



Guide to Commenting on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

Federal and state environmental rules require that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be prepared for the proposed Southwest Transitway project. The EIS process includes the preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which must be made available for public review and comment.

The DEIS discusses: (1) the purpose and need for the project; (2) the alternatives considered; (3) the impacts of these alternatives; and (4) the agencies and persons consulted.

Comments on the DEIS will be accepted through December 11, 2012. Comments on the DEIS may be submitted through email, mail, or in person at one of the public hearings that will be held specifically for that purpose. To learn more about ways to comment on the DEIS, see "How to Comment on the DEIS."

Public hearings on the DEIS will be held in November 2012. To learn more about the hearings, see "Public Hearings."

Obtaining a Copy of the DEIS

The DEIS and appendices are available from Hennepin County's Southwest Transitway website at: <http://www.southwesttransitway.org>.

Printed copies of the DEIS are available for public review at several locations:

Hennepin County Housing, Community Works & Transit

701 Fourth Avenue South, Suite 400, Minneapolis

Libraries

Eden Prairie: 565 Prairie Center Drive, Eden Prairie

Edina: 5280 Grandview Square, Edina

Franklin: 1314 East Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis

Hopkins: 22 Eleventh Avenue North, Hopkins

Linden Hills: 2900 West 43rd Street, Minneapolis

Minneapolis Central: 300 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis

Mnetonka: 17524 Excelsior Blvd., Minnetonka

Sumner: 611 Van White Memorial Blvd., Minneapolis

St. Louis Park: 3240 Library Lane, St. Louis Park

Southwest LRT Project Office

6465 Wayzata Blvd., Suite 500, St. Louis Park

City Halls

Eden Prairie: 8080 Mitchell Road, Eden Prairie

Edina: 4801 West 50th Street, Edina

Hopkins: 1010 First Street South, Hopkins

Minneapolis: 350 South Fifth Street, Minneapolis

Minnetonka: 14600 Minnetonka Blvd., Minnetonka

St. Louis Park: 5005 Minnetonka Blvd., St. Louis Park

To request DEIS documents in an alternative format, please contact the Hennepin County Housing, Community Works & Transit Department, 701 Fourth Avenue South, Suite 400 Minneapolis, MN 55415, tel: 612.348.9260, email: swcorridor@co.hennepin.mn.us.

About the Southwest Transitway

The Southwest Transitway is a proposed 15-mile light rail transit (LRT) line in the Minneapolis/St. Paul region, connecting downtown Minneapolis to major activity centers in Hennepin County, Minnesota, including the cities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Edina, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie. Depending on the alternative being evaluated, this action also includes either:

- The rerouting of existing Twin Cities & Western (TC&W) Railway freight rail service from the Canadian Pacific (CP) Railway's Bass Lake Spur and Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority's (HCRRA's) Cedar Lake (Kenilworth Corridor) to the Minneapolis Northfield & Southern (MN&S) Railway Subdivision and Burlington Northern Santa Fe's (BNSF's) Wayzata Subdivision; or
- The co-location of LRT and TC&W freight rail service on reconstructed freight rail tracks on the CP's Bass Lake Spur and HCRRA's Cedar Lake (Kenilworth Corridor).

A potential transitway in the southwest area of the Twin Cities has been studied by the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) and regional government since the mid-1980s. The Southwest Transitway is currently included in the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan, the region's long-range transportation plan; Hennepin County's long-range transportation plan; the Hennepin County Transportation System Plan (TSP); and the comprehensive and transportation plans of the local municipalities in the study area.

The Southwest Transitway is one of several transit corridors identified in the Metropolitan Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan as being in need of enhanced transit service. The Southwest Transitway study area continues to increase in population and employment with limited additional traffic capacity on existing streets and highways resulting in increased travel time, delays, and air pollution. Portions of the Southwest Transitway study area are already densely developed. New development and redevelopment occurring in the study area are expected to generate increases in travel demand.

About the DEIS

The primary purpose of the Draft EIS is to assist decision-makers in the assessment of impacts associated with the Southwest Transitway project. The DEIS serves as the primary document to facilitate review by federal, state, and local agencies and the general public of the proposed project. The Draft EIS documents the purpose and need for the project and presents a discussion of the alternatives considered. The document also addresses in detail the anticipated transportation and environmental impacts of the project and defines appropriate mitigation measures.

The DEIS documents potential impacts prior to any official federal action to implement the Southwest Transitway project. This Draft EIS discusses the environmental effects of several Build Alternatives taking into consideration input received from federal, state and local agencies and the general public. This Draft EIS will be circulated for review to interested parties, including private citizens, community groups, the business community, elected officials, and public agencies in accordance with federal and state requirements.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is the federal lead agency under NEPA, and the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) is the state lead agency under the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) for development of the DEIS. As of Sept 2, 2011 when the Southwest Transitway project was accepted into the federal New Starts program, the Metropolitan Council became the project sponsor and federal grantee.

How to Comment on the DEIS

Comments on the DEIS will be accepted through December 11, 2012. There are several ways to comment on the DEIS:

- **Speak in person at one of the public hearings.** Individuals will be allotted two minutes to speak; those representing groups will be allotted three minutes. Locations and times of public hearings are listed below.
- **Send written comments by email** to: swcorridor@co.hennepin.mn.us
- **Fill out a comment form**, available at www.southwesttransitway.org and at the public open houses and hearings.
- **Send written comments by mail** to:
Hennepin County
Housing, Community Works & Transit
ATTN: Southwest Transitway
701 Fourth Avenue South, Suite 400
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Following the close of the comment period, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Metropolitan Council will consider all comments submitted and will provide responses to substantive comments in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Public Hearings

The Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) will hold three formal public hearings on the DEIS. An open house will be held in conjunction with each formal public hearing.

November 13, 2012 (Tuesday)	November 14, 2012 (Wednesday)	November 29, 2012 (Thursday)
Hennepin County Government Center 300 Sixth St., Room A-2400 Minneapolis, MN	St. Louis Park City Hall 5005 Minnetonka Blvd. St. Louis Park, MN	Eden Prairie City Hall 8080 Mitchell Road Eden Prairie, MN
Open House: 4:00–5:00 P.M.* Public Hearing: 4:30 P.M.	Open House: 5:00–6:00 P.M. Public Hearing: 6:00 P.M.	Open House: 5:00–6:00 P.M. Public Hearing: 6:00 P.M.
* Public Service Level (Skyway level)		

The purpose of these hearings is to comment on the content of the DEIS document; no action will be taken.

Translation services for non-English speakers and ADA accommodations will be provided on request. To request translation or ADA accommodations, please contact the Hennepin County Housing, Community Works & Transit Department (tel: 612.348.9260, email: swcorridor@co.hennepin.mn.us) at least 14 days before the date of the public hearing.

Topics Covered by the DEIS

The topics examined in the DEIS are prescribed by state and federal environmental regulations. These topics are covered in 12 chapters and appendices that include text, maps, photographs, drawings and other informational exhibits. An Executive Summary is also included.

Topics covered in the DEIS include:

1. Purpose and Need for the Project
2. Alternatives Considered
3. Social Effects
4. Environmental Effects
5. Economic Effects
6. Transportation Effects
7. Public Parks and Recreation Lands (Section 4(f) evaluation)
8. Financial Analysis
9. Indirect Effects and Cumulative Impacts
10. Environmental Justice
11. Evaluation of Alternatives
12. Public Agency Coordination and Comments

Additional relevant information is provided in appendices, including:

- Supporting technical information
- Conceptual engineering drawings
- Public notices
- Agency correspondence
- Lists of preparers and recipients
- List of references



Light Rail Transit (LRT) is among the alternatives evaluated in the DEIS. Other alternatives evaluated in the DEIS include enhanced bus service and a no-build alternative.

More information about the Southwest Transitway Project and the DEIS is available online:

<http://www.southwesttransitway.org>

Hennepin County project site

<http://www.swlrt.org>

Metropolitan Council project site