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S.F. No. 2676 – Southwest light rail project review (1st Engrossment, as amended by the A-4)

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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.

Paragraph (b) encourages the legislative auditor to examine the primary reasons for delays and cost increase in the project, whether the Metropolitan Council properly managed the project's schedule and costs, and whether the Metropolitan Council sufficiently scrutinized route and design choices that have required substantive changes to costs or plan.

Paragraph (c) list seventeen items the legislature encourages the legislative auditor to examine.

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

Paragraph (f) 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 in fiscal year 2022 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.

This section is effective the day following final enactment.

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>.