



# Southwest Corridor Light Rail Transit TLC Official Position Statement

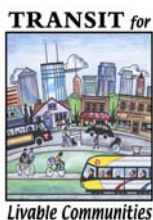
Southwest LRT will be the high speed, high frequency transit connector for the southwest portion of the Twin Cities metropolitan region, linking four suburban cities with downtown Minneapolis (and beyond). LRT is a key piece of an expanded regional transit system that includes LRT, streetcars, commuter rail, bus rapid transit (BRT) and a greatly expanded bus service. The Southwest LRT in conjunction with feeder bus service and bike/walk linkages will connect urban residents to the growing number of jobs in the southwest suburbs and connect suburban residents with jobs, parks, and entertainment venues in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. It will also help address traffic congestion, air and noise pollution and promote compact, pedestrian-friendly development.

Transit for Livable Communities recommends the following policies for the Southwest Corridor based on the information currently available.

1. **Alignment and stops:** The Southwest Corridor LRT line should use alignment 3A which connects activity centers on the south end including Southwest Transit Station and follows the Kenilworth alignment within the City of Minneapolis. The 3A alignment provides similar ridership as the other potential Minneapolis alignments at a substantially reduced capital and annual operating cost<sup>1</sup>. The reasons TLC supports alignment 3A include:
  - Maximizing the likelihood of securing federal New Starts funding given current funding criteria and competition for federal funding as well as maximizing the likelihood of securing state and local funding
  - Improving service and connections to the north and west side of Minneapolis
  - Enabling Southwest LRT trains to continue on to Saint Paul via the Central Corridor or to the Mall of America via Hiawatha LRT (without a transfer) which would be impossible with the Nicollet alignment and costly and time-consuming with an 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> street alignment
  - Maximizing the potential for integrating LRT with Minneapolis's proposed streetcar network which includes lines on the Midtown Greenway (between Hiawatha LRT and Southwest LRT) and Nicollet Avenue

The Mitchell Road station (one of five stations in Eden Prairie) should be considered for elimination (est. cost of \$60 million) and the current park-and-ride facilities at Southwest Station expanded. The proposed Mitchell Road station area has low housing and commercial density and is less than ¼ of a mile by highway from the Southwest Transit Station.

The substantial cost savings from adopting a 3A alignment and the elimination of the Mitchell Road station would ensure money for other transit projects such as a streetcar on the Midtown Greenway Corridor that would connect to Uptown and the Hiawatha Corridor LRT line, expanded bus service, and an east metro transitway project.



626 Selby Avenue  
Saint Paul, MN 55104  
651-767-0298 (phone)  
651-221-9831 (fax)  
[www.tlcminnesota.org](http://www.tlcminnesota.org)  
[tlc@tlcminnesota.org](mailto:tlc@tlcminnesota.org)

*Transit for Livable Communities is a regional, nonpartisan organization working to reform Minnesota's transportation system. Through advocacy, organizing, and research, we promote a balanced transportation system that encourages transit, walking, biking, and thoughtful development.*

## 2. Transportation connections to the line

**Pedestrian/bicycle environment:** Stations areas must include safe and accessible connections by walking, bicycling, and persons using wheelchairs. Bicycle storage, street trees, pedestrian scale lighting, benches, and pedestrian signal countdowns as well as traffic calming strategies should be of the upmost priority. Pedestrian and bike friendly design guidelines should be adopted by communities along the corridor.

**Bus service:** Bus service should be expanded and reoriented to allow LRT stations to serve as major transfer points for buses. High-frequency bus service on arterials should have signal priority. This will require increasing state and/or regional funding for local bus service.

**Parking:** Land directly adjacent to stations should be used for higher density residential and commercial development. Parking ramps and lots for transit customers should be located at least one city block from LRT stations to reduce vehicle traffic and promote a pedestrian-friendly environment. Consideration should be given to charging for parking at the planned park-and-ride facilities. At a minimum, customers from locations outside of the five-county transit sales tax district and/or outside of the Met Council transit taxing district should contribute financially to the significant costs of building and maintaining park-and-ride facilities.

Development near LRT stations should minimize parking needs through use of shared parking, car sharing, and unbundling parking costs from future rental agreements. Generally, off-street parking should be located behind, in, or under any buildings. On-street parking near station areas is desirable and should be metered. Parking benefit districts should be used in conjunction with parking maximums to reduce parking needs and spillover in neighborhoods.

## 3. Land use and development

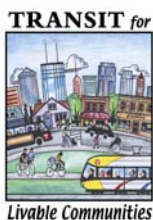
**Density:** The region must maximize its significant investment in LRT by ensuring development density and station area zoning consistent with transit oriented development guidelines. Density will vary based on the location of the station area, but a minimum overall density of .8 Floor Area Ratio must be achieved. Development should reinforce transit use and increase the viability of neighborhood retail.

**Design:** City zoning, site plan and other regulations must allow and encourage a mix of commercial, residential, and retail uses with a incentives to encourage alternatives to single use, auto-oriented uses. Development at station areas should be transit and pedestrian friendly: buildings face the street and include windows and architectural details that enhance the streetscape and increase safety; drive-through uses are restricted; signage is regulated; and alleys are enhanced as pedestrian routes. Public art should be a part of station area design.

**Housing affordability:** Zoning and various public financing tools should be used to encourage development of life cycle housing for a range.

---

<sup>i</sup> Cost estimates from HCRRRA Powerpoint presentation dated August 10, 2009 made to SW Policy Advisory Committee which showed capital cost of \$1.1 to \$1.2 billion for 3A and \$1.5 to \$1.8 billion for 3C options and operating costs of \$23 to \$25 million annually for 3A and \$27 to \$29 million annually for 3C options. Revised 9/14/09 BT.



626 Selby Avenue  
Saint Paul, MN 55104  
651-767-0298 (phone)  
651-221-9831 (fax)  
[www.tlcmnnesota.org](http://www.tlcmnnesota.org)  
[tlc@tlcmnnesota.org](mailto:tlc@tlcmnnesota.org)

*Transit for Livable Communities is a regional, nonpartisan organization working to reform Minnesota's transportation system. Through advocacy, organizing, and research, we promote a balanced transportation system that encourages transit, walking, biking, and thoughtful development.*