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EQB MONITOR

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT WORKSHEETS

EAW Comment Deadline: October 8, 2008

New EAW Form & AUAR Guidance Now Posted

The EQB has posted revised versions of the EAW form and the Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) process guidance at its website. These versions supersede all previous versions and should now be used when initiating an EAW or AUAR (except for feedlots EAWs which have their own custom form). The new EAW form and AUAR guidance can be accessed and downloaded from: www.eqb.state.mn.us/EnvRevGuidanceDocuments.htm. The EAW form is available in two formats: as an rtf file for electronic preparation or as a pdf file that can be printed and filled out as a paper form.

The guidance document *EAW Guidelines* has not been updated at this time. Although some of its content is outdated, that document (February 2000 edition) still contains useful information and should be consulted when completing the EAW form. It is available at the same website location as the EAW form. An updated version is planned to accompany the next revision of the EAW form (date uncertain).

Any questions about the new form or guidance should be directed to the EQB staff at 651-757-2873

The *EQB Monitor* is a biweekly publication of the Environmental Quality Board that lists descriptions and deadlines for Environmental Assessment Worksheets, Environmental Impact Statements, and other notices. The *EQB Monitor* is posted on the Environmental Quality board home page at <http://www.eqb.state.mn.us/>.

Upon request, the *EQB Monitor* will be made available in an alternative format, such as Braille, large print, or audio tape. For TTY, contact Minnesota Relay Service at 800-627-3529 and ask for Department of Administration. For information on the *EQB Monitor*, contact:

Minnesota Environmental Quality Board
658 Cedar St., 300 Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155-1388
Phone: 651-757-2873
Fax: 651-296-3698
<http://www.eqb.state.mn.us>

Project Title: McDonough Farms Development

Description: The McDonough Farms Development includes the conversion of approximate 51.4 acres of agricultural land use to warehouse/light industrial use located between Interstate 35 and County Road 76 (Acorn Trail) in Section 1, Wells Township, Rice County, approximately one mile north of Faribault, Minnesota. Development of warehousing/light industry started on the site in 2006 with Met-Con (82,723 sq. ft), a storage/warehouse building (6,720 sq ft) and Malt-O-Meal (149,940 sq ft) previously constructed. Additional projects are proposed including an approximate 130,000-135,000 sq ft assembly and metal fabrication building for a total of approximately 374,383 sq ft of warehouse/light industrial use.

RGU: Rice County

Contact Person:

Julie Runkel
Planning Director
Rice County Planning and Zoning
320 NW 3rd Street
Faribault, MN 55021
Phone: 507-332-6113
Fax: 507-332-6227
Email: jrunkel@co.rice.mn.us

Project Title: R & R Thier Feedlot Expansion

Description: R & R Thier Feedlots, Inc., located in Section 26 of Olney Township, Nobles County, is proposing to expand its existing 2,920-animal unit (AU) site of beef finishing cattle by 2,080 AUs, for a total of 5,000 AUs of beef finishing cattle. The existing cattle AUs are currently housed in a 100-foot by 720-foot total confinement barn and eight open lots with runoff controls. An existing above-ground, fiberglass-lined steel tank stores the runoff from existing lots. The proposed expansion will include the construction of ten open lots with runoff controls, and a retention pond to collect any manure contaminated runoff. A perimeter drain tile will be constructed around the proposed retention pond.

A copy of the Environmental Assessment Worksheet will be posted on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Web site, at the following: <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/news/eaw/index.html>

RGU: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Contact Person:

Nancy Drach
Planner Principal
Environmental Review and Feedlot Section
Regional Division
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
520 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155-4194
Phone: 651-297-18236
Email: nancy.drach@state.mn.us

Project Title: TH 95 Improvement Project Environmental Assessment

Description: The Environmental Assessment (EA) documenting the impacts of the proposed action for the Trunk Highway (TH) 95 Project located in the City of Princeton and Mille Lacs County is available for review. The proposed scope of the project includes reconstructing TH 95 as a four-lane divided roadway from approximately 2,060 feet east of 13th Avenue to approximately 1,730 feet west of Mille Lacs County State Aid Highway 31. Left and right turn lanes, frontage roads, and storm water management improvements are also proposed as part of the preferred alternative. Copies of the EA are being distributed to those agencies on the current MEQB document review list and others. The comment period will begin on **September 8, 2008** and will extend through **October 8, 2008**.

Copies of the EA, which documents the purpose and need of the project, alternatives considered, and the anticipated social, economic, and environmental impacts, are available for public review beginning September 8th at the following locations:

- Princeton City Hall, 705 2nd Street North, Princeton, Minnesota 55371
- Mille Lacs County Highway Department, 565 8th Street NE, Minnesota 556353
- Princeton Area Library – 100 4th Avenue South, Princeton, Minnesota 55371
- East Central Regional Library – Cambridge Branch, 244 South Birch Street, Cambridge, MN 55008

The EA can be made available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by calling Mark Karnowski, Princeton City Administrator at 763-389-2040 or to individuals who are hearing or speech impaired by calling the Minnesota Relay Service at (800)627-3529 or 651-296-9930 TTY.

To afford an opportunity for all interested persons, agencies and groups to comment on the EA, an open house/public hearing meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, September 25, 2008, at the Princeton City Hall, 705 2nd Street North, in the City of Princeton. The open house will begin at 6:00 p.m. and the official public hearing will start at 6:30 p.m. Representatives from the City of Princeton, Mille Lacs County, along with their consultant Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc. (SEH), will be present to answer questions during the meeting. Individuals with a disability who need a reasonable accommodation to participate in the public meeting, please contact the City Administrator or through the Minnesota Relay Service at the telephone numbers listed above, as soon as possible.

Project Proposer: Mille Lacs County

RGU: Minnesota Department of Transportation

Contact Person:

Mark Karnowski
Princeton City Administrator
705 2nd Street North
Princeton, MN 55371
Phone: 763-389-2040
Email: mark@princetonmn.org

Project Title: Settlers Ridge

Description: Settlers Ridge and Settlers Glen are made up of a total of 97.24 acres located in Section, 1, Township 34, Range 26, Livonia Township in Sherburne County, Minnesota. 97.24 acres will be divided into 32 single family residential lots at least 2.5 acres in size and one outlot. The lots will be served by individual private wells and septic systems.

RGU: Sherburne County

Contact Person:

Lynn Waytashek
Assistant Zoning Administrator
13880 Highway 10
Elk River, MN 55330
Phone: 763-241-2900
Fax: 763-241-2910
Email: Lynn.Waytashek@co.sherburne.mn.us

Project Title: City of Ironton Water Tower Demolition

Description: The City of Ironton anticipates demolishing and removing their old elevated water storage tank (water tower) which is no longer in service. The structure will be completely demolished and removed from the existing site. The water tower is located south of Town Line Road (Twp. Rd. 220) between Irene Ave and Viola Ave.

RGU: City of Ironton

Contact Person:

Rosemary Caddy
City Clerk-Treasurer
P.O.Box 97
Ironton, MN 56455-0097
Phone: 218-546-5625

Project Title: Chandler 115 kV Transmission Line

Description: Great River Energy, wholesale power supplier to Nobles Cooperative Electric and 27 other distribution cooperatives in Minnesota and Wisconsin, is planning to reconstruct and upgrade 1 mile of existing 69 kV (69,000 volt) overhead electric transmission line to a 115 kV (115,000 volt) transmission line. The line is located along the south side of Section 18, T105N, R42W of Fenton Township in Murray County. Due to the age and reliability concerns of this segment of line, it is imperative that it be built as soon as possible. Due to ongoing load growth in the area along with additional interconnections for wind generation, the line will be permitted, designed and constructed to 115 kV standards. It will continue to operate at 69 kV until the adjoining transmission systems are upgraded to 115kV.

A copy of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the project is available at the Murray County Auditor's Office, and Murray County Environmental Services' Office.

The EA is also available on the Murray County website: <http://murray-countymn.com>

RGU: Murray County

Contact Person:

Jean Christoffels
Zoning Administrator
Murray County
2500 28th Street
P.O. Box 57
Slayton, MN 56172
Phone: 507-836-6148 Ext. 160
Fax: 507-836-8904
Email: jchristoffels@co.murray.mn.us

EAW NEED DECISIONS

The noted responsible governmental unit has made a decision regarding the need for an EAW in response to a citizen petition.

- Roseville City Council, Applewood Pointe at Langton Lake. Denied.

EIS NEED DECISIONS

The responsible governmental unit has determined the following projects do not require preparation of an EIS. The dates given are, respectively, the date of the determination and the date the EAW notice was published in the *EQB Monitor*.

- Sauk Rapids Township, Kraemer Sauk Rapids Quarry, August 27, 2008, (June 16, 2008).

SCOPING EAW and DRAFT SCOPING DECISION DOCUMENT

Project Title: Keetac Mine Expansion Project

Description: U. S. Steel proposes to restart and idled production line and expand the mine pit at its Keetac taconite mine and processing facility. The proposed project would increase Keetac's iron pellet production output by 3.6 million long tons to a total output of 9.6 million long tons per year.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) are going to prepare a joint Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will satisfy both state and federal environmental

review requirements for the project. The DNR and USACE invite comments on the proposed EIS scope during the 30-day scoping period that concludes Wednesday, October 8, 2008, at 4:30 p.m.

The DNR will hold a public scoping meeting on Wednesday, October 1, 2008, beginning at 6:30 p.m., at the Nashwauk-Keewatin High School, 400 Second Street, Nashwauk, Minnesota.

Public review copies of the Scoping EAW and Draft Scoping Decision Document have been placed at the following locations:

DNR Library
500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul

DNR Regional Headquarters
1201 East Highway 2, Grand Rapids

Duluth Public Library
520 West Superior Street, Duluth

Minneapolis Public Library – Technology and Science
250 Marquette Avenue, Minneapolis

Hibbing Public Library
2020 E 5th Avenue, Hibbing

Keewatin Public Library
125 3rd Avenue West, Keewatin

The Scoping EAW/Draft Scoping Decision Document can also be viewed on DNR's website at www.dnr.state.mn.us/input/environmentalreview/keetac/index.html.

Please address any comments to the contact below, or send an email to environmental.review@dnr.state.mn.us. Please include the words, "Keetac Mine Expansion Project" in the subject line of the email. All emails should include a name and legal mailing address.

RGU: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Contact Person:

Erik Carlson
Principal Planner
Environmental Policy and Review Unit
MN Department of Natural Resources
Division of Ecological Services
500 Lafayette Road, Box 25
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025
Phone: 651-259-5162
Fax: 651-297-1500

NOTICE OF EIS PREPARATION

Project Title: Southwest Transitway

Description: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) are planning to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the proposed Southwest Transitway Project, a 14-mile corridor of transportation improvements that links Eden Prairie, Minnetonka,

Edina, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, and Minneapolis neighborhoods and downtown Minneapolis. The EIS will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) as well as provisions of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The purpose of this Notice of Intent (NOI) is to alert interested parties regarding the plan to prepare the EIS to provide information on the nature of the proposed transit project, to invite participation in the EIS process, including comments on the scope of the EIS, including the project purpose and need, the alternatives to be studied, and the potential social, economic, environmental and transportation impacts to be evaluated.

DATES: Written comments on the scope of the EIS by all interested individuals and organizations, public agencies, and Native American Tribes on the scope of the EIS, including the purpose and need for the proposed action; alternatives that may be less costly or have less environmental or community impacts while achieving similar transportation objectives; and the identification of any significant social, economic, or environmental issues relating to the alternatives are invited. Public scoping meetings will be held to accept comments on the scope of the EIS. The scoping meetings will be composed of a one hour public open house followed by a formal public hearing hosted by the HCRRA and will be held at the following locations on the following dates:

Tuesday, October 7, 2008

2:00 PM open house

3:00 PM public hearing

Hennepin County Government Center

300 South 6th Street

Minneapolis, MN 55487

Tuesday October 14, 2008

5:00 PM open house

6:00 PM public hearing

St. Louis Park City Hall

5005 Minnetonka Boulevard

St. Louis Park, MN 55416

Thursday, October 23, 2008

5:00 PM open house

6:00 PM public hearing

Eden Prairie City Hall

8080 Mitchell Road

Eden Prairie, MN 55344

The locations for all scoping meetings are accessible to persons with disabilities. Any individual who requires special assistance, such as a sign language interpreter, to participate in a scoping meeting should contact Ms. Katie Walker, AICP, Transit Project Manager, Hennepin County, Housing, Community Works & Transit, 417 North 5th Street, Suite 320, Minneapolis, MN 55401, Telephone: (612) 348-9260; e-mail: Katie.Walker@co.hennepin.mn.us. Requests for special assistance should be made two weeks in advance of the scheduled meeting.

Scoping materials will be available at the meetings and are available by clicking on the Southwest Transitway Web site at www.southwesttransitway.org. Hard copies of the scoping materials are available from Ms. Katie Walker, AICP, at the 417 North 5th Street, Suite 320, Minneapolis, MN 55401, Telephone: (612) 348-2190; e-mail: Katie.Walker@co.hennepin.mn.us. An interagency scoping meeting will be scheduled with agencies having an interest in the proposed project.

In addition to receiving comments at the public hearings, the public may submit comments by e-mail, mail, fax, or via the Web site.

ADDRESSES:

WRITTEN COMMENTS SHOULD BE SENT TO: Ms. Katie Walker, AICP, Transit Project Manager, Hennepin County, Housing, Community Works & Transit, 417 North 5th Street, Suite 320, Minneapolis, MN

55401, Telephone: (612) 348-2190; e-mail: Katie.Walker@co.hennepin.mn.us; Fax: (612) 348-9710; or can be made at <www.southwesttransitway.org>. Comments will be accepted until 5:00 PM on November 7, 2008.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Mr. David Werner at FTA, Region V, 300 West Adams Street, Suite 320, Chicago, Illinois 60606, Telephone: (312) 353-2789; e-mail: David.Werner@dot.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The Proposed Project would provide for transit improvements within the Southwest Corridor, which extends approximately 14 miles from downtown Minneapolis to Eden Prairie through St. Louis Park, Hopkins, and Minnetonka. The proposed project was the subject of an Alternatives Analysis (AA), which recommended three light rail transit (LRT) alternatives and one Enhanced Bus alternative for inclusion in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The proposed project would provide high-frequency (7.5 minute peak), bi-directional transit service 20 hours per day seven days per week. Stations are proposed at ½ to 1 mile intervals providing service to key activity centers including, but not limited to, downtown Minneapolis, the new Twins Baseball Stadium, the Walker Art Center, the Minneapolis Convention Center, Eat Street, Uptown, Calhoun Village/Commons, Methodist Hospital, Excelsior/Grand, Cargill, SuperValu, Opus, Golden Triangle, and the Eden Prairie Center Mall.

Purpose and Need for the Project

The intent of the Southwest Transitway Project is to improve mobility, further develop multi-modal options, and increase transportation choices for the traveling public. The overall goals of the proposed project are to: (1) improve mobility; (2) provide a cost-effective, efficient travel option; (3) protect the environment; (4) preserve and protect the quality of life in the study area and the region; and, (5) support economic development.

The Southwest Transitway was first identified as a potential transitway in the mid-1980s reflecting the projected strong growth for this area by the Metropolitan Council. Since the mid-1980s numerous studies by the Metropolitan Council, Mn/DOT, and Hennepin County have documented the transportation needs of the study area. These studies are available for review at the Southwest Transitway Web site <www.southwesttransitway.org> The Southwest Transitway is identified in the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) as a Tier 2 transitway. <www.metrocouncil.org>.

With Southwest Transitway communities projected to encompass 25 percent of the regional employment base by 2030, the Twin Cities region needs to maintain the ability to travel to, from, and through Southwest Transitway communities efficiently, and at acceptable cost. The six communities that make up the Southwest Transitway study area need to accommodate additional transportation capacity while preserving the corridor's business advantages, environmental features, and quality of life for residents.

Additional considerations supporting the project's need include:

Declining mobility is being experienced by residents, workers and visitors to the study area. This is caused by travel resulting from the high employment and residential growth of the area, which is outstripping the capacity of the existing transportation system. Currently 27 percent of all regional trips begin or end in the corridor and 65 percent of the trips generated within the corridor stay in the corridor. The study area includes two of the region's largest employment centers, downtown Minneapolis with over 140,000 jobs, and Golden Triangle with over 50,000 jobs. Travel on area roadways has increased by 80 to 150 percent over the past 25 years. This has led to increasing congestion with no plans by the state, region or county to significantly expand the roadway system. The area is projected to continue to grow with a significant portion of the 1 million people and 500,000 jobs the region expects to add by 2030 locating within the study area.

Competitive, reliable transit options are not available for many study area choice riders and transit dependent

persons. Due to congested roadways and circuitous roadway networks, it is difficult to provide the significant travel time advantages that would attract choice riders to the transit system and to adequately serve transit-dependent people living in and around downtown Minneapolis attempting to access the growing job base in the study area. The study area roadway network is oriented north-south/east-west where development patterns have radiated outward from downtown Minneapolis on a diagonal. The number of transit-dependent people is growing in the study area, primarily in and around downtown Minneapolis. The roadway network through these neighborhoods is circuitous and has many one-way streets.

Alternatives to be Considered

After a two-year study of transit alternatives, three light rail transit routes (Build Alternatives) have been identified for further evaluation in the EIS to determine which would best serve the study area. Other alternatives currently under consideration include a future No-Build Alternative, and a Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative, also known as Enhanced Bus.

Build Alternatives to be Considered

Light Rail Transit 1A: This alternative would operate from downtown Minneapolis to Eden Prairie (TH 5) via an extension of the Hiawatha LRT tracks on 5th Street past the downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station to Royalston Avenue to the Kenilworth Corridor through Minneapolis and the HCRRA property through St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka and Eden Prairie terminating at TH 5 and the HCRRA's property. Stations are proposed at Royalston Ave., Van White Blvd., Penn Ave., 21st St., West Lake St., Beltline Blvd., Wooddale Ave., Louisiana Ave., Blake Rd. downtown Hopkins, Shady Oak Rd., Rowland Rd., TH 62, and TH 5.

Light Rail Transit 3A: This alternative would operate from downtown Minneapolis to Eden Prairie (Mitchell Road/TH 5) via an extension of the Hiawatha LRT tracks on 5th Street past the downtown Minneapolis Intermodal Station to Royalston Avenue to the Kenilworth Corridor through Minneapolis, the HCRRA property in St. Louis Park and Hopkins, to new right-of-way through the Opus/Golden Triangle area, the Eden Prairie Major Center area terminating at TH 5 and Mitchell Road. Stations are proposed at Royalston Ave., Van White Blvd., Penn Ave., 21st St., West Lake St., Beltline Blvd. Wooddale Ave., Louisiana Ave., Blake Rd., downtown Hopkins, Shady Oak Rd., Opus, City West, Golden Triangle, Eden Prairie Town Center, SouthWest Station, and Mitchell Rd.

Light Rail Transit 3C: This alternative would operate from downtown Minneapolis to Eden Prairie (Mitchell Road/TH 5) via Nicollet Mall to Nicollet Avenue (tunnel from Franklin Avenue to 28th Street), the Midtown Corridor through Minneapolis, the HCRRA property in St. Louis Park and Hopkins, to new right-of-way through the Opus/Golden Triangle, the Eden Prairie Major Center area terminating at TH 5 and Mitchell Road. Stations are proposed at 4th St., 8th St., 12th St., Franklin Ave., 28th St., Lyndale Ave., Hennepin Ave., West Lake St., Beltline Blvd., Wooddale Ave., Louisiana Ave., Blake Rd., downtown Hopkins, Shady Oak Rd., Opus, City West, Golden Triangle, Eden Prairie Town Center, SouthWest Station, and Mitchell Rd.

No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative contemplates roadway and transit facility and service improvements (other than the proposed project) planned, programmed and included in the Financially Constrained Regional Transportation Policy Plan to be implemented by the Year 2030. It includes minor transit service expansions and/or adjustments that reflect a continuation of existing service policies as identified by the Metropolitan Council. The No-Build Alternative serves as the NEPA baseline against which environmental effects of other alternatives, including the proposed project, will be measured.

Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Alternative

The TSM Alternative (Enhanced Bus) is designed to provide lower cost, operationally-oriented improvements to address the project's purpose and need as much as possible without a major transit investment. It includes minor modifications to the existing express service, and would augment Metro Transit and SouthWest Transit service between Minneapolis and Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Hopkins, and St. Louis Park. This alternative will serve as the New Starts Baseline against which the cost-effectiveness of the proposed project will be measured, and includes improvements identified in the No-Build Alternative.

In addition to the above described alternatives, other additional reasonable transit alternatives identified through the scoping process that provide similar transportation benefits while reducing or avoiding adverse impacts will be evaluated for potential inclusion in the EIS. Because of the sensitive adjacent land uses located in many parts of this corridor, all alternatives will need to consider a full range of design and mitigation solutions to enlist the support of local communities for the completion of this line.

Probable Effects

The EIS Process and the Role of Participating Agencies and the Public

The purpose of the EIS process is to explore in a public setting the effects of the proposed project and its alternatives on the physical, human, and natural environment. The FTA and the HCRRA will evaluate all significant environmental, social, and economic impacts of the construction and operation of the proposed project. Impact areas to be addressed include: transportation; land use, zoning, and economic development; secondary development; land acquisition, displacements, and relocations; cultural resource, including impacts on historical and archaeological resources and parklands/recreation areas; neighborhood compatibility and environmental justice; natural resource impacts including air quality, wetlands, water resources, noise, vibration; energy use; safety and security; wildlife and ecosystems, including endangered species. Measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate all adverse impacts will be identified and evaluated.

Regulations implementing NEPA, as well as provisions of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), call for public involvement in the EIS process. Section 6002 of SAFETEAU-LU requires that FTA and the HCRRA do the following: (1) Extend an invitation to other Federal and non-Federal agencies and Indian tribes that may have an interest in the proposed project to become "participating agencies," (2) provide an opportunity for involvement by participating agencies and the public in helping to define the purpose and need for a proposed project, as well as the range of alternatives for consideration in the EIS, and (3) establish a plan for coordinating public and agency participation in, and comment on, the environmental review process. An invitation to become a participating agency, with the scoping materials appended, will be extended to other Federal and non-Federal agencies and Native American tribes that may have an interest in the proposed project. It is possible that FTA and the HCRRA will not be able to identify all Federal and non-Federal agencies and tribes that may have such an interest. Any Federal or non-Federal agency or tribe interested in the proposed project that does not receive an invitation to become a participating agency should notify, at the earliest opportunity, the Project Manager identified above under ADDRESSES.

A comprehensive public involvement program will be developed and a Coordination Plan for public and interagency involvement will be created and posted on the project Web site at <www.southwesttransitway.org>.

The public involvement program includes a full range of involvement activities including the project Web site (referenced above); outreach to local officials, community and civic groups, and the public; and development and distribution of project newsletters. Specific mechanisms for involvement will be detailed in the public involvement program.

The public and participating agencies are invited to consider and comment on this preliminary statement of the purpose and need for the proposed Southwest Transitway project. Suggestions for modifications to the statement of purpose and need for the proposed project are welcome and will be given serious consideration. Comments on potentially significant environmental impacts that may be associated with the proposed project and alternatives are also welcome. There will be additional opportunities to participate in the scoping process at the public meetings announced in this notice.

The HCRRA will be seeking New Starts funding for the proposed project under 49 U.S.C. 5309 and, therefore, will be subject to New Starts regulations (49 CFR Part 611). The New Starts regulation requires a planning Alternatives Analysis that leads to the selection of a locally preferred alternative and the inclusion of the locally preferred alternative as part of the long-range transportation plan adopted by the Metropolitan Council. The New Starts regulation also requires the submission of certain project-justification information in support of a request to initiate preliminary engineering, and this information is normally developed in conjunction with the NEPA process. Pertinent New Starts evaluation criteria will be included in the Final EIS.

The EIS will be prepared in accordance with NEPA and its implementing regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR parts 1500-1508) and with the FTA/Federal Highway Administration regulations "Environmental Impact and Related Procedures" (23 CFR part 771). In accordance with 23 CFR 771.105(a) and 771.133, FTA will comply with all Federal environmental laws, regulations, and executive orders applicable to the proposed project during the environmental review process to the maximum extent practicable. These requirements include, but are not limited to, the environmental and public hearing provisions of Federal transit laws (49 U.S.C. 5301(e), 5323(b), and 5324), the project-level air quality conformity regulation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (40 CFR part 93), the Section 404(b)(1) guidelines of EPA (40 CFR part 230), the regulation implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR Part 800), the regulation implementing Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (50 CFR part 402), Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act (23 CFR 771.135), and Executive Orders 12898 on environmental justice, 11988 on floodplain management, and 11990 on wetlands.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING and ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA) AVAILABILITY FOR THE WEST BELTLINE PROJECT

Steele County

Notice is hereby given that a Public Hearing will be held at 7:15 p.m. on September 23 2008 at the Steele County Boardroom located at 630 Florence Avenue, Owatonna, Minnesota. The purpose of the meeting is to gather public comments regarding the construction of CSAH 7/39th Avenue/West Beltline project in western Owatonna.

The Public Hearing will be held within a 30-day comment period for the Environment Assessment (EA). The comment period begins on September 8, 2008 and ends on October 8, 2008. The EA will be available for viewing at the following locations:

<http://www.co.steele.mn.us/ENGIN/engin.html>

Steele County Highway Department
Steele County Annex
635 Florence Avenue
Owatonna, MN 55060

Owatonna Public Library
105 North Elm Avenue
Owatonna, MN 55060

The preferred alternative consists of constructing a new, 10-ton, two-lane, collector, rural roadway connecting SW 18th Street and existing US Highway 14 West on the west side of Owatonna including an overpass of the DM&E Railroad.

Questions regarding this project can be directed to:

Anita Benson, P.E.
Steele County Engineer
Phone: 50-444-7670

NOTICES

Notification of Releases of Genetically Engineered Organisms

File Number	Company	Crop	Project	County
08-NO-084	Syngenta	Corn	Insect Resistance	Goodhue

For more information contact Mary Hanks, Minnesota Department of Agriculture,
625 Robert St N., St. Paul, MN 55155, 651/201-6277, mary.hanks@state.mn.us.

Public Meeting Notice – North Central Regional Landscape Committee Minnesota Forest Resources Council

The North Central Regional Landscape Committee of the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) will meet on Wednesday, September 10, 2008, from 9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. in Grand Rapids at the Forest History Center.

For more information, please contact Lindberg Ekola at (320) 256-8300 or go to the calendar on the MFRC website at <http://www.frc.state.mn.us>.

Public Meeting Notice – Northeast Regional Landscape Committee Minnesota Forest Resources Council

The Northeast Regional Landscape Committee of the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) will meet on Wednesday, September 24, 2008, from 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. in Duluth at the Natural Resources Institute (NRRI) building.

For more information, please contact Lindberg Ekola at (320) 256-8300 or go to the calendar on the MFRC website at <http://www.frc.state.mn.us>.