

11.0 PUBLIC AND AGENCY COORDINATION AND COMMENTS

This chapter describes the public and agency coordination efforts associated with the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project. At the onset of the project, a Public and Agency Involvement Program was developed that identified public outreach techniques and activities to support the decision-making process. The Public and Agency Involvement Program followed guidelines set forth in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act—A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Activities outlined in the program have guided public and agency involvement from initial planning activities through the Central Corridor Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS), the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS), and the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) process.

11.1 Public Involvement

Public involvement and agency coordination is critical to the success of any project with the potential to affect the surrounding community, metropolitan region, and state. Planning for the Central Corridor LRT Project involved extensive consultation with the affected public and coordination among participating agencies. The affected public includes those residents living within the Central Corridor LRT Study Area, along with individuals, businesses, community groups and social clubs, civic organizations, and others from the greater metropolitan region interested in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. Public agencies including local government and county, state, and federal regulatory jurisdictions have been important partners contributing to the project's development and success.

To build and maintain public support for the project, communication efforts have been targeted toward key audiences within the Central Corridor LRT Study Area and greater metropolitan community. Key audiences considered in the development of a public involvement plan and communication activities include:

- **General Public** – Residents of the seven-county metropolitan area, especially those interested in LRT and transportation issues;
- **Elected Officials** – Representatives of the public with constituencies living within the Central Corridor LRT Study Area and those serving on key transportation and transportation finance committees;
- **Corridor Residents** – Persons who reside within one-half-mile of the alignment that would be served and directly impacted by the Central Corridor LRT;
- **Corridor Businesses** – Owners and employees of businesses located in proximity to the Central Corridor LRT alignment;
- **Transit Users** – Persons already using transit as their usual means of transportation in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area;
- **Community Groups** – Organized groups that represent a geographic, demographic, or ethnic group adjacent to the alignment;
- **Businesses Groups** – Chambers of commerce and business groups serving smaller geographic segments of the Central Corridor LRT Study Area;
- **Educational Institutions** – The University of Minnesota (U of M) and other colleges and learning centers within walking distance of the Central Corridor LRT Study Area; and
- **Media** – Minneapolis and St. Paul metropolitan area media outlets, community and college newspapers, ethnic newspapers, radio stations, or television programs serving populations within the Central Corridor LRT Study Area.

Public involvement activities have been structured and implemented to help ensure issues related to engineering solutions, social and environmental impacts, economic effects, financing, and other community concerns are considered throughout the planning and decision-making process.

11.1.1 Current Public Involvement Program

The neighborhoods adjacent to the Central Corridor LRT alignment in Minneapolis and St. Paul are composed of numerous minority and ethnic groups, civic organizations, and

business groups that have a history of active involvement in the community, including eight district councils in St. Paul that provide regular input into municipal decision-making. The Central Corridor LRT alignment will also pass through Minneapolis neighborhoods with well-established community and business groups, including Prospect Park, Elliot Park, Cedar-Riverside, Marcy-Holmes, and Stadium Village. The development of a public involvement program that incorporates the dynamic aspects of the affected neighborhoods and the greater metropolitan region was critical to achieving a successful project outcome.

In October 2006, the Metropolitan Council prepared the Central Corridor LRT Communication and Public Involvement Strategic Plan. The manager of public involvement and the Metropolitan Council's public affairs director drafted the plan following a review of other regions' plans and programs and after they sought input from the project partners' communications and public affairs staff. Working with the Central Corridor Project Office (CCPO) and agency partners, the manager of public involvement was responsible for developing, updating, and implementing the Central Corridor Communication and Public Involvement Strategic Plan to maximize the chances for timely and successful completion of the project, consistent with community values and expectations.

To develop a plan that meets the needs of the Metropolitan Council and the community, it was important to first identify the Council's objectives and goals and to understand the community. The objectives of the plan are to:

- Build broad public awareness of, and support for, the Central Corridor LRT as an essential means to improve our transportation system and maintain regional competitiveness.
- Identify key community, business, minority, and ethnic groups within the Central Corridor LRT Study Area and maximize opportunities for public involvement and communication during the environmental, design, and construction processes to promote public ownership of the Central Corridor LRT.
- Prepare project area residents, businesses, and commuters for what to expect during construction, listen to their concerns, and develop plans to minimize harmful or disruptive effects.

When developing the Central Corridor LRT Communication and Public Involvement Strategic Plan, the Metropolitan Council established a system to identify the appropriate level of public involvement needed for project decisions. The purpose of this system was to help set public expectations and guide staff in developing and implementing appropriate public involvement strategies for key issues requiring resolution. It also assisted the Metropolitan Council in focusing on issues requiring public input and ideas. The three levels of public involvement are:

- **Inform:** The Metropolitan Council presents technical information and analysis to the public. The objective is to assist the public in understanding the issues, alternatives, and solutions. Examples include utilities and bridge analyses.
- **Input:** The Metropolitan Council asks the public for information about different aspects of the project. The objective is for the Metropolitan Council to understand public concerns as the project is engineered and designed; examples include intersection design and parking.
- **Influence:** The public is included in the development of alternatives and selection of the preferred station design, access, and art. The objective is to reflect the community's desires in the Central Corridor LRT Project.

The Central Corridor LRT Communication and Public Involvement Strategic Plan includes key messages that are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The plan places strong emphasis on careful coordination among the project's partners to ensure consistent communications. A variety of print and electronic media strategies are also incorporated as part of the plan.

These elements include:

- Fact sheets on Central Corridor LRT for use at public meetings
- A regularly updated Web site and monthly newsletter entitled *Making Tracks*
- A project fact sheet, translated into Vietnamese, Somali, and Spanish
- A public comment telephone line and e-mail address
- Bus and rail informational bulletins
- Public information meetings, open houses, speakers' bureaus, and listening sessions
- Media events, news releases, media kits, and editorial board meetings at key stages of the project

The Central Corridor LRT project's public involvement activities have included extensive and intentional efforts to engage environmental justice communities, informing residents about the project and providing opportunities for participation in the project's evaluation, planning, alternative development, station locations development activities, and environmental issues. These efforts have included public presentations to and meetings with minority community groups and civic organizations, public open houses and general information sessions, stakeholder meetings, small group and one-on-one meetings, diversity training and strategies to engage non-traditional stakeholders. Regular meetings have occurred with groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Urban League, the St. Paul African American Leadership Council (AALC), the Listening House Homeless Shelter, Union Gospel Mission, Berean Church, and Central Towers Assisted Living among several other community groups, churches, and organizations. The Community Outreach Staff include several persons fluent in languages spoken by community residents for whom English is a second language. Interviews and public service announcements were also made in local and regionally broadcast ethnic media outlets including, print, and television and radio programs in Somali, Hmong, Vietnamese, Thai, and Spanish. Media outlets have included the Minnesota Spokesman Recorder, Hmong Today, Hmong Times, African News Journal, Asian American Press, the Minnesota Women's Press, Vietnamese Broadcasting of Minnesota, along with Hmong and Somali local television news programs. Details about when, where, with whom, and what was discussed at the outreach meetings conducted by the project are provided in Appendix F.

To promote the broadest range of opportunity for public involvement, informational meetings and open houses were held in geographically varied locations and at varied times of the day and week. Printed materials were translated into multiple languages to facilitate communication with immigrant communities within the Central Corridor LRT Study Area.

A final feature of the Central Corridor LRT Communication and Public Involvement Strategic Plan is the Action Plan, which identifies specific action items and provides a place to identify their status and budget. This section of the plan is reviewed and updated at least every six months. The plan was last updated in August 2008, for submission with the New Starts Application Update in September 2008.

A key component of the Central Corridor LRT Communication and Public Involvement Strategic Plan was the creation of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and Business Advisory Council (BAC). These two committees were created because the communities and businesses along the corridor have different concerns, and the number of community groups likely to participate would be too many for one committee. The committees facilitated communication with residents and businesses.

The CAC is the primary avenue for public and community involvement. The objective of the CAC is threefold:

- Advise the Central Corridor Management Committee (CCMC) and provide input and feedback to CCPO staff on issues related to the planning, environmental design, and construction of the Central Corridor LRT Project including station design, feeder bus service, public art, traffic and parking, station/pedestrian access, and potential construction impacts on both residences and businesses near the Central Corridor LRT Study Area.
- Promote and facilitate citizen participation including efforts to promote involvement by businesses and area residents.
- Provide feedback to the Central Corridor Communication Steering Committee on the structure and effectiveness of the communication and public involvement efforts.

By design, the CAC is a large, diverse, and inclusive group of public participants representing the interests of the communities throughout the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. More than 70 organized groups, representing neighborhood district councils, neighborhood groups, business representatives, advocacy groups, educational institutions, ethnic communities, and religious organizations in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area, were invited to nominate a representative to serve on the CAC. Approximately 50 nominations were received. The goal was to create a committee that represents all types of stakeholder groups in the Central Corridor LRT Study Area, including those based on such issues as geography, ethnicity, age, and organization type. For example, 42 percent of the Central Corridor LRT Study Area is populated by minorities; therefore, nearly one-third of the initial 44 CAC members represented minorities.

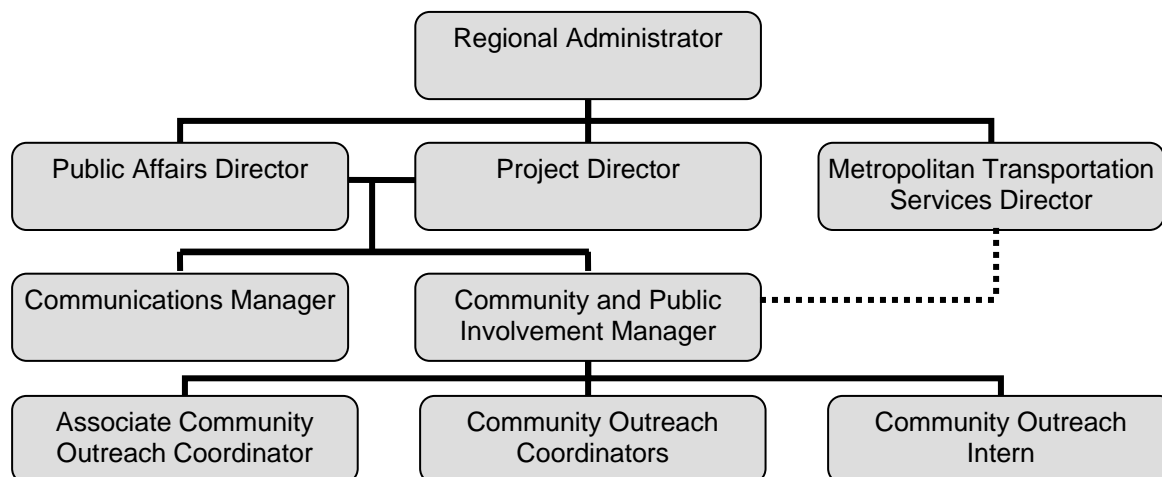
The CAC's monthly meeting provides an important vehicle for involving community groups in the design process, addressing Central Corridor LRT Study Area concerns, facilitating public awareness, and identifying ways to mitigate construction impacts. It also provides a way for the CCPO and project partners to share information about the project and to address community concerns. Notices, agendas, and minutes of the CAC are publicly available and posted on the Central Corridor LRT Web site: www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/centralcorridor.htm.

The BAC includes representatives of businesses located within the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. The BAC advises the Central Corridor Partnership (CCP) and the CCMC, and provides input and feedback to CCPO staff on the full range of issues that have a direct impact on the business community including station design and accessibility, traffic, parking, and potential construction impacts. It also provides an opportunity for the CCPO staff to share information about the project and construction plans with businesses throughout the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. One of the key objectives of the BAC is to develop a business mitigation plan to help businesses prepare for construction and provide input on project related issues.

The Central Corridor LRT Community and Public Involvement Unit works with and supports these committees and has responsibility for public relations, education, and marketing activities. This office is led by the Central Corridor LRT’s Manager of Public Involvement, who works closely with (and has access to) the Metropolitan Council’s communications staff for Web updates, graphics, and other support.

Along with the Manager of Public Involvement, the Community and Public Involvement Unit staff consists of a Communications Manager, six Community Outreach Coordinators, an Associate Community Outreach Coordinator, and a Community Outreach Intern. The number of outreach staff is based on the Public Involvement Plan’s proposal to divide the Central Corridor LRT Study Area into one- to two-mile segments based on city and neighborhood boundaries and assign one outreach coordinator to each segment. (See Chapter 1, Purpose and Need, for a map showing the planning segments.) This strategy allows the assigned outreach coordinator to become very familiar with the areas’ technical issues, as well as to build relationships with the community. The outreach coordinator’s primary responsibilities are to share information with the community about the project’s progress, and to collect community feedback and information on critical aspects of the project. Figure 11-1 graphically describes the organization of the public involvement and communications staff.

FIGURE 11-1 CCPO COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS UNITS’ ORGANIZATION CHART



Ongoing coordination with project stakeholders and the public has continued from November 2006 to the present. Several types of meetings have been held. These include public information updates, listening sessions, and individual meetings as requested.

Since the creation of the Central Corridor Communication and Public Involvement Strategic Plan in October 2006, the outreach team has communicated with more than 25,000 people through more than 1,000 meetings, community events, and informal contacts, such as:

- Twenty-one CAC meetings where the CCPO staff presented current information about the Central Corridor LRT Project and asked for public input;
- Sixteen BAC meetings where the CCPO staff presented current information about the Central Corridor LRT Project and asked for business input;

- Forty-five meetings coordinated by or participated with the City of St. Paul related to their *Central Corridor Development Strategy*;
- Twenty Chamber of Commerce meetings, including the Hmong Chamber, Black Chamber, Midway Chamber, and St. Paul Chamber;
- Thirty-five tables at community fairs or special events, such as Jazz Fest, Minnesota State Fair, Hmong Resource Fair, Vietnamese New Year, and sporting events where staff distributed information and responded to questions;
- Thirteen formal public meetings or open houses that presented general updated information about the Central Corridor LRT Project and gave stakeholders an opportunity to talk to project staff;
- Fifteen station-specific meetings where staff reviewed the layout and location of the station with adjacent and affected property owners;
- Three public hearings and open houses held for the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement;
- Twenty booths staffed at Metro Transit Commuter Challenge events to share information about the Central Corridor LRT Project; and
- Four public listening sessions that provided an opportunity for people to share their concerns and comments directly with members of the Metropolitan Council.

11.1.2 Public and Agency Involvement during the AA/DEIS

The Central Corridor Transit Study process was done in two parts: 1) a feasibility study for commuter rail, which was completed in 2001; and 2) a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS) for baseline, LRT, and bus rapid transit (BRT) in the corridor, which was completed in 2006. During the initial AA/DEIS stages of the Central Corridor Transit Study, the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) developed the Public and Agency Involvement Program to support decision-making efforts and encourage an open, collaborative approach regarding a balanced transportation system. The program recognized that the keys to an effective process are to actively involve the community and to create enthusiasm for the transit project and sustainable development along the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. A detailed explanation of the program is included in Chapter 8.0 of the AA/DEIS.

The following sections describe the outreach conducted during the AA/DEIS process.

11.1.2.1 Outreach during the AA/DEIS Scoping Process

The Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an AA/DEIS was published in the Federal Register on June 5, 2001. The Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Central Corridor Scoping Booklet and announcements of the Scoping Meetings were published in the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) Monitor on June 11, 2001. The formal scoping comment period extended from June 11 to July 20, 2001.

The initiation of the AA/DEIS for the Central Corridor Project began with a formal Scoping Process. The purpose of the AA/DEIS Scoping Process was to determine the scope and significance of social, economic, environmental, and transportation issues associated with the potential alternatives and the proposed action. The AA/DEIS Scoping Process was used to publicly announce the alternatives being considered for inclusion in the AA/DEIS and to seek additional options, which could be examined. The process provided opportunities to

inform the public, government agencies, elected officials, organizations, and businesses that the AA/DEIS process was commencing and to solicit issues of concern.

Three public scoping meetings and one agency scoping meeting were held. Each meeting included a presentation of the screening process results, the alternatives recommended for inclusion in the AA/DEIS, the issues to be considered in the AA/DEIS, the schedule for completion, and the Public and Agency Involvement Program supporting AA/DEIS activities.

11.1.2.2 Outreach during the AA/DEIS

Several outreach activities took place during the AA/DEIS process to educate and inform people about the Central Corridor LRT Project. These included a speakers' bureau, business briefings, stakeholder meetings, and community meetings. Chapter 8.0 of the AA/DEIS lists the various meetings that were held.

The AA/DEIS Notice of Availability was published in the Federal Register on April 21, 2006, signaling the start of a 45-day public comment period. The comment period concluded on June 5, 2006. Project staff collected comments by phone, mail, e-mail, and in person at four public hearings held at sites along the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. More than 570 people attended these hearings to provide input on the Central Corridor LRT Project, along with providing comments on suggested changes. The four public hearings were held at the following locations:

- University of Minnesota (U of M) - Twin Cities, in Minneapolis on May 22, 2006
- Lao Family Community of Minnesota, Inc., in St. Paul on May 23, 2006
- The Minnesota History Center, in St. Paul on May 24, 2006
- St. Paul Central High School, in St. Paul on May 24, 2006

All of the comments received on the AA/DEIS have been compiled into a database. A summary of comments received during the formal comment period and at the public hearings is included in section 11.3 of this chapter.

11.1.3 Outreach during SDEIS/Preliminary Engineering

At the beginning of the preliminary engineering process, the Metropolitan Council identified 37 key issues for resolution during the design process. Many of the items were design refinements that would be resolved through preliminary engineering; however, several of the key project issues were believed to have the potential to result in significant impacts to the environment. These key changes were documented and disclosed in the SDEIS.

The design options reflected conditions that existed within the Central Corridor, including technical, operational, and financial constraints; major infrastructure requirements that were not fully documented in the AA/DEIS; physical conditions that had changed within the Central Corridor LRT Study Area since the AA/DEIS; and substantive comments received during the AA/DEIS public comment period. The SDEIS allowed for changes to the AA/DEIS Preferred Alternative to be fully documented and disclosed to project stakeholders, decision-makers, and the public. It also allowed interested parties to have an opportunity to comment on the impacts documented.

An NOI to prepare an SDEIS for the Central Corridor LRT Project was published in the Federal Register and the Minnesota EQB Monitor on February 25, 2008. According to Minnesota Environmental Review Rules, interested parties had 20 days after the notice to

comment on the scope of the SDEIS. Appendix E of the SDEIS includes the comments received on the scope of the SDEIS and the corresponding responses.

After the SDEIS was completed, a notice of availability (NOA) was published in the Federal Register on July 11, 2008, and the Minnesota EQB Monitor on July 14, 2008 signaling the start of a 45-day public comment period. The comment period concluded on August 25, 2008. Project staff collected comments by phone, mail, e-mail, and in person at three public hearings held at various sites along the Central Corridor LRT Study Area. The three public hearings were held at the following locations:

- Wilder Foundation in St. Paul on August 4, 2008
- Brian Coyle Center in Minneapolis on August 7, 2008
- Goodwill Easter Seals in St. Paul on August 9, 2008

A summary of comments received during the formal comment period and at the public hearings is included in Section 11.4 of this chapter.

11.1.4 Outreach after Publication of the SDEIS

After the publication of the SDEIS and the end of the formal comment period, the Metropolitan Council adopted a Preferred Alternative based upon the analysis undertaken during preliminary engineering and the comments received on the SDEIS. LRT was selected as the Preferred Alternative for the Central Corridor operating at-grade on Washington and University Avenues, passing north of the State Capitol Building and turning south on Robert Street, turning west at 12th Street to Cedar Street, and then continuing south on Cedar Street into downtown St. Paul, turning diagonally at 4th Street, and continuing east to end at St. Paul's Union Depot with tail track leading to an operations and maintenance facility farther east (Metropolitan Council Resolution No. 2008-26).

Twenty-three meetings have been held to discuss solutions to public concerns about the Central Corridor LRT Project since adoption of the Preferred Alternative. These included four meetings of the BAC, three meetings of the CAC, and five open house meetings on the FEIS in December 2008 (December 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6) where the public was invited to speak to technical staff. Notable topics included the Washington Avenue Bridge, traffic modeling, the Transit/Pedestrian Mall, TPSS locations, the Operation and Maintenance Facility (OMF), and parking.

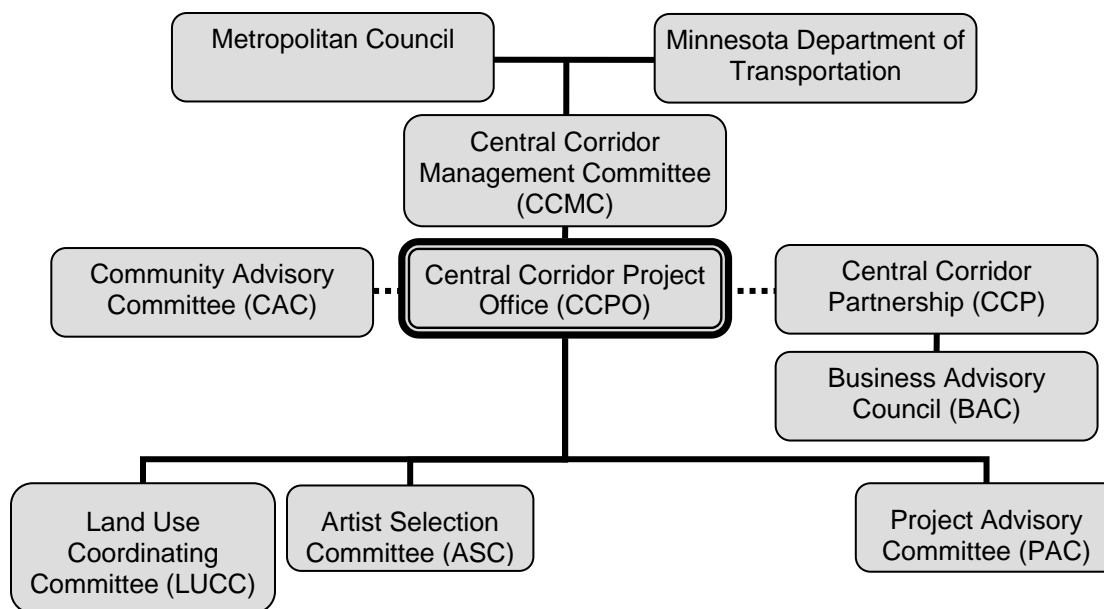
11.2 Agency Coordination

As the federal grantee for the Central Corridor LRT and the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Metropolitan Council is responsible for ensuring that LRT facilities in the metropolitan area are planned, developed, constructed, operated, and maintained in an efficient, cost-effective manner and coordinated with other transportation modes and facilities.

In the planning, design, and construction of the line, the Metropolitan Council is working closely with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), Ramsey and Hennepin counties, the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and the U of M. In addition, the Metropolitan Council consulted with Metro Transit, which is a service of the Metropolitan Council, to ensure coordination and cooperation in planning the connection of the Central Corridor LRT with the Hiawatha LRT line.

Figure 11-2 shows the organization of the Central Corridor LRT Project key committees.

FIGURE 11-2 COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION CHART



The project has used several advisory committees to provide policy input from policy makers, government entities, community groups, businesses, and residents. These committees include:

- Central Corridor Management Committee (CCMC):** This 13-member committee is headed by the chair of the Metropolitan Council and includes representatives from each of the project partners, as well as the business community and public. It provides policy input to the Metropolitan Council on key planning, design and construction issues. It meets in the Metropolitan Council Chambers on the second Wednesday of the month. Additional meetings are added as necessary. Meeting

agendas are posted online at least one week in advance of the meeting. A current list of the CCMC members is available by calling 651-602-1140 or online at <http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/CCMCmembers.htm>.

- **Community Advisory Committee (CAC):** The CAC is the primary avenue for public and community involvement in the design and construction of this project. The CAC will advise the CCMC and provide input and feedback to CCPO staff on issues related to the planning, design and construction of the Central Corridor LRT Project. The CAC meets at Goodwill-Easter Seals Building on the third Thursday of every month from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. A current list of the CAC members is available online at <http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/CCPartnersOversight.htm> or by calling 651-602-1140. The composition and role of the CAC are described more fully later in this plan. The CAC reports to the CCMC at its monthly meeting.
- **Central Corridor Partnership (CCP):** The CCP is a business-initiated and led coalition. Its mission is to provide a collective voice for businesses along the corridor. The CCP's goals include advocating for Central Corridor LRT funding and support and securing long-term regional transportation funding. The CCP provides input to the CCMC and the CCPO. The CCP meets quarterly.
- **Business Advisory Council (BAC):** The BAC was formed under the guidance of the CCP. Members represent a diversity of businesses along the corridor. The BAC provides input to the CCMC and CCPO via the CCP on project design and construction mitigation. The BAC meets on the third Monday of the month from 4:00 to 5:30 PM. A current list of the BAC members is available online at <http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/CCPartnersOversight.htm> or by calling 651-602-1140.
- **Project Advisory Committee (PAC):** The PAC includes the senior level public works or engineering staff from each of the project partners, and will provide advice to the CCPO and its director during preliminary engineering, design, and construction. The PAC is chaired by the CCPO Project Director. The PAC generally meets on the 4th Wednesday of the month. Additional meetings are scheduled as needed.
- **Communication Steering Committee (CSC):** The CSC includes communication and public affairs staff from the Metropolitan Council, MnDOT, Metro Transit, Ramsey County, Hennepin County, St. Paul, Minneapolis, U of M, and the CCP. The purpose of the CSC is to establish and implement a coordinated communications and public involvement effort for the Central Corridor LRT Project. The CSC is responsible for reviewing and updating this Communications and Public Involvement Strategic Plan and is chaired by the Metropolitan Council's Director of Public Affairs. In 2007, the CSC met on the 2nd Thursday of the month. An evaluation in March 2008 of the effectiveness of the CSC meetings to discuss specific issues revealed that the group preferred to hold two monthly meetings; one to discuss issues in the City of Minneapolis or around the U of M and a separate meeting to focus on issues in the City of St. Paul.
- **Land Use Coordinating Committee (LUCC):** The LUCC ensures coordination between the Metropolitan Council, the CCPO, and local entities (the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, the U of M and the CAAPB leading local land use planning processes. The LUCC includes professional land use staff representatives from each of the local entities and is chaired by the Met Council's Director of Metropolitan Transportation Services. The LUCC meets on the first Wednesday of the month.

- **Artist Selection Committee (ASC):** The ASC, created in June 2008, assists the CCPO in reviewing artist qualifications and interviewing potential artists. The Committee will include artists or art experts from the CCPO, St. Paul, Minneapolis, the U of M, CAAPB, Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and the Minnesota State Arts Board.
- **Central Corridor Project Office (CCPO):** The CCPO team includes staff members from Metropolitan Council and MnDOT, complemented by experienced members of the Environmental and Engineering Services Consultant team, Ramsey County, Hennepin County, and the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. The CCPO is responsible for the environmental, preliminary engineering, design, and construction phases of the project.

11.2.1 Additional Agency Coordination

In addition to ongoing coordination with the project stakeholders and the public, the CCPO coordinates with other federal, state, and local agencies and interested parties. These include:

- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
- Board of Water and Soil Resources
- Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB)
- Department of Administration
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Health
- Department of the Interior
- Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Minnesota EQB
- Indian Affairs Council
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
- Minnesota Historical Society
- Minnesota State Archaeologist
- National Park Service
- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Upon request, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) agreed to be a Cooperating Agency for the Central Corridor LRT Project. Details of the correspondence with FHWA are included in Appendix E. A list of required permits (Table 11-1) that will be obtained during future phases of the Central Corridor Project is included on the following page.

Table 11-1 Permitting

Government Agency	Type of Review, Approval or permit	Action Required
Federal		
Federal Transit Administration	Section 106 Programmatic Agreement	Approval
	Record of Decision	Approval
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	Section 106 Programmatic Agreement	Approval
Federal Transit Administration	Section 4(f)	Approval
Department of Interior	Section 4(f)	Approval
U.S. Coast Guard	Section 9 Bridge Permit	Permit
Federal Highway Administration	Interstate Access Request	Approval
National Park Service	Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA)	Review
State		
MN Department of Natural Resources	Work in Protected Waters Permit	Permit
MN Department of Transportation – Bridge Office	Bridge plan review	Approval
MN Department of Transportation – State Aid Office	Plan review and approval	Approval
MN Pollution Control Agency	Air Quality Permit (for the Operations and Maintenance Facility)	Permit
MN Pollution Control Agency	Application for Voluntary Investigation and Clean-up (VIC) or Voluntary Petroleum Investigation and Clean-up (VPIC)	Enroll in program
MN Pollution Control Agency	Phase II Final Remedial Action Plan	Approval
MN Pollution Control Agency	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination system Permit (NPDES)	Permit
State Historic Preservation Office	Section 106 Programmatic Agreement	Approval
State Historic Preservation Office	Final Design approval for downtown St. Paul Union Depot design elements	Review and Approval
Metropolitan Council	EIS Adequacy Determination (state process)	Approval
Metropolitan Council	Section 106 Programmatic Agreement	Approval

Government Agency	Type of Review, Approval or permit	Action Required
MN Department of Transportation	Utility Permits: a) permanent overhead and underground installations b) temporary relocations and minor installations	Permit
MN Department of Health	Abandonment of Water Wells Documentation	If wells are located
City/Local		
City of Minneapolis	Utility Permits (Water, sewer, electric, and storm drain)	Permit
	Building Permits (Traction Power Substations and Signal bungalows)	Permit
	Municipal Consent	Approval
	Driveway Access Permits	Permit
	Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan Approval and Grading Permit Approval and Permit	Permit
Minneapolis Park Board	Use of East River Parkway	Approval
City of St. Paul	Utility Permits (Water, sewer, electrical, and storm drain)	Permit
	Building Permits (Traction Power Substation, Signal bungalow, and Operations and Maintenance Facility)	Approval
	Municipal Consent	Approval
	Zoning Change: from B-5 to I-1	Approval
	Driveway Access Permits	Permit
	Plumbing Permits	Permit
St. Paul Heritage Preservation Committee	Raymond Avenue Station design Union Depot Station design	Approval
St. Paul Regional Water	Water extension and hydrant modifications approvals	Review and Approval
Capitol Region Watershed District	Sediment and Erosion Control Permits	Review and Approval
Capitol Area Architecture Planning Board	Leif Erikson Lawn impacts	Review and Approval

11.2.2 Municipal Consent Process

State law requires cities, counties, and regional rail authorities to hold public hearings on preliminary engineering plans for the Central Corridor LRT Project. These preliminary design plans show the general dimensions and location of the light rail alignment, including approximate station locations and a plan for disability access. They are provided to give municipalities and other interested parties the opportunity to review and comment on the plans. This is known as the municipal consent process.

Five public hearings were held during the municipal consent process. The first public hearing was held by MnDOT, Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA), and RCRRA on May 29, 2008. The cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and Hennepin and Ramsey counties held public hearings prior to their city councils and county boards approving the plans in July 2008. The meetings dates were:

- City of Minneapolis on June 3, 2008
- City of St. Paul on June 4, 2008
- Ramsey County on June 5, 2008
- Hennepin County on June 17, 2008

After the public hearings, the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and Hennepin and Ramsey counties, unanimously passed resolutions adopting the preliminary design plans as part of the municipal consent process. The municipal consent plans were the basis of the 30 percent preliminary engineering plans which were later used for adoption of the Preferred Alternative.

The Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) and approaches described in the SDEIS and approved through the local municipal consent process included a mid-block Wacouta crossing of Kellogg Boulevard to the Union Depot elevated railyard, and a new OMF located on Ramsey County-owned land east of Union Depot. Since publication of the SDEIS, several significant issues were expressed by project partners and stakeholders. The concerns were associated with impacts to historic resources, specifically the Union Depot and its associated facilities, potential constraints on Ramsey County plans for a multimodal transit hub re-using the Union Depot concourse, and additional project costs due to poor soil conditions identified on the site for the OMF.

With the identification of substantial challenges on the Ramsey County-owned site east of Union Depot, an alternative site for the OMF was identified in downtown St. Paul re-using the Diamond Products building on Broadway and Prince Streets. Refining the Preferred Alternative to include this site had numerous project advantages:

- It avoided almost all Section 4(f) historic resource issues identified by SHPO and other consulting and interested parties
- Connecting to this site using public right-of-way is possible with minimal to no access disruptions to adjacent buildings and sites on 4th Street
- The Diamond Products building can be re-used for the OMF and provides for added functionality
- Alternative use of the Ramsey County site is possible

The Diamond Products site was proposed as an alternate OMF for inclusion and evaluation in the FEIS. The site, just north of the site disclosed in the SDEIS, would minimize numerous project impacts, including potentially significant impacts to historic resources and would not incur additional project costs. On March 18, 2009, the City of St. Paul accepted the revision to the location of the OMF as part of the municipal consent process.

11.2.3 Section 106 Coordination

The Section 106 process consists of steps for identifying and evaluating historic properties; assessing the effects of a proposed project on historic properties; and consultation for methods to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse impacts. It is the goal of the

Section 106 process to avoid adverse effects to historic properties. Where avoidance cannot be accomplished, measures to mitigate adverse effects are undertaken. Adverse effects occur when the project results in changes to the property, its setting, or its use that affect the National Register characteristics of the property in a manner that diminish the integrity of the property's location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association.

Methods for avoidance, minimization, or mitigation of impacts to historic property (any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in the NRHP) will be developed in coordination under the Section 106 consultation process.

The three coordinating agencies are FTA, MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit (MnDOT-CRU), and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). MnDOT-CRU is the FTA designee for the Section 106 process. To complete an inventory and evaluation of historic properties and to develop and complete a Section 106 programmatic agreement for the assessment of effects to historic properties as project development has continued (see Appendix E), the CCPO and MnDOT-CRU have had ongoing consultation with SHPO, FTA, and interested parties including the Prospect Park and East River Road Improvement Association (PPERRIA), Historic St. Paul, the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, the CAAPB, historic preservation professionals associated with the Lowertown Historic District and the Union Depot in the City of St. Paul, representatives from the University of Minnesota, representatives of several historic buildings in St. Paul, the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, and the Church of St. Louis, King of France.

Historic St. Paul, the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, the PPERRIA, the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation, the Church of St. Louis, King of France, and Central Presbyterian Church have submitted formal requests and have been approved to participate as consulting parties in the Section 106 process. Details of the ongoing Section 106 consultation process are included in Section 3.4 and Chapter 7 of this FEIS. Appendix E includes background documentation for the ongoing Section 106 consultation process.

11.3 Summary of Comments and Responses on the AA/DEIS

This FEIS incorporates comments received on the AA/DEIS during the 45-day comment period following publication of the NOA in the *Federal Register* on April 21, 2006. The following section is a summary of the comment themes by subject area and common responses developed during the FEIS. All comments received have been documented and responded to in the FEIS. For verbatim comments and corresponding responses, see Appendix K (the Comment-Response Report). In Appendix K, a particular comment and the corresponding response can be found by using the Commenter Index or the Issue Area at the beginning of Appendix K. Agency comment letters with full text are included in Appendix E.

Public comments on the AA/DEIS were generally positive and favored LRT and an alignment on University Avenue as the preferred alternative in the Central Corridor. A total of 916 people, agencies and organizations offered comments on the AA/DEIS, including 180 who spoke at the public hearings. A summary of the most common comments and responses are described below.

11.3.1 Alternatives Considered (Alignments, Modes, Design Options)

Numerous comments were received on the AA/DEIS regarding various alignment options, stopping patterns, and technology type. The most common issue raised was the preference to select LRT along University and Washington Avenues as the LPA. Many of the comments also reflected preferences of LRT over Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Another common theme was whether or not to include grade-separation, specifically through the U of M's East Bank.

After publication of the AA/DEIS and completion of the public hearings, the Metropolitan Council adopted the AA/DEIS LPA for the Central Corridor. The AA/DEIS LPA was 11 miles in length, of which 9.8 miles consisted of new alignment and 1.2 miles used the existing Hiawatha LRT alignment in downtown Minneapolis. The AA/DEIS LPA was at-grade along most of the alignment with the exception of a tunnel through the U of M's East Bank. Subsequent to the completion of the AA/DEIS for the Central Corridor LRT Project, several unresolved policy questions and design element options arose which required additional study. These unresolved issues and design changes resulted in the completion of the SDEIS. After the publication of the SDEIS, the Metropolitan Council adopted a Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative is defined as LRT operating at-grade on Washington and University Avenues, passing north of the State Capitol and turning south on Robert Street, turning west at 12th Street to Cedar Street, and then continuing south on Cedar Street into downtown St. Paul turning diagonally at 4th Street, and continuing east to end at St. Paul's Union Depot with tail track leading to an operations and maintenance facility farther east (Metropolitan Council Resolution No. 2008-26). See Chapter 2 for a full description of the Preferred Alternative. The alignment of the Preferred Alternative is shown in detail in Figure 2-3 through Figure 2-10.

11.3.2 Impacts to Businesses

Many comments received on the AA/DEIS expressed concern for the small businesses along the Central Corridor LRT Project. These comments related to potential financial hardships that could occur during construction, with altered traffic patterns, any increases in rent, land value or taxes, and changes to parking. Other comments were related to support and consideration of minority businesses—businesses that reflect the diversity of a neighborhood—and the social value of these small businesses, which some felt were not being recognized by project proponents.

The Central Corridor LRT Project will address potential construction impacts by providing information about detours with signage, and advance notices. Maintenance of traffic and sequence of construction would be planned and scheduled to minimize traffic delays and inconvenience. Best Management Practices (BMPs) would include working with business-owners to provide an alternate access to their businesses if necessary, giving them adequate notice about construction plans and phasing, keeping access to bus stops open, and alerting the public to detours. In addition, the Central Corridor Partnership, an alliance of St. Paul and Midway area business leaders, will be providing assistance to help businesses with marketing strategies and business planning to survive the construction process and let their customers know they are still open.

The outreach staff will be key in notifying businesses and residents of construction plans, road closures, and bus re-routes, as well as being a point of contact for construction related emergencies such as power outages. For this reason, from May to August 2008, Outreach Coordinators went door-to-door surveying businesses, and in October 2008 a series of business listening sessions were held to identify outstanding concerns and to start planning for construction including identification of the best strategies for communicating with businesses. The Central Corridor LRT Project outreach team has and will continue to engage the public in the preliminary engineering process and into construction.

Land development and property taxation policies are principally the responsibility of the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Both cities have adopted comprehensive land use and development strategies or are updating plans and policies to reflect projected land use development changes with the construction and operation of the Central Corridor LRT project. In St. Paul's Central Corridor Development Strategy and the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth, land use changes are a function of market changes, and these plans attempt to mitigate the market forces.

The outreach program provides many avenues for people to submit comments and concerns, which are forwarded to the planners and engineers.

11.3.3 Impacts to Existing Bus Service

Many people who commented on the AA/DEIS expressed concerns about the impacts the Central Corridor LRT would have on existing bus service. Typical comments focused on access and mobility issues, frequency reduction to the Route 16 bus, increased waiting times, walk distances, handicap access, and impacts to transit dependent populations.

The Metropolitan Council and the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis and Ramsey County are very aware of the concerns raised by community members. Based on the public's comments, several operational changes to the Preferred Alternative and the existing transit network were developed and incorporated into the 2030 transit network. For example, the project includes the addition of two new bus routes, the 60 and 83, to provide service and connections with other transit routes. While a reduced frequency on Route 16 has the potential to affect populations in this corridor, the introduction of LRT service and the additional two bus routes have the overall effect of increasing ridership capacity and access throughout the corridor. Route 83 increases north/south access along Lexington Parkway while Route 60 provides circulating east/west service along University Avenue and in the Midway area. End-to-end run times on the Central Corridor LRT are significantly faster than existing transit service. Additionally, the Central Corridor LRT will be compliant with all ADA requirements. Furthermore, as part of the Central Corridor LRT project, the Metropolitan Council will commit to preparing a targeted transit service plan for the environmental justice community identified in the Environmental Justice analysis (Section 3.8 of this FEIS). This service plan will be based on regional transit service standards and accepted quantitative

methods typically used by Metro Transit, but will also provide for community input into the process and measures of need as expressed by and as tailored for this transit-dependent community. This plan will be completed at least six months prior to Central Corridor LRT beginning revenue service operations and will be implemented concurrent with the start of LRT service.

11.3.4 Number and Location of Stations

Several comments were received on the AA/DEIS regarding station spacing and locations. Many comments discussed the need for additional stations at various locations; however, the most recurring comment was regarding the need to add stations at Hamline Avenue, Victoria Street, and Western Avenue to increase access to neighborhoods and businesses along University Avenue.

In response to these comments, the SDEIS evaluated three additional future infill stations at Hamline Avenue, Victoria Street and Western Avenue, which would result in approximately half-mile station spacing through much of the Central Corridor. The Metropolitan Council analyzed the effects these stations would have on the overall project. It was found that adding stations at these locations would increase overall travel time resulting in lower ridership for the project and reduced cost-effectiveness (see the Technical Report in Appendix J5). The project as proposed in the SDEIS and FEIS would include below grade infrastructure to allow for station construction at a future date when demand is warranted and funding is available.

11.3.5 Impacts to Property Value

Numerous comments were received on the AA/DEIS that raised questions regarding potential impacts of the alternatives under consideration on the value of property. The comments focused on LRT as the likely preferred alternative and how this new investment might trigger new development at stations and renew interest in the residential property in the corridor. The potential for gentrification was a common theme that was described. Generally, commentors voiced concerns over likely increases in property value and their property tax and that this would contribute to the movement of current residents out of the neighborhood. Suggestions for rent control, subsidy, and freezes on property taxes were common.

These issues were very important to the Metropolitan Council as well as the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis and Ramsey County. It is likely that increased access brought by transit improvements may act as a catalyst for new investment. In anticipation of new and transit-oriented development (TOD), St. Paul adopted the *Central Corridor Development Strategy* (October 2007) (described in Section 3.1 and Chapter 5). The strategy includes Transit Opportunity Zones (TOZ) that would overlay existing zones and guide new development. The strategy contains an Inclusive Housing strategy that is intended to mitigate the potential displacement of low-income individuals and families from the corridor as property values rise. Further, specific strategies are identified in this plan for home ownership assistance.

11.3.6 Traffic Impacts

There were numerous comments that expressed concerns about the impact LRT would have on traffic congestion and traffic safety, especially in regards to pedestrians crossing University Avenue. Additionally, concerns were raised about how and where vehicles and pedestrians would be allowed to cross University Avenue, and the types of safety devices that would be employed.

Generally, traffic congestion is expected to increase with the No-Build and Preferred Alternatives in 2030. The Preferred Alternative will cause some intersections to operate at a decreased level of service (LOS). There are several strategies that may be employed to help mitigate these impacts. The new signal control systems and track systems will be integrated to provide extended "green" signal times to promote the efficient movement of trains along the corridor, while minimizing disruption to automobile traffic. The lengthening of turning lanes for some intersections may also be incorporated. Vehicles will be able to cross University Avenue at signalized intersections, spaced at approximately 1/4 mile intervals.

The current configuration of University Avenue poses a barrier to pedestrian movements. Adding LRT would not degrade conditions further. Incorporating desired system elements such as non-signalized pedestrian crossings and secondary station platform access would provide clearly defined crossing areas and connections along the corridor, enhancing the overall pedestrian environment and promoting community cohesion. Pedestrians will be able to cross University Ave at nearly every legal crossing that presently exists (approximately every 1/8 mile or city block).

The Metropolitan Council follows safety and security policies that establish requirements for project subsystems such as tracks, station areas, transit vehicles, communication equipment, and operations based on local, state, and national codes or standards. The roadway safety channelization and protection treatments will be designed to discourage automobiles and pedestrians from crossing the tracks except in legally permitted areas.

11.3.7 Environmental Justice

Several comments were received following publication of the AA/DEIS regarding environmental justice and potential impacts to minority or low-income communities. Comments primarily focused on transit service equity, station area development and station spacing, and protection of minority-owned businesses from construction impacts. Many of the comments were focused on populations living in the Midway East planning segment and the Rondo neighborhood in St. Paul. Many people felt that the existing transit service along University Avenue provided sufficient service to adjacent communities, and the disruption to neighborhoods during construction would result in undue harm to sensitive populations.

The Metropolitan Council and the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis and Ramsey County are very aware of the concerns raised by community members. In response to the comments received, the SDEIS evaluated these and other environmental justice issues along the corridor. Based on the public's comments, several operational changes to the Preferred Alternative and the existing transit network were developed and incorporated into the 2030 transit network, discussed in Section 6.1 of the FEIS. Numerous comments were made about the reduction in service frequency of the Route 16 bus. Based on these comments, the project includes the addition of two new bus routes, the 60 and 83, to provide service and connections with other transit routes. While a reduced frequency on Route 16 has the potential to affect populations in this corridor, the introduction of LRT service and the additional two bus routes have the overall effect of increasing ridership capacity and access throughout the corridor. Route 83 increases north/south access along Lexington Parkway while Route 60 provides circulating east/west service along University Avenue and in the Midway area. Additionally, end-to-end run times on the Central Corridor LRT are significantly faster than existing transit service.

Community access issues focused around the three future infill stations at Western Avenue, Victoria Street, and Hamline Avenue. The SDEIS evaluated the addition of these three future infill stations. Results of this analysis determined that the additional stations would result in increased travel times, corresponding with a decrease in ridership levels. However,

the Metropolitan Council is committed to building these stations, and the proposed project will construct the underground infrastructure at these station locations so the stations may be constructed in the future when demand is warranted and funding is available.

While many comments concerned access and the construction of the future infill stations, several other comments were made relating to station area development and the equitable consideration of low-income and minority populations living near proposed station areas. Recognizing the potential LRT stations have to enhance growth and development around station areas, both St. Paul and Minneapolis have adopted planning and zoning regulations in effort to guide development that is sensitive to the needs of area residents. The stabilization of natural market forces around station areas is a goal of these plans and policies, most notably St. Paul's Central Corridor Development Strategy. The document contains a set of guidelines for development at and around stations locations including parks, connections to existing neighborhoods, building mass and design, and other guidelines to honor and enhance neighborhood character.

11.3.8 Public Involvement Process

The most common issue identified regarding public involvement was about the length of the circulation period of the AA/DEIS. Many commentors wanted to increase the length of the comment period as well as to increase outreach techniques. Some of these outreach techniques focused on the ability to communicate in languages common in the Central Corridor.

Although the comment period was not extended as many people requested, any comments received after the closing of the comment period were included in the public record. A comprehensive plan for public involvement was developed as part of preliminary engineering. This plan included outreach to all communities along the corridor and also included hiring Central Corridor Outreach Coordinators whose sole responsibility is to interface with residents, business owners and other stakeholders in the process. The Community Outreach Coordinator team is multilingual, including in Spanish, Thai, Vietnamese, Hmong, French, and American Sign Language. The plan included a component to reach out to limited English proficiency and other sectors of the community who may be typically underrepresented in the planning and public involvement process. During preliminary engineering, a full-time Manager of Communications was hired to ensure that information about the Central Corridor LRT was available and published in local media and to develop informational materials published by the project office informing the public about the project.

11.3.9 Neighborhood Impacts

The majority of comments received on the AA/DEIS concerning neighborhood impacts discussed the need to maintain community cohesion and character of the local neighborhoods, potential for land use changes and redevelopment within the corridor, and comments on livable communities.

To address these concerns, the City of St. Paul adopted the Central Corridor Development Strategy. The strategy contains a set of guidelines for development at and around stations locations including parks, connections to the neighborhoods, building mass and design, and other guidelines to reflect and enhance neighborhood character. In addition, Minneapolis is updating the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth, which recognizes the importance of strategic infrastructure investments along transportation corridors, the vitality of its neighborhoods, and its relationship to important institutions.

Community cohesion concerns were widely expressed by many community members, particularly in relation to the Rondo neighborhood in St. Paul. The current alignment runs through the Rondo neighborhood, the heart of St. Paul's African-American community that was devastated by the construction of I-94 in the 1960s. Community members from around the metropolitan area were concerned about maintaining the remaining neighborhood fabric and community cohesion. The Central Corridor LRT is not intended to act as a barrier to any community, but rather to enhance the access both to adjacent communities and the metropolitan region. Physical infrastructure enhancements that will occur as a result of the project will allow for safer street crossings and improved circulation in the adjacent neighborhoods.

11.3.10 Visual Aesthetics

The majority of comments received on the AA/DEIS concerned changes in the visual and aesthetic setting due to the introduction of new visual elements including overhead catenaries, stations, and LRT vehicles. Other concerns included streetscape, landscaping, and sidewalk improvements to enhance the corridor; preserving or creating green space and trees; and the incorporation of public art in the project.

Most of the Central Corridor LRT Project's design work has been on the engineering aspects of the system—where the tracks will go, how the stations will be configured, and where the operating systems will be placed. Following the Record of Decision (ROD) for the FEIS, the Final Design Phase begins and the more visible elements of the project will take shape. The appearance of the stations, station approaches, landscaping and furnishings, pedestrian crossings, safety equipment, lighting fixtures, and much more will be designed and detailed for public travel, safety, and enjoyment.

The Metropolitan Council is working also closely with the cities, neighborhoods, and citizen committees to ensure that the stations and their surroundings are compatible with their neighborhoods. The basic station design will be consistent for all stations; however, five public artists have been hired to work with the public to integrate public art into the stations that reflects the surrounding community.

11.4 Comments and Responses on the SDEIS

This section provides a summary of comments received on the SDEIS. This FEIS incorporates comments received on the SDEIS during the 45-day comment period following publication of the NOI in the *Federal Register* on July 11, 2008. Approximately 60 parties commented on the SDEIS. A summary of comments and responses is provided below.

11.4.1 Alternatives Considered (Alignments, Modes, Design Options)

Comments were received on the SDEIS concerning Central Corridor LRT alignments and other design options. Specifically, comments were made on alignment routes, the U of M tunnel, station locations, and LRT facilities.

The AA/DEIS and SDEIS process examined numerous alignment options and station locations/configurations. The Preferred Alternative includes an alignment and station locations/configurations that meet the purpose and need most efficiently and minimize project impacts.

Many comments received discussed the grade-separation discussed in the AA/DEIS through the U of M's East Bank and a need to reexamine a northern alignment through the U of M. Additional analysis was conducted by the Metropolitan Council during PE to evaluate grade-separation options at the U of M. Through this analysis, it was determined that the project could not support the tunnel as described in the AA/DEIS. The U of M conducted an additional analysis reexamining a "Northern Alignment." Upon completion of the analysis, Metropolitan Council determined, in consultation with the U of M, that an At-Grade Transit/Pedestrian Mall would be included as part of the project description of the SDEIS. The Metropolitan Council evaluation is described in Chapter 2 of the SDEIS. The U of M analysis described in Chapter 2 and reproduced in full in Appendix G of the SDEIS.

11.4.2 Impacts to Businesses

Many comments received on the SDEIS expressed concern for the small businesses along the Central Corridor LRT Project. These comments related to potential financial hardships that could occur during construction, with altered traffic patterns, with any increases in rent, land value or taxes, and because of the loss of on-street parking spaces.

The Central Corridor Partnership, an alliance of St. Paul and Midway area business leaders, will be providing assistance to help businesses with marketing strategies and business planning to survive the construction process and let their customers know they are still open. The partnership is developing a business management plan and seeking funding sources.

The Central Corridor LRT Project will address potential construction impacts by providing information about detours with signage, and advance notices. Maintenance of traffic and sequence of construction would be planned and scheduled to minimize traffic delays and inconvenience. BMPs would include working with business-owners to provide an alternate access to their businesses if necessary, giving them adequate notice about construction plans and phasing, keeping access to bus stops open, and alerting the public to detours.

The Metropolitan Council is working with the City of St. Paul to identify parking solutions that will work for local businesses and residents during construction of the Central Corridor LRT. The mitigation measures will be included as part of the construction plans and specifications.

Increased access brought by transit improvements may act as a catalyst for new investment, and thus improve customer traffic for existing businesses. Transit-oriented development

(TOD), including areas of increased residential and commercial density that will encourage walking and transit use, are likely to become common around the stations. To address concerns and undesired effects of expected TOD, St. Paul adopted the Central Corridor Development Strategy (October 2007). The City of St. Paul has begun to establish Transit Opportunity Zone (TOZ) overlay districts, which, generally, promote and facilitate desired changes and improvements through redevelopment and rehabilitation activities, including those of developers.

11.4.3 Impacts to Property Value

Numerous comments were received on the SDEIS that raised questions regarding potential impacts on the value of property of the alternatives under consideration. The comments focused on LRT as the likely preferred alternative and how this new investment might trigger new development at stations and renew interest in the residential property in the corridor. The potential for gentrification was a common theme and fear. Generally, commentors voiced concerns over likely increases in property value and their property tax and that this would contribute to the movement of current residents out of the neighborhoods.

It is likely that increased access brought by transit improvements will act as a catalyst for new investment in the Central Corridor. Land development and property taxation policies are principally the responsibility of the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. In anticipation of new and transit oriented development, both cities have adopted comprehensive land use and development strategies or are updating plans and policies to manage the projected land use development changes that are expected to follow the construction and operation of the Central Corridor LRT project and which could increase property values. These plans include the St. Paul Central Corridor Development Strategy and the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth. These plans recognize that land use changes are a function of real estate market changes, and these plans attempt to mitigate the market forces.

St. Paul's Central Corridor Development Strategy, for example, includes policies and initiatives needed to make the outlined vision possible, including needed modifications to the comprehensive and neighborhood plans and guidelines for the establishment of TOZ overlay districts in the corridor. These zones would guide new development within existing zones. Development and land use guidelines are centered on defining areas of change and stability, thereby focusing new development in desired locations where the community and neighborhoods can benefit most.

11.4.3.1 Traffic Impacts

Many of the comments received on the SDEIS expressed concern about impacts to traffic congestion and requested that the traffic analyses be updated using more recent information, and that an analysis of traffic impacts to downtown Minneapolis was needed. In addition, numerous commentors requested more detailed information regarding mitigation. Many of the concerns were related to changes in the U of M area.

The Metropolitan Council conducted multiple traffic studies of Central Corridor LRT operations and their impacts to surrounding traffic (see Appendix J of this FEIS). Future traffic volumes used to predict 2030 traffic operations used the Metropolitan Council's Regional Model, which accounts for future development and planned and programmed transportation projects as reflected in local comprehensive plans. Numerous traffic studies have been completed for the Central Corridor LRT Project. See Chapter 6 of this FEIS for study results and proposed mitigation, and Appendix J of this FEIS for additional information about the studies.

11.4.3.2 Environmental Justice

During the comment period for the SDEIS, comments on environmental justice continued to be focused on transit service equity and station spacing, along with concerns regarding the recognition of environmental justice communities in the corridor. Based on the comments received, the Environmental Justice analysis was refined for the FEIS, and included the participation of the FTA Office of Civil Rights (see Section 3.8 of this FEIS).

Comments regarding transit service equity were associated with the reduction in service frequency of the Route 16 bus. Additional comments expressed concern over station spacing in the Midway East planning segment and the construction of the three future infill stations. The refined Environmental Justice analysis did determine that three Census blocks in the Midway East planning segment, near the proposed Western Avenue Station, would experience a decrease in transit service with construction and operation of the Preferred Alternative. While the analysis determined that the majority of corridor residents would see significant increases in transit service, the reduction in service to these three Census blocks is considered a disproportionate impact for which the project benefits do not offset the impacts.

Recognizing this impact, the Metropolitan Council will prepare a targeted transit service plan for the environmental justice communities identified as part of the Environmental Justice analysis. This service plan will be based on regional transit service standards and accepted quantitative methods typically used by Metro Transit but will also provide for community input into the process and measures of need as expressed by and as tailored for this transit-dependent community. This plan will be completed at least six months prior to Central Corridor LRT beginning revenue service operations and will be implemented concurrent with the start of LRT service.

11.4.3.3 Neighborhood Impacts

Comments received on the SDEIS concerned neighborhood cohesion and connectivity, including station design, the location of traction power substations (TPSS), and commitments to support and preserve community character—in other words, sensitivity to and respect for the existing neighborhoods, residents, and businesses of the Central Corridor.

Community cohesion—maintaining the physical, emotional, and cultural connections of individual neighborhoods—is a key consideration of the Metropolitan Council and other project partners, including the Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, and Ramsey and Hennepin counties. The Metropolitan Council recognizes that the character and diversity of the Central Corridor's neighborhoods are aspects of the community that must be preserved and celebrated. The cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul have adopted development and design guidelines as part of city and neighborhood comprehensive plans and zoning policies to both guide development in the corridor and preserve adjacent neighborhood characteristics and community cohesion. This planning initiative integrates and builds upon the Central Corridor LRT Project. The City of St. Paul's Central Corridor Development Strategy (October 2007) is one example of the plans developed to enhance and protect corridor neighborhoods. This plan includes strategies to promote and facilitate the changes and improvements through public redevelopment and rehabilitation activities and private investments that will naturally follow the development of the Central Corridor LRT project.

The City of St. Paul has begun to establish TOZ overlay districts to accomplish the desired changes and improvements while maintaining community character, cohesion, and

connectivity. The desired outcome for each neighborhood is for the access brought by transit improvements to act as a catalyst for new community investments.

The Central Corridor LRT project is intended to enhance community cohesion, connectivity, and access to destinations both within the corridor and to points beyond. Construction of the LRT will improve the existing pedestrian infrastructure along University Avenue, and improve the safety of pedestrians through implemented design guidelines. The current configuration of University Avenue poses a barrier to pedestrian travel within the corridor. The development of the LRT will channel pedestrian movements to crossing locations at intersecting streets, where curb improvements and pedestrian islands within the street will shield pedestrians from both LRT vehicles and automobile traffic. Crossings will be available throughout the corridor, at both signalized and non-signalized intersections, and the pedestrian channelization is intended to discourage mid-block crossings and improve pedestrian safety.

A total of 13 TPSS facilities are planned for the Central Corridor LRT Project. These structures will add new visual features to the neighborhoods and business districts in which they are located. For TPSS facilities that will be placed in visually or culturally sensitive locations, additional screening and other treatments to integrate them appropriately with their surrounding context will be considered.

11.4.3.4 Noise and Vibration

The majority of comments concerning noise and vibration impacts discussed the need to provide detailed analysis and mitigation for sensitive equipment and facilities proximate to the corridor, including the U of M research facilities, Minnesota Public Radio (MPR), recording studios, historic buildings, and places of worship. Additional comments concerned the noise from warning bells, horns, and “wheel squeal.”

Metropolitan Council performed detailed operation and construction noise analyses based on FTA guidance (2006). Analysis results as discussed in FEIS Section 4.6.6.2-3 guided the selection of mitigation measures throughout the corridor, including the Cedar Street corridor where two historic churches and MPR exist, the U of M where vibration sensitive equipment exists, and local residents in the corridor who may be affected by noise during construction and operation.

Metropolitan Council is committing to the mitigation of several noise impacts throughout the corridor through administrative and receiver based mitigation. Metropolitan council has committed to discontinuing the routine use of horns throughout the corridor, and the reduction of bell sound levels or the duration of bells will also be reduced. Noise impacts caused by crossovers will in some cases be mitigated through the installation of a movable point frog, where feasible or crossovers may be moved to alternative locations, where the impact to residences and other noise-sensitive receivers is reduced. The noise mitigation measures are described in detail in FEIS Section 4.6.8.

Metropolitan Council also performed detailed operation and construction vibration analyses, which are described in FEIS Section 4.7.6.2 and Section 4.7.7.2. Analysis results guided the selection and implementation of vibration mitigation measures throughout the corridor during construction and operation. These are described in FEIS Section 4.7.6.3 and Section 4.7.7.3.

The Metropolitan Council recognizes that the proposed alignment is proximate to several churches and MPR. The Metropolitan Council also recognizes that in this portion of the project area the existing sound environment is representative of the downtown district of a

major urban city. This acoustic environment is often punctuated by short-term noise events such as brake screeches, horns on vehicles, emergency responder sirens, church bells, lawn mower use, general traffic noise, etc. Within this environment, Metropolitan Council performed detailed operation and construction noise analyses that are described in FEIS Section 4.6.6.2-3 and Section 4.6.7.

Additional testing in the Cedar Street area including a horn and bell simulation presented in Section 4.6.6.3 and Appendix J guided the selection and implementation of noise mitigation measures for MPR and other noise-sensitive buildings in the Cedar Street area. MPR and other noise-sensitive locations throughout the downtown St. Paul area will also benefit from the administrative mitigation measures described above including the discontinuation of routine horn use. Metropolitan Council has also committed to receiver based mitigation at MPR. For further detail concerning the noise mitigation measures for this location are described in FEIS Section 4.6.8 and Section 4.6.9.

The results of the detailed analysis also guided the selection and implementation of noise and vibration mitigation measures associated with the OMF. No noise impacts associated with the OMF in St. Paul are expected to occur. Most noise producing activities, other than the turn around, will be conducting inside the OMF.

The Metropolitan Council is committed to maintaining LRT systems to minimize avoidable noise and vibrations. The Metropolitan Council is committed to ongoing vibration monitoring at select and appropriate locations to ensure that mitigation measures as designed and constructed continue to function in the future. Technical studies for noise and vibration are located in Appendix J of this FEIS.

11.4.3.5 Cultural Resources

The majority of comments concerning cultural resources focused on potential impacts to historic buildings and historic districts. In particular, concerns were expressed about the Union Depot, Church of St. Louis, King of France, Central Presbyterian Church, Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Ford Motor Company building, St. Paul Athletic Club, as well as many other historic buildings. Historic Districts were also identified as concerns, including the Capitol Mall Historic District, Lowertown Historic District, Prospect Park, and the University of Minnesota Historic District. Concerns were focused on changes to the historic setting as well as potential construction related impacts.

The FEIS evaluates and discusses how the project may affect historic buildings and historic districts that are proximate to the corridor. This includes discussion of potential visual and aesthetic impacts, changes to the historic setting from noise or traffic, and direct impacts from construction noise, vibration, and temporary easements. The Metropolitan Council is working closely with the State Historic Preservation Office and FTA to obtain a determination of effects and to develop a Programmatic Agreement that identifies necessary mitigation. Coordination with local stakeholders, including property owners and historic district representatives will continue. The Programmatic Agreement is included in Appendix G of this FEIS.

11.4.3.6 Impacts to Churches

Comments regarding access to places of worship in the Central Corridor mainly concerned Central Presbyterian Church and the Church of St. Louis, King of France. A portion of the alignment along Cedar Street in the Capitol Area will pass in front of two churches where the right-of-way for the Preferred Alternative is not wide enough to allow two-way traffic.

The Preferred Alternative would limit access to the alley leading to the north entry of the Central Presbyterian Church. The church commented that this was particularly problematic for conducting specific church functions that include vehicles (weddings and funerals), and would cause problems in complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Metropolitan Council is working with the church to develop an agreement that would provide everyday access to the south church entrance, and special, but limited, access to the north church entrance for weddings, funerals, and similar special needs. This may include relocating trash receptacles, leasing close-in parking spaces, and improving church security systems. See Section 3.2 for a full description of the impacts and proposed mitigation.

As described in Section 3.2 the Preferred Alternative would result in the removal of on-street parking spaces along Cedar Street, including those in the front of the St. Louis King of France Church. A full discussion of impacts to parking facilities is provided in Section 6.3. Metropolitan Council will install a surmountable curb on Cedar Street to enable wedding and funeral vehicles to park in front of the church as they do today.