

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: June 23, 2014

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of July 9, 2014

Subject: Recommend adoption of the revised Orange Line Project Plan Update

District(s), Member(s): District 5, Steve Elkins; District 7, Gary Cunningham; District 8, Adam Duininck; District 15, Steven Chávez

Policy/Legal Reference: Public Accountability Policy 2-1; Public Involvement in the Transportation Planning Process 1-3b

Staff Prepared/Presented:

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Division/Department(s): Metro Transit, BRT/Small Starts Project Office

Proposed Action

Recommend adoption of the revised Orange Line Project Plan Update, incorporating public comments. The Project Plan Update, upon adoption, will serve to inform an application to the Federal Small Starts program, help FTA determine an environmental path for the Orange Line, and update the Council's Transportation Policy Plan.

Background

On April 30, Metropolitan Council authorized release of the draft Project Plan Update for public comment. Comments were solicited in various ways, including:

- METRO Orange Line website (2,200 visits in April and May);
- Facebook and Twitter posts, and a Tweet Chat hosted by Metro Transit;
- Finance and Commerce article: *Orange Line Plans Ready for Comment*;
- Orange Line E-newsletter (336 subscribers);
- I-494/35W Interchange Vision Layout Open House (80 attendees);
- 66th Street Reconstruction Open House (130 attendees); and
- Presentations at Metropolitan Council Transportation Committee, I-494 Corridor Commission, I-35W Solutions Alliance, Bloomington City Council, Richfield City Council, Dakota County Regional Rail Authority, and Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority.

Comments and letters of support were primarily received from organization and agency partners, and included the following themes:

- Support for the proposed Knox Avenue alignment (3A) and addition of the 76th Street Station;

- Support for improved transit throughout the corridor, with planned routes and frequency complementing existing service;
- Continued integration with concurrent highway and bridge projects and local land use planning;
- Continued coordination with property owners, agencies, and other stakeholders in subsequent phases of design and engineering, in order to maximize benefits and minimize any impacts;
- Maximizing BRT speed and competitiveness as individual project components are designed;
- Studying and implementing a southern extension of the Orange Line to Lakeville;
- Consideration for improving pedestrian access between stations and local destinations; and
- Better engaging local partners in a discussion about potential funding roles.

Rationale

A formal public comment period or public hearing is not required at this stage of planning, however, the Project Plan Update is intended to provide critical direction and focus as the Orange Line enters Small Starts Project Development and begins environmental processes this year.

Funding

The Project Plan Update was funded using Metro Transit operating budget resources, supplemented by capital project funding partnerships at specific station locations.

Known Support / Opposition

Orange Line project partners have been closely involved in the planning efforts that are summarized in this document. Letters or resolutions of support have been received from Richfield, Bloomington, Burnsville, Dakota County, the I-494 Corridor Commission, the I-35W Solutions Alliance, and Lake Street Council.

There is known opposition to the Knox Avenue alignment from Kraus-Anderson, the property manager of the Southtown Shopping Center in Bloomington. The proposed alignment would require approximately 900 linear feet of new right-of-way on an existing service road through the Southtown parking lot, connecting Knox Avenue under I-494. Metro Transit staff continue to work closely with Kraus-Anderson to understand concerns and potential impacts, and to maximize development benefits in the next phase of planning.