

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: March 11, 2013

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of March 27, 2013

Subject: Principles for Southwest LRT Major Scoping Decisions

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: Minn. Stat. 473.3994

Staff Prepared/Presented: Brian Lamb, General Manager (612-349-7510)

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Division/Department: Transportation/Metropolitan Transportation Services

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the following guiding principles, not listed in order of priority or weight, to be applied when determining the Southwest LRT (SWLRT) project scope during Preliminary Engineering:

- Comply with current federal and state laws, rules and guidelines;
- Follow Regional Transitway Guidelines, regional policies and regional plans adopted by the Metropolitan Council and follow best business practices of the Council;
- Follow SWLRT Design Criteria, including criteria for safety and security;
- Positively impact (increase) the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) rating criteria;
- Positively impact (increase) ridership;
- Positively impact (increase) land use, economic development and access to affordable housing by coordinating with local station area plans;
- Positively impact (increase) equity so that community benefits and burdens are equally shared;
- Positively impact (increase) environmental benefits;
- Positively impact (increase) use of the intermodal transportation network including bus, light rail, trails and sidewalks;
- Positively impact (decrease) or not impact the project schedule;
- Positively impact (decrease) capital cost;
- Positively impact (decrease) operating cost; and
- Actively engage and encourage input from interested and impacted stakeholders.

Background

In May, 2010, the Metropolitan Council selected the Kenilworth-Opus-Golden Triangle alignment and LRT mode as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the Southwest Transitway.

In September 2011, the FTA granted approval for the Southwest LRT project to start Preliminary Engineering and required that the project scope include determination of the location of freight rail.

In October 2012, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) published the Southwest LRT Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) based on a 15.8-mile light rail transit line extension of the Green Line, extending from downtown Minneapolis, through St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka to Mitchell Road in Eden Prairie and includes 17 new stations.

In November 2012, HCRRA held three public hearings on the Southwest LRT DEIS. The public comment period ended on December 31, 2012. Nearly 1000 comments were received.

In December 2012, the Council awarded contracts to two engineering consultant teams to design project components to a 30% level. The 30% engineering analysis will inform and assist the Council in determining refinements to the project scope that can be carried forward in the design of the project.

In February and March 2013, Southwest LRT Project Office (SPO) staff sought feedback from agency technical staff, Business Advisory Committee members, Community Advisory Committee members, and the Corridor Management Committee at their latest meetings. The proposed guidelines reflect their feedback.

In Q4 2013, the SPO will be seeking Municipal Consent approval of the SWLRT preliminary design plans from the five cities and County on the line.

In Q1 2014, the SPO will be completing 30% plans and specifications.

The estimated capital cost of the LPA is \$1.25 billion with a forecasted 2030 weekday ridership of 29,660.

Rationale

These principles will guide the Council to make informed decisions on project scope refinements to address concerns raised in the DEIS public comment process and enable the Council to advance the project forward in the FTA new Starts program.

Funding

Determining a project scope which meets FTA requirements is necessary to secure 50% federal funding.

Known Support / Opposition

During the DEIS public hearing process, the public provided a range of comments including support for the project and identifying potential concerns and ideas regarding project scope refinements.