



Extending TRACKS

Issue 3 | July 2013

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August is decision time for “big three” issues

August is decision time for three major issues facing the Southwest LRT Project. After 11 public meetings that drew more than 800 attendees, Metropolitan Council members are expected to vote in late August on how to resolve the location of freight rail in the design of the project, adjustments to the alignment in Eden Prairie and where to build the operations and maintenance facility.

“The public is anxious to learn whether their homes or businesses would be impacted either by a full or partial acquisition depending on proposed adjustments to the existing planned Southwest LRT route and freight rail location. We owe it to them to make

a decision and to keep the project on track to begin construction in 2015,” said Mark Fuhrmann, program director for light rail projects at Metro Transit.

In the fall, project staff will present municipal consent plans for review by Hennepin County and the five host cities with the goal of completing the municipal consent approval process by the end of the year. Here is what will be in the municipal consent plans:

- Station locations
- Location of LRT tracks above, below or at ground level
- General dimension, elevation or alignment of routes and crossings
- Location and length of the LRT line

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Attendees at June station location open houses submitted comments by filling out comment cards and by attaching sticky notes to maps. More than 600 people attended two freight rail and six station location open houses in June, submitting more than 400 comments that will help inform project staff and engineers as they prepare recommendations, committees as they provide feedback and Metropolitan Council members as they make key decisions in August. Comments also may be emailed to swlrt@metrotransit.org.

Public meetings on freight rail set for July 17 & 18

Project staff will present cost estimates and information on a range of engineering concepts at public meetings July 17 in Minneapolis and July 18 in St. Louis Park.

For meeting times, locations and directions, see last page of this newsletter.

Like the two June 13 public open houses on the freight rail issue, the July 17–18 public meetings will begin with open houses. People can view maps and artists’ renderings and provide written feedback. They can also talk with project staff about the engineering concepts.

Six concepts will be presented for keeping freight traffic in the Kenilworth Corridor of Minneapolis where light rail tracks would be built. Two additional concepts will be presented for relocating freight traffic to rebuilt freight tracks on elevated berms in St. Louis Park. Only one concept will be chosen. Following the open houses, design and engineering director Jim Alexander will deliver the presentation. A facilitated question-and-answer period will follow.

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Recommendations to be presented July 25

In late July, project staff will provide cost estimates for the concepts presented to date for resolving the three big issues facing Southwest LRT and make recommendations.

The rollout will begin at a July 25 evening joint meeting of the Community Advisory Committee and Business Advisory Committee at Beth El Synagogue in St. Louis Park. This meeting is open to the public to observe. For meeting time, address and directions, see the last page of this newsletter.

Next Steps

Aug. 7: Staff will make the same presentation to the Southwest Corridor Management Committee, an advisory body made up of mayors of corridor cities, Hennepin County commissioners and others.

Aug. 14: The Southwest Corridor Management Committee will meet again to discuss their recommendations to the Metropolitan Council.

Aug. 14: Staff will also make the same presentation to the Met Council.

Aug. 26: The Met Council's Transportation Committee will review public feedback and the Southwest Project Office's recommendation, and vote on a recommendation to the full Met Council.

Aug. 28: The Metropolitan Council will vote on the recommendations after receiving feedback from all committees, the public, earlier open houses and written comments.

The Southwest LRT Community Outreach Coordinators are the first point of contact for members of the public, community organizations and corridor businesses. To learn more about outreach activities and get in touch with the outreach coordinator for your area, visit the Public Involvement page of the project website at www.swlrt.org.



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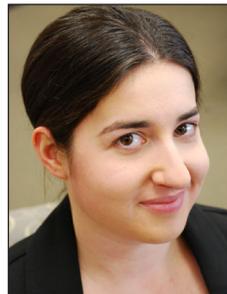


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Electronic newsletters

To receive the latest Southwest LRT Project news, please sign up to receive newsletters by email. Go to www.swlrt.org and enter your email in the white ENewsletter Sign Up box at the bottom of the home page.

Corridor-wide support for LRT voiced at freight rail open houses



During a freight rail open house on June 13, Southwest LRT design and engineering director Jim Alexander (center) explains one of the eight engineering concepts being evaluated for resolving the location of freight rail in the design of the project.

More than 300 people attended two June 13 freight rail open houses, expressing corridor-wide support for light rail transit. A couple of over-arching themes emerged. The public urged minimizing property acquisitions and selecting the best investment versus the least costly option.

Regarding the six co-location engineering concepts presented for keeping freight rail traffic in the Kenilworth

corridor of Minneapolis where LRT tracks would be built, two themes emerged:

- The two tunnel concepts – one shallow tunnel or twin deep-bore tunnels – are regarded as a win-win for both Minneapolis and St. Louis Park.
- Minimizing impacts to parkland and trails is desired.

As for the two relocation engineering concepts presented to reroute freight traffic onto a rebuilt Canadian Pacific Railway north-south track known as the Minneapolis, Northfield & Southern line through St. Louis Park, three themes emerged:

- Minimizing impacts to schools and local businesses is desired.
- Increasing the elevation of freight trains through St. Louis Park is perceived as a safety issue.
- Freight structures are viewed as dividing the community.

Project staff will provide cost estimates for all eight engineering concepts at the freight rail public meetings on July 17 and 18. See last page for meeting time, location and address.

More Information

For more information about the six co-location concepts and two relocation concepts, see the May 28 news release on the News page of the project website at www.swlrt.org.

Or watch staff's May 28 presentation to the St. Louis Park City Council: <http://youtu.be/tt-3W5NOpcg>.

Project presentation to the Business Advisory Committee, June 6, available on the Committees page of the project website at www.swlrt.org.

The screenshot shows the Southwest LRT website with the 'TRANSPORTATION' menu item selected. The main heading is 'PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT' with the sub-heading 'Engagement with the public is the key to improving transit service'. Below this, there are sections for 'Community Outreach Coordinators', 'Public Meetings', and 'Freight Rail Co-location/Relocation Community Meetings (July 2013)'. A sidebar on the left contains links for Project Facts, Route, Stations, Public Involvement, Environmental, Project Partners, and Committees. At the bottom, there are links for Contact Southwest LRT, Southwest LRT News, and Project Funding.

The Southwest LRT website – www.swlrt.org – offers the latest news and information about the project. Find out about community events in your area, download maps and presentation materials, read news releases and connect with the project through our team of full-time outreach coordinators.

More than 210,000 jobs are located within one-half mile of the proposed Southwest LRT stations, with 60,000 new jobs projected by 2030 – making this the most jobs-rich corridor in the state.

Site of maintenance shop narrowed to two locations Eden Prairie, Hopkins sites' strengths and weaknesses weighed

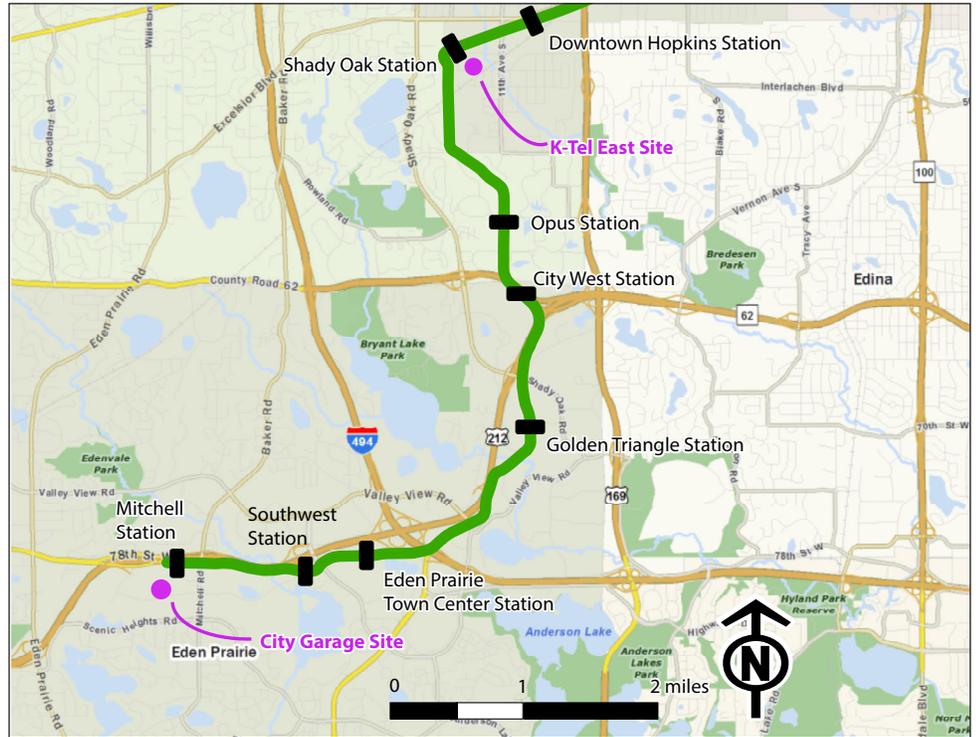
Project engineers have narrowed the list of operations and maintenance facility (OMF) locations to two sites: one in Eden Prairie and one in Hopkins.

The two finalists are the city garage site in Eden Prairie and the K-Tel East site in Hopkins.

Both sites have their strengths and weaknesses, as did all locations that designers considered.

Cost estimates for both the Eden Prairie and the Hopkins sites are being prepared and will be presented at the July 25 joint Business and Community Advisory Committee meeting. See last page of newsletter for time, location, address and directions.

For information about the other sites eliminated from consideration for an operation and maintenance facility, see slides 20–47 of the PowerPoint presentation to the June 27 Community Advisory Committee, available on the www.swlrt.org website.



Eden Prairie: City Garage Site

Strengths:

- Consistent with land-use guidelines and zoning regulations
- Opportunity to include station and park-and-ride facilities on a single site

Weaknesses:

- Site dependent on Eden Prairie alignment
- Wetland impacts
- Noise and vibration impact concern to Eaton property
- End-of-line location poses operational limitations
- Requires coordination with station and park-and-ride facilities

Hopkins: K-Tel East Site

Strengths:

- Consistent with land-use guidelines and zoning regulations
- Operator relief access
- Freight rail and proposed LRT alignment buffer south and west property borders
- Redevelopment potential of remnant areas

Weaknesses:

- Wetland impacts
- Flood-prone conditions
- Geotechnical considerations in southern portion of site (i.e., the grade would need to be raised)



Upcoming Events

July 17

Freight rail open house 4:30–7:00 p.m., Jones-Harrison residence, 3700 Cedar Lake Avenue, Minneapolis.

July 18

Freight rail open house 4:30–7:00 p.m., St. Louis Park High School, 6425 W 33rd St., St. Louis Park.



Council and committee meetings: The public is invited to observe the following meetings, but there will be no opportunity for public testimony on issues related to Southwest LRT.

July 25

Community and Business Advisory Committees Joint Meeting 6:00–9:00 p.m., Beth El Synagogue, 5225 Barry St. W, St. Louis Park. Project staff will present project cost estimates and recommendations.

August 7

Southwest LRT Corridor Management Committee 8:30–11:30 a.m., St. Louis Park City Hall Council Chambers, 5005 Minnetonka Blvd. Project staff will present project cost estimates and recommendations.

August 14

Corridor Management Committee 12:30–2:30 p.m., St. Louis Park City Hall Council Chambers, 5005 Minnetonka Blvd. The Committee will reconvene to discuss project cost estimates and recommendations to the Metropolitan Council.

August 26

Transportation Committee Meeting 4:00 p.m., Metro Transit Heywood Offices, 560 6th Ave. N, Minneapolis. The Metropolitan Council’s Transportation Committee will forward cost estimates and recommendations to the Council.

August 28

Metropolitan Council Meeting 3:00 p.m., Council Chambers, 390 Robert St. N, St. Paul. The Council will vote on recommendations after considering feedback received to date.

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About the project

The Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) project (Green Line Extension) will operate from downtown Minneapolis through the southwestern suburban cities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie, passing in close proximity to the city of Edina. The proposed alignment is primarily at-grade and includes 17 new stations and approximately 15.8 miles of double track.

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, the Eden Prairie Center Mall, and the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes. Ridership in 2030 is projected at 29,660 weekday passengers. The project will interline with Central Corridor LRT (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 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 (HCRRA).