

# Existing Conditions

NOVEMBER 15, 2017



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



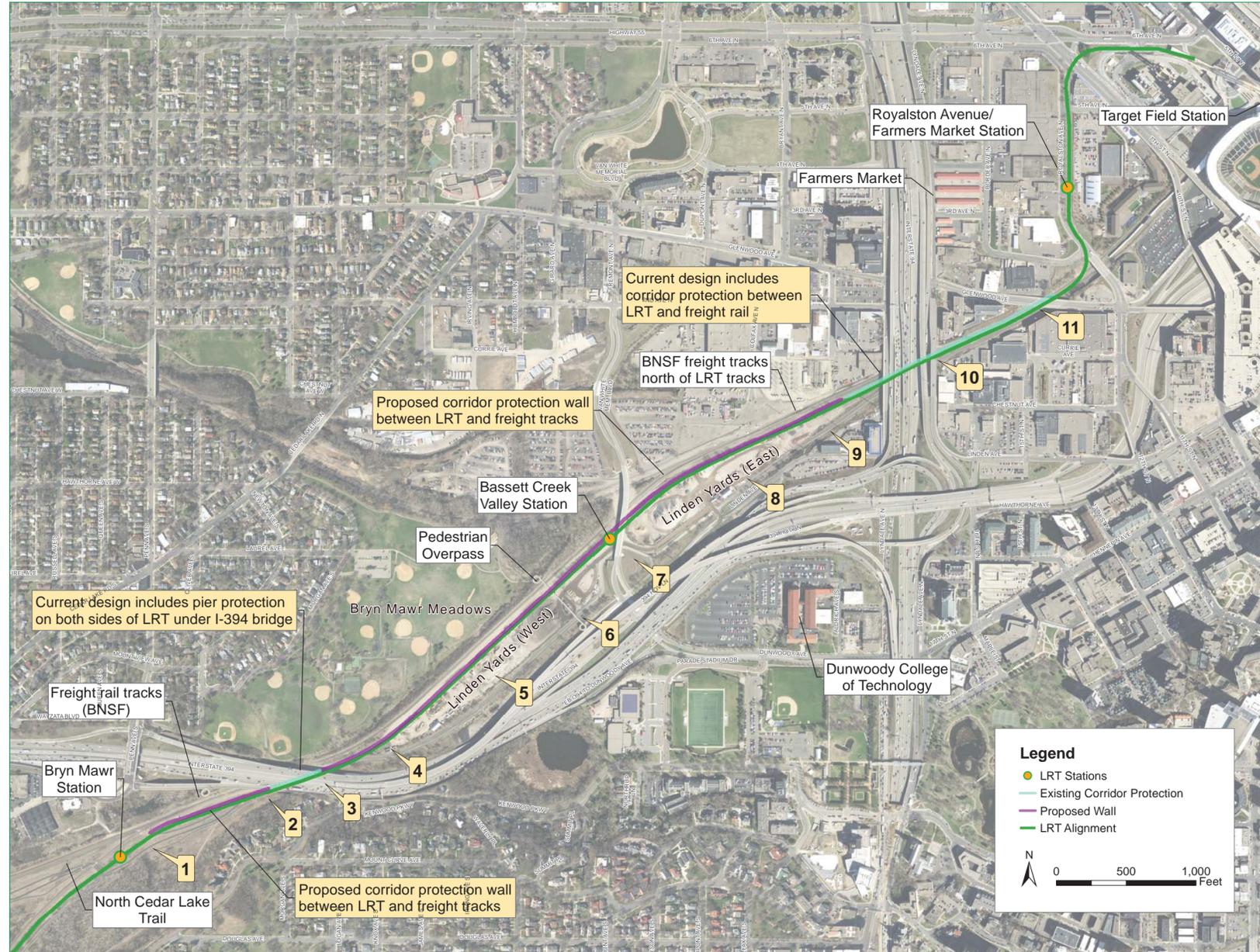
2. Looking east along the Cedar Lake Trail as it passes under I-394.



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

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## 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 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.

## WHAT DESIGN ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSED WALL CAN THE PUBLIC WEIGH IN ON?

- The aesthetic treatment of the wall including color, texture, graphics and plantings.

# Environmental Impact Review

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## The Southwest LRT Project is examining the environmental impacts of the proposed corridor protection wall.

In August 2017, the Southwest LRT Project Office began working closely with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on an evaluation of changes to the design of the project since the publication of the Project's Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the FTA's Record of Decision (ROD).

The FTA will examine the findings of the post-ROD environmental review and determine whether further action is required. The FTA's findings will be documented and made available to the public.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

- Address requirements of the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA);
- Evaluate proposed changes to the design of the Southwest LRT Project since publication of the Project's Final Environmental Impact Statement;
- Consider the effects of the proposed corridor protection wall on the Southwest LRT Project's environmental impacts and mitigation measures; and
- Determine if additional environmental impact evaluation is required.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION TOPICS

- Neighborhood and Community
- Property Acquisitions and Displacements
- Cultural Resources
- Visual Quality and Aesthetics
- Geology and Groundwater Resources
- Surface Water Resources
- Ecosystems
- Noise Impacts
- Vibration Impacts
- Utilities
- Freight Rail
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Networks
- Safety and Security
- Parks and Recreational Areas (Section 4(f))
- Historic Properties (Section 106)

# Impacts on Historic Properties ("Section 106")

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## WHAT IS A SECTION 106 REVIEW?

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires projects that receive federal funding to take into account their effects on historic properties.

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.

MnDOT has determined that this district is eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Because the district is eligible for the National Register, a Section 106 review is required.

The Federal Transit Administration has determined the proposed Project design modifications will have an adverse effect on the railroad historic district. Consultation is in process to resolve the adverse effect through minimization and mitigation.



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



View looking southeast from near Penn Ave. and Wayzata Blvd. (c. 1940s).

Great Northern Railway mainlines and Cedar Lake Yard in the foreground, the Minneapolis & St. Louis Cedar Lake Yard and shops in the middle ground, and the Kenwood Water Tower in the distance. Photograph by William F. Armstrong, courtesy of Don L. Hofsommer.



View looking northeast towards downtown Minneapolis from the northeast side of Cedar Lake (c. 1960s).

Minneapolis and St. Louis Cedar Lake Yard and shops in the foreground, the Great Northern Railway Cedar Lake Yard and mainlines to the left, and the Kenwood Water Tower and Wayzata Blvd. Bridge in the distance. Photographer unknown, courtesy of Don L. Hofsommer.

## 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, the FTA and CRU will:

- Determine whether or not there is an adverse effect on the historic district;
- Provide the determination to the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office for review and concurrence;
- Inform consulting parties with jurisdiction over any area of potential new adverse impact;
- Publish the FTA finding and supporting materials for a 30-day review and comment period;
- Work with consulting parties to minimize and mitigate any adverse effects; and
- Prepare a plan to mitigate adverse impacts.



Above: Active freight rail tracks near Penn Avenue.

# Public Involvement

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## OPPORTUNITIES TO INFLUENCE CORRIDOR PROTECTION WALL DESIGN

### 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.

Project staff have met with the following groups:

- **Bryn Mawr Board** on September 13 and October 11
- **Harrison Neighborhood Association** on September 14
- **Bassett Creek Redevelopment Oversight Committee** on September 19 and October 17

### Public Tours

Tours of the corridor have been given to policy makers and community members.

Tours help people visualize the proposed wall and understand how it will appear in different areas.

### Pop-up Events

Pop-up events along the North Cedar Lake Trail are planned, to engage area residents and users of the corridor.

These events will provide details about the proposed corridor protection wall, general project information, and opportunities to give feedback.

### Staying Engaged

The Southwest LRT Project website ([www.SWLRT.org](http://www.SWLRT.org)) and Extending Tracks newsletter will provide updates on progress of the project including the proposed wall design.

An online comment form will be available for people who could not attend this open house.

**Contact Sophia Ginis if you have comments or questions, or if you would like an outreach coordinator to attend your event: 612-373-3895 or [sophia.ginis@metrotransit.org](mailto:sophia.ginis@metrotransit.org).**

### 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 represent neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor protection area as well as the Minneapolis Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committees. Members will serve for the duration of the wall design process.

Since October, the group has met three times, including a tour of the corridor. Input from the Working Group has helped project staff advance the design of the proposed corridor protection wall.



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