

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: April 28, 2014

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of May 14, 2014

Subject: Midtown Corridor Alternatives Analysis – Recognize Policy Advisory Committee Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) recommendation

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: 2030 Transportation Policy Plan

Staff Prepared/Presented: Brian Lamb, General Manager, 612-349-7710; Charles Carlson, Senior Manager of Transitway Projects, 612-349-7639; Michael Mechtenberg, Project Manager, 612-349-7793

Division/Department: Metro Transit/BRT Small Starts Project Office

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council recognizes the Midtown Corridor Policy Advisory Committee's (PAC) action (attached) on a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) recommendation made on February 12, 2014. This action confirms previously adopted BRT improvements along Lake Street. A future Council action to amend the Transportation Policy Plan with a rail corridor LPA may be considered when:

Adequate funding is projected for the project in the fiscally constrained plan,

Specific rail mode (single car LRT or streetcar) is determined through more advanced study phases and supporting community engagement, and

Resolutions of support are obtained from the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County

Background

Metro Transit and corridor partners completed an 18-month evaluation of the costs, benefits, and impacts of transit improvements in the Midtown Corridor that included alternatives on Lake Street and/or the Midtown Greenway. The Midtown Corridor is listed in the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan as a transitway corridor to study for mode and alignment while Lake Street is identified as a future arterial bus rapid transit (BRT) corridor.

Following a detailed analysis of three alternatives, the PAC, which included both policymakers (Metropolitan Council, City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County) and community organizations (Midtown Greenway Coalition, Lake Street Council, etc.), unanimously recommended **arterial BRT on Lake Street and double/single-track rail in the Midtown Greenway** as the best solution for the transportation needs in the corridor. Through this process project staff engaged the local community, including business and non-profit leaders, policymakers, and the general public, for their input and feedback on the analysis.

The rail component of the recommended LPA will undergo additional steps prior to being adopted into the Transportation Policy Plan. This includes determination of specific mode (LRT or streetcar), expressed support for the recommendation through resolutions from the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County, and additional projected funding capacity within the fiscally constrained TPP.

Since the Metropolitan Council was the lead agency for the alternatives analysis, the Council's action to recognize the LPA recommendation acknowledges that the work of the project Policy Advisory Committee is complete.

Rationale

A transitway study typically concludes with a Locally Preferred Alternative recommendation from the sponsoring agency. This action confirms the Council's support for pursuing the additional steps necessary to warrant consideration as a LPA in the Transportation Policy Plan.

The AA completed work direction to conduct a study described in the 2030TPP:

p. 141, "Based on results from the *2030 Transit Master Study*, the Midtown corridor also shows promise as a transitway connecting Hiawatha LRT and Southwest Transitway. With ... (Alternative 3A) selected as the Locally Preferred Alternative for Southwest, the Midtown Corridor should be examined further to see if a connector between Hiawatha and Southwest is warranted."

p. 146, "Based on results from the *2030 Transit Master Study*, the Midtown corridor also showed promise as a transitway connecting Hiawatha LRT and Southwest Transitway and is recommended for further study to determine the appropriate mode and alignment."

p. 149, "Midtown: Preferred mode and alignment to be determined through further study."

Funding

The analysis evaluation was funded through a competitive grant from the FTA 5339 Alternatives Analysis program and 20 percent local match.

Known Support / Opposition

Local communities have expressed support for advancing transitway improvements in the corridor, as evidenced by unanimous support for the recommendation of the Midtown Corridor Alternatives Analysis Policy Advisory Committee.



Midtown Corridor Alternatives Analysis

Locally Preferred Alternative – Feb. 12, 2014

WHEREAS, the Midtown Corridor is identified in the Metropolitan Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (amended May 2013) as a future bus or rail transitway, with the appropriate mode and alignment to be determined through further study, and

WHEREAS, Lake Street is identified in the Metropolitan Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (amended May 2013) as a future arterial BRT corridor (called enhanced bus for this study), and

WHEREAS, on April 2, 2010 the City of Minneapolis identified the Midtown Greenway as part of a long-term rail network, and

WHEREAS, the City of Minneapolis has identified Lake Street as a primary transit network corridor in the Access Minneapolis: Citywide Transportation Action Plan (published July 2009), and

WHEREAS, on November 3, 2009 the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority unanimously supported the Southwest Transitway LPA resolution which included an amendment that "the region continue to explore the development of and commitment to the Midtown Corridor as a rail transit connection between the Southwest and Hiawatha LRT lines," and

WHEREAS, the alternatives analysis identified three primary needs to address with the Midtown Corridor transitway: unmet transportation needs in the corridor, particularly with transit; a diverse population with a variety of transportation demands; support of city and regional policies encouraging growth and development in the corridor, and

WHEREAS, the alternatives analysis identified five primary goals to achieve with the Midtown Corridor transitway: increase transit use among the growing number of corridor residents, employees, and visitors; improve corridor equity with better mobility and access to jobs and activities; catalyze and support housing and economic development along the corridor; develop a cost-effective transitway that is well-positioned for implementation; build upon the vibrancy and diversity of the corridor by supporting healthy, active communities and the environment, and

WHEREAS, the alternatives analysis has shown that either the double/single-track rail in the Midtown Greenway or enhanced bus on Lake Street will address the corridor needs and achieve the project goals, and

WHEREAS, the alternatives analysis has further shown that there is sufficient demand in the corridor to support both double/single-track rail in the Midtown Greenway and enhanced bus on Lake Street, and



WHEREAS, there is strong community support for rail in the Midtown Greenway and for transit improvements on Lake Street, including on Lake Street east of Hiawatha Avenue, outside the project study area, and

WHEREAS, the technical advisory committee (TAC), with representatives from Metro Transit, the Metropolitan Council, the City of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Hennepin County, the City of Saint Paul and Minnesota Department of Transportation, has provided input in this resolution,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Midtown Corridor Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) has taken into consideration the technical information on each of the alternatives, along with input from the TAC, CAC and community, and recommends the dual alternative of enhanced bus on Lake Street and double/single-track rail in the Midtown Greenway as the locally preferred alternative for the Midtown Corridor project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that subsequent phases of technical analysis will continue to engage policymakers, technical experts, adjacent property owners and the community to address key issues not covered in the LPA, including but not limited to the rail vehicle type, track design such as single/double and turf track segments, greenspace, station area design, bicycle and pedestrian path width, and other elements to enhance the Midtown Greenway and Lake Street.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution for the recommended locally preferred alternative by the Midtown Corridor PAC be forwarded to the Metropolitan Council for consideration in the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan.