



# Communications and Public Involvement Plan

Revision 02.00

November 2014

Prepared by the Metropolitan Council

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Southwest LRT Project  
Management Signature Form

# **Communications and Public Involvement Plan**

**Rev. 02-00**

November 2014

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Management has indicated its approval of this document on the following “Management Plan Approval” form (the revision number of this document should match the revision number on the “Management Plan Approval” form).

*Instructions: One of the following Project Management Team Members must approve this document: New Starts Rail Projects Program Director, Project Director, Deputy Project Director or one of the Assistant Project Directors.*



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## 1 Introduction to the Project

The 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 Edina. The proposed alignment includes 17 new stations and approximately 16 miles of double track. It will be part of an integrated system of transitways, including connections to the METRO Blue Line, the Northstar Commuter Rail line, bus routes and proposed future transitways. The total project cost of \$1.65 billion will be funded 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, Capitol area and downtown St. Paul.

## 2 Project Description

The Southwest LRT (METRO Green Line Extension) is an approximately 15.8-mile proposed extension of the METRO Green Line (Central Corridor LRT) that will operate from downtown Minneapolis through the communities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie, passing in close proximity to Edina (see Figure 1).

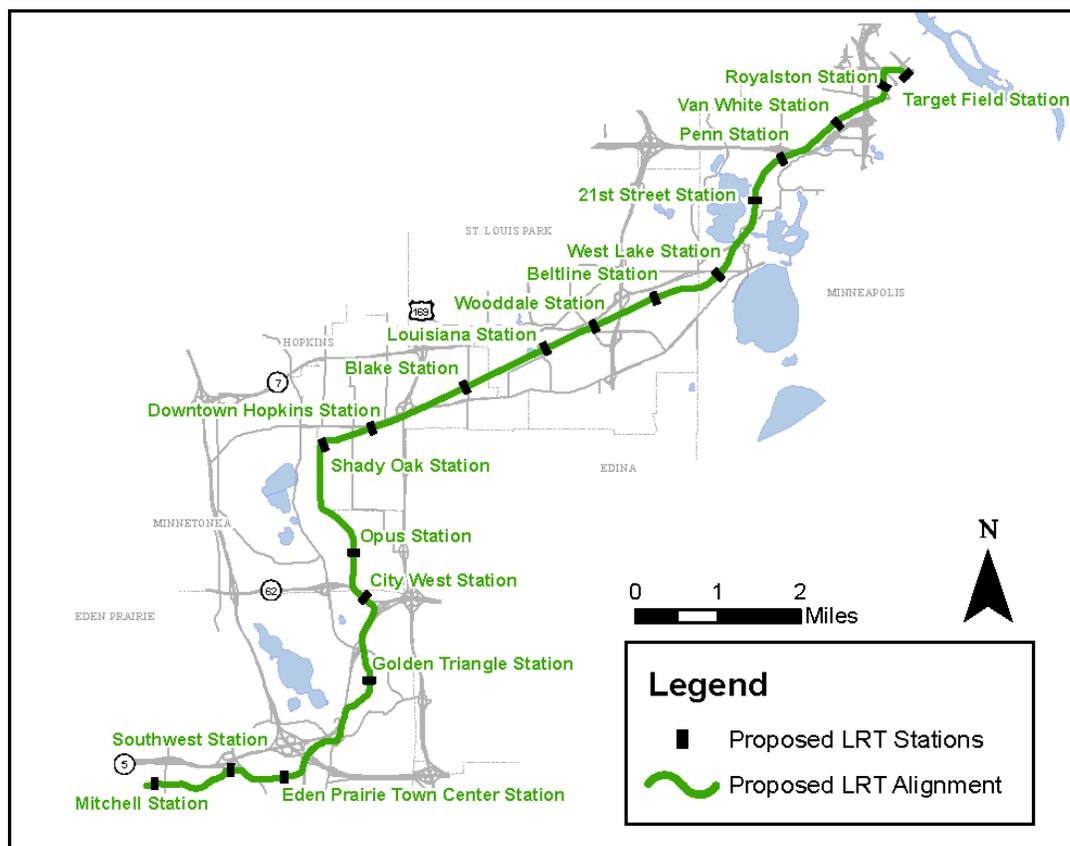


Figure 1: Proposed Southwest LRT Alignment

The proposed alignment includes 17 new stations, approximately 3,800 additional park-and-ride spaces, accommodations for kiss-and-ride, bicycle and pedestrian access, as well as new or restructured local bus routes connecting stations to nearby residential, commercial and educational destinations. Major activity centers from Eden Prairie to St. Paul, including the Eden Prairie Center regional mall, UnitedHealth Group campuses, the Opus/Golden Triangle employment area, Park Nicollet Methodist Hospital, the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes, downtowns Minneapolis and St. Paul, the University of Minnesota, and the State Capitol area, will be accessible by a one-seat ride. Passengers will be able to connect to the greater METRO system, including METRO Blue Line (Hiawatha LRT), METRO Orange Line (I-35W BRT), Northstar Commuter Rail, METRO Red Line (Cedar Ave BRT) via Blue Line, and the planned METRO Blue Line Extension (Bottineau LRT) as well as future commuter rail, planned Bus Rapid Transit systems and intercity passenger rail line at one or more of the five downtown Minneapolis stations (see Figure 2).

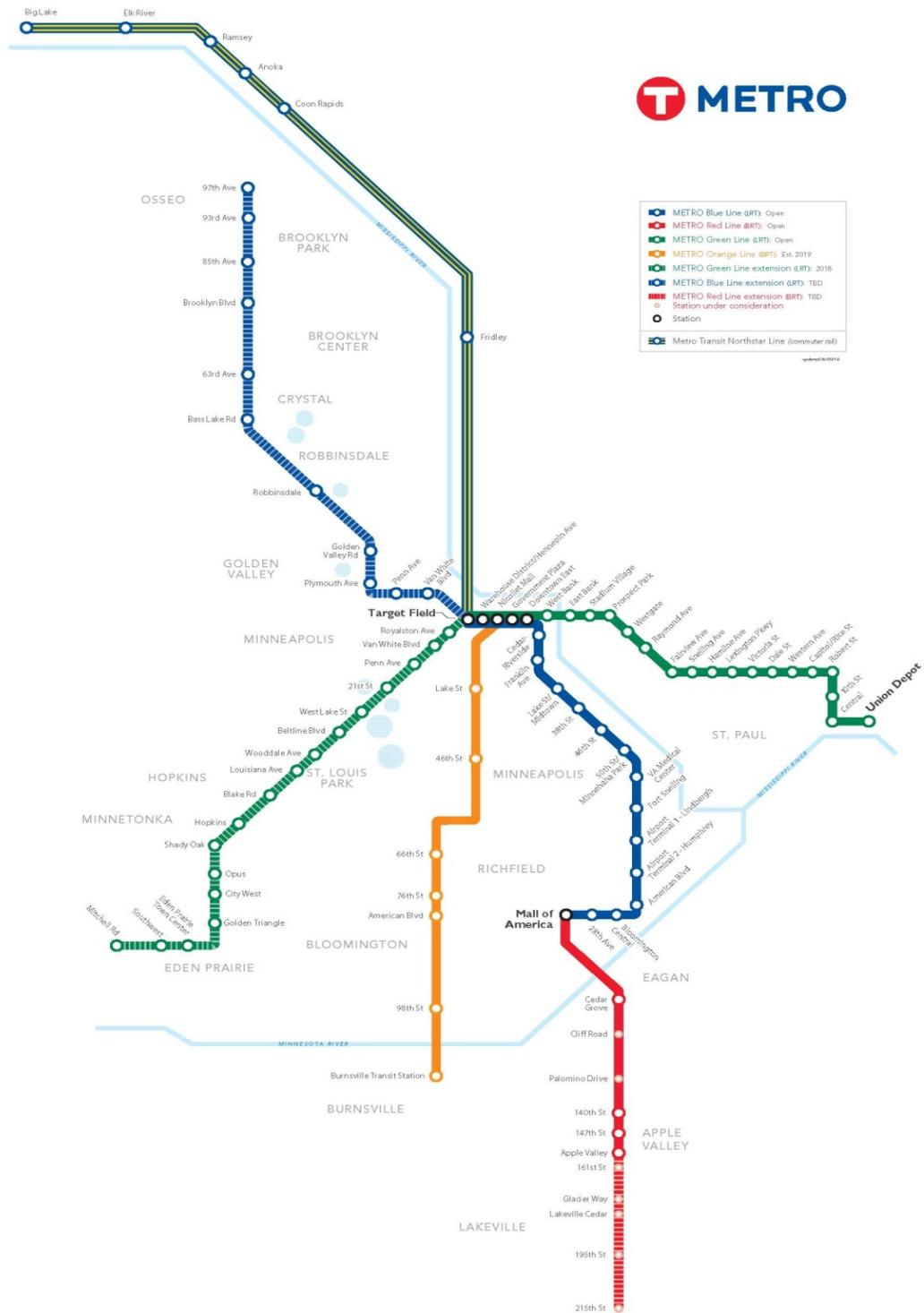


Figure 2: METRO System Map

The Metropolitan Council (Council) is the FTA grantee and will serve as the owner-operator of the completed Southwest LRT Line.

The Southwest LRT will operate primarily at-grade and with structures providing grade separation of LRT crossings, roadways and water bodies at specified locations. For just under one-half mile, it will operate in a shallow LRT tunnel in the Kenilworth Corridor south of the channel with an at-grade LRT bridge over the channel.

The westernmost station on the line will be located near the intersection of Mitchell Road and Technology Drive in Eden Prairie, south of Trunk Highway (TH) 212. Between Mitchell Road and Glenwood Avenue in Minneapolis, the line will operate in dedicated right-of-way (ROW), which will be a combination of trunk highway ROW, street ROW easements and new ROW. Between Glenwood Avenue and the existing Target Field Station the line will operate in street ROW and on a bridge over N 7th Street. From Target Field Station through downtown Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota, and downtown St. Paul, Southwest LRT service will be interlined/through-routed with the Green Line, sharing tracks on South 5th Street in downtown Minneapolis with the Blue Line.

The 17 planned stations along the Southwest LRT line are: Mitchell, Southwest, Eden Prairie Town Center, Golden Triangle, and City West Stations in Eden Prairie; Opus Station in Minnetonka; Shady Oak, Downtown Hopkins, and Blake Stations in Hopkins; Louisiana, Wooddale, and Beltline Stations in St. Louis Park; and West Lake, Penn, 21st St., Van White, and Royalston Stations in Minneapolis.

An additional 29 light rail vehicles (LRVs) will need to be added to the Green Line fleet for the operation of the Southwest LRT line. The additional LRVs will be stored and maintained in a new Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) to be centrally located in Hopkins.

Additional project requirements include traction power substations (TPSS) to supply electrical power to the LRVs and signal bungalows housing equipment needed to operate and monitor train signals. The Council will identify specific sites for TPSS and signal bungalows during the Project Development and Engineering phases of the Project.

### **3 Purpose of the Communication and Public Involvement Plan**

The Communication and Public Involvement Plan (“Plan”) recognizes the need to communicate and engage with multiple audiences within the Southwest Corridor and the region as a whole. The Metropolitan Council (“Council”) and project partners must develop broad public understanding of and support for the Project as a necessary investment to improve access and mobility to employment, educational and economic opportunities within the corridor and beyond.

The Council and project partners will seek to engage the public, including Southwest Corridor residents, businesses, transit riders and agencies in the project planning process and address their needs and concerns. This Plan identifies key business and community groups (including new immigrant communities, communities of color, low income communities and the disability community) within the corridor and defines strategies that will maximize opportunities for public involvement and communication during the design and construction process.

The goals of this Plan are:

1. To develop and maintain public understanding of and support for the project as an essential means to improve our transportation system and maintain regional competitiveness;
2. To build mutual trust among the Council, project partners and the public by creating transparency through information sharing and regular, clear two-way communication about the project with community members, residents, businesses and interested groups in the corridor;
3. To promote public involvement by providing opportunities for public participation and dialogue between the Council and the public;
4. To maintain ongoing communication with project partners and ensure that key messages are consistent, clear and responsive to changing needs; and
5. To inform elected officials and funding partners about the Project's status, timing and needs.

## 4 Key Messages

The Council and project partners must address the sometimes differing needs and concerns of multiple audiences. These efforts must build public understanding of the project and key decisions made during Project Development by providing timely information and opportunities for public involvement. The Council and project partners will review and update these key messages as needs change and the project progresses.

Southwest LRT will:

- Add a fast, safe, transportation option for the southwest metro area;
- Improve regional mobility;
- Expand the region's network of light rail and bus rapid transit lines;
- Build on the success of the METRO Blue Line and Green Line by attracting new transit riders;
- Provide improved access to key destinations in Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie including Eden Prairie Center, the Opus/Golden Triangle employment center, Downtown Hopkins, the Park Nicollet/Methodist Hospital area and Target Field;
- Provide seamless service to the University of Minnesota, Midway area, State Capitol and Downtown St. Paul via the Green Line as well as connections to the Mall of America, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and Veterans Administration medical center via the Blue Line;
- Provide a new transportation option for the 199,000 employees who currently work in the corridor as well as 83,000 new jobs that are forecasted by 2030;
- Complement other transportation networks including buses, trails and bicycle routes;
- Enhance regional competitiveness;
- Create an estimated 150 design, engineering and management jobs, 3,500 construction jobs and 175 permanent operations and maintenance jobs;

- Connect the region's top job center, downtown Minneapolis, with the region's sixth-largest job center, Opus/Golden Triangle;
- Leverage the transportation infrastructure investment to support planned growth and development around stations, enhance existing neighborhoods and create new economic opportunities;
- Provide opportunities to work with local, state, and federal partners to resolve technical issues and secure funding; and,
- Provide substantial opportunities for the members of the public to share their ideas, ask questions, and identify issues.

## 5 Corridor Profile

The demographic analysis used to prepare the 2014 New Starts documentation for the Project (based on 2010 Census data) showed that there were nearly 63,000 people living within one-half mile of Southwest LRT stations. The corridor as a whole has more than 199,000 jobs, and is expected to add 56,000 residents and 83,000 new jobs by 2030.

### 5.1 Race and Ethnicity

More than 16,000 people who identify themselves as members of racial and ethnic minorities reside within the one-half mile of a Southwest LRT station site. Racial and ethnic minorities comprise 27 percent of the corridor's population, compared with 24 percent for the region as a whole. Areas of higher concentrations of minority residents are found in all of the corridor's communities. Southwest LRT station areas where proportions of racial and ethnic minorities are higher than the regional average include:

- Target Field (37%)
- Royalston (41%)
- Van White (42%)
- Blake (38%)
- Downtown Hopkins (28%)
- Opus (26%)
- Eden Prairie Town Center (49%)
- Southwest (49%)

The highest proportion of residents born in Africa (7%) is found near Blake Station; many households in this area are part of the Twin Cities' large East African community. The Southwest LRT Project will continue to work with community organizations such as the New American Academy to encourage participation by members of the East African community, and will provide translations of informational materials following procedures established for the Central Corridor LRT Project.

The areas with the highest proportion of Black or African American residents are near the northern Minneapolis stations (Target Field, Royalston and Van White). Other areas where the Black or African American population is higher than the regional average include Blake, Downtown Hopkins, Shady Oak, Opus and City West Stations and the Eden Prairie Town Center and Southwest Stations in Eden Prairie.

Residents who identify as Asian or Pacific Islander are most concentrated around the Blake, Eden Prairie Town Center and Southwest Stations. Up to 30% of residents near the Eden Prairie Town Center and Southwest Stations were born in Asia (compared to the Twin Cities average of 4%).

Hispanic or Latino residents are fairly evenly distributed along the length of the Southwest LRT route, making up between three and nine percent of the population in all station areas (Twin Cities average: 6%). The largest proportions of Hispanic or Latino residents are near Hopkins Station (9%) and Opus Station (7%).

## **5.2 Household Income**

Approximately 14% of households within one-half mile of stations had incomes below the poverty level, according to the 2010 Census, compared with the regional average of 11%. The proportion of impoverished households is higher than the regional average in some portions of downtown Minneapolis and around the Beltline, Louisiana and Downtown Hopkins stations.

Southwest LRT will benefit low-income households by addressing one of the major barriers to employment for low-income people – lack of reliable transportation – and by providing new reverse commuting opportunities for people seeking jobs in the suburban Opus/Golden Triangle and Eden Prairie Center areas. Providing new transit options can reduce the financial burden of transportation for low-income families.

The proportion of people living near the Southwest LRT line who have no personal vehicle available is highest near the northern Minneapolis stations of Target Field (26%), Royalston (28%) and Van White (31%); the average for all station areas is 14% and for the Twin Cities region as a whole 8%. Although the high levels of transit dependence in and around downtown Minneapolis may be partially attributable to residents' choice to live in areas where public transportation options are relatively abundant, these areas also have the highest percentages of low-income residents in the Southwest Corridor, and the number of households with incomes below the poverty level in these areas is more than twice the regional average. This indicates a high level of transit dependence around the northern Minneapolis stations.

Transit dependence is also relatively high around stations near the midpoint of the Southwest LRT alignment (Blake, Downtown Hopkins, Shady Oak and Opus); these stations also have the highest proportions of low-income residents after the northern Minneapolis station areas.

## **5.3 Limited English Proficiency**

The proportion of residents with limited English proficiency in the Southwest Corridor varies from 1–2% near West Lake Station/21<sup>st</sup> Street Station to 10% near Blake Station. The average proportion of residents with limited English proficiency in all Southwest LRT station areas (6%) is similar to the proportion for the Twin Cities region as a whole. The Southwest Corridor includes significant numbers of foreign-born residents, including significant numbers of people born in Africa, Asia and Latin America; however, it should be noted that not all foreign-born residents have limited English proficiency.

## **5.4 SWLRT Stakeholders**

The Metropolitan Council will work with the Southwest LRT advisory committees to identify stakeholders and will take the specific needs, interests and concerns of those stakeholders into account in the

development of outreach strategies. An initial stakeholder analysis identified the following stakeholders as having an interest in the development of Southwest LRT:

1. Twin Cities region
  - a. Hennepin County residents
  - b. Residents of the cities of Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Edina, Minnetonka, Eden Prairie, and other cities in the southwest metro area
  - c. Traveling public in the southwest metro area
  - d. Residents and businesses located near the corridor
  - e. Residents and businesses of the greater Twin Cities metro area
  
2. Community groups within the Southwest Corridor
  - a. Neighborhood associations adjacent to the corridor
  - b. Business organizations (chambers, business associations, Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis, etc.)
  - c. Educational and medical institutions
  
3. Other target audiences within the Southwest Corridor
  - a. Transit system users
  - b. Park and trail system users
  - c. Bicyclists and bicycle clubs
  - d. Students, teachers, and school administrators
  - e. Seniors
  - f. Youth
  - g. Underrepresented populations
  - h. Low income communities
  - i. Immigrants
  - j. Disabled community
  
4. Agencies and officials whom project partners will keep apprised of study progress
  - a. City mayors and councils
  - b. State elected officials
  - c. Three Rivers Park District
  - d. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
  - e. Freight rail lines
  - f. Watershed districts
  - g. School districts

## **6 Southwest LRT Organizational Structure**

As the federal grantee for the SWLRT project and the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Metropolitan Council is responsible for ensuring that LRT facilities in the metropolitan area are planned, developed, constructed, operated and maintained in an efficient, cost-effective manner and coordinated with buses and other transportation modes and facilities.

In the planning, design and construction of the line, the Council will work closely with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA), the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), the Cities of Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, Eden Prairie and Edina and other project partners.

## **6.1 Southwest LRT Project Office**

The Metropolitan Council established a Southwest LRT Project Office (SPO) to coordinate, design, construct, manage and close-out the SWLRT Project. The project office is located near the corridor with space for short and long-term SPO staff. In April 2012, SPO opened for business in Suite 500 of the Park Place West Building, 6465 Wayzata Boulevard, St. Louis Park, MN.

The SPO team includes staff members of the Council, Metro Transit, MnDOT, HCRRA and other government entities, complemented by experienced staff of two Preliminary Engineering Consultants, an Environmental Services Consultant. Staff level committees will facilitate internal communications and coordination among the partner agencies.

The Project's Communications and Public Involvement units will undertake the work described in this Plan, including communications, education and public outreach. The staff includes the assistant director for communications, public outreach and administration; the communications manager; the public involvement manager; the communication specialist and three community outreach coordinators.

### **6.1.1 Assistant Director Administration, Communication and Public Involvement**

The Assistant Director Administration, Communication and Public Involvement oversees the communication and outreach activities of the Project during the Project Development, Engineering and Construction phases. This position coordinates with the other communication and outreach directors at Metro Transit and the Metropolitan Council, and provides direction to managers who are responsible for day-to-day operations.

### **6.1.2 Communications Manager**

The Communications Manager is responsible for implementing and maintaining the communication components of this Plan. This includes looking for opportunities to promote the project in the media, preparing newsletters, developing promotional materials, pitching news stories, writing news releases, preparing project fact sheets, coordinating translation of key materials into other languages, following up with the media, monitoring news coverage, establishing and maintaining social media presence and archiving stories about the project. The Communications Manager will also assist in the development of communication materials and web content.

### **6.1.3 Communications Specialist**

The Communications Specialist supports Communications Manager, serves as backup when the manager is out of the office and handles social media through the use of YouTube videos, Twitter and Flickr.

### **6.1.4 Technical Writer**

The Technical Writer assists communications and public involvement staff by creating web pages, posting material on the Project website, creating display materials, developing maps and graphics, and assembling material for reports.

### **6.1.5 Public Involvement Manager**

The Public Involvement Manager is responsible for implementing and maintaining the public involvement components of this Plan. This includes coordinating the work of the advisory committees, managing the outreach staff, overseeing the planning and coordination of public hearings, community focus groups, informational meetings and other events, and assisting in the development of communications materials and web content.

### **6.1.6 Community Outreach Coordinators**

The Community Outreach Coordinators work with stakeholders throughout the Project Development, Engineering and Construction phases of the project. This includes providing staff support to advisory committees, coordinating and facilitating public meetings, providing public input opportunities, responding to requests for speakers, visiting with stakeholders, conducting surveys, attending engineering issue team meeting to convey community concerns and interest into the engineering process, and coordinating other activities as required. During construction, the Community Outreach Coordinators will be responsible for disseminating information about construction activities, working with businesses to maintain access, and responding to community concerns. The Community Outreach Coordinators will be the first point of contact for residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. Their contact information will be made available to the public via newsletters, media releases, the Project website, and printed flyers.

## **6.2 SWLRT Advisory and Policy Input Committees**

Advisory and policy committees are a key avenue by which the Metropolitan Council receives public input. Southwest LRT advisory and policy committees will allow the Metropolitan Council to receive advice and feedback from policy makers, government entities and community groups, businesses and citizens.

Advisory Committees will include:

- the SWLRT Corridor Management Committee;
- the SWLRT Community Advisory Committee;
- the SWLRT Business Advisory Committee;
- the SWLRT Communication Steering Committee;
- the SWLRT Technical Project Advisory Committee;
- the Community Works Steering Committee; and
- the Community Works Technical Implementation Committee.

The Metropolitan Council or SPO may create additional committees based on needs as the project progresses.

### **6.2.1 SWLRT Corridor Management Committee**

The State of Minnesota has mandated the creation of a Corridor Management Committee to advise the Metropolitan Council on the design and construction of LRT (Minn. Stat. 473.3994). This committee will advise the Council on issues relating to environmental review, preliminary design, preliminary engineering, final design, implementation method and construction of LRT.

The Metropolitan Council established a 17-member SWLRT Corridor Management Committee chaired by the Metropolitan Council chairperson and including representatives from the following organizations and agencies:

- the Metropolitan Council;
- the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (3);
- the Counties Transit Improvement Board;
- each of six cities that will be served by SWLRT;
- Metro Transit;
- the Minnesota Department of Transportation;
- the Minnesota Department of Management and Budget;
- the SWLRT Community Advisory Committee; and
- the SWLRT Business Advisory Committee.

The committee meets monthly on the first Wednesday of every month and may call special meetings as needed. SPO staff manage and support the work of the SWLRT CMC.

#### **6.2.2 SWLRT Community Advisory Committee**

In 2012, the Metropolitan Council coordinated with Hennepin County to expand the Citizens' Advisory Committee, which had been established by HCRRA during the Southwest Transitway Alternatives Analysis, and reconvene it as the SWLRT Community Advisory Committee (CAC). This committee provides feedback on engineering and design issues, land use and transit oriented development.

During Project Development, the CAC serves as a primary avenue for public and community involvement in the design process, advising the Corridor Management Committee and providing feedback to SPO staff on issues related to the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements and to the design, engineering and construction of the SWLRT including station location and design, feeder bus service, public art, traffic and parking, station/pedestrian access, and construction mitigation and impacts on both residential and business communities in the corridor. As the Project progresses, subcommittees may be formed to address specific issues such as operations and maintenance facility design. The committee represents a variety of interests and issues including:

- Neighborhood and community groups;
- Underrepresented populations, which include new immigrant communities, communities of color, low income communities and persons with disabilities;
- Educational institutions;
- Environmental groups;
- Religious organizations;
- Freight rail concerns;
- Transit riders;

- Park, bike and trail interests;
- Station areas;
- Seniors;
- Youth; and
- Affordable housing.

Meetings of the SWLRT CAC will be held on average once a month in 2015 and 2016. Special meetings, open houses, subcommittees and focus groups will be scheduled as needed. To facilitate communication and a sharing of ideas and information, the CAC will meet jointly with the SWLRT Business Advisory Committee (BAC) at least twice each year; this meeting will replace a regularly scheduled CAC meeting. SPO staff will manage and support the work of the SWLRT CAC. SWLRT Business Advisory Committee

### **6.2.3 SWLRT Business Advisory Committee**

In 2012, the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County established a SWLRT Business Advisory Committee (BAC) to provide input with a specific business focus to the Project by advising the SWCMC. Members will represent the diversity of business activities along the Corridor. The BAC provides input on project design and construction mitigation. The SWLRT BAC provides feedback to the Southwest LRT Corridor Management Committee and the Community Works Steering Committee.

The committee represents a variety of business interests and issues including:

- businesses, including small entrepreneurs and business establishments;
- chambers of commerce and business organizations;
- corporate headquarters;
- non-profit organizations;
- developers; and
- landowners

The SWLRT BAC will meet on average once a month in 2015 and 2016. Special meetings, open houses, subcommittees and focus groups may be scheduled as needed. To facilitate communication and the sharing of ideas and information, the SWLRT BAC will meet jointly at least twice each year with the SWLRT Community Advisory Committee; this meeting will replace a regularly scheduled BAC meeting. SPO staff will manage and support the work of the SWLRT BAC.

### **6.2.4 SWLRT Communications Steering Committee**

The purpose of the SWLRT Communication Steering Committee (CSC) is to establish and implement a coordinated communications and public involvement effort for the SWLRT Project and Hennepin County's Community Works efforts. Responsibilities of the CSC include assisting with implementation of a coordinated, proactive communications effort that supports the Southwest LRT project, coordinating the dissemination of information to the public and coordinating outreach activities. The CSC will meet monthly and will be chaired by the Assistant Director Administration, Communication and Public Involvement. The Communications Steering Committee will include communication and public affairs staff from:

- the Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit;
- MnDOT;
- CTIB;
- Hennepin County;
- the Cities of Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Edina, Hopkins, Minnetonka and Eden Prairie;
- the Three Rivers Park District; and
- the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

The CSC will also assist the SPO in evaluating the communication and outreach efforts and updating the Communications and Public Involvement Strategic Plan on an annual basis. SPO staff will manage and support the work of the SWLRT CSC.

#### **6.2.5 SWLRT Technical Project Advisory Committee**

The Technical Project Advisory Committee (TPAC) will provide technical input on project design and engineering issues; advise on communication of technical issues to the BAC, CAC and CMC; support integration of design work with community land use and development goals and support the SPO in achieving its goal of delivering the project on time and within budget. It is anticipated that the TPAC will meet monthly. SPO staff manage and support the work of the SWLRT TPAC. Membership includes staff from:

- the Southwest Project Office;
- Metro Transit Rail Operations
- City/County staff and Engineering/Public works Planning/Development staff
- MnDOT; and
- the Three Rivers Park District.

The SWLRT TPAC began meeting in early 2013.

#### **6.2.6 Hennepin County Community Works Committees**

Hennepin County established the Southwest LRT Community Works (CW) project in 2009 to support a comprehensive, multi-jurisdictional approach in which land use planning and LRT engineering inform each other to maximize the public benefit of investment in the Southwest LRT line. SPO provides office space for Community Works staff in order to facilitate communications and coordination. SPO staff attend and participate in Community Works committee meetings. Hennepin County staff support and manage the work of the CW Steering Committee.

The Community Works Steering Committee (CW SC) provides overall guidance and direction for the Southwest LRT Community Works Project. The Steering Committee provides a forum for its members to be educated about the process, influence development plans and leverage public and private investment. The CW SC meets on the third Thursday of every month. Membership includes representatives from:

- the Metropolitan Council
- the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority

- the Hennepin County Board (2)
- the Cities of Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Edina, Hopkins, Minnetonka and Eden Prairie;
- the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District;
- the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board;
- SouthWest Transit; and
- the Urban Land Institute (ex officio);

Planning and engineering staff from each municipality, Hennepin County, the Metropolitan Council and Advisory Partners will meet monthly as the Technical Implementation Committee (TIC). Members of the TIC will advance land use planning efforts by participating actively in monthly meetings, collaborating to develop and implement work plan elements that require city leadership and input, making consensus-based recommendations for actions by the Community Works Steering Committee, and supporting and promoting the Southwest LRT Project and Southwest Community Works to elected officials, the business community, and constituents/community members. The TIC will be co-chaired by Hennepin County staff and a community development director from one of the partner cities. The Committee generally meets once a month.

## **7 Public Involvement**

The Metropolitan Council is committed to engaging the public throughout the development of the Southwest LRT project. The benefits of involving the community in the planning process include:

- Increasing the prospects for early identification and resolution of issues that could impede the project;
- Providing a mechanism for communities, neighborhoods, business interests and other constituencies to contribute ideas concerning issues such as station placement, access, art, construction impacts, and parking;
- Promoting public acceptance of and support for the project;
- Maximizing the value of the public investment; and
- Increasing the chances for successful completion of the project.

### **7.1 Issue Resolution During Project Development**

For each decision that must be made, the Council will determine whether it is a technical decision that will be guided by engineering principles or an issue that requires public input to make an informed decision. The communication and outreach strategy for a decision that requires public input will be more complex than the strategy for informing the public about the outcome of a technical decision. Public involvement strategies will be based on the level of public interest and the type of input required. In framing the discussion of key decisions, staff will clearly define the public's role in the decision-making process. Framing discussions will answer the following questions:

- What decisions related to the issue have been made and are non-negotiable?
- What decisions related to the project are technical and not open for public discussion?

- What decisions related to the issue are negotiable and open for public discussion?
- How can the public provide input into the decision?
- How will the public input be used in the decision making process?

## 7.2 Strategies

To achieve the goals of this plan and reach its target audiences, SPO and project partners will employ multiple communication and public engagement strategies.

### 7.2.1 Communications

The Metropolitan Council and project partners will provide information about the project using a variety of tools including print and electronic communications such as, but not limited to those listed below.

- **A project website** including a description of the project, timeline, map, frequently asked questions (FAQ), videos, public involvement procedures, meeting dates and agendas for advisory committees and appropriate links. The website will be updated frequently to provide the latest information, including meeting notices, agendas, minutes, press releases, project updates, newsletters and feature articles.
- **Fact sheets and brochures** including project description, map, timeline and FAQs, to be printed and posted as PDF documents on the Project website.
- **Newsletters** delivering information about the project and decisions to target audiences including interested residents, elected officials, business groups, etc. to be produced in print and electronic (PDF or HTML) formats.
- **Social media to provide brief** project updates.
- **News releases and news advisories** to metro-area print and broadcast media outlets including college and ethnic newspapers and radio stations serving audiences within the corridor.
- **Spokespersons** designated to provide project information.
- **Media briefings** to pitch project-related story ideas.
- **Informational posters or kiosks** at community gathering spots such as Eden Prairie Mall, city hall message boards, trail hubs and major employers.
- **Photography** illustrating progress on the project in presentations, newsletters, the website and for distribution to media outlets.
- **Videos or animations** posted to the Metropolitan Council's YouTube channel and the project website, and included in public presentations.

### 7.2.2 Public Involvement Opportunities

The Metropolitan Council will provide opportunities for two-way communications with corridor stakeholders, including, but not limited to:

- **Public comment line and email address** to receive general comments as well as reports of specific issues and concerns.
- **Public presentations** giving an overview of the project or discussing specific issues with residents, businesses and other groups in the corridor.

- **Door-to-door canvassing** by outreach staff to reach owners of affected properties and businesses.
- **Public meetings and forums** to provide information, answer questions, and solicit public input via comment cards; includes comment time during advisory committee meetings
- **Community group engagement** with existing community groups to seek feedback on targeted issues of interest to that group; may include co-hosting meetings.
- **Advisory committees** such as the CAC and BAC to seek input on the project. Committees or working groups focusing on specific issues may be established as needed.
- **Online polling** to survey stakeholders.
- **Radio and cable television broadcasts** of brief videos and audio announcements city and community communication outlets
- **Community event participation** by staff, including tables and literature distribution.
- **Briefings and tours** of the Southwest LRT alignment and Green or Blue Line facilities for stakeholders, elected officials and reporters.
- **Mobile Project Office** based on a retired Metro Transit bus and equipped with displays that can be changed and updated to suit a variety of outreach tasks and events. Members of the public will be invited to learn more about the project and share their comments/ideas with SPO staff. SPO would hold extended office hours and members of the public can drop in to pick-up project info, discuss the project with staff and provide written and electronic comments through interactive methods.

## 8 Title VI and Environmental Justice Community Engagement

### 8.1 Title VI and Environmental Justice Outreach Plan

This plan outlines strategies to reduce barriers and increase participation throughout the development of the Southwest LRT Project, including additional strategies and activities to ensure the greatest participation of communities that have been traditionally underserved and/or underrepresented. To help ensure the greatest participation possible, this plan identifies communication and engagement strategies that promote broad participation that comply with the intent and principles of Title VI and Environmental Justice laws and policies.

Pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Federal Transit Administration requires the Council, as a New Starts grant recipient, to develop specific plans to engage minority, low-income and limited-English-proficiency populations.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that federal funding recipients do not discriminate on the basis of race, color or national origin in their programs or activities.

Environmental justice deals with disproportionate impacts on low income and/or minority populations or neighborhoods. This plan builds on past activities to (1) identify low income and/or minority neighborhoods along the proposed route; (2) determine whether disproportionate impacts appear to

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<sup>1</sup> FTA Circulars 4702.1B, "Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients" and 4703.1, "Environmental Justice Policy Guidance for Federal Transit Administration Recipients."

exist; and (3) ensure that the public engagement process includes comprehensive efforts to communicate with the public about impacts and provides ample opportunity for community members to comment about such impacts.

SPO used the 2012 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) as a basis to identify minority and low-income populations along the Southwest Corridor. Section 5 of this plan provides more detail on corridor demographics.

### **8.1.1 Communication and Engagement Strategies**

Outreach staff will work with community groups and public agencies to identify transit dependent populations in the Corridor. A key outreach strategy that has proven to be successful is to identify and engage community leaders in communities of color, new immigrant communities and low income communities so that they can encourage participation by community members and advise the Council on ways to effectively communicate with underrepresented/underserved communities. Another key strategy is meeting with neighborhood communities on a regular basis to share the latest project information and highlighting when key decisions will be made, by whom and various ways communities can share their thoughts on the decision.

SPO staff, with input from community members, have identified the following strategies to include more voices in the process.

- inviting community representatives to serve on the SWLRT CAC and BAC;
- seeking opportunities to engage communities in dialogue about the project through partnerships with the Corridors of Opportunity grantees;
- establishing and maintaining connections between SPO outreach staff and community representatives through regular meetings and dialogue;
- expanding community participation by door-knocking, the mobile project office and notices in community newspapers;
- engaging residents in multi-family housing complexes, and members of social, educational, advocacy and non-profit organizations;
- providing interpreters at events and translating materials into languages other than English;
- working internally with other projects to provide a holistic picture of agency activities and maximize the value of attendees' time at project events;
- sharing summaries of public meetings to promote understanding of issues by policy makers;
- ensuring American Disability Act compliance when selecting meeting and event locations;
- holding public meetings at locations that are close to the target audiences and accessible by transit whenever possible; and
- taking steps to anticipate barriers and promote the attendance of low income populations, such as locating meetings in convenient locations that can be accessed via transit, and holding meetings at a variety of times including weekends and evenings.

SPO will review strategies and efforts regularly to ensure that they effectively promote full inclusion in the decision-making and project development process. SPO will do so through discussions with community groups and individuals, partner and agency staff and SWLRT advisory committees.

### **8.1.2 Operations and Maintenance Facility Title VI Equity Analysis Outreach Plan**

The FTA's Title VI guidance requires the Council to conduct an equity analysis for the proposed Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) in order to ensure that the location does not disproportionately impact populations identified on the basis of race, color or national origin. To encourage greater participation by low income and minority populations in the site selection process in 2013, the SPO coordinated communication efforts with community leaders and interest groups. SPO activities included:

- working with Corridors of Opportunity grant recipients to engage low income and minority populations on OMF issues;
- door-knocking and distributing fliers in neighborhoods surrounding finalist OMF locations, especially Blake Road Station area because of identified low income and minority populations; and
- coordinating with COO grant recipients to hold special meetings to obtain public feedback on finalist locations through the Blake Road Collaborative.

Community feedback and public input led to the elimination of sites near Blake Road due to potential impacts on low income and minority populations and other community concerns.

### **8.1.3 Limited English Proficiency Outreach Plan**

Individuals who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English are described as Limited English Proficient (LEP). Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency," reprinted at 65 FR 50121 (August 16, 2000), directs each federal agency to examine the services it provides and develop and implement a system by which LEP persons can meaningfully access those services. The Executive Order states that recipients must take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons.

The SPO accommodates LEP groups by:

- Hiring project staff who speak more than one language;
- Translating materials into other languages;
- Working with community representatives to disperse information in non-written (verbal) formats; and
- Employing outreach techniques (e.g. higher use of graphics to illustrate concepts) to engage LEP populations.

To engage LEP populations, SPO has translated environmental documents and guides into Somali, Spanish and Hmong, the predominant non-English languages used in the Southwest Corridor. In addition, SPO carries a standing contract for verbal and written translation services that can be exercised on a demand basis.

#### **8.1.4 The Corridors of Opportunity Initiative & Community Engagement Outreach Grant Recipients**

The Corridors of Opportunity Initiative was a three-year collaborative effort launched in 2011 that brought together leaders from state, regional and local government, philanthropy, non-profit and business to accelerate the build-out of the transit system while promoting adjacent development that benefits people of all incomes and backgrounds. Participants included the Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, Ramsey County, the Counties Transit Improvement Board, City of Minneapolis, City of Saint Paul, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, McKnight Foundation, St. Paul Foundation, Urban Land Institute, and many other authorities, foundations and community organizations. The goals of the initiative were:

- To align transit, land use, economic and workforce planning;
- To expand the transit system;
- To engage underrepresented communities;
- To expand access to jobs and affordable housing;
- To secure resources and attract robust investment;
- To increase the region's ability to compete globally; and
- To support the region's Sustainable Development Plan.

One of the Corridors of Opportunity programs that is continuing is the Community Engagement Team Outreach Grant program to increase participation and decision-making in public planning processes by underserved populations (people of color, low-income communities, and people with disabilities). In 2011 and 2012, the Corridors of Opportunity Policy Board issued grants to the Intercongregational Communities Association, the New American Academy, La Asamblea de Derechos Civiles and Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha (CTUL) to reinforce this effort in the Southwest Corridor. SWLRT project sponsors will work collaboratively with these organizations and their constituents to ensure that they receive accurate and current information and have opportunities to provide meaningful input into the process. SWLRT included grant recipients on the SWLRT Community Advisory Committee to expand participation of low income and minority populations.

## **9 Construction Impact Mitigation**

As with any major infrastructure project, construction of the Southwest LRT line will have short-term impacts on residents and businesses in the surrounding area. The Metropolitan Council and SPO will develop and implement a Construction Mitigation Plan prior to the start of construction. The goal of the Construction Communication Plan will be to prepare project-area residents, businesses and commuters for construction, listen to their concerns, and develop plans to minimize harmful or disruptive effects. Strategies may include:

- Issuing regular construction updates and posting them on the Project website;
- Providing advance written notice of roadway closures, driveway closures and utility shutoffs;
- Conducting public construction meetings;
- Establishing a 24-hour construction hotline;
- Preparing brochure with information about construction;

- Posting special “open for business” and way-finding signage;
- Addressing property access issues; and
- Assigning staff to serve as liaisons between the public and contractors during construction.

## 10 Program Feedback

Communications and outreach staff will monitor public concerns about the Southwest LRT Project and will adjust the Communications and Public Engagement Plan and community involvement strategies as the project evolves and issues change. Throughout the Project, public comments and feedback will be collected through a variety of channels, including but not limited to the following:

- Meetings of the Metropolitan Council and Southwest LRT Project advisory committees (CMC, CAC, BAC and CSC), including comments by members , individuals and groups attending meetings;
- Comment cards, evaluation forms and testimony at public involvement meetings and open houses;
- Participation in community events and programs;
- An email address and telephone line established to receive comments and questions; and
- Stakeholder surveys.

The SWLRT CSC will solicit information regarding the effectiveness of the communications and outreach program from agency groups, project committees, technical teams and project staff.

## 11 Communication and Public Involvement Activities

### 11.1 2015 Communications and Public Involvement Action Plan

The 2015 Communications and Public Involvement Action Plan outlines key activities to be undertaken by SPO to support PE and environmental documentation activities. This Action Plan is a high-level inventory of critical activities. The Action Plan will be reviewed monthly with SPO staff to ensure key activities are occurring and that new information or activities are being incorporated.

Project Activity	Community Involvement Objectives	Budget	Frequency
Hold joint BAC/CAC meetings	Share project information and provide opportunity for public	Staff time	At least once a year
Develop and release project newsletter	Provide project updates	Staff time	Quarterly
Participate in at least on average 5 community meetings	Provide project updates and opportunity for feedback	Staff time	Monthly
Hold CMC meetings	Provide project updates, seek feedback and have policy discussions.	Staff time	Monthly
Hold BAC meetings	Provide project updates and seek feedback	Staff time	6-10 meetings in 2015

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Community Involvement Objectives</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Hold CAC meetings	Provide project updates and seek feedback	Staff time	6-10 meetings in 2015
Hold CSC meeting	Provide project updates, seek feedback and coordinate communications	Staff time	Every other month
Hold public hearings on SDEIS	Share project information and provide opportunity for public testimony	Staff time; project budget	Following Met Council action on project scope and budget
Schedule Mobile Project Office for Public Events	Share project information and provide opportunities to receive public comments	Staff time; project budget	Monthly
Update website	Provide current project information	Staff time	Weekly
Use social media to promote engagement opportunities	Provide project updates	Staff time	Monthly

## 11.2 2014 Communications and Public Involvement Activities

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Community Involvement Objectives</b>	<b>Process/Status</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
Hold joint BAC/CAC meetings	Share project information and provide opportunity for public	No joint meetings were held in 2014 as the committees only met 4 times each	Twice per year
Develop and release project newsletter	Provide project updates	Issues Extending Tracks in Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter	Quarterly
Participate in at least 5 community meetings	Provide project updates and opportunity for feedback	Attended 100+ community meetings	Monthly
Hold CMC meetings	Provide project updates, seek feedback and have policy discussions.	Held 12 meetings	Monthly
Hold BAC meetings	Provide project updates and seek feedback	Held 4 meetings	Monthly
Hold CAC meetings	Provide project updates and seek feedback	Held 4 meetings	Monthly
Hold CSC meeting	Provide project updates, seek feedback and coordinate communications	Held 3 meetings	Monthly
Hold 4 public town hall community meetings on project studies	Share project information and provide opportunity for public testimony	Held meetings 4 meetings in January and February	January - February 2014
Hold public hearings on Municipal Consent Plans	Share project information and provide opportunity for public testimony	Held 9 public hearings on Municipal Consent plans	Following Met Council action on project scope and budget
Schedule Mobile	Share project information and provide	Mobile Project Office and	Monthly

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Community Involvement Objectives</b>	<b>Process/Status</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
Project Office for Public Events	opportunities to receive public comments	Outreach Staff attended 10 community events	
Update website	Provide current information in transparent	Website was update monthly with advisory committee meeting materials. Website was updated frequently with Municipal Consent and 30% plans, draft reports, newsletters and press releases.	Weekly

### 11.3 2013 Communications and Public Involvement Activities

The Communications and Public Involvement Action Plan documents key activities undertaken by SPO to support PE and environmental documentation activities in 2013. This Action Plan is a high-level summary of critical activities.

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Community Involvement Objectives</b>	<b>Process/Status</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
Hire 3 Community Outreach Coordinators	Provide staff resources to	Staff started January 2013	Project budget	February 2013
Schedule meet-and-greet meetings with cities to introduce outreach staff	Coordinate communications	Outreach coordinators attended meeting with city staff	Staff time	Spring 2013
Coordinate with TSAAP and Community Works outreach activities	Share project information	Outreach staff attended TSAAP hosted public meetings	Staff time	Monthly
Hold joint BAC/CAC meeting	Share project information and provide opportunity for public	Held 3 joint meetings in February, June and July.	Staff time	July 2013
Develop and release project newsletter	Provide project updates.	Issued <i>Extending Tracks</i> in March, May, July and December	Staff time	Quarterly
Develop GovDelivery email lists	Provide project updates.	Used to issue <i>Extending Tracks</i> , press releases and meeting notices	Staff time	Monthly Quarterly newsletter
Participate in 5 community meetings each month	Provide project updates and opportunity for feedback	Held or attended nearly 200 community meetings in 2013	Staff time	Ongoing
Hold monthly CMC meetings	Provide project updates, seek feedback and have policy discussions.	Held 18 CMC meetings in 2013	Staff time Audio visual support	December 2013
Hold BAC meetings	Provide project updates and seek feedback	Held 8 BAC meetings, in addition to the 3 joint	Staff time	November 2013

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Community Involvement Objectives</b>	<b>Process/Status</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
		BAC/CAC meetings		
Hold CAC meetings	Provide project updates and seek feedback	Held 8 CAC meetings, in addition to the 3 joint BAC/CAC meetings	Staff time	December 2013
Hold CSC meeting	Provide project updates, seek feedback and coordinate communications	Held 7 CSC meetings in 2013	Staff time	December 2013
Public open houses on stations and LRT alignment	Provide staff and materials for open houses	Held open houses on technical issues, OMF locations, Eden Prairie alignment, and freight rail issues.	Staff time; project budget	May re OMF June 2013, October 2013 and January 2014 re: freight rail
Update website	Provide current information in transparent	Website was update monthly with advisory committee meeting materials. Website was updated regularly with new information, FAQs, draft reports, newsletters and press releases.	Staff time	Ongoing
Develop A Mobile Project Office	Provide project updates and seek feedback	Secured a Metro Transit 40' Gillig Phantom and converted it to a mobile project office	Staff time; project budget	December 2013
Conduct a direct mail campaign	Provide project updates and seek feedback	Postcards were mailed to zip codes within 1 mile of either sides of the LRT alignment	Staff time; project budget	December 2013

#### **11.4 2012 Communication and Public Involvement Activities**

The Communications and Public Involvement Action Plan documents key activities undertaken by SPO to support PE and environmental documentation activities in 2012. This Action Plan is a high-level summary of critical activities.

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Community Involvement Objectives</b>	<b>Process/Status</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
Update and expand the Council's Southwest LRT website	Provide updated information about the project.	Updated the website with Met Council's overhaul of the website	Staff time	March 2013
Establish public comment line (telephone and email)	Provide way for stakeholders to comment on the project.	swlrt@metrotransit.org	Staff time	January 2012
Prepare project fact sheet	Provide general background about the project.	Prepared fact sheet, posted info online	Staff time	January 2012
Prepare informational brochures	Provide general background about the project.	Designed brochure, seeking bids for printing	\$3000	January 2012

<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Community Involvement Objectives</b>	<b>Process/Status</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
Establish Speakers Bureau	Provide general background about the project.	Created speaker request form, posted online	Staff time	June 2012
Prepare adaptable informational PowerPoint	Provide general background about the project.	Created standard PPT template	Staff time	April 2012
Establish Communication Steering Cmte. (CSC)	Provide forum to share information and coordinate communication and public involvement activities.	Held first meeting Jan. 6	Staff time	January 2012
Establish Community Advisory Cmte. (CAC)	Provide forum for public input and information sharing.	Sent letters Jan. 31,	Staff time	March 2012
Establish Business Advisory Committee (BAC)	Provide forum for public input and information sharing related to business issues.	Identifying business stakeholders,	Staff time	July 2012
Prepare monthly newsletter	Provide update on recent activities, meetings, and decisions.	Template created, first edition to be sent March 2013	Staff time	March 2013
Hold initial CAC meeting.	Provide overview of project. Present roles, responsibilities and key issues that will need a decision during Preliminary Engineering	First meeting April 12	Staff time	April 2012
Hold initial BAC meeting	Provide overview of project. Present roles, responsibilities and key issues that will need a decision during Preliminary Engineering	First meeting held August 8	Staff time	August 2012
Support DEIS Public Hearings	Provide staff and materials support for HCRRA's DEIS public hearings	Attended three public hearings	Staff time/\$100 materials	November 2012
Present Project Information to Community Groups	Provide project information to stakeholders and interested parties	Provide/attend 5 presentations community events a month	Staff time	On-going
Hire 3 outreach coordinators	Provide project information to stakeholders, implement Plan	Positions posted fall 2012, staff started January 2013	Project budget	January 2013