

Metropolitan Council

Metropolitan Council Chambers, 390 No. Robert St., St. Paul, Mn. 55101

Meeting of the Central Corridor Management Committee

February 13, 2008

Members Present	Peter Bell, Chair	Toni Carter	Kathleen O'Brien
	Tom Hanson	Rafael Ortega	Peter McLaughlin
	Reynaldo Aligada	Jim Westerhaus	Bob McFarlin
	Chris Coleman	Mary Hill Smith	R.T. Rybak

Members Absent Paul Krause

1. CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present Chair Peter Bell called the February 13, 2008 regular meeting of the Central Corridor Management Committee to order at 12:05 pm at the Metropolitan Council offices at 390 North Robert St., St. Paul.

2. APPROVAL OF 02/13/08 AGENDA AND 01/23/07 MINUTES

Bell made small amendments to the agenda: Under Item 4 CCLRT Major Scope Issues, add - Bus Transit Service Planned Improvements, 2008 Timeline; and move Item 7 Response to District Councils Collaborative Report to the last item under Item 4 on the agenda. Motion was made by M.Hill Smith, seconded by J.Westerhaus to adopt the amended agenda for the 02/13/08 meeting and motion by T.Hanson, seconded by Hill Smith to approve the minutes of the 01/23/08 meeting. The motions carried.

Bell thanked Ramsey County representatives (Commissioners Ortega and Carter) and Commissioner McDonough, Mayor Coleman and others who worked toward making progress with difficult issues on the east portion of the Central Corridor LRT line.

The time needed for the 2/27 CCMC meeting to be held prior to the Metropolitan Council meeting on the same day will be determined by the number of items that are addressed at the CCMC meeting today. The CCMC meeting on 2/27 will include a vote. Meeting duration will be noted at the end of this meeting.

3. CCLRT COMMUNITY MEETINGS – Robin Caufman

Robin Caufman gave an overview of the January informational meetings (7 total) and the Public Listening Sessions (4 total). She presented a sample of the comments received, number of comments, and provided a transcript of the meetings. This information will also be available on the internet.

4. CCLRT MAJOR SCOPE ISSUES – Mark Fuhrmann

Mark Fuhrmann reported on the following major scope issues with a powerpoint presentation, and provided copies of said presentation to the committee members:

Vehicle Maintenance Facility

With the success of the Hiawatha LRT line, it has been determined that the Hiawatha facility cannot accommodate the needs of the CCLRT as well. Two sites are being explored for the CCLRT facility; Fuhrmann explained the type of properties, locations, ownership for each site (one Minneapolis and one St. Paul).

Washington Avenue Traffic Analysis

Fuhrmann turned this portion of the report over to Dan Soler, Sr. Project Engineer at the Central Corridor Project Office.

Soler stated that the traffic analysis grew into three different studies: Study 1 - Washington Avenue specific with/or without the tunnel and with traffic, Study 2- impacts to traffic with a “Value Engineered” (shortened) tunnel, and Study 3 – at-grade transit both open to traffic and closed to auto traffic with a transit/pedestrian mall.

Highlights from the Studies:

Study 1 –

One intersection would suffer congestion levels if there was a tunnel in Washington Avenue.

Many intersections would suffer in the at-grade scenario, if there was no mitigation. The amount of affected intersections is reduced with mitigation including eliminating some left turn lanes, one-way streets and revised bus stops and further reduced with additional mitigation including closure of some accesses, parking ramp traffic diversion and added left turn lanes. O’Brien stated that traffic Study 1 led to the University of Minnesota questioning the impact on business for the Academic Health Center, width of sidewalks, quality of streetscapes, walk through campus and impact of shorter tunnel. Soler went through the next steps to traffic Study 1.

Study 2 –

This study examined impacts to nearby intersections resulting from closures of certain roads, changing some roads to one-way in certain areas and leaving two-way roads in other areas, with the construction of a value engineered (shorter) tunnel. The study attempted to address traffic that uses Washington Avenue within the campus, traffic that uses Washington Ave. to travel from the campus, and traffic that uses Washington Avenue to get to other destinations (through campus traffic).

Study 3 –

This study examined various impacts to 48 major intersections in a 2.9 square mile area in the vicinity of the East Bank and the West Bank. The study looked at impacts with the LRT at grade and Washington Ave. open to traffic, and with LRT at-grade with a transit/pedestrian mall created on Washington Ave.

Questions and comments on the Traffic Study report:

O’Brien commented that the U of M’s principles are that they want the line operating optimally, safely, and to contribute to the growth of the campus community and businesses and neighborhoods along University Ave. The U of M has been focusing on the value engineered tunnel, and taking traffic off of Washington Ave., and the northern alignment. University staff is working on acceptable alternatives. She discussed existing service entrance issues at the University Hospital and other possible access issues.

A traffic analysis is part of the scope of service for the northern alignment study, but will not be available until late spring 2008.

Rybak supported a transit/pedestrian mall including buses for Washington Ave. He also has concerns with the Franklin Avenue intersection.

Discussion on the mitigation costs and traffic impacts on the CEI in FTA viewpoint.

In answer to questions, Soler stated that the base data used for the modeling in these studies was prior to the I-35W bridge collapse.

Bus Service Planned Improvements

Mark Fuhrmann reported on the DEIS service plan, emphasizing two new proposed bus routes connecting to University Avenue (Rtes. 83 & 60) being considered to serve most residents within ¼ mile of transit service. This is in response to committee questions and the listening session comments received.

Discussion:

Fuhrmann answered questions regarding frequency and ease of access. He stated that no existing bus stops are planned for removal on University, but there may be a reduction in frequency.

Aligada emphasized the continued need for the three fill-in stations on University, and the importance of not decreasing the transit benefits for transit dependent riders. He cautioned overlooking the most transit dependent persons when striving for ridership numbers to reach the CEI.

Discussion regarding environmental justice issues that were brought up in the listening sessions.

2008 Timelines

Mark Fuhrmann explained the key milestones and the “why’s” for the decision deadlines; Bell reiterated that the timelines are based on the deadline for the New Starts application submittal to the FTA.

Rybak stated that if the CCMC and project partners quickly move forward to reach resolutions, as urged by the Governor’s challenge, then a clear message must be sent to the Governor that it is expected that he also act in a timely manner in reference to funding for the project.

If the U of M northern alignment proves to be meritorious, the time frame presented by Fuhrmann is not applicable, and the committee would face an important decision whether to delay the project or not. If the U of M northern alignment were found to be the preferred alignment, then the New Starts submittal would most likely be delayed to November 2008. The FTA has been notified that the northern alignment is being studied. Rybak stated the need to continue to study the northern alignment, while we move forward with these alternatives presented today.

Response to District Councils Collaborative Report

Mark Fuhrmann presented responses to the DCC report. Aligada amplified the comments heard at the listening sessions (% of responses received and the passion with which they were presented) regarding additional stations. He stated that the 3 additional stations on University are very important to the neighborhoods. The citizens want a commitment for support to build the stations at a later date and to be assured that the stations will not be totally dropped from the project.

5. CCLRT CASH FLOW ANALYSIS – Mark Fuhrmann

Mark Fuhrmann presented detailed slides specifying when funding commitments are required by the FTA.

Bell added that within the next few days the Metropolitan Council will be submitting a request for \$25 M to the Federal Congressional Legislative Delegation for federal fiscal 2009.

McLaughlin stated that the funding cash flow is problematic because it puts the risk onus on the Regional Rail Authorities before the FFGA is signed. The RRAs are bearing the risk of expending dollars earlier in the process with the State and Federal government expending dollars later in the project. He is looking to the Metropolitan Council to resist efforts to put a condition on bonding for CCLRT that states there must be a FFGA before state monies can be expended. Bell stated that discussions are being held, the legislative process has just begun, and negotiations regarding conditions to funding will be discussed at the legislature.

McFarlin stated that Northstar also struggled with cash flow issues. Cash flow issues must be resolved prior to a FFGA being issued. A complete, comprehensive plan for projects must be part of the application for the FFGA.

6. PROJECT SCOPE SCENARIOS – Mark Fuhrmann

Due to lack of remaining time at this meeting, this subject will be addressed at the 2/27/08 CCMC meeting.

7. RESPONSE TO DISTRICT COUNCILS COLLABORATIVE REPORT – Mark Fuhrmann

This item was addressed in Item No. 4 above.

8. NEXT MEETING: February 27, 2008 12:00 – 4:00 pm.

This meeting will include project scenarios and an update on the CEI. A vote will be taken; method has not been determined, yet. Members – please allow four hours for the meeting to discuss remaining issues. The Metropolitan Council plans to take action at their meeting this same day following the CCMC meeting.

9. ADJOURN:

Chair Bell adjourned the meeting at 3:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted, LuAnne Major, Recording Secretary