

House Transportation Finance Committee

Hennepin County Commissioner Greene Testimony HF 3441 - Blue Line Extension Operations and Capital Maintenance

Co-Chairs Koznick and Tabke

1:00 pm, 3/25/2026

Introduction

- Co-Chair Koznick, Co-Chair Tabke, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Marion Greene; I am the Hennepin County Commissioner for District 3 and Chair of the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority.
- HF 3341 seeks to punish Hennepin County for investing local revenue in the metro transit system that will have significant regional and statewide benefits. We urge you to oppose this legislation.

Hennepin County Summary

- Hennepin County serves residents with efficient transportation options that meet the needs of our growing region. We do by investing in multimodal transportation like the construction of a comprehensive network of high frequency transit like light rail and bus rapid transit.
- Quality transit builds vibrant and thriving communities and benefits the entire metro and state of Minnesota.

Blue Line Extension

- The Blue Line Extension is the missing northern leg of our light rail system. It is a generational investment in communities that rely heavily on transit to move affordably and with dignity throughout our region. Half of Blue Line Extension riders are expected to come from households that do not have reliable access to a car.
- It will extend the Blue Line from downtown Minneapolis through North Minneapolis, Robbinsdale, Crystal and Brooklyn Park, efficiently connecting these communities to the broader transit network including 5 hospitals, 55 schools, 200,000 jobs and 462 retail businesses. This is a growing corridor that is projected to see 194,000 new residents and 100,000 more jobs in the next 20 years.
- The Metropolitan Council is responsible for the development of the project and is the project sponsor to the Federal Transit Administration to qualify for federal funding up to 50% of project costs.
- Hennepin County has worked as a project partner with Met Council and is committed to helping pay the remaining non-federal share of the project.
- In 2024 the Met Council completed the municipal consent process for the project with all cities and Hennepin County voting to approve preliminary design plans.

Strong support from elected officials along the corridor shows the value this project will bring to their communities.

- 2026 is a big year for the Blue Line Extension LRT project. After years of hard work and planning, the Blue Line Extension will apply for federal funding this year and begin construction next year after federal funding is awarded.

Why Light Rail

- Light rail continues to have the highest ridership and lowest per rider subsidy of any transit mode. It moves people efficiently and connects major destinations. In fact, just the two existing light rail lines serve 25-33% of all transit rides in the metro.
- Light rail also provides the highest return on investment in economic development, including 36,000 multifamily housing units permitted since 2019.
- Light rail spurs commercial centers and property tax revenue that reduces the burden on other properties. Land near light rail generates 27 times more tax revenue than an average parcel in the Metro and four times more economic development per mile than BRT.
- The Blue Line Extension is also a critical jobs investment for construction workers across the state, creating upwards of 6,000 jobs to build the project and more than 40,000 jobs in associated economic development.
 - For example, 5,400 people brought home paychecks from the Green Line construction, living in 73 of Minnesota's 87 counties.

Wrap

- Met Council makes construction and operation decisions for Metro Transit, not Hennepin County.
- Hennepin County is committed to helping build a robust transit system to better serve our region and state.
- The legislature should encourage local governments to invest in high-quality transit to improve mobility, meet the state's climate goals, and create thousands of good paying jobs.
- For those reasons, we strongly oppose this bill.
- Thank you for the opportunity to testify.