

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

**Monday, August 18, 2008**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Nell McClung, Tom Olesak, Sharron Johnson, Peter Latuff, Kay Baker, Christine Wiegert, Sondra Reis, Brian Thoemke, David Youmans, Harry Melander, Brenda Kyle.

**Members Absent:** Ken Hinz, Chang Thao, David Jones, Guy Mingo, Lori Fritts, Jim Roth, Khue Yang, Kathy Bjerke, Denise Currie, Julio Fesser, Tanya Bell.

**Others Present:** Robin Caufman, Shoua Lee, Dana Dellis, Jessica Hill, Eve Vang, Donna Drummond, Hue Pham, Dan Soler, Jim Alexander, Bill Sands

#### **1. WELCOME**

Robin Caufman opened the meeting at 4:00pm. She announced that both Lori and Kari will be unable to make it today. Today's agenda will include parking impacts, budget CEI changes, and vibrations.

#### **2. PROJECT UPDATES**

Robin Caufman provided an update by talking about revising Metro Transit operating costs. Replacing bus service with new LRT line will reduce bus operating costs by approximately 12 million dollars a year, however adds \$17 million in LRT operating costs resulting in a net increase in bus and LRT transit operation cost \$5.3 million. However, LRT will be carrying more people. We also updated the travel time and travel time savings and found that the project is increasing user benefits which will have a positive effect on the CEI by lowering it. The engineers are in the process of calculating capital costs so we can update the CEI.

Peter Latuff asked where the CEI is now. The last report to the BAC was \$24.82. The 2007 threshold to be eligible for federal funding was \$23.99; however, the Federal Transit Administration raised it in June to \$24.49. The CEI currently exceeds the threshold therefore we will need to bring project capital costs down to reduce the CEI to meet the FTA guidelines.

The CEI will be updated in the few weeks; we will send you an email updating you. The lower the CEI is, the better to compete with other projects looking for funding as well.

Nell McClung asked how we are listed among the rankings. After we submit our application to the FTA in September, they will review the information and give the project a new ranking. The ranking will probably be available in February.

Mr. Latuff asked if Metropolitan Council will also let the BAC know of any physical changes such as eliminating certain crosswalks or infill stations. Ms. Caufman answered that we can provide project updates such as this at the BAC meetings.

Ms. Caufman also updated the BAC on the vibrations testing. The Engineering Services consultants have been focusing on buildings at the U of M as well as several buildings on University Avenue

and 3 buildings in downtown St. Paul. Seven buildings were identified as having magnet sensitivities at the University of Minnesota. KSTP in the Midway area, the 2 churches downtown, the State lab building, and MPR was also tested for vibration impact.

Nell McClung asked if the Metropolitan Council considered talking to the Minnesota Services for the Blind about vibration impacts. They have a recording studio close to Vandalia Street and University Avenue. Ms. Cauffman responded that we haven't identified that location yet as being impacted by vibrations but that we would follow up with their staff.

Mr. Latuff expressed worries about damage to historic buildings. Dan Soler stated that speed is a large factor in vibration, in addition to the underlying ground beneath light rail. If there is bad soil, there will be more impact. Jim Alexander added that distance is a factor too. If the light rail is too far away from a building, there is no substantial effect.

Ms. Cauffman referred back to the slide and pointed out the locations studied and stated that we have preliminary results. She provided a brief summary on the technical details of the study. The report will be finalized and posted online. She will e-mail it to the BAC when it is available. Jim stated that we are anticipating the report to be finalized in October.

Ms. McClung suggested we provide an update about the vibration study at a future BAC meeting.

Peter Latuff asked if we have studied the soil. Dan Soler responded that the majority of University Ave is sufficient except for areas by the University of Minnesota. Robin added that the road bed is in good condition.

Bill Sands compared the existing tremor effects semi-trucks have on the road to the future impacts the weight of the LRT will have. Mr. Soler replied that the vibrations have less to do with weight than distribution of that weight. The weight distribution of the train is different from the semi-trucks because the LRT is longer in length.

### **3. TECHNICAL REPORTS**

Ms. Cauffman gave a review on parking studies, focusing on the segment in Saint Paul. There is an estimated 1,150 existing on-street parking. With the LRT in place, only 175 on-street parking will remain. Outreach staff has been going through the corridor collecting surveys and mapping surface parking lots and identifying north-south parking. The City of Saint Paul has reported that there are about 25,000 parking spaces in private lots within ¼ mile of stations. We found that there are about 15,000 spaces within one block off of University Avenue both north and south. There is 560 on-street parking spaces on north-south cross streets within a block of the corridor. There is only a 30% usage of those areas.

Mr. Latuff asked who is using these spaces. Ms. Cauffman answered that businesses suggest that people are using the spaces to park their car and ride the bus to the University of Minnesota or one of the downtowns. This happens most notably farther east of the corridor, which is a problem the City will have to manage.

Mr. Latuff asked to define what “farther east” means? Ms. Caufman pointed out Rita’s area where it is popular for people to “hide and ride.” Jessica Hill added that this is a popular activity at the University of Minnesota too.

Ms. Caufman brought the discussion back to reviewing business surveys. The outreach coordinators have been talking to businesses. One particular business distributed business surveys to all his neighbors. We are still encouraging people to return their surveys to us. 200 surveys were returned. If you include the businesses represented by the surveys completed for larger office buildings such as the Court International Building, over 43% of businesses are represented with the returned surveys. Preliminary analysis shows that 85% of the businesses surveyed have access to off-street parking. We have produced a one-page summary for every single block.

Mr. Latuff asked if occupied off-street parking is still counted as off-street parking even if a single block is occupied by trucks. Ms. Caufman responded that in that case, it would be considered occupied parking and off-street parking.

Bill Sand inquired about whether there is an existing problem of “hiding and riding” in neighborhoods close to Hiawatha LRT? Yes. The City of Minneapolis found that as common problem at first and implemented parking by permit. Other states have similar strategies.

Ms. Caufman talked about impact assumptions. Businesses are assumed to not be impacted if they have: remaining off-street parking, own off-street parking, shared parking, and are within a reasonable distance from north-south parking. We found that a lot of businesses are starting to have conversations with their neighbors. Parking impacts can be resolved by sharing and managing parking.

As of August 2008, there are four critical areas that will have the most impact.

Bill Sands asked where the 4 critical areas were. Robin pointed them out on the slide: Raymond, few blocks east of Snelling, Lexington, and Dale.

Mr. Sands noted that his business is in the Dale area and asked who he should talk to? Shoua Lee would be the Community Outreach Coordinator in that area. The City of Saint Paul is another good resource. The City is looking at metering and time restriction signage. Karri Plowman and Lori Fritts are also looking to find ways to facilitate shared parking arrangements.

Ms. Caufman also mentioned that we’ve looked at the costs and benefits of restoring some on-street parking in areas requested. For example, the Greater Frogtown Community Development Corporation expressed interest in taking out four non-signalized pedestrian crossings. Taking out the pedestrian crosswalks could bring back 6 parking spots but also usually eliminated the secondary access.

Donna Drummond from the City of Saint Paul brought up the potential development of a space near Dale Street and St. Albans Street to become a shared parking lot for businesses in that area.

Mr. Latuff suggested converting one lane of traffic to on-street parking east of Lexington Avenue. In response, Ms. Caufman brought up Traffic #5.1 where we evaluated the need to have two traffic lanes according to existing traffic demands. The alternative of converting the outside lane into parking during standard business hours would result in congestion and failing intersections.

However, we will work with the City and County to determine if on-street parking should be allowed in the evening.

Dan Soler, project traffic engineer, added that the LRT is meant to decongest roads. National studies show that congestion will only increase and transit ridership will increase. We hope that LRT can provide an alternative.

Mr. Latuff said he was concerned that busses will block traffic on University Ave with it stopping and loading, including waiting for people in wheel chairs to enter and exit? Dan Soler says that is true and might have an effect, but noted that busses will also come less frequently.

A question was raised about accessibility for deliveries. Mr. Soler responded that it would be helpful for businesses to have morning deliveries.

Bills Sands commented that Central Corridor LRT is a lot different from Hiawatha LRT

Mr. Soler noted that the traffic study will be available in September. Mr. Soler says we may be able to show a simulation of how LRT will run with traffic if the BAC was interested. It was suggested that the BAC meet at the CCPO for a future meeting and review the traffic simulation.

Brian Thoemke noted that people park at Fort Snelling to get to the Mall of America on Hiawatha LRT. He is concerned about impacts of “hiding and riding” especially when the new stadiums are open.

Donna Drummond responded that the City is looking at investing in License Plate Recognition, a technology that uses GPS to identify locations and illegal parking. Another example of decreasing hide and riders is to see if owners of large parking lots are interested in renting out their parking lot as a park and ride after hours, on the weekends, or during large events.

Ms. Cauffman stated that on the Minneapolis side, the City has some large ramps that are utilized for overnight and extended parking for the airport.

Ms. McClung asked Mr. Soler that when does the final decision get made whether parking can remain in one spot or another? Mr. Soler stated that each situation comes with some level of trade-off. Parking mitigation will require putting folks together with the City and Project office to make a decision.

Ms. McClung asked how we could be proactive and who should she contact? Your outreach coordinator, Rita Rodriguez.

Ms. McClung asked what the projection of transit demand will be in 2014. 42,000 riders per day on Central Corridor by 2030.

Robin Cauffman adjourned the meeting at 5:25 PM.

**Next Meeting: Monday, September 15, 2008**