

**Southwest Light Rail Transit Project**  
**Minneapolis, Minnesota**  
**New Starts Engineering**  
**(Rating Assigned November 2019)**

| Summary Description                               |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Proposed Project:</b>                          | Light Rail Transit<br>14.5 Miles, 16 Stations                                  |
| <b>Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):</b>                | \$2,003.15 Million <small>(includes \$55.0 million in finance charges)</small> |
| <b>Section 5309 CIG Share (\$YOE):</b>            | \$928.84 Million (46.4%)   |
| <b>Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2023):</b> | \$38.71 Million  |
| <b>Current Year Ridership Forecast (2014):</b>    | 19,400 Daily Linked Trips<br>6,418,400 Annual Linked Trips                     |
| <b>Horizon Year Ridership Forecast (2035):</b>    | 28,500 Daily Linked Trips<br>9,432,200 Annual Linked Trips                     |
| <b>Overall Project Rating:</b>                    | Medium-High  |
| <b>Project Justification Rating:</b>              | Medium   |
| <b>Local Financial Commitment Rating:</b>         | Medium-High  |

**Project Description:** The Metropolitan Council (MC) is planning a light rail transit (LRT) extension of the METRO Green Line from the existing Target Field LRT station in downtown Minneapolis to Eden Prairie in suburban Hennepin County, serving the suburban municipalities of Minnetonka, Hopkins and St. Louis Park. The proposed alignment generally parallels freight rail and roadway rights-of-way, with several grade-separated crossings and a short tunnel segment. The project includes construction of nine park-and-ride facilities with approximately 2,500 total spaces and a new railcar light maintenance facility as well as the purchase of 27 light rail vehicles. Service is planned to operate from 4:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. daily with trains every 10 minutes during the day on weekdays, every 10 to 30 minutes during the evening on weekdays, and every 10 to 15 minutes on weekends.

**Project Purpose:** Population, employment and congestion are growing rapidly in the project corridor. Downtown Minneapolis has the region's largest concentration of employment and a growing population, while several large corporate campuses and business parks are located in the western end of the corridor. Although the corridor has extensive bus service, particularly express service oriented toward commuters to downtown Minneapolis, growing congestion on the roadway network slows travel speeds. The project is intended to provide more efficient access to and from major employment centers and especially improve transit access to suburban employment sites. As an extension of the METRO Green Line, the project provides through service to and from the University of Minnesota campus, the State Capitol complex, and downtown St. Paul. The Project connects to the existing METRO Blue Line LRT and Northstar commuter rail lines at Target Field.

**Project Development History, Status and Next Steps:** Following completion of an alternatives analysis for the corridor in May 2010, MC selected LRT as the locally preferred alternative and adopted it into the region's fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan. Under SAFETEA-LU, FTA approved the project into New Starts Preliminary Engineering in September 2011. When MAP-21 took effect, the project was considered to be in the New Starts Project Development phase since the environmental review process was not yet complete. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was released in October 2012, followed by a Supplemental Draft EIS in May 2015 that accounted for changes to the western end of the project alignment, the relocation of the operation and maintenance facility, and a revised configuration for the Kenilworth Corridor segment of the line in Minneapolis. The

Final EIS was released in May 2016, followed by FTA's issuance of a Record of Decision (ROD) in July 2016. FTA approved the project into Engineering in December 2016. FTA issued an Amended ROD in May 2018 that accounted for additional project modifications. MC anticipates receipt of a Full Funding Grant Agreement in early 2020, and the start of revenue service in 2023.

***Significant Changes Since Last Evaluation (November 2018):*** No changes.

## Locally Proposed Financial Plan

| <u>Source of Funds</u>  | <u>Total Funds (\$million)</u> | <u>Percent of Total</u> |
|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Federal:</b>   |                                |                         |
| Section 5309 New Starts   | \$928.84                       | 46.4%                   |
| FHWA Flexible Funds (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program) | \$6.14                         | 0.3%                    |
| FHWA Flexible Funds (Surface Transportation Program)                | \$3.70                         | 0.2%                    |
| <b>State:</b>   |                                |                         |
| Motor Vehicle Sales Tax Reserves                                    | \$16.00                        | 0.8%                    |
| State of Minnesota General Fund                                     | \$12.30                        | 0.6%                    |
| Business Development Capital Projects Grant Program Bond Proceeds   | \$2.00                         | 0.1%                    |
| <b>Local:</b>   |                                |                         |
| Hennepin County Sales and Use and Motor Vehicle Excise Tax          | \$593.00                       | 29.6%                   |
| Counties Transit Improvement Board Sales Tax Revenue                | \$217.40                       | 10.9%                   |
| Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority Property Tax            | \$199.50                       | 10.0%                   |
| Hennepin County General Obligation Bond Proceeds                    | \$10.90                        | 0.5%                    |
| City of St. Louis Park General Fund                                 | \$4.06                         | 0.2%                    |
| City of Eden Prairie General Fund                                   | \$4.00                         | 0.2%                    |
| City of Eden Prairie Land Contribution                              | \$2.45                         | 0.1%                    |
| City of Minnetonka Housing and Redevelopment Tax                    | \$2.00                         | 0.1%                    |
| City of Hopkins Economic Development Fund                           | \$0.53                         | 0.0%                    |
| City of Hopkins Land Contribution                                   | \$0.16                         | 0.0%                    |
| City of Minnetonka Land Contribution                                | \$0.10                         | 0.0%                    |
| City of St. Louis Park Land Contribution                            | \$0.06                         | 0.0%                    |
| <b>Total:</b>   | <b>\$2,003.15</b>              | <b>100.0%</b>           |

**NOTE:** The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

**MN, Minneapolis, Southwest Light Rail Transit  
(Rating Assigned October 2019)**

| <b>Factor</b>   | <b>Rating</b>      | <b>Comments</b>   |
|---|--------------------|---|
| <b>Local Financial Commitment Rating</b>  | <b>Medium-High</b> |   |
| <b>Non-Section 5309 CIG Share</b>   | <b>+1 level</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CIG share of the project is 46.4 percent.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Project Financial Plan</b>   | <b>Medium</b>      |   |
| Current Capital and Operating Condition<br>(25% of local financial commitment rating) | Medium-High        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The average age of Metropolitan Council’s (Met Council) bus fleet is 6.7 years.</li> <li>• The most recent bond rating for Met Council, issued in May 2018, are as follows: Moody’s Investors Service Aaa and Standard and Poor’s Corporation AAA.</li> <li>• Met Council’s current ratio of assets to liabilities as reported in its most recent audited financial statement is 3.0 (FY2017).</li> <li>• There have been no service cutbacks or cash flow shortfalls in recent years.</li> </ul>  |
| Commitment of Capital and Operating Funds (25% of local financial commitment rating)  | High               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All of the non-Section 5309 CIG capital funds are committed or budgeted, and the rest are considered planned. Sources of funds include FHWA Surface Transportation Program funds; FHWA Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program funds; State of Minnesota General Fund appropriations; State of Minnesota Business Development Capital Projects Grant Program general obligation bond proceeds; State of Minnesota Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST); Counties Transit Improvement Board sales tax; Hennepin County sales and use tax, excise tax, and general obligation bond proceeds repaid with property tax revenue; Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority property tax; City of Minnetonka Housing and Redevelopment tax; City of St. Louis Park general fund bond proceeds; City of Hopkins economic development fund; City of Eden Prairie Municipal State Aid for Local Transportation funds, local Transportation Fund, and Capital Maintenance and Reinvestment Funds; and in-kind real estate contributions from the City of St. Louis Park, the City of Hopkins, the City of Minnetonka, and the City of Eden Prairie.</li> <li>• Approximately 79.9 percent of the operating funds needed to operate and maintain the transit system in the first full year of operation are committed or budgeted, and the rest are considered planned. Sources of funds include FTA Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula funds, State MVST revenue, State general fund</li> </ul> |

|  |                   |   |
|--|-------------------|---|
|  |                   | <p>appropriations, funds from the Minnesota Department of Transportation, farebox revenue, Anoka County sales and use tax and motor vehicle excise tax, Dakota County sales and use tax and motor vehicle excise tax, Hennepin County sales and use tax and motor vehicle excise tax, Ramsey County sales and use tax and motor vehicle excise tax, unspecified funds from Washington County, property tax revenue from the Sherburne County Regional Rail Authority, and advertising revenue and investment income.</p>  |
| <p>Reasonableness of Capital and Operating Cost Estimates and Planning Assumptions/Capital Funding Capacity (50% of local financial commitment rating)</p> | <p>Medium-Low</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assumed growth in capital revenue assumptions is reasonable compared to recent historical experience.</li> <li>• The capital cost estimate is reasonable.</li> <li>• Regarding growth in operating revenue assumptions, bus system farebox revenue and State operating assistance are optimistic, and State MVST receipts are reasonable compared to recent historical experience.</li> <li>• Operating cost estimates are reasonable compared to recent historical experience.</li> <li>• Valley Metro has access to funds via additional debt capacity, cash reserves, and other committed funds to cover unexpected cost increases or funding shortfalls equal to at least 10.0 percent of the total CIG capital cost and 10.9 percent of annual system wide operating expenses.</li> </ul> |

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***LAND USE RATING: Medium***

The land use rating reflects population density within one-half mile of proposed stations, employment served by the line, and the share of legally binding affordability restricted (LBAR) housing in the station areas compared to the share in the surrounding county.

- An estimated 310,000 jobs would be served by the project, which corresponds to a High rating by FTA benchmarks. Average population density across all station areas is 3,300 persons per square mile, corresponding to a Medium-Low rating. In the downtown Minneapolis core, daily parking fees averaged \$13 in 2012, which rates Medium-High. The proportion of LBAR housing in the project corridor compared to the proportion in the county through which the project travels is 1.52, which rates Medium.
- Downtown Minneapolis features dense development. Other station areas in Minneapolis and the inner suburbs feature moderate-density development and industrial and warehousing uses that could be redeveloped in the future, while the outer-suburban station areas generally include large office park developments.
- Most of the stations have full pedestrian system coverage throughout the entire station area.

***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium-High***

**Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium-High**

- *Growth Management:* The Metropolitan Council's regional development framework provides policy guidance for the region that municipalities will implement through updated local comprehensive plans. The latest framework sets more aggressive expectations for development in transit corridors than prior frameworks.
- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* Both conceptual and more detailed station area plans have been prepared for each station area. Adopted plans typically call for mixed-use higher density development, and include guidelines directed at achieving walkable, pedestrian-oriented development. An investment framework for public investments is in place for the corridor, while preparation of a transit-oriented development (TOD) implementation strategy is underway.
- *Supportive Zoning Regulations Near Transit Stations:* Minneapolis and Hopkins have adopted strong TOD-supportive zoning. Eden Prairie and Saint Louis Park have TOD-supportive regulations but are working to further improve their ordinances to better catalyze implementation of TOD. Many of these zoning regulations set minimum as well as maximum densities.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* The Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County have worked with a range of stakeholders to identify and pursue redevelopment opportunities. Regional and county agencies have a number of funding programs for TOD projects, and these programs are being used to support projects in the corridor.

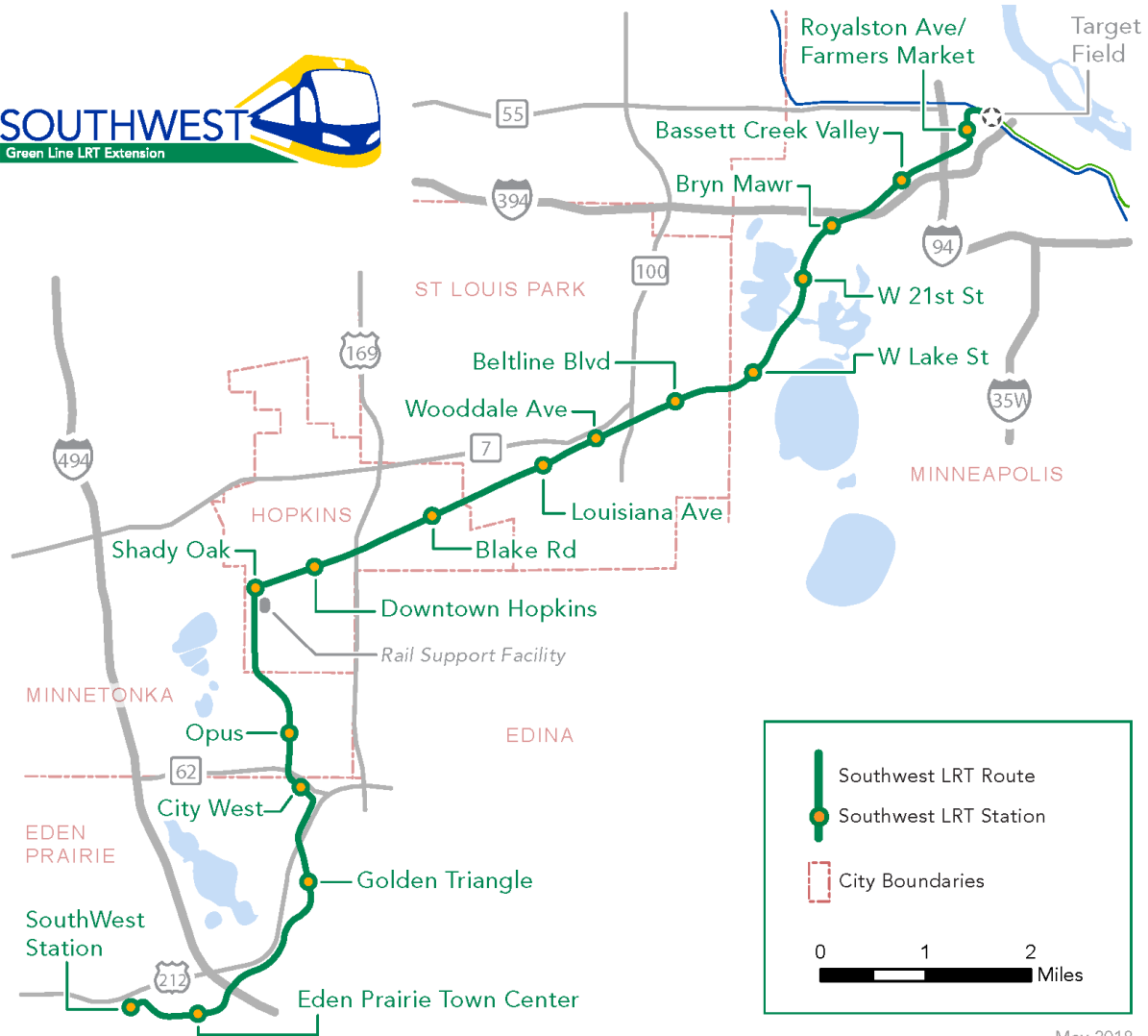
**Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium-High**

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Several major residential and mixed-use projects that are underway in the eastern portion of the project corridor demonstrate TOD characteristics. Recent projects in the western segment of the corridor tend to exhibit campus-like suburban design principles but proposed projects are becoming more urban in character. A number of TOD projects, many supported by regional and local TOD initiatives, have been implemented along the two existing LRT corridors in the region.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* The corridor, particularly the middle segment, has strong redevelopment potential. Current zoning is likely to result in redevelopment at higher densities. The Twin Cities region's economy is healthy and the project corridor is one of the strongest growth areas in the region.

**Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: High**

- The communities in the project corridor have extensive policies, plans, programs and partnerships to increase the affordable housing supply that are integrated throughout planning processes and many levels of government. The region has an especially extensive set of affordable housing incentives, and there is good evidence of affordable housing development and preservation in the project corridor.

Southwest LRT (METRO Green Line Extension)



May 2018