The study area is on the SW LRT where it crosses Cedar Lake Parkway, between Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles. It is less than ½ mile north of Lake Street, 1 mile from the Cedar Lake Prairie and almost 3 miles by regional trail from the Twins Stadium.
Presentation Context and Purpose

Please read prior to reviewing the following presentation sides

The following presentation was provided by Steve Durrant of Alta Planning + Design at the November 26, 2012 meeting of Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board’s (MPRB’s) Community Advisory Committee (CAC). MPRB hired Steve Durrant to conduct a preliminary feasibility analysis of lowering the train and trail at the Cedar Lake Parkway/Southwest Transit intersection and bridging Cedar Lake Parkway over the top of the train and trail. The MPRB and CAC will use this preliminary analysis to inform the drafting of the MPRB’s comment letter for the Southwest Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The MPRB and the CAC do not have design authority for the Southwest Transitway. These concepts should be used for discussion purposes only.

The MPRB established the CAC in 2010 to:

Prepare recommendations to the Board on the contents of a formal Comment Letter in response to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed Southwest Light Rail Transit Alternative 3A. The recommendations of the CAC shall focus on desired outcomes relative to historical, cultural, visual, recreational, social, environmental, and safety issues as they relate to lands owned or managed by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.
The study area maps are oriented with north to the right and we’ll always refer to north toward downtown, west to Cedar Lake, south to Lake Street and east toward Dean Parkway.
The existing freight rail line (blue) is on the west side of the corridor, west of the Kenilworth Regional Trail. The Grand Rounds Trail crosses the Kenilworth Regional Trail at this location, and connects to Dean Parkway.
A key consideration for the transit design to date will have been to keep the project within the transit property (orange) to avoid other public right of way (blue), especially park land (green), and to avoid acquiring private properties (not shaded).
Key to our consideration of this crossing is the existing land form. Note that Cedar Lake is at 852 feet (above sea level), the rail line currently crosses Cedar Lake Parkway at 873 feet, and the Parkway continues up to 878 feet at the intersection with Benton Boulevard. These elevations will play a role in the concepts discussed.
The concept design from the DEIS shows what is called the ‘Locally Preferred Alternative’ (LPA). There was a desire to avoid the traffic delays caused by an on-grade crossing of the Parkway. The LPA passes over the Parkway on a bridge (red) with approaches supported on retained earth fill. The transit alignment starts climbing at the Kenilworth Channel at the far right of this image, and returns to grade at Park Siding Park on the far left. The track climbs a nearly 5% slope to a point 24 feet over the Parkway. The Kenilworth Regional Trail would stay at grade and cross the Parkway as it does now.
This simulation shows what the bridge could look like. This image shows a much longer bridge than the LPA to provide a more open scene. The LPA has the fill right up to the sidewalks on both sides.
For context, the alternatives in this study look at an option that would avoid this overpass.
And would also avoid the on grade Parkway crossing.
The idea is to take advantage of the highpoint at Benton Boulevard to have the Parkway cross over the transit and trail: benefits include no delays or safety hazards associated with the transit line crossing the Parkway, the visual impacts of the fill and bridge are removed, safety and delay for the trail crossing of the Parkway is removed, noise impacts from the transit project can be more easily mitigated, and there may be transit operations benefits of shallower slopes to the track (less than 2% versus over 4% with the LPA). There could be cost benefits as well, but project cost comparisons have not been made.
The technical dimensions required show that the track would need to be at least 18 feet below the new Parkway surface, and the bridge would cross a corridor at least 45’ wide.
Looking at the project area again from above, the Parkway would be realigned from its intersection with Sunset Boulevard on the west to Xerxes Ave on the east. Burnham Road and Park Lane would be rearranged to provide for a safer intersection with the Parkway and to accommodate the new landform. A wide lid could cover the transit corridor to provide an opportunity for a larger park-like experience versus two bridges.

This alternative keeps the Regional Trail on the east side of the track, and provides trail access to the Parkway and Grand Rounds Trail from the south, similar to the access ramps on the Midtown Greenway.

This alternative is also different from the LPA in its horizontal alignment: the track is moved west and starts using public right of way (city), and requires an acquisition of private land south of the Parkway.
This is the same concept showing 2 bridges, versus one continuous lid.
Another approach would be to get access to the Parkway and Grand Rounds Trail from the north, eliminating a Parkway crossing and allowing a shallower climb from the Regional Trail to the Parkway.

This alternative still shows the track moved west using public right of way (city), and private land south of the Parkway.
This alternative looks at putting the Regional Trail on the west side of transit. It provides better park access far north of the Parkway by having the Regional Trail on the Cedar Lake side of the tracks. Another benefit is keeping the transit project within transit property. However, in order to keep the project out of private acquisition, the Regional Trail has to cross to the east side of the corridor at the Parkway, creating a zigzag in the trail alignment and a Parkway crossing.

Members of the Community Advisory Committee suggested keeping the trail on the west side of the tracks through this section, or crossing the transit project on a separate bridge south of the Parkway near Park siding Park. These options would require acquisition of private property on the southwest corner of the intersection.
The acquisition on the southwest corner from the Cedar Lake Townhome Association would be 6-7000 square feet.
An aerial view looking south, Cedar Lake is on the right, Dean Parkway to the left.
Emphasizing the zigzag alignment that avoids acquisition (solid), or stays on the west side to avoid crossing the Parkway (dashed).
Alternative 5
Light Rail Transit and Cedar Lake Trail Crossing At Cedar Lake Parkway

Cedar Lake Parkway LRT Improvements
Minneapolis, MN
November 2013

Crossover
The project location and the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) from the DEIS. The Kenilworth Regional Trail stays on the east side of the corridor throughout.
The west side option, has the trail cross
In more detail, the LPA stays on the east. The Crossover Alternative crosses under the transit corridor in Cedar Lake Prairie, providing access to Cedar Lake Park, East Cedar Beach, Burnham Woods.