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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

July 12, 2016

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## Gateway Gold Line study recommendations promote health through innovative design

A new health impact assessment has identified opportunities to promote and improve health through innovative land use changes around the Gateway Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit (Gold Line BRT) stations. Gold Line BRT will be Minnesota's first bus rapid transit line in an exclusive lane, connecting the East Metro cities of Woodbury, Oakdale, Landfall, Maplewood, and Saint Paul with a growing transit system in the Twin Cities. The project is currently in the research and design phase with an anticipated opening in 2023.

The health impact assessment brought together diverse partners including residents, businesses, public health advocates, and staff from Ramsey and Washington Counties in discussions about how community design impacts health.

Washington County Commissioner Lisa Weik, chair of the Gateway Corridor Commission, was excited to see transportation and public health working together to build healthy, livable communities.

"Health has always been a consideration for our county, but previously we had not investigated the links between health, transportation, and land uses," said Commissioner Weik "I am happy this project resulted in a shared vision for what healthy communities will look like along the Gold Line."

Commissioner Weik added "The upcoming comprehensive planning process each city and county will undertake is a unique opportunity to solidify that vision for health for years to come."

Health impact assessments use a flexible approach that brings together public health expertise, scientific data, and input from community and other stakeholders to examine the potential health risks and benefits of key policy proposals. The Gold Line BRT assessment provides practical recommendations to capitalize on opportunities to improve community health and to minimize any potential health risks.

A \$100,000 grant from the Health Impact Project, a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts, with funding from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation, enabled community leaders to explore the connection between transportation, land use, and health. Four health elements—connectivity, housing, jobs, and safety—selected by community participants were evaluated through the analysis process. Results include findings that social and financial stress for households limits the ability to be healthy. The portion of households that are over-burdened by housing and transportation costs illustrates this struggle. For Ramsey County communities, the portion of income paid toward housing costs is relatively high; in more suburban communities, the combined cost of transportation and housing is significantly high.

Regarding jobs along the Gold Line BRT, cities typically cannot offer a job for every individual living in their community, and transit helps connect individuals with employment opportunities. Each city can include in local plans the importance of locating jobs for convenient transit access, and enabling high-quality transit links to the corridor's major job centers.

"Gold Line BRT provides a great opportunity to enhance job growth, economic development, and connections to good jobs," said Will Schroeer, executive director of East Metro Strong. "Considering both economic access and health impacts as we design this line will help ensure that it will be a long-term success for our region and residents."

Gold Line BRT staff will work with Gold Line cities to implement the suggested strategies through their comprehensive plans. Ramsey County Commissioner Ortega, Gateway Corridor Commission Vice Chair, commented, "This health assessment is particularly useful because it recognizes the uniqueness of each city along the route. Each city can include in their plans recommendations from this study that best support their vision for a healthy, livable community."

The full report is available at [TheGatewayCorridor.com](http://TheGatewayCorridor.com).

### About Gateway Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit

Gateway Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit will be Minnesota's first BRT line in a dedicated busway. This cost-effective transportation solution is critical to the future development of our region. All-day transit service would stop at multiple stations and include connections to the growing regional transit system. The work is led by the Gateway Corridor Commission, which is comprised of local elected officials, business and community leaders. More information is available at [www.theGatewayCorridor.com](http://www.theGatewayCorridor.com). Updates and information can also be found on Facebook at [facebook.com/gatewaycorridor](https://facebook.com/gatewaycorridor) and on Twitter at [@GoldLineBRT](https://twitter.com/GoldLineBRT).



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