

**Background Information for MPRB
Community Advisory Committee for
2010 Southwest Light Rail Transit
Project DEIS Comment Letter
Section 2**

1 2. SW LRT Corridor Overview

Source: <http://www.southwesttransitway.org/home.html>

The proposed Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) line is a high-frequency train serving the rapidly growing southwest metro area – Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Edina, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, Minneapolis Neighborhoods, and downtown Minneapolis.

The Southwest LRT line will connect to other rail lines (Hiawatha, Central, and Northstar) and high-frequency bus routes in downtown Minneapolis, providing access to the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport, Mall of America, the State Capitol, and downtown St. Paul.

1.1 Frequently Asked Questions and LRT Project Timeline

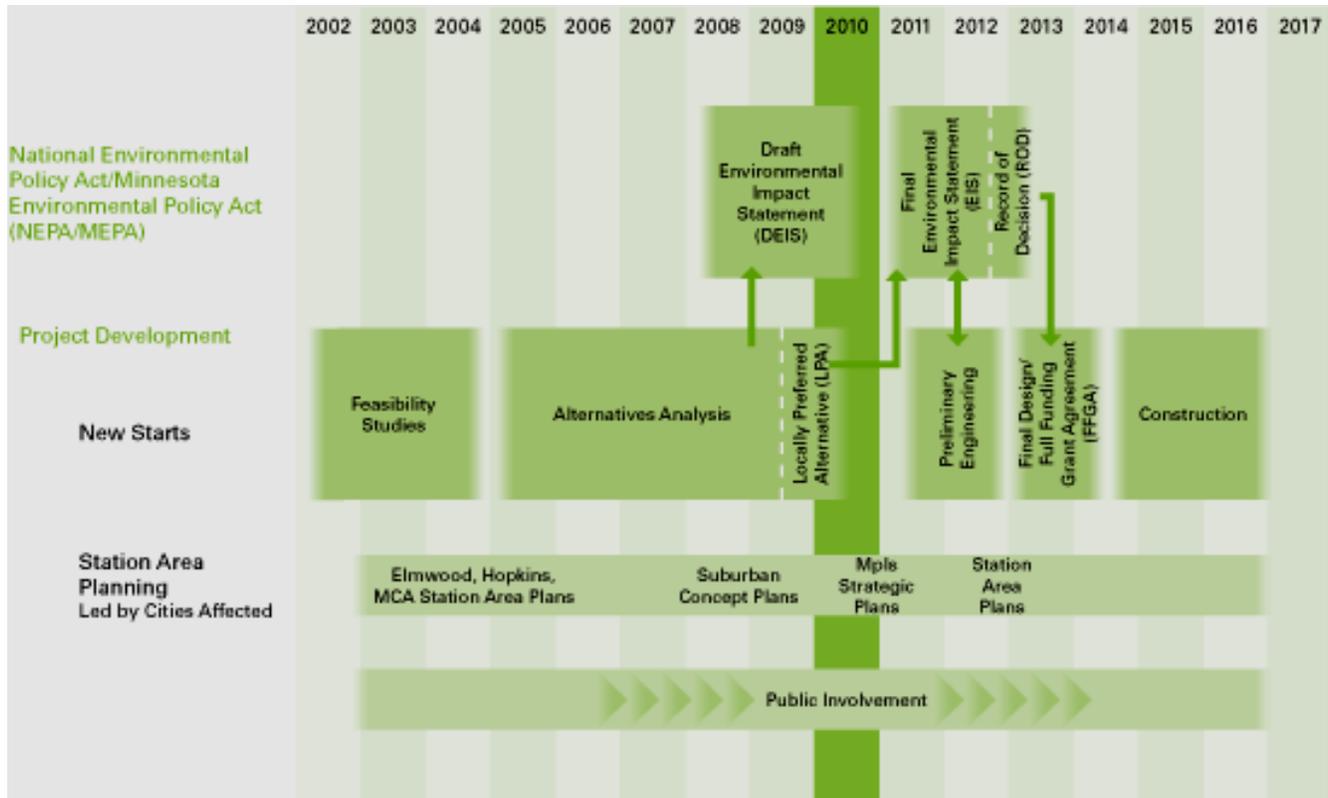
1.1.1 Frequently Asked Questions

Source: http://www.southwesttransitway.org/index.php?cid=1&option=com_easyfaq&Itemid=35

- 1. How many people will be expected to ride on the Southwest LRT?** Depending upon the route selected, there will be an estimated 24,000 to 30,000 rides per day by year 2030, which is comparable to current ridership on the Hiawatha LRT line.
- 2. When can I ride the Southwest LRT train?** At this time, the Southwest LRT is projected to open in 2017, though project schedule depends on securing federal and local funds.
- 3. How often will the trains run?** Service will be same as on the Hiawatha LRT - every 7 1/2 minutes during peak times (6-9:45 am and 3-7:15 pm), every 10 minutes during midday and evenings, and every 30 minutes from 4-6 am and 9 pm-1 am. Southwest LRT trains will run 20 hours per day, 7 days per week.
- 4. If LRT is built what will happen to the trails?** Hennepin County and its partners are committed to ensuring that a connected system of trails is retained throughout the southwest metro area. Currently, there are four trails that may be affected by a Southwest LRT line. They are the Southwest LRT trail, the Kenilworth trail, the Cedar Lake Park trail, and the Midtown Greenway. These trails are all located on property owned by the HCRRA. The existing walking and biking trails will be maintained; there is plenty of space for light rail and the existing trails. Currently, rails and trails safely coexist in more than 60 areas of the United States.
- 5. What are some examples of rails and trails safely coexisting?** The [Rails-to-Trails Conservancy](#) recently reported that there are more than 60 cases of trails coexisting with rail operations in 30 states nationwide. These “Rails-with-Trails,” defined as bicycle/pedestrian paths located directly adjacent to active railroad corridors, vary in characteristics from a few slow-moving freight trains to high-frequency commuter trains traveling as fast as 150 miles per hour.
- 6. Who will design and build the Southwest LRT? Who will operate it?** In the Twin Cities region, the Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit is the lead agency in the designing and building of transitways, including light rail, commuter rail, and busways. Metro Transit currently operates the Hiawatha line and will operate the Central Corridor and the Southwest LRT.
- 7. Who will pay for the construction of the Southwest LRT?** At this time, it is assumed that Southwest LRT funding for capital costs will come from four sources: the transit sales tax in the metro area (30 percent), the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (10 percent), the State of Minnesota (10 percent), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) (up to 50 percent).

1.1.2 LRT Project Timeline

Source: <http://www.southwesttransitway.org/project-progress-past-a-future.html>



1.2 Possible Routes and “Locally Preferred Alternative”

Source: <http://www.southwesttransitway.org/possible-routes.html>

The Alternatives Analysis conducted in 2007 determined three route options: 1A, 3A, and 3C. The 3C 11th/12th Street sub-alternative was proposed in Fall 2008 during the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Scoping Period. The routes were chosen for further study based on transportation efficiency and the overall impact to the surrounding area.

In fall 2009, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority recommended LRT 3A as the Southwest Transitway Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). In 2010 the Metropolitan Council will finalize the LPA selection process for the Southwest Transitway by amending the regional [Transportation Policy Plan](#) (TPP) to include LRT 3A. In 2010 the DEIS will be completed for all four alternatives: 1A, 3A, 3C (Nicollet Mall), and 3C (11th/12th Street Sub-Alternative).

Metropolitan Council Approves Southwest LRT Locally Preferred Alternative

Source: <http://www.southwesttransitway.org/home.html>

May 26, 2010

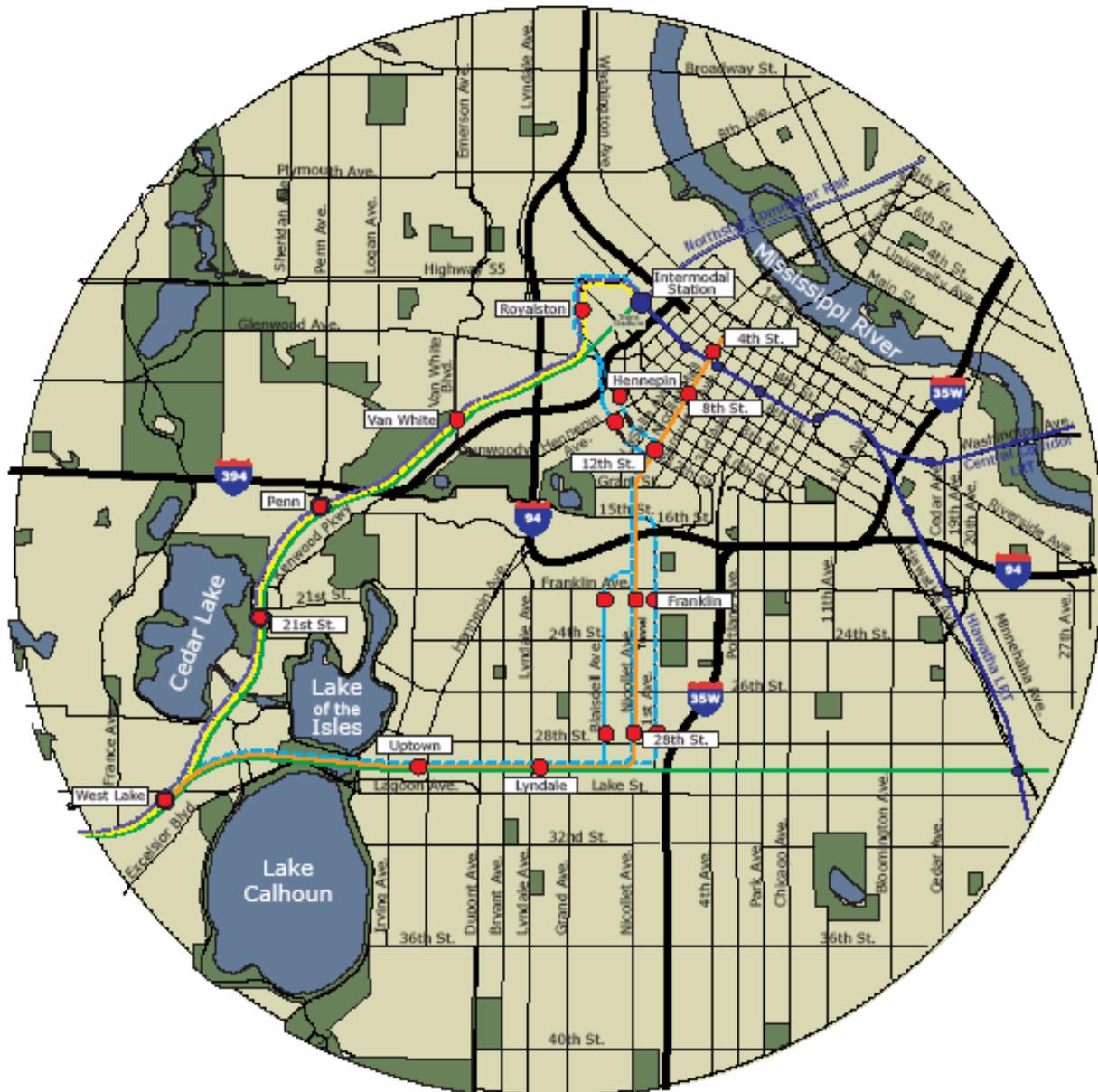
On May 26 the Metropolitan Council approved light rail on the 15-mile Southwest Corridor between downtown Minneapolis and Eden Prairie. At the same time the Council approved the locally preferred

alternative (LPA), it amended the region's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan to include LRT as the mode of choice in the corridor, making the project eligible for federal funding.

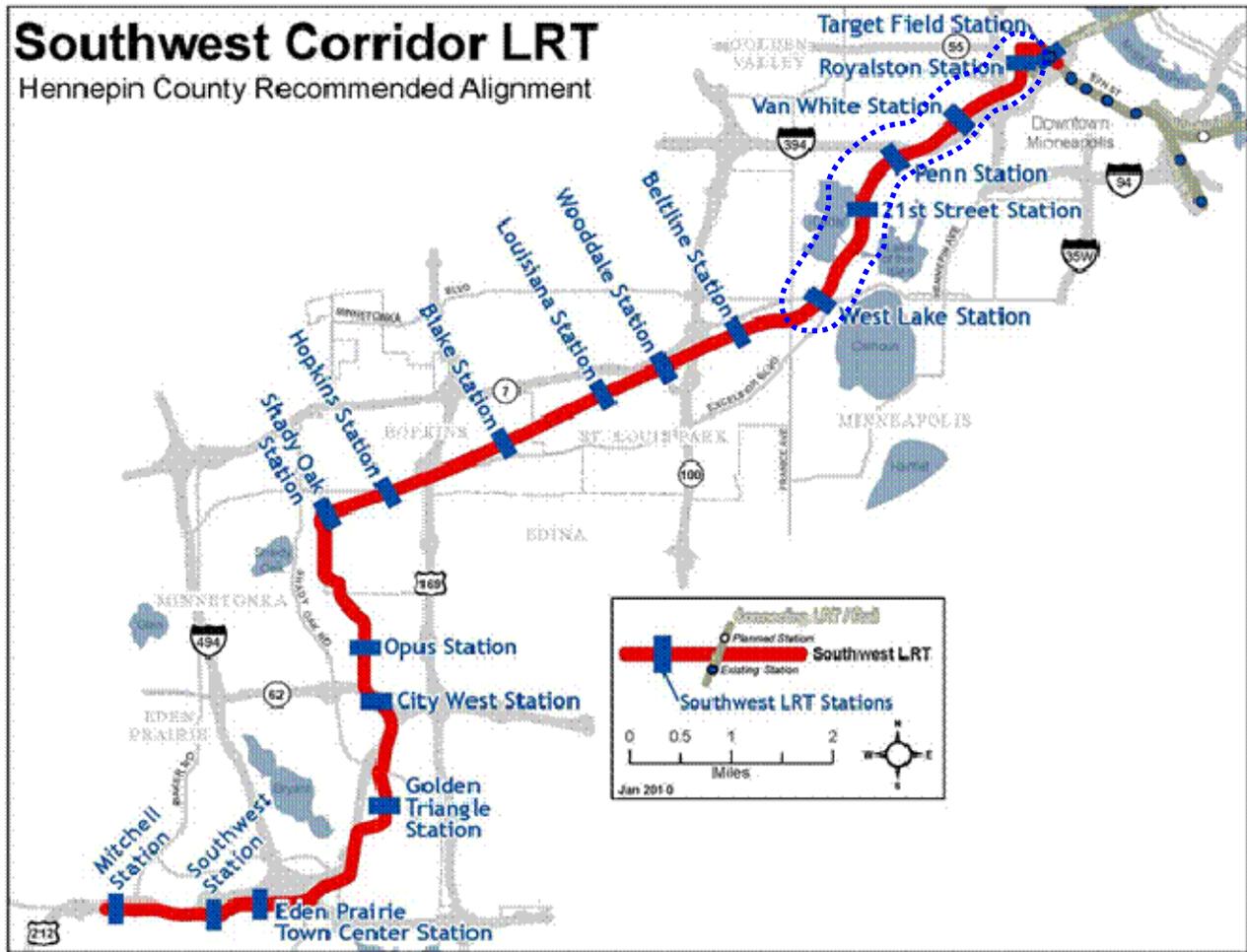
"I am pleased that Southwest LRT has reached this milestone and is transitioning to the Metropolitan Council," said Hennepin County Commissioner Gail Dorfman. "I am confident that Southwest LRT will be a strong candidate in the competition for federal dollars. Light rail in the corridor will generate strong ridership, connect people with key destinations, and serve as a catalyst for economic development."

"World class cities have growing, vibrant transit systems," said Metropolitan Council Chair Peter Bell. "The selection of the mode and alignment for this corridor is an important step forward. It moves the project to the next level and continues the process of building out the region's rail corridor network."

The map below shows Minneapolis detail for the route alternatives. The selected alternative, 3A, is in green/yellow. *Source: <http://www.southwesttransitway.org/minneapolis-detail-map.html>*



Below is the map showing the “**locally preferred alternative,**” **Route 3A**, that received final approval from the Metropolitan Council in May 2010. This is the only route being considered, and the Minneapolis portion (within yellow-highlighted area) is the focus of the CAC’s work.

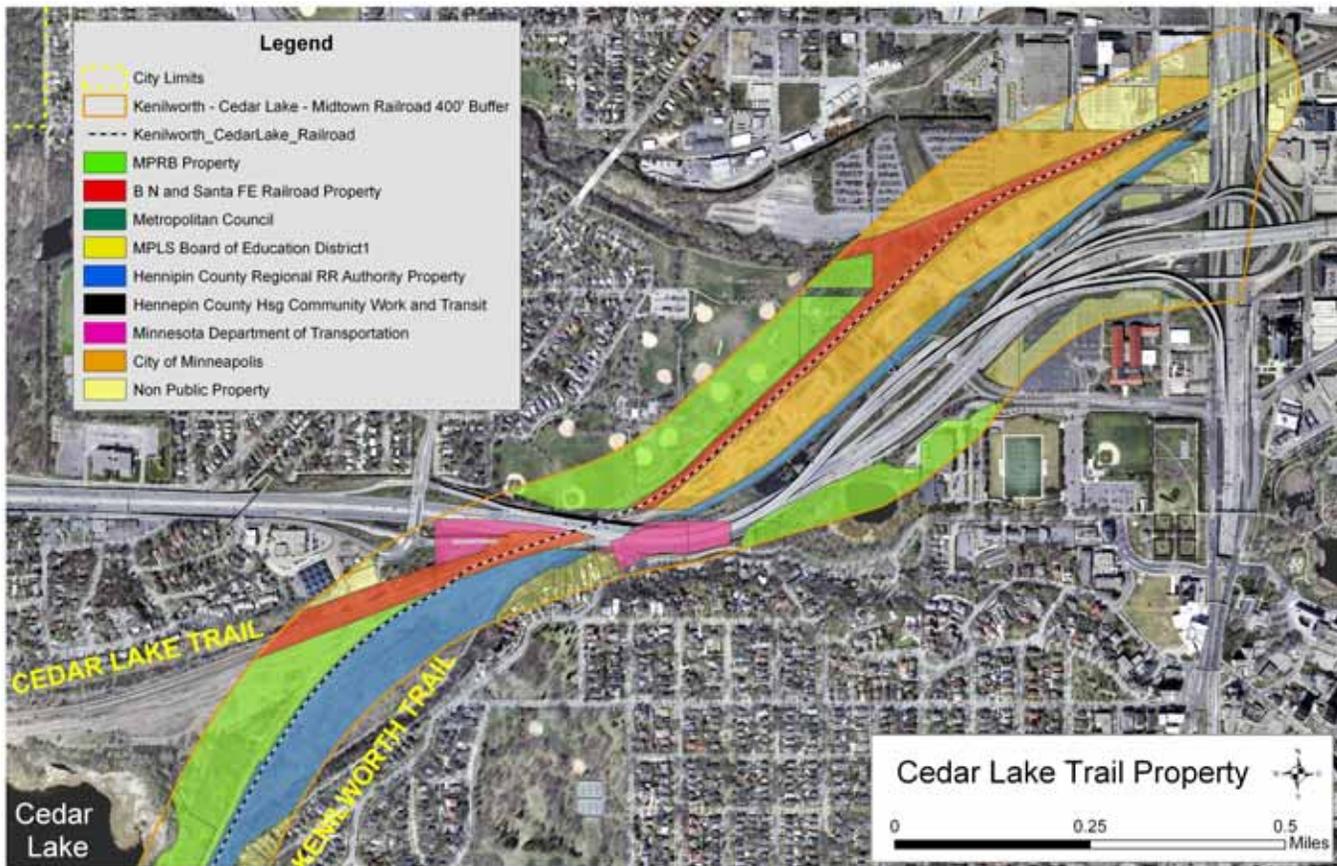


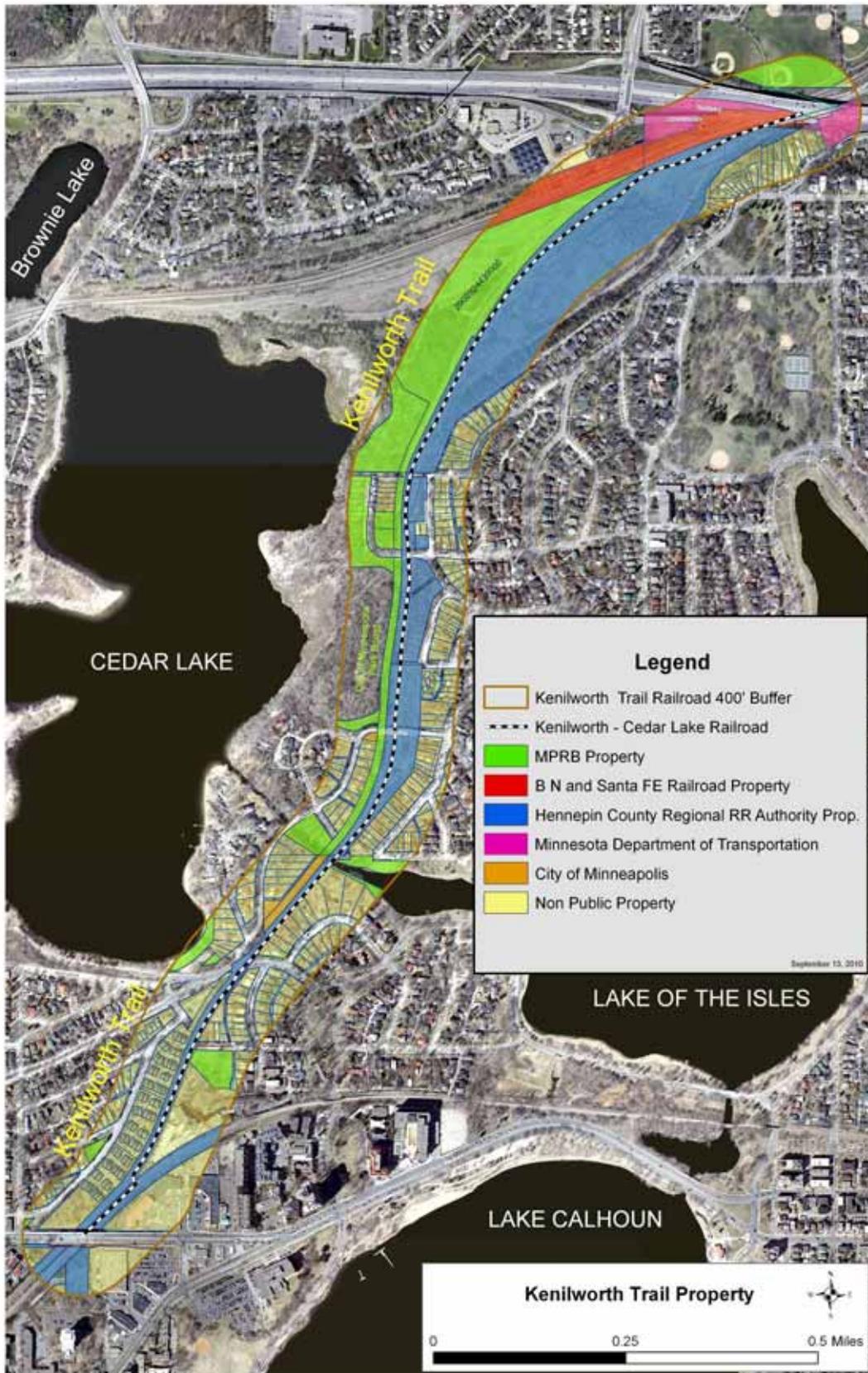
1.3 Property Ownership and Jurisdictional Issues

1.3.1 Property Ownership

The Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority owns the land along Southwest LRT Route 3A, and through the remaining design and engineering process may acquire other property for stations, access, etc.

The maps on the following two pages show Park Board properties adjacent to Route 3A.





1.3.2 Jurisdictional Issues

The SW LRT corridor falls within both regional and federal park systems.

The chain of lakes and surrounding lands in Minneapolis are a designated Metropolitan Council Regional Park known as Chain of Lakes Regional Park. As with all other regional parks, this one is owned and operated by local implementing agencies, in this case the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

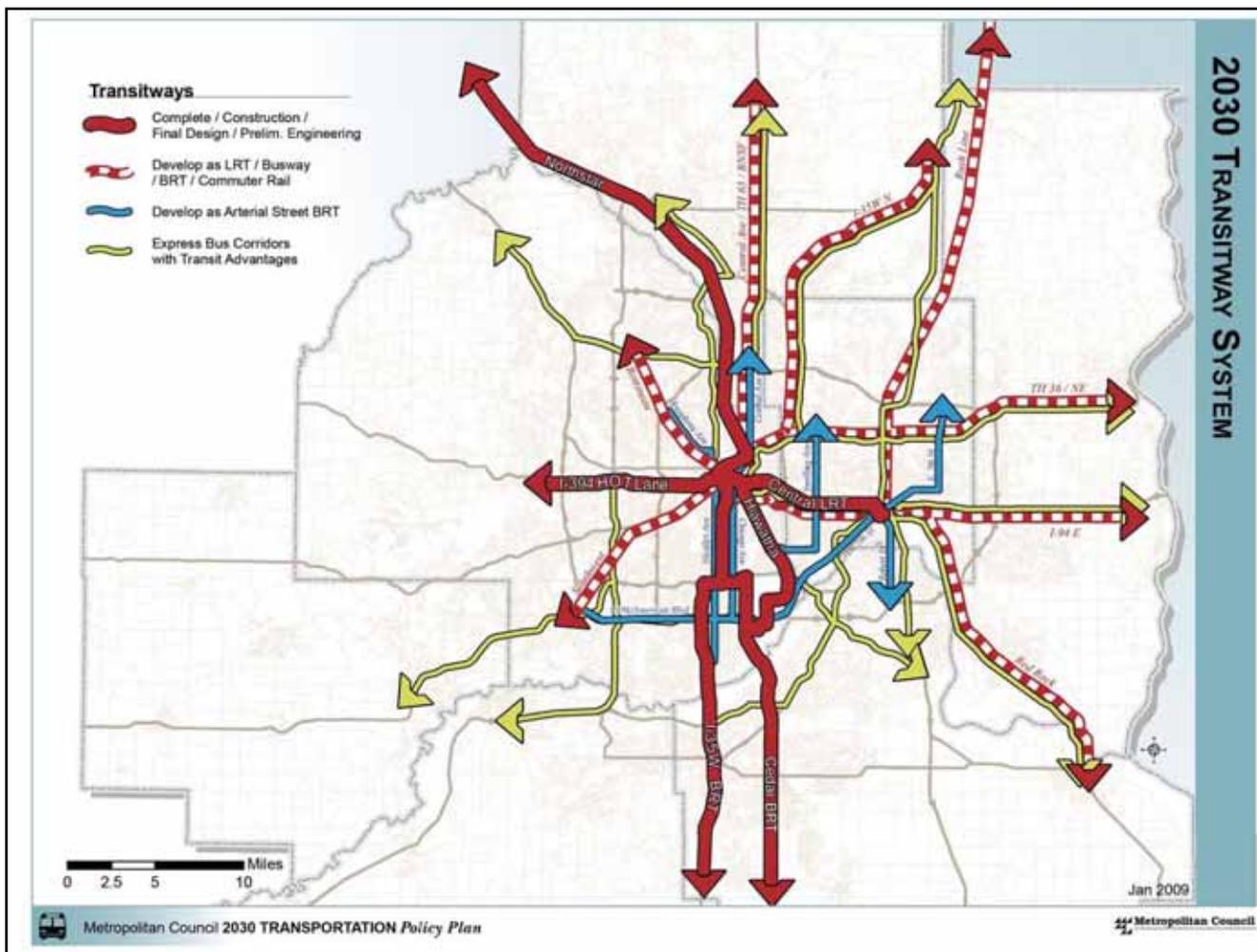
In addition, Minneapolis has over many years created a system of drivable parkways around the city that is known as the Grand Rounds, and several years ago were designated as part of the Federal National Scenic Byways System. The Grand Rounds are owned and operated by MPRB. The walking and biking trails along the Grand Rounds are part of various regional park systems, again owned and operated by MPRB.

The SW LRT corridor passes through the Chain of Lakes Regional Park and crosses the Grand Rounds at Cedar Lake Parkway.

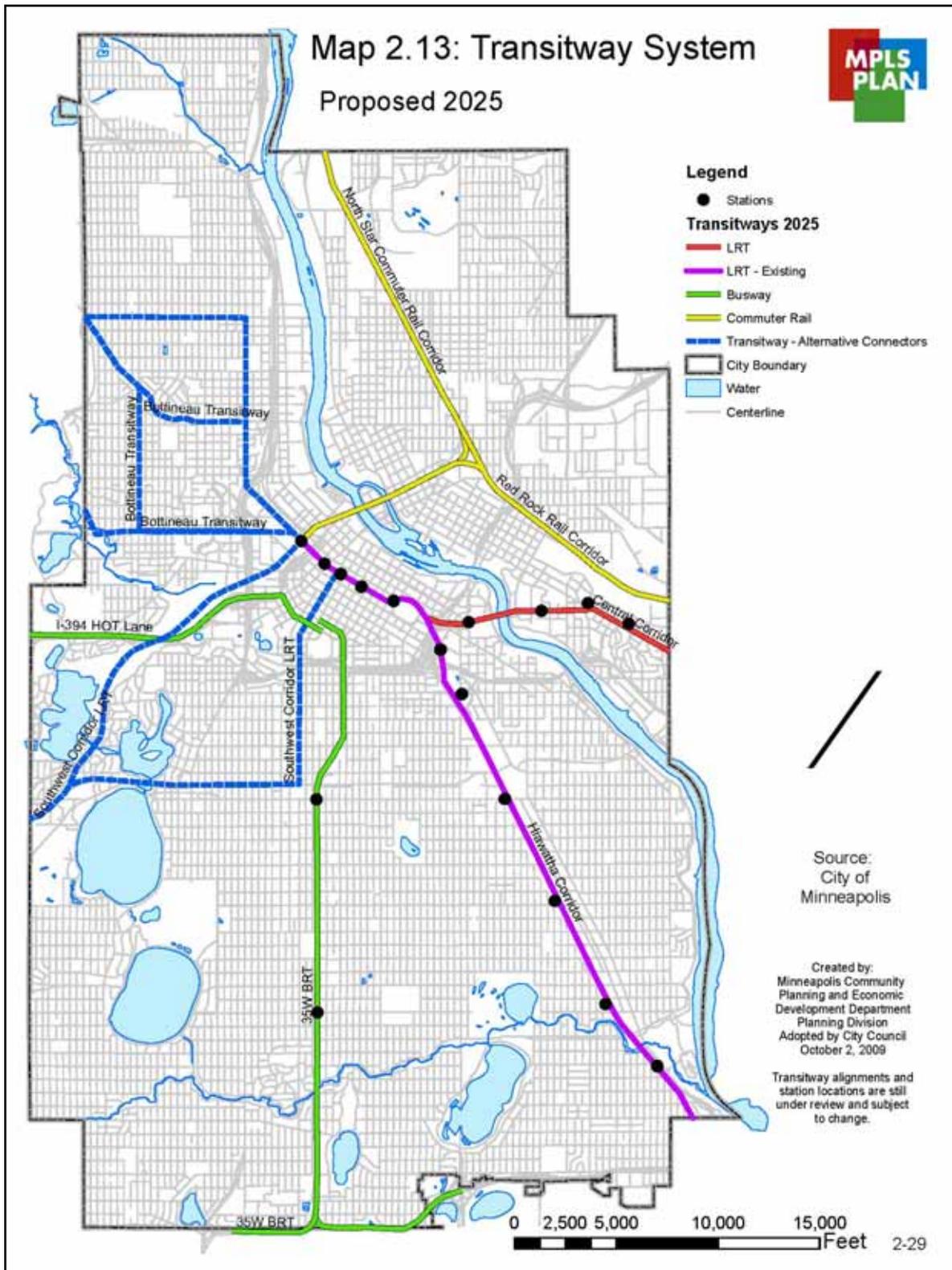
The Metropolitan Council and City of Minneapolis also address transit in this area in the Met Council's Transportation Policy Plan and the City's Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth.

Below are Metropolitan and City of Minneapolis maps showing the plans most relevant to the CAC's charge.

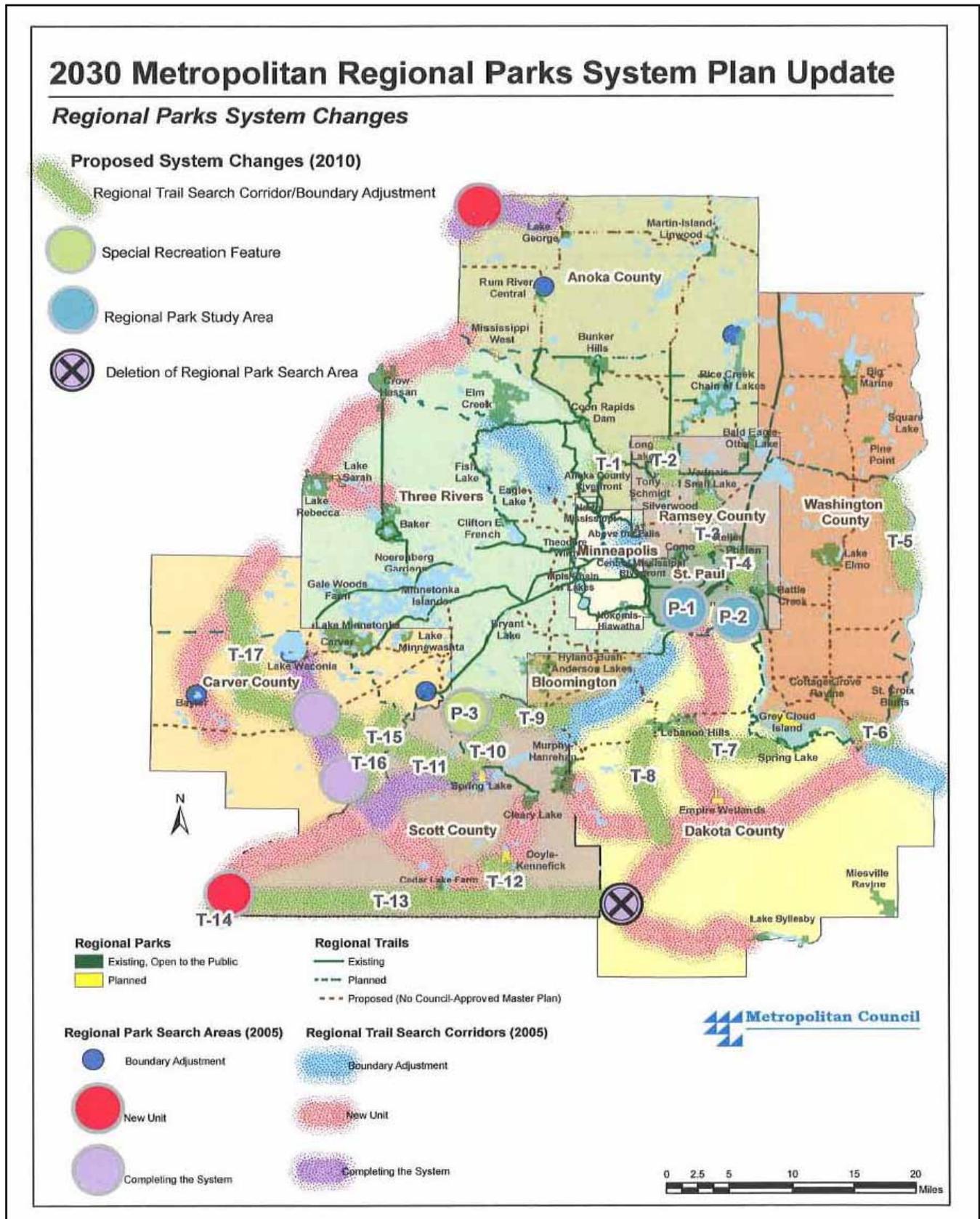
The map below from the Met Council's Transportation Policy Plan shows regional commitments to transit routes.



The map below from the City of Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth shows city commitments to transit routes.



This map from the Met Council's Regional Parks Policy Plan illustrates that the area we're addressing contains both regional parks and trails.



This map shows that the LRT corridor crosses the Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway at Cedar Lake Parkway

