Southwest LRT (METRO Green Line Extension) Project

Supplemental Draft EIS Comments

Public Comments at the Hopkins Public Hearing, June 16, 2015

July 2015
TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

The following is the transcript of proceedings, taken before Rebekah J. Bishop, Notary Public, Registered Professional Reporter, Certified Realtime Reporter, at the Hopkins Center for the Arts, 1111 Mainstreet, Hopkins, Minnesota 55343, commencing at 6:04 p.m. on Tuesday, June 16, 2015.
APPEARANCES

Metropolitan Council:

Jennifer Munt
Edward Reynoso
Steve Elkins
PROCEEDINGS

MS. MUNT: Hello, everybody. Welcome to the public hearing on the supplemental draft environmental impact statement for Southwest Light Rail Transit. This hearing is being hosted by the Metropolitan Council, and today, we have myself, Jennifer Munt, I'm a Met Council member; my colleague, Edward Reynoso, at the end of the table; and Steve Elkins to my other side. This is Sophia Ginis, and she's going to be our timekeeper tonight.

If you'd like to testify, please make sure you've signed up on the sign-in sheet located at the sign-in desk outside the door. We'll call you in in the order that you signed up. This is an opportunity to provide your input to the Met Council, and our job today as council members is to be listening.

The intent of these hearings is to listen to your comments on the Southwest Light Rail Transit DEIS. I understand that many of you may have questions on the project due to the current cost estimates, but tonight we really want to focus on comments about the supplemental DEIS.

We will not be responding to questions at this meeting, but recording your comments. Individuals will have up to two minutes, groups up to three
minutes. I ask that you state your name and address for the record. If you're representing a group, please identify the group as well as your name and -- and your address.

We'll let you know when you have one minute 30 seconds and when your time is up. Sophia here has got signs that she will show to you. To ensure that everyone that wants to speak has an opportunity, I ask that you respect the time limits and refrain from applauding or cheering during the public hearing.

To help expedite the process, I'll call three names at a time. If you're the second and third names, please come forward so that you'll be ready to speak as soon as the other person is done.

Before we begin taking public testimony tonight, Nani Jacobson, who is the assistant director of Environmental and Agreements at the Southwest Project Office, she'll give us a 10 to 12 minute overview of the supplemental DEIS. Welcome, Nani. She's got a presentation right behind me.

(Per request, presentation not reported.)

MS. MUNT: Thank you, Nani.

I want to first recognize two elected officials who have joined us tonight, Hennepin County Commissioner Jan Callison and Hopkins City Councilman
Gadd. They are both here to hear your comments.

Tonight we have got only two people signed up
to testify. First is Bob Carney, and second is Stuart Nolan.

Bob?

MR. CARNEY: Hi, I'm just curious: Are they still on that -- still two-minute rule?

MS. MUNT: Two minutes.

MR. CARNEY: Two minutes. Okay. I guess this is the two-minute warning.

The State has cancelled $30 million that had
been appropriated for Southwest Light Rail. The total
that the State has appropriated so far now is down to
$15 million. The supplemental -- the impact statement
says in section 5.2, "Remaining funding is assumed to
come from," and then dot, dot, dot, "the State
(10 percent)."

Now, you're talking about trying to cut back
to a $1.65 billion budget; right now, it's at
$2 billion. That's $165 million for the State's
10 percent. And they've contributed $15 million, so
there's 150 missing -- $150 million missing.

I talked to Speaker Daudt at the special
session and asked him, "Is there any chance that the
legislature next year is going to put any more money
into Southwest Light Rail?" He said, "No." I asked him, "Is that on the record or off the record?" He said, "I don't care."

So you need to realize that there is a $300 million shortfall in the amount of money that you think is coming into this program. That's $150 million that the State is not going to do and another $150 million in federal match.

Now, the current reports show $59 million being spent on it. I've got an e-mail from a Hennepin County project engineer who says that Hennepin County Railroad has put $34 million into it; their numbers show $10.9 million. I'm showing about $90 million that has been put in so far. I'm showing another sixty -- $67.3 million scheduled to be disbursed or budgeted by Hennepin County Railroad or CTIB for the rest of the year.

This is just an outrageous process. The real issue is we've got to freeze this thing before more money is spent.

Thank you.

MS. MUNT: Next speaker is Stuart Nolan.

MR. NOLAN: Don't start the clock yet. I haven't said a word. Can you pass those down, please?

Excuse me, I'm Stuart Nolan, Stuart
Companies. Among others, we own just about 500 rental housing units on either side of Hopkins and Minnetonka -- and the City of Minnetonka. As -- as the route comes south over the tracks, our properties begin and extend south on either side (inaudible) Smetana.

We object to that route through the middle of our properties and uprooting the lives of over a thousand of our residences. And it damage -- the damage to the environment, I won't harp on it, is considerable with our wetlands and our wildlife and -- and trail.

We propose an alternate. Instead of going through where the yellow is on the map I gave you, we propose -- and this is -- this is a problem for some people; to us, it makes a lot of sense. If the train came up Excelsior Boulevard and turned south at 11th Street instead of going up to 17th, and it connects to the same point south where you can see.

When it does, it decreases the cost of the train because it's -- it's shortening the route by 2100 and some feet; it reduces the travel time; it reduces the impact to the environment; and it eliminates the problem with the Hopkins Maintenance Facility because it doesn't go up to 17th, it turns at 11th.

It's a straight route. It saves money, the
environment, the maintenance facility, travel time, and
I think it deserves consideration and not just shoveled
under the map -- map because this is what some people
decided to push.

And I made it in two minutes.

MS. MUNT: Folks, is there anybody else who
would like to testify tonight? We've got two minutes
for individuals, three minutes for groups.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I have a question: What is
the total expenditure on Southwest Light Rail Transit
planning to this point?

MS. MUNT: Sam, could you help the lady with
an answer?

MS. O'CONNELL: Sure.

MS. MUNT: Thank you.

MS. O'CONNELL: So she asked in the group. I
don't know if you know right now, it's been about
$62 million for the planning that we've been doing on
the engineering and the environmental study. So our
staff would be happy to answer any questions that you
have. We still have a lot of folks that are back in
the open house, so --

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Are you talking about
consultant fees or staff? Does that include staff?

MS. O'CONNELL: (Nods head.)
AUDIENCE MEMBER: So $62 million?

MS. MUNT: Folks, I'd also like to acknowledge Mayor Gene Maxwell from the City of Hopkins.

Anybody else want to testify? I think this is the one of shortest public hearings we've ever had. Well, I think what we'll do, folks, is folks at the table will stick around for another 15 minutes; our staff will stick around outside in the hall until 6:30. If anybody changes their mind, we'll be right here to hear your testimony.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: As long as we're here.

MS. MUNT: Please.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just have a question about the Kenilworth tunnel. I thought that that was cancelled, and they were going to go over that track?

MS. MUNT: Folks, we've got questions about the Kenilworth trail. Can Nani help explain that?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just thought I heard on the news that the tunnel was cancelled and that it would end up being an overhead rail, still using the same track, just overhead.

MS. JACOBSON: Sure, I'll respond to that. With respect to the document, in Section 3.4, it does identify a tunnel in the Kenilworth. And that's still
part of the current project, so we would welcome any
comments on the design in that line that does include a
tunnel in the Kenilworth.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So what I heard on the news
is wrong?

MS. JACOBSON: I mean, the project is -- I'll
be happy to take you out in the lobby and show you that
particular section on that.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I -- I guess I have another
question. How much -- what soft soil, sandy stuff for
what percentage of the line? Because I know there's
some in Eden Prairie and there's some in Minneapolis,
and certainly, there's some in Hopkins.

MS. MUNT: Nani, can you speak to the -- the
wet soil that may be encountered in both Eden Prairie
and in Hopkins?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And Minneapolis.

MS. MUNT: And Minneapolis.

MS. JACOBSON: Certainly. We do have the --
we do have pretty minimal wetland packs in the three
areas that we have identified in SDEIS. I would
actually -- we have a board out there; it's at the end
of the hall. That's going to be the best way to answer
your question, and if there's not a staff person out
there, I can certainly come out and show you what --
where those wetlands are.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I saw that. I just wondered what percentage -- I know that the area of the Kenilworth trail was not just wetland; it was a lake. It was -- so it's filled in. Seems -- seems that the land that's left is wetland. So, I mean, how much soil stabilization?

MS. JACOBSON: There's a small amount of wetland in that area, but not the -- not that much. I think it's less than -- less than an acre along that Kenilworth area. So we look -- we do a very thorough analysis in the field, surveys to document the vegetation and the wetland coverage. So we've done that for the entire --

MS. MUNT: Anyone else wants to testify?

Okay. I have got us, right now, at 6:30. We'll hang out here until 6:45, and if anybody changes their mind, just step to the microphone. Let us know your name and your address and the group you represent, if you're here on behalf of a group.

(Proceedings concluded at 6:28 p.m.)
STATE OF MINNESOTA  
: ss  CERTIFICATE  
COUNTY OF ANOKA  

BE IT KNOWN that I, Rebekah J. Bishop, took the foregoing transcript of proceedings;

That the foregoing transcript of proceedings is a true record of the testimony given;

That I am not related to any of the parties hereto, nor an employee of them, nor interested in the outcome of the action;

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

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL this 23rd day of June, 2015.

________________________________
Rebekah J. Bishop, RPR, CRR
Notary Public
My Commission Expires 1/31/2020
Date: 6-16-15

Comment: I have no comment on Environmental Study. Just how the southwest LRT will be built. Thank you.

David Hester