Case Study 3 — New Rail Starts: Seattle Monorail & LRT

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Outline

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  - Types of rail
  - New Starts Introduction
- Seattle case
  - Overview
  - Who is involved
  - Problems
  - Recent Happenings
- MN Rails: LRT, Northstar Commuter Rail
Types of Rail

- Commuter Rail – Chicago’s Metra
- LRT – Hiawatha Line, Minneapolis
- Monorail – Disneyland, CA
- Subway – BART, San Francisco
Common Criticisms

- Rail is outdated
- Transit is not Cost Effective
- Rail Carries Too Few Passengers to Solve Problem
- Efficient Rail Transit Requires High Densities
- People Will Not Give Up Their Cars
- Rail Transit is Too Slow or Unattractive
- Rail Systems are Over Budget and Fail to Attract Predicted Ridership
What's “New Starts”? 

- “The Federal government’s primary financial resource for supporting locally-planned, implemented, and operated transit “guideway” capital investments.”

- Is covered under SAFETEA-LU
  - Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (Passed August 2005)

- Includes various modes of transit: heavy rail, LRT, monorail, BRT
New Starts Criteria

1. Alternatives Analysis and Preliminary Engineering

2. Project Justification
   - Mobility Improvements
   - Environmental Benefits
   - Operating Efficiencies
   - Cost Effectiveness and
   - Other Factors

3. Local Financial Commitment
Seattle Monorail
Who is involved?

- City of Seattle - publicly owned transit system
- ETC ('00) - Elevated Transportation Company
  - ETC plan proposed Aug. 2002
- SMP (Nov. '02) - Seattle Popular Monorail Authority
  - developed citywide monorail system
- Cascadia Monorail Company (DBOM) - responsible for entire design Monorail project
History of Seattle Initiatives

- 1962 Worlds Fair
- Voters have continually supported transit initiatives
- In 1997, voters launched Initiative 41
  - X shaped, 40 mile monorail system
  - passed with a 53% approval
- In 2000, voters passed Initiative 53
  - provided 2 years and $6 million
Overview of Seattle

- ETC plan (’02) - 5 lines totaling 58 miles to crisscross the city
- Green Line - 14 miles to connect West Seattle to Ballard and stadiums in SODO
- Largely counting on increased tax base to fund continued construction
- Quote describing monorail
Positive Aspects

- Fast and Efficient
- Green and Clean
- Economic Development and New Jobs
- Higher Property Values and Pedestrian-Friendly Neighborhoods
- Tourism
- World-Class Design
Recent Happenings

- Problems... Governance or Financing
- This is the “most disappointing day for me since I became Mayor.” Greg Nickels on unmet deadlines and postponing the project
- Voters to decide on Nov. 8
- Raise Taxes or reduce size
- Newly proposed Green Line is ¼ shorter and without essential canal crossing
- PONDER THIS!! Continue support, or end negotiations and start over?
Grand Opening
Saturday, June 26, 2004
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Warehouse District to Fort Snelling
Introduction

- Length: 12 miles, connecting downtown Minneapolis, Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport and the Mall of America in Bloomington
- Stations: 17 locations
Light Rail Vehicles

- 24 cars, each 94 feet long and manufactured by Bombardier
- Electrically powered by wires 16 feet overhead
- Top speed is 55 mph with a general service speed of 40 mph and slower speed in downtown
Bus Feeder and Fare

- **Feeder bus service:** 46 Metro Transit routes will connect to 13 rail stations with timed transfers. Twenty percent of rail riders will arrive at their station by bus.

- **Fare price:** Light-rail fares will be the same as bus fares. Transfers will be valid between bus and rail if used within 150 minutes.
## Hours of Operation & Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate Route Frequency</th>
<th>Minutes between trips on this route</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rush Hours</strong> <em>(weekdays 6-9 am and 3-6:30 pm)</em></td>
<td>7-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midday</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Evening</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Owl</strong> <em>(1am-5am)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday</strong></td>
<td>10-15</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday/Holiday</strong></td>
<td>10-15</td>
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Construction funding

in millions $

- Federal Transit Administration - $334.3
- State of Minnesota - $100
- Metropolitan Airports Commission - $87
- Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority - $84.2
- Federal Grant for Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality - $49.8
- Transit capital grant - $39.9
- Minnesota Department of Transportation - $20.1

**TOTAL** $715.3
Milestones achieved

- Broke ground January 17, 2001
- Delivered 13 rail cars
- Completed 12 stations
- Mined airport rail tunnels
- Installed all track in Minneapolis
- Relocated utilities in downtown
Northstar Commuter Rail

- the corridor between St. Cloud/Rice and the Twin Cities
Southwest Corridor Rail Transit

A joint effort of the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) and the cities of Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, and Minneapolis.
Southwest Corridor Rail
Transit

- Improve mobility.
- Provide a reliable/competitive travel choice.
- Serve population and employment concentrations.
- Provide for a seamless, integrated transit system.
- Reasonable cost.
- Enhance the environment.
- Enhance the Study area and region's quality of life.
- Promote economic development and redevelopment
Questions

- Do the extensive costs of major rail systems outweigh the benefits?
- Are monorail and LRT corridors necessary to ensure continued development of downtown areas like Minneapolis and Seattle?
- Is it realistic to count on expected tax base increases to help pay for the Seattle monorail project?
- Should local transit projects be federally funded?