



## **Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee**

Thursday, February 19, 2015

1:30 – 3:00 PM

Council Chambers, St. Louis Park City Hall

### **Agenda**

- |             |  |   |
|-------------|--|---|
| <b>I.</b>   | <b>Welcome and Announcements</b><br><i>Chair Jan Callison</i>  | <b>1:30 to 1:40 PM</b>                                |
| <b>II.</b>  | <b>Approval of the October 2014 Meeting Minutes*</b><br><i>Chair Jan Callison</i>  | <b>1:40 to 1:45 PM</b><br>(Action)                    |
| <b>III.</b> | <b>Committee Updates</b><br><i>Technical Implementation Committee (TIC)</i><br><i>Business &amp; Community Advisory Committees (BAC/CAC)</i> | <b>1:45 to 2:00 PM</b><br>(Information)               |
| <b>IV.</b>  | <b>Survey Results and Recommendations</b>  | <b>2:00 to 2:45 PM</b><br>(Presentation & Discussion) |
| <b>V.</b>   | <b>2015 Meeting Schedule</b>   | <b>2:45 to 2:55 PM</b><br>(Information)               |
| <b>VI.</b>  | <b>Adjournment</b><br><i>Chair Jan Callison</i>  | <b>2:55 to 3:00 PM</b>                                |

\*enclosed

The next Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee meeting will be held on **Thursday, March 19, 2015** at the St. Louis Park City Hall at 1:30 PM.

## Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee Roster (February 2015)

Representing	Name	Member	Email Address
Hennepin County	Jan Callison (Chair)	Member	Jan.callison@hennepin.us
	Linda Higgins	Member	Linda.higgins@hennepin.us
Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority	Marion Greene	Member	Marion.greene@hennepin.us
	Peter McLaughlin	Alternate	Peter.mclaughlin@hennepin.us
Metropolitan Council	Jennifer Munt	Member	jennifer.munt@metc.state.mn.us
City of Minneapolis	Linea Palmisano	Member	Linea.palmisano@minneapolismn.gov
	Lisa Goodman	Alternate	Lisa.goodman@minneapolismn.gov
City of St. Louis Park	Anne Mavity	Member	annemavityslp@comcast.net
	Sue Sanger	Alternate	suesanger@comcast.net
City of Edina	James Hovland	Member	jhovland@ci.edina.mn.us
	Mary Brindle	Alternate	mbrindle@comcast.net
City of Hopkins	Kristi Halverson	Member	khalverson@hopkinsmn.com
	Aaron Kuznia	Alternate	akuznia@hopkinsmn.com
City of Minnetonka	Tony Wagner	Member	twagner@eminnetonka.com
	Terry Schneider	Alternate	tschneider@eminnetonka.com
City of Eden Prairie	Kathy Nelson	Member	knelson@edenprairie.org
	Brad Aho	Alternate	baho@edenprairie.org
Minnehaha Creek Watershed District	Dick Miller	Member	dickrmiller@gmail.com
	Jeff Casale	Alternate	jasale@minnesotahomes.com
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board	Anita Tabb	Member	atabb@minneapolisparcs.org
	Meg Forney	Alternate	megf@visi.com
SouthWest Transit	Nancy Tyra-Lukens	Member	ntyra-lukens@edenprairie.org
Urban Land Institute-Minnesota	Caren Dewar	Ex-officio	caren.dewar@uli.org
	Cathy Bennett	Alternate	Cathy.bennett@uli.org
Community Advisory Committee	TBD	Ex-officio	
Business Advisory Council	TBD	Ex-officio	



**SOUTHWEST LRT**  
community works

*Beyond the Rails*  
[swlrtcommunityworks.org](http://swlrtcommunityworks.org)

Southwest LRT Community Works  
Steering Committee

2015 Meeting Schedule

Meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month at 1:30 PM at the St. Louis Park City Hall, Council Chambers.

*February 19*

*March 19*

*May 21*

*July 16*

*August (tentative) 20*

*September 17*

*November 19*



**Southwest LRT Community Works Steering  
Committee Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, October 16, 2014  
1:30-3:00pm, St Louis Park City Hall

**Meeting Attendees**

Steering Committee Members & Alternates  
Chair Jan Callison, Hennepin County Member  
Anne Mavity, St. Louis Park Member  
Jason Gadd, City of Hopkins Member  
Dick Miller, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Member  
Jeff Casale, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Alternate  
Caren Dewar, Urban Land Institute- Minnesota Member

Other Attendees

Katie Walker (Hennepin County), Chuck Darnell (Hennepin County), Elise Durbin (Minnetonka), Tara Beard (Met Council), Cathy Bennett (Urban Land Institute), Karen Lyons (Met Council), Brent Wittenberg (Marquette Advisors), Lou Frillman (Marquette Advisors), Barry Schade (BMNA), Vida Y Ditter (BMNA), Larry Blackstad (MCWD), Janet Jeremiah (EP), Alyssa Ness (EP), Jeanette Colby (Kenwood-Isles Area Association), Gretchen Nicholls (TC LISC), Tim Thompson (Housing Preservation Project), Kim Koempel (SPO), Meg McMonigal (SLP), Lars Negstad (ISAIAH), Kathie Doty (KLD Consulting)

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Jan Callison convened the meeting and provided updates. She asked Katie Walker to cover the County's recent receipt of a technical assistance grant from the Cornerstone Group for 50 hours of technical assistance to explore Inclusionary housing design and implementation. She also referenced recent articles, one from the Center for Transportation Studies on the influence of neighborhood design and rail transit and two others from Finance and Commerce on housing development in the Southwest communities.

Chair Callison distributed a draft letter to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency in support of funding application by the City of Hopkins for funding for Dow Towers (preservation of affordable housing), indicating that she would like the Committee to approve her sending this on behalf of the Steering Committee. She deferred action on this to later in the meeting awaiting a quorum.

**II. Approval of September 2014 Minutes**

Chair Callison requested action on the September minutes at the end of the meeting. The minutes were moved and seconded, and passed on a voice vote.

**III. Southwest Corridor Wide Housing Gaps Analysis - Continuation of September discussion with Marquette Advisors**

Chair Callison re-introduced Lou Frillman and Brent Wittenberg from Marquette Advisors, saying that we did not have time to fully discuss the recommendations of their report at the September meeting so we set aside time today to continue that discussion. She also invited city staff to come to the table to support a more inclusive discussion. Mr. Wittenberg started with summary points from his report: through this process we hope to define better what Transit Oriented Development will look like in this corridor, coordinate marketing of this corridor, and create

consensus around goals and policies. He also talked about creating a signature development project to take steps in achieving those aims, and about the need for tools and strategies but also funding. They are recommending an affordable housing fund amount of \$200 million.

The Committee discussed several topics including inclusionary zoning (mixed income housing), the need for financing mechanisms, and other tools to explore such as tax credits for affordable housing, and the creation of housing and innovation funds. It was observed that, while we can learn from other experiences such as the Midtown Corridor, this corridor is quite different in many ways (e.g. higher land values, more spread out, multiple city jurisdictions). Chair Callison asked Marquette representatives if they had talked to schools along the corridor to address issues raised at the last meeting by Myron Orfield. Mr. Frillman reported that they did talk to Eden Prairie schools but not others. He reminded committee members, though, that projections for future growth in affordable housing indicate that a small percentage of this growth is expected to include families with children. Most of the growth is expected to be with adults without children. Dick Miller talked about the need to establish housing goals for the corridor. Ms. Mavity said that cities do have goals already, but it would be a good idea to harmonize these as we move forward. John Doan talked about plans at the County to develop a transit-oriented affordable housing fund, saying that this would cover multiple transportation corridors in Hennepin County, not just Southwest. Karen Dewar and Dick Miller talked about successes and challenges in creating housing along the Midtown Corridor, saying it is key to engage leaders such as Jim Campbell, Chair of the Southwest Investment Partnership, who can rally other business leaders to see how investing in affordable housing could be considered enlightened self-interest.

Chair Callison asked members to summarize their comments and to let staff know if there are other points to be included in the report from Marquette Advisors.

#### **V. Southwest Community Works Accomplishments to date and proposed future activities**

Chair Callison asked Katie Walker to present on accomplishments to date, saying this will be a springboard to guide discussions on the future direction of the SW Community Works initiative and the Steering Committee. Ms. Walker stated that SW Community Works is moving into an implementation phase as we now have municipal approval in place to move the LRT line forward. She provided a summary of the history of the SW Community Works initiative, saying that we aim to use transitways as catalysts for community development. She also reported on specific accomplishments (see attached graphic).

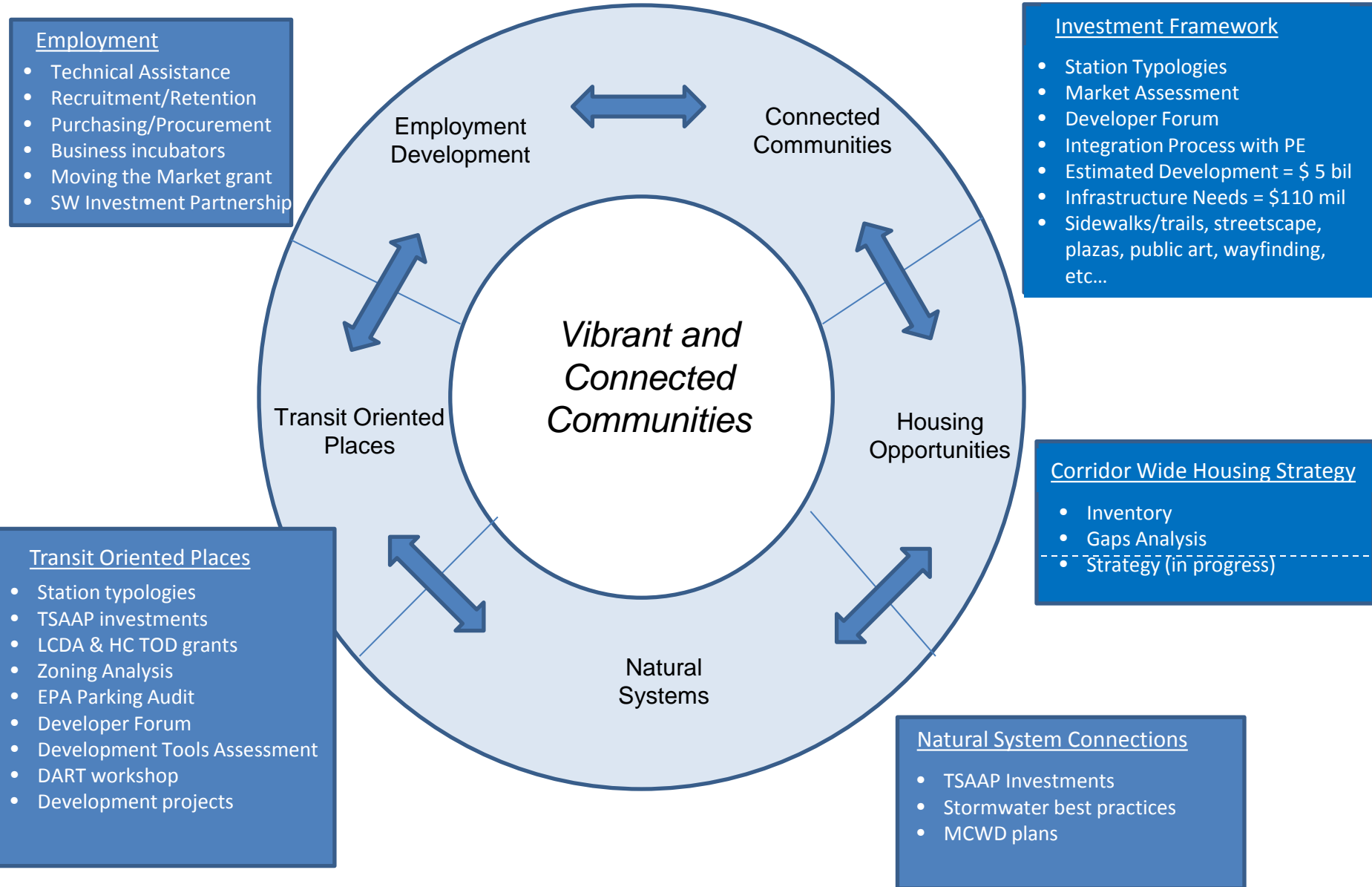
#### **VI. Next Phase of Southwest LRT Community Works**

Chair Callison indicated that the Committee would engage in a discussion of the goals and work plan, and structure of the Steering Committee as the SW LRT project moves forward. Several members weighed in in response, saying that the SW Community Works structure has been valuable and that we are ahead of projects in other parts of the country as a result. This discussion will be continued in early 2015 around review and input on the work plan.

#### **VII. Adjournment**

Chair Callison adjourned the meeting. The November Steering Committee Meeting has been cancelled, so the next meeting will be on Thursday December 18, 2014 at the St. Louis Park City Hall at 1:30pm.

# Laying the Foundation





### Agenda Item III – Committee Updates

#### Steering Committee Action Requested:

Information

#### Background:

The Southwest Community Works Steering Committee is served by three committees – a Technical Implementation Committee composed of technical staff from the partner agencies and others, a Community Advisory Committee composed of community representatives and special interests, and a Business Advisory Committee composed of business representatives along the proposed line.

An update on committee activities will be provided to the Southwest Community Works Steering Committee.

#### Previous Action on Request:

#### Recommendation:

#### Attachments:

#### Comments:

## Southwest LRT Community Advisory Committee

Nominating Organization	Name
Metropolitan Council	Council Member Jennifer Munt (Co-Chair)
Metropolitan Council	Russ Adams (Co-Chair)
Eden Prairie	Charles Weber
Eden Prairie	Andre Pieper
Eden Prairie	Jeff Strate
Eden Prairie	Sana Elassar
Minnetonka	Brian Kirk
Minnetonka	Shirajoy Abry
Minnetonka	Kevan HAnson
Hopkins	Melissa Everett
Hopkins	Kathryn Campbell
St. Louis Park	Janet Weivoda
St. Louis Park	Sara Maaske
St. Louis Park	Bill James
Minneapolis	Jamil Ford
Minneapolis	Ian Kees
Minneapolis	Lee Munnich
Minneapolis	Doug Peterson
Minneapolis	Jody Strakosch
New American Academy	Asad Aliweyd
Blake Road Corridor Collaborative	In Process
La Asamblea De Derechos Civiles	Miguel Zuniga
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha	In Process
Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing	Amanda Kappes

## Southwest LRT Business Advisory Committee

Nominating Organization	Name	Business
Minneapolis Regional Chamber	Will Roach (Co-Chair)	Baker Tilly
Twin West Chamber	Dan Duffy (Co-Chair)	Duffy Architects
Eden Prairie	Mark Gustafson	Rosemount Emerson
Eden Prairie	Rick Weiblen	Liberty Property Trust
Minnetonka	Dave Perner	United Health Group
Minnetonka	In Process	
Hopkins	Bill Beard	Beard Group
Hopkins	Kyle Allison	Hopkins Honda
St. Louis Park	Curt Rahman	CKJ Properties
St. Louis Park	Duane Spiegle	Park Nicollet Health Services
Minneapolis	Stuart Ackerberg	Ackerberg Group
Minneapolis	Tony Barranco	Ryan Companies
Eden Prairie Chamber	Gary Orcutt	First Western Bank & Trust

## Agenda Item IV – Survey Results & Recommendations

### Steering Committee Action Requested:

Information and Discussion

### Background:

Southwest Community Works Steering Committee members were asked to complete a survey to aid in shaping the committee's work in 2015 to achieve the collective vision of the group. Staff from the Hennepin County Center of Innovation and Excellence designed the survey and will present the results for discussion.

### Previous Action on Request:

### Recommendation:

### Attachments:

### Comments:



# BOARD OF HENNEPIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

A-2400 GOVERNMENT CENTER  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55487-0240

January 8, 2015

Dear Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee members,

Thank you for your service on the Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee and your continued commitment to working collectively to maximize the community benefits that will result from implementation of the Southwest LRT line. In preparation for 2015, I would like first to reflect on our accomplishments in 2014 and then invite you to provide input to help shape our 2015 work.

Under your leadership significant progress was made in 2014 in terms of achieving our collective vision to create unique, vibrant and connected communities along the Southwest LRT line. Among the milestones are: the Southwest Corridor Investment Framework, which was adopted by the Hennepin County Board and acted upon by our partner cities; the Corridor Wide Housing Inventory and Gaps Analysis, which provides the foundation for preparation of the Southwest Corridor Wide Housing Strategy; and Municipal Consent, which was secured by the Metropolitan Council for the Southwest LRT project. This work and the continued efforts of the partner agencies to prepare for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) have laid a strong foundation for action in 2015.

As we start 2015, I would like your thoughts on how to ensure that we continue to build on this work to achieve our ultimate goals and maximize the community benefits of the Southwest LRT line. To aid in this, I hope you will take the time to complete a short online survey which staff will prepare and distribute in the next couple of weeks. Staff will be prepared to share the results of the survey and suggestions for action in 2015 at the February **Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee meeting**, which is scheduled for **February 19, 2015 at 1:30 PM at the St. Louis Park City Hall**. Note: the January 15, 2015 Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee meeting is cancelled.

Again thank you for your leadership and commitment to the Southwest LRT Community Works partnership and I am looking forward to a 2015 filled with continued success and progress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jan Callison".

Jan Callison  
Hennepin County Commissioner, District 6  
Chair, Southwest Community Works Steering Committee



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## Updates/Information

- MinnPost Article, "Obama budget funds Southwest LRT – if everything goes right", 2/3/2015
- Federal Transit Administration New Starts Rating
- MinnPost Article, "Park Board gets feds to order more extensive environmental review of Southwest LRT", 2/5/2015
- Finance & Commerce Article, "Minnetonka continues to pursue extra Southwest station", 2/10/2015
- Sensible Land Use Coalition event, "How to Get Your Development Approved", 2/26/2015
- Southwest Project Office Making Tracks Newsletter

# Obama budget funds Southwest LRT — if everything goes right

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By [Devin Henry](#) | 02/03/15

WASHINGTON — There was some good news for Minnesota's planned Southwest LRT project buried in President Obama's 2016 budget request on Monday: he wants to give the line \$150 million to begin construction next year.

But getting that cash will require everything to work out just right.

Plans call for the federal government to provide half the funds needed to build the \$1.68 billion light rail line, which would stretch from Target Field to Eden Prairie, with the state (10 percent), metro area (30 percent) and Hennepin County (10 percent) picking up the rest of the tab. The budget request seems to be a major step toward making that line a reality — and it is, assuming all goes as planned. But Obama wants to fund the line as part of a big increase in federal mass transit spending, which could be a complicated matter on Capitol Hill.

## Big funding request

Southwest LRT is tucked into a \$3.25 billion package of mass transit projects the Department of Transportation proposes to fund next year. The current budget is \$2.1 billion, meaning Obama is asking a Republican-controlled Congress for a nearly two-thirds increase in funding for mass transit in 2016, paid for in his budget with a new tax on cash corporations are holding offshore.

Among the proposals in Obama's budget, this is one that [might — might — find some support on the hill](#), because some Republicans have pitched similar, if smaller, tax plans. Even so, Congress incrementally increased funding for mass transit between 2014 and 2015, and a 65 percent increase is a heavy lift, especially absent a long-term transportation bill, which is years overdue and whose prospects are perpetually dim.

If Congress trims down Obama's proposal or keeps the mass transit budget flat, funding for certain projects could go out the window — which means a December tweak to a transit funding formula could loom large for Southwest LRT.

## 40 percent vs. 50 percent

Every year, the Federal Transit Administration creates a list of proposed projects to which it will grant funding agreements. Projects that have previously won a grant agreement get annual funding installments and are first in line every year to get cash.

In December, Congress decided to give second priority to projects whose federal share is less than 40 percent, before moving to other projects beyond that. Under that language, Southwest LRT's federal share of 50 percent makes it a lower priority than, say, light-rail projects in Tacoma, Washington or suburban Maryland, whose federal shares are smaller.

Southwest LRT supporters said there isn't much to worry about right now, noting there is enough buffer room in Obama's budget request that the line should receive its federal funding next year even if Congress doesn't appropriate the full \$3.25 billion. Back-of-the-envelope math suggests that between existing projects (\$1.35 billion) and new projects with a lower percentage federal share than Southwest LRT (\$825 million at most), the project could get its funding even if Congress gives a minimal bump to the mass transit account flat next year.

Proposed 2016 new transit projects

Obama's budget, which calls for \$3.25B in spending on federal grants for new transit projects, proposes funding the projects listed below, in addition to projects currently receiving funding (\$1.35B) and spending on new project development and oversight.

<b>Project</b>	<b>2016 cost (Millions)</b>	<b>% federal funding</b>	<b>Project rating</b>
<b>New Starts Program projects</b>			
Red Line (Baltimore, MD)	\$92	34%	Medium-High
National Capital Purple Line (MD)	\$100	37%	Medium-High
Southeast Extension (Denver, CO)	\$150	44%	Unknown
Mid Coast Corridor Transit Project (San Diego, CA)	\$100	49%	Medium-High
Southwest LRT (Minneapolis, MN)	\$150	50%	Medium-High
TEX Rail (Fort Worth, TX)	\$100	50%	Medium-High
Westside Section 2 (Los Angeles, CA)	\$100	?	Unknown
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$792</b>		
<b>Small Starts Program projects</b>			
Tacoma Link Light Rail Expansion (Tacoma, WA)	\$75	35%	Unknown
4th Street/Prater Way Corridor (Reno, NV)	\$6	47%	Unknown
Provo-Orem Bus Rapid Transit (Provo-Orem, UT)	\$71	47%	Unknown
CityLYNX Gold Line Phase 2 (Charlotte, NC)	\$75	50%	Unknown
San Rafael to Larkspur Regional Connection (San Rafael, CA)	\$20	53%	Unknown
Montana Corridor BRT (El Paso, TX)	\$27	59%	Unknown

Project	2016 cost (Millions)	% federal funding	Project rating
Van Ness Avenue BRT (San Francisco, CA)	\$30	60%	Medium-High
Fresno Area Express Blackstone/Kings Canyon BRT (Fresno, CA)	\$11	80%	Medium
COTA Northeast Corridor BRT Project (Columbus, OH)	\$38	80%	Unknown
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$353</b>		

“We are hopeful that Congress will continue to support investing in our nation’s transportation and transit infrastructure at least at the current levels and that they support the President’s request for Southwest LRT,” said Meredith Vadis, a spokeswoman for the Met Council, which is charged with requesting the funding.

But opponents of the line have suggested the project’s FTA rating could hurt its chances of winning a grant. That’s what former Congressman Martin Sabo, who opposes the current alignment of the line, [suggested last year when the 40 percent benchmark was first tucked into a budget bill.](#)

Ratings are based on factors like land use, ridership and financing, and in September 2011, Southwest LRT won a “medium” rating from the FTA. (UPDATE: The FTA informed officials Tuesday morning that Southwest LRT has been assigned a "Medium-High" overall rating.) Opponents say higher-rated projects like the “medium-high” TEX Rail, a Fort Worth commuter rail project with a 50 percent federal share set to be funded at \$100 million in Obama’s budget, could end up getting priority if funds are tight.

If it all goes wrong and Congress decides to cut into the mass transit account the safest way to improve its funding chances could be to increase the state and local contribution to the budget (a 10 percent increase would equal about \$168 million). In an email, Vadis said, “we would have to look at a variety of sources to fill that gap with local funding” if that were to happen.

The Met Council is still waiting on the FTA to clarify what impact an increased percentage of local funding would have on the project’s funding prospects. “When we have more information, we’ll be prepared to address potential changes to the project’s current funding formula,” Vadis said.

### **Minnesota politics confuses the issue**

To make all of this even more confusing, if Minnesota wants to win a federal funding agreement in the 2016 fiscal year, it needs to have already secured state and local funding, a prospect complicated by state politics.

Gov. Mark Dayton supports the project, but he’s been hesitant to pursue the final \$120 million state contribution for it until a dispute between the Met Council and the Minneapolis Parks

Board is resolved, and Republicans in the Legislature have already said they're against funding the line.

Transportation is such a hot issue for the Legislature this session that we're likely months away from any type of deal on the light rail front. The line isn't as controversial on the federal level as it is in Minnesota, and by virtue of putting Southwest LRT in its budget, it's clearly a priority for the Obama administration. It's a massive public works project four years in the making, and funding for those doesn't just disappear overnight. But right now, the calculus for securing funding has gotten muddled in St. Paul and it isn't exactly a slam dunk in Washington.

**Correction:** *An earlier version of this story said Southwest LRT had a project ranking of "medium" and it could miss out on funding to projects with a higher ranking. Officials were told Tuesday morning that [the project had been upgraded to "medium-high."](#)*

*Devin Henry can be reached at [dhenry@minnpost.com](mailto:dhenry@minnpost.com). Follow him on Twitter: @[dhenry](#)*

# Southwest Light Rail Transit

## Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota

### New Starts Project Development (Rating Assigned November 2014)

Summary Description	
<b>Proposed Project:</b>	Light Rail Transit 15.7 Miles, 17 Stations
<b>Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):</b>	\$1,653.45 Million (includes \$65.0 million in finance charges)
<b>Section 5309 New Starts Share (\$YOE):</b>	\$826.72 Million (50.0%)
<b>Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2020):</b>	\$49.15 Million
<b>Current Year Ridership Forecast (2010):</b>	19,200 Daily Linked Trips 6,355,900 Annual Linked Trips
<b>Horizon Year Ridership Forecast (2030):</b>	34,200 Daily Linked Trips 11,332,100 Annual Linked Trips
<b>Overall Project Rating:</b>	Medium-High
<b>Project Justification Rating:</b>	Medium
<b>Local Financial Commitment Rating:</b>	High

**Project Description:** The Metropolitan Council (MC) is planning a light rail transit (LRT) line between Eden Prairie in suburban Hennepin County and the existing Target Field LRT station in downtown Minneapolis. The line would also serve the suburban municipalities of Minnetonka, Hopkins and St. Louis Park. The proposed alignment generally parallels freight rail and roadway rights-of-way, with grade-separated crossings in several locations and two short tunnel segments. The project would operate as an extension of the Green Line that opened in June 2014: trains would operate through service between Eden Prairie and downtown Saint Paul via downtown Minneapolis and the University of Minnesota campus. The project includes ten park-and-ride facilities with approximately 3,700 spaces, 29 light rail vehicles, and a new railcar maintenance facility. Service would operate every ten minutes during the day and every 15 minutes during the evening on weekdays, and every ten to 15 minutes on weekends.

**Project Purpose:** Population, employment and congestion are growing rapidly in the project corridor. In particular, downtown Minneapolis has over 150,000 jobs and a growing population, while the western end of the LRT line would serve suburban employment concentrations and the Eden Prairie Center regional mall. While the corridor has extensive bus service, growing congestion on the roadway network slows travel speeds, and reverse-commute service to the suburban employment sites is limited. The project would provide more efficient access to and from major employment centers and reduce travel times for highway and transit users. As an extension of the Green Line, the project would provide through service between Minneapolis's southwestern suburbs, downtown Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota campus, the State Capitol complex and downtown St. Paul. At Target Field, the project would also provide transfer connections to the existing Blue Line LRT and Northstar commuter rail lines.

**Project Development History, Status and Next Steps:** Following completion of an alternatives analysis in May 2010, MC selected an LRT line from the suburb of Eden Prairie through the downtowns of Minneapolis and St. Paul as the locally preferred alternative and included it in the region's fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan. Under SAFETEA-LU, FTA approved the project into preliminary engineering in September 2011. Under MAP-21, the project is considered to be in the project development phase since the environmental review process is not yet complete. A Draft

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was released in October 2012. In July 2013, MC began preparing a Supplemental Draft EIS to account for changes to the western end of the project alignment that resulted from local input, the relocation of the operations and maintenance facility, and a revised configuration for the Kenilworth Corridor segment of the line in Minneapolis that retains freight rail service in the corridor and includes an approximately half-mile LRT tunnel beneath the freight rail alignment. MC anticipates completion of the Supplemental Draft EIS in early 2015, completion of a Final EIS and receipt of a Record of Decision in late 2015, receipt of a Full Funding Grant Agreement in mid-2016, and start of revenue service in 2019.

**Significant Changes Since Last Evaluation (September 2011):** Project capital costs increased from \$1,250.48 million to \$1,653.45 million due to alignment refinements associated with additional design work and local input, including the inclusion of a short tunnel section in the Kenilworth Corridor, and a two-year delay relative to MC's proposed schedule at the time that FTA last evaluated the project. MC also added three light rail vehicles to the project scope. The anticipated Section 5309 funding amount increased from \$625.24 million to \$826.72 million, with the share remaining at 50 percent.

<b>Locally Proposed Financial Plan</b>		
<b><u>Source of Funds</u></b>	<b><u>Total Funds (\$million)</u></b>	<b><u>Percent of Total</u></b>
<b>Federal:</b> Section 5309 New Starts	\$826.72	50.0%
<b>State:</b> Minnesota Legislature General Obligation Bonds and Appropriations	\$165.35	10.0%
<b>Local:</b> Counties Transit Improvement Board Sales Tax	\$496.03	30.0%
Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority Property Tax	\$165.35	10.0%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$1,653.45</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**NOTE:** The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

**MN, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Southwest LRT  
(Rating Assigned November 2014)**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Local Financial Commitment Rating</b>	<b>High</b>	
<b>Non-Section 5309 New Starts Share</b>		The New Starts share of the project is 50.0 percent.
<b>Composite Financial Rating</b>	<b>High</b>	
Capital and Operating Condition (25% of capital plan rating)	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The average age of the Metropolitan Council (MC) bus fleet is 5.9 years, which is younger than the industry average.</li> <li>• MC's most recent bond ratings, issued in January 2014, are as follows: Moody's Investors Service Aaa and Standard &amp; Poor's Corporation AAA.</li> <li>• MC's current ratio of assets to liabilities, as reported in its most recent audited financial statement, is 2.35 (FY2013).</li> <li>• There have been no service cutbacks or cash flow shortfalls in recent years.</li> </ul>
Commitment of Capital and Operating Funds (25% of capital plan rating)	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 85 percent of the non-Section 5309 New Starts funds are committed, with the remainder planned. Sources of funds include State general obligation bond revenues, sales tax revenues from the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) and property tax revenues from the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority.</li> <li>• Approximately 99 percent of the funds needed to operate and maintain the transit system in the first full year of operation are committed or budgeted, while the remainder is planned. Sources of funds include state Motor Vehicle Sales Tax receipts and general fund contributions, CTIB sales tax revenues, and fare revenues.</li> </ul>
Capital and Operating Cost Estimates, Assumptions and Financial Capacity (50% of capital plan rating)	Medium-High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assumed growth in the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax is more conservative than historical experience, while annual growth rates for State of Minnesota General Fund appropriations, CTIB, and property tax bond revenues are in line with historical experience. However, the plan lacks assumptions for other expansion capital projects.</li> <li>• The capital cost estimate is reasonable for this stage of the project.</li> <li>• Assumed farebox collections are more conservative than historical experience.</li> <li>• The financial plan shows that MC has the financial capacity to cover cost increases or funding shortfalls equal to at least 30 percent of estimated project costs or 18.5 percent of the Transportation Division's annual operating expenses in the first full year of the project's operation.</li> </ul>

# Southwest Light Rail Transit

## Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota

### New Starts Project Development (Rating Assigned November 2014)

#### **LAND USE RATING: Medium**

The land use rating reflects population and employment densities within ½-mile of proposed station areas, as well as the share of legally binding affordability restricted housing in the corridor compared to the share in the surrounding county(ies).

- An estimated 295,000 jobs would be served by the project, which corresponds to a high rating according to FTA benchmarks. Average population density across all station areas is 2,900 persons per square mile, corresponding to a medium-low rating. In the downtown Minneapolis core, daily parking fees averaged \$13 in 2012, corresponding to a medium-high rating.
- The proportion of legally binding affordability restricted housing in the project corridor compared to the proportion in the counties through which the project travels is 1.30, which corresponds to a medium-low rating.
- Downtown Minneapolis features dense development. Outside of the downtown core, station areas in Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, and Hopkins feature moderate-density development including residential, retail, and office uses along with substantial parcels of industrial and warehousing uses, much of which could be redeveloped in the future. The cities of Minnetonka and Eden Prairie, while less densely developed, include large employment centers located within station areas, generally in a more suburban office park style. Most of the stations have full pedestrian system coverage throughout the entire station area.

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium-High**

##### **Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium-High**

- *Growth Management:* The Metropolitan Council's (MC) regional development framework provides policy guidance for the region that is implemented through local comprehensive plans and a cross-acceptance process. The latest framework, Thrive MSP 2040, and associated transportation and housing policy plans set minimum density expectations for new residential and mixed use development around transit stations.
- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* Conceptual planning for the Southwest Corridor station areas has been conducted. A joint public-private-nonprofit initiative evaluated more detailed development strategies and guidance for transit-oriented development (TOD) implementation, which led to an investment framework for the corridor. The same partners will continue implementation work. Comprehensive and small area plans for the station areas in Minneapolis, Hopkins, and St. Louis Park call for transitioning declining industrial and warehousing units to high-density residential and mixed-use development.
- *Supportive Zoning Regulations Near Transit Stations:* Minneapolis and Hopkins have adopted strong TOD-supportive zoning. Eden Prairie and Saint Louis Park have TOD-supportive regulations, but are working to further improve their ordinances in order to better catalyze implementation of TOD. Many of these zoning regulations set minimum as well as maximum densities.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* The MC has worked with a range of stakeholders to identify and pursue redevelopment opportunities. Regional and county agencies have funding programs for TOD implementation projects.

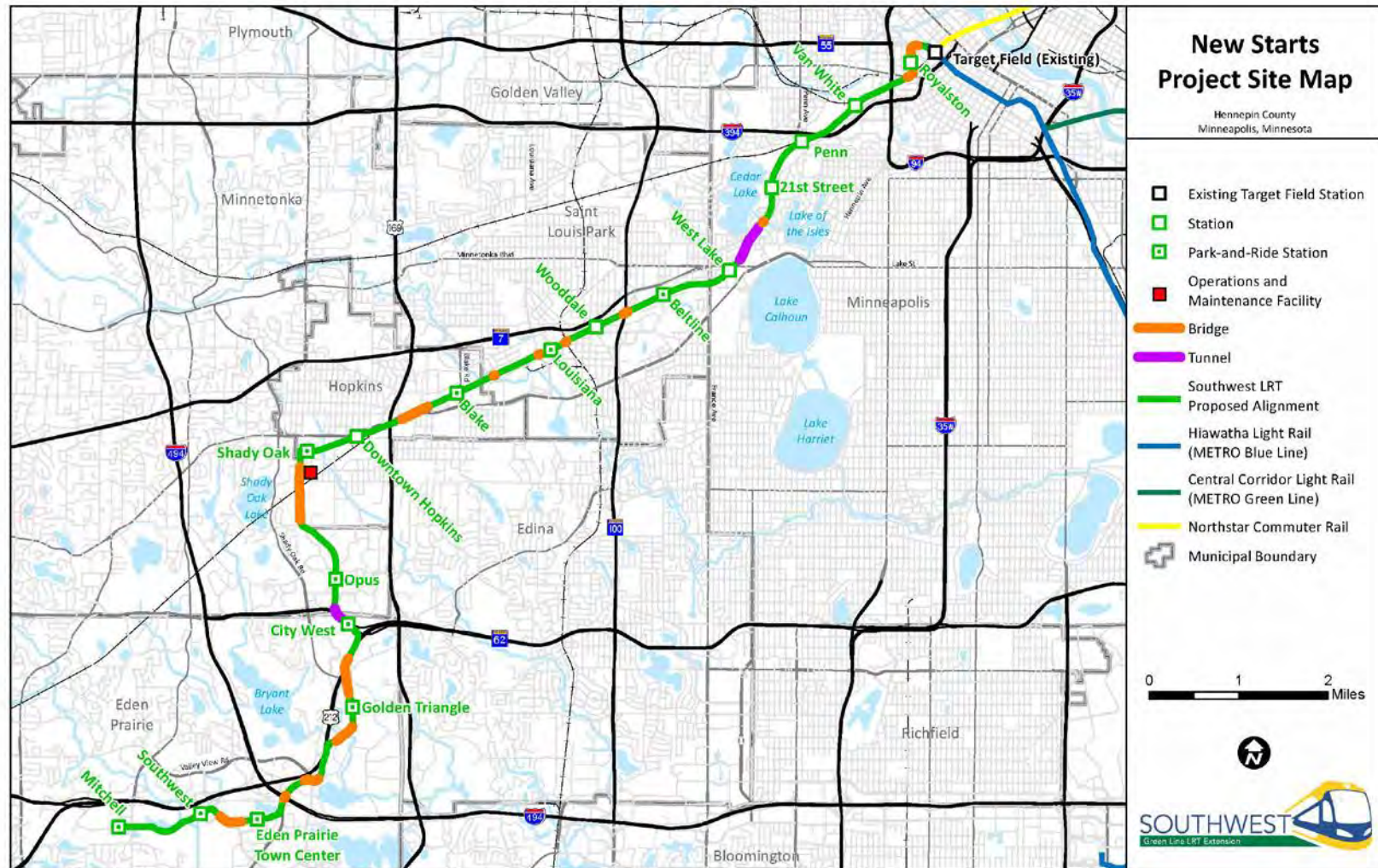
##### **Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium-High**

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Several major residential and mixed-use projects that are underway in the eastern portion of the project corridor demonstrate TOD characteristics. Recent and planned projects in the western segment of the corridor appear to be moving closer to TOD principles but are not completely there, with more campus-like suburban design principles still in evidence. A number of TOD projects, many supported by regional and local TOD initiatives, have been implemented along the two existing LRT corridors in the region.

- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* Approximately 560 acres of land with strong redevelopment potential have been identified in Southwest LRT station areas. With allowable Floor Area Ratios in the 2 to 4 range, this equates to over 70 million square feet of redevelopable space around stations. The stations along the middle segment of the alignment are identified as having the strongest redevelopment potential, and there are significant amounts of undeveloped land in the outer station areas. The Twin Cities region is experiencing a healthy economy and the project corridor is one of the strongest growth areas in the region.

#### **Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: High**

- The communities of the Southwest LRT corridor have for many years demonstrated a commitment to maintaining and producing affordable housing, and carefully coordinating the co-location of affordable housing and transit. The supportive policies, plans, programs and partnerships are extensive, and are integrated throughout local planning processes and many levels of government and with partners. The region appears to have one of the most comprehensive set of affordable housing initiatives in the country, and there is good evidence of affordable housing development and preservation in the project corridor.



# MINNPOST

## Park Board gets feds to order more extensive environmental review of Southwest LRT

By **Peter Callaghan** | 02/05/15



MinnPost photo by Peter Callaghan

Metropolitan Council Chair Adam Duininck, the council's light rail program director Mark Fuhrmann and Minneapolis Park Board Superintendent Jayne Miller talk Wednesday after a board discussion on Southwest LRT.

The Federal Transit Administration has ordered the Metropolitan Council to conduct a full analysis of the impacts of Southwest Light Rail Transit on Minneapolis park land — a requirement that will delay a key environmental review of the project by several months.

Due to the new requirement, a long-anticipated supplemental draft environmental impact statement that was to have been released by the end of February now won't be available for public review and comment until late spring. That in turn will not only delay the final decision on the environmental impacts of the \$1.68 billion project, but also the final engineering work and the start of construction for the 16-mile extension of Metro Transit's Green Line.

The new order from federal officials is a direct result of a letter sent last month by the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board. The letter notified the FTA that the Park Board believes that the Southwest LRT project has the potential to harm a strip of park land that runs between Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles. Such a disruption could constitute a “taking” of parkland for a federally funded transportation project, something prohibited by a federal rule known as Section 4(f).



Previous environmental impact statements by the Met Council acknowledged there would be so-called 4(f) impacts on the park land due to the alignment. But those studies also determined that the impacts would be minor — de minimis in regulatory speak — and could be mitigated, the council staff said.

After receiving the letter, FTA officials began taking part in meetings between Met Council staff and park board staff, deciding to order the more-formal 4(f) review.

The change in direction from the FTA came the same week the project received two pieces of good

news from the federal government. First, the project was included in President Obama’s transportation budget — one of just seven so-called new starts projects in the nation. In addition, the project’s overall rating was upgraded by the FTA from medium to medium-high.

The Park Board has long wanted a more-extensive study on the impacts of a bridge over the Kenilworth Channel, which connects Lake of the Isles and Cedar Lake. When the Met Council refused, the board hired consultants to do some of the work on its own. The new orders from FTA for a full section 4(f) analysis put that work back on the Met Council staff. Wednesday, several park board members said they were frustrated that it took their letter to heighten awareness of the 4(f) issues with the Met Council and its staff.

## Tunnel would add up to \$145 million in costs

Word of the FTA’s new orders came at a Wednesday night meeting of the Park Board, during a briefing on the project by senior Met Council staff, including Chair Adam Duininck. And it came after the Park Board’s own staff said the result of an engineering study commissioned by the board showed that its preferred option for the route’s crossing of the Kenilworth Channel — a tunnel rather than a bridge — would be “feasible” and likely “prudent,” though expensive.

Those two words are key to any discussion of a possible tunnel. Under federal 4(f) rules, projects that use park land cannot be approved if there are alternative routes that are both feasible and

prudent. The Park Board needs to prove that tunneling is both.

Yet Met Council staff told the park board Wednesday night that if the tunnel option was accepted, the project would be delayed by a year or more and the price tag would rise between \$105-\$145 million. The delays would come from engineering work on the tunnel options, additional environmental review, a new municipal consent process for the city of Minneapolis and Hennepin County and the longer construction schedule for a tunnel versus a bridge.

Inflation alone would add about \$50 million to the cost, or about \$1 million a week, said Met Council light rail director Mark Fuhrmann.

The delays would also cause the project to miss the 2016 construction season, Fuhrmann told the board. And rather than be open for riders in late 2019, the extension would be open in late 2020 or early 2021, Fuhrmann said.

“Our major concerns are timeline and budget,” Duininck said of the tunnel options. “We are short of time and short of regional resources.”

On Wednesday, Park Board staff said they believed a tunnel option is technically feasible and prudent in terms of causing less visual and noise impact. A tunnel would also negate the need for an additional bridge over the channel to carry two-way light rail trains.

But the staff did not have a conclusion when it came to another federal stipulation, that the tunnel option not cause “additional construction, maintenance, or operational costs of extraordinary magnitude.” The park department’s own cost analyses for a tunnel vs. bridges are similar to the Met Council’s, though it did not factor in estimates of inflationary increases.

The federal officials will ultimately review the Section 4(f) analysis and decide what changes to the project are needed. That review also will determine whether adding between \$100 million and \$145 million to a \$1.68 billion project is “extraordinary.”

The Met Council and the park board staff have agreed to meet weekly on the Section 4(f) issues. Duininck pledged to work closer with the Park Board and staff and Board President Liz Wielinski said working with Duininck the last month has been “a breath of fresh air.”

## Get MinnPost's top stories in your inbox

## Minnetonka continues pursuit of extra Southwest station

By: Cali Owings  
Finance & Commerce  
February 10, 2015



*A Southwest Light Rail Transit station could be added at Smetana Road and Feltl Road in Minnetonka after a push from a neighboring apartment owner. (Staff photo: Bill Klotz)*

The city of Minnetonka is taking steps to ensure an additional station could be built along the Southwest Light Rail Transit line at Smetana Road after a push from an apartment owner near the line.

The city will pay \$115,847 for design work so that the development of the 16-mile line doesn't preclude a station from being built near the intersection of

Smetana Road and Feltl Road in the future. The Minnetonka City Council approved the funding Monday night.

Cities along the 16-mile line between Minneapolis and Eden Prairie have the ability to fund engineering and environmental work for improvements above the base budget and scope that could be constructed along with the light rail project.

The idea for a station at Smetana [initially](#) came from Bloomington-based developer StuartCo, which owns a cluster of apartment and townhome buildings north of Smetana Road. StuartCo has pushed for the station to serve an estimated 6,000 residents in the area. StuartCo CEO and President Lisa Moe said she's pleased the City Council recognized the need to invest now and make it possible to add a station later.

"If we don't do it now and people want it down the road, we're going to have egg on our face," Moe said.

But the city's action won't make the area truly "station-ready," said Julie Wischnack, Minnetonka's community development director. It will fund design to determine how much it would cost to build the track for the line in a way that allows a station to be added at some point. The work would likely include excavation and retaining walls.

When the engineering is complete, the city can decide if it wants to pay to construct the adjusted guideway.

The initial \$115,847 will pay for the early work while the city waits for other opportunities — like federal grants to make the area station-ready or actually build the station, Wischnack said.

There's a precedent in the region for infill stations. The city of St. Paul, Ramsey County and the Central Corridor Funder's Collaborative paid for a portion of [three added stations](#) at Western Avenue, Victoria Street and Hamline Avenue along the 11-mile Green Line between downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul.

While some City Council members raised concerns about the future cost of actually adding a station, the council ultimately decided it was better to have the option on the table.

"We just want to make sure that we are keeping our options open and that is worth the investment," said Tim Bergstedt, Minnetonka City Council member.

StuartCo will continue to monitor the progress of the potential station and provide information about the potential ridership, Moe said. The company still sees merit in having the station constructed by opening day.

**From:** [community@sensibleland.org](mailto:community@sensibleland.org)  
**To:** [Catherine M. Walker](#)  
**Subject:** SLUC: How To Get Your Development Approved  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 11, 2015 10:13:55 AM

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Corrine Heine  
*Minnetonka City Attorney*

Mayor Terry Schneider  
*City of Minnetonka*

Barbara Thomson  
*City of Plymouth*

John Shardlow  
*Stantec*

#### PROGRAM INFO:

**\$38/members**

**\$48/nonmembers**

**\$20/students**

**Wednesday, February 25, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM**

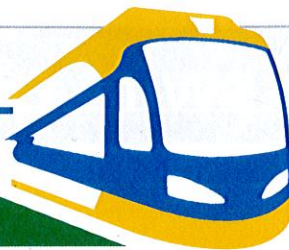
DoubleTree Park Place, 1600 Park Place Boulevard, St. Louis Park, MN

Sensible Land Use Coalition  
PO Box 284, Excelsior, MN 55331  
952-474-3302

[http://www.sensibleland.org/members/EmailOptPreferences.aspx?  
id=22379835&e=katie.walker@co.hennepin.mn.us&h=f3f9955213205d09edb93a13f689cf604e8dacac](http://www.sensibleland.org/members/EmailOptPreferences.aspx?id=22379835&e=katie.walker@co.hennepin.mn.us&h=f3f9955213205d09edb93a13f689cf604e8dacac)

# SOUTHWEST

Green Line LRT Extension



## Extending TRACKS

Issue 9 | February 2015

www.swlrt.org

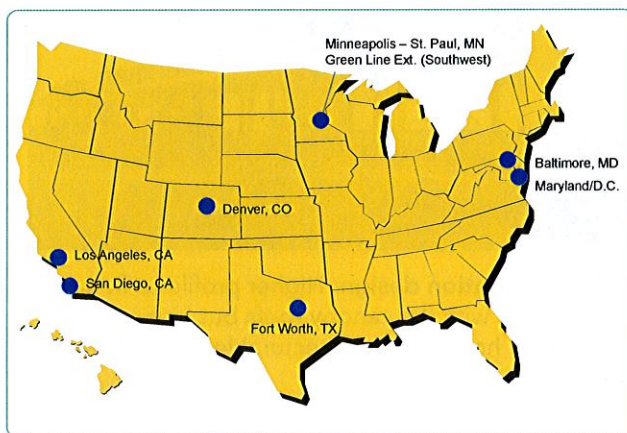
### Project gets important boost from Washington

The METRO Green Line Extension (Southwest LRT Project) has received strong signals from Washington that it is in the vanguard of projects nationwide and that the federal government intends to pay for half of the project's construction costs.

"The ratings increase is a tremendous vote of confidence from the federal government regarding the project's merits and bodes well for us to achieve our federal matching dollars," Metropolitan Council Chair Adam Duinick said in a statement. "Our rating rose

in large part due to the project's ability to achieve municipal consent from all five corridor cities and the county last year, as well as total funding commitments from the Counties Transit Improvement Board and Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority," Duinick said.

Southwest is among seven New Starts projects nationwide that



In early February, the Federal Transit Administration published new ratings for LRT projects, showing the Southwest LRT Project had climbed to medium high from a medium in 2011, the last time it posted a rating for the project in its federal New Starts report. Ratings are used to prioritize funding for LRT programs. Also in early February, President Obama included \$150 million for the project in his fiscal year 2016 budget. This would be the first installment of the anticipated federal share of \$827 million for the \$1.65 billion project.

the FTA has recommended for Capital Investment Grant Program funds in fiscal 2016. Other projects, shown in the map above left, are in Los Angeles, San Diego, Denver, Fort Worth, Baltimore and the Washington, D.C., area.

With the total commitments from the Counties Transit Improvement Board and the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority added to earlier funding from the state, the project has 85 percent of its local funding, which equates to \$705 million.

### Designers refine station prototypes with help from cities, county

Designers at the METRO Green Line Extension (Southwest LRT Project) will refine four LRT station prototypes based on input from technical staff from the five corridor cities and Hennepin County.

The four types range from an understated to bold design. The designs are intended to provide flexibility while fostering consistency in construction and minimizing long-term maintenance costs. Project office staffers have been in discussions with staff from the corridor cities and county about which of the four station designs developed in 2014 will be used at each of the 17 planned stations. Discussions with the public will occur in 2015.

### Public involvement helps station design, art fit together

In 2015, the project office designers will work with project partners, the public and the artist assigned to each station to select one of the four station types, additional architectural elements for wayfinding, color, texture and patterns, and integrated public art.

STATIONS CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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## Learning from experience

Lessons learned from the METRO Blue Line station designs helped inform the METRO Green Line and Green Line Extension designs.

For example, uniform components will be used to make routine maintenance and repairs easier. Also, the locations of ticket vending machines, kiosks and other components will be consistent from station to station to make the stations easy to use for all riders, especially those with visual impairments.

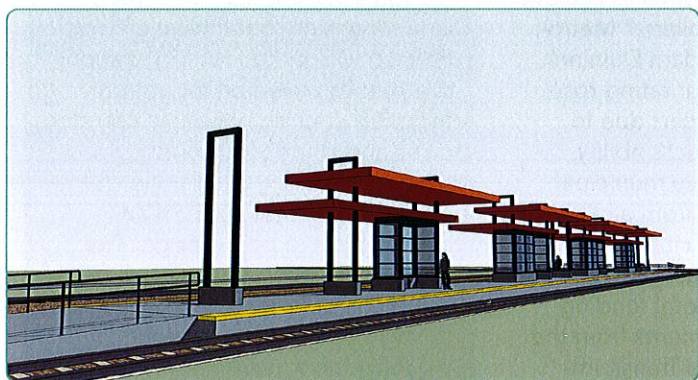
In addition to planning consistent passenger amenities from station to station on the METRO Green Line Extension, sta-

tion designs will allow for some more variety through variations of the canopies and vertical elements. The four station types vary by canopy design, type of support structures and other architectural elements.

## Safety is designed into LRT stations

Designing stations to promote safety through high visibility with the use of primarily transparent materials, such as glass, and adequate lighting allows police and passersby to see into the station. Station designs include security features such as cameras and emergency call buttons.

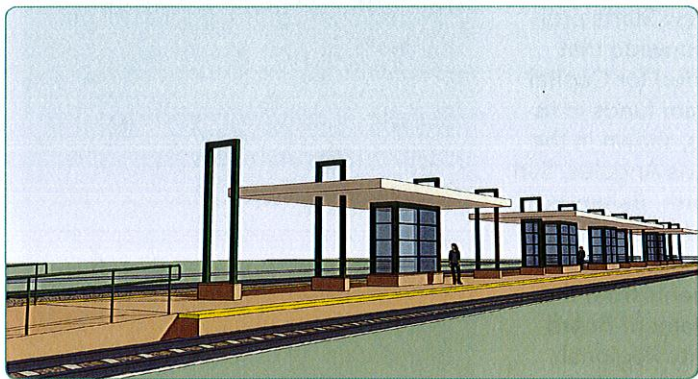
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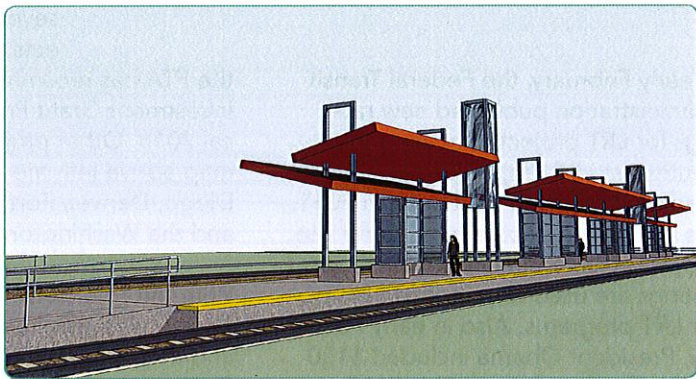
**The Neighborhood Station design:** Scaled to fit into a neighborhood, featuring a pair of flat canopy roofs with slightly raised structural elements.



**The Town Square Station design:** Higher profile to fit into of an activity center, with flat canopy roofs but higher structure and additional horizontal architectural features above the canopy.



**The Landscape Station design:** Understated, with a horizontal profile and flat canopy roofs.



**The Landmark Station design:** Largest station profile to increase station visibility. The design consists of pairs of sloped canopy roofs, with the highest structure and vertical architectural features located between the station canopies.

STATIONS CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

## Weather protection a key consideration

The station canopies are designed to prevent water from falling onto the edge of the platform below to promote passenger safety and comfort when getting on and off of the train. Water will be captured in a roof drain system and then flow into downspouts to carry it away from the station.

Stations will be designed for typical rainfall and typical snowfall with moderate wind, but not weather extremes.

Station shelters will have sides and overhead heaters to provide protection from most weather events but not weather extremes.



## Station artists to be hired this spring

Public invited to participate in selecting art for stations, operation & maintenance facility

Several experienced public artists will be hired this spring to incorporate art into all 17 LRT stations and the line's operations and maintenance facility.

The artwork will aid in station identification and passenger wayfinding and help promote transit use and community pride. The Metropolitan Council's Regional Transitway Guidelines say public art should be provided to create quality public spaces and complement the surrounding area.

The budget for public art at each of the 17 stations and at the operation and maintenance facility is to be determined but will be a percentage of the overall construction budget. Public art at the operations and maintenance facility is part of the agreement with the city of Hopkins for locating the facility within the city.

The artists will be selected by a committee that includes representatives from each city, Hennepin County, the

Minnesota State Arts Board, Metro Transit and the project office.

### Public participation

Station Art Committees will be formed for each city to provide input into the public art process.

These committees will participate in visioning sessions in spring 2015 to provide input and inspire the artists' designs. Station Art Committees will also meet to review art concepts and provide input in summer 2015 and review preliminary designs and provide input in fall 2015. Time will be allotted for general public input at each Station Art Committee meeting.

The development of the public art designs will coincide with the station design process to maximize integration. The artists' designs are anticipated to be finalized in 2016 and will be incorporated into the final design documents for the project.

### Art will be integrated into station, made of durable materials

Public art will be integrated into each of the 17 stations and the operations and maintenance facility rather than be a separate piece of art. Art could be integrated into station platforms, railings, or columns and into the exterior walls or landscaping of the operations and maintenance facility.

The reason for integrating artwork within functional elements is intended to ensure it isn't in the way, doesn't impede visibility and doesn't create areas of concealment or hinder maintenance.

Materials used in the artwork will be selected for their durability and suitability to the local climate and for use in public spaces.

## Sambatek: Helping build Twin Cities LRT

Sirish Samba's journey to working on Twin Cities LRT projects started outside a bank in India

Sirish Samba had just finished an undergraduate engineering degree in India in the early 1990s and wanted to attend a university in the United States to earn his master's degree. But he had grown up the only son in a modest family of seven children and couldn't afford the move.

"Only the privileged in India go study abroad," said Samba, the son of an Indian Railways guard, the British term for conductor.

Today, Samba, 44, is the CEO of Sambatek, a 100-employee engineering firm in Minnetonka. The firm is working on the METRO Blue Line Extension LRT Project and has worked on the METRO Green Line and Southwest LRT (METRO Green Line Extension) Projects. Sambatek has thrived in part through its participation in the state's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program, but Samba also emphasizes his company's professional work and experience as keys to its growth.

Samba's path to employment in the United States and the helm of Sambatek didn't happen by chance.

For a solid month when he was 21, Samba sat outside the bank in southern India, trying to talk to a key banker each day as he entered the building. Eventually, the banker agreed to meet with him. He informed Samba that the bank didn't provide student loans.

Samba, a strong student, had already heard from South Dakota State University in Brookings, S.D. The school had accepted him into its master's program

for an engineering degree and had agreed to let him pay in-state tuition. But Samba needed a \$4,000 loan to help him travel to the United States and enroll at South Dakota State. Once there, he planned to get a job to help pay his way.



*Sambatek CEO Sirish Samba*

"Every day I would go back to the bank and ask for the loan," Samba said. Seeing Samba's persistence, the banker relented and provided the loan.

He gained valuable experience working on high-profile projects, including wastewater treatment facilities for the growing city of St. Michael, the Arbor Lakes development in Maple Grove and the Water Park of America in Bloomington.

But the ownership of MFRA was in flux. The former CEO decided to retire in 2000 and pass the firm to four senior managers. After an appraisal, though, he decided to sell the business to an investor. In 2005, MFRA changed ownership again when it was sold to a private equity firm.

As the recession hit, MFRA, which was well known in the Twin Cities as a land

development company, found itself burdened with debt. Over time, Samba took a larger role in righting the company's finances and eventually ended up the majority owner supported by other employee-owners.

The restructured company operated as MFRA and still did development work, but Samba was seeking more civil-engineering related work as well.

At a convention in 2009, Samba met Tracey Jackson, a senior equal opportunity consultant for Metro Transit, who works with DBE firms. Requirements for participating in the DBE program involve limits on personal net worth (less than \$1.32 million), a business-size standard set by the Small Business Administration of less than \$17.4 million in annual gross receipts and be at least 51 percent minority or woman owned.

For the Green Line Extension LRT Project's advanced design contract and for the Blue Line Extension engineering contract, the DBE goal is 19 percent.

Samba was apprehensive about participating in the DBE program, but the company qualified and was looking to grow to rebound from the recession.

In recent years, Sambatek won a contract for work on the Interchange project in downtown Minneapolis where all of the LRT lines and Northstar commuter rail come together. His firm is doing survey work on the Blue Line Extension LRT Project. Sambatek was also awarded a master contract from the Metropolitan Council, which essentially puts the firm on call for a wide range of future work.

Paul Danielson, a senior vice president with Kimley-Horn, a nationally known design consulting firm, was introduced

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to Samba when Kimley-Horn was pursuing preliminary engineering work for the Southwest LRT Project. Surveying was Sambatek's primary work on the project, Danielson said. "But what's worked out well is their willingness to jump in and do just about anything we've asked," he said.

That included support for visual simulations along the Southwest LRT alignment, architectural renderings and storm water management analysis.

"They were our number one DBE firm on Southwest LRT," Danielson said. "They became an extension of our staff."

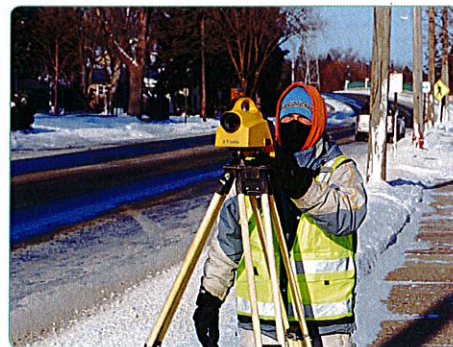
Sometimes the two firms compete on projects, sometimes they're partners, Danielson said. "We trust each other enough to know that we'll be team partners and at times we might compete head-to-head," he said.

In 2014, the company changed its name to Sambatek and moved to new space in Minnetonka, near Interstate 494 and Highway 62. "It shows our confidence in the future of the company," Samba said.

Sambatek is also opening an office in Bismarck, N.D., to support highway projects there.

Samba, who is married with three children, says his success in Minnesota paid dividends back in India. Years ago, he paid back the student loan that made it possible for him to attend South Dakota State. "Even now, when I go back, I sometimes visit with (the banker) because I'm a very grateful person," Samba said.

His work in the United States has also allowed him to help all of his sisters get married in India, where paying a dowry to the groom's family is the norm. "That's where I get my drive," Samba said, referring to his ability to help his



*Jeremy Honga of Sambatek does survey work on the Blue Line Extension LRT Project along Broadway Avenue in Robbinsdale*

family back home. If all else is failing, he said his background "teaches me to not take no for an answer."

Samba is a naturalized citizen and calls Minnesota home now. "I'm grateful to the country and its people, and its systems that provide equal opportunity," he said. "For a son of a railroad guard to be a consultant for an LRT system, it's an incredible honor."

## About the project

The Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project (METRO Green Line Extension) will operate from downtown Minneapolis through the communities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie, passing in close proximity to the city of Edina. The line will connect major activity centers in the region including downtown Minneapolis, the Opus/Golden Triangle employment area in Minnetonka and Eden Prairie, Methodist Hospital in St. Louis Park, downtown Hopkins, the Eden Prairie Center Mall, and the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes. Ridership in 2030 is projected at nearly 34,000 weekday boardings.

The project will interline with the METRO Green Line, which will provide a one-seat ride to destinations such as the University of Minnesota, state Capitol and downtown St. Paul. It will be part of an integrated system of transitways, including connections to the METRO Blue Line, the proposed METRO Blue Line Extension, the Northstar Commuter Rail line, a variety of major bus routes along the alignment, and proposed future transitway and rail lines.

The Metropolitan Council will be the grantee of federal funds. The regional government agency is charged with building the line in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The Southwest Corridor Management Committee, which includes commissioners from Hennepin County and the mayors of Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Edina, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie provides advice and oversight. Funding is provided by the Federal Transit Administration, Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), state of Minnesota and Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRA). The Southwest LRT Project website is [www.swlrt.org](http://www.swlrt.org).

### Southwest LRT Project Office

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