

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: May 14, 2018

For the Special Metropolitan Council meeting of May 16, 2018

Subject: Southwest Light Rail Transit (Green Line Extension) Decision Regarding Need for Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: Minnesota Rules, part 4410.1700

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Division/Department: Metro Transit / Green Line Extension Project Office

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council determines the Project changes reviewed in the Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA) do not have the potential for significant environmental effects and authorizes its Chair to sign the Findings of Fact and Conclusions on behalf of the Council in support of the decision that a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Background

The Supplemental EA analyzed whether there have been significant changes to the proposed action, the affected environment, and the anticipated impacts or the proposed mitigation measures required due to the ten (10) Project changes as shown in Attachment 1. Under the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), the Supplemental EA served as the state environmental assessment worksheet (EAW) to evaluate the proposed changes to the Project. The analysis documented in the Supplemental EA has been used by the Council to reach an informed and appropriate decision whether to issue a Negative Declaration for the revised Project (pursuant to Minnesota Rules, part 4410.1700) or that a Supplemental EIS is warranted.

Minnesota Rules, part 4410.1700 requires that an EIS be prepared for projects that have the potential for significant environmental effects. In deciding whether a project has the potential for significant environmental effects, the following four factors described in Minnesota Rules, part 4410.1700 were considered and documented in the Findings of Facts and Conclusions document:

1. Type, extent, and reversibility of environmental effects.
2. Cumulative potential effects. The project proposer shall consider the following factors: whether the cumulative potential effect is significant; whether the contribution from the project is significant when viewed in connection with other contributions to the cumulative potential effect; the degree to which the project complies with approved mitigation measures specifically designed to address the cumulative potential effect; and the efforts of the proposer to minimize the contributions from the project.
3. The extent to which the environmental effects are subject to mitigation by ongoing public regulatory authority. The project proposer may rely only on

mitigation measures that are specific and that can be reasonably expected to effectively mitigate the identified environmental impacts of the project.

4. The extent to which environmental effects can be anticipated and controlled as a result of other available environmental studies undertaken by public agencies or the project proposer, including other EISs.

Rationale

The Council finds that an EIS is not necessary for the proposed Project modifications based on the following factors:

- All requirements for environmental review of the proposed project have been met.
- The Supplemental EA and the permit development processes related to the Project have generated information which is adequate to determine whether the Project has the potential for significant environmental effects.
- Areas where potential environmental effects are identified have been addressed by mitigation measures where impacts are expected to result from project construction, operation, or maintenance. Mitigative measures have been and will be incorporated into project design and have been or will be coordinated with state and federal agencies during the permit process.
- Based on the criteria in Minnesota Rules, part 4410.1700, the project does not have the potential for significant environmental effects.
- A Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the proposed Southwest LRT Project.

Thrive Lens Analysis

Construction of the Green Line Extension that will increase the region's prosperity as it will provide access to 80,900 forecasted jobs and a new transportation option for 55,800 forecasted residents within ½ mile of the planned new stations in addition to the 145,300 forecasted jobs and 35,600 forecasted residents in downtown Minneapolis.

Funding

There are no funding considerations associated with this action. Any funding required to implement the proposed Project changes are considered separately.

Known Support / Opposition

During the comment period for the Supplemental Environmental Assessment, the Council received 32 comments. The comments included support for and opposition to the Project and proposed modifications. Responses are included with the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document.

Attachment 1: Location of Project Modifications Evaluated in the Supplemental EA

