



Gateway Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit: A Closer Look at Health and Land Use

Project Summary

May 2016

Introduction

Overview

This document summarizes the Gateway Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit (Gold Line BRT) health impact assessment (HIA) process and recommendations. The HIA process provides a framework for reviewing health benefits and impacts of land use decisions. The review results in a set of recommendations on how to incorporate health into decision-making processes before a policy is adopted. Find more details in the *Gateway Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit: A Closer Look at Health and Land Use Technical Report* at TheGatewayCorridor.com.

Background

Our Environment Shapes Our Health

The places in which we live, work, and play affect our health. Man-made (or “built”) environments can support or limit healthy behaviors and the ability to get to basic needs and services. Our health begins with decisions on where to place resources such as grocery stores, schools, parks, and health care facilities within our cities and what methods of travel we are able to use. Communities should consider health as early as possible in these decisions to ensure all residents can lead healthy lives. Cities play an essential role in the design of our environments and as a result, yield great power in creating healthy communities.

A Local Vision for Health

Cities regularly develop plans for their vision of the future and map how to reach that vision. These plans (called “comprehensive plans”) help guide how cities will develop, where resources like jobs, housing, and trails will be located, and how we will travel throughout our communities. Individual and community health is certainly affected by these planning processes as cities aim to create livable communities. However, health is often missing from comprehensive plans and cities’ mission and vision.

Certain comprehensive plan elements required by the Metropolitan Council—the metropolitan planning organization for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area—provide opportunities to incorporate health. This study focuses on including health in land use decisions around the Gold Line BRT project. The project team conducted outreach as part of this study and many community members provided feedback about the connection between health and where they live, work, and play. As a result, as cities work to update their comprehensive plans, they should consider health early and often, and engage community members to further define what health means to each community.

The Gold Line BRT is an Opportunity

The Gold Line BRT is a proposed transitway in the East Metro that will connect urban and suburban communities, jobs, retail, education, and recreation destinations. All-day transit service will be provided at the stations and will tie into the growing regional transit system. The route could open for service by 2023 and will provide new economic development opportunities as the region grows. This health impact assessment is part of broad planning efforts for the Gold Line BRT, and focuses