Southwest Transitway DEIS Comments

Comments Received during the November 29, 2012 Public Hearing
PUBLIC HEARING OF THE
HENNEPIN COUNTY REGIONAL RAILROAD AUTHORITY
EDEN PRAIRIE, MINNESOTA
NOVEMBER 29, 2012
6:00 p.m.
PROCEDINGS

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Good evening. I will call to order this hearing. I apologize for the technical difficulties here.

I'm Peter McLaughlin, and I'm Chair of Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority. I am pleased to welcome you here tonight to the last of three public hearings to receive comments on the Southwest Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement, or the DEIS as it is called. We're happy to see all of you here tonight. The attendance has been good at all of these hearings. It's important to have that participation as we explore the development on the Southwest line.

The Southwest line will be the region's third LRT line. It's a critical link in the regional transit system. It's estimated to serve 30,000 trips per day and to provide access to more than 270,000 jobs in this corridor in the relatively near future. That includes, as you all probably know, major corporations; Cargill and United Health just to name a few.

In addition, this line will provide a link to some of the greatest amenities within the region, whether it be the regional park system, the Walker Art Institute and Sculpture Garden, the Hopkins Center for the Arts, all the way to the University of Minnesota on a
single seat ride through Downtown, the Dunwoody Institute, Hennepin Technical College, as well as major sports facilities at the Metrodome, Target Center, and Target Field.

It's also going to allow residents of the Southwest Metro to connect easily and quickly to Downtown to Minneapolis, the Capitol in Downtown St. Paul, easy transfers to the airport and the Mall of America. At the same time, it will allow residents of North Minneapolis, St. Paul, and the rest of the region to access jobs out here along this corridor from the Southwest region.

So it's my pleasure to welcome you here today. I want to mention that in Chapter 8 of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, published in October of this year, an error was made by the consulting firm, which incorrectly stated the cost estimate for the LRT 3A-1 colocation alternative, which the cost was understated by $100 million. This correction was caught by our staff, and the staff at the Metro Transit, and we wanted to make sure that as soon as we became aware that it actually had reappeared in the final version, that everyone was informed of the error that was made prior to the close of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement public comment period, which is scheduled to close on December 31st.
Public comments that were received prior to issuance of this correction will not be affected. They're still part of the public record. It won't be altered in any way and will be included fully in the record of comments that will be received by the Metropolitan Council and the Federal Transit Administration during the final environmental impact statement process.

So with that, I would turn to my colleague, who represents a portion of Eden Prairie and the Southwest line, Jan Callison.

COMMISSIONER CALLISON: Good evening. I will speak as loudly as I can. I'm Jan Callison. I represent the northern third of Eden Prairie, as well as Hopkins and Edina, all cities that are either on the route or adjacent to the route, so I also want to welcome you here tonight.

Planning for the Southwest project began many years ago by the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority, which was interested in improving transit and service for the growing Southwest Metro area. After many years of analysis and numerous studies, the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority and the Partner Cities recommended that an LRT line brought through Kenilworth area of Minneapolis, through St. Louis Park and Hopkins,
through the Opus area of Minnetonka and the Golden Triangle area of Eden Prairie made sense.

This recommendation was sent to the Metropolitan Council -- I think it's on -- which then selected that route as what is called the locally preferred alternative in May of 2010. Now I'll have to speak more softly.

This was one of the first major milestones for the Southwest LRT project on its journey from an idea to reality. This was followed by approval in September 2011 from the Federal Transit Administration, or FTA, that the project could enter the Federal New Starts Program and proceed with preliminary engineering. Southwest LRT is one of only 12 projects nationwide to achieve this status.

Recently the Obama Administration designated Southwest LRT as a project under their We Can't Wait Program, where projects are expedited through the permit and review process through early coordination and collaboration amongst agencies. And at the State level, the Southwest LRT project received $2 million in DEED funds from the Government, which demonstrates the State commitment to this project.

In October, with the long-awaited release of the DEIS, the Southwest LRT project achieved another
milestone. This document is an important step in the development of the major infrastructure project like Southwest. The DEIS is intended to provide for the full and open disclosure of the potential impacts and potential mitigation for the proposed Southwest LRT project. Comments submitted on the DEIS will help to shape what is evaluated during the preliminary engineering process and the Final Environmental Impact Statement, or FEIS.

Hennepin County also established the Southwest LRT as a community works project as an innovative mechanism to coordinate implementation of LRT with land use and economic development. So this major regional transit investment will benefit residents, businesses, and communities and provide opportunities for us all.

I'll turn it back over to you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you, Commissioner Callison.

So the goal of the Environmental Impact Statement is to provide the public and public agencies, businesses, and the whole community with full disclosure of the potential impacts of this project and possible ways to mitigate those impacts. That's the purpose of the Environmental Impact Statement.
The FTA has chosen to extend the comment period until 5:00 p.m. on December 31st. And these comments are important because they help to shape the work of the Metropolitan Council on the -- which will be leading this project as we go forward during the preliminary engineering process, and they will be reflected in the final Environmental Impact Statement.

Tonight we're here as representatives of the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority to listen to your comments. The purpose of this hearing and the other two that occurred earlier is to provide the public with the opportunity to give verbal comments on the DEIS. In addition to providing verbal comments this evening, comments can also be submitted via e-mail at swcorridor@co.hennepin.mn.us; wcooorridor@cohennepin.mn.us; or via U.S. Mail to Hennepin County, 701 4th Avenue South, Suite 400, Minneapolis 55015.

Comments provided in writing receive the same weight as comments received during the public hearings, so there's no differentiation in terms of the weight afforded to the comments depending on the forum in which they're offered.

For this DEIS, Hennepin County is the state responsible governmental unit, or RGU; the Federal Transit Administration is the lead federal agency; and
the Metropolitan Council is the local project sponsor. Comments received during this public comment period, which extends through December 31st, are being collected by Hennepin County and will be provided to the Metropolitan Council and the FTA. All substantive comments received will be responded to during the preliminary engineering FEIS phases of project development. The County Railroad Authority will continue to be a strong partner as the project moves forward under the leadership of the FTA and the Metropolitan Council.

In terms of logistics for the evening, the rules are the same as the -- in our previous hearings. Each speaker will have three minutes to provide his or her comments. The speakers will be given a signal on timing to help them gauge the pace of their comments, a signal for two minutes remaining, and then a one-minute remaining signal. And then at the end of the three minutes, we'd ask you to wrap up your comments.

Comments are being transcribed for the formal record by a stenographer. Speakers should clearly state their name, address, and organization, if they represent one, if any. And the people should limit their comments to the Southwest Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Written statements, in addition to oral comments, are also very much welcome and will be added to
the formal record of oral comments received.

Speakers in the audience are asked to conduct themselves in a respectful manner. That's been the practice here over the last two hearings. We ask you to be courteous to all who have come here tonight to speak and share their comments; and, in that regard, we ask that there be no clapping, cheering, booing, or other actions that might disrupt. So that's -- those are the rules of the game, and we'd ask you to abide by those tonight.

So with that, I will -- I will take testimony here. We have a list of people who have signed up. The sign-up is continuing. You can sign up out front. And, frankly, at the end, if you haven't testified and wish to do so, we'll take hands at the end, as well, and people can approach the mic without having signed up. So again, we ask you to state your name and address; and if you represent an organization, to state that and try to abide by the three-minute warning.

The first speaker on my list who's signed up is Jason Wedel or Wedel -- Wedel. Okay -- from Allan Mechanical. Welcome, sir.

MR. WEDEL: Thank you, Commissioner.

We really appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments this evening. Again, I am Jason
Wedel. My address is 7875 Fuller Road in Eden Prairie. I'm representing Allan Mechanical, a business that is owned by my father and brother. We're commenting this evening about the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

There are four proposed operation and maintenance facility locations. One of those locations would -- details acquiring our property, or acquiring our property to construct that; so we wanted to go on record as being opposed to the acquisition of our property for that operation and maintenance facility for a number of reasons. I've got five I'd like to go through quickly.

First, our property is very unique in that the current zoning allows outdoor storage. That's critical for our business. We are a commercial heating and air-conditioning business. We get large equipment delivered to our property and stockpiled, and we store it outside. Anyone familiar with local city planning, it's very difficult to find locations where outdoor storage is available, so that's critical for us.

Secondly, we have immediate access to County Highway 5 where the road intersects County Highway 5 where the highway turns into freeway. It works wonderful for us. We're able to service our clients throughout the entire Metro area.

Thirdly, we now have enough room on our
property when we purchased it because of that, so we have plans for an expansion. We've gone through the expense of doing some planning for our building and had talks with the Cities on how we can accommodate our growth in the future. Any relocation would prohibit that.

Fourthly, we do have a cell phone tower that currently leases property from us. That's a source of revenue for us; and if we were forced to relocate, we would lose that potential revenue stream.

Lastly, we have a lot of very expensive and specialized equipment that we use to construct duct working and other components that are critical to heating and air-conditioning systems, and so to have to relocate our business and move elsewhere would be very expensive.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

MR. WEDEL: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Randy Neis, and then Geoffrey Jarpe on deck after that.

How'd I do on your name?

MR. WILLIAMS: I am not Randy Neis.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Okay.

MR. WILLIAMS: He's back there, and I'm speaking on behalf of our organization.

I am Steve Williams, on behalf of Bobby and
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<td>MR. WILLIAMS: There's two Steves. We</td>
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<td>happen to have both Steves in the meeting here tonight.</td>
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<td>his wife Erin are here representing our organization.</td>
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<td>Prairie, and nine months, 10 months after we build it,</td>
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<td>they come to us saying that there's a proposal of</td>
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<td>realigning the light rail down Singletree. Well, that's</td>
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<td>the entrance of our new flagship store in Eden Prairie.</td>
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And it was just an absolute shock that we would have such a close working relationship with Eden Prairie in building our facility across from the mall only to have them 10 months later tell us that they are looking at one of three options to realign the light rail. And so I want to go on record as strongly opposing the light rail going down Singletree and the impact. Obviously, if you look at what happened to University businesses, it's a negative impact at any -- any route that you take, I'm sure. But to all of a sudden have them promoting a Singletree alignment when they were promoting us 10 months earlier would be shameful.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Geoffrey Jarpe, and Barbara Fleet on deck.

MR. JARPE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's Jarpe, Geoff Jarpe. I'm with the Minneapolis law firm Maslon Edelman Borman & Brand. We represent the owner of the building located at 11455 Viking Drive. That building is an office building that houses the branch of the BMO Bank, and that building had been there for quite a number of years. It's a real asset to the area. I want to speak against the locally preferred alternative
in one respect, insofar as it impacts in a very negative way the bank building.

A very large bridge is slated to be constructed over the highways in the immediate vicinity of the bank and right next to the bank. And I submitted a brief letter this past Monday in accordance with the Notice of Hearing and the criteria laid out in the DEIS. And I want to reiterate that we do not think, number one, that the negative impacts have been adequately addressed in the draft EIS insofar as this specific property is concerned.

And, secondly, we think that the alternatives to building that bridge have not been adequately considered and dealt with in this draft EIS. We think that they -- both of those issues need to be addressed. They need to be addressed specifically and in detail.

Now, having said all that, I want to state that on behalf of the owners we stand ready, willing, and able to sit down with the appropriate people, happy to do that, and see if we can work out something here and explain our concerns, which are very serious, in greater detail.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.
COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: You did say you submitted some written comments?

MR. JARPE: Belt and suspenders, Mr. Chairman. The letter went in this past Monday, and I wanted to reiterate our concerns here this evening.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Very good. Thank you.

Next we have Barbara Fleet, and Elaine Rothman after her.

Welcome.

MS. FLEET: Welcome. My name is Barbara Fleet. I live at the Southwest Station condos. It's 13570 Technology Drive. And I am totally opposed to this light rail going from Southwest Metro station to Mitchell Road. It would be in between Highway 5 and the condos, within just a couple feet from our building.

First of all, I can't even believe they even thought of it. I mean, there's absolutely no room. And, also, I mean, I can think of all the reasons. The noise, it's a total -- it would be a total eyesore. The close proximity is a total invasion of our privacy.

There's 237 condo units that were just built six years ago with about 500 residents that this would affect. The vibration -- it's not just a train that is going through once an hour. It's every seven and
a half minutes. That's a lot. And the condos were built on the wetlands, and we already know from the Southwest Metro station that they've had horrific problems with the settlement of the pavement just in the last couple years. Well, this could do total structural damage to our building. That's 237 condos.

Also, I think about all aspects of this. You're talking about inner city people, some very undesirable people maybe coming out on the light rail to the number one city -- voted the number one city in the whole U.S. coming out. This could totally -- it could increase the crime, which could totally affect Eden Prairie forever. Let's see here...

If it does go through, I personally would think it should stop at the Eden Prairie Town Center and not even come into the Southwest hub because of the wetlands, should stop there and then be redirected somewhere else. But truly, in my heart, in this economy, I think it's -- the money could be better spent somewhere else.

I think that the buses -- I think they're wonderful buses, they're luxury buses, they move right along the express lane. I think they're doing -- it just does great. And it's almost really sinful to even think about spending this amount of -- obscene amount of money
on the light rail at this point in time in the economy.

That's it.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Elaine Rothman, and then Mario Colloly.

MS. ROTHMAN: Hi. My name is Elaine Rothman. I live at 5305 Beachside Drive. And if you were to come to my townhouse, I live right on the railroad, Canadian Pacific Line, and the Twin City railroad that's using it.

We are constantly bombarded by the noise from the railroad, the vibration from the railroad. My unit seems to be the stopping point for the -- I'm told the Twin City line picks up all the cars in St. Paul and brings it all the way through, and then it comes to where I sit, and they stop, and you get the bang, bang, bang, bang, bang. And then they uncouple in Hopkins, and then they come back; and then they go forward, and then they come back; and it's constant.

Today it was all day. 8 to 10 at night, you cannot have the windows or the doors open in the summertime. It's very hard to hear. It's enormous noise. And I'm losing -- erosion, my yard is being eroded by these constant vibrations. And now you're going to bring those rail -- the light rail line in about
two blocks away. You're saying it goes right up over the
blocking, and that's a -- I can't see that. If you take
a look at the railroad and what it's doing up there, and
then you're going to put the light rail station right
there.

We also have the landfill issue right
there, and I don't know if that's a -- but right now
Hopkins landfill is building this huge, huge mountain in
there, and that is going to sit right beside the light
rail. But if you take the Twin City line out, I'll take
the light rail; but both of them together, it's going to
couple and double what we already experience. Thank
you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very
much.

Mario Colloly, and Brian Payne next.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Welcome.

MR. COLLOLY: Good afternoon. My name is
the Mario Colloly. I live at 3301 (inaudible) South in
Minneapolis. I am a member of the Center of Workers
United in Struggle that organizes low wage workers,
mainly organizing with immigrant, Latino immigrants in
the Twin Cities.

We have -- over the five years that we've
existed, we've been able to recover over $550,000 in
unpaid wages to workers. We've also been able to change policies at 20 companies that were in direct violation of the federal and state labor laws to be able to improve working conditions for over 2,000 low wage workers.

A lot of our members either live or work along the projected routes for the Southwest line. We know that the Southwest line is going to -- is a very positive thing for our community that's going to be able to allow for more opportunities for jobs. But we also feel there is a need for a deeper analysis in terms of the impact that it could have on low wage workers. We see that large employers are going to only benefit economically significantly from this project, but there's a need for a deeper study in terms of low wage workers who work along the route.

We see the example of the Hiawatha Line out of the Mall of America. A lot of the workers who are working at Mall of America are still earning poverty level wages, and often we've partnered with workers who aren't even paid minimum wage. At the same time the businesses at Mall of America benefited significantly by gaining more clients although the workers who were there didn't see an economic improvement, so we are proposing that there would be a study looking into the working conditions and wages for the workers who currently work
along the line and then a follow-up study after the line is done to see has there been a change. What is the impact on low wage workers.

Thank you for opening the time to be able to hear from us, and thank you for listening to us.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Next we have Brian Payne, and then John Lee Brian.

MR. PAYNE: And so my name is Brian Payne. I also work at the same organization that Mario just mentioned. I live at 3508 Oakland Avenue South in Minneapolis. And, again, our organization represents a number of workers who live and work along the proposed routes, and that's why we're here tonight.

So we're about to see the Southwest Transit rail project take significant steps to engage the diverse populations who live in the areas that would be served by the project in a forum such as this. It's an important step towards engaging low income minority populations in the process of the development of the Southwest Transit project.

We'd like to bring up two other points that are missing particularly in this study in terms of more deeply understanding the economic effects on low income
minority populations. First, when we looked at the preparers, the list of preparers of the documents, they're mostly employees of two large private consulting firms. To my knowledge, there are no low income minority members of the community represented in that list of preparers. This means that both low income and minority populations didn't play a key role in researching and preparing the study about their own community, and that all of the funding that went towards researching preparing the study went to large private companies, rather than towards the low income minority populations who and/or work in the areas that would be effected by this project.

In fact, it appears that individuals who already have access to good jobs and who do not live and work in the areas that will be served by the project are paid to do research and prepare documents about the potential impacts on low income and minority populations who do work in the areas that will be served by the project. Then low income and minority members of the community are expected to volunteer their time to come to public forums while other people are paid to do it.

Low income and minority populations who live and work along proposed routes for public transit should be engaged directly in researching potential
economic effects of proposed transit routes on their communities and should benefit from resources invested in research.

To remedy the situation, we propose creating partnerships between the community organizations that represent low income and minority populations and the center for transportation studies or either similar organizations of the University of Minnesota where the organizations can hire and train members of the community to do surveys in the community, and academic partners can provide the scientific and statistical analysis for the information provided.

This project can go beyond just researching potential economic impacts. It will also provide information about workers rights and about organizations and the government agencies that defend those rights. This will be an important step towards ensuring that similar work in those organizations are not perpetuated along the Southwest line, as what was mentioned on the Hiawatha line.

Secondly, we're also looking at the accessibility to the construction jobs that are going to come out from this project. The counties in the surrounding Metro area say that 22 to 32 percent of those jobs are going to be construction jobs and should be
available to the minority community -- to minorities populations. That goal is very rarely met in the community and may lead to specific restrictions that prevent minority populations from doing those jobs; so we propose looking into what they are -- what those restrictions are and why they're in place.

Thank you very much for your time.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: We have been joined by Jennifer Mundt from the Metropolitan Council over there and State Representative Elect Yvonne Selcer in the front row.

Congratulations on your election. As a former House member, I truly want to welcome you to the House of Representatives. It's a great experience, so thank you for representing those in the community here.

All right. Next we have John Lee, and then Cheryl Boldon.

Mr. Lee, welcome.

MR. LEE: Thank you. I'm John Lee. I live at 5281 Beachside Drive in Minnetonka. I want to address the issue of rail congestion that we will suffer from.

The current freight line, referred to as the Bass Lake Spur, the scourge of Minnetonka, runs through our neighborhood. Now, it was built a hundred years ago when Minnetonka and Hopkins were not densely
populated, and it made perfect sense.

Today that's not the case. It's a congested area. Our neighborhood is going to be at the confluence of the freight line currently leased by the TC&W and the light rail line. We're going to be hemmed by railroads. We're all willing to pay a price for progress, but I know you're having an issue with that freight line in St. Louis Park, as well; highly controversial, lawsuits threatened.

Has the Council -- in studying the rail lines, there is an option for relocating the freight west of the Twin Cities. So my question is has the Council considered that? They're currently proposing to move the freight line out of the Kenilworth corridor through St. Louis Park. Highly controversial. You've got to move it anyways. Why not look at going back a step. Let's back it up into rural Minnesota, western Minnesota -- that's the area it primarily serves -- and reroute it there, and then bring it into the Twin Cities, and see if they kill two birds with one stone. That's my reason for being here.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much for your comments.

Cheryl Boldon, and then -- the person who was taking the names couldn't read the last name -- James
from St. Paul from IBEW Local 160.

MS. BOLDON: Hi. My name is Cheryl Boldon, and I represent Southwest Station, L.L.C. and Southwest Station Management, L.L.C. Address is 12900 through 13300 Technology Drive in Eden Prairie.

First, I'd just like to say the biggest issue that I have is the concern over the significant sinking that we have on our site. We have sunk as much as three feet. And with -- I have great concerns about the underground tunnel and the subsidence from disturbed subsoils for the underground tunnel and the temporary dewatering associated with the LRT construction and the possible permanent dewatering of the tunnel if the groundwater is at 8 feet at that point, then the proposed tunnel is going to be knocked down 26 feet.

I would suggest that the light rail cross abovegrade so as not to interfere with traffic crossing after it. Next it is apparent that the models used to assess the number of parking spaces needed to adequately handle the estimated ridership must be re-evaluated. We have a sprawling metro area, which if not the most sprawling of all the states is definitely in the top three. As such, carpooling and higher density housing models from across the country do not adequately illustrate the parking demands.
Just like the bus, Park and Ride and Southwest Station was built into obsolescence from the day it was constructed. This is -- the concern I have is that we're using the same similar flawed data. This miscalculation of much needed parking has put an unfair demand and a monitoring burden on the owners of the surface parking lots at Southwest Station. My concern is that this further erroneous assessment will create even greater hardships.

Then there is an error in the DEIS on page 355 of Appendix H1. It shows 13000 Technology Drive and 3E parcel as having 175 existing parking spaces. In reality that parcel has 49 spaces. Ruby Tuesday, located at 12900 Technology Drive, and Anchor Bank, located at 12950 Technology Drive, combined have in excess of 175 parking stalls. So I'm not clear what they're actually referring to in that.

And I also am concerned that there appears to be no consideration for businesses related to construction, staging, noise, and high level vibrations. It seems like a major omission of the DEIS. I had a national shopping center expert, Max Ramstead, came out and looked at the center, and he said the center will be destroyed. And you show a taking of Anchor Bank, but not a taking of Ruby Tuesday; but you are taking all of Ruby
Tuesday's parking.

So I do not understand how you can leave a building with no parking, so I'm losing my extra parking. Santorini is losing all of their extra parking, and Ruby Tuesday's is losing a hundred percent of their parking, but yet their building remains. It just makes no logical sense. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

James, you're next; and Wanda Prescott after that.

MR. SAMUELSON: My name's James Samuelson. I'm with the IBEW Local 160. I do the political coordinating work for our local. I've been very active in this light rail project. It employs a lot of our members throughout the whole system. Once it becomes a running line totally, we employ our members with the Metro Transit.

Also, in 2010 we had talked a lot about jobs, jobs, jobs. Well, these things have not gone away, talking about it; but with other cities moving forward, like Denver and Houston, we can't sit on the back burner in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and in the surrounding area and go in the back steps here like -- so this project will move our state into a major growth area.
So we need to move this to get jobs. There's a lot of factories down this way. I live Downtown St. Paul. I have -- I'm three blocks from the depot, which is having their grand opening this Saturday. I'm looking forward to someday getting on that line and travel anywhere I possibly can, so...

There was a gentleman here earlier talking about the industry for low income people to get around. With the cost of gas nowadays, a lot of those people can't even afford a car. You can put $1.75 in the meter, and you're off to your job down here in one of these factories. So I'm looking forward to this line being built and keep our members in a living wage job. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Wanda Prescott, followed by Steve Williams.

Welcome.

MS. PREScott: Welcome. I'm Wanda from the Ridgedale Group in Omaha, Nebraska; and I represent the Claremont Apartments on Smetana Drive.

We're very concerned in regards to the light rail going within 90 feet away from the backside of all five of our buildings. Right now there's an existing
trail and wooded area. People rent those apartments because of that serene environment, and to have a train come through 332 times a day would be very adverse for the residents there.

Due to the frequency, the visual noise, the vibration, and impact, we really feel like we would lose a lot of residents that currently pay a premium rate to have a trail view right now. Also the temporary impacts of construction disturbance, tree removal, and grading, soil compaction, again, would be a great disruption to our residents; also, the visual, the sight of trains frequently passing by their windows roughly 90 feet away where now, again, they have trees and quiet; the headlamp from the train sweeping by, and also the tenants' knowledge of hundreds of people passing by their window every night, again, within 90 feet; also, the noise, the sound of the trains going through.

We understand that Minnetonka has a quiet zone ordinance in effect right now, but the City doesn't know if the LRT project will comply with that because of the border on Hopkins; so again we're very concerned about the noise and the train horns, the warning bells, and also the vibration, the settling of our buildings. We are built on a wetland, so we're very concerned about the continual vibration.
We have also submitted in writing from Jerry Van, from our development department, written concerns, as well. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Steve Williams.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He already spoke.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Already spoke.

That was okay.

Jeff Strate, followed by John Nicklow.

MR. STRATE: I guess you'll have to put the Jeff Strate filter on.

My name is Jeff Strate. I live at 15020 Summer Hill Drive, Eden Prairie. Tonight I represent myself. I've been an advocate for light rail transit for 15, 16 years here and an advocate for trails. I'm only going to speak on a few things that I saw and suspect need more study for the Draft Environmental Statement. Some have been mentioned already, but I'll repeat them quickly.

I still don't know if there is a need to extend light rail transit at this time or in the next 15 years to Mitchell Road, and I parrot the concerns of about the wetlands in that area. They have caused problems with construction in that area ever since I've
lived here, which is about 19 years right now.

    Also, I'm very concerned about the future
of our Southwest Transit bus system. It's a wonderful
commuter bus system, and I want to know more about how
that's going to be integrated into the collaboration with
the light rail transit. Will it become -- will it remain
a commuter system to the U? I hope it does because we're
going to need both. And I also hope it can expand its
service westward to, say, Mall of America.

    I'm also very concerned about the grade
crossing at Valley View Road near Highway 112. That's an
at-grade crossing. That is one of the most congested
intersections in Eden Prairie, and I recommend seriously
looking at tunneling underneath that intersection. It's
difficult enough as it is to get through there every day,
except after 9:00 at night.

    I also wanted to see more future
consideration for express service 20 years down the line
between Hopkins and Downtown Minneapolis. I know you're
having a difficult time right now figuring out all these
challenges to the draft, but that should be thought of.
I think we do have enough right-of-way to consider that,
at least to get us thinking, because there are a lot of
stops on this thing.

    It's going to be slow to get into Downtown
Minneapolis from Eden Prairie, and I really believe that if a number of stops can be routed along those stations between St. Louis Park and Downtown Minneapolis, that would really increase service for our commuters out here.

I'm also siding with the people in St. Louis Park that grave concerns about additional railroad travel through there. I am delighted that this Southwest LRT is going to serve Opus in Minnetonka and Golden Triangle in Eden Prairie; not only for our businesses, but also for future affordable housing, and that's going to go both to seniors and people from other parts of the state. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you.

John Nicklow, and then Patty Schmitz. Welcome.

MR. NICKLOW: Thank you. Hello. My name is John Nicklow, and I'm representing my family's business at Santorini down the road at 13000 Technology Drive.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: I think you're going to have to stand up. That mic is pretty hot.

MR. NICKLOW: Is it hot? Okay. Is here good?

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Yeah.
MR. NICKLOW: Our business currently depends on the parking lot surrounded by the Southwest Transit bus station. There are currently seven restaurants and one bank. So seven out of the eight businesses have the same peak hours.

The plan that is currently favored by the committee would put a second parking ramp, taking up a third of the current parking spots, basically making a -- changing currently a stressed parking situation into a disaster. And my concerns go beyond the finish line and kind of peak with the construction and the disruption that would cause.

The ease at which our customers could come and visit our restaurant is a grave concern of ours. The restaurant industry is based on providing food and drink for the convenience of our customers. Take away the convenience, and the customers will respond by finding a more convenient location leaving us dead in the water.

My concern is to be able to keep our business at current levels or better and would like the opportunity to discuss this with you further beyond this meeting.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you for your comments.

Patty Schmitz is next, and then Tom
Welcome.

MS. SCHMITZ: Thank you. My name is Patty Schmitz. I live at 2806 Dean Parkway, and I'm speaking on behalf of myself and my husband Alex Deitz.

First of all, I want to say that I am a big supporter of light rail transit. I lived in the Washington, D.C. area for four years, and I took -- I took the Metro to work three or four times a week; so I'm really pleased that the Twin Cities continue to move light rail forward. It's long overdue.

I do have some concerns about the DEIS, and I'd like to speak about the one that's most troubling to me. That item is the proposed new bridge over Cedar Lake Parkway. I know that Commissioner Dorfman is probably quite familiar with that particular section of the proposed LRT route. But where the bridge is proposed to be put is in a densely residential neighborhood. And if it's built, the length of the span would stretch from a small and quiet park a couple blocks west of the actual intersection and east of Lake of the Isles.

The rise of the bridge upwards of 30 feet plus the wires needed for the LRT would be in very close proximity to the beach at the south end of the lake and would be an eyesore for -- I think for hundreds of
residents who live nearby. Cedar Lake is arguably the most unique of the chain of lakes in Southwest Minneapolis. Unlike Lake Calhoun and Lake Harriet, there's no commercial development on the lake. It's surrounded by bike paths, park paths, beaches, and some private homes and is honestly just such a tranquil place. I know that we have light rail trains go by, and I support that because I really do like the notion of having this transit go by, but I do not want to look at a bridge on my way there, and I don't want to look at a bridge when I am there.

I've also reviewed the DEIS, and I saw the flyover, and I would say from looking at it almost every bridge is crossing interstate, highways, freeways, busy commercial thoroughfares, and nearby railroad tracks. And I realize that each situation is a little bit different, but this is a two-lane road.

The other thing I want to comment on briefly is the locally preferred alternative around the question of what to do with freight traffic that's currently on the LRT route. My understanding is that the DEIS generally does not support colocation that runs through our neighborhood for those freight trains. And while I'm sympathetic to those in St. Louis Park who are close to moving this freight train tracks that run
through St. Louis Park, having to live with this -- that 
freight traffic, it's not a lot of trains. 

And so I would ask that we not be asked to 
give up Parkland and not be asked to take both the 
freight line, which was supposed to be between one and 
six years and has now been there for over 10. I ask that 
we not be asked to take both the freight line and the 
LRT. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very 
much.

Tom Schuster and Jeff Goto.

Mr. Schuster, how are you?

MR. SCHUSTER: Good. How are you?

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Welcome.

MR. SCHUSTER: My name's Tom Schuster, and 
I live at 5945 12th Avenue South in Minneapolis. I'm 
here representing 43 Hoops Basketball Academy in Hopkins.

We have a unique relationship with the Rail 
Authority, as you guys already own our property. So I'm 
speaking to you as my landlord. Thank you. You've been 
great partners. And also I'd like to say, overall, I'm 
pleased and delighted to see light rail. I think it's a 
good thing. Unfortunately for my business, it could be 
the end of my business.

We have looked at the Draft Environmental
Impact Study ourselves and people in our neighborhood and feel pretty strongly it really would make more sense to have the station on the south side of the track versus the north; so, for the record, we'd like to advocate for that. We -- and from a traffic flow standpoint, it just makes more sense to put it on the south side since you already own the property on the north side. I know we're fighting an uphill battle.

If the station does go at 100 62nd Street where 43 Hoops is located currently, I guess we'd ask that you consider leaving our business intact as much as possible. I think we can co-exist. We've got 150 stalls in our parking lot. I don't think that our property was designed to be a park-and-go station, but more of a drop-off-and-go station or a walk-and-go station; so I think that we could co-exist.

People have said, you know, we're facing a budget crisis, and we don't have the money. I know what you paid for our property. I think you got a good deal. And we helped you financially by contributing half a million dollars in rent since we moved in, and we'll pay another half million between now and when our lease expires. And I'd like to keep paying that every five years forever and continue to be good partners with the Rail Authority.
I'd also like to point out that we've been great partners with the City of Hopkins and the Hopkins School District, with the police, the Resource West Food Shelves. There isn't a community center in the Blake Road, but we basically provided our building as a community center. We hosted a hot lunch program for kids in the area this past summer. We've opened our doors to just about any civic group that asks, always at no charge.

We had 400 Muslims meet for their Holy Day a month ago. Pretty much our building is the community center for the Blake Road, and we'd love to continue to be able to do that. And if we can co-exist, we'd sure like to.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: How many basketball courts?

MR. SCHUSTER: Two and a half.

I was going to say when you negotiated the lease, you said you used to sneak in any basketball court you could, and you're welcome to stop by any time.

Commissioner Callison has been there.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Well, I have to say that some of us in Minneapolis wondered how Hopkins got to be good.

MR. SCHUSTER: My business partner is
coaching the Eden Prairie girls tonight, so we've done even more with them than Hopkins. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you.

Jeff Goto from Costco, and then Matt Muyres.

Welcome.

MR. GOTO: Good evening, Commissioners.

My name is Jeff Goto. I'm the general manager of the Costco on 12011 Technology Drive. My purpose here is to convey a concern that we have with the light rail project.

I believe our corporate office has submitted a detailed written response. I'm just going to read it.

THE REPORTER: Can you speak up?

MR. GOTO: Okay.

THE REPORTER: Thank you.

MR. GOTO: Costco does not oppose the concept proposed with the Southwest Transitway. Costco also does not oppose the construction of the Southwest Transitway, with the exception of the area specific to our location on Technology Drive. One of the proposed plans calls for the Town Center Station and the accompanying light rail traffic to be constructed on the south side of Technology Drive.
Costco opposes any rail tracking and any rail station construction on the south side of Technology Drive for the following reasons. Construction of the railroad tracks on the south side of Technology Drive would require every vehicle entering our parking lot to cross over the tracks. Any disruption to the flow of traffic entering and exiting our facility would have an adverse effect on our business and inhibit our continuing growth.

To illustrate our concerns to you, please consider the following. In 2005, which was the first full calendar year we were open, we had approximately 700,000 vehicles enter our facility. That comes to about 58,000 vehicles a month. Now, three years later, in 2008, the vehicle total was 1.29 million, which about is 103,000 vehicles per month. This -- in 2012, and that's going August of 2011 to August of 2012, our vehicle traffic was 1.82 million, which was about 100,000 vehicles a month. Those figures don't include the traffic from our 216 employees, nor do they include the traffic from the trucks and semis that deliver on average about $3 million worth of freight to us each week.

To summarize our concerns, Costco simply cannot allow its current feature members, employees, and suppliers to be subjected to the delays, frustration, and
inconvenience that is sure to occur should the light rail tracks and the station be constructed on the south side of Technology Drive. For that reason, we ask that an alternative place be put in place so as not to disrupt our current business, and we continue to grow.

We should also let it be known that while Costco's prepared to use any and all resources necessary to protect the interests of our members, employees, and suppliers, we are hopeful that a resolution can be reached that will be mutually agreeable to all parties.

So thank you for your time.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much for being here.

Matt Muyres, and then Charlie Fink.

I don't see anybody moving toward the podium.

Charlie Fink, and then David Greene.

Charlie Fink?

Okay. Then David Greene, followed by Jeffrey Peltola.

MR. GREENE: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Commissioners.

My name is David Greene, and I live at 2724 Emerson Avenue South in Minneapolis; and I'm here representing Isaiah, which is a coalition of 100 churches
in the Twin Cities, Metro, and St. Cloud areas that work for racial economic justice. We've been working closely with North Minneapolis communities on Southwest LRT, particularly the Harrison Neighborhood Association. And Harrison, just to give you an idea of the community, is a community of 80 percent minority, people of color. Population is 37 percent poverty rate, which is fairly typical for North Minneapolis neighbors.

So we have some detailed written comments that we'll be submitting, so tonight I want to focus on the big picture and why Southwest LRT is such an important project for our region. I summarize it like this: Southwest LRT is a racial and economic equity project. If we do this right, the project has the potential to be a transformative catalyst for our region.

Let's start with education. Minnesota has the worst achievement gap in the country. I've talked to some of the kids in Harrison who spend up to two hours each way on the bus to get to school along the Southwest corridor. I remember when I was a kid we complained about getting up early for a 20-minute carpool. These kids have extraordinary dedication to their education. We should make it easier for them to get to school, and Southwest LRT will provide improved connections, provide new connections and opportunities to these kids.
Minnesota also has one of the worst, if not the worst, wealth gaps in the country. There is simply not a reasonable transit connection today from North Minneapolis to jobs in the Southwest Corridor. In fact, Harrison did a job skills inventory of its residents and found that the skills residents already have match up very well with the needs of employers along the line. Southwest LRT is an opportunity gateway for thousands of people in North Minneapolis who have been cut off from opportunity for too long. The Van White and Penn Avenue Stations will be key connectors for communities that desperately need jobs.

Plus, Isaiah supports transportation goals in the -- Chapter 1 of the DEIS. Isaiah also supports the economic development goals in the DEIS. Harrison and the Bryn Mawr neighborhoods have worked over a decade to develop the Bassett Creek Valley master plan. These are communities working together to lift themselves out of poverty. As a vision, the BCV master plan would add over 3,000 housing units, 40 acres of open green space, and 5,000 to 6,000 jobs in the area. It would take a blight land in Linden Yards and turn it into productive engines of prosperity.

Currently the DEIS evaluation does not consider the effects of the BCV master plan on ridership
and other aspects of the project. The BCV master plan is part of the official comprehensive plan in Minneapolis and was approved -- that was approved by the Met Council. The DEIS should reflect the anticipated developments, include them in the project modeling, and emphasize the development potential at the Penn and Van White Stations.

I'll just close by saying again the Southwest LRT is a racial and economic equity project. Our region must close the education and opportunity gaps if they are to prosper. Southwest LRT is one way we can begin to do that. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Jeffrey Peltola, followed by Art Higinbotham.

Welcome.

MR. PELTOLA: I know Art.

Good evening. I'm Jeffrey Peltola. I live at 3131 Excelsior Boulevard, Number 913, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55416. Most of my remarks tonight will be about the west side station area and the surrounding area.

But first I'd like to say the philosophy for the entire Green Line Extension project, both the station planning and preliminary engineering, should be
what transit stations are intended to be, actual places, not merely modes -- between modes of transportation. Ridership, the number of LRT passengers isn't the only indicator of success. The number of pedestrian trips done in and around the station areas for me is even more important. They don't pay fares unless they board trains, but they are an integral part of the economic activity that's at the heart of the return on investment that we seeking with a project like this.

Some of the biggest mistakes and missed opportunities of transit projects stem from losing sight of this. Think Fairfax County, Virginia and those stops versus Arlington County, Virginia, if you're familiar with that part of the Washington, D.C. area. Around West Lake where I live, I think it's fair to say there's a broad consensus when it comes to the issue of parking. More parking guests or park and ride adjacent to the station itself, no.

There's also a broad consensus that right now there are serious problems, and the bike/pedestrian environment is unpleasant and unsafe. Near the end of 2010, at the conclusion of the previous Minneapolis station planning project, a number of us didn't like some things that were in the final document. We got together and submitted about a half dozen comments.
While doing so, it was obvious we didn't want to wait several years to make transportation improvements in our community. And so even before the Southwest project became recently an Obama We Can't Wait project, we were resolved to get on with it. So that led to one student project in the spring of 2011, two more in the fall of 2011, and two more right now. So far five projects, 19 students, and lots of community engagement. In fact, the projects this fall have the special benefit of the community input generated by the park board SHRT in that area, as well as the walkability workshop that Commissioner Dorfman helped organize.

So flowing out of this effort, I'm in the process of founding a new nonprofit called Public Works for Public Good. Check out ewpg.org. And all the work from this -- these projects is posted on the Lake Street and Excelsior Boulevard page. So the pace of work on this large LRT project in the complex West Lake Station will accelerate greatly in the coming months. It's essential that the various governmental entities, their leaders, staff, consultants elaborate effectively in a manner that's transparent to the public. I know a lot of other people are looking forward to being constructive partners.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very
MR. HIGINBOTHAM: Good evening, Commissioners. Thank you for the opportunity to address you.

I am Art Higinbotham, resident of 3431 St. Louis Avenue, Minneapolis. I'm a graduate of Amherst College and have an engineering degree from MIT, and I'm a retired senior executive at 3M Companies.

I'd like to talk to you about the Southwest LRT capital accounts, which is covered in DEIS section 8.0, if you want to follow through. I assume I have the leeway of plus or minus $100 million because there was a slight typo in the DEIS.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: We corrected that pretty fast.

MR. HIGINBOTHAM: In that section the $218 million is specified under track and web guide for 16.4 miles of track, plus infrastructure. And as Mark Fuhrman, the project manager, has pointed out, the project director, that also includes infrastructure such as bridges, underpasses, overpasses, park and rides, and stations.

I've used as models the Martin Sabo foot...
and bike bridge at Lake and Hiawatha, which is about $5 million, and the tunnel under the airport, which is a bore tunnel costing $100 million.

First of all, I see a discrepancy between the $218 million and the video, which was produced by Southwest Transitway, called a virtual ride from Eden Prairie to Target Field. I would invite you to view that, because all the infrastructure which I have made cost estimated here is shown in that video. $50 million for a flyover 494. $40 million for a flyover at Highway 212. $40 million for a flyover at Crosstown. $30 million for a 3,000 foot bridge over the Minnetonka wetlands. 20 million for a 169 underpass. 120 million for the freight relocation to St. Louis Park. 30 million for access to the West Lake Street station. 10 million for Cedar Lake Parkway tunnel, not an overpass. 5 million in new bridges over the Cedar Lake, Lake of the Isles tunnel. And it goes on and on.

It includes the amount necessary for the track itself. 60 million for four park-and-rides at Eden Prairie, Hopkins, Wooddale, and Belt Line. $150 million for new stations. $100 million for safety fences, vegetation noise barriers, and so forth. And it totals up to $750 million. Add a contingency of 75 million, 825; not 218, and the project total cost will be 1
billion 881; not 1 billion 275.

Unless this is addressed, the place for this project is on federal new starts endowment. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you. Fred Koppelman, and then a Dave Van Hattum.

Fred Koppelman?

All right. Then Dave Van Hattum, followed by Todd Larson.

Welcome.

MR. VAN HATTUM: Good afternoon. My name is Dave Van Hattum. I live at 4120 Aldridge Avenue South in Minneapolis. I work for a Transit For Livable Communities. Transit For Livable Communities is a local nonprofit advocacy organization with over 10,000 members in the Twin Cities Metro.

Our mission is to advocate for expanded options for people to use the bus, the train, biking, and walking. Transit For Livable Communities, or TLC, strongly supports the Southwest LRT and the locally preferred alternative. The Southwest LRT line is a smart and cost-effective investment for our region. It's a key component of a regional transit system that will help attract employers and young people to our region, and it provides the right long-term transportation solution for
this corridor.

It also provides substantial environmental benefits. Currently on a per-mile basis, transit riders consume half the energy as cars, and a far smaller fraction of the pollution is produced by transit on a per-mile basis. And as we build this system by raising more riders, those numbers just look better and better. But more transit riders also reduces water pollution and helps protect open space, something we all believe in.

The Southwest LRT line will serve growing demand both for the commuters from the suburbs into Downtown, but also those reverse -- critical reverse commutes to Eden Prairie and other communities. Before my time at Transit For Livable Communities, I worked out here in Eden Prairie along 494 with the large employers, and I was probably in every lunch room in Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, et cetera; and I can tell you there's thousands of people that are really looking forward to this enhanced transit option and the connections with pedestrian and biking, as well.

No doubt there will be impacts from this project that will require well thought out mitigation, just as there are with all major transportation projects. Again, we support the locally preferred alternative because we are convinced it will provide the greatest
benefit with the least detrimental impacts. We have seen Hennepin County and our Metro come up with appropriate mitigation for both Hiawatha and the Central Corridor LRT now under construction, and we trust that the County and its partners will provide and refine as needed the necessary mitigations for the locally preferred alternative.

In summary, based on the many economic, environmental, and quality of life benefits, the TLC strongly supports the Southwest LRT project, and we believe strongly that we need to keep moving forward so we can all be riding the train in 2018. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Todd Larson, and then Susan Friske Pfaff. Welcome.

MR. LARSON: Thank you. My name is Todd Larson, and I live at 3020 Colorado Avenue South in St. Louis park, which is a block off the proposed bypass route.

I'm speaking in favor of the colocation alternative for a couple of different reasons, the first one being -- is strictly financial. If it's the cheaper route or the cheaper alternative and works, why shouldn't it be the one that is supported and selected.
Secondly, if colocation is deemed undesirable, that's a concept I don't understand. As in my day job in city planning for Brooklyn Park, I'm quite involved in the Bottineau Corridor where colocation along the freight route corridor between Highway 55 through Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park is seen as the favorable -- favorable route; and that's from Hennepin County staff and from the consultants that we're working with. So I don't understand how one is favorable and one is unfavorable. So in general, I do support the concept of light rail through the region. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Susan Friske Pfaff, followed by Asad Aliweyd.

Welcome.

MS. FRISKE PFAFF: Good evening. My name is Susan Friske Pfaff. I'm the owner of one unit at Southwest Station Condos, located at 13560 Technology Drive. And currently I rent out that unit. I'm representing myself this evening as a landlord.

I have a very important question for all of you in the audience this evening. Please raise your hand if any of you would be in favor of light rail tracks appearing 8 to 10 feet from the foundation of your house.
Well, that's wonderful news that none of you have to deal with the dilemma I have to deal with. For the record, no one raised their hand.

I'm strongly opposed to the light rail transit tracks that are proposed to run in front of two of the residential buildings on Southwest Station Condos, located between Highway 212 and Technology Drive. For the renters of my unit, I'm deeply worried about the potential vibrations and noise a track running within such close proximity to the building would cause.

It's my understanding this distance would be as close as 8 to 10 feet. Since the buildings are wood frame construction, not concrete, I'm also concerned about the structural integrity of the buildings being impacted. I hope the Railroad Authority will reconsider the proposed Metro light rail station in order to avoid the placement of the light rail tracks for running along Highway 212 and our condo community. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Asad Aliweyd and Blair Moe.

Welcome.

MR. ALIWEYD: Good evening, Council. My name is Asad Aliweyd. I am with New American Academy. I work with the Somali community in Eden Prairie. New
American Academy, on behalf of the community, we support the TA local alignment from the Southwest Transit because it provides our community with access to a transit system. It provides our community with economic development opportunities. It provides the opportunity to increase affordable housing in the five stations in Eden Prairie and also another 10 stations in the southwest area, opportunities.

As you know, a large number of immigrants work and commute to communities in the southwest area, all the way to South Minneapolis, Hopkins, and St. Louis Park. A lot of need is for transit. Accessible transit is very important to us. So we estimate about 500 Somalis at a minimum, they don't have a car to travel to Minneapolis.

Economic development is another thing that we support in this project, because Southwest LRT can provide (unintelligible) to Eden Prairie for economic development opportunities with this five station area. We are very glad to give us a bus tour where we may have a business opportunity. We start business ownership training, and that won't be happening without the Southwest LRT project. So we tried to have a business established in this area of opportunities.

It will also bring opportunity for
employment and the businesses stations area. It will bring affordable housing, and for -- for this -- for this area of the Twin Cities. Affordable housing -- well, one concern we have is Southwest LRT is a place -- a priority for where the affordable housing is going to be. It's not very clear to us.

And we would like to thank those who support this. We call accessible transit a human rights issue. So everyone should have a -- well, affordable housing is something that everybody should have. For example, the transit, if you have five kids and you're an immigrant and your five kids go to (unintelligible) --

THE REPORTER: Sir, you're going to have to turn this way. I can't hear you.

MR. ALIWEYD: -- and you don't have a car and you live this far from the city, how are your kids going to be able to go to education.

So it's -- it's a faster way to travel to Twin Cities. It's safer. It is cheaper. That's why we support it -- this, and that's why we would like to have the Southwest LRT to be successful in the coming years and months. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you. Very much.

Next is Blair Moe, and followed by Steve
Mr. Moe, welcome.

MR. MOE: Thank you. My name is Blair Moe, and I'm from -- I reside at 2944 Blackstone Avenue in St. Louis Park. And my only concern -- I'm speaking for myself and the $100 million typo that was in the DEIS for the colocation.

I'm just a little bit concerned about that. I've been in the IT industry for a large corporation for over 20 years. I push around reports like that all the time, and I'm just concerned about how that number could have gotten through. The fact it was a typo doesn't wash with me because those numbers should be checked, calculated, and double-checked. And it makes me wonder about other numbers in the DEIS and what happens if, you know, once all the contracts are signed and the project is underway, we find out that there are more errors and more problems.

So I just wanted to say that we need to really be sure about all numbers. I am in favor of light rail. I'm also in favor of colocation. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Steve Chelesnik, and then Jack Perry.

Welcome.
MR. CHELESNIK: Good evening, Commissioners

Steve Chelesnik. I am an Eden Prairie resident and also
general counsel for Emerson Process Management. One of
the companies we own is Rosemount, which is located on
Technology Drive and is one of the -- one of the oldest
corporate citizens in Eden Prairie. I think we've been
here for quite a long time, and we supply quite a few
high-tech jobs as a corporate citizen.

We've worked closely with the City as the
Southwest rail project has moved along, and we're very
supportive of the project generally. We think it will
bring a lot of benefits to the community, and we also
support Commissioner Callison. And we're supportive of
the preferred option with the exception of the Technology
Drive alignment for a variety of reasons, but we can get
into those reasons in written comments what I will submit
later.

What I would like to say, I guess, is that
this is a huge public investment. It's a 50- or 75- or
100-year investment, and it needs to be done right. And
it needs to -- all the decisions need to be carefully
thought through. The present location of the Town Center
Station is not a particularly well thought out decision.
It was moved there as an option because there were
problems with the originally preferred routes, and I
think it's one that needs to be revisited.
And we support the City's desire to have
alternatives to Technology Drive alignment investigated.
During the DEIS phase and during preliminary engineering
when it's early enough to do something, so we can
understand what the options are. I think there are much
closer options that better serve both the State purposes
of the light rail and also City's to create a station
with sufficient areas of parking. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very
much.

Jack Perry.
Mr. Perry, welcome.

MR. PERRY: Thank you. Jack Perry from the
Briggs and Morgan Law Firm, and I'm here on behalf of
Costco, and Costco spoke earlier. I just want to make a
couple very, very quick comments.

And the first is Steve and I have been
working with Rick and other members of the City to make
sure that our concerns with the current location on
Technology Drive have been heard and understood, and
there's two comments I need to make.

First is the comment by one of the earlier
speakers about the City changing its mind. And if you go
back and look at the history of this project, as early
as -- my date's May 18, 2010, the Eden Prairie City Council went on record opposed to this portion of the route, the Technology route, with the Town Center Station being on Costco property. They reiterated that same position as a Council on February 21, 2012; and then just more recently on November 20, they said the same thing.

And my understanding is they'll send a letter tomorrow reiterating that while they, like Costco and Emerson are in favor of this project, this portion of the route doesn't make sense. In real simplistic terms, the reason it doesn't make sense is this Costco is a big box retail store. It's not a -- it's not a place where you -- where you have a Town Center. If you want a another park and ride, it's a great spot. That's not what all the plans say it's supposed to be. It's not what -- what was envisioned in the City documents.

The additional point I wanted to make is -- is that -- there was a comment made by Steve (unintelligible) about the implication of -- cost implications. And one of the things that Costco will submit with its written comments, like some of your (unintelligible), is the cost implications for this Town Center location is they will be uniquely -- uniquely hurt. And it's ironic that you brought up -- one of your first comments, Commissioner McLaughlin, was about a $100
million error.

Because my analysis of the application of the 2006 condemnation laws that legislation passed through, the one that's 117.186, there's a revision in the law, and the net effect of this is that if you destroy a business, which is what would happen with the Costco facility if you put the Town Center Station right next to the gas station, which would end the gas station, which would end the Costco location, the price tag on that is somewhere slightly north of a $100 million.

And we have not said that to the City as a threat. We've talked about it and explained it to them, but as a rationale -- one more rationale for why this is a bad location and why it should be located further north closer to the mall. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Any other people who have signed up?

No one else signed up.

Is there anyone else who wishes to speak?

They're welcome to come forward at this time.

Anybody else wishing to speak?

You've spoken already.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, I've already spoken, but I just wanted to make a comment.
Earlier when you mentioned the comment period --

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- you said it went to December 31st. And I believe it goes to December 11th, unless it's been changed.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: It's been changed.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It has been changed. Okay. Thanks I just wanted to make sure.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: That is correct, December 31st, the end of the year. Thank you for the question and comments.

Anybody else?

Yes, sir? You want to speak? Go ahead.

MR. ENDBLOM: Jeff said you wanted to hear from a local Swede.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Is that your organization?

MR. ENDBLOM: No. My name is Dan Endblom, and I live at 106 Valley View Road in Eden Prairie. And my grandfather, a Swede, bought 27 acres of land near Nine Mile Creek, and now where Flying Cloud Drive is.

And I'm here as a tree hugger, I guess, because there is a stand of Burr Oak and Red Oak trees
that are just north of Flying Cloud Drive, and I'd like
consideration to be made to move the line to preserve
that, as my grandfather wanted that land to be preserved.
He donated 12 acres of his original 27 acre purchase to
be preserved by the then Village of Eden Prairie. And we
also put our land in Minnesota Land Trust so that part of
Eden Prairie is going to be preserved forever. And I
speak on behalf of 150-year-old oak trees and their value
to our community. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Can I just -- is
the staff clear of where this is?

If not, could you just give us a little bit
more for the record so that we know precisely what you're
talking about?

MR. ENDBLOM: Sure. Where the line crosses
Nine Mile Creek at Valley -- or at Flying Cloud Drive,
which is right by the dog park and Eagle Ridge Academy.
On the other side of -- on the north side of Flying
Cloud, that's the glacial escrow that I'm referring to
that is a real little treasure in all of these other
amazing stories I've heard tonight, so...

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very
much for coming forward.

Is there anybody else who wishes to make
comments tonight?
Yes, sir.

Introduce yourself for the tape.

MR. MUYERS: Yeah. Mat Muyers. I live in Richland, Minnesota.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Oh, we missed you earlier. Okay. Great.

MR. MUYERS: Yeah, yeah. I am -- I stepped out. The gentleman makes a great point. I'm glad he made it, otherwise I probably wouldn't have been up here.

But there's a nine-minute video that somebody made that has a flyover of the entire route. It goes really slow, and there's a woman's voice and everything sounds so nice. And I'm watching it, and it seems like a Walt Disney ride or something. There's tunnels and there's overpasses and there's wetlands, and everything seems so pretty.

And then, all of a sudden -- you have to keep in mind there's a -- there's going to be a 30- or 35-foot wide swathe through this 16-mile route. So as you watch this nine-minute video and it's going through LRT and through Opus, and I'm envisioning this 35-foot-wide -- and there's this stand of trees by Smetana Road, just to the -- just to the south. Smetana, kind of by Feltl.

And the route -- whoever picked this route
goes right through approximately 300 feet of woods, and it's a larger section of woods. It's not that small, but it's large enough to make a note. It's behind the apartment complex that have the red roofs there. And then there's a 3,000-foot bridge over wetlands. I guess let's reconsider the route from the Shady Oak Station to Highway 212; because that whole section, there's no natural route for the railroad -- rail line. It's all envisioned by we'll go here; and then we'll go here; we'll go over wetlands; and then go through these trees; and then over here. So that whole section from Shady Oak to, more or less, 212 needs to be reconsidered; there's no question, because it's all natural earth; and Eden Prairie City Council has already destroyed their fair share, so -- Council with their Highway 212 project, and let's just reconsider that section at least.

Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Anyone else?

Yes, sir.

Hey, how are you?

Welcome.

MR. LAUX: Thank you, Commissioner.
My name is Jeff Laux, L-A-U-X; and I reside with my wife Brenda at 2812 Eden Prairie Parkway, so long as she says so; and I only have a couple of meaningful comments and one more unmeaningful comment.

First of all, thank you very much, Commissioner Dorfman. I remember when you were mayor and we started talking about these important topics, and to look at -- I think that Mark Andrews was the commissioner, so a lot has changed in those times.

Commissioner McLaughlin, the work that you've done to advance the concept of light rail in our community through the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority is -- is incredible. And -- and all of you -- Commissioner Callison, I don't know you, but I'm glad you're on the Regional Rail Authority, and you keep working on this project. It's a thankless job.

There's nothing that everybody can't find not to like. But -- but light rail is something that is going to serve our greater community for a long, long time in the future, and it's going to be way too expensive now, but 50 years from now it won't be; so keep pressing forward. It's incredibly important to do so.

I remember when, as a resident of the Calhoun Isles, we discovered that our property line wasn't where we thought it was when the Regional Rail
Authority was putting in the bicycle pathways. I remember there were some people that thought that some undesirable people were going to come to the lakes area on their bikes, and they were going to steal everything from all of our houses; and I just want to say two things about that. I'm one of the undesirable people from Minneapolis. I promise not to go anywhere and do anything bad. Secondly, people didn't come and take things out of our garages. That's not what happened.

Now, on a serious note, everybody has to make sacrifices for a regional project to work, and those sacrifices are great. I think it's real important to try to thank in advance those folks in St. Louis Park who are not going to press for colocation because this is a regional project for which everyone has to make a sacrifice. Colocation does not work. It will kill the project. We cannot have colocation.

The second thing that I want to say is one of the ways to make sure the people let go of the tunnel is to propose a bridge, so maybe we need to go back and look at at-grade crossing at Cedar Lake because the comments that were made earlier are spot on. That is not the solution for a safe crossing, and so please do a lot of studying on that. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you, sir.
Anybody else?

Anybody else?

Going twice. Third time. Anybody else?

Well, with that, then I -- we will conclude this hearing. I appreciate everyone's participation.

That is a -- I've been through a few of these projects, and it's a long march; and the comments that you made tonight will be a part of that process and will help make this project a better project. And we will take them into account as we move into the next stages of the project, as there's a design consideration mitigation and the like.

We appreciate your participation here tonight, wish you well, and ask you to drive home safely.

Any other comments from my colleagues?

COMMISSIONER CALLISON: Thank you all for taking the time to be here.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: With that, we stand adjourned. Thank you very much.

(Proceedings adjourned at 7:47 p.m.)
REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF MINNESOTA )
COUNTY OF HENNEPIN ) ss.

I, hereby certify that I reported the above proceedings on the 29th day of November, 2012, in St. Louis Park, Minnesota;

That the cost of the original has been charged to the party who noticed the proceedings, and that all parties who ordered copies have been charged at the same rate for such copies;

That I am not a relative or employee or attorney or counsel of any of the parties, or a relative or employee of such;

That I am not financially interested in the action and have no contract with the parties, attorneys, or persons with an interest in the action that affects or has a substantial tendency to affect my impartiality.

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL THIS 10th day of December, 2012.

_________________________
Dawn Workman Bounds
Notary Public, Hennepin County, Minnesota
My commission expires January 31, 2014
Draft Environmental Impact Statement Comment Form
Southwest Transitway Project

Federal and state environmental rules require that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be prepared for the proposed Southwest Transitway project. The EIS process includes the preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which must be made available for public review and comment.

The DEIS discusses: (1) the purpose and need for the project; (2) the alternatives considered; (3) the impacts of these alternatives; and (4) the agencies and persons consulted.

Comments on the DEIS will be accepted through December 11, 2012. All comments must be received by that date. Please include a return mailing address with all comments.

Public hearings on the DEIS will be held in November 2012. To learn more about the hearings, please visit www.southwesttransitway.org

Why not Alternative 3C-2

Leave the freight going through Lakewood

Name: Shelly Silver
Address: 1989 Buckstone Ave
City/State/Zip: SCP MN 55416
Telephone: Email:

Thank you!
Hennepin County
Housing, Community Works & Transit
ATTN: Southwest Transitway
701 Fourth Avenue South, Suite 400
Minneapolis, MN 55415
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Please consider routing the line as it crosses Nine Mile Creek at Flying Cloud Drive:

- Preserve the stand of oak (bur, red) trees that live on a glacial esker, North of Flying Cloud and West of Nine Mile.

- Adjacent land was purchased by my grandfather over 70 years ago; 12 acres of land were donated to Eden Prairie to be forever a natural area. 5 acres are held by Minnesota Land Owners. The remaining 7 acres is now THE BLOOMER FARM.

- The 150+ old trees provide a beautiful visual buffer for Eagle Ridge Academy.

- I am the 3rd generation living and caring for the family "farm".

Thanks to Tom Hintstrom for visiting with me and the commission for the opportunity to speak.

Name: DAN ENBLOM
Address: 10610 VALLEY VIEW RD
City/State/Zip: EDEN PRAIRIE MN 55344
Telephone: 952.212.3263 Email: dpenblom@yahoo.com

Thank you!
Hennepin County
Housing, Community Works & Transit
ATTN: Southwest Transitway
701 Fourth Avenue South, Suite 400
Minneapolis, MN 55415
My name is Fred Koppelman and I live in Eden Prairie

I’m here to call your attention to one of biggest money wasting schemes that we’ve seen in a long time.

There is a group of unelected bureaucrats who seem to think that we need to construct parallel, steel rails from here to downtown upon which to run expensive locomotives pulling shiny, new coaches to transport people. AT A COST OF $1.75 BILLION

Well, we already have a transportation system called Southwest Metro Transit that does an adequate job of accomplishing that task. And buses can be added as the need requires and if transportation needs take a new direction, those busses have steering wheels that can go wherever that need is. However, there is a disturbing fact that most people may not even realize about Southwest Metro Transit and that is that ridership pays for about 30% of the cost of operation. That means that 70 cents of every dollar spent has to be made up by us taxpayers!
Let’s fix Southwest Metro Transit before we even THINK about a light rail system. I can only imagine how much of a taxpayer subsidy will be needed with a light rail system—maybe 80 or 90%?? Do we really want to put our grandchildren and even our great grandchildren into hock for a system that we do not need? I think not!

Neither the Transportation Board, nor the Metropolitan Council which controls it, need to answer to any voters, they are appointed and can spend as much of our money as they want. All they have to do is convince us that we NEED what they are proposing. Well, it’s time that that madness stops! And that time is NOW!

Thank you
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_____________________________
I am interested in knowing more about the proposed locations of operation and maintenance facilities at my business property
in Eden Prairie and was told earlier in the process that the area surrounding (perhaps including some of my land) was a potential site. Such a decision would obviously have a huge impact on my business, ranging from disruption of business due to traffic access to possible relocation of the business.

_____________________________
Name: Glenniee Kutsch
Address: 7980 Wallace Rd
City/State/Zip: Eden Prairie, MN 55344
Telephone: 952-941-8516 Email: glenniee@autosourceinc.com

Thank you!
transitway

Fold here

G. Kutsch
7980 Wallace Rd
Eden Prairie MN 55344

Hennepin County
Housing, Community Works & Transit
ATTN: Southwest Transitway
701 Fourth Avenue South, Suite 400
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Fold here
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______________________________
THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO LOGIC OR REASON
TO THE PROPOSED FREIGHT RAIL ROUTE
THAN ST LOUIS PARK

______________________________
CO-LOCATE LRT + LEAVE
FREIGHT WHERE IT HAS ALWAYS
BEEN.

Name: LYN WIK
Address: 3965 QUENTIN
City/State/Zip: 55416
Telephone: 952 270 2020 Email: 

Thank you!