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S.F. No. 2676 – Southwest light rail project review (1st engrossment)

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Section 1 [Southwest Light Rail Transit Project Audit]. Requires the legislative auditor to review the Southwest Light Rail Project. Several additional provisions related to the review are included.

Paragraph (a) requires the legislative auditor to conduct a special review, program evaluation, or combination of the two to examine certain aspects of the Southwest Light Rail project. This paragraph includes 17 items the legislature encourages the legislative auditor to examine.

Paragraph (b) states that the identity of individuals that provide information to the legislative auditor and their statements provided to the legislative auditor are private data.

Paragraph (c) prevents the Metropolitan Council from requiring vendors or contractors to tell the Council if the vendor or contractor is contacted by the Legislative Auditor or if the vendor or contractor provides information to the Legislative Auditor.

Paragraph (d) prohibits the Metropolitan Council from retaliating against any Council employee who participates in any review or evaluation.

Paragraph (e) prohibits the Metropolitan Council from requesting the reassignment or removal of an employee of a contractor based solely on that employee's participation in a review or audit. The Council is prohibited from retaliating or taking adverse action against a contractor based solely on their participation in the review or audit.

This section is effective the day following final enactment.

Section 2 [Appropriation]. Appropriates \$200,000 from the general fund to the Legislative Auditor for purposes of any special review or program evaluation conducted pursuant to **section 1**. The appropriation may be used to hire additional staff or contract with necessary third parties.

Background. On October 28, 2021, the Legislative Auditor’s Office released a memo to the legislature about the Southwest Light Rail Transit project. The memo was not a full-scale special review but did provide some background information that is relevant to ongoing issues with the project. The full memo is available here:
<https://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/sreview/swlrtmem.pdf>.