

RIVERVIEW TRANSIT CORRIDOR AMENDMENT TO THE 2040 TRANSPORTATION POLICY PLAN

*Public Comment Report
Nov. 29, 2018 through Jan. 21, 2019*

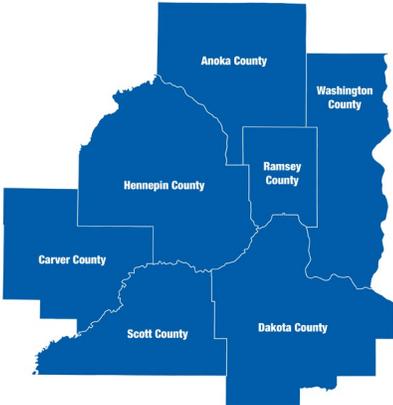


February 2019

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Comment Overview

This comment report summarizes comments received for the draft amendment to the *2040 Transportation Policy Plan* to include the locally preferred alternative of Modern Streetcar for the Riverview transit corridor in the Current Revenue Scenario of the plan. The draft plan was released for the purposes of public comment on Nov. 29, 2018 and comments were accepted through Jan. 21, 2019. During that time, the plan was available on the Metropolitan Council's website and through printed copies as requested.

The Council proactively promoted availability of the comment draft, including advertising it and the public hearing through social media and other means. In addition, the Council proactively engaged with tribal nations in the state to discuss impacts the proposed alignment would have to Fort Snelling and nearby cultural resources. A public hearing was conducted on Jan. 9, 2019 at the Metropolitan Council's offices in downtown St. Paul. A list of people who testified is included in this report.

The following report includes a spreadsheet that summarizes the comments received, who made the comment, the staff response to the comment, and any text changes made to the Transportation Policy Plan.

More than 800 people engaged with the Council related to the plan. About 80 people participated directly – both individuals and representatives of organizations, including local governments and non-profit organizations. Comments related to approximately 25 specific areas, identified on the following pages that can be organized into the following general categories: Alignment, cost, environmental impact, mode and project process.

A written record of all comments made via letter, email, online, or on the phone is available from the Metropolitan Council upon request.

How to Use this Document

The following spreadsheet summarizes the comments received, who made the comment, and the response to the comment. Given that Ramsey County is still the lead agency for the Riverview Corridor work and will continue to manage the project through the next phase of environmental review, several of the comment responses are from Ramsey County staff. Council staff also provided responses. The different elements are noted in the table. There is an index of all comment contributors with an identifying number attached. Many people made similar comments, so a generalized summary of comments is preceded by the identifying number of the people or groups who made the comment.

In order to find the comments of a resident or group, follow these steps:

1. Look for an individual or group name on the List of Commenters table.
2. To the left of the name is their commenter identification number.
3. Hold down the "control" key on the keyboard and hit the "F" key at the same time.
4. Type the commenter identification number, and hit the Enter key.
5. Your document software will identify all the comments that were made by that commenter.

Table of Commenters

ID	First Name	Last Name	Comment Type
45	Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community		Email
21	Stuart Companies		Email, Mail, Public Hearing
37	United Hospital		Email
42	Kory	Andersen	Email
57	Antonio	Backman	Email
44	Nathan	Bakken	Email
77	Margaret	Barbis	Email
72	Delores	Barton	Email
35	Austin	Bell	Email
46	Scott	Berger	Email
54	Michael	Bishop	Email
81	Tyler	Blackmon	Public Hearing
8	Pete	Boisclair	Voicemail
83	Judy	Brueggemann	Mail
27	Harold	Buss	Email
63	Max	Christensen	Email
33	Tyler	Dale	Email
55	Chris	Danner	Email
22	Al	Davison	Email
26	Jason	DeBoer-Moran	Email
14	David	Drummond	Email
47	Eric	Ecklund	Email
51	Scott	Engel	Email
3	Barb	Fleig	Email
61	Joan	Folkert	Email
49	Ben	Frank	Email
52	Andrew	Frenz	Email
5	Lee	Gjorvad	Email
13	Kevin	Grass	Email
30	Kristine	Grill	Public Hearing
73	Mitch	Gulbransen	Email
53	Evan	Hall	Email
6	Marie	Hanson	Email
69	Matthew	Hollinshead	Email, Public Hearing
40	Nate	Hood	Email
66	Bill	Hosko	Email
29	Bill	Huepenbecker	Public Hearing
9	Coralie	Hunter	Email
71	Chip	Jenne	Email
74	Jerome	Johnson	Email
39	Miller	Jozwiak	Email
4	Carol	Kaehn	Email
78	Carol	Kist	Email
60	Amy	Kuebelbeck	Email
70	Daniel	Kueny	Email
80	Michael	Leek	Public Hearing
25	Kevin	Leuthold	Email
43	Jesse	Lorenz	Email
75	Paul	Mattessich	Email
65	Will	Mattessich	Email
79	Terry	Mattson	Public Hearing

ID	First Name	Last Name	Comment Type
38	Michael	Mayer	Email
15	Joe	McKinley	Email
7	Gordon	Moore	Email
19	Hans	Mouritzen	Email, Mail
41	Matt	Muenzberg	Email
24	Donald	Mullin	Email
48	Kyle	Olson	Email
17	Joan	Pasiuk	Email
18	Dan	Pierskalla	Email
34	John	Regal	Email
67	Ian	Reynolds	Email
20	Nicholas	Rossini	Email, Mail
58	Delaney	Russell	Email
50	Nicky	Salica	Email
36	James	Schoettler	Email, Public Hearing
2	Kari	Scholen	Email
59	Dan	Scollan	Email
31	Jay	Severance	Email, Public Hearing
28	Virginia	Simek	Public Hearing
10	Sharon	Slettehaugh	Email
32	Greg	Struve	Public Hearing
11	Catherine	Sweet	Email
16	Melis	Switzer	Voicemail
62	Derek	Thompson	Email
82	Darren	Tobolt	Public Hearing
12	Christa	Treichel	Email
1	Lynn	Utecht	Email
76	Daniel	Waddell	Email
64	Donovan	Walker	Email
23	Robert	Wellemeyer	Email
68	Joe	Zwolski	Email

Commenter	Topic	Summary	Response
18	Alignment	Build the route underground	<p>From Ramsey County:</p> <p>A tunnel option was evaluated in the Pre-Project Development Study. This alternative was dismissed by the Policy Advisory Committee due to impacts and cost. Ramsey County is committed to working with stakeholders to address pedestrian and bike concerns through station area planning and streetscape design to address safety and accessibility. An emphasis will be placed on how to create connections between W. 7th activity centers, surrounding neighborhoods and cultural attractions such as the Mississippi River. Additionally, improved pedestrian and bicycle accommodations will be evaluated at the Mississippi River crossing.</p>
21, 37, 57, 63	Alignment	Concern about station location	<p>From Ramsey County:</p> <p>A modern streetcar that runs partly in dedicated right-of-way along W. 7th Street will connect downtown Saint Paul to other major destinations and serve neighborhoods, improving mobility and access to opportunities and fostering redevelopment. It was chosen as the locally preferred alternative because it best met the purpose and need for the corridor by providing the highest ridership (nearly twice as many trips as ABRT), the highest number of transit dependent riders, and has the highest development potential.</p> <p>The use of Smith Ave. will be evaluated in the Environmental Impact Statement phase as an alternative to West 7th Street to identify which route provides the best ridership and benefits while minimizing cost and impacts. The analysis completed by WSB will be evaluated and incorporated into the next phase as appropriate as well as continuing to coordinate with United and Children's Hospitals via the technical, policy and community committee processes.</p>

Commenter	Topic	Summary	Response
23, 25, 31, 69, 74, 78	Alignment	Consider reassessing the Ford site	<p>From Ramsey County: Modern streetcar was chosen as the locally preferred alternative because it best met the purpose and need for the corridor by providing the highest ridership (nearly twice as many trips as ABRT), the highest number of transit dependent riders, and has the highest development potential.</p> <p>Ramsey County will continue work closely with the National Park Service, Historic Fort Snelling, MN Department of Natural Resources, the MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit and other stakeholders during the upcoming preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement and project engineering to avoid, minimize or mitigate any impacts to natural areas and historic sites.</p> <p>All transit routes through the Ford Site had lower forecasted ridership than the locally preferred alternative. This is due to the Ford Site being a different travel market than W. 7th Street. Trips around the Ford Site are oriented to Minneapolis, not along the destinations connected by W. 7th Street. This resulted in the riders being added by traveling through the Ford Site not being enough to offset the riders lost by deviating from the more direct path along W. 7th Street. Traveling through the Ford Site added 10-15 minutes of travel time for these riders. Ramsey County, the City of Saint Paul and Metro Transit are committed to undertaking an evaluation of how best to connect Riverview and the Blue Line with a connection to the Ford Site.</p>
74	Alignment	Proposed alignment may require auxiliary bus service for neighborhood connection	<p>From Ramsey County: All transit routes through the Ford Site had lower forecasted ridership than the locally preferred alternative. This is due to the Ford Site being a different travel market than W. 7th Street. Trips around the Ford Site are oriented to Minneapolis, not along the destinations connected by W. 7th Street. This resulted in the riders being added by traveling through the Ford Site not being enough to offset the riders lost by deviating from the more direct path along W. 7th Street. Traveling through the Ford Site added 10-15 minutes of travel time for these riders. Ramsey County, the City of Saint Paul and Metro Transit are committed to undertaking an evaluation of how best to connect Riverview and the Blue Line with a connection to the Ford Site.</p>
20, 31, 66	Alignment	Supports a different route	<p>From Ramsey County: Many businesses located on W. 7th Street between Kellogg Boulevard to Randolph Avenue generate traffic throughout the day and rely on on-street parking to some degree. A transit guideway design that allows for the shared use of a travel lane with vehicle traffic while still accommodating on-street parking was deemed to be the best compromise in this section of W. 7th Street. In the upcoming environmental analysis, this segment of W. 7th Street will be further evaluated to determine the appropriate type of guideway for the Riverview modern streetcar.</p>

Commenter	Topic	Summary	Response
1, 2, 3, 9, 13, 21, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 53, 63, 65, 67, 69, 73, 78, 83	Cost	Concern about cost of Riverview project	<p>From Ramsey County:</p> <p>Various bus and rail options were evaluated for the corridor. Modern Streetcar was chosen as the locally preferred alternative because it best met the purpose and need for the corridor by providing the highest ridership (nearly twice as many trips as arterial bus rapid transit), the highest number of transit dependent riders, and has the highest development potential.</p> <p>Consistent with other large transit projects, the Riverview Corridor will be funded from multiple sources. It is anticipated that the capital cost will be paid for by federal funds (49%) and non-federal funds (51%). The non-federal funds will be provided by Ramsey and Hennepin Counties.</p>
2, 23, 31, 36, 69	Environmental Impact	Concern about bridges	<p>Ramsey County, the current lead agency for the project, will continue work closely with the National Park Service, Historic Fort Snelling, MN Department of Natural Resources, the MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit and other stakeholders during the upcoming preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement and project engineering to avoid, minimize or mitigate any impacts to natural areas and historic sites. The National Park Service has stated that while a new bridge crossing the Mississippi River is not statutorily prohibited, it is not the preferred option and prior to advancing a new bridge, an analysis must be done that evaluates the ability of the existing bridges to address the need, then new bridges next to an existing river crossing, and only if these are not feasible can a new bridge in a new corridor be evaluated.</p>
17	Environmental Impact	Concern about interaction with bicycles, pedestrians	<p>Ramsey County, the current lead agency for the project, is committed to working with stakeholders to address pedestrian and bike concerns through station area planning and streetscape design to address safety and accessibility. An emphasis will be placed on how to create connections between W. 7th activity centers, surrounding neighborhoods and cultural attractions such as the Mississippi River. Additionally, improved pedestrian and bicycle accommodations will be evaluated at the Mississippi River crossing.</p>

Commenter	Topic	Summary	Response
66, 72	Environmental Impact	Concern about LRT Operations	<p>From Ramsey County:</p> <p>The current cost estimate for the Riverview modern streetcar is based on less than 1% engineering but the cost per mile to construct is comparable to other rail transit projects in the US. The construction cost will be refined during the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement.</p> <p>To qualify for federal funding, transit projects must demonstrate that they are cost effective using criteria provided by the Federal Transit Administration. This is typically done after a project has been through considerable environmental analysis and engineering so the project sponsor has a reasonable accurate cost estimate. Preliminary cost effectiveness calculations show that the Riverview modern streetcar is cost effective. These preliminary costs will be refined as the project undergoes environmental analysis and engineering.</p>
2, 3, 19, 78	Environmental Impact	Concern about tunnel construction	<p>From Ramsey County:</p> <p>The current corridor plan includes connecting to Blue Line just north of Fort Snelling Station in order to connect to the existing stations at MSP Airport. A tunnel has been scoped to protect Fort Snelling and allow for navigation through the complex topography of the area across the Highway 5 bridge. More analysis will be conducted to determine the right engineering solution for this area in future phases of the project.</p>
12	Environmental Impact	Concern about wildlife, natural areas	<p>Ramsey County, the current lead agency for the project, will continue to work closely with the National Park Service, Historic Fort Snelling, MN Department of Natural Resources, the MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit and other stakeholders during the upcoming preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement and project engineering to avoid, minimize or mitigate any impacts to natural areas and historic sites. This analysis will include an evaluation of modern streetcar on the existing bridge.</p> <p>The Council understands and respects the concerns about the important natural and cultural resources in the area and is committed to working with Ramsey County on the next phase of the project, as described above.</p>
45, 80	Environmental Impact	Concerns about cultural resources	<p>The Riverview Corridor project partners look forward to working with the 11 federally recognized tribal nations within Minnesota, any displaced tribal communities where possible, and resource agencies to complete engineering and environmental analysis along the corridor, including the river bluff and Fort Snelling.</p>

Commenter	Topic	Summary	Response
12	Environmental Impact	Opposed to building another bridge	<p>Ramsey County, the current lead agency for the project, will continue to work closely with the National Park Service, Historic Fort Snelling, MN Department of Natural Resources, the MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit and other stakeholders during the upcoming preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement and project engineering to avoid, minimize or mitigate any impacts to natural areas and historic sites. This analysis will include an evaluation of modern streetcar on the existing bridge.</p> <p>The Council understands and respects the concerns about the important natural and cultural resources in the area and is committed to working with Ramsey County on the next phase of the project, as described above.</p>
70	Environmental Impacts	Concern about environmental impacts	<p>From Ramsey County:</p> <p>W. 7th Street is 56 feet wide from curb to curb throughout most of its length and can accommodate a modern streetcar running in a lane shared with traffic without narrowing sidewalks. In areas where the modern streetcar would run in dedicated right-of-way on W. 7th Street, more operating space would be required. This can come from narrowing sidewalks, removing on-street parking or narrowing the travel lanes. Modern streetcar tracks are embedded into the pavement and can be hazardous to bicyclists; however, Saint Paul recently completed a design study showing how the parallel Canadian Pacific Spur could be converted to a bike and pedestrian trail.</p> <p>Pedestrian safety and access are important in developing the Riverview modern streetcar. Ramsey County is committed to working with stakeholders to address pedestrian and bike concerns through station area planning and streetscape design to address safety and accessibility. An emphasis will be placed on how to create connections between W. 7th activity centers, surrounding neighborhoods and cultural attractions such as the Mississippi River.</p> <p>Ramsey County is committed to working with area businesses and residents during the upcoming preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement and project engineering to identify and minimize the impacts of construction and find solutions that maintain access to businesses during construction.</p> <p>Project staff met with representatives from Saint Paul Regional Water Services to discuss the location of water utilities and the geology under W. 7th Street. The current cost estimate for the Riverview modern streetcar is based on less than 1% engineering but does include local knowledge about the depth of bedrock under W. 7th Street. The cost per mile to construct is comparable to other rail transit projects in the country. The construction cost estimate will be refined during the environmental analysis and engineering phases.</p>

Commenter	Topic	Summary	Response
30	Environmental Impacts	Streetcars support placemaking	Supportive comment acknowledged.
2, 3, 4, 5, 14, 17, 20, 21, 28, 32, 33, 35, 51, 52, 53, 54, 59, 67, 68, 70, 72	Mode	Opposed to the project	Comment acknowledged
35, 42, 48, 49, 55, 62, 64, 65, 69, 73, 74, 75, 76	Mode	Prefers a dedicated lane/mode choice	<p>From Ramsey County: The Riverview modern streetcar would run in shared lanes with traffic on W. 7th Street from approximately Kellogg Boulevard to Randolph Avenue, or about two miles. The Riverview modern streetcar would run in dedicated right-of-way for the remainder of the 11.7-mile route. This operating layout was deemed to be the best compromise for portions of W. 7th Street where on-street parking was in demand. In the upcoming environmental analysis, this segment of W. 7th Street will be further evaluated to determine the appropriate type of guideway for the Riverview modern streetcar.</p>
4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, 17, 21, 27, 28, 35, 39, 42, 43, 46, 54, 57, 61, 63, 64, 65, 67, 70, 72, 73, 77, 83	Mode	Prefers improved bus service	<p>From Ramsey County: Arterial bus rapid transit (ABRT) is an improvement over local fixed-route bus service; however, ridership forecasts showed limited ridership increase compared to forecast Route 54 service. This is due to Route 54 already having the majority of ABRT travel time improvements already in place including limited stops, competitive travel times and frequent service. Modern streetcar was chosen as the locally preferred alternative because it best met the purpose and need for the corridor by providing the highest ridership (nearly twice as many trips as ABRT), the highest number of transit dependent riders, and has the highest development potential.</p> <p>The Riverview locally preferred alternative is travel time competitive with the bus service while serving more destinations. Additionally, the streetcar will have a more consistent travel time than a bus. The portions of the route that will be in dedicated right-of-way are less likely to be subject to slowdowns due to traffic or weather than buses operating in mixed traffic.</p>

Commenter	Topic	Summary	Response
20, 39, 41, 44, 46, 50, 54, 57, 59, 66, 67, 68	Mode	Prefers LRT	<p>From Ramsey County: The Riverview modern streetcar would run in shared lanes with traffic on W. 7th Street from approximately Kellogg Boulevard to Randolph Avenue, or about two miles. The Riverview modern streetcar would run in dedicated right-of-way for the remainder of the 11.7-mile route. This operating layout was deemed to be the best compromise for portions of W. 7th Street where on-street parking was in demand. In the upcoming environmental analysis, this segment of W. 7th Street will be further evaluated to determine the appropriate type of guideway for the Riverview modern streetcar.</p> <p>A modern streetcar that runs partly in dedicated right-of-way along W. 7th Street will connect downtown Saint Paul to other major destinations and serve neighborhoods, improving mobility and access to opportunities and fostering redevelopment.</p>
11, 14, 21, 27, 31, 39, 42, 51, 53, 66, 67, 68, 70, 78	Mode	Streetcar won't improve transit options	<p>From Ramsey County: A modern streetcar that runs partly in dedicated right-of-way along W. 7th Street will connect downtown Saint Paul to other major destinations and serve neighborhoods, improving mobility and access to opportunities and fostering redevelopment. It was chosen as the locally preferred alternative because it best met the purpose and need for the corridor by providing the highest ridership (nearly twice as many trips as ABRT), the highest number of transit dependent riders, and has the highest development potential.</p>
21, 36, 48, 50, 52, 59, 68, 69, 71, 73	Mode	Supports more transit in the corridor	Comment acknowledged.
7, 8, 19, 20, 24, 26, 29, 30, 34, 38, 40, 47, 58, 60, 76, 79, 81, 82	Mode	Supports streetcar option for the corridor	Supportive comment acknowledged.
11	Mode	Use current transit to the airport	Comment acknowledged.

70	Project Process	Concern about study process and related conclusions	<p>From Ramsey County:</p> <p>The consultant was selected via an open request for proposals process to complete technical analysis consistent with the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program. This program funds both New Starts and Small Starts projects. Both programs contain the same justification criteria, but are differentiated by the overall cost of the project. Projects under \$300 million compete in the Small Starts program while projects costing more than \$300 million compete in the New Starts program. Completing the analysis consistent with the federal CIG program maintains project eligibility for federal funding.</p> <p>The Riverview Project evaluated six alternatives under the CIG program with Arterial BRT as a Small Start and the others as New Starts due to Arterial BRT being the only alternative that would cost less than \$300 million. The results of this analysis were presented to the Riverview Technical Advisory Committee in September of 2017 and the Policy Advisory Committee in October of 2017. The Policy Advisory Committee selected the corridor's locally preferred alternative in December following a public hearing.</p> <p>The technical analysis for the corridor covered 27 criteria broken into five key areas (Environmental, Community, Transportation, Cost, and Station Areas). Many of the Environmental, Community and Transpiration criteria didn't differentiate as the route of the alternatives did not have much deviation. Additionally, the challenges with pedestrians and bicycles are not unique to a single alternative, they are inherent to a street that runs on a diagonal, has on-street parking and has three different lane configurations. However, as part of the approving the locally preferred alternative, the Policy Advisory Committee identified the need for future environmental and engineering work to fully analyze the impacts of noise, construction, pedestrian safety, and bike safety. Additionally, Station Area planning will be done to determine where development should and should not be focused around station areas, how the project can best fit into the existing neighborhood, and how pedestrians and bicyclists will access stations, travel across and along the corridor including connections to surrounding neighborhoods and cultural attractions such as the Mississippi River. Both the City of Saint Paul and Ramsey County have adopted policies related to how the transportation system will be prioritized. While the policies differ in name, they prioritize the transportation system in the same way, pedestrians first, then bikes, then transit and then cars. These policies will impact Riverview as it progresses through its environmental and engineering analysis.</p> <p>As part of analyzing how Riverview can best fit into the neighborhood, specific emphasis will be placed on emerging technologies to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts. One such opportunity is to use off-wire propulsion for the vehicle. This could allow the project to be built without overhead wires and utility poles.</p>
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Commenter	Topic	Summary	Response
			<p>Public engagement was a priority for the project and lead to the development of the corridor's purpose and need, goals and objectives, general station locations, alternatives (route and vehicle) to be analyzed, additional analysis on six bus rapid transit alternatives as well as more in-depth analysis of multiple technical options. The commitment to engaging with the public wasn't schedule or cost neutral, it added time and cost to the project (nearly doubling both). This additional work lead to a more informed public through neighborhood meetings, living room meetings, electronic engagement through social media and a website, pop-up meetings at food shelves, apartment complexes, grocery stores, community festivals/events and bus stops. Presentations to community groups, district council meetings, and business organizations and multiple rounds of open houses with formal question and answer sessions. Through these efforts more than 4,600 people were engaged on the project. Public comment was allowed at every Policy Advisory Committee meeting and summaries of the public engagement activities were provided throughout the project. Additionally, starting in January, 2017 monthly reports of all comments received in the previous month were provided as part of the Policy Advisory Committee agenda packets. In reporting public engagement activities, care was taken to balance the views as much as possible so that one commenter did not arbitrarily outweigh another. However, in the case of United Hospital, they were provided the opportunity to present the results of their analysis to the Technical and Policy advisory committees.</p> <p>Technical Advisory Committee members were provided information with as much advanced notice as possible. For those occasions where the Technical Advisory Committee was not ready to make recommendations on the material in front of them, it was brought back at a future meeting and members were offered the opportunity to meet with project staff to discuss the item in further detail. Specifically, the February, 2017 Technical Advisory Committee meeting focused on initial draft results for the most promising alternatives. The TAC didn't recommend releasing the information to the public until June 2017.</p>

Commenter	Topic	Summary	Response
15, 45, 71, 80	Project Process	Need more detail about real impacts of project to provide substantial comment	<p>The Riverview Corridor project partners look forward to working with the 11 federally recognized tribal nations within Minnesota, any displaced tribal communities where possible, and resource agencies to complete engineering and environmental analysis along the corridor, including the river bluff and Fort Snelling.</p> <p>The Council understands and respects the concerns about the important natural and cultural resources in the area and the Riverview Corridor project partners look forward to working with the 11 federally recognized tribal nations within Minnesota, any displaced tribal communities where possible, and resource agencies to complete engineering and environmental analysis along the corridor, including the river bluff and Fort Snelling.</p>



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