SOUTHWEST LRT (METRO GREEN LINE EXTENSION) SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

SOUTHWEST LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT (METRO GREEN LINE EXTENSION) SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Prepared by:
United States Department of Transportation (USDOT)
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

and

Metropolitan Council, Minnesota (Council)

In cooperation with
United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

Submitted pursuant to:

After publication of the FEIS, the Council will issue an Adequacy Determination for the Final EIS in accordance with Minnesota environmental law.

FTA will issue a single Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision document pursuant to Pub. L. 112-141, 126 Stat. 405, Section 1319(b) unless FTA determines statutory criteria or practicability considerations preclude issue of the combined document pursuant to Section 1319.

Date of Approval

May 2015
Abstract

The Metropolitan Council (Council) proposes to construct and operate the approximately 16-mile Southwest Light Rail Transit (METRO Green Line Extension) project (Southwest LRT) as an extension of the Central Corridor LRT (METRO Green Line) to provide transportation improvements in the southwest metropolitan region. The Southwest LRT would extend from Eden Prairie, Minnesota, through the cities of Minnetonka, Hopkins, and St. Louis Park, to downtown Minneapolis, passing in close proximity to Edina, and connecting to the METRO Green Line, which began revenue service in June 2014. The identified Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) is a light rail line alignment constructed and operating on the Kenilworth-Opus-Golden Triangle alignment, reflecting adjustments to the LPA made subsequent to publication of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In addition to the proposed light rail alignment, stations, park-and-ride lots, and ancillary facilities, including a proposed Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF), the LPA includes proposed related bus, roadway, bicycle/pedestrian improvements, and freight rail modifications.

This Supplemental Draft EIS restates the project’s Purpose and Need Statement from the Draft EIS and provides a description of the proposed action (that is, the LPA), focusing on three areas that are evaluated within the Supplemental Draft EIS. It also includes a description of the process and analyses used to identify adjustments to the LPA in those three areas. The three areas analyzed in this limited-scope Supplemental Draft EIS are: (1) adjustments to the proposed light rail alignment and station improvements in a segment in Eden Prairie, generally between the intersections of Technology Drive and Mitchell Road and of Flying Cloud Drive and Valley View Road; (2) the location of a proposed OMF in Hopkins; and (3) adjustments to proposed light rail and freight rail alignments and LRT stations in a segment in St. Louis Park and Minneapolis, generally between Louisiana Avenue South and Penn Avenue South. This Supplemental Draft EIS augments the information and analyses provided in the Draft EIS focusing on changes that may result in significant adverse environmental impacts of the proposed project since publication of the Draft EIS in October 2012. This Supplemental Draft EIS also includes additional preliminary Section 4(f) de minimis impact findings not included in the Draft EIS.

Comments on this document may be submitted in writing to the contacts below or made verbally at the following public hearings, which will be conducted in conjunction with informational open houses.

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Table of Contents

1 Purpose and Need ........................................................................................................... 1-1
  1.1 Project Purpose ........................................................................................................... 1-1
  1.2 Project Need ................................................................................................................ 1-1

2 Alternatives Considered ................................................................................................. 2-1
  2.1 Project Overview ......................................................................................................... 2-1
    2.1.1 Project Participating Agencies .............................................................................. 2-1
    2.1.2 Project Background ............................................................................................. 2-4
  2.2 Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement ......................... 2-4
  2.3 Design Adjustments Considered Following the Draft Environmental Impact Statement ........................................................................................................... 2-8
    2.3.1 Eden Prairie Segment .......................................................................................... 2-8
      2.3.1.1 Background .................................................................................................... 2-8
      2.3.1.2 Design Adjustments Considered in the Eden Prairie Segment ...................... 2-9
    2.3.2 Operations and Maintenance Facility Location ..................................................... 2-12
      2.3.2.1 Background .................................................................................................... 2-12
      2.3.2.2 Operations and Maintenance Facility Sites Considered after Publication of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement .............................................. 2-14
    2.3.3 St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment ................................................................... 2-19
      2.3.3.1 Background .................................................................................................... 2-19
      2.3.3.2 Design Adjustments Considered in the St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment .................................................. 2-19
  2.4 Design Adjustment Process .......................................................................................... 2-43
  2.5 Locally Preferred Alternative Adjustments Evaluated in this Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement ......................................................................................... 2-44
    2.5.1 Eden Prairie Segment .......................................................................................... 2-47
    2.5.2 Operations and Maintenance Facility .................................................................... 2-51
    2.5.3 St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment ................................................................... 2-51
  2.6 Locally Requested Capital Investments ...................................................................... 2-58
    2.6.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................... 2-58
    2.6.2 Proposed Locally Requested Capital Investment Actions .................................... 2-58
      2.6.2.1 Local Roadway Improvements ...................................................................... 2-58
      2.6.2.2 Streetscape, Landscape and Aesthetic Improvements .................................... 2-58
      2.6.2.3 Local Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements ................................................. 2-59
      2.6.2.4 Utility Activities ............................................................................................... 2-59
      2.6.2.5 Guideway Profile Adjustment ...................................................................... 2-59
    2.6.3 Next Steps ............................................................................................................ 2-60

3 Affected Environment, Impacts, and Mitigation ................................................................ 3-1
  3.1 Environmental Resources Addressed and Related Methods and Regulations ............. 3-2
    3.1.1 Environmental Resources Addressed in this Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement .......................................................................................................................... 3-2
    3.1.2 Environmental Resources Methodologies and Regulations .................................. 3-4
      3.1.2.1 Land Use ........................................................................................................ 3-4
3.1.2.2 Acquisitions and Displacements ................................................................. 3-5
3.1.2.3 Cultural Resources .................................................................................. 3-6
3.1.2.4 Parklands, Recreation Areas, and Open Spaces ........................................ 3-7
3.1.2.5 Visual Quality and Aesthetics ................................................................. 3-8
3.1.2.6 Geology and Groundwater ..................................................................... 3-10
3.1.2.7 Water Resources: Wetlands, Floodplains, Public Waters and Stormwater
Management ..................................................................................................... 3-11
3.1.2.8 Noise ....................................................................................................... 3-12
3.1.2.9 Vibration .................................................................................................. 3-15
3.1.2.10 Hazardous and Contaminated Materials ............................................... 3-15
3.1.2.11 Economic Effects .................................................................................. 3-16
3.1.2.12 Transportation Effects: Transit, Roadway and Traffic, Parking, Freight Rail,
Bicycle and Pedestrian, Safety and Security ..................................................... 3-17
3.1.2.13 Mitigation Measures ............................................................................. 3-22
3.1.2.14 Environmental Justice Compliance ...................................................... 3-27

3.2 Eden Prairie Segment .................................................................................... 3-27
3.2.1 Social Effects ............................................................................................. 3-30
3.2.1.1 Land Use ............................................................................................... 3-30
3.2.1.2 Acquisitions and Displacements .......................................................... 3-34
3.2.1.3 Cultural Resources .............................................................................. 3-39
3.2.1.4 Parklands, Recreation Areas, and Open Spaces .................................... 3-41
3.2.1.5 Visual Quality and Aesthetics ............................................................... 3-45
3.2.2 Environmental Effects .............................................................................. 3-55
3.2.2.1 Geology and Groundwater .................................................................. 3-55
3.2.2.2 Water Resources: Wetlands, Floodplains, Public Waters, and Stormwater
Management ..................................................................................................... 3-59
3.2.2.3 Noise ....................................................................................................... 3-68
3.2.2.4 Vibration .................................................................................................. 3-73
3.2.2.5 Hazardous and Contaminated Materials ............................................... 3-75
3.2.3 Economic Effects ...................................................................................... 3-78
3.2.4 Transportation Effects .............................................................................. 3-79
3.2.4.1 Transit ...................................................................................................... 3-80
3.2.4.2 Roadway and Traffic ........................................................................... 3-81
3.2.4.3 Parking ..................................................................................................... 3-86
3.2.4.4 Bicycle and Pedestrian ......................................................................... 3-87
3.2.4.5 Safety and Security ................................................................................ 3-89
3.2.5 Environmental Justice Compliance .......................................................... 3-90

3.3 Hopkins Operations and Maintenance Facility .............................................. 3-99
3.3.1 Social Effects ............................................................................................. 3-100
3.3.1.1 Land Use ............................................................................................... 3-100
3.3.1.2 Acquisitions and Displacements .......................................................... 3-104
3.3.2 Environmental Effects ............................................................................. 3-107
3.3.2.1 Geology and Groundwater .................................................................. 3-107
3.3.2.2 Water Resources: Wetlands, Floodplains, Public Waters, and Stormwater
Management ..................................................................................................... 3-110
3.3.2.3 Hazardous and Contaminated Materials ............................................... 3-116
3.3.3 Economic Effects ...................................................................................... 3-121
3.3.4 Transportation Effects .............................................................................. 3-122
3.3.4.1 Roadway and Traffic ........................................................................... 3-122
3.3.4.2 Parking ..................................................................................................... 3-124
3.3.4.3 Safety and Security ................................................................................ 3-125
3.3.5 Environmental Justice Compliance .......................................................... 3-126

3.4 St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment .............................................................. 3-133
SOUTHWEST LRT (METRO GREEN LINE EXTENSION) SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

3.4.1 Social Effects................................................................................................................3-134
  3.4.1.1 Land Use ..................................................................................................................3-136
  3.4.1.2 Acquisitions and Displacements .............................................................................3-140
  3.4.1.3 Cultural Resources ...................................................................................................3-145
  3.4.1.4 Source: MnDOT CRU, 2014. Parklands, Recreation Areas, and Open Spaces 3-156
  3.4.1.5 Visual Quality and Aesthetics ...............................................................................3-161

3.4.2 Environmental Effects .................................................................................................. 3-168
  3.4.2.1 Geology and Groundwater ......................................................................................3-168
  3.4.2.2 Water Resources: Wetlands, Floodplains, Public Waters, and Stormwater
    Management ..................................................................................................................3-173
  3.4.2.3 Noise ......................................................................................................................3-179
  3.4.2.4 Vibration ...............................................................................................................3-185
  3.4.2.5 Hazardous and Contaminated Materials .................................................................3-188

3.4.3 Economic Effects ..........................................................................................................3-193

3.4.4 Transportation Effects ....................................................................................................3-196
  3.4.4.1 Transit ....................................................................................................................3-197
  3.4.4.2 Roadway and Traffic .............................................................................................3-198
  3.4.4.3 Parking ...................................................................................................................3-201
  3.4.4.4 Freight Rail ............................................................................................................3-203
  3.4.4.5 Bicycle and Pedestrian ..........................................................................................3-205
  3.4.4.6 Safety and Security .................................................................................................3-207

3.4.5 Environmental Justice Compliance ..............................................................................3-209

3.5 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update ............................................................................3-218
  3.5.1 Regulatory Background/Methodology .......................................................................3-221
    3.5.1.1 Types of Section 4(f) Properties ...........................................................................3-222
    3.5.1.2 Section 4(f) Determinations .................................................................................3-222
    3.5.1.3 Section 4(f) Evaluation Process ............................................................................3-222
    3.5.1.4 Section 4(f) Use Definitions and Requirements ....................................................3-224
  3.5.2 Purpose and Need ........................................................................................................3-225
    3.5.2.1 Project Purpose ....................................................................................................3-225
    3.5.2.2 Project Need ..........................................................................................................3-225
  3.5.3 Description of the Locally Preferred Alternative ........................................................3-226
  3.5.4 Section 4(f) Properties in the LPA Study Area ...........................................................3-227
    3.5.4.1 Publicly Owned Parks and Recreational Areas ......................................................3-234
    3.5.4.2 Historic Properties ..............................................................................................3-266
  3.5.5 Coordination ................................................................................................................3-327
    3.5.5.1 Department of Interior (DOI) .................................................................................3-327
    3.5.5.2 Officials with Jurisdiction ......................................................................................3-327
    3.5.5.3 Public ....................................................................................................................3-328
  3.5.6 Preliminary Determination of Section 4(f) Use ...........................................................3-328

4 Public and Agency Coordination .........................................................................................4-1
  4.1 Accessibility to the Public ...............................................................................................4-1
  4.2 Coordination since the Draft Environmental Impact Statement ....................................4-1
  4.3 Advisory Committees.....................................................................................................4-2
  4.4 Public Involvement ........................................................................................................4-6
    4.4.1 Background ..............................................................................................................4-6
    4.4.2 Communications and Public Involvement Plan .........................................................4-8
      4.4.2.1 Outreach and Communications Team ................................................................4-8
      4.4.2.2 Public Outreach and Events ..............................................................................4-9
      4.4.2.3 Other Project Communication Strategies ..........................................................4-14
  4.5 Agency Coordination ......................................................................................................4-17

Front Matter
4.5.1 Participating Agencies ................................................................. 4-17
  4.5.1.1 Agency Coordination since Publication of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement ................................................................. 4-17
  4.5.1.2 Preliminary Permits and Approvals Required ................................................................. 4-20
4.6 Public and Agency Coordination following Publication of the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement ................................................................. 4-22

5 Next Steps and Funding ................................................................. 5-1
  5.1 Next Steps and Schedule ......................................................................................................................................................... 5-1
  5.2 Funding ................................................................................................................................................................................. 5-2
  5.3 Capital Costs ........................................................................................................................................................................... 5-3

Appendices
A List of Recipients
B List of Preparers
C Supporting Documents and Technical Reports (Incorporated by Reference)
D Sources and References Cited
E Agency Coordination Letters
F Development and Evaluation of Design Adjustments Since Publication of the Draft EIS
G Supplemental Draft EIS Conceptual Engineering Drawings
H Noise and Vibration Memoranda
I Responses to Comments Received on Supplemental Draft EIS Scope
J Visual Resources Technical Report
K Public Notices
L Draft 4(f) Evaluation Update Supporting Documentation

Tables
  2.3-1 Eden Prairie Steps 1 and 2 Subsegments and Design Adjustments Considered ................................................................. 2-11
  2.3-2 Operational and Site Criteria Used to Evaluate the Second-Step Operations and Maintenance Facility Sites ................................................................. 2-17
  2.3-3 Third-Step Sites for the Operations and Maintenance Facility ........................................................................................................... 2-18
  2.3-4 Set 1 Design Adjustments Developed and Evaluated in the St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment, by Step ........................................................................................................... 2-23
  2.5-1 LPA Proposed LRT Alignment Length, Stations, and Park-and-Ride Lots: Draft EIS and Supplemental Draft EIS (within Supplemental Draft EIS Segments) ................................................................. 2-48
  2.6-1 General Locally Requested Capital Investment Activities by Requestor and Identification Number ........................................................................................................... 2-59
  3.1-1 Environmental Resources Addressed in the Supplemental Draft EIS by Study Area ........................................................................................................... 3-2
  3.1-2 METRO Blue Line Reference Noise Levels ........................................................................................................... 3-13
  3.1-3 Locally Preferred Alternative Operating Plan ........................................................................................................... 3-18
  3.1-4 Existing Freight Rail Conditions on the Kenilworth Corridor, Bass Lake and MN&S Spurs ........................................................................................................... 3-20
  3.1-5 Freight Co-Location Crossing Blockage Times ........................................................................................................... 3-21
  3.1-6 Summary of Short-term and Long-term Mitigation Measures by Resource Area ........................................................................................................... 3-23
  3.2-1 Summary of Findings for the Eden Prairie Segment ........................................................................................................... 3-28
  3.2-2 Changes in Existing Land Use under the LPA – Eden Prairie Segment ........................................................................................................... 3-33
  3.2-3 Eden Prairie Segment – Parcel Description ........................................................................................................... 3-37
  3.2-4 Parklands, Recreation Areas, and Open Spaces in the Eden Prairie Segment ........................................................................................................... 3-42
  3.2-5 Existing Visual Quality and Aesthetics by Viewpoint in the Eden Prairie Segment ........................................................................................................... 3-47
  3.2-6 Anticipated Direct Change and Impact in Visual Quality and Aesthetics from Eden Prairie Segment Viewpoints ........................................................................................................... 3-50
  3.2-7 Eden Prairie Segment Wetland Impact Summary ........................................................................................................... 3-61
  3.2-8 Summary of Existing Noise Level Measurements – Eden Prairie Segment ........................................................................................................... 3-69
Exhibits

2.1-1 Proposed Southwest LRT Alignment ................................................................. 2-2
2.2-1 LRT Build Alternatives Evaluated in the Draft EIS ........................................ 2-7
2.3-1 Step 1 and 2 Subsegments and Design Adjustments Considered, Eden Prairie Segment ................................................................. 2-10
2.3-2 Third Step LRT Alignment Adjustments Evaluated in the Supplemental Draft EIS, Eden Prairie Segment ................................................................. 2-13
2.3-3 OMF Sites Considered ........................................................................................................ 2-15
2.3-4 Existing Freight Rail Owners and Operators ....................................................... 2-21
2.3-5 Areas of Potential Light Rail and Freight Rail-Related Adjustments, St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment ................................................................. 2-25
2.3-6 Brunswick Central Freight Rail Relocation Adjustments ..................................... 2-26
2.3-7 Draft EIS and Brunswick West Freight Rail Relocation Adjustments .............. 2-27
2.3-8 Kenilworth Corridor Adjustments Considered .................................................... 2-31
2.3-9 Shallow LRT Tunnels – Over Kenilworth Lagoon Design Adjustments, St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment ................................................................. 2-34
2.3-10 MN&S North Freight Rail Relocation Adjustments ........................................... 2-36
2.3-11 Short Shallow Cut-and-Cover Tunnel – Under Kenilworth Lagoon ............... 2-40
2.3-12 Long Shallow Cut-and-Cover Tunnel – Under Kenilworth Lagoon ............... 2-41
2.5-1 SOUTHWEST LRT CORRIDOR AND SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT EIS STUDY AREAS ................................................................. 2-46
2.5-2 Project Overview Eden Prairie Segment ............................................................... 2-49
2.5-3 Project Overview, Operations and Maintenance Facility, City of Hopkins ........ 2-53
2.5-4 Project Overview St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment ........................................ 2-54
2.5-5 Proposed Freight Rail Modifications ...................................................................... 2-57
3.2-1 Property Acquisitions, Eden Prairie Segment ..................................................... 3-38
3.2-2 Archaeological and Historic Architectural Areas of Potential Effect, Eden Prairie Segment ................................................................. 3-40
3.2-3 Parklands, Recreation Areas, and Open Spaces, Eden Prairie Segment .......... 3-43
3.2-4 Areas with Compressible Soils, Eden Prairie Segment ....................................... 3-57
3.2-5 Water Resources: Wetlands, Floodplains, and Public Waters, Eden Prairie Segment ................................................................. 3-63
3.2-6 Noise/Vibration Impacts and Monitoring Locations, Eden Prairie Segment .... 3-70
3.2-7 Potential High-Risk Hazardous and Contaminated Materials Sites, Eden Prairie Segment ................................................................. 3-77
SOUTHWEST LRT (METRO GREEN LINE EXTENSION) SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

3.2-8 Low-Income Population Within Census Block Groups, Eden Prairie Segment .................................................. 3-91
3.2-9 Minority Population Within Census Blocks, Eden Prairie Segment ............................................................... 3-93
3.3-1 Property Acquisitions, Hopkins Operations and Maintenance Facility .......................................................... 3-107
3.3-2 Water Resources: Wetlands and Floodplains, Hopkins Operations and Maintenance Facility ....................... 3-114
3.3-3 Potential High-Risk Hazardous and Contaminated Materials Sites, Hopkins Operations and Maintenance Facility ........................................................................................................ 3-119
3.3-4 Low-Income Population Within Census Block Groups, Hopkins Operations and Maintenance Facility ......................................................................................................................... 3-128
3.3-5 Minority Population Within Census Blocks, Hopkins Operations and Maintenance Facility ........................... 3-129
3.4-1 Property Acquisitions, St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment ............................................................................. 3-145
3.4-2 Architecture/History Area of Potential Effect and Resources, St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment ................. 3-147
3.4-3 Archaeological Area of Potential Effect, St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment ................................................... 3-148
3.4-4 Parklands, Recreation Areas, and Open Spaces, St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment ................................. 3-159
3.4-5 Water Resources: Wetlands, Floodplains, and Public Waters, St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment .......... 3-159
3.4-6 Noise/Vibration Impacts and Monitoring Locations, St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment ............................. 3-176
3.4-7 Potential High-Risk Hazardous and Contaminated Materials Sites, St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment ..... 3-191
3.4-8 Twin Cities & Western Railroad Service Extent .................................................................................................. 3-196
3.4-9 Low-income Population Within Census Block Groups, St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment .......................... 3-211
3.4-10 Minority Population Within Census Blocks, St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment ........................................ 3-212
3.5-1 Proposed Southwest LRT Alignment .................................................................................................................. 3-227
3.5-2 Section 4(f) Properties within the vicinity of the proposed LPA – Mitchell Station to Shady Oak Station ........ 3-231
3.5-3 Section 4(f) Properties within the vicinity of the proposed LPA – City West Station to Beltline Station .......... 3-232
3.5-4A Section 4(f) Recreational and Individual Historic Properties within the vicinity of the proposed LPA – Louisiana Station to Target Field Station ..................................................... 3-233
3.5-4B Section 4(f) Historic District Properties within the vicinity of the proposed LPA – Louisiana Station to Target Field Station ........................................................................................................ 3-234
3.5-5 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Purrgatory Creek Park ................................................................. 3-238
3.5-6 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Flying Cloud Dog Park ............................................................... 3-241
3.5-7 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Overpass Skate Park ................................................................. 3-243
3.5-8 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Edgework Park ............................................................................. 3-244
3.5-9 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Jorvig Park ....................................................................................... 3-248
3.5-10 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Lilac Park ......................................................................................... 3-249
3.5-11 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Alcott Triangle ............................................................................. 3-251
3.5-12 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Park Siding Park ......................................................................... 3-253
3.5-13 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Kenilworth Channel/Lagoon Recreational Resource (element of the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park) .................................................. 3-256
3.5-14A Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Bridge Construction Sequence over the Kenilworth Channel/Lagoon ................................................................................................................ 3-256
3.5-14B Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Kenilworth Channel/Lagoon Recreational Resource (element of the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park) — Plan View ........................................... 3-257
3.5-15 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Cedar Lake Park at East Cedar Beach ........................................ 3-259
3.5-16 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Cedar Lake Park at Cedar Lake Junction* ..................................... 3-262
3.5-17 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Minikahda Club ............................................................................ 3-263
3.5-18 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Bryn Mawr Meadows Park ......................................................... 3-266
3.5-19 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Minikahda Club ............................................................................ 3-275
3.5-20 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Cedar Lake Parkway ..................................................................... 3-281
3.5-21 Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation Update – Kenilworth Lagoon/Grand Rounds Historic District Existing Conditions (looking north) .................................................................................. 3-286
Introduction to the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement

This Introduction provides a general overview of the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which updates information provided in the Draft EIS, as published in October 2012. This Introduction includes a general description of the project, its current status relative to federal and state environmental processes, and an overall description of the purpose of the Supplemental Draft EIS. The information provided in this Introduction is only intended to provide a general orientation to the Supplemental Draft EIS, which should be referred to for more detailed information.

Project Description

The project’s Purpose and Need Statement is provided in Chapter 1 of the Draft EIS and this Supplemental Draft EIS. The proposed project, the Southwest Light Rail Transit (METRO Green Line Extension) Project (referred to herein as Southwest LRT or the project), will operate between downtown Minneapolis through the communities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie, passing in close proximity to the City of Edina. The proposed alignment will be primarily at-grade and will include up to 17 new stations and approximately 16 miles of double track. The alignment will connect major activity centers in the region, including downtown Minneapolis, Methodist Hospital in St. Louis Park, the Opus/Golden Triangle employment area in Minnetonka and Eden Prairie, and the Eden Prairie Town Center. The project will interline with the Central Corridor LRT (METRO Green Line), which will provide a one-seat ride to destinations such as the University of Minnesota, the State Capitol, and downtown St. Paul. The proposed Southwest LRT will be part of an integrated system of transitways, including connections to the METRO Blue Line (Hiawatha LRT), the Northstar Commuter Rail line, the METRO Red Line (Cedar Avenue Bus Rapid Transit), a variety of major bus routes along the alignment, and several proposed future transitways and rail lines.

National Environmental Policy Act/Minnesota Environmental Policy Act Background and Project Progress Since Publication of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

The Federal Transit Authority (FTA), as the project’s lead federal agency, will ensure that the project completes its environmental review process and documentation in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) requires that where federal laws have environmental document requirements in addition to but not in conflict with those in Minnesota Statutes, Section 116D.04, governmental units cooperate in fulfilling these requirements as well as those of state laws so that one document can comply with all applicable laws.

FTA issued its Notice of Intent to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Southwest Transitway Project in September 2008 and authorized the project to advance into Preliminary Engineering (now termed Project Development) in September 2011. The Southwest Transitway Draft EIS was published by FTA, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA), and the Metropolitan Council, (Council) in October 2012. The public comment period for the Draft EIS concluded on December 31, 2012. The Draft EIS evaluated seven alternatives, including the No Build and Enhanced Bus alternatives and five light rail alternatives. The five light rail alternatives also included proposed locations for freight rail currently operating on the Bass Lake Spur and Cedar Lake Junction, commonly known as the Kenilworth Corridor, rail lines. Four of the light rail alternatives included relocation of freight rail from the Bass Lake Spur and Kenilworth Corridor to the Minneapolis, Northfield, and Southern Railway (MN&S) Spur near Louisiana Avenue South and the Wayzata Subdivision (LRT 1A, LRT 3A, LRT 3C-1, and LRT 3C-2). The remaining alternative was a variation of LRT 3A, consisting of the same LRT alignment, but with freight rail remaining in its current location, co-located with light rail in the Bass Lake Spur and Kenilworth Corridor (LRT 3A-1). The Draft EIS also identified the project’s Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), the LRT route included as part of LRT 3A and LRT 3A-1, which was adopted into the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan by the Council in May 2010. Within the Draft EIS, LRT 3A and LRT 3A-1 generally differ only in the location of freight rail within the St. Louis Park/Minneapolis segment of the corridor.
Following the end of the Draft EIS public comment period on December 31, 2012, local lead agency authority for completion of the environmental process transferred from HCRRA to the Council. At that time, the project’s name was changed from Southwest Transitway to Southwest LRT.

Based on comments submitted on the Draft EIS, the Council continued the Project Development process by identifying and evaluating adjustments to the LPA’s light rail and related improvements, as defined in the Draft EIS. The Council also developed and evaluated adjustments to the design of the two sets of freight rail modifications evaluated in the Draft EIS (termed “freight rail relocation” and “co-location”) and identified the freight rail modifications to be included within the LPA. As Project Development activities continued in coordination with the project’s advisory committees, stakeholders, and host cities and county, the FTA and the Council identified three areas requiring further environmental consideration based on the potential for new significant environmental impacts from the proposed project not addressed in the Draft EIS. These three areas are the focus of this Supplemental Draft EIS (see Document Purpose below).

**Document Purpose**

The FTA and the Council prepared this Supplemental Draft EIS to provide information and comment opportunities to agencies and the public because design of the proposed Southwest LRT has advanced since publication of the Draft EIS. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is a federal Cooperating Agency for this project under NEPA. Impacts to waters of the United States associated with the Southwest LRT project will require an Individual Permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act; this permit program is administered by the USACE. This Supplemental Draft EIS reflects coordination to date between FTA and USACE on the NEPA/Section 404 merger process which has led to the USACE making a preliminary determination that the LPA as described in this Supplemental Draft EIS is the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative (LEDPA) for the Southwest LRT project.

The general objectives of the Supplemental Draft EIS are to:

- Inform the public, resource agencies, and local governments of proposed design adjustments made since publication of the Draft EIS to the LPA in the three study areas described below
- Identify any new potential significant adverse impacts associated with those design adjustments not addressed in the Draft EIS
- Invite public and agency comment on the various design adjustments evaluated within this Supplemental Draft EIS

Adjustments to the LPA evolved as a result of Project Development activities that addressed public and agency input on the Draft EIS. In reviewing the design adjustments made since publication of the Draft EIS, FTA and the Council determined that there are potential new significant environmental impacts associated with the LPA in the following three areas, which are addressed in this Supplemental Draft EIS (see maps in the Executive Summary):

- Eden Prairie Segment (generally between the intersections of Technology Drive and Mitchell Road and of Flying Cloud Drive and Valley View Road)
- The location of a new light rail Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) in the City of Hopkins
- St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment (generally between Louisiana Avenue South in St. Louis Park and Penn Avenue South in Minneapolis)

For these project areas, this Supplemental Draft EIS addresses the following items:

- The project’s Purpose and Need Statement from the Draft EIS (see Chapter 1)
- An updated description of the LPA reflecting design adjustments since publication of the Draft EIS, including adjustments to the light rail alignment, stations, and park-and-ride lots in the Eden Prairie Segment (such as related bus, roadway, and bicycle/pedestrian improvements); a proposed site for an OMF in the City of Hopkins; and adjustments to the light rail alignment, stations, and park-and-ride lots
within the St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segment (such as related bus, roadway, and bicycle/pedestrian improvements and freight rail modifications) (see Chapter 2)

- An updated analysis and documentation of the substantial social, environmental, economic, and transportation impacts associated with the current design of the LPA that have changed since publication of the Draft EIS, including changes in methodologies and identification of additional measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts, as well as an update to the project’s Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation that was included in the Draft EIS (see Chapter 3)

- A summary of agency coordination and community outreach activities since publication of the Draft EIS and known governmental permits and approvals (see Chapter 4)

- A description of the next steps, funding, and actions under NEPA and MEPA (see Chapter 5)

The following list briefly describes the contents of the appendices to the Supplemental Draft EIS:

- A list of recipients of the Supplemental Draft EIS (see Appendix A)
- A list of project team members who helped prepare the Supplemental Draft EIS (see Appendix B)
- A list of the supporting documents and technical reports to the Supplemental Draft EIS that are incorporated by reference, including information on how to obtain copies of the documents (see Appendix C)
- A list of sources and references that are cited within the Supplemental Draft EIS (see Appendix D)
- Copies of resource agency coordination letters received since the close of the Draft EIS public comment period (see Appendix E)
- A description of the process and evaluation measures used in the alignment adjustment process (see Appendix F)
- Conceptual engineering drawings showing the current LPA in the Eden Prairie and St. Louis Park/Minneapolis Segments and the conceptual layout of the Hopkins OMF (see Appendix G)
- Memoranda providing additional detail on the noise and vibration analysis included in Chapter 3 of this Supplemental Draft EIS (see Appendix H)
- Summaries of and responses to comments received on the Supplemental Draft EIS scope (see Appendix I)
- Supporting documentation for the visual resources analysis included in Chapter 3 of this Supplemental Draft EIS (see Appendix J)
- Public notices since publication of the Draft EIS (see Appendix K)
- Supporting documentation for the Draft 4(f) Evaluation Update (see Appendix L)
### Acronyms and Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>alternatives analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>Americans with Disabilities Act</td>
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<td>area of potential effect</td>
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<td>best management practice</td>
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<td>CCP</td>
<td>construction contingency plan</td>
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<td>Cedar Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Central Corridor LRT</td>
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<td>CERCLIS</td>
<td>Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Information System</td>
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<td>dBA</td>
<td>A-weighted decibel</td>
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I-394     Interstate 394
I-494     Interstate 494
L_{dn}    24-hour, time-averaged, A-weighted sound level (day-night)
LEDPA     Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative
L_{eq}    equivalent continuous sound level
LOS       level of service
LPA       Locally Preferred Alternative
LRCI      Locally Request Capital Investments
LRT       light-rail transit
LRV       light-rail vehicle
MAP-21    Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century
MDA       Minnesota Department of Agriculture
MDED      Minnesota Department of Economic Development
merger process FTA and USACE are implementing a merger process between the NEPA and CWA Section 404 permitting processes
MEPA      Minnesota Environmental Policy Act
METRO Blue Line Hiawatha LRT
METRO Green Line Central Corridor LRT
METRO Red Line Cedar Avenue Bus Rapid Transit
MN&S      Minneapolis, Northfield, and Southern Railway
MnDOT     Minnesota Department of Transportation
Mod       Moderate
MPCA      Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
MPRB      Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board
NA        not available
NB        Northbound
NEPA      National Environmental Policy Act
NEPA/404 merger FTA and USACE are implementing a merger process between the NEPA and CWA Section 404 permitting processes
NFPA      National Fire Protection Association
NRHP      National Register of Historic Places
NWI       National Wetlands Inventory
OMF       Operations and Maintenance Facility
PAHs      polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons
PCBs      polychlorinated biphenyls
PD        Project Development
PEC       Preliminary Engineering Consultant
PGIS      pollutant-generating impervious surface
PIN       property identification number
project Southwest Light Rail Transit (METRO Green Line Extension) Project
RAMP      Real Estate Acquisition and Management Plan
RAP       remedial action plan
RGU       Regional Governmental Unit
ROD       Record of Decision
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<td>Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement</td>
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