

## Southwest LRT: Many questions remain. Funding it now would be premature.

### **COST**

**The real costs of SWLRT are not yet known** and current estimates cannot be deemed reliable.

- Met Council has a history of grossly underestimating costs.<sup>i</sup>
- Engineering is not yet complete.<sup>ii</sup>
- Environmental review is not yet complete, so cost estimates, including those for safety, and for soil, noise, and vibration mitigation, are currently non-existent or speculative.
- Funding SWLRT with a 7-county sales-tax increase in effect gives the Met Council a blank check, the size of which could be highly embarrassing.

### **SAFETY**

**Serious safety issues are still unresolved.**

- Freight trains carrying millions of gallons of highly explosive ethanol (as dangerous as Bakken oil) would run as close as 10 feet of LRT and its sparking electric wires.<sup>iii</sup>
- These dangerously “co-located” LRT and freight lines would pass within feet of hundreds of homes — and directly under the Twins Stadium, a situation known to deeply concern the Minneapolis fire chief.<sup>iv</sup>

### **RAILROADS**

**The Met Council still hasn't come to agreement with three railroad companies.**

- Issues include funding, alignment, design, taxes, transfer of land, *and, importantly, liability.*
- Should the state pay hundreds of millions of dollars to fund improved capacity and operations of these private companies?<sup>v</sup>

### **RIDERSHIP**

**Ridership estimates continue to decline.**

- The Met Council's own projections show *8 of the 16 stations losing ridership (2030-2040).*<sup>vi</sup>
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- Light rail as currently planned serves neither Minneapolis' most densely populated areas nor its most transit-dependent populations.<sup>vii</sup>

### **LAWSUITS**

**LPA v. Met Council lawsuit is pending.**

- A decision in favor of LPA would, at a minimum, require re-doing the EIS, resulting in a multi-year delay with a concomitant increase in cost.<sup>viii</sup>
- Another lawsuit is also pending.
- Lawsuits create uncertainty about federal funding.<sup>ix</sup>

### **ENVIRONMENT** **Met Council still has not addressed serious environmental risks.**

- Problems identified by the Minneapolis Park Board were swept aside.
- Risks include potential dewatering of the Chain of Lakes.

**Legislators deserve answers on SWLRT,  
the costliest public works project in Minnesota history.**

## Notes

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- <sup>i</sup> The Met Council raised cost estimates for the Green line extension from \$1.2 billion to \$1.8 billion and for the Blue line extension from \$1.0 to \$1.5 billion.
- <sup>ii</sup> Total engineering (civil, systems, and Operations Maintenance Facility) is only 75 percent complete; costs will surely rise.
- <sup>iii</sup> Ethanol-loaded trains may pose an even greater risk than Bakken oil-loaded trains because ethanol has a lower flashpoint than oil. Ethanol is also difficult to extinguish and contaminates water. Risk is magnified because LRT is powered by 750 volts of electricity that is prone to arc, as shown on the Green Line in St. Paul.
- <sup>iv</sup> Besides being silent on the plan's risk to lives, the Met Council's plan is also silent about liability for accidents.
- <sup>v</sup> Under current plan, Met Council would spend \$260 million of public funds for private freight rail upgrades benefitting CP, TCW, and BNSF railroads.
- <sup>vi</sup> Met Council's own revised estimates show that projected ridership at Penn Avenue, Van White and Royalston stations has dropped 22 percent from original projection. Previously studied SWLRT alignments should be updated with 2040 ridership projections.
- <sup>vii</sup> SWLRT route should better serve Minneapolis residents, businesses and convention center.
- <sup>viii</sup> Court denied Met Council's motion to dismiss, continued the case to discovery, and left open potential summary judgment for LPA. When Met Council sought protective order against releasing public documents, court denied their request. The Met Council recently appealed court's decision denying protective order.
- <sup>ix</sup> Project should return to scoping phase to include both LRT and freight rail in LRT alignment choice.

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