



# The MN&S Freight Rail Study - Summary of Key Questions/Information

12/16/10

## Who is involved in the MN&S Freight Rail Study?

- Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- City of St. Louis Park
- St. Louis Park School Board
- The Railroad Companies – Twin Cities and Western (TC&W), Canadian Pacific (CP) and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF)
- The Project Management Team (PMT) comprised of the above noted entities, along with fifteen neighborhood representatives and Safety in the Park

## What is the purpose of the MN&S Freight Rail Study?

The purpose of the MN&S Freight Rail Study is to analyze the potential design concepts, environmental impacts, and potential mitigation measures associated with the potential relocation of Twin Cities and Western (TC&W) freight rail operations from the Kenilworth corridor on to the MN&S line.

The MN&S Study, which was initiated in June 2010 includes the following key work/product elements: conceptual preliminary engineering and cost estimating, preparation of a state environmental assessment worksheet (EAW), which includes community impact assessment, and an outreach program.

## What is the timeframe of the MN&S Freight Rail Study?

The study began in late June 2010. This study, which includes the preparation of a design concept to be defined and evaluated in a state environmental review document (environmental assessment worksheet), will conclude with the final environmental determination made by the Minnesota DOT and a final report which summarizes the findings and recommendation for next steps. The current schedule reflects a completion date in late spring 2011.

## How is the PMT involved in the study?

The PMT was created to provide input and guidance to the MN&S Freight Rail Study. The PMT participates in developing and identifying study issues, concepts, priorities, and other components. Members represent the issues and priorities of their respective organization/group and strive to work towards collaborative solutions.



The open house on December 16 is a joint PMT meeting/open house. Prior to this open house, there have been four PMT meetings, including a working field tour of the study area. Future PMT meetings will be held in January, March and May 2011 to refine the design concepts and mitigation measures, and review the impact evaluation findings. An open house will also be held in the spring of 2011.

### **What will be evaluated in the environmental review document (EAW)?**

The EAW will evaluate social, environmental and transportation related impacts associated with the proposed design concept for the study. Issue areas such as noise, vibration, traffic, safety, right of way, wetlands, water quality/drainage, historic resources, hazardous materials/soil contamination, community impacts, parklands, visual impacts, air quality, and consistency with approved planning documents will be evaluated in the EAW.

### **What progress has been made on the Study?**

Key work on the study to date includes: identification of key issues/concerns, draft study needs and goals, existing condition inventory/field review, coordination with stakeholder agencies/railroads, development of preliminary design concepts and initial list of potential mitigation options.

### **Who controls the design in the railroad right of way?**

Track design requirements are set forth by the railroad in ownership of the right of way (CP and BNSF for the MN&S Study), along with the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance Association (AREMA), and other applicable engineering and design standards.

### **Who controls the speed of trains?**

The speed of trains is regulated by the FRA and is based on the condition of the track. A railroad determines what speed it wishes to travel at and then agrees to meet the FRA track standards to travel at that speed.

### **What is the current speed on the MN&S line, and what is proposed?**

The MN&S spur, owned by the CP Railway is currently designed for a maximum allowable speed of 10 miles per hour (mph). Under the proposed design concept, the maximum allowable speed would be 25 mph.

### **Would the existing track remain?**

Under the proposed design concept, the existing MN&S rail would be replaced and all new construction to be 136 pound continuously welded rail with new ballast, ties, and track switches.





## What would happen to the existing grade crossings in the study area?

The railroads have indicated that all the existing railway/roadway at-grade crossings at a minimum would need to be signalized. Additionally, under the preliminary design concept, the intersection with 29<sup>th</sup> Street is proposed to be closed. The study is currently identifying and evaluating other mitigation measures for at-grade crossing in the study area.

## How many trains currently operate on the MN&S, and how many trains would be relocated from the Kenilworth Corridor to the MN&S?

The CP currently operates one local assignment, round trip, 5 days per week on the MN&S. Typically the size of the train ranges between 10 to 30 cars per day.

Freight traffic can and does vary depending on business and economic decisions made by the railroads as they accommodate customer needs. At this time, the following characterizes traffic in the Kenilworth Corridor:

TC&W currently operates two daily round trips from Hopkins to St. Paul. Average train size ranges from 20 to 50 cars. Total number of cars per day, based on the above operations is 140 cars. TC&W also runs longer “unit” trains. The number of unit trains varies per week, averaging 5-7 unit trains per month, at a train length varying from 80 to 120 cars. The unit trains carry ethanol or coal. The ethanol trains return via the same route. The coal trains return via another route.

## How can I get involved in the Study?

The PMT meetings are all open to the public. Additionally, there is a study website that includes frequently asked questions, study documents, and notices regarding upcoming meetings. The Study website is [www.mnsrailstudy.org](http://www.mnsrailstudy.org).

We would also encourage you to take a comment card, and provide your input/comment/question either tonight or submit it after the meeting to the address included on the comment form. Electronic comments can also be submitted to: [comments@mnsrailstudy.org](mailto:comments@mnsrailstudy.org).

