



St. Louis Park Railroad Advisory Task Force Position Statement Summary

The Task Force recommends that freight rail traffic through St. Louis Park should be through traffic only. The Task Force is opposed to introducing any additional rail traffic through the City of St. Louis Park.

All railroad blocking operations should be eliminated in St. Louis Park, Hopkins, and Minnetonka. This should be accomplished by constructing a switching yard west of these three cities.

Construct a southern connection and associated mitigation in the Oxford industrial area based upon a design study that allows for a direct connection of the east-west to north-south rail lines, that has the least effect on the adjacent neighborhoods, and that allows the ability to build the northern connection.

Freight rail traffic from the west headed for St. Paul should continue to travel through the Kenilworth Corridor in Minneapolis unless and until such time as a viable form of mass transit displaces it. The Task Force recognizes that other entities are evaluating the use of the Kenilworth Corridor to be used for mass transit. This Task Force recommends that these entities also evaluate other corridors, specifically the Highway 100 right-of-way be evaluated for mass transit.

The City should proceed with negotiating with all relevant parties to effect the above, seek funding from possible sources, conduct environmental studies, prepare plans to mitigate impact of increases in rail traffic, evaluate structural capacity and safety of existing railroad infrastructure, and implement a "quiet zone".

If at a future date, it is determined that the Kenilworth Corridor is the most feasible route for mass transit and that freight rail and a mass transit system cannot coexist in that corridor, freight rail traffic will be re-routed through St. Louis Park. This is to be accomplished by constructing a northerly connection on the Golden Auto Site and a connection on the iron triangle property. All environmental mitigation must be completed according to the environmental studies prior to re-routing.

The City Council should re-evaluate this strategy if significant changes in rail traffic patterns occur.

Position Statement
Agreement and Understanding of Affected Neighborhoods
of
The St. Louis Park Railroad Advisory Task Force

Proposed Strategy Plan

Based on all material reviewed, the St. Louis Park Railroad Advisory Task Force recommends that the City of St. Louis Park Council initiate the following actions:

Immediate Action

1. The Twin Cities & Western Railroad Company's freight rail traffic to and from the terminals in St. Paul will continue to be routed over its present course through the Kenilworth Corridor.
2. Negotiation of an agreement between the City of St. Louis Park, the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority, Canadian Pacific Railway, Burlington Northern Santa Fe, and Twin Cities & Western Railroad to maintain TC&W St. Paul freight rail traffic through Kenilworth unless and until such time as freight rail is displaced by some means of mass transit. The agreement must contain the following elements in order to permit re-routing of traffic from Kenilworth to St. Louis Park:
 - In order to trigger re-routing of freight rail traffic, a study must be completed that evaluates other corridors (specifically including the Highway 100 corridor with an eastbound connection either via the Burlington Northern Santa Fe right-of-way, or the I-394 right-of-way). The study must identify the Kenilworth Corridor as the most feasible route for mass-transit.
 - The means of mass transit must physically displace freight rail traffic (light rail transit, heritage trolley, express busway, etc.). Commuter rail is not included in this definition since commuter trains use the same infrastructure as freight rail trains. The study must further conclude that there is no reasonable way to accommodate both freight rail and mass transit within the Kenilworth Corridor in order to trigger re-routing.
 - The mass transit must be a significant form of regional mass transit capable of transporting large numbers of commuters between Minneapolis and the southwest suburbs or greater areas. Transportation intended for recreational use is excluded.
 - In order to implement mass transit in Kenilworth, the project must include sufficient funds to pay for the following items:
 - a) Noise, safety, and additional environmental mitigation of the segments in St. Louis Park that will be exposed to increases in rail traffic to the levels defined by the environmental studies performed under items #10 and #11 below.
 - b) The construction of a south connection, if such has not already been constructed, in compliance with the most feasible routing alternative determined per paragraph 3 of this document, if necessary for freight rail traffic to reach Savage.
 - c) The construction of a north connection across the Golden Auto Site, and a connection to the BNSF line on the iron-triangle property, if necessary to permit freight rail traffic to reach St. Paul.

3. Completion of a study reviewing the engineering and financial feasibility of the construction of the south connection. The major components of the study shall include:
 - Real estate purchases and business relocations;
 - Impact to Methodist Hospital by an at-grade crossing of Louisiana Avenue;
- Identifying the environmental impacts to the adjacent communities, and determining the route that has the minimum impact to these communities;
- Evaluating alternatives to assure that a north connection across the Golden Auto Site can still be funded and constructed if the south connection is built;
- Evaluating the alternatives to assure that the south connection will allow rail traffic to continue through the Kenilworth route if a north connection is also constructed without obstructing the HCRRA transit corridor;
- Conducting neighborhood meetings to present the study to the affected neighborhoods to gain their support.

The study should consider the following options:

- a) A direct connection to the north-south track from the east-west track in the north-east corner of the industrial park (Avoids all at-grade crossings, and removes the entire existing switching wye).
 - b) Extending the west-end of the existing switching wye track to connect to the east-west track (Includes an at-grade crossing of Louisiana Avenue and creates a new crossing of Oxford Street. Includes removal of the north leg of the switching wye).
 - c) Extend the south leg of the existing switching wye track to connect to the east-west track east of the Louisiana Avenue bridge (Creates an at-grade crossing of Oxford Street and includes the removal of the north leg and west stub of the switching wye).
 - d) By any other feasible means.
4. If the study described under #3 above finds a south connection to be feasible, purchase right-of-way for the connection including business condemnation/relocation, and construct the south connection according to the recommendation of the study.
 5. If and when a south connection is built, negotiate an agreement with the Canadian Pacific and Twin Cities & Western Railroad Companies that would grant the City the power to review potential changes in rail traffic patterns and/or rail users over this proposed rail connection. The City would reserve the right to deny additional rail traffic if alternative routes were available, or to require the operating rail company to fund mitigation to maintain environmental impacts at their existing levels.
 6. If and when a south connection is built, negotiate an agreement with the Canadian Pacific Railway to facilitate the removal of track and abandonment of railroad rights-of-way on the portions of the existing switching wye that are to be removed (as defined by the study under item #3 above). This agreement must also provide for eliminating rail service to any businesses served by the wye track.
 7. Construction of a switching yard outside of the cities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, and Minnetonka and removal of all sidetrack through these cities (with the exception of the sidetrack to remain for run-around/passing track as determined by the study under item #3 above).

If public funding subsidizes construction of the switching yard, negotiate an agreement that requires rail car storage and blocking operations to be performed outside of the cities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins and Minnetonka. The agreement will allow no exceptions based upon future railroad growth or infrastructure deployment. The agreement must prohibit storage, blocking or switching of railroad cars on the run-around/passing track, and all other locations in these cities.

8. Acquisition and environmental cleanup of all or part of the Golden Auto Site through the use of the Hennepin County Environmental Response Fund. The property would be platted such that sufficient right-of-way in the southeast portion of the site would be owned by the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority and is reserved for a future rail interconnect. The remainder, if any, of the site would either be retained as a potential transit station site, or sold for private development, as determined by the City of St. Louis Park.
9. Negotiate an agreement with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to reconstruct the Highway 100 freight rail bridge if the Highway 100 reconstruction project is implemented before such time as freight rail is displaced in the Kenilworth Corridor.

This agreement should also include a provision where if the freight rail is eliminated from Kenilworth prior to the Highway 100 reconstruction project, the money savings realized by MnDOT to avoid constructing a freight rail bridge (including any temporary construction elements) will be completely turned over to fund railroad mitigation in St. Louis Park.

10. Complete an environmental analysis of the rail segments in St. Louis Park and Minneapolis that will accomplish the following:
 - Identify and model the environmental impacts of the existing and proposed rail traffic (including, but not limited to, impacts on the residential homes adjacent to the track; the impact of the railroad on the St. Louis Park High School; air, noise, and vibration impact; and street-railroad crossing impacts);
 - Study the environmental impacts along the Kenilworth corridor and determine the appropriate mitigation measures for railroad and/or other transit activities;
 - Study wetland and wildlife impacts from proposed rail construction and rail traffic;
 - Identify a series of mitigation steps that can be implemented based on levels of impact; (including but not limited to: upgrade track to seamless rail, landscaping, earthen berms, noise walls, home and school soundproofing, and removal of homes)
 - Develop a finance plan and identify funding source(s) for the various mitigation steps.
11. Assist the St. Louis Park School Board in assessing safety, noise, or other impacts introduced by additional rail traffic to the High School and Peter Hobart School. The assessment must include analysis of pedestrian and vehicular safety at the grade crossing of Dakota Avenue and Library Lane. The study should recommend physical mitigation measures, and revisions to school evacuation procedures. Identified mitigation measures must be implemented prior to freight rail traffic being re-routed through St. Louis Park.
12. Evaluate the existing St. Louis Park Railroad infrastructure for assessment of structural capacity (i.e. rail, bridge and street crossings). Compare the findings to the short-term and long-term expected railroad traffic projections, and recommend structural improvements if required. This assessment should be performed by an outside party, and not by the railroad companies. The railroad companies or parties not including the City of St. Louis Park will be responsible for funding the required improvements.

13. The City of St. Louis Park, in cooperation with the Cities of Minneapolis, Hopkins, and Minnetonka should evaluate the implementation of a southwest regional “Quiet Zone”. The evaluation should analyze the existing at-grade intersections and determine which improvements would be cost-effective to implement a “Quiet Zone” according to the new FRA Regulations. The key elements in the evaluation should be:
 - Pedestrian safety considerations (including evaluating the installation of fencing along the tracks adjacent to residential areas and pedestrian bridges at appropriate locations)
 - Noise impacts of crossing bells vs. train horns.
 - Cost estimates and identification of funding sources.
 - Physical improvements (street closure, signal installation, safety barriers, and other geometric improvements).
14. The City of St. Louis Park should distribute this Official Position Statement to MnDOT, Met Council, and any other entities considering light rail transit, busways, and other mass transit options in the Kenilworth Corridor. These parties must be fully informed of the conditions that the City of St. Louis Park has established concerning re-routing of freight rail traffic through their communities, including the requirement to fund infrastructure improvements as well as the identified noise, safety, and other environmental mitigation measures.

Future Action

The Task Force is not in favor of accepting additional freight rail traffic over the any rail track segment in St. Louis Park as a result of re-routing the traffic; however, the Task Force has identified possible scenarios that may occur at some future date. Each scenario requires a specific set of actions if the above Immediate Actions are implemented.

Kenilworth Corridor – Transit Displacement

If freight rail is displaced by some viable form of mass transit (defined by #2 under Immediate Action above) freight rail traffic will be eliminated from the Kenilworth Corridor and re-routed on the north-south line through St. Louis Park. In such case, the Task Force recommends the following actions:

1. Implement the environmental mitigation measures that are recommended by the studies defined under items #10 and #11 under Immediate Actions.
2. Construct a connection to the north with a bridge over the HCRRA right-of-way to provide a through movement for the TC&W St. Paul trains. A southern connection must be in place or be constructed concurrently to assure that rail traffic to/from Savage does not back-up into the northern neighborhoods.
3. Construct the iron triangle connection.
4. Remove the existing freight rail track in the Kenilworth corridor.
5. Remove the existing freight rail track east of the north/south line in St. Louis Park, including the full length of the run-around/passing track and Bass Lake Yard. Canadian Pacific Railway rights-of-way will be purchased by Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority.

6. If the freight rail traffic is re-routed prior to the reconstruction of Highway 100, the cost savings realized by MnDOT to construct a bridge for light rail transit in lieu of a freight rail bridge will directly be passed along to St. Louis Park to fund environmental mitigation.

Commuter Railroad from the South

If the Dan Patch commuter rail project is implemented, the iron triangle connection would be constructed to carry commuter trains into Minneapolis. If this occurs while freight rail traffic is still being routed through Kenilworth, the Task Force recommends that the City of St. Louis Park take the following action:

1. Maintain the Twin Cities & Western Railroad Company's freight rail traffic to and from the terminals in St. Paul over its present course through the Kenilworth Corridor, until such time as that freight rail traffic is displaced by mass transit.

Whether freight rail traffic is being routed through Kenilworth or St. Louis Park, the Task Force recommends that the City of St. Louis Park take the following action:

1. St. Louis Park City work closely with MnDOT on the planning of the commuter rail line to assure that the appropriate mitigation measures are implemented to limit the effects of the environmental impacts from the projected rail traffic.

Rail Traffic from West to North

The Official Position Statement of the St. Louis Park Railroad Advisory Task Force is based on the anticipated shift of the Twin Cities & Western Railroad's river traffic from its current market to the north (Camden), to the south (Savage). It is possible that economic conditions may change and the Camden traffic may continue or increase. If the Camden traffic increases and/or if other new rail traffic coming from the west to the north exceeds projected volumes, the following actions may be taken:

1. If conditions reach unreasonable levels, the neighborhood leaders from the southern affected neighborhoods (Brooklawns, Elmwood, South Oak Hill, Creekside, and Brookside), will contact the St. Louis Park City Council to initiate action.
2. Based on the severity of the problem and the anticipated duration, the City Council may implement one of the following series of actions:
 - A) Serious situation/Long-term Duration:
 - Request MnDOT, the HCRRA, and/or the railroad companies to construct a northern connection on the Golden Auto Site with a bridge over the HCRRA right-of-way.
 - Implement environmental mitigation along segments with additional rail traffic.
 - B) Serious situation/Temporary Situation:
 - City staff will work with TC&W to conduct operations in such a way where the impacts are minimal to the adjacent residents.
 - C) Less than serious situation/Long-term Duration:
 - City staff will work with TC&W on minimizing impacts to adjacent neighborhoods
 - Implement environmental mitigation measures, if necessary
 - D) Less than serious situation/Temporary Situation:
 - City staff will work with TC&W on minimizing impacts to adjacent neighborhoods

The St. Louis Park City Council will interpret the situation according to the above criteria.

Rail Traffic from South to East

Although there is no indication that freight rail traffic would be introduced on this path, the Task Force recommends the following actions to prevent northbound trains from using a new south or north interconnect to connect to the east-west line and proceed through Kenilworth. These actions would only be necessary if this additional traffic could not be obstructed by the agreement defined under Item #5 under the Immediate Actions.

1. Study the environmental impacts from the additional traffic to determine if impacts from projected volumes would exceed reasonable levels.
2. If the conditions reach unreasonable levels, The City Council may take one of the following actions, based on the severity of the problem and the anticipated duration:
 - A) Serious situation/Long-term Duration:
 - Study alternate routes to determine if there is a feasible route that could entirely avoid, or minimize the additional rail traffic through St. Louis Park. The selected route should not include an east connection in St. Louis Park, or allow trains to perform switching movements that involve stopping or backing of trains.
 - Implement environmental mitigation on segments with increased rail traffic.
 - B) Serious situation/Temporary Situation:
 - City staff will work with the operating rail company to conduct operations in such a way where the impacts are minimal to the adjacent residents.
 - C) Less than serious situation/Long-term Duration:
 - City staff will work with the operating rail company to minimize impacts to adjacent neighborhoods.
 - Implement environmental mitigation measures on segments with increased rail traffic.
 - D) Less than serious situation/Temporary Situation:
 - City staff will work with the operating rail company to minimize impacts to adjacent neighborhoods

The St. Louis Park City Council will interpret the situation according to the above criteria.

Attachments to this Position Statement

- (A) List of Advisory Task Force members;
 - (B) Chronology of meetings, field trips and neighborhood meetings since the initiation of the Task Force;
 - (C) Financing Plan.
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St. Louis Park Railroad Advisory Task Force Members List

Neighborhoods

Birchwood: P. Gardner/S. Silvernail
Blackstone: Gerri Nassen
Bronx Park: Ruth Bergene
Brookside: Dee Welsh
Brooklawns: Scott Lorentz
Cedarhurst: Jerry Stamm
Eliot View: Tom Powers
Elmwood: John Basill
Lake Forest: Lynne Carper
Bronx Park: Kim Daniels
Sorenson: Jami LaPray
Minneapolis: George Puzak

City of St. Louis Park Staff

Councilmembers: Sue Sanger
Sue Santa
Chris Nelson
City Manager: Charlie Meyer
Planning: Judie Erickson
School Board: Joel Koch

Consultants

Project Managers: Dick Koppy/Lee Koppy
Rail Design: Roger Anderson
Environmental: Eric Hansen
Noise: David Braslau

Hennepin County

Commissioner: Gail Dorfman/Kate Walker
HCRRA: Gary Erickson/Warren Potter

Other Affected Cities

Minneapolis: John Wertjes
Minnetonka: Desyl Peterson

Railroad Companies

TC&W: Dan Rickel
Canadian Pacific: Mark Nordling
BNSF: Brian Sweeney

MnDOT

Railroad/Waterway: Robert Swanson
Hwy 100 Design: Wayne Norris

Multi-Modal: Kate Garwood
Commuter Rail: Gabe Guevara

St. Louis Park Railroad Advisory Task Force

Chronology of Meetings

Meeting 1, April 25, 2000	Intro to Phase 2 Study
Meeting 2, June 8, 2000	Intro to Environmental Consultant Voicemail "Hotline" Transcriptions Busway Presentations Highway 100 Reconstruction "Blocking" Operations Feasibility Studies
Cedarhurst Neighborhood Mtg June 14, 2000	Informational Meeting about Rail Study
Meeting 3, June 27, 2000	Commuter Rail Presentation Noise Study Scope/Schedule Field Trip Preparation
Field Trip, July 13, 2000	Tour of Key Locations along Railroad Corridors in St. Louis Park and Minneapolis
or Field Trip, July 18, 2000	Tour of Key Locations along Railroad Corridors in St. Louis Park and Minneapolis
Meeting 4, July 25, 2000	Current and Projected Rail Traffic Volumes Noise Study Scope/Locations MnDOT Model Planning Unit Dan Patch Corridor Coordination
Meeting 5, August 22, 2000	Results of Noise Study Feasibility Study Findings for North Connection
Meeting 6, September 26, 2000	Results of Noise Study Feasibility Study Findings for North and South Connections
Meeting 7, October 24, 2000	At-Grade Crossing Upgrades Decision Package Discussion

Meeting 8, November 28, 2000	Traffic Volumes for each of the Options Environmental Impacts from Rail Traffic Environmental Mitigation Measures Decision Package Discussion
South Oak Hill Neighborhood, December 14, 2000	Discuss Blocking Operation and Impacts
Meeting 9, December 19, 2000	Presentation of 3 Decision Package Alternatives Decision Package Discussion
Meeting 10, January 23, 2001	Round-Table Discussion of Options Consensus Agreement Items
Meeting 11, February 27, 2001	Discussion of the Interconnects Establishing Official Positions of the Task Force
Meeting 12, March 27, 2001	Drafting of the Position Statement
Meeting 13, April 24, 2001	Further revisions to the Position Statement Drafting of the Position Statement Summary
Meeting 14, May 22, 2001	Final revisions to the Position Statement and Summary and Identifying Follow-up Actions

* Please note all meetings listed above were meetings of the St. Louis Park Railroad Advisory Task Force, unless noted otherwise.