PUBLIC HEARING ON SOUTHWEST TRANSITWAY

October 20, 2009

Hennepin County Government Center

4:00 p.m.
COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: I will call to order this meeting of the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authorities hearing for -- This is a formal public hearing, and all proceedings are going to be transcribed. We are gathered here less than a month away from the opening of the Northstar Corridor, which will be open for business on November the 16th. We are meeting a little bit more than five years after the opening date of Hiawatha, which has been, by all accounts, an enormous success, far exceeding the projected ridership, and the customer acceptance has been very, very enthusiastic. So our main purpose today is to receive public comment about the Southwest Light Rail project. As a general rule, we are not going to be responding to your comments at this hearing, but, rather, we will take your comments under consideration. They will be transcribed, and your -- and we're going to take them under consideration as decisions are made about this project as it moves forward.

Just a bit of background before we begin, the project has been under study since 2002. There have been enumerable technical analyses and review by technical and policy staff from our project partners, as well as from the state and the federal levels.
These things are complicated. There are lots of people who are involved. We are at a point where information on cost ridership, potential environmental impacts and the like, we believe that that information is sufficient to make a determination on what the best route would be for Southwest, so that we can proceed then with the design.

The hallmark of the work of this project has been strong, sustained and comprehensive public involvement. We've held more than 25 open houses, five public hearings, made presentations at a hundred neighborhood and business groups and have strived to inform the public with our Web site, newsletters and outreach materials. We consider public involvement to be essential to support good decisions as this project moves forward. This hearing is a part of our effort to involve the public and to make sure that we hear and understand public concerns and viewpoints. Specific to the proposed preferred alternative for the Southwest LRT project on October the 14th, the Southwest Policy Advisory Committee, the PAC, voted to recommend that the LRT 3A option Opus/Golden Triangle/Kenilworth alternative be selected as the locally preferred alternative for the Southwest LRT line. The 3A was recommended by the PAC because it is the alternative
that, in its judgment, best meets the purpose and needs of the project as expressed by the goals of improving mobility, providing a cost-effective and efficient travel option and preserving the environment, while protecting the quality of life and supporting economic development. The Southwest PAC recommendation has been forwarded to the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority, and we are having this hearing today so that we can hear from the public prior to making a recommendation on the locally preferred alternative, which will then be forwarded to the Metropolitan Council for a final decision here within the Twin Cities region.

As we go into the hearing, and I'm going to turn to Commissioner Dorfman for comments before we begin, those --

COMMISSIONER DORFMAN: Oh, you are.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: -- those who wish to speak tonight have signed up. We're going to call on those individuals first according to the list that we have here available. And is there a list available?

CLERK: I don't have --

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Is there a list?

Okay, we have a list. Ms. Walker will get that.
If you have not signed up but wish to speak, please find one of our staff people. Katie Walker is there or others, and you can get yourself on the list if you wish to speak here today.

Finally, in order to make sure we hear from everyone, we're going to limit comments to three minutes. That's been -- that's our usual procedure. We've got a timer on the podium, green, yellow, red; you get the picture. Go ahead with green. At two and a half minutes you're going to see yellow, which means not slow down but speed up, and try to be done at the three-minute point, at which the red light comes on. There is no trapdoor, but we will try to enforce the three-minute limit so that everybody has an equal opportunity to speak today.

When you come to the mic, please state your name and address and then offer your comments, so -- And with respect to provide respectful hearing of all speakers, we would ask the audience members from -- to refrain from commenting or applause. We want everyone here to feel free to make their comments as they see fit so that -- and to do so in an open environment where everyone is treated fairly and equally.

I will turn the podium over to Commissioner Dorfman, who has provided leadership on this project.
since that first day in 2002 and has -- has provided leadership in bringing us to this moment that we have here today. So Commissioner Dorfman.

COMMISSIONER DORFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to thank everybody for coming. I would note that Commissioner Callison first has -- first as a city councilman --

MS. CALLISON: Correct.

COMMISSIONER DORFMAN: -- has served on the PAC for a long time and then has continued as county commissioner and, you know, this is basically in some ways a continuation of the public hearing we had in Hopkins, which was also sponsored by the Rail Authority, and we heard from many, many people there and it was very helpful, and so this is really our opportunity to hear from you. And then our plan is to take up the policy, both the Technical Advisory Committee and the Policy Advisory Committee recommendations, before the Rail Authority on November 3rd. So thank you all for coming.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Ms. Callison, do you wish to add anything?

MS. CALLISON: No. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Anyone else? (No response)
COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: All right. Then we'll proceed with the list of people who have signed up ahead of time. First is Kent Warden representing BOMA.

MR. WARDEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Welcome.

MR. WARDEN: Thank you. My name is Kent Warden. I represent Greater Minneapolis BOMA, Building Owners and Managers Association, representing commercial property in downtown Minneapolis and throughout the length of the Southwest Corridor. We're here today to speak very decidedly in favor of the route option 3A. I have been following this process very closely; a number of advantages to that, a number of disadvantages to anything that would bring it down Nicollet and either go on the Nicollet Mall or, alternatively, on 11th and 12th Street. I have submitted a written statement to that effect detailing all of the rationale further, but I just wanted to restate that for emphasis today. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: All right. Thank you very much. Any questions?

(No response)

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you.

Next, Russ Adams. Mr. Adams, welcome.
MR. ADAMS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, members of the commission. I do have copies of my speech if that's easier for the note taker, and I'll leave those on this table.

My name is Russ Adams. I'm the director of the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability. It's a coalition of 25 organizations that work on environmental, economic and social justice issues in our region's growth and development patterns. The alliance is coconvening a table of transit, housing and neighborhood and faith-based groups interested in regional transitways. A number of our partners at that table have actually come out in support of the 3A Kenilworth Corridor alignment. These partners' organizations include -- and you'll be hearing from some of them tonight -- the Harrison Neighborhood Association, ISAIAH, MICAH, and Transit For Livable Communities.

As the county and other public agencies review routing options for the Southwest LRT, and down the line as you continue stationary and planning and community engagement efforts, we'd like you to give careful consideration to a couple of core principles. First, there is a remarkable interdependence of people in places along a transitway. Transportation links
people to places where they live, work, learn, shop and receive medical care and play and recreate. This means that transit policy has less to do with moving people efficiently from point A to point B than it does with providing people with greater access and more choices. It allows us to erase years of community isolation from transportation improvements and it empowers people to engage in creative placemaking if we have the wisdom to deploy a comprehensive community engagement strategy. And I think the county is on the right track and there are lots of opportunities to do that. One community inclusion example that I would point to would be the opportunity to engage the significant Somali community that lives along the Southwest transitways, particularly out in the suburbs, as well as other communities of color. We have a number of partner groups interested in doing that and working with the county and local cities, particularly as stationary planning proceeds, and we'd be happy to partner with you on that.

Another piece that we'd like to point out is infrastructure investment is increasingly being seen as a way to stimulate our economy and to provide access to needed jobs to impacted communities. We have an unprecedented opportunity to ensure that the public
investment along the Southwest LRT results in benefits that are distributed equally and equitably, especially in low income communities and communities of color. The alliance has been very active in a campaign called HIRE Minnesota, trying to hold Mn/DOT accountable to their minority and women hiring goals. In 2007 and 2008, they missed 60 percent of their goals. We think we can do better than that on the Southwest LRT. And, in fact, through the leadership of this county we have seen better results on minority and women hiring goals at the Twins ballpark stadium. Let's use the transit hub and the LRT along the Southwest LRT to bridge those efforts and continue that. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you, Mr. Adams. Thank you for the comments about the ballpark; those are very much appreciated. I would next call on former mayor of Eden Prairie, Nancy Tyra-Lukens. Mayor, welcome.

MS. TYRA-LUKENS: Thank you. Mr. Chair and members of the commission, I've been part of the Policy Advisory Committee since its inception about 2002, and the charge of the Policy Advisory Committee was to provide policy direction, to provide information regarding community concerns and issues and to
communicate with community groups and governmental organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders.

In the past seven years, we've looked at different cities and looked at comparable cities to the Twin Cities and what their transportation systems are. We've looked at different modalities that we could use along the Southwest Corridor, and we also looked at a number of alternative routes, and we discussed at length community concerns regarding the various proposed alignments. We—and by that I mean more the staff to the Policy Advisory Committee—worked hard to communicate with people through Web sites, open houses, visiting city council meetings, going to business organizations and community groups. It's been a very, very open process, and I think evidence of that is seen in two ways.

One, we started out -- I think our first meeting was at the Hopkins Depot Coffeehouse, and it was a small group. We eventually grew big enough that we had to move to the Hopkins Police Department. And as more people got interested in attending our meetings, we moved to St. Louis Park to their city council chambers.

Another piece of evidence relating to that is the fact that if you were to walk into a recent Policy
Advisory Committee meeting, you were as likely to hear somebody speaking who was not actually a policy advisor committee member as you were to hear a policy advisor committee member speaking. It was a very open process. Commissioner Dorfman was very open to having anybody speak that wanted to speak. She was very willing to take the time that we needed to get the answers that we needed. And she and Katie Walker just exhibited a lot of patience and were very accommodating.

We took a vote on the locally preferred alternative at our last PAC meeting. We had a recommendation on the 3A alternative from the Technical Advisory Committee that was a unanimous decision. Our vote was unanimous except for one negative vote and one abstention.

Before I close, one thing that I would like to say is -- it's a concern that I have regarding the naming of the corridor as the Southwest Transitway. I'm currently chair of the Commission for Southwest Transit, and already we are getting a lot of confusion from the public as to what is Southwest Transit, what is Southwest Transitway, people calling us for information about Southwest Transitway. I think the confusion could only increase in the future. I think there are advantages to having the direction as part of
the name, but we do have Bottino and Hiawatha and
Central Corridor and Red Rock which really don't tell
you what direction those routes go. So we would really
love it, it would end confusion, if when this route is
started and implemented if the name could be changed.
One name that I've heard that would kind of eliminate a
little bit of confusion is to call it Prairie to Lakes
or the Lakes to Prairie route, but that's just a
suggestion. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you,
Mayor. I would note your testimony--I don't know how
many years ago--I recall it very vividly in your
description of why the route from the depot south
should be along the freeway as opposed to along the
rail corridor because of the history of development and
how it changed between the first ring suburbs and
second ring suburbs, and that actually teed up the
issue and defined it very, very well, and I think it
has guided the recommendation since you made that
testimony back whenever that was --

MS. TYRA-LUKENS: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: -- a few years
ago.

MS. TYRA-LUKENS: Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very
much.

Next on the list is council member -- city
council member Don Sanvels from Minneapolis. Welcome,
council member.

MR. SANVELS: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair
and to the members of your committee. I'm here with
maybe a slightly different voice. You will hear many
arguments, eloquent and correct, about the logistical
and economic feasibility factors of the superiority of
the 3A alternative, Kenilworth alternative. I would
like to speak a little bit about the -- the aspect of
justice that is involved in this decision.

And when Martin Luther King talked about the
blank check that was issued to members of the American
community, he also admonished us to think that we all
inherited that obligation and that debt. It is not
just a debt created and owned by those who issued the
blank check, but it was our collective responsibility
to pay on that debt, and I'm convinced that it is a
point in times like this that that opportunity stares
us in the face. But along with that opportunity comes
the nagging reality that when these decisions are made,
the connection to that debt is often too diffuse to
recall. But I would ask you to remember today that the
inequities of our past still haunt us in real
geographic, logistical, tangible features. We're divided in north Minneapolis by the freeway and the river and way too few bridges from our neighbors. We're divided by a difficult and arduous path to downtown. We're divided to the south. How do you get to parks in the south? There's no way. And so we are kind of contained and estranged and boxed in, and we cannot deny that these are the features, the geographic and environmental features, which constitute the general picture that truncates the possibilities of our community. And now we have an opportunity to no more let justice roll down in the form of social service payments, but no longer to -- for it to be a handout but a way out, a way out to jobs, a way out to opportunity, a way out to school, a way out to visit family. And let's break with the past trends where the convenience of the well-endowed tramples the opportunities of the disadvantaged, and let's turn it on its head and say today we will make decisions to reverse our national trends of inequity which are inextricable from the day-to-day decisions, and sometimes the poignant decisions that are made at crucial moments in time, when we have to say where does a road go, where does a bridge go, where does the traffic flow? And I -- I can assure you that the
thousands of people in north Minneapolis who are hard working, enthusiastically involved in our democratic and our economic system are dying for those jobs in Eden Prairie. They want to get there and they don't want to have to do an obstacle course or a long drive with many transfers or driving a broken-down car and too expensive gas. They can just hop on that rail and find justice in a job down in the garden of Eden Prairie. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you, council member. Karen Rosar. There she is. Welcome to the Rail Authority.

MS. ROSAR: Well, that's an impossible voice to follow, Commissioner McLaughlin, Chairman McLaughlin, commissioners. My name is Karen Lee Rosar, and I represent the North Loop Neighborhood Association, and I'm a devout public transit user. The t's have been crossed and the i's have been dotted. This Southwest Light Rail Transit has been studied for years and years and years. There's reams of data and analysis that's been done which indicates one clear superior alternative, that being 3A. I would ask the -- you as the HCRRA to move that preferred alignment to Met Council so we can expeditiously build
out our Metropolitan Transit system, and I would further ask that going forward with all transit options move expeditiously in planning stages, finding new and creative ways, if possible, within guidelines, so that we can avoid 10-year planning for our light rail -- for all transit. We -- somehow we've got to find ways to move that forward a little bit faster than that. The need is strong, and -- that's all I have to say. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Next is Frank Lorenz. Welcome to the Rail Authority.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. My name is Frank Lorenz, and I represent the firm of Hulke & Gheer. I live in Commissioner Callison's district, but I'm familiar with Commissioner McLaughlin's role in rail transit, and if I recall correctly, you can't graduate from Princeton without at least taking two math courses, so what I'm saying is hopefully going to ring a bell.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: I'll just warn you I didn't get an A, but I got --

MR. LORENZ: Well, but unlike certain other institutions, I don't think they'll let you out
unless you at least sit in on the courses.

So basically what I have today is a reality check about money. Any route that requires a tunnel will cost an extra 150 to $250 million dollars and should be rejected out of hand because of that.

Number two, the present estimates of ridership for Southwest Transit are not believable regardless of how many years they've been studied. They're based on something between wishful thinking and a cloned carbon copy of Hiawatha light rail. But Southwest is not Hiawatha. Hiawatha has benefited from unplanned usage southbound, unplanned ridership to the thousands of lower paying jobs at the airport, Mall of America and the VA Hospital. It's not clear that Eden Prairie and Minnetonka have anything like that number of jobs for central city residents regardless of how badly they need the jobs, and there's no question about that. But the ridership estimates, assuming there's going to be a flow from central Minneapolis, north Minneapolis, whatever, need to be supported by actual jobs, and I'm not aware of employers importing people from South Dakota or anywhere else to fill this tremendous void where they can't find workers for Eden Prairie.

So, in any event, capital construction costs
for Southwest Transit will be managed by Met Council, Metro Transit, with some help from Mn/DOT, and so it was with Hiawatha. But in February of 2002, a federal transportation auditor signed off on a so-called final budget of $675 million for the Hiawatha project. Two and a half years later, the actual cost had increased by 26 percent, $175 million to $850 million dollars. So Met Council is not a reliable or a trustworthy construction manager. The feds, the state, the Metropolitan Airports Commission and Hennepin County had to join together to make up that $175 million cost overrun. If Southwest starts with a budget of a billion dollars, a B, a billion dollars, it's likely that taxpayers will have to come up with another $260 million, and in a recession with eight and a half percent unemployment, that's really going to be hard cheese for the taxpayers.

Hiawatha lost $15 million a year in 2008, and that was covered by taxes. Hennepin County paid 5.3 million; State of Minnesota, 5.3 million in a sharing arrangement, and an emergency unplanned transfer of 4.5 million dollars came from state motor vehicle sales tax, which was authorized by Met Council. So Hennepin County's 50 percent share of the 2009 operating loss for Hiawatha should be about 700 -- or,
I'm sorry, $7.5 million. That's per year.

Hiawatha is now spending an unplanned $3 million a year, just two years after they started full operation of the line, to overhaul and rebuild its 27 train cars, and apparently they don't feel they need to give any detail. It's none of the public's business. Metro Transit is silent on this overall subject, and no one, not the press, not elected officials, not the state legislative auditor, no one is demanding to know why. This $3 million a year is a major scandal. Railroad cars aren't supposed to wear out in 24 months, but no one is asking why. No one is saying boo. Halloween is still 11 days off, and maybe that's the reason. But why isn't Met Transit suing the Canadian manufacturer, Bombardier? We don't know.

The federal auditor for Hiawatha assumed that property taxes could be raised five percent a year, year after year forever. Hennepin County and several other local counties have added a quarter percent sales tax, a transit tax, to the general sales tax, and in the aggregate that will raise about $85 million a year.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Mr. Lorenz, you're getting -- you're over time. You'll have to finish up.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Fine. I'll have
copies of this on the table at the end. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: I have one question, though, for you. You said you were representing the law firm of Hulke & Gheer?

MR. LORENZ: Not the law firm. We're management consultants.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Management. And are you -- and this is -- this is the testimony representing that company?

MR. LORENZ: That's correct.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: All right.

Thank you very much.

Next is Loren Aandahl. Welcome to the Rail Authority.

MR. AANDAHL: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Loren Aandahl, and I live at 2121 Drew Avenue South in Minneapolis.

Two centuries ago President Thomas Jefferson showed incredible vision in concluding the Louisiana Purchase. He had envisioned a future for the young republic whose boundaries would not stop at the Mississippi but extend into the Great Plains and ultimately to the Pacific ocean. Sadly, last Wednesday the Southwest LRT PAC voted figuratively to stop at the Mississippi. In selecting the 3A Kenilworth alignment,
they voted for a route that did not serve the densely populated south and west Minneapolis, that would not link this vibrant area with the western suburbs, and that would not improve local transit between downtown and southwest Minneapolis, the metro's busiest transit route. The decision was understandable in part. There was only really one credible alternative to vote on.

The vast majority of the PAC members are from the western suburbs who just want the line built and don't have much interest in how it gets through Minneapolis to downtown. The city of Minneapolis utterly failed in developing a vibrant -- a viable at-grade alignment between downtown and the Midtown Greenway, in spite of eight years of opportunity to do so. Too late in the process, I suggested a solution utilizing the western side of I-35W. My involvement in this process only happened because of the ridership analysis contained in the evaluation results issued on August 10th.

As an airline executive with 22 years of experience, mostly in the network and schedule planning areas, it was inconceivable to me that the Kenilworth alignment would have a ridership forecast equal with the Uptown alignment that passed through a much more densely populated area. My blistering critique of the
ridership forecast at the September 17th PAC public hearing pointed out numerous issues I had with this forecast.

Last Tuesday, three of us met with the project manager and the consultant who did the forecast. We were told that they had updated the forecast because they had discovered numerous errors with their modeling following my critique. They were not able to provide us with a simple boarding -- a simple station boarding origin and destination grid per my request, but did pass out another summary based on the new forecast. To our embarrassment, and theirs, they were completely unable to explain their own work to us and had to withdraw the summary. Our meeting ended without satisfactory answers to most of our basic questions.

The next day, the PAC members were told of the new forecast before their vote. Not one PAC member asked how such egregious errors could have occurred, much less at the end of an eight-year process. Not one PAC member asked a question about the new forecast, even to question if it was accurate. As a taxpayer, I was appalled by this lack of due diligence.

Then there is the matter of the relocation of the TC&W railway line through the Kenilworth Corridor.
This is a condition of building the LRT on this alignment. The railroad can stay on its turned route for the indefinite future. Yet we were told the two were not interconnected and the cost of the railway relocation has not been costed into the LRT proposal. Furthermore, this relocation has not been finalized, and it will now be grossly unfair to the affected communities to be forced to bare the relocation impact because it's now a done deal that an LRT line will displace the railway through Kenilworth. This is not an issue with an Uptown alignment.

In conclusion, I would urge the HCRRA to vote to delay this project until an at-grade alignment between downtown and Uptown, utilizing I-35W and the Midtown Greenway, can be developed in order to bring improved transit to a much larger segment of the west metro population. I'm convinced that this alignment will have a 35 percent higher ridership, and when combined with moderately higher construction costs will produce a better CEI.

I urge the HCRRA to vote to delay this project until they themselves understand the ridership forecast and are convinced it's accurate. This is the least we can expect from our public officials who are about to commit over a billion dollars of taxpayer
money to this project, and I volunteer to help you in this effort.

I would remind the HCRRA that this project is not some electric toy train set that they are building. It will set the footprint for the metro, the western metro area, for the century to come. Like President Jefferson, let's not stop at the Mississippi. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much. Janet Weivoda. I hope I pronounced that properly. Janet Weivoda?

Okay. We'll skip down to Carrie (phonetic) Anderson. Kari? Kari, sorry. Hi.

MS. ANDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you members of the commission. My name is Kari Anderson, and I live in the Harrison neighborhood in north Minneapolis. I'm a member of the board at Harrison, and I'm also a member of the Bassett Creek Valley Redevelopment Oversight Committee. I also think it's important to add that I ride my bike everywhere pretty much and I use the Cedar Lake trail, the Kenilworth alignment trail and the Greenway daily in the summer, and less often when it snows.

I'd like you to picture coming out of downtown on Interstate 394, and if you look to the
left, you'll see the sculpture garden and you see Dunwoody Institute, Parade Stadium, Walker Art Center; and you look to the left [sic] and there is a manure pile, some city storage, lots of dirt piles and rock crushers and things like that. Zoning policy has clearly favored one side of the freeway over the other side of the freeway. The city has very recently helped rectify this by rezoning that area to include -- to allow for development of housing and corporate uses. This favoritism is not only seen in zoning policy but also in transportation policy. As council member Samuel said, north Minneapolis is very, very isolated by freeways. I mean, just ask yourself this question, How would I drive from north Minneapolis to south Minneapolis? You could do it, but you have to think about it a little bit in order to get there, and it's difficult to do.

The city also recently has been addressing this issue by putting Van White Boulevard through that area to help connect north and south Minneapolis in that area, and an LRT stop at Van White Boulevard would do a lot to bridge the current isolation between north and south Minneapolis.

Because of this historical zoning and transportation biases, development opportunities on the
north side and the south side of that area have -- have also not been equal. The 3A alignment, you might know, goes through an area called Bassett Creek Valley, and for over 10 years a group of local residents, businesses, developers, and people involved in the area have been working to create a vision for that area that was approved by the Minneapolis City Council. It's called the Bassett Creek Area Master Plan. Any development in this area will have an enormous advantage by coming into a situation that has a unified vision among the businesses, the neighbors who live in that area, developers who are interested in the property.

I've heard some of the opponents to the 3A alignment say, Why would anybody put a stop in that area? There's nothing there. But there is something very important there, and that is opportunity, the opportunity to develop cutting edge, transit-oriented development, the opportunity to address decades of bias in city zoning and transportation policies, and also the opportunity to help a community's vision for a healthy future become reality, and so I hope that you take the PAC's recommendation and support the 3A alignment. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very
Jerry Krause. Welcome to the Rail Authority.

MR. KRAUSE: Thank you, Commissioner McLaughlin and other members of the Hennepin County Rail Authority. My name is Jerry Krause. I live at 417 Oliver Avenue South in Minneapolis, which is the Bryn Mahr neighborhood just west of downtown. And I also provided similar comments a month ago at the public hearing out at the Eisenhower school.

Over the last couple of decades I've lived in Minneapolis, Uptown, Lowry Hill, and over the last eight years in Bryn Mahr. I also am an avid user of transit, roughly riding about a thousand different segments on an annual basis. I also use the Cedar Lake trail for running and biking on a continuing basis, probably about two to 300 times on an annual basis. I'm also a member, as some of you may know, of the Citizens Advisory Committee over at Southwest Transit. Like Kari Anderson, who just spoke, I would urge your support of the LRT 3A Kenilworth alignment, which has been recommended by the other two committees. And I think their recommendation is embedded in three ideas that I'd like to briefly address.

One, and importantly, I think, is the cost-effective index. I think others who have
considered this issue have recognized that only LRT 3A route is actually economically viable under FTA guidelines.

There is certainly issues been raised considering ridership projections and whether they're accurate or not. An issue I raised a couple of months ago in a public forum, joint meeting of the committees, is the question of well, to what extent would ridership have to increase through the other alternative coming up Nicollet Avenue; and I think that would probably be somewhere in the neighborhood of 50 percent. Even if the numbers are not accurate, I think there's a huge gap between what currently exists in the numbers and what would have to be projected. And also strikingly, I was looking at my materials from 2006, that these ridership projections are actually very, very similar to what was being proposed at that time.

Like Kari just mentioned to you, Bassett Creek Valley is a very important part, I think, of this process. Like Kari, I've been involved with the redevelopment oversight of that part of the community for over eight years. It is a place of tremendous potential. As Kari had mentioned to you, others have said why build a stop at Van White because there's really nothing there. This -- I think rail is as much
about the future as it is about the present, and the ridership projections are not about today; it's about 2030. And for those who ask why would anything happen in the next 20 years, I point them to the north loop, to the riverfront, and more recently to the Midtown Commons, who might have similar questions concerning the viability of any of those projects.

And, lastly, issues have been raised in other public settings about the concern of the compatibility of rail with the Kenilworth alignment, especially between the lakes. As a avid user there, I'm very concerned about it as well, but I also recognize this is an existing heavy rail corridor and that for the eight miles or so extending down to Hopkins, you would have a very similar use.

Again, I would urge your favorable consideration of Route 3A, the Kenilworth alignment, the only economically sound choice available. Thank you so much.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Next we have Art Higinbotham.

Mr. Higinbotham, welcome to the Rail Authority.

MR. HIGINBOTHAM: Good afternoon, Chairman McLaughlin and commissioners. My name is Art
Higinbotham. I'm a Minneapolis resident of 3431 St. Louis Avenue. I'm the Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association chair. I've been a Southwest Community Advisory Committee representative and a former civil rights commissioner in Minneapolis with an interest in serving minorities. The Southwest locally preferred alternative recommendation before you today is both flawed and mistimed. The ridership for the 3C2 Uptown route is underestimated by over 35 percent compared to the 3A Kenilworth line. The capital costs have been overstated by 40 percent for 3C2 by including a tunnel on Nicollet Avenue. These corrections will flip the CEI and favor 3C2 if they're correctly made by staff.

The travel time on 3C2 to the first downtown station is 3.6 minutes less on 3A -- on 3C2 than 3A. That's because it stops at 12th and Nicollet and doesn't loop around the incinerator to Fifth and Nicollet. That's 37 hours annually less time on a commuter train for southwest commuters. These are inconvenient truths ignored by HCRRA staff and their consultants. Moreover, 3C2 will serve the numerous Lake Street businesses, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Eat Street, the Convention Center, Orchestra Hall, St. Thomas, the State and Orpheum Theatres and
the bus station. 3A will only serve the impound lot. Both serve the Target Center and Target Field, and through the Royalston station both serve the north side equally. That's a better connection than the Van White station. Eventually three of four Minneapolis stations on 3A are subject to elimination to cut costs because the capital costs are already questionable with the FTA. It then becomes an express train through Minneapolis, serves only the suburbs.

Over 3800 petitions were signed in support of 3C2, and most neighborhood boards have signed onto the Uptown route. The LPA decision being requested before any mitigation is costed for either route is not fair. The cart is in front of the horse. Grade separation at Cedar Lake Parkway on Route 3A is not being considered. This is America's only urban scenic byway and part of the Minneapolis ground rounds that is used by cyclists and pedestrians from all over the county. A crossing gate will block one of two east/west routes between I-394 and south of Lake Calhoun, the other being Lake Street. At 3.75 minute intervals, it will cut off a Cedar Lake neighborhood from emergency services. A tunnel has been rejected because of purported high water table. But two light rail lines in this country, in my home town of Pittsburgh, run under rivers. A
tunnel has also been rejected, and get this, because Homeland Security objects to tunnels. Maybe we should consider closing the tunnel under the airport, a much greater security threat.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a bad recommendation made prematurely. It will not pass muster with the FTA and the EPA. It is environmentally 4-F, unfit for duty, please reject it. Request an objective evaluation of the 3C2 alternative and mitigation studies on both routes before committing to a route that will become another commuter rail line serving only the suburbs.

Thank you for consideration.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Higinbotham.

John DeWitt. Welcome to the Rail Authority again, Mr. Dewitt.

MR. DEWITT: Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm John DeWitt. I live at 1531 East River Parkway in Minneapolis. I represent the Midtown Community Works Partnership on the Southwest LRT PAC, and I'm cochair of the Land Use & Transportation Committee for the Midtown Greenway Coalition.

We were pleased to see that the Southwest
Technical -- Southwest LRT Technical and Policy

Advisory Committees both recommended further explanation of rail transit in the Midtown Greenway connecting the Southwest and Hiawatha LRT lines. Three years ago, both the coalition and the Midtown Community Works Partnership endorsed what we called the "Network Alignment" for Southwest LRT, the Southwest LRT through the Kenilworth Corridor combined with the streetcar aligning the Midtown Greenway.

I'd like to talk briefly about why that network has so much potential. We know that transit ridership is driven by access to jobs. Some 70 to 80 percent of all transit trips in the Twin Cities are work related. Last year the Center for Transit Oriented Development produced a map showing employment clusters in our region. There's just one meaningful employment cluster in south Minneapolis, the Wells Fargo/Abbott Northwestern/Allina complex along Midtown Greenway with ten to 12,000 workers. It's important to note that the proposed Nicollet alignment for Southwest LRT would miss that complex by up to three-quarters of a mile, while the Greenway streetcar line serves it directly.

Minneapolis has four designated growth centers; downtown Minneapolis, the U of M, the Wells

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Fargo/Abbott Northwestern/Allina complex and the Bassett Creek Valley. Unknuckled alignment would serve only downtown, while a network alignment serves all but the University of Minnesota.

Over the next few years, we'll be piecing together a bus rapid transit, BRT system, on 35-W. Once again, a Nicollet alignment would just miss that station serving Lake Street and the Midtown Greenway, while a Greenway streetcar would serve that important transfer point directly.

A Greenway streetcar line is actually a hybrid combining the smaller, lower cost scale of a streetcar with the fast travel times of light rail because it's on a private right-of-way. The four-and-a-half mile line would have no street running and just five street crossings. Feasibility studies show a travel time from end to end of just 14 minutes and just 12 minutes from Uptown to Hiawatha. That's easily twice as fast as today's bus service.

Toronto's King and Queen streetcar lines regularly carry 45,000 to 50,000 riders a day, and we don't see capacity being an issue for quite awhile.

I believe the Southwest LRT and the Kenilworth Corridor, combined with the Midtown Greenway streetcar line, offers far better service to our region.
at far less cost than the alternatives.

Thank you for attention. I'll be happy to answer any questions.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you, Mr. Dewitt. Thank you.

Next, Rick Collins. No? Okay. That was -- I'm mistaken. Sorry. Aaron Isaacs.

MR. ISAACS: And, Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Aaron Isaacs. I live at 3816 Vincent Avenue South in southwest Minneapolis. I'm retired from Metro Transit, where I was a planner and manager for over 30 years, and I'm here to speak in favor of the Kenilworth Corridor.

The problem with the Uptown alignment is that it's too expensive and it's too slow. Now, I -- I think everyone knows about the expense with the tunnel, but I want to talk about the speed, because that drives a whole bunch of other things. Right now if you get on a express bus at Eden Prairie station to go downtown, it takes you 25 minutes to get downtown. As I read the report, it takes 39 minutes to get downtown on option 3C. That's a 13 or 14-minute increase. That's a 50 percent increase in travel time if you're a commuter coming out of Eden Prairie. And that's the single
largest group of express bus riders that we want to transfer over to the LRT.

LRT is attractive, more attractive than bus, but I don't think it can stand a 50 percent penalty in ridership, which works out to be almost a half hour added to the daily commute round trip. And my criticism of the consultant's ridership analysis was I think they were far too generous with the Uptown alignment in terms of how many people it will carry in from the suburbs. I think that the ridership loss will be greater.

And the people who are currently riding express buses out of southwest, they don't have the alternative. If those express buses are eliminated, their only alternative is to drive. The other end of the corridor where people have said, Why are there not more additional riders created on the city end of it, you have to -- once again, it's too slow. The travel time is 14 minutes on the LRT to the center of downtown from the Uptown station. That's the exact same travel time as the number six bus that stops at every block. And that situation happens at all the other stations in Minneapolis - at Lyndale, at Nicollet, at Franklin. And so what would actually happen is that the LRT will pull away some transit riders who make short trips in
the city while dramatically reducing bus riders who make long trips in the suburb.

Another thing that you have to consider is -- is the operating cost. Being an old transit planner, I roughed out a schedule, and I've talked to the staff and they say I'm pretty close. It's going to take two additional trains all day long to run the Uptown alignment compared to the Kenilworth alignment. That works out to be something like a 25 percent increase in operating expense via the Uptown alignment, and that cost is perpetual.

The real way to look at it is not in terms of ridership, it's to look at it in terms of passenger miles carried and the reduction in pollutants, fuel use and congestion. And what you want to do is you want to carry people from the suburbs with 15-mile trips and not peel off a few people from the existing bus system that are making the three-mile trips, and that's the reason I'm for the Kenilworth corridor. And I thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much. Next we have Jan Leesen (phonetic). Lysen?

MS. LYSEN: Lysen.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Lysen. Welcome to the Rail Authority.
MS. LYSEN: Yeah, thank you. I'm Jan Lysen. I live at 2849 42nd Avenue South in Minneapolis. I'm here today to represent Transit For Livable Communities. I'm currently serving as the interim executive director of TLC, and I've also served on their board.

I'm here today to support the 3A alignment. Our board of directors has passed a position statement supporting that alignment. We know that perhaps not all the members of our organization will agree with us, but there's a few principles or concepts we think really support the 3A alignment. First of all, it's really the most cost-effective approach. Secondly, from a service perspective, the 3A alignment best serves both the south and western -- both the north and western portions of Minneapolis. The Royalston bus stop, one of the future LRT stops, actually has as many daily buses as the Uptown transit station. So here we will have an alignment, the 3A alignment, that will serve as many or more transit users as that station, giving them direct access to the employment center of Eden Prairie. Routes through the Uptown area really represent a duplication of the service that exists today.

Lastly, one of -- the last reason for our
supporting the 3A alignment is that it's really part of building a regional system. We think that there are some other things that need to happen in addition to the 3A alignment. We, along with others, are supportive of a streetcar connection that has been addressed already this evening, and we think that will also serve to meet the ridership base and serve the region.

Lastly, there's a few other principles that we would like to see addressed as the work goes ahead. One, is we want to see continued connections for walkers, bicyclists and bus riders to the station. We would like to see compact development in the station areas that also support biking, walking and housing affordability at all levels. And, lastly, we'd like to see station area designs that create people-oriented and not car-oriented public spaces.

Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you for your testimony.

Next is Jennifer Munt. I do not see Jennifer here.

MS. LYSEN: Oh, I did that one.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Okay. Thank you very much. And Todd McIntyre is next.
Welcome to the Rail Authority, Mr. McIntyre.

MR. McINTYRE: Thank you, Commissioner.

Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony to you in regards to the future alignment of the Southwest Transitway. Over the years, various aquatic groups have searched for land to develop a facility for swimming, diving, water polo and synchronized swimming. As infield developments continually consume urban opportunities, site selection becomes more challenging every year. Bassett Creek Valley has been of interest to me for many years. And with the Kenilworth alignment, I believe it is the best site in the metropolitan area for the Great Prairie Sport Center. Great Prairie Sport Center in the city of Minneapolis would not only provide a unique community asset, it will also create strong economic impact opportunities.

The Great Prairie Sport Center is a significant community stakeholder offering a multiple season, multiple sport international destination while focusing on the disciplines of aquatics, gymnastics and volleyball. It would also be available to provide training facilities for athletes in private and public schools and from the Courage Center in Golden Valley. Both USA swimming and USA water polo have created
programs to reach demographics traditionally not part of the aquatic sports. If the Great Prairie Sport Center is not developed in Bassett Creek Valley, the youth of north Minneapolis may never use this facility.

One of the five goals of the Southwest Transitway is to increase economic development, and Bassett Creek Valley has the greatest potential of any site along any route. The projected construction of 3,000 housing units and two and a half million square feet of commercial space, all on a tract of land consisting of 56 acres, is not equaled anywhere. Especially with the new Target Field, the Kenilworth Alignment is essential for the future health and vitality of Bassett Creek Valley.

For most people, the year 2020 is 11 years away. However, for Minneapolis the year 2020 started on Friday, October 2nd, 2009. With Chicago's failed bid to host the 2016 Summer Olympics, the process to select the 2020 host city will officially begin in less than one year. Since 2003, plans have been developing to best position Minneapolis as the host city for the 2020 games. The Kenilworth alignment further establishes Minneapolis as an Olympic city and is essential to link Target Center, Target Field and the Great Prairie Sports Center within a comprehensive
transportation plan.

The one item most people will agree to this evening is a need for more transportation options. I believe the best alignment for light rail is the Kenilworth plan and that a more flexible, sleek and iconic mode should be planned to connect Uptown to various destinations. If the Southwest Transitway is not developed on the Kenilworth alignment, the next best option for the Great Prairie Sport Center will probably be in the city of St. Paul. However, we desire to train more -- we desire to train and crown more national and international champions near the home of the Breakfast of Champions. The Kenilworth alignment will leverage the value of Bassett Creek Valley and establish an exceptional legacy for Hennepin County.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Maren McDonnell.

MS. McDONNELL: Good afternoon.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Good afternoon.

Welcome to the Rail Authority.

MS. McDONNELL: Thanks. I'm a little nervous.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Don't be, we're
MS. McDONNELL: Okay. Hi, my name is Maren McDonnell, and I live at 403 Queen Avenue North. I am the board president for the Harrison Neighborhood Association, a neighborhood group located in north Minneapolis. HNA represents 4100 people; 38 percent African American, 30 percent Hmong and Laos, just over 20 percent people of European descent, and a 10 percent mix of Somali and Latino households. The median income for a family is a little more than $21,000 a year, placing 63 percent of our children in poverty.

The Harrison Neighborhood Association supports a Kenilworth 3A alignment because we feel it is the most equitable and cost-effective route for the following reasons: One, Kenilworth 3A best serves northsiders currently working along the Southwest Corridor alignment. Our research shows that nearly 3500 northsiders commute to jobs in the cities served by the 3A alignment.

Number two, Kenilworth 3A best promotes the redevelopment of Bassett Creek Valley, which is a city designated growth center. Hundreds of residents have been engaged in planning the redevelopment of Bassett Creek Valley. The participation was diverse and reflective of our community. The redevelopment of the
area surrounding the Van White station stop would create needed tax base, produce hundreds of units of housing, six to 8,000 jobs. I just got to stop 'cause that kind of blew me away right there. Did you guys -- that's six to 8,000 jobs that this can create, okay? And that affects me and my family greatly, so this is something that touches base with me. Besides the jobs, it will create office and commercial space. All this can be done without tearing down or displacing households and businesses.

Kenilworth 3A connects north Minneapolis to regional opportunity. North Minneapolis has been historically isolated because of past planning practices and underserved by public transportation. Multiple transit coordinators that connect low and moderate income people to job centers throughout the metro area are needed to reduce poverty over a long term.

Again, I want the state -- I want to state that HNA support for the Kenilworth 3A alignment is based in years of work to connect north and south Minneapolis. Hundreds of residents, African Americans, European American, Hmong, Laos and Somali attended meetings and voiced their hopes and dreams. Those visions are reflected in the Bassett Creek Valley
Master Plan, which was approved by the city council in 2007. The plan includes a light rail transit station stop at Van White. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Dan Duffy.

MR. DUFFY: Good afternoon, Commissioners.

I'll try to keep this brief because I have a small cold, so -- my name is Dan Duffy, and I live at 17900 Susan Lane in Minnetonka. As some of you know, I'm a member of the Policy Advisory Committee representing the TwinWest Chamber of Commerce. I've been a member of this committee to study transit in the Southwest Corridor since the inception of this study nearly eight years ago. The TwinWest Chamber, along with the Minneapolis, Edina and Eden Prairie Chambers, has sent a letter to you outlining the details for our support for LRT in the Southwest Corridor and the recommendations for alignment 3A.

I want to speak to you today about the study process and the public policy initiatives from the perspective of a member of the Policy Advisory Committee. We began our study session years ago before the Hiawatha line was up and operating. The first year of our meetings were met with skepticism and concerns from some members of the public who did not see a need for any rail in this metro region. Eventually as
Hiawatha began operating and exceeding projected ridership and other cities began moving forward with their LRT plans, the mood changed from a sort of "not in my backyard" to a "how can we get LRT sooner?" That type of dialogue is what became common at our meetings. Throughout this entire process, the chair of our committee, Commissioner Dorfman, led the effort to make sure that all citizens who wanted to voice their opinions were heard and that this process would be as transparent and fair as possible.

I commend you, Commissioner Dorfman, for your leadership and patience and the respectful consideration you have shown to ensure that every reasonable alternative alignment was properly evaluated and discussed in our study meetings. Whenever a public initiative of this magnitude that affects so many of our metro citizens and businesses is undertaken, it seldom happens without some bumps along the way and differences of opinion. And needless to say, we had both. But in the end, I'm confident in our Policy Advisory Committee selection of alignment 3A will provide the best options for ridership to commute -- for riders to commute to and from the west metro region to employment and entertainment centers in the most seamless and cost-effective way.
Alignment 3A meets the goals set forth by the Policy Advisory Committee of providing a transit alternative that meets the federal cost-effectiveness index scoring guidelines that is efficient, that will provide for economic development and minimize the environmental impact.

Thank you, Commissioner Dorfman, for your leadership of the Southwest Corridor Study and to Katie Walker, Kathie Doty and all the staff members who have given so much of your time and effort in countless public hearings and open houses. It's been a pleasure for me to serve on the Policy Advisory Committee with so many staff and volunteers committed to providing the best alternative for commuting in this metro-wide region. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Next is Lennie Chism. Welcome to the Rail Authority.

MR. CHISM: Well, thank you for having me. I want to tell you a story that's really unique. I want to put a hot dog stand wherever that rail stops. I want to put a bike stand wherever that rail stops, because in my eyes that's what we're really talking about here. We're talking about creating the velocity
of money that's coming out of the suburbs to stop in
north Minneapolis. That's one thing we've been working
on for years, trying to put some money in north
Minneapolis. I think this brings the greatest
opportunity for us to do that. There are a lot of
young men and a lot of young women, adults who will
come to north Minneapolis with the 3A alignment. With
that hot dog stand, we will put people to work, not in
reentry programs, but we'll put them to work as
business people. North Minneapolis was based upon a
concept of small business owners; that's how it was
created under the Jewish community. We have to take
this in consideration.

At one point, Harrison neighborhood was
considered on a map the Negro slums. We need to stop
this disinvestment. We need to make it so that that
area is not someplace that people try to avoid. At the
10:30 news we hear about crime, but yet we see no
walking patrolman over there. We have to change that
attitude. We have to make north Minneapolis the
Uptown, where there's outdoor cafes, there's places for
people to go and sit and gather, have a good
conversation. This offers an opportunity. We often
talk about the riders that will come from the other
areas of town, which is definitely right. But we also
want to talk about the retention that could take place if north Minneapolis gets this. A lot of people leave because they don't have the opportunity of good transit. We talk about the jobs that other people go to. What about the jobs that are going to be created right there, the small jobs.

I'm at 1901 Glenwood. There has been a vacant building across from me since I moved there. I've watched two businesses disappear. We have to stop the disinvestment in order to increase the investment.

This brings us an excellent opportunity. Uptown has enough. North Minneapolis needs a little bit. And I'm hoping that this will be the start, the catalyst, not just a pass-through for developers to pick up some money, but for an opportunity for the workers in north Minneapolis, 'cause this does contain federal dollars to get jobs and opportunity. That's what we're really talking about here. The velocity of money can stop and start with the 3A -- with this 3A alignment.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my thoughts.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Next we have Peter Rickmyer. Peter Rickmyer?
Mr. Rickmyer: Thank you, Commissioner. I appreciate your time.

I'm here to speak about what the purpose is for the LRT, at least for what my understanding was, is to eliminate exhaust in the community. Exhaust causes cancer and other health issues. Whether we spend an extra $50 million bringing it one way versus another way which decreases people catching cancer is well worth the money. As Commissioner Stenglein knows, that I've been working on a couple stop signs in north Minneapolis to reduce the exhaust. So many people are catching cancer now and related health issues.

The other thing that I would like to see with the LRT that's now in existence, the Northstar Rail and the one that's proposed, is to see a lot of -- see a lot of plants, which produces lots and lots of oxygen, because light rail is not going to get rid of the exhaust fumes from the freeways. And so to counteract the exhaust fumes, we must produce plants. And if we work together with the environmental groups, we could get a healthier metropolitan area.

Thank you for your time.

Commissioner McLaughlin: Thank you, sir.
Neil Trembley. Welcome to the Rail Authority.

MR. TREMBLEY: Thank you, Commissioner.

Commissioner McLaughlin, Commissioners, my name is Neil Trembley. I live at 37 Oliver Avenue South in Minneapolis. I'm a member of the Cedar Lake Park Association. I'm also Commissioner Stenglein's delegate to the Hennepin County Bicycle Advisory Committee. But in this instance, I'm here as an observer in terms of the bicycle advisory committee.

I want to talk about four issues. The Cedar Lake Park Association is in favor of the best route for LRT. If the 3A route is the best route and is chosen, I want to bring up three issues -- or four issues, which is parks, trails, bicycles and history.

North of the Cedar Lake Parkway and to the I-394 bridge is a really unique area. The Cedar Lake Park Association considers it basically greater Cedar Lake Park, even though some of it is, of course, county land. We consider it a stewardship of that entire area. Historically, as some of you may know, it was part of Cedar Lake, the bottom of Cedar Lake, was -- is most of that. So when it -- so if the 3A alignment is chosen and transit goes through there, we want to make sure that the parklike atmosphere that's there now
continues and it is maintained. So that's one issue that I think we want to bring up on the table.

Second, of course, is trails. I'm an avid bicyclist and just used Kenilworth trail, as well as the north and -- the north Cedar Lake trail, the Midtown Greenway. I had a great ride today. And as I was going up the Kenilworth trail, there's some really tight spots there, and I just want to make sure that there still continues to be a trail there if the 3A alignment does go through and that it's a trail that can service both pedestrians, bicyclists and any other users and that it's a real amenity, which brings us, of course to bicycles.

The one thing that the Hennepin County Bicycle Committee was a little -- or did talk about yesterday was, of course, with any alignment would be availability for bike lockers, any kind of bike usage that would go on, the ability for -- like, on the Hiawatha line for bikes to be able to go on the LRT. So that's -- that is one issue.

And the fourth is -- is history. I'm kind of an amateur historian of the Cedar Lake Park area, and there is a lot of history in that area between the -- north of the Cedar Lake Parkway and I-394. That's where the Minneapolis and St. Louis rail line --
railway had their yards and facilities. And I think wherever there is a stop, whether it be at 21st and Uptown or Penn Avenue, that the history of the area, I think it would be great to be able to see some of that history illustrated at those stops.

So that's all. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Bob Day.

MR. DAY: Mr. Chair, I'll pass on my comments.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: All right.

Thank you.

David Greene.

MR. GREENE: Thank you, Mr. Chair and members. My name is David Greene. I live at 2724 Emerson Avenue South, in The Wedge, and for more than a half a decade I've led transit campaigns with ISAIAH, an organization of a hundred churches and congregations dedicated to racial and economic justice in Minnesota. One of the things we did was help secure the local sales tax that's going to fund the large portion of this line.

I live in Uptown and I'm tired of being cut off from north Minneapolis. That's where my dad grew
up, and I have roots there. That's why I support the 3A Kenilworth route for Southwest LRT, and so does ISAIAH.

There are all sorts of technical reasons to prefer the 3A alignment, including cost, engineering, logistics and ridership, but I want to focus on people. Who's this line going to serve? It's going to serve suburban commuters, and it should. It's going to serve downtown Minneapolis, and it should. But let's think about our transportation history for a moment. Over the years we've constructed freeways and other barriers that have led to a reality where a person living in north Minneapolis does not have a viable transit option to get to a job in the southwest suburbs. That's a whole lot of people cut off from a whole lot of opportunity. The 3A alignment restores that link, and with connecting bus service will be a vital artery for the whole north side. 3A is also a link for people in Minneapolis and the suburbs to visit north Minneapolis and connect to the people and places there. The discussion around this project has made it plain to me how much more we need to be connected to each other so we can start throwing away all of the assumptions we make about the city, the suburbs, the neighborhoods, and the people who live there.
This is a racial justice issue. If we're going to spend a billion dollars on this project, we should get significantly improved transit service for those who need it the most. 3C and 3C2 do not have all of the stations that connect north Minneapolis. 3A provides those links. If we choose to spend $500 million more on a 3C route to serve an area of Minneapolis already served by the best transit network in the state and we keep people in north Minneapolis cut off from schools and jobs, what are we saying? We want to say we're going to spend $500 million to keep transportation inequity in place? Shame on us if we do. If we don't route along 3A, it's not transportation, it's amputation. And what of that $500 million dollars? That's funding for another commuter rail line at least, maybe two, not to mention streetcars and an enhanced bus service. This is a decision that affects the entire Twin Cities metro area.

Furthermore, we must keep the Penn, Van White and Royalston stations going forward as these are the opportunity links for north Minneapolis. 3A makes our community more healthy. Thank you all for your work on this project.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very
Next is Cameron Slick.

MR. SLICK: Good day, Commissioners of the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority. My name is Cameron Slick. I am an avid bus rider, and I live at 2312 Lyndale Avenue South, and I wanted to start with that choosing alignment 3A will be setting a terrible precedent for the Twin Cities light rail program. The county would prefer to build transitways and railroad corridor through low-density communities instead of serving denser neighborhoods that are conducive to transit-oriented development is a terrible mistake. Now, it is understandable, a little, from a cost perspective because railroad corridors typically are cheaper to build light rail in. At the same time, they usually are not by very dense pieces of -- of neighborhoods. And I just want to let you know that this is a bad precedent for the next line, the Bottino Line, to which there are three possible light rail alternatives, two of which involve using a railroad corridor that would also have far less service for people in north Minneapolis.

And I also feel that there is a great inequity being shown to the city of Minneapolis here on the Policy Advisory Committee. There are only two
elected officials from the city of Minneapolis. I feel the county has bent over backwards to serve the third ring suburbs of Minnetonka and Eden Prairie and their business parks. Such an act was not done for Minneapolis and one of its largest business centers and community centers, Uptown and Eat Street. I ask of you trying -- I'm sorry.

I'll just finish that north Minneapolis is not going to be served by 3A because the stations of Penn Avenue and Van White Boulevard will get engineered out. Now, you can always do in-fill stations when there may be some speculative development there 20 or 30 years out. The Bottino corridor, if we're lucky, will serve north Minneapolis. Thanks.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Next is Tim Springer. Welcome to the Rail Authority, Mr. Springer.

MR. SPRINGER: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: You're dressed for the weather out there.

MR. SPRINGER: Dressed for biking.

Good afternoon, Chairman McLaughlin and Commissioners. My name is Tim Springer. I'm executive director for the Midtown Greenway Coalition. Our
address is 2834 10th Avenue South, Greenway Level, Suite 2 in Minneapolis. We're a grassroots nonprofit with a mission of empowering communities to develop, improve, protect and enjoy the Midtown Greenway as a green urban pathway to improve people's lives.

The Southwest LRT 3A alignment as recommended by the Southwest Corridor PAC is consistent with the Midtown Greenway Coalition's position. The Midtown Greenway Coalition is atypical from most -- as compared to most trails organizations across the country in that we agree that there should be transit trains operating alongside the trails in the Midtown Greenway. We have long advocated for what we call the Network Alignment, which includes trains coming up from Eden Prairie to downtown through the Southwest Corridor and from the mall and the airport through the Hiawatha line, and the Midtown Greenway cutting across the middle of Minneapolis to connect those two important lines, being an important system altogether. The Network Alignment would serve all of the neighborhoods along the Midtown Greenway/Lake Street Corridor from the western border of Minneapolis east to Hiawatha, including the transit-dependent communities of Phillips.

The city of Minneapolis has also adopted a number of land use plans that anticipate the Midtown
Greenway/Lake Street Corridor as being served by rail transit, and is already planning ahead for this eventuality. The Midtown Greenway Coalition does also recommend that transit planners work with stakeholders along the Kenilworth Corridor to plan and secure funding for adequate mitigation measures, especially between Lake Street and Franklin Avenue.

Thank you very much for hearing our testimony today and for your long-time support of the Midtown Greenway, what has become Minnesota's busiest bikeway.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Next is Thatcher Imboden. There he is.

MR. IMBODEN: Thank you, Commissioners.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Welcome.

MR. IMBODEN: Thanks. My name is Thatcher Imboden. I live in south Minneapolis, grew up in Uptown, am president of the Uptown Association and have -- and I work for a commercial real estate firm located in Uptown and some other various activities. I started going to meetings on the Southwest Transitway many years ago, not in any official capacity on those organizations -- or on the PAC or the CAC, but I was interested and wanted to see what was going on and try to understand the impacts and opportunities.
There's a couple things that have been said over the course of the last number of months about transit in Uptown that I wanted to just clarify and maybe elaborate on. The Uptown area is a small city. Uptown within one mile of Hennepin and Lake has over 30,000 residents. When you take the 3C areas, when you talk about Eat Street and Uptown and Lyn-Lake, we have more population, more people living, than St. Louis Park, than Hopkins, and than Minnetonka. So, I mean, this is not just a small community. This is a regional location. We have some -- we have a very large business district. We have restaurants that people come from. We have the lakes that people come and recreate at. We have bars, we have great neighborhoods to live in, so we have -- we have some housing that's available--we'd encourage people to come over--and we have great shopping. These are all places that people are coming to.

And there's some challenges with that. Like all cities that have major destinations, we have traffic problems. We have traffic problems that affect both people who are driving, that are biking, that are taking the bus. For instance, I just took the bus here from where the west Lake station area is down here, and it took me 35 minutes; that's -- well, with some
walking time. That was pretty crazy.

We have parking issues. Uptown has a very substantial problem between the businesses and the residents because of the great amount of people who are coming to the Uptown area. And there's perception and, to some degree, a real issue of having inadequate parking facilities.

So when we talk about the Southwest Light Rail project, we're talking about an opportunity to help us deal with some of these local issues because we're a regional destination and an origin, and so the fact that we're a regional place is creating some of these issues, and so the ability of Hennepin County to help us with that would be greatly appreciated.

During the process we had some issues with the ridership forecasts. This is not a minor issue. During the alternatives analysis, there were a lot of red flags that were raised by myself and some others, specifically about the -- the rider forecasting for station boardings in the Uptown area, Uptown and Lyn-Lake and the Eat Street stations. For example, back then when the -- in the alternatives analysis, they identified how many people would walk to the stations. In Uptown, 250 people a day would walk to the Uptown station to get on. You go out to the
suburbs, and there would be way more people walking to
the stations than Uptown. The only -- the stations on
the entire line that had fewer people walking to the
station was City West, Golden Triangle, Southwest Metro
Transit and Mitchell. But all the ones in St. Louis
Park, all the ones in Hopkins, and many of them out
further west actually had a lot more people walking to
them, so that just raised some fundamental questions
about the study.

Needless to say, we were told and promised
that they were going to continue to look into these
things during this next process, during the DEIS
process. Unfortunately, there are still red flags and
we still haven't gotten answers. Very briefly--and I'm
just trying to elaborate that there's some issues--
there's a thousand people projected to board a day at
21st Street Station and Kenwood; in Uptown, 1100. It
raises some questions. Also, in the alternatives
analysis, they had 1800 more people boarding between
Uptown and Fourth Street on the 3C alignment, but if
you go back to today's thing -- or I should say, if you
look at the alternatives analysis versus the current
study, there were 1800 more people boarding for that
same segment if you try to balance it. And so, again,
it's why did those things change? We don't know. And
so I'm just raising these because there's been comments since then that the Uptown transit market is saturated. That was some of the justification, it seemed, to -- that was used to suggest that the Uptown area's ridership numbers weren't very high, that our market was saturated. That poses a very big problem for us in Uptown because if we want to have improvements in the future -- and I'll really be quick here. If we want to have improvements -- 'cause 3A is going to be selected, I know it, we all know it. When you have the two equal riderships and $600 million difference, it's a no-brainer to pick 3A. However, we need to look at how are we going to improve transit for this very regional destination. And it's not just an east/west connection. We're talking about north/south between downtown and Uptown and Lyn-Lake and Nicollet and Lake, and so I urge you guys not to forget about the regional significance of our communities and will work with us and the city of Minneapolis and try to improve our transportation. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much. Thank you.

Next is Vicki Moore. Welcome.

MS. MOORE: Thank you so much for this opportunity. I am Vicki Moore. I live in the Harrison
neighborhood, and I have been on the citizen advisory committee. I really want to thank the board for having an open and objective process, and I very much want to thank the staff. This has been an extraordinarily educational experience for me. I know much more about light rail than I thought I ever would know about light rail. And one of the things that the staff did that was extremely helpful to me is that they made the information available. They got the information up online really fast when it was there, they took the time to explain what it meant to someone like myself, who I know nothing about engineering, and it gave me the opportunity to share this information with my neighbors so that they could look at it in their homes, in their communities, in their groups, and have a better understanding about what -- what this was about.

One line cannot be all things to all people. I mean, the one thing that I really have come to understand is that there is a tremendous interest in transit in this area, and I hope that this is a jumping off point for a regional network. Of course, I do support the Kenilworth alignment. I am a Harrison resident. I'm also a -- you know, I'm also a resident of the city of Minneapolis. And what's really important to me is that we make a start, that we have
something that's viable, something that will meet the federal requirements and that we don't say this is the end here; that this is the beginning, that we're going to get some sort of like LRT, BRT, you know, light rail, buses, whatever, but we're going to have better transit opportunities.

I wish that Art was still here, 'cause we've had some really spirited discussions over the last year. My house is not in the impound lot. I will say that 19 years ago there wasn't a Second Avenue North; it was a mud street. Someone had left a pile of, like, scrap metal. There was a front-end loader, tow trucks ran wild all over the place. So we came from some very humble beginnings in term of corralling the tow trucks, getting Second Avenue North paved, you know, galvanizing our community and realizing that we have a community and we have 250 acres of undeveloped land.

I'm very much supportive of transit-oriented development. I think we provide an excellent opportunity in that area, so I hope you support 3A for a variety of reasons, and I hope that this kind of open process continues, so that we will have a really good network in our area.

One evening when I was going off to the CAC meeting, one of my neighbors, and I would say the
garage guys who live in my alley, were gathered around
at my neighbor's car; you know, they were putting her
car back together basically with staples and string and
duct tape because she needed to get up to get to work
in the southwest part of our area the next morning.
I've been in that position. You know, I wished that
I'd had transit. I wished that I didn't have to
walk -- you know, take three different buses to get my
son to daycare, to get myself to work. That was many
decades ago. So I really applaud the efforts that
we're making in terms of having really good transit for
all of our citizens.

So thank you and thank you to the staff.
Again, I'm going to keep learning about LRT.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very
much.

Rick Dorsey. Rick Dorsey? Here he comes.
Got it. Take your time.

Mr. Dorsey, welcome.

MR. DORSEY: Good evening, Commissioners.
Thank you for having me -- letting me speak. I'm here
tonight really to -- I appreciate all the efforts
that's done by everybody in getting to this point, but
what I'm really here to do is to suggest another option
in that you don't have to look at the options you're
looking at tonight, and that's something maybe has been foregone. And the reason for wanting to do that is -- it stems from wanting to put together the best long-term network and looking at it from a visionary standpoint, not just this one particular line.

I've been looking at more than -- looking at the whole system, what you want to be doing is creating mobility for the whole community, not just Minneapolis, not just Minnetonka, wherever. You want to create mobility for everything.

If you look at what's worked in the past, we have the best model that there is, and that's the highway system. Why are those big roads built the way they are? They didn't start that small. But they're built because of demand. They're built by growth, they're built by congestion, reasons of congestion, and because of that they've grown to where they are today. And that's where -- the reason why they're there is because they bring people to where they have to get to. And that's where the problems are, that's where the congestion is, and that's the first concern that was to be looked at with the idea of light rail; the primary issue was to deal with some of the congestion issues.

And where the money is going to come from to pay for it is by the people out there being convinced
that we're going to solve our congestion problem. Yes, there are a lot of other issues there, but when you look at -- look at what we have, this is something that's going to be a long-term -- placed into -- or put into place for a long term and can't be changed. We're looking at billions of dollars between the systems that are being proposed, the different lines. Five to $6 billion is what we're looking at. That's a lot of money. On an annual basis, we're looking at combining all the losses for all the different lines of probably somewhere 80 to 100 million dollars annually. That's a lot of money. That's based on just taking what we know about the Hiawatha and the projection for the -- for the Southwest Corridor.

I'm proposing looking at something else, and that's to connect up to what we already have in place and build off of it, perhaps taking that Hiawatha line, coming across to Eden Prairie from the east and going across, paralleling 494, be it on it or parallel to it, then moving around to Ridgedale area and coming in 394, creating a loop. You're still focusing on the major corridors being the downtown, you're tying into it, the airport areas, you're tying into it, the areas around the mega mall, Southdale, Eden Prairie mall, all areas where people want to go and need to get to, not just
during rush hours but during the weekends, at nights, times when they'll be using those modes of transportation. There's lots of ways that this can be funded in terms of public and private opportunities if you connect those dots, because those are the businesses that are out there and they want the people coming to them. So to create new corridors where we're competing with the regional goal of trying to build regional centers and -- and use -- utilize our infrastructure to the maximum and to the best of our capacity would be best suited by trying to follow what's already there and why it's there.

I guess my time is up, but I'd be more than happy to come back in a work session and talk with you. And I hope that you recognize that you do have an option tonight as well, and that's to not vote for any of the options and to look for more time to really look at perhaps out of the box that we've been looking at at this point in time and look at the public and private opportunities that are there that will potentially save that 80 to 100 million dollars a year annually that I know we can't afford. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Steve Haggar or Hager (phonetic), I'm not
sure which. Welcome.

MR. HAGGAR: How are you doing today?

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Okay. How about you?

MR. HAGGAR: I'm doing real good.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Okay.

MR. HAGGAR: Okay. My name is Steve Haggar. I grew up in St. Louis Park, Minnesota. I have a lot of friends who live in north Minneapolis. There's a term I'd like to define for you today. That term is racial justice. Racial justice is the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all. Equitable impacts and outcomes across race are the key indicators of racial justice.

When I look at the 3A and 3C proposals, I think about people and opportunities. I support the Kenilworth 3A alignment because I believe this route would do a lot along the lines of racial justice. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Steve Faber. Welcome to the Rail Authority.

MR. FABER: Thank you, Commissioners.
I'm Steve Faber. I own a business in Bassett Creek Valley, and I've been in the commercial real estate business for the last 30 years. I think there have been a number of points that have been brought up in favor of the Kenilworth alignment, which I am. I just want to touch on two things. One, I want you to know that the Bassett Valley Creek Master Plan is not a pipe dream. I mean, that will happen. Kenilworth alignment is the catalyst for that. It's probably the least developed land in the city of Minneapolis with the most potential, so you'll get -- you'll get a bang for your buck there by putting the Kenilworth alignment there. There will be a significant development and density that will happen there and -- and so that's point one.

Two, I've been involved for the last five years. I'm on the ROC as it's affectionately known, the Redevelopment Oversight Committee, which is those neighborhoods Bryn Mahr and Harrison that are in that area. This is a remarkable group of people that have been dedicated for a lot of years longer than I have to this -- to that neighborhood and this cause. I mean, there have been people that have been -- you know, that are sitting here in this audience that have been for 10 or 12 years kind of a groundswell neighborhood group coming and saying this is what we want in the
neighborhood. What I can assure you is that they will embrace what you're doing there. They've come to realize that, you know, compromise is what's needed to get from A to Z. They're willing to do that, and you won't have any problems with that neighborhood should you vote to pass the Kenilworth alignment. They will work with you for the betterment of everybody. They have -- For whatever reason, policy over the years has kind of abandoned the near north, and I think it's time that these folks have a win. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Thank you very much.

Let me go back to Janet Weivoda. Janet Weivoda?

(No response)

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: Is there any other -- has anyone else signed up to speak, or is there anyone else who would like to speak who has not signed up? Anybody else? Second time here. Third time, anybody else who wishes to testify?

(No response)

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: All right. Are there any comments from board members before we close the public hearing? We're going to have -- we have one technicality here that we have to deal with, and that
is that the Resolution establishing this hearing said it was going to be from 4 to 7 p.m. Commissioner Dorfman has volunteered to remain until 7:00, along with staff, to make sure that we don't miss anyone who is trying to come at the tail end of this. We don't want to violate the promise that we made. But -- and anybody else is welcome to stay as well. But I appreciate Commissioner Dorfman being willing to do that.

But I want to thank everybody who participated tonight. We've seen on television some public hearings over the last three or four months on other topics that have not been particularly orderly, and I thought this was.

MR. RANDY JOHNSON: They call it a townhall meeting.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: This was very orderly, very productive, I thought. And I think people were very respectful of one another and one another's opinions, so for that I thank you as Chair of the Hennepin County Rail Authority, and I turn it back to Commissioner Dorfman.

COMMISSIONER DORFMAN: I would just say for the earlier public hearing, the most recent public hearing that we had with Hopkins--and I'm kind of
looking at Kathie Doty—we also -- a number of people who couldn't attend the public hearing sent in comments, either email or others, and they became part of the formal record, and I think we will continue to do that if we -- you know, if people want to communicate in some other way, we'll certainly add that to the record. Okay.

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: And, again, the schedule for consideration of the locally preferred alternative by the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority has this item on the agenda at our next Rail Authority meeting on November the 3rd, which is a Tuesday, at our regular time after the County Board meeting.

Is there any other information or comments anyone would like to make?

(No response)

COMMISSIONER McLAUGHLIN: All right. Then I will recess this public hearing and hand the chair position over to Commissioner Dorfman to see if anyone else arrives between now and the appointed closing time at 7 p.m. Thank you all very, very much.

COMMISSIONER DORFMAN: Thank you.

(No other comments were received and the hearing closed at 7 p.m.)