



To: Edina Transportation Commission

Agenda Item #: VI. D.

From: Mark K. Nolan, AICP, Transportation Planner

Action

Discussion

Date: November 21, 2013

Information

Subject: Southwest LRT Freight Rail Re-Route: The "Southern Arm"

Action Requested:

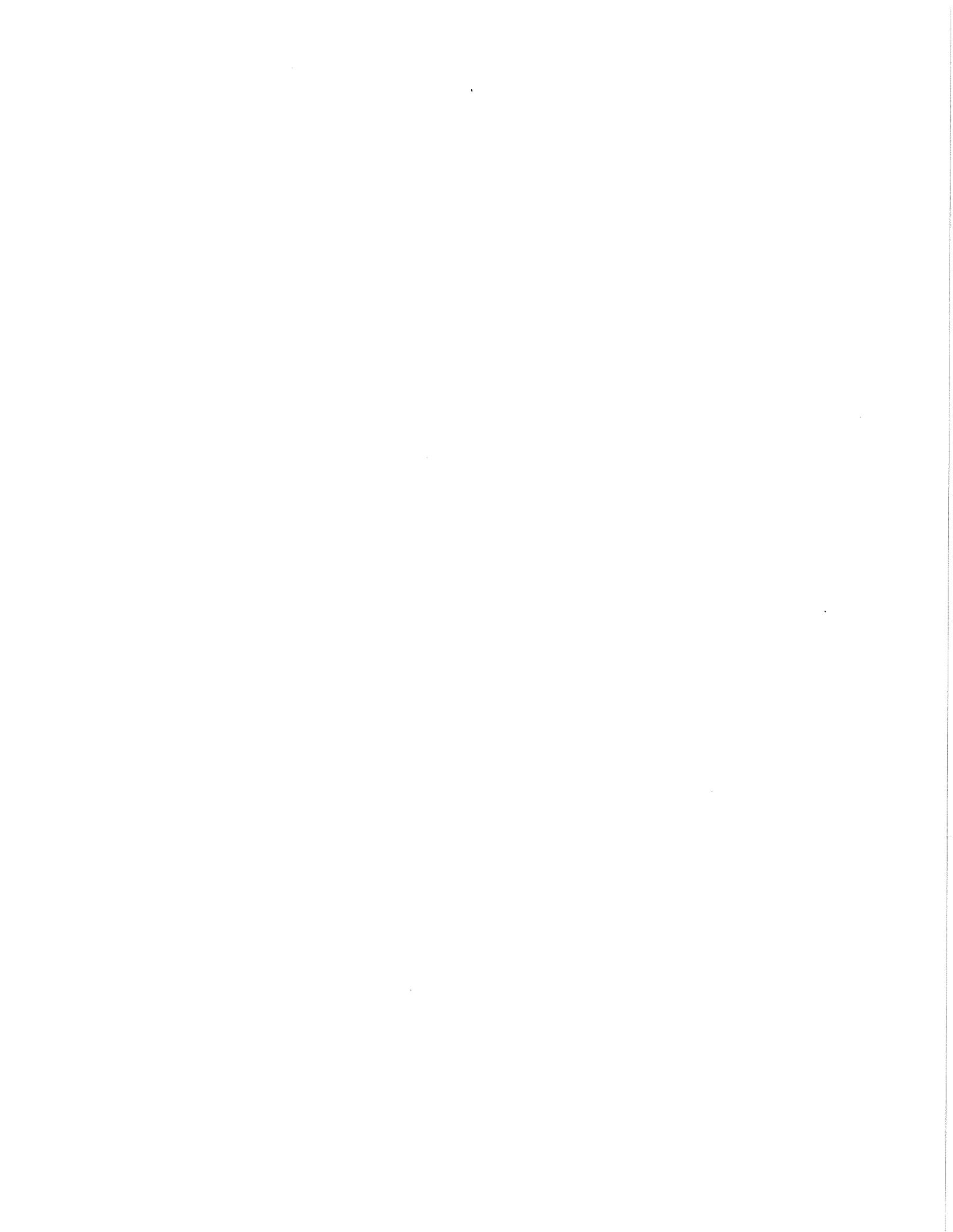
Discuss potential issues regarding the "Southern Arm" alternative of the Southwest LRT freight rail re-route options and potential impacts to Edina, and make recommendations for City Council consideration if necessary.

Information / Background:

Please recall that at the October 24 ETC meeting the group Safety in the Park gave a presentation regarding issues surrounding the Southwest LRT and potential freight rail re-route options. While their presentation focused on future impacts to St. Louis Park, they also discussed the planned "southern arm," which runs on MN&S track through Edina (east of Highway 100). Safety in the Park discussed how the possibility exists for increased freight traffic with this option, potentially impacting Edina neighborhoods.

Attachments:

October 24, 2013 Safety in the Park Presentation (slides 18-30)



The St. Louis Park Freight Rail Re-Route



An important component that affects Edina directly is the planned "Southern Arm".

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The St. Louis Park Freight Rail Re-Route



The Southern Arm would replace a "switching wye" in St. Louis Park that enables trains to change direction from East/West to North/South and vice versa. It's a cumbersome procedure, rarely utilized.



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The St. Louis Park Freight Rail Re-Route



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The St. Louis Park Freight Rail Re-Route

As part of the SWLRT plan the switching wye may be replaced by a southern arm to accomplish the same task-changing direction.



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The St. Louis Park Freight Rail Re-Route



The SLP City Council favors the southern arm because it eliminates the switching wye and because it removes several light industrial buildings making way for more dense economic development and a more southerly Louisiana LRT station. The cost of the southern arm is estimated by the Met Council to be \$30M.



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The St. Louis Park Freight Rail Re-Route



In combination with the southern arm, a “swap” is also planned.

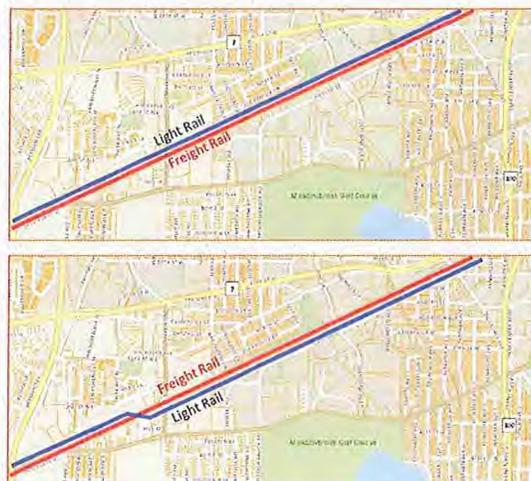
As LRT approaches St. Louis Park from the west, the LRT track will be “collocated” with freight rail. LRT will be on the north side, freight on the south.

The plan is to “swap” those two, placing LRT on the south and freight on the north. Doing so is favored by SLP and Hopkins because more land is available on the south side of the tracks creating more economic development space and eliminating the need for LRT users to cross the freight track to get to LRT.

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The St. Louis Park Freight Rail Re-Route



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The St. Louis Park Freight Rail Re-Route



The combination of the Swap and the Southern Arm is estimated by the Met Council to cost \$60M.

Only the SLP re-route (in the most recent plan) **REQUIRES** these elements because building the northerly arm of the Brunswick Central plan would wipe out the Switching Wye and the railroad demands *some* way to change direction. Therefore, the actual cost of the Brunswick Central is \$260M, not just \$200M. Collocation does not require southern arm.

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The St. Louis Park Freight Rail Re-Route



While SitP's main goal is to stop an SLP re-route, we are also concerned about the Southern Arm. Depending on market conditions, the Southern Arm will make it possible for long, heavy freight trains to cross several St. Louis Park roads, including Excelsior Blvd, at grade creating safety issues. It is, again, modifying a track that was never built for such purposes into a mainline.

This should concern Edina as well since the MN&S travels past churches, homes, and more in close proximity.

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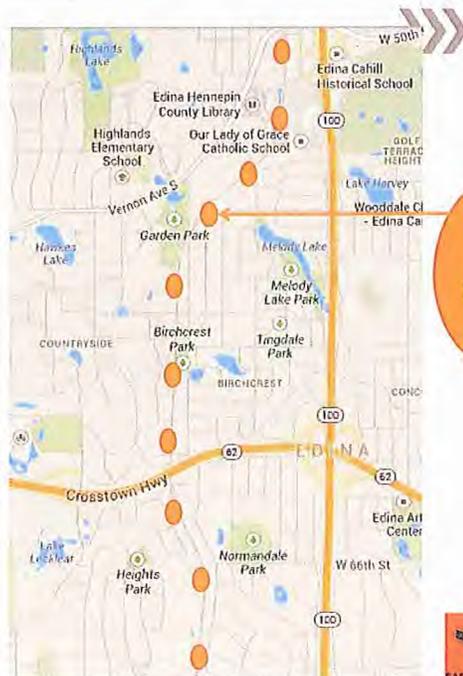
The St. Louis Park Freight Rail Re-Route

How does this effect Edina?

If market conditions are favorable, it could mean large increases in freight headed to the Minnesota River Docks.

Most importantly, once this is built, there is no turning back. Federal law protects rail lines in perpetuity.

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The St. Louis Park Freight Rail Re-Route

The Minnesota River Grain Elevator and Docks



The MN&S

Swing Bridge

Barge Loading

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The St. Louis Park Freight Rail Re-Route

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