

Meeting of the Central Corridor Community Advisory Committee November 20, 2008

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Kirstin Beach, Bill Carter, Ann Finseth Steve Grans, Missy Gettel, Richard Hanson, Brian Hanninen, Karl Karlson, Jackie Lunde, Ken Rodgers, Rozanne Severance, Jessica Treat, Keith Thompson, Dave VanHattum, Chip Welling, Kevin Wendt, Anne White

Others Present: Jim Alexander, Laura Baenen, Joey Browner, Robin Caufman, Donna Drummond, Mark Fuhrmann, Dana Happel, Oscar Gonzalez, Jessica Hill, Kent Hranicka, Linda Jungwirth, Shoua Lee, Hue Pham, Kathryn O'Brien, Sarah Penman, Rich Rovang, Carissa Ptacek, Joe Scala, Dan Soler, Carol Swenson, Alicia Vap, Eve Vang, and John Wicks

1) MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Kirstin Beach called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM and asked if anyone had changes to the October meeting minutes. There were no changes proposed.

2) REPORTS

Chair's Report

Ms. Beach thanked the CAC members for their feedback and stated that the next meeting will be held on December 18, 2008 as regularly scheduled.

CAC Members Report

Ms. Beach gave CAC members an opportunity to share activities of their organizations or raise any concerns.

Anne White reported on the District Councils Collaborative activity regarding the public art process and concerns they have about the outreach efforts. Ms. Beach recapped the October 22, 2008 Met Council discussion and the proposed amendment she put forward. She noted that there was a lot of discussion and that some Met Council members do not support public art being part of the project.

Richard Hansen asked if there is going to be sufficient time for the public art process. Yes there will be time. Mark Fuhrman stated that in the coming months we will be focusing on continuing to advance PE. We expect a spring time approval to allow our project to enter Final Design, which will mean our contracted artists will need to have their preliminary designs ready by then.

Ms. White asked if the artists' proposals were public yet. Mr. Fuhrman stated that we do not have the executed contracts in hand yet. Once that happens, we will be allowed to share that procurement.

Richard Hansen inserted that he is happy that our president-elect will be addressing global warming. And that it is an important component of our project.

Dave VanHattum stated that someone from Livable Communities responded to an article in the MinnPost that criticized rail and its adverse effect on the environment and energy.

Ken Rodgers suggested that a link to the article is distributed to the CAC members.

Outreach Coordinators Report

Ms. Beach asked two of the Community Outreach Coordinators to highlight upcoming outreach activities.

Dana Happel talked about the upcoming FEIS open houses. While these meetings are not required by federal law, the Met Council is going above and beyond FTA requirements to let people know about changes that have been made during engineering to address concerns and issues. Ms. Happel reviewed the dates, times and locations of the meetings.

Ms. Happel also noted that we are holding a second tour on November 24 for new CAC members that have not been on a tour yet.

Ms. Beach asked if we can offer the tour to other friends of members. We have limited space since we are only taking out a van.

Mr. VanHattum asked what the major changes are for the FEIS. Kathryn O'Brien listed the Operation and Maintenance Facility location in Saint Paul, the 35W ramp configurations in the West Bank, the Washington Avenue transit/pedestrian mall, and the location of the Traction Power Substations.

Ms. White asked if the CAC can get this electronically before it is presented at the FEIS open houses.

Robin Caufman stated that most of the materials have been presented at previous CAC and CCMC meetings or, at tonight's meeting. The Traction Power Substations and Signal Bungalow locations will be new information that will be sent out to the CAC and BAC via email once we have talked to property owners.

Robin Caufman gave the Station Art Committee update, filling in for Jessica Hill who was delayed at a community meeting, by stating we have extended the deadline to Friday, November 21, 2008. So far we've received ~50 applications. The CCPO staff are working on the contracts. We'll be contacting SAC members in early December to schedule a training session.

The application is available online.

3) PROJECT UPDATES

2009 Traffic Improvements and Utility Relocation

Dan Soler reviewed slides 6 through 8 of the CAC presentation. There will be traffic rerouting within the UofM campus due to converting Washington Ave into a transit/pedestrian mall. Rerouting improvements will include: intersection improvements, lane configurations, traffic signal installations. If we can do these improvement and utility relocations in 2009, then it will allow us to accelerate construction of the transit/ped mall in 2010.

Ken Rodgers asked if that work is done ahead of time before the project gets approved, who pays for the utility relocation and improvements. Dan Soler stated that it will be funded locally. However, with the Letter of No Prejudice and a Full Funding Grant Agreement, we will be reimbursed for 50% from federal funds.

Jackie Lunde asked if any private utilities being relocated would be at property owner's expense. If so, has the property owner been informed of that? Xcel energy, gas, and District Energy are covered by the utility.

Ms. White asked when a schedule for any construction that will disrupt business and traffic will be available and who will be responsible for notifying people about that impact? We're already starting to work with the UofM for Fall 2009. Utilities will be responsible for notifying their customers. The project office will responsible for notifying people about other construction impacts, timing etc....

Downtown St. Paul Traffic Modeling

Dan Soler reviewed the downtown St. Paul traffic study by reviewing slides 9-13 of the presentation). These are corridor wide studies, looking at specific issues for 29th Avenue to Robert Street using SYNCHRO and VISSIM software and existing turning traffic counts. Both SYNCHRO and VISSIM software were used to evaluate intersections and how traffic would operate with and without LRT.

Karl Karlson asked to explain what Level E or F is? D means there is no congestion that is creating back up at the intersection, E indicates an intersection that has more cars that are trying to get through the light than average, and F means vehicles would be backed up waiting for the next green light to get through the intersection.

Chip Welling asked about the St. Paul traffic dynamics? On 7th? Kellogg has the heaviest volumes of traffic in St. Paul. 7th Street changes it's characteristics as it gets toward Cedar Avenue.

University Avenue Traffic Modeling Update

Dan Soler reviewed the updated University Avenue traffic modeling by reviewing slides 14-21 of the presentation. VISSIM does a much better job by considering the variable of an LRT and how it'll impact roadway and intersection operation.

Ms. White said that you showed congestion before near Marshall Ave. off Snelling Ave. using SYNCHRO, but we have not seen it recently. Why? That was without LRT...we want to focus on the corridor alignment with LRT running. Combining the results of the VISSIM and SYNCHRO analysis both show Snelling as the critical intersection on Snelling Avenue. Mr. Soler used the example of the "unweave the weave project" where one area was fixed and traffic flows more smoothly, but congestion was just moved down the highway to the next constrained traffic area. Fixing the problem at one spot, could mean problems at other spots. We've got to find a balance with movements through intersections for LRT, vehicles, pedestrians, and bike.

Chip Welling pointed out the highway expansion in Boston which concluded in a periphery of the Boston area having an increase of delay. Mr. Soler stated it was similar to the "unweave the weave," which created more back up in other places now that people can get to those places faster.

Washington Avenue Transit/Ped Mall

Mark Fuhrman talked about the Washington Ave Transit/Ped Mall by reviewing slides 22-34 of the presentation. Workgroup meetings have occurred during the summer and fall to address design issues.

Kevin Went asked if there is a typo in the presentation. At an earlier design meeting he participated in had Options A, B, and D. What happened to Option D? Option D included transitioning the LRT from

center running at either end of the mall to side running within the mall. Option D was eliminated from further consideration because it posed concerns with running trains immediately adjacent to the sidewalk. There were also concerns with locating bike lanes down the center of the mall.

Option E was added since the earlier design meeting as an option to A where the amenity zone is narrower and no pedestrian access would be allowed.

Mr. Fuhrman continued to discuss the revised option of the Washington Ave/Ped Mall.

Dave VanHattum asked who liked which option just for our clarification? There is a lot of dynamic to the 6 stakeholders at the table. The UofM prefers the shared bus/rail option. Metro Transit prefers the dedicated lane for LRT.

Chip Welling asked how a shared lane would work? Project staff did a national research and found that in Calgary, their experience is generally favorable. However, during heavy snow events the buses bring on snow which turns to ice on the track. Has that resulted into derailments? Jim Alexander answered that we do have a maintenance program in place to avoid that so it doesn't occur.

Ms. White stated that she thought that sharing the tracks will also slow down the train. She asked how the one shared lane would impact the speed and timeliness of the train. We are currently assessing the speed and time with one shared lane.

Missy Gettel asked if trains would be the limiting factor for the buses throughput. Yes, buses could go faster than the LRT, however if a bus gets through the traffic light but the LRT does not, it could cause delay for the LRT.

Steve Grans asked what is included in the total bus count on Washington Avenue. It includes Metro Transit, the UofM Circulator, Southwest Transit, and Minnesota Valley Transit buses.

Ms. White asked about the location of the bus stops? The bus stops will remain in front of Coffman, east and west bound, and in the vicinity of the Oak Street / Washington Avenue intersection. No bus stops are planned in the transit/pedestrian mall area.

Dave VanHattum asked if the charrettes are opened to the public. There are existing working groups that include representatives from the UofM, the business community and other stakeholders. Usually 2 weeks after a charrette, we have held public meetings to present the information and seek feedback. The public meetings will provide an opportunity for the public to comment, but the charrettes are not open to the general public.

Richard Hansen asked "what is a charrette and what sort of process does that include?" Jim Alexander stated that the initial charrette consisted of 7 to 8 groups that evaluated different options and provided technical feedback on the options.

Dave VanHattum asked who the "subject matter experts" are that serve on the working groups. And does it consider those walking and biking? Mark Fuhrman answered matters that relate to biking principally comes from the UofM and Minneapolis representatives to the working groups.

Missy Gettel inserted that she sits on the Biking and Transportation Committee at the UofM as well as the Working Group #2 and she participated in the charrette.

West Bank Ramp Configuration

Dan Soler reviewed updates on ramp configurations in the west bank area, slides 35-42 of the presentation.

Ms. Gettel asked what about a white strip on the map connecting Cedar and 19th? It is a sidewalk to give the public access to the #16 and #3 bus stops.

Ms. White suggested creating a 3D graphic to show the vertical topography of Cedar and 19th.

Jackie Lunde asked if a motorist can still come off I-35W and go downtown. Yes.

Chip Welling asked if there will be a cost savings if we change the PE Plan for the I-35W ramp to the Preferred Option? Yes. However, we do not know how much yet.

4) ADJOURNMENT

Kristin Beach asked the CAC to complete the feedback form before adjourning the meeting at 6:50PM.

Next meeting: December 18, 2008.

Attachment 1: CAC meeting November 20, 2008 – Meeting Feedback

1. What outstanding questions do you have about traffic impacts?

Downtown St. Paul

- How much difficulty might the train experience be when going up Robert Street then turning West on University to go West?
- Like spider web. Strong routes in, out and around.

University Avenue

- E/F Intersections
- How will the lights function for fastest and most efficient train movement?
- Just that solutions to congested intersections need to consider the broader picture, 2 miles plus radius, not just at that particular site.
- Traffic going from Snelling to pierce butler to Hamline, currently a problem. This route is used to avoid Snelling.

2. Do you have comments or concerns about the design of the Washington Ave. Transit/Ped Mall?

- The potential problems, especially when it is for the train associated with the shared lane option sounds as though they will be significant. It is not clear to me what the advantage of the shared lane might be.
- Good Work.
- I can't wait to utilize it.
- Pleased to see the willingness to experiment with bus and train sharing alignment so bikes do not have to share lane with buses. Also pleased to see concept of reclaiming space for people to linger.
- Student input nonexistent for decision on one choice for Washington Pedestrian Mall. Went from deciding between two options in August to here is the only option in December. As a student representative on the design team (Group 2) have not been convinced that the amenity zone is necessary, cost effective or practical. How will bikes enter and exit the bike lanes?
- I like the experiment approach of trying two options in real world demo.

3. What do you see as issues and benefits of the revised West Bank ramp configuration?

Issues:

- Keep accessible
- Increased congestion at Washington and 35W ramp intersection will cause tons of additional problems for Washington 3rd and 4th transit.

Benefits:

- Cost savings, development potential.
- Area available for development.
- Opens future development. Prefer the better intersection design at Cedar.
- Existing configuration is very pedestrian unfriendly. I think this is moving in the right direction.
- Development opportunity reduced cost, less freeway type treatment of what is a city street.

Attachment 2: CAC meeting November 20, 2008 – Meeting Feedback

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.	Today's Meeting Format	Today's Meeting Content	Overall meeting performance
	4	4	4
	5	5	5
	5	5	5
	4	4	4
	4	4	
	4	5	4
	4	4	5
Average	4.3	4.4	4.5

How can we improve?