

Meeting of the Central Corridor Community Advisory Committee June 19, 2008

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Kirstin Beach (Chair), Larry Englund, Ken Erickson, Readus Fletcher, Brian Hanninen, Richard Hanson, Doug Hennes, Xiong Pao Lee, Jeffrey Peltola, Ken Rodgers, Jessica Treat, Rozanne Severance, Keith Thompson, Chip Welling, John Wicks.

Members Absent: Fredrick Blocton, Veronica Burt, Patricia Carlson, Bill Carter, Mohamed Egal, Denise Fosse, Metric Giles, Steve Grans, Maricruz Hill, Margot Imdieke Cross, Karen Inman, David Johnson, , Jackie Lunde, Richard Kleinbaum, Nick Rosenberry, Art Sidner, Tim Schwartz, Seng Tchaa, JoAnn Tesar, Dave VanHattum, Anne White, Chris Worthington.

Others Present:, Jim Alexander, Laura Baenen, Joey Browner, Robin Caufman, Dana Dellis, Donna Drummond, Mark Fuhrmann, Jessica Hill, Kent Hranika, Linda Jungwirth, Shoua Lee, Sarah Penman, Rita Rodriguez, Dan Soler, Carol Swenson, Kyle Williams.

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Chair Kirstin Beach called the meeting to order at 5:08 PM. She noted a few people emailed proposed changes to the April and May meeting minutes; those comments will be reviewed and incorporated into the minutes. There were no other changes suggested.

a. Chair's Report

Chair Beach noted that Kirsten Denzer with the Graduate Student Association and Ross Skattum with the Minnesota Student Association resigned due to the end of the school year and her term on the Board. ThaoMee Xiong also resigned. This will be Jeff Peltola's last meeting.

b. CAC Members' Reports

Rozanne Severance reported that the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee discussed platforms. TAAC members indicated that they prefer continuity of station design and layout for accessibility to the blind and people in wheel chair and concerned about safety on the platform. They will be submitting written comments to the project office.

c. Community Outreach Reports

Dana Dellis, downtown Saint Paul community outreach coordinator, said she has meet with all the downtown property owners along the alignment on Cedar Street and 4th Street including MPR and the 2 historic churches. They are working on addressing concerns related to vibrations and building access.

Shoua Lee stated that she has talked to every business in her segment of the corridor. The outreach coordinators have been very busy talking to businesses and property owners along the corridor. She said that we have over 250 survey responses and continue to go door to door. Their primary concern is the loss of on-street parking.

2. PROJECT UPDATE BY CHAIR BELL

Metropolitan Council Chair Peter Bell thanked Kirstin Beach for chairing the CAC and the committee members for participating in the CAC meeting. He is very appreciative of the committee member's time and energy. He reviewed recent accomplishments including (1) passage of the Transportation Policy Bill which included a 1/4 cent sales tax increase for transit improvements; (2) State Bonding Bill of \$70 million; and (3) University of Minnesota agreement to have LRT at grade on Washington Ave. with a transit/pedestrian mall.

He also noted that we are one of two regions in the country that have one commuter rail project funded by FTA, one light rail project in preliminary engineering and participant in the Urban Partnership Agreement project for bus rapid transit.

He reviewed some of the other issues such as loss of on-street parking spots. He recognizes that the while the loss of parking is a very small percentage of the 25,000+ off street parking spaces, the impacts are significant for those small businesses that don't have access to off street parking.

Chair Bell also mentioned vibration impacts on MPR; he has meet with Bill Kling. We are in the process of studying the impacts and will be looking at mitigation. He acknowledged the concerns of the 2 churches north of MPR.

Chair Bell talked about some of the upcoming steps including the conclusion of the municipal consent process in July and the new starts application submittal in September. He concluded by saying that he believes this will be a significant benefit to the community.

CAC Chair Beach asked Chair Bell to provide an update on the status of the three infill stations. Chair Bell reviewed several issues about station location in the City of St. Paul, starting with the placement of the Union Depot station which has been resolved with Ramsey County. Next he reviewed the community's interest in closer spacing of stations along University Ave. Due to CEI and budget constraints, as a compromise the infrastructure and foundation for three future stations at Western, Hamline and Victoria was added into the project scope. He indicated his first priority is adding one of those three stations if additional funds are made available in the project budget.

Ken Erickson commented that he is concerned about McNally Music if the tracks are moved to the west side of Cedar Street because they also have recording studios.

Jeff Peltola asked about the chances of securing federal funds in 2010 and whether the congressional delegation can provide assistance. Chair Bell indicated that the demand for FTA funds is high, consequently competition will be great but conversations with the FTA are favorable.

Readus Fletcher asked if we will continue to be aggressive in contracting with DBEs, like we have been in preliminary engineering. We will continue to meet or exceed our current goals.

Jessica Treat asked about Chair Bell's sense on reduction in Route 16 frequency. When you add both the rail and the bus system together, including a circulator and new north south connecting routes, it will be the best service in the region and state, even if there is reduction in Route 16 frequency.

Larry Englund said that he has seen studies showing that the Twin Cities has higher ridership than other region. Chair Bell said that is correct, we have one of the most efficient transit systems in the nation. Approximately 30% of the cost is covered by rider fares; our light rail system covers 40%.

Chip Welling thanked Chair Bell for his work on the project; he thinks it will be an asset to the corridor. Chip said that when people make a choice whether to drive, take transit, bike or walk is the costs and that parking is a hidden subsidy to driving. He asked if the Metropolitan Council is looking at innovative solutions to parking. Chair Bell said that we can influence land use and design decision through the Met Council's Livable Community Development Account grants. He could look into whether we could analyze parking in the comprehensive planning process.

Larry Englund asked if we have done further research on hide and riders. We are working with the city on this issues; one solution is permitting.

3. STREETSCAPE DESIGN

Dan Soler introduced the concept of streetscape design by reviewing previous topics of discussion including street design, system design and station design. Streetscaping is the element that ties together the civil, system and station design pieces. Mr. Soler reviewed some of the concerns and comments we've heard from the community that are being considered in the streetscape design such as ADA compliance, maintenance, safety, durability and way finding. These have translated into the principles that are guiding the streetscape including accessibility, security, safety, aesthetics, and sustainability. Mr. Soler also reviewed elements that provide accessibility to the station.

Jessica Treat said that she has been reading about the ADA requirements and whether we are just complying with the minimums or are we planning to exceed them. She will forward Mr. Soler the link so he can follow up with the design team. Ken Rodgers also said he would like to see the project go beyond the standards.

Rozanne Severance asked the engineers to keep in mind that the aging population, families with strollers and people on bikes also benefit from improved accessibility.

Mr. Soler reviewed elements that address security and safety concerns such as adequate lighting and clear sight lines. For example, the placement of bus stops should not block sight lines at pedestrian crossing. Railings can be used to guide pedestrians and encourage them to cross at the designated spots. Sidewalk design can also address safety by identifying where it is appropriate for people to walk and another area where that serves as a buffer with space for trees, light posts, bus shelters and signage.

Jessica Treat commented on the sidewalk width shown in the preliminary design plans. Her primary concern is the pedestrian realm, but feels that the train and traffic lanes are being given priority. Mr. Soler said that the engineers are trying to fit everything into constrained space as well as addressing safety concerns in the design process.

Jeff Peltola also asked what widths are in the preliminary design plans. Most of the sidewalks on University Avenue are 10-12 feet. The sidewalks shown on slide 19 of the presentation have 6 feet of sidewalk and 4 feet of buffer.

Ken Rodgers asked Dan Soler to define the buffer space. He said that the 6 feet of sidewalk space would be open walking space. The buffer area could be a change in pavement treatment and would include elements such as light posts, trees, and bus shelters

Jessica Treat said that 14 feet is preferred width.

Richard Hanson commented that all modes need to work together; all are important. He said what is important is ensuring that all the transportation modes work together safely and suggested that pedestrians and bicyclists need to pay attention to signage.

Larry Englund responded to the concept way-finding signs in slide 20 of the presentation. He suggested that they could be more creative than a square base and that we should consider designed a way to discourage people from climbing on them.

Mr. Soler continued the presentation; discussing the concept of sustainability by addressing stormwater and using recycled materials as well as maintainability by using durable materials that can withstand the harsh Minnesota climate. He reviewed the next steps; most of today's presentation focused on University Avenue; we need to work on other areas including downtown St. Paul, the Capitol area and the University of Minnesota. Mr. Soler noted that the streetscape and elements will vary within a block depending on the presence of a station, a non-signalized pedestrian crossing or lighted intersection.

Carol Swenson asked how we are integrating the City of St. Paul's Development Strategy and Minneapolis' station area planning. The project working groups include staff from Minneapolis and St. Paul; they bring their respective city's perspective to the discussion.

Mr. Soler wrapped up the presentation by asking the CAC to identify what they would like to see in the streetscape design.

Rozanne Severance asked to keep materials in mind. Cobblestones and bricks are not a good choice because people trip and wheel gets caught. On the other hand, pavers and bricks do provide a good differentiation in texture as well as provide for pervious surface.

Richard Hanson said that in Europe they have cobblestone streets, but they are not ideal in Minnesota where the temperature extremes cause buckling.

Jeff Peltola said that the metal grates around trees are not good. Mr. Soler agreed that tree grates are not installed very much anymore because they have disadvantages such as collecting trash. Different cities have different standards. For example, Minneapolis will place trees in grassy boulevards.

4. NEXT MEETING

Chair Beach asked the Committee members if they would like to schedule a special meeting on July 31 to discuss public art; the CAC members agreed it was a good idea.

The next CAC meeting is scheduled for July 17, 2008 at 5:00 PM.

Readus Fletcher shared about recent meetings MNSCU had with groups of young people and found that they have some interesting insights. He encouraged us to reach out to the young people for their input and perspective. Robin Cauffman mentioned that we've talked to the school districts about nominating a student to the CAC.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Co-Chair Beach asked that CAC members turn in their comments sheets and adjourned the meeting at 6:50 PM.

Prepared by Robin Cauffman, 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) Reported analysis on 12/20/2007 CAC agenda.
- Reason for U tunnel (10) Presented tunnel and at grade route at 11/15/2007 CAC meetings.
- 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. Forwarded CAC DBE press release 12/17/07. Handed out new DBE brochure and notified CAC that DBE links added to website, 3/20/08.
- Issues of cost and under-lying assumptions (6) – Presented overview of project budget at 6/21/07 CAC meeting. Analysis and costs of additional stations on 12/20/2007 agenda.
- Connecting Bus Service (6) – Presented at 6/21/07 CAC meeting.
- Construction mitigation (6) Karri Plowman shared work of BAC at 10/18/2007 CAC.
- Future expansion (cut short now or extends system in future) (5). Presented potential routes to connect to Union Depot 11/15/2007 CAC
- Access to businesses and community services during construction (4) 1/17/08 CAC talked about University Ave. reconstruction.
- Environmental Justice Analysis (4) Initiated conversation 8/16/07 CAC; submitted summary memo at 9/20/07 CAC.
- Parking, including Hide and Ride (4) Discussed at 3/20/08 CAC meeting
- St. Paul's Development Plan (4) Presented at 5/17/07 CAC meeting.
- EIS Presentation (3) Presented at 7/19/07 CAC meeting. Presented review of SDEIS on 11/15/07. Noted SDEIS timeline at 3/20/08 CAC meeting.
- Station information including design (3) Presented Dale, Lexington, Snelling, Fairview, Raymond and Westgate station at 9/20/07 CAC. Station standard design and Capitol stations planned for 10/15/07 CAC. Discussed West Bank at 11/15/2007 CAC.
- Timelines with deadlines for decisions (3) Presented issues matrix at 9/20/07 CAC. Noted SDEIS timeline and municipal consent dates at 3/20/08 CAC meeting.
- 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) Outreach staff reported at 3/20/08 CAC meeting that they received safety certification and will be putting together a safety program.
- Signal pre-emption or prioritization for LRT (2) 1/17/08 CAC presented initial traffic signalization and street crossing plans. Talked about signalization at 3/20/08 CAC.
- Summary Report on RFP process (procedure) (2)
- Access to line (1) Discussed pedestrian access at 1/17/08 and 3/20/08 CAC meetings.
- Bike Lane (1)
- Techniques to reach all constituencies (1) Brainstormed stakeholders and public involvement strategies at 2/15/07 CAC.
- Union Depot (1). Presented potential to connect to Union Depot 11/15/2007 CAC.
- Very detailed information must be provided (1)
- Visual simulations of corridor design (1) – Include at beginning of CAC meetings. Showed visualization of 5 block segment of corridor with potential design elements at 3/20/08 CAC meeting.
- Working groups and clear outputs/products (1). Started using workstation format at 10/18/2007 CAC.
- 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 - 1/17/08 CAC talked about University Ave. reconstruction. 6/19/08 introduced streetscape elements

Attachment 2: Responses

1. Identify two elements of the streetscape you would like to see in the design.

- Sidewalks themselves, lamp posts, street furniture, all maintained frequently. Pick up the trash! If in good shape, it will show that people care and discourage littering and vandalism.
- Sound cues, lighting, and signs to direct passengers to the station locations. West Bank station in particular will be difficult to find.
- Better sidewalks (smoother & wider).
- Audible warning for crossing streets and getting on and off platforms. People with vision problems need to know where the tracks and trains are.
- Lighting, which will help for safety.
- Mapping information at stops that provides two key issues. The bus routes that pass by the LRT stop and Key Street, shops along bus route and the landmarks on significant features in nearby neighborhood that provides its uniqueness.
- Clear signage. I see so many people using subways and trains in other cities (e.g., NYC), yet totally confused because of poor signage.
- Use materials that are green as much as possible
- Minimum 14 ft sidewalks equal 2' door zone, 6-8' walk zone and 4-6' furniture zone
- Lighting
- Design of Railing
- Green the medians and sidewalks
- Linger space
- Building fronts should be the fronts of buildings with windows and doors, not the back sides of buildings with few or no windows or doors.
- Clear sight lines
- More green space.
- Bricks on the sidewalk are a terrible idea. Wheels and feet get caught in the space between bricks.
- Signage being clear and visible (not cluttered looking). Avoid the "Round" type signs that Minneapolis has used around the lakes. They may be attractive and give a Mayberry like feel; unfortunately they are very hard to read.
- Materials selected at streetscape and stops should be simple, colorful and most important durable and not likely to receive or hold graffiti.
- Have larger than normal count down times for pedestrians. Many in the St Paul are 10 to 15 seconds. I'd go longer if possible.
- Local artists reflect historic diversity signage. Include and reflect the diversity of Central Corridor East. Get input from youth (art, even design).
- Greenscaping.
- Median buffers.
- Design of lighting
- Way finding
- Sidewalk vendors/cafes.

2. Discuss why those elements are important to you.

- Public safety, aesthetically more appealing
- Visitors and disabled will need assistance to locate stations. Clear sight lines are needed to make stations and pathways less susceptible to crime.
- I'm a pedestrian much of University Avenue is ugly to look at.
- We need to continue to go beyond ADA minimum. Minnesota has set a standard for accessibility for the notion.

- Mapping information does just that, provides transportation information to riders and persons waiting. Durable materials last longer and require less maintenance.
- Pretty easy to discern. You want to move pedestrians quickly.
- I believe that a quality public realm is of utmost importance in this project. We need to create a place that people want to linger in. Narrow sidewalks with traffic butting by will not create a quality public realm and will be a lost opportunity. (See letter from Municipal Consent.)
- Opportunity for creative treatments in both areas. Let neighborhoods determine look of roadway.
- Railing, safe and secure feeling. Lighting, safety.
- The avenue will be filled with cars, buses and trucks. LRT needs to soften the environment. A way to create an identity for the LRT as whole or individual stations.
- Beyond safety and movement for pedestrians, the opportunity for public gathering is key. Oh yeah “bricks suck”.

Attachment 3: CAC meeting June 19, 2008 – Meeting Feedback

1. Results

Results tallied from feedback forms distributed toward end of meeting. Form asked members to grade overall meeting performance and today's meeting format on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was the lowest and 5 the highest. Grades are replicated in columns to the right.	Overall Meeting Performance	Today's Meeting Format
	4	5
	5	5
	4	5
	5	4
	5	5
	5	5
	4	4
	5	5
	3	4
	4	4
	3	3
	4	4
	5	5
Average	4.3	4.5

2. Comments

- Great information & group interaction.