

Metropolitan Council

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

Meeting of the Central Corridor Management Committee

May 21, 2008

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present Chair Peter Bell called the May 21, 2008 regular meeting of the Central Corridor Management Committee to order at 12:17 pm at the Metropolitan Council offices at 390 North Robert St., St. Paul.

2. APPROVAL OF 05/21/08 AGENDA AND 04/30/07 MINUTES

Motion was made by Coleman seconded by Smith to adopt the agenda for the 05/21/08 meeting and motion was made by Carter seconded by Hanson to the approve minutes of the 04/30/08 meeting. The motions carried.

3. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Chair Bell introduced Speaker of the House Margaret Anderson Kelliher, Senator Sandy Pappas, and Representative Alice Hausman, thanking them for their heroic efforts in securing Central Corridor transportation funding and restoring most of the Council's request for supplemental financing. The funds are critical to building out the region's transportation system and providing an important link between Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Commissioner McLaughlin, Chair of the Counties Transit Improvement Board, expressed the appreciation of the County Boards, noting the recent Legislative Session represented the biggest single structural leap forward for transportation in the Metropolitan Area since 1998. The Transportation bill provided sales tax.

Mayor Rybak noted another huge success was passage of the Urban Partnership Agreement, allowing communities a unified vision on 35W, allowing commuters less congestion.

Speaker Kelliher thanked all the partners for their support on transportation issues. Representative Hausman asked folks not to think of hurdles as barriers, but management issues of a very complicated project. Senator Pappas agreed that with the partnership in place today, the Central Corridor can become a reality.

4. WASHINGTON AVENUE UPDATE

Mark Fuhrmann, Central Corridor Project Director presented updates on:

a. Mitigation Package Update

- All partners generally agree on the 14 mitigation issues, with some clarification. Kathleen O'Brien, U of M, asked for a description of the elements for each item and how costs are attributed. Commissioner McLaughlin suggests the East River Road connection be a separate item. Mayor Rybak asked for a definition and strategy for completing East River Road, number 8 on the list.
- East Bank Traffic Improvements include additional traffic signals, turns lanes and modifying intersections.

- Electromagnetic technical solutions were identified to mitigate concerns near five research buildings housing sensitive equipment.
- b. Running Time and CEI Calculation
- Staff identified 1300' missing from travel time calculations. When added into the travel time model, 39 seconds were added to Washington Avenue alignment travel time, increasing the CEI to \$24.39.
- c. Adjustments to Cost & CEI
- Staff identified capital cost savings of \$17M to keep the CEI below \$24. With the Washington Avenue Transit Mall, the project can avoid right-of-way acquisition costs of \$15M savings. The other \$2M comes from elimination of a tunnel radio, no longer needed in the project.
- d. Project Schedule/SDEIS Status
- FTA informed project office staff that they are unable to return SDEIS comments by May 28. FTA wants to see the Northern Alignment feasibility study and will look to the project sponsor as to its preferred alignment so they know all local partners are on the same page as to where the train should go.

Mr. Fuhrmann believes the mitigation package, with the additional feature of East River Road going north, is an adequate package to address the Washington Avenue traffic situation and believes the FTA would see that package as reasonable and justifiable.

**Steve Kotke, City of Minneapolis Public Works Director
CCLRT Project Advisory Committee**

Chair Bell introduced Steve Kotke, representing the CCLRT PAC. Mr. Kotke noted that the PAC believes that all mitigation issues relating to Washington Avenue alignment have been identified and the group is comfortable that solutions to the issues will be sought. He presented the following statement:

The following statement is supported by the Minneapolis, St. Paul, Hennepin County, Ramsey County, MnDOT and Met Council/CCPO members of the CCLRT Project Advisory Committee (PAC) with U of M not taking a position:

After significant technical analysis of all project information, including the Northern Alignment Feasibility Study and results of the CEI calculations for the Northern Alignment that were presented to PAC on May 19, 2008, PAC recommends proceeding toward Final Engineering of the Washington Avenue at-grade transit mall alignment for CCLRT.

Further, it is PAC's opinion that:

- Direct impacts of a Washington Avenue at-grade alignment have been adequately identified and there are reasonable opportunities for mitigating these impacts.
- There will be other transportation system impacts, anticipated and unanticipated, that should be addressed through system improvements to ensure multi-modal mobility throughout the entire CCLRT corridor and affected area.
- Project partners should continue to work towards securing the funding necessary for transportation system improvements ineligible for FTA funding but necessary for overall success of the project.
- The CCLRT is a critical link in a regional rail system and changes in traffic patterns are a necessary part of advancing the broader goal.

Kathleen O'Brien, U of Minnesota, stated she is pleased the engineers believe the mitigation plans are adequate, because this is the kind of assurance the Board of Regents might look to if they review the Washington Avenue alignment some time in the future. She also noted the University PAC representatives were not given an agenda of the Wednesday morning PAC meeting.

5. UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA'S NORTHERN ALIGNMENT

Kathleen O'Brien, University of Minnesota, introduced the presentation, with a briefing packet prepared for the Regents and distributed to CCMC. The northern alignment is the preferred alternative of the University Board of Regents since their action on the Central Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement in July 2001. The Metropolitan Council agreed to consider a preliminary feasibility study of the northern alignment, provided the University completely pays for the preliminary study. The feasibility analysis, done by SRF Consulting Group, "has shown the northern alignment will save costs and save ride time. However, ridership is projected to be less than the Washington Avenue alternative. The alignment avoids the negative impacts to Washington Avenue traffic, hospital and clinics access, and surrounding neighborhoods and businesses."

Bob Baker, Director of Parking and Transportation, University of Minnesota presented the University of Minnesota Dual Track Planning Efforts.

The SRF report details a Northern Alignment "Enhanced Access", where the ridership model inputs were adjusted to reflect the presence of the U of M shuttle service in providing access to the regional transit system (LRT and bus). This "enhancement", which does not have FTA approval, changes the CEI to \$24.58. Without the "enhancement", the Northern Alignment has a CEI over \$28. Opportunities of the "Enhanced Access" include using existing railroad right-of-way to minimize disruptions of campus transportation system, strengthens connections to SE Minneapolis and the West Bank, supports developing in Dinkytown, Stadium Village, and biosciences facilities, maintains access to the hospital, and avoids impacting Northrop Mall and Historic Knoll area.

It is Mr. Baker's belief that the engineering studies for both alignments are 15% complete.

6. NORTHERN ALIGNMENT RISKS AND ISSUES

Mark Fuhrmann identified several risks that would cause a schedule delay and cost escalation: site contamination on the East and West Bank, railroad right-of-way acquisition, operating agreement and insurance and indemnification issues, required federal permits, and multiple environmental issues.

Other Northern Alignment concerns include: significantly lower ridership using FTA-accepted ridership model, significantly higher CEI, plus the risks not reflected in the cost estimate.

7. CCMC RECOMMENDATION TO MET COUNCIL

It was moved by Commissioner McLaughlin, seconded by Mayor Rybak to adopt the following resolution:
WHEREAS:

1. The Central Corridor Management Committed and the Metropolitan Council on February 27, 2008 directed that the Project Office proceed with Preliminary Engineering and make a New Starts application to the Federal Transit Administration to move the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (CCLRT) Project into Final Design with, among other features, a University of Minnesota at-grade Transit Mall on Washington Avenue;
2. The University of Minnesota, City of Minneapolis and the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority have requested further definition and planning of a Washington Avenue at-grade Transit/Pedestrian Mall, with special emphasis on design and operation of the Mall, mitigation measures, and bus operations in the University Area, which includes the nearby neighborhoods;
3. The University of Minnesota has conducted a Feasibility Analysis of the Northern Alignment as a possible alternative to the Washington Avenue at-grade Transit/Pedestrian Alignment;
4. The results of the Northern Alignment Feasibility Analysis show a higher estimated Cost-Effectiveness Index.
5. A number of significant outstanding issues have been identified relating to environmental (including contaminated soils), design, construction, operations and maintenance, railroad-related matters and project schedule of the Northern Alignment, which create additional uncertainty and risks;
6. Great progress has been made in the definition of a mitigation package for the Washington Avenue at-grade

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alignment in the University Area by all affected parties;

NOW, THEREFORE:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Corridor Management Committee recommends that the Metropolitan Council refine its action of February 27, 2008 and direct the Project Office to proceed with Preliminary Engineering and make application to the Federal Transit Administration to move the CCLRT Project into Final Design with, among other features, a University of Minnesota at-grade Transit/Pedestrian Mall on Washington Avenue with no vehicular traffic except emergency vehicles, light rail vehicles and buses;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Corridor Management Committee recommends that Metropolitan Council direct the Project Office to discontinue all work related to the Northern Alignment, effective immediately;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Corridor Management Committee recommends that the Metropolitan Council, the University of Minnesota, Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority and City of Minneapolis continue to work toward the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) focused on mitigation measures in the University Area and a second MOU regarding design, construction, ownership, right-of-way, operational and maintenance issues, in the University area;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the parties represented in the Corridor Management Committee agree to work cooperatively to (a) submit a New Starts application in early September, 2008, (b) advocate timely federal approval of the New Starts application, and (c) take all the necessary actions with the FTA to maintain the project on its current schedule, with entrance into Final Design in Spring, 2009.

Chair Bell informed the Committee that University President Bruininks called Governor Pawlenty, concerned about actions at today's meeting. Chair Bell was asked by Chief of Staff Matt Kramer for a weeklong reprieve to allow the University to present additional information.

Motion by Council Member Mary Smith, seconded by Commissioner Tom Hanson, to table the Resolution vote for one week. Motion carried.

Chair Bell asked University officials to come to the next meeting with written documentation from the FTA on whether the Northern Alignment can be done within the time frame established by the project office for the Washington Avenue Alignment and if the FTA will accept the revised CEI ridership model used for the Northern Alignment. In addition, he asked for written comments from BNSF Railroad senior officials regarding right-of-way acquisition, insurance and indemnification issues.

Chair Bell said the CCMC will meet Wednesday, May 28 for a final vote on the alignment. Any committee members unable to attend should email their proxy designee to him.

8. INFORMATION SHARING BY CCMC MEMBERS

Committee members expressed their respect for the University institution and staff, and their belief that all stakeholders are right in seeking their best interests, while considering the project as a whole. Concessions have been made by stakeholders, and it's important and possible to manage the remaining issues while keeping the project on schedule.

9. NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY May 28, 2008 1-3:00 pm

10. ADJOURN – Chair Bell adjourned the meeting at 4:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Pat Curtiss, Recording Secretary

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