

## **Equity Commitments for SWLRT**

*The following list of transit-related equitable outcomes are based on a series of conversations focused on how communities of color in Minneapolis can benefit from the SWLRT project. We are offering targeted strategies that will create wealth and economic opportunity. A particular emphasis on north Minneapolis was applied to these equity commitments.*

*In addition, the community-based organizations and allied advocacy groups involved in these discussions believe that low-wealth populations and communities of color throughout Minneapolis – and along the entire Green Line – stand to benefit from the implementation of these strategic priorities.*

### **List of organizations that have contributed to this document:**

1. African American Leadership Forum
2. African Career, Education & Resource, Inc.
3. Asian Economic Development Association
4. Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation
5. Blake Road Collaborative
6. Center for Urban & Regional Affairs
7. Cycles for Change
8. District Councils Collaborative of Minneapolis/St. Paul
9. Fresh Energy
10. Harrison Neighborhood Association
11. HIRE MN
12. Jewish Community Action
13. La Asamblea de Derechos Civiles
14. Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota
15. Minneapolis branch of the NAACP
16. Minneapolis Urban League
17. Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
18. Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing
19. Minnesota Environmental Partnership
20. Nexus Community Partners
21. New American Academy
22. Northside Residents Redevelopment Council
23. Masjid An-Nur
24. Metropolitan Interfaith Coalition for Affordable Housing
25. Native American Community Development Institute
26. Neighborhoods Organizing for Change
27. Sierra Club North Star Chapter
28. Summit Academy OIC
29. Transit for Livable Communities
30. Alliance for Metropolitan Stability

## I. TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS

Plan and develop multi-modal transit connections to the Penn Ave and Van White Southwest Light Rail stations

### 1. **A connection from Penn Ave BRT or enhanced bus service to the Penn Ave SWLRT Station**

**a) Direct Service:** The **Met Council** will commit to run high frequency bus connections with extended weekday and weekend service hours along Penn Ave. N. to the SW Penn Ave. station stop.

**b) Full analysis of bus connections and new routing to maximize access and connectivity of SW LRT:** The **Southwest Project Office** will conduct a transit service plan that will analyze the existing bus systems and reconfigure to support the transit rider needs and uses in the SWLRT area, including connections for the SW Van White station and enhanced bus service for Glenwood Ave.

A national model of community engagement for this process is the Trusted Advocate Program at **District Councils Collaborative of St. Paul and Minneapolis (DCC)** see <http://dcc-stpaul-mpls.org/content/transit-more-ride-trusted-advocate-project> This was a direct partnership between Metro Transit and DCC to execute the community engagement.

**c) Community Partnerships/Contracts for future transit service planning:** The Met Council commits to award community-based community engagement contracts to local community organizations to participate in two areas.

- i. **Coordinated transit service planning** with the Met Council for the SWLRT, Penn Avenue BRT, Bottineau LRT, Fremont/Girard Avenue and West Broadway Avenue corridors.
- ii. **Coordinated land use planning** with city, county and Met Council for SWLRT, Penn Avenue BRT, Bottineau LRT, Emerson/Fremont Avenue and West Broadway Avenue corridors. Including (but not limited to):
  - A focus on sensible density principles
  - **Review and re-commitment to the Basset Creek Valley Master Plan**, which has called for a relocation of the impound lot and does not

include placement of a rail storage facility in the region. Alternative locations for the impound lot and rail storage facility are possible and need to be adopted.

## **2. Create favorable conditions for future transit connections to the SWLRT, including a Northside circulator, other proposed BRT lines, streetcars, and regional rail.**

**a) Adoption of Regional Street Car Policy:** The **Met Council** will recognize the cities of **Minneapolis** and **St. Paul** Street Car analysis and commits to adopting a regional street car policy.

**b) Adoption of Nicolet/Central Street Car project into the TPP:** The **Met Council** commits to providing a Locally Preferred Alternatives recommendation for the **Nicolet/Central** Street Car project and will work to have this line adopted into the TPP by the end of 2014, subject to the approval of the TAB.

**c) Move Street Car and Enhanced Bus service forward:** the **Met Council** commits to providing a Locally Preferred Alternatives recommendation for the **Midtown Greenway** Street Car/single rail car corridor and will move the **West Broadway** Street Car project forward, pending a favorable review that Street Cars are a viable option for that corridor by the current study. The Council also commits to funding enhanced bus service for **Lake Street** and **Franklin Avenue** once the SW line begins operations in order to form better links between the Green and Blue lines.

**d) 21<sup>st</sup> Street Station:** The **Met Council** commits to including a **21<sup>st</sup> Street station** along the SWLRT corridor as a critical connection point for buses from Franklin Avenue serving south Minneapolis - in particular the Phillips Community and Whittier neighborhood.

Community members want a commitment to east-west bus connectivity to access the SW line to enhance connections to the population base of south Minneapolis.

**e) North Minneapolis Bus Circulator concept:** The **Met Council** commits to study and make recommendations on the viability of operating a new bus circulator route for the Northside of Minneapolis. The circulator would provide access to origins and destinations within the neighborhoods of North Minneapolis as well as connecting them to the regional transit system and all of the economic, social, and environmental opportunities the region affords. <sup>i</sup>

## **3. Prioritize bicycle and pedestrian access**

**a)** Minneapolis, Hennepin County and Met Council commit to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian planning into the coordinated transit service and land use planning efforts as listed in **Item I. 1. c)** [page 2 of this document]

- Incorporate Complete Street policy principles and practices when making transit investments
- Incorporate plans for protected bikeways for the northside when making transit investment and planning decisions

**b)** Support innovative opportunities to connect transit investments to healthy outcomes.

Invest in North Side transit infrastructure and amenities

#### **4. Heated bus shelters, Transfer Stations and other improvements**

**a) Met Council** commits to add **at least 24 heated bus shelters** (full C-style standard Metro Transit shelter) along routes **5, 7 9, 14, 19, 22, and 30** by 2015.

**b) Met Council** commits to add **security cameras** and **emergency call boxes** at strategic locations along routes **5, 7 9, 14, 19, 22, and 30**.

**c) Met Council** commits to adopt **snow removal management practices** at shelters in north Minneapolis with higher ridership

**d) Met Council** commitment to work with northside community-based partner groups to study and identify sites for constructing **at least two north Minneapolis Transfer Stations** for bus and rail transit riders.

#### **Lower bus fares**

**a) Met Council** commits to **at least a 25 cent drop in regular route fares** in urbanized portions of the region. Metro Transit will apply an equity lens, and uphold FTA Environmental Justice principles, when evaluating fare increases and decreases.

**b) Longer transfer times: Met Council** commits to extending the time period allowed for transferring from one vehicle to another after initial payment by one hour – from 2 ½ hours to **3 ½ hours** (this has been a consistent request among transit riders).

#### **5. Lower wait times**

a) **Service Frequency: Met Council** agrees to study the feasibility of higher frequency service with extended hours and higher frequency service on weekends. A model for defining what this could look like would be how higher frequency is defined in the Central Corridor service plan.

## II. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Prioritize Van White Station development

### 1. **City and County collaboration are needed to maximize the development potential already planned for by the community**

a) **Van White Station Prioritization:** The **City of Minneapolis** commits to prioritizing funding development at the Van White station along the SWLRT and commits to working closely with the **Bryn Mawr** and **Harrison neighborhood associations** to achieve the vision of the **Bassett Creek Valley (BCV) Master Plan** for a mixed-use, mixed-income development including affordable rental and homeownership options. Use **SW project contingency funds** to support station area infrastructure and address bike/ped connectivity needs.

b) **No Land Transfer at Van White Station:** The **City of Minneapolis** commits to not transfer the land surrounding the SW Van White station area (**Linden Yard West and East**) for the use of commuter train storage.

c) **No Train Storage at Van White Station:** As a core commitment to Environmental Justice principles and racial equity outcomes, **MnDOT** agrees not to pursue a diesel train storage yard at the SW Van White station area (**Linden Yards East**).

d) **Removal of city Impound Lot:** The **City of Minneapolis** commits to the **dismantling, clean up and reclamation** of the city impound lot to residential and park/recreation standards consistent with prior commitments of city comprehensive planning documents and the 4 stages of redevelopment in the BCV Master Plan. Relocation and/or alternative to the impound lot should be developed and considered in an effort to equitably disperse benefits and risks of city design and needs. Secure funding from state, regional and **SW project contingency fund** sources.

e) Develop community agreed upon design guidelines for Van White station development.

f) Invest in energy efficient development.

## **2. Maintain and Expand affordable housing base**

a) **Housing Choices:** The **City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County** and the **Met Council** commit to working with local neighborhood associations, private and community nonprofit housing developers such as Urban Homeworks and the City of Lakes Community Land Trust to fund the maintenance and preservation of a rich balance of housing choices that are affordable for current and future residents and workers within and near the transitway corridors. It is important that there are goals around developing mixed-income communities in order to secure equitable share of resources and opportunities for whole community development. Affordability definitions should be calibrated to median income levels for the city of Minneapolis (lower percentages than regional median income levels to better reflect on-the-ground conditions).

b) The **City of Minneapolis** commits to a strategy of preventing involuntary displacement of low-wealth communities from transitway corridors.

## **3. Promote and engage with Glenwood Ave. “West Market Business District” to catalyze growth through more of North Minneapolis**

a) The **City of Minneapolis** commits to working with local neighborhood associations and business owners to coordinate station area planning and land use planning that anticipates multiple transitway investments. The **West Market Business District** and **Van White Memorial Blvd.** should serve as demonstration projects for this purpose. The city of Minneapolis commits to honoring previous commitments to neighborhoods and communities (i.e., Bassett Creek Valley Master Plan commitments).

b) The **City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County** and the **Met Council** agree to coordinate efforts with local neighborhood associations and nonprofit community development organizations to

plan for new business development along northside commercial corridors, achieve TOD density goals, create entrepreneurial incubator programs and maximize local job/workforce programs.

### **III. REGIONAL EQUITY/HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **1. Develop a system that connects job seekers with employment and entrepreneurial opportunities along corridor**

**a) A system should be developed to ensure people of color have opportunities to secure employment with Anchor Institutions and businesses in key growth sectors of the regional economy.**

Public officials and agencies need to recognize this leg of a broader rail system will connect segregated populations to employment centers (industrial parks, etc.) and training agencies throughout the system. Employers along the transit development should be engaged to understand their employee needs and this opportunity, both now and moving forward. Their projections along with job descriptions can be used to design a community based recruitment and training program for these jobs. Similar to construction, this program would create a pool of available workers to fill future employer needs.

Public agencies should use their leverage to bring employers to the table and to ensure those employers are hiring people of color. All anchor institutions along the transit line that receive public benefits or simply benefit from the transit development should have hiring goals for people of color as they hire new workers in the future.

Community based training organizations should be utilized in the effort to design such a program to recruit, identify, and if necessary train community workers to meet the needs of Anchor employers based on the similar successful effort of the Employment Assistance Firm being implemented as a part of the development of the Minnesota Multi-use Sports Facility (i.e. the Vikings Stadium.)

**b) Hennepin County and DEED commit to create framework to operationalize this program with Northside employment outreach and training groups such as Summit Academy OIC and**

**the Minneapolis Urban League to design and fund a program such as the Employment Assistance Firm model (EAFs) to intentionally and successfully connect unemployed and underemployed Northside residents to jobs along the SW Corridor.**

Program design based on best practices:

- i. Assessment of employers' employee needs –current and projected.
- ii. A trusted intermediary to bridge employee connections to employers. (Hopefully, EAF under another name)
- iii. A means of recruitment
- iv. Training aligned with identified employer needs.
- v. Identifying regional development/employment opportunities in expanding industries.
- vi. Organize the proposed North Minneapolis Workforce Center's program and tenancy to be the anchor for this effort.

**Possible partners:** the county can look to their work with the **Northside Community Response Team (NCRT)** and **DEED** can work with its **North Minneapolis Workforce Center** Community Advisory Committee (CAC) & the other Community-Based Organizations that performed outreach. Another stakeholder partner that should be approached is the **Northside Funders Collaborative**. This program should also employ lessons learned from the successes and failures of the Central Corridor efforts on anchor institutions.

The partners should engage local and regional businesses committed to job training and local-source hiring in a coordinated effort with Penn Ave Community Works and other targeted development in North Minneapolis.

## **2. Exceed the required 32% minority/6% female construction hiring goal**

**a) The Met Council agrees to increase Equitable Hiring Goals to 40% people of color and 10% women (above the required 32% people of color and 6% women).**

With the increased interest in creating employment opportunities for people of color, particularly those in North Minneapolis, and the availability of the premier construction



employment training program in Hennepin County in North Minneapolis, the required hiring goals can and should be increased.

When compared to other areas in the region, North Minneapolis has a higher percentage of people of color and higher rates of poverty. Increased opportunities for employment have a significant opportunity to improve the economy of the neighborhoods.

The Met Council has set a precedent for increasing hiring goals when the development is in communities of color and high areas of poverty. On CCLRT construction, the Met Council set a hiring goal nearly 70% higher than the required goal. In this instance, the Met Council should set a goal equal to the percentage of people of color living in Minneapolis. This number is lower than the percentage of people of color in North Minneapolis and will still be lower than the percentage of people of color living in the city by the time construction begins, let alone when it ends.

**b) The Met Council should contract with a Community Based Recruitment and Training Organization.**

Similar to the Employment Assistance Firm being utilized on the construction of the Multi-purpose Sports Facility in Downtown Minneapolis, the Met Council should contract with a community-based recruitment and training organization to organize this effort.

The overall purpose of this organization is to ensure that there is a pool of trained and skilled people of color and women available to work on this construction project. The organization will recruit both skilled workers and those needing training. For those needing training, the organization will provide the necessary training.

The organization needs to have strong community ties to be able to recruit people into the program. Training organizations must have experience working with communities of color and women. The organizations must also have relationships with organized labor to ensure that the workers and trainees have access to union employers.

This system is already underway on the new football stadium. Summit Academy's efforts and models like the Minneapolis Urban League's 'Big Step' program – training initiatives that create partnerships with the construction trades, should be replicated.

**c) There should be targeted zip code employment goals set for communities of color and areas high in poverty.**

On the construction of CCLRT, the Met Council identified zip codes with high percentages of people of color and high rates of poverty. Employers tracked the number of workers in these zip codes and publicly reported these numbers on a monthly basis.

Not only should this happen on this construction project, but there should be targets for the number of employees from these zip codes.

On previous construction projects, local government agencies have stated that federal regulations prohibit them from having local hiring goals when US Department of Transportation dollars are involved. There are ways around this, particularly with the involvement with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

HUD administers the Section 3 program, which is designed to create employment opportunities for low-income individuals living near HUD financed development. When HUD contributes to housing development along a transit line, Section 3 requirements could potentially be applied.

This would be of particular interest given the strong desire for benefits in North Minneapolis. The USDOT and HUD should be contacted in connection with this project to explore this opportunity.

**d) The Met Council will track the ethnicities of SWLRT construction workers and regularly report out to its EAF partners on these figures.**

**e) A goal of 20% DBE contracting will be pursued by the Met Council for SWLRT.**

**f) The governmental agencies coordinating the SWLRT project commit to finding opportunities to unbundle contracts for construction and professional projects to ensure that small, minority, and women owned businesses are included and able to prosper.**

Funding should be provided to offer technical assistance and support to these businesses as needed to ensure their success. The services that the Metropolitan Economic Development Association, (MEDA) provided to CCLRT could serve as a model for this assistance.

**g) Additionally, the governmental agencies coordinating on the SWLRT project, in partnership with major employers along the corridor, commit to adopt an equitable procurement system for goods and services from minority owned and other disadvantaged businesses.**

**h) The City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County and the Met Council commit to establish a \$50 million “capital fund” to support and promote entrepreneurs of color.**

This fund will be a flexible tool for helping train emerging entrepreneurs on the basics of starting a business, developing a business plan and lining up investors and capital. The fund will also be used to provide gap financing, low-interest loans and small capital improvement grants to “start ups” and existing businesses that wish to operate on or expand along transitway corridors.

#### **IV. REPORTING**

The efforts made on these items should be reported to the public and the community-based partners on a regular basis. Reports should be made available on line by the coordinating agency and delivered to the appropriate citizen and neighborhood groups.

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<sup>i</sup> **Background on Northside Bus Circulator concept:** Most residents in North Minneapolis would be within a 10-minute walk of the circulator and the access it could provide both within the neighborhoods and into the rest of the region. **Jamil Ford** of the architectural firm **Mobilize Design & Architecture** and **Jim Erkel** of the **Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA)** are teaming up to release a report exploring the circulator concept. They initially worked up the idea as an add-on or mitigation for Bottineau particularly after the alignment selected as the locally preferred alternative will move around, not through, the neighborhoods. However, the circulator and its route could be easily adapted to improve the

equity performance of Southwest or take into account any other transit investment such as streetcars or arterial BRT. In transportation terms, the circulator would act in urban neighborhoods like park-and-rides lots work in suburban areas to artificially concentrate ridership/densities.

Mobilize Design & Architecture and MCEA argue for measures that would create a triple bottom line for the neighborhoods. First, they point to specific equipment -- completely electric buses that are sized to fit the residential and mixed-use forms of the neighborhoods. Next, they argue that Metro Transit should maintain the buses in the neighborhoods and hire drivers and maintenance staff from the neighborhoods. Third, leverage this transit investment by creating a partnership between the **city and/or county** and **Xcel Energy** for the use of distributed photovoltaic arrays on homes and in community gardens which should also be installed by people hired and trained out of the neighborhoods.

**Organizational Endorsements of the *Equity Commitments for SWLRT*:**

