

NEWS RELEASE: Transit Alternatives advocate bobagain and others are expected to again protest the Met Council’s “lack of any public hearing” at today’s Southwest LRT final Council vote; \$1.744B project cost amount is questioned, may be \$30 million too low



Note: A .pdf version of this News Release is attached.

Disclosure: bobagain is a registered Lobbyist, representing “*We the People*”, an informal association, and has announced a campaign to win a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting, covering the unfolding “SWLRT disaster”.

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Minneapolis 7/8/15 – Transit Alternatives advocate, registered lobbyist and “candidate-journalist” Bob “Again” Carney Jr. (bobagain), and others, are expected to again protest today at the Metropolitan Council’s meeting to approve the latest budget plan for the problem-plagued Southwest Light Rail project. Last week bobagain was joined by Captain Jack Sparrow in protesting the unelected Council’s determination to vote on the latest plan without holding any public hearing (see youtube photo excerpt). Today’s meeting is at 4 PM, at the Council’s headquarters, 390 Robert Street North, in Saint Paul.



Photo by Dorothy Childers

Yesterday bobagain testified at a Hennepin County HCRRA Board meeting, where that elected body decided to permit public comment as they considered approving an additional \$8 million for the SWLRT project. Both bobagain’s testimony, and his interview of Met Council SWLRT officials, including New Starts program director Mark Fuhrmann, are included in his [latest youtube video, titled: “Met Council’s new \\$1.744 Southwest LRT budget may be understated – 7-7-15 HCRRA Meeting Testimony”](#).



During his testimony, bobagain pointed out to the Board that, although for purposes of seeking Federal

matching dollars the contribution of Hennepin County land is being valued at \$30 million, in reporting the project cost, that local contribution of land is being treated as valued at \$0. A spreadsheet showing bobagain's calculations is at the end of this news release – bobagain plans to distribute the spreadsheet at the Met Council meeting later today.

Yesterday State Rep. Linda Runbeck (R-Circle Pines), who chairs the House Subcommittee on Metropolitan Council Accountability and Transparency, sent out a news release stating as follows:

“The most recent plan to build the proposed Southwest Light Rail Transit line poses a multitude of problems. Between environmental concerns, public safety issues, and the unknown liability to taxpayers, I urge the Met Council to reject this ill-conceived plan to move forward with the Southwest Light Rail Transit line,” said Runbeck. ‘I’m particularly concerned about the state potentially being on the hook to cover the operating costs given that the changes may result in lower ridership.’”

State House Transportation Chair Tim Kelly (R-Redwing) has written the Met Council, stating his concerns about their recent consideration of a plan to finance \$150 million that will apparently not be provided by the State, using tax anticipation bonds. Kelly questions whether that financing plan would be legal.

In his testimony yesterday to the Hennepin County Board, bobagain concluded: “I hope that we just stop this thing and go back to the drawing board.”

The spreadsheet follows, on a separate page.

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Here's just ONE of many question the Met Council WON'T be facing in a public hearing before voting today on the latest SWLRT budget:

Is the revised Southwest LRT project cost \$1.744 billion, \$1.774 billion, or someing else?

Part A, \$1.653 billion		Percent	Dollars (millions)	Notes:
			Cash & cash equivalent	This is the budget number the Met Council was trying to cut back to.
			in-kind	
HCRRA	10%	\$165.3		
CTIB	30%	\$495.9		
State	10%	\$165.3		\$15 million paid so far, after \$30 million was cancelled in May '15; indications are no more is coming from the state
Federal	50%	\$826.5		
Subtotal, Part A:			\$1,653	

Part B: the \$91 million budget increase		This is (in millions) the recent \$341 increase, less \$250 in cuts, the resulting budget increase is \$91		
				This is rounded down from \$91 million, and adjusted by \$10 million to \$80 million, per the 7/1 COTW presentation
Rounding adjustment		\$1		Cash value of rounding adjustment
Adj. to \$80 M cash		\$10		Cash value of projected savings, per 7/1 COTW slide presentation
Hennepin County				
	HCRRA land (in kind)		\$30	The land value is treated as "in kind" because the Met Council said the earlier plan was to value it at \$0. Nothing new is actually going into the project, only the valuation amount has changed.
	add'l cash	\$8		
	Fed match for HC	\$38		Feds match \$30 million in-kind contribution
Cities				
	add'l cash & equiv. needed:	\$17		
	Fed match for cities	\$17		
Subtotal, Part B:			\$91	

Total, cash & cash equivalents:	\$1,744	So... what should we report as the project cost? Should we value the HC land at \$0 for the Local contribution, but \$30 million when seeking Federal dollars?		
Total, cash plus in-kind:	\$1,774			

Summary of total expected contributions:	Cash	In-kind	Total	
	Savings, rounding adjustments	\$11		\$11
HCRRA	\$173	\$30	\$203	cash = \$165.3 + \$8; note, for the earlier \$1.65 billion budget, the value including land is now \$195 million (\$165 + \$30)
CTIB	\$496		\$496	
State	\$15		\$15	
Cities	\$17		\$17	EP proposes \$3 million in land, counted as cash value because it was not earlier valued at \$0, as HC's land contribution was.
Met Council (see note)	\$150		\$150	
Federal	\$882		\$882	= \$826.5 + \$38 + \$17
Total:	\$1,744	\$30	\$1,774	

Note: because no more money is expected from the State, or from other local units of government, it appears the Met Council will have to provide \$150 million to cover the "missing" portion of the state's share.