



August 12, 2020

Dear Governor Walz, Metropolitan Council Chair Zelle, and Hennepin County Board,

The Blue Line Coalition is a coalition of organizations in relationship with immigrant and Black communities living in North Minneapolis and the Northwest suburbs in the Bottineau corridor. We stand together to call upon our elected officials to ensure the METRO Blue Line Extension LRT gets built in ways which create the equitable development, economic opportunities and access this line has the capacity to bring. It is vitally important to the health of our communities and, consequently, to the health of our entire region that:

- The METRO Blue Line Extension gets built to connect Northwest suburbs to downtown Minneapolis in the most timely fashion, but without inferior quality due to haste.
- The mode of this line remains light rail transit.
- This project does not lose its place in line for Federal New Starts dollars.
- All options are kept on the table to move forward with the current alignment, while alternative alignments are evaluated.

As you know, for generations, transportation has been misused as a tool for systemic racism, letting highway projects decimate Black business districts to spare white neighborhoods. Previous transit projects prioritized white commuters while skipping over communities of color on their way to downtown job centers.

However, starting in 2013, the Blue Line Coalition partnered with Hennepin County to engage communities along the current alignment, whose lives are integrally tied to that alignment in their housing, jobs and livelihoods. We had a shared goal, to ensure this METRO Blue Line Extension is planned and implemented in an inclusive and equitable way, and we rose to the challenge of this shared goal. The BLC put forward visions of equitable development along the corridor in our [Equitable Development Principles & Scorecard](#), [Housing Policy Platform](#), and Station Area Plans.

Last week, like so many others, we were surprised and frustrated by the announcement to abandon negotiations with BNSF Railway on the route. Along with elected leaders, in the corridor cities, we have a very strong preference for this project to proceed as light rail. If a new route is necessary, the start and end points must remain the same to connect our communities and keep our place in line for federal funding. But, more than an allegiance to any one alignment,

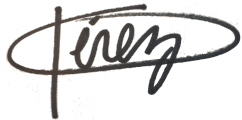
we are dedicated to advancing critical transit options that are the backbone of racial and regional equity.

Despite our disappointment, our coalition sees the additional possible opportunities in this announcement for a second beginning in which we can be creative and use the lessons, tools and information we've acquired over the seven years working together with Hennepin County to make this light rail transit project a reality.

We look forward to building upon this innovation by executing a plan that is intentional about benefiting all communities of color and implementing tools that address oppressive systemic issues. The opportunity exists to explore additional options, to lead with inclusivity, and to work together towards an extension line project that best meets the needs and dreams of our communities.

Thank you for your commitment to One Minnesota and the continued fight against systemic issues that keep our communities of color excluded from developing wealth, and segregated from opportunities in our region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ricardo', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval.

Ricardo Perez
Blue Line Coalition Organizer

About the Blue Line Coalition: *The Blue Line Coalition is comprised of organizations dedicated to building community-based power to advance local and regional equity and community health/wealth along the Bottineau Corridor. Formed in 2013, we reflect the immigrant and Black/African American, and other people of color communities living in North Minneapolis and the Northwest suburban communities along the planned LRT and BRT lines, all of whom will benefit most from the Blue Line Extension being built, completed and running in a timely manner. We want not only the Blue line LRT extension to be built, but also continued economic development, opportunities for accumulated wealth, prosperity, healthy living conditions, and environmental justice throughout the corridor that creates access and opportunities for all to thrive.*

Blue Line Coalition member organizations: *African Career, Education & Resource, Inc. (ACER), Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, CAPI USA, Harrison Neighborhood Association, Heritage Park Neighborhood Association, Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota, Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing (MICAH), Northside Residents Redevelopment Council, and Urban Small Business Alliance.*