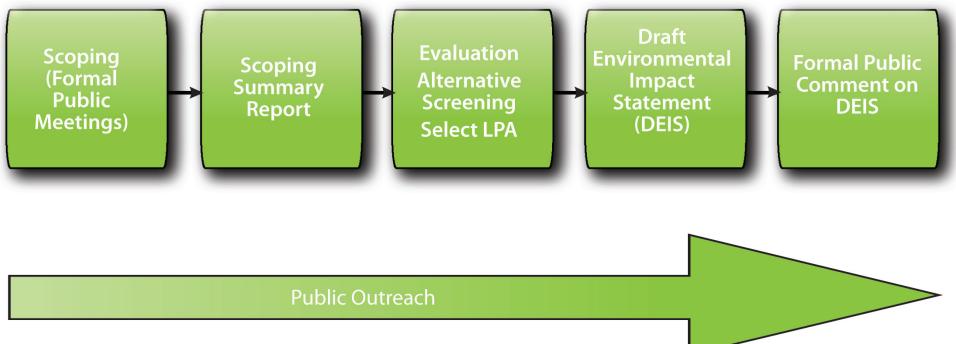


Draft Environmental Impact Statement Process



The LPA selection by the Southwest Policy Advisory Committee is expected in Fall 2009. Prior to forwarding the recommended LPA to the HCRRA and the Metropolitan Council, a targeted public outreach process will occur to ensure that all potentially affected individuals, groups and organizations are fully informed.

Through this process the HCRRA expects the Southwest LRT line to be well positioned to be the next light rail line constructed in the Twin Cities region after the Central Corridor LRT line (between downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul) which is scheduled to open in 2014.



What is a Draft Environmental Impact Statement?

The purpose of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is to provide a full and open evaluation of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Southwest LRT line, and to ensure that decision-makers and the public are aware of the impacts and of reasonable alternatives to avoid or minimize adverse impacts prior to implementing the transit line. The DEIS consists of a printed report for public review and comment which:

- Identifies and explains the purpose and need for improved transit to serve the area
- Develops and describes the alternatives for the proposed action being considered
- Identifies the environmental and community effects of the LRT project and measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse impacts of their implementation
- Describes agency and public coordination efforts

Issues To Be Addressed

Based on comments received during the Scoping Process, and in compliance with Federal and State requirements, the DEIS will document potentially significant environmental impacts including:

- Ecosystems and natural resource benefits and impacts including geology and soils, air quality, water resources including hydrology and water quality, noise and vibration;
 - Land use, zoning and economic development;
 - Demographics and socioeconomic factors;
 - Displacements and relocations;
 - Neighborhood compatibility, community facilities and services, and environmental justice;
 - Visual and aesthetic characteristics;
 - Cultural resource benefits and impacts, including those related to historical and archeological resources, traditional cultural resources and parklands/recreation and Section 4 (f) resource areas;
 - Hazardous materials;
 - Energy use;
 - Construction effects; and,
 - Transportation benefits and impacts (including transit, roads and highways, railroads, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities).
-
- Serves as the basis for a decision to move forward with the Southwest LRT line
 - Allows opportunities for public and agency input

For more information, go to www.southwesttransitway.org

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SOUTHWEST
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In this issue

- All about the Southwest LRT
- Recapping the scoping process
- A look back, a look ahead
- Insight about the Draft Environmental Impact Statement
- Concerns and issues to be addressed

What is the proposed Southwest LRT line?

The proposed Southwest LRT line is a high-frequency train serving the rapidly growing southwest metro area - Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Edina, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, as well as Minneapolis neighborhoods and the Minneapolis downtown area.

The Southwest LRT line will connect to other rail lines (Hiawatha, Central, and Northstar) and high-frequency bus routes. Through these connections Southwest LRT will also provide access to the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport, Mall of America, the State Capitol, and downtown St. Paul.



Southwest LRT Goals

- Improve Mobility
- Cost-Effective and Efficient
- Protect the Environment
- Preserve Quality of Life
- Economic Development

"The Southwest LRT line is a key component of a comprehensive transit system for the Twin Cities. It connects communities and commerce, providing a more balanced transportation system that supports the economy of our region."

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

Key Milestones

Scoping Process Wraps Up

The Southwest Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) started with a process called Scoping in which the need for the project, the alternatives under consideration, and the environmental impact areas to be analyzed were presented to the public for comment. The public comment period extended from September 8 to November 7, 2008, for the Southwest Transitway project. The comment period included three public hearings and a variety of communications efforts, such as media relations and advertisements, to ensure interested parties knew the Scoping Process was in motion. The Scoping Process collected nearly 900 written and verbal comments from individuals and groups. The wide range of public comments are documented in the Scoping Summary Report. The report is available at www.southwesttransitway.org.

The comments received were used to refine the "scope" of the DEIS to ensure that it will provide for the full and open evaluation of reasonable alternatives to inform the public and policy makers of the potential environmental impacts of those alternatives.



Scoping Summary Report Accepted By HCRRA

On January, 27, 2009, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) accepted the Southwest Transitway DEIS Scoping Summary Report. This closes the Scoping Process and sets the scope for the environmental review process.



"This is a major milestone for the Southwest light rail project. Due to the success of the scoping process, we are on track for implementation immediately following the Central Corridor light rail line."

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



Where We've Been

Since 2002, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) has been working with its partners to find solutions for the growing transit needs of this area. Numerous studies and reports have been produced considering transit technologies ranging from bus to subway to monorail. These studies determined that light rail transit is the best technology to serve this area.



Currently, the Southwest LRT project is in the environmental review phase called the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Step one of the DEIS is the Scoping Process, which establishes the scope of work for the DEIS. For example, during the Scoping Process, residents identified specific areas where concerns over noise, vibration and traffic should be addressed in the DEIS. The Scoping Process took place in late 2008, and consisted of an extensive public comment period – including three public hearings, analysis of submitted comments, and preparation of the aforementioned Scoping Summary Report.

Where We're Going

Now that the Scoping Process is completed and the "scope" of analysis for the DEIS is set, the evaluation of the remaining LRT alternatives will begin. The Southwest Policy Advisory Committee – composed of representatives from Hennepin County and cities along the corridor, as well as other public agencies and business chambers – will be reviewing ridership, cost, cost-effectiveness, economic development opportunities, transit system integration, critical environmental impacts and other factors to narrow the options to one route, the "locally preferred alternative" or LPA. Once the LPA is selected a more detailed evaluation will begin to identify all potential environmental impacts and potential methods for avoidance, minimization or mitigation.

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