

Metropolitan Council

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

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**Meeting of the Central Corridor Management Committee**

**February 27, 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 27, 2008 regular meeting of the Central Corridor Management Committee to order at 12:10 pm at the Metropolitan Council offices at 390 North Robert St., St. Paul.

Bell explained that the committee will hear recaps and updates of major issues and scope scenarios today. The committee will then vote on a recommendation to go the full Metropolitan Council meeting today. This recommendation will give firm direction to help the Central Corridor Project Office staff to prepare an application to the FTA for Final Design. Bell explained that there is additional work to be done, and more “tweaks” to the design of the LRT. He thanked the partners for their work on the committee thus far, and their work with the Metropolitan Council and staff and expressed deep appreciation to partners as well as staff.

**2. APPROVAL OF 02/27/08 AGENDA AND 02/13/07 MINUTES**

Motion was made by Carter, seconded by Smith to adopt the agenda for the 02/27/08 meeting and the minutes of the 02/13/08 meeting. The motion carried.

**3. CCLRT PROJECT SCOPE SCENARIOS – Mark Fuhrmann**

Mark Fuhrmann introduced the following people for their reports and also made his reports:

Robin Cauffman gave a recap as to the results and comments from the public listening sessions. Cauffman shared a written report of the comments with the committee members. She reported that outreach staff received feedback from the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) as to Scenario B; the CAC members identified what they thought were the strengths and weaknesses of Scenario B.

Dan Soler gave a recap and updates to the Washington Avenue traffic studies. Some of the comments from committee members:

McLaughlin asked whether estimates have been determined for the number of cars moving on nearby streets as a result of the mitigation plans. Soler responded that there are turning movement car counts at the various intersections on Washington Avenue, they would be distributed to other spots if the traffic is not allowed on Washington Ave. Each intersection has a different number of cars; counts would need to be studied specifically, some of the work has been done as part of Studies 2 and 3. O'Brien stated that traffic study #1 mitigation plans are not without impacts to the neighboring area; several thousand people come to the U of M campus to use the U of M Hospital facilities each day and that the U of M does not have the arterial street system to carry the traffic diverted from Washington Ave. Rybak added that the project must address mitigation of the neighborhoods around the U of M.

O'Brien stated that the U of M Board of Regent's position, since 2000, has been that constructing LRT at-grade with traffic on Washington Avenue is not acceptable. This position has been reflected in several prior studies and

in a letter and position paper which was distributed to members yesterday pertaining to the tunnel/northern alignment. She stated that U of M staff has met with the faculty in the Civil Engineering and are looking at other mitigation measures elsewhere, such as roundabouts in certain locations.

Soler presented updates to Traffic Studies #1 and #3 with the proposed mitigation plans. Fuhrmann stated that mitigation measures would need to be reviewed and approved by the FTA as an eligible project expense, in order to be covered as part the project.

Discussion followed Bell's question whether it is possible to introduce a new mode of transit on a heavily congested corridor, with mitigation, and be held harmless from all parties.

Fuhrmann gave an update on the U of M Northern Alignment and the 2 alternatives to crossing the river. He explained the "dual-track" project schedule timeline as it relates to the Northern Alignment Study. Bell stated that if the Northern Alignment works in terms of the CEI and becomes eligible to be considered, then a decision must be made at that time whether to delay the project. Rybak stated that the Northern Alignment may be a viable alternative, but noted the importance of moving forward in order to meet the project schedule. O'Brien stated that the U of M is very mindful of the schedule; they requested in mid November 2007, that the CCLRT staff consider having the environmental component of the Northern Alignment reviewed at the same time as the environmental component of the SDEIS, if the information is available at that time. McFarlin expressed concern that we may face risks in the FTA's subjectivity to our commitment by having the Northern Alignment studied. McFarlin stated that the FTA will review the scope and budget of the project prior to submitting an application for FFGA and the FTA will determine if the project is ready to apply.

Fuhrmann continued with an update of the CC Bus Transit Service on University Avenue (new Rtes 60 & 83), station spacing and planned infill stations. He answered questions clarifying the capital and operating costs of the two new bus routes, and questions on the impact of the new routes on the CEI. Carter asked how the information thus far may impact the ability to find the opportunity to construct the three infill stations. Discussion followed on the subject of the ability and impact of adding station(s) prior to the FFGA application, if an opportunity exists. Coleman proposed reducing mitigation and adding one infill station. Bell expressed concern that the amount of mitigation not be reduced.

Carter and Ortega expressed the importance of being resolved to look for opportunities to build an infill station(s) if circumstances change (such as numbers coming in under CEI, mitigations costs are much less than estimated, or contingency funds becoming available) prior to the application for FFGA. Ortega also requested that if money becomes available during construction, then adding station(s) should also be a priority in the project. Bell stated that release of contingency funds occurs as a result of construction, it is not possible to release contingency funds to add scope to the project that is not already part of the FFGA. Discussion followed concerning whether to add one infill station to the scope at this time or whether to wait until mitigation costs are determined.

Upon Ortega's suggestion the Chair and committee agreed to be on record as agreeing that at least one additional station be the first priority and committing to add it to the scope of the project, if fine-tuning of the engineering allows a window of opportunity to add said station, prior to application for a FFGA in August 2008.

O'Brien asked to get a copy of the Supplemental DEIS timeline slide. She asked for a response to her request from the last meeting – what the impacts to the CEI are with LRT at grade and traffic being alleviated off of Washington Avenue with the Transit Mall.

In answer to Rybak's concern, Fuhrmann stated project staff is working with the cities to ensure that the bicycle trail is kept in continuity near the Hiawatha LRT connection.

Fuhrmann reviewed each of the scenarios that are included on the action presented to the committee today (attached).

**Motion** was made by Ortega, seconded by Smith to adopt the action as attached to these minutes. **Motion passed unanimously.**

The motion was passed with the understanding that, if the CEI increases or other dollars are made available by mid-summer 2008, the first claim on those dollars would be one of the infill stations.

In answer to McFarlin, Bell stated that, if the opportunity arises, the choice of which infill station to add will be made by staff in consultation with the Ramsey County and St. Paul partners.

Fuhrmann stated that next steps will include planning and scheduling for detailing one additional infill station, further detailing mitigation actions with budget and funding sources, and the northern alignment feasibility analysis.

Smith will be presenting this action to the full Metropolitan Council at their meeting immediately following, today.

O'Brien stated that the U of M Board of Regents has always preferred the Northern Alignment or, if on Washington Avenue – then a tunnel. A third option on Washington Avenue with a Transit Mall and mitigation is now proposed. The Board of Regents has not taken action, her yes vote to the action today is with reservations because a mitigation plan is not in place, an integrated transit plan has not been designed, and the costs for those items have not been determined yet.

#### **4. NEXT MEETING: March 12, 2008**

The next regular meeting is scheduled for March 12, 2008 from 1:30 to 3:00 pm in the Metropolitan Council Chambers.

#### **5. ADJOURN:**

Chair Bell adjourned the meeting at 3:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted, LuAnne Major, Recording Secretary

## Central Corridor Action

The Central Corridor Management Committee recommends to the Metropolitan Council that the Project Office proceed with preliminary engineering and make application to the Federal Transit Administration to move the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (CCLRT) project to final design, with the following features:

- Fifteen new stations along approximately 11 (eleven) miles of track, with a western terminus at the Minnesota Twins Ballpark, and an eastern terminus in front of the St. Paul Union Depot;
- a vehicle maintenance facility will be constructed under the Lafayette Bridge, connected by double tracks to the eastern terminal station in front of the Union Depot;
- three stations in downtown St. Paul including 10<sup>th</sup> Street, front of Union Depot and a station on the diagonal connecting Cedar Street / 5<sup>th</sup> Street with Minnesota / 4<sup>th</sup> Street;
- three-car platforms;
- infrastructure below grade for three infill stations at Hamline, Victoria and Western avenues;
- Washington Avenue Bridge modifications;
- University of Minnesota at-grade Transit Mall;
- Improved Hiawatha LRT connection placing CCLRT on structure over 35 W and interlining with Hiawatha south of 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue;
- Mill and overlay of University Avenue travel lanes including reconstruction of approximately 85% of the curb, gutter and sidewalks;
- total Project mitigation costs of approximately \$39 million;
- total Project cost of approximately \$909,100,000 with a CEI  $\leq$  \$23.99;

Furthermore, the CCMC recommends that the Project Office continue to work with project stakeholders on mitigation measures, and other unresolved issues, throughout the balance of preliminary engineering.