

Southwest Station Area Planning

In partnership with the cities of Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Hopkins, and St. Louis Park, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority initiated station area planning for suburban stations along the Southwest LRT line. Planning will be initiated in Minneapolis in 2010, now that a route through Minneapolis has been chosen.

Station area planning builds upon the past planning work of each community and analyzes how light rail transit riders will access the stations and how development patterns could change around each station. Community members and city staff have been working with the Hay Dobbs consulting team at visioning sessions and public meetings to create transit-supportive district design guidelines. These guidelines will recommend patterns and forms of development and a mix of land use to achieve an active, transit-supportive, pedestrian environment around each of the 12 stations.

Below are examples of renderings of station areas as they are envisioned in the station area plans.



Blake Road Station looking Northeast at Blake Road and Excelsior Boulevard



Proposed Wooddale Station Transit Plaza

"It's important to keep our region strong and growing, and having a 21st century transportation system is key to achieving those goals. A Southwest Light Rail line is a critical part of our region's transit infrastructure, and I'm proud to be part of the collaboration of communities in the Southwest metro area that's been working jointly to make this project a reality. Choosing the Locally Preferred Alternative was a very significant milestone that we can celebrate as a community."

—Commissioner Jan Callison,
Member of the Southwest
Policy Advisory Committee

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SOUTHWEST transitway

What is the Southwest LRT Project?

The Southwest LRT is a proposed high-frequency light rail line serving the rapidly growing southwest metro area with stations in Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, and Minneapolis.

When constructed, the Southwest LRT line will connect to the Hiawatha and Central Corridor LRT lines, the Northstar Commuter line, and high-frequency bus routes in downtown Minneapolis, providing connections to the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport, Mall of America, University of Minnesota, State Capitol, and downtown St. Paul.

The Southwest LRT line will be a part of a regional approach to increasing transit alternatives for our growing metro area, and will provide an efficient way for people to get to a wide range of destinations. In addition, this LRT line will support growth and development while also maintaining our high quality of life.

Southwest LRT Goals

1. Improve Mobility
2. Cost-Effective and Efficient
3. Protect the Environment
4. Preserve Quality of Life
5. Economic Development

"The County and our partners – cities, business chambers, and agency representatives - have been working hard since 2002 to make sure that all feasible routes have been studied and that our process has been fair and open. With the selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative, the Southwest Light Rail project has taken a major step toward becoming a reality."

—Hennepin County Commissioner Gail Dorfman,
Chair of the Southwest Policy Advisory Committee

Key Milestones:

Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Selection

On November 3rd, 2009, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority acted to recommend that the LRT 3A alternative be selected as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the Southwest LRT line (see map on pages 2-3). LRT 3A was chosen because it is the alternative that best meets the Southwest LRT goals of improving mobility, providing a cost-effective and efficient travel option, protecting the environment, preserving quality of life, and supporting economic development.

The LRT 3A alternative is proposed to operate from Mitchell Road in Eden Prairie through downtown Minneapolis, where it will use the existing Hiawatha LRT tracks. The line is expected to serve close to 30,000 trips per day and will cost approximately \$1.2 billion to construct in year 2015. The line is consistent with local and regional plans and will be part of an integrated system of rail and bus lines providing expanded service to the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area that will move the region toward doubling transit ridership by the year 2030. ↪



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To support the LPA selection, the SW LRT project team has been working over the past 6 months to develop cost estimates, ridership forecasts, an assessment of impacts/benefits to the transportation and transit systems, and an inventory of potentially affected critical environmental resources was conducted. The evaluation results were shared with the public at five open houses in August, and are available at www.southwesttransitway.org. The public was invited to comment formally at public hearings held on September 17th and October 20th, 2009

The HCRRA's LPA recommendation will now be sent to the Metropolitan Council for their consideration and action. Once the Metropolitan Council selects the LPA and includes it in their Transportation Policy Plan (TPP), the project can apply to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for entry into Preliminary Engineering (PE).

What's Next for Southwest LRT?

The process for developing an LRT line is lengthy and complicated. The public is encouraged to get and stay engaged in this process by visiting our website at www.southwesttransitway.org and attending our meetings as the project moves through the project development process.

The Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority continues to partner with the Federal Transit Administration to complete the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Southwest Transitway project. The DEIS will document the potential social, economic, and environmental impacts of the alternatives and options for mitigation of unavoidable adverse impacts.

Issues To Be Addressed

The DEIS will document significant impacts and benefits regarding:

- Ecosystems and natural resources including geology and soils, air quality, water resources, and noise and vibration;
- Land use, zoning, and economic development;
- Demographics and socio-economic factors;
- Displacements and relocations;
- Neighborhood compatibility, community facilities and services, and environmental justice;
- Cultural resources including historical and archeological resources, parkland and Section 4(f) resources;
- Hazardous materials;
- Energy use;
- Construction effects;
- Transportation including transit, roads and highways, railroads, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Proposed Southwest LRT Project Timeline

