

MEETING LOCATIONS

Open House: 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

May 16, 2017
Sandstone Senior Center
206 Main St.
Sandstone, MN

May 17, 2017
Duluth Depot*
506 West Michigan St.
Duluth, MN

May 18, 2017
Coon Rapids Civic Center
11155 Robinson Dr. NW
Coon Rapids, MN

** The public meeting in Duluth will also serve as a public hearing to meet requirements under Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter TRANS 400.11, Distribution and Review of Environmental Documents.*

MEETING PURPOSE

A Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessment (EA) has been completed for the Northern Lights Express (NLX) Project, a proposed higher speed intercity passenger rail project between Minneapolis and Duluth.

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- ◆ Present the results of the Tier 2 EA.
- ◆ Share information about the NLX Project.
- ◆ Obtain verbal and written public comments.

MEETING AGENDA

The meeting is an informal **open house** from **5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.** We encourage you to review meeting materials and **speak with project staff** to have your questions answered. MnDOT and consultant personnel are available to provide specific information and individual assistance. There will be **no formal presentation**. Written and private verbal comments can be made throughout the meeting and will be entered into the official project record along with other meeting exhibits and materials. **All comments are due by May 24, 2017.**

MEETING DISPLAYS

Several displays, maps and project documents are available for review, including:

- ◆ Tier 2 EA and executive summary.
- ◆ Map series showing NLX Project features and environmental resources.
- ◆ Displays showing NLX Project features.
- ◆ Displays summarizing NLX Project impacts and benefits.



Rendering of a typical NLX station

View meeting materials online

Please visit the NLX Project website at www.mndot.gov/nlx to view the Tier 2 EA documents and all the meeting materials.



THE NLX PROJECT

NLX is a proposed higher speed passenger rail project that would provide rail service between Minneapolis and Duluth. If constructed, NLX would operate on 152 miles of existing BNSF Railway track in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The proposed NLX Project would operate four round trips (eight trains) per day at speeds up to 90 miles per hour. Travel time between Minneapolis and Duluth would be approximately 2.5 hours.

Stations would be located at Target Field in Minneapolis, Coon Rapids, Cambridge, Hinckley, Minnesota; Superior, Wisconsin; and Duluth, Minnesota.

The NLX Project would include one maintenance facility and one layover facility. These facilities may be on separate sites in Sandstone and Duluth, or co-located on one site in Duluth.

Purpose of the NLX Project

The purpose of the NLX Project is to provide a means to meet transportation needs through creating a passenger rail service linking Minneapolis and Duluth, connecting with other existing and planned transportation systems.

The NLX Project seeks to introduce a new intercity passenger rail service that would:

- ◆ Be reliable and cost-effective
- ◆ Offer a new transportation connection
- ◆ Provide greater intermodal connectivity

Need for the NLX Project

The NLX Project would:

- ◆ Improve limited statewide intermodal connectivity
- ◆ Meet travel demand related to population trends
- ◆ Improve travel reliability affected by congestion



City Hall in Cambridge, MN

NLX Corridor



ABOUT THE TIER 2 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), has prepared a Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with federal and state environmental requirements (National Environmental Policy Act, Minnesota Environmental Policy Act and Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act). The Tier 2 EA documents the project's anticipated social, cultural, economic, transportation, and environmental impacts and identifies measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate those impacts. The Tier 2 EA also discusses the impact of not implementing the NLX Project, or the No Build Alternative.

The Tier 2 EA builds on the Tier 1 Service Level EA prepared in 2013. The Tier 1 EA evaluated impacts of the project as a whole and selected a preferred corridor for passenger rail service. The Tier 2 EA updates impacts described in the Tier 1 EA and addresses specific project-related issues and likely environmental effects associated with the project's proposed track infrastructure, grade crossing improvements, stations, and layover and maintenance facilities.

After the formal public comment period on the Tier 2 EA ends on May 24, 2017, FRA and MnDOT, in consultation with WisDOT, will make a final environmental decision on the Tier 2 EA for the NLX Project. When the NLX Project has environmental approval, MnDOT can move forward with final design and construction.

NLX PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

DISTANCE	152 miles on existing BNSF Railway track
FREQUENCY OF SERVICE	4 trains per day in each direction
SPEED	60 mph average speed; 90 mph running speed
TRAVEL TIME	About 2½ hours travel time between Minneapolis and Duluth
STATIONS	Minneapolis, Coon Rapids, Cambridge, Hinckley, Superior, WI, and Duluth
IMPLEMENTATION COST	\$547 million (\$2014) for construction and equipment
FACILITIES	1 maintenance facility in either Duluth or Sandstone, 1 layover facility in Duluth
TRAIN EQUIPMENT	3 train consists, each includes 1 locomotive and 6 coaches
RIDERSHIP	700,000 and 750,000 annual rides in 2020, anticipated to increase to 900,000 and 1,000,000 rides by 2040
FARES	Approximately \$30 one way and \$60 round trip
REVENUES FROM FARES	In the range of \$12.8 million per year for the first 5 years of operation
OPERATING COST	\$17 million per year for operations and maintenance starting in 2020

Special Resource Considerations

Section 106/Historic Properties: The Tier 2 EA includes documentation on the preliminary Section 106 findings regarding historic properties, in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act. Persons with an interest in or knowledge about historical and archaeological resources in the project area are invited to provide such information at the public meeting either through a written or private verbal comment.

Section 4(f)/Parks and Recreation: The Tier 2 EA includes information on the Section 4(f) impacts and the preliminary de minimis findings (i.e., that adverse impacts to parks and recreation facilities and recreational trails would not result from the proposed project.) FRA will consider any comments received regarding this issue during the public comment period prior to making its final de minimis determination.

Acquisitions and Relocations: The NLX Project would acquire approximately 4 acres of private property for station and maintenance facility site development. The acquisitions would not result in residential or business relocations. MnDOT will comply with the Uniform Act (49 CFR 24), Minnesota Statutes Chapter 117 and Wisconsin Statutes (Wis. Stat.) Chapter 32, as applicable, for unavoidable land acquisitions of privately owned properties.



Duluth Depot in Duluth, MN

Next Steps

After the formal public comment period on the Tier 2 EA ends on May 24, 2017, FRA and MnDOT, in consultation with WisDOT, will make a final environmental decision on the Tier 2 EA for the NLX Project. When the NLX Project has environmental approval, MnDOT can move forward with final design and construction. If funding is available in a timely manner, service could begin as early as 2020.

Schedule Timeline

