

Extending TRACKS

Conference set for mid-November for contractors interested in bidding to build SWLRT

Contractors interested in bidding to build the Southwest LRT line are invited to attend a Nov. 13 pre-bid conference to learn about cost-saving modifications made to the bid invitation re-issued on Oct. 30.

The pre-bid conference will be from 2 to 4:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 13, in the fellowship hall of St. Andrew Lutheran Church, 13600 Technology Dr., Eden Prairie, MN 55344. From 2 to 3 p.m., there will be a contract overview. From 3 to 4:30 p.m., owners of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises will have an opportunity to introduce themselves to contractors and the services they could provide as subcontractors. The DBE goal for the civil construction contract is 16 percent.

Bids will be due on Jan. 9. The Met Council anticipates awarding the civil or heavy construction contract in April and issuing a Limited Notice to Proceed in May. Construction is expected to start mid 2018.

In September, the Metropolitan Council rejected all four bids for being too high and having responsiveness issues.

Due to the bid rejections in September, the schedule was revised. This resulted in an estimated four-month delay. Revenue service would begin in 2022, instead of 2021.

Closing Excelsior Blvd, increasing trail closures provide contractors more flexibility

The Met Council revised bid specifications after coordinating with project partners and surveying contractors.

“One of the primary goals is to reduce a contractor’s upfront financial risk and allow more flexibility in the construction schedule,” said Jim Alexander, project director.

Revisions include refined freight rail coordination and maintenance elements, adjusted completion dates to allow



Rendering of the LRT bridge over Excelsior Blvd.

additional time to complete work and modified maintenance of traffic requirements and constraints.

Some of the changes made to the contract documents include:

- Extending the overall project schedule by four months, mainly for tunnel activity. This increases the duration of the Kenilworth Trail closure, reducing overtime while increasing the flexibility of sequencing the work.
- Adding the closure of the Cedar Lake Trail and temporary detours. This reduces costs related to maintaining interface between trail and construction.
- Allowing a two-week closure of Excelsior Boulevard in Hopkins, so crews can finish their work in that area quicker.

Community feedback results in modifications to light rail trains' accessibility features



TAAC members experience full sized mockup of proposed vehicle design changes and meet project designers to offer their input.

The interiors of the new LRT trains to be built for Southwest LRT, as well as the Blue Line Extension, will be modified, thanks to community feedback.

The redesign will have some seats running parallel along the middle vehicle walls facing each other. This increases circulation away from ADA-designated seating and allows for a wider path for users of some wheelchairs and walkers while keeping nearly the same number of seats.



Light rail vehicle design includes space for passengers in wheelchairs and companion seating.

Designers met regularly with the public, including two key advisory committees, both LRT projects' Community Advisory Committees and the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee. The TAAC is a 16-member committee made up of transit users and advocates for older people and the disability community, as well as representatives of service providers and other appropriate agencies.



Design for center section of new light rail vehicles has seats facing each other which creates a wider aisle.

Features at LRT stations will promote safety, accessibility for all

The stations for both LRT extension projects will include features to promote safety and accessibility for all.



Rendering of the West Lake St. Station showing elevator tower

These include:

- Platform edge protective bollards between light rail vehicle cars
- Gently sloping access ramps from sidewalk to platform
- Tactile warning strips to mark the edge of the platform
- Audible and visual warnings at street and track crossings

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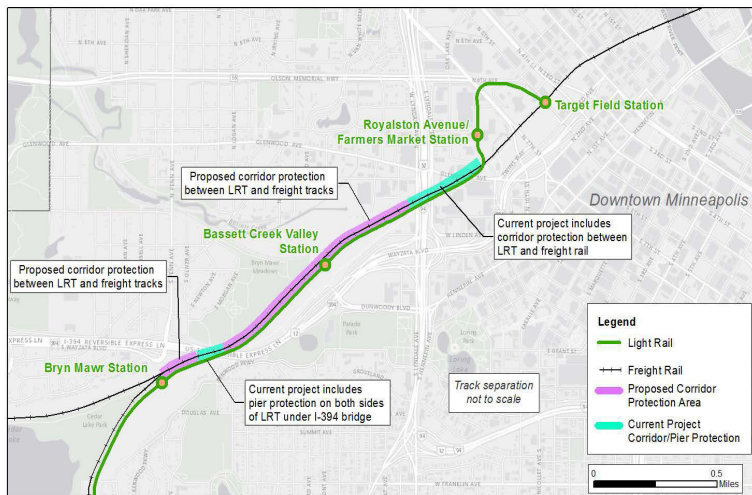
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- Wider platforms to allow two wheelchairs to pass side by side
- Shelter areas with seating and open spaces for wheelchairs
- Elevators to provide access from stations that are below street level including Bassett Creek Valley, Bryn Mawr and West Lake Street stations on the Southwest LRT (METRO Green Line Extension)



Stations include safety features such as between car bollards and tactile warning strips

Video shows how LRT route would look with proposed corridor protection wall



Map of shared use corridor with both LRT and freight rail. See video for mockup of proposed wall: <http://bit.ly/2y1fftB>

A video produced by Southwest LRT Project staff shows a proposed corridor protection wall and the area it would be built between LRT tracks and freight rail tracks west of downtown Minneapolis on BNSF Railway's Wayzata Subdivision.

METRO Green Line Extension tracks will be built parallel to the BNSF tracks between Glenwood Avenue and Bryn Mawr Station in Minneapolis.

The current LRT design includes protection for Interstate 394 bridge piers and other corridor elements in this area. The additional corridor protection wall between the freight rail and light rail tracks is required by BNSF as a condition for allowing the LRT tracks to be built on its right of way.

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Existing (top) and planned with proposed wall (bottom) at the Bryn Mawr Meadows area



Existing (top) and planned with proposed wall (bottom) at the Bryn Mawr station area

Public, local leaders provide input on proposed wall design



SWLRT project staff point out route and size of proposed wall to Minneapolis city staff

Three public tours and meetings with property owners, neighborhoods, policy makers and a community work group are providing design input on the proposed corridor protection wall.

Community groups providing input include the Bryn Mawr Board, Harrison neighborhood and Bassett Creek Redevelopment Oversight Committee. Staff and policy makers from the city of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, state Legislature and Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board are also providing input.

Community issues that have been raised include aesthetics of the wall design, community connectivity, opportunities for economic development and environmental review.



SWLRT outreach coordinator Sophia Ginis conducts a tour of the proposed corridor wall route with members of the public

Learn about the design of the proposed corridor protection wall at public open house

Wednesday, November 15, 2017

5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Bryn Mawr Elementary School Cafeteria

252 Upton Avenue South, Minneapolis

MAP: <https://goo.gl/maps/8td72K3qmCP2>

If you require assistance to participate, please contact Sophia Ginis as soon as possible before the scheduled meeting:

Email: Sophia.Ginis@metrotransit.org

Phone: 612-373-3895

FTA finds “adverse effect” on historic railroad district



Remnants of a historic masonry retaining wall in the corridor protection area

As anticipated, the Federal Transit Administration this week found that a proposed corridor protection wall between Southwest LRT tracks and freight railroad tracks and other changes in Minneapolis would “adversely affect” a historic railroad district.

The term “adverse effect” is a technical one as part of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. An “adverse effect” occurs when an action has a negative impact to

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the location, design, setting materials, workmanship, feeling, or association of a historic resource.

The “adverse effect” is twofold:

1. Widening of the historic cut, removal of several historic retaining walls, and introduction of taller, modern concrete retaining walls that will replace historic stone and concrete walls and earthen embankment, changing its character. These changes are needed to make room for light rail tracks and the Northstar tail tracks just west of downtown.
2. Physical and visual barrier between the freight track and historic railyards due to the addition of the proposed corridor protection wall.

Background, description of historic resource

BNSF Railway is requiring the proposed wall between Bryn Mawr Station and the I-94 bridge as a condition for allowing LRT tracks to be built on its property parallel to its high-volume freight tracks. The wall, which would be an approximately 1-mile extension of the original planned corridor protection, ranges from 70 feet to 270 feet from the nearest trail and from 4 to 8 feet in height on the trail side and 10 feet high on the freight rail side.

BNSF Railway is also requiring the relocation and extension of the Northstar Commuter Rail tail track to maintain sufficient space within their right-of-way to allow for possible reinstallation of a second main line track.

Minnesota Department of Transportation’s Cultural Resources Unit worked for several months with the Metropolitan Council and FTA in leading a review of the potential effect of these changes on the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railroad/Great Northern Railway Historic District, of which the BNSF Wayzata Subdivision is a part.

Because MnDOT had determined this historic railroad district is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, this required what is known as a Section 106 review of the proposed changes to the historic property. The review included an evaluation to determine if the introduction of the wall and the other changes would result in an “adverse effect” to the historic freight rail corridor.

Next steps include engaging consulting parties, preparing mitigation plan

Southwest LRT Project Office and MnDOT’s Cultural Resources Unit will work with consulting parties to minimize the “adverse effect” and prepare a mitigation plan for review. The consulting parties include the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office, the city of Minneapolis, Hennepin County and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

The consulting parties will have an opportunity to provide input on the findings, aesthetic design for the wall and/or use of interpretive panels, and offer mitigating strategies. The MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit will also consider public input that the project office is seeking from the community through a plan developed in coordination with the city of Minneapolis. MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit will also review the aesthetic design, which must meet the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s standards for the treatment of historic property.

Southwest LRT employee receives award for volunteer efforts

Equal opportunity consultant Jon Vang, who works with the Southwest LRT Project, said he was "blown away" when he received a call recently from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits.

"I got the phone call out of the blue," Vang explained. "The person told me I had won the Virginia McKnight Binger Unsung Hero Award. I said, 'What is that?'"

The Unsung Hero award is a partnership between the McKnight Foundation and the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits to honor "individuals doing life-changing work in communities across Minnesota with little or no recognition," according to the Council of Nonprofit's website. Vang is one of four recipients who each received \$10,000, no strings attached.

Vang was nominated for the award by Headwaters Foundation for Justice, a social-justice grant-making organization. Vang participated in the Headwaters' Giving Project fund-

raising program and continues to be a mentor there. He is also being recognized for his work to end gender-based violence in the Hmong community with ManForward and his work to support men returning from prison through the Power of People Leadership Institute.

"I do a lot of volunteer and community work on the side and have been doing it for quite a while," Vang said. "I wasn't expecting to get anything in return."

In his position as an equal opportunity consultant, Vang works with the Council's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise



Jon Vang takes notes at a Great Minds workshop

program and workforce outreach for the Southwest LRT project. For the last several months, Vang has been running the training program for LRT BUILD. The Met Council's LRT BUILD program helps people without construction experience get training so they can have the opportunity to work on the SWLRT project when the time comes. In June, the program graduated 16 students.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The planned Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project (METRO Green Line Extension) will operate from downtown Minneapolis through the communities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie, passing in close proximity to the city of Edina. The line will connect major activity centers in the region including downtown Minneapolis, Methodist Hospital in St. Louis Park, downtown Hopkins and the Opus/Golden Triangle employment area in Minnetonka and Eden Prairie. Ridership in 2040 is forecasted at approximately 34,000 average weekday boardings.

The project will interline with the METRO Green Line, which will provide a one-seat ride to destinations such as the University of Minnesota, state Capitol and downtown St. Paul. It will be part of an integrated system of transitways, including connections to the METRO Blue Line, the proposed METRO Blue Line Extension, the Northstar Commuter Rail line, a variety of major bus routes along the alignment, and proposed future transitway and rail lines. The Metropolitan Council will be the grantee of federal funds. The regional government agency is charged with building the line in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

The Southwest Corridor Management Committee, which includes commissioners from Hennepin County and the mayors of Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Edina, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie, provides advice and oversight. Funding is provided by the Federal Transit Administration, Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), state of Minnesota and Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) and other project partners. The Southwest LRT Project website is www.swlrt.org.

Southwest LRT Project Office

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