



## Motion of Support – SWLRT DEIS Comments

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### **RE: Southwest Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

The following comments were approved by the North Loop Neighborhood Association board on November 28, 2012.

#### **2.1.3**

Issue: As it relates to the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Royalston station concerning safety, access, accessibility, visual sightlines, and cross-access. There should be an at-grade platform and access at the Royalston Station path across 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Hwy 55.

Outcome: To have improved access to the railway transit line, providing clear and direct pedestrian connections. Connections shall include Minneapolis Farmers' Market, the Upper North Loop, the Sports District (Target Center and Twins ballpark Target Field), and the Minneapolis downtown Central Business District.

Outcome: To provide safe access between these areas to the railway transit line.

Outcome: Grade separated facilities have created pedestrian, automobile, and bicycle barriers in the neighborhood for years. Safety plans shall include keeping LRT vehicles at grade with other modes of transportation in an effort to maintain safe and functional viewing corridors, sightlines, visual cues, and connections.

Outcome: Balance short-term impacts to automobile traffic with long-term adverse impacts to development, community, street grid, and visual connections from railway overpasses/bridges/tunnels.

**Proposal: Provide street grade LRT at the Royalston alignment as it crosses 7<sup>th</sup> Street, not within a tunnel or elevated on a bridge. This is in support of the City of Minneapolis' North Loop Small Area Plan, as adopted in the City's Zoning policy. (Refer to attached renderings for an at-grade crossing specifically drafted for this location.)**

Advantages: Development opportunities increase for the station area due to the limited need for elevation changes, allowing for access to the existing Minneapolis Public Works facility site. Additional development is improved by allowing close-by access and near ROW locations for buildings, pathways, and circulation space. Cost savings would be

realized and recaptured by eliminating the tunneling cost for underground, or semi-underground trenching and elimination of bridge and trestles. Visibility also improves ridership by increasing sightlines to the station itself by non-area residents accessing the site. The Royalston Station is indicated as an overflow station for the Twins ballpark Target Field. Interrupting the visual cues and sightlines from one to the other adversely will affect ridership levels with these blocking obstructions.

### **2.1.3**

Issue: The locally preferred alternative routes the Royalston Station along Royalston Avenue. The route should be aligned on Border Avenue.

Outcome: The street grid should be made continuous as outline in the North Loop Small Area Plan. Healing the street grid will improve access to the Transitway and the station. The border Alignment aids this positive street grid access. (Refer to attachment for illustration.) Holden Avenue is proposed to be closed on 6-20 (6.2.2.2) affecting the street grid.

Outcome: Alignment on Border Avenue will provide clear enhanced connections for pedestrians directly to the Minneapolis Farmers' Market, the Upper North Loop, the Twins ballpark Target Field, and to the existing bus routes along Hwy 55 and 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

Outcome: Grade separation from the Minneapolis Farmers' Market to the planned Royalston Station would require a vertical transportation to get pedestrians and bicyclists up and down the 30 feet of elevation change. Minimize cut and fill, embankments, and elevation change for the railway.

Outcome: Provide safe and functional pedestrian, automobile, and bicyclist access which serve stakeholders and users in its fullest capacity.

Outcome: Provide direct access to the Minneapolis Farmers' Market and area residents. Current design would require a multiple block walk by pedestrians accessing a Royalston Station.

Outcome: Provide for enhanced TOD and redevelopment of the area around the Border Avenue Station.

Outcome: Provide enhanced visibility to the line, surrounding areas, and positive view corridors.

<p><b>Proposal: Provide route along Border Avenue alignment as shown in the attachment.</b></p>
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Advantages: No vertical transportation access would be required for the block long path, as required by a Royalston Station alignment, via Border Avenue, recapturing these costs would be positive to the Transitway. Holden Avenue could be preserved with a Border Avenue alignment, greatly increasing street grid connectivity. Bicyclists benefit from a Border Avenue alignment and Station due to a more direct connection, visibility, and safe ROW connections to the Cedar Lake Trail system. Private land ownership exists in the area that would be required to make a pathway for the Royalston Station to the Farmers' Market. Again, a Border Avenue alignment would eliminate the need for

these private land acquisitions. Costly elevation changes are avoided by utilizing a Border Avenue alignment. The Border Avenue Station would be located very near the Farmers' Market, a major destination and source for ridership. There are more development opportunities along both sides of the Border Avenue Station option. Pedestrian access is more direct to existing bus routes on 7<sup>th</sup> street and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue with a Border Avenue Station. The Royalston Station may require an overpass, bridge, tunnel, or trenching, these costs would be eliminated by a Border Avenue Station; thus, recapturing these costs, providing enhanced views to the railway line for pedestrian safety, and benefits from visibility also allows for greater ridership. Additional residential access is gained by the Border alignment as it allows for direct access to the neighboring transitional shelter housing populations and access to shelter meals. Crossover bridge savings would also be recaptured as the Border Avenue Station would eliminate this bridge at Glenwood Avenue.

### **2.3.3.9**

Issue: The Operations & Maintenance Facility (OMF) identified four options, one of which is to be located in the North Loop Neighborhood and does not fulfill criteria used in the site selection process as described in Appendix H.

Outcome: Preferred location near one end of the line: The North Loop is home to the Interchange, a regional transportation hub that currently connects Hiawatha LRT with the Northstar Commuter Rail. In 2014 it will connect Central Corridor LRT to St. Paul. Southwest LRT will interline with Central Corridor LRT so consequently the identified OMF is mid-line.

Outcome: Compatibility with adjacent current and planned land uses as found in the North Loop Small Area Plan projects large-scale 10-story developments that are transit-oriented. This location for the OMF would have a negative impact on residential density in order to support the regional transportation system.

Outcome: Land zoned in this area is incorrectly identified in the DEIS as being industrial/light industrial. In fact the area is zoned B4S Downtown Services district and not industrial in nature. An OMF would be a barrier to TOD opportunities.

**Proposal: To locate the OMF outside the North Loop.**

Advantage: The majority of the land needed for the proposed OMF at this site is private. Costly acquisitions can be avoided by siting the facility at one of the other proposed locations. TOD opportunities would be increased by siting a mix of residential, office, and commercial uses rather than an OMF.

### **Chapter 3**

Issue: The DEIS does not include any mention of the Minneapolis Zoning related to the North Loop Small Area Plan.

Outcome: This zoning regulation and policy has impacts along the area of the Royalston Station, the mid-line connection to the Central Corridor, the Interchange facility, and the pathway for the railway transit to Van White Station.

**Proposal: List this document as supporting evidence within the DEIS. Apply its**

**goals, zoning regulations, land use, transit recommendations, and development issues to the Southwest Transitway.**

Advantage: This document supports many desirable outcomes for development, transit-oriented development, safety, and access.

**3.2**

Issue: The Minneapolis Farmers' Market as a regional destination and potential use for the railway transit line.

Outcome: Recognize this vital regional resource within the Environmental Impact Statement.

**Proposal: Include the impact to the land use and economics of the railway taking into account the business of the Farmers' Market.**

Advantage: Ridership should have increases shown on market days, thus an increase in fares. This is a vital area amenity and Citywide resource.

**Chapter 4, 4-83, 4-97**

Issue: No noise sensitive areas were indicated near the Royalston Station.

Outcome: To reduce impact to neighboring residential areas.

Outcome: Be sensitive to area residents by limiting LRT vehicle noise which will also impact future residential developments. The North Loop area is the fastest growing neighborhood by population in the City of Minneapolis as 2010 census data shows. This area will continue to be an area for residential population growth moving forward, especially as Minneapolis is calling for a doubling of population by 2025.

**Proposal: Limit LRT vehicles to 20mph design speed and reduce idling LRT vehicles. Remove bridges and tunnels as pathways for LRT vehicles.**

Advantage: This will keep noise to a minimum and reduce the noise impact to the area. The removal of bridges and tunnels will limit the reverberation and sound impact wave formations that are increased due to closed-in hardscape areas that occur in both tunnels and bridge embankments/structures.

**6.2.2.2**

Issue: The closing of the Royalston Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Ave N intersection is mentioned. This would have gravely negative consequences to the area's street grid, access to local businesses, and development opportunities. The existing Royalston businesses are industrial that require frequent, direct, and unfettered access from semi-trucks.

**Proposal: Continue to allow for access from Royalston Avenue to 5<sup>th</sup> Ave N, by way of an at-grade crossing if needed.**

Appendix F, part 1, page 61

Issue: Royalston Station and railway path is planned as a tunnel. Due to the location of the Interchange facility, it no longer is possible to create the tunnel.



6th Ave Streetscape: At-Grade LRT with Integrated Pedestrian Route

