

# SOUTHWEST

Green Line LRT Extension



# Extending TRACKS

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## Project gets important boost from Washington

The METRO Green Line Extension (Southwest LRT Project) has received strong signals from Washington that it is in the vanguard of projects nationwide and that the federal government intends to pay for half of the project's construction costs.

"The ratings increase is a tremendous vote of confidence from the federal government regarding the project's merits and bodes well for us to achieve our federal matching dollars," Metropolitan Council Chair Adam Duinick said in a statement.

"Our rating rose in large part due to the project's ability to achieve municipal consent from all five corridor cities and the county last year, as well as total funding commitments from the Counties Transit Improvement Board and Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority," Duinick said.

Southwest is among seven New Starts projects nationwide that

the FTA has recommended for Capital Investment Grant Program funds in fiscal 2016. Other projects, shown in the map above left, are in Los Angeles, San Diego, Denver, Fort Worth, Baltimore and the Washington, D.C., area.

With the total commitments from the Counties Transit Improvement Board and the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority added to earlier funding from the state, the project has 85 percent of its local funding, which equates to \$705 million.

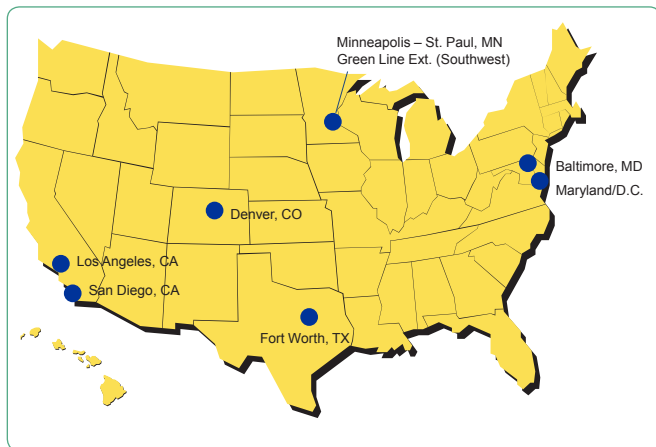
## Designers refine station prototypes with help from cities, county

Designers at the METRO Green Line Extension (Southwest LRT Project) will refine four LRT station prototypes based on input from technical staff from the five corridor cities and Hennepin County.

The four types range from an understated to bold design. The designs are intended to provide flexibility while fostering consistency in construction and minimizing long-term maintenance costs. Project office staffers have been in discussions with staff from the corridor cities and county about which of the four station designs developed in 2014 will be used at each of the 17 planned stations. Discussions with the public will occur in 2015.

## Public involvement helps station design, art fit together

In 2015, the project office designers will work with project partners, the public and the artist assigned to each station to select one of the four station types, additional architectural elements for wayfinding, color, texture and patterns, and integrated public art.



In early February, the Federal Transit Administration published new ratings for LRT projects, showing the Southwest LRT Project had climbed to medium high from a medium in 2011, the last time it posted a rating for the project in its federal New Starts report. Ratings are used to prioritize funding for LRT programs. Also in early February, President Obama included \$150 million for the project in his fiscal year 2016 budget. This would be the first installment of the anticipated federal share of \$827 million for the \$1.65 billion project.

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## Learning from experience

Lessons learned from the METRO Blue Line station designs helped inform the METRO Green Line and Green Line Extension designs.

For example, uniform components will be used to make routine maintenance and repairs easier. Also, the locations of ticket vending machines, kiosks and other components will be consistent from station to station to make the stations easy to use for all riders, especially those with visual impairments.

In addition to planning consistent passenger amenities from station to station on the METRO Green Line Extension, sta-

tion designs will allow for some more variety through variations of the canopies and vertical elements. The four station types vary by canopy design, type of support structures and other architectural elements.

## Safety is designed into LRT stations

Designing stations to promote safety through high visibility with the use of primarily transparent materials, such as glass, and adequate lighting allows police and passersby to see into the station. Station designs include security features such as cameras and emergency call buttons.

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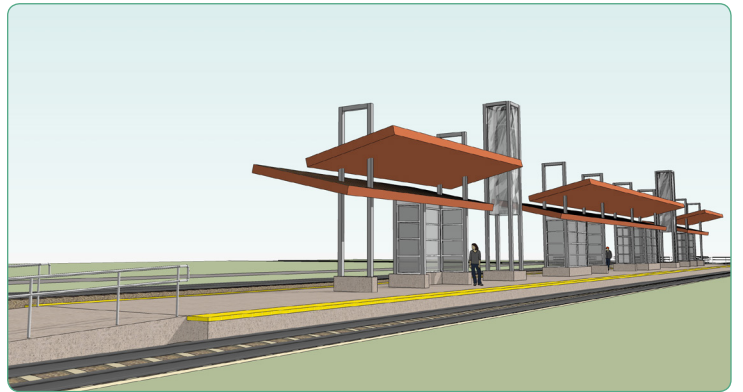
**The Neighborhood Station design:** Scaled to fit into a neighborhood, featuring a pair of flat canopy roofs with slightly raised structural elements.



**The Town Square Station design:** Higher profile to fit into of an activity center, with flat canopy roofs but higher structure and additional horizontal architectural features above the canopy.



**The Landscape Station design:** Understated, with a horizontal profile and flat canopy roofs.



**The Landmark Station design:** Largest station profile to increase station visibility. The design consists of pairs of sloped canopy roofs, with the highest structure and vertical architectural features located between the station canopies.

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## Weather protection a key consideration

The station canopies are designed to prevent water from falling onto the edge of the platform below to promote passenger safety and comfort when getting on and off of the train. Water will be captured in a roof drain system and then flow into downspouts to carry it away from the station.

Stations will be designed for typical rainfall and typical snowfall with moderate wind, but not weather extremes.

Station shelters will have sides and overhead heaters to provide protection from most weather events but not weather extremes.



## Station artists to be hired this spring

### Public invited to participate in selecting art for stations, operation & maintenance facility

Several experienced public artists will be hired this spring to incorporate art into all 17 LRT stations and the line's operations and maintenance facility.

The artwork will aid in station identification and passenger wayfinding and help promote transit use and community pride. The Metropolitan Council's Regional Transitway Guidelines say public art should be provided to create quality public spaces and complement the surrounding area.

The budget for public art at each of the 17 stations and at the operation and maintenance facility is to be determined but will be a percentage of the overall construction budget. Public art at the operations and maintenance facility is part of the agreement with the city of Hopkins for locating the facility within the city.

The artists will be selected by a committee that includes representatives from each city, Hennepin County, the

Minnesota State Arts Board, Metro Transit and the project office.

### Public participation

Station Art Committees will be formed for each city to provide input into the public art process.

These committees will participate in visioning sessions in spring 2015 to provide input and inspire the artists' designs. Station Art Committees will also meet to review art concepts and provide input in summer 2015 and review preliminary designs and provide input in fall 2015. Time will be allotted for general public input at each Station Art Committee meeting.

The development of the public art designs will coincide with the station design process to maximize integration. The artists' designs are anticipated to be finalized in 2016 and will be incorporated into the final design documents for the project.

### Art will be integrated into station, made of durable materials

Public art will be integrated into each of the 17 stations and the operations and maintenance facility rather than be a separate piece of art. Art could be integrated into station platforms, railings, or columns and into the exterior walls or landscaping of the operations and maintenance facility.

The reason for integrating artwork within functional elements is intended to ensure it isn't in the way, doesn't impede visibility and doesn't create areas of concealment or hinder maintenance.

Materials used in the artwork will be selected for their durability and suitability to the local climate and for use in public spaces.

## Sambatek: Helping build Twin Cities LRT

Sirish Samba's journey to working on Twin Cities LRT projects started outside a bank in India

Sirish Samba had just finished an undergraduate engineering degree in India in the early 1990s and wanted to attend a university in the United States to earn his master's degree. But he had grown up the only son in a modest family of seven children and couldn't afford the move.

"Only the privileged in India go study abroad," said Samba, the son of an Indian Railways guard, the British term for conductor.

Today, Samba, 44, is the CEO of Sambatek, a 100-employee engineering firm in Minnetonka. The firm is working on the METRO Blue Line Extension LRT Project and has worked on the METRO Green Line and Southwest LRT (METRO Green Line Extension) Projects. Sambatek has thrived in part through its participation in the state's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program, but Samba also emphasizes his company's professional work and experience as keys to its growth.

Samba's path to employment in the United States and the helm of Sambatek didn't happen by chance.

For a solid month when he was 21, Samba sat outside the bank in southern India, trying to talk to a key banker each day as he entered the building. Eventually, the banker agreed to meet with him. He informed Samba that the bank didn't provide student loans.

Samba, a strong student, had already heard from South Dakota State University in Brookings, S.D. The school had accepted him into its master's program

for an engineering degree and had agreed to let him pay in-state tuition. But Samba needed a \$4,000 loan to help him travel to the United States and enroll at South Dakota State. Once there, he planned to get a job to help pay his way.



*Sambatek CEO Sirish Samba*

"Every day I would go back to the bank and ask for the loan," Samba said. Seeing Samba's persistence, the banker relented and provided the loan.

He gained valuable experience working on high-profile projects, including wastewater treatment facilities for the growing city of St. Michael, the Arbor Lakes development in Maple Grove and the Water Park of America in Bloomington.

But the ownership of MFRA was in flux. The former CEO decided to retire in 2000 and pass the firm to four senior managers. After an appraisal, though, he decided to sell the business to an investor. In 2005, MFRA changed ownership again when it was sold to a private equity firm.

As the recession hit, MFRA, which was well known in the Twin Cities as a land

development company, found itself burdened with debt. Over time, Samba took a larger role in righting the company's finances and eventually ended up the majority owner supported by other employee-owners.

The restructured company operated as MFRA and still did development work, but Samba was seeking more civil-engineering related work as well.

At a convention in 2009, Samba met Tracey Jackson, a senior equal opportunity consultant for Metro Transit, who works with DBE firms. Requirements for participating in the DBE program involve limits on personal net worth (less than \$1.32 million), a business-size standard set by the Small Business Administration of less than \$17.4 million in annual gross receipts and be at least 51 percent minority or woman owned.

For the Green Line Extension LRT Project's advanced design contract and for the Blue Line Extension engineering contract, the DBE goal is 19 percent.

Samba was apprehensive about participating in the DBE program, but the company qualified and was looking to grow to rebound from the recession.

In recent years, Sambatek won a contract for work on the Interchange project in downtown Minneapolis where all of the LRT lines and Northstar commuter rail come together. His firm is doing survey work on the Blue Line Extension LRT Project. Sambatek was also awarded a master contract from the Metropolitan Council, which essentially puts the firm on call for a wide range of future work.

Paul Danielson, a senior vice president with Kimley-Horn, a nationally known design consulting firm, was introduced

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to Samba when Kimley-Horn was pursuing preliminary engineering work for the Southwest LRT Project. Surveying was Sambatek's primary work on the project, Danielson said. "But what's worked out well is their willingness to jump in and do just about anything we've asked," he said.

That included support for visual simulations along the Southwest LRT alignment, architectural renderings and storm water management analysis.

"They were our number one DBE firm on Southwest LRT," Danielson said. "They became an extension of our staff."

Sometimes the two firms compete on projects, sometimes they're partners, Danielson said. "We trust each other enough to know that we'll be team partners and at times we might compete head-to-head," he said.

In 2014, the company changed its name to Sambatek and moved to new space in Minnetonka, near Interstate 494 and Highway 62. "It shows our confidence in the future of the company," Samba said.

Sambatek is also opening an office in Bismarck, N.D., to support highway projects there.

Samba, who is married with three children, says his success in Minnesota paid dividends back in India. Years ago, he paid back the student loan that made it possible for him to attend South Dakota State. "Even now, when I go back, I sometimes visit with (the banker) because I'm a very grateful person," Samba said.

His work in the United States has also allowed him to help all of his sisters get married in India, where paying a dowry to the groom's family is the norm. "That's where I get my drive," Samba said, referring to his ability to help his



*Jeremy Honga of Sambatek does survey work on the Blue Line Extension LRT Project along Broadway Avenue in Robbinsdale*

family back home. If all else is failing, he said his background "teaches me to not take no for an answer."

Samba is a naturalized citizen and calls Minnesota home now. "I'm grateful to the country and its people, and its systems that provide equal opportunity," he said. "For a son of a railroad guard to be a consultant for an LRT system, it's an incredible honor."

## About the project

The Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project (METRO Green Line Extension) will operate from downtown Minneapolis through the communities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie, passing in close proximity to the city of Edina. The line will connect major activity centers in the region including downtown Minneapolis, the Opus/Golden Triangle employment area in Minnetonka and Eden Prairie, Methodist Hospital in St. Louis Park, downtown Hopkins, the Eden Prairie Center Mall, and the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes. Ridership in 2030 is projected at nearly 34,000 weekday boardings.

The project will interline with the METRO Green Line, which will provide a one-seat ride to destinations such as the University of Minnesota, state Capitol and downtown St. Paul. It will be part of an integrated system of transitways, including connections to the METRO Blue Line, the proposed METRO Blue Line Extension, the Northstar Commuter Rail line, a variety of major bus routes along the alignment, and proposed future transitway and rail lines.

The Metropolitan Council will be the grantee of federal funds. The regional government agency is charged with building the line in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The Southwest Corridor Management Committee, which includes commissioners from Hennepin County and the mayors of Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Edina, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie provides advice and oversight. Funding is provided by the Federal Transit Administration, Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), state of Minnesota and Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRA). The Southwest LRT Project website is [www.swlrt.org](http://www.swlrt.org).

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