposed station site prior to project letting. If the Phase I ESA indicates that known or potential contaminated properties exist on or adjacent to the station site, a Phase II/Drilling Investigation will be completed to check for possible soil and groundwater contamination. Additionally, if contamination is found, a clean-up plan will be prepared, required MnPCA approvals applied for, and special provisions included in the contract for properly handling any contaminated materials encountered during construction.

Coon Rapids – Riverdale Station

The Coon Rapids Riverdale station is currently a bituminous park-and-ride lot. No contaminated materials were encountered when the site was developed as a park-and-ride facility (2002). Previously conducted geotechnical investigations (drilling) will be reviewed to confirm appropriate soil conditions (e.g. no contamination) in the area of the footings for the pedestrian crossing.

Elk River Station

The site is primarily developed as an existing park-and-ride facility. During the development of the park-and-ride lot, no contaminated materials were encountered. Based on field review and work completed during the EIS, it is unlikely that this site has contaminated soil or groundwater based on its past and current use. No additional work is required on this site.

Big Lake Station and Vehicle Maintenance Facility

Based on past and current land use, this site does not appear to have contaminated soil or groundwater. No further work on this site is recommended.

Change of Impact Summary

This section includes updated information along with an assessment of potential impacts associated with the proposed revisions to the preferred alternative (limited to Big Lake station area that was not included in the preferred alternative). Based on the findings presented above, the revised preferred alternative would not result in impacts significantly different than those documented in the FEIS. Removal of the Northeast Minneapolis and Coon Rapids-Foley stations from the preferred alternative MOS eliminates the impacts and potential clean up required at both of those proposed station locations.

4.16 Air Quality

MOS of Preferred Alternative Evaluated in FEIS

The Twin Cities metropolitan area of Minnesota is in current compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for transportation-related pollutants, including ozone, carbon monoxide, particulate matter, and nitrogen oxides.

Section 4.7 of the FEIS documents the potential air quality impacts associated with the defined no-build and commuter rail alternatives with regard to national and state ambient air quality standards.

Three intersection locations were selected for air quality analysis, as they represent worse case locations within the corridor in terms of traffic volume and vehicular delay. The three locations include:

- TH 65/Broadway Avenue
- TH 47/61st Avenue
- Coon Rapids Boulevard/Foley Boulevard

For each location, the highest predicted one-hour and eight-hour CO concentrations were calculated. No air quality violations were encountered under the preferred alternative evaluated in the FEIS.

Revised Preferred Alternative

As the proposed changes to the preferred alternative would not significantly increase the number of park-and-ride lot spaces proposed at each of the stations, the findings from the FEIS are considered valid for the revised preferred alternative and incorporated by reference in the EA.

4.17 Noise and Vibration

MOS of Preferred Alternative Evaluated in FEIS

The noise and vibration assessment conducted as part of the Northstar Corridor FEIS included a screening for sensitive noise and vibration sites, an investigation of the ambient noise conditions, the identification of potential noise and vibration impacts, and an overview of possible mitigation measures for adversely impacted locations (*See Section 4.8 of the FEIS*). The *FTA's Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment,* April 1995, guidelines were followed to conduct the noise and vibration screening and general assessments.

The general noise assessment included noise from all possible sources, including: commuter rail, freight service, bus service at transit stations, and automobile activity associated with park-and-ride facilities. The assessment included comparing the project related noise levels to the existing noise levels in order to determine human reaction to the amount of change. Consistent with the FTA guidance, there are three possible outcomes to the general noise assessment: no impact, impact, and severe impact.

The MOS of the preferred alternative evaluated in the FEIS indicated that up to 14 sensitive receiver locations could experience a noise impact (See Figures in Appendix A.2). The areas are summarized in Table 4.4

Table 4.4 — Noise and Vibration Impact

Area #	Noise Sensitive Area	Land Use Category	Measurement Location	Measured Ambient Noise (dBA)	Metric	Estimated Project Noise (dBA)	Range of Impact (dBA)	Potential Noise Impact	Distance to Centerline
R19	Oak Terrace Estates	2	Monitor 3	60	Ldn	58	58-63	Impact	100
R32	Main Street Northwest Residential Cluster	2	Monitor 2	56	Ldn	58	57-62	Impact	100
R33	119th Avenue NW Residential Cluster	2	Monitor 2	56	Ldn	56	56-62	Impact	135
R40	Residential Cluster	2	Monitor 2	56	Ldn	56	56-62	Impact	135
R41	CR 18 Residential Cluster	2	Monitor 2	56	Ldn	58	56-62	Impact	100
R42	South Heights Drive Residential Cluster	2	Monitor 2	56	Ldn	56	56-62	Impact	135
R43	CR 18 Residential Cluster	2	Monitor 2	56	Ldn	56	56-62	Impact	135

Continued

Area #	Noise Sensitive Area	Land Use Category	Measurement Location	Measured Ambient Noise (dBA)	Metric	Estimated Project Noise (dBA)	Range of Impact (dBA)	Potential Noise Impact	Distance to Centerline
R44	Jay Street NW Residential Cluster	2	Monitor 2	56	Ldn	58	56-62	Impact	100
R45	Egret Blvd. Residential Cluster	2	Monitor 2	56	Ldn	56	56-62	Impact	135
R46	Residential cluster	2	Monitor 2	56	Ldn	56	56-62	Impact	135
R47	Egret Blvd. Residential Cluster	2	Monitor 2	56	Ldn	58	56-62	Impact	100
R52	East River Road Residential Cluster	2	Monitor 2	56	Ldn	57	56-62	Impact	100
R54	East River Road Residential Cluster	2	Monitor 2	56	Ldn	57	56-62	Impact	100
R55	79th Avenue Residential Cluster	2	Monitor 2	56	Ldn	57	56-62	Impact	100

The FEIS identified two potential vibration sensitive areas within the potential impact assessment distance. One of the sites was located outside the MOS limits, and the other site (Area R6, Broadway Avenue South Residential cluster) would remain a potential impact area.

Revised Preferred Alternative Noise and Vibration Impacts

The following change in noise impact would be experienced under the revised preferred alternative.

Northeast Minneapolis Station

Noise levels associated with idling trains and whistle blowing when entering and exiting the Northeast Minneapolis station was of particular concern to residents in proximity to the proposed station. The concerns expressed by the surrounding residents would be avoided as this station is not included in the revised preferred alternative.

Big Lake Station and Vehicle Maintenance Facility

The DEIS evaluated a maintenance facility on the south side of the BNSF and to the east of CR 43. Because there are no sensitive receivers in proximity to the proposed facilities, no noise impacts would occur.

Third Mainline from MP 15.1 to 21.1

The inclusion of a third mainline on the west side (railroad south) of the existing mainline from MP 15.1 to 16.6 and on the east side (railroad north) from MP 16.6 to 21.1 would improve potential noise impacts for the following areas previously identified as reaching the "impact" level of noise: from MP 15.1 *to* 21.1: #R52, #R54 and #R55. This reduction in noise impacts would be attributable to the fact that the third mainline is proposed on the east side (railroad north side) of the existing mainline. The analysis conducted during the EIS, reflected a third mainline on the west side (railroad south) of the existing mainlines. The three areas presented previously

are residential clusters (R52, R54, and R55) located on the west side (railroad south) of the mainline. By aligning the third mainline to the east side (railroad north), the distance from the centerline of the third mainline would increase by approximately 30 feet. Although not previously identified as experiencing an "impact" level of noise, residential clusters R59, R58, R57, R56, R55, R53, R52, R51, and R50 would experience a potential decrease in noise associated with the commuter rail train as the distance from the centerline of the third mainline would increase by approximately 30 feet from that originally evaluated in the EIS (noise analysis reflected a third mainline on the southwest side of the mainline). In contrast, Area 27 (City of Fridley Community Park) and Area 31 (Springbrook Nature Center) would experience noise levels associated with a 30-foot decrease in the distance from the centerline of the proposed third main. Both of these areas were identified in the no impact category in the EIS.

LRT Alignment on South Side of 5th Street North

Although the FEIS indicated that an LRT alignment on the north side of 5th Street North would not result in noise and vibration impacts to surrounding buildings (of particular concern was the historic Ford Centre building); the shifting of the LRT alignment to the south of 5th Street North would minimize potential noise and vibration impacts even further.

Change in Noise and Vibration Impact Summary

The proposed revised preferred alternative would not significantly change the impacts and/or mitigation presented in the FEIS/ROD. The proposed revisions would reduce the potential noise and vibration impacts previously documented in the FEIS for the MOS of the preferred alternative.

Mitigation measures for the proposed changes to the preferred alternative are the same as in the FEIS.

4.18 Transportation

FEIS Evaluation

Transportation Impacts/Mitigation Evaluated for the MOS of the Preferred Alternative in the FEIS

The transportation evaluation included in the FEIS (*Section 5.0*) focused on the operation of individual intersections near the proposed station location areas. *Table 5.1-4 of the FEIS presents the Level of Service (LOS) analysis for existing conditions, year 2020 No-Build and the preferred alternative (See Appendix A-1).* Under the MOS of the preferred alternative, the following locations were identified as having potential traffic impacts:

Minneapolis Downtown Station and LRT Connection

- The 5th Street North/6th Avenue North intersection is expected to operate at a LOS C and LOS B in the AM and PM hours, respectively. Although, the intersection LOS is not expected to be an issue during the PM peak hour, the north approach (southbound) queue length is expected to extend beyond the adjacent 5th Street access along 6th Avenue North.

  The west approach (eastbound left-turn movement) is expected to operate at LOS F during the AM peak hour.
- The 5th Street North/2nd Avenue North intersection is expected to operate at LOS F during the AM and PM peak hours. During both time periods, the eastbound and westbound movements are expected to operate at LOS F, with substantial delays and queue lengths. The proximity of

the Third Avenue Distributor (TAD) Garage access contributes to congestion and to the existing poor operation of this intersection and 5th Street North.

Minneapolis Northeast Station (7th Street NE)

- Central Avenue/7th Street NE is forecast to operate at LOS F and LOS E during the AM and PM peak hours, respectively. The eastbound left-turn movement is forecast to operate at LOS F in both the AM and PM peak hours.
- Central Avenue/SE 8th Street would operate at LOS F in the AM peak hour and LOS F in the PM peak hour. The westbound left-turn movement is forecast to operate at LOS F in the AM peak hour. Left-turn movements from SE 8th Street/the proposed station driveway is forecast to operate at LOS F in the PM peak hour, with substantial delays.

Fridley Station

- East River Road/61st Avenue would operate at LOS D during the PM peak hour (*note:* the intersection would operate at LOS F during the AM peak hour under the no-build and commuter rail alternatives).

Coon Rapids — Foley

- East River Road/Foley Boulevard would operate at LOS B during the AM peak hour and LOS C during the PM peak hour.
- Although the north parking access from Foley Boulevard would operate at LOS B during the PM peak hour, the outbound left turn would operate at LOS E.

Coon Rapids — Riverdale

- Northdale Boulevard/Crooked Lake Boulevard would operate at LOS D during the AM peak hour (*note:* the intersection would operate at LOS F during the PM peak hour under the no-build alternative).

Anoka Station

- Fourth Avenue/Pleasant Street would operate at LOS F during the AM peak hours (*note:* the intersection would operate at LOS F in the PM peak hour under the no-build alternative).
- Seventh Avenue/Johnson Street would operate at LOS F during the AM and PM peak hours. For the AM peak hour, all left-turn movements would operate at LOS F, while during the PM peak hour, the left turn onto 7th Avenue would operate at LOS F.

The following mitigation measures for the MOS of the preferred alternative were presented in the FEIS:

Downtown Minneapolis Station and LRT Connection
(See Figure in Appendix A-2 of EA)

- The 5th Street North/2nd Avenue North intersection – During final design, the signal phasing, and timing will be reviewed with the City of Minneapolis. Providing an actuated phase for the proposed exclusive LRT phase would help improve the operation. However, the intersection is expected to still operate below LOS D during both the AM and PM peak hours.
- The vehicle circulation east of 2nd Avenue North along 5th Street will be reviewed during final design. Changes to the downtown transportation system, including either lane geometry, directional flow on 5th Street, vehicle circulation throughout the nearby region of downtown, or a combination thereof will be evaluated during final design. The best of these mitigation measures will be implemented.

- The possibility of locating the LRT tracks on the south side of 5th Street North after 3rd Avenue will also be studied. This may improve mobility at the 5th Avenue North/5th Street North intersection.

Minneapolis Northeast Station

- Left-turn conditions are not expected to improve with implementation of a preferred alternative. Mn/DOT will continue to work with the City of Minneapolis regarding potential traffic control measures on Central Avenue NE to facilitate safe pedestrian access, vehicle safety, and appropriate LOS on surrounding roadways.

Anoka Station

- As a part of future planned TOD surrounding the Anoka station, the Mn/DOT will partner with the City of Anoka to improve traffic conditions at intersections surrounding the station area, with focus on the intersections at 4th Avenue/Pleasant Street and 7th Avenue/Johnson Street.

Big Lake Station

- To accommodate additional passengers driving to the Big Lake station with it becoming the northwest terminus of the Northstar commuter rail line, 400 parking spaces will be provided at the station. This is 76 more than would be built if the MOS were not adopted. A traffic signal is proposed as mitigation for the intersection of TH 10 and CR 43.

Revised Preferred Alternative

Under the revised preferred alternative, the potential traffic impacts identified at the Northeast Minneapolis and Coon Rapids-Foley stations would be avoided. The following section provides both updated and new impact/mitigation information pertaining to the Downtown Minneapolis station/LRT connection, the Anoka station, and the new Big Lake station location.

Downtown Minneapolis Station/LRT Connection

The FEIS identified the 5th Street LRT extension running along the northern half of 5th Street from 1st Avenue North westerly past 5th Avenue North and then traversing to the southerly side between 5th Avenue North and 6th Avenue North.

As the FEIS documented, the City of Minneapolis requested further review of the merits of the LRT along the southerly half of 5th Street, during the next level of design, to minimize impacts to the traffic operations causing the closure of 5th Avenue North at 5th Street.

The design team reviewed the traffic operations of the 5th Street North/ 2nd Avenue North/5th Street Garage, 5th Street North at 3rd Avenue North, and vertical clearance limitations over I-394 and the 5th Street roadway, west of the LRT Station. Meetings were held with the City of Minneapolis Department of Public Works, the Historic Preservation Commission, and the City of Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development staff.

Based on the design review, modeling the traffic/LRT operations, and meetings with Minneapolis staff, the LRT alignment has been shifted to a southerly alignment from 2nd Avenue North to the west.

This modification to the south side allows for the existing operation of the 5th Street Garage entry/exit rather than a costly reconstruction of the internal operation. The move also eliminated the need for vehicular traffic on 5th Street North from crossing the LRT at both 6th Avenue North

and 2nd Avenue North, as indicated in the FEIS. The need to close 5th Avenue North and the creation of a dead-end street/high retaining wall in front of the Ford Centre was also eliminated with the change to the southerly side.

Anoka Station

The City of Anoka is taking the lead in the development of the proposed parking facility near the proposed station. Their current conceptual plans call for up to 450 parking spaces. The City's overall Commuter Rail Transit Village (CRTV) plan includes reconfiguration of surrounding roads to provide improved safety and traffic flow conditions in the area. Mn/DOT and its partnering agencies will continue to work with the City to identify and implement appropriate mitigation measures to accommodate future traffic conditions at the proposed station.

Big Lake Station

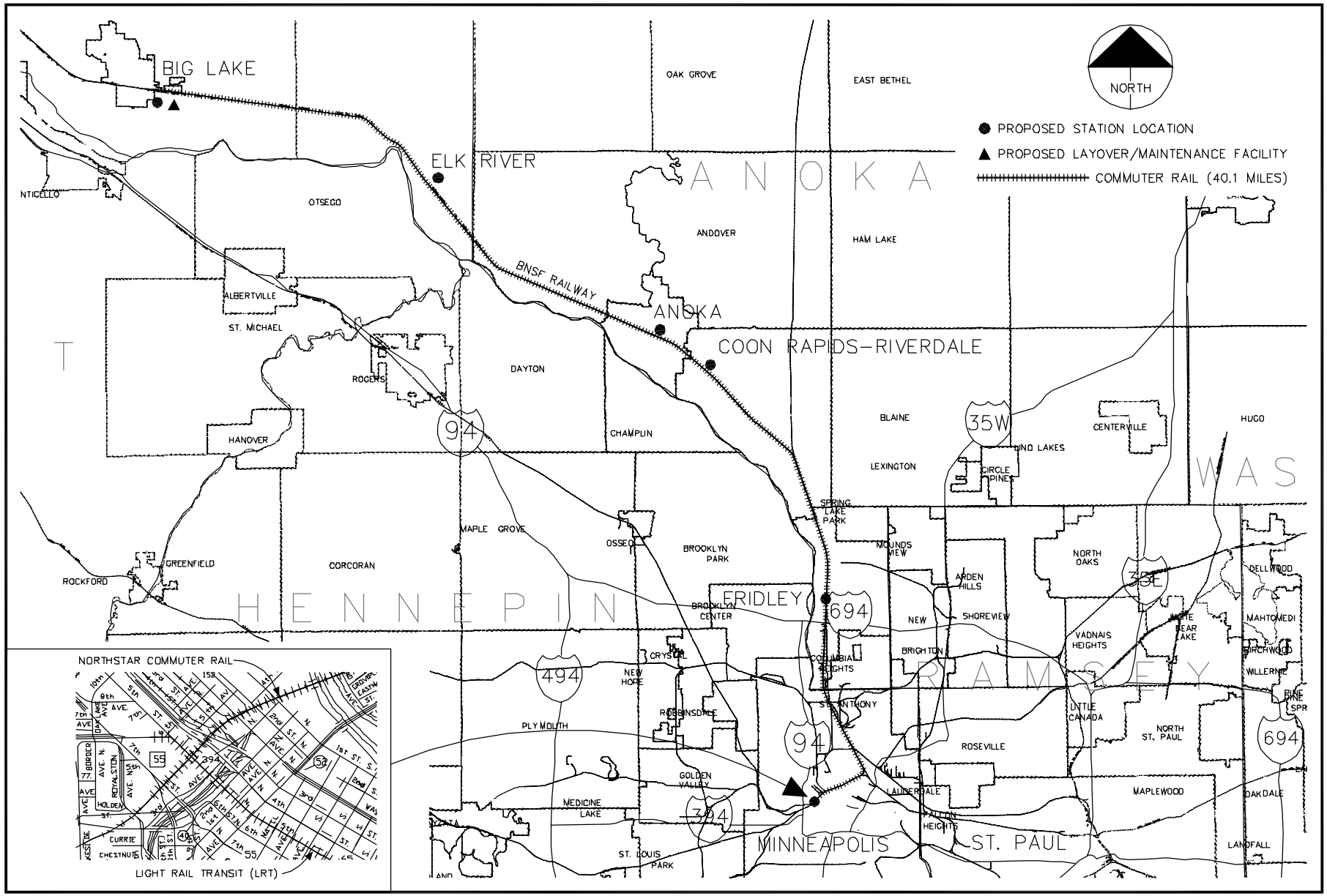
The travel demand model used in the FEIS forecast 502 trips per day starting from the Big Lake station in year 2020, of which 380 arrived by car. (There was no differentiation between those who would drive alone or drive with others to the station nor between those who would park at the station or be dropped off.) There were 324 parking spaces in the Big Lake station plans at that time. Those figures were for a commuter rail line running through Big Lake to Rice. As noted above, under the MOS, it was expected that more people would use the Big Lake station when it became the northwest terminus and additional parking spaces would be necessary. A ridership forecast for the MOS was never run under that version of the travel demand model.

That travel demand model was later adjusted and FTA approved the use of the new version in 2003. The new version has been used to forecast ridership on the revised preferred alternative. In 2025, 620 trips per day are forecast to start from the Big Lake station. Of these, 490 are expected to arrive by car. Again, this figure includes people being dropped off or carpooling and parking at the Big Lake station. This is consistent with the approximate number expected under the MOS of the preferred alternative in the FEIS. Therefore, the mitigation measures specified in the FEIS for the MOS of building 400 parking spaces and providing a traffic signal at the intersection of TH 10 and CR 43 will be adequate. The traffic signal is currently in place and operating.

As noted in Figure 3.7, the proposed station site plan includes an access road which would be approximately 1, 200 feet long. The Northstar Corridor Rail project would construct this road as a new public street, connecting to an existing intersection at CR 43. An additional 2, 400 feet of paved road is being constructed by the project from the station to the maintenance facility site. To accommodate the flow of traffic into the Big Lake station, the addition of a striped turn lane from CR 43 into the Big Lake station is proposed.

Summary of Impact Changes

The revised preferred alternative would result in fewer traffic impacts than those documented in the DEIS/FEIS for the Northstar Corridor.



NOTE:
LRT CONNECTION FOR NORTHSTAR FROM 3RD AVENUE NORTH TO INTERMODAL STATION IN DOWNTOWN MINNEAPOLIS

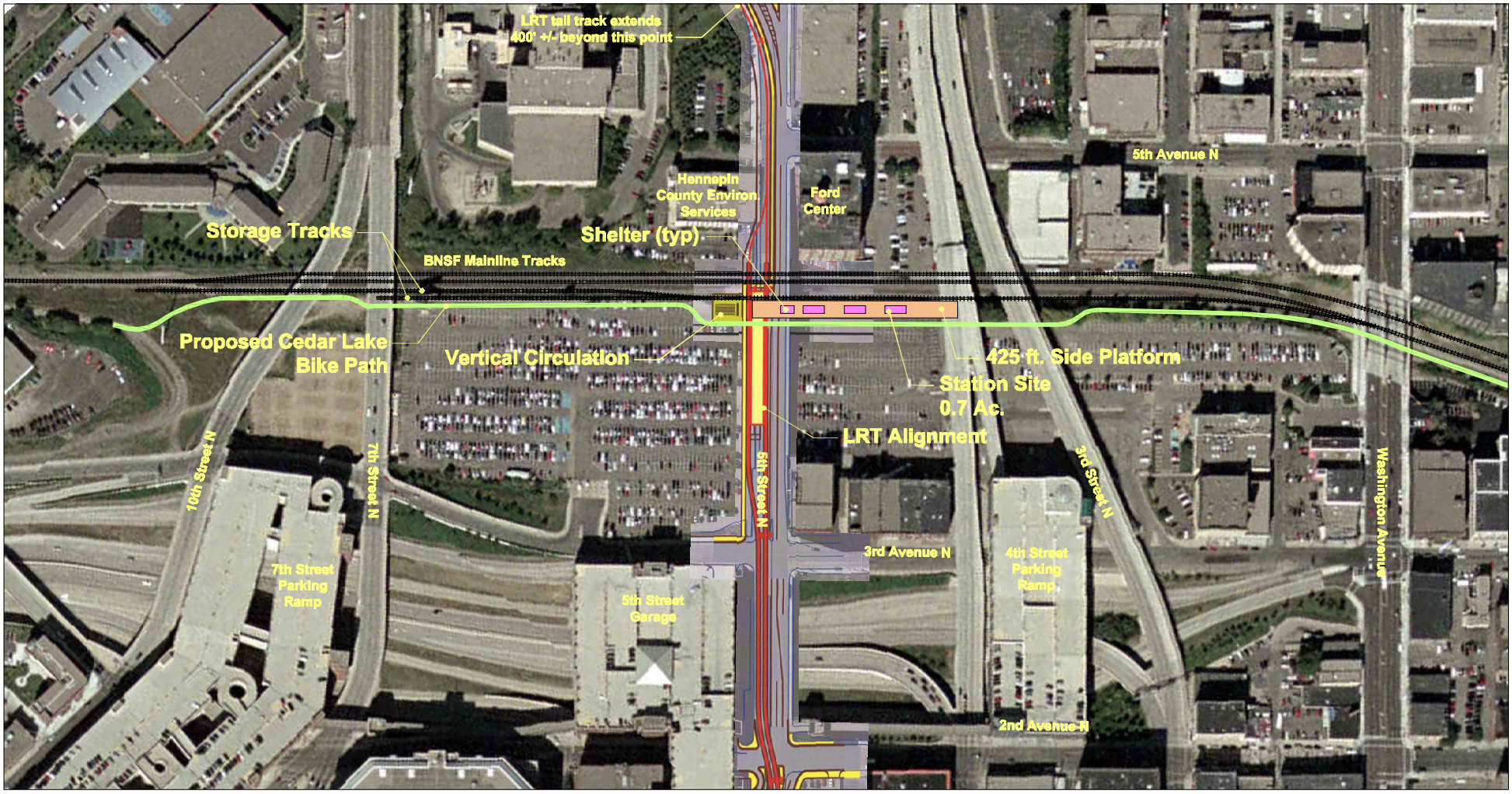
MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NORTHSTAR COMMUTER RAIL

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FIGURE 3.1
REVISED PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE EVALUATED IN EA



NORTH

0 50 100 200
SCALE IN FEET

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

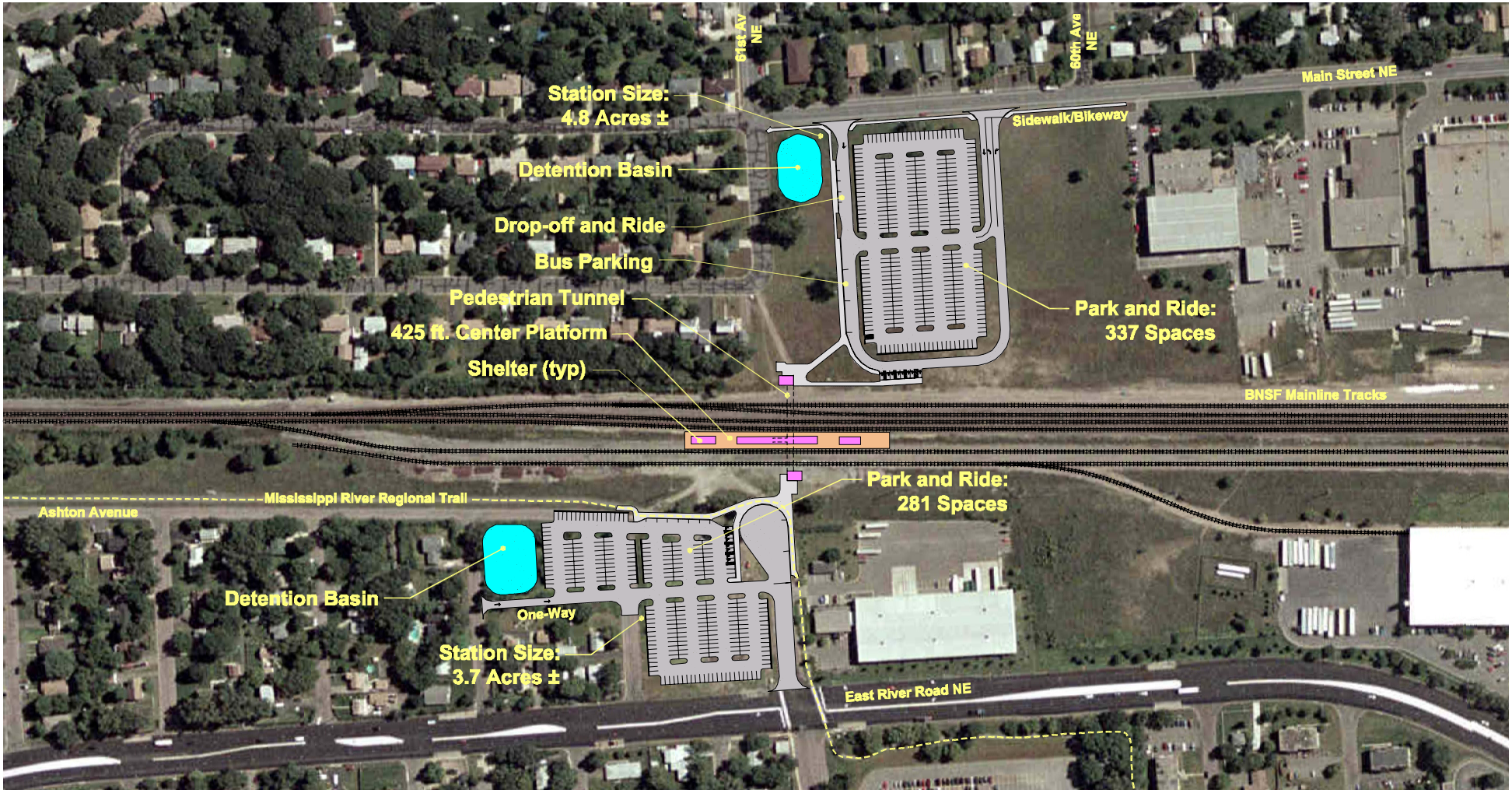
NORTHSTAR COMMUTER RAIL

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FIGURE 3.2
DOWNTOWN MINNEAPOLIS INTERMODAL STATION PLAN

G:\Nstar\CADD\EA_REPORT\EXHIBITS\01-EIS-3-2.dwg December 05, 2005 - 2:39pm



NORTH

0 50 100 200
SCALE IN FEET

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NORTHSTAR COMMUTER RAIL

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FIGURE 3.3
FRIDLEY STATION PLAN

G:\N-star\CADD\EA_REPORT\EXHIBITS\FR-EIS-3-3.dwg December 05, 2005 - 3:24pm

NORTH

0 50 100 200
SCALE IN FEET

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

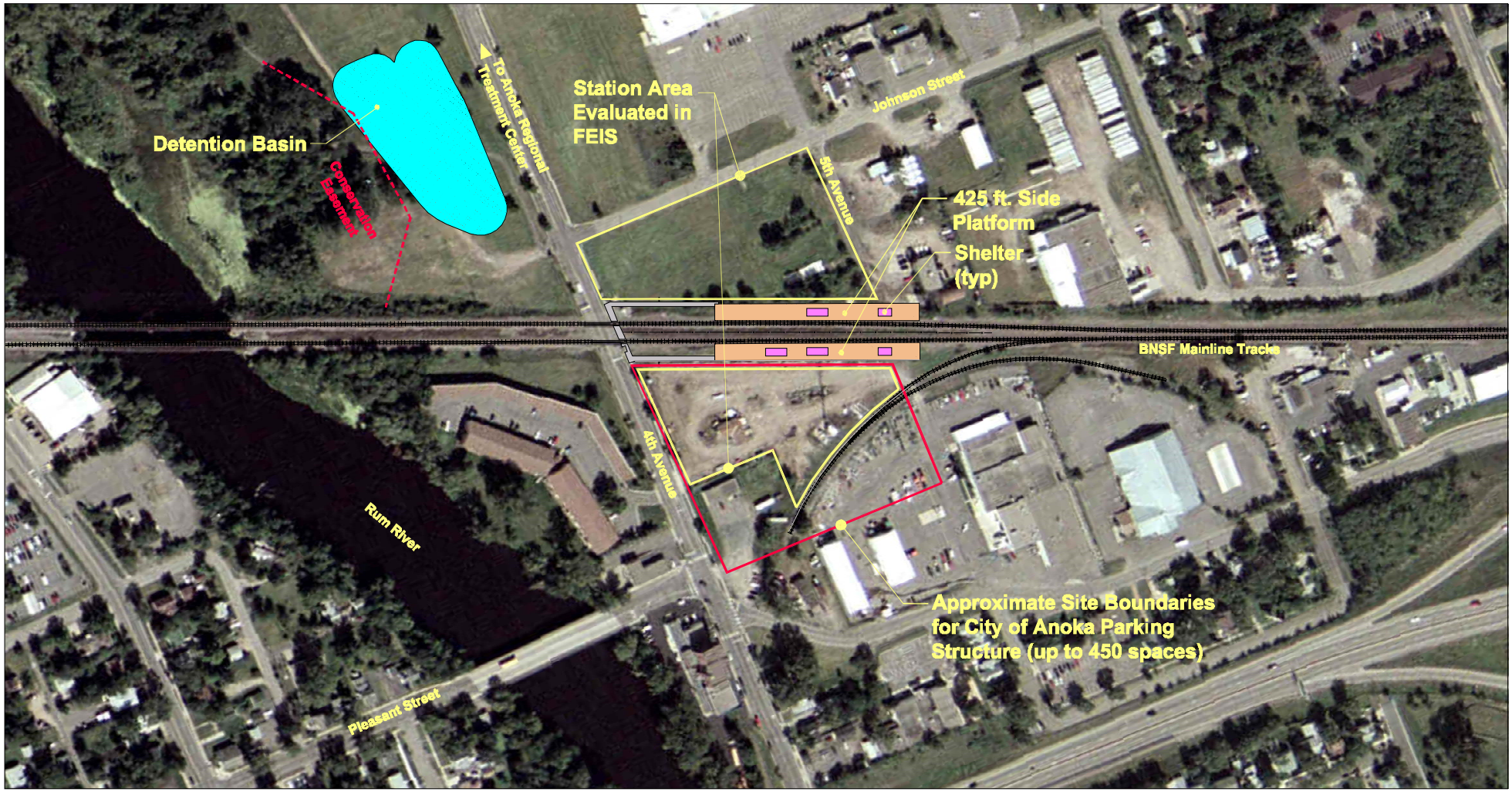
NORTHSTAR COMMUTER RAIL

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FIGURE 3.4
COON RAPIDS STATION PLAN

G:\N-star\CADD\EA_REPORT\EXHIBITS\CR-EIS-3-4.dwg December 05, 2005 - 2:35pm



NORTH

0 50 100 200
SCALE IN FEET

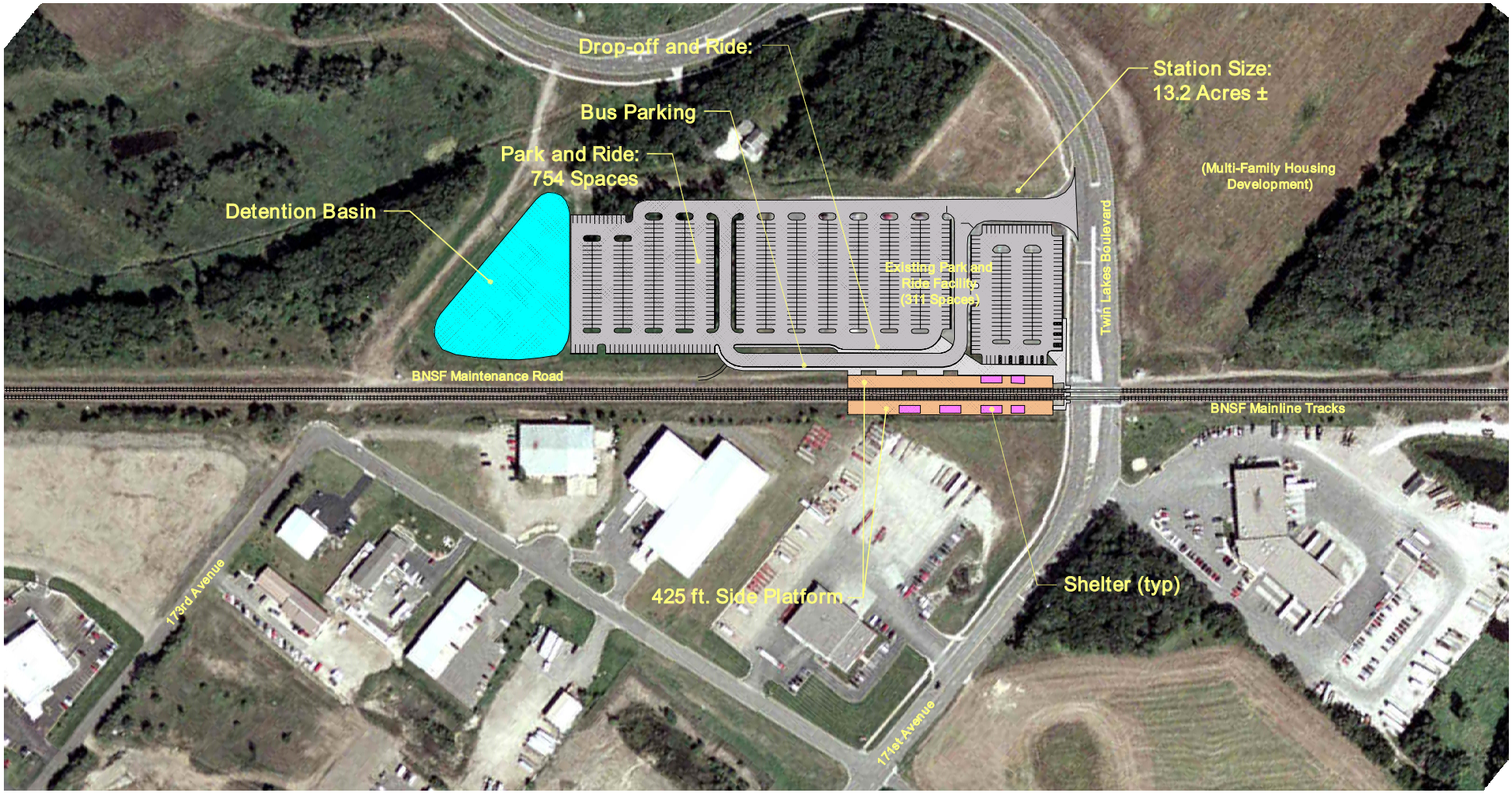
MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NORTHSTAR COMMUTER RAIL

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FIGURE 3.5
ANOKA STATION PLAN



NORTH

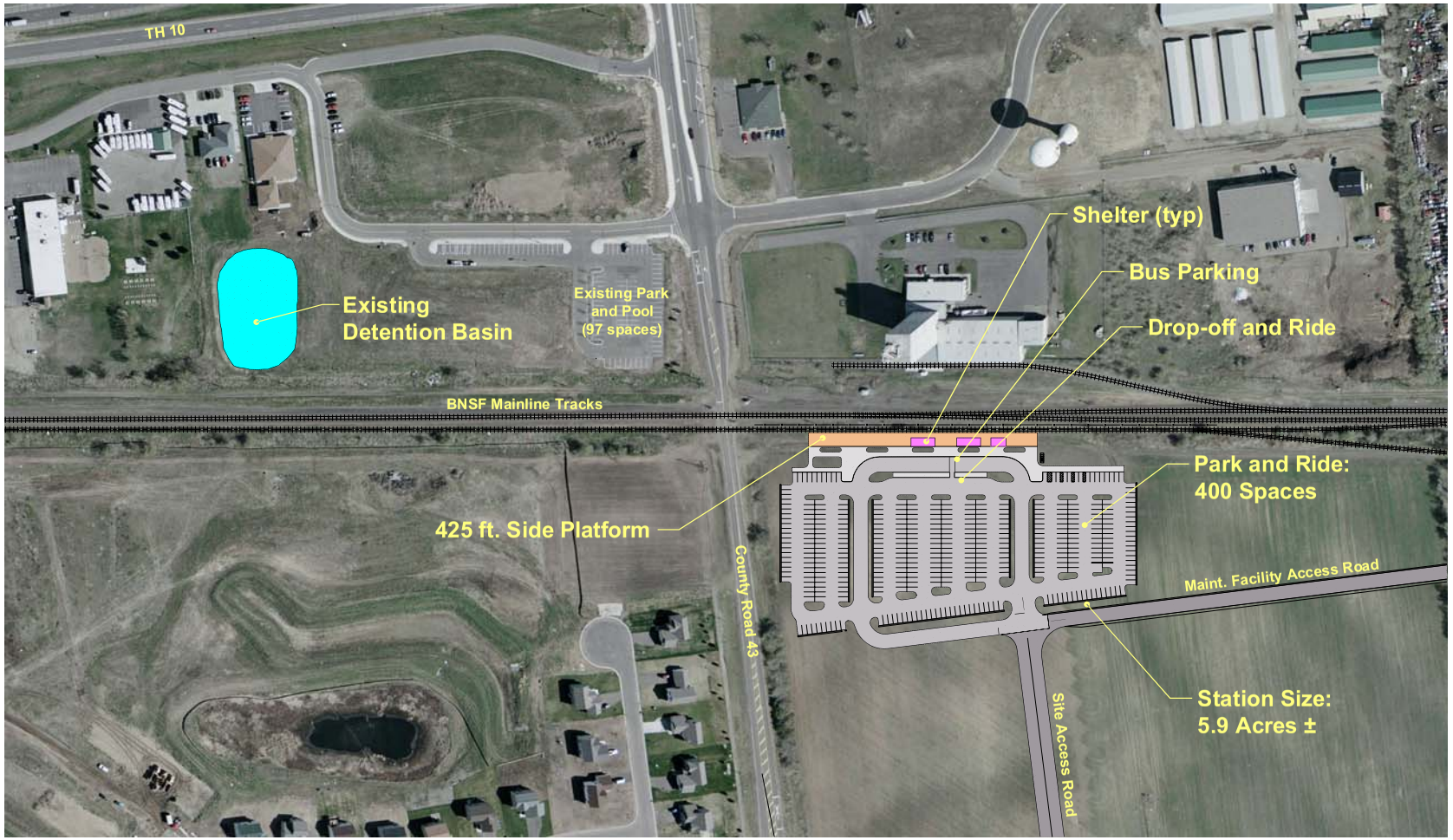
0 50 100 200
SCALE IN FEET

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FIGURE 3.6
ELK RIVER STATION PLAN

G:\N-star\CADD\EA_REPORT\EXHIBITS\ER-EIS-3-6.dwg December 05, 2009 - 3:07pm



NORTH

0 50 100 200

SCALE IN FEET

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NORTHSTAR COMMUTER RAIL

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

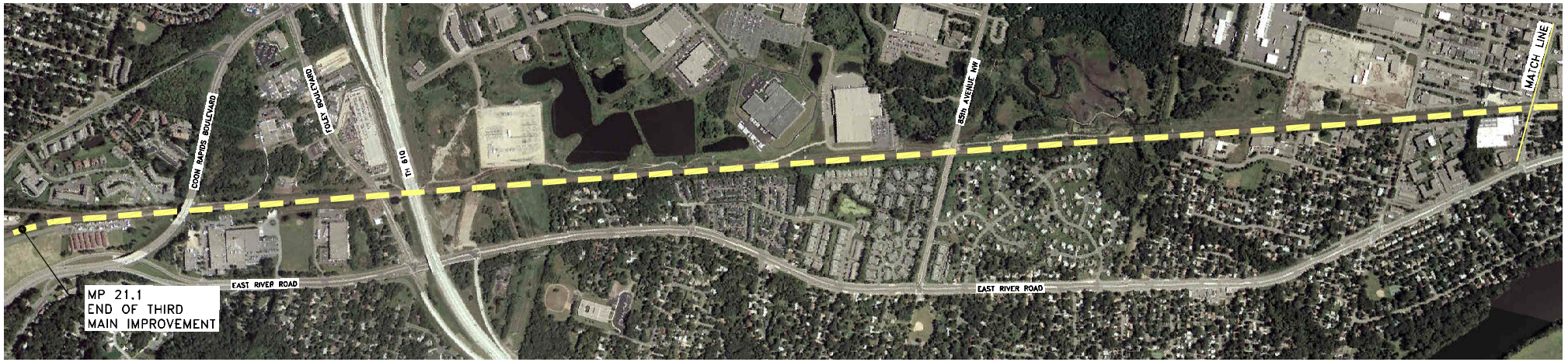
FIGURE 3.7
BIG LAKE STATION PLAN

G:\N-star\CADD\EA_REPORT\EXHIBITS\BL-EIS-3-7.dwg January 03, 2006 - 4:09pm

FROM APPROXIMATELY MILE POST 16.6 TO MILE POST 21.1 THIRD MAIN WOULD BE ON EAST (RAILROAD NORTH) SIDE OF MAINLINE.

FROM MILE POST 15.1 TO APPROXIMATELY MILE POST 16.6 THIRD MAIN ON WEST (RAILROAD SOUTH) SIDE OF MAINLINE

NORTH



NORTH

0 250 500 1000
SCALE IN FEET

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

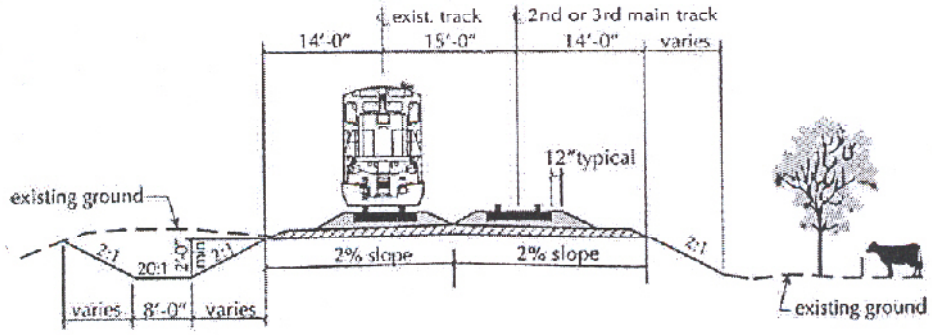
NORTHSTAR COMMUTER RAIL

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

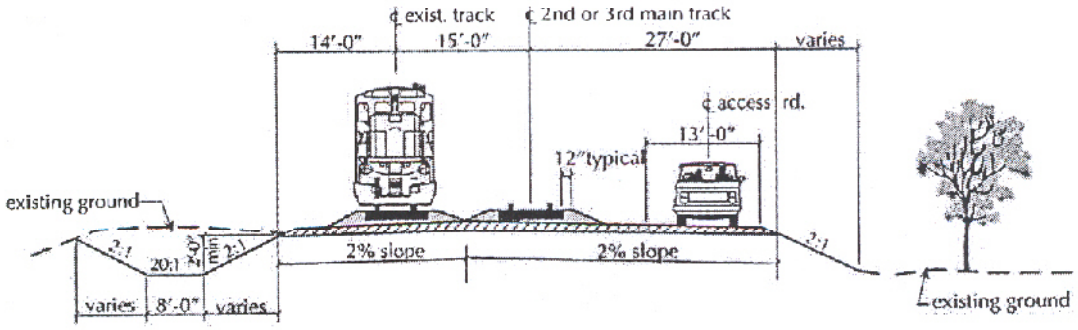
NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FIGURE 3.8
TRACK CAPACITY IMPROVEMENTS EVALUATED IN EA

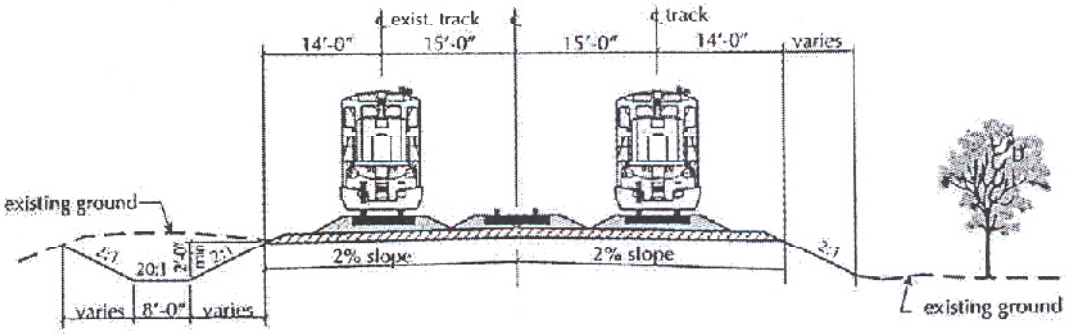
G:\N-star\CADD\EA_REPORT\EXHIBITS\EXHIBIT3-8.dwg December 05, 2003 - 3:12pm



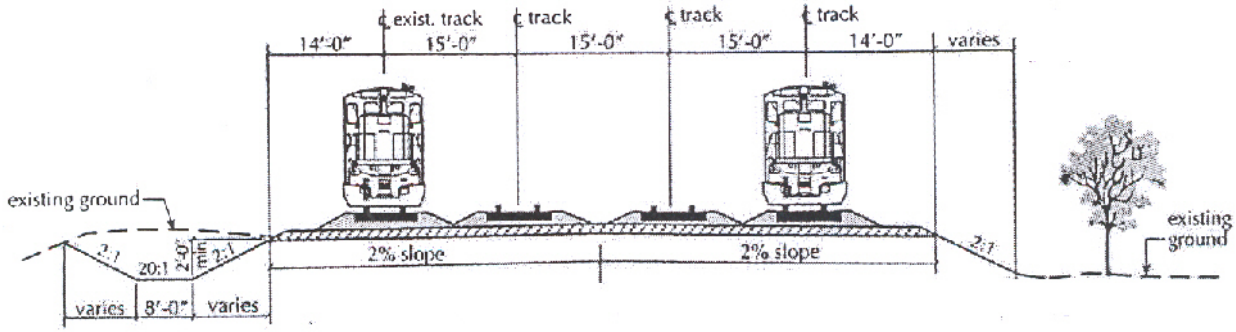
Double Track Tangent with 15'-0' Centers



Double Track Tangent with 15'-0' Centers and 13'-0" Access Road

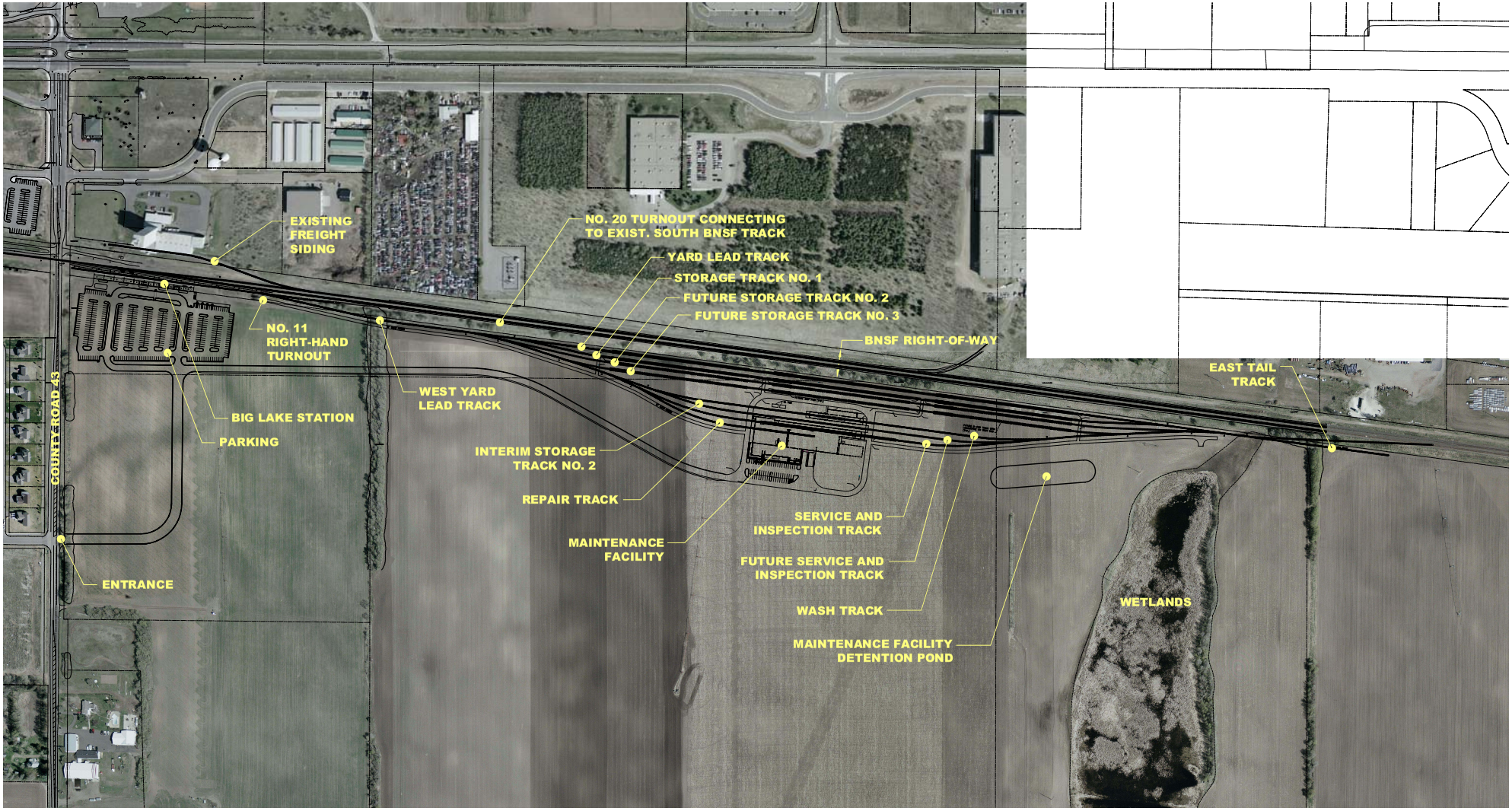


Triple Track Tangent with 15'-0' Centers



Triple Track with Siding Tangent with 15'-0' Centers

NOTE:
THE NORTHTOWN YARD TO RICE CREEK AREA OF CORRIDOR WOULD HAVE 20 FOOT TRACK CENTERS.



NORTH

0 100 200 400
SCALE IN FEET

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

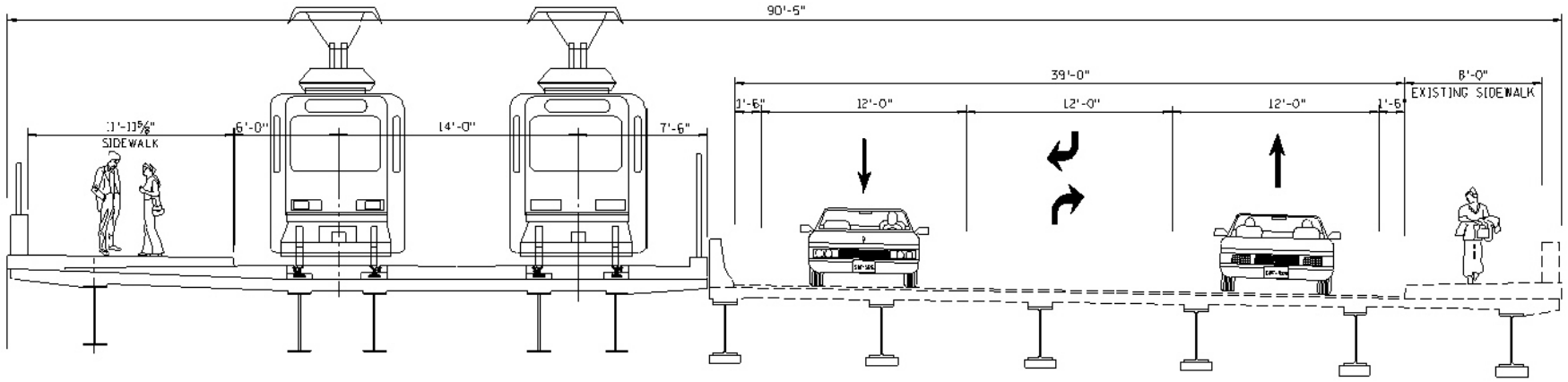
NORTHSTAR COMMUTER RAIL

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

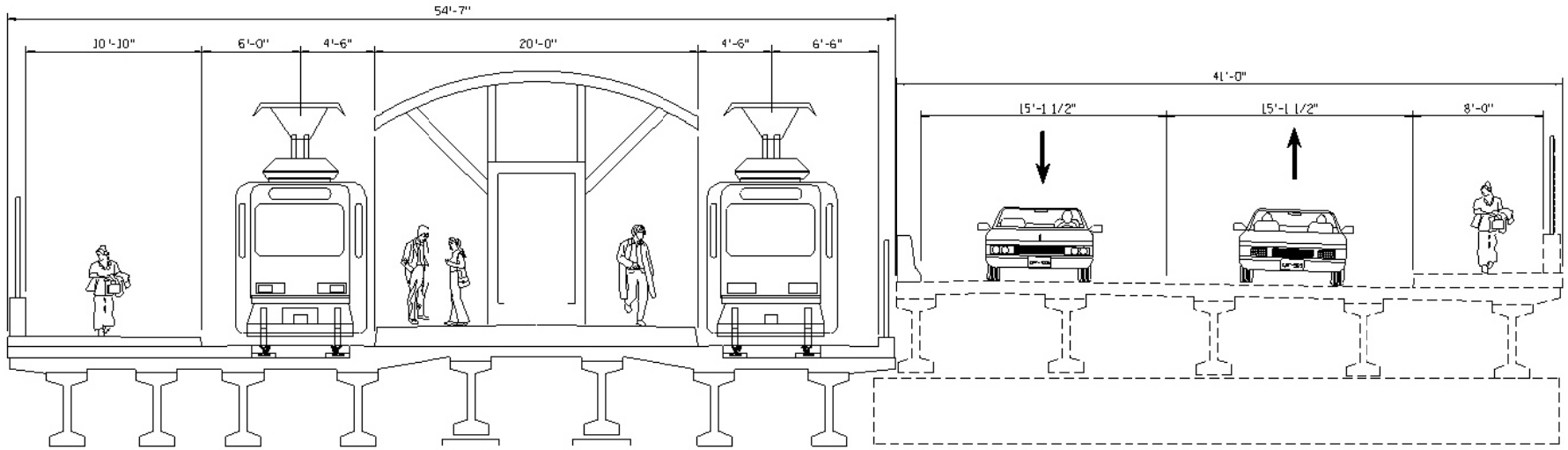
NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FIGURE 3.10
BIG LAKE MAINTENANCE FACILITY PLAN

G:\N-stor\CADD\EA_REPORT\EXHIBITS\MF-EIS-3-10.dwg January 03, 2006 - 4:31pm



5th STREET NORTH BETWEEN 2nd AND 3rd AVENUE NORTH



5th STREET NORTH BETWEEN 3rd AVENUE NORTH AND INTERMODAL STATION

FIGURE 3.11
LRT TYPICAL SECTION
5TH STREET NORTH

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

Figures referenced in Section 3.0 are included at the end of this section.

3.1 Proposed/Revised Preferred Alternative

The proposed project consists of two modal elements: commuter rail and LRT. The commuter rail component would begin in downtown Minneapolis and extend northwest through Hennepin, Anoka, and Sherburne counties to Big Lake, Minnesota, a total distance of approximately 40.1 miles. The majority of the route is on BNSF's Chicago to Seattle transcontinental line (Figure 3.1).

With the planned capacity improvements, the entire commuter rail route will be double-tracked, allowing commuter trains to run concurrently with 35 to 60 freight trains per day. Signals will be upgraded, with the entire commuter rail route using the centralized train control (CTC) system upon completion. BNSF will dispatch and may also operate the commuter rail trains. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Class 4 track will allow passenger speeds up to 79 miles per hour and freight speeds up to 60 miles per hour. The boarding platforms will be located within BNSF right-of-way and, in most locations the commuter trains will stop directly on the BNSF mainline tracks to board passengers. The two terminal stations will include off-line platforms where boarding will occur from siding tracks.

Five trains will run in the peak direction on weekday mornings and afternoons at half-hour intervals. Three trains will run in the reverse-peak direction during those periods. One train will run in each direction during midday. There are a total of 18 trains per weekday, nine in each direction. There will be three trains, in each direction, or six trains per day, on weekends and holidays.

Stations will be located in downtown Minneapolis, Fridley, Coon Rapids-Riverdale, Anoka, Elk River, and Big Lake (See Table 3.1). All stations, except downtown Minneapolis will contain park-and-ride lots.

Commuter rail rolling stock obtained for the project will be maintained at a maintenance facility and storage site located adjacent to the end-of-line station in Big Lake. The commuter rail fleet will consist of five locomotives, six cab coaches, and twelve trailer coaches.

The LRT component includes a four-block connection from the downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station to the Hiawatha LRT Warehouse District Station. The connection will provide a transit link from the Northstar Corridor to downtown Minneapolis and beyond to the Hubert. H. Humphrey Metro dome, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, and the Mall of America.

The LRT connection will conform to Hiawatha LRT design standards. The intermodal station will offer vertical circulation, with a stairway, escalator, and elevator between the commuter rail station on the lower level and the LRT station on the 5th Street Bridge (one level above).

Two light rail vehicles (LRVs) will be procured to maintain desired frequencies over the Hiawatha Line when LRT is extended to the Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal station.

Construction of the project is proposed to occur between 2007 and 2009.

3.1.1 Alternative Evaluation Process

This section provides a more detailed discussion regarding the proposed changes to the system elements of the preferred alternative evaluated in the FEIS and the revised preferred alternative evaluated in the EA. Please refer to Table 1.2 for a summary of the primary reasons for the specific system element changes.

Stations

The MOS of the preferred alternative defined and evaluated in the FEIS included the following stations and site characteristics.

Table 3.1 — Stations (MOS) of Preferred Alternative

Station Location	Site Size	Park-and-Ride Lot	Stormwater Ponds
Downtown Minneapolis	0.7 acre	0	No
Minneapolis Northeast	1.1 acres	0	No
Fridley	10.2 acres	595 spaces	Two Stormwater Detention Basins
Coon Rapids - Foley	4.62 acres	248 spaces	On-Site Stormwater Detention Basin
Coon Rapids - Riverdale	9.77 acres overall/ 7.72 acres developed	453 spaces	Commuter Coach facility
Anoka	4.95 acres	258 spaces	Off-Site Stormwater Detention Basin
Elk River	13.16 acres/11.2 acres developed	731 spaces	On-Site Stormwater Detention Basin
Big Lake and Layover Facility (MOS)	8.46 acres/4.1 Developed	400 spaces	On-Site Stormwater Detention Basin (west)

The revised preferred alternative evaluated in the EA includes the following stations and site characteristics.

Table 3.2 — Stations of Revised Preferred Alternative

Station Location (Figure #)	Site Size	Park-and-Ride Lot (# of spaces)	Stormwater Ponds
Downtown Minneapolis (Figure 3.2)	0.7 acre	0	No
Fridley (Figure 3.3)	3.7 acres (West) 4.8 acres (East)	281 (West) 337 (East)	On-site Stormwater Detention Basin (west and east sides)
Coon Rapids-Riverdale (Figure 3.4)	9.6 acres 7.0 acres currently developed	460 spaces	Drains to Existing On-Site Pond
Anoka (Figure 3.5)	The exact configuration of the parking facility is to be determined by the City of Anoka. The site size of 4.95 acres defined and evaluated in the FEIS reflects station facilities on both the north and south sides of the tracks. Figure 3.5 reflects the general site area proposed by the City of Anoka for the parking facility (south side of tracks).	The City of Anoka is taking the lead in the development of a parking structure at this station (up to 450 spaces/ 2 level structure). The Northstar Project is a funding partner for the proposed parking structure at the Anoka Station.	Off-Site Stormwater Detention Basin *(to be constructed as part of the Northstar Corridor Rail Project)*
Elk River (Figure 3.6)	13.2 acres 9.5 acres currently developed	754 spaces	On-Site Stormwater Detention Basin
Big Lake/Layover Facility (Figure 3.7)	5.9 acres (station) 3.9 acres (roadway connection to maintenance facility)	400 spaces	On-site Stormwater Detention Basin

Table 3.3 presents the cumulative distance for the proposed MOS stations of the revised preferred alternative, along with cumulative travel times for the system.

Table 3.3 — Northstar Cumulative Station Distance and Travel Times

Proposed Station	Distance	Minutes (cumulative)
Downtown Minneapolis	0	0
Fridley	9.2	16
Coon Rapids - Riverdale	18.2	24
Anoka	20.3	27
Elk River	29.9	35
Big Lake	40.1	43

Track Improvements

Both the DEIS and the FEIS each included a specific section that identified potential track improvements. The most noteworthy change from the DEIS to FEIS stage, was the removal of the Coon Creek siding from MP 18.8 to 20.7 and third main track from MP 15.6 to 20.7. With the removal of the Coon Creek siding/third main, all of the proposed track improvements were assumed to be within existing BNSF right-of-way (See figure in Appendix A.2).

A summary of the BNSF required track improvements for the revised preferred alternative is reflected in Table 3.4. For comparison, the track improvements evaluated in the EIS are included as a reference. Based on the proposed improvements included in the BNSF Agreement, the impact evaluation included in this EA will be limited to the proposed third mainline from MP 15.1 to MP 21.1 (see Figure 3.8 for the location of the third mainline improvements). The third mainline would be located in the cities of Fridley and Coon Rapids, from just south of I-694 to just north of Coon Rapids Boulevard. Mn/DOT and the NCDA will continue to work with the BNSF regarding specific right-of-way requirements associated with improvements at the Northtown Yard.

Table 3.4 — Summary of Proposed Track Improvements under the Revised Preferred Alternative

Item Number[1]	Description	Defined in EIS*	New Evaluation Required Based on Design Modification/Change in Surrounding Area
1	Construct Double Track Through Northtown Yard (43rd Avenue to 35th Avenue) with Double Crossover at 43rd. Construct replacement of May Brothers Lead Track	Yes	BNSF ROW limits in this area currently being confirmed
2	Install CTC Signaling System from Elk River to Coon Creek on Staples Subdivision	CTC signal locations not defined/evaluated in EIS as they would be located within existing ROW	No
3	Install CTC Signaling System from Big Lake to Elk River on Staples Subdivision	CTC signal locations not defined/evaluated in EIS as they would be located within existing ROW	No
4	Install CTC Signaling System from Harrison Street to Holden Street on Wayzata Subdivision	CTC signal locations not defined/evaluated in EIS as they would be located within existing ROW	No

Continued

Item Number[1]	Description	Defined in EIS*	New Evaluation Required Based on Design Modification/Change in Surrounding Area
5	Construct Double Crossovers at Elk River (MP 39.3) and Ramsey (MP 29.3)	Yes	No
6	Construct Double Crossovers at Big Lake MP 45.1 or MP 43.5	Yes	No
7	Construct Double Crossovers at MP 32.9 on Staples Subdivision	Yes	No
10	Upgrade "Old Main 2" on Midway Subdivision	Yes	No
11	Upgrade Siding from Holden Street to Harrison Street to Mainline and Extend Double Track Through West Leg of the Minneapolis Jct. Wye	Yes	No
12	Construct Crossover at MP 11.3 on Wayzata Subdivision to Allow Eastbound Commuter Trains to Cross Over into the Depot	Yes	No
13	Extend Double Track from Minneapolis Jct. Wye to St. Anthony on Midway Subdivision	Yes	No
14	Upgrade Crossover at MP 11.11 on Midway Subdivision	Yes	No
15	Upgrade Main 3 on Staples Subdivision West of University (MP 11.7 to MP 12.5)	Yes	No
16	Extend Midway Subdivision Main 2 from MP 11.7 to MP 12.3	Yes	No
19	Construct Third Main from Coon Creek to Interstate (just south of I-694) (MP 15.1 to MP 21.1) Third Main on west (railroad south) side from MP 15.1 to approximately MP 16.6. Third Main on east (railroad north) side from approximately MP 16.6 to MP 21.1.	DEIS identified and evaluated the Coon Creek Siding (MP 18.8 to 20.7) on the east (railroad north) side of existing mainline and Third Main Track from MP 15.6 to 20.7 (5.1 miles) on the west (railroad south) side of mainline track. Third Main and siding were not included in the preferred alternative identified and evaluated in the FEIS	Yes
20	Connect South Runner as Continuous Track from Interstate to Main 1 on the St. Paul Subdivision at University	Yes	No
21	Construct Additional Tracks for Lost Capacity on the Wayzata Sub between MP 11.9 and 12.6	No	No — tracks will be located within existing BNSF ROW

* The impact evaluation included in the EIS was limited to proposed improvements that would be located outside the existing BNSF right-of-way. Based on track improvements defined at the time the EIS was prepared, the impact analysis was limited to the proposed third mainline from MP 15.6 to 20.7 and the Coon Creek Siding from MPs 18.8 to 20.7.

[1] Item numbers reflect the BNSF numbering scheme for required capacity improvements per agreement with the NCDA.

As presented in Tables 1.2 and 3.4, the third main is proposed to be located on the west (railroad south) side from MP 15.1 to 16.6, then transition to the east (railroad north) side of the mainline at MP 16.6. The proposed third main would then be located on the east (railroad north) side to its end point at MP 21.1. This alignment location was defined and evaluated to avoid and/or minimize impacts to the surrounding social and environmental resources in the area. Specifically, the proposed alignment reduces potential noise, right-of-way, wetland, floodplain, and parkland/trail (4(f)/6(f)) impacts previously documented in the DEIS, when the third main was proposed to be located on the west (railroad south) side of the mainline.

Figure 3.8 illustrates the capacity improvements under evaluation in the EA. Figure 3.9 presents the typical cross sections of the proposed capacity improvements.

Vehicle Maintenance Facility

The DEIS identified and evaluated three alternative vehicle maintenance facility sites, including Big Lake, Elk River North, and Elk River South.

The preferred alternative in the FEIS identified a vehicle maintenance facility south of the Elk River station site (Elk River South). The design developed at the time of the FEIS indicated that the main and shop leads would be partially within existing BNSF right-of-way. Approximately 28 acres of land would therefore be needed for the construction of the balance of the facility.

To avoid deadheading trains from Elk River South to the end of the line at Big Lake, the Big Lake site has been identified as the revised preferred site. The total site for the vehicle maintenance facility, layover facility, and relocated Big Lake station would be approximately 37.5 acres (See Figure 3.10).

Functions at the vehicle maintenance facility would be the same as those evaluated in the DEIS/FEIS, including:

- Main lead track to station for passenger boarding and deboarding
- Shop lead track for vehicle access to shop complex
- Vehicle maintenance building
- Train wash building
- Employee parking
- Train vehicle storage

LRT Track Connection and Station

The FEIS identified and evaluated a Hiawatha LRT extension on the north side 5th Street from 3rd Avenue North to the Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station (tail tracks extending to 6th Avenue North). As noted in Table 1.2, the ROD indicated that a transportation mitigation measure for the LRT alignment on 5th Street North would be investigating the possibility of locating the LRT tracks on the south side of 5th Street North, northwest of 3rd Avenue North (See figures in Appendix A.2).

The revised preferred alternative evaluated in the EA includes an LRT extension on the south side of 5th Street from 3rd Avenue North to the Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal station, with rail tracks extending to 6th Avenue North (See Figures 3.2 and 3.11).

3.2 Capital Costs and Local Financial Commitment

As part of the preliminary engineering efforts for the Northstar Corridor Rail project, capital cost estimates were prepared and included in the FEIS. The capital costs included the following: right-of-way, right-of-way preparation, structures, trackwork, pavements/parking lots, and grade crossings, signals and electrification, rail vehicles, art in transit, contingencies, and engineering/ administration/construction management. The capital cost estimates presented in the FEIS are summarized in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 — Capital Cost Summary from FEIS (December 2002)

Item Description	Total Project Cost (MOS – Downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake)		Total Project Cost (Downtown Minneapolis to Rice)	
	2001 Dollars	2005 Dollars	2001 Dollars	2005 Dollars
Northstar Corridor Commuter Rail	$214,292,600	$238,390,500	$243,263,100	$270,618,800
Intermodal Connector (1st Avenue North to 5th Avenue North)*	$21,017,700	$23,380,100	$21,016,700	$23,280,100
Total	**$235,309,300**	**$261,770,600**	**$264,279,800**	**$293,998,900**

* The Northstar Corridor FEIS evaluated the proposed Hiawatha LRT connection from 3rd Avenue North to the proposed Intermodal Station in downtown Minneapolis. The impacts and mitigation measures associated with the LRT line from 1st Avenue North to 3rd Avenue North were documented in the Hiawatha LRT FEIS Reevaluation and ROD (April 2000).

Table 3.6 presents a summary of the capital cost estimate for the revised preferred alternative (Year of Expenditure).

Table 3.6 — Capital Cost Estimate, Revised Preferred Alternative – Downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake (Year of Expenditure)

Cost Category	Total (millions)
Guideway and Track Elements	$43.86
Stations, Stops, Terminals, and Intermodal Facilities	$16.19
Support Facilities: Yards, Shops, and Administration Buildings	$23.32
Sitework and Special Conditions	$18.34
Systems	$41.11
ROW, Land, and Existing Improvements	$9.44
Vehicles	$71.43
Professional Services	$38.48
Unallocated Contingency	$25.62
Finance Charges	$1.26
Total	**$289.05**

The 2005 Minnesota Legislature passed a bonding bill that included $37.5 million for the Northstar Corridor Rail project. The bill was signed into law on April 11, 2005 by Governor Tim Pawlenty.

In addition to these funds, the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities committed $2.5 million to the project and the NCDA Capital Partners committed over $44 million. The combined non-federal commitment to date is over $85 million.

The non-federal share of the estimated project capital costs is approximately $144 million.

3.3 Revised Operating Plan and Costs

The Northstar Corridor FEIS *(Section 2.8, page 2-34*) identifies the total annual operating costs for the full regional commuter rail system (and regional bus service) to be $15 million in fiscal year 2005 for the corridor defined as Downtown Minneapolis to Rice, and $11.1 million for the MOS (Downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake).

The proposed modifications to the preferred alternative reflect commuter rail service between Big Lake and downtown Minneapolis, along with some modifications to the corridor bus service. As noted previously, proposed station stops include:

- Downtown Minneapolis
- Fridley
- Anoka
- Coon Rapids – Riverdale
- Elk River
- Big Lake

Proposed commuter rail patterns in the peak periods are as follows:

- Big Lake to Minneapolis – All stops, 2-trips in both directions
- Elk River to Minneapolis – All stops, 2-trips in the peak direction
- Anoka to Minneapolis – All stops, 1-trip in both directions

In the peak periods, there will be five peak-direction and three reverse peak-direction trips. There will also be one proposed midday round trip between downtown Minneapolis and Big Lake. This plan results in 18 one-way trips each weekday. Weekend and holiday service would consist of three round trips; with two round trips (morning and evening) between downtown Minneapolis and Big Lake and one round trip (midday) between downtown Minneapolis and Elk River.

Based on analysis completed in July 2005, the annual project system operating cost in year 2005 dollars is $10.9 million.

3.4 Ridership

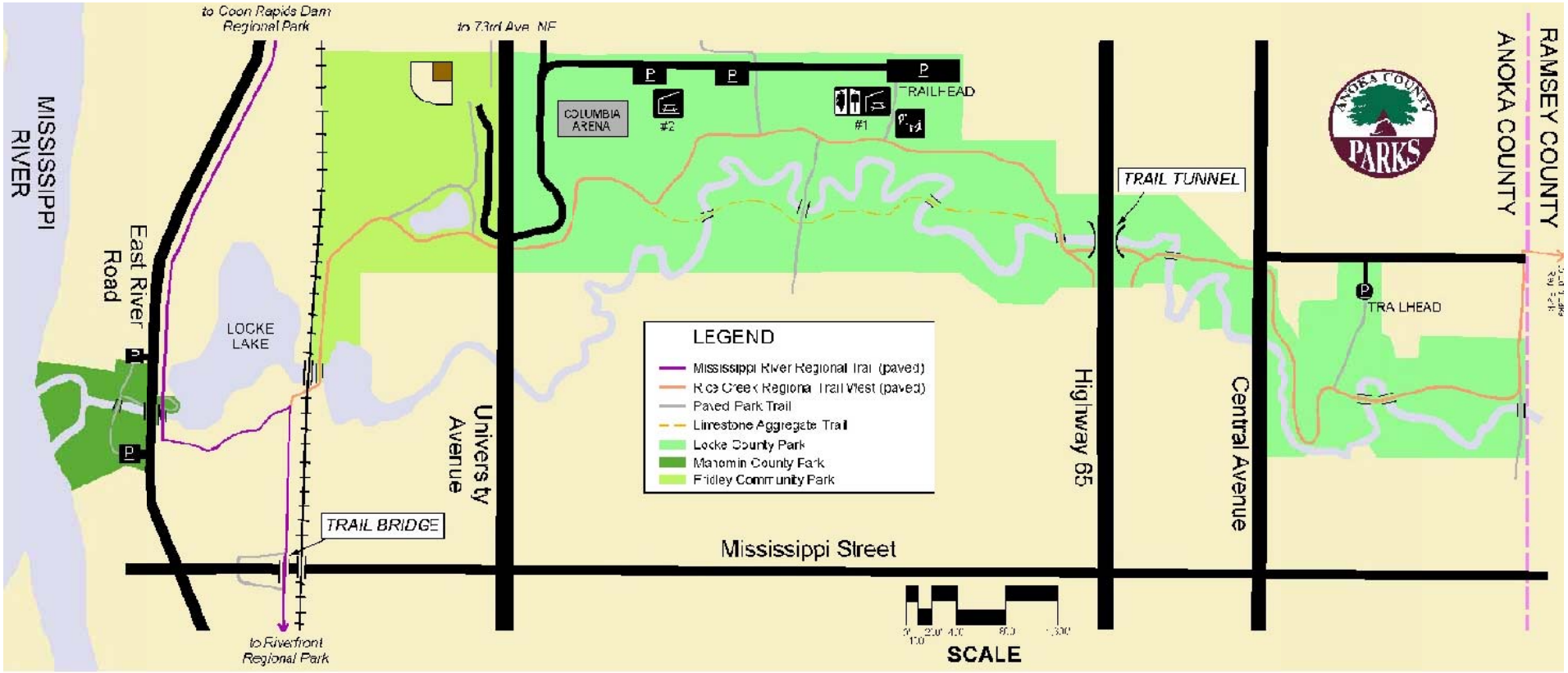
The FEIS identified year 2020 average daily ridership at 9,485 for the MOS (downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake), and 10,829 for the full build out system from downtown Minneapolis to Rice (*see Table 2.8-1; page 2-34 of the FEIS*). The MOS identified in the FEIS, included eight station locations (Downtown Minneapolis, Minneapolis Northeast, Fridley, Coon Rapids-Foley, Coon Rapids-Riverdale, Anoka, Elk River, and Big Lake).

Since the publication of the FEIS, Mn/DOT, the NCDA, Metropolitan Council, and the FTA have been working on refining the ridership projections for the proposed system. Additionally, the revised ridership forecasts reflect the removal of the Minneapolis Northeast and Coon Rapids-Foley station locations.

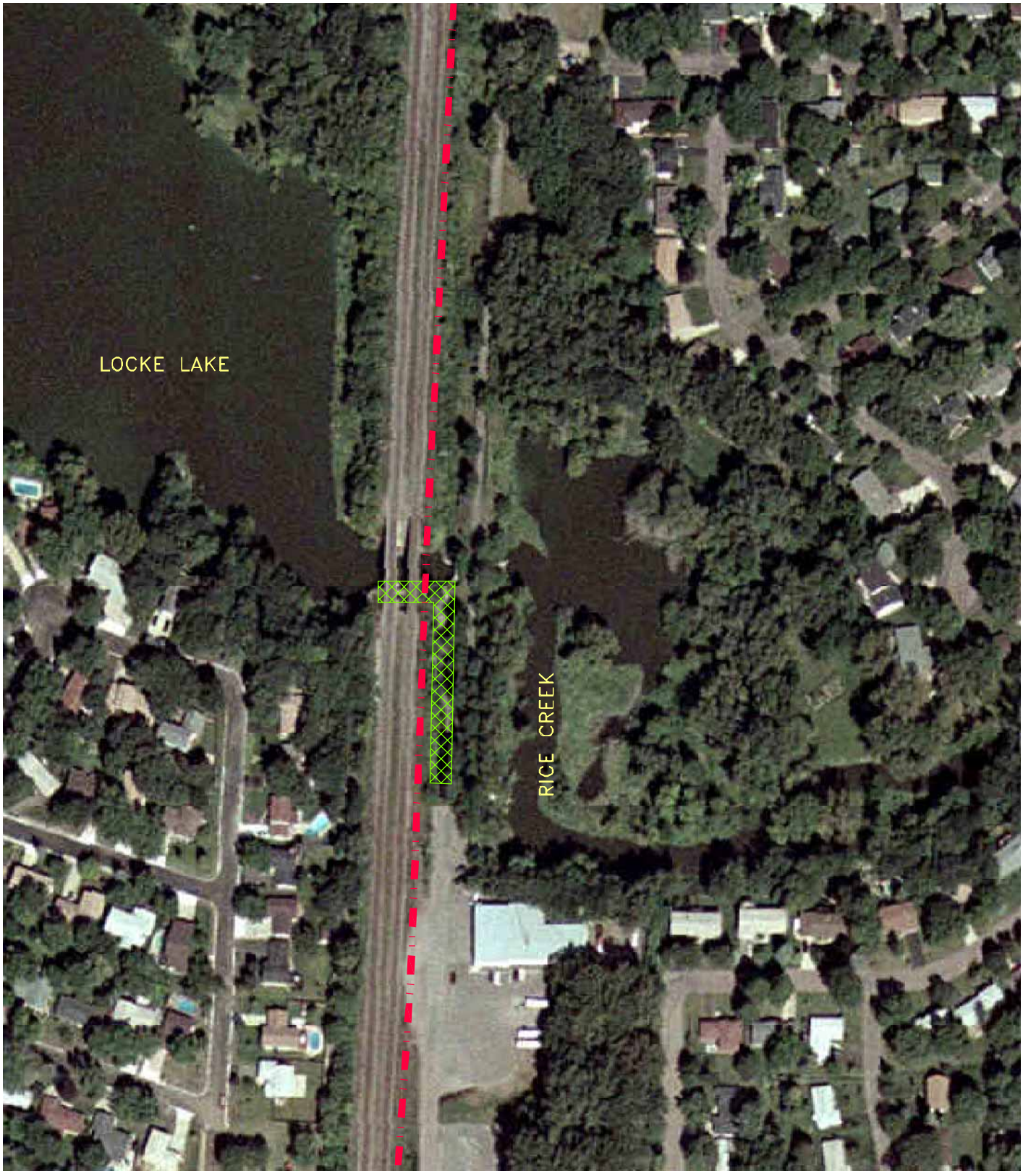
Table 3.7 presents a summary of the current ridership forecasts for the revised Northstar Corridor preferred alternative. The ridership model is continuing to be enhanced and refined to more accurately reflect the anticipated ridership.

Table 3.7 — Northstar Commuter Rail Daily Ridership for Revised Preferred Alternative

Station	Inbound plus Outbound Boarding by Station of Origin	
	2009 (Opening Year) Ridership	2025 Ridership
Big Lake	450	620
Elk River	570	790
Anoka	190	270
Coon-Rapids- Riverdale	550	770
Fridley	350	490
Downtown Minneapolis	1,920	2,650
Total	**4,030**	**5,590**



SOURCE: ANOKA COUNTY PARKS



LEGEND

IMPACT AREA

NEW THIRD MAIN

NORTH

0 50 100 200

SCALE IN FEET

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FIGURE 6.2

POTENTIAL IMPACTS TO RICE CREEK TRAIL

LEGEND

- EXISTING RICE CREEK/MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGIONAL TRAIL
- PROPOSED THIRD MAIN
- TEMPORARY TRAIL CLOSURE AREA
- ADVANCE TRAIL CLOSURE SIGNS

NORTH

0 300 600

SCALE IN FEET

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

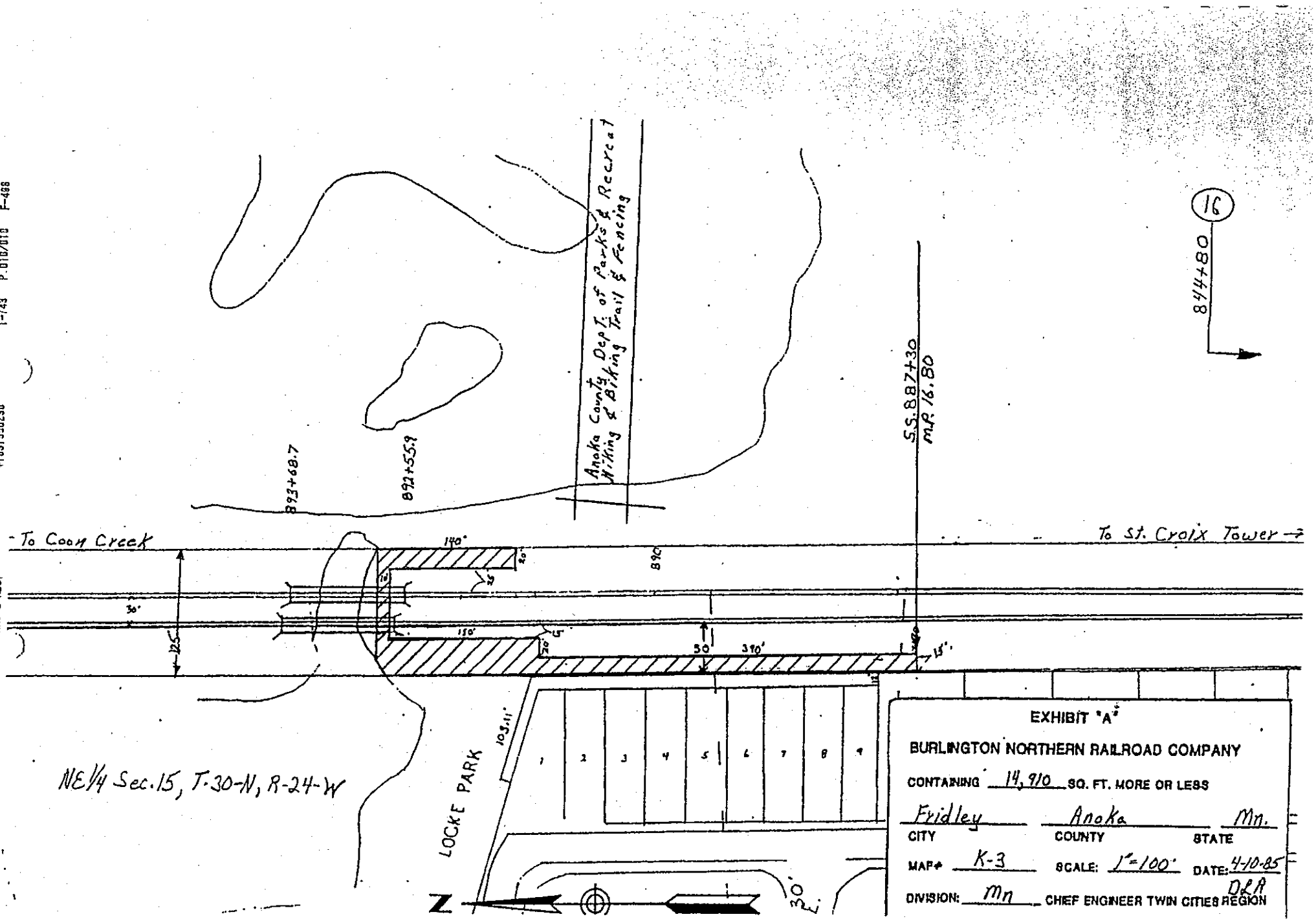
NORTHSTAR COMMUTER RAIL

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FIGURE 6.3

RICE CREEK REGIONAL TRAIL
MITIGATION DURING CONSTRUCTION



Case No.:

AGREEMENT, made this 1st day of December, 1981, between ~~BURLINGTON NORTHERN INC., a corporation, hereinafter called the "Railroad,"~~ and BURLINGTON NORTHERN RAILROAD COMPANY (formerly BURLINGTON NORTHERN INC.), a Delaware corporation, hereinafter called the "Railroad", and ANOKA COUNTY, DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION, whose postoffice address is 550 Bunker Lake Boulevard, Anoka, Minnesota 55303, hereinafter called the "Applicant."

WITNESSETH;

WHEREAS, the Applicant desires to construct, maintain and use a paved hiking and biking path (hereinafter termed the "facility"), upon the right of way of the Railroad located at Fridley, Anoka County, Minnesota, as shown hatched blue ~~as shown in Red~~ upon the plan which is attached hereto and made a part hereof, marked Exhibit "A," the Railroad consents thereto upon the following terms and conditions: dated September 25, 1981,

1. Applicant shall pay to the Railroad the sum of One Hundred and No/100---------- dollars ($100.00) upon the execution hereof, for the first 5 year period and for each subsequent 5 years that this agreement remains in effect.

2. The Applicant shall construct and maintain the said facility at the Applicant's sole cost and expense and in a manner in all respects satisfactory to the Railroad.

3. Nothing herein contained shall imply or import a covenant on the part of Railroad for quiet enjoyment.

Applicant shall, at its own sole cost and expense and in a manner in all respects satisfactory to Railroad's Minnesota Division Superintendent, construct a chain link fence, on both sides of said hiking and biking path across Railroad property.

4. The Applicant shall and hereby does release and discharge the Railroad of and from any and all liability for damage to or destruction of said facility or any property of the Applicant upon the premises of the Railroad in connection with the construction, maintenance and use thereof, and the Applicant shall and hereby does assume any and all liability for injury to or death of persons or loss of or damage to property in any manner arising from or during the construction, use, maintenance ~~or removal~~ of said facility, however such injury, death, loss, damage or destruction aforesaid may occur or be caused; and the Applicant shall and hereby does indemnify and save harmless the Railroad of and from any and all claims, demands, suits, actions, damages, recoveries, judgments, costs or expenses arising, growing out of or in connection with any such injury, death, loss, damage or destruction aforesaid.

5. Upon the cancellation or termination otherwise of this agreement the Applicant shall at the Applicant's own sole cost and expense and to the satisfaction of the Railroad ~~remove the said facility and~~ restore the premises of the Railroad as near as may be to their now existing condition.

~~In the event that the Applicant shall fail to remove or cause to be removed from said premises~~ the said facility prior to the effective date of the cancellation or termination otherwise of this agreement, the Railroad may appropriate the said facility or any part thereof to its own use without compensation ~~to the Applicant or may remove the same at the cost and expense of the Applicant.~~

6. The Applicant shall not assign this agreement ~~or permit any other person or persons to use or occupy any portion of the premises of the Railroad occupied by the said facility~~ without first having obtained the written consent of the Railroad.

7. Either party hereto may cancel and terminate this agreement at any time upon thirty days notice in writing to the other of its intention so to do.

8. All notices to be given by the Railroad to the Applicant hereunder may be effectually given by letter from the Railroad or its agent or attorney deposited postpaid in a United States post office addressed to the Applicant at the Post Office address above stated.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this agreement the day and year first above written.

In presence of:

BURLINGTON NORTHERN RAILROAD COMPANY

By_____
General Manager - Leases

ANOKA COUNTY,
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

By_____

Title Chairman of the County Board

FORM 60086 1 76

DUPLICATE

SUPPLEMENT TO LEASE NO. 239,416

BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT, the description of the property leased to ANOKA COUNTY, DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION, by BURLINGTON NORTHERN RAILROAD COMPANY (formerly BURLINGTON NORTHERN INC.), ~~BURLINGTON NORTHERN RAILROAD COMPANY~~, at or near Fridley station, Anoka County, State of Minnesota, under Lease No. 239,416, dated December 1, 1981, is hereby amended to read as follows:

All that part of the premises of the said Lessor as shown hatched black on the print hereto attached, marked Exhibit "A" dated April 10, 1985, and made a part hereof.

Lessee is hereby allowed to erect and maintain a covered bridge within the lease site in addition to the paved biking and hiking path.

The rental in said agreement is hereby fixed at One Hundred and No/100 Dollars ($100.00) per year effective May 1, 1985, and Five Hundred and No/100 Dollars ($500.00) for each five (5) years thereafter, effective December 1, 1986.

~~The annual rental in said agreement is hereby fixed at~~ ______ Dollars, ~~($______) per annum, effective~~ ______.

All other terms and conditions of said lease shall remain in full force and effect.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed this agreement as of this 22nd day of April, 1985.

BURLINGTON NORTHERN RAILROAD COMPANY

By [signature]
Manager Leases

ANOKA COUNTY,
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

By [signature]

Title Director of Parks & Recreation

In presence of:

[signature] Jean E. Ellsworth

[signature]

FORM 50068 5-74

APPENDIX A

A.1 Supporting Materials

Northstar Corridor Record of Decision, December 2002 (includes Programmatic Agreement)

Minnesota Department of Transportation

Transportation Building
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-1899

DEC 1 9 2002

December 18, 2002

Sequence #: (if required)	
File Code(s):	

Northstar Corridor Rail Project
Environmental Documentation
Recipients

Dear Recipient,

Enclosed please find the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Northstar Corridor Rail Project, issued pursuant to Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 771 and Title 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508. The Federal Transit Administration has determined that the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 have been satisfied for the project's preferred alternative.

Also enclosed in this package for recipients who are not from federal agencies is the Adequacy Determination concluding the Minnesota State Environmental Review Process. It confirms compliance with the procedures of Minnesota Statutes 116D and Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4410.

Any questions regarding the proposed project can be addressed to me:

Mike Schadauer
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, MS 475
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899
(651) 282-5366

Thank you for your interest in the Northstar Corridor Rail Project.

Sincerely,

Mike Schadauer

Mike Schadauer
Northstar Corridor Rail Project Manager

Enclosure: Northstar Corridor Rail Project Record of Decision
Northstar Corridor Rail Project Adequacy Determination (non federal only)

cc: Tim Yantos, Northstar Corridor Development Authority

Minnesota Department of Transportation

Office of Environmental Services
395 John Ireland Boulevard, MS 620
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Fax: 651/ 284-3754
Phone: 651/-284-3750

December 17, 2002

To Whom It May Concern:

SUBJECT: ADEQUACY DETERMINATION; FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT; NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR RAIL PROJECT; RICE TO MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the above referenced project was published in March, 2002. The **Notice of Availability** of the above referenced FEIS was published in the **EQB Monitor** on April 1, 2002. During the 30 day FEIS review period, nine comment letters were received, and are responded to below.

The Preferred Alternative is the implementation of an 81.8-mile commuter rail line on the existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) track between downtown Minneapolis and Rice, Minnesota. There will be eleven stations along the commuter rail line. The downtown Minneapolis multi-modal station at 5th Street North and 5th Avenue North will also include a connection to the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit (LRT) line. Track capacity improvements, a vehicle maintenance and layover facility, LRT connection from 3rd Avenue North to 6th Avenue North, which includes an LRT station, as well as feeder bus improvements are also included in the proposed action. The Preferred Alternative is more fully described in the FEIS.

COMMENT SUMMARY

A total of nine letters commenting on the FEIS were received. Commentors included:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Department of the Interior
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
- Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities (Metropolitan Council)
- City of Minneapolis
- City of Fridley
- Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF)
- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

Letters received from the EPA, Department of Agriculture, MPCA, Metropolitan Council and the City of Fridley indicated that specific concerns that were raised related to the DEIS had been

sufficiently addressed in the FEIS, and that no further comment was warranted. The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe indicated that they do not have concerns regarding sites of religious or cultural importance in the project area.

A meeting was held with City of Minneapolis staff on May 9, 2002, to discuss their comments on the FEIS. Many of the comments were editorial in nature and would not change the outcome of the evaluation in the FEIS. An additional comment related to the potential for new development near the Downtown Minneapolis station in the future, and the effects this development could have on the design of the station. The location for the Downtown Minneapolis station was selected because it is best suited to existing land use patterns. Mn/DOT will engage in an interactive planning process with the City of Minneapolis regarding future land use patterns. If the land use pattern of the area changes before station construction begins, Mn/DOT will re-evaluate the need for additional environmental documentation for the Downtown Minneapolis station. The City of Minneapolis also noted that a master planning process, relative to the Minneapolis Northeast station, has been discussed and not officially initiated as stated in the FEIS.

The letter received from BNSF expressed concerns that certain track improvements were not included in the FEIS. These track improvements were removed because they presented significant environmental impacts to wetlands, 4(f) resources and state-threatened wildlife species. Mn/DOT studies also indicate that these track improvements would not be necessary for commuter rail/freight function; however, Mn/DOT has proposed track improvements to provide equivalent functionality. Mn/DOT will continue to work with BNSF to reach an agreement on this issue. The list of track improvements listed in the FEIS is believed to be comprehensive; however, if any of the final track improvements differ from those evaluated in the FEIS, additional environmental analysis and documentation will be done as appropriate.

The Department of Interior expressed three primary concerns regarding Section 4(f) issues. The first concern was the lack of a signed agreement with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in regards to historic resources. Since publication of the FEIS, the Programmatic Agreement has been signed. A second point of concern the Department of the Interior noted was that the FEIS did not indicate that the SHPO concurs with Mn/DOT's determination of no adverse effects regarding the Elk River Maintenance Facility site. The SHPO has concurred with Mn/DOT's evaluation and this comment is included in the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Record of Decision, which is contained in this distribution.

The last item of concern of the Department of Interior related to a final agreement with BNSF regarding track improvements. As stated above, the list of track improvements listed in the FEIS is believed to be comprehensive. However, if any of the final track improvements differ from those evaluated in the FEIS, additional environmental analysis and documentation, including a Section 4(f) Evaluation, will be done as appropriate.

These issues were resolved through a letter issued to the Department of the Interior, and a response letter dated August 22, 2002, which concurred with Section 4(f) approval for the project.

Letters and responses to comments from the City of Minneapolis, and the Department of the Interior are included in the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Record of Decision, which is contained in this distribution.

DETERMINATION

As the Responsible Governmental Unit for the above referenced project, the Minnesota Department of Transportation has determined that the FEIS is adequate. In reaching this decision Mn/DOT considered the following factors:

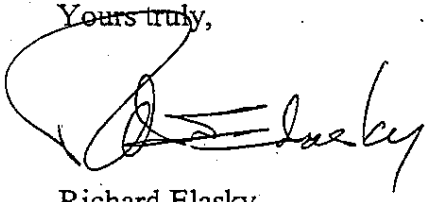
1. During the project development process, and within both the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements, Mn/DOT considered all the issues associated with this project, which were raised during the scoping process. All issues for which information could reasonably be obtained have been analyzed.

2. The FEIS provided responses to all substantive comments, which were received during the Draft EIS review and public comment period.

3. The FEIS was prepared in compliance with the procedures of Minnesota Statutes 116D, and Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4410.

This Determination of Adequacy concludes the Minnesota State Environmental Review Process.

Yours truly,



Richard Elasky

Chief Environmental Officer
Director, Office of Environmental Services

RECORD OF DECISION

Northstar Corridor Rail Project
Rice to Minneapolis, Minnesota
Minnesota Department of Transportation

DECISION

This Record of Decision (ROD) is issued pursuant to Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 771 and Title 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has determined that the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) have been satisfied for the Northstar Corridor Rail Project (the "Project") preferred alternative. The Project will operate between Minneapolis and Rice, Minnesota. It will be operated by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT). This decision is based on the Northstar Corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Section 4(f) Evaluation dated March 2002. The FEIS was prepared by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Mn/DOT, and the Northstar Corridor Development Authority (NCDA).

The proposed action covered by this ROD is the implementation of an 81.8-mile commuter rail line on the existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) track between downtown Minneapolis and Rice, Minnesota. There will be eleven stations along the commuter rail line. The downtown Minneapolis multi-modal station at 5th Street North and 5th Avenue North will also include a connection to the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit (LRT) line. Track capacity improvements, a vehicle maintenance and layover facility, LRT connection from 3rd Avenue North to 6th Avenue North which includes an LRT station, and feeder bus improvements are also included in the proposed action.

BASIS FOR DECISION

The primary basis for this FTA decision includes the alternatives analysis, technical considerations, and social, economic and environmental evaluations and determinations found in the Northstar Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation (October 2000), the supplemental environmental document to the DEIS (January 2001) and the Northstar Corridor FEIS (March 2002).

BACKGROUND

Examination of commuter rail in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area began in 1997, with the initiation of the Twin Cities Commuter Rail Feasibility Study (FS). The FS was conducted in two phases, with study documents published in January 1998 and January 1999, respectively. The Northstar Corridor was included in this study.

In May 1998 the NCDA, working on behalf of Mn/DOT, undertook a Major Investment Study (MIS) to identify transportation solutions to meet future transportation needs in the Northstar Corridor. This study concluded that commuter rail service in the Corridor is feasible, and identified commuter rail as part of the Locally Preferred Transportation Investment Strategy (LPTIS), along with expanded feeder bus service, roadway improvements, river crossings, Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) initiatives, and bicycle/pedestrian improvements.

The DEIS, which evaluated potential transportation alternatives for the Northstar Corridor, was published in October 2000. As a result of actions taken through the Advanced Corridor Planning Process, and comments received on the DEIS, a supplemental environmental information document to the DEIS was distributed in January 2001, which evaluated the impacts of a proposed Northeast Minneapolis Station at 7th Street Northeast. The FEIS, which identified a Preferred Alternative, was published in March 2002. These documents defined the purpose and need for transportation improvements to the Northstar Corridor, and described and evaluated proposed transportation improvements for the Corridor.

Based on the analysis documented in the DEIS, supportive technical reports, and concerns raised throughout the study's public involvement process, a Preferred Alternative was selected and fully described in the FEIS. This alternative was selected based on the analysis results in the DEIS and the supplement to the DEIS, consultation with permitting agencies, comments received during the DEIS review and comment period, input during the Advanced Corridor Planning Process, and more detailed engineering analysis. The Commuter Rail Alternative, with modifications, emerged as the Preferred Alternative and was carried forward to be evaluated in the FEIS. This alternative best addresses the need identified by federal, state, and local transportation planning efforts to implement a regional transportation system, and to support growth in regional travel demand.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Three primary alternatives were considered for the Northstar Corridor. These included the No-Build Alternative, the Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative, and the Commuter Rail Alternative. Each of these alternatives is described below.

No-Build Alternative: The No-Build Alternative evaluated in the DEIS and FEIS is defined as the existing roadway and transit system, along with committed and programmed transportation improvements for which funding has been committed through Year 2003. This includes two commuter-coach bus facilities and one park-and-pool facility along the Northstar Corridor at Elk River, Coon Rapids-Riverdale, and Big Lake, respectively.

TSM Alternative: The TSM Alternative included all elements of the No-Build Alternative along with expanded bus service, ITS improvements, and pedestrian/bicycle facilities. Specific TSM improvements evaluated in the DEIS included: transit service enhancements, feeder bus service, infrastructure improvements, park-and-ride facilities and additional bicycle lanes.

Commuter Rail Alternative: The Commuter Rail Alternative evaluated in the DEIS consisted of passenger rail service on an existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) rail line from downtown Minneapolis to the St. Cloud area. Three possible northern termini were analyzed, including St. Cloud East, Downtown St. Cloud, or Rice. Fourteen commuter rail stations were evaluated along this line. The DEIS also evaluated three potential layover facility locations, three potential vehicle maintenance facility locations, several potential track improvements, and revised bus operations plans. The Commuter Rail Alternative also included the connection of Hiawatha LRT service on 5th Street to the commuter rail from 3rd Avenue North to the multi-modal station in downtown Minneapolis. The supplemental environmental information document to the DEIS evaluated a potential station location at 7th Street Northeast in Minneapolis. For a complete discussion of the Commuter Rail Alternative, please refer to Section 2.1, Part C of the FEIS.

Based on analysis documented in the DEIS and the supplemental environmental information document, the Commuter Rail Alternative, with modifications, was selected as the Preferred Alternative. Modifications to the Commuter Rail Alternative included:

- Selection of Rice as the northern terminus
- Selection of Elk River South as the maintenance facility location
- Selection of Rice as the layover facility location
- Elimination of stations at St. Cloud Downtown, Clear Lake, and Ramsey
- Elimination of track capacity improvements from milepost (MP) 15.6 to MP 20.7
- Selection of a Minneapolis Northeast station at 7th Street NE

The Preferred Alternative is discussed in detail later in this document.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Scoping meetings for the Northstar Corridor project were held in July 1999. Meeting notices were published in the Volume 64, Number 108 *Federal Register* (June 7, 1999), and the June 28, 1999 issue of the *Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (MnEQB) Monitor*. Notices were also placed in several local newspapers within the Northstar Corridor geographic area.

The DEIS was distributed in November 2000. The DEIS was distributed to a list of approximately 300 interested parties and appropriate agencies. The public comment period for this document ran from November 13, 2000, to January 12, 2001. The DEIS comment period reopened from February 5, 2001 to March 7, 2001, to provide adequate comment time for the supplemental environmental document. As part of the DEIS comment period, four public hearings were held, one each in St. Cloud, Elk River, Fridley, and Minneapolis, MN.

In addition to the DEIS comment period, the City of Minneapolis also appointed a task force representing area residents and business interests to review the proposed Northeast Minneapolis station plan at 7th Street NE and make recommendations. Six meetings of the Northstar Community Task Force took place during February and March 2001.

The FEIS was distributed in April 2002, and included responses to all written and verbal comments received on the DEIS. A Notice of Availability was published in the *MnEQB Monitor* on April 1, 2002, and in the Volume 67, No. 66 *Federal Register* on April 5, 2002. The FEIS public review period ran from April 5, 2002, to May 6, 2002.

The DEIS and FEIS for the Northstar Corridor Rail Project will be available for review by the public at the following locations during normal business hours:

MnDOT Central Office Library
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN

Anoka County Courthouse
County Administration, 7th Floor
2100 Third Avenue
Anoka, MN

Elk River Public Library
413 Proctor Avenue
Elk River, MN

Great River Regional Library, St. Cloud
405 St. Germain
St. Cloud, MN

FEIS COMMENT SUMMARY

A total of nine letters commenting on the FEIS were received. These letters are included as Attachment C. Commentors included:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Department of the Interior
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
- Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities (Metropolitan Council)
- City of Minneapolis
- City of Fridley
- Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF)
- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

Letters received from the EPA, Department of Agriculture, MPCA, Metropolitan Council and the City of Fridley indicated that specific concerns that were raised related to the DEIS had been sufficiently addressed in the FEIS, and that no further comment was warranted. The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe indicated that they do not have concerns regarding sites of religious or cultural importance in the project area.

A meeting was held with City of Minneapolis staff on May 9, 2002, to discuss their comments on the FEIS. Many of the comments were editorial in nature and would not change the outcome of the evaluation in the FEIS. An additional comment related to the potential for new development near the Downtown Minneapolis station in the future, and the effects this development could have on the design of the station. The location for the Downtown Minneapolis station was selected because it is best suited to existing land use patterns. Mn/DOT will engage in an interactive planning process with the City of Minneapolis regarding future land use patterns. If the land use pattern of the area changes before station construction begins, Mn/DOT will re-evaluate the need for additional environmental documentation for the Downtown Minneapolis station. The City of Minneapolis also noted that a master planning process, relative to the Minneapolis Northeast station, has been discussed and not officially initiated as stated in the FEIS.

The letter received from BNSF expressed concerns that certain track improvements were not included in the FEIS. These track improvements were removed because they presented significant environmental impacts to wetlands, 4(f) resources and state-threatened wildlife species. Mn/DOT studies also indicate that these track improvements would not be necessary for commuter rail/freight function; however, Mn/DOT has proposed track improvements to provide equivalent functionality. Mn/DOT will continue to work with BNSF to reach an agreement on this issue. The list of track improvements listed in the FEIS is believed to be comprehensive; however, if any of the final track improvements differ from those evaluated in the FEIS, additional environmental analysis and documentation will be done as appropriate.

The Department of Interior expressed three primary concerns regarding Section 4(f) issues. The first concern was the lack of a signed agreement with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in regards to historic resources. Since publication of the FEIS, the Programmatic Agreement has been signed. It is included as Attachment A to this document. A second point of concern the Department of the Interior noted was that the FEIS did not indicate that the SHPO concurs with Mn/DOT's determination of no adverse effects regarding the Elk River Maintenance Facility site. The SHPO has concurred with Mn/DOT's evaluation, and this comment is included in Attachment B.

The last item of concern of the Department of Interior related to a final agreement with BNSF regarding track improvements. As stated above, the list of track improvements listed in the FEIS is believed to be comprehensive. However, if any of the final track improvements differ from those evaluated in the FEIS, additional environmental analysis and documentation, including a Section 4(f) Evaluation, will be done as appropriate.

These issues were resolved through a letter issued to the Department of the Interior, and a response letter dated August 22, 2002 which concurred with Section 4(f) approval for the project.

Letters and responses to comments from the City of Minneapolis, and the Department of the Interior are included as Attachment C. These letters and responses are also located in the Mn/DOT project file.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Preferred Alternative for the Northstar Corridor includes:

- Commuter Rail Service on the existing BNSF rail line from downtown Minneapolis to a northern terminus at Rice, Minnesota, for a length of 81.8 miles.
- Eleven commuter rail stations at the following locations (from north to south): Rice, St. Cloud East, Becker, Big Lake, Elk River, Anoka, Coon Rapids- Riverdale, Coon Rapids-Foley, Fridley, Northeast Minneapolis (7th Street NE location) and Minneapolis Downtown.
- A vehicle maintenance facility at the Elk River South location.
- A layover facility at Rice.
- A Light Rail Transit Connection from 3rd Avenue North to 6th Avenue North (including tail tracks), with the LRT continuing on the north side of 5th Street, and an LRT station immediately west of 3rd Avenue North.
- All of the proposed track improvements evaluated in the DEIS (retained for the purposes of environmental evaluation); except for the potential triple track from Coon Creek to I-694 (mileposts 20.7 to 15.6) and the potential siding from milepost 20.7 to 18.8. Proposed track improvements potentially could change from those evaluated in the EIS, depending on the outcome of BNSF negotiations.
- A bus operation plan that will reduce bus service frequencies on existing express service routes that duplicate commuter rail service. Existing bus routes will also be modified to connect to commuter rail stations and service frequencies will be modified to provide strong connections to commuter rail.

MITIGATION MEASURES

Mn/DOT will be responsible for construction of all facilities relating to the Project. Mn/DOT will also be responsible for implementing all mitigation measures described in the FEIS. These measures include the stipulations set forth in the Programmatic Agreement (PA), which is included as Attachment A. The PA complies with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. FTA requires as a condition of any grant or grant agreement that all required

mitigation measures be implemented in accordance with the requirements identified in the ROD. FTA requires that Mn/DOT periodically submit written reports on their progress in implementing the required mitigation measures. FTA will monitor this progress through quarterly reviews of final engineering and design, land acquisition required for the project, and construction of the project. A complete discussion of mitigation measures can be found in the FEIS, Sections 3.0 through 5.0. A summary of mitigation measures for each impact area is included below.

Community Facilities

- Installation of "Watch for Pedestrian" signs at the Anoka station; and
- Coordination with affected facilities during station construction.

Displacements and Relocations

- Payment of fair market value for approximately 18 parcels, and relocation assistance, as provided by law, for loss of private property; and
- Posting of signs announcing parking lot closure dates during construction of the Minneapolis Downtown station.

Archaeological and Historic Resources

- Application of mitigation measures outlined in the Programmatic Agreement (Attachment A). Mitigation measures identified in the PA include the following:

  - Final design review and concurrence by MnSHPO of **Rice station** and **Minneapolis Northeast station** to assure they will not result in an adverse effect to the Rice Mill & Grain and Northwestern Furniture Mart, respectively.

  - The design of the **Minneapolis Downtown Commuter Station** will take into account its visual relationship to the Minneapolis warehouse district. In addition, programmatic aspects of the design, which influence the design of the 5th Street North Bridge between 3rd and 5th Avenues North will be considered.

  - The design of the new **5th Street North Bridge between 3rd and 5th Avenues North** (including the Light Rail Transit (LRT) platform and the vertical circulation system) will meet the Secretary of the Interior's standards for new construction in historic areas.

  - The design of the new **5th Street North Bridge between 2nd and 3rd Avenue** will meet the Secretary of the Interior's standards for new construction in historic areas.

  - The potential relocation and reuse of the St. Cloud Northern Pacific Depot will meet the Secretary of Interior's standards and will ensure the continued eligibility of the depot on its new location.

  - The design of all LRT system elements between the 5th Street North Bridge LRT station and the Hiawatha LRT project will address the Warehouse District. These elements include (but are not limited to) signage, track and traffic lanes, curbs and sidewalks, overhead cables and support posts, and landscaping. (A portion of this project between 1st and 3rd Avenues North was previously covered under the earlier Hiawatha LRT Project Programmatic Agreement of 1999).

Visual and Aesthetic Conditions

- Incorporation of station landscaping which complements the character of the surrounding community in all station locations; and
- Continued coordination with Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) and City of Anoka regarding Anoka Station pond design.

Wetlands

- Incorporation of permanent storm water management controls and Best Management Practices (BMPs); and
- Replacement of wetlands in the vicinity of the St. Cloud East station, within the major watershed, through a private wetland bank program certified by the Board of Water and Soil Resources.

Vegetation and Wildlife

- Replanting of native vegetation in all impacted areas; and
- Completing Rice station construction during non-breeding months of the Swallow, or installing netting to prevent active nesting.

Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species

- Adjusting construction schedule near Becker to minimize disturbance to Loggerhead Shrike nesting pairs; and
- Adhering to erosion and sediment controls during construction of track improvements west of Elk River and in Big Lake, to avoid secondary impacts to the Blanding's Turtle.

Water Resources and Utilities

- Installation of appropriate storm water management facilities, designed to the EPA's National Urban Runoff Program (NURP) criteria;
- During final design, Mn/DOT will explore the feasibility of implementing innovative ponding design using infiltration techniques at one "test case" site;
- Implementation of BMPs during construction to reduce runoff;
- Formulate a detailed public utility relocation plan for all relocated utilities
- Minimize the extent of the utility disruption;
- Plan for utility service disruptions to occur, to the extent possible, during periods of non-usage or minimum usage;
- Coordinate relocation of private utilities to minimize impact to customers;
- Minimize the extent of utility work within the roadway;
- Where feasible, coordinate utility work hours to correspond with non-peak traffic hours;
- Provide adequate public notification, including public meetings and notices (related to utility construction); and
- Provide utility-related traffic detours.

Hazardous Waste and Contaminated Material

- Conduct Updated Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs), if needed and Phase II Drilling Investigations, if appropriate, on all parcels to be acquired;
- Implementation of BNSF Environmental Response Procedures in the event of a hazardous materials spill from a commuter train; and
- Adherence to BNSF construction contingency plan.

Noise and Vibration

- Evaluation of operational characteristics during final design, to minimize project-generated noise to the extent possible; and
- Ongoing maintenance of wheels and rails to minimize vibration.

Transportation

- Review of signal timing and phasing at 5th Street North/2nd Avenue North in conjunction with the City of Minneapolis;
- The vehicle circulation east of 2nd Avenue North along 5th Street will be reviewed in final design. Changes to the downtown transportation system, including lane geometry, directional flow on 5th Street, vehicle circulation throughout the nearby region of downtown, or a combination there of will be evaluated. The best of these mitigation measures will be implemented;
- Investigation of possibly locating the LRT tracks on the south side of 5th Street North, northwest of 3rd Avenue North;
- Installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Central Avenue NE and 8th Street NE, if evaluation during final design shows that improved traffic conditions will result;
- Coordination with the City of Anoka on improving traffic conditions at intersections surrounding the station area, with focus on 4th Avenue/Pleasant Street and 7th Avenue/Johnson Street, as a part of future Transit-Oriented Development efforts; and
- Installation of a traffic signal at Trunk Highway (TH) 10/Lincoln Avenue, restricting access from Lincoln Avenue, or diverting left-turning traffic to the signalized intersection at 15th Avenue SE in St. Cloud. One or a combination of these will be selected in final design.

Safety

- Station sites have been selected to utilize existing gated crossings for station access. At the St. Cloud East and Coon Rapids Riverdale stations, a pedestrian bridge will be constructed due to a lack of a nearby crossing. At the Fridley station, a pedestrian tunnel will be constructed due to a lack of a nearby crossing;
- Station areas will have inter-track fencing installed to prevent pedestrians from crossing the tracks at inappropriate locations;
- Station security measures will include security cameras where warranted;
- An ongoing education effort and safety program will be implemented to promote pedestrian and vehicle safety in corridor communities and nearby schools;
- A fire/life safety committee will be formed to ensure appropriate emergency response procedures are developed and implemented;
- Mn/DOT will work towards implementing recommendations contained in the Sherburne County Railroad Grade Crossing Study. Mn/DOT has a Railroad-Highway Grade Crossing Safety Improvement Program that offers funding for improvements such as those recommended in the above referenced study;
- Coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration on safety issues; and

- Coordination with the Metropolitan Council to ensure any required updates are made to the Hiawatha LRT project's State Safety Oversight Program.

DETERMINATIONS AND FINDINGS

Conformity with Air Quality Plans

The Project is included in the current Twin Cities Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and the long-range metropolitan transportation plan. The regional analysis of this plan shows a reduction in regional Carbon Monoxide (CO) emissions with commuter rail, and emissions are below the officially established emissions budget for the TIP.

The plan and TIP were determined to conform with the requirements of the 1990 Clean Air Act (per 40 CFR Parts 51 and 93) by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and FTA on December 12, 2001. This proposed action conforms to the requirements of the Clean Air Act Amendments and the Conformity Rules, 40 CFR Section 93.

In addition, the CO hot spot analysis in FEIS section 4.7.3-B ("Microscale Air Quality") indicates that the project will not cause or contribute to any localized violations of the CO standard. Therefore the project conforms because it comes from a conforming plan and TIP and does not cause or contribute to any localized violations of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

Section 106

To assess and mitigate the effects that commuter rail and the LRT connection will have on historic properties, a PA has been developed and signed by the FTA, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Mn/DOT, the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission, and the St. Cloud Heritage Preservation Commission. The PA is included as Attachment A of this document. Mitigation measures identified in the PA include the following:

- Final design review and concurrence by MnSHPO of **Rice station** and **Minneapolis Northeast station** to assure they will not result in an adverse effect to the Rice Mill & Grain and Northwestern Furniture Mart, respectively.

- The design of the **Minneapolis Downtown Commuter Station** will take into account its visual relationship to the Minneapolis warehouse district. In addition, programmatic aspects of the design, which influence the design of the 5th Street North Bridge between 3rd and 5th Avenues North will be considered.

- The design of the new **5th Street North Bridge between 3rd and 5th Avenues North** (including the Light Rail Transit (LRT) platform and the vertical circulation system) will meet the Secretary of the Interior's standards for new construction in historic areas.

- The design of the new **5th Street North Bridge between 2nd and 3rd Avenue** will meet the Secretary of the Interior's standards for new construction in historic areas.

- The potential relocation and reuse of the St. Cloud Northern Pacific Depot will meet the Secretary of Interior's standards and will ensure the continued eligibility of the depot on its new location.

- The design of all LRT system elements between the 5th Street North Bridge LRT station and the Hiawatha LRT project will address the Warehouse District. These elements include (but are not limited to) signage, track and traffic lanes, curbs and sidewalks, overhead cables and support posts, and landscaping. (A portion of this project between 1st and 3rd Avenues North was previously covered under the earlier Hiawatha LRT Project Programmatic Agreement of 1999).

Section 4(f)

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act (49 U.S.C. Section 303) affords special protection to parks, recreation areas, wildlife refuges and historic sites. The existence of Northstar commuter rail in downtown Minneapolis would require the shifting of the planned Cedar Lake Trail east of, and parallel to, the commuter rail line and station, for a distance of approximately 1,500 feet. There is no feasible or prudent alternative to this action, as the commuter rail station is required to be adjacent to the BNSF tracks. To mitigate this impact to the planned Cedar Lake Trail extension, Mn/DOT will obtain right-of-way sufficient to accommodate the trail (12 feet wide and 1,500 foot in length). This commitment to replacement of the affected trail section constitutes "all possible planning to minimize harm" which is required by Section 4(f).

As indicated in Attachments A and B, the SHPO has concurred that, with Mn/DOT's commitment that designs meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, the Northstar Corridor project will not cause any adverse effects on any historic properties. Therefore, use of these historic resources has been avoided, as Section 4(f) requires whenever a feasible and prudent avoidance option exists.

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDING

FTA has determined that the environmental documentation prepared for the preferred alternative satisfies the statutory and regulatory requirements of NEPA and fully evaluates the potential environmental impacts of the Project from downtown Minneapolis to Rice, Minnesota. The environmental documents represent the detailed statement required by NEPA regarding:

- The environmental impact of the proposed action;
- Adverse environmental effects which cannot be avoided should the proposed action be implemented;
- Alternatives to the proposed action;
- The relationship between local short-term uses of the human environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity; and
- Irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources which would be involved if the proposed action is implemented.

In accordance with 49 USC Section 5324(b), FTA has determined that:

- An adequate opportunity to present views was given to all parties with a significant economic, social, or environmental interest;
- The preservation and enhancement of the environment, and the interest of the communities in which the project is located, were considered; and
- No feasible and prudent alternative to the adverse environmental effects of the project exists and all reasonable steps have been included to minimize these effects.

Joel P. Ettinger
Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration

12-10-02
Date

Attachments:

Attachment A: Programmatic Agreement
Attachment B: SHPO letters
Attachment C: Comment letters received on the FEIS

ATTACHMENT A
PROGRAMMATIC AGREEMENT

PROGRAMMATIC AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
THE MINNESOTA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE, THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, AND THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

REGARDING
THE NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR COMMUTER RAIL FACILITY BETWEEN RICE AND DOWNTOWN MINNEAPOLIS, A CONNECTION TO THE HIAWATHA LIGHT RAIL SYSTEM AT 5TH STREET NORTH AND 5TH AVENUE NORTH, MINNEAPOLIS, AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF TWO BRIDGES ON 5TH STREET NORTH, BETWEEN 2ND AND 3RD AVENUES NORTH AND 3RD AND 5TH AVENUES NORTH, MINNEAPOLIS

WHEREAS, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is proposing to fund the use of existing rail for commuter service, a connection to the Hiawatha light rail system, and the reconstruction of two bridges on 5th Street North in Minneapolis;

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) has consulted with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and is a signatory to this agreement;

WHEREAS, Mn/DOT will administer the implementation of the project;

WHEREAS, Mn/DOT will complete the stipulations of this agreement;

WHEREAS, the FTA will be responsible for ensuring that all aspects of project implementation meet the terms of this agreement;

WHEREAS, Mn/DOT has completed the identification and evaluation of historic properties in the project's area of potential effect;

WHEREAS, the project will have an effect on the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District (listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)), the Northwestern Furniture Mart in Minneapolis (eligible for listing on the NRHP), the Rice Mill and Grain (eligible for listing on the NRHP), and the Northern Pacific Depot in St. Cloud if it is used on the rail line (eligible for listing on the NRHP).

NOW THEREFORE, the Parties agree that, upon execution of this agreement, FTA shall ensure that the following stipulations are implemented in order to take into account the effect of the undertaking on historic properties:

I. STIPULATIONS

The FTA will ensure that the following measures are carried out:

1. All aspects of the project within and adjacent to the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District will be designed by Mn/DOT to be compatible with the historic character of the district and will consider effects to buildings adjacent to the district that contribute to the district. All aspects of the project within this area will meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* (STANDARDS) and will be designed in consultation with the Minnesota SHPO and submitted for their review and concurrence. The Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission, as a consulting party, will be part of this review. Information about this project will be made available to members of the public for their comment and input.

    A. The design of the downtown Minneapolis Commuter Rail Station will consider its visual relationship to the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District. Any aspects of the design of this station that may influence the proposed reconstruction of the 5th Street North Bridge between 3rd and 5th Avenues North will be considered.

    B. The design of the new 5th Street North Bridge between 3rd and 5th Avenues North, including the Light Rail Transit (LRT) station platform, and the vertical circulation system, and the design of the 5th Street North Bridge between 2nd and 3rd Avenues North, will meet the STANDARDS for new construction in historic areas.

    C. The design of all LRT system elements between the 5th Street North Bridge LRT Station and the Hiawatha LRT Project will consider effects to the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District. These elements include, but are not limited to, signage, track and traffic lanes, curbs and sidewalks, overhead cables and support posts, and landscaping. (A portion of this project between 1st and 3rd Avenues North was previously covered under the earlier Hiawatha LRT Project Programmatic Agreement of 1999.)

2. All new design and construction in the vicinity of the Northwestern Furniture Mart will meet the STANDARDS and will be submitted to the Minnesota SHPO for review and concurrence. Information about this project will be made available to members of the public for their comment and input.

3. All new design and construction in the vicinity of the Rice Mill and Grain building will meet the STANDARDS and will be submitted to the Minnesota SHPO for review and concurrence. Information about this project will be made available to members of the public for their comment and input.

4. If the St. Cloud Northern Pacific Depot is moved to the Northstar Corridor for use as a rail station, the relocation and reuse of the building will meet the STANDARDS and will ensure the continued eligibility of the depot at its new location. Plans for relocation and reuse will be submitted to the Minnesota SHPO for review and concurrence. Information about this project will be made available to members of the public for their comment and input.

II. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

If at any time during the implementation of this AGREEMENT, Mn/DOT or the SHPO objects within 30 days to any action proposed, or any failure to act pursuant to this AGREEMENT, they may file written objections with the FTA. However, prior to filing such objections, parties to this AGREEMENT shall attempt to resolve the dispute with Mn/DOT before involving the FTA. The FTA shall notify the parties to this AGREEMENT of the objection, and then take the objection into account, consulting with the objector and at the objector's request, with any of the parties to this AGREEMENT, in order to resolve the objection. The FTA will facilitate resolution with any of the parties involved.

If the FTA determines that the objection cannot be resolved, then the FTA shall forward all documentation relevant to the dispute to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (COUNCIL). Alternatively, if the SHPO is unsatisfied with the FTA's proposed resolution of the conflict, then the SHPO may forward the dispute directly to the COUNCIL. Within 30 days after receipt of all pertinent documentation, the COUNCIL will either:

1. Provide the FTA with recommendations, which the FTA will evaluate in reaching a final decision regarding the dispute; or

2. Notify the FTA that it will comment pursuant to 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 800.7(b) and Section 110(1) of the National Historic Preservation Act and then proceed to comment. Any COUNCIL comment provided in response to such a request will be taken into account by the FTA in accordance with 36 CFR Section 800.6(a)(1)(C)(ii) with reference to the subject of the dispute.

Any recommendation or comment provided by the COUNCIL will be understood to pertain only to the subject of the dispute. The FTA's responsibility to carry out all actions under this AGREEMENT that are not the subject of the dispute will remain unchanged.

III. AMENDMENTS

Any party to this AGREEMENT may request that it be amended. Any amendments shall be in writing and signed by all parties. This AGREEMENT is in accordance with the regulations in effect at the time of its execution. If the regulations change from the time of execution, Mn/DOT will consult with all parties regarding an amendment of this AGREEMENT.

IV. TERMINATION OF AGREEMENT

Any signatory to this AGREEMENT may terminate it by providing thirty (30) days notice to the other parties, provided that the parties will consult during the period prior to termination to seek agreement on amendments or other actions that would avoid termination. In the event of termination, Mn/DOT will comply with 36 CFR §§800.3 through 800.13 with regard to the undertakings covered by this AGREEMENT.

V. DURATION OF AGREEMENT

If the terms of this agreement have not been implemented seven years after signature, this agreement shall be null and void. In such an event, FTA shall notify the parties of this agreement of the expiration, and if appropriate, shall re-initiate review of the undertaking in accordance with 36 CFR Section 800.7(c)(4) and Section 110(l) of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Execution of this AGREEMENT and implementation of its terms evidences that the FTA has afforded the COUNCIL a reasonable opportunity to comment on the PROJECT and that the FTA has taken into account the effects of the PROJECT on historic properties.

FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

By: Donald Simonds Date: 3/25/02

MINNESOTA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

By: Nina M. Archabal Date: 2/13/02

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

By: [signature] Date: 2/19/2002

Consulting Parties:

MINNEAPOLIS HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

By: Linda J Messenger Date: 3/12/02

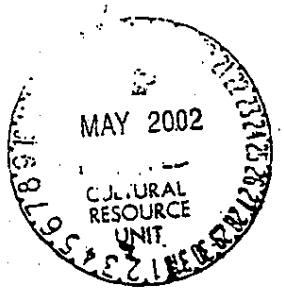
ST. CLOUD HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

By: David Ebert Date: 3/5/02

ATTACHMENT B
SHPO LETTERS

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



May 15, 2002

Mr. Craig Johnson
MnDOT
Cultural Resources Unit
Transportation building
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

RE: Northstar Corridor; commuter rail corridor from downtown Minneapolis to the St. Cloud area
Anoka, Benton, Sherburne, Hennepin, Stearns and Wright Counties
SHPO Number: 2000-0273

Dear Mr. Johnson:

You have requested clarification from our office regarding an issue that was addressed during the review of the Northstar Corridor Project.

The issue relates to the need for survey at the Elk River maintenance site. This issue was raised during the identification process.. However, you will note that the Section 106 programmatic agreement for the project, which we signed on 13 February 2002, does not include any stipulations related to this site. If there had been outstanding issues related to the site, stipulations would have been included or we would not have signed the agreement. Therefore, you can conclude that we concurred with your recommendation that there are no outstanding identification issues at the Elk River maintenance site.

If you have further questions, contact us at 651-296-5462.

Sincerely,

Dennis A. Gimmestad
Government Programs and Compliance Officer

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

November 1, 2001

Ms. Jackie Sluss
Cultural Resource Unit
MN Dept. of Transportation
Transportation Building, MS 676
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

RE: Northstar Corridor Rail Line; Phase II Architectural History Evaluations
SHPO Number: 2000-0273

Dear Ms. Sluss:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Phase II evaluations and the evaluation of effects for the Northstar Corridor Project.

We agree with the recommendation that a Programmatic Agreement be formulated for this project. This agreement will need to outline a process for further consideration of the design of project components within or adjacent to historic properties. In this vein, we feel that a finding of "no adverse effect" at this point would be premature. It would also be inconsistent with the development of an agreement, since "no adverse effect" findings do not usually include agreement documents.

As the agreement is developed, we think the following issues need consideration:

1. **Five brick houses** in Rice and St. Cloud (**Russell House, Gazette House, Mohr House, Bachman House, and Hotel Exchange**). We appreciate the background research completed on brick construction in the St. Cloud area and on these five buildings. Based on the potential significance of this collection of vernacular buildings, we do not concur at this time with the determination that none of these buildings meet National Register criteria. However, we have reviewed the discussion in the Phase I report relative to the effects of the project work on the houses, and have concluded that they will not be adversely affected. It would not appear that any further evaluation or review is necessary.

2. **Rice Mill and Grain** in Rice. We concur with the determination that this property meets National Register criteria. It appears that the project work in the vicinity will have no adverse effect on the property. The Programmatic Agreement should include a provision for review of the final design of the adjacent station area to assure that this is the case.

3. **Northwestern Furniture Mart** in Minneapolis. We concur with the determination that this property meets National Register criteria. It appears that the project work in the vicinity will have no adverse effect on the property. The Programmatic Agreement should include a provision for review of the final design of the adjacent station area to assure that this is the case.

4. **Great Northern Railroad Line** throughout the project area. Pages 83-84 of the Phase I Cultural Resources Assessment indicate that the proposed project follows the route of the Great Northern, which has been determined to meet National Register criteria. As the report indicates, the proposed project should have no effect on the historical characteristics of the line.

5. **Minneapolis Warehouse District** in Minneapolis. All aspects of the project within and adjacent to the Minneapolis Warehouse District need to be designed to be compatible with the historic character of the district and need to take into account effects on adjacent properties which contribute to the district. The Phase II report stipulates that the new construction in this area should have no adverse effect in this area. The Programmatic Agreement, therefore, should include a provision stipulating that all aspects of this portion of the project will meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and will be designed in consultation with our office and submitted to our office for review and concurrence. Public participation and participation of interested parties (including the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission) should be part of this review process. We offer the items below as some issues which will need to be considered as this review and consultation takes place.

A. The design of the Minneapolis Downtown Commuter Station will need to take into account its visual relationship to the warehouse district. In addition, programmatic aspects of the design which influence the design of the 5th Street Bridge between 3rd Avenue and 5th Avenue will need to be considered.

B. The design of the new 5th Street Bridge between 3rd Avenue and 5th Avenue (including the station platform and the vertical circulation system) needs to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for new construction in historic areas. The effects of the structure on the adjacent properties need to be addressed. The grade of the structure near the Booth Fisheries Warehouse is expected to drop, and it should be possible to minimize the effects of the bridge in this area. On the other hand, raising the grade of the bridge adjacent to the facade of the Ford Building could cause an adverse effect to this building. Contrary to information in the report, it appears that the 5th Street side of the Ford Building may indeed have been a primary historic facade. The integration of the bridge design with the significant elements of this facade is an important issue.

C. The design of the new 5th Street Bridge between 2nd Avenue and 3rd Avenue needs to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for new construction in historic areas.

D. The design of all LRT system elements between the Commuter Station and the Warehouse District Station needs to address the Warehouse District. These elements include (but are not limited to) signage, track and traffic lanes, curbs and sidewalks, overhead cables and support posts, and landscaping.

6. With regard to the potential move of the **Northern Pacific Depot** in St. Cloud to the St. Cloud East Station Site, it would seem to us that any such move would obviously be related to the construction of the project, and that provisions should be included in the Programmatic Agreement for the review of such an action should it occur. The fact that the city may cover the costs of the move would not appear to remove it from consideration as part of the effects of this project and the need to include it in the scope of this review.

We look forward to working with you to complete the agreement for this project. Contact us at 651-296-5462 with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Dennis A. Gimmestad
Government Programs and Compliance Officer

cc: Tammy Campion, St. Cloud Heritage Preservation Commission
Greg Mathis, Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
Garneth Peterson, URS
Tom Cinadr, MHS (cef)

ATTACHMENT C
COMMENT LETTERS RECEIVED ON THE FEIS

United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

ER-00/830

AUG 2 2 2002

Mr. Joel Ettinger
Regional Administrator, Region 5
Federal Transit Administration
200 West Adams, Suite 320
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Dear Mr. Ettinger:

The Department of the Interior (Department) reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Section 4(f) Evaluation for the Northstar Corridor Project in Anoka, Benton, Sherburne, Hennepin, Stearns, and Wright Counties, Minnesota. The Department offers the following supplemental comments on this project for your consideration:

Section 4(f) Comments

In the Department's original comments, we expressed concern that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) had not provided sufficient information to conclude that all measures to minimize harm to historic properties had been presented in the Section 4(f) Evaluation. The original evaluation gave insufficient evidence that the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) had agreed to sign an agreement containing the offered mitigative measures. In your letter of July 1, 2002, you included a copy of the signed agreement document indicating SHPO concurrence with the mitigation.

The Department had also expressed concern that the FTA and the MnDOT had not taken into account all cultural resources that would be impacted by the Elk River maintenance facility since it had not been subjected to an inventory. We have now received a copy of a letter from the SHPO indicating that there were no further concerns with impacts to cultural resources at that proposed facility. Based upon that letter, the Department withdraws its concerns.

Finally, the Department expressed concern about the lack of final negotiations with BNSF (the railroad) that may have led to impacts to potential Section 4(f) properties. In your letter of July 1, 2002, you explained because of the uncertainty of these negotiations, you included several options in your analysis for capacity improvements. The Department will agree that should the conclusion of these negotiations with the railroad result in capacity improvements, the FTA and the MnDOT will be responsible for the additional environmental work, including any potential evaluation under Section 4(f).

Summary Comments

Based upon the additional information provided to us on the Northstar Corridor Project, the Department concurs with the Section 4(f) approval of this project.

The Department has a continuing interest in working with the FTA and MnDOT to ensure impacts to resources of concern to the Department are adequately addressed. For matters related to Section 4(f), please contact the Regional Environmental Coordinator, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, 1709 Jackson Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68102.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

Terence R. Martin

for Willie R. Taylor
Director, Office of Environmental
Policy and Compliance

cc:
Mr. Mike Schadauer
Office of Passenger Rail Transit
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, MS 475
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-1899

U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

REGION V
Illinois, Indiana,
Michigan, Minnesota,
Ohio, Wisconsin

200 West Adams Street
Suite 320
Chicago, IL 60606-5253
312-353-2789
312-886-0351 (fax)

JUL - 1 2002

Willie R. Taylor
Director, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20240

Regional Env. Coordinator
National Park Service
Midwest Regional Office
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, NE 68102

RE: Northstar Corridor Rail Project, MN

Dear Mr. Taylor:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) have reviewed the comments provided in the Department of the Interior's (DOI) letter dated May 3, 2002, regarding the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Northstar Corridor Rail Project in Minnesota. FTA offers the following comments and documentation for DOI's consideration, and respectfully requests that DOI approve the proposed Section 4(f) evaluation.

DOI's letter mentions that the final evaluation presents a full analysis of the impacts to properties eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, but did not demonstrate concurrence by the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) through a signed agreement. The Programmatic Agreement (PA) was being circulated for signature at the time the FEIS was being printed. The PA is now fully executed, and a copy is included with this letter. Additionally, the executed PA will be included as an attachment to the Record of Decision (ROD).

Additionally, the DOI letter noted that the FEIS did not indicate that the Minnesota SHPO had concurred with Mn/DOT's determination of no adverse effects regarding the Elk River Maintenance Facility site. Minnesota's SHPO did concur with Mn/DOT's evaluation, and a letter from the SHPO reflecting that fact is also included with this letter.

Finally, you mention that it would be premature to approve the Section 4(f) Evaluation prior to completion of negotiations with Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF).

Mn/DOT recognizes that the lack of a final agreement with BNSF lends some uncertainty to the final outcome of the process, which is why several capacity improvement options were analyzed. Mn/DOT has communicated with BNSF the need to avoid impacts to the Springbrook Nature Center and the Rice Creek West Regional Trail. On page S-5 of the FEIS (bullet no. 6), it states that, "It is anticipated that all potential track improvements are included at this time; however, if capacity improvements are added, additional environmental documentation will be done." This additional environmental documentation, if needed, will include the appropriate Section 4(f) Evaluation.

If you have questions or comments please contact either Vanessa Adams-Donald of my staff or myself at (312) 353-2789. I hope the above information satisfies your concerns about the Section 4(f) evaluation for the Northstar Corridor Rail Project.

Sincerely,

Joel P. Ettinger
Regional Administrator

Enclosures

cc: Mike Schadauer, Mn/DOT

Minnesota Department of Transportation

Office of Passenger Rail Transit
Mail Stop 475
395 John Ireland Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Phone: 651/ 215-6800
Fax: 651/ 284-4113

June 5, 2002

Sequence #: (if required)	
File Code(s):	

Jon Wertjes
City of Minneapolis
Dept. of Public Works
350 South 5th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1390

Dear Jon:

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) has reviewed the comments from the City of Minneapolis provided to us in a letter dated May 3, 2002 regarding the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Northstar Corridor Rail Project. We offer the following response to your letter and would like to reaffirm that when the Northstar Corridor Rail Project moves into a final stage of design, we will continue to work with the City of Minneapolis to address the concerns of interested stakeholders.

A meeting was held on May 9th, 2002 with you and Mike Larson from the Office of Planning to discuss the concerns outlined in the above referenced letter. At that meeting we discussed that many of the comments expressed in your letter were editorial in nature and do not affect the outcome of the decision in the FEIS.

One of the comments expressed in your letter related to the potential for new development near the Downtown Minneapolis station in the future, and the effects the development could have on the design of the station. The location for the Downtown Minneapolis station was selected because it is best suited to existing land use patterns. If the land use pattern of the area surrounding the station changes before station construction begins, Mn/DOT will evaluate the need for redesign of the station and additional environmental documentation, if warranted.

An additional comment that you expressed was that a master planning process for the area surrounding the Northeast Minneapolis station has been discussed, but not initiated, as was mentioned in the FEIS. It is anticipated that the above two comments with corresponding responses will be included in the comment summary section of the Northstar Corridor Record of Decision (ROD).

If you have further questions or comments please contact me.

Sincerely,

Mike Schadauer

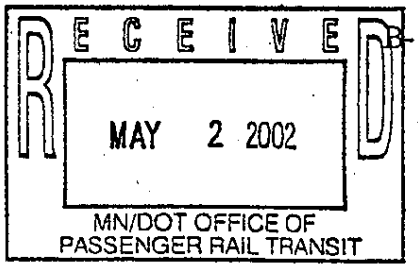
Mike Schadauer
Northstar Corridor Rail Project Manager

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 5
77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD
CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

APR 25 2002

REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF:

R-19J



Joel Ettinger, Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration - Region 5
200 West Adams Street - Suite 320
Chicago, IL 60606

Re: **FEIS, Northstar Corridor Project: Minneapolis to Rice, Minnesota (FTA) (EIS No.: 020125)**

Dear Mr. Ettinger:

In accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5 (U.S. EPA) has reviewed the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) *Northstar Corridor - Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Section 4(f) Evaluation* dated March 2002.

The FEIS identifies a Preferred Alternative for the Northstar Corridor. The Preferred Alternative is an 82-mile-long commuter rail service on the existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) rail line from downtown Minneapolis to Rice, Minnesota. It includes track capacity improvements, eleven commuter stations, a layover facility at Rice, vehicle maintenance facility at Elk River, and a bus operations plan. It also includes a light rail transit (LRT) connection to the Hiawatha LRT line in Downtown Minneapolis on 5th Street from 3rd Avenue North to 6th Avenue North. In addition, a Minimum Operable Segment (MOS) for the Northstar Corridor is defined and evaluated in the FEIS. The MOS for the Northstar Corridor is defined in the FEIS to address and evaluate a commuter rail system that could operate in a cost-effective manner. The MOS for the Northstar corridor is defined as commuter rail service, approximately 41 miles long, from Downtown Minneapolis to the Big Lake station. Under the MOS, a layover facility would be located at Big Lake.

We documented our comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Supplemental DEIS for this project in letters dated, January 22, 2001, and March 7, 2001, respectively. Our comments generally dealt with insufficient information to assess environmental impacts. Our comments were in the following areas: (1) cumulative impacts analysis, (2) storm water management, (3) wetland mitigation, and (4) air quality.

We have reviewed the information presented in the FEIS in light of the concerns presented in our previous comment letters. The FEIS includes additional information and discussions for the

areas of concern we identified. In addition, we are pleased to see that direct wetland impacts have been reduced from 7.23 acres in the DEIS to 1.86 acres in the FEIS. The FEIS indicates that wetland replacement will occur within the major watershed through a private wetland banking credit program certified by the Board of Water and Soil Resources.

We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on the Northstar Corridor FEIS. If you have any questions, please contact Virginia Laszewski of my staff at 312-886-7501 or e-mail at laszewski.virginia@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

Kenneth A. Westlake, Chief
Environmental Planning and Evaluation Branch
Office of Strategic Environmental Analysis

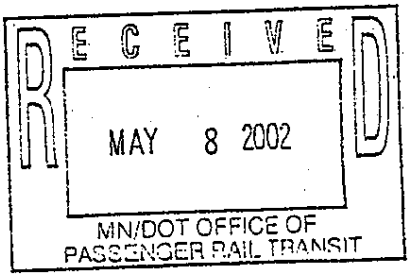
cc: Mn/DOT
Northstar Corridor Development Authority

United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

ER-00/830

MAY 3 2002



Mr. Joel Ettinger
Regional Administrator, Region 5
Federal Transit Administration
200 West Adams, Suite 320
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Dear Mr. Ettinger:

The Department of the Interior (Department) has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Section 4(f) Evaluation for the Northstar Corridor Project in Anoka, Benton, Sherburne, Hennepin, Stearns, and Wright Counties, Minnesota. The Department offers the following comments and recommendations for your consideration.

Section 4(f) Comments

The Department provided the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) comments on the draft EIS and Section 4(f) Evaluation on January 5, 2001, which appear in the final EIS and evaluation. We expressed our concern in the letter that the project may affect properties eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. In our letter, the Department requested that the final evaluation provide a detailed analysis of the impacts to the properties, if they were to be impacted. We also requested that the final evaluation present a signed Memorandum of Agreement with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, if necessary, to demonstrate concurrence with the measures to minimize harm to Section 4(f) properties.

The final evaluation presents a full analysis of the impacts, but it does not demonstrate the SHPO's concurrence with the measures outlined to minimize harm, though it is stated in the final Section 4(f) Evaluation that the SHPO has concurred. The last piece of correspondence from the SHPO presented in the documents, dated November 1, 2001, indicates that the SHPO's staff is willing to explore an agreement, but some issues were clearly unresolved. A version of an agreement document is included in the final document that appears to address those issues but there are no signatures, and there is no explanation as to why the document is not signed.

Finally, we note that the Elk River maintenance site was not inventoried for cultural resources since access to the property was denied. While the Mn/DOT has made the determination that the property has low potential for archeological materials, and that there would be no adverse effect from the project, there is no indication of concurrence from the SHPO. In an earlier letter (January 21, 2001), the SHPO indicated that certain project areas had not been inventoried and that an agreement document could be used to provide for the necessary studies. There is no provision for the Elk River site in the agreement document included in the final evaluation. Therefore, because these issues appear not to have been resolved, the Department cannot concur with your assessment that all measures to reduce harm to historic properties have been provided for and agreed to by all parties.

The Department agrees that the removal of the commuter rail and track improvement aspects of the project avoids impacts to the Springbrook Nature Center and the Rice Creek West Regional Trail. However, we note that the FTA indicates that it has not yet completed negotiations with the BNSF (the railroad) concerning these track improvements. The language of the evaluation appears to indicate that this issue is not yet settled. Until the negotiations have been completed, it would seem premature to approve the Section 4(f) Evaluation.

Summary Comments

The Department does not concur with Section 4(f) approval of this project at this time. We would be pleased to reconsider this position upon receipt of revised material that includes adequate information and full discussion of measures to minimize harm as mentioned earlier in our Section 4(f) Evaluation comments.

The Department has a continuing interest in working with the FTA and the Mn/DOT in order to ensure that impacts to resources of concern to the Department are adequately addressed. For matters related to Section 4(f), please contact the Regional Environmental Coordinator, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, 1709 Jackson Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68102.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

Willie R. Taylor
Director, Office of Environmental
Policy and Compliance

cc:
Mr. Mike Schadauer
Office of Passenger Rail Transit
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, MS 475
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-1899

Minnesota Department of Agriculture

April 22, 2002

Mr. Mike Schadauer
Project Manager, Northstar Corridor
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, MS 475
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Northstar Corridor Project Final Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Mr. Schadauer:

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has reviewed the Northstar Corridor Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The mitigation measure referred to in Section 4.1 of the FEIS satisfies our concerns regarding severed or isolated farmland resulting from the construction of the substations, which we raised in the DEIS.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the FEIS. Please contact me at (651) 215-0369 if you have any questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Becky Balk

Becky Balk, Agricultural Land Use Planner
Agricultural Development Division

cc: Jim Boerboom
Paul Burns
Bob Patton

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

May 8, 2002

Mr. Mike Schadauer
Office of Passenger Rail Transit
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

RE: Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) Northstar Corridor project

Dear Mr. Schadauer:

Staff from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) have received and reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) completed by the Federal Transit Administration and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) for the proposed Northstar Corridor project.

The MPCA finds that the Mn/DOT responses to our comments on the above-referenced document prepared for the Northstar Corridor sufficiently address the concerns and issues raised in our comment letters.

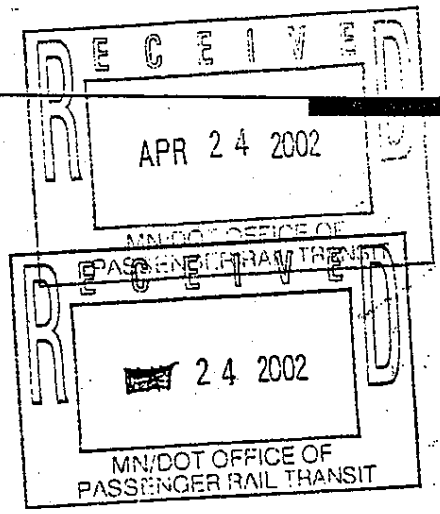
Thank you for the opportunity to review the documents for this project. Should you have any general questions about these comments, please contact me at (651) 296-5897. We look forward to a cooperative and effective relationship necessary for the efficient planning and construction of this important project.

Sincerely,

Dale B. Thompson
Team Leader
Regional Environmental Management Division

DBT:smd

Metropolitan Council
Improve regional competitiveness in a global economy



April 22, 2002

Mr. Mukhtar Thakur, P.E.
Director, Office of Passenger Rail Transit
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd. , MS 475
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Metropolitan Council comments on the *Northstar Corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement*-
(Referral No. 184025-5)

Dear Mukhtar:

The Metropolitan Council has reviewed the *Northstar Corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement* and has no further comments to submit on the environmental impact statement for the proposed Northstar Corridor project.

I look forward to the continued Metropolitan Council involvement in the development of this project.

Sincerely,

Nacho Diaz
Director, Transportation Planning

Cc: Natalie Haas Steffen, Council Member , District 9
James E. Nelson, Council Member, District 10
Carol A. Kummer, Council Member, District 8
Tim Yantos, Northstar Corridor Development Authority

Minneapolis
City of Lakes

Department of Public Works
David J. Sonnenberg
City Engineer
Director

Brian J. Lokkesmoe
Deputy Director

350 South 5th Street - Room 203
Minneapolis MN 55415-1390

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Assistant Director of Public Works
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Minneapolis, MN 55415-1390
(612) 673-2241

Administrative Services
T. G. Moloney, Director
350 South 5th St. – Room 203
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(612) 673-3478

Engineering Services
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309 2nd Ave. S. – Room 300
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Equipment Services
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1200 Currie Ave. N.
Minneapolis, MN 55403-1234
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Field Services
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Minneapolis, MN 55415-1390
(612) 673-3759

Property Services
S. A. Kotke, Director
350 South 5th St. – Room 223
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1390
(612) 673-2402

Solid Waste & Recycling
S. A. Young, Director
309 2nd Ave. S. – Room 210
Minneapolis, MN 55401-2281
(612) 673-2433

Transportation & Parking
G. A. Finstad, Director
350 South 5th St. – Room 233
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1390
(612) 673-2411

Water Works
A. J. Kramer, Director
250 South 4th St. – Room 206
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(612) 673-2418

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Affirmative Action Employer

May 3, 2002

Mr. Mike Schadauer
Office of Passenger Rail Transit
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, MS 475
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

RE: FEIS Northstar Commuter Rail

Dear Mike:

Here are the City of Minneapolis comments on the FEIS for the Northstar Commuter Rail project.

General Comments

Downtown Station -- Planning activities in the vicinity of the Downtown Multi-Modal Station include the Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan (currently underway) and Hennepin County's Multi-Modal Station Area Master Plan. Both planning processes have explored specific and general concepts for a new mixed-use district that mitigates the presence of freeway infrastructure and integrates this area with both downtown and the Warehouse District. Further, the site of the Downtown Station platform remains the City's preferred location for a new professional baseball stadium. The final location and design of Downtown Station commuter rail facilities and the LRT extension should account for these potential development plans.

Northeast Station -- The City appreciates inclusion and consideration of the Northstar Community Task Force (7th St. NE) materials in the appendices and looks forward to working with Northstar project staff on the final design of the station and associates facilities.

Summary

Page S-17, Minneapolis Downtown Station

Please add a reference to Section 8.6.5 after the words "Programmatic Agreement".

Page S-19, Pedestrian Access, 1st paragraph

Add that "The Ford Centre falls within the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District (NRHP)."

Create a new paragraph that includes the last sentence of the first paragraph plus the following text: "The City continues to express a desire to explore alternatives that preserve vehicle access to 5th Avenue North and consider the visual and aesthetic relationship of bridge reconstruction to this district property (as per the Programmatic Agreement)."

Page S-25, Table S.6-3

The Minneapolis Downtown section refers to 5th Street South. This should be 5th Street North.

Section 2.0

Page 2-17, Table 2.2-6, Proposed Feeder Bus Routes

The two listed routes serving the Minneapolis station should have included the other bus routes listed on pages 5-31 and 5-32.

Page 2-22, Changes to Downtown Minneapolis Multi-Modal Connector

While the City of Minneapolis concurs with the identified location of the multi-modal station, the City has indicated that there are numerous historic, transportation, and development factors that may change future location and design of both the commuter rail and LRT stations. The City requests that MnDOT as part of the future design process address these and other factors that may influence this station location and its design.

Figure 2.2-2A, Downtown Minneapolis Site Plan

The LRT platforms and tracks are labeled "(By Others)'. Please delete this reference since this is part of the overall project.

Page 2-26, "Minneapolis Northeast":

The phrase: "A decorative retaining wall would replace existing BNSF fencing, with a landscaped berm on the west side of the wall," reads as if the fencing will be removed and replaced with a wall, a berm, and landscaping. Rather, in discussions with the Northstar Community Task Force and staff, new non-climbable wrought iron fencing, between the residential properties and the station area, was to be installed, with such fencing, the retaining wall, berm and landscaping as critical elements of overall safety and access discussions.

Section 3.0

Page 3-7, Employment for the Northstar Primary Service Area, 3rd Paragraph

This paragraph references data in Table 3.1.9. The forecast of 76,000 or 55 percent employment growth differs from what is indicated in the table.

Page 3-9, Table 3.1-9

This table differs from the Draft EIS, and indicates a considerably larger employment base as part of the Primary Service Area than what was assumed in the DEIS. This table also is inconsistent with Table 3.1-8, which provides a breakdown by employment type. It appears that employment in downtown Minneapolis was newly included in Table 3.1-9, but not explained or updated in the text and this other table.

Page 3-21, Minneapolis Northeast Station, Major Trip Generators

This section should have mentioned the Mid-City Industrial Opportunity Area, a major trip generator that will be accessible via commuter rail via bus transfer.

Page 3-28, Minneapolis Downtown Station Neighborhood,

Text should be added to this section regarding the ballpark being a possible future pattern of land use.

Page 3-28, Minneapolis Northeast Station Neighborhood, 2nd paragraph

Change "initiated" to "discussed".

The FEIS should not include a reference to the initiation of a "master planning process when only discussions have been held. It is true that there will be continued community involvement in the final design of the station, feedback and input regarding the operation of the station, and also with regard to changes in public infrastructure and proposed development and redevelopment in the area.

Page 3-60, Minneapolis Northeast Station at 7th Street Northeast

This section should have noted the concurrence of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) that the Northwestern Furniture Mart Building (Banks Building) meets National Historic Register criteria.

Page 3-62, Paragraph 2

This section should have acknowledged a commitment by the project, in cooperation with the City, to explore possible alignment and geometric alternatives that minimize visual and aesthetic impact, as well as access to, the Ford Centre (as per Section 106 Programmatic Agreement).

Figure 3.1-17

The figure should show the proposed ballpark as a possible future pattern of development. Please use the "sports arena star" along with the office denoted for the parking lot where the commuter rail station is located.

Section 5

Page 5-10, Minneapolis Downtown Station and Multi-Model Connector

The City wishes to explore options to the proposed configuration of the Downtown Commuter Rail and LRT extension in order to meet a number of planning objectives in the area. Numerous alternatives have been discussed with MnDOT staff related to the potential commercial/office/housing developments, the proposed ballpark, existing historic properties and access to the 5th Avenue North to/from 5th Street North. These alternatives include but not resolved are:

- Construct the LRT station platform on the south side of the 5th Street railroad bridge, with vertical circulation on the same side and separate the 5th Street railroad bridge profiles for vehicles traveling on the north side of the bridge, thereby maintaining access to 5th Avenue North
- Integrate the multi-modal station (commuter and LRT) infrastructure into the proposed ballpark and/or other mixed-use developments
- Relocate only the LRT station from the 5th Street railroad bridge east to the 5th Street freeway bridge and build a new "grand central station" over the I-394 freeway across from the 5th Street TAD garage.

Section 7

Page 7-5, Section 7.6

The City appreciates the commitment to the establishment of a security plan, including the staff and financial participation of the owner and operator of the line.

If you have further questions about the letter, please feel free to contact Jon Wertjes at (612) 673-2614.

Respectfully,

Jon Wertjes, P.E.
Minneapolis Public Works

Michael Larson
Minneapolis Planning

cc: David Sonnenberg, Chuck Ballentine, Brian Lokkesmoe, Greg Finstad, Heidi Hamilton, Bob Morgan, Peter Wagenius

CITY OF FRIDLEY

FRIDLEY MUNICIPAL CENTER • 6431 UNIVERSITY AVE. N.E. FRIDLEY, MN 55432 • (763) 571-3450 • FAX (763) 571-1287

May 3, 2002

Mr. Mukhtar Thakur
Director, Office of Passenger Rail Transit
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, MS 475
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Mr. Thakur:

The City of Fridley staff, various advisory commissions, and the City Council have taken time to review the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Northstar Commuter Rail Project. On April 24, 2002, the City hosted a Final EIS meeting to allow residents to comment and express their views about the FEIS document. Thirteen residents, 4 MnDOT/NCDA Staff, 4 City Council Members, and myself attended the meeting. The purpose of this letter is to summarize the discussion and offer final comment.

Many of the comments made were actually questions that were handled by Mike Schadauer, MnDOT.

Question #1 What happens if the Legislature does not fund the North Star project?
Answer: Mike Schadauer explained potential outcome of several funding scenarios.

Question #2. Have you taken sound tests with high-speed freight noise?
Answer: Mike Schadauer explained the noise study portion of the FEIS and its relationship to future transit traffic as opposed to freight traffic that already exists. Also, beyond noise, the track and all crossings have been evaluated to assure all is known about necessary improvements to accommodate commuter rail.

Question #3 Has the City considered a quiet zone?
Answer: City staff responded, yes; however, with at-grade crossings that exist in Fridley, a quiet zone designation would be difficult. An alternative plan by the City would need to be offered by the City and that plan has not been devised. Ken Stevens added that the at-grade crossings requiring horn blowing are north of the proposed station site.

Question #4 Has a solution to folks using Starlite Blvd. as a short cut been resolved.
Answer: City staff responded that the design of the Station site was modified to discourage those trips by moving the access to the parking over to Main Street. Staff further indicated that once the City Council has approved a Station Site, the details of signage, etc., could be evaluated.

Question #5 Can the tunnel be locked at night for safety?
Answer: Mike Schadauer responded that part of the City's interest in having the tunnel was the ability to connect the neighborhoods on the east and west side of the tracks. They will likely want that connection during all hours. However, there will be cameras that will aid in monitoring, and local assistance from Fridley Police will be helpful.

Question #6 The third rail appears to be in limbo according to the plan. Who pays if it is eventually needed?
Answer: Mike Schadauer explained the NCDA position on the third rail and further explained that since it is not in their plan, it was not analyzed in the FEIS. If it is eventually needed, the Burlington Northern folks will need to address the issue at the time of that request.

Question #7 Is the noise on the same wavelengths when there are more trains on a tighter schedule?
Answer: Mike Schadauer explained the noise study modeling and the additional number of trains used in the analysis to provide the most accurate estimate.

Question #8 Comment (not FEIS related), rather than question about poor traffic movement on roadways and timing of traffic lights.
Answer: N/A

Question #9 Why did Minneapolis need to move all the utilities on 5th Street (not FEIS related)?
Answer: Mike Schadauer explained the difficulties of using any of the street corridors in Minneapolis for that reason. Fifth Street eventually became the chosen route and, like any of the alternative choices, utilities would be an issue.

Question #10 Why did the State have to pick up the cost of a parking ramp to allow people to go to the airport (not FEIS related)?
Answer: Mike clarified who was paying for the ramp and what the benefits were in that location.

Question #11 Have there been any surveys about crime increasing at train stations?
Answer: Mike Schadauer responded with more people in any given area, the potential for criminal activity might increase. He reiterated the need for surveillance by the Northstar folks and local police.

Question #12 Could the City and County provide a tunnel under East River Road at 61st?
Answer: City staff committed to investigating potential, while explaining that the project on East River Road this summer is surface enhancement, not reconstruction.

Question #13 Could buses use 57th, rather than 61st?
Answer: Lynne Clarkowski, MnDOT, responded by pointing out what the 3 projected bus routes are and by indicating that a change would need to be evaluated. Ken Stevens added that those routes are the routes that will be used, if the station is constructed and that ridership, pick-up locations; destinations are all factors that contribute to the decisions about routes. These routes were analyzed in the FEIS in Chapter 5.

Question #14 Has there been additional consideration to buffer zones along the residential areas? A row of mature trees would be nice.
Answer: The station sites on both the east and west sides of the tracks have been laid out to provide buffers. The east side was reconfigured in response to neighborhood and City Council's desire of a separation between the residents and the station site.

Question #15 What are the benefits of the commuter rail to people in Fridley?
Answer City staff responded: relief of traffic on roadways and additional options for Fridley residents' travel.

Question #16 Comment: I'm not against commuter rail, but I'm against it in my neighborhood.
Answer: Comment noted.

Question #17 When will commuter rail be available to ride?
Answer: As soon as 2005, if funding becomes available.

The comments/questions made through this process were recorded herein and answers were provided to the participants in the process. Thank you for your oversight of this process and for providing the staff necessary to answer the questions that were raised.

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

April 3, 2002

Joel P. Ettinger
Regional Administrator, Region 5
Federal Transit Administration
200 West Adams Street, Suite 320
Chicago, IL 60606-5253

Re: Proposed Northstar Corridor Project
81.8 mile commuter rail line on existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF), Between downtown Minneapolis and Rice, MN

Dear Mr. Ettinger:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above-referenced project. It has been reviewed pursuant to the responsibilities given the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the Procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (38CFR800).

I have reviewed the documentation; I have determined that the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe does not have any concerns regarding sites of religious or cultural importance in this area.

For future reference, please address any correspondence to:

Gerald White, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
6530 Hwy 2 NW
Cass Lake, MN 56633

Please contact Gina Papasodora, Deputy THPO at (218) 335-2940 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

for Gerald White, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

6530 Hwy 2 NW • Cass Lake, Minnesota 56633
(218) 335-8200 • Fax (218) 335-8309
Email: llpr@paulbunyan.net

BNSF

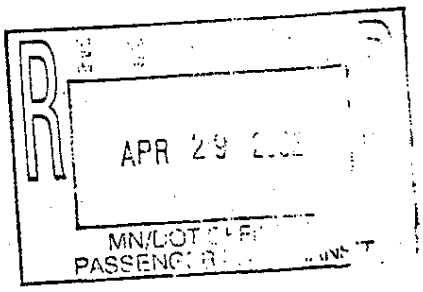
DJ MITCHELL II

Assistant Vice President

Burlington Northern Santa Fe

2600 Lou Menk Drive
P.O. Box 961034
Fort Worth, Texas, 76161-0034

Phone (817) 352-1230
Fax (817) 234-7454



April 26, 2002

Mr. Joel Ettinger
Regional Administrator, Region 5
Federal Transit Administration
200 West Adams, Suite 320
Chicago, IL 60606

Subject: Northstar Corridor FEIS

Dear Mr. Ettinger:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed FEIS for the Northstar Corridor. We have two observations related to this draft.

First, we note that in Section 2.2.7 Potential Track Improvements, the third main track from Coon Creek to I-694 and the Coon Creek siding (MP 20.7 – 18.8) have been eliminated from the FEIS. However, no alternative track improvement has been proposed to provide the capacity and functionality required to reliably operate the proposed commuter rail service around our freight service entering or leaving the west end of Northtown Yard.

Second, we do not believe all or even most of the track and signal capacity improvements listed can be built for the project cost listed on Table 2.7-1.

If you have any questions about either of our two comments, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

DJ Mitchell
Passenger Operations

Cc: Mike Schadauer, MnDOT

If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at (763)572-3590.

Sincerely,

CITY OF FRIDLEY

Scott J. Hickok
Community Development Director

c. Mike Schadauer, Mn/DOT
Lynn Clarkowski, Mn/DOT
Ken Stevens, NCDA

C-02-54

Letters of Correspondence

- Minnesota Natural Heritage Letter, November 17, 2005
- Mn/DOT Letter (Kristen Zschomler), November 21, 2005
- Mn/DOT Letter (Greg Busacker), December 2005
- SHPO Letter (Dennis Gimmestad), December 19, 2005

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program, Box 25
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-40
Phone: (651) 259-5107 Fax: (651) 296-1811 E-mail: sarah.hoffmann@dnr.state.mn.us

November 17, 2005

Ms. Carissa Ptacek
MnDOT
155 Fifth Avenue South, Suite 755
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Re: Request for Natural Heritage information for vicinity of proposed Northstar Commuter Line Third Main Line Track, Fridley Station, Big Lake Station, and Big Lake Maintenance Facility

County	Township (N)	Range (W)	Sections
Anoka	30	24	3, 10, 15, 22
Anoka	31	24	26, 35, 36
Sherburne	33	27	20, 28, 29

NHNRP Contact #: ERDB 20000253-0006

Dear Ms. Ptacek,

The Minnesota Natural Heritage database has been reviewed to determine if any rare plant or animal species or other significant natural features are known to occur within an approximate one-mile radius of the area indicated on the map enclosed with your information request. Based on this review, there are 28 known occurrences of rare species or native plant communities in the area searched (for details, see enclosed database printout and explanation of selected fields). Following are specific comments for **only those elements that *may* be impacted** by the proposed project. Rare feature occurrences not listed below are not anticipated to be affected by the proposed project.

- Blanding's Turtles (*Emydoidea blandingii*), a state-listed threatened species, have been reported from the vicinity of the above listed project areas. Blanding's Turtles spend much of their time in shallow wetlands (1-3 feet deep), but they nest in open, sandy uplands up to 1 mile from wetlands. Nesting is in June and eggs hatch in September, at which time young turtles enter deep wetlands where they over-winter in soft sediments. Factors believed to contribute to the decline of this species include wetland drainage and degradation, development on upland nesting areas, and possibly collection for the pet trade.

  For your information, I have attached a fact sheet and a flyer about the Blanding's Turtle. The fact sheet is intended to provide you with background information regarding habitat use, life history, and reasons for the species' decline, as well as recommendations for avoiding and minimizing impacts to this rare turtle. As you will note, there are two lists of recommendations. The first list contains recommendations to prevent harm to turtles during construction work, and is relative to all areas inhabited by Blanding's Turtles. Please refer to this first list of recommendations for your project. The second column expands on the first column, and contains greater protective measures to be considered for areas known to be of state-wide importance to Blanding's Turtles, or any area where greater protection for turtles is desired. Your project area is not within one of these priority areas. The flyer, which should be given to all contractors working in the area, contains an illustration and description of the Blanding's Turtle, as well as a summary of the recommendations provided in the fact sheet.

The Natural Heritage database is maintained by the Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program, a unit within the Division of Ecological Services, Department of Natural Resources. It is continually updated as new information becomes available, and is the most complete source of data on Minnesota's rare or otherwise significant species, native plant communities, and other natural features. Its purpose is to foster better understanding and protection of these features.

Because our information is not based on a comprehensive inventory, there may be rare or otherwise significant natural features in the state that are not represented in the database. A county-by-county survey of rare natural features is now underway, and has been completed for both Anoka and Sherburne County. Our information about native plant communities is, therefore, quite thorough for those counties. However, because survey work for rare plants and animals is less exhaustive, and because there has not been an on-site survey of all areas of the county, ecologically significant features for which we have no records may exist on the project area.

The enclosed results of the database search are provided in two formats: index and full record. To control the release of locational information, which might result in the damage or destruction of a rare element, both printout formats are copyrighted.

The index provides rare feature locations only to the nearest section, and may be reprinted, unaltered, in an Environmental Assessment Worksheet, municipal natural resource plan, or report compiled by your company for the project listed above. If you wish to reproduce the index for any other purpose, please contact me to request written permission. **The full-record printout includes more detailed locational information, and is for your personal use only. If you wish to reprint the full-record printouts for any purpose, please contact me to request written permission.**

Please be aware that review by the Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program focuses only on *rare natural features*. It does not constitute review or approval by the Department of Natural Resources as a whole. If you require further information on the environmental review process for other natural resource-related issues, you may contact your Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist, Wayne Barstad, at (651) 772-7940. Thank you for consulting us on this matter, and for your interest in preserving Minnesota's rare natural resources.

Sincerely,

Sarah D. Hoffmann
Endangered Species Environmental Review Coordinator

encl: Database search results
Rare Feature Database Print-Outs: An Explanation of Fields
Fact sheets: Blanding's Turtle

NORTHSTAR COMMUTER LINE, ANOKA & SHERBURNE COUNTIES

Minnesota Natural Heritage Database — T30N R24W S3,10,15,22; T31N R24W S25,26,35,36; T33N R27W S20,28,29 — 18:47 Tuesday, NOVEMBER 15, 2005 —

Element Occurrence Records — MnDNR, Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program —

TWP	RNG	PRIMARY SECTION	FED STATUS	MN STATUS	S RANK	ELEMENT and OCCURRENCE NUMBER	MANAGED AREA
T030N	R24W	02		SPC		HETERODON NASICUS (WESTERN HOGNOSE SNAKE) #11	
T030N	R24W	03			S2	DRY PRAIRIE (CENTRAL) SAND-GRAVEL SUBTYPE #71	SPRINGBROOK NATURE CENTER
T030N	R24W	03			SU	LAKE BED #9	SPRINGBROOK NATURE CENTER
T030N	R24W	11		THR		EMYDOIDEA BLANDINGII (BLANDING'S TURTLE) #733	
T030N	R24W	14		END		SCLERIA TRIGLOMERATA (TALL NUT-RUSH) #3	
T030N	R24W	23		SPC		ARISTIDA TUBERCULOSA (SEA-BEACH NEEDLEGRASS) #4	
T030N	R24W	23			S2	DRY OAK SAVANNA (CENTRAL) BARRENS SUBTYPE #26	
T030N	R24W	23		SPC		FIMBRISTYLIS AUTUMNALIS (AUTUMN FIMBRISTYLIS) #6	
T030N	R24W	23		SPC		HETERODON NASICUS (WESTERN HOGNOSE SNAKE) #8	
T030N	R24W	23		NON		HETERODON PLATYRHINOS (EASTERN HOGNOSE SNAKE) #11	
T030N	R24W	23		SPC		HUDSONIA TOMENTOSA (BEACH-HEATHER) #23	
T031N	R23W	19		SPC		HUDSONIA TOMENTOSA (BEACH-HEATHER) #13	
T031N	R23W	30		SPC		HUDSONIA TOMENTOSA (BEACH-HEATHER) #36	
T031N	R24W	27		THR		EMYDOIDEA BLANDINGII (BLANDING'S TURTLE) #86	COON RAPIDS DAM REGIONAL PARK
T031N	R24W	35		THR		EMYDOIDEA BLANDINGII (BLANDING'S TURTLE) #467	MISSISSIPPI NATL RIVER & RECREATION AREA
T031N	R24W	35		SPC		LIGUMIA RECTA (BLACK SANDSHELL MUSSEL) #232	
T033N	R27W	16		THR		EMYDOIDEA BLANDINGII (BLANDING'S TURTLE) #416	
T033N	R27W	16			S3	OAK FOREST (CENTRAL) DRY SUBTYPE #35	
T033N	R27W	18		THR		EMYDOIDEA BLANDINGII (BLANDING'S TURTLE) #415	
T033N	R27W	19		THR		EMYDOIDEA BLANDINGII (BLANDING'S TURTLE) #150	
T119N	R21W	02		THR		EMYDOIDEA BLANDINGII (BLANDING'S TURTLE) #72	COON RAPIDS DAM REGIONAL PARK
T119N	R21W	02		THR		EMYDOIDEA BLANDINGII (BLANDING'S TURTLE) #763	COON RAPIDS DAM REGIONAL PARK
T119N	R21W	11			S2	FLOODPLAIN FOREST #32	MISSISSIPPI NATL RIVER & RECREATION AREA
T119N	R21W	13			S2	FLOODPLAIN FOREST #41	MISSISSIPPI NATL RIVER & RECREATION AREA
T119N	R21W	25	LT	SPC		HALIAEETUS LEUCOCEPHALUS (BALD EAGLE) #1547	ANOKA COUNTY RIVERFRONT REGIONAL PARK
T119N	R21W	36				COLONIAL WATERBIRD NESTING SITE #809	ANOKA COUNTY RIVERFRONT REGIONAL PARK
T119N	R21W	36			S2	FLOODPLAIN FOREST #40	ANOKA COUNTY RIVERFRONT REGIONAL PARK
T121N	R24W	09			S4	LOWLAND HARDWOOD FOREST #88	MISSISSIPPI RIVER ISLANDS SNA

RECORDS PRINTED = 28

Minnesota Department of Transportation

Office of Environmental Services
Mail Stop 620
395 John Ireland Boulevard

Office Tel: (651) 296-3243
Fax: (651) 282-9834

November 21, 2005

Bryan Dodds
Senior Project Engineer
Northstar Project Office
Ceresota Building
155 5th Avenue South, Suite 755
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Dear Mr. Dodds:

RE: Northstar Cooridor (Commuter Rail Corridor, Minneapolis to Big Lake, Minnesota)

We have reviewed the above-referenced undertaking on behalf of the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (36 CFR 800).

The project was previously reviewed, and an MOA was signed on February 13, 2002. The project was determined to have an adverse effect on the Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District, the Northwestern Furniture Mart (both in Minneapolis), the Rice Mill and Grain in Rice, and the Northern Pacific Depot in St. Cloud.

Since the MOA was signed, the project scope was changed. Most of the changes consist of a reduction in the scope, such as the removal of the Northeast Minneapolis and Coon Rapids-Foley station and the terminus of the line at Big Lake instead of St. Cloud. All of the changes expect for one were covered in the previous Section 106 reviews: the proposed maintenance facility at Big Lake. While a potential maintenance facility was considered for this site in the original project review, since the commuter line will now stop at Big Lake, the needed facility will impact a much larger area than originally evaluated.

Based on previous archaeological survey work in the area, plus a review of Mn/Model, the area has low potential for containing intact, significant archaeological resources. Also, much of the area has been previously disturbed by railroad, roadway, and residential construction. There are no properties over 50 years in age that are within the area of potential effect (APE) for the project. The farmstead located to the south of the proposed maintenance facility contains recent buildings, and the farmstead across the street contains buildings over 50 years in age, but they are common property types of the area and are not significant resources. Also, there is a new housing development located between this farm and proposed maintenance facility and station, which provides a buffer for potential noise or visual issues.

We have determined that the expanded Big Lake Maintenance Facility will not impact any additional historic properties. Our determination will be forwarded to the SHPO on November 22, 2005. Federal regulations mandate that the SHPO has 30 days in which to comment on FTA-funded projects before the Section 106 review process can be considered complete. When received, we will forward a copy of the SHPO comments to you.

We look forward to working with you and the SHPO to resolve the design issues for the downtown commuter station as per the terms of the MOA.

Sincerely,

Kristen Zschomler

Kristen Zschomler, RPA
Historian/Archaeologist
Cultural Resources Unit (CRU)

encs.

cc: Joe Hudak, Mn/DOT CRU
Mn/DOT CO File
Mn/DOT CRU Project File

Minnesota Department of Transportation

Office of Environmental Services
395 John Ireland Boulevard, MS 620
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Fax: 651/ 284-3754
Phone: 651/ 284-3750

DEC 0 2005

November 30, 2005

Ms. Carissa Ptacek
Minnesota Department of Transportation
155 Fifth Avenue S, Suite 755
Minneapolis, MN 55401

RE: Federal Threatened and Endangered Species
Northstar Corridor Rail Project: Third Main Line Track – I 694 to TH 610
Anoka County

Dear Ms Ptacek:

As you have requested, the above referenced project has been reviewed for potential effects to Federally-Listed Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species. According to the County Distribution of Minnesota's Federally-Listed Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate Species list maintained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Anoka County is within the distribution range of the Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) a Federally-Listed Species.

If a Federal agency authorizes, funds, or carries out a proposed action, the responsible Federal agency, or its delegated agent, is required to evaluate whether the proposed action "may affect" listed species. If it is determined that the action "may affect" a listed species, then the responsible Federal agency shall request Section 7 consultation with the USFWS. If the consultation shows "no effect" on the listed species, further consultation is not necessary.

According to the information provided by the Natural Heritage Database (updated 10-13-05) maintained by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, there is a Bald eagle nest on an island in the Mississippi River approximately 750 meters west of the existing rail line. There are no other known occurrences of Federally-Listed T&E Species within the immediate project area. The eagle nest is 0.46 miles from the proposed construction area and there is no direct line of sight to the railroad tracks. Due to the location and nature of the proposed project, we conclude that the project will have no effect on Federally-Listed T&E Species. If the project is modified or new information becomes available which indicates that listed species may be affected, please contact this office.

This review was completed for Federally-Listed T&E Species only. For information on State-Listed T&E Species, contact the Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Sincerely,

Greg P. Busacker, Ph.D.
Natural Resource Specialist

cc: Gerry Larson Jason Alcott file

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
State Historic Preservation Office

December 19, 2005

Ms. Kristen Zschomler
Cultural Resources Unit
MN Dept. of Transportation
Transportation Building, MS 620
395 John Ireland Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Re: Northstar Corridor (Commuter Rail Corridor, Minneapolis to Big Lake)
SHPO Number: 2000-0273PA

Dear Ms. Zschomler:

Thank you for notifying our office of the change in scope for the above referenced project.

We concur with you determination that the expansion of the maintenance facility area at Big Lake will not result in any additional historic properties being affected.

We also note that some of the properties that were recognized as being affected in the original agreement will no longer be affected due to the reduction of project scope in other areas.

Contact us at 651-296-5462 with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Dennis A. Gimmestad
Government Programs & Compliance Officer

Station Area Development Summary

Development Projects Near Northstar Commuter Rail Stations

Station Site	TAZ	Project Name & Type	Parcel # or Address	Status			Year Open	Development Value/ Project Overall Cost	Commerical Square Feet	Number of Units	Type/Project Uses	Rent or Sale Price	Developer	Notes
				Completed	Under Construction	Proposed								
Projects in white cells are within a half-mile of the Northstar stations														
Projects in gray cells are outside the half-mile of the Northstar station area														
Big Lake		Ashbury Apartments		X			2004			23	Residential			New construction of Apartment Building
Big Lake		Coburn's Grocery Store		X			2004		50,000		Commercial			Grocery Store
Big Lake		Retail Stores		X			2004		16,600		Commercial			Retail/Restaurant
Big Lake		Wright's Crossing 3rd Add.		X			2004			12	single family			
Big Lake		Wright's Crossing 3rd Add.		X			2004			21	townhome			
Big Lake		Wright's Crossing 3rd Add.		X			2004			39	single family detached villas			
Big Lake		Wright's Crossing 4th Add'n.				X				49				Multi-units
Big Lake		Wright's Crossing Townhomes Add'n.		X			2004			12	townhomes			
Big Lake		Northland Meadows		X			2004			7	single family units			
Big Lake		Mattson's Sunny Acres		X			2004			3	single family units			3 of the 14 units are within the half-mile radius of the station
Big Lake		Harpster & Houle Add'n.		X			2004			3	single family units			
Big Lake		Jefferson Square		X			2004		6,200		Mixed-use office and retail			3,100 square feet each office and retail
Big Lake		460 Lexington Avenue	460 Lexington Avenue	X			2004		2,640		Office			Expansion to existing business
Big Lake		McPete's Recreational Expansion		X			2004				Recreational			Batting cages/outdoor mini-golf
Big Lake		Dynamic's Land Design and Real Estate Company Expansion		X			2004				Commercial			
Big Lake		Wilts Parcel/Outlot F Northland Meadows Add'n.	Parcel 65-533-0060			X								
Big Lake		Lake Plaza Shopping Mall site				X								Approx. 9 acres
Big Lake		Big Lake Lumber site				X								Approx. 5 acres
Big Lake		Big Lake Legion and Ball Field site				X								Approx. 10 acres
Elk River		Elk River Station PUD - Senior Housing								70	Senior Apartments		Centex Homes	70 acres adjacent to proposed commuter rail station
Elk River		Elk River Station PUD - Single Family								298	Townhomes		Centex Homes	70 acres adjacent to proposed commuter rail station
DT Mpls-Central Riverfront	392	The Carlyle	100 3rd Ave S		X		2006			255	Residential		Opus	39-story condominium building; 80% presold by 5/05
DT Mpls- Ent. District	393	Block E Entertainment Complex	6th St and Hennepin Av	X			2002				Mixed-use hotel and entertainment complex			underground parking

Station Site	TAZ	Project Name & Type	Parcel # or Address	Status			Year Open	Development Value/ Project Overall Cost	Commerical Square Feet	Number of Units	Type/Project Uses	Rent or Sale Price	Developer	Notes
				Completed	Under Construction	Proposed								
Projects in white cells are within a half-mile of the Northstar stations														
Projects in gray cells are outside the half-mile of the Northstar station area														
DT Mpls- Ent. District	393	G & G Condos	314 1st Av N			X	?			12	Residential			Condominiums
DT Mpls- Ent. District	401	Lamoreau	6th St and Hennepin Av			X	2006			73	Residential			Across from Block E, 39 units initially; 3 story addition to total 73 units
DT Mpls- North Loop	389	701 Washington Avenue Building	701 Washington Avenue	X			2003				Commercial			Renovation into architect's headquarters offices
DT Mpls- North Loop	391	First Avenue Office Condo Lofts	120 First Avenue North	X			2003		30,000		Commercial			Conversion of two 3-story buildings to office-condos
DT Mpls- North Loop	390	River Station	201 1st St N	X			1998+			360	Mixed-use residential and commercial			Prior rail yd & brownfield site; st level commercial, below grade arking, unique onsite stormwater treatment, pedestrian amenities
DT Mpls- North Loop	391	212 Lofts	212 N 1st St	X			2004			55	Residential			Loft condominiums
DT Mpls- North Loop	391	Rock Island Lofts	111 4th Av N	X			2004			63	Residential			Condominiums
DT Mpls- North Loop	391	Riverwalk Lofts	400 N 1st St	X			1999+			75	Residential			Loft condominiums
DT Mpls- North Loop	391	Lindsay Lofts	408 N 1st St	X			2001			52	Residential			Loft condominiums
DT Mpls-North Loop	391	Institute of Production &b Recording	312 Washington Av N	X			?				College/Training			
DT Mpls- North Loop	389	801 Washington Lofts	801 Washington Av	X			2003			61	Residential			Conversion of three-story 1913 warehouse into 61 condominium units
DT Mpls- North Loop	389	Bookman Lofts	525 N 3rd St	X			2005			57	Residential			Conversion of 100-year old five-story brick warehouse into condominiums
DT Mpls- North Loop	389	918 Lofts	918 N 3rd St	X			2004			30	Residential			conversion of three-floor warehouse to condominium lofts
DT Mpls- North Loop	389	Bassett Creek Lofts	901 N 3rd St	X			2003			32	Residential			Loft condominiums
DT Mpls- North Loop	389	720 Lofts	720 4th St		X		2005			99	Residential			Loft condominiums
DT Mpls- North Loop	389	Bookman Stacks	345 6th Av N		X		2005			45	Residential			New construction, eight-story condominium building
DT Mpls- North Loop	389	730 Lofts	730 4th St N		X		2005			126	Residential			12 story loft condos
DT Mpls- North Loop	389	710 Lofts	710 4th St N	X			2004			60	Residential			Condominiums
DT Mpls- North Loop	390	Tower Lofts	700 Washington Av N		X		2005			135	Mixed-use residential and commercial			Conversion of a 1920s converted warehouse with street-level retail
DT Mpls- North Loop	390	5th Avenue Lofts	201 5th Av N		X		2005			136	Residential			Seven-story loft condominium building

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Station Site	TAZ	Project Name & Type	Parcel # or Address	Status			Year Open	Development Value/ Project Overall Cost	Commerical Square Feet	Number of Units	Type/Project Uses	Rent or Sale Price	Developer	Notes
				Completed	Under Construction	Proposed								
Projects in white cells are within a half-mile of the Northstar stations														
Projects in gray cells are outside the half-mile of the Northstar station area														
DT Mpls- North Loop	390	The Landings	4th Av N & W River Pkwy	X			1996-2000			58	Residential			
DT Mpls- North Loop	390	Heritage Landing	401 1st St N	X			1999+	$31 million		229	Residential		Hunt Gregory	761 to 2,562 sq ft; includes mkt rate & luxury
DT Mpls- North Loop	390	Town Place Suites	525 N 2nd St	X			1999				Hotel suites			4 floors - 131 suites; meeting space
DT Mpls- North Loop	389	Security Warehouse Lofts	404 Washington Av No.		X		2005			215	Residential			6 stories
DT Mpls- North Loop	390	The Reserve	360 1st Street North			X	?			408	Residential			Two condominium towers: 8-story containing 108 condos and 40- to 50-story containing 300 condos.
DT Mpls- North Loop	393	Pantages Theatre Restoration	Hennepin Av	X			2006				Theatre			
DT Mpls- North Loop	401	Lunds Grocery	1201 Hennepin Ave			X	2006				Retail			
DT Mpls- North Loop	393	The Eclipse	240 Hennepin Av S (SW Washington & Hennepin)		X		2007			506	Residential			2 high-rise residential towers (26 & 32 stories), rooftop gardens
DT Mpls- Nicollet Mall	400	Loring Park City Apartments	13th St So. & Harmon Place	X			2002	$25.4 milon		160	Apartment homes			5 story structure with rooftop gardens/terraces
DT Mpls- Nicollet Mall	401	Skyway Theater Tower	719 Hennepin Av			X	?			266	Residential			
DT Mpls- Nicollet Mall	402	Ivy Tower Residences, Hotel	1115 2nd Av So		X		2007			88	Residential condominiums, hotel, spa, restaurant, retail		Jeff Laux, Gary Benson	24 story new bldg; 7 story historic renovation; 136 room hotel, retaurant & retail in grotto; 80% presold
DT Mpls- Nicollet Mall	402	The Nicollet	10th St & Nicollet Mall		X		2007			314	Residential		Nicollet LLC; McDonnell & Johnson	50 story tower condominiums
DT Mpls- Nicollet Mall	402	Metro Apartments	9th & Marquette	X			2004?			112	residential			
DT Mpls- Nicollet Mall	407	St Quebec	6th & Marquette	X			2005			19	Condos with commercial on lower floors			
DT Mpls- Nicollet Mall	408	Nicollet Hotel Block	Washington Av & Nicollet Mall			X	?			300	Housing, convenience retail, transit layover			City RFP out for 1.7 acre site purchased by city with FTA funds; joint development site
DT Mpls- Nicollet Mall	408	Powers/Ritz Block	4th St & Marquette			X	?			250	Condos w/office or hotel; 1st flr retail required		Opus	Nicollet Station designed to be expanded with redev of Powers Block; 2nd side platform & vertical circulation to skyway; easements reserved
DT Mpls - Nicollet Mall	408	Renaissance Sq Bldg	5th St & Nicollet			X	?			?	Condos, hotel or combination			Former 168,000 sf Xcel Energy offices offered for sale & reuse
DT Mpls - Nicollet Mall	393	The Kingman	314 1st Av N			X	?			12	Condos			

Station Site	TAZ	Project Name & Type	Parcel # or Address	Status			Year Open	Development Value/ Project Overall Cost	Commerical Square Feet	Number of Units	Type/Project Uses	Rent or Sale Price	Developer	Notes
				Completed	Under Construction	Proposed								
Projects in white cells are within a half-mile of the Northstar stations														
Projects in gray cells are outside the half-mile of the Northstar station area														
DT Mpls - Nicollet Mall	408	Minneapolis Central Library	3rd & 4th Streets on Nicollet Mall		X		2006				Library			
DT Mpls - Nicollet Mall	402	Target Store	900 Nicollet Mall	X			2000				Retail			2 Story Target
DT Mpls - Nicollet Mall	402	Target Plaza South	11th St & Nicollet Mall	X			2000				Office; corporate Target hdqtrs			32-story tower stepped back 3-story human scale corner plaza on Mall
DT Mpls - Nicollet Mall	402	1016 Marquette	10th & Marquette	X			2006			8	Residential			10 story building with condominiums
DT Mpls - Nicollet Mall	402	Residential & Parking	9th & Marquette	X			?	Is this the one above?		?	Housing over 9 stories parking		Paul Klodt	5 stories of housing over 9 stories of pking
DT Mpls-Warehouse District	388	Twins Ballpark	Northstar station site			X	?	$478 million			Ballpark next to multi-modal station			Ballpark and Multi-modal station expected to drive conversion of former industrial uses to housing along 5th St. North.
DT Mpls-Warehouse District	388	Twinsville	Northstar station site			X	?	$400 million		1,000	Condominiums			Adjacent to ballpark. If ballpark not constructed, 3,000 condominiums are proposed at a total development cost of $800 million
DT Mpls-Central Riverfront	412	North Star Lofts	227 Portland	X			1999			37	Residential			Condominiums in a historic landmark; former North Star Blanket Mill
DT Mpls-Central Riverfront	412	Washburn Lofts	700 S 2nd St	X			2003			21	Residential			Condominium conversion of 21 units in Washburn A Mill's Utility Building
DT Mpls-Central	412	Stone Arch Lofts	601 S 1st St	X			2000			35	Residential			Condominiums
DT Mpls-Central Riverfront	412	Mill City Museum and Mill Ruins Park		X							Recreational/Commercial			Renovation of the 1878 Washburn Crosby Flour Mill, combined with new construction, into a milling museum and park on the Mississippi River.
DT Mpls-Central	412	Humboldt Mill Loft Condominiums	750 S 2nd St	X			2004			40	Residential			Renovated 1878 Humboldt Mill and new construction
DT Mpls-Central Riverfront	412	Milwaukee Depot	3rd Av S and Washington Av	X			2001				Recreational/Hotel/Event Center			Renovation of historic Milwaukee Depot into Marriott Courtyard Hotel and Residence Inn, an indoor convertible ice skating rink and event space and indoor water park.
DT Mpls-Central	412	Park Avenue Lofts	200-300 Park Av S		X		2004-2007			76	Residential			

Station Site	TAZ	Project Name & Type	Parcel # or Address	Status			Year Open	Development Value/ Project Overall Cost	Commerical Square Feet	Number of Units	Type/Project Uses	Rent or Sale Price	Developer	Notes
				Completed	Under Construction	Proposed								
Projects in white cells are within a half-mile of the Northstar stations														
Projects in gray cells are outside the half-mile of the Northstar station area														
DT Mpls-Central	412	Depot East Office Building	TAZ 412	X			2003				Office, Retail and Parking			
DT Mpls-Central	412	Parking Ramp with liner development	Chicago and Washington Av			X	2007			124	Parking with commercial and residential liner			1000 stall parking and condominiuniums
DT Mpls-Central	412	Whitney Hotel Condominiums	150 Portland Av S			X	2006			48	Residential			Historic hotel renovation to condominiums
DT Mpls-Central	412	Washington Live-Work Lofts	Portland and Washington Av			X	2007			28	Occupational Residential			Live-Work lofts
DT Mpls-Central	412	The Portland	225 Portland			X	2007			22	Residential			Condominiums
DT Mpls-Central	412	Metropolitan Lofts	2nd St S and Portland Av	X			2004			35	Residential			4-story buildings, condominiums
DT Mpls-Central	412	MacPhail Center for the Arts				X	2004		80,000		Commercial			New home for the Center
DT Mpls-Central	412	Mill Place & River Trails Apts	3rd Ave S & 2nd St			X	?			254	Residential			Apartments
DT Mpls-Central	412	Colmbia Mill Commons	S 1st St & 5th Ave So			X	?			15	Residential			
DT Mpls-Central	412	Parcel F	900 Washington Av S			X	?			200	Residential			5-8 stories of condominiums
DT Mpls-Central	412	The Nine	605 2nd St So			X	2007			9	Residential			4.5 storels
DT Mpls-Central Riverfront	409	American Trio Lofts	618 S 6th St	X			2004			90	Residential with Commercial		Ned Abdul & McGough	Condos; restaurant 1st flr Former Northern Implement & Pittsburg Place Glass Bldg
DT Mpls-Central Riverfront	409	607 Lofts on Washington		X			2005			30	Residential			Condos; restaurant 1st flr Former Northern Implement & Pittsburg Place Glass Bldg
DT Mpls-Central	409	People Serving People		X			2004			139	Residential & Social Services			
DT Mpls-Elliot Park	405	1010 Park	1010 Park Av			X	2006			400	Residential		Heritage Development	Condos
DT Mpls-Elliot Park	405	5th Avenue Gateway	505 E Grant St			X	2008			136	Residential			Condos
DT Mpls-Elliot Park	405	Grant Park	5th Ave S & Grant		X		2004+			318	Residential			Condo tower and townhomes
DT Mpls-Elliot Park	405	Skyscape	583 Portland Ave			X	2007			252	Residnetial		Tandem	Condos
DT Mpls-Elliot Park	405	The Sexton	521 S 7th St		X		2005			206	Residential			Residential rehab, & parking ramp with residential above
DT Mpls-Elliot Park	405	Lenox Flats		X			2005			24	Residential			Residential rehab
DT Mpls-Elliot Park	411	St Barnabas Apts	South of Metrodome on 5th		X		2005			39	Residential			Efficiency apartments for homeless youth
DT Mpls-Elliot Park	410	East Village	8th St & 11th Av S	X			2003+			180	Residential & Commercial			Rental housing, market, restaurant, coffee house

Station Site	TAZ	Project Name & Type	Parcel # or Address	Status			Year Open	Development Value/ Project Overall Cost	Commerical Square Feet	Number of Units	Type/Project Uses	Rent or Sale Price	Developer	Notes
				Completed	Under Construction	Proposed								
Projects in white cells are within a half-mile of the Northstar stations														
Projects in gray cells are outside the half-mile of the Northstar station area														
So Nicollet Mall (Loring Park)	398	Jeremiah Project, Ph II		X			?			21	Residential			
So Nicollet Mall (Loring Park)	397?	Metro State Un & Mpls Community & Technical College		X							College Expansion			
So Nicollet Mall (Loring Park)	4007	Univ of St Thomas	1000 LaSalle	X			2000+				College Expansion			
So Nicollet Mall (Loring Park)	397	Allina/Eitel Hospital Site	1375 Willow St			X	?			300	Residential			35 or 48 stories
So Nicollet Mall (Loring Park)	398	The Groveland	317 Groveland Av		X		2008			133	Residential			
So Nicollet Mall (Loring Park)	398	301 Oakn Grove	301 Oak Grove St	X			2005			50	Residential			
So Nicollet Mall (Loring Park)	398	1730 Clifton Place	1730 Clifton Pl			X	2007			120	Residential			

City of Anoka Resolution and CRTV Concept Plan

City of ANOKA

CITY HALL • 2015 FIRST AVE. NO. • ANOKA, MINNESOTA 55303-2270

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RESOLUTION NO. 2005-58

A RESOLUTION TO PURSUE A JOINT AGREEMENT WITH THE NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANOKA STATION

WHEREAS, the Northstar Corridor Development Authority ("NCDA") proposes to develop the Northstar Corridor Rail Project ("Project") along the existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe ("BSNF") Railroad which passes through the City of Anoka; and

WHEREAS, the Project includes several stations along the corridor including a station at the 4th Avenue crossing of the BNSF Railroad in the City of Anoka; and

WHEREAS, the Anoka commuter rail station ("station") will consist to two platforms, a station, a 65 car park-n-ride facility on the south side of the BNSF railroad, and a 203 car park-n-ride on the north side of the BNSF railroad; and

WHEREAS, certain properties are identified as necessary to provide for said station development; and

WHEREAS, on November 11, 2004 the NCDA authorized the Anoka County Regional Railroad Authority to proceed to acquire certain properties as needed for the commuter rail station on behalf of the NCDA in accordance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements; and

WHEREAS, said properties are currently owned by the City of Anoka; and

WHEREAS, the City of Anoka has been actively pursuing development of the Commuter Rail Transit Village ("CRTV") in and around the station as evidenced by the following actions:

1. Acquired south part of station site in 1995.
2. Acquired eight acres of State property in 1996, which is proposed pond site.
3. Acquired north part of station site in 1999.
4. Prepared the "Heart of Anoka" plan to identify planning areas.
5. Identified a 150 acres CRTV master planning area in 1999.
6. Completed a housing and commercial market study in 2000.
7. Obtained a Metro Council planning grant in 2002.
8. Established/extended a development moratorium (Aug 2001 and Feb 2004).
9. Acquired five-acre former lumber yard site in 2002.
10. Approved a Master Land Use Plan for the CRTV in 2004.
11. Acquired 19 acres of State land at north end of CRTV in 2004.

RESOLUTION NO. 2005-58
JT Development Agreement with NCDA regarding CRTV Station

12. Approved tax increment financing modifications for a funding source in 2005.
13. Approved a revised Master Land Use Plan in 2005 (in process).

WHEREAS, the City of Anoka has acquired the commuter rail station site and will make it available to appropriate agency to facilitate development of the Project; and

WHEREAS, the NCDA Station Plan and the CRTV Master Plan, in part, cover the same properties and may result in mutually incompatible land uses if not well coordinated and mutually planned by the City and NCDA; and

WHEREAS, development of the CRTV will take place over time in several phases; and

WHEREAS, future expansion of the Anoka station may become necessary in the future; and

WHEREAS, both the NCDA and the City need to plan for future transit needs at the Anoka Station; and

WHEREAS, the City of Anoka wishes to establish an urban mixed use development at the Anoka station.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City of Anoka will continue to work in cooperation with the NCDA to pursue the successful development of the Northstar Corridor Commuter Rail Project and development of the Anoka station.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City of Anoka will continue to pursue development of the Commuter Rail Transit Village at and surrounding the Anoka Station.

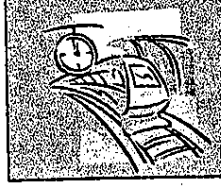
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City of Anoka is prepared to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the NCDA concerning the initial development and future expansion of the Anoka Station and requests that the NCDA agree to pursue a mutually beneficial long term relationship concerning development of the Anoka Station and the Anoka Commuter Rail Transit Village.

Adopted by the Anoka City Council this the 16th of May 2005.

ATTEST:

Amy T. Oehlers, City Clerk

Bjorn E. Skogquist, Mayor



CITY OF ANOKA
COMMUTER RAIL TRANSIT VILLAGE
DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

April 2005

1. The City completed the Commuter Rail Transit Village Plan in March of 2004.

2. The City purchased 19 acres of State land on the north end of the Commuter Rail Transit Village (CRTV) on November 29, 2005.

3. The City updated the CRTV Master Plan in December of 2004 based upon the purchase of State land.

4. The City is currently updating and refining the CRTV Master Plan site plan.

5. The City is currently researching and preparing zoning ordinance standards and design guidelines for the CRTV area.

6. The City is now negotiating purchase or control of development of 54 acres of State land currently for sale ½ mile north of station site.

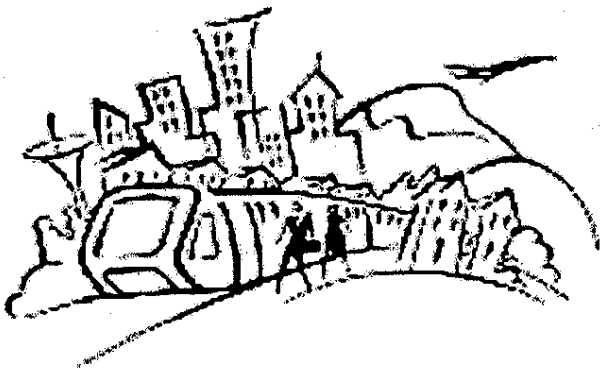
7. The City cooperated with Anoka County in their recent purchase of property at 2701 4th Avenue which is adjacent to, and potentially a part of, the commuter rail station site. The property will also facilitate realignment of Pierce Street at 4th Avenue.

8. The City is in the process of modifying the City Council Tax Increment Financing District to include the CRTV area which establishes another funding source for property acquisition. This modification will be completed by May 16, 2005.

9. The City has commenced discussions for possible purchase of several properties in the CRTV including a non-conforming residence and two bulk oil plants.

10. The City has held several meetings with the owner of Lakeland Tool Inc. to explore options for downsizing or relocation of this manufacturing facility as part of the CRTV development plan.

11. The City has established an understanding with Hoffman



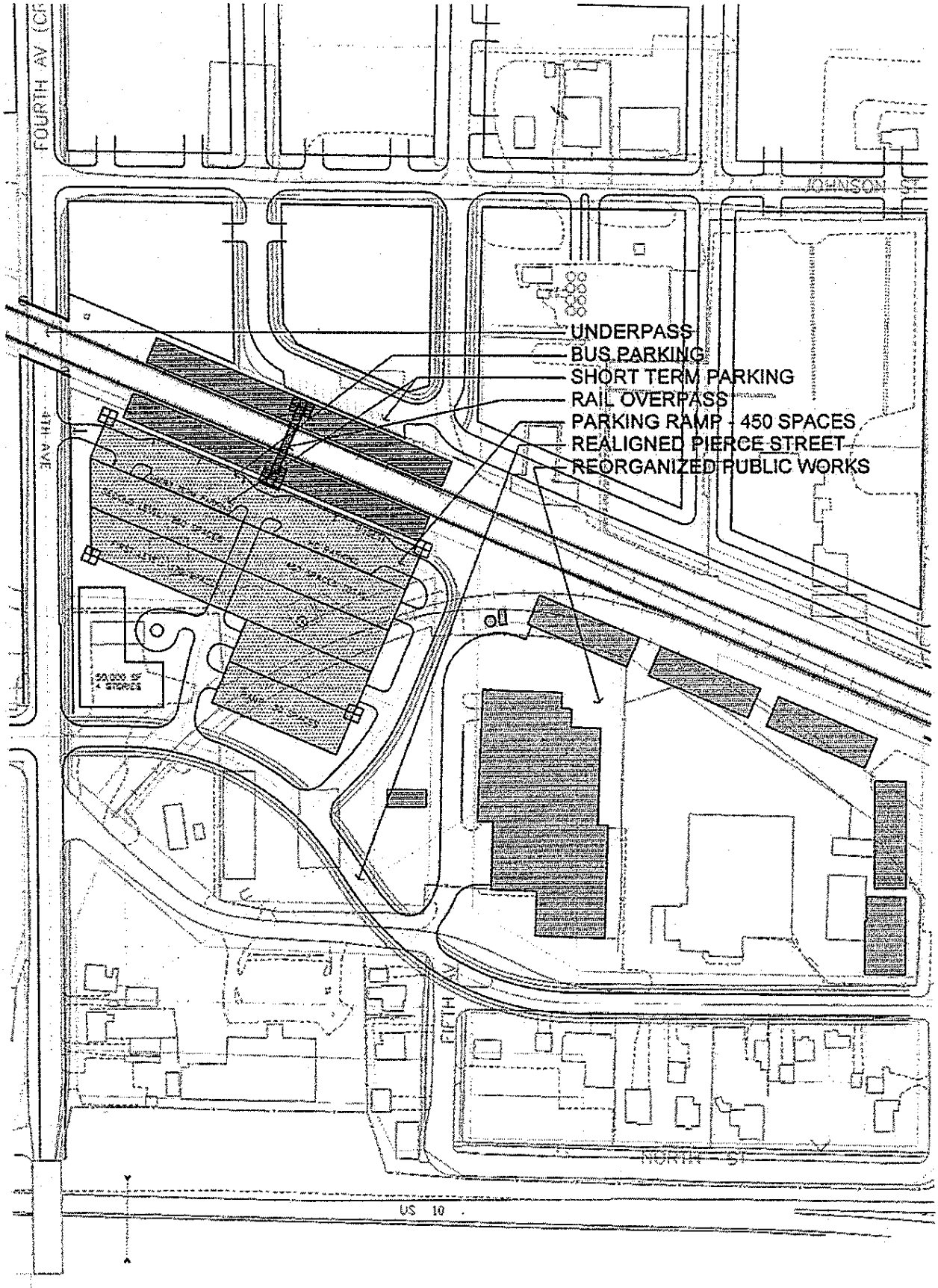
Enclosures Inc. regarding their property on 6th Avenue in the CRTV whereby the company agrees to hold their property for a reasonable period of time and then make it available for private redevelopment subject to the CRTV Master Plan.

12. The City is working with the Anoka County Rail Authority in its due diligence research regarding purchase of the commuter rail station site from the City.

13. The City is currently moving the pole yard which currently occupies the southerly portion of the station site to another location in anticipation of station development.

14. The City continues to develop plans for the North Central Business District, six blocks to the south of the CRTV, including planning for linkages between the two areas.

For more information on the *City of Anoka Commuter Rail Transit Village,* please call Robert Kirchner, Community Development Director, at 763-576-2721 or Carolyn Braun, Planning Director, at 763-576-2722.



CRTV - STATION AREA REFINED CONCEPT PLAN - PHASE ONE

CITY OF ANOKA

N

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BKO ASSOCIATES INC 612.623.4000

01 AUG 2005 . RMP-2

2

Table 5.1-4 — Summary of Peak-Hour Intersection Level of Service (AM/PM) from the FEIS

The exceptions are at proposed Preferred Alternative station facility locations that would not have an associated LOS under the No-Build Alternative. Where appropriate, mitigation measures are also identified.

Table 5.1-4. Summary of Peak Hour Intersection Level of Service (AM/PM)

Impact Area	Intersection	Existing (1999)	Year 2020 No-Build Alternatives	Year 2020 Commuter Rail Alternatives[1]
Rice				
	TH 10/Main Street	B/B	B/B	B/B
	Main Street/ Division Street	A/A	A/A	A/A
St. Cloud Downtown *(Not part of the Preferred Alternative)*				
	2nd Street/9th Avenue	A/A	F/F	F/F
St. Cloud East				
	TH 10/CSAH 7	A/A	B/A[2]	C/F
	15th Avenue Southeast/Lincoln Avenue	A/A	A/A[2]	A/A[2]
	Lincoln Avenue/South Lot Entrance	--	--	A/A
Clear Lake – Option A *(Not part of the Preferred Alternative)*				
	TH 10/24 (CSAH 6)	B/C	C/C	C/C
	TH 24/ Lot Entrance	--	--	A/A
Clear Lake – Option B *(Not part of the Preferred Alternative)*				
	TH 10/24 (CSAH 6)	B/C	C/C	C/C
	TH 10/East Lot Entrance	C/C	C/C	C/C
	TH 24/Lot Entrance	--	--	A/A
Becker				
	TH 10/Liberty Lane	B/B	B/B	B/B
	Liberty Lane/North Lot Entrance	--	--	A/A
Big Lake				
	TH 10/CR 43	A/F	B/C	B/C
	CR 43/Frontage Road	--	A/A	A/A
	Frontage Road/East Lot Entrance	--	B/C	B/C
Elk River				
	TH 10/171st Avenue	B/B	C/F	C/F
	Tyler Street/South Lot Entrance	--	A/A	A/A
Ramsey *(Not part of the Preferred Alternative)*				
	TH 10/Ramsey Boulevard	C/B	F/D	F/D
	Ramsey Boulevard/South Lot Entrance	--	--	A/A
Anoka				
	4th Avenue/Pleasant Street	B/C	C/F	F/F
	4th Avenue/Johnson Street	A/A	A/A	A/A
	7th Avenue/Johnson Street[4]	A/A	A/E[2,3]	F/F
Coon Rapids Riverdale				
	CSAH 14/Northdale Boulevard	B/B	B/C	B/C
	Northdale Boulevard/Crooked Lake Boulevard	B/C	C/F	D/F
	Northdale Boulevard/South Lot Entrance	--	A/A	A/A
Coon Rapids Foley				
	Coon Rapids Boulevard/Foley Boulevard	C/C	D/F	D/F
	East River Road/Foley Boulevard	B/B	B/B	B/C
	Foley Boulevard/North Lot Entrance	--	--	A/B[2]

Table 5.1-4. Summary of Peak Hour Intersection Level of Service (AM/PM)				
Impact Area	**Intersection**	**Existing (1999)**	**Year 2020 No-Build Alternatives**	**Year 2020 Commuter Rail Alternatives[1]**
Fridley				
	East River Road/61st Avenue	B/B	F/C	F/D
	TH 47/61st Avenue	B/C	F/F	F/F
Minneapolis Northeast - Central/Broadway *(Not part of the Preferred Alternative)*				
	TH 65/Station Access			A/D[2]
	TH 65/Broadway Avenue	E/F	F/F	F/F
Minneapolis Northeast - 7th Street NE				
	Central Avenue/NE 1st Avenue/SE 7th Street	B/B	B/B	B/B
	Central Avenue/NE 7th Street[5]	A,C[2]/A,B	A,D[2]/A,C[2]	A,F[2]/A,E[2]
	Central Avenue/SE 8th Street[5]	A,B[2]/C,D[2]	A,D[2]/A,F[2]	A,F[2]/A,F[2]
	Central Avenue/Future Station Driveway[5]	--	--	A,A/A,A
Minneapolis Downtown				
	5th Street North/6th Avenue North	A,C/A/C	A,D/A,D	C[3]/B[7]
	5th Street North/3rd Avenue North	B/A	B/B	C/B
	5th Street NorthAvenue North	B/C	B/C	F[8]/F[8]

Notes: 1. LOS without recommended year 2020 background traffic improvements.
2. Minor street left turn at LOS E or LOS F.
3. Major street left turn at LOS E or LOS F.
4. Existing traffic signal at 7th Avenue/Grant Street would operate near LOS B/C in the AM and PM peak hours in all future scenarios.
5. For unsignalized intersections, major street/minor street levels of service are presented.
6. Year 2001 for the Minneapolis Downtown station.
7. North approach queue lengths are expected to extend beyond 5th Street side access with 6th Avenue North.
8. Westbound and eastbound movements expected to operate at LOS F.

A. No-Build Alternative (Year 2020)

The following intersections have been analyzed as a basis of comparison for the year 2020 as part of the analyses of the Preferred Alternative.

St. Cloud East

TH 10/CSAH 7 would operate at LOS B and LOS A during the AM and PM peak hours, respectively. However, the left turn movement from CSAH 7 onto TH 10 is expected to operate at LOS F.

Anoka

- Fourth Avenue/Pleasant Street would operate at LOS C during the AM peak hour and LOS F during the PM peak hour.
- Seventh Avenue/Johnson Street would operate at LOS A during the AM peak hour and LOS E during the PM peak hour. For the AM peak hour, the northbound left turn onto Johnson Street is forecast to operate at LOS F, while during the PM peak hour the eastbound left turn onto 7th Avenue would likely operate at LOS F.

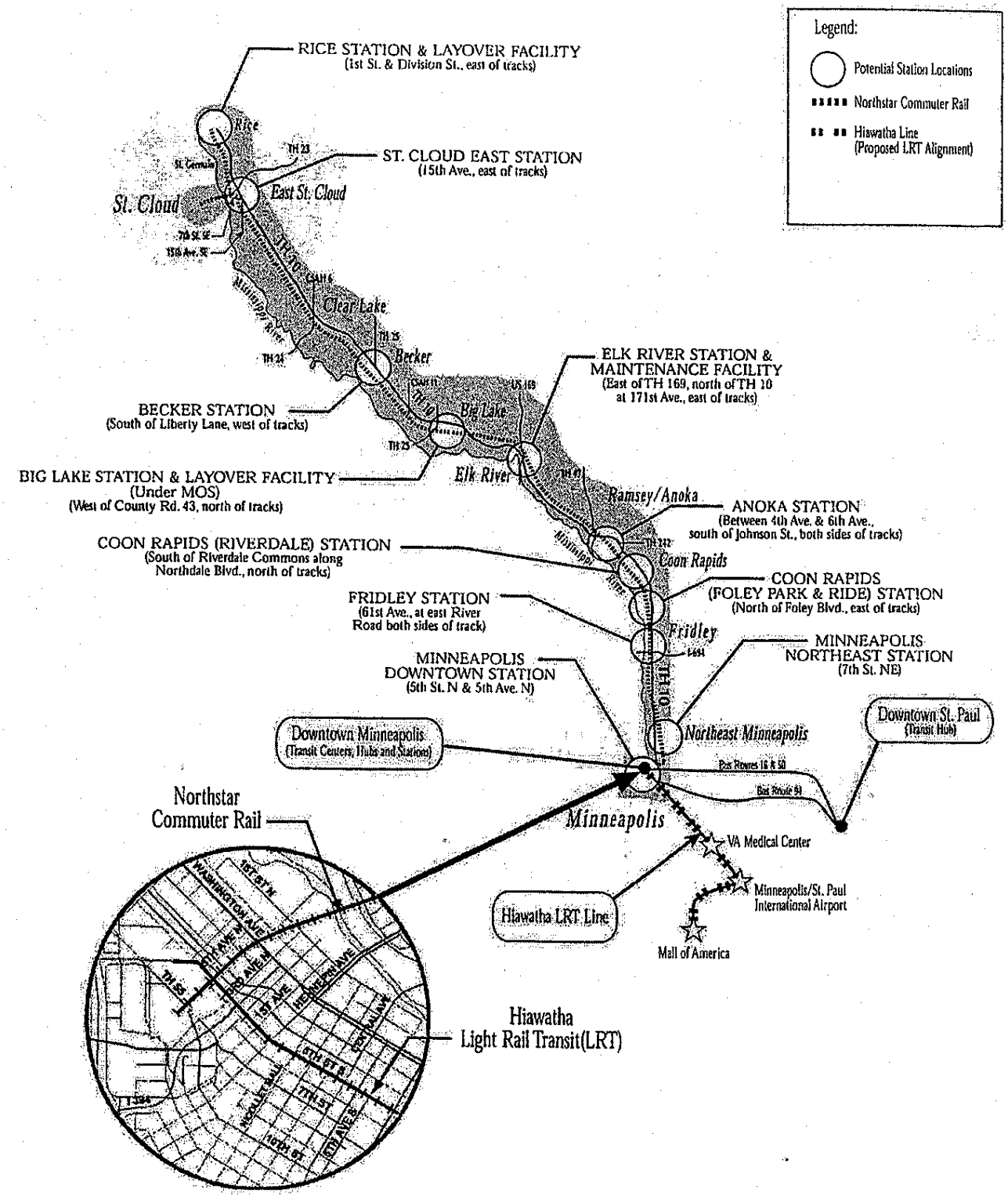
Coon Rapids-Riverdale

- Northdale Boulevard/Crooked Lake Boulevard would operate at LOS C during the AM peak hour and LOS F during the PM peak hour.

APPENDIX A

A.2 Figures from the FEIS

- Preferred Alternative Evaluated in FEIS
- Minimum Operable Segment
- Downtown Minneapolis Site Plan
- Fridley Site Plan (2 figures)
- Coon Rapid-Riverdale Site Plan
- Anoka Site Plan
- Elk River Site Plan
- Big Lake Site Plan (MOS of Preferred Alternative)
- Vehicle Maintenance Facility – Elk River South
- Summary of Track Capacity Improvements Evaluated in EIS
- Hiawatha LRT Connection with Northstar Corridor
- LRT Typical Cross Section Between 3rd Avenue and 5th Avenue North
- Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District Boundaries
- Wetlands #10, 11, 12, and 13
- Wetlands #16
- Wetlands #17
- Floodplain Impacts Identified in the DEIS (Commuter Rail Alternative)
- Corridorwide Noise Monitoring Locations
- Noise Monitoring Sites and Sensitive Receivers (4 Figures)
- Studied Intersection Geometric and Traffic Control, Minneapolis Downtown Station and Intermodal Connector



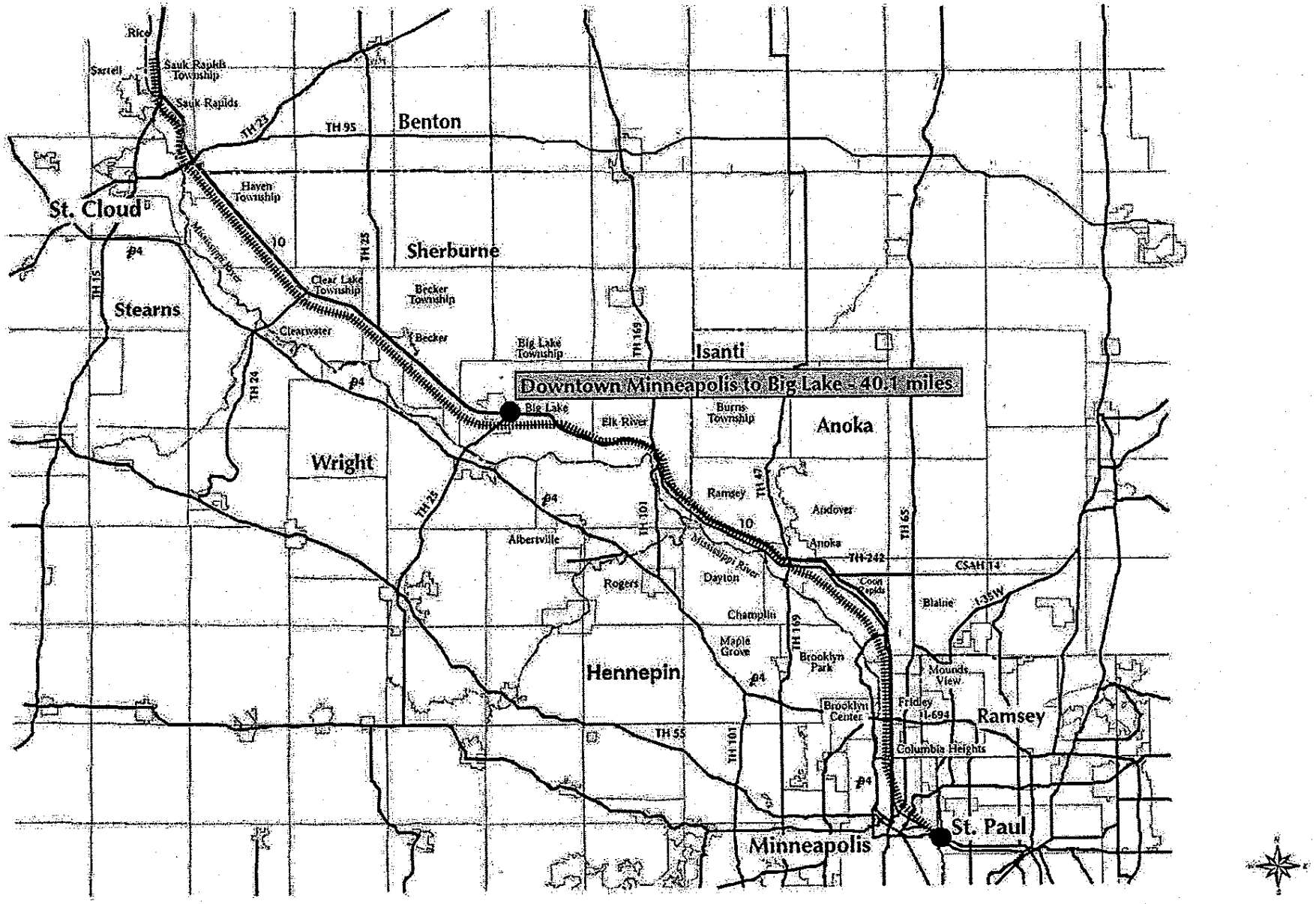
Note: MOS of Preferred Alternative is defined as the Commuter Rail System from downtown Minneapolis to Big Lake.

Final Environmental Impact Statement

Figure 2.2-1
Preferred Alternative

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

39935.0413-2/02-1



Final Environmental Impact Statement

Figure S-3
Minimum Operable Segment (MOS)

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

39935.0413-2/02-1

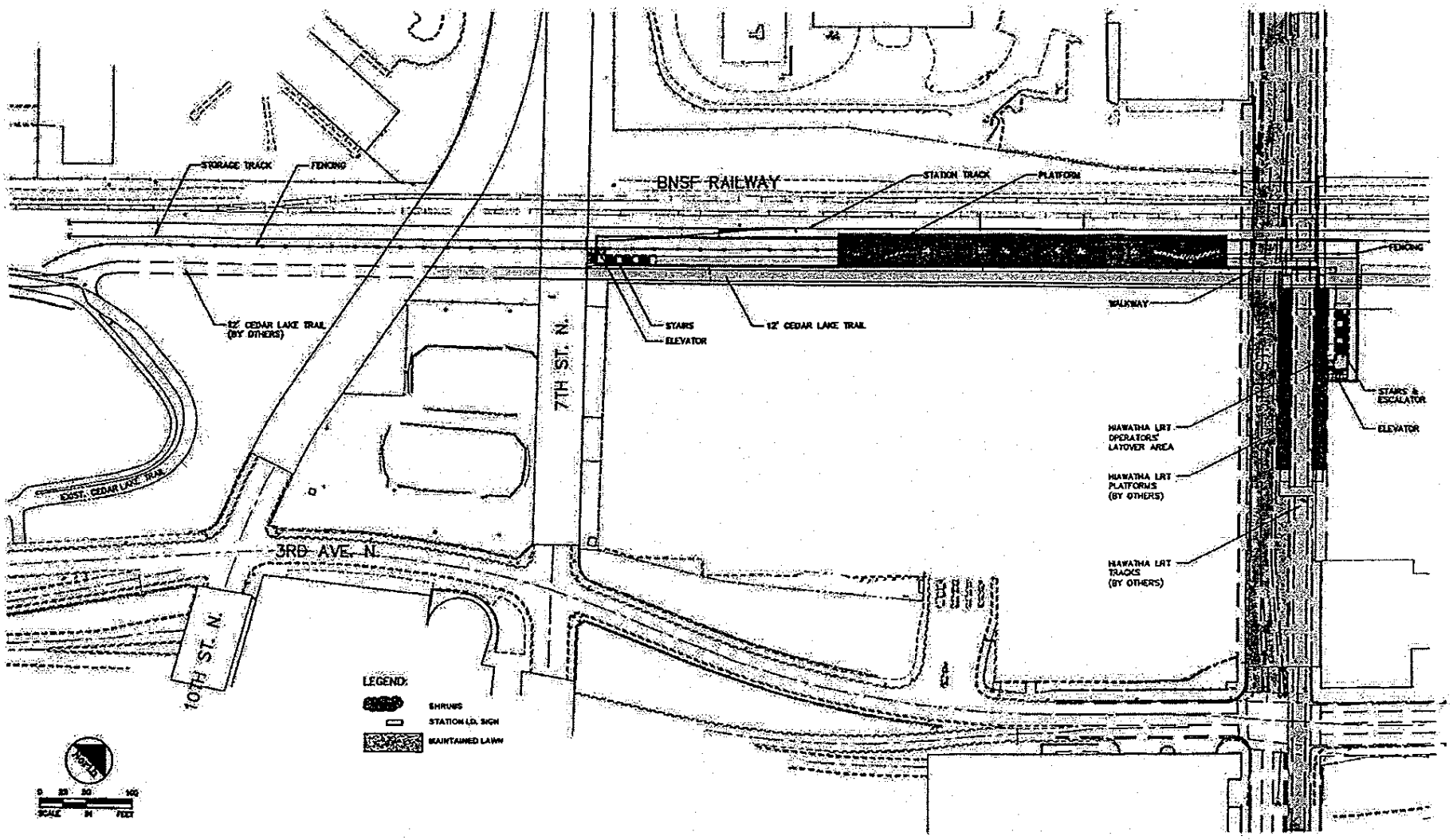


Figure 2.2-2A

Downtown Minneapolis Site Plan

3903S.0413-202-1

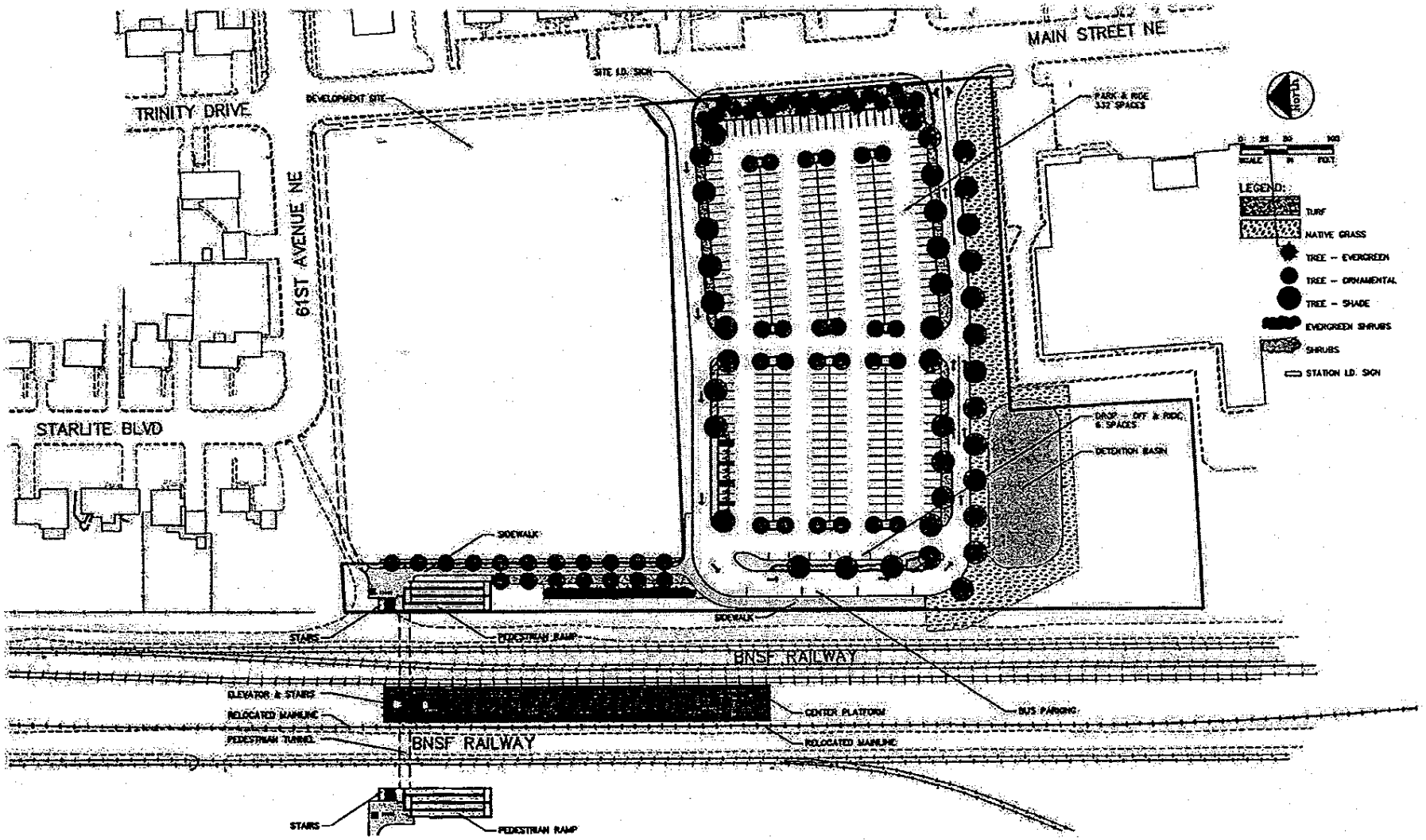


Figure 2.2-4A

Fridley Site Plan – East

39925 0411-202-1

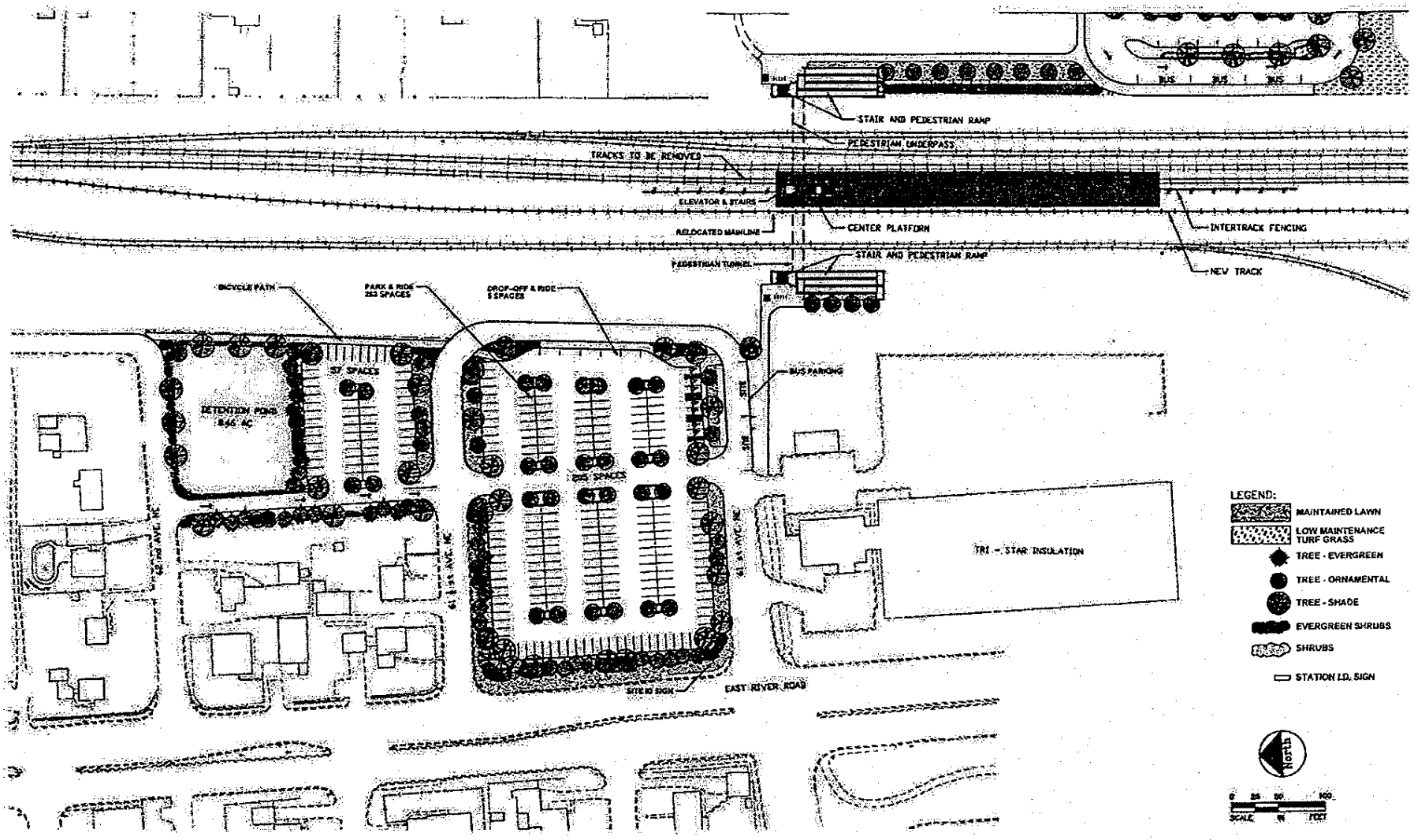
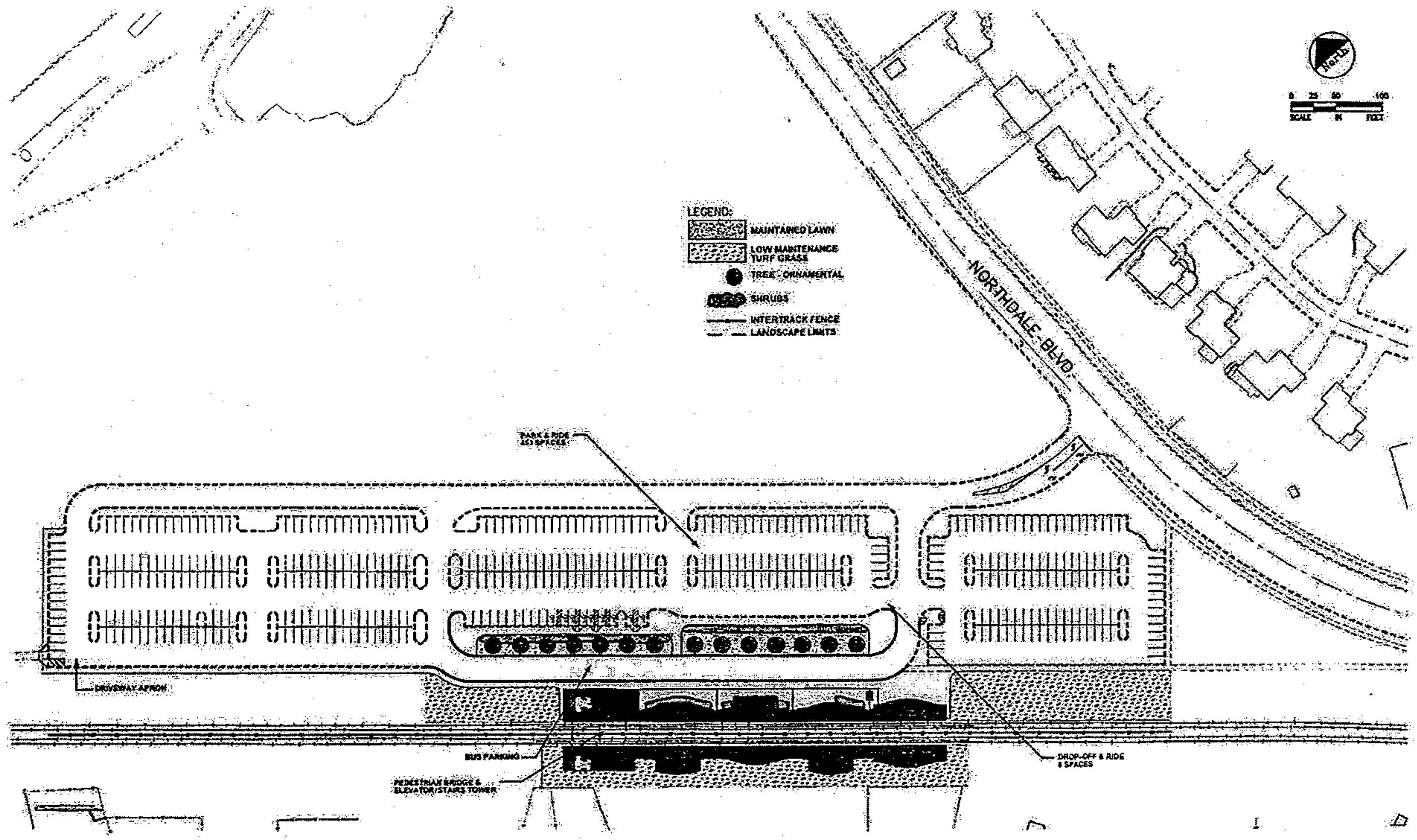


Figure 2.2-4B
Fridley Site Plan – West

39935.0413-2/02-1



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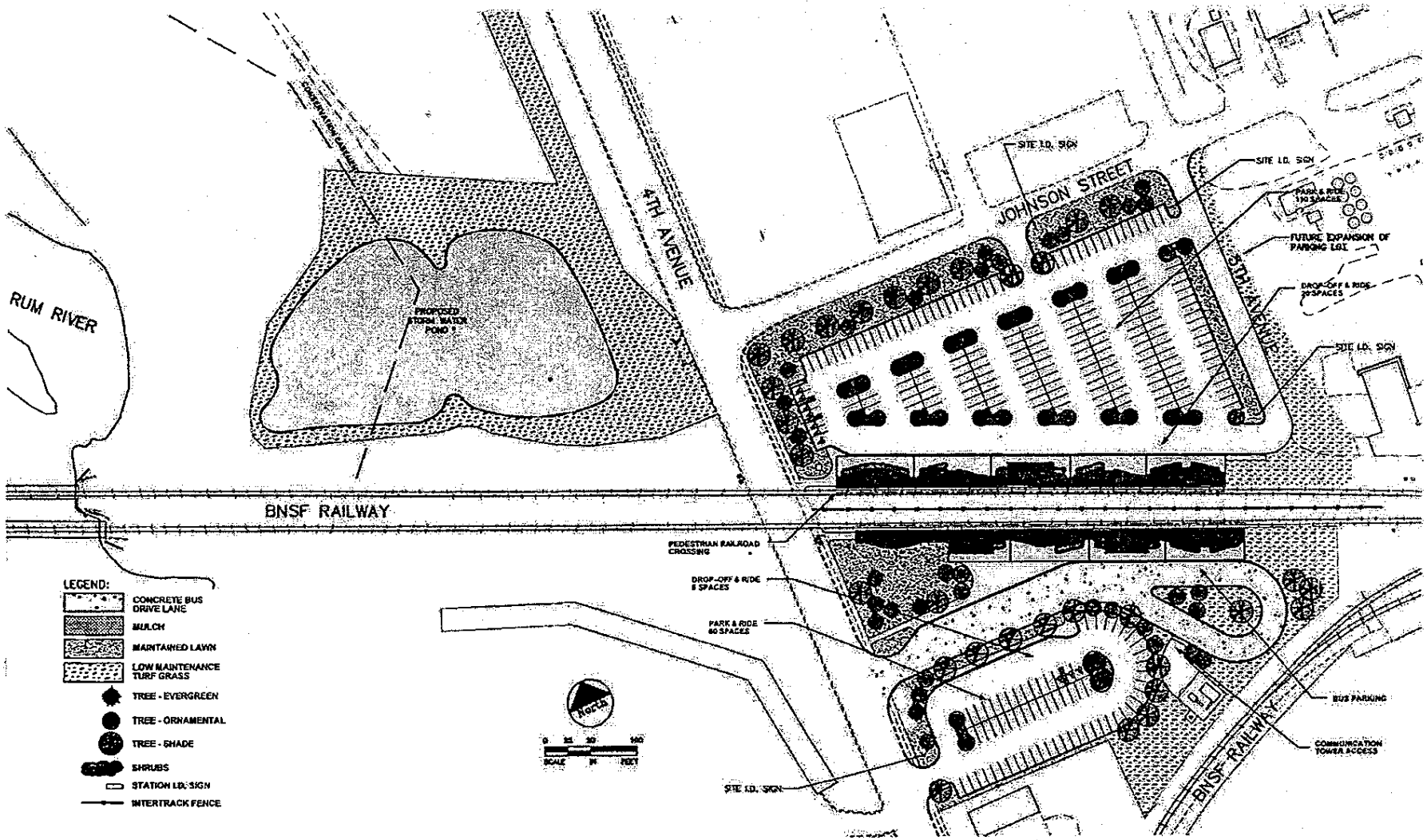
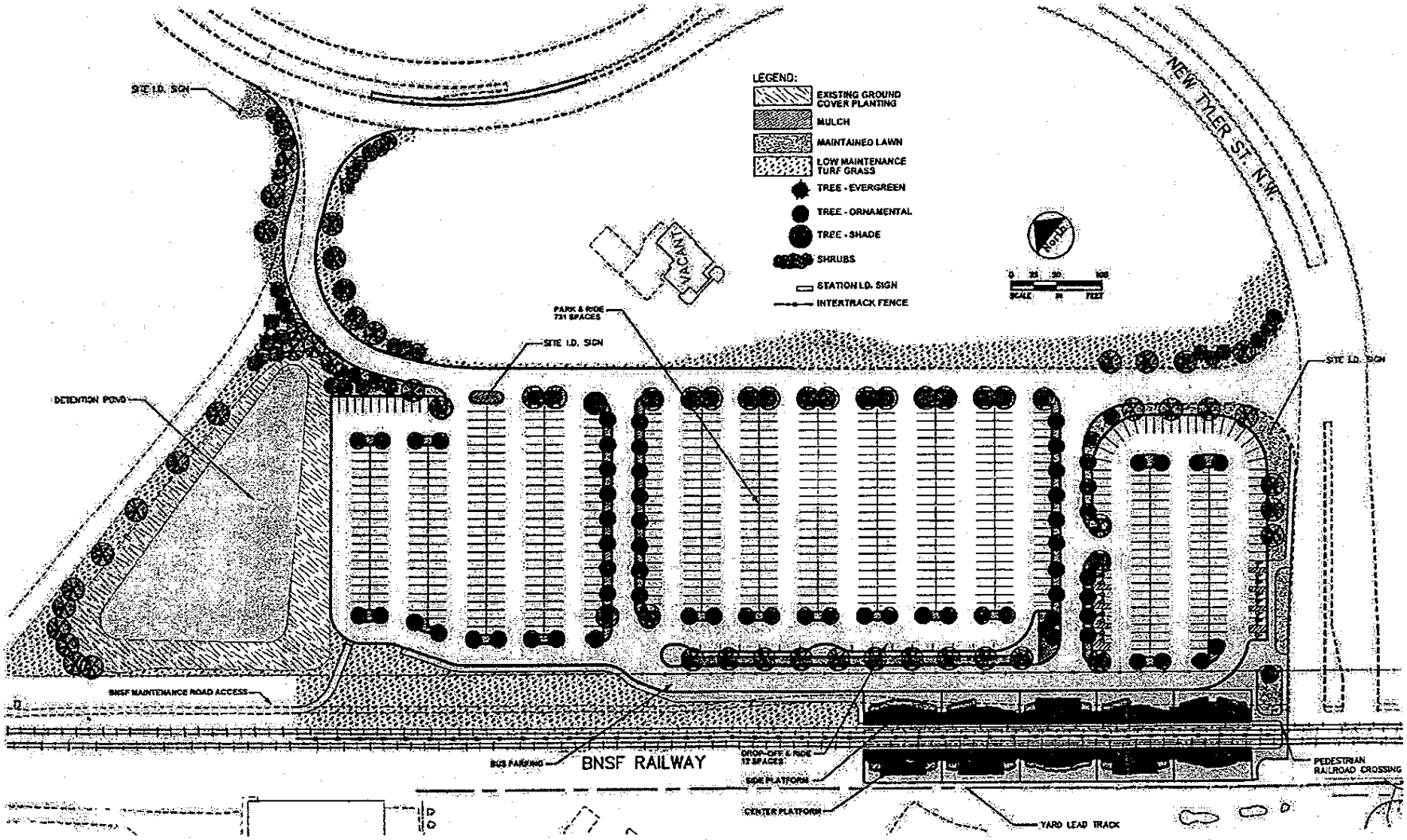
NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Figure 2.2-6A

Coon Rapids – Riverdale Site Plan

39035,0413-2/02-1


RUM RIVER
PROPOSED STORM WATER POND 7
4TH AVENUE
JOHNSON STREET
SITE I.D. SIGN
SITE I.D. SIGN
PARK & RIDE 170 SPACES
FUTURE EXPANSION OF PARKING LOT
DROP-OFF & RIDE 20 SPACES
5TH AVENUE
SITE I.D. SIGN
BNSF RAILWAY
PEDESTRIAN RAILROAD CROSSING
DROP-OFF & RIDE 8 SPACES
PARK & RIDE 60 SPACES
BUS PARKING
COMMUNICATION TOWER ACCESS
BNSF RAILWAY
SITE I.D. SIGN
LEGEND:
CONCRETE BUS DRIVE LANE
MULCH
MAINTAINED LAWN
LOW MAINTENANCE TURF GRASS
TREE - EVERGREEN
TREE - ORNAMENTAL
TREE - SHADE
SHRUBS
STATION I.D. SIGN
INTERTRACK FENCE
NORTH
SCALE
FEET



Final Environmental Impact Statement

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Figure 2.2-8A

Elk River Site Plan

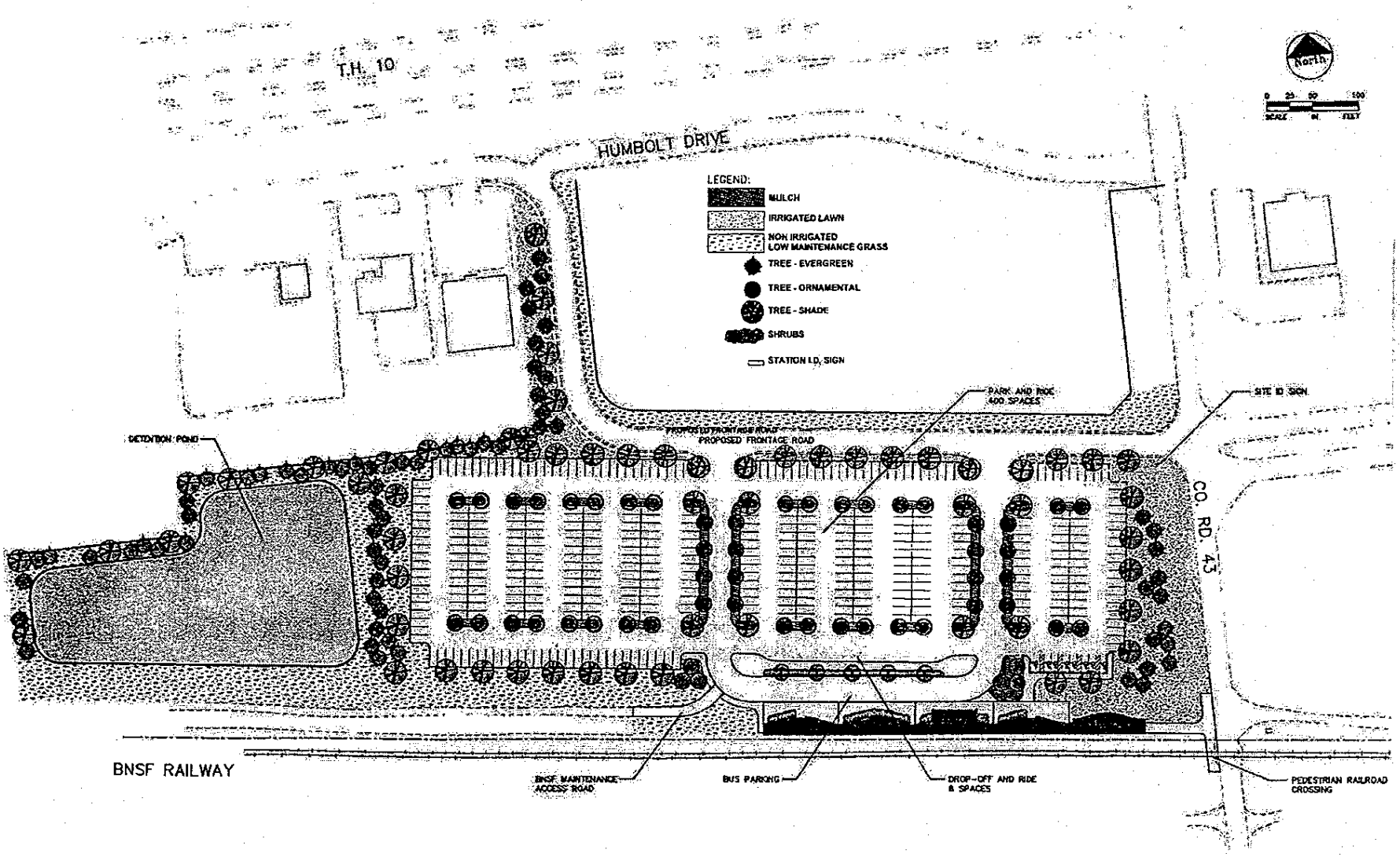


Figure 2.2-9B
Big Lake Site Plan
(MOS of Preferred Alternative)

32935.0413-202-1

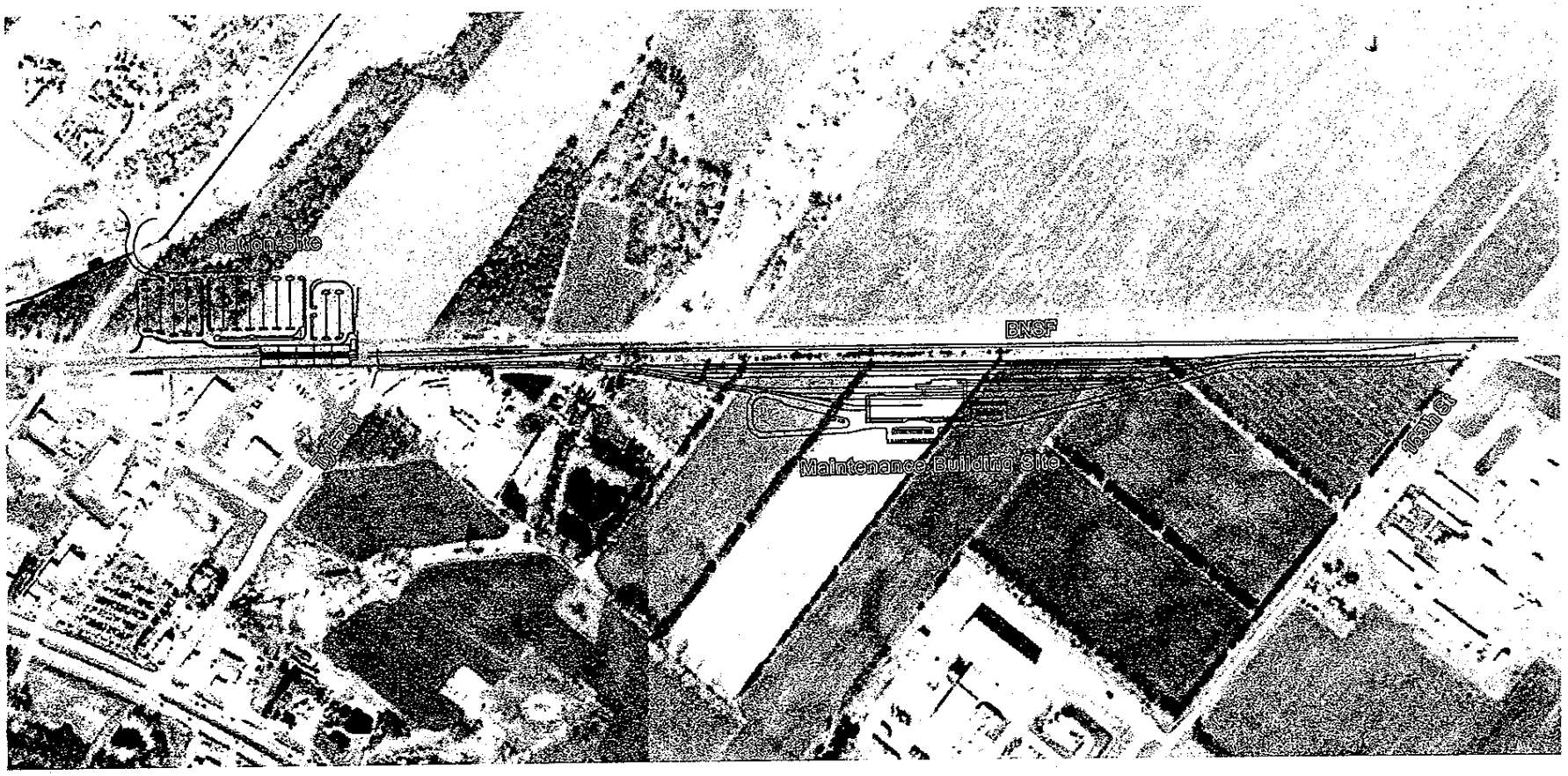


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Figure 2.2-13

Vehicle Maintenance Facility-Elk River

39935.0413-2/02-1

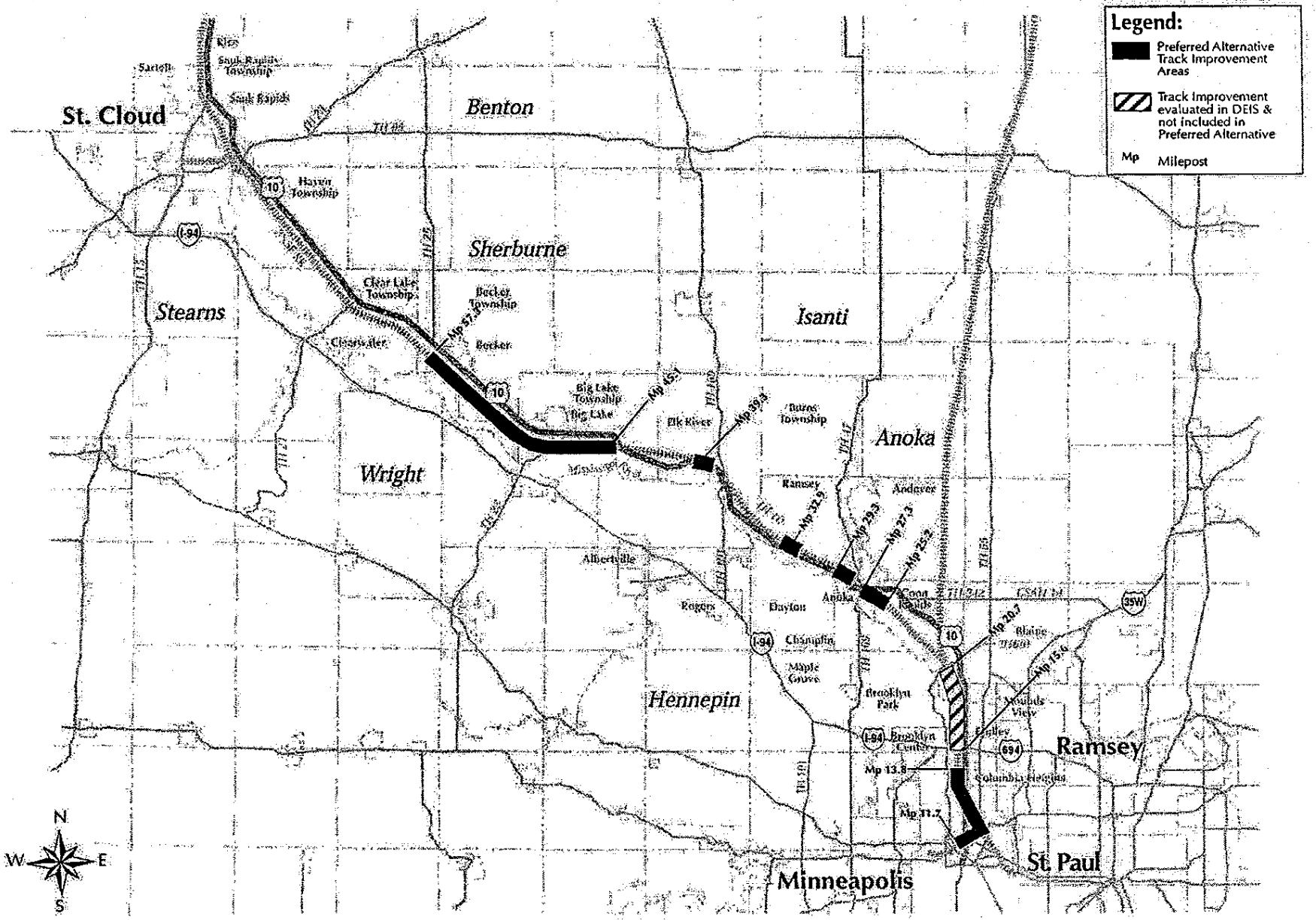

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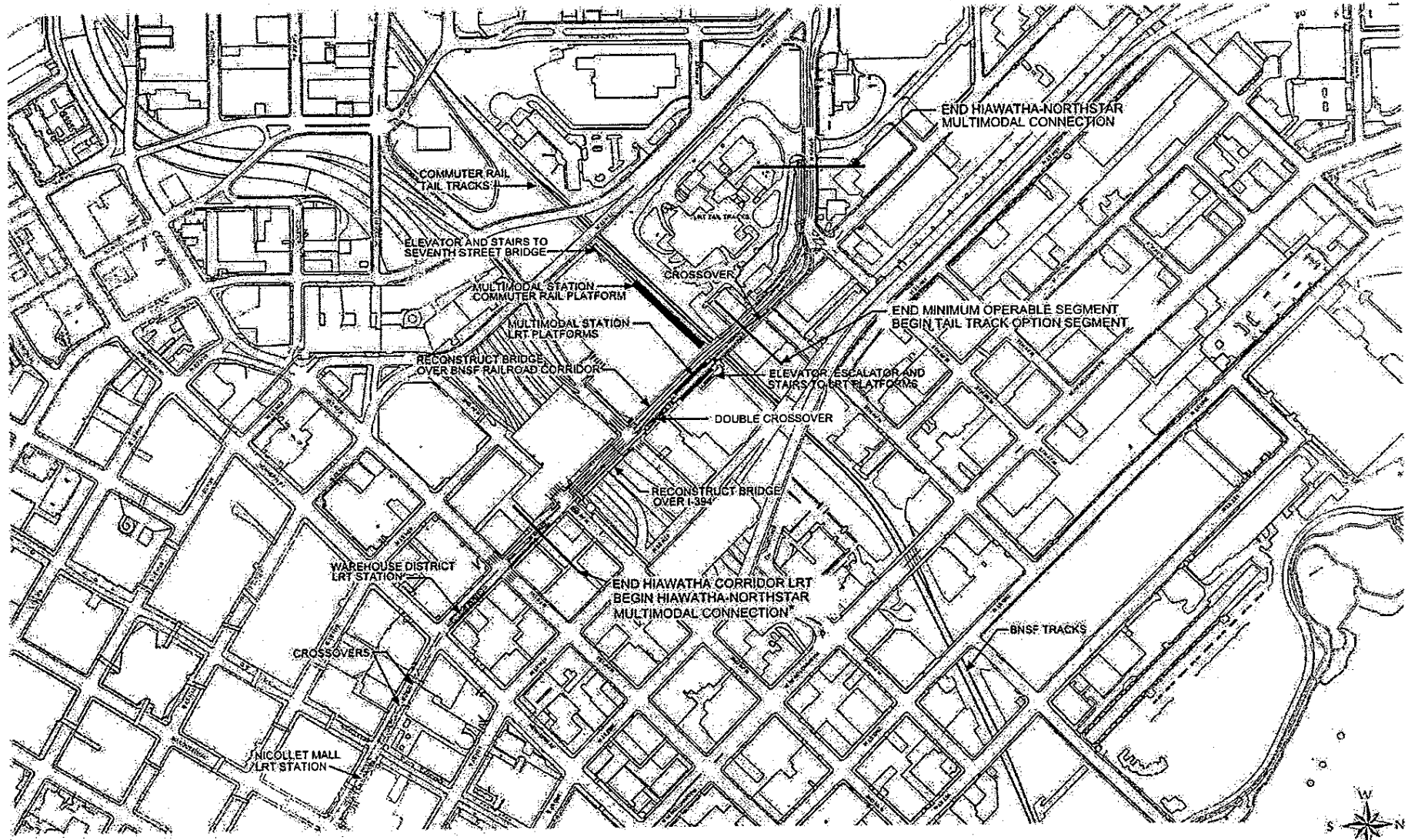
Figure 2.2-15
Preferred Alternative-
Corridor-Wide Track Improvement Areas
39935.0413-2/02-1

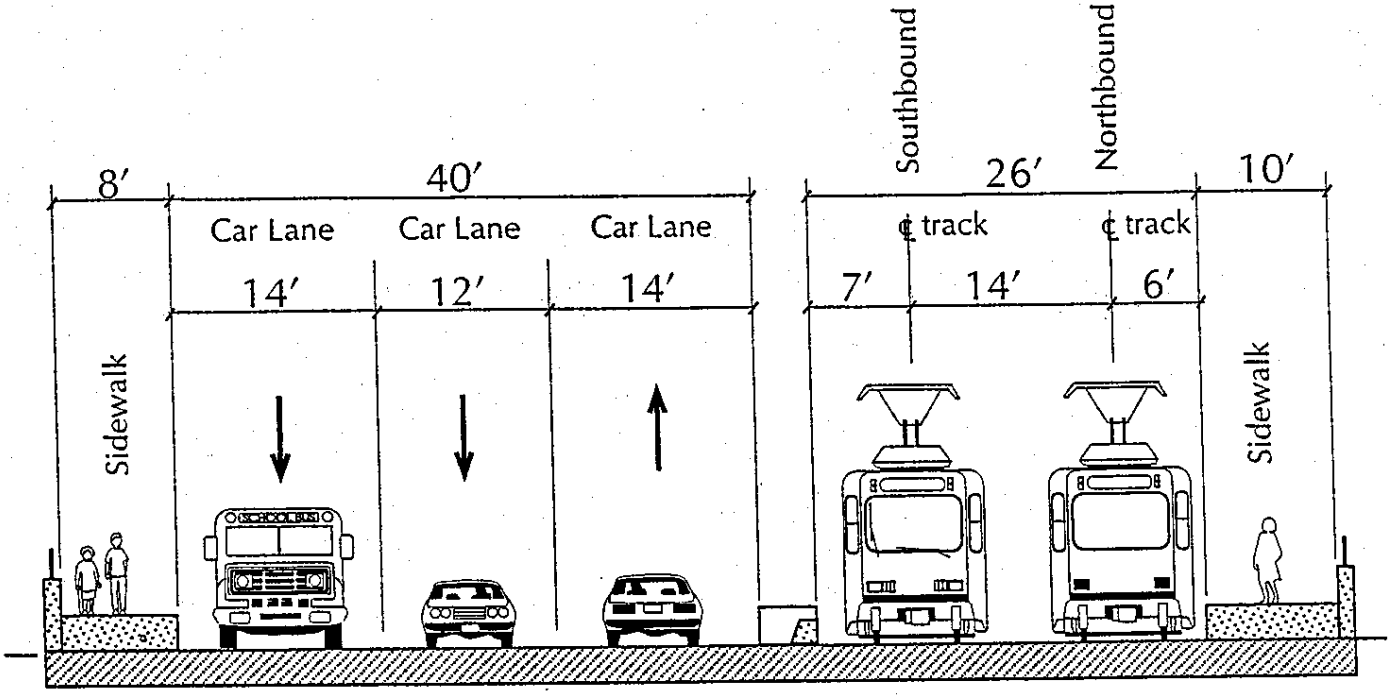


* Note: Environmental clearance for LRT on 5th Street to 3rd Avenue North was completed under the Hiawatha LRT ROD.

Figure 2.2-23

Hiawatha Corridor LRT Connection with the Northstar Corridor Preferred Alternative

39935.0413-2/02-1



5th Street between 3rd Avenue North and 5th Avenue

Figure 2.2-22
LRT Typical Cross-Section Between 3rd Avenue North and 5th Avenue

39935.0413-2/02-1

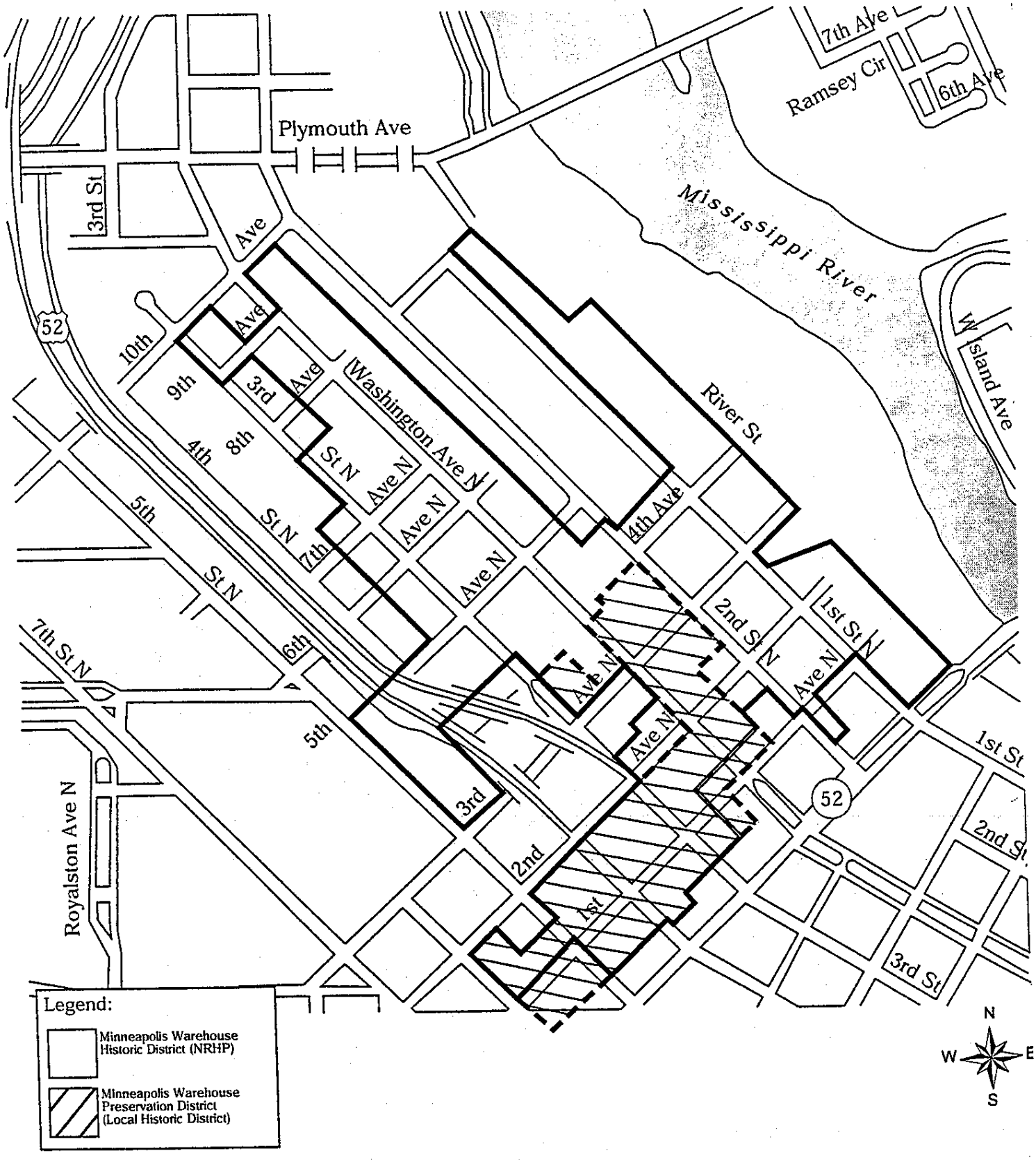


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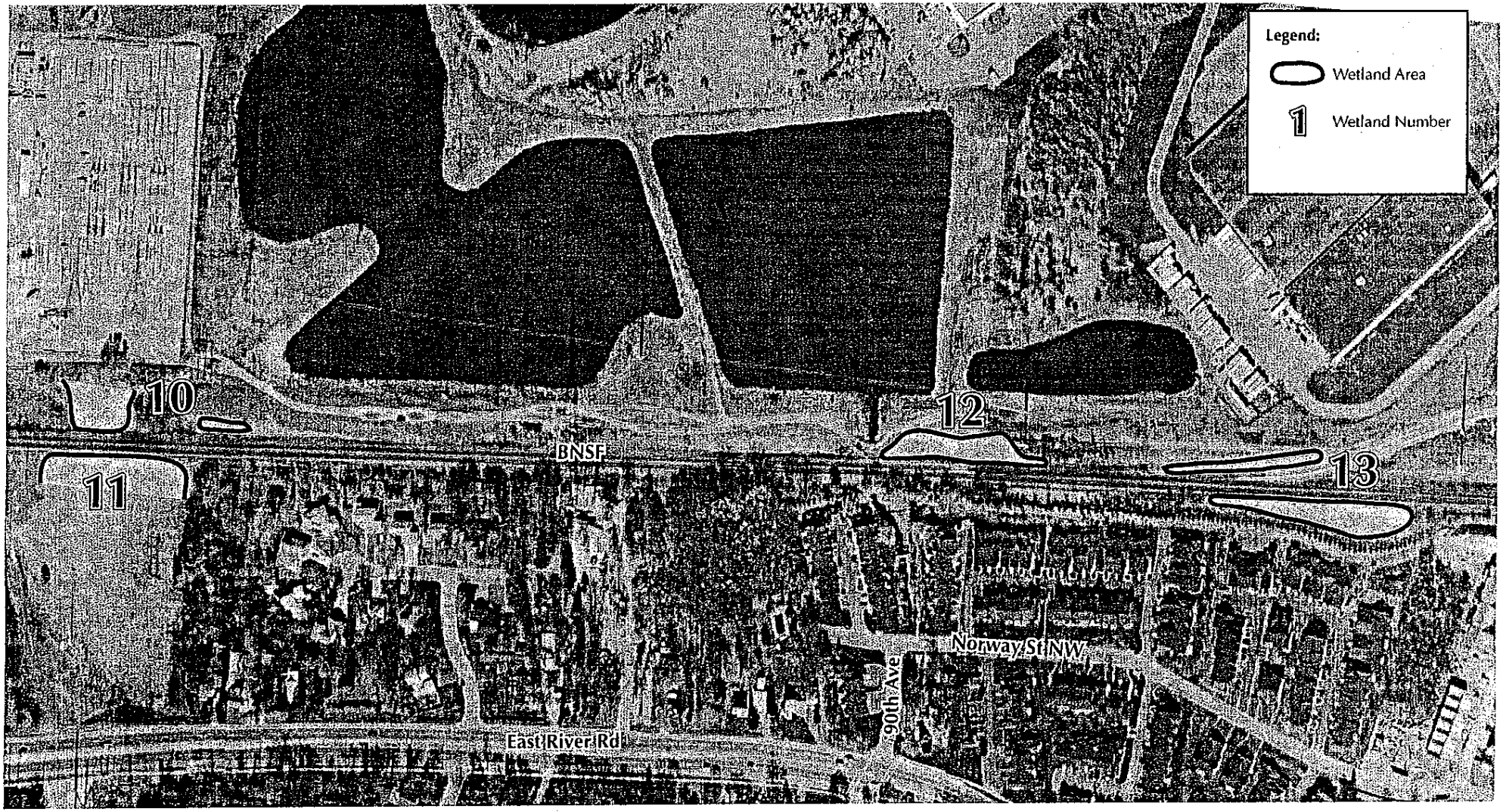
Figure 3.4-7

Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

39935.0413-2/02-1



E
N S
W

0 125' 250' 500'

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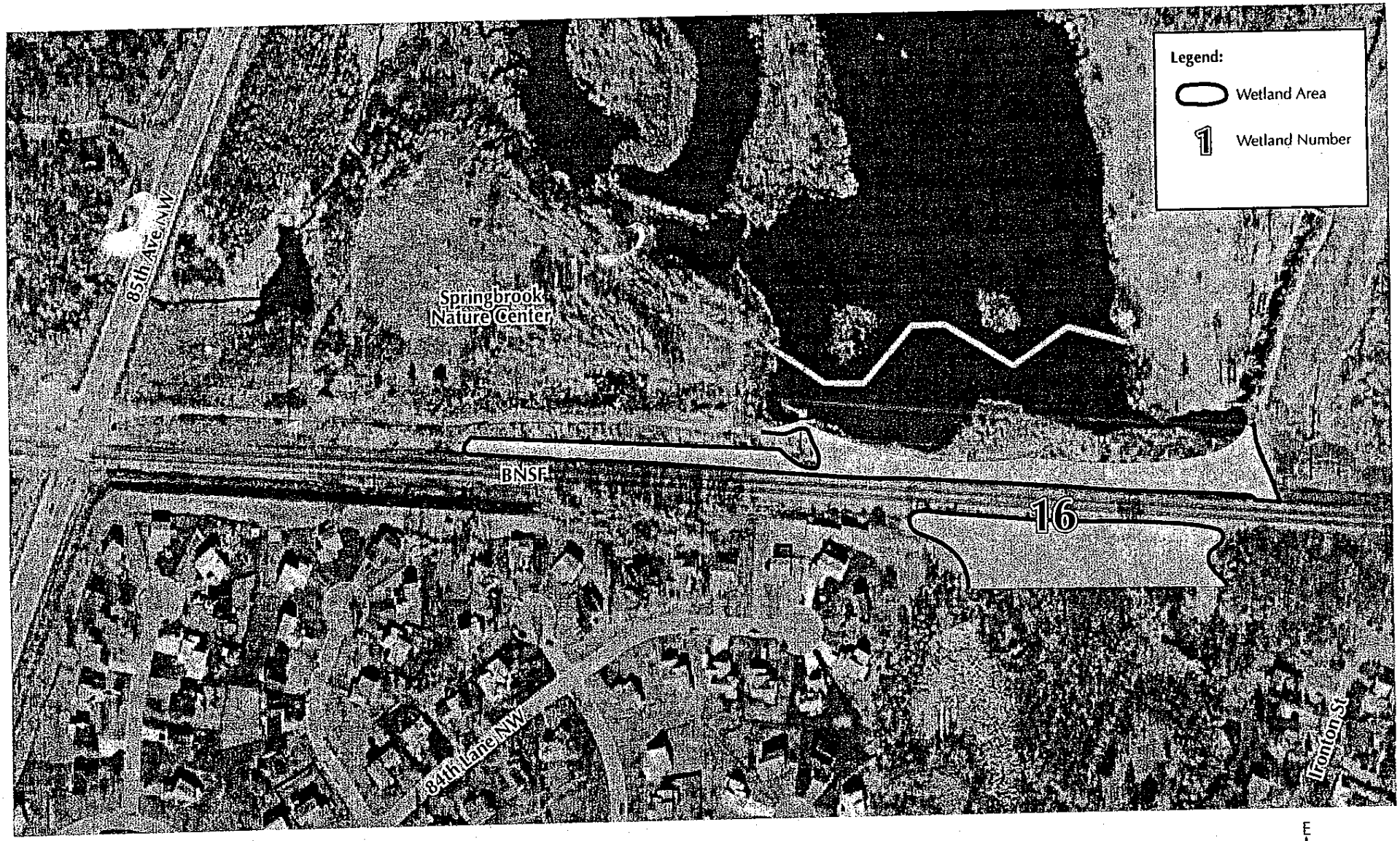
Figure 7.4-4
Wetland Delineation # 10, #11, #12 & #13
Coon Rapids



Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Figure 7.4-5
Wetland Delineation # 16
Fridley

39935.0410-9/00-1

NORTHSTAR CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

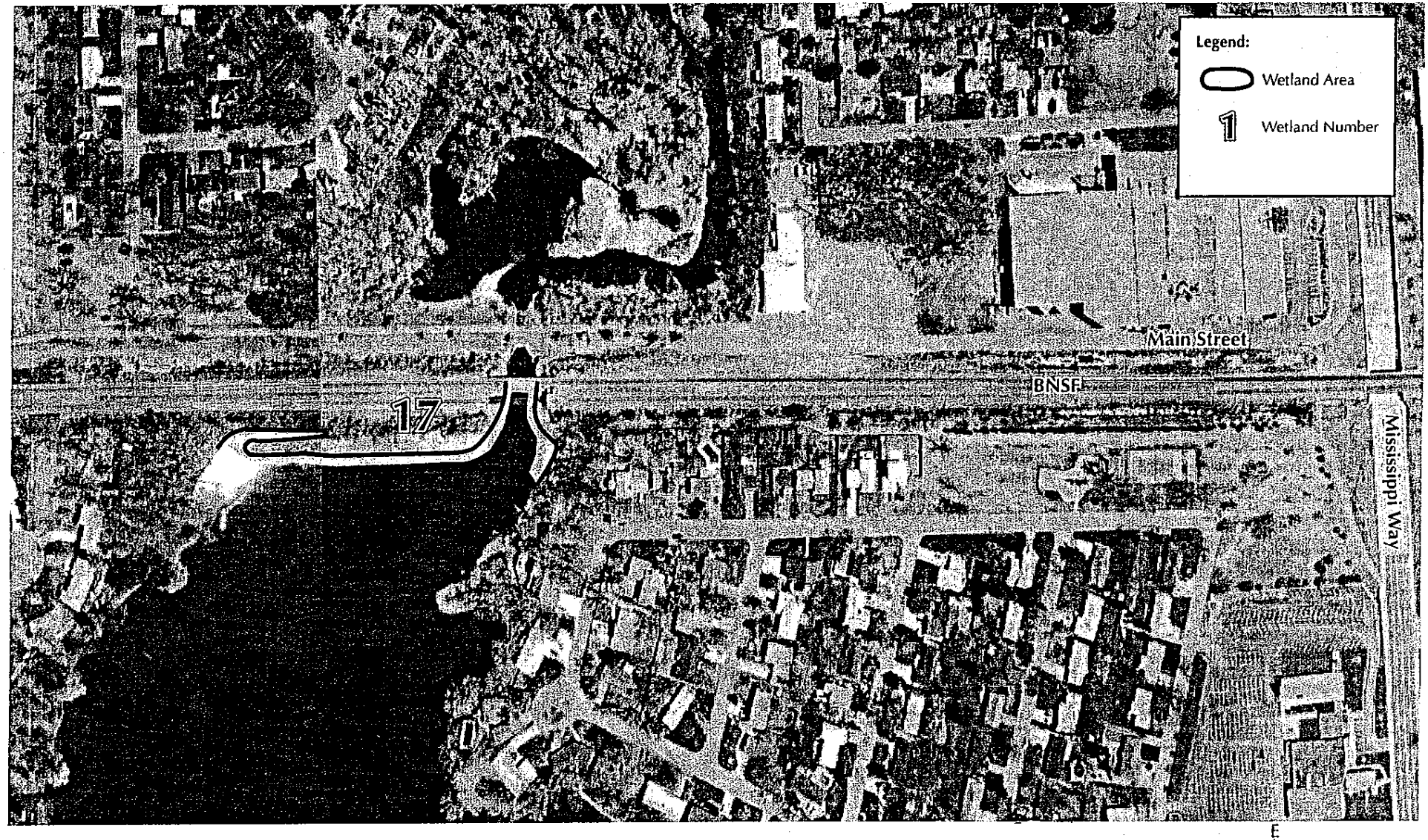


Figure 7.4-6
Wetland Delineation # 17
Fridley

39935.0410-6/00-1

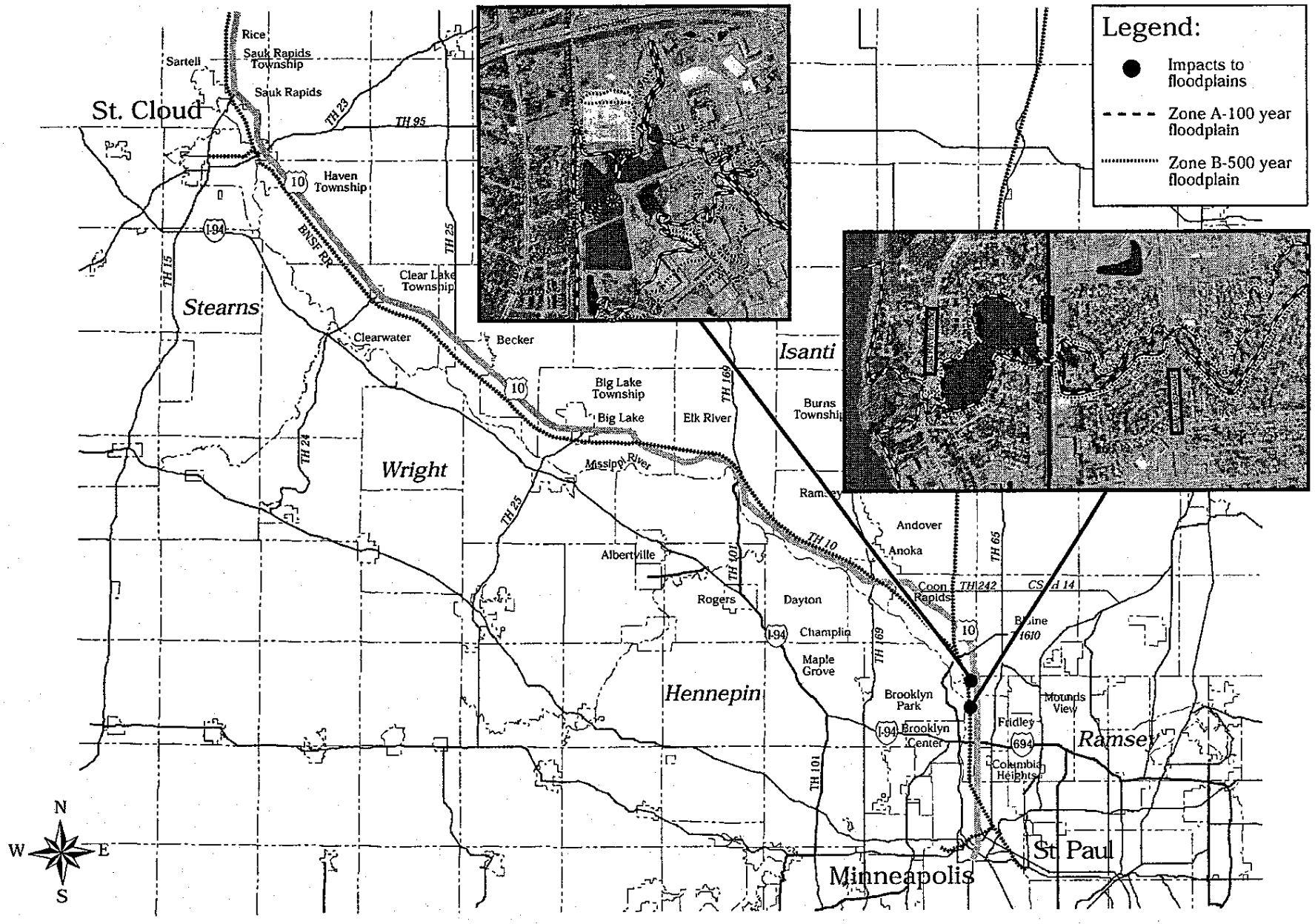


Figure 4.5-1

Floodplain Impacts Identified in the DEIS (Commuter Rail Alternative)

39935.0413-2/02-1

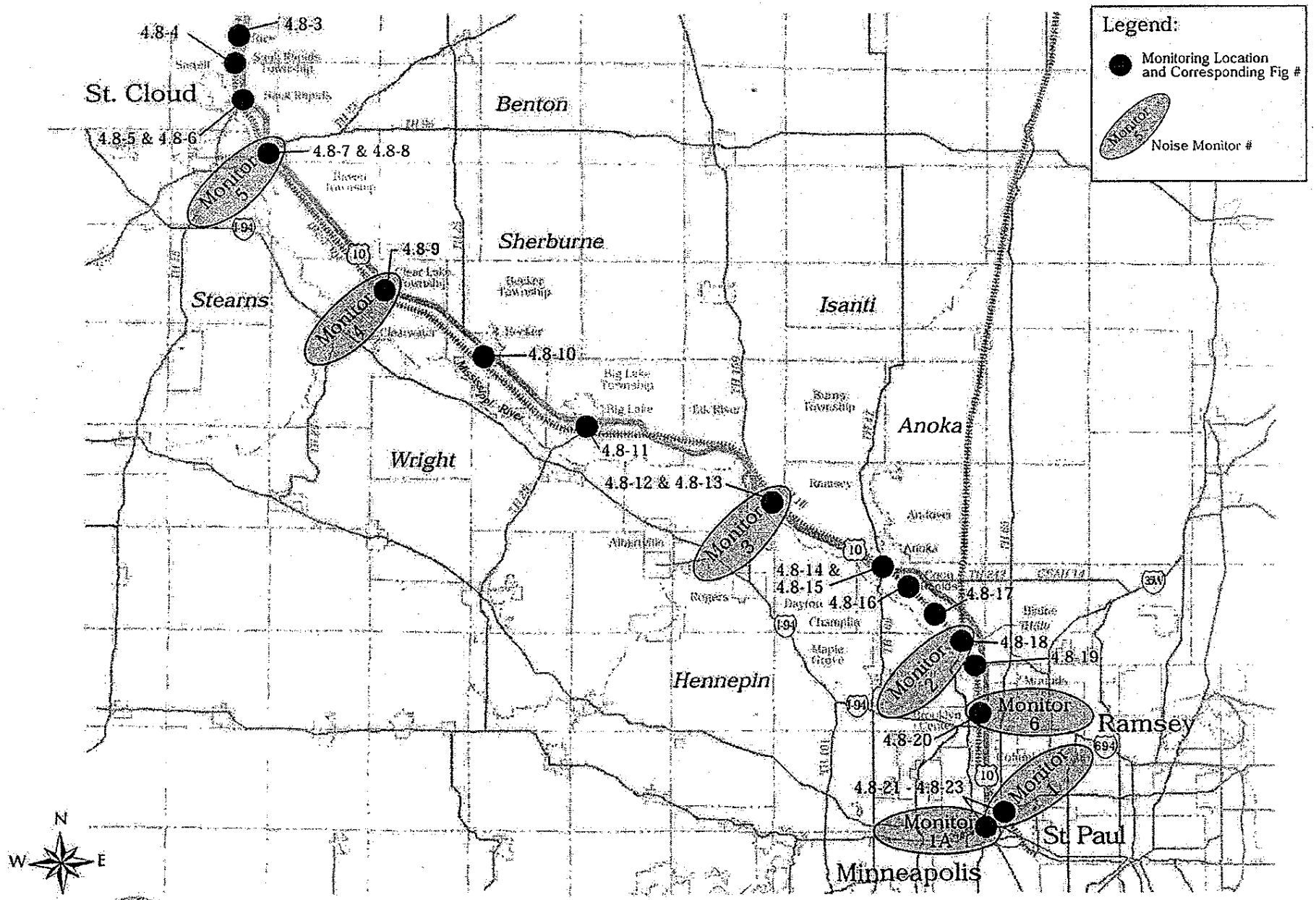


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Figure 4.8-2

Corridorwide Noise Monitoring Locations

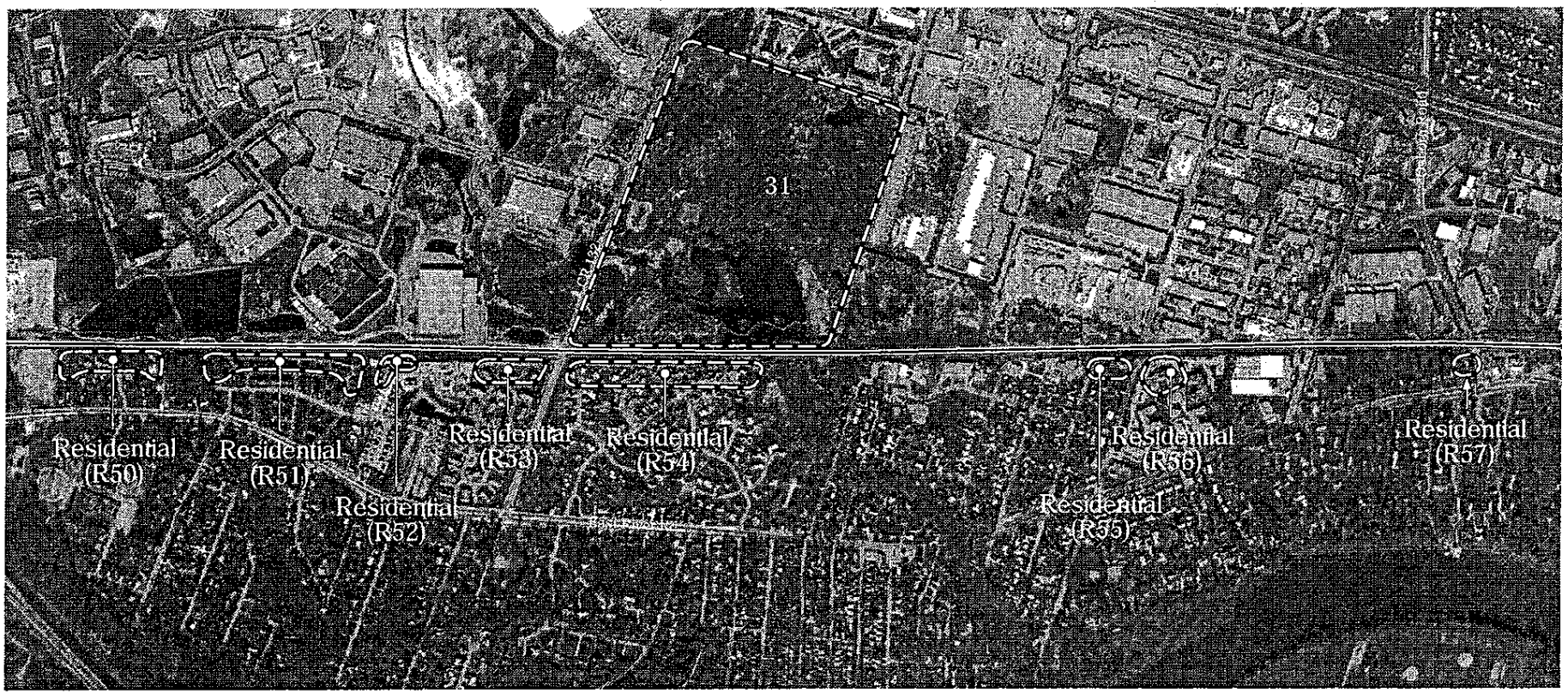
39935.0413-2/02-1

Noise Receivers
Monitoring Sites
Commuter Rail Track
Commuter Rail Station
( ) Site Number (Refer to Table 4.8-4)

E
N
S
W
0 400' 800'

Figure 4.8-18
Noise Monitoring Sites and Sensitive Noise Receiver Areas (Foley Boulevard Station)

35935.0413-2X02-1



Noise Receivers
Monitoring Sites
Commuter Rail Track
Commuter Rail Station
( ) Site Number (Refer to Table 4.8-4)

N E S W

0 400' 800'

Figure 4.8-19
Noise Monitoring Sites and Sensitive Noise Receiver Areas (Coon Rapids-Fridley)

39935.0413-2002-1


28
27
Residential
(R61)
M6
S
Residential
(R58)
Residential
(R59)
Residential
(R60)
Residential
(R62)
Mississippi River
Noise Receivers
Monitoring Sites
Commuter Rail Track
Commuter Rail Station
Site Number (Refer to Table 4.8-4)
E
N
S
W
0
400'
800'

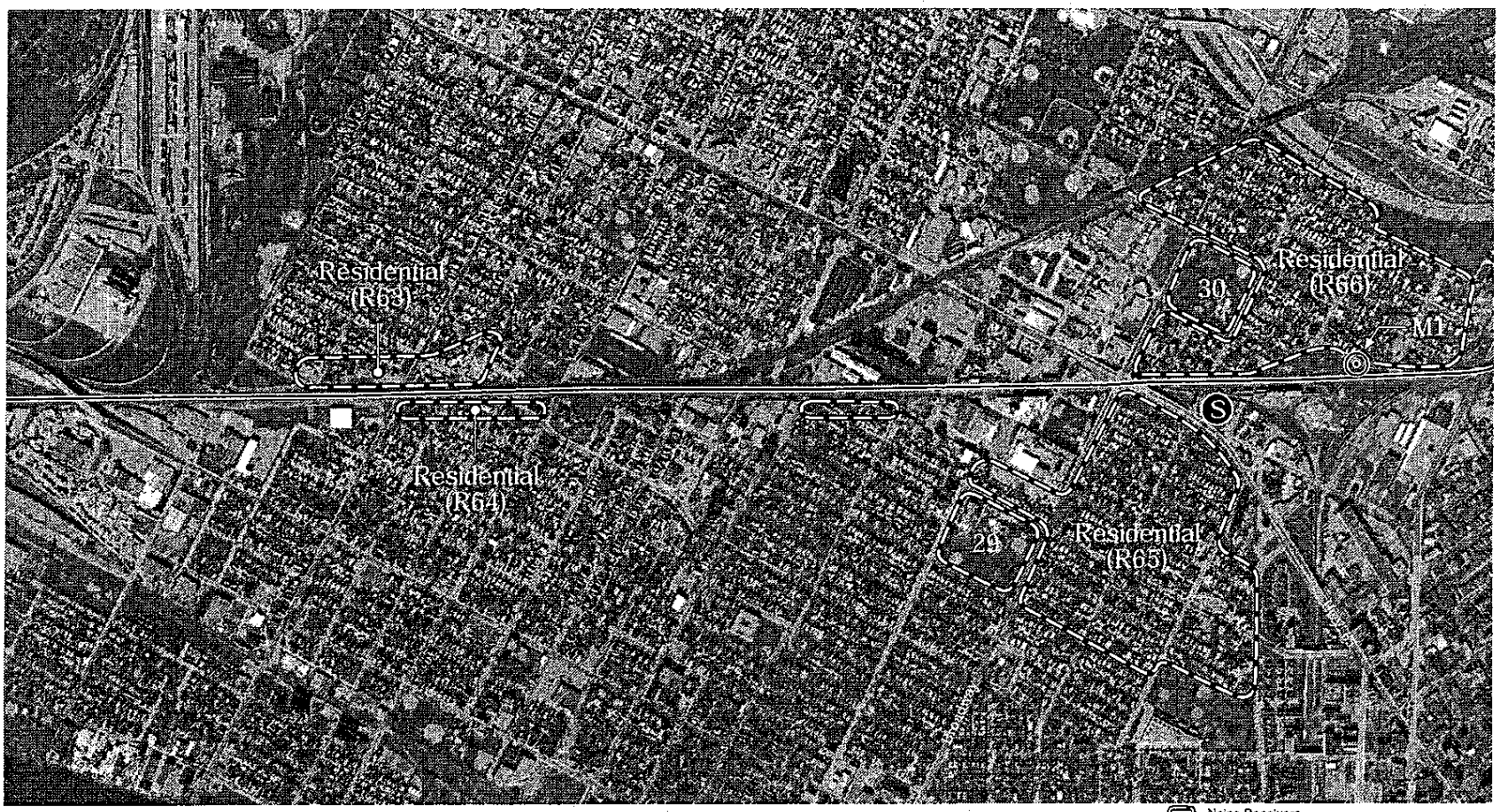


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Figure 4.8-21

Noise Monitoring Sites and Sensitive Noise Receiver Areas (Minneapolis NE)

39935.0413-2/02-1

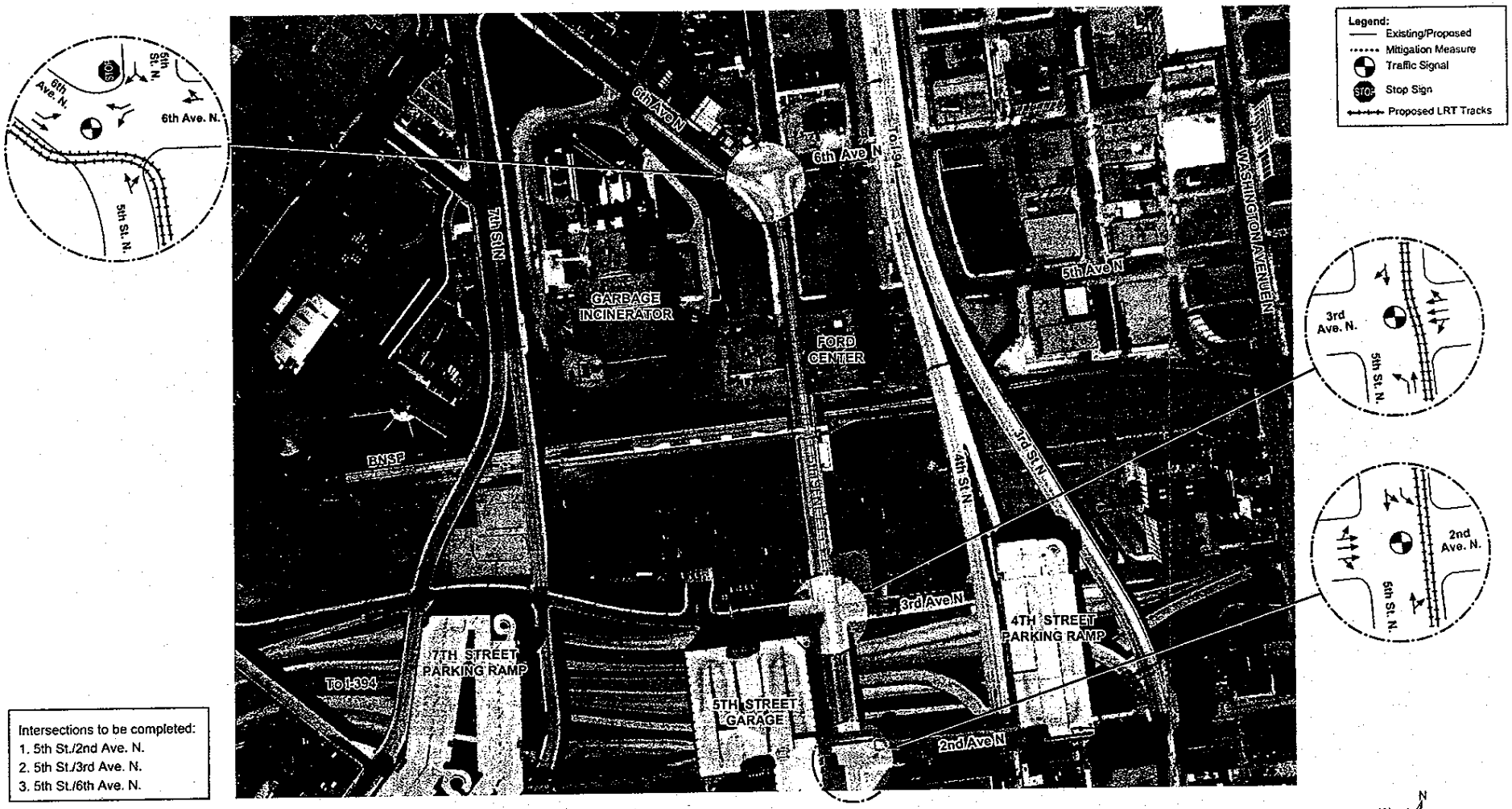

Figure 5.1-11

Studied Intersection Geometry & Traffic Control

Minneapolis Downtown Station and Multi-Modal Connector

39915.0413-202-1