



DISTRICT COUNCILS COLLABORATIVE of Saint Paul & Minneapolis

DCC UPDATE – May 29, 2009

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

Next Governing Council Meeting: Wednesday, June 10, 2009 • 7–9 PM • Central Corridor Resource Center

Community Statement on Central Corridor

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.

Summit planners are seeking comments and additional input into the *Community Statement* produced from discussions held at the Community Summit held March 7 & 8, 2009. DCC Governing Council members are bringing the draft *Statement* back to their organizations for review and comment. If you are interested in seeing a summary of the Statement or the full document, go to www.dcc-stpaul-mpls.org. Planners anticipate finalizing the Community Statement by the end of June 2009.

DCC Priority Issues and Activities

Parking Solutions Report

The Central Corridor Project Office (CCPO) and St. Paul planning staff have teamed up to resolve parking issues due to loss of on-street parking and the inevitable hide-and-rider attracted to neighborhood streets near LRT stations. The 77-page report identifies 11 areas that require site-specific solutions and proposes 10 corridor-wide solutions, such as parking meters, permit parking zones, and creation of Parking Improvement Districts. Staff is now in the process of presenting the report to community members, property owners, and businesses in a variety of venues and holding workshops for each of the 11 areas that need detailed attention. The report may be downloaded from: <http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/centralcorridor.htm>.

Traction Power Substations — Proposed Locations and Potential Impacts Being Resolved

Over the last six weeks, the CCPO has continued to meet with St. Paul District Councils to finalize issues of location and visual impacts. Here's the current status:

Neighborhood	General Location	Description of Change
St. Anthony Park	University/Raymond TPSS	Finalized new location on the south side of University west of Raymond
Hamline-Midway	Charles and Prior TPSS	Developing visual mitigation for TPSS
Union Park	University/Hamline TPSS	Reviewed four locations, but none viable. CCPO and Union Park continuing work to locate an acceptable site in the shopping area or to the north in Hamline-Midway.

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

Franklin Avenue/East River Road/27th Avenue Intersection Study. Hennepin County and their project consultant SEH met with the neighborhood steering committee, which includes Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association and the Seward Neighborhood Group, and shared three design options: 1) a 1-lane roundabout; 2) a 2-lane roundabout, and 3) conversion of the intersection from a 5-way to a 4-way design. Steering committee members agreed that converting the intersection to a 4-way design was not an option and they are concerned that the roundabout design is not friendly to pedestrians and bicyclists. A Seward survey of bicycle traffic showed that as many as 500 bicyclists are going through the intersection at peak hours. Seward has voted that pedestrians and bicyclists should have priority in re-designing the intersection, not vehicles, which is what traffic engineers appear to be focusing on. Prospect Park agrees. A fourth option under study uses "Intelligent" traffic signaling, which would allow for smoother operations at this congested intersection. According to the project schedule, another community meeting was to be held toward the end of May, but has not yet been announced. The web site address for the study is <http://www.sehinc.com/online/franklin/index.htm>.

University of Minnesota Update. At the request of the DCC Washington Avenue Alignment Impacts Committee, the University of Minnesota hosted a meeting to update surrounding community leaders on LRT project developments as they pertain to the University. About 12 community people attended. The presentation summarized the current project status and short-term schedule, changes in campus roadways immediately surrounding the mall, concerns regarding vibration and electromagnetic impacts on research labs and equipment, and preliminary designs and operations arrangements for the pedestrian/transit mall.

Roadway improvements include: signaling intersections, converting some 1-way streets to 2-way, adding turn lanes through re-striping or construction, building new streets to complete the network north of Washington Avenue between Harvard and Walnut, and milling and overlaying East River Road with new asphalt. These improvements are consistent with what has been presented previously. What is new is the project schedule. Improvements were originally projected to be made in 2009, but are now scheduled for 2010. This still allows for work to be completed prior to closing Washington Avenue for constructing the mall and laying LRT tracks, which is scheduled to begin in 2011.

Vibration and electromagnetic interference are the primary concerns of researchers located close to Washington Avenue. Wheels rolling on the surface of the rails generate vibrations that are transmitted through soil/rock to the buildings and eventually to sensitive lab equipment. The CCPO hired a consultant to conduct tests, the results of which were read by University-hired consultants. The University and CCPO are still in conversation about the severity of the impacts and appropriate mitigation for impacts from construction and on-going operations.

Electromagnetic Interference (EMI) is caused by the electrical current flowing through the overhead lines or catenary structure and by movement of a large metal mass, such as LRT cars or buses. EMI can disrupt the operation of electronic devices, although interference diminishes with distance from the train. Not all of the technical issues surrounding these impacts have been resolved, but the University and CCPO have a process in place for addressing them.

Finally the Transit/Pedestrian mall concept designs are progressing. There will be a landscaped pedestrian area down the middle of the street on either end of the center boarding platform; buses and trains will share a lane in each direction and emergency vehicles and bicycles will share a zone. Design details will be developed after the project enters final engineering.

In conclusion, the University noted that the pedestrian deck of the Washington Avenue Bridge is now open for use and work on "Traffic Betterments" by the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County is progressing. Betterments include Granary Road, the Franklin/E River Road/27th Ave intersection described above, East River Road Extension, 10th Avenue /4th Street SE/University zone, and I-35 W northbound/southbound ramps at Washington Avenue. (At the CCMC, Hennepin County reported that the cost of the improvement to the pedestrian deck was \$598,156 and was financed by Hennepin County.)

Advocacy for Stations at Western, Victoria, and Hamline

Members of the Stops for Us coalition secured support from Senators Sandy Pappas, Dick Cohen, Mee Moua, Ellen Anderson and Scott Dibble to introduce a \$12 million bonding bill to build the missing stations at Western, Victoria, and Hamline. The Senate File number is 2117. The bill will not be considered until the 2010 Legislative Session. A Legislative Hearing may be scheduled this summer.

On April 29, 2009, the DCC, Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee and Stops for Us Coalition co-hosted a meeting with **Norm West**, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Principal Reviewer for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region V. Mr. West, who is responsible for reviewing the Central Corridor Environmental Impact Statement, was in Minneapolis/St. Paul on related business and agreed to meet with community members to explain the EPA's role, responsibilities, and authority in the review process and to talk about recent developments in Environmental Justice (EJ) review under the Obama Administration. Among the different impacts on EJ populations that Mr. West discussed, cumulative impacts on the Rondo community appear to be an area not fully explored in the Draft EIS or the Supplemental EIS. Mr. West was very interested in the research that had been done around the issues of the missing stations and methodology for determining disproportionate concentrations of minority and/or low-income populations in the corridor.

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

The St. Paul NAACP, Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation, and Community Stabilization Project and individual community members constitute the Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee (PBHRC). Their primary concern is to ensure that minority or low-income populations do not bear disproportionate impacts associated with the Central Corridor LRT Project and that they share equitably in the benefits light rail will bring. From PBHRC's point of view, the Central Corridor Project is not adequately addressing these concerns, so they have decided to file a Civil Rights Act of 1964 Title VI Complaint with the FTA. PBHRC contends that the Met Council has failed to adequately assess impacts borne by the African American community in the same manner it has addressed impacts on non-minority and non-low-income communities. Among the impacts of concern are:

dislocation of the existing African American community by gentrification and physical division and isolation of the community.

At the May Governing Council meeting, the PBHRC asked the District Councils Collaborative to support the complaint. Although the Governing Council unanimously passed a resolution supporting the intent of the complaint, members felt they should consult with their respective organizations prior to signing on to the complaint. They agreed to circulate the complaint when it is finalized by PBHRC and to discuss it again at the June 10th Governing Council meeting.

Public Art / Station Design/Streetscape and Public Involvement

Station Design and Public Art Concepts was the main topic of the May Community Advisory Committee meeting with Alicia Vap presenting. Stations will have consistent layout of enclosed waiting areas, ticket kiosks, etc, to help people navigate. There can be many variations in materials, colors and patterns.

Public meetings were held in May to review public art design concepts for each of the Central Corridor stations. Summary descriptions and sketches of the May 2009 concepts are posted online at: <http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/StationArtConcepts.htm>. The Central Corridor Project Office welcomes public comments and feedback on the station art concepts as artists continue to work on the designs. Use the Comment Card links to record your comments and send your feedback to the outreach coordinator listed at the bottom of each card. If you have questions, comments, or concerns, please contact the outreach coordinator listed at the bottom of each station public art description. Or you can email comments to: centralcorridor@metc.state.mn.us.

The City of Saint Paul's Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) proposals for funding **streetscape improvements, off-street parking strategies, and a sidewalk completion fund** were ranked among the top 10 projects by the CIB Task Force. The DCC provided testimony in support of these projects at the CIB Committee's May 26th Public Hearing. By mid-August, the Mayor will present the 2010 CIB Budget to the City Council who will approve it by mid-December of 2009. The City of Saint Paul's legislation to consolidate and extend the expiration dates of Tax Increment Finance districts in the corridor and use the additional funding for streetscape improvements failed to pass.

Access to and within the Corridor

The City of Saint Paul has completed the preliminary draft of its **Central Corridor Bike Walk Action Plan**. The purpose of the plan is to build on existing visioning plans and to identify and prioritize projects for implementation. Among the preliminary recommendations are to complete priority bikeways, adopt a Complete Streets Ordinance, test wayfinding, and enhance maintenance of bikeways and walkways. Comments and input received at the open house are now being incorporated into the final draft, which the City Council is expected to adopt later this year. In the meantime, City staff is searching out funding sources to implement different projects identified in the plan.

CCLRT Planning Process and the Met Council — Reports from CCMC and CAC

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

As part of the agreement to permit location of the OMF in Lowertown, the Central Corridor Project Office established a task force co-chaired by Gary Erickson, CCPO Assistant Project Director, and Kim Hyers, Chair of the CapitolRiver Council (CRC). The task force is charged with providing input and feedback to CCPO staff on the design of the exterior improvements to the Diamond Products building including: façade improvements on Broadway and Prince Streets and green roof technologies. Lowertown stakeholder groups represented on the task force include: residents, business owners, property owners, St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, Public Art Saint Paul, and CapitolRiver Council. Preliminary plans for the OMF will be presented to the BAC on June 15, the CAC on June 18, and CRC's monthly meeting on the Central Corridor on June 24. The CCMC will hear plans on July 8, 2009.

Noise Impacts on University Avenue to be Mitigated

Two areas along University Avenue were found to have moderate to severe noise impacts on residential and industrial land uses: 1) between and around Raymond and Hampden and 2) between and around Avon and Grotto. To reduce these impacts caused by trains running on crossover tracks, the CCPO relocated crossovers to areas where there would be fewer impacts. In the case of Avon and Grotto, relocation eliminates 11 "severe" impacts, and ten "moderate" impacts on residential land uses and one "moderate" impact on an industrial land use. The FEIS will outline additional mitigation strategies to reduce or eliminate noise impacts.

Areaways Being Located and Evaluated

Areaways are open spaces that were once used to provide direct delivery access to the basements of many commercial buildings. With changes in building uses, many areaways have been abandoned and sealed or filled, while others remain vacant. Areaways become a concern when sidewalks are rebuilt and/or they become the location for electrical poles to operate the LRT train or to accommodate streetlight poles. They must be either filled or covered before anchoring poles and replacing the sidewalk. The CCPO is working intensively with property owners along Cedar and 4th in downtown St. Paul because preliminary work may happen later this year. (According to St. Paul City Ordinance, property owners are responsible for vacating areaways.) Along University Avenue and Washington Avenue, CCPO staff is researching and identifying areaways. They also are working with utilities to identify utility vault locations.

Stations Design Options Introduced

Although the layout or footprint for each station type will remain consistent, the CCPO is open to varying color material choice for certain elements in response to public art and/or local preference. Changes in canopy design are also a possibility, but it would be considered a betterment to be paid for by a third party.

New Starts Report

Mark Fuhrmann reported that the Central Corridor New Starts rating by the FTA has been upgraded from Medium to Medium-High. Of our peer New Starts projects, six now have "Final Design" status and 13 have "Preliminary Engineering" status. The CCPO will seek to enter Final Engineering as soon as a Record of Decision is issued.

Project Funding

The State bonding bill, signed by Governor, includes \$8.5M final local match for Central Corridor. Bell assured the CCMC that if the Governor line item vetoes this amount, there is still the 2010 Legislative Session to acquire the final amount needed to meet Federal matching requirements.

Environmental Impact Statement Schedule

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is currently with FTA, and it is expected to be published early June. CCPO is assembling some additional supporting documentation, including required consultation with two Indian tribes who have interests in the Central Corridor area. After publication, the public has 30 days to comment. The FTA typically issues the Record of Decision 50-60 days after the FEIS is published.

Early Relocation of District Energy Utilities Schedule

Relocation of District Energy pipes that heat and cool much of downtown St. Paul must occur in what is known as the "shoulder season" in early fall or late spring. Early relocation of these utilities under 4th Street will ensure that heavy construction of the line will go more smoothly and quickly. The CCPO wants to do this work in the fall of 2009. However, it cannot begin until after the FTA issues both the Record of Decision, which concludes the Environmental Review process, and a Letter of No Prejudice, which relieves them of any financial responsibility if the Central Corridor project is not approved for matching Federal funds. If these clearances are not acquired in time for work this fall, the next construction opportunity is in the spring of 2010.

DCC INTERNAL NEWS

Election of Officers for 2009-2010

At the Annual Meeting in May, the Governing Council re-elected **Anne White**, Chair, Union Park; **Steve Wilson**, Vice Chair, Summit-University, **Bob Spaulding**, Secretary, CapitolRiver Council; **Ron Lischeid**, Treasurer, University District Improvement Association; and **Phil Anderson**, Member-at-Large, Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association.

DCC Receives 501 (c) (3) Status from the IRS

The Internal Revenue Service determined that the DCC meets the requirements for tax exemption. The DCC is now able to operate without a fiscal sponsor.

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

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