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# Northern Lights Express

March 2018

## ABOUT NLX

The Northern Lights Express is a proposed high-performance intercity passenger rail project that would provide service between Minneapolis and Duluth. NLX passenger trains would operate on approximately 152 miles of track owned by the BNSF Railway.

The NLX Project is being managed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation in consultation with the Federal Railroad Administration, and with cooperation from the Minneapolis-Duluth/Superior Passenger Rail Alliance, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, and local communities.



Duluth Open House

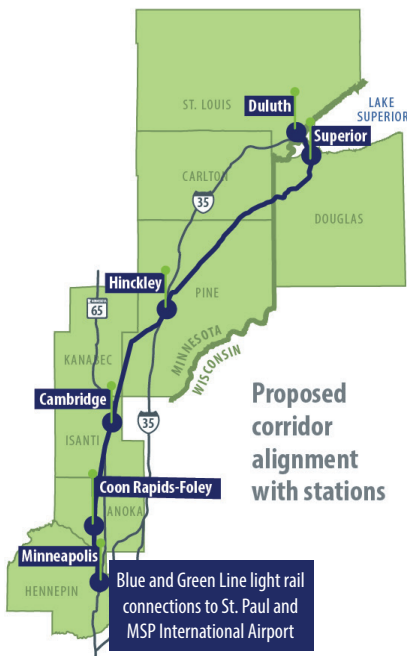
## ENVIRONMENTAL WORK COMPLETE NLX MOVES TO FINAL DESIGN

The Federal Railroad Administration found that the Northern Lights Express High-Performance Intercity Passenger Rail Project – between Minneapolis and Duluth, Minnesota – will not have significant environmental impacts when they issued their Finding of No Significant Impact on February 20, 2018. This means that the project can proceed to final design and construction as soon as funding is available.



Sandstone Open House

## NLX CORRIDOR MAP



MnDOT, as the Responsible Government Unit, for the State of Minnesota's environmental review process, has also determined that a state Environmental Impact Statement is not needed for the NLX Project. This decision was based on the Tier 2 Environmental Assessment and was documented in the Findings of Fact and Conclusion and Negative Declaration. The Minnesota Environmental Quality Board agreed with this finding. The Tier 2 EA, FONSI, and Findings of Fact and Conclusions documents are available at the MnDOT website: [www.mndot.gov/nlx](http://www.mndot.gov/nlx).

FRA and the Minnesota Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, prepared the Tier 2 EA for the NLX Project. The Tier 2 EA examined the 152-mile project corridor relative to social, economic and environmental impacts. The Tier 2 EA was available for public comment from April 24 to May 24, 2017, and comments were taken into consideration by FRA in preparation of, and included in, the FONSI.



Coon Rapids Open House



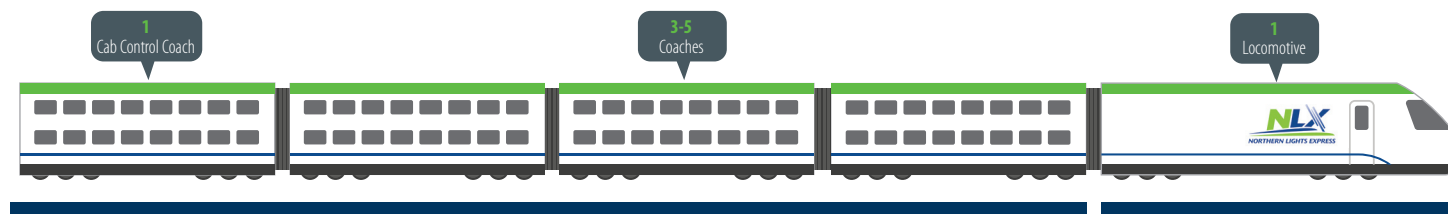
Train Station Model

# SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PLAN:

## AN OVERVIEW OF NLX SERVICE, COSTS AND BENEFITS

The **Service Development Plan**, which has recently been updated and finalized, describes the planned service, vehicles and operating characteristics of the NLX project. The plan also documents the benefits and costs of the NLX Project.

### What will the train be like?



#### Passenger Cars

Amtrak Midwest Passenger cars or PRIIA Next Generation Intercity Passenger Rail Bi-level cars

#### Locomotive

Siemens Charger



Siemens Charger Locomotive (photo courtesy of Amtrak)

#### Accessibility Amenities

Station platforms will be level with passenger car floors allowing level boarding for wheelchairs, strollers and other wheeled items

#### Safety Requirements

All vehicles will meet safety requirements of the Federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA)

### What are the costs and benefits?

#### Costs

The estimated **capital costs** of the NLX project is

**\$500-600 million**

For the first five years of operation, the estimated average **operating cost** is

**\$18.9 million**

estimated average **revenue** from fares is

**\$12 million**

estimated average **subsidy** is

**\$6.9 million**

#### User Benefits

- ▶ Up to 1 million annual riders by 2040
- ▶ Business travelers experience productivity savings
- ▶ More reliable travel times
- ▶ Reduced congestion during rush hours and peak weekend travel times
- ▶ Travel time savings
- ▶ Passengers save money, stress and reduce their carbon footprint



#### Safety Improvements

- ▶ Reduced crashes on regional roadways due to diversion of travelers from auto to train
- ▶ Improved safety features at grade crossings reduce risk of vehicles colliding with trains



#### Freight Benefits

- ▶ Upgraded crossings
- ▶ Improved speed, reliability and safety of freight movements
- ▶ Improved efficiency for shippers



## Economic Growth

- ▶ **Fiscal growth** – over \$375 million in tax revenues over 40 years
- ▶ **Economic Development** – supports the growth of new businesses and new development near stations
- ▶ **Jobs growth** – 3,000 jobs annually during construction and an average of 500 jobs annually during the first five years of operation
- ▶ **Tourism** – 250 annual jobs from tourism over forty years



## Quality of Life

- ▶ Improves transportation choices
- ▶ Creates new jobs
- ▶ Fosters new economic growth
- ▶ Adds money to local economy and local tax base



## Environmental Sustainability

- ▶ Reduces auto vehicle miles traveled
- ▶ Reduces emissions
- ▶ Potentially reduces environmental impacts on sensitive habitats and water resources



## Combined Benefits

- ▶ The combined benefit to train riders, other transportation users, freight operators and the general public is estimated at \$634 million over the next 40 years (2017 \$, 7% discounted rate).



## Positive Return on Investment

NLX has a positive return on investment, meaning that the monetized value of all the benefits, including new jobs, new economic activity and increased local tax base, exceeds the initial capital cost and on-going operating subsidy when viewed over a 40-year planning horizon.

## What will the service be like?



Four round trips per day between the Twin Cities and the Twin Ports is the most cost-effective operation plan based on the benefit-cost analysis

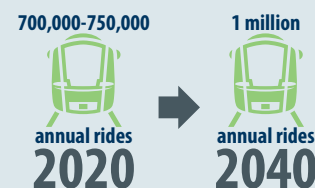


Maximum train speeds will reach 90 mph with average speeds around 60 mph



The one way travel time between the Twin Cities and the Twin Ports will be approximately 2 1/2 hours

### Additional Service Items



It is estimated that there will be 700-750,000 annual rides in 2020 and up to 1 million riders by 2040

### Proposed NLX Schedule: 4 Round Trips at 90 MPH

READ DOWN	TRAIN					TRAIN				READ UP
	7003	7007	7009	7013	Station	7002	7006	7010	7014	
	4:57	7:17	<b>12:34</b>	<b>5:14</b>	Duluth Union Depot	11:18	<b>2:18</b>	<b>7:58</b>	<b>11:43</b>	
	5:13	7:33	<b>12:50</b>	<b>5:30</b>	Superior	11:02	<b>2:02</b>	<b>7:42</b>	<b>11:27</b>	
	6:14	8:34	<b>1:51</b>	<b>6:31</b>	Hinckley	9:56	<b>12:56</b>	<b>6:36</b>	<b>10:26</b>	
	6:44	9:09	<b>2:26</b>	<b>7:06</b>	Cambridge	9:26	<b>12:26</b>	<b>6:06</b>	<b>9:56</b>	
	7:11	9:36	<b>2:53</b>	<b>7:33</b>	Coon Rapids	8:59	11:59	<b>5:39</b>	<b>9:29</b>	
	7:30	9:55	<b>3:12</b>	<b>7:52</b>	Target Field Station	8:40	11:40	<b>5:20</b>	<b>9:10</b>	
	2h 33m	2h 38m	2h 38m	2h 38m	Trip Time	2h 38m	2h 38m	2h 38m	2h 33m	

PM times in **bold**

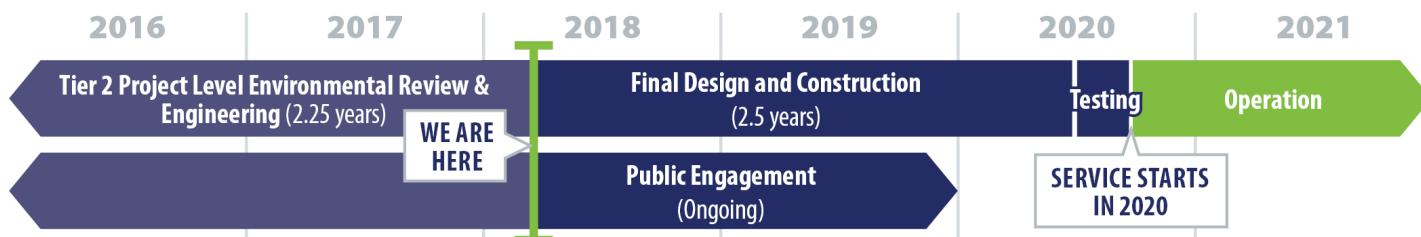


A one-way trip fare between the Twin Cities and the Twin Ports will be approximately \$30  
(Fare prices are subject to change upon startup of service)

The planned operation schedule was based on coordinating the schedules of Amtrak trains, the North Shore Scenic Railroad train and BNSF freight trains.



## Schedule Timeline



## NEXT STEPS

Now that environmental work for the project is complete, next steps for the Northern Lights Express project include negotiating an operating agreement with Amtrak, completing negotiations with BNSF, assembling funds for final design and construction, and acquiring right-of-way for stations. The first construction projects will likely be grade crossing improvements, many of which may be constructed prior to the completion of rail improvements or the construction of stations.



Rendering of a typical NLX station

## HOW TO STAY INVOLVED WITH THE NLX PROJECT

Over 85 people attended public meetings in May 2017 to hear about and comment on the NLX Project and the Tier 2 Environmental Assessment. Responses to public comments were prepared and provided to the Federal Railroad Authority (FRA) as part of the review process. MnDOT and FRA considered these comments when making their respective Finding of No Significant Impacts. This led to the FRA approval of the FONSI and MnDOT's Negative Declaration regarding the need for a state Environmental Impact Statement.

There are many ways you can stay involved with the NLX project as it moves forward with next steps:

### If you support NLX, tell your elected officials:

Sign up for your call to action and find out who your elected officials are at [www.northernlightsexpress.org](http://www.northernlightsexpress.org)

### Join the NLX mailing list:

Send your email address by text message:

Text **NLX** to **22828** to get started (message and data rates may apply)

### Become a friend of NLX

Join us at [Facebook.com/NorthernLightsExpress](https://www.facebook.com/NorthernLightsExpress)

## Additional Questions or Comments?

[www.mndot.gov/nlx](http://www.mndot.gov/nlx) • [nlx.dot@state.mn.us](mailto:nlx.dot@state.mn.us)

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The NLX newsletter is an electronic newsletter published as needed.

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