



SOUTHWEST
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Southwest LRT

Technical Memorandum No. 4

PLANNING COMPATIBILITY EVALUATION

September 9, 2009



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This technical memorandum assesses the compatibility of the Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) alternatives with the local and regional plans of the project partner cities, Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council. According to the Minnesota Metropolitan Land Planning Act¹, local municipalities are required to update their comprehensive plans at a minimum every 10 years. Upon completion, municipalities in the metropolitan region are required to submit these plans to the Metropolitan Council. The Metropolitan Council is responsible for the final review to ensure consistency between the Plans and help guide regional growth. The Metropolitan Council also updated the systems plans for the region including the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP). The most recent version of the TPP was adopted in 2009.

Since the publication of the Southwest LRT Alternatives Analysis (AA) in 2006, all of the project partner cities have revised existing comprehensive plans pursuant to the Metropolitan Land Planning Act and have submitted them to the Metropolitan Council for review. These plans discuss the community vision for future development, growth, and change projected out to the year 2030. Additionally, some of the project partner cities have adopted small area or neighborhood plans that identify specific land use, housing, transportation, or natural resource management goals on a refined scale.

This memorandum provides a summary of the adopted plans and studies in an effort to determine the Southwest LRT project's compatibility with the current plans, and to identify planning or resource inconsistencies. The information in this memorandum will be incorporated into the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) report. In the LPA Report, the LRT alignments will be ranked to determine which one best meets the purpose and need for the project. The alternative(s) identified through this process to best meet the purpose and need will be recommended as the LPA. Impacts, benefits and recommended mitigations to reduce unavoidable adverse impacts of the project to acceptable levels will be documented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

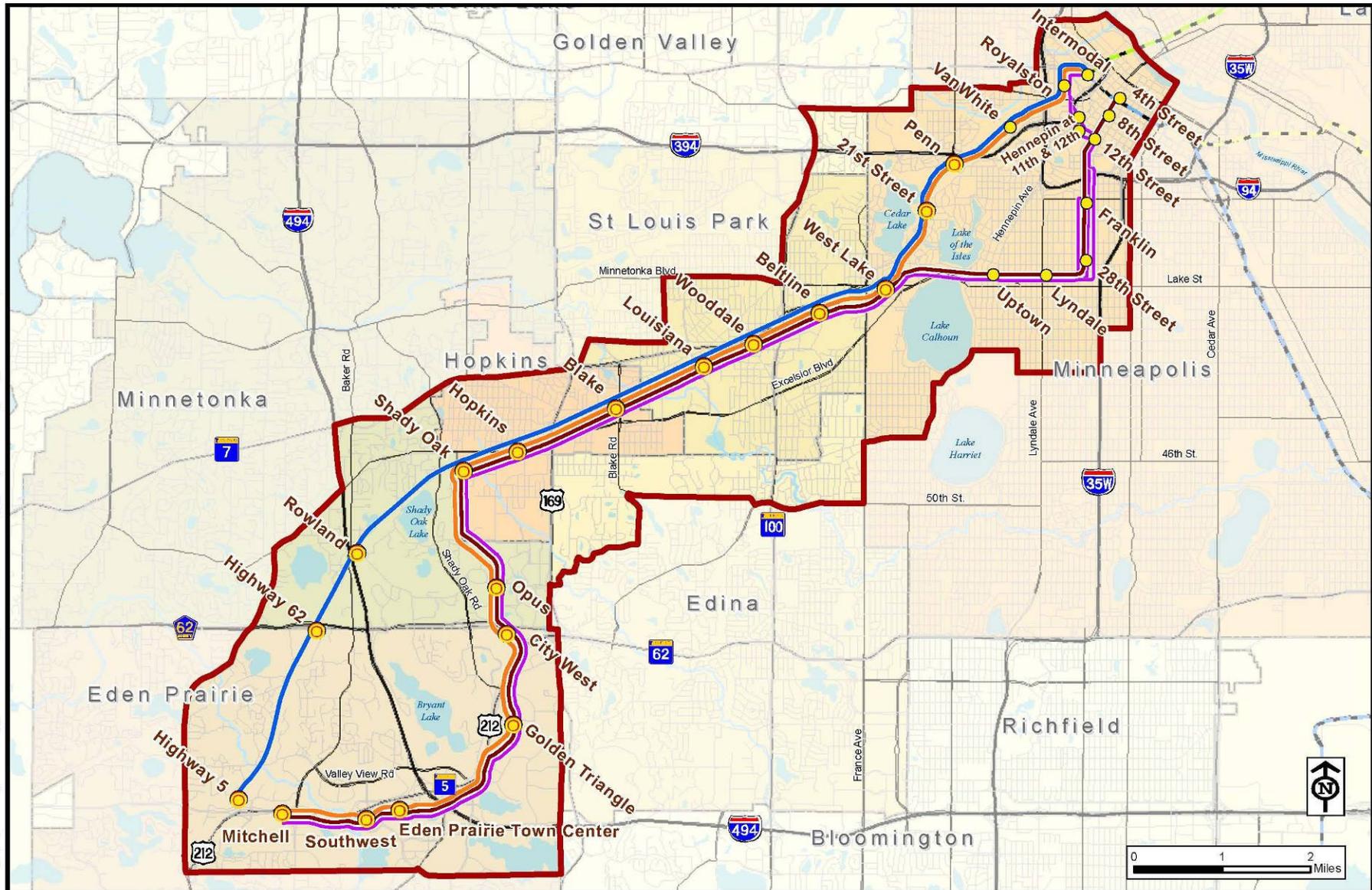
2.0 CRITERIA, METHODOLOGY AND MEASUREMENT

2.1 Consistency with Local and Regional Plans

A review of the local and regional plans for the project partner cities that fall under the Metropolitan Land Planning Act as well as other adopted plans and studies by local jurisdictions was conducted to determine if LRT implementation is consistent and compatible with the policies and plans of the affected governmental units. Figure 1 provides a map of the project Study Area. At the time of this memorandum's publication, any studies that were unpublished were not considered as part of this analysis. These plans and studies will be discussed in the land use chapter of the DEIS.

¹ State of Minnesota, Metropolitan Land Planning Act (MLPA) M.S. 473.851 to 473.871.

Southwest Transitway Study Area Figure 1



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<h2>LPA Report</h2>	Legend			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study Area Station Park & Ride Station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LRT 1A LRT 3A LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hiawatha Light Rail Northstar Commuter Rail Central Corridor Light Rail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal Boundaries

2.1.1 Criteria

The purpose of this analysis was to evaluate whether the Southwest LRT alternatives are compatible with the regional and local land use and transportation plans. Preferences for a particular LRT alignment (as specified in an adopted plan) are noted. The adopted local plans include the comprehensive plans for the cities of Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Hopkins, Edina, St. Louis Park, and Minneapolis. The adopted regional plans include the Hennepin County Transportation System Plan and the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Policy Plan (TPP).

For purposes of this memorandum, the Plans required under the MLPA² are discussed first followed by other relevant plans and studies.

2.1.1.1 Metropolitan Land Planning Act (MLPA)

- ◆ Metropolitan Council
 - 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP), 2009
- ◆ Hennepin County
 - Hennepin County Transportation Systems Plan, 2008
- ◆ City of Eden Prairie
 - City of Eden Prairie Comprehensive Plan, 2008
- ◆ City of Minnetonka
 - City of Minnetonka Comprehensive Plan, 2008
- ◆ City of Edina
 - City of Edina Comprehensive Plan, 2008
- ◆ City of Hopkins
 - City of Hopkins Comprehensive Plan, 2009 (adoption pending)
- ◆ City of St. Louis Park
 - St. Louis Park Comprehensive Plan, 2008
- ◆ City of Minneapolis
 - Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth, 2008
 - Access Minneapolis, 2008

2.1.1.2 Other Relevant Plans/Policy

- ◆ Hennepin County
 - Intermodal Station Siting and Feasibility Study, 2006

² State of Minnesota, Metropolitan Land Planning Act (MLPA) M.S. 473.851 to 473.871.

- ◆ City of Eden Prairie
 - Major Center Area Study, 2006
 - Golden Triangle Study, 2004
- ◆ City of Hopkins
 - Hopkins Station Area Plan, 2007
 - East Hopkins Land Use and Market Study, 2003
 - Blake Road Corridor Small Area Plan, 2009
- ◆ City of St. Louis Park
 - Elmwood Area Land Use, Transit and Transportation Study, 2003
- ◆ City of Minneapolis
 - Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan, 2007
 - Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Land Use Plan, 2005
 - Nicollet Avenue Task Force Report: The Revitalization of Minneapolis' Main Street, 2000
 - Uptown Small Area Plan, 2008
 - Midtown Minneapolis Land Use and Development Plan, 2005
 - Midtown Greenway Land Use and Development Plan, 2007
 - Midtown Corridor Historic Bridge Study, 2007

2.1.2 Methodology and Measurement

As a requirement of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) New Starts Project Planning and Development program, defined in the FTA's Reporting Instructions for the Section 5309 New Starts Criteria, applicants for federally-funded transit projects are required to consider existing and planned future land uses and policies governing land development. As one of several reporting criterion, the FTA establishes three measures of transit-supportive land use that include existing land use conditions, transit-supportive plans and policies, and performance and impacts of these policies.

In order to measure the Southwest LRT project's compatibility with adopted regional and local land use plans, a structured evaluation process was established beginning with the collection and review of adopted regional and local comprehensive land use and transportation plans applicable to the Study Area. The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the compatibility of the LRT alternatives with the local and regional land use and transportation plans. The measurement for the evaluation is a qualitative assessment of stated policies and documentation contained in the adopted local and regional plans of the study partners.

As visionary documents, many of the Plans reviewed in this analysis discuss the Southwest LRT project in broad terms, and do not include specific discussions of alternative alignments or elements of the project. Other plans include statements of preference for one alternative over another. The evaluation recognizes these differences and they are accounted for in the rating of

the alternatives. Based on the review and evaluation of each plan's discussion of the Southwest LRT project, a matrix was created to summarize the results. In completing the matrix the following ratings were assigned to each LRT alignment for each plan:

- (+) Applied to an LRT alignment that is compatible with a plan or its policy.
- (-) Applied to an LRT alignment that is not compatible with a plan or its policy.
- (NA) Is applied in cases where an LRT alignment that is not addressed by the Plan or its policy.

If an alternative is not compatible with a plan, inconsistencies or conflicts are identified and presented in the discussion. Refer to Figures 2-5 for maps of the LRT alternatives.

DRAFT

LRT 1A

Figure 2

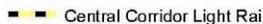


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LPA Report

Legend

 Station	 LRT 1A	 Hiawatha Light Rail
 Park & Ride Station		 Northstar Commuter Rail
 HLRT Station		 Central Corridor Light Rail

LRT 3A

Figure 3



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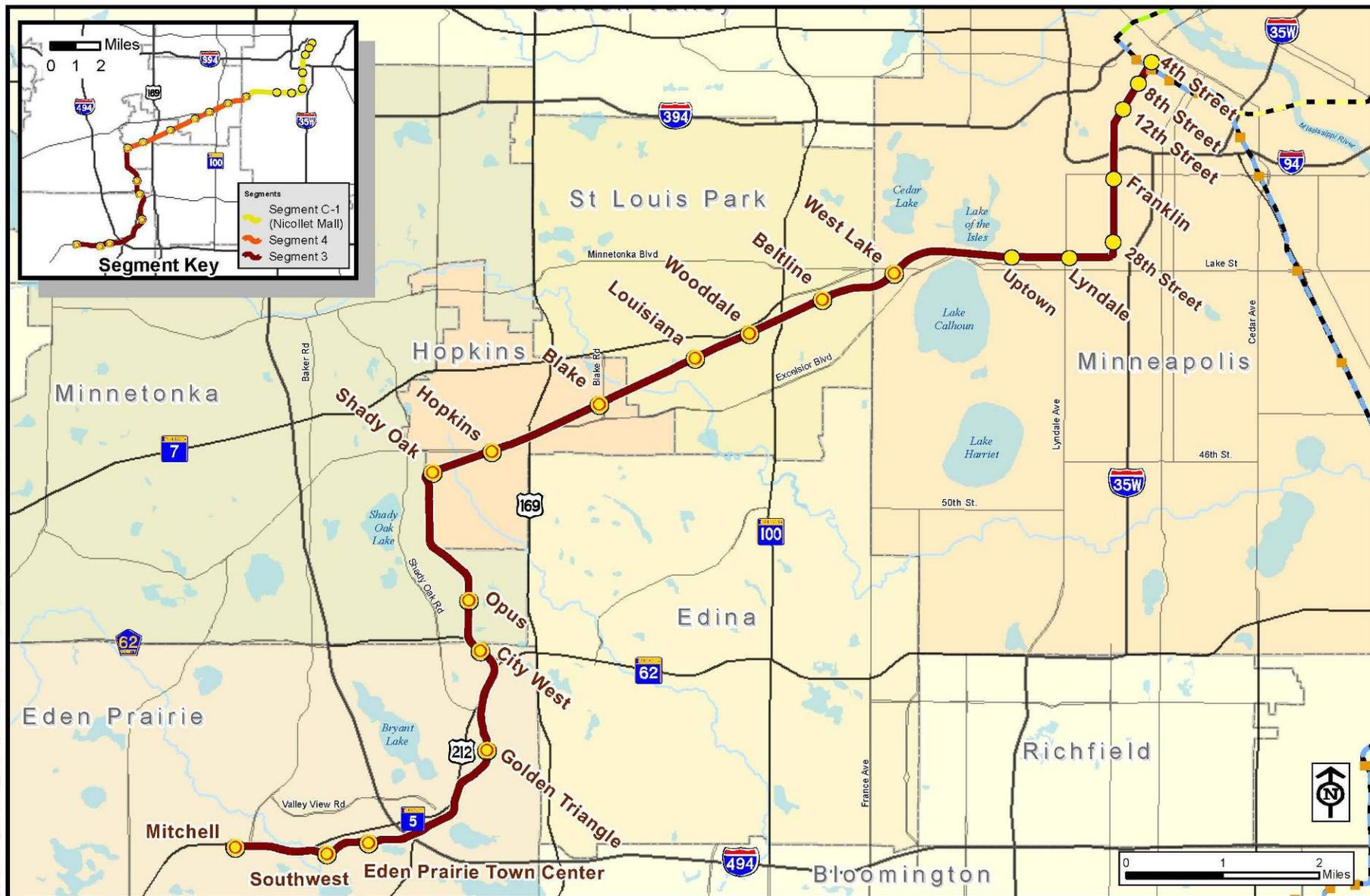
LPA Report

Legend

- Station
- Park & Ride Station
- HLRT Station
- LRT 3A
- Hiawatha Light Rail
- Northstar Commuter Rail
- Central Corridor Light Rail

LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall)

Figure 4




LPA Report

Legend

- Station
- Park & Ride Station
- HLRT Station
- LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall)
- Hiawatha Light Rail
- Northstar Commuter Rail
- Central Corridor Light Rail

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Figure 5

LRT 3C-2 (11th / 12th Street)



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<p>LPA Report</p>	Legend Segment C-2 Stations		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Station Park and Ride Station HLRT Station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Segment C-2 (11th/12th Street) Segment C-2A (Blaisdell Avenue) Segment C-2B (1st Avenue) Segment 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tunnel Area Hiawatha Light Rail Northstar Commuter Rail Central Corridor Light Rail

2.2 Metropolitan Land Planning Act (MLPA)

The following sections provide a review of the local and regional plans required by the MLPA and the compatibility of the Southwest LRT alternatives with these plans.

Metropolitan Council

The following section discusses the Plans and studies of the Metropolitan Council (the Council) for transportation in the Twin Cities metropolitan region. As the regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Council has oversight of major transportation investments, including transitways.

2030 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP)

Adopted in January 2009, the Council's *2030 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP)* establishes the regional vision for transportation in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan region. In accordance with the Council's *2030 Regional Development Framework*, the TPP stresses the importance of planning for and investing in a multi-modal transportation system, including investments in roadways, bridges, airports, non-motorized transportation infrastructure and public transportation systems.

The overall transit goal contained in the TPP is to double transit ridership by year 2030 through enhancements to the bus system and investments in a system of transitways, including the Southwest LRT. The existing and programmed bus network will continue to remain as the backbone of the region's transit system. The TPP recognizes that transit investments can increase regional mobility, decrease roadway congestion, connect major regional destinations, and have environmental and development benefits. Transitways are generally defined in the TPP as bus or rail transit corridors on dedicated rights-of-way, linking major employment centers and regional destinations.

Most of the transit service policy recommendations established in the TPP are supported by the Council's 2030 Transit Master Study (TMS) findings. The TMS serves as the basis for the transit chapter in the TPP. The TPP identifies the Southwest LRT as part of the region's future network of transitway facilities. While the TPP does not identify a specific LRT alternative or alignment configuration, it recognizes LRT as the preferred transportation mode for the Project advanced from the Southwest LRT AA. The findings of the TMS identified the Southwest LRT Project as having "high potential" in terms of ridership and cost-effectiveness, and these results are published in the TPP. The study also found that the Southwest LRT had the highest projected ridership of all transitways evaluated in the TMS.

Included as part of the discussion on regional transitways, the TPP recommends nine Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors on arterial roadways and major streets, including six for implementation by the year 2020. While some routes would not be dedicated busways with exclusive rights-of-way, some arterial streets may be outfitted with enhanced bus stops and traffic control technologies to give transit priority at intersections, helping to reduce travel times. The TPP does not specify which arterial BRT corridors should be implemented prior to or after 2020, but indicates that substantial ridership growth is correlated with high frequency and faster transit service. The arterial BRT projects are low-cost low-infrastructure enhancements to

existing high frequency routes with the focus on improving travel times to increase ridership and provide existing transit passengers with improved service reliability.

One of these corridors is Nicollet Avenue (terminus points undefined). Currently, Nicollet Avenue and Nicollet Mall are served by Metro Transit's high-frequency Route 18, providing weekday and weekend services at 5-8 minute service frequencies during the peak periods. Other routes serving Nicollet Avenue south of Grant Street include routes 17 and 568. North of Grant Street, numerous routes serve Nicollet Mall, including routes 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 16, 25, 568, 587, 589, 665, 667, 668, 670, 671, 672, 674, 675, 677, and 829. Under the Plan, arterial BRT service is proposed to operate on Nicollet Avenue and Nicollet Mall. The Plan does note that arterial street BRT may be most feasible for transit service given narrow right-of-way widths and operational costs. From a regional transit system perspective, investment in both arterial street BRT and LRT on Nicollet Avenue and Nicollet Mall would likely result in transit service duplication, resulting in higher capital construction, operations and maintenance costs, likely to complicate the Metropolitan Council's ability to attain their goal of doubling transit ridership by 2030.

In addition to emphasizing the transitway corridor investments, the TPP supports the creation of intermodal facilities in the downtowns of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The TPP identifies the St. Paul Union Depot and the proposed Minneapolis Intermodal Station as these hub locations. Both of these facilities are intended to establish and enhance intra- and inter-regional transportation connections through a variety of transportation modes. These facilities help to establish passenger connections between transit lines and to handle the expected ridership growth as a result of transit system investments. The proposed LRT 1A, LRT 3A and LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) would directly connect with the proposed downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station and are considered to be compatible with this objective of the TPP. The LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternative operates on Nicollet Mall terminating at 4th Street and does not provide a direct connection into the proposed downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station and is therefore considered to be inconsistent with the TPP.

The Southwest LRT is identified in the TPP, along with bus system enhancements, as a means to achieve the goal of doubling ridership by 2030. Based upon the discussion above, LRT 1A, and LRT 3A are considered compatible with the TPP. LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) and LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) are considered to be incompatible with the TPP because they do not provide a direct connection to the downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station, they result in duplication of transit service which may negatively affect the ability for transit ridership to increase, and the route conflicts with plans for Nicollet Mall bus service as well as access into and out of downtown Minneapolis via 12th Street.

Beyond the TPP's discussion of the regional transit network, the TPP also serves as the regional plan for highway and roadway systems, and coordinates highway infrastructure investments. The TPP outlines several policies and objectives for improving throughput on the metropolitan region's highway system. These policies include future highway and roadway planning and the continued planning for a multimodal transportation system, the optimization of existing roadway capacities, the use of technology to improve throughput, and a continued emphasis on roadway safety.

Interstates 94 and 394 are the primary interstate highways the Southwest LRT project would interact with in downtown Minneapolis. While the project would also interact with Interstate 494

(the exact alignment still to be determined), I-94 and I-394 are two primary traffic carriers in and around the downtown core. According to Mn/DOT, the roadway portions nearest to the Southwest LRT project for I-94 carry between 164,000 to 190,000 vehicles per day, while I-394 carries between 129,000 and 143,000 vehicles daily. Controlled entrance and exit ramps to these freeways help regulate traffic volumes and manage roadway throughput capacities. Additionally, three large parking ramp facilities are located on downtown Minneapolis' western side with direct connections to both I-94 and I-394. These parking facilities also include transit terminals, bus pull-outs, and connections to the Minneapolis skyway pedestrian system.

The placement of LRT on Nicollet Avenue, Nicollet Mall, 11th or 12th Streets may present several challenges to highway, roadway, and transit operations around downtown Minneapolis that may be incompatible with the TPP. The LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) would likely impact downtown transit operations and limit the ability of BRT service to operate on Nicollet Avenue and Nicollet Mall as discussed above. The LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternative operating on Nicollet Mall would result in the displacement of local bus service from Nicollet Mall that could impact route ridership levels and disrupt bus operations on alternate streets. According to the *Access Minneapolis Plan* (discussed below), the streets bus service would be forced to operate on are already operating near capacity, and the addition of new routes would likely create capacity problems. The conversion of Hennepin Avenue and 1st Avenues in downtown to two-way streets may also restrict transit capacities on these streets as buses compete with more automobile traffic. While the Marquette and 2nd Avenue Transit Project (MARQ2) will consolidate express downtown transit service onto dual contra-flow bus lanes, local service would remain on Nicollet Mall. Additional information on this project and the implications of LRT on Nicollet Mall are discussed under the *Access Minneapolis Plan* below.

The LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) would travel on a short portion of Nicollet Mall between Grant Street and 11th Street, and travel as a one-way couplet pair on 11th and 12th Streets between Nicollet Mall and Glenwood Avenue. This alternative would require the removal of a traffic lane on both 11th and 12th Streets, with the potential to result in significant disruptions to traffic operations on these streets, reducing the throughput capacity on each street, and impacting transit operations. Both 11th and 12th Streets are strategically important to the MARQ2 project as a means of access to and from the I-394 corridor. LRT service on these streets could place significant strain on the entrance and exit ramps to I-394, resulting in significant traffic queues both on city streets and the freeway. The placement of station platforms on these streets would also require additional street or sidewalk width. This could have significant implications for the region's highway system. While the LRT 1A and LRT 3A alternatives would require street modifications to Royalston Avenue, these impacts would not immediately affect the roadway operations near I-394.

Overall, the TPP is very supportive of transit and the Southwest LRT project as a means of increasing regional mobility. The emphasis placed on an interconnected network of transitways in the Plan suggests that LRT 1A and LRT 3A alternatives are compatible with the TPP. While the TPP does not favor a particular alignment, and therefore the LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) and LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) could be compatible with the Plan, the potential disruptions to transit service and major regional roadways suggest that these alternatives may be less compatible with the TPP as compared to the other alternatives.

Hennepin County

Hennepin County Transportation Systems Plan

Prepared in 2008, the *Hennepin County Transportation Systems Plan* (HCTSP) identifies Hennepin County's (the County) vision for transportation, updating previous planning efforts and making recommendations for transportation improvements to accommodate population and employment growth. The Plan has been submitted to the Metropolitan Council for approval, and is expected to be adopted by Hennepin County Board of Commissioners in mid-2009. While the HCTSP identifies the automobile as the primary mode of transportation and focuses primarily on roadway issues, the Plan recognizes the importance transit service has for regional mobility, enhancing economic opportunities and quality of life. The Plan addresses improvement and investment in a multi-modal transportation system, including transitways.

Coordination with County partners on establishing transit-supportive land use is also emphasized, as is cooperation with the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) to acquire abandoned rail corridors for future transportation use. Improving pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure and efficiency is addressed in an effort to make all modes of travel possible, including the implementation of intermodal hubs to facilitate transportation mode transfers.

The Plan identifies LRT as a desired element of the multi-modal transportation system, including the Southwest LRT as a high priority in expanding the region's light rail system. The Plan recommends that the County work to implement the Southwest LRT, in addition to other LRT, commuter rail and bus rapid transit systems.³

The Plan recognizes the three LRT alternatives identified in the Southwest LRT AA, which also determined LRT as the preferred mode for serving the southwest metropolitan area. The LRT 1A, LRT 3A, and LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternatives and the LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) are all compatible with the Hennepin County Transportation System Plan.

City of Eden Prairie

City of Eden Prairie Comprehensive Plan

As an update of the 1999 comprehensive plan, a draft of the *City of Eden Prairie Comprehensive Plan* was completed and filed with the Metropolitan Council for approval in 2009. The Plan includes the Redevelopment and Economic Development Chapter in recognition of a shift towards redevelopment and reinvestment. In particular, the Plan includes a specific land use plan and land use category to guide redevelopment of the Major Center Area (MCA) and the Golden Triangle Area (GTA) in which both areas plan for and support the integration of LRT and transit oriented development (TOD). The City of Eden Prairie has passed a resolution supporting the recommendations of the Southwest LRT AA Study and maintains a strong preference for either the LRT 3A or LRT 3C alternatives which serve the Major Center Area and the Golden Triangle Area.

In further support of LRT in the transit corridor, the *Comprehensive Plan Update* identifies five TOD areas that align with the five LRT station areas along the LRT 3A or LRT 3C alignments.

³ Hennepin County Transportation Systems Plan, pg. 4-18.

The LRT station areas are identified for redevelopment potential, transit-supportive land uses and increased housing densities within ½ mile of the LRT stations.

The LRT 3A and LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) are compatible with the *Eden Prairie Comprehensive Plan* because they are identified as preferred alignments that supports the city's redevelopment plans for the Major Center Area and Golden Triangle Area. The LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) would serve the same area as the LRT 3A and LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternatives in Eden Prairie and is considered compatible with the Plan. The LRT 1A alternative does not support the city's redevelopment plans for the MCA and GTA and is therefore not compatible with the Plan.

City of Minnetonka

2030 Minnetonka Comprehensive Guide Plan

The *2030 Minnetonka Comprehensive Guide Plan* was approved by the City Council in 2008 and submitted to the Metropolitan Council for approval in 2009. The Plan supports transit and states that "the Southwest Corridor LRT includes a preferred alignment that directly serves the Opus area, as well as Hopkins and the Golden Triangle, offering significant transit improvements for Minnetonka-area residents, employees, and employers as well as the communities of Eden Prairie, St. Louis Park and Minneapolis."⁴ The Plan further states "The planned Southwest LRT route will bisect Opus in the north/south direction as it extends between the cities of Hopkins and Eden Prairie. The City of Minnetonka and Hennepin County will shortly begin a study to review LRT station area locations and potential TOD techniques that can be utilized in station area planning efforts. An area in Opus will be planned to accommodate one of the station areas."⁵

In terms of economic development, the Plan states that Minnetonka has several distinct regional business centers, including Opus and Crosstown, two areas served by the proposed LRT 3A, LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) and LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) alternatives. In addition to identifying a preferred alignment, the plan discusses the development potential around identified station areas and regional job centers. "Higher redevelopment densities are planned to provide expanded housing and commercial opportunities, and to support transit and LRT (Opus) service. It is expected that the majority of future new housing opportunities in Minnetonka will occur in these regional centers."⁶

With regard to housing and residential growth relating to the Southwest LRT, the Plan states the following: "Additional residential redevelopment and transit oriented design (TOD) opportunities at the southeast quadrant of Excelsior Boulevard and Shady Oak Road may be realized in the long term future. As part of the planning process for the future southwest LRT, a nearby station may initiate interest for more mixed use development utilizing TOD techniques, including medium and high density residential. The city will be reviewing the potential for future additional higher density residential development and TOD design within this area as part of a future planning process with the City of Hopkins and Hennepin County for the LRT stations."⁷ The Plan further states that "Because it is likely that enhanced transit facilities will be available to Opus in

⁴ City of Minnetonka, 2030 Minnetonka Comprehensive Guide Plan, ppg. VIII-41.

⁵ City of Minnetonka, 2030 Minnetonka Comprehensive Guide Plan, ppg. IV-32

⁶ City of Minnetonka, 2030 Minnetonka Comprehensive Guide Plan, ppg. IV-8

⁷ City of Minnetonka, 2030 Minnetonka Comprehensive Guide Plan, ppg. IV-19

the future, it is expected that significant additional housing opportunities can be provided within appropriate areas of Opus. Further, the opportunities provided by LRT will benefit the Opus area businesses and allow for expansion without taxing the surrounding roadway system.”⁸ The Plan continues, noting the policy changes and future planning necessary for the Opus region, by stating “The 2030 Comprehensive Guide Plan will likely require amendments following completion of the LRT study to accommodate TOD land uses and development criteria. Further, it is likely that a new overall master plan will be needed for Opus before completion of the LRT to reflect the potential for changing land uses and related development criteria.”⁹

The LRT 3A and LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternatives are compatible with the *2030 Minnetonka Comprehensive Guide Plan* because they serve Minnetonka and the Opus business park. The LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) would serve the Opus business park and is considered compatible with the Plan. The LRT 1A alternative is not compatible with the Plan because it does not provide service to the Opus business park.

City of Edina

Edina Comprehensive Plan Update, 2008 (Draft)

The City of Edina *Comprehensive Plan* provides guidance for future development within the city between 2008 and 2030. The Plan identifies the community vision, goals and implementation procedures to achieve the desired outcomes for the city. The theme of the revised plan revolves around the premise that a strong community grows in response to the needs and wants of the community’s citizens. To this end, the Plan identifies several themes heard during the Plan’s preparation: 1) planning for future generations; 2) ensuring the well-being of Edina citizens through safe, economically diverse neighborhoods; 3) cultivating and strengthening the city’s quality of life through attractive neighborhoods and housing that promote the city’s identity; 4) protecting the city’s natural areas; 5) promoting economic competitiveness; 6) creating a sustainable city; and 7) increasing the use of transit.¹⁰

With regard to transitways, the Plan includes a specific discussion of transitways and the importance major regional transit investments can have for both local and regional mobility. The Plan identifies the Southwest LRT as the most relevant transitway to the city currently, while also discussing future light rail or commuter rail transit service within the community.¹¹ Acknowledging that the Southwest LRT would not operate within the city limits, the Plan affirms the regional significance the proposed transitway can have for mobility and development both regionally and for the city. The Plan identifies the proposed park and ride stations at Blake Road and Hopkins as locations with the “most interest to Edina residents.”¹²

Edina’s revised comprehensive plan does not indicate a preferred alternative stating that “Various alignment alternatives are still under consideration, but in the vicinity of Edina they follow the railroad right-of-way which is between Highway 7 and Excelsior Boulevard. The corridor passes just north of the northwest corner of Edina.”

⁸ City of Minnetonka, 2030 Minnetonka Comprehensive Guide Plan, ppg. IV-32

⁹ City of Minnetonka, 2030 Minnetonka Comprehensive Guide Plan, ppg. IV-32

¹⁰ City of Edina, Comprehensive Plan Update, ppg. 1-3 and 1-4.

¹¹ City of Edina, Comprehensive Plan Update, pg. 7-33.

¹² City of Edina, Comprehensive Plan Update, pg. 7-34.

The LRT 1A, LRT 3A, and LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternatives are compatible with the *Edina Comprehensive Plan Update*. The LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) would serve the same area as the LRT 3A and LRT 3C alternatives, and is also considered compatible with the Plan.

City of Hopkins

Hopkins Comprehensive Plan, 2008 (Draft)

The *Hopkins Comprehensive Plan* provides a vision for the future of the city that includes strengthening city neighborhoods and quality of life, enhancing the character of downtown Hopkins, redeveloping transportation corridors, protecting open spaces and making informed decisions regarding transportation infrastructure investments. The Plan recognizes the Southwest LRT project as an integral part of the updated comprehensive plan, and the Plan emphasizes the project as an important transportation corridor for development and redevelopment efforts within the city. As stated in the Plan, the Southwest LRT project is “a reality for Hopkins,”¹³ and as one overarching goal and continues by stating that “Efforts should continue to support the Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT).”¹⁴ The Plan does not identify a preference for a specific alignment but focuses on LRT with respect to development and transportation in relation to Segment 4 between the Shady Oak Station and West Lake Station, along the route that all of the LRT alternatives travel.

The city recognizes the important role transit can play in achieving the specified goals for the city, stating “Hopkins is committed to fostering an environment supportive of transit and ridesharing because it recognizes the benefits that good access can have on economic development and general quality of life in this community, not to mention the fuel savings and reduced air emissions.”¹⁵ Current transit service in Hopkins is provided by Metro Transit, operating a mixture of express and local services, along with transit-supportive infrastructure, including park and ride lots, sheltered waiting areas, and dial-a-ride services. The Plan indicates that the city intends on continuing existing transit services and exploring improvements to the existing bus network and transit facilities for both buses and passengers.

In addition to the current transit service, the transportation chapter also specifies goals for LRT and the Southwest LRT. Recognizing that few changes to the existing transportation network are likely, the Plan states that the Southwest LRT constitutes a major change to the transportation system in Hopkins, and the intended alignment runs through Hopkins on the property currently owned by the HCRRA, with three proposed stations.¹⁶

Stated goals and policies for LRT include the following: “The city, through its representatives, will continue to actively participate in the planning and design of the proposed 2015 Southwest LRT.”¹⁷ Additionally, the Plan states “The city supports the proposed location for the light rail transit stations in Hopkins and will work with the HCRRA and Metropolitan Council on station planning and design.”¹⁸ Based on the Plan’s support for the Southwest LRT and LRT, the

¹³ City of Hopkins, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 1-4.

¹⁴ City of Hopkins, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 1-4.

¹⁵ City of Hopkins, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 6-3.

¹⁶ City of Hopkins, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 6-1.

¹⁷ City of Hopkins, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 6-4.

¹⁸ City of Hopkins, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 6-4.

project is deemed to be compatible with the existing and future plans for the city. Furthermore, the proposed alignment through Hopkins, along with the proposed station areas are also determined to be compatible with the existing plans of the city.

In addition to the transportation chapter, several other chapters of the Plan discuss the Southwest LRT and the project's potential for future development and redevelopment within the city. The transportation chapter provides a series of goals and achievement strategies for each mode of transportation, including bus and LRT. Recognizing that few opportunities exist for modifications to the existing transportation system, the Plan emphasizes the importance of investing in transit systems and travel demand management (TDM) strategies as methods to alleviate roadway congestion, maximize the use of the current network, encourage redevelopment, and improve the overall quality of life for city residents.

In addition to the transportation chapter, the land use and housing chapters also provide specific discussions of opportunities for land development and densities focused around the project. In both cases, the city has identified goals and policies intended to guide future development around the proposed railway corridor through the city, focusing future development around stations areas with higher densities and mixed land use development patterns.

The land use chapter identifies several goals for future land use, one of which is to "Take advantage of redevelopment opportunities to capture future Light Rail Transit (LRT) initiatives." The city intends to focus on future growth and redevelopment along transportation corridors including the Southwest LRT corridor, including Segment 4 between Shady Oak Road and Blake Road, which is common to all of the LRT alternatives. A critical issue discussed by the Plan is the continued enhancement of downtown Hopkins as a commercial core of the city.

The Plan also provides the following language with regard to the Southwest LRT and land use:

The Southwest LRT line passes directly through Hopkins creating redevelopment opportunities at and around three potential station locations. These redevelopment opportunities may occur prior to any LRT improvements. Therefore, the city will work to ensure that new redevelopment in and around future station areas is appropriate and consistent with future transit improvements.¹⁹

The Plan states that the Southwest LRT line "has the potential for significant change including creating additional potential locations for more housing or mixed-use development."²⁰ More specifically, the Plan identifies future improvements for housing on and around Shady Oak and Blake Roads, both roads intended to have LRT station platforms located on Segment 4. As part of future redevelopment efforts for Hopkins discussed in the housing chapter, the Plan states, "In order to address future redevelopment, Hopkins will work closely with Hennepin County and other agencies on the implementation of the Southwest LRT line."²¹

¹⁹ City of Hopkins, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 2-5.

²⁰ City of Hopkins, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 4-20.

²¹ City of Hopkins, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 4-21.

The LRT 1A, LRT 3A, and LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternatives are compatible with the *Hopkins Comprehensive Plan* because they all provide service to Hopkins. The LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) would serve the same area as the other alignments and also considered compatible with the Plan.

City of St. Louis Park

City of St. Louis Park Comprehensive Plan

The *City of Saint Louis Park Comprehensive Plan* was updated in May of 2009 and submitted to the Metropolitan Council for review. Transportation was one of eight areas of focus identified through a community-wide process to develop a vision for the city.²² A chapter of the Plan is dedicated to transit which recognizes it as an important element in the overall transportation network.

The Plan recognizes that roadways cannot address every transportation need for St. Louis Park. It identifies that the community needs to be connected by other systems such as transit and trails.²³ Transit is considered important to the transit network because it provides options for citizens who cannot drive or do not have access to an automobile; it provides opportunities to people who prefer or require an alternative mode of travel; it reduces congestion on roadways.²⁴

The historical influence of the street car is cited for creating long term impacts on the community that resulted in early residential and commercial development along the tracks which established permanent land use patterns.²⁵ Because employment and retail in Minneapolis was accessible to residents via the street car another impact was a stunted development of local employment or commercial centers. The street car was dismantled in 1938 one year after the construction of the interchange between Highway 7 and Highway 100 was completed.²⁶

The Plan outlines the history of southwest transit planning since 1980. The Plan outlines the process which has led to the present day environmental study of three LRT routes under consideration to serve the Southwest metro residents and workers.

Based on the definition of transit market areas defined in the Metropolitan Council 2030 TPP, St. Louis Park is located within Transit Market Area II. This designation means the city has a high level of transit service, with frequent local and express service offered 12-24 hours a day, seven days a week.²⁷ St. Louis Park is currently served by three transit service providers; Metro Transit, Metropolitan Council Transportation Services, and Metro Mobility.

Metro Transit, the primary transit operating division of the Metropolitan Council, operates several bus routes through St. Louis Park including limited service, non-stop service, and high frequency service routes.²⁸ The Plan notes that transit shelters have been updated in recent

²² City of St. Louis Park, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 1.

²³ City of St. Louis Park, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 30.

²⁴ City of St. Louis Park, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 30.

²⁵ City of St. Louis Park, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 30.

²⁶ City of St. Louis Park, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 30.

²⁷ City of St. Louis Park, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 31.

²⁸ City of St. Louis Park, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 32.

years with roadway improvements but several are deficient and lack amenities to support pedestrian safety and use. It further notes that nine new shelters are proposed along major bus routes, three of which will be implemented when LRT is constructed.²⁹ The Plan cites the call for LRT in the Southwest corridor through St. Louis Park in the current TPP. It describes the three potential routes and the sub-alternative route under consideration in the DEIS to select the LPA. It notes that the alignment through St. Louis Park exists on HCRRRA property and generally parallels Highway 7. Three stations are located within St. Louis Park at Beltline Boulevard, Wooddale Avenue, and Louisiana Avenue. The Plan notes that initial station area planning is being conducted.

In addition to discussing the existing and future transit system needs, and the proposed location for LRT through the city, the plan also discusses the connection between transit and land use. The city studied transit accessibility through its “Active Living Sidewalk and Trails Plan.”³⁰ It calls for improved pedestrian amenities for transit users. The Plan indicates that the city will continue to study opportunities to improve transit effectiveness in order to plan for walkable communities, TOD, additional park and ride facilities, better coordination of transportation services and resources and increased density of housing and employment where appropriate.³¹

LRT 1A, LRT 3A, and LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) are compatible with the *City of St. Louis Park Comprehensive Plan* because they all provide access and service to the areas identified in the Plan for light rail transit stations. LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) would provide the same access as the other alignments and is also considered compatible.

City of Minneapolis

The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth, 2008

The *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* was approved by the Minneapolis City Council on July 11, 2008 and been sent to the Metropolitan Council for formal review and approval. This plan replaces *The Minneapolis Plan* (2000) the comprehensive plan for the city.

The Plan outlines several goals and policies for land use and transportation, including the encouragement of growth and reinvestment by developing a multi-modal transportation system, encouraging walking and bicycling by ensuring routes are safe, comfortable and pleasant, making transit a more attractive option for both new and existing riders, managing the impact of automobiles and parking, and supporting the development of a multi-modal downtown transportation system that encourages an increasingly dense and vibrant regional center. The land use policy supports “activity centers”, which the study defines as areas that support a wide range of commercial, office, and residential uses, have a busy street life, are heavily oriented towards pedestrians and are well served by transit. The *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* is supportive of transit and adopting land use policies that favor transit. The Plan identifies “Transitway – Alternative Downtown Connectors” proposed for the Year 2025 on a Transitway System Map which coincide with Segment A and Segment C-1, however it does not

²⁹ City of St. Louis Park, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 32.

³⁰ City of St. Louis Park, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 35.

³¹ City of St. Louis Park, Comprehensive Plan, pg. 35.

specifically identify the Southwest LRT Project or endorse specific segments or a particular LRT alignment.

The LRT 1A, LRT 3A and LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternatives are compatible with the *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* and are shown on its maps. The LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) is not addressed by the Plan or illustrated on its maps and is given a value of “N/A” in the summary matrix.

Access Minneapolis, 2008

In 2008, the City of Minneapolis adopted the *Access Minneapolis – Ten-Year Transportation Action Plan*, intended to identify specific actions the City of Minneapolis intends to take within the next ten years to implement the transportation policies articulated in *The Minneapolis Plan* (2000) and the *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* (2008). The Plan makes a series of transportation policy and investment recommendations. *Access Minneapolis* addresses a full range of transportation options and issues including pedestrians, bicycles, transit, automobiles and freight. The Plan is divided into four sections, including the *Citywide Action Plan (updated 2009)*, the *Downtown Action Plan (2007)*, and the *Streetcar Feasibility Study (2008)*.

The *Citywide Action Plan (Final Draft)*, updated on July 13, 2009, identifies several steps to improve the existing transportation system in order to accommodate current needs and projected growth. The purpose of the Plan is to establish a livable and walkable city through a multi-modal transportation system, a goal that can be accomplished without widening existing roadways. The Southwest LRT project, as one of several regional transitways, figures prominently into the *Citywide Action Plan*. The Plan states that regional transitways are “very import for the city Minneapolis,”³² and identifies the Southwest LRT as one of five transitways to be implemented. A recommended action in the Plan is for the city to “support the implementation of regional LRT and BRT systems, including in particular, the Central and Southwest LRT corridors, the I-35W BRT corridor, and the Bottineau Boulevard transitway study.”³³ The Plan does not identify a preferred alignment for the Southwest LRT in Minneapolis.

The Plan calls for future growth around designated land use features such as Transit Station Areas.³⁴ The Plan identifies facilities that support the use of transit and are effective in increasing the volume of riders who chose transit as their primary mode of transportation are identified in the Plan. Passenger facilities and amenities, the pedestrian environment, bicycle access, high quality vehicles, safety and security, transit information and system legibility are all recognized facilities and services that support transit ridership.³⁵

The Plan notes that the city is “actively pursuing the implementation of additional rail transit that will support the light rail service currently provided in the Hiawatha Corridor, while these services are very well used, a much finer-grained transit system is needed to encourage more people to select transit, walking or biking as their primary mode of transportation.”³⁶ To accomplish this, Minneapolis and its partner agencies will establish a Primary Transit Network

³² Access Minneapolis: The Citywide Action Plan, pg. 24.

³³ Access Minneapolis: The Citywide Action Plan, pg. 51.

³⁴ Access Minneapolis: The Citywide Action Plan, pg. 16.

³⁵ Access Minneapolis: The Citywide Action Plan, pg. 29-31.

³⁶ Access Minneapolis: The Citywide Action Plan, pg. 44.

(PTN). The PTN will be a permanent network of all-day transit service, primarily on local bus service but also with LRT/BRT and potentially a streetcar system.³⁷ Methods of improving transit efficiency and ridership include developing improved transit information along all transit corridors, especially along the PTN corridors where the city and Metro Transit are trying to encourage higher ridership.³⁸

The *Downtown Action Plan* specifies a vision for the downtown area, elaborating on the *Citywide Action Plan*. The Plan emphasizes the importance of efficient mass transit, pedestrian activity, and bicycling, in addition to supporting automobile traffic. The *Downtown Action Plan* recognizes the growth that is expected to occur in the area, and the city's hope to increase the use of alternative transportation to meet increasing trip generation.

The *Downtown Action Plan* is very supportive of transit stating "Encouraging the use of transit is extremely important to maintaining mobility and sustaining the economic vitality of downtown and the city as a whole."³⁹ The Plan states further "High quality transit service encourages denser development, which in turn increases ridership, which provides the justification for providing an even higher level of transit service."⁴⁰ The Plan identifies the Southwest LRT project as one of six BRT or LRT corridors to be implemented by 2030.⁴¹ The Plan also considers the project as a method for controlling the volume of buses in downtown. Specifically, the Plan identifies bus traffic as a transit challenge in downtown Minneapolis. With implementation of the Southwest LRT, and in coordination with other regional transitways and transit investments, the volume of downtown bus service is anticipated to be more manageable on city streets, particularly during the PM peak periods.⁴² The Plan does not specify an alignment preference.

As part of the MARQ2 project's implementation, Nicollet Mall would continue to be served by local buses. Using "green technology" gasoline-electric hybrid buses, local buses are intended to operate as downtown shuttles from Washington Avenue on the north end of Nicollet Mall to Grant Street at the southern end near the Minneapolis Convention Center. Through an agreement negotiated with downtown businesses, the intent of this is to allow pedestrians at any point to use any bus to travel on Nicollet Mall between Washington Avenue and Grant Street as a free fare zone. Local buses would terminate at one end of Nicollet Mall or the other, depending on their route origin, and would not take fares as they traveled up or down Nicollet Mall.

The introduction of LRT service on Nicollet Mall results in several conflicts with the future planning efforts and vision for Nicollet Mall as expressed in *Access Minneapolis*. While *Access Minneapolis* recognizes Nicollet Mall as one of several transit alternatives being considered, the Plan defines a vision for the future of the Mall, elements of which would likely not be possible to incorporate with the placement and operation of LRT on the Mall. Specifically, the Plan calls for the relocation of all express bus service to Marquette and 2nd Avenues, and improvements in

³⁷ Access Minneapolis: The Citywide Action Plan, pg. 44.

³⁸ Access Minneapolis: The Citywide Action Plan, pg. 50.

³⁹ Access Minneapolis: Downtown Action Plan, pg. 16.

⁴⁰ Access Minneapolis: Downtown Action Plan, pg. 16.

⁴¹ Access Minneapolis: Downtown Action Plan, pg. 16.

⁴² Access Minneapolis: Downtown Action Plan, pg. 17.

efficiency and frequency of local bus service. The Marquette and 2nd Avenue Project (MARQ2) represents a major capital investment in downtown transit service also intended to improve transportation generally throughout downtown. Funded through the federal Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA), the MARQ2 intends to consolidate commuter transit service in downtown Minneapolis through the creation of dual contra-flow bus lanes. Express bus service would be funneled onto these streets, with improved passenger amenities and facilities including sheltered waiting areas, wayfinding capabilities, schedule information, and improved sidewalks for both pedestrian flow and additional curb capacity for boarding queue space and bus alightings. The goal of this approach is to improve transit operational service, reliability, visibility, circulation, and increase bus capacity in the downtown core. During the peak hour periods, the dual bus lanes would be capable of handling over 180 buses per hour. The MARQ2 project forms a foundation for improved transit as part of the *Access Minneapolis* plan.

The LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) would use a short portion of Nicollet Mall between Grant Street and 11th Street, and traveling as a one-way couplet pair on 11th and 12th Streets between Nicollet Mall and Glenwood Avenue. The LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) would require the removal of a traffic lane on both 11th and 12th Streets. This would result in significant disruptions to traffic operations on these streets, reducing the throughput capacity, and impacting transit operations. Both 11th and 12th Streets are strategically important to the MARQ2 project as a means of access to and from the I-394 corridor. The placement of station platforms on these streets would also require additional street or sidewalk width. Furthermore, LRT service on these streets could place significant strain on the entrance and exit ramps to I-394, resulting in significant traffic queues both on city streets and the freeway. This would have significant implications for the region's highway system. While the LRT 1A and LRT 3A alternatives would require street modifications to Royalston Avenue, these impacts would not immediately affect the roadway operations near I-394.

The implementation of LRT on Nicollet Mall would preclude local bus service from operating on the Mall. The operational planning for train service, coupled with the service plans and stop requirements/requests of the buses, would likely be infeasible and inefficient. This would force the relocation of local buses from Nicollet Mall to other downtown streets, which has the potential to impact the ridership of the local routes both in and outside of the downtown core area. Construction of the LRT would likely preclude bicycle traffic on the Mall, and also likely require the removal of sidewalk area, impacting both pedestrian movement and business activities (outdoor dining, farmers market, outdoor festivals, and the Holidazzle parade).

In addition to local bus service remaining on Nicollet Mall, *Access Minneapolis* supports the reinstatement of bicycle traffic on the Mall during the daytime hours. Due to the high volume of current bus traffic, bicycles are prohibited on Nicollet Mall from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. during weekdays. Furthermore, the existing streetscape façade of Nicollet Mall is a unique feature of downtown Minneapolis, with open-air dining, large sidewalks, and as a downtown parade route. The placement of LRT on Nicollet Mall would require street widening to include sufficient space for bicycles and separate the travel paths of trains and bicycles.

The *Streetcar Feasibility Study Final Report* reflects the benefits of a streetcar service to provide a high amenity transit service supporting local development. It identifies the following goals for developing a streetcar line:

- Increase transit ridership by regular and occasional riders; especially by providing enhanced and attractive local circulation service connecting city neighborhoods with the downtown core.
- Increase the attractiveness of transit to new markets by providing a unique vehicle and customer experience.
- Provide connections and distribution between high capacity regional transit and local neighborhoods.
- Enhance the environment by replacing diesel bus service with clean and quiet electric vehicles.
- Catalyze and organize development and redevelopment potential around a transit investment by providing a quality transit line with a sense of permanence.

The study proposes the implementation of a streetcar system for both the Midtown Corridor and Nicollet Avenue. A major factor influencing the decision on where to begin constructing a streetcar network is finding a suitable location for a storage and maintenance facility for the vehicles. For the initial implementation of the first streetcar line, the study recommends the city provide funding and identifies Metro Transit as the potential operator of the service, either directly or through contract with the city.

The LRT 1A and LRT 3A alternatives are compatible with the *Access Minneapolis Plan* as discussed above. The LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternative and the LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) are not compatible with the Plan for the reasons specified above, especially the role and function of Nicollet Mall in downtown Minneapolis, including the displacement of bus service, impacts to pedestrian facilities and potential operational impacts to the MARQ2 project.

2.3 Evaluation of Other Relevant Plans

Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station Siting and Feasibility Study

The *Downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station Siting and Feasibility Study*, prepared in 2006, outlines design concepts, rail operations and staging possibilities for a transit station in downtown Minneapolis that would facilitate the use of and transfers between various transportation modes. As addressed in the Study, an intermodal station could provide access to intercity commuter rail, buses serving the downtown area, the Central Corridor and Hiawatha LRT lines, along with the potential for Southwest LRT and Bottineau Corridor service, through the extension of the existing LRT line. With space provided for vehicle pick up and drop-off, bicycle facilities, and potential skyway connections, the proposed Intermodal Station would serve as an essential part of encouraging transit use throughout the region. The Study recognizes a Southwest Corridor LRT would likely enter the Intermodal Station site from the west, possibly via Royalston Avenue, Sixth Avenue, and Fifth Streets where service could be integrated with Hiawatha service.

In addition to accommodating these various transportation modes, the Study addresses land uses surrounding the proposed Intermodal Station. The new Minnesota Twins baseball stadium, Target Field, and potential mixed-use developments near the facility are considered, including the possibility of incorporating the transit station into one of the new developments. Parklands and pedestrian bridges are also outlined to improve pedestrian safety surrounding the station

and create a more inviting environment, better integrated with the surrounding areas. Further, the proposed mixed-use developments would help contribute to the activity of the streets in the area, and their density would support transit use.

The Study identifies two potential sites (Alternatives A and B) within the corridor defined by the BNSF tracks, 3rd Avenue, Washington Street and the 7th Street Bridge for the station. The Study determined that from a rail operations point of view, the preferred Intermodal Station location was west of 5th Street (Alternative A), but due to land use proposals by others, it was decided to carry forward a second site to east of 5th Street (Alternative B). Both sites are proximate to the Hiawatha Line and both connect to the skyway system and the 5th Street garage. Both alternatives offer a direct and convenient pedestrian connection to the Hiawatha LRT line, a direct connection to the 5th Street garage and 7th Street bus service, vertical circulation from the commuter rail platforms to the Intermodal Station, and an efficient transfer between modes.

The LRT 1A, LRT 3A alternatives and LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) are compatible with the study because they directly access the proposed Intermodal Station. The LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternative is not compatible with the study because it does not directly access the Intermodal Station.

Eden Prairie Major Center Area Study

The *Eden Major Center Area (MCA) Study* from 2006 states that the MCA future is based on a vision that “Bus and light rail transit service should be completely integrated into the street network and development pattern to take advantage of concentrations of people who will choose to use transit to get around the area.” LRT service is highly recommended in the future MCA plan. The Study identifies preferences for an alternative that would bring LRT into the MCA from the northeast and the Golden Triangle area and pass it through the Town Center on the south side of Lake Idlewild. This alignment would permit a station to be located in the heart of the Town Center. Station-related development, including jobs, housing and supportive retail and services could be co-located in an easy walking distance (10 minutes or approximately one-half mile) of the station site. An additional park-and-ride commuter station would be located in proximity of the current Southwest Station. The study indicates that if the preferred alternative is determined to add too much time to the regional system or otherwise proves infeasible, an alternative alignment is recommended that would enter the MCA from the northeast and Golden Triangle area, traverse across the north edge of Town Center and connect to a station located in proximity of the current Southwest Station which would function primarily as a park-and-ride commuter station.

The 120 acre Town Center will consist of mixed use and high density housing near the LRT Station Area with structured parking with limited use of surface parking lots. A total of 3,600 housing units and 500,000 square feet of retail is part of the Town Center redevelopment and located within a 10 minute walk of the LRT station. The redevelopment will be designed to support Eden Prairie’s community health, active living and sustainability goals.

The MCA encompasses significant portions of the proposed routes and stations common to LRT 3A and LRT 3C, but does not encompass any of the land near Segment 1 which is unique to LRT 1A. The study supports LRT in the MCA area and therefore Segment 3, which is common to LRT 3A, LRT 3C and the LRT 3C (11th/12th Street), is compatible or (+) with the

goals in the study even though the alignment is slightly similar to the preferred route illustrated in the study. Segment 1, which is unique to the LRT 1A alternative, does not provide access to the MCA and is considered inconsistent or (-) to the study.

The LRT 3A and LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternatives are compatible with *MCA Study* because they directly access the area. The LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) would also serve the MCA area and is considered compatible with the Plan. The LRT 1A alternative is not compatible with the Plan because it does not provide service to the MCA area.

Golden Triangle Land Use/Multi-Modal Transportation Evaluation

The *Golden Triangle Land Use/Multi-Modal Transportation Evaluation* was prepared for the City of Eden Prairie and the Hennepin County Department of Housing, Community Works and Transit. It was adopted in 2004 with the intent to evaluate the potential for an increased mixed land use pattern with the goal of satisfying four objectives: (1) Reduce peak period traffic congestion, (2) Maintain or improve property tax benefits, (3) Increase transit use and alternative transportation mode use in a suburban location, and (4) Explore the possibilities of creating additional development opportunities in Eden Prairie for regional commercial development. The Study supports the Southwest LRT project including the redevelopment area within the ½ mile area of the proposed LRT Golden Triangle Station which is located on the alignment for LRT 3A, LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall), and LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street).

The evaluation covers Land Use and Traffic Congestion, Development and Redevelopment Opportunities, Sustainability and Implementation Strategies. The study identifies the housing land use pattern as having the greatest impact on reducing traffic congestion, especially during afternoon peak periods. The Study states that further fiscal analysis of redevelopment indicated that a higher density housing pattern (attached townhomes and apartments or condominiums) would be necessary in order to reduce the economic barriers to redevelopment.⁴³

Based on routing options presented during the AA for the LRT 3A alternative, the Study created two alternative land use concepts for the purpose of demonstrating alternative land uses and development scenarios intended to achieve the objectives of the study and take advantage of adjacent transit services. The concepts present a pattern that focuses a hub of activity around an LRT station with mixed use development vertically oriented with residential over street level. The mixed use street would serve as the primary street leading to the LRT station. Pedestrian friendly streets would provide direct sidewalk and trail connections from adjacent development to the station. The Study notes that these systems would need to reach beyond the redevelopment limits into existing employment areas in order to maximize access to transit and to the commercial services that would be available during the day to the work force in the Golden Triangle area. Park and open space areas, although not illustrated on the concepts, would be integrated throughout the development in the form of smaller pocket parks and public plazas.⁴⁴

The Study presents three courses of action for guiding the development of the Golden Triangle. The Market Based concept illustrates a continuation of current development patterns, trends

⁴³ City of Eden Prairie, GTA Report, pg. 6-7.

⁴⁴ City of Eden Prairie, GTA Report , pg. 6-11.

and building forms. The Transit Village concept and the more extensive Expanded Transit Village concept change the face of the area by creating new residential and mixed use neighborhoods.⁴⁵ Similar to the Town Center, the intent of the Transit Village is to encourage a pedestrian friendly mix of housing, retail, employment and park and open space uses within a 10 minute walking distance of a light rail station. Focusing only on traffic and trip generation reductions, the costs associated with actively implementing the Transit Village and Expanded Transit Village options do not justify the magnitude of investments needed to serve as a catalyst for a substantial change in the land use pattern.⁴⁶

The Study cites the research conducted in the planning process generally demonstrated the redevelopment proposed in the Transit Village and Expanded Transit Village concepts would not occur without significant financial participation by the city. It notes that the city is unlikely to commit to the magnitude of potential public investment required to actively implement one of the Transit Village scenarios and therefore redevelopment initiatives would need to originate in the private sector.

The resulting evaluation does not recommend one course of action over the other, instead presents the summary findings as a tool for the city to use to guide future development and policy. The Study states that the city needs to understand the public actions and financial implications of implementing these alternative concepts such as:

- The potential impacts on property valuation and taxes
- The need to balance potential tax benefits with the costs of development
- A discussion of costs and benefits of the Market Based and Transit Village concepts

The LRT 3A and LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternatives are compatible with the *Golden Triangle Land Use/Multi-Modal Transportation Evaluation Study* because they directly access this area. The LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) would also serve the Golden Triangle area and is considered compatible with the Study. The LRT 1A alternative is not compatible with the Study because it does not provide service to the Golden Triangle area.

Hopkins Station Area Plan, 2007

Completed in October 2007, the *Hopkins Station Area Plan* develops a set of station area plans for the proposed Shady Oak, Hopkins and Blake stations located on Segment 4 which is common to all of the LRT alternatives. The Plan provides a “road map” to guide future growth and redevelopment of select sites through an integrated transportation and land use planning approach within the City of Hopkins.⁴⁷ Among these elements, the Plan makes recommendations for the proposed stations considering existing and planned future land uses, economic impacts, environmental factors and transportation facilities, in an effort to create intra-city linkages between downtown Hopkins and neighboring communities.

⁴⁵ City of Eden Prairie, GTA Report, pg. 6-12.

⁴⁶ City of Eden Prairie, GTA Report, pg. 7-1.

⁴⁷ City of Hopkins, Station Area Plan, pg. 3.

Considering the current and future land uses surrounding the proposed station locations, the Plan focuses on the near- and long-term planning options, with particular attention to TOD potential and mixed-use design, combining compatible land uses and the creation of compact, dense, pedestrian-friendly street level design. Around each proposed station, the Plan considers parcels of land prime for redevelopment, with recommendations on staging development as either near- or long-term.

The Plan recognizes the efforts of the HCRRRA and Metropolitan Council in planning to build a LRT route through Hopkins with three stations in the community. The Plan states that Hopkins is committed to fostering an environment supportive of transit and ridesharing because it recognizes the benefits that good access can have on economic development and general quality of life in the community, along with motor vehicle fuel savings and reduced air emissions. The Plan proposes various initiatives that the City will pursue in support of LRT such as participating in the planning and design of the Southwest LRT and supporting the proposed locations for the LRT stations. The Plan indicates Hopkins will plan LRT stations and transit-oriented developments to ensure an excellent pedestrian environment within 1/2 mile of the stations. The city will publicize the accessibility of the LRT stations in the community to promote the use of this new travel mode and also to make the general public more aware of the convenient access to the central city area of Hopkins (and from the central city outward). The City will attempt to maximize the connectivity between the proposed downtown LRT station and the central business district, including pedestrian, bicycle and shuttle bus access. The city will strive to ensure that parking demands at LRT stations do not negatively impact surrounding residential or business areas.

Regarding existing bus service, the Plan states that the city has worked with Metro Transit to create new or improved bus facilities along the routes serving Hopkins, especially along Excelsior Boulevard and in downtown Hopkins. The City will review major new developments for the inclusion of bus shelters and pullouts if such sites are along MTC bus routes. The Plan acknowledges the importance of providing feeder bus or circulating loop transit services to improve connectivity between each of the stations, downtown Hopkins, and regional destinations not immediately adjacent to the proposed LRT alignment.

LRT 1A, LRT 3A, and LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) are compatible with the *Hopkins Station Area Plan* because they all provide access and service to the Station Area. LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) would provide the same access as the other alignments and is also considered compatible with the Plan.

East Hopkins Land Use and Market Study

The *East Hopkins Land Use and Market Study* (EHLUM) from 2003 was done in an effort to “take a more proactive look at future land use and market opportunities” in the east end of the city,⁴⁸ an area bounded generally by TH 7 to the north, TH 169 to the west, Excelsior Boulevard to the south, and the Blake Road “corridor” to the east. One of the Study’s objectives was “to further explore non-roadway connections, through either off road trails or improved transit opportunities.”⁴⁹ The EHLUM used the Hopkins’ Comprehensive Plan and the Hopkins Zoning

⁴⁸ City of Hopkins, *East Hopkins Land Use and Market Study*, pg. SUM-1.

⁴⁹ City of Hopkins, *East Hopkins Land Use and Market Study*, pg. 1-6.

Ordinance for background and analysis, and land use concepts were developed based on market conditions and development trends including transit, land use, and redevelopment. The EHLUM notes that the Southwest Corridor's presence in the study area contributed to interest in the Study and that the "potential for transit-oriented development was a contributing factor that impacted plan concepts throughout this study."⁵⁰ The EHLUM specifically addresses the "regional rail corridor" owned by HCRRA⁵¹ and Section 4 of the Plan is devoted to Transit Implications. Section 4 introduces the development potential of LRT in the Southwest LRT Corridor and acknowledges the unknowns of its location and timing. It is specifically noted that the "construction of a transit line passing through the study area could significantly enhance the attractiveness of the area as a business and residential setting" and the study examines potential station locations and impacts on surrounding land use.⁵²

The Final Land Use Concept Plan in the EHLUM recommends that the Southwest Transit Corridor become either a BRT or LRT corridor, continue to share space with a regional greenway/regional trail with various connections to the neighborhood, and have a transit station at Blake Road. Based on that scenario, the EHLUM would be a guide for exploration of redevelopment opportunities and serve as a "reminder of the broader forces at work in the area."⁵³

Each redevelopment concept considered the transit implication—a mix of uses that focused on providing density—and each site was studied with regard to its potential relationship to a future transit stop. The redevelopment of the SuperValu site (generally the northeast quadrant of the TH 169 and Excelsior Boulevard intersection) and its potentially supportive relationship to future BRT/LRT is of particular concern in the Study.

The EHLUM recognizes that implementation of LRT could be a major catalyst for change in East Hopkins.⁵⁴ The Study recognizes that Excelsior Boulevard and the HCRRA rail corridor are the likely routes for enhanced mass transit, and that later phases of transit planning will examine transit station locations in more detail. It is recommended that redevelopment and transit planning objectives be coordinated with an understanding the following implications:

- Access to enhanced transit supports residential redevelopment in East Hopkins
- Enhanced transit would improve the potential for reverse commuting and support employment uses at the SuperValu site and in East Hopkins
- The design and location of a transit station may be an asset or a liability for East Hopkins. A well designed facility complements the objectives for East Hopkins, but a large park and ride lot conflicts with the Plan developed in this study⁵⁵

⁵⁰ City of Hopkins, East Hopkins Land Use and Market Study, pg. SUM-2.

⁵¹ City of Hopkins, East Hopkins Land Use and Market Study, pg.1-5.

⁵² City of Hopkins, East Hopkins Land Use and Market Study, pg. 4-1.

⁵³ City of Hopkins, East Hopkins Land Use and Market Study, pg. 5-5.

⁵⁴ City of Hopkins, East Hopkins Land Use and Market Study, pg. 7-7.

⁵⁵ City of Hopkins, East Hopkins Land Use and Market Study, pg.7-5.

Because each LRT alternative would share the same alignment through East Hopkins, all of the alternatives are determined to be compatible with the *East Hopkins Land Use and Market Study*.

Blake Road Corridor Small Area Plan

The *Blake Road Corridor Small Area Plan* (BRCP) was prepared in 2008-2009 by Hennepin County in conjunction with the City of Hopkins to serve as a policy and vision document for the Blake Road Corridor within which an LRT station for the Southwest LRT is proposed. The affected area includes Blake Road north of the Hennepin County-owned rail corridor and south of Highway 7, and the blocks adjacent to Blake Road along Cambridge Street, Cottageville Park, Lake Street NE, 2nd Street NE, and Minnehaha Creek. The BRCP was presented to, and approved by, the Hopkins City Council on May 19, 2009.

The primary ideas behind the Plan include focusing development near the future LRT station while creating an extension of 2nd Street east of Blake Road that becomes the 'front door' to future redevelopment of that site.⁵⁶

The Plan is based on the following previous studies: City of Hopkins DRAFT Comprehensive Plan 2010–2030 (not approved to date), Blake Road Corridor Assessment, *East Hopkins Land Use and Market Study*, and Blake Road Streetscape Concept.

Recommendations include several visions, including making the area west of Blake Road and south of 2nd Street a mixed use development near the future LRT station and a large park and ride facility in the long term.⁵⁷ North of 2nd Street, higher density residential development with should occur along new public or private streets that connect 2nd Street to Lake Street and Oaks Park. The area east of Blake Road (the Hopkins Cold Storage Site) should be redeveloped with office and residential uses at 4 stories or more and office buildings reaching at least 8 stories. Redevelopment to the north of the study area is focused near Cottageville Park, which is seen as the focal point for this redevelopment when it is redesigned to contain more passive activity including a gathering space. Efforts should be made to connect Cottageville Park to Minnehaha Creek along Blake Road.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Hennepin County, Blake Road Corridor Small Area Plan, pg. 2.

⁵⁷ Hennepin County, Blake Road Corridor Small Area Plan, pg. 3.

⁵⁸ Hennepin County, Blake Road Corridor Small Area Plan, pg. 3.

The BRCP assumes that the station will be sited west of Blake Road and north of the existing railroad tracks. It is expected that significant redevelopment in the Blake Road corridor will occur because of favorable market conditions influenced by LRT and other large redevelopments such as Excelsior Crossings.⁵⁹ The Plan recognizes that introduction of an LRT station to the study area will also have a strong influence on redevelopment patterns, especially within a quarter mile of the station itself. The Plan explores a number of development options to take advantage of these opportunities. The area is envisioned to have a large transit plaza north of the station with significant mixed use development just to the north of the plaza. That area would accommodate increased development density, a park and ride facility, and an increase in vehicular and pedestrian traffic. A second development parallel to Blake Road and north of the rail line should provide for “kiss and ride” facilities connected physically to the transit plaza. Strong pedestrian connections should be created connecting to key areas outside of the study area, as well as to connect key areas within the study area.⁶⁰

LRT 1A, LRT 3A, and LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) are compatible with the *Blake Road Corridor Small Area Plan* because they all provide access and service to the Blake Road corridor Hopkins. LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) would provide the same access as the other alignments and is also considered compatible with the study.

Elmwood Land Use, Transit & Transportation Study

The *Elmwood Land Use, Transit & Transportation Study* was completed in February, 2003 as a joint effort between the City of St. Louis Park and Hennepin County. Results of the study were incorporated into the City’s comprehensive plan. The Study was developed as a tool to guide decisions on future land use redevelopment, infill development, and infrastructure changes in the Elmwood neighborhood. The Elmwood neighborhood is a triangular region in the City of St. Louis Park bordered by TH 100 on the east, on the north by TH 7, and the Elmwood Neighborhood to the southwest.

The conclusions reached by the Study are intended to provide a flexible framework for ongoing decision-making. One of the conclusions made was to support the development of LRT in the Southwest LRT project. The Study calls for the development of a center platform LRT station at Wooddale Avenue and West 36th Street, the location of the proposed Wooddale station which would serve Elmwood commercial and residential areas as well as neighborhoods north of TH 7. It proposes parcels in the northeast quadrant of Wooddale Avenue and West 36th Street be used as a multi-modal transit facility interfacing circulator bus activity, a park-and-ride facility, and walk-to/bike-to traffic with LRT access. The Study suggests that the area should be developed as a multi-use facility and include retail or service elements complimenting transit users at West 36th Street. It further suggests bus service to and from the transit station would have curbside drop-off and pick-up areas on West 36th Street.

Under the assumption that LRT will be implemented within the Southwest Corridor, the Study addresses the potential relocation of the freight rail in the adjacent CPR corridor. If such a relocation occurs, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) right-of-way may be available for alternative uses within the Elmwood Study Area.

⁵⁹ Hennepin County, Blake Road Corridor Small Area Plan, pg. 19.

⁶⁰ Hennepin County, Blake Road Corridor Small Area Plan, pg. 11.

Further analysis is recommended once LRT is operational to accommodate transit-oriented parking to minimize impacts on residential streets. One of the principles of the Study states that Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) land use patterns and building configurations should be considered within a five-minute walk of LRT loading platforms. The study promotes implementing LRT to positively affect adjacent parcels by providing a catalyst for redevelopment and an opportunity for mixed land uses within a neighborhood environment.

LRT 1A, LRT 3A, and LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) and LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) are all compatible with the *Elmwood Land Use, Transit & Transportation Study* because they serve the area in which the Study recommends specific land use and transportation developments.

Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan, 2007

The *Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan* was approved by the Minneapolis City Council on January 12, 2007. The Plan envisions a system of existing and proposed parks and open space integrated with a revitalized mixed-use urban village. The Plan advocates redevelopment of industrial land areas to a mixed-use development of residential, commercial and open space land uses. The Bassett Creek area is located just outside of downtown Minneapolis in the vicinity of Bassett Creek, Glenwood Avenue and Van White Memorial Boulevard.

The Plan asserts that transit and commuter trails play a significant role in the pace, character and intensity of redevelopment in Bassett Creek Valley, and improved transit service would provide significant travel opportunities and connections to the metro region, including reverse commuting from downtown to Bassett Creek Valley employment areas and beyond, a reduced need for office parking in the Valley, less congestion and greater transit links to other areas. The Plan is supportive of the Southwest LRT project for the aforementioned opportunities of a station located in the area. The Plan specifically identifies the area served by LRT 1A and LRT 3A along the Kenilworth Trail and the Van White Boulevard Station.

LRT 1A and LRT 3A are therefore compatible with the *Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan*. LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) and LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) would not access or provide service to the area and therefore are considered incompatible with the Plan.

Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Land Use Plan, 2005

The *Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Land Use Plan* was adopted by the Minneapolis City Council in September, 2005. The Plan addresses issues and opportunities for the neighborhood revolving around land use patterns, demographics, transportation, housing, natural resource management and commercial enterprise.

Specific to transportation improvements, roadways and traffic operations are primary concerns for the neighborhood. According to the Plan, transportation land uses comprise approximately 19 percent of the total neighborhood land area. Bounded by major highway corridors on two sides, the neighborhood has been divided into two portions. While access to the freeway system is considered to be excellent and the many roads running throughout the neighborhood provide access to residential and commercial areas, transportation infrastructure is perceived as a barrier element according to the Plan. Safe traveling speeds, pedestrian safety, noise, parking and reductions in transit services operating in the neighborhood were identified as key concerns of area residents.

In effort to improve mobility throughout the neighborhood and to points beyond, as well as improve safety on neighborhood streets, the Plan promotes an increased emphasis on transit and alternative transportation modes as a means of decreasing traffic. The Plan inventories the existing transit service operating through the neighborhood and supports continued planning for improved transit service through the neighborhood to improve connectivity with the greater metropolitan region. At present, the Route 9 bus provides regular weekday and weekend service to the neighborhood at 15 minute rush hour headways and 30 minute off-peak headways. The Plan specifically discusses the Southwest LRT as a means of alternative transportation with the potential to improve mobility and connectivity between the greater metro region and the neighborhood. While the Plan provides limited references to the Southwest LRT project, the Plan acknowledges the project as having several potential benefits to the neighborhood. The Plan states that “the Southwest Corridor Light Rail Transport (LRT) will run through the southern segment of the neighborhood.”⁶¹

The Plan identifies the proposed Penn Avenue station, on Segment A, near the interchange of Penn Avenue and I-394 along with the development potential for additional residential and commercial space to neighborhood residents. The plan notes a station at this location would improve connectivity and provide alternative means of travel around the Twin Cities, bringing people to the neighborhood, and increasing commercial opportunities for the neighborhood commercial nodes.⁶²

LRT 1A and LRT 3A are compatible with the *Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Land Use Plan*. LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) and LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) do not access or provide service to the area and therefore are considered not compatible with the Plan.

Nicollet Avenue: The Revitalization of Minneapolis' Main Street, 2000

The *Nicollet Avenue Task Force Report* was adopted by the Minneapolis City Council in May of 2000. In 1998 the Minneapolis City Council established the Nicollet Avenue Task Force to develop recommendations regarding redevelopment opportunities, locations for streetscape improvements, and transportation/roadway improvements. The report study area extends to both sides of Nicollet Avenue between Grant Street and 62nd Street for a total length of six miles. The four main strategies presented in the study are listed below:

- Invest in well-defined commercial nodes and corridors to encourage increased compatibility of adjacent uses
- Redevelop under-utilized commercial areas to encourage increased compatibility of adjacent uses
- Encourage quality urban design and pedestrian-friendly environments
- Manage traffic flow and reduce traffic speed

The Study recommended promoting I-35W as the primary transportation corridor for the city, most notably by “encouraging light rail transit in additional to other transit alternatives along the

⁶¹ City of Minneapolis, *Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Land Use Plan*, pg. 24.

⁶² City of Minneapolis, *Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Land Use Plan*, pg. 24.

35W corridor.”⁶³ The report recommends narrowing the roadway on Nicollet Avenue to slow traffic and widening the boulevard to create a more pedestrian friendly environment and improve the area’s building façades and natural environment. To encourage pedestrians to the use Nicollet Avenue, the Study recommends exploring the feasibility of traffic calming strategies on Blaisdell and First Avenues. Strategies suggested include converting Blaisdell and First Avenues to two-way streets, striping a bike lane, or striping a parking lane in order to slow traffic.

The Study recognizes that attracting people to Nicollet Avenue is a critical means of increasing the commercial vibrancy of the area. It notes that over the years, traffic levels along Nicollet have declined for various reasons such as the construction of Interstate 35W and the one-way paired streets of Blaisdell Avenue and First Avenue displacing commuter traffic and the placement of Kmart on Nicollet Avenue at Lake Street which created a barrier between south of Lake Street, Nicollet Avenue and downtown. The Study states that routing traffic back to Nicollet (as was done when access to 1st Avenue was limited) can restore some of the original traffic volumes and enhance the customer base and pedestrian traffic. The Study notes that while committed business owners have helped bring about a renaissance on the avenue north of Lake Street, the physical barrier created by the Kmart shopping plaza between Nicollet Avenue and Lake Street is a major obstacle to commercial vitality. The Study suggests that reopening Nicollet Avenue would be a tremendous boon to the area. It would not only revitalize Nicollet Avenue, but would also contribute to the success of redevelopment efforts along Lake Street and along the 29th Street Midtown Corridor. For these reasons, Task Force members identified the reopening Nicollet Avenue at Lake Street as the single most important element in revitalizing Nicollet Avenue.⁶⁴

LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternative and LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) are not compatible with the *Nicollet Avenue: The Revitalization of Minneapolis’ Main Street Study* because the vision developed as part of the Study does not incorporate LRT running below Nicollet Avenue. The Study does not address the LRT 1A or LRT 3A alternatives.

Uptown Small Area Plan, 2008

The *Uptown Small Area Plan* was approved by the Minneapolis City Council in February 2008. The Uptown Neighborhood is located southwest of downtown Minneapolis near the Chain of Lakes. The Plan includes the established neighborhoods of East Isles, Lowry Hill East, East Calhoun and Calhoun Area Residents Action Group (C.A.R.A.G.). The Plan promotes improved connectivity between the Midtown Corridor and the surrounding lakes and urban core.

With respect to transit, the Plan recognizes that improving transit service in Uptown is fundamental to the future success of Uptown. It notes that current service is relatively good but that superior transit service in Uptown is necessary to relieve congestion, improve air quality, encourage economic activity, maintain affordability, and restore the retail infrastructure.⁶⁵ “Transit will become critical to the Core of Uptown as the Plan supports transit in the Greenway,

⁶³ City of Minneapolis, Nicollet Avenue Task Force Report. pg. 31.

⁶⁴ City of Minneapolis, Nicollet Avenue Task Force Report, pg. 15.

⁶⁵ City of Minneapolis, Uptown Small Area Plan, pg. 96.

streetcars on Hennepin Avenue, and investments in a circulator connecting the Lake, the Core of Uptown, and Lyn/Lake.”⁶⁶

The Plan supports improving transit service by creating a physical environment that increases density, improves passenger facilities, and encourages ridership. “Currently transit service in Uptown is relatively good. The Uptown Transit Station is well used, ridership is high, and there is strong local support for additional transit investments. Despite this strong base, transit in Uptown has not reached its full potential. In particular, the land use mix in Uptown is not fully transit supportive due to some remaining auto oriented uses, the lack of high density housing along the corridors, and the relatively low daytime population of employees.”⁶⁷ In effort to improve transit services, the Plan recommends promoting land uses and development densities that create and support strong transit markets, such as high density housing, employment, and retail.⁶⁸

Among the transit recommendations specified in the *Uptown Small Area Plan* is to “Implement Southwest Transit Corridor to either connect through Uptown or to extend to the possible future streetcar system to future West Calhoun Transit Center.”⁶⁹ The Plan suggests a transit center located in the center of the study area as the hub for buses serving these routes, and Uptown could be a stop along the future Southwest LRT corridor.

Both the LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternative and the LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) are compatible with the *Uptown Small Area Plan*. Other modes of transit, such as a midtown streetcar are also compatible with the Plan. The Plan does not address the LRT 1A or LRT 3A alternatives.

Midtown Minneapolis Land Use and Development Plan, 2005

The *Midtown Minneapolis Land Use and Development Plan*, adopted in December 2005, sets out guidelines for future development and infrastructure improvements along Lake Street in Minneapolis. The study area is located along Lake Street between Blaisdell and 11th Avenues and extends between the Midtown Corridor and 31st Street. The report documents the planning and design process conducted to prepare land use and development plans that will inform future revision of the *Minneapolis Plan* and will be used to guide development activities. The Plan generally supports a range of transit modes (streetcar, trolley, LRT etc.) but does not support a specific alternative or mode, stating the city should continue to move the proposed Southwest LRT and trolley concepts along by participating in studies that further investigate implementation of either of these transit technologies. The report identifies the re-opening of Nicollet Avenue as a through street across Lake Street where it is currently blocked by a Kmart store as the highest priority for all area neighborhoods and is supported by every planning study completed since the intersection was closed.⁷⁰

LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) and the LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) alternatives are compatible with the *Midtown Minneapolis Land Use and Development Plan*. Other transit modes, such as a

⁶⁶ City of Minneapolis, Uptown Small Area Plan, Pg. 54.

⁶⁷ City of Minneapolis, Uptown Small Area Plan. Pg. 96.

⁶⁸ City of Minneapolis, Uptown Small Area Plan, pg. 97.

⁶⁹ City of Minneapolis, Uptown Small Area Plan, pg. 15.

⁷⁰ City of Minneapolis, Midtown Minneapolis Land Use Development Plan, pg. 7.

streetcar, are also compatible with the Plan. The Plan does not address the LRT 1A or LRT 3A alternatives.

Midtown Greenway Land Use and Development Plan, 2007

The *Midtown Greenway Land Use and Development Plan*, adopted by the City of Minneapolis in February 2007, sets forth recommendations for TOD along the Midtown Corridor and enhanced transit station areas at each potential station location in the Midtown Corridor independent of the mode chosen (LRT, BRT or streetcar). The Plan identifies the Midtown Greenway as the former rail corridor running along 29th Street across central Minneapolis from Lake Calhoun to the Mississippi River. The intent of the Plan is to provide clear policy direction for land use and development along the Midtown Greenway. The Plan acknowledges the Southwest LRT is proposed to share the Midtown Corridor with the Midtown Greenway. It notes that streetcar or trolley service has also been proposed in the trench as a permanent or interim transit service before LRT is constructed. The Plan does not endorse a particular transportation mode or alignment but does encourage further investigation on the city's behalf to implement these technologies. The Plan evaluates the long-term viability of existing land uses along the corridor and provides guidance for future land uses along the Midtown Greenway. The Plan references the *Minneapolis Plan* which focuses on a transportation system that favors transit and policy to support transit services and development growth along transit corridors. It notes the goal of the city to have a regional trail system that includes both LRT and commuter rail.

Both the LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternative and the LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) are compatible with the *Midtown Greenway Land Use and Development Plan*. Other transit modes, such as a streetcar, are also compatible with the Plan. The Plan does not address the LRT 1A or LRT 3A alternatives.

Midtown Corridor Historic Bridge Study, 2007

The *Midtown Corridor Historic Bridge Study* was prepared in 2007 for the Public Works Department of the City of Minneapolis to assess potential repair and rehabilitation limitations, present the original construction methods and identify potential effects of bridge removal on the corridor's status as a historic district. The Midtown Corridor is a historic district located between Hennepin Avenue and Cedar Avenue that includes twenty-six historic bridges. The Study states that the HCRRA is the current owner of the corridor purchased the area for a future rail transit line. The Study notes that the HCRRA is cautious that any work planned for the bridges does not impede future uses or alignments of the rail transportation corridor. While the Study acknowledges the AA alignments the option for using part of the Midtown Corridor for rail transit it does not specifically support or oppose any segment. It also identifies additional transit options for the corridor in the form of a modern streetcar or BRT. The Study recognizes that despite the mode of future transportation in the corridor, extensive engineering will be required to assess potential construction impacts. The Study does not endorse a particular transportation mode or alignment but goes on to evaluate the existing bridge structures and their conditions.

The results of the evaluation showed structural and functional deficiencies with virtually every bridge in the Study and therefore recommended eventual removal of all of the bridges. Because the bridges are one of the only characteristic features defining the area as a historic district, their removal could instigate the loss of the areas status on the National Register of Historic Places and it could be delisted. The Study indicates that the city intends to apply for federal funds to assist in the preservation of the bridge structures and that the city, the HCRRA and

Hennepin County will work together to derive agency agreements dealing with future bridge maintenance, programming for any reclassification or replacement programs, financial partnering and long-term ownership of the structures.⁷¹

Both the LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) alternative and the LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) are compatible with the *Midtown Corridor Historic Bridge Study* providing they do not impact the contributing features to the Midtown Corridor Historic District. Other transit modes, such as a streetcar, are also compatible with the Study. The Study does not address the LRT 1A or LRT 3A alternatives.

3.0 SUMMARY

In summary and as documented in the table below, LRT 3A is fully compatible with all regional and local land use and transportation plans. LRT 1A is compatible with the Metropolitan Council's TPP, but is incompatible with the land use plans of the local jurisdiction of Minnetonka and Eden Prairie. LRT 3C-1 (Nicollet Mall) and LRT 3C-2 (11th/12th Street) are incompatible with the Metropolitan Council's TPP as well as the *Access Minneapolis Plan* adopted by the Minneapolis City Council. Therefore, the alternative considered to best meet the purpose and need for the project under the planning Compatibility evaluation measure is LRT 3A.

⁷¹ City of Minneapolis, *Midtown Corridor Historic Bridge Study*, pg. 5.

Appendix A – Planning Compatibility Evaluation Summary Matrix

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