Southwest Light Rail Transit

Since 2012, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) has consistently and regularly communicated, through public Board actions, its support of light rail transit and its position regarding the SWLRT options as they impact parkland. The MPRB has not deterred the project or the project timeline. The MPRB has worked, and continues to work, diligently to stay within the project timelines. The MPRB actions are outlined below and are available at www.minneapolisparks.org/currentprojects, then select “Southwest Light Rail.”

The MPRB has a fundamental responsibility to protect parkland. Under a provision of federal transportation law referred to as 4(f), no federal dollars can be spent on a transportation project that impacts park land unless there is no “feasible and prudent alternative” and the public agency responsible for the park (the MPRB in this case) determines that the transportation impacts are “de minimis,” i.e. insignificant. The MPRB needs data to determine what option, bridge or tunnel, is the most feasible and prudent and will have the least impact on parkland.

The Park Board has repeatedly requested the Met Council provide answers to what park impacts would occur in the corridor. The Met Council did a preliminary engineering study of extending the south tunnel under the channel and stated it was feasible; however has not provided the MPRB with the data it needs to determine if it is prudent or will have the least impact on parkland. In November 2014, the MPRB initiated, at its own expense, an engineering study to further evaluate the Met Council tunnel option and explore other tunnel options for feasibility. In January 2015, once it was determined that two tunnel options were feasible, the MPRB, at its own expense, extended the engineering contract to examine the prudence of the tunnel options and their impacts on parkland.

As outlined below, the MPRB has been proactive and transparent in articulating its position and concerns related to the Southwest LRT (SWLRT).

12/05/12 - Resolution 2012-321: Resolution Approving a Comment Letter to Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority for the Southwest Transitway Draft Environmental Impact Statement

08/21/13 - Resolution 2013-282: Resolution Stating the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board’s Position on Project Design Alternatives Recently Developed in the Preliminary Engineering Phase of Southwest Light Rail Transitway Planning

02/05/14 - Resolution 2014-114: Resolution Urging the Southwest Light Rail Transitway Project Office to Conduct a Detailed Engineering Feasibility Study and Cost Comparison of Tunneling Under the Kenilworth Channel as Part of the Shallow Tunnel Option

05/21/14 - Resolution 2014-209: Resolution Stating the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board Determination That, Based on Southwest Light Rail Transitway Project Office Preliminary Finding of Feasibility, Tunneling LRT Under the Kenilworth Channel May be the Only Section 4(F) Feasible and Prudent Alternative Within the Shallow Tunnel Option Regarding Minneapolis Parkland Impacted by the Project, However that Determination Requires Greater Analysis

09/17/14 - Resolution 2014-293: Resolution Authorizing a Professional Services Agreement with Stinson Leonard Street, LLP for Legal Services Related to the Southwest Light Rail Transit Project in the Amount of $22,000

10/01/14 - Discussion item: Presentation and Discussion on Stinson Leonard Street, LLP’s Legal Review and Recommendations for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Regarding the Southwest Light Rail Transit Project

11/19/14 - Resolution 2014-347: Resolution Authorizing a Professional Services Agreement with Brierley Associates for Engineering Services Related to the Feasibility and Prudence of Kenilworth Channel Crossing Alternatives in the Amount Up to $245,500

01/07/15 - Resolution 2015-106: Resolution Authorizing an Amendment to Professional Services Agreement with Brierley Associates for Engineering Services Related to the Feasibility and Prudence of Kenilworth Channel Crossing Alternatives in the Amount of $248,275 for a New Contract Total of $493,775

01/07/15 - Resolution 2015-107: Resolution Approving a Letter Requesting a Meeting to Discuss Legal Jeopardy to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts Program Created by the Implementation of the Program for the Southwest Light Rail Transit Project in Minneapolis, Minnesota by the FTA and the Metropolitan Council