



# Extending TRACKS

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## Public open houses set for June 13 on freight rail issue

Two public open houses will be held June 13 on engineering concepts for resolving the location of freight rail in the design of Southwest LRT (Green Line extension).

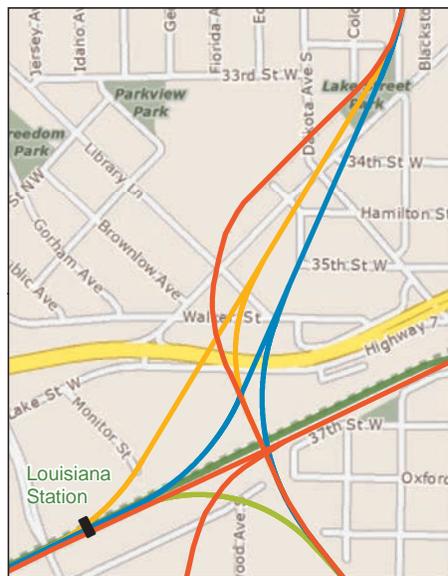
(See open house scheduling details on page 7.)

The concepts explore various possibilities for co-locating freight and LRT tracks in Minneapolis, as well as options to reroute freight rail traffic in St. Louis Park to make way for LRT tracks. The relocation concepts to be presented will be different than the one described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

The Federal Transit Administration, which would fund half the \$1.25 billion line, directed the Metropolitan Council's Southwest LRT Project Office to design for both the freight rail co-location and relocation options prior to recommending one. The Metropolitan Council is then expected to decide the freight rail issue by late summer following input from citizens, businesses and the various committees.

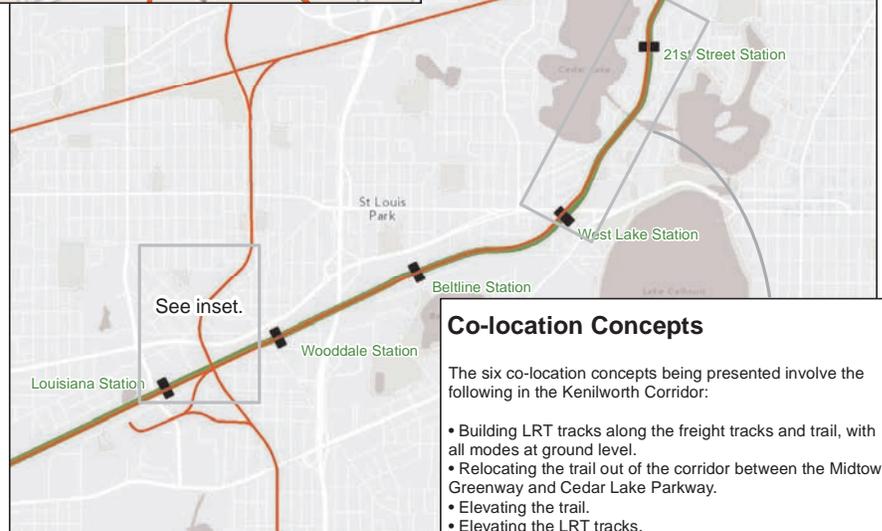
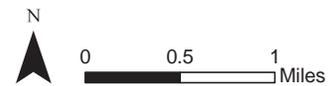
### How engineers developed their concepts

In addition to reviewing public comments on the DEIS, project engineers and consulting engineers have met a number of times since the beginning of the year with technical staff from the affected parties. These meetings involved technical staff from BNSF, Canadian Pacific Railway (CP) and Twin Cities & Western Railroad (TC&W), as



#### Relocation Concepts

- Existing Freight Rail
- Brunswick West
- Brunswick Central
- Southern Connection
- Proposed LRT Route



#### Co-location Concepts

The six co-location concepts being presented involve the following in the Kenilworth Corridor:

- Building LRT tracks along the freight tracks and trail, with all modes at ground level.
- Relocating the trail out of the corridor between the Midtown Greenway and Cedar Lake Parkway.
- Elevating the trail.
- Elevating the LRT tracks.
- Building a shallow tunnel for LRT tracks.
- Building deep twin tunnels, with one tunnel for each LRT track.

# Extending TRACKS

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## Public provides needed feedback at May open houses

The public provided feedback at three open houses in mid-May on a short list of potential locations for the Southwest LRT Project's operations and maintenance facility.

Public comments at the open houses in Eden Prairie, Hopkins and St. Louis Park will be summarized and shared with members of the project's Business and Community Advisory Committees, Corridor Management Committee and the Metropolitan Council to help them understand local issues around each site as they provide their thoughts.

With the benefit of input from citizens, businesses and the various committees, project staff will narrow the list to two or three sites and seek more public feedback before making a recommendation to the Metropolitan Council. The Met Council will choose the preferred site later this year.

"Each site has its challenges. The corridor is in a developed urban and suburban setting," said Jim Alexander, director of design and engineering. The goal is to find a site that is both operationally efficient and can be made to fit into its surroundings.

The maintenance facility will house 180 permanent operator and maintenance jobs and is where light rail vehicles will be cleaned, stored and undergo light maintenance.

### Short list comes from list of 18 potential sites

In late February, the Southwest Project Office presented a list of 18 potential sites for the maintenance facility in response to comments received on the four sites considered in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

*OMF continued on next page*

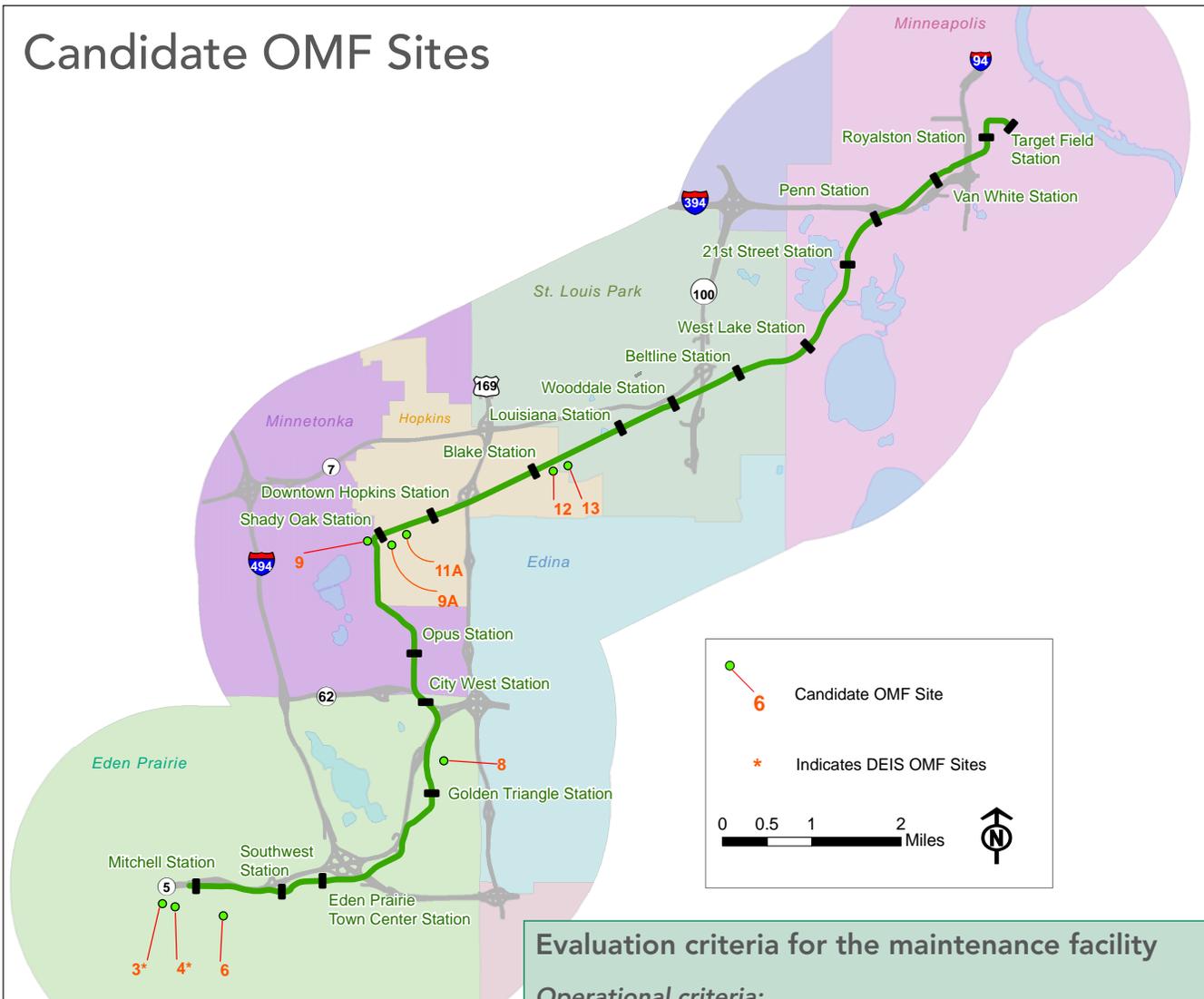


ABOVE: The operation and maintenance facility for METRO's Blue Line (formerly Hiawatha LRT) performs all the duties that will be performed at the maintenance facilities for the Green Line and Southwest LRT (Green Line extension), as well as heavier maintenance.



ABOVE: Designers incorporated suggestions from residents and businesses in Lowertown St. Paul into the operation and maintenance facility for the Central Corridor LRT (Green Line). Its red brick exterior matches surrounding buildings in the historic district. Lots of windows were included to give the building a strong street presence. The facility will primarily clean and store light rail vehicles, perform some light maintenance and is where light rail operators will report to work.

## Candidate OMF Sites



### Evaluation criteria for the maintenance facility

#### Operational criteria:

- Effective site configuration
- Close proximity to the mainline
- Good connection to the mainline
- Access for the operations staff

#### Site characteristic evaluation criteria:

- Adjacent land-use compatibility
- Transit Oriented Development/mixed use/economic development considerations
- Zoning
- Site and facilities cost: facilities, grading, utilities, soils
- Real estate acquisition: cost, complexity, legalities
- Relocation cost: displaced occupants and uses
- Environmental impact: wetlands, hazardous materials
- Cultural resources: cultural, historical
- Stormwater management: drainage, treatment

### OMF from previous page

After receiving feedback about the 18 sites from the project's committees of residents and business representatives, Hennepin County officials and officials of the cities on the Southwest LRT route, staff narrowed that list to seven sites that were presented at the mid-May open houses.

"The open houses were opportunities for project office staff to learn more of the local perspective from potentially impacted businesses and residents and address their concerns during preliminary engineering and design and ultimately develop a better solution," said Sam O'Connell, manager of public involvement for the Southwest LRT Project.

## Public open houses set for Southwest LRT station locations

Six open houses for the public to learn and provide feedback on proposed locations for all 17 Southwest LRT (Green Line Extension) stations will be held in mid to late June.

(See map of proposed station locations on next page.)

Before finalizing station locations, project designers and engineers would like to know which of the options being considered for station locations would enhance connections to neighborhoods and promote future development opportunities.

Staff will summarize and share the feedback with the project's business and community advisory committees and corridor management committee as well as the Metropolitan Council to help them understand the issues around stations as they provide their input.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement identified the station locations to the nearest cross streets. Now, project designers and engineers need to fix the locations of station platforms, the roadway, pedestrian, bike and bus connections to the stations and the locations of park-and-rides and kiss-and-rides in relation to the stations.

The public is encouraged to attend the open houses held in the city where they live. Here is the schedule by city:

### Minneapolis

All Minneapolis Stations – June 17, 8-9:30 a.m., Metro Transit's Fred T. Heywood Office Building, 560 Sixth Ave N, Minneapolis. For directions, see: <http://goo.gl/maps/uDQZG>.

All Minneapolis Stations – June 17, 4:30-7 p.m., Harrison Recreation Center, 503 Irving Ave. N., Minneapolis. For directions, see: <http://goo.gl/maps/UHtBP>.

All Minneapolis Stations – June 24, 4:30-7 p.m., Kenwood Community Center, 2101 Franklin Ave. W, Minneapolis. For directions, see: <http://goo.gl/maps/oguGh>.

### St. Louis Park

All St. Louis Park stations – June 20, 4:30-7 p.m., Beth El Synagogue, 5224 W. 26th St., St. Louis Park. For directions, see: <http://goo.gl/maps/aRVEP>.

### Minnetonka/Hopkins

All Minnetonka/Hopkins stations – June 18, 4:30-7 p.m., Hopkins Center for the Arts, 1111 Mainstreet, Hopkins. For directions, see: <http://goo.gl/maps/oG0SK>.

### Eden Prairie

All Eden Prairie stations – June 26, 4:30-7 p.m., Eden Prairie City Center, 8080 Mitchell Rd., Eden Prairie. For directions, see: <http://goo.gl/maps/zpK5l>.

Individuals who require assistance to participate should contact Daren Nyquist, Southwest LRT community outreach coordinator, at [Daren.Nyquist@metrotransit.org](mailto:Daren.Nyquist@metrotransit.org) or 612-373-3894. Requests for special assistance should be made as soon as possible, in advance of the scheduled meeting.

## Firm that worked on Denver LRT line chosen for SWLRT

The same engineering firm that conducted the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Denver's Southwest Corridor light rail line will do the same for the Southwest LRT (Green Line extension) in the Twin Cities.

The Metropolitan Council on May 1 authorized the regional administrator to award CH2M HILL of Englewood, Colo., a contract to complete the FEIS through March 31, 2015, in an amount not to exceed \$3.38 million.

A panel representing staff from the Metropolitan Council, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority and the Minnesota Department of Transportation evaluated the proposals and ranked CH2M HILL's proposal the most advantageous for the Council. The other proposer was HNTB.

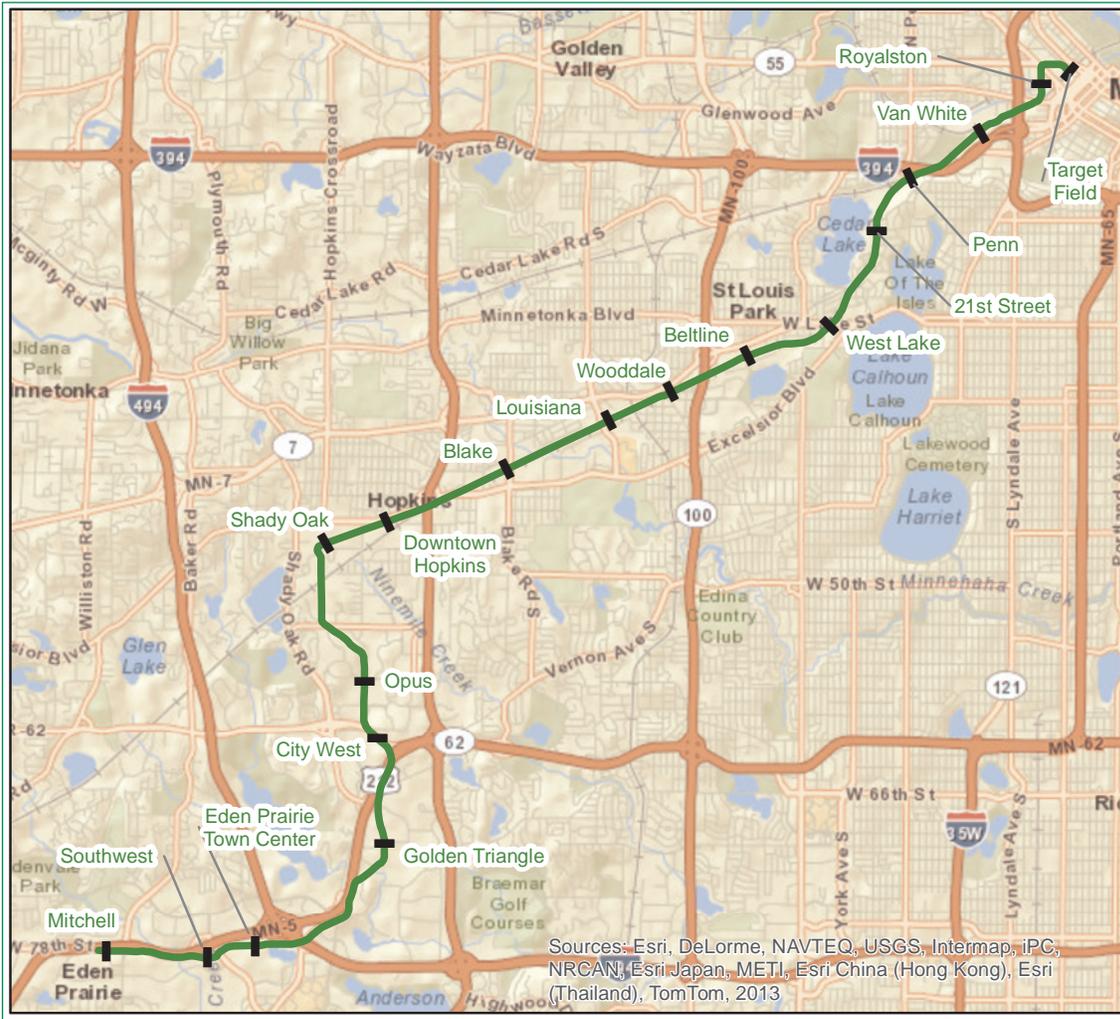
The CH2M HILL team has extensive National Environmental Policy Act and related experience on New Starts and transit projects, as well as experience in and around the project study area.

Funds are available in the Southwest LRT Project capital budget.

### Similar project for CH2M HILL

CH2M HILL prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and developed a fast-track FEIS for the Denver Regional Transportation District. It worked closely with the design consultant and incorporated environmental work

*FEIS continued on page 6*



Proposed Southwest LRT (Green Line Extension) station locations.

## Proposed Station Locations–Nearest Cross Streets

### Eden Prairie

**Mitchell Road:** Hwy 212 & Mitchell Rd.

**Southwest:**

Technology Dr. & Eden Prairie Center Dr.

**Eden Prairie Town Center:**

Technology Dr. & Flying Cloud Dr.

**Golden Triangle:**

70th St. W & Shady Oak Rd.

**City West:** 62nd St. W & Shady Oak Rd.

### Minnetonka

**Opus:** Bren Rd. E & Bren Rd. W

### Hopkins

**Shady Oak Road:**

5th St. S & 16th Ave S

**Downtown Hopkins:**

Excelsior Blvd. & Eighth Ave. S

**Blake Road:** Blake Rd. & Second St. NE

### St. Louis Park

**Louisiana Avenue:**

Louisiana Ave. & Oxford St.

**Wooddale Avenue:**

Wooddale Ave. & 36th St. W

**Beltline Boulevard:** Beltline Blvd. &

Park Glen Rd.

### Minneapolis

**West Lake Street:**

Lake St. W & Chowne/Abbott Ave. S

**21st Street:**

21st St. W & Thomas Ave. S

**Penn Avenue:** I-394 & Penn Ave. S

**Van White Boulevard:**

I-394 & Dunwoody Blvd./Van White Blvd.

**Royalston Avenue:**

Royalston Ave. & Holden St. N

Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, USGS, Intermap, IPC, NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), TomTom, 2013

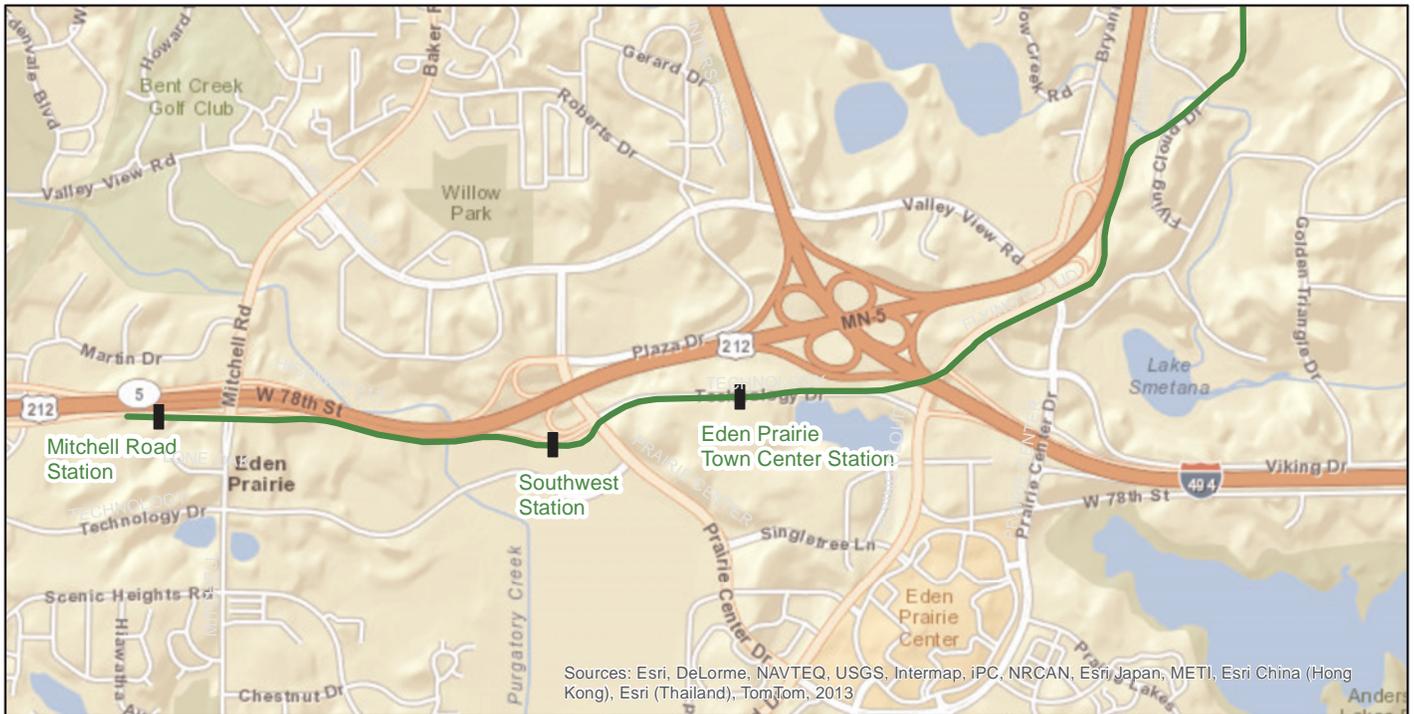
## Alignment adjustments being evaluated for Eden Prairie

The Southwest Project Office staff and consulting engineers are evaluating alignment and station adjustments on the western end of the line.

The goal is to best serve the identified passenger markets for Town Center, Southwest and Mitchell Road stations, the three westernmost stations in Eden Prairie.

The city of Eden Prairie proposed the alignment adjustments to bring the line closer to the city's town center and to better accommodate more passengers on the western end and minimize impacts to residents and businesses.

The proposed adjustments would shift the line slightly from what was proposed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.



Eden Prairie alignment adjustments now under discussion include an option that would shift the currently proposed light rail alignment (shown in green above) to the south, nearer to the Eden Prairie Center mall.

### FEIS from page 2

previously done by other subcontractors for the Southwest Corridor of Denver. That is an 8.7-mile line from Littleton to the end of the line for Denver's Central Corridor LRT system.

Critical environmental issues addressed included visual impacts of two major flyovers or train bridges, avoidance of wetlands during construction, transportation impacts and socioeconomic impacts on neighborhoods surrounding the LRT stations. Other rail projects on which CH2M HILL has worked include:

- East Link Light Rail Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Sound Transit, Seattle, Wash.: provided full array of environmental, transportation planning, engineering, public/stakeholder outreach services for proposed

18-mile LRT extension from Seattle to Bellevue and Redmond.

- Gateway Corridor Alternatives Analysis: completed work earlier this year on the corridor that overlays Interstate 94 and U.S. Highway 12 from the St. Croix River Bridge to St. Paul; recommended one alignment and two modes – Bus Rapid Transit and LRT.

## FREIGHT RAIL *from page 1*

well as technical staff from Hennepin County, the cities of St. Louis Park and Minneapolis, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Three Rivers Park District, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District and St. Louis Park School District. The purpose is to understand the challenges and opportunities presented by both co-location and relocation and to get technical input on how best to design both options.

The co-location option involves building LRT tracks next to freight rail tracks where TC&W currently operates trains along the Cedar Lake Trail in St. Louis Park and through the Kenilworth area in Minneapolis.

The relocation option involves relocating TC&W's trains to CP's Minneapolis, Northfield & Southern (MN&S) track in St. Louis Park and BNSF's Wayzata line in St. Louis Park and Minneapolis.

Both co-location and relocation options would have impacts on residences and businesses, including the freight railroads. The goal is to choose one option and design it in a way that is safe and operationally efficient for both LRT and the freight railroads and cost effective.

### Details of the co-location, relocation concepts

In no particular order, the six co-location concepts being presented involve the following in the Kenilworth Corridor in Minneapolis:

- Building LRT tracks along the freight tracks and trail, with all modes at ground level.
- Relocating the trail out of the corridor between the Midtown Greenway and Cedar Lake Parkway.
- Elevating the trail.
- Building a shallow tunnel for LRT tracks.

- Building deep twin tunnels, with one tunnel for each LRT track.
- Elevating LRT tracks.

Both relocation concepts for rerouting freight rail traffic in St. Louis Park would connect TC&W freight trains from CP's Bass Lake line to the existing MN&S line. To allow for safer movements of TC&W's long freight trains through St. Louis Park, the new reroute concepts have gentler curves and a flatter alignment than the reroute as outlined in the DEIS. In no particular order, the two concepts involve the following:

- Building freight tracks through the existing St. Louis Park High School football field, which would be relocated to reunite it with the main campus. This reroute concept is referred to as the Brunswick West freight rail relocation alignment.
- Building freight tracks that skirt the field to the east. This reroute concept is referred to as the Brunswick Central freight rail relocation alignment.

Outreach staff at the Southwest LRT Project Office is beginning to notify business owners and residents whose properties could be fully or partially acquired by any of the co-location or relocation concepts.

### What happens next?

Project engineers will present details of their concepts and seek public feedback at the two June 13 open houses. They will be held from 8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. and 4:30 to 7 p.m. in the Commons Cafeteria at Benilde-St. Margaret's School, 2501 Highway 100 South, in St. Louis Park. For directions, see: <http://goo.gl/maps/Ub9Yh>.

Individuals who require assistance to participate should contact Sophia Ginis, Southwest LRT community outreach coordinator, at [Sophia.Ginis@metrotransit.org](mailto:Sophia.Ginis@metrotransit.org) or 612-373-3895. Re-

quests for special assistance should be made as soon as possible, in advance of the scheduled meeting.

Public input at open houses will be summarized and shared with project engineers as they advance the designs. The feedback also will be shared with members of the project's business and community advisory committees, the Corridor Management Committee and the Metropolitan Council to help them understand the issues around co-location and relocation as they provide input.

Additional open houses later in June will cover stations and other project elements. (See page 4 for details.) Cost impacts of the co-location and relocation concepts will be developed and presented in midsummer.

## Upcoming Events

### June 13 Freight Rail Open Houses

8–9:30 a.m. and 4:30 to 7 p.m.  
Benilde-St. Margaret's School, 2501 Highway 100 South,  
St. Louis Park (<http://goo.gl/maps/Ub9Yh>).

### June 17 Minneapolis Station Locations Open Houses

8–9:30 a.m., Metro Transit Heywood Office Building, 560  
Sixth Ave. N, Minneapolis (<http://goo.gl/maps/uDQZG>).

4:30–7 p.m., Harrison Recreation Center, 503 Irving Ave.  
N, Minneapolis (<http://goo.gl/maps/UHtBP>).

### June 18 Minnetonka & Hopkins Station Locations Open House

4:30–7 p.m., Hopkins Center for the Arts, 1111 Main-  
street, Hopkins (<http://goo.gl/maps/oG0SK>).

### June 20 St. Louis Park Station Locations Open House

4:30–7 p.m., Beth El Synagogue, 5224 W. 26th St., St.  
Louis Park (<http://goo.gl/maps/aRVEP>).

### June 24 Minneapolis Station Locations Open House

4:30–7 p.m., Kenwood Community Center, 2101 Franklin  
Ave. W, Minneapolis (<http://goo.gl/maps/oguGh>).

### June 26 Eden Prairie Station Locations Open House

4:30–7 p.m., Eden Prairie City Center, 8080 Mitchell Rd.,  
Eden Prairie (<http://goo.gl/maps/zpK5l>).

### Southwest Project Office

Park Place West Building  
6465 Wayzata Boulevard  
St. Louis Park, MN 55426  
[www.swlrt.org](http://www.swlrt.org)  
612.373.3800

## About the project

The Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) project (Green Line Extension) will operate from downtown Minneapolis through the southwestern suburban cities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie, passing in close proximity to the city of Edina. The proposed alignment is primarily at-grade and includes 17 new stations and approximately 15.8 miles of double track.

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, the Eden Prairie Center Mall, and the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes. Ridership in 2030 is projected at 29,660 weekday passengers. The project will interline with Central Corridor LRT (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 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 (HCRRA).