Meeting objectives and structure

JANUARY 2014

MEETING OBJECTIVES

1. To build on previous meetings and conversations and explore the key issues about SWLRT in greater depth and even more meaningful conversation.

2. To solicit input on the scope of reports that have been commissioned that can genuinely inform the completion of those reports:

- Freight rail location analysis
- Water resources evaluation
- Landscaping/greenscaping inventory

MEETING STRUCTURE

- 5:00–5:30 Open House
- 5:30–5:50 Introduction & Project Update
- 5:50–7:20 Facilitated Conversations & Report Out
- 7:20–7:30 Wrap Up

GROUND RULES

- Share your thoughts openly, honestly and respectfully
- Use your "indoor" voice
- Only one speaker at a time
- Please wait to be recognized before speaking
- Take phone calls outside
- Signs are permitted; remove handles for safety

What is the route of the Southwest LRT?

JANUARY 2014

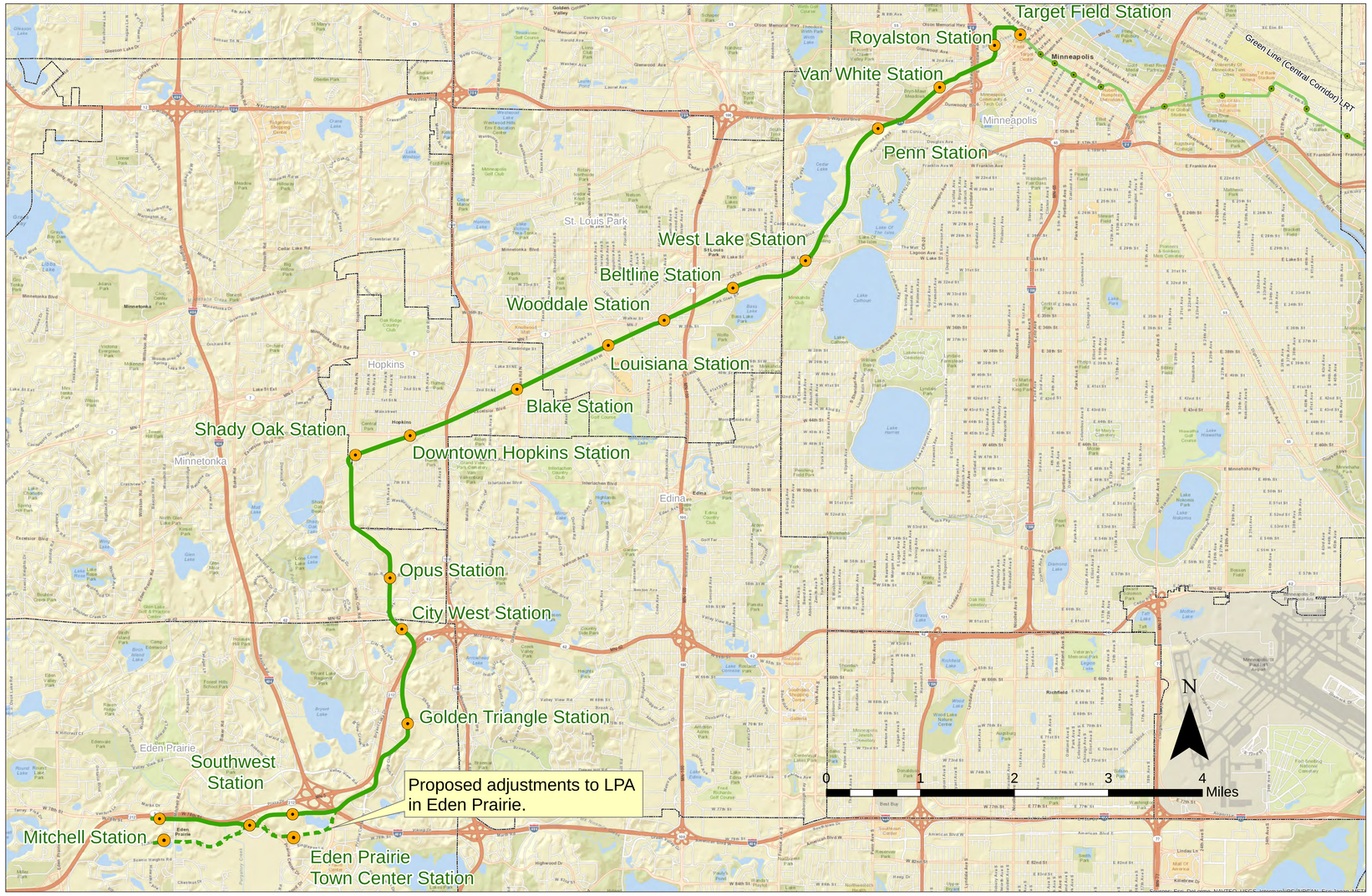
The Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) route for Southwest LRT was selected in 2010 and endorsed by all cities along the route.

Since January 2013, minor adjustments to the LPA alignment have been made in response to public input during the engineering process.

The LPA runs from downtown Minneapolis through the communities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie, passing in close proximity to the city of Edina.

Southwest LRT will interline with Central Corridor LRT (the Green Line) to provide a one-seat ride from Eden Prairie to 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.

Projected ridership in 2030 is 29,660 weekday riders.



- Travel time from Minneapolis to Eden Prairie: 38 minutes
- Current LRT Fares: $1.75 non-peak / $2.25 peak hours

SOUTHWEST
Green Line LRT Extension

How did we get here?

JANUARY 2014

Planning to improve transit in the Southwest Corridor has included collaboration with communities along the corridor and has followed federal and state requirements.

The first studies of Soutwest Corridor transit improvements were developed in the 1980s by Hennepin County.

In 2004, the Metropolitan Council adopted the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan, which envisioned a transitway in the Southwest Corridor.

Hennepin County conducted an Alternatives Analysis of transit improvement options for the Southwest Corridor in 2006/2007.

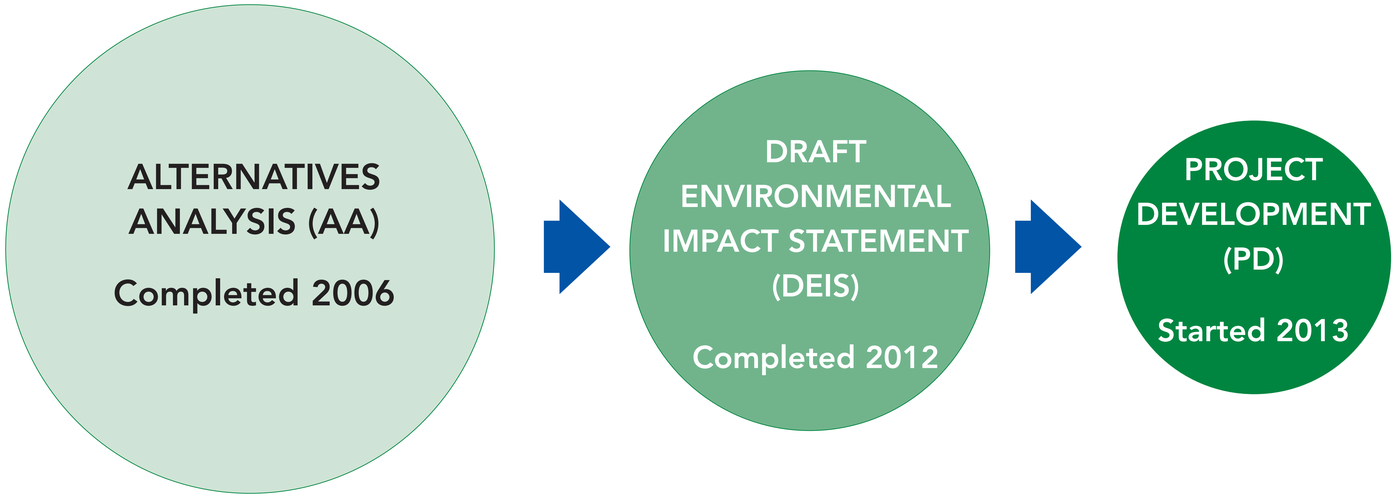
Based on this analysis, Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council identified the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) of light rail transit (LRT) along the proposed route in 2009.

In 2012, the Federal Transit Administration, Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council published the Southwest Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which evaluated the impacts of several project route and mode alternatives.

In January 2013, the Metropolitan Council became the lead agency for the environmental process of the project, and began engineering and design work. The Metropolitan Council reviewed the comments on the DEIS and identified 25 technical issues to be resolved in Project Development.

In 2013, project engineers resolved 23 of the 25 issues. One of the remaining issues is the location of freight rail.

In response to public feedback, Governor Dayton asked the Metropolitan Council to complete additional studies related to freight rail and concerns about the impacts of a shallow LRT tunnel on water quality and vegetation.



AA ACTIVITIES:

Evaluate routes and modes

Select Locally Preferred Alternative

DEIS ACTIVITIES:

Document potential impacts of multiple route and mode alternatives

Seek input from public, local governments and relevant agencies

PD ACTIVITIES:

Initiate engineering and design

Resolve technical issues identified during the DEIS process

Continue environmental process, concluding with Record of Decision

Why not reconsider the "Uptown" route?

JANUARY 2014

Planning for the Southwest LRT line included an Alternatives Analysis that considered several route options. The Alternatives Analysis identified several factors that made the Midtown Greenway and Nicollet Avenue a poor route for Southwest LRT.

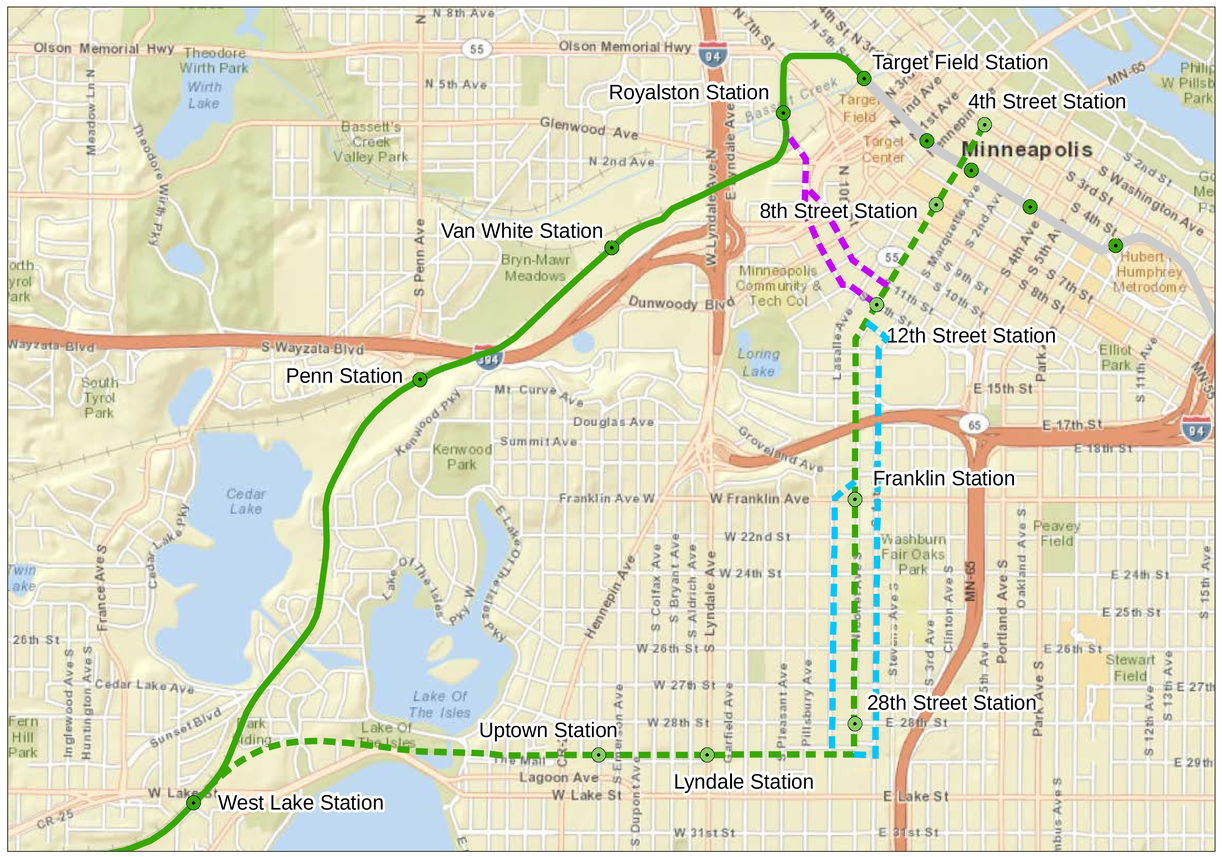
Hennepin County eliminated the Greenway-Nicollet route from further consideration for Southwest LRT. However, other transit options – including streetcar service that would connect to the Southwest LRT line at West Lake Station – are currently being considered for the Midtown Greenway and Nicollet Avenue.

CHALLENGES FOR LRT IN THE MIDTOWN GREENWAY–NICOLLET–UPTOWN ALIGNMENT

Greater construction impacts:
Under both Uptown alternatives, Nicollet Avenue south of Interstate 94 would be closed from Franklin Avenue to 28th Street for approximately two years.

Busy downtown streets and intersections would be ripped up for multiple years for utility relocation and LRT construction.

Higher construction costs:
Construction costs would be $111 million to $180 million higher than for the proposed $1.55 billion design with two shallow LRT tunnels through the Kenilworth Corridor.



The map above shows the Midtown Greenway/Nicollet Avenue alternatives considered (dashed lines) and the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) route (solid line) for the Southwest LRT Project.

Project sponsors studied sub-options for operating light rail at street level or in a shallow tunnel between the Greenway and Franklin Avenue; alternatives for routing trains on or under Blaisdell Avenue or First Avenue South (blue) in that area were also considered. Another sub-option (purple) would have routed trains along 11th and 12th Streets to Royalston Station.

Significant property acquisitions:
Compared to the current route, many more private properties, two-thirds of which are in low-income neighborhoods, would have to be acquired.

More historic and cultural impacts:
Historic properties eligible for or listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and cultural resources such as Orchestra Hall, Peavey Plaza and Westminster Presbyterian Church, would be directly impacted by LRT construction and operation.

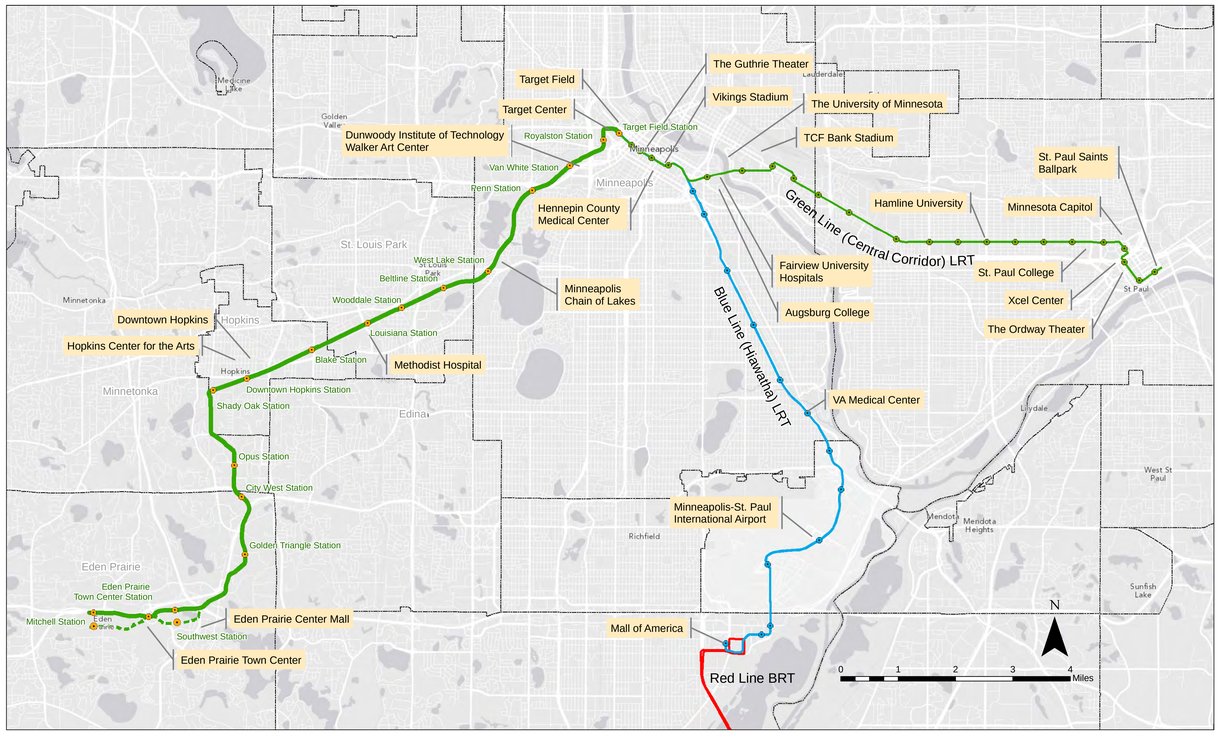
Where can I go on Southwest LRT?

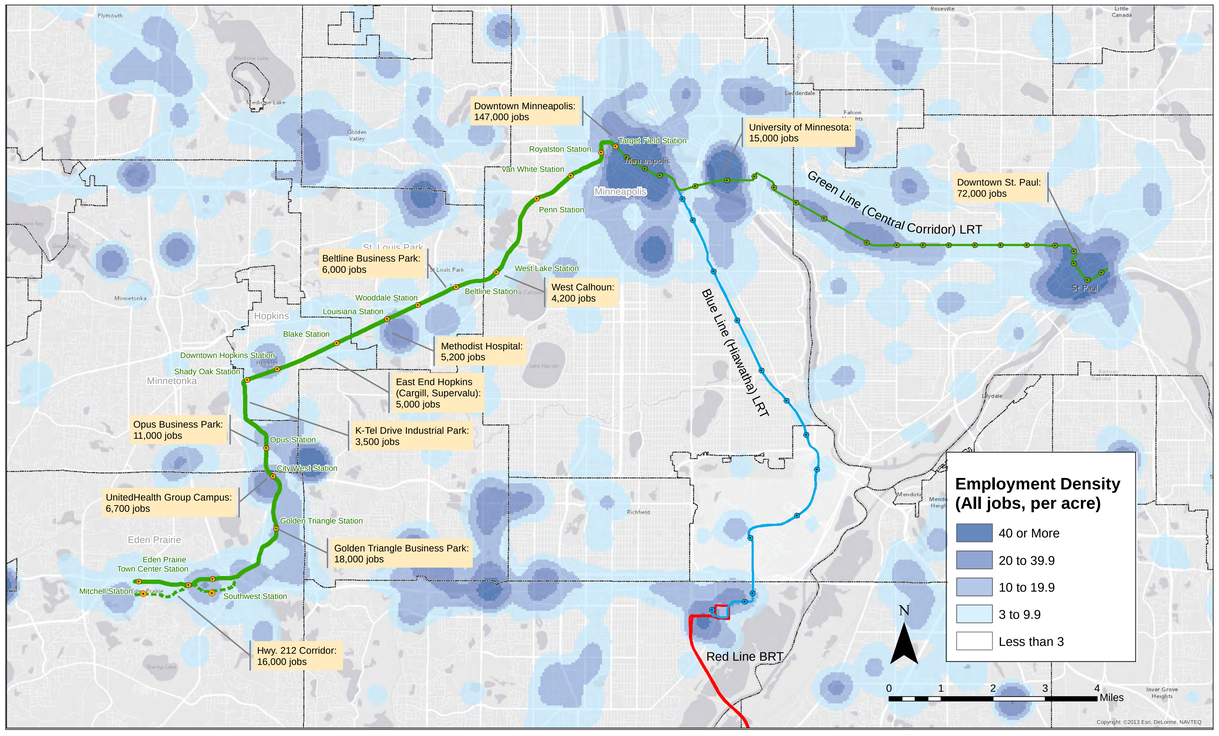
JANUARY 2014

Southwest LRT will connect the Southwest Corridor with key destinations in the Twin Cities region.

Opportunities for entertainment, shopping, health care and education are plentiful along the Southwest LRT and the METRO Green Line:

- Major medical centers including Park Nicollet Methodist Hospital, Hennepin County Medical Center and Fairview University Hospitals.
- Educational institutions including the University of Minnesota, Dunwoody Institute, Augsburg College and St. Paul College.
- Shops, restaurants and theaters of downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul, including the Guthrie and the Ordway.
- Target Field, Target Center, the U of M stadiums, Xcel Center and the new St. Paul Saints and Vikings stadiums.
- The Minneapolis Chain of Lakes.
- Downtown Hopkins and Eden Prairie Town Center.





The Southwest LRT line will serve major job centers in the Southwest Corridor and connect to the University of Minnesota and downtown St. Paul via the METRO Green Line, with no transfer required.

Southwest LRT will provide economical and reliable transportation to people traveling to Minneapolis and St. Paul as well as those who work in the southwestern communities.

Growing numbers of "reverse commuters" who live in the central cities and work in the Southwest Corridor will benefit from access to some of the region's most dynamic employers in health care, technology and manufacturing.

SOUTHWEST
Green Line LRT Extension

Why do ridership projections change during project development?

JANUARY 2014

Ridership for the Southwest LRT will be determined at key project milestones:

- **Alternatives Analysis** Projected ridership is one factor used to compare different project alternatives
- **Locally Preferred Alternative** Ridership projections are submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts program with the Project's application to begin engineering work
- **Project Development** After the project scope has been approved, updated ridership projections are submitted to the FTA when the Project applies for a New Starts final funding grant

Ridership projections are influenced by many factors.

Corridor ridership projections are developed using a model of the Twin Cities' regional transportation system. The LPA forecasts indicated that Southwest LRT would average 29,660 weekday riders in 2030.

This model is updated periodically with new data:

- Regional socio-economic data from the U.S. Census Bureau
- The Metropolitan Council's Travel Behavior Inventory, which collects information on regional travel patterns and the use of transit by Twin Cities residents

Other factors that affect the model and influence ridership projections include:

- Year the data was collected
- Year of projection (2020, 2030, 2040...)
- Changes in the number and location of planned park-and-ride facilities
- Changes in the number of planned stations
- Bus and rail transit connections

Who makes decisions about Southwest LRT?

JANUARY 2014

The Metropolitan Council receives input through advisory and policy committees. Members include business owners, private citizens, government officials and community representatives.

Issue Resolution Teams bring together technical staff from municipalities, the Council and engineering consultants to resolve project development issues.

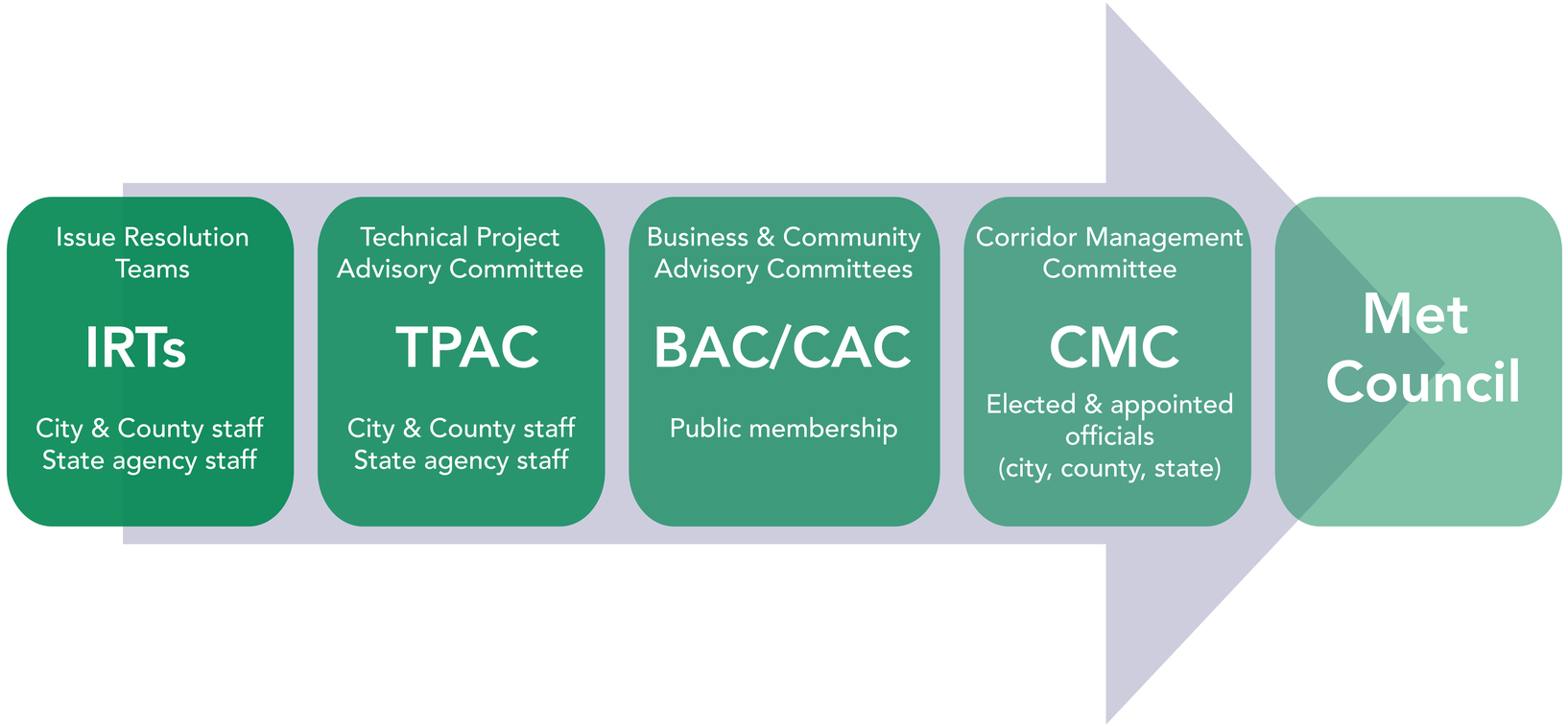
The Technical Project Advisory Committee provides technical input on planning and engineering challenges.

Area residents, business owners and representatives of local interest groups serving on the Business & Community Advisory Committeees meet regularly to review and provide feedback on project activities.

Elected and appointed officials from cities, Hennepin County, the Council and the State of Minnesota provide input on project activities and advise the Metropolitan Council through membership on the Corridor Management Committee.

The Metropolitan Council makes the final decisions on project scope and budget. After approving the scope and budget, the Council will submit plans to the cities and county for municipal consent.

COMMITTEE REVIEW & ISSUE RESOLUTION PROCESS



COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Outreach:
Collect Information

Meetings with neighborhood associations, businesses, interest groups

Interviews

Data Gathering

Engagement:
Receive Public Feedback

Advisory Committee meetings

Business and Community Meetings

Communication:
Share Information

Web site (www.swlrt.org)
Newsletter
Project emails
News releases
Public Open Houses
Twitter

SOUTHWEST
Green Line LRT Extension

What additional analysis is being done?

JANUARY 2014

New studies of freight rail options, water resources and landscaping are now underway in response to local concerns.

The Metropolitan Council selected national engineering firm TranSystems to independently analyze freight rail relocation options and another national engineering firm, Burns & McDonnell, to independently evaluate potential impacts to water resources. Meanwhile, the Southwest LRT Project Office is conducting a landscape inventory.

Draft results of these three efforts are expected to be released in late January 2014 for public comment. Final results will be presented to the public and to the project's advisory committees, and will be reviewed by the Metropolitan Council before it votes on the project scope and budget.

The project office worked closely with technical staff from Hennepin County, the cities of Minneapolis and St. Louis Park, as well as the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and the public in developing the scopes of work.

FREIGHT RAIL

The freight rail location consultant is independently reviewing existing studies and designs, assessing viability of location options already considered and identifying any new viable options based on the freight rail metrics.

WATER RESOURCES

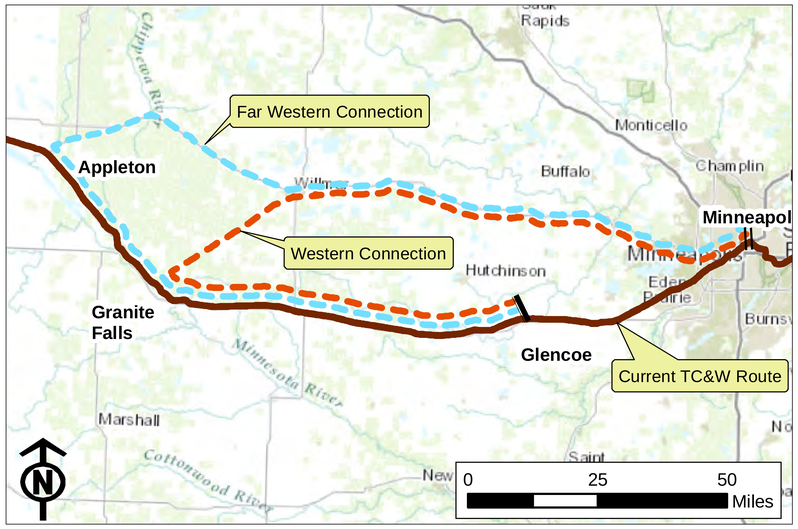
The water resources consultant is independently assessing impacts of LRT construction and operation on water levels and quality within the Kenilworth Corridor.

LANDSCAPING/GREENSCAPING

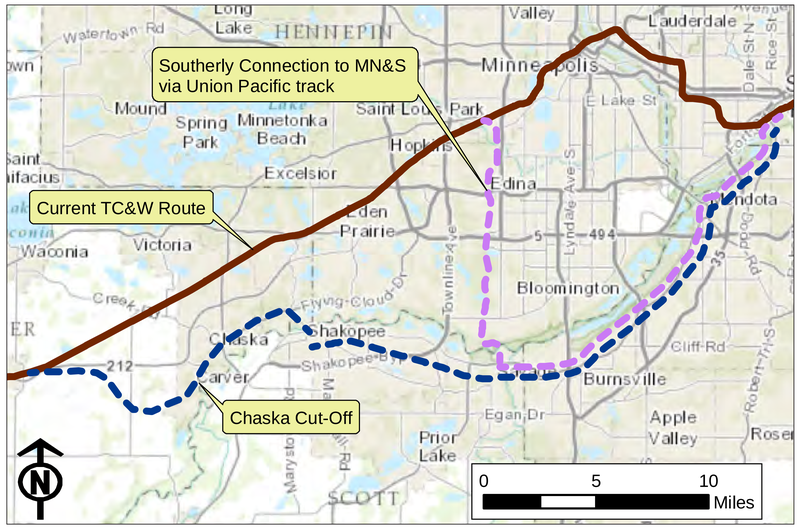
The landscaping/greenscaping inventory is identifying existing trees and vegetation and will identify re-vegetation opportunities with LRT construction in the Kenilworth Corridor.

What is the independent freight rail location study?

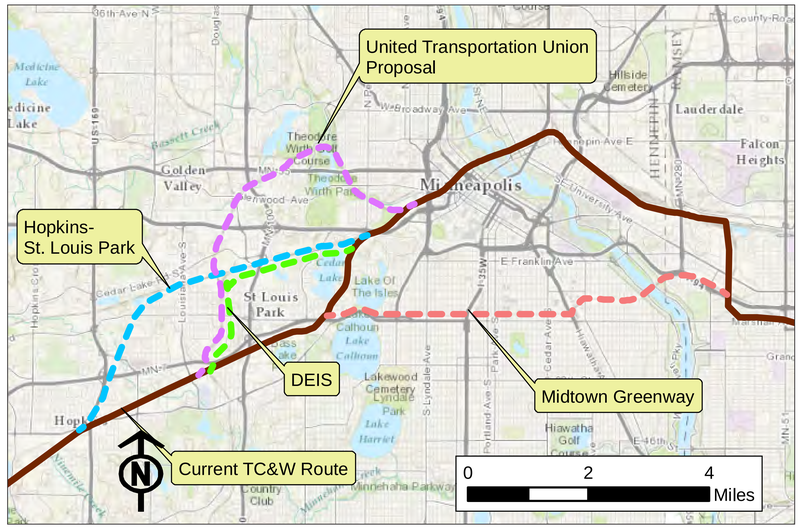
JANUARY 2014



Western Loops: The Appleton/Benson Far Western and Granite Falls/Willmar Western alternatives.



Southern Shifts: The Chaska Cut-Off and the MN&S Southern Connection (via Union Pacific) alternatives.



Other Options: The United Transportation Union alternative in Golden Valley and St. Louis Park; The Midtown Greenway alternative in Minneapolis; The Hopkins/St. Louis Park alternative near the Hwy. 169/Excelsior Blvd. intersection.

The DEIS alternative shown above in St. Louis Park was studied and included as the preferred freight rail option in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

The independent analysis of freight rail alignments is taking a fresh look at previous studies and proposals.

The independent freight rail consultant, TranSystems, is reviewing existing studies and designs, assessing viability of options considered and identifying any new viable options based on the freight rail metrics.

The work is being performed by independent engineering consultant TranSystems and coordinated with Hennepin County, the cities of Minneapolis and St. Louis Park and freight rail operators.

STUDY ACTIVITIES

- Reviewing Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) freight rail relocation design and comments
- Reviewing previous freight rail relocation studies
- Reviewing Southwest LRT Project Office relocation designs
- Interviewing staff of freight railroads, cities and Hennepin County
- Identifying any new viable options based on the freight rail metrics
- Presenting results in February 2014 to the Business Advisory Committee, Community Advisory Committee, Corridor Management Committee and the Metropolitan Council

PREVIOUS STUDIES REVIEWED

- United Transportation Union memoranda (2013)
- Technical memoranda (Short Elliott Hendrickson, 2010 & 2011)
- Evaluation of Twin Cities & Western Railroad routing alternatives (Amfahr Consulting, 2010)
- Twin Cities & Western freight rail realignment study (Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority/TKDA, 2009)
- St. Louis Park railroad study (RLK Associates, 1999)

SOUTHWEST
Green Line LRT Extension

Freight rail study metrics

JANUARY 2014

ELEMENT	METRIC OR MEASUREMENT
Technical Design & Engineering	■ Alignment ■ Horizontal curves/Reverse curves ■ Vertical grade ■ Compensated grade ■ Governing rules & guidelines
Safety Considerations	■ Proximity of track to homes ■ Proximity of track to schools ■ At-grade pedestrian crossings ■ At-grade road crossings
Operational Considerations	■ Train speed ■ Number of trains ■ Existing freight rail customer service impacts
Significant Obstacles to Implementation	■ Utilities ■ Regulatory
Community Impacts	■ Property acquisition ■ Community cohesion
Costs	■ Construction ■ Operations & maintenance

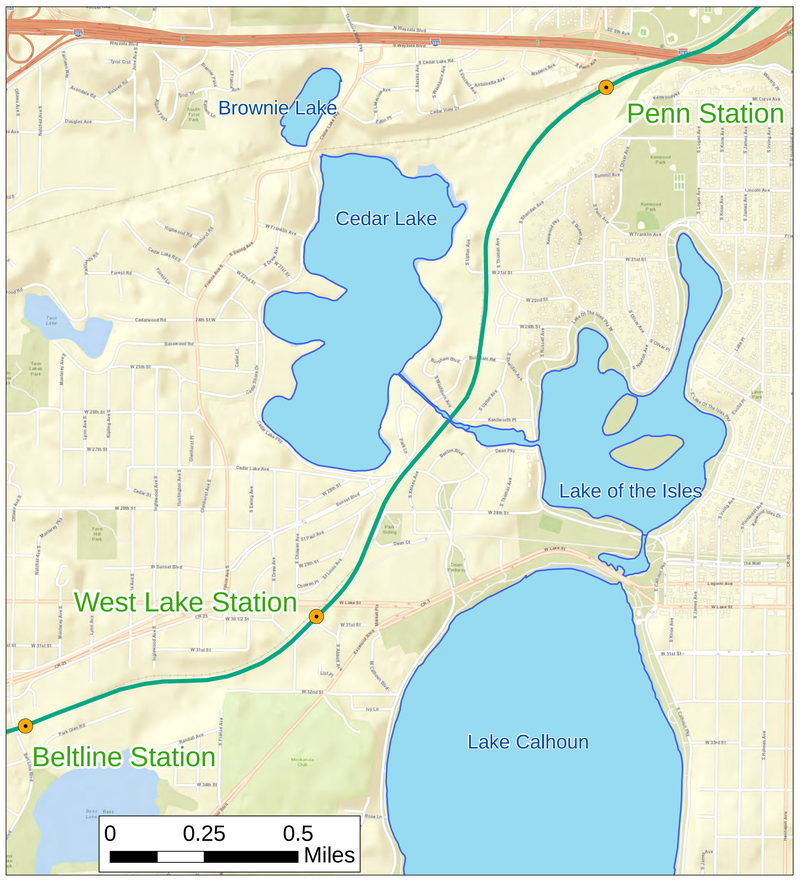
What is the water resources evaluation?

JANUARY 2014

The independent water resources evaluation will assess potential impacts of LRT construction and operations on water levels and quality within the Kenilworth Corridor.

Independent consultant Burns & McDonnell is performing the evaluation, coordinating with the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board and Minnehaha Creek Watershed District.

TIMEFRAME	REVIEW & EVALUATE
Existing Conditions	■ Ground water levels ■ Lake water levels ■ Water quality ■ Soil conditions
Construction	■ Proposed construction methods to minimize impacts to ground water and maintain water quality ■ Proposed construction methods to minimize impacts to surface water and maintain lake water quality ■ Proposed methods to monitor ground water level, surface water level and water quality during construction
Operations	■ Proposed methods to address ground water seepage ■ Proposed methods to address surface run off ■ Proposed methods to monitor ground water level, surface water level and water quality on an ongoing basis



As part of the water resources evaluation and ongoing ground water monitoring program, a technician inserts a ground water level indicator into one of the dozen piezometers placed in the Kenilworth Corridor in November 2012.

STUDY ACTIVITIES

The evaluation will review all previous reports and documents related to water impacts:

- Southwest LRT Project Office draft shallow LRT tunnel Basis of Design
- Southwest LRT Project Office draft water monitoring plan for construction and ongoing operations
- Minnehaha CreekWatershed District/Wenck Associates technical memo

SOUTHWEST
Green Line LRT Extension

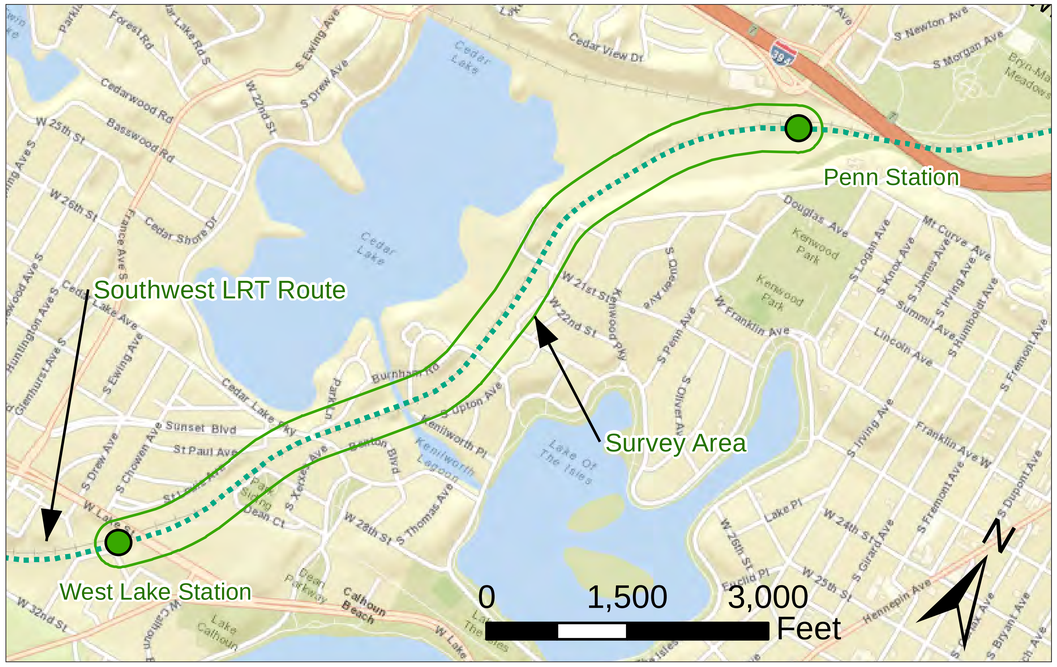
What is the landscaping/greenscaping inventory?

JANUARY 2014

The landscaping/greenscaping inventory is cataloging vegetation in the Kenilworth Corridor and identifying replanting opportunities.

These activities will be carried out by certified tree inspectors and coordinated with the city of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board and Minnehaha Creek Watershed District.

EVALUATION	METRIC OR MEASUREMENT
Tree Inventory	■ Type ■ Number ■ Size



Map showing the area of the tree and vegetation survey in the Kenilworth Corridor, roughly between the sites of the proposed West Lake and Penn stations.

A certified tree inspector hired by the project office measures the diameter of a tree in the Kenilworth Corridor in November 2013.

What makes freight rail relocation so difficult?

JANUARY 2014

Today, more trains operate on fewer miles of track than in the past. With freight traffic on many lines near capacity, relocation options are limited.

In Minnesota, the total length of active freight railroads decreased from 8,500 miles in 1980 to 4,400 miles in 2010. Over the same period, freight tonnage increased 74% – from 140 million to 243 million tons annually.

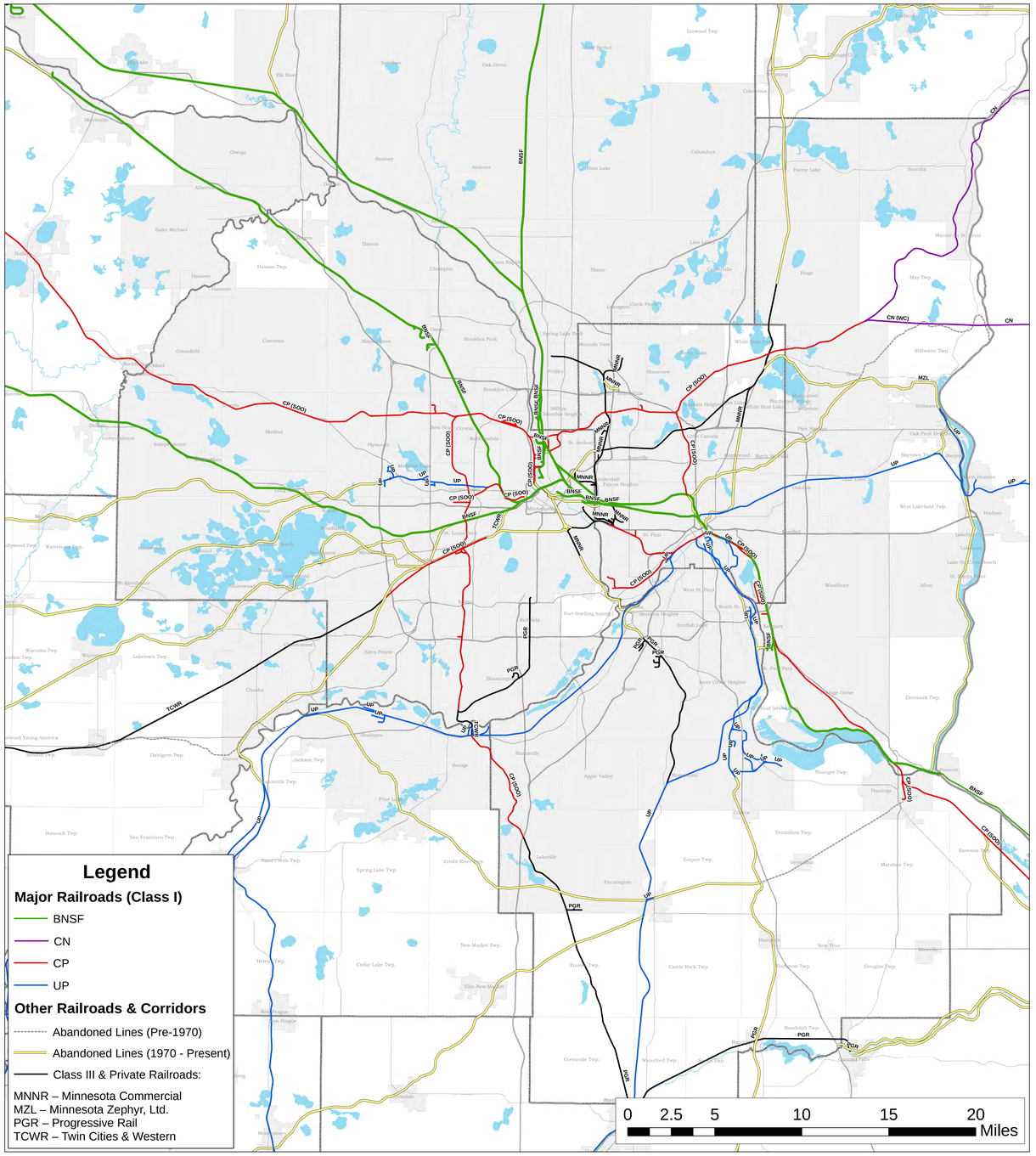
As freight rail companies have merged and consolidated their services, abandonment of tracks has reduced freight rail lines in the Twin Cities region from 685 to 480 route-miles.

The Twin Cities continues to be an important part of the national freight rail network. St. Paul freight yards and junctions handle roughly 5% of all U.S. rail traffic.

By 2030, the Minnesota State Rail Plan predicts an increase of 25–40% in the amount of freight shipped by rail in the state.

FREIGHT RAIL NETWORK CHANGES

The map below shows freight rail lines in the Twin Cities region (2013). Freight routes that have been abandoned since 1970 are shown in yellow.



Freight railroads are "common carriers," and their services are regulated by federal law.

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) is the federal agency charged with overeseeing economic impacts on freight rail shippers and carriers.

STB approval is generally required for changes in service, abandonment of active freight lines, or other changes that have economic impacts.

To make such changes, a freight rail carrier is required to submit an application to the STB for their review and approval.

The Southwest LRT Project Office is working with freight rail companies, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) and the STB.

SOUTHWEST
Green Line LRT Extension

Who depends on the freight rail service that passes through Kenilworth?

JANUARY 2014

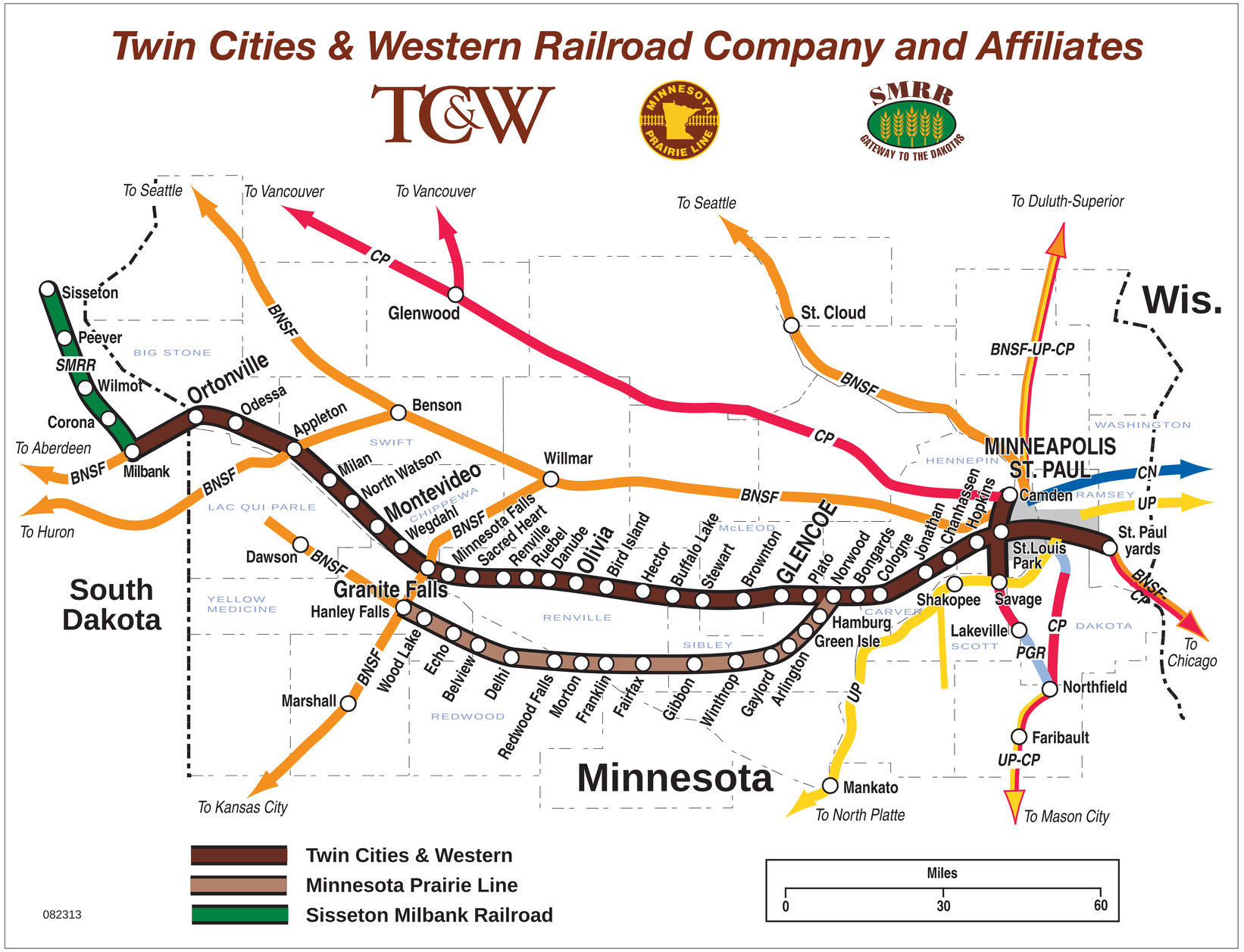
The Twin Cities & Western (TC&W) Railroad serves Minnesota and South Dakota, and is the sole rail service provider for 40 communities.

TC&W is a short-line freight railroad company, formed in 1991, that operates over 283 miles of track in Minnesota and South Dakota. TC&W is affiliated with the Minnesota Prairie Line and Sisseton Milbank Railroad.

The company provides rail service to more than 50 businesses, including 6 co-operatives for grain and farm supplies, 2 ethanol plants, vegetable growers and manufacturers.

Most of the freight traffic handled by TC&W is destined for interchange in St. Paul, and is then shipped on via interstate rail throughout the Midwest and the rest of the U.S.

Since the 1990s, demand for freight has led to increases in the size of trains operated by TC&W. The longest trains are typically "unit trains" carrying single-commodity shipments such as grain, coal or ethanol. The maximum current train size on the TC&W line is approximately 7,600 feet.



SOUTHWEST
Green Line LRT Extension

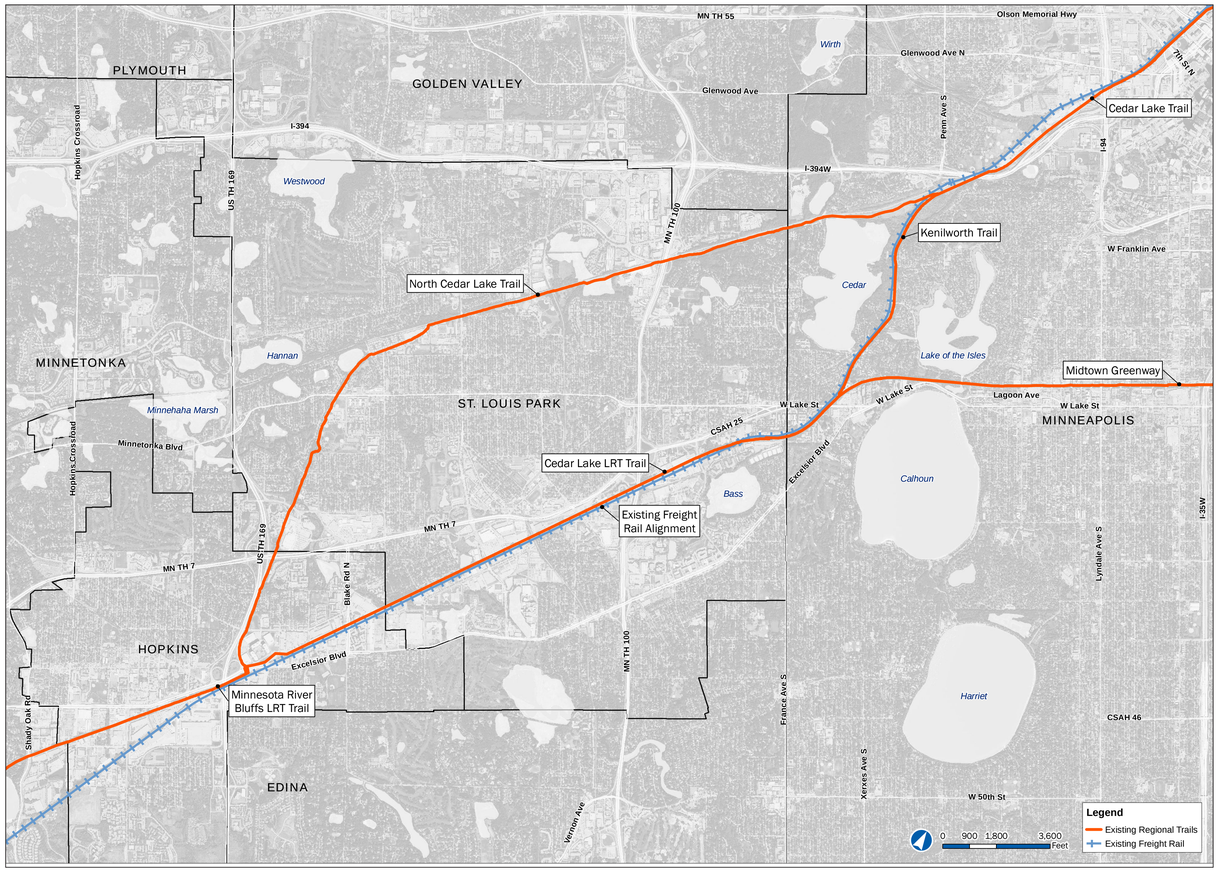
Will the walking and biking trails be removed?

JANUARY 2014

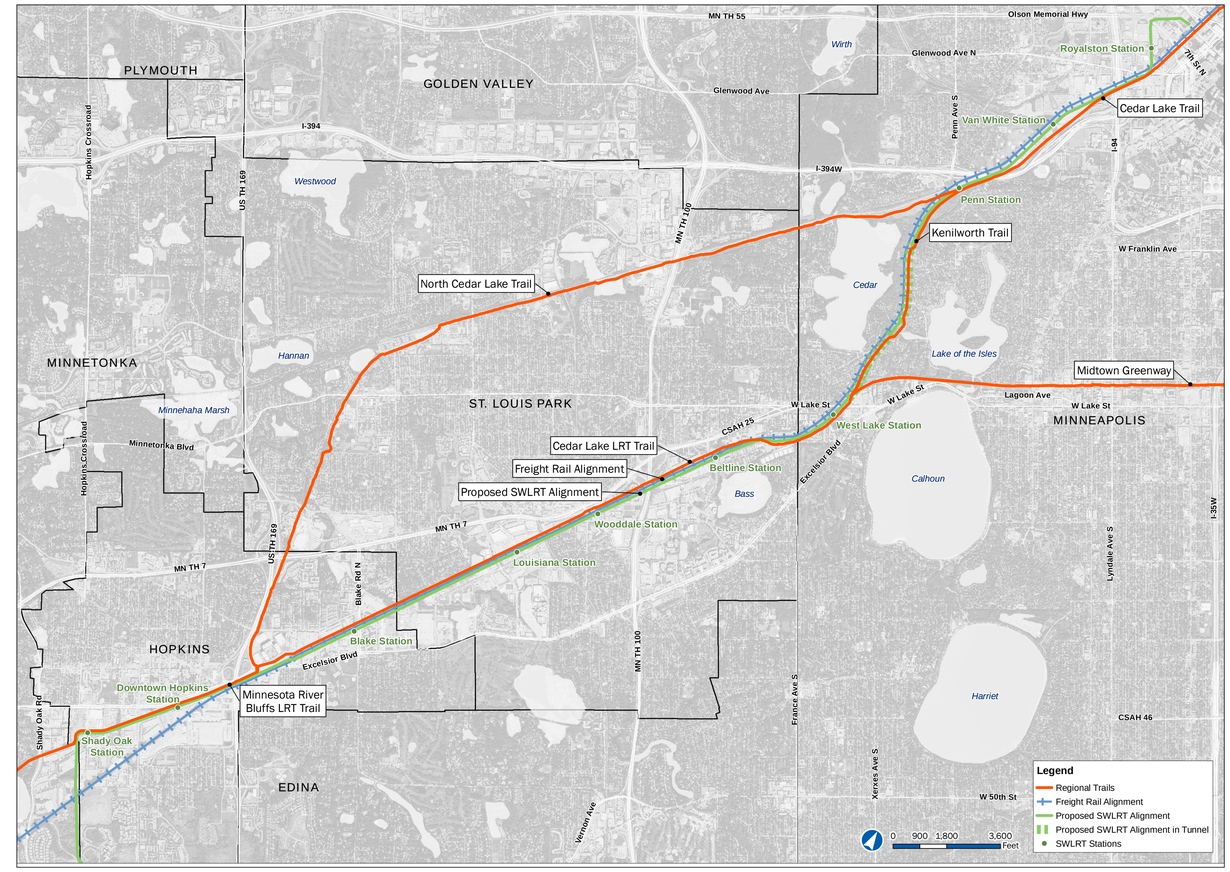
The design of Southwest LRT preserves the valuable network of trails near the light rail line.

More than half a million people enjoy walking and biking on the trails in the Kenilworth area every year. Construction of Southwest LRT will result in short-term disruption and long-term minor adjustments of trails to accommodate transit service, but no permanent relocation of trails is planned.

EXISTING TRAIL SYSTEM



TRAIL SYSTEM WITH SOUTHWEST LRT



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