



# SOUTHWEST LRT community works

green means go.

## Southwest LRT Community Works Vision

Adopted by the Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee on April 21, 2011

### The Southwest LRT corridor: connecting people to jobs, housing, shopping, and fun.

The Southwest Community Works Initiative collaborates with citizens, businesses, and government to align land use and transit planning so that the Southwest LRT Corridor is a premiere destination that is

· *accessible* · *livable* · *vibrant*

#### Economic competitiveness and job growth

*Promoting opportunities for business and employment growth*

#### Housing choices

*Positioning the Southwest LRT communities as a place for all to live*

#### Quality neighborhoods

*Creating unique, vibrant, safe, beautiful, and walkable station areas*

#### Critical connections

*Improving affordable regional mobility for all users*



The Southwest LRT Corridor now and in the future is a:

#### Jobs corridor:

- Within 1/2 mile: 210,000 jobs now; 270,000 by 2030
- 1,000 construction jobs per year (2014-2016)

#### Housing corridor:

- Within 1/2 mile: 31,000 housing units now; over 40,000 by 2030

#### Growth corridor:

- Within 1/2 mile: 60,000 population now; 75,000 by 2030

#### Commuter corridor:

- Nearly 30,000 daily trips by 2030
- High reverse commute ridership; over 7,000 daily trips by 2030

## **Southwest LRT Community Works Adopted Vision Statement**

The Southwest LRT Community Works Initiative collaborates with citizens, businesses and government to align land use and transit planning so that the Southwest LRT Corridor is a premiere destination that is accessible, livable and vibrant.

### **Guiding Principles**

These Guiding Principles are a reflection of the cooperative efforts underway between the jurisdictions in the Southwest LRT Corridor to guide land use and economic development in and around station areas in a transit-supportive manner.

#### **1. Partner to Leverage Resources and Maximize Investment**

*Maximize the return on investment from the Southwest LRT line by promoting public and private partnerships to implement each community's vision.*

Potential Strategies:

- Utilize the existing Community Works structure to guide the implementation of the Southwest Corridor Development Framework.
- Continue collaboration with the Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit to ensure the integration of LRT engineering with land use /economic development to achieve a development-oriented transit design.
- Actively engage the Southwest Business Investment Partnership in TOD planning and to capitalize on the synergy between the public and private sector investments in the Southwest Corridor.

#### **2. Realize Diverse, Compact Transit Oriented Development Surrounding Transit Facilities**

*Continue to promote and encourage Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in the Southwest Corridor consistent with TOD principles: - a mix of land uses (new and existing), higher and more compact densities, high quality pedestrian and bicycle environment, an active defined center and limited and/or managed parking and auto oriented uses.*

Potential Strategies:

- Review, evaluate, and consider the Metropolitan Council Transit Oriented Development Strategic Action Plan and determine what Southwest cities can do in their own plans, zoning codes, policies and capital investments to further that agenda.
- Evaluate existing city zoning codes, steps that have been taken to achieve TOD, and develop targeted recommendations for how to strengthen TOD implementation in each city.

- Prioritize development opportunity sites and pursue site assembly as part of a coordinated strategy.
- Explore the benefits of developing a coordinated environmental process (clearance and permitting) within a ¼ or ½ mile radius of stations along the corridor
- Continue to work with Metro Transit, Hennepin County and others on Joint Development opportunities, process, and implementation.
- Coordinate with engineering on the siting of LRT facilities and infrastructure so that they do not impede future potential development opportunities.

### **3. Accelerate Economic Competitiveness and Job Growth**

*Promote opportunities for business and employment growth to accelerate economic competitiveness of the SW Corridor.*

Potential Strategies:

- Evaluate the establishment of a Corridor Wide Development Authority to increase economic competitiveness of the corridor.
- Align and strategically target Hennepin County and other funding agencies' TOD programs to focus on the Southwest Corridor.
- Establish interdisciplinary teams to coordinate funding, infrastructure investments and development activities for specific stations and projects.
- Work with Greater MSP and similar organizations to continue to support existing jobs and educate commercial real estate brokers about SW LRT opportunities.
- Promote transit accessible job creation by providing pedestrian and bike connections from LRT stops to key employers along the corridor; allowing increased and equitable access to job opportunities without the use of a vehicle.
- Coordinate with the Southwest Project Office to develop a specific marketing and branding plan to distribute to organizations to attract prospective businesses.
- Develop an alliance and promote partnerships with the Southwest Business Investment Partnership.
- Continue to support small business and stimulate entrepreneurship particularly among new American populations by partnering with organizations like Open to Business and the Neighborhood Development Group.

#### **4. Provide a Full Range of Housing Choices**

*Position the Southwest LRT communities as a place for all to live and thrive.*

Potential Strategies:

- Develop, adopt and implement a corridor wide housing strategy with joint policies, tools and financing strategies to achieve a full range of housing choices (types/sizes/styles/values) to meet different needs, stages of life and income levels within walking distance of LRT stations
- Integrate the corridor wide housing strategy within the Corridor Development Framework to ensure market reality, financial feasibility and equitable access to employment, education and amenities
- Encourage cities to adopt policies to preserve existing safe, well-maintained housing that is affordable to existing residents and workers.
- Encourage cities to support new housing projects that increase housing density around the station areas; increasing transit access, reducing dependence upon automobiles, and improving the Affordable Housing + Transportation Index.
- Support policies to ensure that new housing developments will include units affordable to a full range of incomes.
- Consider strategies to retain existing market rate affordable housing including investigating putting in place plans and policies that identify and address the specific housing affordability needs along the corridor, including income target levels, tenure, and unit types.

#### **5. Create Great Quality Places Around Transit Facilities and Key Destinations**

*Create unique, vibrant, safe, beautiful, and walkable station areas.*

Potential Strategies:

- Create walkable “destinations” that are vibrant and vital with a mix of uses. Ensure safety and accessibility for all people to/from LRT stations and within station areas.
- Encourage new development to provide “eyes of the LRT and streets” and natural surveillance of public spaces and parks. Follow Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines – open sight lines, adequate lighting and clear entries/exits. Create a balance between the natural and built environments.

- Encourage open spaces to be well-designed, accessible by foot and bike and accommodate diverse users.
- Promote new methods and creative ideas to enhance main pedestrian routes, key public spaces and private development with landscaping.
- Develop a coordinated public art program for station platforms and station areas (defined as approximately ¼ mile around stations)

## **6. Strengthen Connections Between LRT and the Surrounding Areas - Critical Connections**

*Improve affordable regional mobility for all users.*

Potential Strategies:

- Tailor public infrastructure investments to the station typologies and timing of development.
- Align the capital improvement programs (CIPs) of the partner agencies and with planned private sector infrastructure investments.
- Complete the “last mile” of critical bicycle and pedestrian connections.
- Where appropriate, transform existing roadways that serve stations into complete streets.
- Develop a station hierarchy for users related to station typologies that will guide modal investment priorities.
- Provide convenient, user-friendly, bicycle parking (including secure short- and long-term) and related facilities.



## SOUTHWEST LRT PROJECT **NEWS RELEASE**

Contact: Laura Baenen  
Communications Manager  
Southwest LRT Project  
Metropolitan Council  
651-602-1797 office  
612-269-4365 cell  
[Laura.Baenen@metrotransit.org](mailto:Laura.Baenen@metrotransit.org)

### **Cost estimates released for 8 options for resolving freight rail issue**

**ST. LOUIS PARK, Minn. – July 17, 2013** – Construction of the Southwest LRT Line (Green Line Extension) necessitates that freight rail traffic currently running along the preferred LRT route in Minneapolis is either kept with adjustments or relocated to St. Louis Park.

Planners for the Southwest LRT Project proposed eight options in May for either relocating freight traffic to St. Louis Park or keeping it in Minneapolis. Today, estimated costs for the eight options, which range from a low of \$120 million to a high of \$420 million, were announced. Of this, \$85 million to \$90 million is for changes common to all options.

“Building Southwest Light Rail is about expanding our mobility and access to jobs, schools, entertainment, and many other popular destinations in our region,” said Council Chair Susan Haigh. “This project is important to the quality of life and economic competitiveness of our region. We are committed to building a safe and efficient transit line that improves mobility, supports economic development along the corridor, and meets the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists, all while minimizing impacts to communities, businesses and households.”

“Community support, interest and involvement in this project continues to be outstanding and we’re grateful to have so many engaged residents who want to help us improve the overall project,” continued Haigh.

Over the past two months, Council staff held 11 open houses related to Southwest LRT, which were attended by more than 800 people. Roughly 800 comments, suggestions and critiques have been received.

The Metropolitan Council will look for alternate funding sources to cover some of these costs since these amounts are not included in the project’s \$1.25 billion estimated budget. Funding partners include the Federal Government, Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Counties Transit Improvement Board, and the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority.

On May 28, the project office announced six co-location options for keeping freight rail traffic in the Kenilworth neighborhood of Minneapolis where LRT tracks would also be built. Two other options relocate freight rail traffic to St. Louis Park.

Since then, project engineers have revised these options based on feedback from the public. Better pedestrian and bicycle connections have been added to the two relocation options.

For each co-location option, the number of homes expected to be taken has either been reduced significantly or eliminated entirely. Specifically, in all but one of the six co-location options full acquisition of homes could be eliminated. "In response to clear feedback from communities, project staff adjusted design options to minimize or avoid taking of private homes and improve pedestrian and bicycle access," said Mark Fuhrmann, who leads LRT project development for the Met Council, "We want to be responsive to the communities who strongly support this project, and believe it can be made better."

The cost estimates for all eight options include adjustments to LRT to accommodate freight rail, capital improvements, right-of-way acquisition, contingency and other costs, such as design and finance costs. The estimates are based on 2013 costs.

In addition to the cost estimates below that are specific to each option, all options require the accommodation of common improvements which are estimated to add \$85 million to \$90 million to each option.

***For co-location, cost estimates and primary cost drivers are:***

**All modes (trail, freight and LRT) at ground level** - \$50 million to \$55 million. Reduces full residential property acquisitions from 55 to 26.

**Trail relocated** - \$35 million to \$40 million – New trail route from Midtown Greenway to Cedar Lake Parkway, including trail overpass structures. Avoids full residential property acquisitions.

**Trail elevated** - \$50 million to \$55 million – New elevated trail, including handicapped accessible connection to Cedar Lake Parkway. Avoids full residential property acquisitions.

**LRT elevated** - \$105 million to \$110 million – New elevated LRT structure. Avoids full residential property acquisitions.

**Kenilworth deep LRT tunnel** - \$320 million to \$330 million – Tunnel-boring operations and machinery, reconstruction of West Lake Street Bridge, subway tunnel station at West Lake and eliminates 21<sup>st</sup> Street Station. Avoids full residential property acquisitions.

**Kenilworth shallow LRT tunnel** - \$150 million to \$160 million – Cut-and-cover excavation, retains West Lake Street Station and eliminates 21<sup>st</sup> Street Station. Avoids full residential property acquisitions.

***For relocation, cost estimates and primary cost drivers are:***

**Brunswick West alignment** (through St. Louis Park High School football field) - \$200 million to \$210 million – Full or partial acquisition of 46 homes, businesses or public properties; construction of freight rail bridge structures, lowering of frontage road at Highway 7; and reconfiguration of local roads.

**Brunswick Central alignment** (avoids St. Louis Park High School football field) - \$190 million to \$200 million – Full or partial acquisition of 32 homes, businesses and public properties; construction of overhead freight bridge; lowering of Highway 7 and frontage road; and, reconfiguration of local roads.

***Next steps***

The project office will continue taking feedback on freight rail location at two previously announced public meetings this week from 4:30 to 7 this evening at Jones-Harrison Residence, 3700 Cedar Lake Ave., in Minneapolis and from 4:30 to 7 p.m. Thursday at St. Louis Park High School, 6425 W. 33<sup>rd</sup> St., in St. Louis Park. Staff will present the cost estimates for the eight options for freight rail location and explain the primary cost drivers for each.

Project advisory committees will be meeting, as will the Corridor Management Committee, in the coming weeks. Staff will summarize and share the feedback with the project's committees and the Metropolitan Council to help them understand the issues as they provide their input.

The Met Council is scheduled to meet at 3 p.m. Aug. 28 in the Council Chambers, 390 Robert St N, in St. Paul to approve the scope and cost.



**About the project:** The Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project (Green Line Extension) will operate from downtown Minneapolis through the southwestern suburban cities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie, passing in close proximity to the city of Edina. The proposed alignment is primarily at-grade and includes 17 new stations and approximately 15.8-miles of double track. The line will connect major activity centers in the region including downtown Minneapolis, the Opus/Golden Triangle employment area in Minnetonka and Eden Prairie, Methodist Hospital in St. Louis Park, the Eden Prairie Center Mall, and the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes. Ridership in 2030 is projected at 29,660 weekday passengers. The project will interline with Central Corridor LRT (Green Line) which will provide a one-seat ride to destinations such as the University of Minnesota, state Capitol and downtown St. Paul. It will be part of an integrated system of transitways, including connections to the METRO Blue Line, the Northstar Commuter Rail line, a variety of major bus routes along the alignment, and proposed future transitway and rail lines. The Metropolitan Council will be the grantee of federal funds. The regional government agency is charged with building the line in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The Southwest Corridor Management Committee, which includes commissioners from Hennepin County and the mayors of Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Edina, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie provides advice and oversight. Funding is provided by the Federal Transit Administration, Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), state of Minnesota and Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA). The Southwest LRT Project website is [www.swlrt.org](http://www.swlrt.org)

# StarTribune

## Southwest Corridor light-rail line costs soar

Article by: Pat Doyle  
 Star Tribune  
 July 18, 2013 - 10:48 AM

The price tag for the future light-rail line between Minneapolis and the southwest suburbs will rise sharply — as much as 33 percent — under new estimates for the cost of dealing with conflicting freight train traffic.

The Southwest Corridor LRT, which was already expected to cost \$1.25 billion, could reach nearly \$1.7 billion if planners choose one of the options under consideration in the hotly contested area between Minneapolis and St. Louis Park.

Estimates released Wednesday put the lowest-cost option at \$1.37 billion if the freight trains run alongside light-rail trail the Kenilworth neighborhood of Minneapolis and bike and walking trails there were relocated. Similar options have been opposed by the city and could produce a lawsuit from homeowners.

Burying the LRT in a deep tunnel under the freight lines, and bike and walking paths in Kenilworth would satisfy many homeowners but could bring the highest cost: \$1.67 billion.

Rerouting the freight from Minneapolis to berms in St. Louis Park would cost as much as \$1.55 billion and draw opposition from that community.

The estimates were released by the Metropolitan Council, the agency overseeing the light-rail project, and will add more to an already heated debate over the LRT and freight traffic.

The cost of dealing with the freight will likely make the Southwest Corridor light-rail line the most expensive public work project in the Twin Cities.

The head of transit development for the agency, Mark Fuhrmann, said Wednesday he isn't surprised by the cost of dealing with the freight.

"Designing and building rail ... is pricey," he said. "It just comes with the territory."

Costs rise for state, counties

The cost estimates also will put more of a burden on county governments and the state, which are expected to fund 50 percent of project. The federal government is expected to pick up the other half.

"We knew the resolution of the freight issue was going to cost them money," said Hennepin County Commissioner Pete McLaughlin. "These are significant ... no question about it."

The estimates also are likely to increase resistance among some Republican legislators to fund the state's share of the



The Kenilworth Trail alongside a current freight train that has been a proposal site for the Southwest Corridor rail line in St. Louis Park on Wednesday.

RENEE JONES SCHNEIDER, Star Tribune

Minneapolis and St. Louis Park have been at odds over what to do with the freight rail that currently runs through Kenilworth. The Minneapolis City Council endorsed the light-rail line running through the Kenilworth corridor between Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles, an area popular with bikers and hikers, but only on condition that the freight be relocated.

St. Louis Park residents have objected to taking on additional freight traffic and to berms as high as two stories where tracks would be put. Their City Council prefers keeping the freight in some fashion in Kenilworth.

Meanwhile, a group of Kenilworth residents prefers living with the infrequent freight traffic rather than having the more frequent LRT trains running above ground. They back the deep tunnel for the LRT and running the freight and biking and hiking trails above it.

While those residents said a deep tunnel might cost \$100 million, the Met Council Wednesday estimated its cost as high as \$420 million, which includes \$85 million to \$90 million in bridges and other freight elements common to all of the options.

#### Other tunnel options

Another option involves building less expensive, shallower light-rail tunnels in Kenilworth. One would add as much as \$100 million to the \$1.25 billion project, while a shorter version on the south end of Kenilworth would add \$180 million to \$190 million.

Relocating the freight to St. Louis Park would add up to \$300 million to the project and require acquiring 32 to 46 home businesses and other properties.

The least expensive alternative adds at least \$120 million to the project but forgoes tunnels and berms and would run the freight and LRT next to each other in Kenilworth while relocating the bike and walking trails. Another option keeps the freight and LRT and recreational trails at ground level and alongside each other in Kenilworth and would add perhaps \$145 million to the \$1.25 billion cost. That option would mean acquiring about two-dozen residential properties.

But options for having the freight and LRT next to each other at ground level are similar to an option already rejected by Minneapolis. "That will definitely lead to a battle," said Michael Wilson, a nearby resident.

St. Louis Park residents saw the cost estimates as confirming their view that rerouting freight traffic into their community "cost prohibitive," said Thom Miller, an organizer of opponents there. "They're very close to where we estimated them," he said of building berms.

About 300 people packed a meeting room near Cedar Lake Wednesday evening to hear Met Council engineer Jim Aleksi present the different freight options and their cost.

Among them was Tom Johnson, an attorney representing Kenilworth homeowners who prefer a deep tunnel.

"I'm curious why the deep tunnel is so much higher" than earlier estimates from proponents, he said.

Pat Doyle • 612-673-4504