

Meeting of the Central Corridor Community Advisory Committee August 16, 2007

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Kirstin Beach (Co-chair), Jerry Blakey (Co-chair), Joshua Bunker, Veronica Burt, Richard Kleinbaum, Larry Englund, Ken Erickson, Readus Fletcher, Denise Fosse, Metric Giles, Bree Halverson, Brian Hanninen, Richard Hanson, Doug Hennes, Margot Imdieke Cross, Brant Ingalsbe, Xiongpaoo Lee, Jeffrey Peltola, Ferdinand Peters, Ken Rodgers, Rozanne Severance, Art Sidner, Ross Skattum, Seng Tcha, Jessica Treat, Dave VanHattum, Chip Welling, Anne White, John Wicks, ThaoMee Xiong.

Members Absent: Fredrick Blocton, Kristen Denzer, Steve Grans, Karen Inman, David Johnson, Daniel Kirk, Laura Nevitt, Nick Rosenberry, James Ruiz, Hussein Samatar, JoAnn Tesar, Keith Thompson, Chris Worthington.

Others Present: Laura Baenen, Robin Kaufman, Nkongo Cigolo, Steve Dornfeld, Donna Drummond, Mark Fuhrmann, Oscar Gonzales, Jessica Hill, Wanda Kirkpatrick, Shoua Lee, Arlene McCarthy, Kathryn O'Brien, Va-Megn Thoj, Eve Vang.

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Co-chair Jerry Blakey called the August 16, 2007 meeting of the Central Corridor Community Advisory Committee to order at 5:04 PM in the Goodwill Easter Seals offices at 553 Fairview Avenue North, St. Paul.

Co-Chair Blakey introduced new CAC members Ross Skattum representing the U of M students; Co-Chair Blakey also introduced Co-Chair Kirstin Beach, District 14 Council Member.

2. REPORTS

Mark Fuhrmann gave a project update: The Metropolitan Council has received a notice of approval from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to hire an Engineering Services contractor. The Engineering Service Contract was signed on 8/3/2007. Engineers are on board, and the FTA has given the Metropolitan Council a notice to proceed to preliminary engineering. The first work order has been issued to DMJM Harris to develop a schedule.

Mr. Fuhrmann acknowledged the 35W bridge collapse with grievance and qualified this incident to be the most tragic incident in the State; Mr. Fuhrmann expressed regret for those who had lost loved ones, friends and family and wished them quick recovery.

Mr. Fuhrmann stated that the Metropolitan Council does not anticipate the relocation of the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (LRT) to be placed on top of the 35W bridge; the Metropolitan Council sent a letter to the Governor last Friday (8/10/07) stating that there was no need to incorporate Central Corridor to the 35W bridge. In this letter the Metropolitan Council listed attributes related to environmental review and longer traffic time. Mr. Fuhrmann stated that within a broader transportation system the bridge will be built for a 100 year life span and many questions have been raised to whether the new 35W bridge could be constructed to become LRT capable. The Metropolitan Council has reinforced efforts to study the Washington Avenue Bridge to ensure that this bridge will support the light rail.

Co-Chair Blakey asked whether anyone in the audience had questions regarding the bridge.

Joshua Bunker expressed his concern over the Washington Avenue Bridge's ability to handle a 2 or 3 car-train is scrutinized. He also asked how the overall project cost is going to be affected by the reconstruction of this bridge. The Central Corridor preliminary engineering process includes a technical analysis of the Central Corridor Community Advisory Committee Meeting

Washington Avenue Bridge and will look at the ability of the bridge to handle LRT. Mr. Fuhrmann added that nothing was finalized yet and reiterated that the project office is in the midst of a massive technical analysis. If the analysis reveals that the bridge will not handle the LRT then weak points will be identified and mitigated cost-effectively. Mr. Fuhrman added that the cost to replace or repair the 32 year old bridge would affect the CEI.

Richard Hanson stated that he had a question regarding the cost to rebuild the Washington Avenue Bridge, but Mr. Fuhrmann had answered that question.

Chip Welling wondered what the 35W bridge would look like if 20 to 50% of the total travel demand, i.e., all trips, were accommodated by public transit, as opposed to private automobiles.. Arlene McCarthy responded by saying that extra lanes could be allocated for future bus rapid transit (BRT), express buses and that extra lane could be dedicated to traffic or high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane.

Dave VanHattum wanted to know how the LRT, HOV or BRT component over the bridge would benefit the community when the bridge is only a quarter mile stretch. Arlene McCarthy responded by saying that the new 35W bridge was not set for a specific BRT and nor was it set for an HOV lane; these proposed components were to be accomplished in the future.

Anne White asked if repairing or rebuilding a new Washington Avenue Bridge would require a new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). It is assumed that repair would not require a new EIS but building a new bridge may require new EIS. The Metropolitan Council is in the process of initiating those dialogues with the FTA.

3. Environmental Justice in National Environmental Policy Act context: how Environmental Justice impacts are determined

Chair Blakey invited Kathryn O'Brien to speak about environmental justice. Ms. O'Brien explained that during the Environmental Impact Statement process several aspects are taken into account, and environmental justice (EJ) was one important aspect of the EIS process. Ms. O'Brien reviewed a handout that outlined the environmental justice analysis as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

Dave VanHattum and Joshua Bunker asked for clarification on the difference between social justice and environmental justice. Environmental justice issues refer to disproportionate impacts to low income and minority populations studied through the NEPA process. Social justice is broader and includes a variety of social issues. Mr. VanHattum also asked whether additional stations would be studied. The Council will analyze the potential impacts of stations at Western and Victoria.

Jeffrey Peltola offered that environmental justice looks at some social issues but would not cover all pre-existing social issues. Mr. Peltola explained that he understands that the process for Central Corridor will not look at social justice issues not related to the project.

Brant Ingalsbe requested clear definition of low income. Currently, low income is defined as a household of 4 making under \$19,000. The federal poverty guideline is adjusted every year.

Anne White wondered if access to LRT by low income individuals was covered under NEPA. The access question and specific location of the stations is part of the project scope.

Metric Giles asked who defined the process and stated that the Council's priority has been focused on meeting the cost effectiveness index not the social issues. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) process analyzed the alternative alignments and recommended a preferred alignment which was endorsed by the Metropolitan Council. Mr. Fuhrmann added that the project was about increasing mobility and providing an improved network to move people around the region.

Veronica Burt asked what connections could be made between transportation and investments; Ms. Burt requested that an environmental justice component be illustrated in the response and not only looking at toxic materials but investment infrastructures created as result of this project. Ms. Burt commented that the I-94 Freeway brought some investments within the community. Ms. O'Brien responded by saying that the environmental justice movement historically had been most concerned with impacts related to the siting of hazardous waste dumps and toxic materials. With the issuance of Executive Order 12898 in 1994, however, the impacts of all federal actions were opened to the scrutiny of their potential to result in environmental justice impacts. For transportation-related activities, environmental justice should be looked at from both the planning level (including transportation investments) as well as the project development level.

Anne White asked about the relationship between environmental justice and the Cost Effectiveness Index (CEI). Ms. White clarified her question by saying that if it has been determined that an impact could not be avoided, how would environmental justice be able to address those issues that affect the CEI. Ways to avoid and minimize the impact would be considered first. If avoidance is unsuccessful then minimization or mitigation would follow keeping in mind the project cost.

4. Open Discussion

The purpose of this open discussion is to allow CAC members to identify issues that the Central Corridor LRT will need to look at from a community based perspective. The following list was the result of this open discussion,

a. Issues and concerns

- Displacement-economic based due to rising tax/property Increase in rent
- Construction impacts to employers of low income employees (both large + Small Employers)
- Community Cohesion
- Maintaining transit connections for transit dependent individuals
- Cultural impacts
- Station spacing
- Parking, safety, security for people without parking
Hide riders
- Safety
- Reduction in route 16 service
- Noise
- Vibration
- Access to business
- Land use and surface parking requirements/Zoning
- Employment racism during construction
- Business Mitigation
- Transit equity, Bus/LRT connections
- Rising property values
- Making transfer easy
- Businesses of stations, especially Metrodome w/ CCLRT + HLRT + Buses
- Feeling of isolation, esp. between S. University/N. I-94
- Air quality, vehicle emissions
- Traffic congestion
- Loss of manufacturing core/job base
- Insufficient stops
- Pedestrian safety
- Spill over traffic
- Park and riders

- Communication in PE + construction
- Pedestrian Connects
- Downtown/lowertown resident access
- Closing of roadway during construction
- Access to post secondary schools
- Elimination of onstreet parking → impact to shop owners.
- LRT Hazards (accidents, power lines, power outage, vandalism)
- Children (safety, signage)
- Transit (bus) connection to adjacent neighborhoods

b. Benefits

- Access for disabled (easy access, low flow)
- Travel time savings → increase transit riders, less car dependence
- Reduction parking demand
- Potential for changing business practices, green bldgs...
- Opportunity to make bike connections to LRT increase
- Development has potential for providing housing, including low income.
- Opportunity to promote pedestrian movements
- Connections to downtown residents
- Connection to other/more jobs
- Increases market for local businesses

c. Communication Strategies

- Ad hoc CAC committees
- Time at the end of meeting to (1) Discuss what is coming up (2) Agree on points
- Additional CAC meetings
- Yahoo discussion group

3. Summarize next steps

Ms. Caufman advised CAC members that issues will be submitted to the Central Corridor Management Committee (CCMC) and the engineers and responses to some of these questions would start to become available as soon as the September CAC meeting.

ThaoMee Xiong asked what happens to these ideas (referring to the list resulting from brainstorming session) and who responds to them. Ms. Caufman stated that the next step is to compile the comments and forward them to the engineers. They will identify if and where the comments will be addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). If you have additional comments, please forward them to either Ms. Caufman or the Community Outreach Coordinators (COC's). Ms. Caufman encouraged CAC members to also contact Community Outreach Coordinators, who were introduced at the June 2007 CAC meeting, when they had questions.

ThaoMee Xiong questioned whether Outreach coordinators had answers to these issues. Ms. Caufman replied that the Outreach Coordinators are well trained and are regularly updated on the project; the COC are very capable of making presentations to community groups and providing answers to questions.

Veronica Burt inquired where these concerns were going. Ms. Burt stated that she hoped the process provides a clear definition of the scope of the project, looked at these issues and explored ways of mitigating or avoiding adverse impacts.

4. NEXT MEETING

Ms. Caufman stated that an issue matrix and timeline will be available next CAC meeting. The next CAC meeting is scheduled for September 20, 2007.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Co-Chair Blakey adjourned the meeting at 7:11 pm.

Prepared by Robin Caufman, Manager of Public Involvement

Attachment 1: Future Meeting Topics

Responses to the following question: Identify the topics you are most interested in learning more about and presentation ideas for future CAC meetings.

- Flexibility in locating/adding stations (13)
- Reason for U tunnel (10)
- Job Opportunities (8) Noted need for 75 part time bus drivers and 26 mechanics due to transit demand following the collapse of the I-35 bridge, 8/16/07 CAC
- Issues of cost and under-lying assumptions (6) – Presented overview of project budget at 6/21/07 CAC meeting
- Connecting Bus Service (6) – Presented at 6/21/07 CAC meeting.
- Construction mitigation (6)
- Future expansion (cut short now or extend system in future) (5)
- Access to businesses and community services during construction (4)
- Environmental Justice Analysis (4) Initiated conversation 8/16/07 CAC
- Parking, including Hide and Ride (4)
- St. Paul’s Development Plan (4) - Presented at 5/17/07 CAC meeting
- E.I.S. Presentation (3) - Presented at 7/19/07 CAC meeting.
- Station information including design (3)
- Timelines with deadlines for decisions (3)
- Community Benefits Agreement (2)
- Gentrification (2)
- Historic sites along the line/route (2) - Pointed out historic buildings on 4/19/07 CAC tour.
- Residential development and safety (2)
- Signal pre-emption or prioritization for LRT (2)
- Summary Report on RFP process (procedure) (2)
- Access to line (1)
- Bike Lane (1)
- Techniques to reach all constituencies (1)
- Union Depot (1)
- Very detailed information must be provided (1)
- Visual simulations of corridor design (1) – Include at beginning of all CAC meetings.
- Working groups and clear outputs/products (1)
- Balance budget outcome with outcome of meeting people
- Best way to Reach ELL
- Communication Plan – Presented to the CAC on 3/15/07
- Discussion around overlapping service “sheds” for downtown stations vs. lack on parts of University (How was station placement determined).
- Equitable access
- Financing (other options)
- Streetscaping