
8.0 Recommendation

8.1 Overview

This chapter presents the preliminary recommendation of the Southwest Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the final recommendation of the Southwest Policy Advisory Committee (PAC), and the final action of the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA).

8.2 Background and Assumptions

When the Southwest Alternatives Analysis (AA) began, the HCRRA assembled the Southwest TAC and PAC to provide both technical and policy guidance to the project team. In fulfillment of this charge, the Southwest TAC worked with the project team to develop a preliminary recommendation based upon the technical analysis conducted, and on comments received from public involvement activities. The TAC's preliminary recommendation was shared with the public during a two-month intensive public outreach process.

Feedback received on the preliminary Southwest TAC recommendation was shared with the Southwest PAC. After considering the public feedback the Southwest PAC developed a final recommendation, which was then forwarded to the HCRRA. After receiving the final recommendation, the HCRRA held a public hearing in order to receive additional public comments prior to taking action.

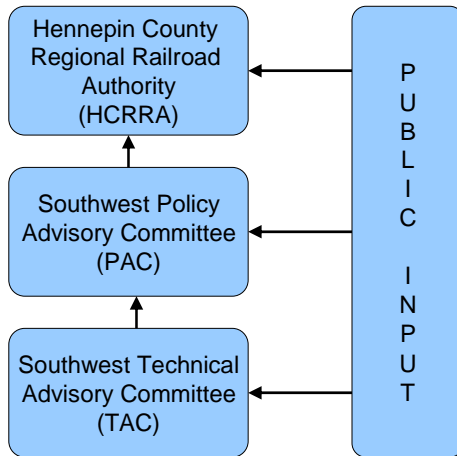
8.3 Recommendations

8.3.1 Southwest Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Preliminary Recommendation

After comparing the benefits, costs and impacts of the light rail transit (LRT) and bus rapid transit (BRT) alternatives, the Southwest TAC recommended retaining the three LRT alternatives, LRT 3A, LRT 3C and LRT 1A, as well as the Enhanced Bus alternative for further evaluation in the next phase of project development, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The DEIS process was assumed to include a screening or tiering process where the information generated as part of the mandatory local comprehensive plan updates would be incorporated into the evaluation process. In addition, the Southwest TAC recommended that the Metropolitan Council raise the priority of the Southwest Transitway in the region's long-range transportation plan, the *Transportation Policy Plan* (TPP).

The three LRT alternatives, LRT 1A, LRT 3A, and LRT 3C, were recommended for inclusion in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) project phase because they were superior at addressing the Southwest Transitway goals of improving mobility, providing a cost-effective and efficient travel option, protecting the environment, preserving the quality of life, and supporting economic development. The three LRT alternatives were found to carry more riders; attract more new riders to the transit system; be more cost-effective; be more operationally efficient; provide transit service to those most in need; provide connections to workplaces, medical facilities, shopping centers and other activity centers in the southwest metropolitan area; and create opportunities for further economic development in the southwest metropolitan area.

Figure 8.1 Study Management



The Southwest TAC recommendations were received by the PAC in September 2006. The Southwest PAC requested that public comment be received on the preliminary recommendation. Public comment was solicited during the months of October and November through public open houses, a study sponsored website (www.southwesttransitway.org), presentations and meetings with interested groups, city council briefings, and news articles and network television coverage. A detailed description of the public outreach activities is included in Chapter 2, Public Involvement, and a summary of comments on the study recommendations is included in Appendix C of this report.

8.3.2 Southwest Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) Final Recommendation

On December 13, 2006, the Southwest PAC met to consider the public comments received and to form a final recommendation.

In general, the public comments received supported the Southwest TAC's recommendation to continue to consider light rail transit (LRT) as the transitway technology best suited to serve the travel needs of the southwest metropolitan area. There was also a general consensus that the LRT 1A alternative was inferior to the LRT 3A and LRT 3C alternatives in addressing the travel needs and supporting economic development in the southwest metropolitan area.

After considering the public comment received, the Southwest PAC concurred with the Southwest TAC recommendation with one caveat, that LRT 1A be retained as an option to be considered only in the event that LRT 3A and LRT 3C prove to be infeasible during the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) process.

Therefore the Southwest PAC recommended the following:

1. That the HCRRRA conduct the next phase of transitway development, the DEIS process;
2. That LRT 3A, LRT 3C, LRT 1A, and the Enhanced Bus alternative be included in the DEIS as potential alternatives;

-
3. That LRT 1A be pursued only if LRT 3A and LRT 3C are found to be infeasible during the DEIS process; and,
 4. That the Metropolitan Council raise the priority of the Southwest Transitway in the *Transportation Policy Plan (TPP)*.

The Southwest PAC recommendation was forwarded to the HCRRA in early 2007.

Figure 8.2 illustrates the three light rail transit alternatives included in the final Southwest PAC recommendation. Figure 8.3 illustrates the Enhanced Bus alternative also included in the Southwest PAC recommendation as the FTA required baseline alternative.

The formal resolutions passed by the Southwest PAC are contained in Appendix A of this report.

8.4 Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) Action

The HCRRA received the Southwest PAC's final recommendation on January 9, 2007. At that time the HCRRA scheduled a public hearing for the Southwest PAC's final recommendation for January 23, 2007.

Fourteen people testified at the January 23rd public hearing. In general, all those who testified supported the recommendation to proceed into the DEIS phase with light rail transit (LRT) as the preferred technology. The general area of debate expressed by those testifying was over which routing alignment ("A", referred to as Kenilworth, or "C", referred to as Midtown/Nicollet) was preferred in Minneapolis.

On February 13, 2007, the HCRRA voted unanimously to accept the Southwest PAC's final recommendation. The formal HCRRA resolution is contained in Appendix A of this report.

Figure 8.2 Study Recommendation

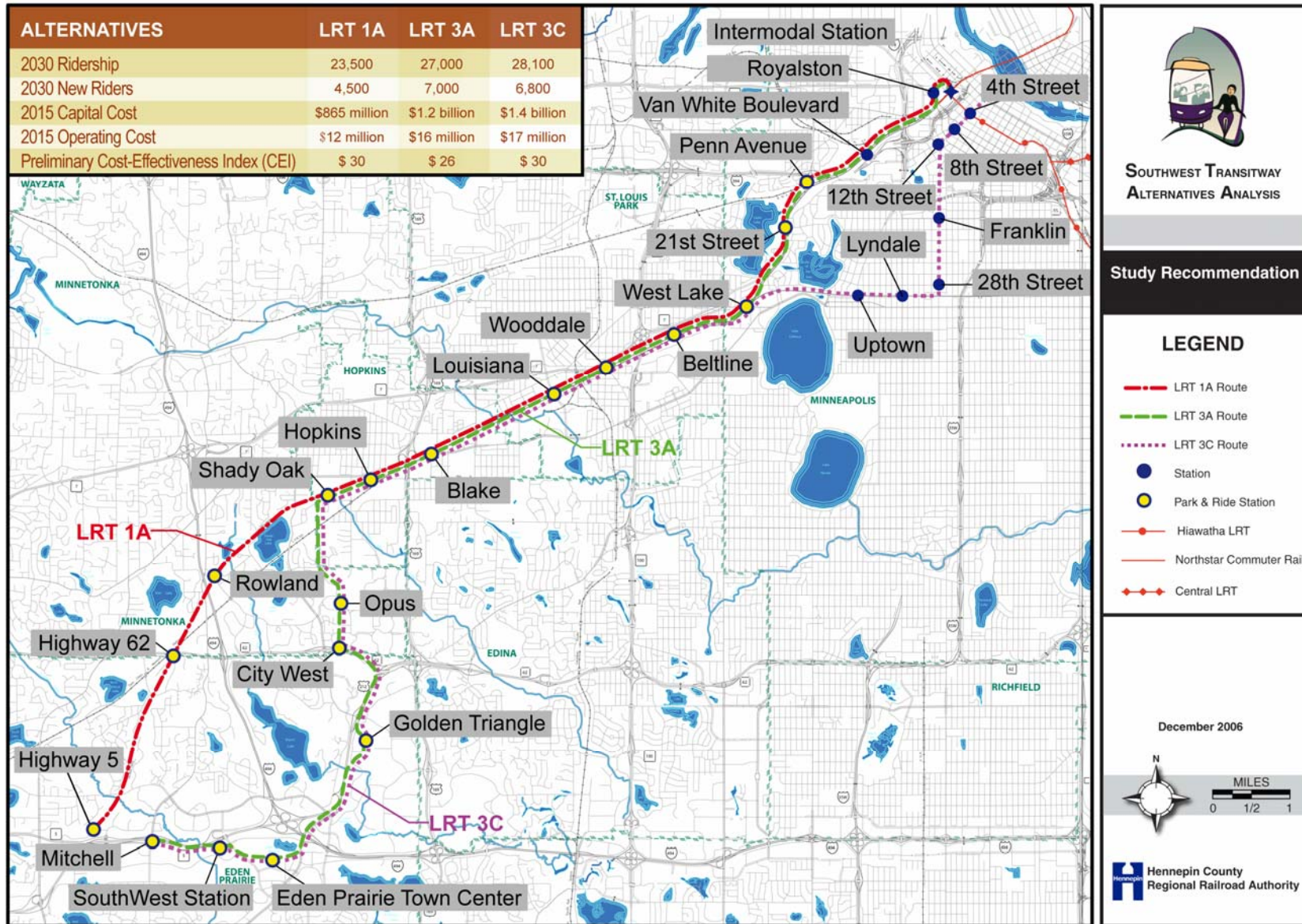


Figure 8.3 Enhanced Bus Alternative

