

**November,  
2009**

# TCWR Freight Rail Realignment Study



**Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority**

**11/18/09**

**With assistance from TKDA**



## **BACKGROUND**

Prior to the Hiawatha/TH55 upgrades in South Minneapolis, Canadian Pacific Railway's (CPR) Bass Lake Subdivision (east-west trackage through St. Louis Park and Minneapolis) crossed Hiawatha Avenue at grade (see Exhibit 1). During the design process for the Hiawatha/TH55 project, Mn/DOT and FHWA determined that neither an at-grade freight rail crossing nor a grade separation was viable and the decision was made to sever the freight rail line and relocate freight rail service to St. Paul. An at-grade crossing posed problems due to the high traffic levels on Hiawatha/TH55 and a grade separation was problematic due to limited grades and geometry. An analysis was conducted to determine the preferred route for the relocated freight rail service. The conclusion was that the MNS Sub was the preferred route. Shortly after this was concluded it was discovered that the Golden Auto site over which the freight rail connection would be constructed was a superfund site. Until the Golden Auto site was cleaned up and delisted, a temporary route needed to be found or the federal funding for Hiawatha/TH55 project would be lost.

The main carrier on the Bass Lake Sub from St. Louis Park, through the Midtown Trench along 29<sup>th</sup> Street, and on to St. Paul is the Twin Cities and Western Railroad (TCWR). TCWR has trackage rights on CPR's Bass Lake Sub and also BNSF Railway (BNSF) track once they got to St. Paul to continue on to the Pigs Eye Yard in St. Paul and to Minnesota Commercial Railway's (MNNR) A Yard. To sever the Midtown Trench tracks at Hiawatha Avenue, an alternate route was needed to get TCWR on to St. Paul where they have connections with BNSF, CPR, MNNR, and Union Pacific Railroad (UP).

Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) owns the old CNW line known as the Kenilworth Corridor through the Kenwood area in Minneapolis. To facilitate the connection of TCWR to the east, HCRRA rehabbed the Kenilworth Corridor as a temporary route and facilitated an agreement between BNSF, CPR, and TCWR to provide trackage rights into and through St. Paul. In order to allow trains back on this old CNW line, the neighborhoods were told that this alignment was going to be temporary to preserve it for future transit use. The temporary route was rehabbed and was to be used for 1-6 years until a permanent relocation could be developed. This 1-6 year fix has now become more than a 10 year fix and is currently in the need of another rehab to safely and consistently carry rail traffic into the future.

### **ST. LOUIS PARK RAILROAD REPORT, 1999**

Shortly after the decision was made to reroute freight rail traffic on a temporary basis through the Kenilworth Corridor in Minneapolis, a study was conducted to examine the short-term and long-term freight rail options to determine solutions that allow freight to move efficiently and effectively through St. Louis Park while reducing impacts to the greatest extent possible for St. Louis Park. A Neighborhood Task Force was assembled to provide guidance and input during the study.

### **STUDY PURPOSE**

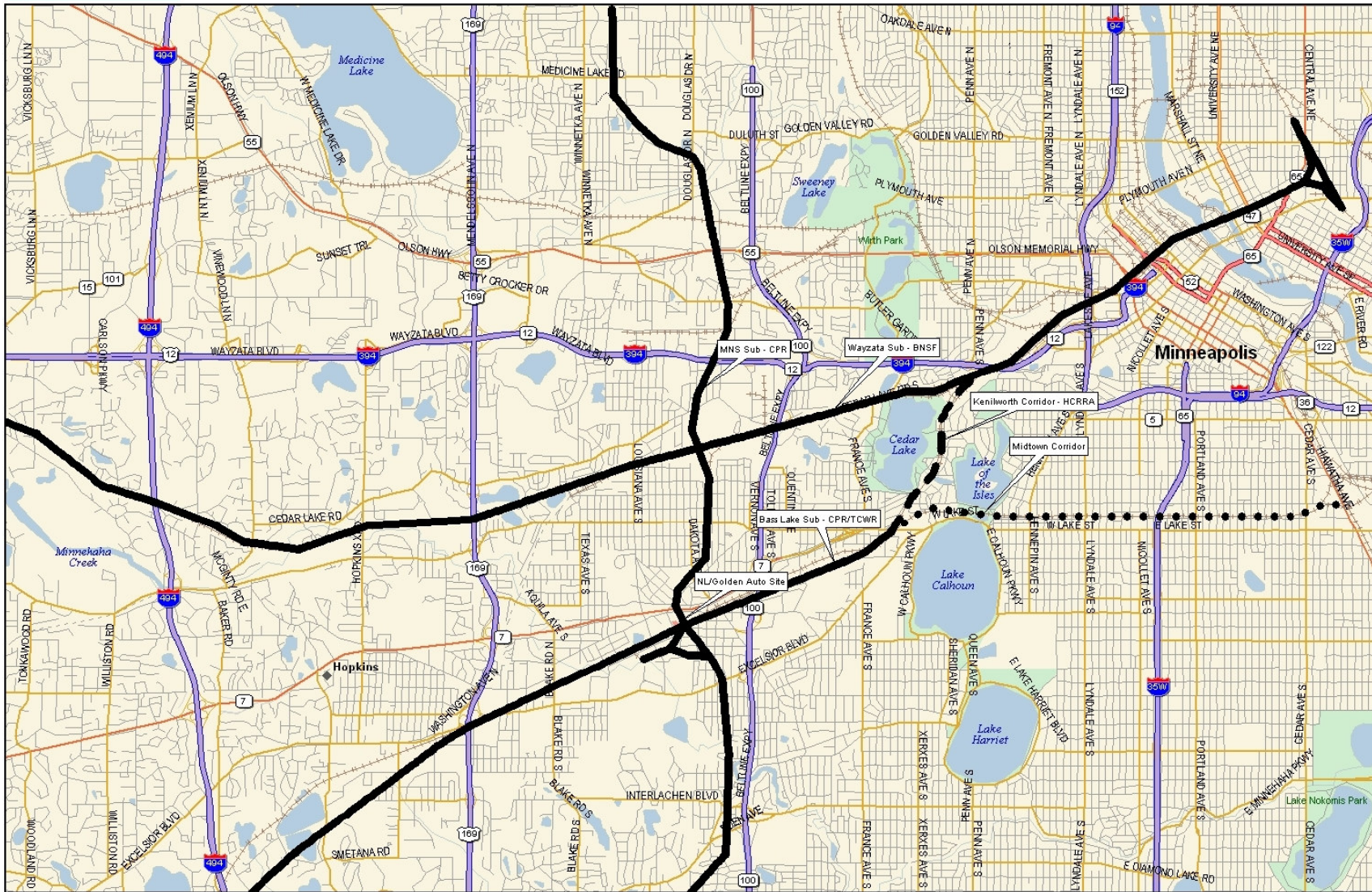
The purpose of the analysis contained in this report is to evaluate all potential options for a permanent location for freight rail operations. To determine a permanent home for freight service consideration must be given to both the short-term and the long-term. Any solution must work for both the short-term as well as the long-term.



# EXHIBIT 1



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For this report, care has been taken to avoid repeating the information in the St. Louis Park Railroad Study prepared by RLK Associates, Ltd. in March 1999. Most of the information contained in this study is based on the technical data from the St. Louis Park Railroad Study. That data was used as a starting point for background information on potential alignments. However, the railroads, Mn/DOT, the City of St. Louis Park, and Hennepin County have all been interviewed again to get updated information that would affect finding a permanent track alignment for TCWR. Using past and present information, Hennepin County is pursuing feasible alignment scenarios for a permanent home for TCWR freight traffic.

To provide project direction, a discussion group was formed and is composed of staff from Hennepin County, Mn/DOT, Twin Cities and Western (TCW) Rail Company, Minneapolis, and St. Louis Park. The discussion group met periodically during the course of the study to provide input and to review technical materials produced by TKDA.

### **CHANGES SINCE ST. LOUIS PARK RAILROAD STUDY, 1999**

While most information in the St. Louis Park Railroad Study is still pertinent, changes have taken place in the metro area that need to be accounted for while finding a permanent home for TCWR. The current Twins Ballpark (Target Field) is nearly complete as is the Northstar Commuter Rail and Hiawatha Light Rail Transit extension. Additional passenger rail and light rail corridors are also being explored that will terminate at the Minneapolis Transportation Interchange, near the new Target Field site. In addition to all the developments surrounding the Twins Ballpark area, railroad priorities and shipping movements have changed since 2000 when the St. Louis Park Freight Rail Task Force Report was completed.

#### **TWINS BALLPARK SITE (Target Field)**

The design of the Twins Ballpark (Target Field) required reconfiguring railroad tracks in the area. With the addition of the Twins Ballpark to the west side of downtown Minneapolis, additional rail complications have been introduced. BNSF's Wayzata Sub runs adjacent to the Twins Ballpark site. This is already a busy section of track for BNSF with up to 15 trains per day traveling through the area. This includes intermodal trains with double-stacked shipping containers that are now able to pass under the Main Street bridge in northeast Minneapolis which was just replaced this year. The inclusion of the Twins Ballpark near BNSF's track required extensive realignment to permit the trackage and ballpark to coexist in the same area. The realignment for the Twins Ballpark works as required, but it hinders future track alignment modifications and limits capacity expansion through the area. On its current right of way, BNSF is relegated to one track through this entire corridor to the northwest of the new Twins Ballpark (Target Field). Adding additional tracks through this area to expand freight rail operations would require significant property acquisitions and reconstruction of bridges. The area to the northwest of the Twins Ballpark (Target Field) is a historic district covering some of the properties that would be required to construct additional tracks through the area.

#### **MINNEAPOLIS TRANSPORTATION INTERCHANGE**

As part of the Twins Ballpark (Target Field) site, a two-level intermodal passenger rail hub is being completed at the north corner of the Twin Ballpark. This includes Northstar Commuter Rail at the same level as BNSF's freight tracks and Light Rail Transit (LRT) at the street level above.

The Northstar Commuter Rail station has been built with two tracks for train storage and passenger loading and unloading. This trackage is built at the same level as BNSF's track as the Northstar passenger train will be utilizing BNSF tracks. Located between the Twins Ballpark to the southwest and BNSF's mainline and buildings to the northwest, most usable space through this area has already been utilized.

The LRT station and trackage is out of the way of freight rail through the area. However, this is another factor that impedes expansion of freight or passenger rail through the area. The LRT extension to the Twins Ballpark is built at the same level as 5<sup>th</sup> Street on a bridge over the Wayzata Sub and Northstar Commuter Rail tracks. If additional freight rail tracks are constructed in the area, the 5<sup>th</sup> Street LRT bridge would need to be lengthened and LRT service would be suspended during construction.

Combined, the Twins Ballpark (Target Field) and the intermodal station connecting Northstar Commuter Rail and Hiawatha/Central LRT restrict if not preclude the ability to expand BNSF's track through the area. For expansion to be possible, bridges over BNSF's track will need to be lengthened, buildings to the west located within a historic district will need to be taken, or possibly both.

## **PASSENGER AND LIGHT RAIL PROJECTS**

Passenger and light rail projects are currently being considered throughout the Twin Cities Metro area. At full build out the Minneapolis Transportation Interchange (intermodal station) could be served by up to five (5) commuter rail lines, up to four (4) LRT lines, intercity passenger rail service, and high speed rail from Chicago. The implementation of the future vision for an integrated system of rail lines and bus routes converging in downtown Minneapolis at the Minneapolis Transportation Interchange has a significant impact on the ability of freight rail to expand operations through this area.

While the passenger and LRT corridors have varying degrees of potential implementation in the near future, the list does highlight the number of passenger rail projects being looked at in the area. That means there is a strong possibility that the area around the Twins Ballpark, and BNSF's Wayzata Sub specifically, will see additional rail traffic increases that need to be accounted for while looking for a permanent route for TCWR's trains. If all of the projects are built as envisioned by Hennepin County, up to 80 commuter and passenger rail trains per day and 500 LRT trains per day will converge at the Minneapolis Transportation Interchange in addition to any freight rail traffic.

## **RAIL TRAFFIC**

Rail traffic varies from day to day and year to year. Although it's impossible to precisely forecast future rail traffic, we can use current rail traffic as a starting point for analysis. The one bit of traffic that has changed significantly is TCWR's southbound traffic to the port of Savage. Due to market changes in grain, this move by TCWR has not run in the past two years. However, that traffic could turn around during any given harvest season. TCWR purchased the bridge over the Mississippi River in Savage to protect that shipping option and is counting on that market for growth in their future traffic projections.

BNSF and CPR rail traffic has gone up and down through the area, but none of the changes suggest a major change in traffic to the point where current routes aren't needed. If anything, the changes (specifically the addition of passenger rail and double-stack intermodal trains on the Wayzata Sub) will necessitate increases in capacity and infrastructure.

Moving commodities along freight rail lines rather than by semi trucks on the roadway system has a significant effect upon the region's mobility. TCWR reports that an average train load equates to 40 semi trucks on the roadway system. Maintaining freight rail connections as a viable method for transporting goods to, from, and within the Twin Cities region contributes to the healthy economy of this region. As the roadway network continues to become more and more congested, moving commodities by freight rail will become more competitive.

## **ALTERNATE ROUTE ANALYSIS**

After reviewing the history of freight rail operations and discussing the future of freight rail operations with the private freight rail companies, TKDA developed an inventory of all possible routes for long-term permanent freight rail operations. The options for alternative routes were presented in small group meetings with the private freight rail companies. Through this process the following alternatives were identified:

- Kenilworth Corridor
- Midtown Corridor
- MNS Sub
- Chaska Cut-Off
- Former Railroad Alignment – Hwy 169
- Western MN Connection with BNSF

The routing alternatives were then evaluated to determine which one would provide the best long-term permanent home for freight rail. Considerations included impact to freight rail operations (short-term and long-term), impacts to the transportation system, potential property acquisitions/relocations, and construction costs.

### **KENILWORTH CORRIDOR – EXISTING TEMPORARY ALIGNMENT**

The temporary route for TCWR routes them along their own track to the west which turns into CPR owned track before turning into HCRRA track between the Midtown Corridor turnoff and the Cedar Lake Junction at BNSF's Wayzata Sub (see Exhibit 2). TCWR runs on the Bass Lake Spur before veering northeast where the old Midtown Corridor started heading straight east along 29<sup>th</sup> Street. From here TCWR runs on the Kenilworth Corridor up to Cedar Lake Junction where it turns east onto BNSF's Wayzata Sub and heads into downtown through the Twins Ballpark site and on to St. Paul. As stated previously, this route was meant to be a temporary route for TCWR. The line was rebuilt to temporarily allow trains to connect to St. Paul while the National Lead/Golden Auto site was to be cleaned up to accommodate a connection between Bass Lake Sub to MNS Sub for TCWR to run through St. Louis Park. The HCRRA acquired the Kenilworth Corridor to preserve it for future transit use. HCRRA allowed temporary use of the Kenilworth Corridor for TCWR operations to allow the Hiawatha/TH55 Project to move forward with the understanding that freight rail was only a temporary use and would vacate the corridor.

According to State Statute 383B.81, an Environmental Response Fund was created to sufficiently clean up the National Lead/Golden Auto site in St. Louis Park. This property was to be used to build the



# EXHIBIT 2



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connection between Bass Lake Sub to MNS Sub for TCWR to run through St. Louis Park before making its way east to St. Paul. The funds were to be made available to St. Louis Park if they entered into an agreement with Hennepin County to acquire the contaminated site and to provide a rail right-of-way to replace the 29<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor. Kenilworth was never to be a permanent alignment and was rehabilitated accordingly. The lifespan of this rehabilitated track is coming to an end and a long-term permanent location for freight rail must be provided.

Mn/DOT is also interested in the relocation of the freight rail through this area. They are interested in knowing whether TCWR will continue to run on this corridor before performing their Hwy 100 widening project under Hwy 7 and the Bass Lake Sub. Mn/DOT acknowledges that if SWLRT is constructed, a new LRT bridge will need to go over Hwy 100. However the necessity to build a freight rail bridge over Hwy 100 is determined by whether or not freight rail continues through the Kenilworth Corridor or if it's relocated elsewhere. Building a freight bridge will add significant costs to the Hwy 100 widening project. They would have to build a longer bridge than currently exists to accommodate a wider Hwy 100.

Building a longer bridge also means a taller depth of structure which inevitably will lead to having to lower Hwy 100 further to get the necessary clearances for vehicular traffic below the freight railroad bridge. And pushing the roadway down creates drainage issues that also need to be accounted for. All of these issues and expenditures would be eliminated if TCWR freight traffic is relocated to the MNS Sub.

During the course of this study, St. Louis Park staff requested an evaluation of freight rail and LRT coexistence in the Kenilworth Corridor. The purpose was to inform elected officials and the public of the implications. Coexistence of the freight rail lines would require acquisitions in excess of \$100 million and a potential additional crossing of freight rail and LRT. Based upon this analysis, it was concluded that it is not viable for freight rail and LRT to coexist in the Kenilworth Corridor.

## **Summary**

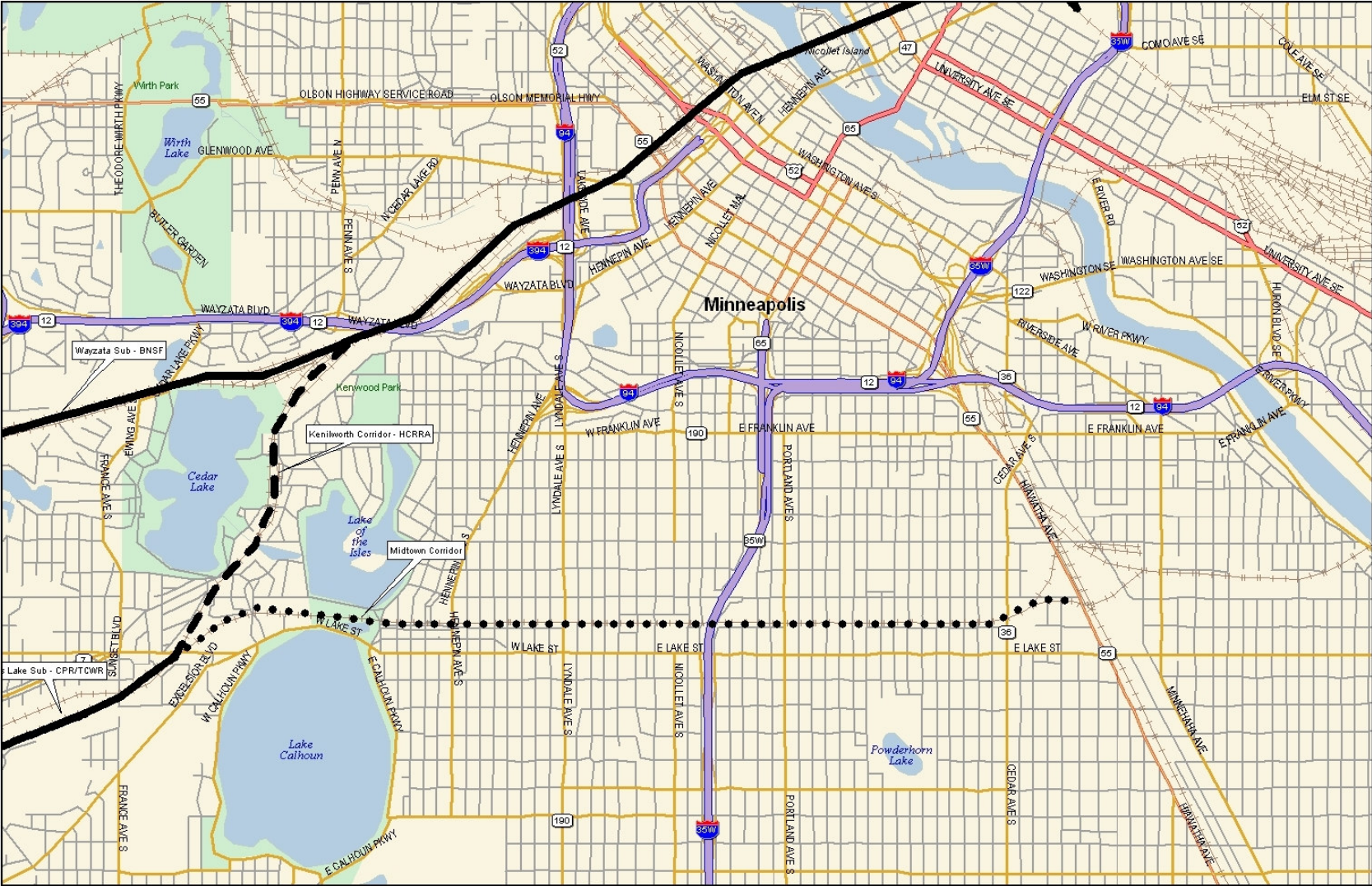
The Kenilworth Corridor has significant constraints for the long-term permanent location for freight rail due to:

- future rail capacity constraints near the Twins Ballpark (Target Field)
- negative impacts to the Hwy 100 project
- traffic management issues related to at-grade crossings of Wooddale Avenue and Beltline Boulevard in St. Louis Park
- funding needed for rehabilitation

## **MIDTOWN CORRIDOR**

Although TCWR was relocated from the Midtown Corridor due to the Hwy 55/Hiawatha Avenue project, it was reevaluated as a potential alignment. The TCWR would follow its current alignment on the Bass Lake Sub through St. Louis Park and onto what is the Midtown Corridor through the trench (see Exhibit 3). It would then approach Hwy 55/Hiawatha Avenue and would be grade-separated as an overpass of the roadway. It would connect to the CPR tracks on the east side of Hwy 55/Hiawatha Avenue that are currently leased and run on by MNNR. This alignment would reinstate freight rail as it existed prior to the Hwy 55/Hiawatha Avenue project and track severing.

EXHIBIT 3



Extensive work would be necessary to make the railroad connection from the west side to the east side of Hwy 55/Hiawatha Avenue. The Hiawatha LRT bridge would need to be reconstructed to provide ample clearance for a freight train on a structure underneath it. A new freight rail bridge would need to be built to span Hwy 55/Hiawatha Avenue. Hwy 55/Hiawatha Avenue would need to be lowered to provide clearance underneath the freight rail bridge. The profile change on Hwy 55/Hiawatha Avenue would most certainly affect the Lake Street overpass and approaches to that bridge. The intersection at 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> Streets would need to be reconfigured and the new Sabo pedestrian bridge north of 28<sup>th</sup> Street would need to be reconstructed. Roadway and LRT traffic through the area would largely be delayed or stopped for this alternative to be constructed. In addition, this construction would require various permits from federal and state agencies as well as agreements with the private freight rail companies.

The Midtown Corridor was acquired by the HCRRA to preserve it for future transit use. The corridor has been considered for LRT, streetcar, and bus rapid transit (BRT) implementation. The Midtown Corridor is included in the Metropolitan Council's TPP as a future project. Reinstatement of freight rail service would preclude transit use of the corridor.

### **Summary**

The Midtown Corridor has significant constraints for the long-term permanent location for freight rail operations due to:

- the estimated capital costs to reconstruct Hwy 55, the Hiawatha LRT line, and the Sabo pedestrian bridge would exceed \$136 million (2008)
- the complexity of engineering to retain vehicle flows on Hwy 55 as well as Lake Street, LRT operations, bicycle and pedestrian movements

### **MNS SUB ALIGNMENT THROUGH ST. LOUIS PARK**

The MNS Subdivision alignment (see Exhibit 4) was the preferred alignment when Hwy 55/Hiawatha Avenue was upgraded and freight rail service in the Midtown Corridor was severed. In 2001, the St. Louis Park Railroad Advisory Task Force developed a position statement that included language agreeing to accept freight rail relocation along the MNS line at such time as the freight rail was displaced from the Kenilworth Corridor by mass transit.

Coming from the west, TCWR would operate on their own tracks before passing onto the CPR owned tracks of the Bass Lake Sub, then heading north on to CPR's MNS Sub through St. Louis Park and then onto BNSF's Wayzata Sub heading east into downtown Minneapolis toward the Twins Ballpark site. For this alignment, a connection between the Bass Lake Sub and the MNS Sub is needed on the south side of St. Louis Park (see Exhibit 5) and a connection between the MNS Sub and Wayzata Sub is needed on the north side (formerly existed and was known as the Iron Triangle; see Exhibit 6). For TCWR's southbound move onto the MNS Sub to the Port of Savage, a new south connection would be made from the Bass Lake Sub to the MNS Sub.

TCWR would be able to operate on this alignment in a very similar fashion to how they currently run through the Kenilworth Corridor. They would have the same connections with other railroads except for the more efficient southbound move onto CPR's MNS Sub. The major change would be the elimination



EXHIBIT 4



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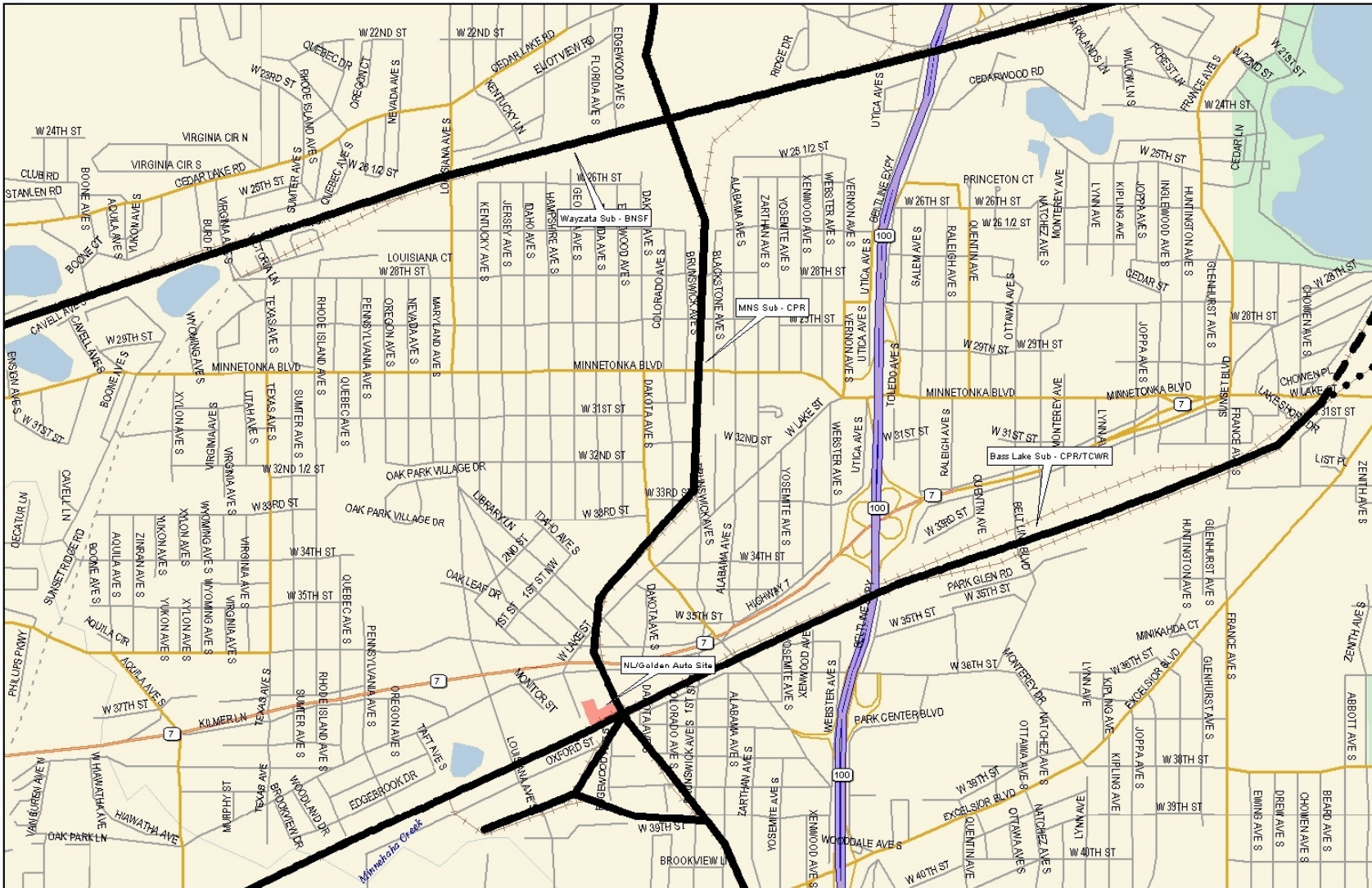




EXHIBIT 5



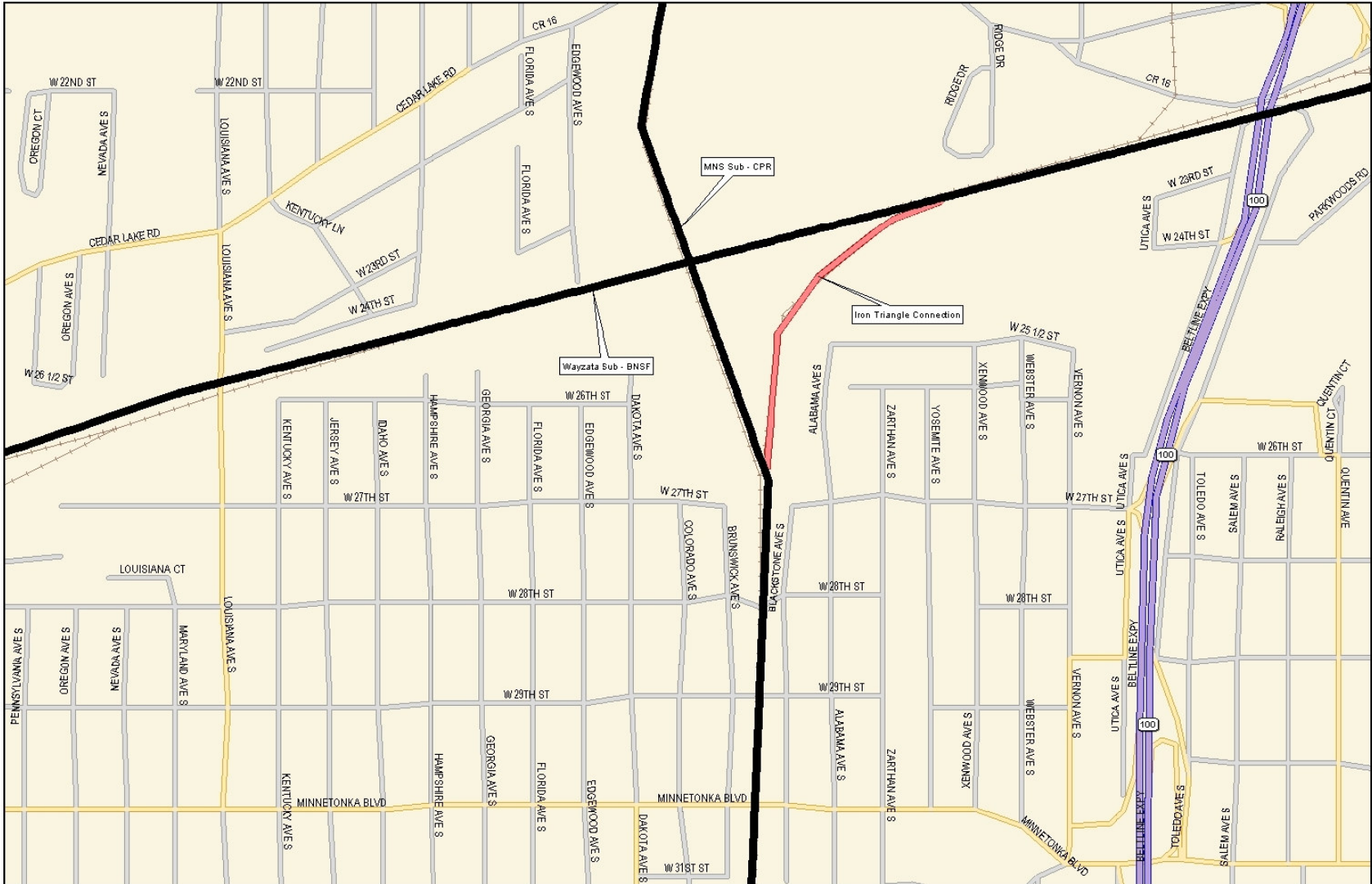
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EXHIBIT 6



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of the north connection to the switching wye in the Skunk Hollow area while leaving the south end of the wye in place to serve one customer at the end of the track west of Louisiana Blvd. This would eliminate all blocking operations for the southbound move with the only necessary stoppage of trains being needed for the switch into the one customer west of Louisiana Blvd. This through movement southbound would eliminate the banging cars, screeching wheels, and whistle blowing from the switching operations needed for their current move southbound (which has been slow for a couple of years but could pick up at any time).

CPR currently runs through St. Louis Park on the MNS Sub with two trains per day on jointed track. With this alignment, additional TCWR trains would be running on the MNS Sub. However, due to the condition of the track on the MNS Sub, it would need to be upgraded to welded rail to accommodate TCWR's heavier trains. The welded rail would eliminate the wheel clatter when wheels pass over the rail joints. It would provide a smooth ride and thus eliminate much of the wheel noise associated with the current jointed rail.

Through discussions with TCW staff it was determined that to minimize construction costs, maintenance requirements, and operational requirements for this alignment, a maximum grade of 0.8%, a maximum curvature for the northbound Bass Lake Sub to MNS Sub connection of 8.0 degrees, and a maximum curvature of 9.5 degrees for the southbound connection were chosen. These grades and curves will allow TCWR to run its existing trains using its existing power to accomplish its movements. This alignment is approximately 0.4 miles longer than the route through the Kenilworth Corridor. These grades, curves, and added length will present additional maintenance requirements and great operating costs compared to straight track, but it can be operated on similar to the way it is today.

The MNS Sub will connect with the Wayzata Sub at a point approximately 2.5 miles west of Cedar Lake Junction. Cedar Lake Junction is where the Bass Lake Sub (and the Kenilworth Corridor) connects with BNSF's Wayzata Sub. In the short term TCWR will run as it currently does and continue on east past the Twins Ballpark site and on to St. Paul. However, as mentioned earlier, if additional passenger rail projects continue to compete for track capacity in the area of the Twins Ballpark, TCWR has the option of running north on the MNS Sub to CPR's Humboldt Yard to get into Minneapolis and St. Paul. This route presents flexibility that can be taken advantage of in the future.

In addition to the work involved with the construction of the new alignment, due to the removal of the storage track in the Skunk Hollow area, a new siding would need to be built for TCWR west of the Twin Cities area. TCWR has some locations in mind and would choose a location if this alignment was chosen. The cost of this storage track is included in the cost estimate.

## **Summary**

The MNS Sub has fewer constraints than the other alternatives and is therefore a feasible alignment for the long-term permanent location for freight rail operations:

- provision for short-term operations and flexibility for freight rail expansion in the long-term if rerouting freight trains through Humboldt Yard is necessary
- opportunity to mitigate an existing freight rail corridor to minimize noise and vibration impacts to adjacent uses
- previous findings that the MNS line provides the preferred alternative for freight rail
- greater operating costs and increased maintenance for TCWR due to grade and curve
- funding needed for relocation and mitigation

## **CHASKA CUT-OFF**

The Chaska Cut-Off was a route that existed in the past when the line was under ownership of the Milwaukee Road. The alternate route that was looked at started just east of Cologne and followed Hwy 212 for 4 miles before veering southeast and then turning northeast back into town and paralleling where the current Hwy 212 exists in town. It then turned back southeast, crossed the existing Hwy 212 and cut through the neighborhood southeast of downtown Chaska. After passing the Carver County Courthouse and Mini Park it continues southeast before crossing the Minnesota River and paralleling the bluff to the east until it met UP's tracks in Shakopee.

The new Chaska Cut-Off alternative would cross over Hwy 212 and parallel the highway until it was northeast of downtown. Once out of town, it would swing back to the southeast where it would cross the river and then tie into UP's tracks on the east side of the Minnesota River (see Exhibit 7)

There are a number of issues that need to be accounted for in this alternative. Firstly, there is a need for a railroad bridge over the Minnesota River and therefore a new one would need to be constructed. Secondly, between Hwy 212 and the Minnesota River, a number of small bridges and or embankment would need to be constructed through a wetland area. Mn/DOT is trying to eliminate at-grade crossings from its Trunk Highway system, therefore the crossing of Hwy 212 would need to be a grade separation which would impact the downtown Chaska area.

### **Summary**

The Chaska Cut-Off has significant constraints for the long-term permanent location for freight rail due to:

- major operational deficiencies for TCWR
- lack of ability to interchange with BNSF, MNNR, CPR, UP, and have access to the Port of Savage and the Port of Camden in Minneapolis.
- complicated alignment and connections to existing railroads

## **FORMER RAILROAD ALIGNMENT ALONG HWY 169 IN ST. LOUIS PARK AND HOPKINS**

There exists an old railroad bed that is faintly visible on aerial photographs of St. Louis Park and Hopkins along TH 169 (see Exhibit 8). This was an old BNSF track that has been developed into housing and a pedestrian trail. This alignment would require the removal of 11 residences and one apartment building on the former right of way and would require reconfiguring the grade separation at TH 169 and Excelsior Blvd. Additionally it would create additional traffic issues on Excelsior Blvd due to a new at-grade crossing. The TH 5/Minnetonka Blvd bridge over the old right of way has been replaced and no longer has the clearance underneath to accommodate a train. The existing pedestrian trail would need to be relocated if new track is installed.

### **Summary**

The Former Railroad Alignment Along Hwy 169 has significant constraints for the long-term permanent location for freight rail due to:

- the number and type of property acquisitions/displacements required
- potential impacts to the transportation system for both roads and trails construction costs of \$120 million (2008)



# EXHIBIT 7



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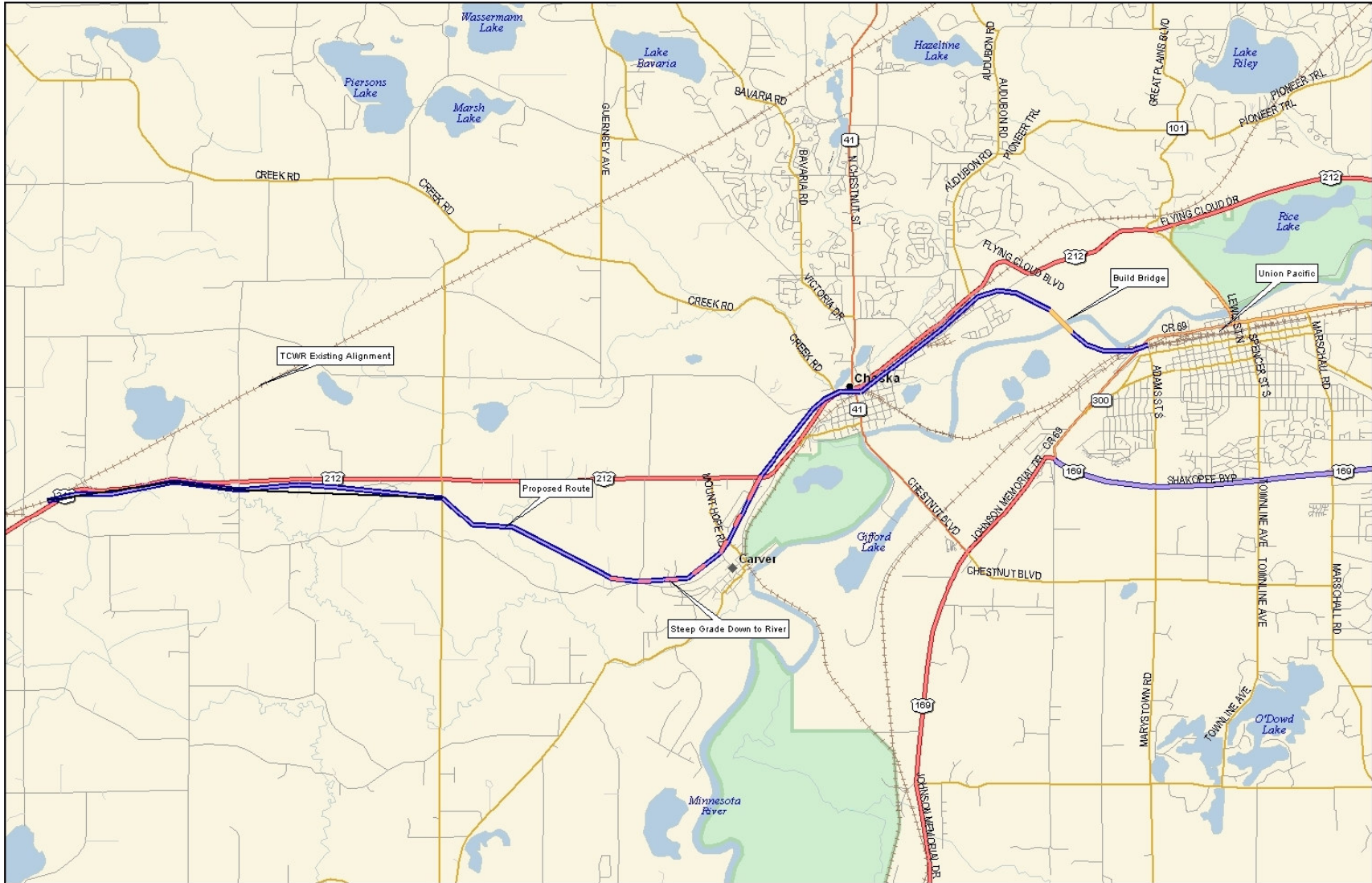
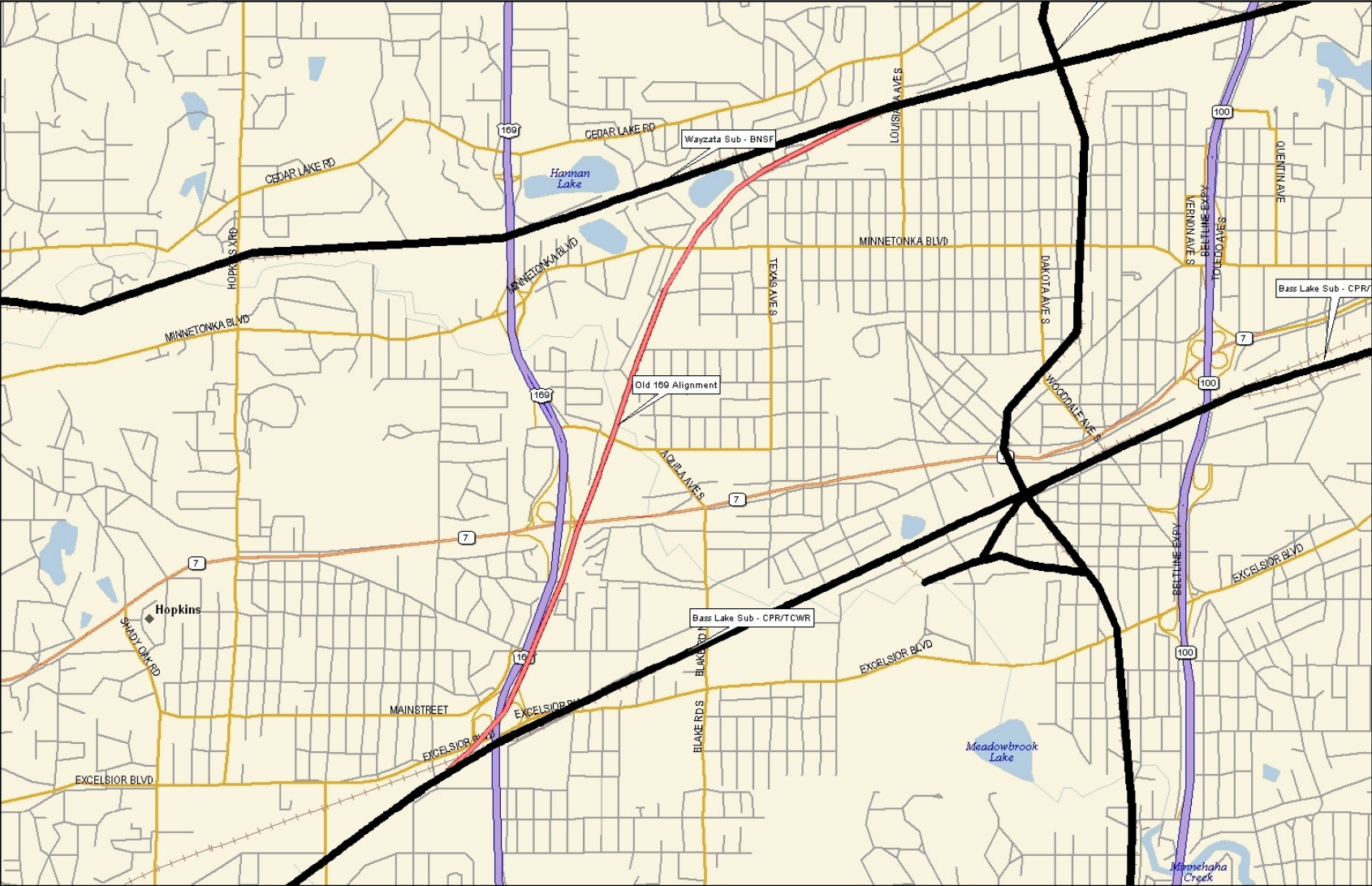


EXHIBIT 8



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## **WESTERN MN CONNECTION WITH BNSF**

TCWR connects with BNSF in Appleton, MN on the west end of its system (see Exhibit 9). It is feasible that TCWR could run all of its rail traffic out the west end of its system and back to the cities via BNSF. However, that severely limits TCWR's competitive advantage of being able to connect with BNSF and CPR essentially holding them to BNSF rates. TCWR was purchased from CPR with the intention of being able to serve the river terminals at Camden and Savage and interchange with CPR, MNNR and UP.

Running all of their traffic to the west also complicates traffic that they currently run on the Minnesota Prairie Line (MPLI) just south of TCWR's mainline in central Minnesota. They would need to run all of their traffic east to Norwood before running the locomotive power around them and pulling them out to the west before heading back east again. This essentially doubles the miles they are hauled on their system and adds additional time getting to the Twin Cities markets. Their short turnaround times of rail cars to the Twin Cities market is a big competitive advantage that would no longer exist for them.

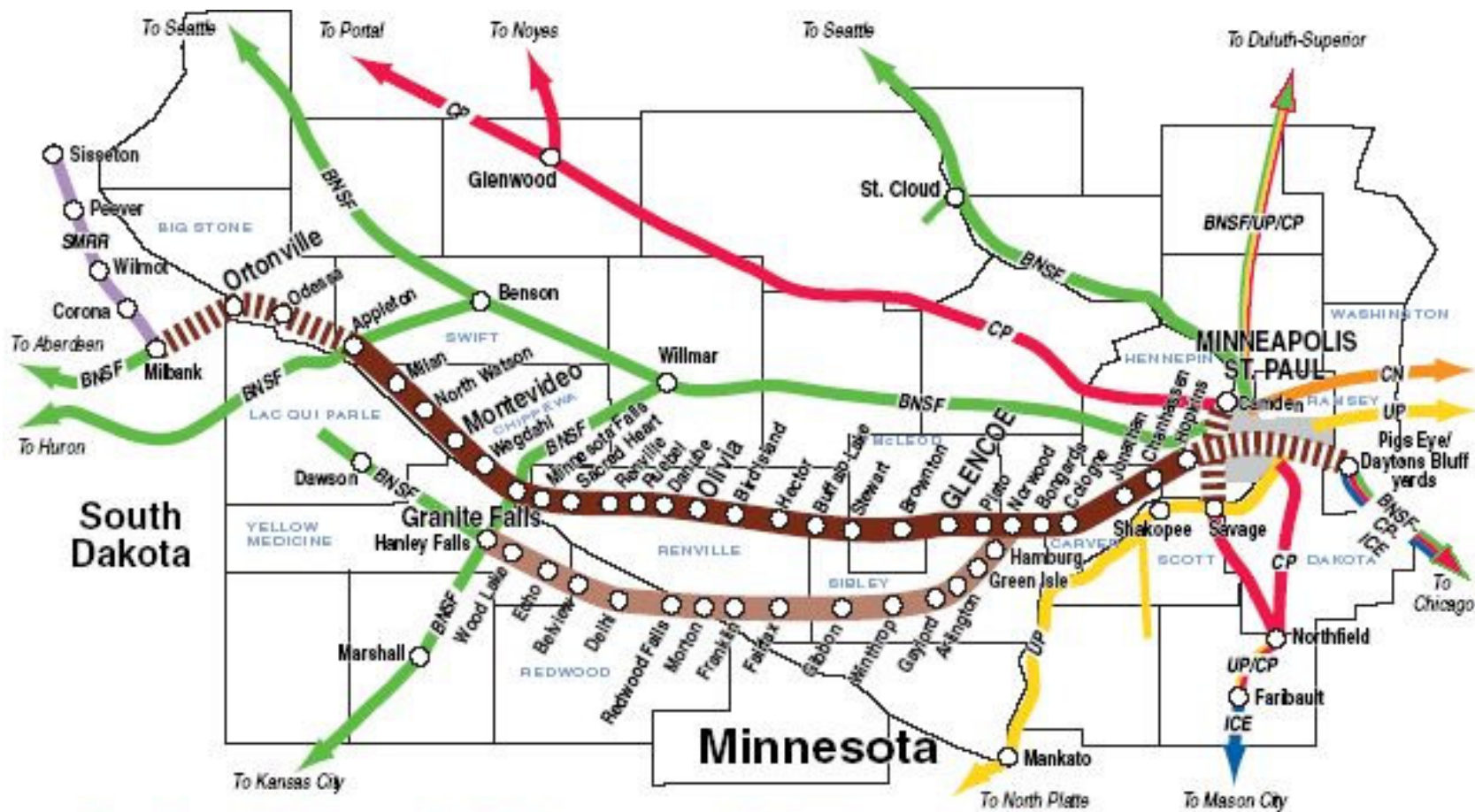
At the moment, the track west of Granite Falls isn't in good enough condition to be able to handle the heavy coal train and ethanol traffic that would need to come in and go out to the west. That stretch of track would have to be upgraded to accommodate the heavier loads it would be hauling.

### **Summary**

The Western MN Connection with BNSF creates operating inefficiencies for TCWR.

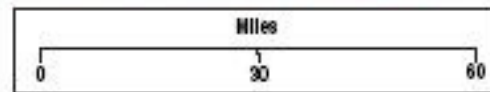


EXHIBIT 9



## Twin Cities & Western Railroad Company

-  Twin Cities & Western
-  Minnesota Prairie Line
-  Trackage rights





## **SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL ALIGNMENTS**

### **KENILWORTH CORRIDOR**

#### ***Benefits***

- Current alignment used by freight rail today

#### ***Considerations***

- Alignment was intended to be temporary, past its planned lifespan
- Potential future transit use of the corridor
- Requires construction of a freight rail bridge over Hwy 100 in St. Louis Park, increasing costs and creating environmental issues for that project
- Compounds future congestion issues in the Target Field area
- Limits freight rail expansion through the Minneapolis Transportation Interchange area

### **MIDTOWN CORRIDOR**

#### ***Benefits***

- Former freight rail alignment used prior to Hwy 55/Hiawatha Avenue reconstruction

#### ***Considerations***

- Significant construction impacts including reconstruction of the new Hiawatha LRT bridge, construction of a new freight rail bridge, lowering of Hwy 55/Hiawatha Avenue and reconstruction of the new Sabo pedestrian bridge north of 28<sup>th</sup> Street
- Construction is highly complex and would require numerous permits from federal and state agencies as well as agreements from the private freight rail companies

### **MNS SUB ALIGNMENT through St. Louis Park**

#### ***Benefits***

- Was the planned permanent alignment for freight rail when the Midtown Corridor connection was severed
- Would allow TCWR the same connections they have today
- Track upgrades would eliminate wheel noise
- Would eliminate the need for blocking operations for the southbound move
- Allows for future flexibility to make northern connections and bypass the Minneapolis Transportation Interchange should that area become too congested
- St. Louis Park received Environmental Response funds to clean up the National Lead/Golden Auto site in order to reserve property for the freight connection
- Removes at-grade freight rail crossing at Wooddale Avenue, Beltline Boulevard, and Cedar Lake Parkway

#### ***Considerations***

- Commercial/Industrial property in St. Louis Park would be needed to build connection
- Requires the closure of 29<sup>th</sup> Street railroad crossing
- Would require a new siding to be built for TCWR west of the Twin Cities
- Retains future congestion issues in the Target Field area while on BNSF's Wayzata Sub
- Limits freight rail expansion through the Minneapolis Transportation Interchange area

### **CHASKA CUT-OFF**

#### ***Benefits***

- Takes rail traffic out of Minneapolis Transportation Interchange area

#### ***Considerations***

- Requires construction of a railroad bridge over the Minnesota River and a number of small bridges or embankment through a wetland area.
- Does not allow access to the Port of Camden or the ability to interchange with lines other than UP
- TCWR is unwilling to accept the major operating deficiencies that this route would create.
- Requires property acquisitions/displacements in Chaska.
- Requires a new rail bridge over the river

### **FORMER RAILROAD ALIGNMENT along Hwy 169**

#### ***Benefits***

- Relatively flat grade through area

#### ***Considerations***

- Requires the removal of new housing developments and a pedestrian trail that have replaced the track.
- Requires reconfiguring the grade separation at Hwy 169 and Excelsior Blvd., creating a new at-grade crossing at Excelsior Blvd.
- Requires replacing the Hwy 5/Minnetonka Blvd. bridge to allow clearance underneath to accommodate trains.

### **WESTERN MN CONNECTION with BNSF**

#### ***Benefits***

- Takes rail traffic out of Minneapolis Transportation Interchange area

#### ***Considerations***

- Limits TCWR's competitive advantage of being able to connect with BNSF and CPR
- Complicates traffic that TCWR currently runs on the Minnesota Prairie Line, doubling the miles that are hauled on the system and adding additional time to get to Twin Cities Markets
- Requires upgraded track west of Granite Falls

## **COST ESTIMATES**

The costs estimates associated with the alternatives can be seen in Exhibit 10. These costs are planning level estimates only. The Kenilworth Corridor and MNS Sub routes used in the St. Louis Park Railroad Study served as the basis for the cost estimates. Cost estimates for the Midtown Corridor, Chaska Cut-Off, Old Railroad Alignment along Hwy 169 and the Western Connection were developed by TKDA as part of this study.

The rehab costs associated with Kenilworth Corridor include upgrading it to a condition in which it can be considered a permanent home for TCWR and CPR, including new track and structures from Louisiana Avenue in St. Louis Park to Cedar Lake Junction. The TH 100 freight railroad bridge is also included in the costs of the Kenilworth Corridor option. The estimated cost was provided by Mn/DOT and is said to include the bridge and the additional costs for the TH 100 project that are associated with constructing the freight railroad bridge. These are Mn/DOT's costs, but are included due to being an additional alignment cost. If the MNS Sub alignment is chosen, Mn/DOT has committed to use funds intended for the freight rail bridge for rail relocation and mitigation in St. Louis Park.

The MNS Corridor's estimate was meant to provide an estimate of what was needed to perform only the construction as it was discussed with TCWR. Costs associated with noise or other mitigation were not included in the estimates, aside from the 30% contingency.

### **EXHIBIT 10**

<b>Alignment</b>		<b>Cost*</b>
<b>1</b>	Kenilworth Corridor - Existing Alignment	\$20,000,000 - \$120,000,000^
<b>2</b>	Midtown Corridor	\$136,000,000
<b>3</b>	MNS Sub Alignment through St. Louis Park	\$48,000,000
<b>4</b>	Chaska Cut-Off	\$105,000,000
<b>5</b>	Old Railroad Alignment along Hwy 169	\$120,000,000
<b>6</b>	Western MN Connection with BNSF	\$60,000,000

\*costs include 30% contingency to account for unknown factors and mitigation of issues  
^\$120,000,000 includes property takings associated with a shared Kenilworth Corridor according to analysis performed by HDR and SWLRT Group.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The discussion group will forward this report to Mn/DOT, with a recommendation for a preferred freight rail alignment, for inclusion in the Statewide Freight Rail Study Plan. Additional engineering work and public outreach will need to be done on the preferred alignment to determine impacts in need of mitigation and to identify mitigation options. Hennepin County will work with the discussion group to identify funding options for further study of the preferred alignment and for future construction and mitigation costs.

Going forward, in early 2010, the preferred alignment will be chosen and an environmental analysis and preliminary engineering will be performed. Once public involvement and impact mitigation is complete, final design can commence with construction to begin shortly thereafter.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Hennepin County Staff would like to recommend to the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority to conduct the environmental and preliminary engineering analysis for the preferred option along the MNS Sub through St. Louis Park.