



Request for City Council Committee Action From the Department of Public Works

Date: December 4, 2012

To: Honorable Sandra Colvin Roy, Chair Transportation & Public Works Committee

Subject: **Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Southwest Corridor LRT**

Recommendation:

1. Approve the staff recommended comments on the DEIS for the Southwest Corridor LRT project and direct the Public Works Department to submit the comments to Hennepin County.

Previous Directives:

- November 21, 2003; Approve the process of the LRT Corridor study and that the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority to pursue the next phase of study as amended; with the understanding that the HCRRA will work with Minneapolis in further evaluating alternative route configurations, which would directly connect Uptown into this regional corridor.
- July 1, 2005; Appoint Council Member Dan Niziolek and Council Member Gary Schiff as Policy Advisory Committee members for the Southwest Corridor Alternatives Analysis process.
- September 5, 2005; Receive and File; SW Corridor study update.
- January 2, 2006; Appoint Council Member Robert Lilligren and Council Member Ralph Remington to serve as Policy Advisory Committee members for the Southwest Corridor.
- October 2, 2009; Receive and File; Report from Hennepin County Housing, Community Works, and Transit.
- January 15, 2010; Approve resolution supporting Locally Preferred Alternative as recommended by the Southwest Transitway Technical Advisory Committee, Policy Advisory Committee and Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority and forwarded to the Metropolitan Council for inclusion in the Regional Transportation Policy Plan.

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Approved by:

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Reviews:

Permanent Review Committee (PRC):	Not Applicable
Civil Rights Affirmative Action Plan:	Not Applicable
Policy Review Group (PRG):	Not Applicable

Financial Impact:

None

Community Impact:

Neighborhood Notification: The SW Project Office has created a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to address community needs.

City Goals: Supports City Transportation Goals

Comprehensive Plan: Supports Comprehensive Plan Goals

Zoning Code: NA

Background/Supporting Information

The 15-mile Southwest Corridor (Green Line Extension) is a regional light-rail transit corridor that serves Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie. Once completed, the Southwest Corridor will directly connect to the Hiawatha LRT Corridor (Blue Line), to the Central Corridor Line (Green Line), to the Northstar Commuter Rail Line, and to the Bottineau Corridor Line (Blue Line Extension) in Downtown Minneapolis. The project is expected to serve an estimated 29,660 riders per weekday, is proposed to have 17 stations, and will cost an estimated \$1.25 billion. When completed in 2018, the Southwest Corridor will interline with the Central Corridor LRT, allowing for a one seat ride between Eden Prairie and Downtown St. Paul.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) documents the potential social, economic, and environmental benefits and impacts of a proposed project or action and proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The DEIS is released to the public and interested agencies for review and comment. The DEIS and the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) compose the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under NEPA.

Completing an Environmental Impact Statement is a significant milestone in the Federal Transit Administration's process for securing federal New Starts funding. Previously the Southwest Corridor has completed a Feasibility Study, an Alternatives Analysis, and a Scoping Document. The Alternatives Analysis resulted in a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), which was approved by the City of Minneapolis on January 15, 2010 and by the Metropolitan Council on May 26, 2010. The Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) defined the Kenilworth Corridor as the preferred route through Minneapolis. The DEIS was published on October 12th 2012, beginning the 60-day public comment period. Public testimony will be taken at public hearings held on November 13th, 2012 (4:30 PM - Hennepin County Government Center), November 14th, 2012 (6PM - St. Louis Park City Hall), and on November 29th, 2012 (6 PM - Eden Prairie City Hall).

Hennepin County is the responsible governmental unit for the DEIS work for this project. The Metropolitan Council is responsible for the preliminary engineering (PE) and construction phases for this project. The Metropolitan Council will also be responsible for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and for the Record of Decision (ROD). On September 2, 2011 the Federal Transit Administration authorized this project to enter the Preliminary

Engineering phase. This allows for surveying, soil testing, and engineering work to begin; resulting in signed plan sets being developed and bid specifications prepared. Once the PE process has been completed and local funding secured, the Federal Transit Administration will enter into a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) with the Metropolitan Council and construction will begin. The FFGA is projected to be executed in 2014 with construction taking place between 2014 and 2017.

The DEIS is organized into the following chapters:

- 1) Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action
- 2) Alternatives Considered
- 3) Social Effects
- 4) Environmental Effects
- 5) Economic Effects
- 6) Transportation Effects
- 7) Draft Section (4F) Evaluation
- 8) Financial Analysis
- 9) Indirect Effects and Cumulative Impacts
- 10) Environmental Justice
- 11) Evaluation of Alternatives
- 12) Public Agency Coordination and Comments

Technical appendices A-J supplement the 12 chapters above.

For simplicity, CPED and Public Works have organized comments by major topic. The key comments CPED and Public Works have made on this document include:

- 1) The co-location alternative presented in the DEIS is an unacceptable alternative. Co-location of freight, light rail, and a trail requires considerably more right-of-way than what is available. The City of Minneapolis strongly opposes the taking of any homes along this corridor or the elimination of Burnham Road to allow for the co-location alternative.
- 2) The City of Minneapolis is opposed to the placement of the Operations and Maintenance within the City of Minneapolis.
- 3) All five (5) stations proposed for Minneapolis must be constructed to provide access to both North Minneapolis and to South Minneapolis. Constructing all five (5) stations helps to provide economic benefits to low income and minority residents. Stations must also be constructed in a manner that serves all modes. Vertical circulation at the Van White, Lake Street, and Penn Stations is required as part of the project scope in addition to sidewalk network connections.
- 4) Both the Kenilworth Trail and Cedar Lake Trail need to be replaced as required to standards (trail width, trail thickness, wayfinding, etc.) defined in AASHTO Guidelines, MnDOT Guidelines, and Minneapolis Bicycle Design Guidelines with minimal interruption to trail use during construction.
- 5) The comments provided present technical concerns regarding grade separation at Cedar Lake Road.
- 6) A tunnel at 7th Street will not work with the Interchange Project elevations. Other options must be considered.
- 7) Require that local stormwater policies be adhered to.
- 8) The City does not support park-and-ride facilities in urban areas.
- 9) Traction power substations must be appropriately placed and the visual impact mitigated.
- 10) Utilities and street infrastructure disrupted as part of the project must be replaced at the project's expense.
- 11) Noise and vibration concerns raised by citizens must be mitigated.
- 12) Require that the system use priority signalization and not pre-emption at signalized crossings.
- 13) The City of Minneapolis supports efforts to minimize project impacts on identified historical or cultural resources.

- 14) Station placement at West Lake Street must allow for a future streetcar connection to the Midtown Greenway Corridor.
- 15) Public art must be integrated into station design.
- 16) Mitigation of any road closures or private driveways near the Royalston Station is required.

A final EIS will be prepared that will address impacts at a higher level of detail and will identify mitigation activities. By statute, a municipal consent process will be used to establish the final project scope at 30% completed engineering plans. It is expected that the municipal consent process will take place in mid to late 2014.

Recommended Action

Approve the DEIS comments for the Southwest Corridor LRT Project and direct CPED and the Public Works Department to submit the attached comments to Hennepin County.

Attachment 1 – SW Corridor Map

Attachment 2 – DEIS Comments

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