

1 Purpose and Need

The purpose and need statement for the proposed Southwest LRT (METRO Green Line Extension) Project (Southwest LRT), proposed to be an extension of the METRO Green Line, remains the same as that stated in Chapter 1, Section 1.3 of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS), as repeated in Sections 1.1 and 1.2 of this Supplemental Draft EIS.¹

1.1 Project Purpose

The purposes for enhancing transit service in the Southwest LRT Project study area are summarized as follows:

- The Southwest LRT Project will improve access and mobility to the jobs and activity centers in the Minneapolis central business district, as well as along the entire length of the corridor for reverse-commute trips to the expanding suburban employment centers.
- The Southwest LRT Project will provide a competitive, cost-effective travel option that will attract choice riders to the transit system. The competitive and reliable travel time for the Southwest LRT Project is attributed to the diagonal nature of the line compared to the north-south/east-west orientation of the roadway network and to the increasing levels of congestion of the roadway network.
- The Southwest LRT Project would be part of the region's system of transitways integrated to support regional transportation efficiency. Since the late 1990s, the Southwest LRT Project has been identified by the Metropolitan Council (Council) as warranting a high level of transit investment to respond to increasing travel demand in a highly congested area of the region. Due to congestion levels on the roadway network, speed and use limitations of the shoulder bus operations, and capacity constraints in downtown Minneapolis, a bus option is limited in its ability to adequately serve the travel demand and to provide reliable travel times.

1.2 Project Need

The transportation issues facing the Southwest LRT Project study area illustrate the need for improved mobility, accessibility, and system linkages to the activity centers in the study area through high-capacity transit service. The Southwest LRT Project is one of several transit corridors identified in the Council's 2040 Transportation Policy Plan as a "transitway expansion assumed to be funded within the current revenue scenario." The Southwest LRT Project study area continues to experience increases in population and employment with limited additional traffic capacity on existing streets and highways, resulting in increased travel time, delays, and air pollution. Portions of the Southwest LRT Project study area are already densely developed. New development and redevelopment occurring in the study area is expected to generate increases in travel demand.

Three primary factors make the Southwest LRT corridor important for people who live and work in the southwest metropolitan area: (1) declining mobility; (2) limited competitive, reliable transit options for choice riders and people who rely on public transportation, including reverse-commute riders; and (3) need to develop and maintain a balanced and economically competitive multimodal freight system.

Sections 1.3.2.1 through 1.3.2.3 of the Draft EIS provide additional information on the need for the proposed Southwest LRT Project.

¹ The United States Army Corps of Engineers has adopted the following overall project purpose for the Southwest LRT Project that it will use to direct the range of reasonable alternatives to be considered in the Clean Water Act Section 404 permit application process: The overall project purpose is to provide high-capacity transit service in the Southwest LRT Project study area.