

Meeting of the Central Corridor Business Advisory Committee

Monday, Oct. 19, 2009

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Kathy Bjerke, Bill Fredericks, Lori Fritts, Jeannine Kessler, Brenda Kyle, David Jones, Peter Latuff, Emily Reller, Sondra Reis, Jim Roth, Jim Segal, Brian Thoemke.

Others Present: Robin Caufman, Joey Browner, Richard Hanson, Karri Plowman, Dan Soler, Kevin Ryan, Shoua Lee, Jessica Hill,

1. WELCOME

Lori Fritts opened the meetings at 4:06 PM. The BAC reviewed the minutes; there were no changes. She welcomed Bill Fredericks who is replacing Julio Fesser, Securian, on the BAC.

Jim Roth reported on a strategic planning session held by leaders from the First Friday Group to identify next steps for coordinating and collaborating on plans for assisting businesses. Mr. Roth will continue to provide updates to this group.

2. OUTREACH COORDINATORS REPORT

The outreach coordinators report was removed from the agenda to allow more time for the construction staging discussion.

3. CONSTRUCTION OVERVIEW AND STAGING

Construction Overview

Dan Soler presented a series of slides that showed what people can expect during construction.

Peter Latuff asked how much utility work will be required on University. There are significantly fewer utilities running along University Avenue and have two to three times as much space to do the work so the impacts will not be as great as the work currently underway on 4th Street in downtown St. Paul.

Mr. Latuff asked if sanitary and storm sewers will be reconstructed and what happens with utility reconstruction through intersections. Kevin noted that sanitary sewers will stay in place and storm sewers will be replaced. Reconstruction of utilities will be done in evenings and weekends to minimize impacts and trackwork will be fabricated off site.

Mr. Latuff asked how driveways will be maintained. We are looking at creating temporary access points via cross streets, alleys or side streets. We will be working individually with businesses on plans for maintaining access.

Karri Plowman asked if we can describe the signage that will direct pedestrians can walk. Dan talked about the types used on typical construction projects and noted that we will need to monitor signage needs as construction changes.

Mr. Soler noted that we will have to do bridge work. BAC members asked about the Cedar Street Bridge over University Avenue behind the Capitol as well as the railroad bridge by Menards. We are not removing either of these bridges; we've completed engineering and design that allows the tracks and roadways to go under the existing structure.

When Mr. Soler reviewed the track construction, Mr. Latuff asked what keeps vibration from transferring to buildings. Generally the embedded track and ground absorb any vibrations which are significantly less for light rail than a typical freight rail line. The Met Council has done extensive research on the vibration impacts and found that the train creates less vibration than truck and bus traffic currently on the corridor.

Lori Fritts asked the CCPO to provide information about vibrations at a future meeting.

When Mr. Soler was talking about station construction, Karri Plowman asked if the public art will be added after the station is built. The art is integrated into the structure of the stations including the platform surface, railings, walls, and poles. Consequently, the art will be installed as the station is built. We are working on coordinating this activity as we develop the bid documents.

Mr. Latuff asked what the light poles will look like and if the catenary poles could be used for street lighting. The budget includes putting back the existing lights. The City of St. Paul has proposed twin lantern lights that would be a betterment and outside of the project budget.

Jim Segal asked if we had the construction schedule. We are continuing to work on the schedule. We will provide guidance to the contractors in the bid documents that we are in the process of preparing. However, we will be working with the contractors on final schedule.

Construction Phasing

Mr. Soler reviewed the considerations the engineers are using to develop construction staging and phasing plans such as traffic management, length of the construction zone and bus access. We are seeking input from stakeholder groups. For example, some people think that a 1 mile segment under construction is too great and will have too much impact. While others propose longer segments to make construction more efficient.

Jim Segal asked if there is space along the Avenue where we could acquire temporary easements in parking lots or wider shoulders for a temporary turn lane or bus pull out. Good suggestion, we will need to be creative.

Brian Thoemke asked if longer segments are faster to build. It is easier to construct linear project especially utility relocation along longer segments.

Mr. Soler reviewed the staging options by explaining the graphics.

Mr. Latuff asked with the 1/3-2/3 option how long will the roads be closed? We are working on construction segments that would allow the roadway to be reopened within one construction season.

Mr. Latuff suggested we consider incentive program. Incentive programs used on other projects are being reviewed by project office staff.

Mr. Plowman noted that with the Outside-In Phasing it may provide direct access to the businesses faster but the perception of longer construction in the middle would continue to discourage customers.

Jim Segal asked to confirm that traffic lane impacts should only be one construction season in front of any given business. Construction schedules are subject to change based on unforeseen issues and weather, but that is what we are working towards.

Lori Fritts suggested creating a one-pager that summarizes construction staging and time estimates. At this point one of the biggest decisions we need to make is the length of the construction segments.

She suggested we go around the room and asked BAC members to share their reaction to the presentations.

Mr. Latuff said that most businesses would prefer longer stretches of construction and a shorter time period.

Brian Thoenke said that a ½-1 mile construction length with 1 mile in between construction zones sounds appropriate. Kathy Bjerke concurred with Brian's statement.

Jeannine Kessler said her only concern is that we are stuck with the 1 mile segments and can't make adjustments. Mr. Soler noted that this is important. For example we will need to coordinate with other construction projects such as the I-94 resurfacing scheduled for 2010 and 2011.

Emily Reller noted that she works with downtown businesses, so the discussion doesn't apply to the businesses she represents. She noted that BOMA is working with the project office on downtown staging issues.

David Jones indicated that they do not want University Avenue to be closed completely. He is looking to engineers and construction folks need to advise

Bill Fredericks said that for downtown St. Paul, closing down the streets to make construction faster is the best approach. Budget-wise, ½ mile segments will not be cost effective.

Jim Segal noted that it is more important to look at specifics of each segment.

Sondra Reis and Jim Roth both agreed that 1-mile segments seem appropriate.

Mr. Latuff asked to invite the City to attend next months meeting.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Lori Fritts adjourned the meeting at 5:30 PM

Next Meeting: November 16, 2009