

1.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

Chapter 1 of this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) provides an overview of the proposed action, planning context, region, and corridor. Transportation issues are also presented along with a discussion of the purpose for transportation improvements in the Southwest Transitway corridor in Hennepin County, Minnesota.

1.1 Overview of Proposed Action

The proposed action, the Southwest Transitway, is the construction and operation of a 15-mile light rail transit (LRT) line in the Minneapolis/St. Paul region, connecting downtown Minneapolis to major **activity centers** in Hennepin County, Minnesota, including the cities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Edina, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie. Depending on the alternative being evaluated, this action also includes either:

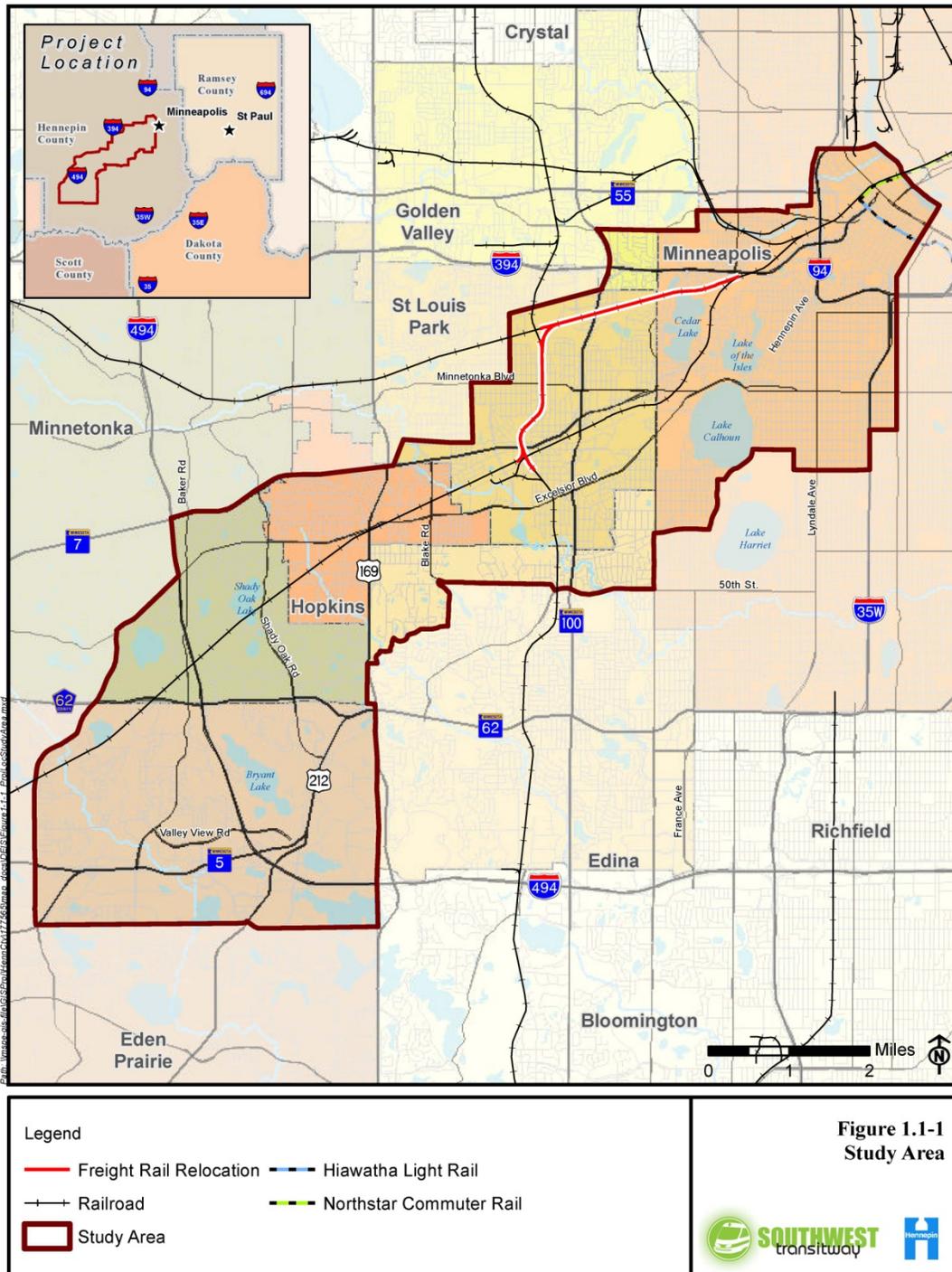
- The rerouting of existing Twin Cities & Western (TC&W) Railway freight rail service from the Canadian Pacific (CP) Railway's Bass Lake Spur and Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority's (HCRRA's) Cedar Lake (Kenilworth Corridor) to the Minneapolis Northfield & Southern (MN&S) Railway Subdivision and Burlington Northern Santa Fe's (BNSF's) Wayzata Subdivision
- The co-location of LRT and TC&W freight rail service on reconstructed freight rail tracks on the CP's Bass Lake Spur and HCRRA's Cedar Lake (Kenilworth Corridor)

(See Figure 1.1-1 and Figure 2.3-2).

High-capacity transit improvements in the southwest area of the Twin Cities have been studied by the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) and the Metropolitan Council Regional Transit Board (RTB) since the mid-1980s. The Southwest Transitway is currently included in the *2030 Transportation Policy Plan (2030 TPP)* (2009), the region's long-range transportation plan; Hennepin County's long-range transportation plan; the *Hennepin County Transportation System Plan (TSP)*; and the comprehensive and transportation plans of the local municipalities in the study area.

An "activity center" is a destination where people gather. Activity centers include concentrated work locations, shopping areas, recreation areas, sports stadiums, educational institutions, government centers, museums, and so forth.

"High-capacity transit improvements" are those that can accommodate large numbers of passengers.



A Southwest Transitway will add **system capacity** in an area of high **travel demand**, respond to travel demand created by existing and planned residential and employment growth, and provide a competitive travel option that will attract **choice riders** and serve **transit dependent populations** (people who rely on public transportation).

A Southwest Transitway will improve **access** and **mobility** to the jobs and activity centers both to/from the Minneapolis central business district (CBD) for the traditional work trip as well as along the entire 15-mile line for **reverse-commute** trips to the expanding suburban employment centers. The competitive travel time for the Southwest Transitway is attributed to the diagonal nature of the line compared to the north-south/east-west orientation of the roadway network. (See Figure 1.1-1 for the diagonal nature of the corridor.)

Specifically, the study area roadway network is primarily oriented north-south and east-west, while a significant portion of the travel movement is northeast/southwest to/from downtown Minneapolis. In order to travel from the southwest suburbs to downtown Minneapolis using major roadways, travelers must go due east and then due north rather than on a northeast radial. As a consequence, current travel routes are circuitous and trips must be made on increasingly congested roadways. The Southwest Transitway will also expand the region's transitway system (Hiawatha LRT line, Northstar Commuter Rail, and the under-construction Central Corridor LRT line.)

The LRT line would operate in a combination of environments including operations in abandoned freight rail right-of-way (ROW) acquired by HCRRA, at-grade operations in street and trunk highway ROW, and operations in new ROW that would be acquired from public and private entities. In addition, the line would operate in very limited sections of elevated structure and tunnel to avoid at grade crossings of major roadways and the CP freight rail line in Hopkins, MN.

Transportation "system capacity" is the ability of local roads and area highways to accommodate a projected amount of traffic.

"Travel demand" is an estimate of how many vehicles will use local roads and area highways in the future.

A "choice transit rider" has access to a private vehicle to make a given trip, but chooses to take transit.

"Transit dependent populations" - A transit-dependent person relies exclusively on public transit for daily trips. The Federal Transit Administration defines transit-dependent persons as those who are 1) without private transportation, 2) elderly (over age 65), 3) youths (under age 18), and 4) persons below poverty or median income levels defined by the U.S. Census Bureau.

In transportation, "access" or accessibility refers to the ease with which people can reach multiple destinations. People in places that are highly accessible can reach many other activities or destinations quickly and easily.

In transportation, "mobility" is the ability of people and goods to move freely within the transportation system.

"Reverse commuters" live in cities and travel to the suburbs to work. This is the opposite of regular commuters who live in the suburbs and work in the city.

The beginning and ending points for serving the travel needs of the southwest area of the Twin Cities are from the City of Eden Prairie to downtown Minneapolis. The Southwest Transitway will be **through-routed** with the Central Corridor LRT through downtown Minneapolis to downtown St. Paul.

“Through-routed” means all Southwest Transitway trains will run from the City of Eden Prairie northeast to Target Field Station then continue on Central Corridor LRT tract to St. Paul. Conversely, all Central Corridor LRT trains will run from St. Paul west to Target Filed Station then continue southwest on Southwest Transitway tracks to the City of Eden Prairie.

1.1.1 Public Involvement and Agency Coordination Compliance

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)¹ authorizes the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the five-year period 2005-2009. SAFETEA-LU includes many provisions for USDOT and includes a section (Section 6002) dedicated to the environmental review process. SAFETEA-LU requires the development of a coordination plan to outline how the Southwest Transitway project will work with the public, Tribal Governments, and local, state, and federal agencies with an interest in the project. Chapter 12 of this Draft EIS documents how this project has worked with these groups to date.

The state, local and tribal agencies were also invited to have a more formal role in the environmental review process as “participating agencies.” The Southwest Transitway project team sent out participating agency invitations on September 25, 2008 to agencies with an interest in the project area, and to various federal, state and local governments. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), as the lead federal agency, invited participation from Tribal Governments on September 9, 2009, November 25, 2009, and February 16, 2010. On August 22, 2012, FTA invited the Surface Transportation Board to become a cooperating agency.

The following entities were sent invitations to participate in the environmental review process:

Tribal Governments

- Prairie Island Indian Community
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community
- Lower Sioux Indian Community Council
- Fort Peck Tribes
- Santee Sioux Nation
- Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate
- Upper Sioux Indian Community

¹ This Draft EIS was prepared under SAFETEA-LU. On July 6, 2012, the President signed into law a new surface transportation act – Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) which goes into effect on October 1, 2012. As the Southwest Transitway project progresses through project development and final environmental clearance, MAP-21 will supersede SAFETEA-LU.

Federal Agencies

- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- U.S. Department of the Interior
- U.S. Federal Highway Administration
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Federal Aviation Administration
- U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency
- U.S. Federal Railroad Administration
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- Surface Transportation Board

State Agencies

- Minnesota Environmental Quality Board
- State Historic Preservation Office
- Minnesota Historical Society
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Board of Water and Soil Resources
- Office of the State Archaeologist
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Minnesota Department of Commerce
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Indian Affairs Council

Regional Authorities

- Metropolitan Council
- Metro Transit
- Three Rivers Park District
- Minnehaha Creek Watershed District
- Nine Mile Creek Watershed District
- Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District
- Mississippi Watershed Management Organization

County Agencies

- Hennepin County
- Hennepin County Research, Planning and Development
- Hennepin Conservation District

Local Government Agencies / Municipalities

- City of Minneapolis
- City of St. Louis Park
- City of Hopkins
- City of Edina
- City of Minnetonka
- City of Eden Prairie
- Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board

All federal, state, and local agencies, with the exception of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District, accepted the invitation to be participating agencies. To date, no Tribal Governments have contacted FTA about the Southwest Transitway project. The Surface Transportation Board, in their August 28, 2012 letter to FTA, agreed to be a cooperating agency.

In the development of the Southwest Transitway, the HCRRA is working closely with the Metropolitan Council, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), and the cities of Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, Edina, and Minneapolis. The project has several advisory committees that provide input from policy makers, government entities, and community groups, businesses, and residents. These committees, described in Chapter 12, are the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC), the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC).

1.2 Project Context

This section describes the Southwest Transitway study area and its activity centers, transportation systems, and travel patterns. The study area includes portions of the cities of Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Hopkins, Edina, St. Louis Park, and southwestern and downtown Minneapolis. The study area is bounded roughly by I-494 to the south, the HCRRA ROW and I-494 to the west, TH 169 south of Excelsior Boulevard and I-35W south of downtown Minneapolis to the east, and I-394 to the north (See Figure 1.1-1).

1.2.1 Early Planning Efforts

Mobility issues and high-capacity transit improvements in the study area have been evaluated by the Metropolitan Council, the RTB, and the HCRRA since the mid-1980s. In the mid-1980s, the region planned to implement the Southwest Transitway as an LRT line extending from downtown Minneapolis to Hopkins. Key studies conducted include the following, which may be viewed at www.southwesttransitway.org:

- *Comprehensive LRT System Plan for Hennepin County (1988)*, HCRRA
- *Draft Environmental Impact Statement Hennepin County Light Rail Transit System (1988)*, HCRRA
- *29th Street and Southwest Busway Feasibility Study (2000)*, Hennepin County
- *29th Street and Southwest Corridors Vintage Rail Trolley Study (2000)*, HCRRA
- *Transit 2020 Master Plan (2000)*, Metropolitan Council
- *Twin Cities Exclusive Busway Study (2000)*, MnDOT

- *Transit 2025 Master Plan for Transit* (2001), Metropolitan Council
- *Southwest Rail Transit Study* (2003)
- *Southwest Transitway Alternatives Analysis* (2007)

1.2.2 Environmental Review and Project Development Process

As the state public agency responsible for completing this Draft EIS, the HCRRA is required to comply with the requirements of the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) pursuant to the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) (Minn. Stat. §116D.04 and 116D.045). The project will also pursue federal funding from the FTA. As a result, the FTA is required to undertake environmental review in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). FTA, as the federal lead agency under NEPA, the HCRRA, as the state lead agency under MEPA, and the Metropolitan Council (METC), as the local project sponsor, have prepared this Draft EIS to satisfy both NEPA and MEPA requirements. METC is the project sponsor and federal grantee and will lead the process for preliminary engineering, and, should the Project proceed, final design and construction. To satisfy both NEPA and MEPA requirements, the METC/HCRRA and the FTA are preparing this Draft EIS for the Southwest Transitway project.

FTA and the requirements of NEPA define the formal parameters under which major federally funded transportation investments must be developed and analyzed. NEPA was enacted to protect, maintain, and enhance the environment. As defined by NEPA, "environment" includes not only the physical environment but also the man-made environment. The intent of the NEPA process is to ensure that potential environmental impacts are identified and considered in the decision-making process. NEPA also requires engaging the public in the environmental review process.

NEPA requires that an environmental document be prepared for proposed federal actions (including those involving the use of federal funds) that could significantly affect the environment. It is the intent of the project sponsor to seek Section 5309 "New Starts" funds from FTA. (A brief description of the New Starts process and a link to additional information on FTA's website are included in Appendix H.)

The primary purpose of the Draft EIS is to assist decision-makers in the assessment of impacts associated with the Southwest Transitway project. The DEIS serves as the primary document to facilitate review by federal, state, and local agencies and the general public of the proposed project. The Draft EIS documents the purpose and need for the project and presents a discussion of the alternatives considered. The document also addresses in detail the anticipated transportation and environmental impacts of the project and defines appropriate mitigation measures. The DEIS documents potential impacts prior to any official federal action to implement the Southwest Transitway project.

This Draft EIS discusses the environmental effects of several Build Alternatives taking into consideration input received from federal, state and local agencies and the general public. This Draft EIS will be circulated for review to interested parties, including private citizens, community groups, the business community, elected officials, and public agencies in accordance with federal and state requirements. Public hearings will be held to provide a forum for agency and citizen participation

and comment. Responses to comments received during circulation of the Draft EIS will be responded to and both the comments and responses will be documented in the Final EIS.

Consistent with federal guidance, a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) was selected at the conclusion of the Alternatives Analysis (AA) phase for the Southwest Transitway. The LPA was recommended by HCRRA and selected by the METC acting as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Twin Cities region. The METC subsequently included the Southwest LPA in the Metropolitan Council's 2030 TPP in May 2010. The LPA selection does not replace, nor does it override the requirement to fully examine alternatives and identify the adverse impacts that must be addressed and **mitigated** under NEPA and MEPA.

"Mitigate" – To mitigate is to reduce the impact of an action

1.3 Purpose and Need of the Proposed Action

The Purpose and Need statement under NEPA defines why a project has been initiated, and what problem(s) it seeks to address. It serves as the basis for defining how alternatives will be developed and measured. Any reasonable alternative must address the needs specified in the Purpose and Need statement for the alternative to be considered in the Draft EIS.

The Purpose and Need statement was developed in consultation with the Southwest TAC, an interagency staff level group of engineers and planners. It was then adopted with the goals and objectives by the Southwest PAC. In June 2012, HCRRA amended the Scoping Summary Report to include the freight rail relocation to the MN&S project as part of the Build Alternatives and to add a new co-location alternative in the Kenilworth Corridor.

The primary purpose of the proposed project, the Southwest Transitway, is to provide a high-capacity transit connection improving mobility, accessibility, and system linkages to major population and employment centers including Downtown Minneapolis, Chain of Lakes and Recreation Area, Excelsior and Grand, Downtown Hopkins, Golden Triangle Business District, Opus Business Park, and Eden Prairie Center. The proposed project would also provide a high capacity transit alternative to the traffic congestion in the study area and further the implementation of the Metropolitan Council's 2030 TPP goal to double transit ridership by 2030.

A key component of the Southwest Transitway project would be the regional connectivity and travel time reliability that a high capacity transit line would offer. Good connectivity to mainline transit service is important for maintaining and expanding transit ridership. The proposed transit project would provide a new, more direct travel connection between the southwest suburbs and downtown Minneapolis. It would also provide transfer opportunities to the existing Hiawatha LRT line, the existing Northstar commuter rail line, and the Central Corridor LRT line, currently under construction.

1.3.1 Project Purpose

The purposes for enhancing transit service in the Southwest study area are summarized as:

- The Southwest Transitway will improve access and mobility to the jobs and activity centers in the Minneapolis CBD, as well as along the entire length of the corridor for reverse-commute trips to the expanding suburban employment centers.
- The Southwest Transitway will provide a competitive, cost-effective travel option that will attract choice riders to the transit system. The competitive and reliable travel time for the Southwest Transitway is attributed to the diagonal nature of the line compared to the north-south/east-west orientation of the roadway network, and to the increasing levels of congestion of the roadway network.
- The Southwest Transitway would be part of the region's system of transitways integrated to support regional transportation efficiency. The Southwest Transitway has been identified by the Metropolitan Council since the late 1990s as warranting a high-level of transit investment to respond to increasing travel demand in a highly congested area of the region. Due to congestion levels on the roadway network, the speed/use limitations of the shoulder bus operations, and capacity constraints in downtown Minneapolis, a bus option is limited in its ability to adequately serve the travel demand and provide reliable travel times.

1.3.2 Need for Improvements

The transportation issues facing the Southwest Transitway study area illustrate the need for improved mobility, accessibility, and system linkages to the activity centers in the study area through high capacity transit service. The Southwest Transitway is one of several transit corridors identified in the 2030 TPP as being in need of enhanced transit service. The Southwest Transitway study area continues to increase in population and employment with limited additional traffic capacity on existing streets and highways resulting in increased travel time, delays, and air pollution. Portions of the Southwest Transitway study area are already densely developed. New development and redevelopment occurring in the study area is expected to generate increases in travel demand.

Three primary factors make the Southwest Transitway Corridor important for people who live and work in the southwest metropolitan area: 1) declining mobility, 2) limited competitive, reliable transit options for choice riders and people who rely on public transportation including reverse commute riders, and 3) need to develop and maintain a balanced and economically competitive multimodal freight system.

1.3.2.1 Declining Mobility

The Southwest area is experiencing significant declining mobility resulting from high residential and employment growth and limited infrastructure improvements. The area is home to downtown Minneapolis, the region's largest employment center with more than 140,000 jobs (78 jobs/acre) and the Golden Triangle/Opus/I-494 area, the region's sixth highest employment region with more than 50,000 jobs (10 jobs/acre). The area is also home to many major employer centers including:

- Downtown Minneapolis – 140,000 jobs
- St. Louis Park's Excelsior and Grand – 10,000 jobs

- Downtown Hopkins – 8,000 jobs
- Golden Triangle Business Park – 18,000 jobs
- Minnetonka’s Opus Business Park – 14,000 jobs
- Eden Prairie Center – 6,000 jobs

In addition to the high employment growth, this area has also experienced high residential growth as demonstrated by the city of Eden Prairie, which grew from 16,000 persons in 1980 to more than 50,000 persons by 2000.

Due to lack of planned highway capacity additions—and transit facility capacity limitations in downtown Minneapolis—future demand increases will not be adequately met by capacity enhancements for either car or bus. Demand increases will be fueled by increasing population within the corridor (12 percent increase to 2030) and by increasing job concentrations—a 16 percent overall increase and increases in job concentrations from 78 to 113 jobs/acre in downtown Minneapolis and from 10 to 17 jobs/acre in the Golden Triangle/Opus/I-494 area. According to the Metropolitan Council Transportation Division, travel times from Eden Prairie for cars are expected to increase by about 10 percent, from 30 minutes in 2000 to 34 minutes in 2030 during peak periods. According to the Institute of Transportation Engineers, the number and frequency of accidents increase with growing congestion, which would lead to continued degradation of highway travel time reliability. Current express bus travel times may increase, despite the current use of shoulder lanes. There are no plans to expand the number of shoulder lanes.

1.3.2.2 Limited Competitive, Reliable Transit Options for Choice Riders and Transit Dependent Populations including Reverse Commute Riders

Due to limited public transportation options, a number of transportation markets are not well served. The key transit markets include trips between the southwest suburbs and Downtown Minneapolis. Although 31 bus routes provide quality service throughout much of study area, these routes operate on the existing roadway system and, for the most part, in mixed-flow traffic. Due to congested roadways and the geography of the roadway network used by the bus system, it is difficult to provide significant travel time advantages or reliable travel times to attract choice riders to the system and to adequately serve people who rely upon public transportation, especially those in and around downtown Minneapolis. A number of major roadways in the study area such as TH 100 and TH 169 are identified by MnDOT as experiencing congestion during peak periods. This negatively affects the ability of the bus transit system to provide fast travel times to attract choice riders from suburban locations.

The geography of the roadway network near downtown Minneapolis limits access for people who rely upon public transportation and makes it difficult to provide competitive transit travel times. The roadway network through this area is circuitous with many one-way street operations. As an example, 24th Street at Sheridan Avenue is about 3.4 miles from 3rd Street at Nicollet Mall. The roadway network is circuitous in this area and a bus trip takes 22 minutes using the existing transit system. The Southwest Transitway project would reduce this travel time to 10 minutes.

The number of people who rely upon public transportation is growing in the study area, primarily in and around downtown Minneapolis. These areas include the North

Loop Neighborhood, Harrison, and Bryn Mawr neighborhoods. Census data from year 2000 show that approximately 1.9 percent of occupied housing units in these areas have no access to a private automobile and an additional 2.9 percent have access to only one. Based on the City of Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan, these areas are forecast to grow by 36.7 percent by 2030, adding 3,589 people and 2,161 households. If existing trends of zero- and one-car occupied housing units continue, a significant share of the forecast growth can be expected to have no access or limited access to private automobiles.

The number of quality jobs in the Southwest Transitway study area is also growing, but these jobs are largely inaccessible by transit. In addition to the strong job growth in downtown Minneapolis, the cities of Minnetonka and Eden Prairie have experienced and are projected to continue to experience substantial future job growth. This is evidenced by the more than 14,000 jobs that are forecast to be added to the corridor outside Minneapolis (2030 TPP). Currently these jobs are difficult to access using transit. As an example, a bus trip from Lowry Avenue North at Penn Avenue North to the employment center near Blake Road takes more than two hours and three transfers using the existing transit system. The Southwest Transitway project would reduce that travel time to less than 30 minutes with one transfer.

1.3.2.3 Need to Develop and Maintain a Balanced and Economically Competitive Multimodal Freight System

The Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan (MnDOT, 2010) (State Rail Plan) indicates that a successful, viable rail industry that meets the future needs of the Minnesota economy requires continued investment and improvement to its infrastructure. Key improvement elements defined in the plan include:

- Continue to make improvements to the condition and capacity of Minnesota's primary railroad arterials to accommodate existing and future demand
- Address critical network bottlenecks
- Upgrade main line track (all Class I-III railroads) to 25 miles per hour minimum speed, as warranted
- Improve the network (all Class I-III railroads) to support the use of 286,000 pound railcars throughout
- Implement state of the art traffic control and safety systems
- Expand intermodal service access options throughout the State

As presented in the State Rail Plan:

...a strong rail system supports economic development, enhances environmental sustainability, helps to preserve the publicly owned roadway infrastructure, and increases the business marketability of the State.

The construction of a new connection between the Bass Lake Spur and the MN&S Spur, a new connection between the MN&S Spur and the BNSF Wayzata Subdivision, and the upgrading of track on the MN&S Spur are included as recommended actions in the Minnesota State Rail Plan. Providing a direct connection to the north-south MN&S line would improve accessibility to CP's Humboldt yard. Currently TC&W

interchanges with the CP at their St. Paul yard. Although the Humboldt Yard is much closer, the inefficiency of the existing connection is so great that the extra distance to St. Paul is less onerous.

The new connection would likely be used, at least in the near term, in a similar manner as the existing connection, which is to access the BNSF Wayzata Subdivision and more efficiently connect to the east side of town. However, the connection would also provide the flexibility to use other routes to get to the various connections that TC&W uses. This is important because the level of rail traffic on the Wayzata Subdivision has been increasing and is expected to increase further as the region continues to add additional passenger and commuter rail services consistent with the region's 2030 TPP and the State Rail Plan. This increase is due in part to the establishment of the Northstar commuter rail service that connects downtown Minneapolis to the northwest suburbs. The location of the Twins Ballpark (Target Field) and the design of the portals under the 5th Street bridge where the BNSF rail line is located restrict if not preclude the ability to expand BNSF's track through the area. For expansion to be possible, the 5th Street bridge over BNSF's track would need to be lengthened, buildings to the west located within a historic district would need to be taken, or possibly both. The current route used by TC&W requires bringing their freight trains through the Twins Ballpark area. The Interchange Project will construct a larger passenger station at this location to serve proposed intercity routes to Duluth, Chicago and other locations as identified in the state rail plan. As passenger traffic increases, the 'window' available to the TC&W to move their trains will get smaller while BNSF gives priority first to the passenger trains and then to their own freight trains. The proposed connection in St. Louis Park allows the TC&W an alternate route at those times when the BNSF route is not available.

Moving commodities along freight rail lines rather than by semi-trailer truck on the roadway system has a significant effect upon the region's mobility. TC&W reports that an average train load equates to 40 trucks on the roadway system. Maintaining freight rail connections as a viable method for transporting goods to, from, and within the Twin Cities region contributes to the healthy economy of this region. As the roadway network continues to become more and more congested, moving commodities by freight rail will become more competitive.

The provision of a connection between the east-west TC&W route and the north-south MN&S route will improve the function of the entire Twin Cities rail network. Benefits would accrue in the following ways:

- Access to the Savage barge terminal would be improved
- Access to CP's Humboldt Yard and other locations on the east side of the metropolitan area would be improved
- An alternate route that avoids the downtown Minneapolis passenger station would be available to the TC&W
- The quality of the north-south rail line would be upgraded

1.4 Project Goals and Objectives

The project goals and objectives are as follows:

1. Improve mobility
2. Provide a cost-effective, efficient travel option
3. Protect the environment
4. Preserve the quality of life in the study area and the region
5. Support economic development
6. Support economically competitive freight rail system

GOAL 1: Improve mobility

Objectives:

- Provide a travel option that reduces congestion and increases mobility, reliability and accessibility for all users, while adding capacity and access to the regional and local transportation system
- Provide a travel option that serves people who rely on public transportation
- Provide a travel option that enhances pedestrian and bicycle activity and access to community nodes

GOAL 2: Provide a cost-effective, efficient travel option

Objectives:

- Ensure cost-effectiveness in design, construction, maintenance and operation and a reliable funding plan for the project

GOAL 3: Protect the environment

Objectives:

- Provide a travel option that protects natural resources including fish, wildlife habitat and water quality
- Provide a travel option that supports improved air quality
- Provide a travel option that supports efficient, compact land use that facilitates accessibility

GOAL 4: Preserve and protect the quality of life in the study area and the region

Objectives:

- Provide a travel option that contributes to the economic health of the study area and region through improving mobility and access
- Provide a travel option that enhances access to public service and recreational facilities
- Provide a travel option that ensures fair distribution of benefits and adverse effects of the project for the region, communities, and neighborhoods adjacent to the project area

GOAL 5: Support economic development

Objectives:

- Provide a travel option that supports economic development and redevelopment with improved access to transit stations

- Provide a travel option that supports local sustainable development/redevelopment goals
- Provide a transportation system element that facilitates more efficient land development patterns and saves infrastructure costs
- Provide a travel option that accommodates future regional growth in locations consistent with local plans and the potential for increased transit ridership

Goal 6: Support economically competitive freight rail system

Objectives:

- Provide a travel option that supports the safe, efficient and effective movement of freight throughout the region, state and nation
- Provide the continuous flow of freight rail throughout the study area