

T Transportation Committee
For the Metropolitan Council meeting of May 26, 2010

ADVISORY INFORMATION

Date April 27, 2010
Prepared:
Subject: Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) Southwest Transitway LPA and I-94 Amendment

Proposed Action:

That the Metropolitan Council accept the attached Summary of Public Comment and adopt the attached amendments to the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan <http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/TPP/2008/ProposedTPPamendmentsFeb2010.pdf> that:

- Select light rail transit (LRT) on the Kenilworth-Opus-Golden Triangle alignment (Alternative 3A) as the locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the Southwest Transitway; and
- Recognize modifications to I-94 from St. Paul/5th Street to the Lowry Tunnel which includes managed auxiliary/bus lanes that add capacity for more than a mile due to the conversion of the shoulder lane to general traffic use following temporary changes made in response to the I-35W bridge collapse.

Summary of Committee Discussion / Questions:

Amy Vennewitz, MTS Dep. Director Finance & Planning, presented this item. She reviewed the number and type of comments received and responses given during the public comment process that ended on April 22, 2010, and the timeline for the adoption of the TPP amendments.

There were no questions from the committee.

Motion by Peterson, seconded by McFarlin and passed unanimously.

T Transportation Committee

Meeting date: April 26, 2010

Council meeting date: May 26, 2010

ADVISORY INFORMATION

Date: April 26, 2010
Subject: Adoption of 2030 Transportation Policy Plan Amendments for Southwest Transitway LPA and I-94 Corridor
District(s), Member(s): All
Policy/Legal Reference: M.S. 473.146, subd. 3 & 23 CFR 450.322
Staff Prepared/Presented: Arlene McCarthy, Director MTS, 651-602-1754
Amy Vennewitz, Dep. Director, Finance and Planning 651-602-1058
Connie Kozlak, Manager, Systems Planning 651-602-1720
Division/Department: Metropolitan Transportation Services (MTS)

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council accept the attached Summary of Public Comment and adopt the attached amendments to the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan that:

- Select light rail transit (LRT) on the Kenilworth-Opus-Golden Triangle alignment (Alternative 3A) as the locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the Southwest Transitway; and
- Recognize modifications to I-94 from St. Paul/5th Street to the Lowry Tunnel which includes managed auxiliary/bus lanes that add capacity for more than a mile due to the conversion of the shoulder lane to general traffic use following temporary changes made in response to the I-35W bridge collapse.

Background

The Metropolitan Council is required, under both state and federal law, to develop a multimodal regional transportation plan that identifies transportation system goals and project priorities over a 20-year period. The current 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) was adopted in January 2009, before a locally preferred alternative (LPA) was recommended for the Southwest Transitway and prior to conclusion of a joint study to determine a management strategy and improvements for the I-94 corridor between Minneapolis and St. Paul.

In November 2009, Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority, as the lead agency for the Southwest Alternatives Analysis, recommended to the Council that light rail transit on the Kenilworth-Opus Golden Triangle alignment (LRT Alternative 3A) be selected as the LPA for the Southwest Transitway. The Metropolitan Council reviewed the recommendation and developed the proposed TPP amendments identifying LRT on the 3A alignment as the LPA.

In addition, in the fall of 2009 after months of study, MnDOT, the Council and the Minnesota Division of the Federal Highway Administration completed a joint study to

determine what corridor improvements should continue on I-94 after the reopening of the I-35W bridge. The study developed a management strategy for the I-94 corridor that included general traffic use of a former bus-only shoulder in the vicinity of TH 280 and downtown Minneapolis. Because the use of the shoulder as a traffic lane exceeds a mile in length the project must be included in the TPP to meet the interagency agreement for Air Quality Conformity.

The Council submitted the Air Quality Conformity Analysis and Documentation for the proposed TPP amendments for the Southwest LPA and I-94 project to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency on December 15, 2009. The MPCA response to and concurrence with the proposed conformity determination is attached and will be included in the amended TPP Appendix F, Clean Air Act Conformance. In addition, the proposed amendments were reviewed by the TAB, TAC and their subcommittees and recommended for adoption.

At its February 24th, 2010 meeting the Council authorized a public hearing and 45-day public comment period on the proposed TPP amendments. The public comment period began on March 8th and concluded on April 22nd. Twenty five individuals, ten of whom represented larger organizations/agencies, submitted comments through various means (oral testimony, e-mail, fax, voicemail, letter or comment card) during the public comment period. A public hearing on the amendments was held at the April 12th Transportation Committee meeting with testimony provided by two individuals representing the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority and Twin West Chamber of Commerce, respectively. An additional public meeting for the Southwest LPA was held on April 15th in Hopkins with testimony from six individuals.

A summary of the public comments on the proposed TPP amendments is attached, along with the specific comments from each individual or organization. The comments included 14 in support of selection of the 3A Alternative as the Southwest LPA, 11 supporting the selection of the 3C Midtown/Nicollet Alternative as the preferred alignment rather than the 3A Alternative, 5 supporting commuter rail on the Southwest corridor rather than LRT and 7 opposed to using the former bus only shoulder on I-94 for general traffic purposes.

Rationale

The Southwest Transitway has gone through an extensive Alternatives Analysis (AA) led by Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority which resulted in a recommendation that the 3A Alternative be selected as the LPA. The AA phase of the project will officially conclude when the LPA is amended into the policy plan, allowing the project to proceed with a federal New Starts application to enter preliminary engineering.

The recommendation for the I-94 management strategy and conversion of the bus-only shoulder to general traffic use was developed through extensive study by MnDOT, the Council and FHWA.

Funding

This action does not require funding.

Known Support / Opposition

Support and opposition to the proposed amendments voiced during the public comment period is shown on the attached Summary of Public Comment.