

Plan B – a Southwest Light Rail Uptown/Hennepin Route

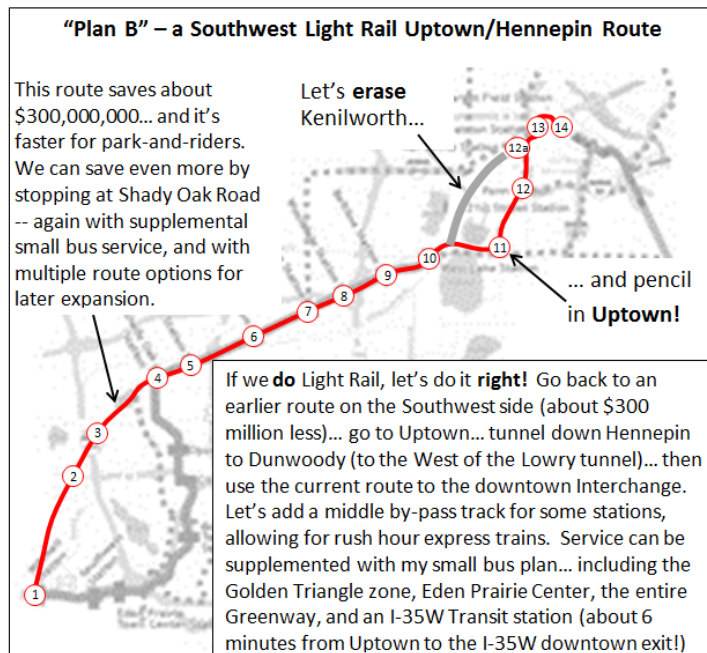
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The map at the right shows a possible “Plan B” – a Southwest Light Rail Uptown/Hennepin Route. I am presently in favor of not doing Light Rail for this corridor – assuming further study demonstrates that my plan for a large number of Metro Mobility size vehicles, and frequent service, proves feasible.

At this point, there are so many problems with the Southwest Corridor that it might be better to proceed with the Bottineau plan.

If we are going to proceed with Light Rail for the Southwest Corridor, it is **imperative** that we start by correcting the disastrous plan to go through Kenilworth. “Affordability” -- the main advantage for this alignment -- has been replaced with hundreds of millions of added cost – to say nothing of what we now see as the growing importance and potential of bike commuting.



The alignments eliminated in the most recent process involved tunnels going under Nicollet or Blaisdell Avenues, and a possible route down Portland. However, the rail Interchange requires significant backtracking. These alignments would be both significantly slower, and would have high expense due to the tunneling.

Unfortunately, in the most recent process, no alignment was considered going to Uptown and then tunneling along Hennepin Avenue. That is the route I'm proposing. We know it can be done in this sense: it **was** done when the Lowry tunnel went under the “bottleneck.” With new tunneling technology, it may be possible to do the tunneling without disrupting the surface roadways – that would certainly be the preferred approach. In addition to reaching Uptown directly, this route would integrate well with both my small bus Transit routes planned for the Greenway, and with the entire existing Minneapolis bus grid.

With this plan, the Light Rail would go beneath three north-south streets just west of Hennepin and the Greenway. It would turn North at Hennepin, go just to the West of the Lowry Tunnel, turn West at Dunwoody Boulevard, and resurface near the proposed Van White Boulevard station, then going the short remaining distance to the Interchange using the current route plan, including a stop at a new Royalston station.

The capital cost for Southwest is now **way** above any reasonable limit. For this reason, we need to either go back to the earlier rail alignment to the Mitchell station area – or simply end the rail line at Shady Oak Road, with an option to extend it later. The shorter route has this advantage: we aren't forced to choose **now** what extension alignment would be best in ten or twenty years. This “Plan B” involves extensive supplemental systems using small busses and frequent service – with references to the detail I provide for these elements in my preferred plan – the **Southwest Light Rail Alternative**. These plans are designed to be studied together -- and I emphasize: this one is “Plan B.”

A closer look at “Plan B”

The map at the right shows more detail -- additional elements that are part of “Plan B”. The grid of Minneapolis city bus routes is shown in orange -- of course these all typically run all day and into the evening.

It’s important to note that all the North and Northeast routes follow relatively direct paths to connect at or near the new downtown rail Interchange.

Access to jobs is a crucial social justice issue and Southwest Light Rail service **would provide this**. My plan enhances better service and social justice with Metro Mobility sized busses -- providing **Five Minute Service** frequency along the full length of Broadway, and connecting Broadway to both the Greenway, and the

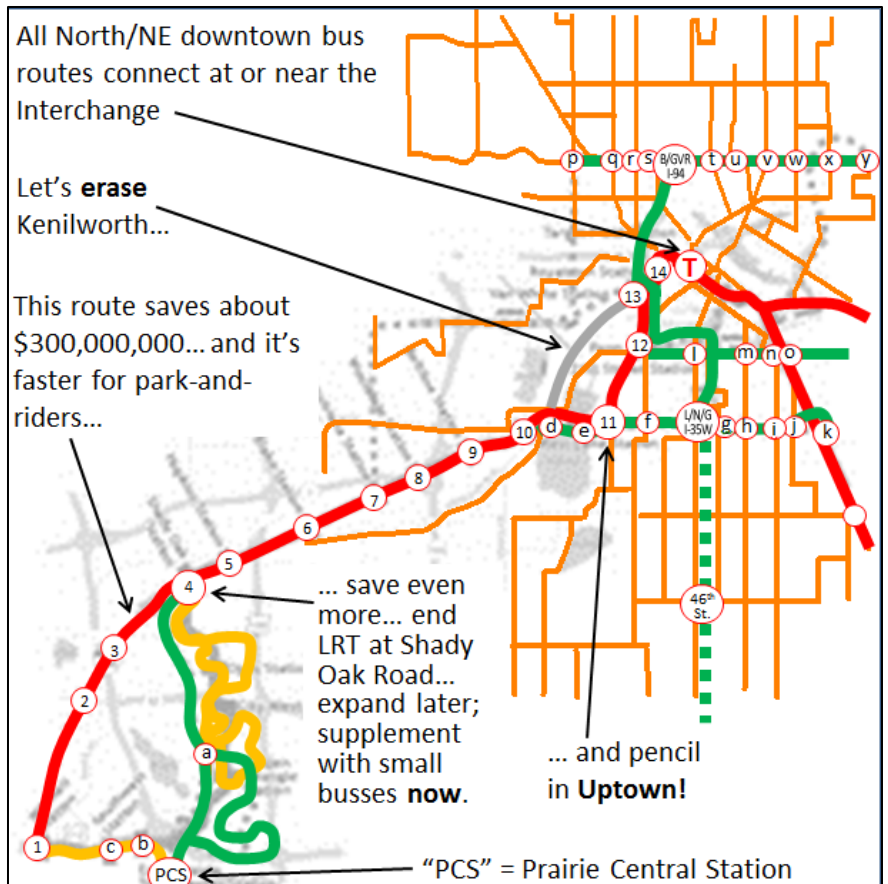
Uptown Transit Station. The ability to transfer quickly among north-south routes in North and Northeast Minneapolis will be a huge step forward -- resulting in a transit system that provides good access to those entire areas. The status quo -- east-west service that is sometimes only every half hour -- is woefully inadequate.

One advantage of an Uptown route that proceeds to downtown along Hennepin is that it allows the full length of the Greenway -- from Uptown station to Hiawatha station -- to be served by small busses -- again with **Five Minute Service** frequency. The alternative “alignments” looked at earlier -- going along Nicollet, Blaisdell, or even Portland -- have the effect of bypassing a significant portion of the Greenway’s length. My proposed Greenway route not only reaches the Uptown station, it can easily be continued to west of Calhoun by routing the busses on to city streets just past Uptown station -- including stops on either side of Calhoun -- shown as “d” and “e”. Elevators will link all north-south routes in south Minneapolis with the Greenway route. Of course, bus service will continue on Lake Street -- this could also be enhanced with small busses running between the bigger ones -- again at Five Minute Service frequency. All of this will help reduce (or eliminate!... too much to hope for?) congestion on Lake Street.

Both the proposed Lake/Nicollet/Greenway/I-35W Transit station, and the existing 46th Street Transit Station (and a big thanks to former Mayor Rybak for pushing that through!) have busses entering and exiting using the center lanes. These are MnPASS lanes -- ensuring congestion-free travel to and from downtown Minneapolis.

From Shady Oak Station to Eden Prairie Center

Supplemental bus service is shown for the Golden Triangle zone as two routes -- a **Golden Triangle Loop** (green) and a **Shady Oak Loop** (orange). For the map on the next page, the proposed Light Rail route, with four stations, is shown with the thick white line. Shady Oak Road, and the **Shady Oak Loop**, is in red. Note that it’s about three miles from **Shady Oak Station** to **Golden Triangle Station**, and about another mile and a half to my proposed new



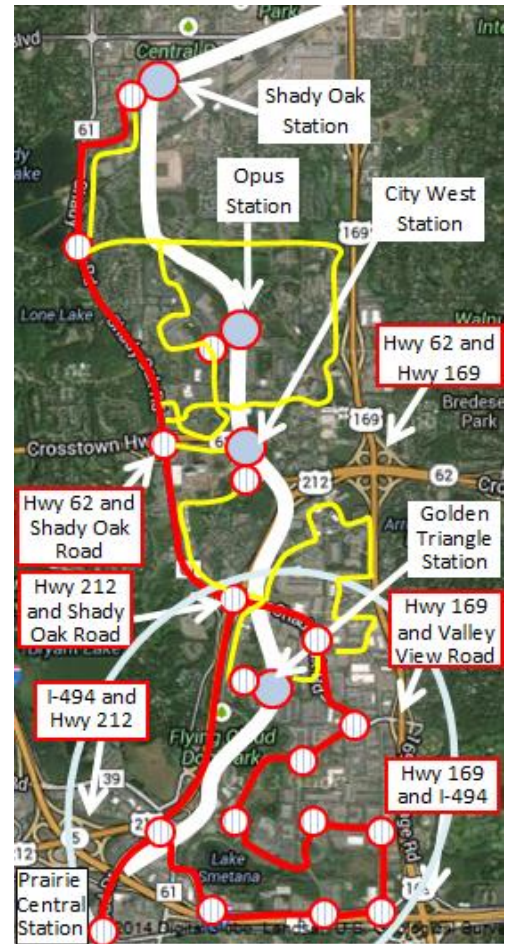
Prairie Central Station, in the middle of Eden Prairie Center. When you consider these distances, here's the reality that emerges: the proposed Light Rail stations are **not** walking distance apart. However, when you're in a vehicle, a mile is nothing. This is why **supplemental bus service for this area is better than the proposed Light Rail service**.

The **Golden Triangle Loop** – (not the spurs... circled in light blue) – runs south of the Shady Oak/212 intersection, with **Five Minute Service** frequency, and closer stops. One spur runs to **Prairie Central Station**. A longer spur links the **Golden Triangle Loop** with Shady Oak Station. The **Golden Triangle Loop** brings about 20,000 jobs within walking distance of a **Transit Revolution** stop.

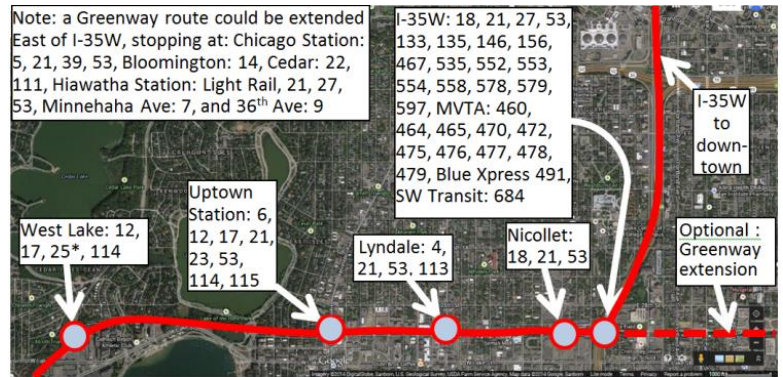
The meandering Northern **Shady Oak Loop** is another yellow brick road --highlighted with a yellow line -- and also with **Five Minute Service** frequency -- connecting the Shady Oak/Hwy 212 stop on the South with Shady Oak Station on the North. The longer path, with on-demand stops along the way, is necessary to reach all major buildings, including Super Value Headquarters and a new United Healthcare facility with 6,600 jobs, and to accommodate one way streets in Minnetonka. Even with these fine grids of stops, we need to take **Transit Revolution** to the next level. Both the **Shady Oak Loop** and the **Golden Triangle Loop** will be supplemented local area shuttle service vehicles, taking people from the nearest transit stop right to the door of their final destination. Naturally there will be a cell phone app for contacting the local shuttles and arranging to be picked up. There will be no additional charge to Go Card holders for this door to door service.

The text boxes with red borders are transit stops for **Transit Revolution Five Minute Freeway Service** – the core of Phase Two **Transit Revolution** service. When a **Transit Cloverleaf** is installed at the I-494/Hwy 212 intersection, the **Golden Triangle Loop** will be re-routed to go there from **Prairie Central Station**. The other three red border **Transit Revolution Five Minute Freeway Service** stops – Shady Oak/Hwy 62, Shady Oak/Hwy 212, and a spur (added when the time comes) to Valley View/Hwy 169 – can all be linked with the **Transit Revolution Five Minute Freeway Service** when that starts. Of course this means that **all** users of **that** service will now have excellent, door-to-door service in the entire jobs-rich zone served by the **Golden Triangle** system. Finally, let's plan to add a non-stop **GT/EP Airport Shuttle**, (Golden Triangle/Eden Prairie... not in the current budget... Flying Cloud **will** be looped in) with at least ten minute service, from the Shady Oak/Hwy 62 stop to MSP International. If you're going to or from an airport, ten minutes isn't too long to wait, but it's preferable to bump the service up to the **Five Minute Service** frequency if at all possible.

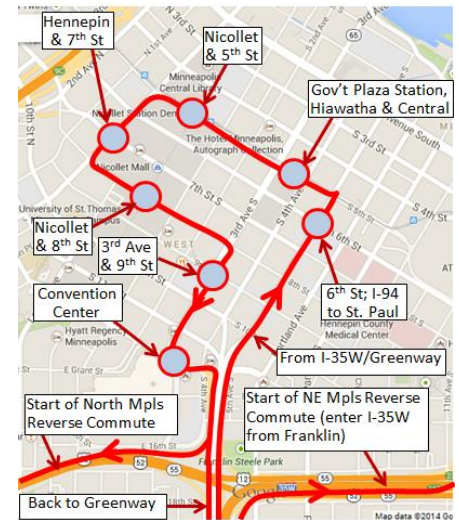
Referring again to the map on page 2, an additional, short route links **Prairie Central Station** with the Mitchell Road end of the Light Rail route from Shady Oak station. This shuttle stops at the currently proposed stations, including the existing **Southwest Station**. That station is currently the main park and ride station for express busses from Eden Prairie to Minneapolis. My proposed plan **continues** this bus service – it **works**, and it is likely to be faster than any Light Rail service... except... (possibly) express routes that use a third center track to pass regular trains, stopping only at two or three stations en route to Minneapolis. With the lower cost option of ending Light Rail at Shady Oak Road (for the time being), continued express bus service from **Southwest Station** is a necessity.



The **Transit Revolution Greenway Route** from West Lake to downtown Minneapolis is shown at the right. It will run on city streets from West Lake to Uptown Station; then it will head down the Greenway right of way to I-35W, with stops at major North-South intersections: Hennepin (Uptown Station), Lyndale, and Nicollet – linked by elevators with street level. The Greenway right of way is 100 feet wide -- plenty of room for two fenced-in **Transit Revolution** vehicle lanes having speed limits of 40 mph or better. Bikes will continue to use the North side of the Greenway. Note the large number of bus routes this Uptown connection links to. As discussed, a new **Lake/Nicollet/Greenway /I-35W** Transit Station will be built (integrated with Nicollet) – **Transit Revolution** vehicles will go to and from downtown via dedicated ramps, and will use existing congestion-free MnPASS lanes.



The middle map at the right shows the standard downtown **Transit Revolution** loop, to and from the downtown I-35W entrance and exit – this route will also be used by the Broadway/Greenway link busses. The first stop is 6th street, where people can catch the I-94 express to downtown Saint Paul. That’s about a 20 minute trip; significantly faster than the Light Rail service connection at the next stop: Government Plaza. The loop then brings you to the core of downtown Minneapolis, and the Convention Center.



The bottom map at the right shows **Prairie Central Station**, which supports two shopping routes, a third route for travelers who want to avoid renting a car, and a fourth route shuttling back and forth between Flying Cloud Airport (this will become part of the **GT/EP Airport Shuttle**). The shopping routes are designed to make a range of general retail and home-oriented shopping venues available to people **who don't or can't drive**. If you don't drive, this group of retailers tends to be too spread out to make bus shopping practical. **Transit Revolution is intended generally to make bus shopping a practical alternative. We can and should do as much for people who shop using transit as we do for people who combine biking with transit.**



There are seven lodging establishments in a concentrated area near **Prairie Central Station**. **Transit Revolution** service is designed to make longer stays for business employees and contractors more economical. Let's figure out a way to pass the savings from not needing a car to the **people** who won't need them. That should be a fringe benefit for contractors and people on extended business trips.

Smaller vehicles... **five minute service**... use existing roads... automated driving up ahead... that's **Transit Revolution!**