



## Southwest LRT Community Works Project Description and Work Plan

Southwest LRT Community Works proposes to formalize and expand early collaborations across jurisdictions to maximize the economic and community benefits of transit investments within the Southwest LRT Corridor. **Following this approach, the Southwest LRT Community Works project will create a shared vision and implementation strategy to provide housing choices, stimulate Transit Oriented Development (TOD), expand transportation options, address corridor-wide issues, leverage public and private investment and resources, and create sustainable communities.**

### Background

The proposed 15-mile, 17-station Southwest LRT line will serve Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Edina, Hopkins, St. Louis Park and Minneapolis (Figure 1). Southwest LRT will be the region's first light rail line that extends from a central city through several suburban communities. The line will expand the region's transit system by connecting to the Hiawatha and Central LRT lines, the Northstar Commuter Rail line, the proposed Bottineau Transitway and the region's bus network at the Transportation Interchange and Southwest Metro Transit in Eden Prairie. The line will improve access to jobs, housing, community and medical facilities, entertainment, recreation area, and educational institutions.

*Southwest LRT Community Works will maximize the benefits that lie "beyond the rails."*

Under Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) leadership, the Southwest LRT line recently achieved a major milestone with the selection of a preferred route, LRT 3A. The Alternatives Analysis (AA) process is complete and the project is ready to enter Preliminary Engineering (PE). By mid-2010, the project will be transferred to the Metropolitan Council which will prepare and submit an application to the FTA to begin preliminary engineering of the LRT line. The Metropolitan Council will establish a Southwest Corridor Management Committee and Southwest LRT Project Office in late 2010.

On December 15, 2009, the Hennepin County Board established Southwest LRT Community Works Project to support community and economic development in concert with the development of light rail transit in the Southwest metro. Staff was directed to prepare a project description and work plan in consultation with the cities of Eden Prairie, Edina, Minnetonka, Hopkins, St. Louis Park and Minneapolis, the Metropolitan Council and other identified stakeholders (attachment A).



## Introduction

Lessons learned from the Hiawatha and Central Corridor lines confirmed the vital role of a strategic, collaborative, integrated framework to address coordination, planning, and implementation for public investment to deliver light rail's broader benefits. The Southwest LRT project has goals to enhance economic development and housing and promote integrated, sustainable design. Through partnerships, Southwest LRT Community Works will maximize the benefits that lie "beyond the rails." The program will build on successful corridor and regional partnerships and effective delivery systems to align policies, including federal initiatives to create sustainable communities, enhance economic competitiveness through better access to housing and jobs, improve efficiency of public infrastructure investments, unlock private capital, and create healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods served by public transit.

### **Southwest LRT Goals**

- Improve Mobility
- Cost-effective/Efficient
- Preserve the Environment
- Protect Quality of Life
- **Support Economic Development**

## Southwest LRT Community Works Project Geographic Boundaries

To effectively use public investments to leverage private investment in and around station locations, Southwest LRT Community Works investments will focus primarily on the ¼ mile radius around stations, but will be flexible enough to respond to opportunities to provide linkages to housing, community amenities, natural resources, employment centers, commercial activity areas, or other destinations. Figure 1 identifies the proposed Southwest LRT Community Works geographic boundaries

## Southwest LRT Community Works Project Goals

Goals for the Southwest LRT Community Works Project will reflect those contained in municipal comprehensive plans, Hennepin Community Works Program parameters, Southwest LRT project goals, and federal Sustainable Communities initiatives.

Initial Southwest LRT Community Works Project goals include:

- Maximize public/private investment along the corridor
- Strategically align resources to promote economic development and redevelopment at station locations
- Stimulate employment development to ensure accessibility to jobs for people of all income levels
- Promote and implement a range of housing opportunities along the corridor
- Improve multimodal connections to stations, within station areas and to key destinations along the corridor in keeping with the County's Complete Streets policy
- Promote sustainability, including natural system preservation and enhancement, energy efficiency, and reduced carbon emissions throughout the corridor



Southwest LRT Community Works provides an organization and a process for partners to:

- work closely with the Southwest LRT Project to ensure timely coordination with project decision points, infrastructure investments, and delivery of the transit line
- garner broad-based community and business input through a transparent public engagement process
- establish and pursue a shared vision for the corridor that develops each station as a unique transit-centered place
- inventory key redevelopment opportunities along the corridor and adjacent to stations
- develop a framework for public investments that will leverage private investment and deliver community and economic benefits
- align jurisdictional authorities, policies, technical and financial resources
- advocate collectively for corridor-wide funding needs
- acknowledge the importance and investments of property owners along the LRT corridor

## Southwest LRT Community Works Core Partners

Core partners in Southwest LRT Community Works Project will include Hennepin County, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRRA), the cities of Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, Minneapolis, Edina, and the Metropolitan Council. As the Southwest LRT Community Works Project evolves over time additional partners may be added.

Following the model of the Southwest LRT project under the HCRRRA's direction, a robust public engagement process will involve stakeholders early and often throughout the process

### Initial Partners

- Hennepin County & HCRRRA
- Eden Prairie
- Minnetonka
- Hopkins
- St. Louis Park
- Minneapolis
- Edina
- Metropolitan Council

Other government agencies, organizations, community groups, businesses, nonprofits, institutions and agencies will also play key roles in the implementation of the Southwest LRT Community Works project. Many of these organizations and agencies will collaborate with the Partnership Steering Committee on specific issues and/or projects and may, over time, become Partnership Steering Committee members. A significant and meaningful public engagement process will involve stakeholders early and often throughout the process and clearly define how their input will be gathered and used.



## Southwest LRT Community Works Organizational Structure

### Governance and Policy

The Southwest LRT Community Works Project is designed to evolve over time and with flexibility to respond to opportunities. The Southwest LRT Community Works Project will be established under the direction of a steering committee composed of the core project partners including:

- Elected officials appointed by the cities of Eden Prairie, Edina, Hopkins, Minneapolis, Minnetonka and St. Louis Park
- Chair of the Metropolitan Council
- Two Hennepin County Commissioners
- One Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority Board Member

A staff working group composed of representatives from Steering Committee partners, and others, will be assembled to implement the Southwest LRT Community Works work plan. This staff group will report to the Steering Committee.

The Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee is designed to be linked to the Southwest LRT Corridor Management Committee to ensure policy coordination and the strong integration of land use/economic development and engineering. Figure 2 documents this relationship.

To facilitate communications between the LRT and Community Works project staff, it is recommended that the SW LRT Project Office include physical space for SW LRT Community Works in what can be described as a “design exchange” where engineering and land use plans and issues can be displayed and discussed among professional staff. It is also recommended that Hennepin County and Metropolitan Council seek funds to support two full-time professional staff (one civil engineer and one planner) to ensure that direct collaboration occurs between the preliminary engineering process and the land use/economic development process. In addition, this will ensure that preliminary engineering progress and results are shared with municipalities, business and community organizations and, similarly, that station area and municipal plans for land use and redevelopment are shared with SW LRT engineering staff.

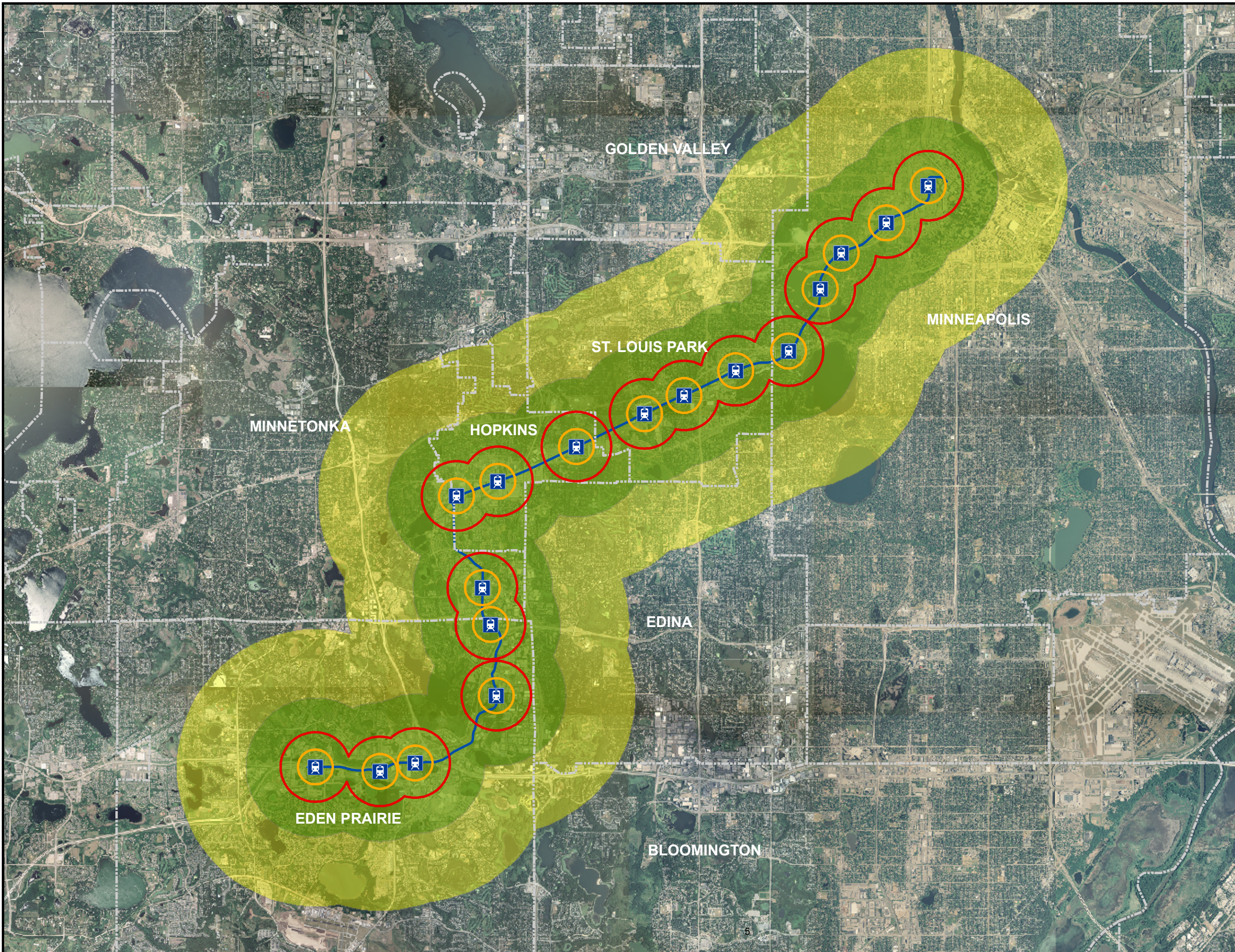
### Administration

Within the first six months, the Steering Committee will need to determine the kinds, amounts and sources of administrative support required. It is recommended that Hennepin County provide initial planning, legal, administrative and other implementation support for the Steering Committee.










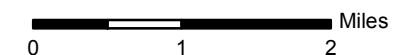
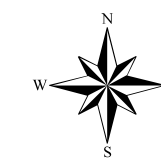
Figure 1

# Southwest LRT Corridor



## Legend

-  Southwest LRT Station
-  Southwest LRT Corridor
-  Quarter Mile Radius
-  Half Mile Radius
-  One Mile Radius
-  Two Mile Radius
-  City Boundary



Data Sources: Hennepin County, Metropolitan Council, MN-DNR, MN-DOT

Disclaimer: This map is provided "as is" without any warranty whatsoever, including but not limited to any warranty as to its performance, merchantability, or fitness for any particular purpose.

Map Creation Date: 05/12/2010

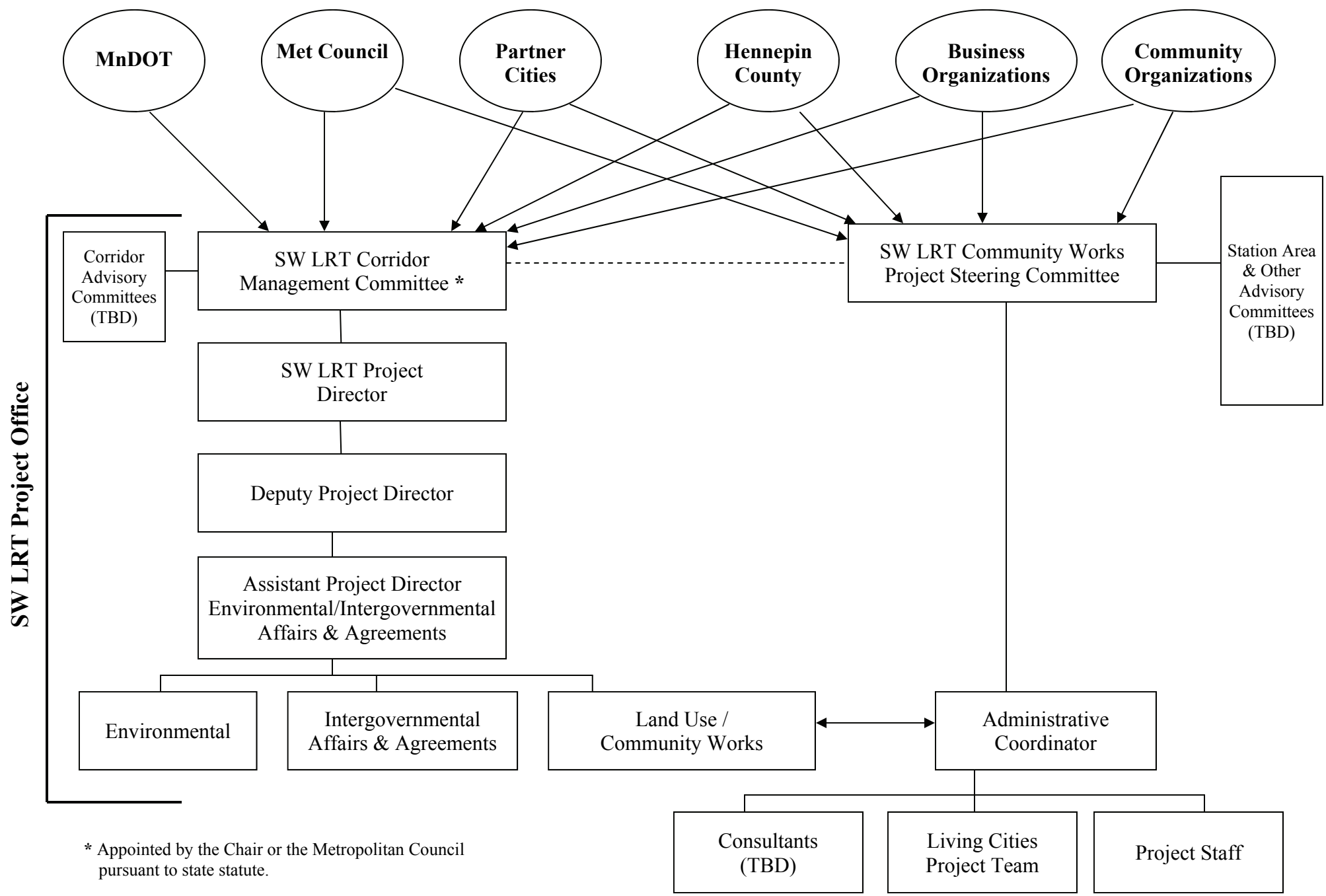




**Southwest LRT Project**

**Figure 2**

**SW LRT Community Works Project**



\* Appointed by the Chair or the Metropolitan Council pursuant to state statute.



## **Southwest LRT Community Works Work Plan**

**(July 1, 2010 to December 31, 2011)**

### **1. Convene Partnership Steering Committee.**

- Establish a formal partnership agreement (similar to Midtown Community Works) to provide financial and administrative support, adopt governance procedures, and establish financial and resource support requirements for participating members.
- Establish an organizational link and working relationship with the Southwest LRT Project Office
- Foster mutual understanding among partners of LRT and Community Works Project parameters, schedule, and decision points.

### **2. Identify immediate and long term Community Works financial needs and potential resources including public and private financial and professional support.**

- Research and create a comprehensive public investment framework that includes strategies to leverage public investment to attract, shape, and accelerate appropriate private investment.

### **3. Begin development of a comprehensive corridor investment framework.**

- Develop an existing conditions inventory and document using a series of maps including, but not limited to: local policies and regulatory mechanisms pertaining to the Southwest LRT Corridor, including comprehensive plans, small area plans, neighborhood plans, zoning ordinances, station area plans, Transit Improvement Area plans, and transportation plans: location, size, and extent of infrastructure projects and investments; community amenities, parks, schools, housing, employment and shopping centers; and, demographic, economic, and regulatory conditions; land uses, amenities, housing types, employment
- Develop a future conditions inventory and document using a series of maps including the items listed above.
- Assess completed station area plans to identify gaps, intermediate time frame implementation recommendations, TOD supportive improvements and TOD opportunity sites.
- Conduct corridor and station area market studies. Examine and document site control issues and land acquisitions opportunities.
- Map opportunity sites and major issues and prepare short-, interim-, and long-term strategies to preserve strategic land parcels and community assets and access to these sites.
- Provide an established and coordinated voice to support funding request and legislative initiatives related

### **4. Research and develop a framework to align municipal and corridor-wide development authorities and planning land use controls, coordinate with financial resources and recommend authority changes as needed to support Southwest LRT Community Works objectives and strategies.**



## Southwest LRT Community Works Financial Resources

One of the Steering Committee’s first tasks is to garner and focus resources among the core partners to address administrative needs and initiate the work plan elements. Over the course of the project, it is envisioned that an investment portfolio will be assembled, primarily from resources available to participating organizations. This portfolio will provide assistance and incentives to attract other investments and secure funds for key implementation activities. Potential investment portfolio elements may include County resources (TOD and other bonds, housing assistance, environmental funds, workforce funds, business development loans and state and federal assistance administered by the county, and others), Met Council funds (Livable Communities Act, Tax Base Revitalization and others), municipal resources (Tax Increment Financing, development fees and others), and the proposed TIF for TOD. The Steering Committee’s corridor investment framework will guide Southwest LRT Community Works investment decisions and member participation.

Immediate resources to support the organization of Southwest LRT Community Works project, begin critical planning, and promote broader education about TOD opportunities, include:

<b>Project Administration (2010-2011)</b>	<b>\$80,000</b>
<i>(Staff and meeting support for Steering Committee and Work Groups-some in kind)</i>	
<b>Initial Strategic Planning &amp; Investment Framework</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>
<i>(Living Cities funding request is pending. Work could be started using existing partner resources)</i>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$380,000</b>

Because resources among the core Community Works partners are finite, the Southwest LRT Community Works Project will endeavor to create a framework to help partners strategically align existing resources to maximize leverage from other sources.

## Southwest LRT Community Works Evaluation

Evaluation should occur throughout the project to inform stakeholders of progress and determine if investments yield desired results in keeping with the development framework. Monitoring progress and taking corrective action ensures that project objectives are being met. Partners will perform the following evaluation functions:

1. Identify outcomes for the project’s goals.
2. Determine milestones and measures. Monitor accomplishment.
3. Identify funds leveraged and development catalyzed by public investment.
4. Identify accomplishment of county initiatives and integration between LRT line design and land use/TOD/economic development decisions.
5. Identify best practices for use in future corridor projects.

Consistent with the goal of achieving multiple, sustainable community benefits, Southwest LRT Community Works will identify potential resources and tools available for public infrastructure, public realm improvements and other investment strategies to attract private investment in ways that deliver maximum community benefits.





**Hennepin County, Minnesota**  
**RESOLUTION NO. 09-0596**



[2009]

The following Resolution was offered by Public Works, Energy & Environment Committee:

WHEREAS, the proposed Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) Line will serve the Cities of Eden Prairie, Edina, Hopkins, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, and St. Louis Park, as a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts project and is included in the Metropolitan Council's long-range Transportation Policy Plan; and

WHEREAS, enhancing economic development is one of five adopted goals of the Southwest LRT project, consistent with the FTA goals and measures of evaluation for funding New Starts projects; and

WHEREAS, the Southwest LRT Line presents numerous opportunities for transit-oriented economic development that maximizes public and private investments along the corridor, particularly in the areas surrounding transit stations; and

WHEREAS, Hennepin Community Works is a program with demonstrated effectiveness in bringing communities together to create jobs, provide access to employment, and enhance the long term value of communities by investing in infrastructure, public works, parks and the natural environment; and

WHEREAS, Hennepin Community Works is an appropriate program for integrating the Southwest LRT Line with targeted economic development activities, and is consistent with new federal programs through the Interagency Council on Sustainable Communities to promote the coordination of transportation, housing, community development, energy and environmental policies; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners establishes the Southwest LRT Community Works project and directs staff to report back to the County Board within 90 days of adoption of this resolution with a Southwest LRT Community Works plan that includes project goals, the geographic boundary of the project, identification of participating organizations and the organizational structure, and a work plan and budget; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Hennepin County Board directs staff to develop the Southwest LRT Community Works project and plan in consultation with the cities of Eden Prairie, Edina, Hopkins, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, and St. Louis Park, the Metropolitan Council, and other Southwest LRT key stakeholders.

The question was on the adoption of the resolution and there were 7 YEAS and 0 NAYS, as follows:

<b>County of Hennepin Board of County Commissioners</b>	<b>YEAS</b>	<b>NAYS</b>	<b>ABSTAIN</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
Mike Opat	X			
Mark Stenglein	X			
Gail Dorfman	X			
Peter McLaughlin	X			

Randy Johnson	X
Jan Callison	X
Jeff Johnson	X

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**RESOLUTION ADOPTED ON 12/15/2009**

*Kay Mitchell*

**ATTEST:**

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**Clerk to the County Board**