

The Supplemental Environmental Assessment

MARCH 22, 2018

Why was a Supplemental Environmental Assessment Required?

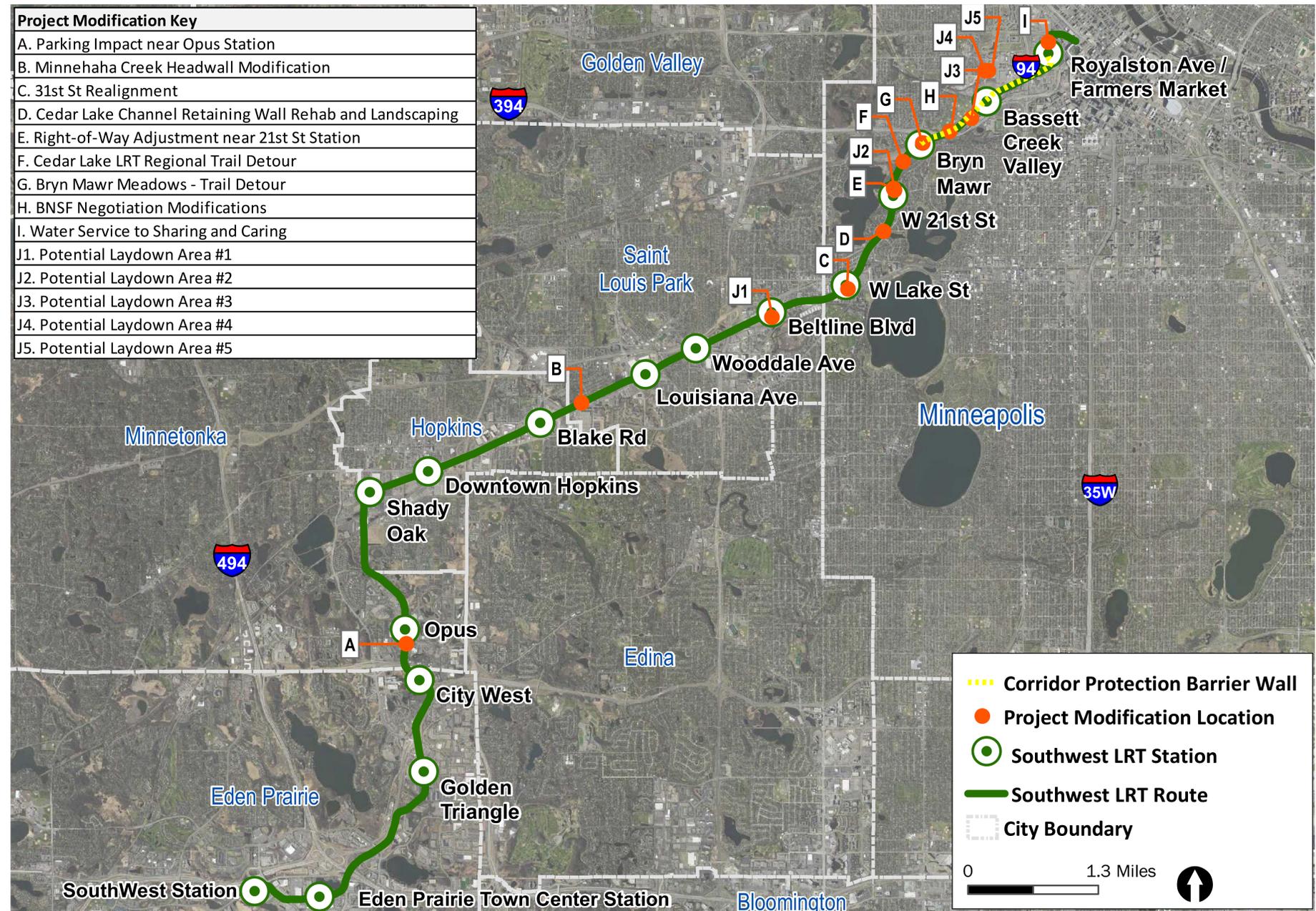
A Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review, which evaluates the significance and the potential impacts of proposed project changes made after the Record of Decision.

The Supplemental EA examines 10 changes in the Southwest LRT Project since the Record of Decision in 2016.

The Metropolitan Council will use the findings from the SEA to determine whether there is substantial evidence that the revised project will have a significant effect on the environment, and to decide if further environmental review is warranted.

Under the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), this will serve as the state environmental document to evaluate the proposed changes to the project.

LOCATIONS OF CHANGES SINCE THE RECORD OF DECISION



The 10 changes identified on the map above are described and analyzed in the Supplemental Environmental Assessment. The SEA and appendices are available on the Project website, www.swlrt.org.

Impacts on Historic Properties

MARCH 22, 2018

The BNSF Wayzata Subdivision tracks are part of the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba/Great Northern Railway Historic District. This Historic District extends from Minneapolis to the North Dakota border.

Impacts on this historic property are evaluated and resolved under two federal laws:

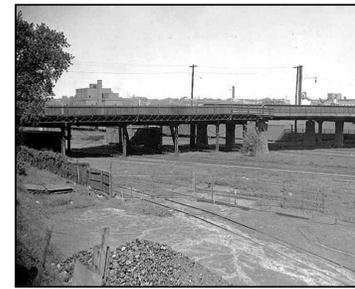
- **Section 106** of the National Historic Preservation Act
- **Section 4(f)** of the Department of Transportation Act

The Federal Transit Administration has determined that the proposed Project design modifications will have an adverse effect on the railroad historic district under Section 106.

The finding of a new adverse effect under Section 106 changes the Section 4(f) determination, and requires the Project to produce an Amended Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation.



Top left: Construction of Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway tracks, 1916. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.



Top right: Lyndale Avenue bridge over Great Northern and Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway tracks, 1936. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.



Bottom left: Looking east over Hwy. 12, Cedar Lake rail yard on the right, 1949. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.



Bottom right: View looking northeast towards downtown Minneapolis from the northeast side of Cedar Lake (c. 1960s). Photographer unknown, courtesy of Don L. Hofsommer.



Left: Remnants of a historic concrete retaining wall in the corridor protection area.

Affected Section 4(f) Property:

A portion of the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railroad/Great Northern Railway Historic District, located in Minneapolis.

Section 4(f) Qualifying Description:

The Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

May 2016 Final Section 4(f) Determination:

The Final Environmental Impact Statement determined that the Project would have no adverse impact on the property under Section 106, and was therefore evaluated as a *de minimis* impact under Section 4(f).

February 2018 Preliminary Section 4(f) Determination:

The proposed changes to the Project will have an adverse effect under Section 106, and is therefore a direct use under Section 4(f).



Above: Active freight rail tracks near Penn Avenue.

Resolution of Historic Property Impacts

SECTION 106 REVIEW PROCESS

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and MnDOT's Cultural Resources Unit (CRU) are responsible for evaluating transportation project impacts on historic properties.

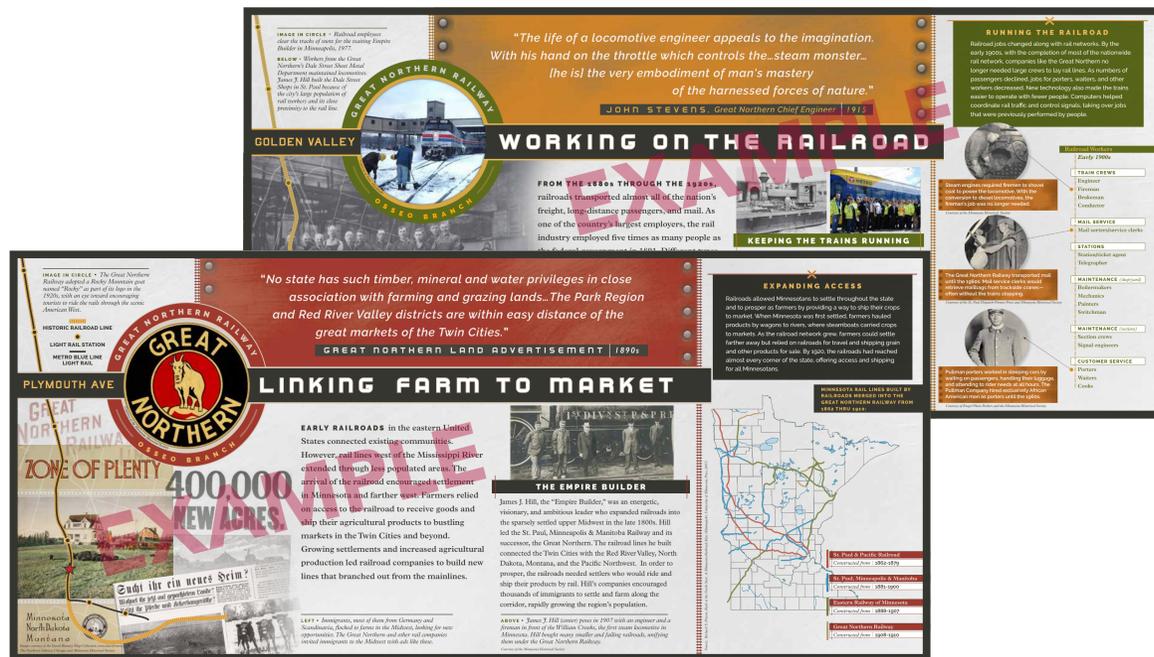
Working with the Southwest LRT Project, FTA and CRU:

- Identify historic properties that may be affected by the project (done);
- Determine whether or not the project will have an adverse effect on historic properties (done); and
- Work with consulting parties to resolve the adverse effect (in process).

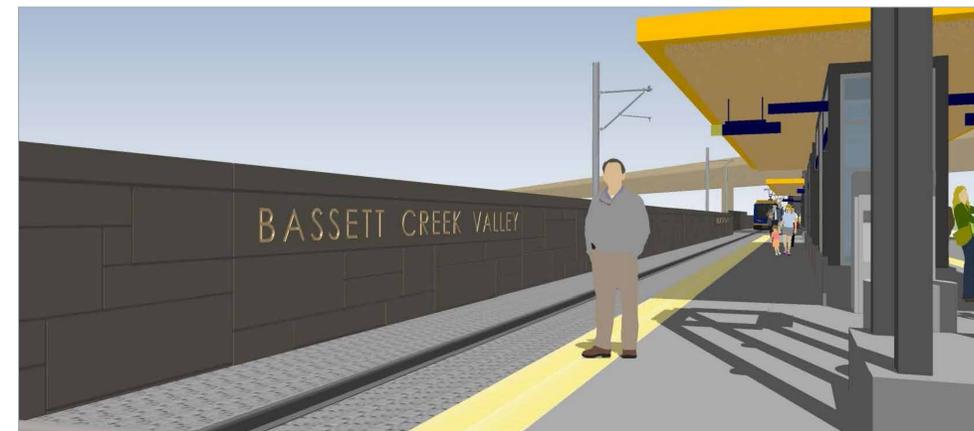
RESOLVING ADVERSE EFFECTS

To mitigate the Project's impacts on the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba/Great Northern Railway Historic District, several measures have been identified:

- Designing the Project modifications to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards to the extent feasible;
- Preparing a Minnesota Historic Property Record for portions of the district; and
- Incorporating interpretive elements into the Project.



Interpretive elements incorporated into the design of the Southwest LRT Project could include interpretive panels (examples shown here do not represent actual content).



Enhanced wall finish at Bassett Creek Valley Station.

Existing Conditions

MARCH 22, 2018



1. Bryn Mawr Station area, looking east along the Cedar Lake Trail.



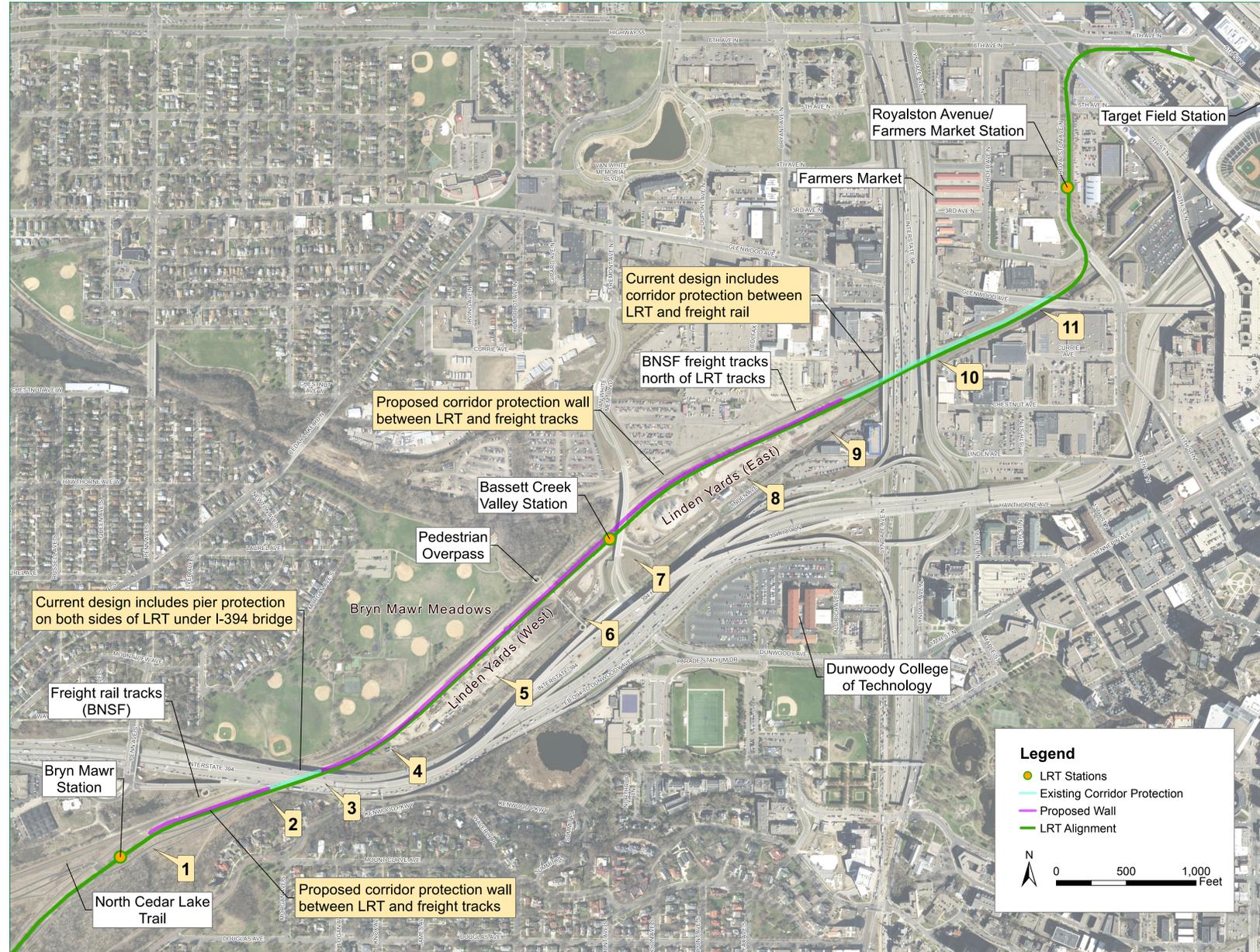
2. Looking east along the Cedar Lake Trail as it passes under I-394.



3. Cedar Lake Trail under I-394, looking east.



4. Linden Yards West, looking east: Trail and proposed wall diverge in this area.



5. Undeveloped land in the western Linden Yards and trail overpass, looking east.



6. Looking east toward Van White Memorial Boulevard from trail overpass.



7. Trail near Bassett Creek Valley Station site, looking east.



11. Looking east at Glenwood Ave. bridge, Target Field in background.



10. Trails passing under I-94, looking east.



9. Industrial land along trail between Linden Yards and I-94, looking west.



8. Entrance to Linden Yards in eastern portion, looking east.

Frequently Asked Questions

MARCH 22, 2018

WHY IS THE CORRIDOR PROTECTION WALL BEING PROPOSED?

- Freight railroad BNSF requires corridor protection between light rail tracks and BNSF's "Wayzata Subdivision" freight rail tracks when they run side by side.
- The Southwest LRT Project cannot be built on BNSF land without BNSF's agreement.

WHY IS BNSF REQUIRING A CORRIDOR PROTECTION WALL?

- BNSF considers the Wayzata Subdivision to be a "mainline," – like a highway – a line that is heavily used and where trains can travel at higher speeds.
- BNSF's current policy, as outlined in their Commuter Principles, is to require corridor protection wherever a transit project shares the company's right-of-way.
- BNSF is seeking to maintain as much of its current right of way as possible, so that the company has capacity to meet future needs.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A CORRIDOR PROTECTION WALL?

- In an unlikely event of a freight train derailment, the proposed wall would prevent freight train cars or the materials they carry from interfering with LRT.

WHY IS THE WALL BEING PROPOSED NOW?

- Federal regulations required the Southwest LRT Project to receive approval of its Environmental Impact Statement (a Record of Decision) before beginning negotiations to acquire property rights.
- The Record of Decision was issued in July 2016. Negotiations with freight rail companies cover many complex issues and are taking time to complete.
- BNSF introduced the requirement for a corridor protection wall during negotiations with the Southwest LRT Project.

Public Involvement

MARCH 22, 2018

Community Meetings

Project staff have been meeting regularly with community groups to inform them about the proposed corridor protection wall, address concerns surrounding the design process, and seek input on the aesthetic design of the wall, including:

- **Bryn Mawr Board**
- **Harrison Neighborhood Association**
- **Bassett Creek Redevelopment Oversight Committee**

Pop-up Events

Pop-up events were held along the North Cedar Lake Trail to engage area residents and users of the corridor. These events provided details about the proposed corridor protection wall, general project information, and opportunities to give feedback.

Public Tours

Tours of the corridor have been given to policy makers and community members. The tours helped people visualize the proposed wall and understand how it will appear in different areas.

Bassett Creek Valley Working Group

The Bassett Creek Valley Working Group was created in September 2017 to advise the Southwest LRT Project on the aesthetic design of the proposed corridor protection wall.

The 15 members of the Working Group represented neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor protection area as well as the Minneapolis Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committees. Members served for the duration of the wall design process.

Starting in October 2017, the group met five times, including a tour of the corridor. Input from the Working Group helped project staff advance the design of the proposed corridor protection wall.

The Working Group produced a report and recommendations, which are available online at <https://metro council.org/swlrt/bcvwg>.



Members of the Working Group discuss design alternatives with Southwest LRT Project staff during a tour of the corridor protection area.

STAYING INFORMED

The Southwest LRT Project website, www.SWLRT.org, provides the latest updates on freight rail corridor protection.

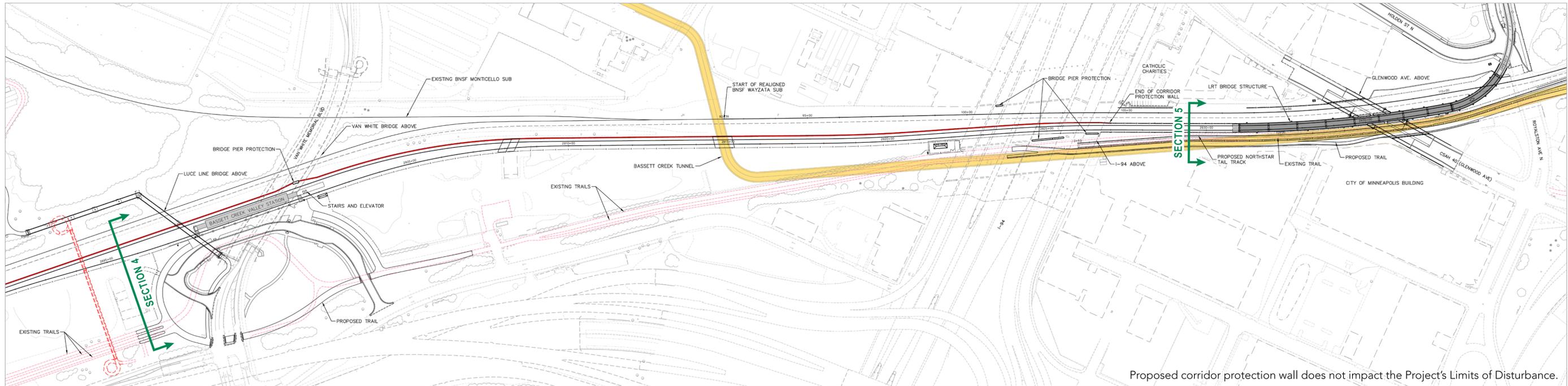
The Southwest LRT Supplemental Environmental Assessment/Amended Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation describes corridor protection plans and impacts. It is available on the web at <https://metro council.org/swlrt/environmental>.

Contact Dan Pfeiffer if you have comments or questions, or if you would like an Outreach Coordinator to attend your event: 612-373-3897 or Daniel.Pfeiffer@metrotransit.org.

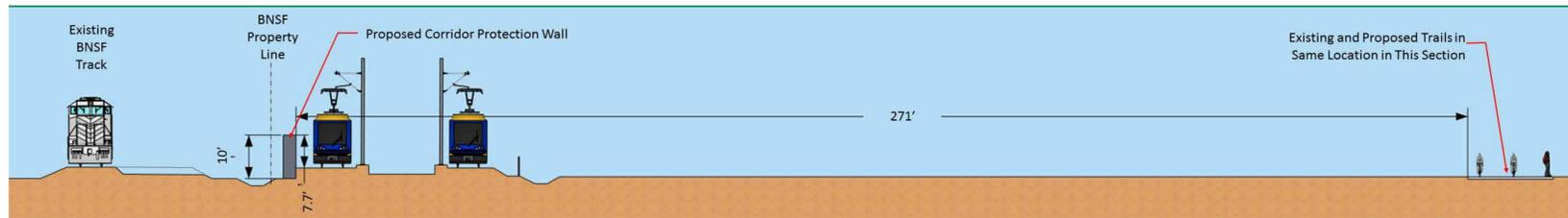
Corridor Protection Wall

EASTERN PORTION

MARCH 22, 2018

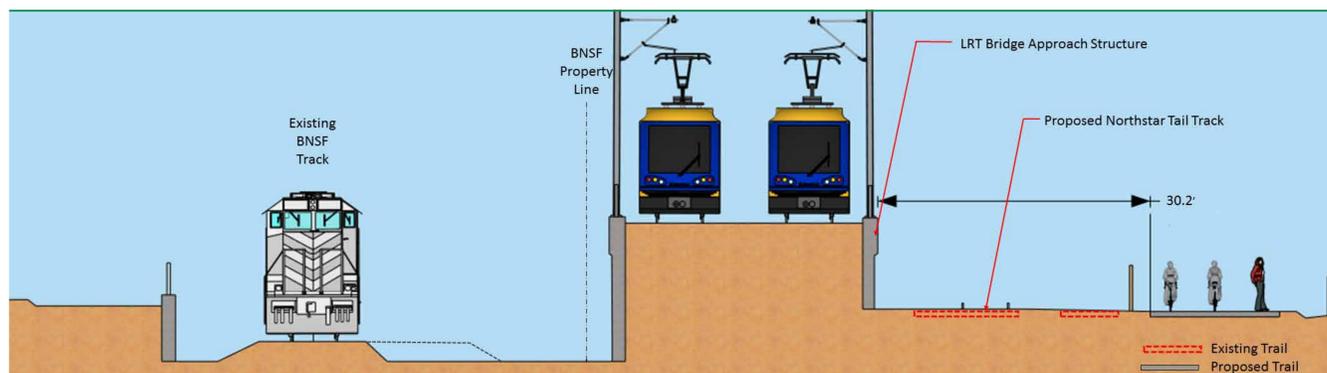


SECTION 4: Bassett Creek Valley Station Area



- Proposed wall is approximately 270 feet from the nearest proposed trail
- Proposed wall does not block access from Bryn Mawr Meadows Park to LRT station via the Luce Line Bridge
- Proposed wall ranges from 5 feet tall to approximately 8 feet tall (for about 1000 feet at Bassett Creek Valley Station)
- Future Bassett Creek Valley development will buffer between LRT and the trail

SECTION 5: I-394 to Glenwood Avenue

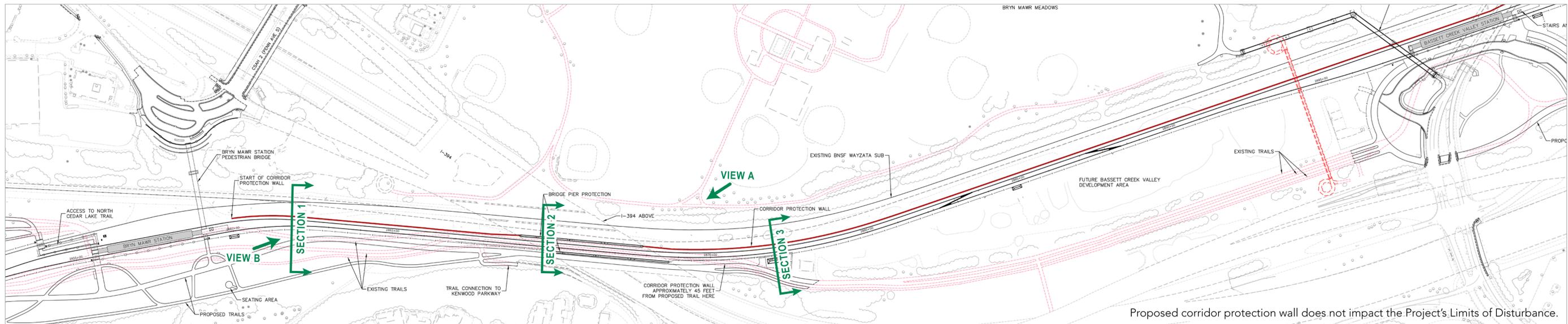


- East end of proposed wall is under I-94 overpass
- Northstar Commuter Rail tail track is shifted to accommodate current freight rail spacing
- New lighting under I-94 overpass
- LRT bridge approach is approximately 30 feet from the nearest proposed trail
- New design does not further impact Catholic Charities

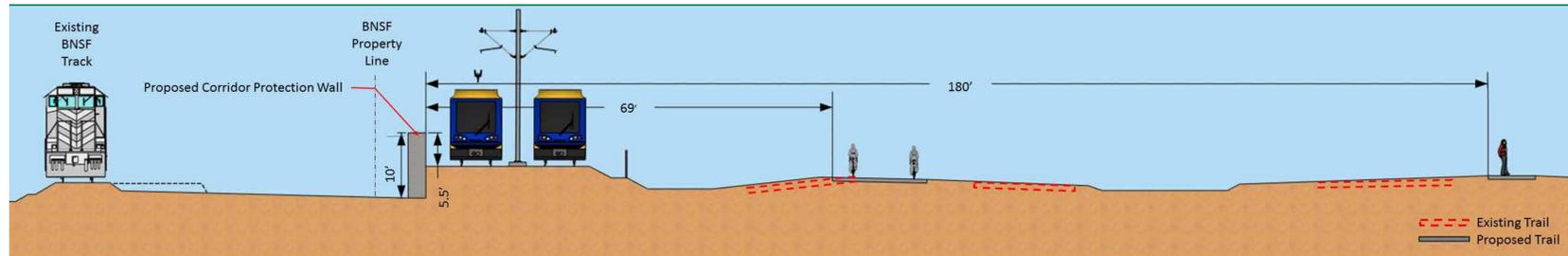
Corridor Protection Wall

WESTERN PORTION

MARCH 22, 2018

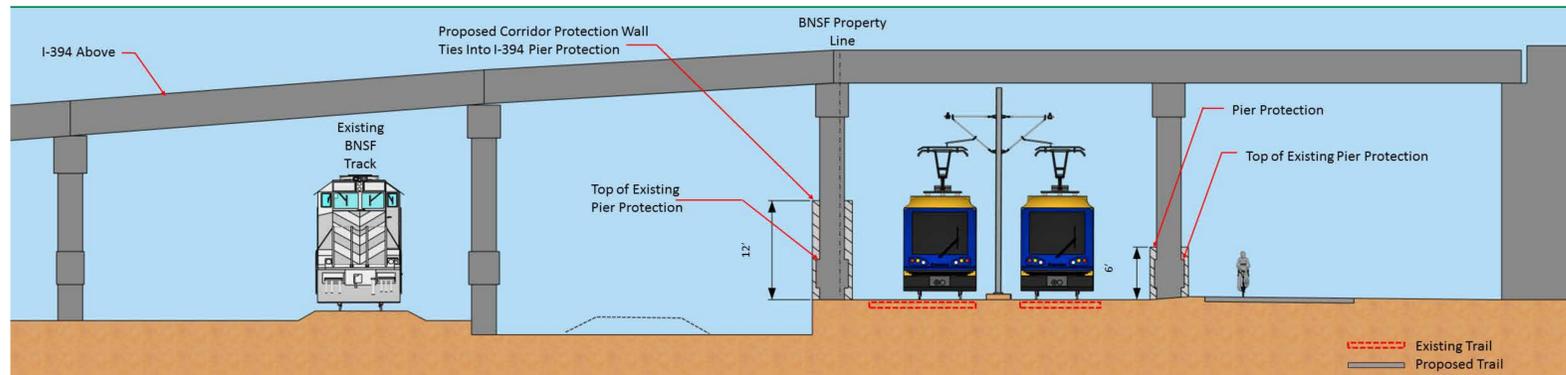


SECTION 1: Bryn Mawr Station Area



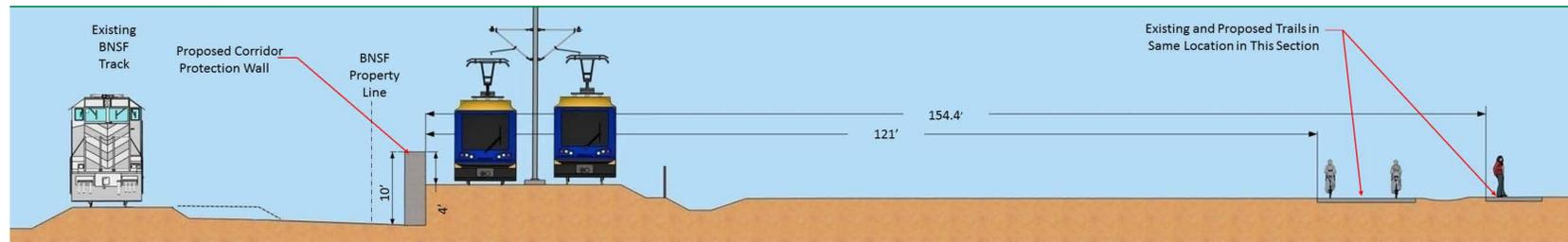
- Proposed wall is approximately 70 feet from the nearest proposed trail
- Proposed wall height is approximately 5 feet 6 inches on the LRT/trail side
- Proposed wall does not block access between North Cedar Lake and Kenilworth Trails
- LRT is located between the trail and proposed wall

SECTION 2: I-394 Underpass Area



- Current project design includes protection for bridge piers on both sides of LRT
- New lighting under I-394 overpass

SECTION 3: Bryn Mawr Meadows Area



- Proposed wall is approximately 120 feet from the nearest trail
- Proposed wall height is approximately 4 feet on the LRT/trail side
- LRT is located between the trail and proposed wall
- Future Bassett Creek Valley development will buffer between LRT and trail

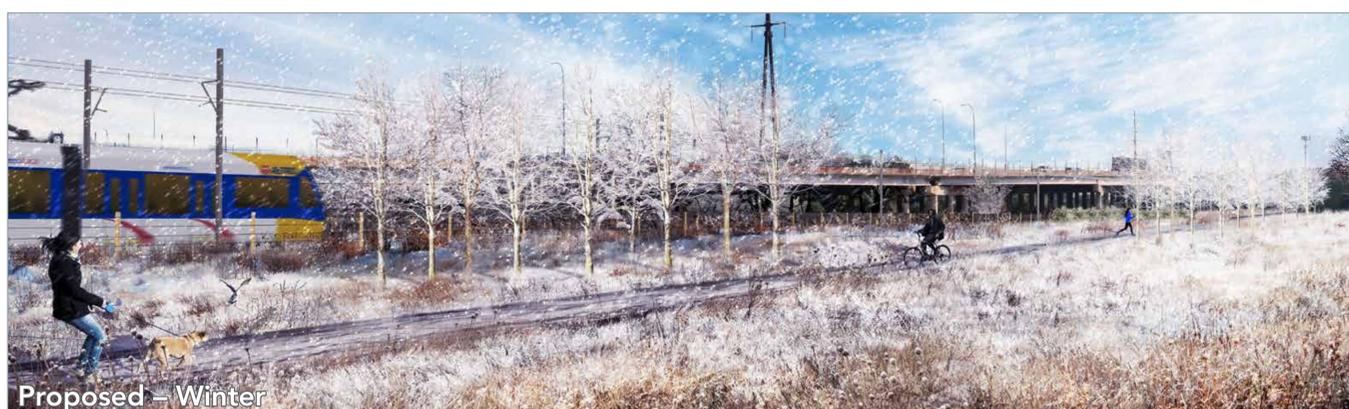
Corridor Wall Renderings

MARCH 22, 2018

VIEW A: Proposed barrier wall in the Bryn Mawr Meadows area



VIEW B: Proposed barrier wall near Bryn Mawr Station



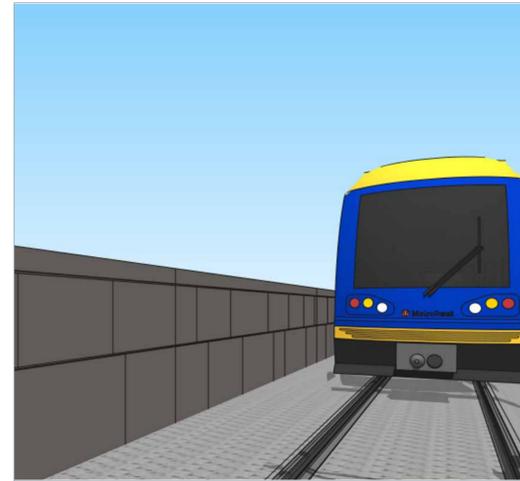
Corridor Protection Wall Design

MARCH 22, 2018

COLOR, TEXTURE AND SCALE



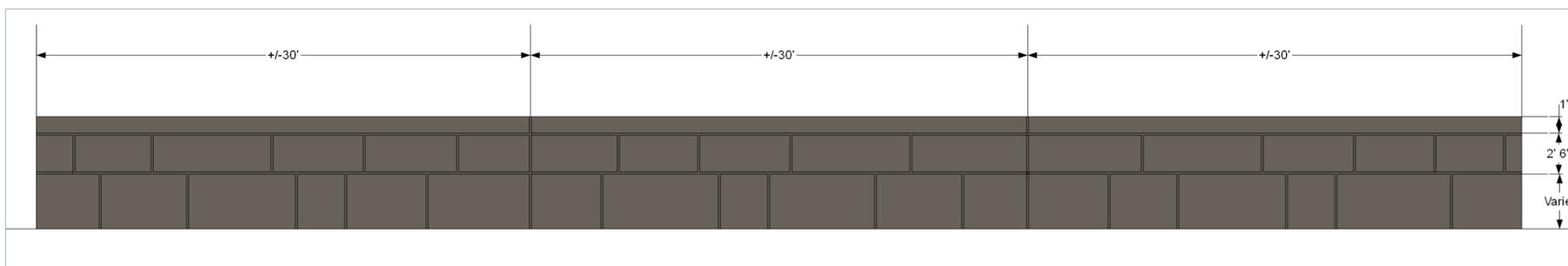
Design rendering of the proposed corridor protection wall seen from the LRT/trail side. Planned landscaping and plantings are not shown.



The height of the proposed wall varies. The rendering shows a typical wall height relative to a light rail vehicle west of Bassett Creek Valley Station.



At Bassett Creek Valley Station, the proposed wall design features station-specific graphics.



Detail of the proposed wall surface. Repeating 30-foot-long segments create the appearance of cut stone.

LANDSCAPING



Trees and vegetation will be planted between the trail and the LRT tracks in several areas, including near Bryn Mawr Station as shown above.



An example of using climbing vines to soften the appearance of a masonry wall along the METRO Blue Line in Minneapolis.



Species in planting areas along the proposed wall include alder, birch, and Boston ivy.

Southwest LRT Project Background

MARCH 22, 2018

PROJECT TIMELINE

2003: Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) publishes Southwest Rail Transit Study in partnership with the cities of Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, and Minneapolis. The study evaluated twelve routes using light rail transit (LRT) and one using diesel multiple unit (DMU) technology.

October 2009: HCRRA recommends Locally Preferred Alternative route and mode.

October 2012: Hennepin County publishes the Southwest Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS).

December 2012: The Metropolitan Council becomes the project lead agency with the transfer of Responsible Government Unit status from Hennepin County.

January 2013: Design and engineering work on the Southwest LRT line begins.

August 2014: Hennepin County and cities along the Southwest LRT route review and approve preliminary design plans in a Municipal Consent process.

May 2015: The Southwest LRT Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is published.

August/September 2015: Hennepin County and cities along the LRT route provide approval for the project in a second Municipal Consent process.

May 2016: The Southwest LRT Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is published.

July 2016: The FTA issues its Record of Decision approving the Final EIS.

August 2016: The Metropolitan Council approves final scope & budget.

February 2018: The Council publishes the Supplemental Environmental Assessment/Amended Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation, covering changes in the project since the Final EIS.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) is extending METRO Green Line light rail service to the southwestern metropolitan area. The METRO Green Line Extension will operate on a route from downtown Minneapolis through the communities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie, passing in close proximity to Edina.

The line will include 15 new stations and will be part of an integrated system of transitways, including connections to the METRO Blue Line, the Northstar Commuter Rail line, many bus routes, and proposed future transitways.

The total estimated project cost of \$1.858 billion will be funded by the Metropolitan Council and project partners through a mix of federal, state and local sources, with federal funds making up approximately half the total.

At Target Field Station in Minneapolis, Green Line Extension trains will continue along the METRO Green Line, providing one-seat rides to the University of Minnesota, State Capitol and downtown St. Paul.