Central Corridor LRT Update

Making Tracks


December 2008

**Four Pages**

## Former factory proposed as new site for operation and maintenance facility

A vacant former factory would be a better location for the Central Corridor LRT line's operation and maintenance facility than a site on county-owned land east of the Lafayette Bridge between Kellogg Boulevard and Warner Road, project designers say.

The vacant Diamond Products building located at Broadway and Prince streets in St. Paul's Lowertown.

The 178,000-square-foot Diamond Products building, formerly a Gillette Co. factory, at the northeast corner of Broadway and Prince streets in Lowertown would be better for a number of reasons, including:

- Reduction of construction costs.
- Lower operating costs
- Fully functional maintenance facility with train-washing equipment and enclosed storage shed for light rail vehicles
- Preservation of future connection to Union Depot concourse
- Reduction of exposure to poor and contaminated soils
- Reduction of coordination with the reconstruction of the Lafayette Bridge

It would cost about $69 million to buy the Diamond Products building and land east of it and do accompanying construction there, compared with about $72 million for building from scratch on the other site and laying the tracks to it.

The Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority conducted its own study and agreed that using the Diamond Products building would be better. The city of St. Paul and Ramsey County will consider the change shortly through the municipal consent process. The maintenance facility will bring 150 jobs to downtown St. Paul.

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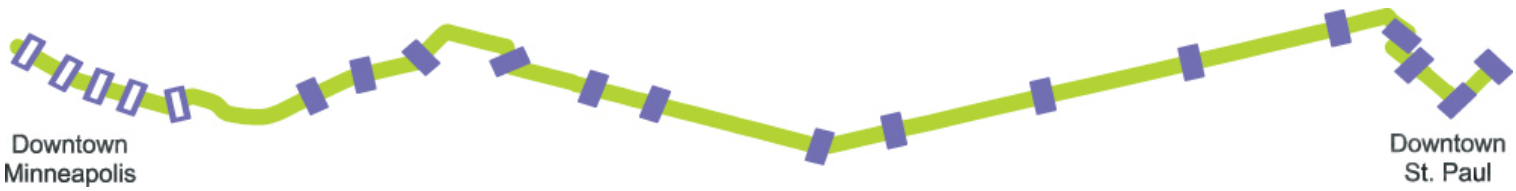

**Placement of LRT support equipment based on safety, reliability, cost, efficiency**

Finding locations for 12 traction power substations and 10 signal bungalows, nondescript metal equipment sheds located near LRT tracks, was based on a need to balance safety, reliability, cost and operational efficiency.

Traction power substations, which resemble intermodal containers carried on semitrailers, house electrical equipment used to change local utility power into power able to be transmitted to the overhead catenary system, a system of contact wires that supplies power to operate the trains. Substations have to be located close -- preferably within 500 feet of track -- to prevent power loss, rail-voltage rise and overhead contact strain and to contain cost.

A typical traction power substation is 14 feet wide by 45 feet long and 11 feet high.

A typical signal bungalow is 10 feet wide by 16 feet long and 10 feet high.

Signal bungalows are small sheds that hold the equipment to operate and monitor the signals that regulate train movement on the alignment. Signal bungalows need to be placed near special trackwork, which refers to track features such as turnouts and crossing diamonds, to minimize installation costs and power demand and to reduce power losses.

In some instances, the substations and signal bungalows will be located near LRT stations. Most will be located in obscured areas and in underutilized parking lots. Other locations will allow for the equipment sheds to be integrated into redevelopment around an LRT station. In all cases, they need to be accessible to maintenance crews.

No homes or existing businesses need to be taken to provide room for these structures as currently planned. They will be free of decoration and will be easy to maintain.

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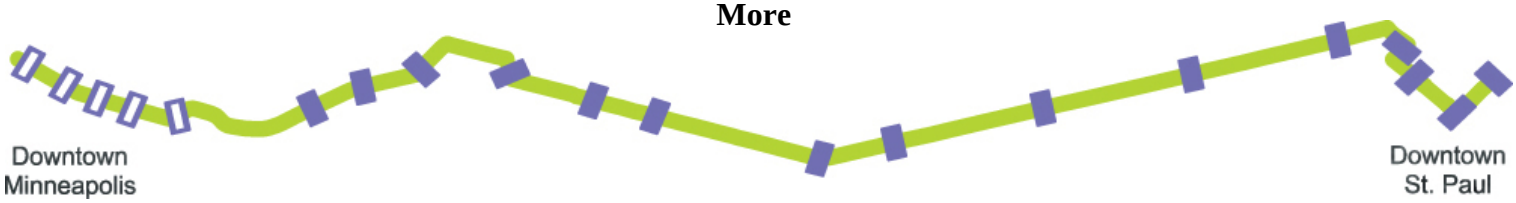

**Utility relocation work planned to begin in 2009 in downtown St. Paul**

Jim Alexander, manager of design (right), explains to a group of downtown St. Paul property owners and building managers how construction work will accommodate business.

Utility relocation work for the Central Corridor LRT Project is planned to begin on Fourth Street in downtown St. Paul in the summer of 2009, and other important milestones for the project will be reached in 2009. Commencement of utility relocation can occur after the project is authorized by the Federal Transit Administration to begin final design of LRT.

District Energy has critical heating and cooling piping located in Cedar, Robert and Fourth streets that will be affected by the Central Corridor project. The Central Corridor Project Office and project partners have collaborated on a solution for Fourth Street. The solution coordinates the location of all utilities, allowing them to co-locate their infrastructure in Fourth Street, rather than requiring relocation of some utilities to other streets. This solution accomplishes several important things, including:

- The CCPO will perform the excavation and restoration of Fourth Street as part of the project, reducing the cost impact on utilities and their customers.
- Co-locating utilities in Fourth Street will help to minimize impacts and disruptions to customers.

The CCPO and its project partners, including the city of St. Paul and Ramsey County, are committed to finding comparable solutions throughout downtown. “We applaud this solution as good news for our customers and downtown St. Paul,” said Anders Rydaker, District Energy’s president and CEO, in a letter to customers.

The CCPO and District Energy held a Dec. 17 informational session for property owners and managers on Fourth Street.

District Energy customers on Fourth Street who have questions should contact Nina Axelson, director of customer and community relations, at nina.axelson@districtenergy.com or (651) 925-8147.

Important milestones in the spring of 2009 will include publishing the project’s Final Environmental Impact Statement in the Federal Register and submitting the final request to enter final design. The FEIS will include statements about impacts that need to be mitigated and mitigation measures.

By fall 2009, the project will apply for a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) and $450 million in federal funding, about half the project’s cost. An FFGA establishes the terms and conditions for federal financial participation in a New Starts project, providing assurance of federal financial support.

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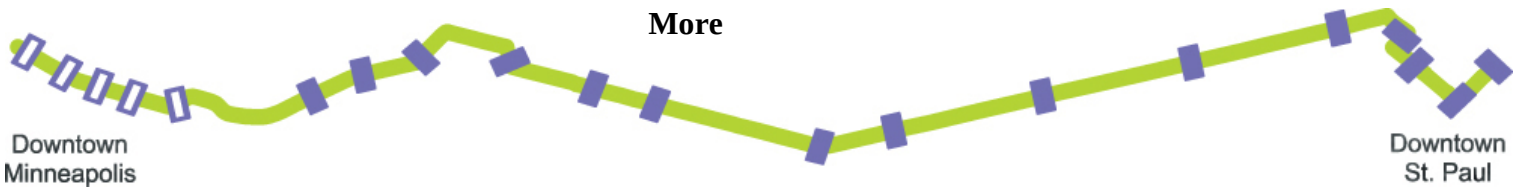

**Met Council OKs money for affordable housing, multi-tenant office building on University Avenue**

The Metropolitan Council recently approved money for land for future affordable housing and the first new multi-tenant office building on University Avenue in more than 20 years.

Earlier this year, the Met Council partnered with Minnesota Housing and the Family Housing Fund to establish the new Land Acquisition for Affordable New Development (LAAND) Initiative. In November, the Met Council authorized up to $3.6 million in loans to help some metro-area cities buy land now for affordable housing in the future. The loans will be made through the Council's Livable Communities program, marking the first time the funds will be loaned to communities to help them purchase land for housing projects.

Of the $3.6 million, $1 million will go to help with land acquisition for affordable housing near the Central Corridor LRT alignment along University Avenue. The city of St. Paul's application indicated at least 30 percent of the housing that will be developed will be affordable.

On Dec. 10, the Met Council approved a $250,000 grant for 2700 the Avenue, a mixed-use office and retail development that will feature up to 10,000 square feet of office space above a grocery store and additional retail. Located two blocks west of Highway 280 on the border of Minneapolis and St. Paul, 2700 the Avenue will be in front of the Westgate Station. The project will complete a 15-acre area bounded by University Avenue, Emerald Street, Ellis Avenue and Curfew Street that for the last eight years has focused on primarily developing new housing units. 2700 the Avenue will round out this quadrant with an office/retail building that connects the new housing with employment and retail amenities and intensifies the land use.

"Adding office jobs and retail to this primarily residential location is a demonstration of providing an appropriate transit-oriented mix of uses in a location near a future Central Corridor stop," according to a statement from the Met Council's Livable Communities Advisory Committee.

The grant money is for storm water management improvements and extension of sewer, water and telecommunications lines to 2700 the Avenue.

**For more information about the project, visit:** http://www.centralcorridor.org/

**Questions or Comments?** Call the comment line at 651-602-1645 or e-mail us at centralcorridor@metc.state.mn.us