

**Meeting of the Central Corridor Business Advisory Committee**

**Monday, July 21, 2008**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Lori Fritts, David Jones, Brenda Kyle, Sondra Reis, Jim Roth, Brian Thoemke, Christine Wiegert.

**Members Absent:** Kay Baker, Denise Currie, Julio Fesser, Sharon Johnson, Jeannine Kessler Nell McClug, Harry Melander, Guy Mingo, Tom Olesak, Chang Thao, Khue Yang, David Youmans.

**Others Present:** Robin Caufman, Shoua Lee, Rita Rodriguez, Dana Dellis, Jessica Hill, Kent Hranicka, Christina Morrison, Linda Jungwirth, Mark Fuhrmann, Kathryn O'Brien

**1. WELCOME**

Lori Fritts opened the meeting by reviewing the June meeting minutes. Jim Roth proposed several changes to the attendance list and titles for Mike LaFave and Jonathan Sage Martinson; the changes were made.

**2. PROJECT UPDATES**

Mark Fuhrmann provided a project update by talking about the new Federal Transit Administrations (FTA) New Starts Guidelines. The deadline for submission in September 5 and the FTA raised the threshold for Medium ratings from \$23.99 to \$24.49. However, they also raised the inflation factor for project costs at a higher rate, so the project costs must now come down to meet the new threshold.

Mr. Fuhrmann updated the BAC on parking impacts and work of the community outreach coordinators to survey and talk to all businesses.

Robin Caufman noted that the outreach coordinators have talked to all businesses and property owners once if not 4 times. We've been tracking our contacts on a large wall map where the outreach coordinators mark the dates they spend on each block.

Lori Fritts asked if we've had businesses or property owners say they do not want to complete the survey. Shoua Lee answered that her experience has been that some businesses do not want to share their information so they don't. Rita indicated that some people don't respond because they don't have issues. Ms. Fritts suggested that some businesses may not respond because they don't know how to respond.

Mark Fuhrmann reviewed the comments we've heard from the public, including not to pave over the infrastructure for the future infill stations. Ms. Fritts asked for clarification about this and asked if we could do a drawing showing how the infrastructure for the future infill stations would look like.

David Jones asked if we could get an estimate on the number of parking spaces impacted by the infrastructure for future infill stations. He suggested that it would be helpful for businesses to

understand the tradeoffs, for example disruption from construction again when the future station is built out or lane shifts.

Mr. Fuhrmann continued project update by stating that all four of the local jurisdictions unanimously approved the preliminary design plans.

He also provided an overview of the memorandum of understanding with the University of Minnesota that includes three types of improvements identified by projects and assigns responsibilities. Metro Transit will control Central Corridor LRT design elements, Hennepin County or the City will be responsible for roadway design and the UofM will donate necessary property. There will be a second MOU that provides more detail on construction, maintenance, operations etc...

David Jones asked to talk about pedestrian safety on Washington Ave. With the at grade alignment, there will be busses, trains, pedestrians and bicyclists on the transit/pedestrian mall. The existing pedestrian bridges will remain and traffic signals will allow pedestrian movements. The real pedestrian safety is that we are removing 17,000 cars per day and reducing bus trips per day. The next effect will be the reduction of 95% of vehicle movements.

### **3. TECHNICAL REPORTS**

Mr. Fuhrmann started the technical reports by reviewing Traffic Study #5. This study was done based on a request by Councilmember Russ Stark to look at impacts to traffic by reducing University Avenue to one lane of through traffic in each direction to allow for replacement of on street parking, right turn lanes and bus pull outs.

Lori Fritts asked how much parking would be put back under the proposal. We will follow up with Dan Soler and get back to the BAC members.

Mr. Fuhrmann reported that currently one intersection fails; Lexington Avenue. Under the scenario to reduce to only one lane of traffic, 13 intersections would fail and the average travel speed would be 5 miles per hour.

Brenda Kyle asked for clarification of terms such as LOS; which stands for Level of Service. The term refers to the level of congestion at the intersection. A is best, D is passing and E or F is failing.

The report shows that we have a fairly quiet morning peak travel period but that the travel demand continues to increase throughout the day until about 6 PM, when it drops off. This is due to the primary retail nature of the corridor.

Lori Fritts asked if we have looked if we have parking during non-peak travel times. We are doing a second phase of the traffic study that which into the whether it would be possible to turn the second lane into parking during off peak periods when traffic flows are lesser.

Sondra asked if travel flows differ from west bound or east bound. No, but it does differ by AM and PM peak times.

Brenda asked hypothetically which alternatives businesses would prefer if they have to choose between on-street parking and two lanes of through traffic. Lori Fritts responded by saying that the primary concern of businesses is access. This applies to construction but also to this discussion. If customers or clients can't get to their door because the traffic flow is so slow, it doesn't matter if there is parking in front of their business.

Brian Thoemke suggested that businesses may choose not to locate on University or people may not visit businesses on University. On the other hand, Brenda suggested that people can be persistent in visiting their favorite stores and businesses.

Lori Fritts said that businesses really need to understand the tradeoffs of decisions. For example, with the pedestrian crossings, people need to know that wherever one is placed will result in loss of on-street parking.

Brenda Kyle reminded people of the vision for the corridor to provide an alternative mode of transportation. She said that there seems to be conflicting interests between vision of shopping and retail district with pedestrian activity and vehicle traffic.

Sondra Reis noted that Central Corridor is different than Hiawatha corridor that is a primary transitway and Lake Street that is a retail district. Central Corridor has manufacturing and industry in addition to residential, retail and office.

Lori Fritts observed that adding parking back after 6 PM may not serve the retail businesses that operate during the daytime business hours.

Mark Fuhrmann said that the role of the CCPO is to look into these issues, study alternatives and seek advice from the advisory committees such as the BAC. This issue does not need to be resolved by the September 5 FTA New Starts deadline, so long as the curb line of the roadway does not change.

Christine Wiegert asked who is responsible for setting the vision? Brenda suggested that she heard the vision was for pedestrian friendly corridor with shopping and transit. Lori Fritts referred to the City of St. Paul's Development Strategy. Sondra Reis said the vision needs to include employment. Brian Thoemke said that he and other employers do not necessarily agree with the vision and noted that it has changed over time.

Christine Wiegert noted that once LRT is in place, the corridor is going to look much different than it does today. Brenda Kyle asked if the City's vision or Development Strategy included a vision for reducing to one lane of traffic in each direction. Christina Morrison, City of St. Paul planner, said that the assumption has been for two lanes in each direction and allows for a balance of modes.

Lori Fritts observed that parking study #5 was the result of the loss of on-street parking. She recapped that several decisions resulted in loss including extension of stations from 2-car to 3-car, lengthening of left turn lanes to accommodate traffic, inclusion of 3 infill stations and pedestrian crossing. She requested that all the tradeoffs are analyzed and understood before any decision is

made to reduce traffic down to one-lane in each direction including how many parking spaces can be returned, what time the parking spaces would be available, etc...

Returning to the presentation, Mr. Fuhrmann reviewed slide #22 that shows 13 intersections would fail if we reduced down to one lane of through traffic in each direction. Assuming that traffic congestion diverted 10% of the traffic off (2300 cars per day) of University Avenue, a secondary study shows we would still have 9 failing intersections. Ms. Fritts asked if the model shows where the person goes; it does allocate on all adjacent streets.

Kathryn O'Brien introduced herself as the project manager for the environmental documentation, including the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which is now available for public review. It is available online as well as several local libraries and public offices. She reviewed the content of the SDEIS and provided instructions on how people can comment.

**Next Meeting: Monday, August 18, 2008**