Agency Coordination Plan
for the
Southwest LRT Project (METRO Green Line Extension)

Supplemental Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements

Cities of Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie, Minnesota

CH2M HILL, Inc.—Project No. 474576

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Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
Council	Metropolitan Council
CPIP	Community and Public Involvement Plan
DEIS	draft environmental impact statement
FEIS	final environmental impact statement
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
HCRRA	Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority
IRT	Issue Resolution Team
LEDPA	Least Environmentally Damaging Proposed Alternative
LPA	Locally Preferred Alternative
LRT	light rail transit
MAP-21	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21stst Century
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
OMF	operations and maintenance facility
PIP	public involvement plan
SDEIS	supplemental draft environmental impact statement
SPO	Southwest Project Office
TEP	Technical Evaluation Panel (Wetland)
TPAC	Technical Project Advisory Committee
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers

1 Overview

1.1 Purpose of Updated Agency Coordination Plan

The Southwest LRT Agency Coordination Plan helps guide the project's agency coordination efforts and summarizes the structure for coordination between the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Metropolitan Council (Council), participating agencies, cooperating agencies, and the public. This Agency Coordination Plan presents roles and responsibilities of the lead and participating agencies and the opportunities for participation at several steps in the EIS process, including the following:

- Publication of the Notice of Intent and scoping activities
- Development of purpose and need
- Identification of the range of alternatives
- Collaboration on methodologies
- Identification of the preferred alternative and the level of design detail
- Completion of the Draft EIS, Supplemental Draft EIS, and Final EIS

The Plan was developed based on the requirements of Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) Environmental Review Program. MAP-21 mandates that lead agencies develop a coordination plan addressing how coordination and communication with agencies and the public will occur throughout the NEPA process.

Local lead agency authority transitioned from the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA), which was the project's local lead agency for the environmental process through the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), to the Council in January 2013 upon the completion of the Draft EIS public comment period. The original plan had updated the *Coordination Plan for the Preparation of the Southwest Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (HCRRA, 2008), which was developed in conjunction with the *Southwest Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (HCRRA, 2012). This plan was updated by the Council in 2014 to reflect agency and municipal coordination procedures underway during project development subsequent to the Draft EIS process.

1.2 Project Background

Mobility issues and high-capacity transit improvements in the Southwest corridor extending southwest from downtown Minneapolis have been evaluated by the Council and HCRRA since the mid-1980s. In 2005, building on prior planning efforts, HCRRA initiated the Southwest Transitway Alternatives Analysis (AA) process, which compared the benefits, costs, and impacts of a range of transit alternatives (modes and routes) to identify which alternative(s) would best meet the needs of the communities as expressed in the AA's Purpose and Need Statement. Section 2.1.1 of the Draft EIS provides a description of the alternatives that were developed, the results of the analysis, and the alternatives that were dismissed and carried forward for further study. The range of alternatives considered included enhanced bus, bus rapid transit, and light rail, including a range of potential alignments for bus rapid transit and light rail.

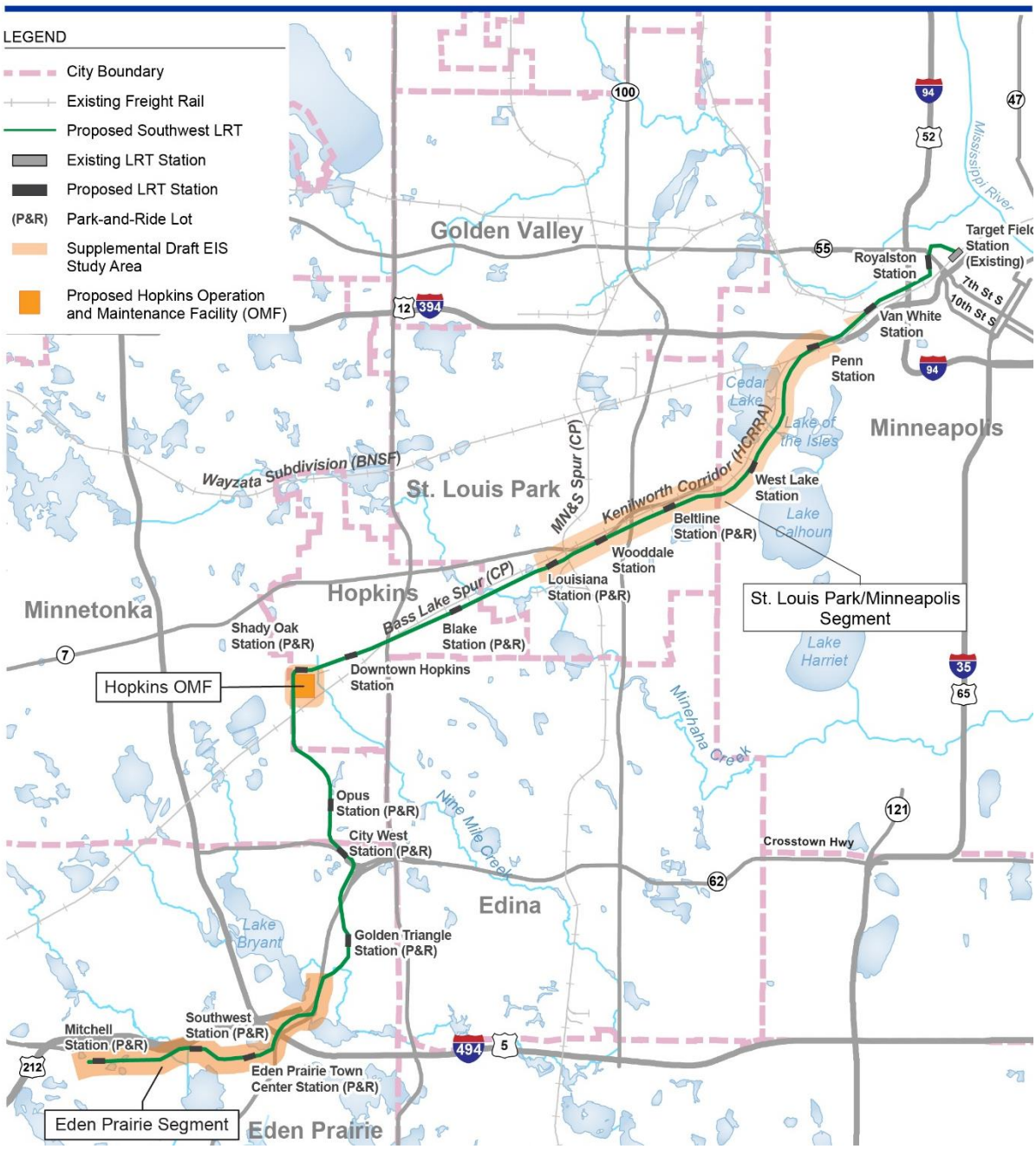
The results of the AA laid the foundation for the project's development and evaluation of alternatives under NEPA, which was initiated in September 2008 when FTA and HCRRA issued their notice of intent to publish an EIS for the Southwest Transitway Project. The project's scoping process began with FTA and HCRRA's proposal to study the alternatives resulting from the AA within a federal and state EIS. During the scoping process, HCRRA solicited public and agency comments on the range of alternatives to be studied in the EIS. As a result of comments received and additional design development and analysis, HCRRA and FTA modified the range of alternatives to be studied further in the project's Draft EIS.

In May 2010, the project's AA process was completed with the identification of the project's LPA and incorporation of the LPA into the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan by the Council. LRT 3A was identified as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) based on the AA's assessment of four evaluation categories: planning

compatibility; performance; implementation factors; and critical environmental resources. In summary, the HCRRA and Council found that LRT 3A would best meet the AA's Purpose and Need Statement, as expressed by the goals of improving mobility, providing a cost-effective and efficient travel option, preserving the environment, protecting quality of life and supporting economic development.

After the close of the Draft EIS public comment period, the Council became the lead agency for the remainder of the project's environmental process. On July 22, 2013, the Council issued a Notice of Intent to complete a Supplemental Draft EIS in the *Federal Register* (FTA, 2013). On the same day, the Notice of Supplemental Draft EIS Preparation was issued in the *EQB Monitor* (Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, 2013). The Notice was published in the *Star Tribune* on July 24, 2013. The purpose of this Supplemental Draft EIS was to develop and evaluate potential adjustments to the LPA. The range of adjustments considered and the measures used by the Council to evaluate them are described in Section 2.5 of the Supplemental Draft EIS. The project's LPA was incorporated within two of the seven alternatives evaluated in the Draft EIS, as described in Section 2.3 of the Supplemental Draft EIS (i.e., LRT 3A and LRT 3A-1), and shown on Exhibit 1.2-1 below.

EXHIBIT 1.2-1
Southwest LRT Project LPA: Proposed Light Rail-related Improvements and Supplemental Draft EIS Improvements



1.3 Light Rail Transit Alternatives Considered in the Draft EIS, Supplemental Draft EIS and Final EIS

1.3.1 Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)

The identified LPA is LRT constructed and operating on the Kenilworth-Opus-Golden Triangle alignment, referred to at the time of the Draft EIS as Alternative LRT 3A.[1] After identification of the LPA, the FTA

[1] The Supplemental Draft EIS clarified that the project's LPA is included within both LRT 3A and LRT 3A-1. That is, in the Draft EIS, the LPA's transit improvements are coupled with the proposed relocation of TC&W freight trains currently operating along the Bass Lake Spur and the Cedar Lake Junction (locally referred to as the Kenilworth Corridor) to the MN&S Spur and Wayzata Subdivision to form LRT 3A; and the LPA's transit improvements are coupled with the continued operations of TC&W freight trains currently operating along the Bass Lake Spur and Kenilworth Corridor to form LRT 3A-1. While the Draft

determined that the project's Draft EIS should address whether: (1) Twin Cities and Western Railway Company (TC&W) freight trains currently operating along the Canadian Pacific's (CP) Bass Lake Spur (Bass Lake Spur)and the HCRRA's Cedar Lake Junction (locally referred to as the Kenilworth Corridor) should be relocated to the CP Minneapolis, Northfield, and Southern Railway (MN&S) Spur and BNSF Wayzata Subdivision (Wayzata Subdivision); or (2) the TC&W freight trains should continue to operate along the Bass Lake Spur and Kenilworth Corridor, referred to in the Draft EIS as "relocation" and "co-location," respectively. Section 2.3 of the Supplemental Draft EIS describes how the LRT alternatives and freight rail modifications were addressed in the Draft EIS.

The Draft EIS was published on October 12, 2012, and the public comment period concluded on December 31, 2012. At the end of the public comment period, the Council implemented a process of developing and evaluating adjustments to the LPA, including incorporation of associated freight rail modifications, based on public and agency comments received on the Draft EIS. The project team solicited feedback from the public, businesses, cities, Hennepin County, the state, and others during a series of public and advisory committee meetings and developed recommended adjustments to the LPA. The project's Corridor Management Committee (CMC) considered the recommendations, analysis, and public comments and on April 2, 2014, passed a resolution on the project's scope and budget that was forwarded to the Council. The Council acted to adopt the project's scope, including adjustments to the LPA since publication of the Draft EIS on April 9, 2014, and July 9, 2014, after considering recommendations and comments from the CMC, Community Advisory Committee (CAC), and Business Advisory Committee (BAC), the project team's technical analysis, and public testimony.

Adjustments to the design of the LPA made by the Council after publication of the Draft EIS—where the adjustments could result in new significant impacts not addressed in the Draft EIS—are the subject of the Supplemental Draft EIS.

1.3.2 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative includes all roadway and transit facility and service improvements (other than the proposed project) planned, programmed, and included in the *Financially Constrained 2030 Regional Transportation Policy Plan* (Council, 2010, amended 2013). It includes minor transit service expansions and/or adjustments that reflect a continuation of existing service policies as identified by the Council. The No-Build Alternative serves as the NEPA baseline against which the potentially significant environmental benefits and impacts of other proposed alternatives, including the proposed project, will be measured.

1.4 Coordination since the Draft EIS

The project has an extensive history of outreach and collaboration with the affected public throughout the corridor. The "affected public," as stated in Section 12.1 of the Draft EIS, includes not only the community members residing in the project corridor, but individuals, businesses, groups, clubs, civic organizations, and others interested in the project as well. Beginning with HCRRA, which was the project's local lead agency for the environmental process through the Draft EIS, followed by the Council, which became the local lead agency for the environmental process upon completion of the Draft EIS public comment period, the project's commitment to public involvement and agency coordination has been integral to providing for early and continuing involvement during the planning and project development processes.

The project's committee structure, outreach activities, and agency coordination efforts continue to evolve as project development activities progress. The project's public and agency plans and activities have been developed and implemented in compliance with MAP-21; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, FTA Circular, *FTA C 4702.1B, Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients*, effective October 1, 2012 (Title VI Requirements and Guidelines Circular); and EO 12898, *Federal Actions to*

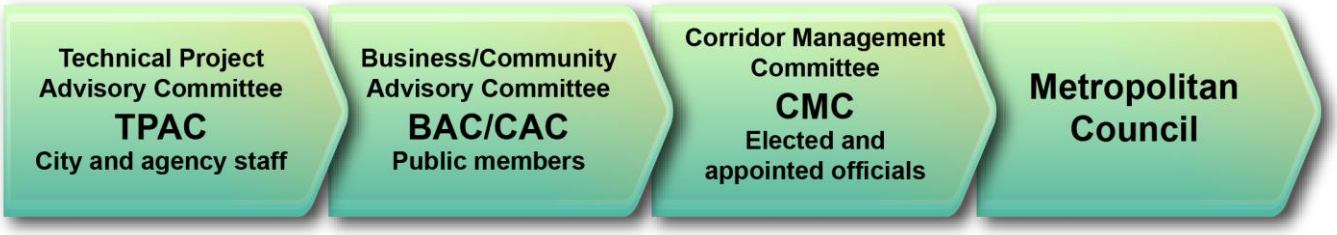
EIS notes that LRT 3A-1 is identical to LRT 3A in the transit service it would provide (see page ES-23 and Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS), it only identifies LRT 3A as the LPA (see pages 2-31 and 2-41 of the Draft EIS for examples). Because the LPA is a subset of both LRT 3A and LRT 3A-1 of the Draft EIS, they should both be considered as the LPA, with differing associated freight rail modifications.

Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (Clinton, 1994), including the USDOT *Final Environmental Justice Order (Order 5610.2(a): Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*), updated May 2, 2012; and the FTA Circular, *FTA C 4703.1*, *Environmental Justice Policy Guidance for Federal Transit Administration Recipients*, effective August 15, 2012 (Environmental Justice Circular [FTA, 2012a]).

2 Advisory Committees

The project's advisory committee structure remains consistent since publication of the Draft EIS, with the exception of the addition of the Technical Project Advisory Committee (TPAC) implemented during the Project Development phase. Exhibit 2.1-1illustrates the key steps in the process used by the Council since publication of the Draft EIS.

EXHIBIT 2.1-1
Southwest LRT Project Advisory Committee Input to Decision Process



Committee and Council meeting schedules, agendas, presentations, and minutes are posted on the Council's Southwest LRT Project website (www.swlrt.org). BAC, CAC, CMC and Council meetings are open to the public. The advisory committees include the following:

- **Technical Project Advisory Committee (TPAC).** The TPAC was established by the Southwest LRT Project Office (SPO) to provide technical input on project-related design, engineering, construction and operation. The TPAC includes senior level staff, as well as engineering and planning staff from SPO, Metro Transit Rail Operations, city and county staff, MnDOT, and Three Rivers Park District. The TPAC also advises on the communication of technical issues with other committees; supports integration of design work with community land use and development goals and objectives; and identifies issues to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts of the project. Membership includes staff from the TPAC first met in February 2013 after Project Development activities began in earnest and is chaired by the Southwest LRT Project Director.
- **Community Advisory Committee (CAC).** The CAC was formed in January 2007. The CAC serves as a primary avenue for public and community involvement, advising the Corridor Management Committee (see below) and providing feedback to Council staff on issues related to environmental documents, design, engineering, and construction of the Southwest LRT Project. The CAC advises on station location and design, feeder bus service, public art, traffic and parking, station/pedestrian access, and construction mitigation and impacts on corridor communities. The CAC also provides feedback to Hennepin County Community Works initiatives on land use and development issues in the corridor. The CAC represents a variety of interests and issues, including neighborhood and community groups; underrepresented populations, including 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. The CAC generally meets on a monthly basis and holds a joint meeting with the BAC (described below) at least twice a year. Council staff manages and supports the work of the CAC with assistance and input from Hennepin County staff. Agendas, presentations, and meeting minutes for CAC meetings are posted on the Council's Southwest LRT Project website (www.swlrt.org). A representative of the CAC serves on the CMC and is a voting member.
- **Business Advisory Committee (BAC).** The BAC, formed in August 2012 by the Council and HCRRA, advises the CMC on project design and construction from a specific business perspective and serves as an information resource to the business community. The BAC also provides input on station area vision and character from a business point of view, addressing the needs of employees, customers, deliveries, and other aspects relevant to business retention and expansion. This committee represents a diversity of business establishments along the corridor, including small entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce and

business organizations, corporate headquarters, nonprofit organizations, developers, and land owners. The BAC generally meets on a monthly basis and holds a joint meeting with the CAC at least twice a year. Council staff manages and supports the work of the BAC with assistance and input from Hennepin County staff. Agendas, presentations, and meeting minutes for BAC meetings are posted on the Council's Southwest LRT Project website (www.swlrt.org). A representative of the BAC serves on the CMC and is a voting member.

- **Corridor Management Committee (CMC).** The CMC was established in December 2010 to provide advice to the Council on the Southwest LRT Project design and construction, as mandated by Minnesota Statutes 473.3994. The CMC advises the Council on issues relating to the environmental review, preliminary through final design and engineering, implementation method, and construction of the Southwest LRT. The committee comprises representatives from the Council; HCRRA; the Cities of Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, Eden Prairie, and Edina; Metro Transit; MnDOT; Minnesota Department of Management and Budget; the CAC and BAC; and the Counties Transit Improvement Board. The CMC is chaired by the Chair of the Council and generally meets monthly, or more often as needed. CMC recommendations are transmitted to the Council. Agendas, presentations, and meeting minutes for CMC meetings are posted on the Council's Southwest LRT Project website (www.swlrt.org).
- **Metropolitan Council**. The Southwest LRT project receives input from the Council's Transportation Committee, which focuses on regional transportation issues specifically concerning transportation policy and planning and transit operations. This Committee is composed of Council Members and meets on the 2nd and 4th Monday's of each month. The full Council meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday's of each month on a broad range of topics impacting communities, parks, transportation, wastewater and water, housing, and planning. These meetings are public and agendas, presentations, and meeting minutes are posted on the Council's website (www.metrocouncil.org).

In addition to the above advisory structure, the Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee was established in 2009 by Hennepin County to focus on public investment and community benefits in the Southwest LRT Project area. The Steering Committee meets monthly and includes members from the cities of Eden Prairie, Edina, Hopkins, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, and St. Louis Park; Hennepin County Board of Commissioners; HCRRA; the Council; Minnehaha Creek Watershed District; Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board; SouthWest Transit Board; and Minnesota Urban Land Institute. Additional information regarding the Community Works program is available at Hennepin County's Southwest Corridor website (www.southwesttransitway.org/).

3 Agency Coordination

This section provides a description of the project's participating agencies and the Council's agency coordination efforts that are supporting development of the Southwest LRT Project.

3.1 Lead Agencies

The lead agencies must perform the functions in preparing an EIS in accordance with 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 771 and 40 CFR Parts 1500–1508. In addition, the lead agencies must identify and involve participating agencies; develop coordination plans; provide opportunities for public and participating agency involvement in defining the purpose and need and determining the range of alternatives; and collaborate with participating agencies in determining methodologies and the level of detail for the analysis of the alternatives. Lead agencies also must provide increased oversight in managing the process and resolving issues. This project has two lead agencies: the FTA and Council.

3.1.1 Federal Transit Administration

FTA is the lead federal lead agency. FTA's responsibilities include the following:

- Prepare an EIS in accordance with NEPA, MAP-21, and applicable federal law.
- Provide oversight in managing the process and resolving issues.
- Facilitate the timely and adequate delivery of the environmental review process.
- Be responsible for the content of the EIS, furnish guidance, independently evaluate and approve documents, and verify that project sponsors comply with mitigation commitments.
- In consultation with the local lead agency and after consideration of input from the public and participating agencies, make the decision regarding the purpose and need used in the NEPA evaluation and range of alternatives to be evaluated in the NEPA document.
- Identify the LPA.

3.1.2 Metropolitan Council

The Council is the project sponsor and local lead agency for the NEPA process, as well as the lead for the process under the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act. The Council's responsibilities include the following:

- Refine the definition and analysis of the alternatives that were deemed feasible and recommended by the Draft EIS.
- Prepare an environmental document that assesses the impacts of the alternatives.
- Identify means and methods to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts.
- Identify and involve participating agencies.
- Develop coordination plans.
- Provide information that will serve as a basis for public and participating agency input on key decisions that will be made by FTA and the Council.
- Provide opportunities for public and participating agency involvement in defining the purpose and need.
- Collaborate with participating agencies in determining methodologies and the level of detail for the analysis of alternatives.

3.2 Cooperating and Participating Agencies

3.2.1 Cooperating Agencies

Cooperating agencies are those governmental agencies with jurisdiction by law or special expertise that have been specifically requested by the lead agency to be involved in the environmental documentation efforts per CFR 1508.5 Cooperating Agency. Under the Section 6002 guideline (SAFETEA-LU Sec 6002, *Efficient Environmental Rules for Project Decisionmaking*, Subsection 139(d) Cooperating Agency), a cooperating agency is included as a participating agency, but not all participating agencies are NEPA cooperating agencies. The cooperating agency for the Supplemental Draft EIS is the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

The USACE is responsible for implementing NEPA and related laws and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The Southwest LRT Project is proceeding under the NEPA/Section 404 merger process, which includes the USACE's determination of the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA).

Roles and responsibilities of the USACE include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Participating in the NEPA process starting at the earliest possible time, especially with regard to the development of the purpose and need statement, range of alternatives, and methodologies.
- Identifying, as early as practicable, issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts. Cooperating agencies are also allowed to participate in the issue resolution process.
- Providing meaningful and timely input on unresolved issues.
- Reviewing and providing comment on the Supplemental Draft EIS, Final EIS, and the proposed preferred alternative.
- Issue a Clean Water Action Section 404 Permit.

3.2.2 Participating Agencies

A participating agency, as defined in the MAP-21 1305(c) guidance, is a federal, state, tribal, or local government agency that has an interest in the project and has agreed to participate in the scoping and NEPA processes. Participating agencies provide input, identify project concerns, and partake in issue resolution processes to further the project within the NEPA framework. The project's federal and local lead agencies and federal cooperating agencies under NEPA are included as participating agencies. The agencies listed in the following subsections have accepted invitations to participate. Invitations were originally issued by HCRRA in conjunction with the Draft EIS process.

3.2.2.1 Federal Agencies

- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
- United States Army Corps of Engineers
- United States Department of Agriculture
- United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
- United States Department of Interior
- United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration
- United States Environmental Protection Agency
- United States Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration
- United States Federal Emergency Management Agency
- United States Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- United States Department of Homeland Security
- Surface Transportation Board

3.2.2.2 State Agencies

- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Minnesota Environmental Quality Board
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Indian Affairs Council
- Board of Water and Soil Resources
- Office of the State Archaeologist
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Minnesota Department of Commerce
- State Historic Preservation Office
- Minnesota Historical Society

3.2.2.3 Regional Authorities

- Three Rivers Park District
- Minnehaha Creek Watershed District
- Nine-Mile Creek Watershed District
- Mississippi Watershed Management Organization

3.2.2.4 County Agencies

- Hennepin County
- Hennepin County Research, Planning and Development
- Hennepin Conservation District

3.2.2.5 Local Government Agencies/Municipalities

- City of Eden Prairie
- City of Edina
- City of Hopkins
- City of Minneapolis
- City of Minnetonka
- City of St. Louis Park
- Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

3.3 Agency Coordination since Publication of the Draft EIS

This section provides an overview of the Council's agency coordination efforts since publication of the Draft EIS that supported the Council's efforts to develop and evaluate design adjustments to the LPA and that supported preparation of this Supplemental Draft EIS. These efforts were also supported by and implemented in coordination with the committee and public involvement activities described in Section 4.3 and 4.4 of the Supplemental Draft EIS, respectively. Agency coordination during the project's AA and Draft EIS phases is documented in Section 12.2 of the Draft EIS. Key elements of the project's agency coordination efforts since publication of the Draft EIS included the following:

- **Technical Issue.** Following publication of the Draft EIS, the Council implemented a process to help identify and evaluated design adjustments to the LPA. The design adjustment process was organized around 25 technical issues, illustrated on Exhibit 2.4-1 of the Supplemental Draft EIS. Each issue was addressed in detail by the project team, working closely with state and local jurisdictions and with representatives of affected railroads (for technical issue 21). See Sections 2.3 and 2.4 of the Supplemental Draft EIS for additional information on the technical issues process and how it was implemented.
- **Clean Water Act Section 404 Coordination.** The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) issued a preliminary jurisdictional determination in 2009 that stated that there may be waters and/or wetlands subject to USACE oversight. Based on information provided during Project Development, the USACE

issued a determination of the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA) in 2014. For Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 purposes, the LEDPA is the alternative that meets the project purpose, is available to the project, and has the least amount of impact to aquatic resources. Using a NEPA/404 merger process developed since publication of the Draft EIS, FTA, the Council, and the USACE—which is a federal Cooperating Agency on the project's Supplemental Draft EIS—have been coordinating on activities that will support the project's CWA Section 404 wetland permit process.

- **Technical Evaluation Panel.** As prescribed under the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act of 1991, a Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) was established in July 2013 to institute coordination procedures as wetlands are delineated throughout the corridor, wetlands qualities are assessed, and mitigation options are considered. Chaired by the Assistant Director of Environmental and Agreements, the project's TEP has members representing the USACE, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, MDNR, MnDOT, Hennepin County, City of Eden Prairie, City of Minneapolis, City of Minnetonka, City of St. Louis Park, Bassett Creek Watershed District, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, Nine Mile Creek Watershed District, and Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District. Prior to publication of this Supplemental Draft EIS, the TEP first met on July 2, 2013, and generally meets on a monthly basis. The meetings are anticipated to continue through preparation and approval of the project's wetland permits. Chapter 3 of the Supplemental Draft EIS identifies specific coordination activities with local governmental units responsible for local wetland permitting.
- **Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act Coordination.** The Draft EIS identified tasks and coordination efforts occurring as part of the Section 106 process. Tasks described in the Draft EIS included identifying buildings, structures, and known archaeological sites within the project Area of Potential Effect (APE) to determine whether a Section 106 Agreement (documenting the terms and conditions agreed upon to resolve adverse effects related to historic properties) would need to be developed among the FTA, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Minnesota SHPO, HCRRA, the Council, and other interested parties during the Final EIS process. Section 106 coordination is documented in Section 12.2.2 of the Draft EIS and has been ongoing since publication of the Draft EIS. Chapter 3 of the Supplemental Draft EIS documents the evaluation of Section 106 resources and related coordination activities between the Council, FTA, the MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit, and the Minnesota SHPO.
- **Tribal Coordination.** In September and November 2009 and February 2010, the FTA sent letters to potentially affected Indian tribes, requesting that they identify any concerns about potential project impacts. The letters were sent to the Prairie Island Indian Community, Lower Sioux Indian Community Council, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Fort Peck Tribes, Santee Sioux Nation, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate (Tribal Historic Preservation Office), and the Upper Sioux Indian Community. Additionally, a meeting opportunity was offered to tribal representatives in 2010; none of the representatives expressed an interest in meeting at that time. Section 12.2.3 of the Draft EIS documents tribal coordination.
- **Communication Steering Committee.** The Communications Steering Committee establishes, reviews, implements, and updates the CPIP to maintain a coordinated communication and public involvement effort for the Southwest LRT Project. The Steering Committee includes communication and public affairs staff from the Council, Metro Transit, MnDOT, Hennepin County, and the corridor cities and is chaired by the Southwest LRT Assistant Director of Administration/Communication/Public Involvement.

4 Public Involvement

Ongoing engagement and communication with the affected public has been a fundamental element of the Southwest LRT Project since it was initiated. Maintaining an open dialogue and offering opportunities for input and discussion – especially related to the identified technical issues and items of concern to the affect public – will continue to be a key component throughout the implementation of the Southwest LRT Project.

4.1 Background

Chapter III of FTA's Environmental Justice Circular contains recommended strategies and techniques for ensuring that environmental justice populations have a voice in the decision-making process and describes nontraditional outreach strategies and practical suggestions that may result in greater participation by environmental justice populations. The project implemented these recommendations by conducting a strategic planning process and developing a *Communications and Public Involvement Plan* (CPIP) ([Council, 2014b]) that includes a demographic analysis of the corridor (ethnicity, languages spoken and income level). The CPIP identifies the following outreach strategies for engaging ethnic and low income populations:

- Providing translators at events and translating materials in languages other than English.
- Inviting community representatives to join the CAC.
- Proactively seeking opportunities to engage communities in dialogue about the project.
- Establishing and maintaining connections between SPO outreach staff and community representatives.
- Reviewing efforts regularly to ensure effectiveness.

In addition to traditional communication strategies, the project established community and business advisory committees and hired outreach staff to attend neighborhood meetings, staff tables at community events, and meet with people one to one or in small groups. The CPIP provides a summary of the outreach plans to select an OMF site and to accommodate and engage individuals with limited English proficiency.

Public involvement efforts have continued and evolved as local lead agency responsibility shifted from HCRRA to the Council in January 2013. Since assuming responsibility as the local lead agency for the environmental process, the Council has worked with local public transportation agencies and local jurisdictions to implement a public involvement program in support of its effort to continue design and engineering for the LPA. That effort spanned from January 2013 through January 2014, when the Council identified the project's scope, including adjustments to be incorporated into the LPA since publication of the Draft EIS. The Council's action was based on: (1) its consideration of the technical evaluation of the range of potential design adjustments to the LPA; and (2) comments received from the public, agencies, jurisdictions, and committees on the potential design adjustments during the project's public involvement and agency coordination activities since the close of the Draft EIS public comment period.

4.2 Communications and Public Involvement Plan (CPIP)

The Council drafted a CPIP that provides the structure for coordination between FTA, the Council, project partners, and the public during the project development process, including the preparation of this Supplemental Draft EIS to satisfy the requirements of NEPA and its implementing regulations. The CPIP supports the project's *Agency Coordination Plan*, as, updated by the Council. The CPIP also provides for compliance with the EQB Environmental Review Program, pursuant to MEPA and Minnesota Statutes, Section 116D.04. Agency review and approval under Minnesota's Municipal Consent Process (Minnesota Statutes 473.3993 and 473.3994) was also incorporated into the project CPIP.

The goals of the CPIP are 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.

- 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.
- Promote public involvement by providing opportunities for public participation and dialogue between the Council and the public.
- Maintain ongoing communication with project partners and ensure that key messages are consistent, clear, and responsive to changing needs.
- Inform elected officials and funding partners about the project's status, timing, and needs.
- Encourage meaningful public participation in the project.
- Avoid schedule delays and cost increases due to misunderstanding of project objectives or opposition to project activities.

The CPIP identifies strategies for engaging the community and engaging the public input during the decision-making process, including project technical issues developed during Project Development. Section 6.1 of the CPIP identifies the process to identify strategies for involving the public in project technical issue resolution. This process is based on the level of public interest and type of input required. Considerations for involving the public include the mechanism by which the public provides input and how public input would be used in decision-making. The following subsections describe the project team's organizational structure and the project's advisory committees as documented in the CPIP.

4.3 Outreach and Communications Team

Project staff dedicated to communications and outreach includes the Assistant Director for Administration, Public Involvement, and Communications; Communications Manager; Public Involvement Manager; Communications Specialist; three Community Outreach Coordinators; and a technical writer. The efforts of the communications and public outreach staff are guided by the CPIP. The staff works closely with stakeholders, including several established stakeholder groups to enhance continuous engagement with the public to serve as a part of the overall decision-making process.

In addition to hosting public open houses and other events, SPO team members will attend and present at community meetings throughout the Southwest LRT project area. Attending such meetings will allow groups that may have specific concerns or questions to interact with staff and to provide feedback in a more personal, less formal setting. Any concerns expressed at these meetings will be shared with the appropriate SPO team members.

SPO staff will also reach out to individual businesses, residential complexes, and industry-related organizations and met with individual owners and small residential or business area groups to provide project information.

4.4 Public Outreach and Events

Since taking responsibility for the Southwest LRT Project, Council staff have hosted public events in locations throughout the Southwest LRT corridor to provide the public with the opportunity to provide input on project design efforts and receive updates and information about project activities. Public events are tailored to present information and solicit feedback on specific project aspects and offer an opportunity for the public to provide feedback on various features of the project and make connections with project staff. Project ideas and requests provided by the affected public were documented and considered in project design. Public events are typically conducted in an open house format and are publicized on the project website and through press releases and email alerts. Advisory committee members also aid in promoting the public events in their communities. Public events are accessible to those with disabilities in accordance with the ADA. Translation services and ADA accommodations are provided upon request. SPO selects meeting locations based on ease of access to the location and meeting room, and proximity to potentially affected areas.

4.4.1 Supplemental Draft EIS Agency and Public Coordination

The Council reformulated the agency and public participation process during Project Development to better address engineering refinements to the preferred alternative. Twenty-five technical issues were identified with issue resolution teams (IRTs), including corridor city staff, which were established to coordinate with SPO in addressing each technical issue. IRTs generally met weekly for the cities of Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, and Minneapolis for freight rail issues, OMFs, and trails. In addition, SPO maintains a Technical Project Advisory Committee, Corridor Management Committee, Community Advisory Committee, and a Business Advisory Committee. HCRRA separately staffs a Transactional Station Area Advisory Committee, which coordinates with SPO. Minnesota's Municipal Consent requirements also provide each municipality affected by a public transportation project to accept or refuse the project's planned design.

The project database and the CPIP have been refined and will continue to be updated, as needed, to incorporate public input. Notice of scheduled project meetings will continue to be published in local papers and community news letters in the project area. A project website is established and will continue to be updated regularly to provide the most current information. The website address is: http://metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Projects/Current-Projects/Southwest-LRT.aspx. Interested residents may also provide contact information to receive project updates or to ask questions.

Opportunities for agency interaction and input will continue to occur at important milestones throughout the study process as follows:

- Scope of Supplemental Draft EIS
- Evaluation and screening methodology
- Conceptual engineering design of adjustments to LRT 3A and 3A-1
- Preparation of the Supplemental Draft EIS and Final EIS
- Identification of final adjustments to the LPA

4.5 Other Project Communication Strategies

The Southwest LRT Project will conduct a wide variety of other project activities used to help implement the Council's public involvement program in support of the effort to identify and evaluate potential adjustments to the LPA.

4.5.1 Project Website

The Council's Southwest LRT Project website serves as a communications forum and resource to the public, allowing stakeholders to keep informed about project history, current activities and data, and upcoming milestones. The project website, which is part of the Council website and is available at www.swlrt.org, provides information on the EIS process, and offers downloads of environmental documents, including the Scoping Summary, Draft EIS, and public comments submitted on the Draft EIS. Information posted on the project website includes:

- Current project status information and timeline
- Project facts and frequently asked questions
- LPA route information
- Information about the proposed stations
- Public meeting announcements and presentations
- Environmental process information
- Links to project partners
- CAC, BAC, and CMC information and meeting documents
- Contact information, including community outreach coordinators and SPO information

- Current Southwest LRT Project announcements and newsletters
- Project funding information
- Project documents, including public and committee meeting documents, environmental documents (Draft EIS), and other reports
- Route visualization video

4.5.2 E-list

Early during Project Development, the Council established a project "e-list," which was used to send out newsletters, press releases, and meeting information. The ability to sign up for email updates was made available at public meetings held by the project and on the project website. The list currently has more than 1,000 subscribers.

4.5.3 Social Media

The Southwest LRT Project has used Twitter to provide project updates, including new website information, press releases, upcoming public meetings, project visualizations, project newsletters, and other project-related material. Council will continue to use its Twitter account to share selected Southwest LRT project information.

4.5.4 Newsletters

The Council published and printed six editions of the Southwest LRT Project newsletter, called *Extending Tracks,* during preparation of this Supplemental Draft EIS. The newsletter was produced in March, May-June, July, and December of 2013 and April and during the summer of 2014, and provided an additional resource to the public for the latest Southwest LRT Project news and announcements. The newsletter was distributed by mail throughout the project area, provided to project advisory and management committees, and posted to the Southwest LRT Project website.

4.5.5 Other Outreach Efforts

A variety of other project communication activities are available to outreach staff to use as needed. This includes door-to-door outreach, including distributing fliers for upcoming meetings or notifying property owners about right of entry required for field work. Targeted mailings are also used to notify stakeholders of upcoming meetings and notifications of field work. Corridor wide mailings are also used to announce activities and decisions that affect the entire project area.

Additionally, a variety of project specific print material has been developed for this project, including a project brochure and fact sheets (e.g., relating to noise and vibration), frequently asked questions, and the Field Guide to LRT Elements. These materials are provided at project meetings and open houses.

4.5.6 Media

Southwest LRT communication staff frequently coordinates with nearly 100 local reporters who represent print, electronic, and television network media. News sources include city and neighborhood newspapers and minority and ethnic media sources. Project coordination with media includes media tours and issuing press releases regarding upcoming project events, such as open houses and significant project milestones.

4.5.7 Corridors of Opportunity/Partnership for Regional Opportunity

The Council works with and through an enterprise called Corridors of Opportunity, which ran from 2011 through the end of 2013. This enterprise promoted a Twin Cities regional transit system working in tangent with economic development and inclusive benefits for stakeholders. The Southwest LRT Corridor is one of seven corridors that Corridors of Opportunity worked with. Work done by the Corridors of Opportunity included outreach and engagement within project communities and for stakeholders boosting social and economic development that would have far-reaching public benefits for all groups, including underrepresented populations.

The Corridors of Opportunity's Community Engagement Team (CET) identified and promoted existing community assets along the Southwest Corridor and ensured that communities located within the project area were involved in the planning process. "The CET recommends grants to community groups that support innovative and effective place-based initiatives that engage and involve underrepresented communities (low-income, communities of color, immigrant communities, persons with disabilities) in participation, decision-making and leadership roles related to Southwest corridor planning and implementation" (http://www.corridorsofopportunity.org/activities/engagement). A list of CET grant recipients within the Southwest Corridor and the project title for which the grant was provided is listed below in Table 1.4-1:

TABLE 4.4-1
Corridors of Opportunity Community Engagement Team Recommended Grantees and Projects by Year

Grantee	Project Title	Year
Intercongregation Communities Association	Blake Road Neighborhood Discussion Circles	2011
New American Academy	SW Corridor Immigrant Opportunities Outreach and Engagement	2011
La Asamblea de Derechos-Civiles	Emancipation Campaign: Corridors to Freedom	2012
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha (CTUL)	*Good* Job Opportunities in Corridor Development	2012
Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing (MICAH)	Interfaith Housing, Transit and Equitable Development Organizing	2012
New American Academy	N/A	2012

Source: http://www.corridorsofopportunity.org/activities/engagement.

The project team invited groups that have received CET grants to have a representative participate on the CAC. Additional information about Corridors of Opportunity's work in relation to Southwest LRT Project is available on the Corridors of Opportunity website (http://www.corridorsofopportunity.org/).

In late 2013, the Corridors of Opportunity was re-named The Partnership for Regional Opportunity (the Partnership). This name change is intended to reflect the group's region-wide focus, extending beyond transitways. The Partnership's Policy Board, which adopted this new vision for its work: *Growing a prosperous, equitable, and sustainable region*, agreed to meet for one additional year and will meet six times in 2014. The goals of the Partnership are to:

1. Improve the economic prospects of low-income people and low-wealth communities
2. Promote high quality development near existing assets (e.g. employment centers, transitways, and commercial and industrial corridors)
3. Advance a 21st century transportation system

Additional information about the Partnership is available here: http://www.corridorsofopportunity.org/Corridors_News/partnership-regional-opportunity-corridors-opportunity-lives-2014.

4.5.8 Southwest LRT Transitional Station Area Action Plans

The Hennepin County Southwest LRT Community Works staff partnered with Council staff on the TSAAP planning effort for Southwest LRT communities. The objectives of TSAAPs were to address infrastructure, planning, and development needs at station locations to encourage area growth and a foundation for the community when the Southwest LRT line opens. To create plans for prioritizing investment, TSAAP leaders reached out to the communities in the Southwest LRT corridor to generate ideas and input. A community engagement plan was developed for the TSAAP process which included outreach methods to involve public participation and create comprehensive community plans. Information about TSAAPs, including the final report, completed in late 2013, is posted on Hennepin County's Community Works website (http://www.southwesttransitway.org).

5 Issue Resolution

5.1 Process

Lead agencies, cooperating, and participating agencies will work cooperatively in accordance with the guidelines in this section to identify and resolve issues that could delay completion of the environmental review process or could result in denial of any approvals required for the project under applicable laws.

Based on information received from the lead agencies, participating agencies will identify, as early as practicable, any issues of concern regarding the project's potential environmental or socioeconomic impacts. Issues of concern include any issues that could substantially delay or prevent an agency from granting a permit or other approval that is needed for the project.

The following issue resolution process will be followed:

- Meetings will be held as needed primarily through established SPO procedures and protocols during the course of the NEPA process to discuss and resolve issues.
- If issues are not being resolved in a timely manner, the following will occur:
  - An official issue resolution meeting will be scheduled.
  - If resolution cannot be achieved within 30 days following such a meeting and a determination has been made by the FTA that all information necessary to resolve the issues has been obtained, then FTA will notify the heads of all participating agencies, the Council, the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives, and the Council of Environmental Quality that a resolution could not be reached.
  - FTA will publish such notice in the *Federal Register*.

6 Revision History

Table 5.0-1 iden*tifies changes t*o the coordination plan. The table will be active and filled out as progress occurs.

TABLE 5.0-1
Revision History

Version	Date	Name	Description
1	May 2014	SDEIS/FEIS	Updated by the Council to address the Supplemental Draft and Final EISs
2			
3			

7 References

Federal Highway Administration. November 2006. *SAFETEA-LU Environmental Review Process* (Public Law 109-59). Final Guidance.

Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA). 2007. *Southwest Transitway Alternatives Analysis Final Report*.

Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA). 2008. *Coordination Plan for the Southwest Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement.*

Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA). October 2012. *Southwest Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement*.

Metropolitan Council (Council). 2010; Amended May 2013. *2030 Financially Constrained Regional Transportation Policy Plan*.