



DISTRICT COUNCILS COLLABORATIVE of Saint Paul & Minneapolis

DCC UPDATE — October 2, 2009

651-249-6877 • www.dcc-stpaul-mpls.org

Next Governing Council Meeting: Wed., October 14, 2009 • 7–9 PM • Central Corridor Resource Center

Moving Toward a Community Agreement

“To be successful, the light rail line must not only improve mobility, but must also serve as a catalyst to strengthen and enhance existing and future neighborhoods, workforces and businesses along the line.”
Central Corridor Community Summit Vision, March 2009

Community Summit II — On July 7, 2009, more than 75 people gathered to review and discuss comments on the Central Corridor Community Statement Summary and to take action in support of a Community Summit Resolution on the Central Corridor Line. The resolution validates the work of the Community Summit, articulates the Summit’s comprehensive vision for the corridor, and sets forth seven principles for addressing issues and concerns raised through the Summit process. The resolution is intended to be a starting point for discussions to create a written agreement. The DCC endorsed the resolution at its July 8, 2009 meeting. For a copy of the *Community Statement* and the *Summit Resolution* go to the “Community Summit” page at www.dcc-stpaul-mpls.org.

Community Agreement Assembly — On August 10, 2009, 50-60 people assembled to launch the process of creating a Community Agreement. The meeting was convened by the DCC with support from other Summit planners and elected officials. A draft organizational structure for creating and implementing a written agreement(s) was presented to the group along with several options for creating a formal Coordinating Committee that would create and implement the agreement. At the close of the meeting, there was consensus that a “Nominating Committee” composed of Summit planners and those who worked on convening this meeting should: 1) flesh out the process for creating a Coordinating Committee, based on criteria agreed upon by the group; 2) implement the process and develop a slate of candidates; and 3) re-convene an assembly with representation from all Central Corridor stakeholder groups. The DCC will be the lead community organization to convene the Nominating Committee. For more information, go to www.dcc-stpaul-mpls.org or contact Carol at carol@dcc-stpaul-mpls.org.

Central Corridor Project Updates

Central Corridor Scope of Work Revised in August

In early August, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced a new CEI “Medium” threshold of \$24.99, an increase of \$0.50. After adjusting for inflation, the new Central Corridor CEI is \$24.60, leaving \$0.39 to add elements not previously included in the project. The short list of additional elements included: 1) \$7.8MM for acquisition of land for the 4th/Cedar diagonal in downtown St. Paul (the City was not successful in acquiring the property for the project); 2) \$5.2MM for one of the missing stations on University Avenue; 3) \$1.5MM for façade improvements on the St. Paul Lowertown Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF); 4) up to \$17 MM so the University could manage construction through campus; 5) up to \$14.6MM for mitigation and monitoring vibration and electromagnetic impacts on University labs. After two intense weeks of deliberations and negotiations, the Central Corridor Management Committee recommended a new project scope that would include: 1) \$7.8 MM to acquire the 4th/Cedar diagonal; 2) **\$1.5MM for the Lowertown OMF**; and 3) \$4.8MM to mitigate impacts on University labs (monitoring will be addressed later). In addition to agreement on added elements, the Met Council and other Project Partners agreed to a 70/30% split of Contingency Funds when they are released (70% to Ramsey County/St. Paul and 30% to Hennepin County/Minneapolis) and to allow respective local governments determine how those funds would be spent, assuming recommendations meet Federal criteria.

Good News for the Missing Stations: As part of the agreement on a new scope of work, there was good news for the Missing Stations. The City of Saint Paul committed up to \$5.2MM to build a station as an additive alternate of the construction package; the Met Council and FTA agreed to complete all necessary environmental work needed to build the three stations and to include all three as additive alternates to the construction bid; Ramsey County agreed to pay for the additional environmental work; and Ramsey County and St. Paul committed to funding a second station with the first release of any available Contingency Funds, and to jointly seek funding for the third station through such sources as the County Transit Improvement Board. The overall goal is to build out and bring all three stations into operation in 2014 along with the rest of the line.

FTA Issues Record of Decision on the Central Corridor LRT Project

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) issued its "Record of Decision" (ROD) on the Environmental Review Analysis of the Central Corridor LRT Project on August 19, 2009. The ROD is the legal document that records findings of the Environmental Review and outlines what the FTA and Met Council will do to mitigate adverse impacts. It also includes responses to comments received on the FEIS. The DCC focused its FEIS comments on environmental justice issues surrounding the three missing stations at Western, Victoria and Hamline; traffic impacts on neighborhoods due to the closure of Washington Avenue for the pedestrian/transit mall; and the need to mitigate impacts of the Operations and Maintenance Facility in Lowertown. The ROD responds to these comments, but no substantive changes were made to conclusions in the FEIS and mitigation proposals in the FEIS. The FEIS is available at <http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/FEISJuly2009.htm>.

Project Schedule

With the new scope and budget approved, the Central Corridor project office, on September 8th, submitted the application to enter Final Design. If approved in November, as anticipated, a Full Funding Grant Agreement could be awarded in June or July 2010. This would allow construction to begin in late summer of 2010.

Early Relocation of District Energy Utilities Begins

The FTA's issuance of the Record of Decision and a "Letter of No Prejudice" cleared the way for early relocation of utilities under 4th Street in downtown St. Paul. The Letter of No Prejudice assures Project Partners that the Federal Government will pay for its portion of the work (50%), assuming a Full Funding Grant Agreement is reached. The first round of construction bids for the work came in higher than what was anticipated, so all were rejected. The second bidding round came in below estimates and a \$12.5MM contract was awarded to Bolander & Sons from St. Paul; utility relocation work has already begun. To subscribe to electronic updates on construction and other items of interest, go to <http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/CCLRTSubscribe.htm>

Future of the Community Advisory Committee Under Discussion

With the conclusion of the formal environmental review process, the DCC will need to find new ways to strengthen the public involvement process and ensure that community voices are included as the project moves into Final Design. In the next few months, the Met Council will be considering whether the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) should continue to exist or whether some other public process would be better. It is important that the district councils participate in this discussion and do everything possible to ensure that a process is put in place to allow community concerns to be brought forward and addressed as the project moves forward.

Draft Construction Public Information and Communication Plan

Robin Cauffman, Central Corridor Manager of Public Involvement, is preparing a construction communication plan for Central Corridor. She will base the plan on the communication plan for the 4th Street advance utility work. The plan addresses such issues as public interaction with the Construction Team, Emergency Response, Business and Residential Impact Mitigation, and Public Forums. The Central Corridor is being divided into two construction zones—Civil East and Civil West. The Minneapolis/St. Paul border serves as the dividing line. The DCC will be working with Robin to coordinate opportunities for neighborhood associations and district councils to discuss the proposed plan. This is an opportunity to advocate for a strong neighborhood role in developing criteria for contractors and in overseeing compliance.

DCC Priority Issues and Activities

Washington Avenue Transit/Pedestrian Mall, Washington Avenue Bridge, and At-Grade Alignment

On October 22, the DCC committee addressing this issue will meet with the Central Corridor Project Office to be updated on the Washington Avenue Bridge. Bridge upgrades and retrofitting are estimated to cost \$56MM. Since

the bridge will serve LRT, pedestrians, and vehicles, the cost of improvements will be split between the Project (\$30MM) and Hennepin County / MnDOT (\$26MM).

Advocacy for Stations at Western, Victoria, and Hamline

The DCC and our STOPS for Us coalition partners worked with Ramsey County and City of Saint Paul elected officials to secure funding for at least one station. Ramsey County Commissioners Carter and McDonough were critical to these negotiations as were Mayor Coleman and Council members Carter, III and Stark.

On October 13, there will be a State Legislative Hearing on Transportation. The Stops for Us coalition will have 30 minutes to present testimony in support of a State bonding bill to fund at least two stations. Among those testifying are DCC Chair Anne White, Metric Giles (Community Stabilization Project), State Representative Alice Hausman, Ramsey County and the City of St. Paul.

Since St. Paul has committed to funding a station, Councilmember Carter has begun talking with district councils, community members, businesses, and community organizations about which station might be built with City funds. Watch for additional information on how this decision-making process will unfold.

Support for Title VI Complaint Sought by Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee

At its July meeting, the Governing Council passed a motion supporting the issues and recommendations identified in the document prepared by the Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee (PBHRC). The DCC sent a letter conveying this resolution to Amber Ontiveros, the FTA Civil Rights Officer handling the complaint. In recent conversations with PBHRC and Ms. Ontiveros, we learned that although complaints are usually handled in the order in which they are received, the PBHRC complaint has been advanced because it involves an FTA New Starts project. Ms. Ontiveros stated that there are many supporting materials to read and digest from both PBHRC and the Met Council so it was difficult to predict when a decision might be reached.

Public Art / Station Design/Streetscape and Public Involvement

Public Art designs for all stations were unveiled at the August Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting. Anne White, DCC representative on the CAC, reported that Public Art presentation materials were limited so it was difficult to get a good sense of the design proposals. Public Art concepts for each station are available at the Central Corridor website <http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/StationArtConcepts.htm>.

Saint Paul Lowertown Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) Task Force

Community members and staff from the Central Corridor Project Office and the City of St. Paul are members of a joint task force that have been meeting to resolve community concerns and design issues related to the location of the Central Corridor OMF off the southeast corner of the St. Paul Farmer's Market. Commitment of \$1.5MM of Project funds goes a long way toward façade improvements that will visually integrate the OMF into its historic context and provide for a mix of uses in new storefront space. This initiative is transitioning into a master planning process that will integrate station area planning for the Union Depot station with long-range plans for the larger Lowertown area. Ellen McPartlan and Andrew Schlack, CapitolRiver Council representative and alternative on the DCC Governing Council are both actively involved in this process.

DCC INTERNAL NEWS

Discussion of DCC Goals and Activities for 2009 to 2012

Now that the Environmental Review Process and Preliminary Engineering are completed, the DCC is reassessing its priorities and activities for the next two and a half years. Influencing and monitoring Final Engineering decisions will remain a priority along with ensuring that unresolved issues identified during Preliminary Engineering are addressed. However, there are new issues emerging such as creating a Central Corridor Community Agreement, station area planning for the Missing Stations, and leading a Community Agreement Issue Team on Neighborhood Livability. The Governing Council will conclude this planning process in December of this year.

DCC Executive Committee and Staff: Anne White, Chair, Union Park; Steve Wilson, Vice Chair, Summit-University, Karen Inman, Secretary, Frogtown; Ron Lischeid, Treasurer, University District Improvement Association; Phil Anderson, Member-at-Large, Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association; and Carol Swenson, Executive Director.

The District Councils Collaborative wishes to gratefully acknowledge funding support from The Saint Paul Foundation, F.R. Bigelow Foundation, The Minneapolis Foundation, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.