

**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  
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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/5<sup>th</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup>, 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 8<sup>th</sup> and concluded on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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.

## Summary of Public Comments Southwest Transitway LPA and I-94 Corridor Policy Plan Amendments

Comment	Commenter #	Response
<b>Southwest Transitway:</b>		
Support selection of LRT on the 3A alignment as the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Southwest Transitway.	1, 2, 8, 10, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24	The Alternatives Analysis (AA) led by Hennepin County determined that LRT along the 3A alignment best met the project purpose and need and should be the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the Southwest Transitway.
Do not support selection of the 3A alignment, support selection of the 3C alignment through the Midtown/Nicollet corridor.	3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 25	The 3C Alternative was considered during the AA process and was not recommended as the LPA as it did not best meet the project purpose and need.
The Southwest Transitway should be a commuter rail line and link with Northstar.	6, 7, 8, 9, 11	The Alternatives Analysis determined that commuter rail is not an appropriate technology in the Southwest Corridor.
The 3A alignment best connects the north side of Minneapolis with job opportunities and meets environmental justice goals.	1, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23	The connection to job opportunities was one of the factors considered in the AA process.
Relocating freight rail from the Kenilworth corridor through St. Louis Park will impact residents and must be considered as part of the Southwest Transitway project.	18	The freight rail relocation is considered a separate disconnected action that is being led by Hennepin County.
The Midtown/Nicollet (3C) corridor will have higher ridership, serves more destinations and offers better opportunity for TOD.	3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 25	The AA process determined that the 3A alignment best met the project purpose and need.
The Penn Avenue, Van White and Royalston stations should be maintained as they provide important connections to jobs for north Minneapolis residents and offer opportunities for TOD. Follow the Bassett Creek Master Plan in this area and do not include train storage in the area.	16, 17, 20, 21, 22	The current alignment does include stations at Penn Avenue, Van White and Royalston. Local development plans will be refined as the project progresses.
Support the proposed amendment to examine the Midtown Corridor to see if a connection between Hiawatha and Southwest is warranted.	24	Proposed amendment #5 for the Southwest LPA states "...the Midtown Corridor should be examined to see if a connection between Hiawatha and Southwest is warranted."
<b>I-94 Management Strategy:</b>		
The I-94 shoulder lane should remain as a bus only shoulder, not as a lane that includes general purpose traffic. Allowing other vehicles to use this lane will negatively impact transit travel times.	3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22	MnDOT, with participation by the Council, conducted an approximately year long study to determine the best alternative to manage traffic in the I-94 corridor, while not greatly impacting transit operations. The study concluded that the temporary conversion of the bus only shoulders to general traffic usage in the area of TH 280 to downtown Minneapolis due to the I-35W bridge collapse should be retained with a managed lane and Intelligent Transportation System improvements in the corridor.

## Southwest Transitway LPA and I-94 Management Strategy Transportation Policy Plan Amendments Public Comment

Name	Organization	Date Submitted	SW	I-94	Method	Comment
#1 Karen Lee Rosar	Citizen	3/5/2010	X		E-mail	<p>I am writing in support of Light Rail Transit (LRT) on the Kenilworth-Opus-Golden Triangle alignment (Alternative 3A) as the locally preferred alternative for the Southwest Transitway. This vital link is a necessary component of a modern metropolitan transportation plan and addresses the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Keeping an aging population safely mobile</li> <li>•Equity in transportation</li> <li>•Equity in access</li> <li>•Public health</li> <li>•Clean environment and green field preservation</li> <li>•Energy policy/energy independence</li> <li>•Efficient use of tax dollars</li> <li>•Efficient land use policy with regards to transit oriented development</li> <li>•Traffic congestion and unsustainable costs of roadway expansion</li> </ul>
#2 Gary Kerber	Citizen	3/8/2010	X		E-mail	<p>First, I like and agree with your route 3C selection. Second, after reviewing national LRT performance and cost-benefits, plus the state of our economy and tax burdens, I do not favor development of more LRTs.</p> <p>My perception: After parking at Mitchell Rd/Hwy 5 and stopping 17 times on LRT, I finally reach Target Field.</p> <p>Reality: Express or regular bus from Chanhassen or EP (I can walk to the bus) will get me to Target Field in half the time for the same cost.</p> <p>The same rationale can be applied to M-F rush hour transit, but only for workers from Chan and EP to downtown Mpls (less than 10% of the same workers who use the bus system).</p> <p>Again, I see no tangible benefit and advantage of LRT over buses.</p> <p>Apply the LRT funds to road and bus system improvements and many more citizens will benefit.</p>
#3 Reza Watson	Citizen	3/19/2010	X	X	E-mail	<p>SW LRT -- I disapprove of the Henn County alignment thru Kenilworth. The stops between West Lake and Target Fields are useless and serve a high income area with very low density . The Midtown greenway alignment will serve some of the busiest bus lines and reduce the number of buses in Mpls, reducing pollution. This might be expensive but it will serve Convention Center, Tech Colleges, University of MN and Eat St , Nicollet Mall, Lyndale and Uptown some of the most vibrant neighborhoods in Mpls. Art Institute . Schools and many apts and housings It reduces the need for parking in these areas.</p> <p>I-94. Adding cars to the extra lane will increase the travel time on the express buses.</p>
#4	Citizen	4/12/2010	X		E-mail	<p>SW light rail does not serve the Mpls residents the 3C should have been the option This route have the largest ridership and will speed up the travel time .Many business area such as Lyn/Lake, Eat Street and Uptown will benefit from better and fast services while reduce the need for parking.</p> <p>Nicollet, Lyndale, Hennepin and Lake St have the highest bus ridership in the city the Let will save 5 mins or more. Convention center will be served so are the many colleges nearby.</p> <p>The SW LRT should continues to UM/Fairground via the transit way thru Dinkytown.</p> <p>Option use the Norrhstar to continue to Eden prairie.</p>

Name	Organization	Date Submitted	SW	I-94	Method	Comment
#5 Cheryl L. Boldon	Southwest Station Management LLC	4/12/2010	X		Letter	I am strongly opposed to the proposed LRT 3A line being selected as the locally preferred alternative LPA
#6	Citizen	4/12/2010	X	X	E-mail	The SW LRT should become a commuter rail with the Northstar train continues to Eden Prairie .The trains are out of services when they get to DT Mpls Sw will get all day services. Since the 3C option is too expensive this will reduce cost will using existing train.Northstar trains are underused with limited schedules Why buy new LRT trains for SW when the demand will be low for option 3A.The SW Light Rail cannot support 10-15 mins services unless the 3C option is chosen, 30 mins will be more appropriate for 3A . The shoulders on I-94 should remain exclusively for buses.
#7	Citizen	4/12/2010	X	X	E-mail	Interstate 94 shoulders need to get the transit an advantage so allow buses only. Northstar rail trains can be used for the SW corridor after arriving Dt all trains are out of services with only 1 reverse commute trip. Henn Co already chose the 3A which will not have the ridership to support the current LRT demand 10-15mins headways.Northstar commuter trains can reduce the cost for the Sw corridor running them 20-30mins off peak. The 3C will be a better match to pair with Hiawatha
#8	Citizen	4/12/2010	X	X	E-mail	1) Light rail to Eden prairie does not have the density thru Kenilworth so the 3C is the best option for ridership .There are too many destinations and very high density areas to served . IF the 3A is the final choice then make it a commuter line using the existing Commuter trains from Big Lake with it limited schedules will reduce cost. (2) The shoulder lanes on 94 remain for buses to get them advantage over solo driving. Add bus shelter and stop at Snelling/94 on the shoulders for buses to pick up and discharge riders.
#9 Ann Hirpara	Citizen	4/13/2010	X	X	Fax	Keep the lanes for buses only on interstate 94 .To allow cars will encourage solo drivers and discourages transit use. SW LRT Kenilworth routing does nothing to serve the North Mpls residents when they can connect to the LRT downtown. Build it right to serve Mpls residents living near and along Lyndale, Nicollet, Henn Avenues serving all the major commercial and retail corridors with the highest densities. Serving the Convention Center, St. Thomas, MCTC, Dunwoody Walker Art center, MIA and many other destinations will have the higher ridership than Central LRT. The best choice is the 3C option. If the 3A is chosen then use the train from Northstar to serve this corridor rather than having them idle with the limited schedule to Big Lake.
#10	Citizen	4/13/2010	X	X	E-mail	The preferred choice is the 3C which will serve the busiest bus lines will reduce operating costs. The 3A will have low ridership. Buses only should use the 1- 94 lanes
#11 Arturo Negron	Citizen	4/13/2010	X	X	E-mail	Uptown, Lyn Lake, Eat Street on Nicollet Avenues are busy corridors not to ignore when they have highest transit usage The routing thru Midtown greenway is the top choice for the high ridership. Too many destinations for convention center, jobs, schools and housing will be overlooked. Kenilworth is most upper income who does not ride transit. The 3A will not have the ridership for 10-15 min headways. This routing will be suited for commuter services such as the Northstar. Buses only need to use the lanes on 94 freeway

Name	Organization	Date Submitted	SW	I-94	Method	Comment
#12 Herb Jones	Citizen	3/30/2010	X		Voicemail	He has concerns in regard to the Light Rail into the Southwest Corridor. He feels it is not the right thing to do. His suggestion is that it runs down Lake St. and dump into downtown from that street. He feels that it will down grade the value of homes in that particular area and the traffic will be very bad.
#13 Gail Dorfman	Hennepin County Commissioner and Chair of the Southwest Policy Committee	4/12/2010	X		Oral Testimony	Advocated for the Southwest LRT project on the recommended alignment as she helped to lead the formal process on the project since 2002. She indicated growing support for rail transit in the southwest metro. Ms. Dorfman conveyed the county's view that the project is feasible and has been thoroughly studied and analyzed. It generate strong ridership and serve as a catalyst for economic development. It will expand transit to new markets, attract riders and better serve people all along the corridor. Ms. Dorfman said Southwest LRT will be a major component of the larger regional system, connecting to other major corridors and providing access to key destinations. She indicated the process has been thorough, concluding that alignment 3A is the right route and will be competitive in the effort to secure federal funding.
#14 Dan Duffy	Served in the Policy Advisory Committee, Twin West Chamber of Commerce	4/12/2010	X		Oral Testimony	Advocated for the Southwest LRT 3A alignment, speaking from the business point of view. He described that the project has been well-vetted through meetings, open houses, public hearings and the media and commended the process for providing so many opportunities for public education and stakeholder input. Mr. Duffy said the recommended alignment maintains lower costs than other options, aligns with federal cost effective guidelines, provides the best option for commuters in a cost-effective way, promotes economic development and minimizes environmental impacts. Mr. Duffy described "bumps along the way and differences of opinion," but said the recommended alignment meets the goals of the Policy Advisory Committee. He encouraged the Council to approve the Locally Preferred Alternative and act quickly to make federal application.
#15 Nicholas Baker	Citizen	4/16/2010	X		Comment Card	Moving forward with the Kenilworth-Opus-Golden Triangle alignment (Alternative 3A) as the locally preferred alternative for the Southwest Transitway - a selection that was made under a now outdated and obsolete set of evaluation criteria - seems to defy all logic, particularly when alternative alignments would almost certainly compare better under the current, revised rules for federal funding. In light of the magnitude and permanence of this investment, to proceed with the current selection simply for the sake of expedience seems quite foolish - it is not too late for the Met Council to do the right thing for the Twin Cities by ordering a review of this selection. Particularly in light of the recent realignment of national policy from the DOT, HUD, and the EPA, the region needs to be making smart transportation investments that improve livability for all area residents, not simply those that provide the shortest travel times for suburban commuters. I urge the Council to reconsider their position before moving ahead with this important decision - one that will have significant and far-reaching impacts.

Name	Organization	Date Submitted	SW	I-94	Method	Comment
#16 - Joan Vanhala	Alliance for Metropolitan Stability	4/15/2010	X		Oral Testimony	The Alliance is a broad coalition of 26 faith-based, social justice and environmental organizations advocating for public policies that promote equity in land use and urban development... Many coalition member groups support the Kenilworth-Opus-Golden Triangle alignment. This alignment comes with an excellent opportunity for transit oriented development at the Van White Station. The Alliance is working with the Harrison Neighborhood Association to ensure that the equitable development goals of the Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan are fully applied at the Van White Station. The fulfillment of the Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan will have a significant impact towards the success of the Southwest Transitway by increasing ridership and transit oriented development opportunities. We recommend that the Southwest Transitway project staff update the Van White Station ridership projections with the current City of Minneapolis comprehensive plan, which includes Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan.
#17 - B. Aaron Parker	MICAH	4/15/2010	X		Oral Testimony	MICAH is a faith-based organization made up of congregational leaders throughout the metropolitan region building the community support that is needed to create new or preserve existing affordable housing... One of MICAH's priorities is to support plans and policies necessary to create affordable housing opportunities around each station... The primary reason for constructing affordable housing near station stops in transit corridors is that ease of mobility and access translates to affordability... Specifically, we support the Kenilworth Alignment on the Southwest Transitway because it is the only option that creates development opportunities that are much needed on the Northside of Minneapolis. I urge you to follow the commitments and plans made in the Bassett Creek Valley master plan for the Harrison Neighborhood... Good urban design of the station areas will be absolutely critical to the success of this transit corridor and the entire transit system.
#18 - Jami LaPray	Citizen	4/15/2010	X		Comment Card	I am very much in favor of light rail. However, there are some residents of St. Louis Park who will be negatively affected by the SWLRT. Freight rail will be rerouted from a main line track that goes east/west and through Kenwood to a secondary line of tracks that goes north/south through St. Louis Park. The residents in this area will have their lives disrupted. Their property values will decrease due to the re-route. We need the Met Council to know that those residents need help with mitigation due to the increase in freight rail traffic. We are the one group that will be losing while the rest of Hennepin County gains.
#19 - Marilu Thomas	Citizen	4/15/2010	X		Comment Card	We support the Kenilworth alignment because it makes transit accessible to a broader population - especially those who do not have alternative transportation (cars, carpools, etc.).
#20 - Malik Holt-Shabazz	Minneapolis Harrison Neighborhood	4/15/2010	X		Oral Testimony	Supports the 3A alignment as the selected LPA. This alignment will best connect residents of the Harrison neighborhood with job opportunities in the SW area. It is difficult for residents to use transit to this area today and SW will provide greater frequency and availability of transit options. Important to maintain the Penn, Van White and Royalston stations for northside residents to connect to jobs/economic opportunities. Need to adhere to the Bassett Creek Redevelopment plan. Opposes train storage near the Van White station as this will forego the opportunity for TOD development and result in a large opportunity cost (lost) - Harrison neighborhood has done a study on the potential job and residential creation. HNA has engaged hundreds of residents in the process.



Name	Organization	Date Submitted	SW	I-94	Method	Comment
#21 - Tim Brausen	ISAIAH/Citizen	4/15/2010	X		Oral Testimony	Representing both ISAIAH which is a group of congregations that have come together to promote Environmental Justice issues and is also a resident of St. Louis Park. Supports the selection of the 3A Kenilworth alignment as the LPA. This alignment will give EJ opportunities to the north side of Minneapolis. Transportation is the key to providing access to jobs and the opportunity to build communities. Kenilworth alignment will benefit traditionally passed over communities. He also supports the implementation of the Bassett Creek Master Plan.
#22 - David Greene	ISAIAH/Citizen	4/15/2010	X	X	Oral Testimony	Minneapolis resident who also works with ISAIAH. Supports the selection of the 3A alignment and also requests that the Penn Avenue, Van White and Royalston stations be kept intact to connect north Minneapolis residents with job opportunities. Is opposed to train storage near the Van White station. Also commented on the I-94 amendment and does not like the loss of the bus only shoulder on I-94. this had a negative impact on transit riders and reduces the quality of the transit trip.
#23 - Dave Van Hattum	Transit for Livable Communities	4/15/2010	X		Oral Testimony	Eager for implementation of the southwest Transitway which will increase access to jobs, address congestion and provide opportunity for TOD. TLC supports the 3A alignment as it has the best estimated ridership, interlines with Hiawatha, maximizes the opportunity to receive federal funds and will allow for implementation of a streetcar on the Midtown alignment. Suggests that the project consider eliminating the Mitchell station to reduce costs. also asks that the council lead the efforts to advocate for transit funding for the identified long range needs. TLC advocates for the expansion of the Transit Taxing district.
#24 John Dewitt/Tim Springer	Midtown Greenway Coalition	4/22/2010	X		E-mailed letter	The Midtown Greenway Coalition supports the amendment to designate the Kenilworth-Opus-Golden Triangle alignment as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the Southwest LRT corridor. The Coalition also supports the proposed amendment to examine the Midtown Corridor to see if a connection between Hiawatha and Southwest is warranted. On October 26, 2006 the Coalition Board adopted a resolution supporting a Network Alignment in south Minneapolis with the Southwest LRT utilizing the Kenilworth Corridor and rail transit in the Midtown Corridor connecting the Southwest and Hiawatha light rail lines.
#25 Tim Prescott	Citizen	4/22/2010	X		E-mail	The approval of the 3A locally preferred alternative alongside the Kenilworth Trail will mean that Minneapolis will lose a once in a century opportunity to revitalize the region through the construction of transit oriented developments in South Central Minneapolis. I urge you to work towards the adoption of the 3C alternative alignment through South Minneapolis as being in the best interest of the whole metropolitan community. Please review and consider the following arguments in favor of the 3C alternative: 1. The South Minneapolis station sites along alignment 3C have many times greater development potential than the station sites along the 3A corridor running through the Brynmar, Penn and Kenwood neighborhoods. 2. The decision making process to arrive at the locally preferred alternative 3A has been flawed 3. I believe a proper assessment weighing benefits against risks and costs will show the 3C South Minneapolis alternative to be considerably more cost effective than the 3A route along the Kenilworth Trail.