

Southwest LRT will connect the dynamic Southwest Corridor with more than 290,000 jobs along the entire METRO Green Line. Building on more than \$115 million in regional transit-oriented development investments, enforceable regional growth policies and transit supportive zoning adopted or under consideration at every Southwest LRT station, this project warrants a high rating.

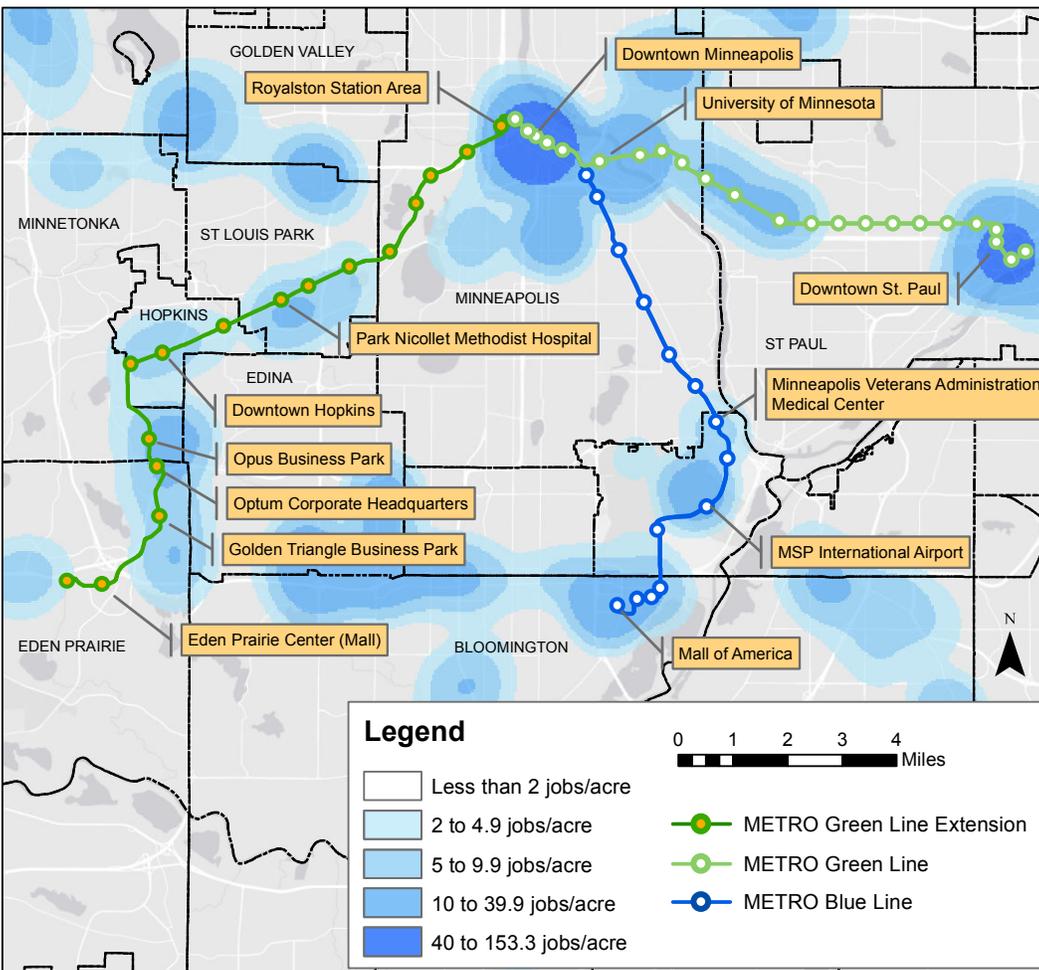
# Highlighted Updates since the 2014 submittal

Since September 2014, all five cities along the corridor have continued to develop **TOD supportive zoning** updates. Minneapolis recently approved a new zoning ordinance that removes parking minimums for projects near transit, and the city councils in the other four cities are scheduled to take action on new TOD zoning districts this fall.

The **updated affordable housing statistics** in this submittal improve the project's ranking from medium low to medium. The Southwest Community Works steering committee, led by Hennepin County, is close to adopting a **corridor wide housing strategy** that will provide corridor-wide affordability targets and specific implementation strategies to meet the targets.

Regional investment in TOD continues to grow, and **new TOD projects** are being developed along both existing transitways and planned transitways like the Southwest LRT route. For example, the City of Hopkins and Hennepin County are developing a TOD implementation plan for Blake Station, where redevelopment potential is high due to several **major public infrastructure projects** either completed or planned and public ownership of several key redevelopment parcels.

## Southwest LRT and the Twin Cities' developing light rail network



*The Twin Cities' light rail transit network will connect many of the region's key employment centers.*

*Southwest LRT will extend the METRO Green Line, which opened in 2014. The line immediately exceeded ridership projections and is driving an estimated \$3 billion in development along the Central Corridor between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul.*

*The METRO Blue Line, the region's first light rail line, opened in 2004 and continues to exceed ridership projections.*

# Existing Land Use

The Southwest Corridor is ready for LRT. The area boasts 58,000 jobs outside the Minneapolis CBD – and a total of 291,000 jobs along the entire METRO Green Line. In addition, the cities are ready to embrace new employers by having identified more than 500 acres of developable land along the corridor.

Southwest LRT will complete the region's vision for the METRO Green Line, extending single-seat service all the way from downtown St. Paul through downtown Minneapolis to the growing communities and job centers of the southwest metropolitan area – and creating new opportunities for economic growth and housing choice across the metropolitan area. When Southwest LRT is complete, the METRO Blue and Green Lines together will reach more than 360,000 jobs – nearly a quarter of the region's total employment.

With economic expansion and population growth placing increasing demands on the area's transportation system, the southwest metro area faces the challenge of decreasing mobility. Southwest LRT will support continued economic growth throughout the corridor by providing an efficient and reliable transportation option that connects people to jobs, housing, education and recreational opportunities.

**Major employment centers define the Southwest Corridor** The Southwest Corridor is home to some of the fastest-growing employment centers in the Twin Cities including Golden Triangle business park, a new Optum corporate headquarters that will employ 6,700 when complete, the existing Opus business park, retail and entertainment destinations in Downtown Hopkins, and Methodist Hospital. The proposed line will improve access to jobs in the southwest metro area by providing a reverse commute option that is not easily accessible or available today. In 2010, there were approximately 58,000 jobs within ½ mile of the 16 proposed stations and 116,000 jobs in downtown Minneapolis. By 2035, employment is expected to grow to over 92,000 within ½ mile of the proposed stations and nearly 146,000 in downtown Minneapolis.

Regional and local chambers of commerce support Southwest LRT, recognizing that the line will connect workers with jobs in the Southwest Corridor and provide an important amenity for firms seeking to locate in the area. The Twin Cities business community recognizes that high-frequency, reliable transit is a necessity for the Southwest Corridor to maintain economic growth in this jobs-rich area.

**Pedestrian and bicycle amenities abound** The Twin Cities region is recognized nationally for its network of parks and trails. Southwest LRT station areas have good pedestrian accessibility and are generally well connected to the street network; where gaps in the pedestrian network exist, the Southwest LRT Community Works program has an aggressive plan for creating necessary connections. The Southwest Corridor includes regional and local multipurpose trails used by thousands of bicycle commuters and walkers. Trails provide key pedestrian linkages to almost all Southwest LRT stations. Southwest LRT will also serve highly walkable community centers including the Minneapolis North Loop, downtown Hopkins and Eden Prairie Town Center.

**Affordable housing concentration earns high rating** The ratio of affordable housing to total housing is over one and a half times higher in the cities along the Southwest LRT alignment than in Hennepin County as a whole. As a result, the corridor cities received an average 75/100 rating in an annual, statutorily required report evaluating municipalities' existing affordable housing plans, policies and tools, compared to 33/100 for the region.

# Existing Land Use

Criteria	Green Line Extension	FTA Rating
Employees Served By the System	291,000*	High
Average Population Density (Per Square Mile)	3,049	Low-Medium
Parking Cost Per Day (CBD)	\$12.55	Medium-High
Parking Spaces Per Employee (CBD)	0.34	Medium
Affordable Housing Measurement	1.54	Medium
<b>Average</b>		<b>Medium-High</b>

\* FTA rating for Employees Served by the System uses total employment along the entire line on which a no-transfer ride from the proposed project's stations can be reached (Green Line from Downtown St Paul to Eden Prairie Southwest Station).

**Attractive residential areas offer a mix of housing options** Almost 18,000 new residents are anticipated to put down roots in the Southwest Corridor by 2035, drawn by the corridor's economic vitality, desirable communities and the availability of housing options ranging from high-density apartments and condominiums to traditional single-family homes. Existing dense, multifamily housing serves the relatively high percentage of renters along the entire Green Line corridor – over 66%, compared to 36% throughout Hennepin County.

**A dynamic real estate market favors development** A recent market report identified the Southwest Corridor as the most dynamic real estate market in the Twin Cities region. Many sites, totalling roughly 540 acres, have been identified in the corridor with opportunities for redevelopment, and demand for commercial properties is fueled by a corridor-wide trend toward businesses in the technology, medical and education sectors. At the same time, the Southwest Corridor communities are some of the most popular residential areas in the Twin Cities.

**Parking supply in the central business district favors transit** The price of daily parking in the central business district is roughly \$12.55, equating to a Medium-High rating. In addition, the active real estate market is converting many existing surface parking lots in the downtown area to new high-density mixed use developments. Outside the Minneapolis CBD, communities view existing surface parking areas as opportunities for transit-oriented redevelopment, as shown in the conversion of parking to developable land near Louisiana Station/Park Nicollet Methodist Hospital and the Eden Prairie Major Center Area for the Town Center Station area.

# Transit-Supportive Plans & Policies

The Twin Cities' dedication to TOD is transforming the area into a national leader. More than \$115 million in public and non-profit funding has been targeted to TOD-related activities throughout the region, including \$60 million invested by the Metropolitan Council. Strong regional and local leadership has produced enforceable growth management and land conservation policies throughout the region. Corridor cities have adopted plans and policies for most station areas that will increase densities.

The Southwest LRT Community Works program, a unique and effective collaboration created by the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners in 2008, is guided by a Steering Committee composed of member partners from Hennepin County, cities along the LRT line, and other key organizations including the Metropolitan Council, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, the Urban Land Institute and SouthWest Transit. The Community Works program focuses on developing tools and policies that extend the benefits of Southwest LRT "Beyond the Rails" by stimulating economic development, promoting effective planning, and strengthening community connections.

**Comprehensive plans and design guidelines encourage transit-friendly development** The comprehensive land use plans adopted by communities along the Southwest LRT route comply with the Metropolitan Council Regional Development Framework and Transportation Policy Plan, which include minimum density requirements for transitways. Adopted plans call for transit-supportive densities in station areas ranging from 40 dwelling units per acre along the outer portion of the Southwest LRT line to 120–200 dwelling units per acre in Minneapolis.

**TOD and Joint Development are actively supported** The Council's TOD Strategic Action Plan and TOD Policy were created to prepare for expansion of the regional transitway system and guide regional TOD implementation. A Metro Transit TOD Office, led by an experienced TOD director, guides TOD efforts along the Southwest LRT line in partnership with Hennepin County and local communities. Joint Development (JD) is a high priority for Southwest LRT, and the Project is pioneering a JD project under the FTA's JD Guidelines. The Metropolitan Council's TOD Handbook provides policy guidance to local governments and developers on transit-supportive development.

**Zoning in place for high-intensity commercial and residential uses** Of the 19 distinct zoning classifications applied to land around Southwest LRT stations, 16 have density requirements that would rate at least a Medium-High according to FTA standards. The City of Saint Louis Park is developing a Form Based Code for its station areas, and if adopted, it would be only the second one in use in Minnesota. In addition, the cities of Minnetonka and Hopkins are engaged in an innovative station area planning process for their shared Shady Oak station that will result in a new TOD zoning district that both cities can adopt, creating a seamless experience for station area redevelopment projects.

# Transit-Supportive Plans & Policies

Criteria	Performance	FTA Rating
Plans and policies for TOD in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional TOD policy has been adopted</li> <li>• Station area plans have been developed for all stations</li> </ul>	<b>High</b>
TOD zoning & implementation tools available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transit-supportive zoning adopted in some station areas, planning for TOD zoning underway in all others</li> </ul>	<b>High</b>
Programs that support TOD established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Southwest LRT Community Works</li> <li>• Metro Transit Office of TOD</li> <li>• Hennepin County TOD Program</li> <li>• TOD Livable Communities grant program</li> </ul>	<b>High</b>

**Parking reduction measures are in place** Minneapolis has implemented policies to limit the amount of parking in the downtown area and reduce public subsidies for parking, including creating a Downtown Parking Overlay district that prohibits the construction or expansion of surface parking and reduces minimum parking requirements, and has also enacted maximum parking limits throughout the city. Recently the city passed a new ordinance that removed parking minimums for high density multifamily projects near transit.

**Affordable housing benefits from regional leadership** The Metropolitan Council, sponsor of the Southwest LRT Project and primary provider of transit in the region, is also charged under state law with identifying affordable housing needs and allocating cities' responsibility to meet those needs through comprehensive planning. The regional commitment to housing has already produced a significant increase in affordable housing along the region's last LRT project, the METRO Green Line: between 2011 and the end of 2014 – more than 2,375 units of affordable housing had been created along the corridor. Hennepin County's success in promoting affordable housing was recently recognized in a nationwide study by the Urban Land Institute, which ranked the county first in the nation in reducing the gap between affordable housing need and supply.

Financing tools at the municipal, regional and state levels prioritize affordable housing projects near transit stations. In the Southwest Corridor, housing officials from cities, Hennepin County, the Local Initiative Support Coalition, Urban Land Institute-Minnesota and the Metropolitan Council are collaborating through the Community Works program to develop a corridor-wide housing strategy; the group is considering a coordinated overlay district and TOD fund to achieve corridor housing goals.

**Transit supportive action plans have been prepared for each station area** The Southwest LRT Transitional Station Area Action Plans (TSAAP) process, led by Hennepin County in partnership with local municipalities, has been completed and compiled into the Southwest Corridor Investment Framework, a guiding document for implementation of TOD along the Southwest LRT line. The Investment Framework recommends infrastructure investments that support anticipated development by opening day of the LRT, maximize LRT system investments, enhance existing businesses, support a full range of housing opportunities and encourage development.

# Transit-Supportive Plans & Policies

Examples of station area planning drawings completed for all 16 stations (Blake Station area shown):



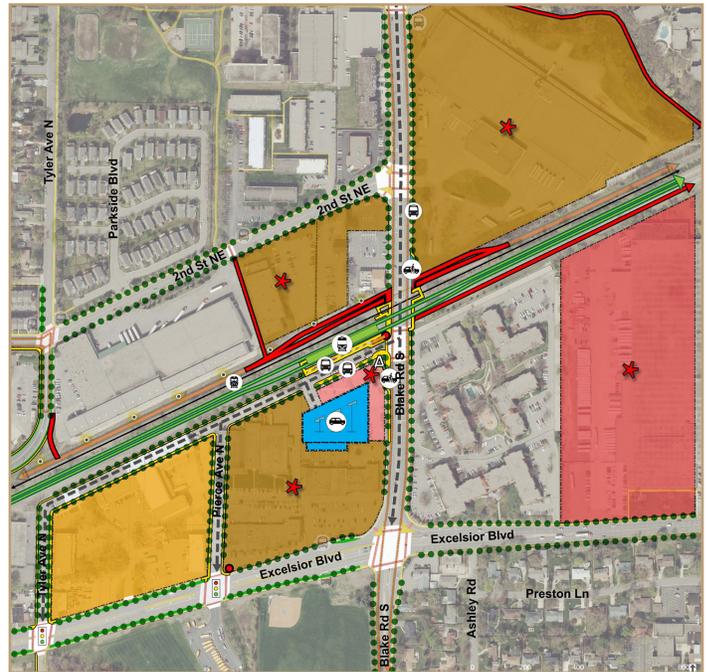
Base project scope improvements, opening day.



Access and circulation.



Station area improvements.



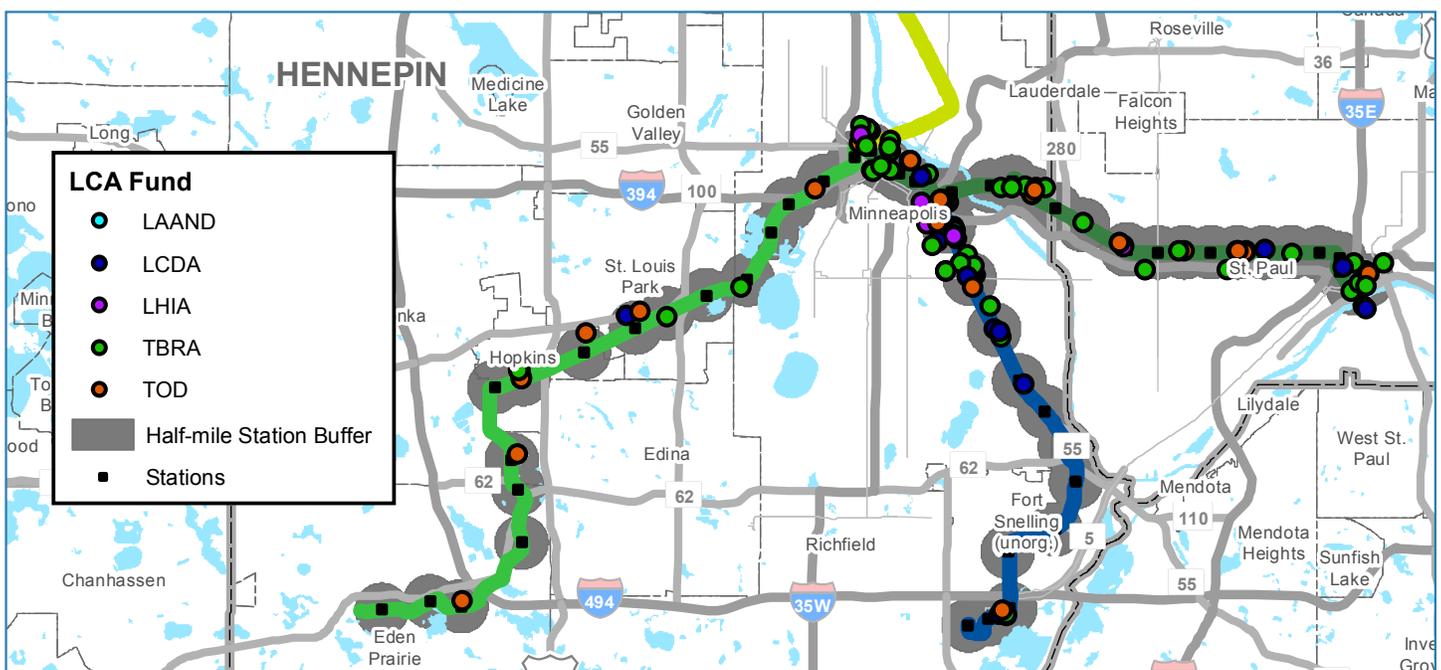
Potential development sites.

# Performance and Impacts of Policies

The Southwest Corridor is already emerging as the next exciting chapter in the Twin Cities' strong TOD history. Transit-supportive development is occurring at more than a third of the stations. One joint development project is being advanced as part of the project and several future Joint Development projects are being explored. All development proposals in the station areas include TOD design elements.

**The region has a history of successful TOD implementation** The Metropolitan Council's focus on concentrating development around transitways has resulted in \$61 million of Livable Communities grants to 93 projects along rail corridors. All these projects are within walking distance of transit stations on the METRO Blue and Green Lines, the Northstar Commuter Rail line and the proposed Southwest LRT alignment.

**Development is strong along regional transit corridors** The Twin Cities region has a proven track record of implementing TOD along transitways. Around the METRO Green Line, which began passenger service in 2014, 132 completed or planned projects have attracted an estimated \$3 billion in investment over the last five years. Developers recognized the opportunity that LRT presented years before the line carried its first passenger, and new projects continue to advance. Development along the region's first LRT line, the METRO Blue Line, has increased housing options and revitalized the Hiawatha Avenue corridor. Along the METRO Blue Line, more than 40 projects have been built outside downtown Minneapolis between 2003 and 2013, boosting the market value of real estate from \$26 million to more than \$130 million.



Livable Communities Act investments along the METRO Green Line, Blue Line and Southwest LRT corridors.

# Performance and Impacts of Policies

**New transit-friendly development projects enrich Southwest LRT station areas** Recognizing the successes of transit-supportive development along the METRO Blue and Green Lines, local governments and developers are moving forward with transit-supportive development near Southwest LRT station sites even though LRT service will not begin until 2020. Recent residential projects in the Southwest Corridor include:

- TowerLight, a 115-unit senior assisted living development with 26,000 sq ft of ground-floor commercial space across the street from the Wooddale Station.
- Hoigaard Village, a mixed-use project developed at 42 units per acre on a 10-acre site with significant streetscape enhancements, at Wooddale Station.
- Gallery Flats, a 163-unit mixed-use project near Downtown Hopkins Station requiring a 1:1.1 parking ratio and pedestrian environment improvements.
- Optum, a division of UnitedHealth Group, one of Minnesota's largest employers, is developing a new 1.5 million sq ft campus for 6,700 workers at City West Station in Eden Prairie. The development includes land for the LRT station and trail connections to the office buildings.
- Martin Blu Apartments in Eden Prairie with a density of 61 units per acre and only 1.6 parking spaces per unit. The development also includes one shared car and extensive bike parking.



*TowerLight senior assisted living, near Wooddale Station.*



*Gallery Flats, near Downtown Hopkins Station.*



*Plan of the new Optum corporate campus at City West Station.*

# Performance and Impacts of Policies

**Proposed development projects are poised to continue the TOD trend** New projects in the development pipeline will continue the trend of building in anticipation of the Southwest LRT line.



*Linden Yards West concept rendering, Van White Station area.*

- Linden Yards West has an approved concept plan calling for 303 residential units and 770,000 sq ft of office space on city-owned industrial land near Van White Station in Minneapolis.
- Non-profit developer PLACE is proposing to develop a mixed-income, mixed-use creative community including renewable energy systems near Wooddale Station in St. Louis Park.
- Oxford Village, a proposed project to redevelop six existing duplexes into 51 units of affordable workforce housing near Blake Station in Hopkins.



*Oxford Village concept rendering, Blake Station area.*

- A 200-unit multifamily development, including a level of parking that could be used by transit riders, is proposed for a key corner site at Eighth Avenue and Excelsior Avenue near Downtown Hopkins Station.
- Liberty Plaza, near Golden Triangle Station in Eden Prairie, has a development agreement stipulating TOD features including reduced and managed parking and high-density residential uses.



*Multifamily residential development with transit rider access and transit lobby area (left of rendering), proposed near Downtown Hopkins Station.*

- A mixed-use project near Eden Prairie Town Center Station that will combine 372 units of senior housing, 260 units of market-rate multifamily housing, 75 workforce units and 70,000 sq ft of retail space in a dense development of up to 13 stories.