

Making Tracks



January
2010

Central Corridor LRT Project included in president's budget

A decades-long dream to link St. Paul and Minneapolis by light rail transit is a step closer to reality with the Obama Administration's request to fund the Central Corridor LRT Project in the fiscal 2011 budget.

"This signals a high degree of confidence by the federal government in the readiness of the project to begin construction this year," Metropolitan Council Chair Peter Bell said. The Met Council will be the grantee of federal funds.

The president's 2011 budget contains a recommendation for a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA), including \$45 million of funding in the first year of construction. The Federal Transit Administration is expected to approve the project's entry into final design next month and by fall to award an FFGA, committing the 50 percent federal share of \$478 million.

These developments, along with a requested advance commitment of \$83.6 million from Ramsey and Hennepin counties and the Counties Transit Improvement Board, would allow heavy construction to begin on schedule this summer and keep the project within budget. Utility relocation work began last fall along Fourth Street in downtown St. Paul in anticipation of heavy construction beginning late summer 2010.

The project had a \$941 million budget before the federal government, the city of St. Paul, the Counties Transit Improvement Board, Ramsey County and the Central Corridor Funders' Collaborative, a coalition of local foundations, pledged \$15.6 million to add three stations sought by St. Paul and community groups. This development brings to 18 the number of stations to be built.

The 11-mile line, which would begin service in 2014, will link downtown St. Paul and downtown Minneapolis along Washington and University avenues via the state Capitol and the University of Minnesota. The line would connect with the Hiawatha LRT line at the Metrodome station in Minneapolis and the Northstar commuter rail line at the Target Field Station. The ridership projection is about 41,000 average weekday boardings in 2030. Travel time will be about 40 minutes between the line's eastern end in front of St. Paul's Union Depot and the western end at Target Field Station in Minneapolis.





Met Council to vote Feb. 24 on adding infill stations

The Metropolitan Council is expected to vote Feb. 24 on adding the three infill stations sought by St. Paul officials and community groups. This was made possible recently when the Federal Transit Administration relaxed its policies for measuring cost-effectiveness and the federal and local governments committed additional funds.

The three stations on University Avenue at Hamline Avenue, Victoria Street and Western Avenue were not included in the original plan recommended by Ramsey County in 2006 and — until now — could not be squeezed into the project budget. The main reason was the FTA, part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, employed a rigid pass/fail test to measure the cost-effectiveness of transit projects.

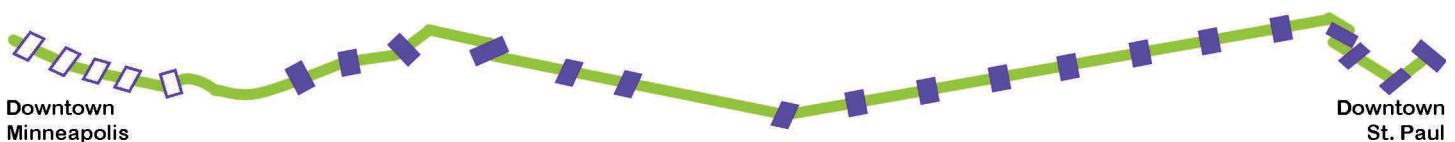
The federal government will provide half of the \$15.6 million needed to pay for the additional stations. The matching local funds will come from the city of St. Paul, the Counties Transit Improvement Board, Ramsey County and the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, a coalition of local foundations.

Peter Bell, chair of the Met Council, issued a statement applauding the additional funding. "I have long indicated my commitment to add one or more infill stations to the project as soon as contingency or other funds became available," he said. At the same time, Bell cautioned project advocates from interpreting the relaxation of federal cost-effectiveness rules as "an invitation to add additional project elements beyond the current project scope and budget."

Still, as a result of lawsuits from the University of Minnesota and community groups, the federal government says it will not commit half of the cost of building the Central Corridor LRT line until fall.

The delay means project partners will have to commit \$83.6 million prior to the federal Full Funding Grant Agreement in September to keep the project on schedule for construction this summer and within budget.

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Construction Coordinating Committees to be created

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) will finish its work this spring and be replaced by construction coordinating committees to focus on more localized issues as desired by CAC members.

The project's Business Advisory Council also will transition over to business community leadership and meet on a quarterly basis instead of monthly.

The project will create construction coordinating committees for each of the six territories assigned to the community outreach staffers. Each committee is expected to have six to eight members representing the District Councils, neighborhood groups, business organizations, Americans with Disabilities Act and transit users

The construction coordinating committees would review performance standards and recommend award of the incentive program that is being incorporated into the civil east and civil west construction contracts. The Central Corridor Project Office is recruiting interested members of the BAC and CAC to serve on their local construction coordinating committees.

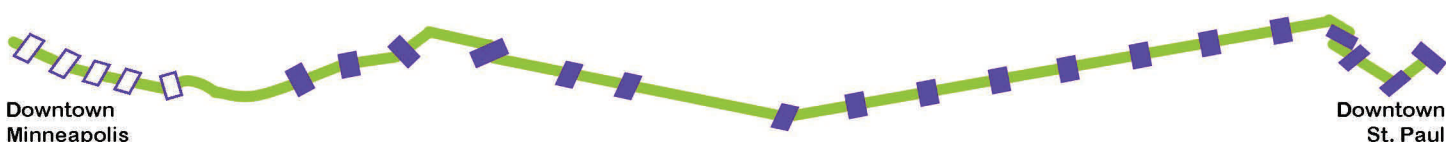
Meeting to provide look ahead at 4th Street construction activities

The Central Corridor LRT Project plans two public construction meetings Feb. 17 at 3 p.m. for businesses and at 6 p.m. for downtown St. Paul residents in the Jerome Hill Theater at 180 E. Fifth Street. The purpose is to provide a general quarterly update and a look ahead for downtown businesses, property managers and employees. Utilities and project staff will be present to answer questions. The Building Owners and Managers Association will moderate.

Key messages will be:

- Advanced utility relocation work will continue for remainder of the winter
- Utility relocation activity will increase beginning in April
- Additional signage has been installed
- Construction activities will continue through fall 2010

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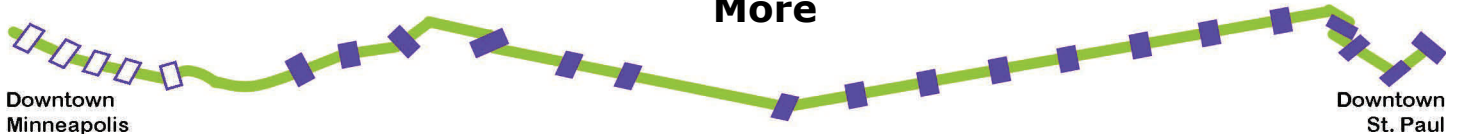


Fourth Street IS open for business...COME ON DOWN!

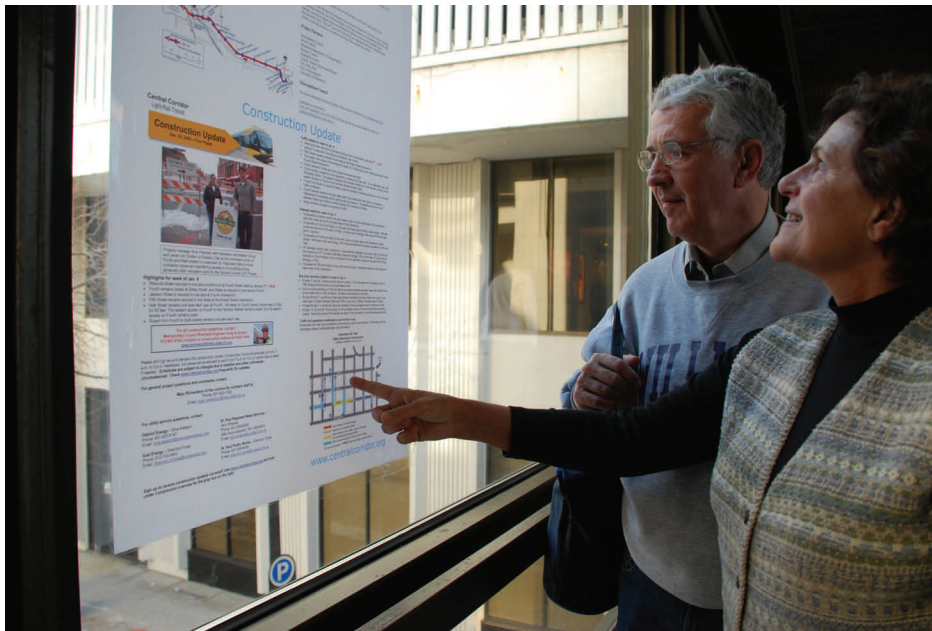


The crew at **Master Framers** (above) and day bartender **Layne Evans** of **Innuendo** bar want customers to know that they can get to these Lowertown businesses during advanced utility relocation work for the Central Corridor LRT Project. Directions and a map are provided in weekly construction updates at www.centralcorridor.org

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Read all about it....

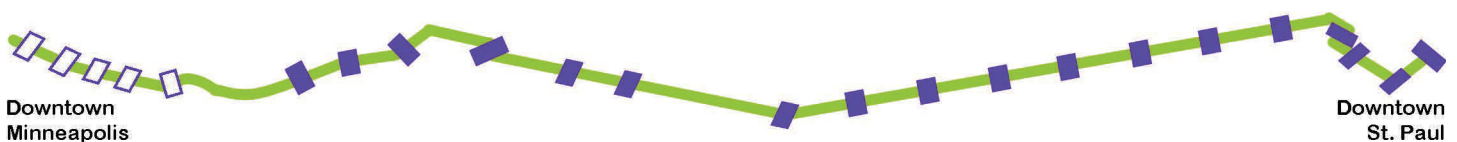


John and Rosalie Wosepka, who live in downtown St. Paul, examine a weekly construction update posted in the skyway to learn what streets and sidewalks are open and where bus stops have been relocated during advanced utility relocation work for the Central Corridor LRT Project. Updates come out every Friday for the upcoming week, are distributed by email and posted under the construction section at www.centralcorridor.org



Enhanced signs, such as the blue one at left, tell the public how to contact the project office if they have an urgent concern related to construction. For non-urgent matters, contact the project office comment line at 651-602-1645.

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You CAN park near Lowertown nightclubs during construction...



Lowertown Ramp manager **Vern Willams** welcomes patrons of participating downtown St. Paul nightspots to enjoy validated parking in this ramp on Jackson Street south of Fourth Street. People who park in this ramp on Friday and Saturday nights through the end of March can take their ramp ticket to a participating nightspot for validation.

About the project: The Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Project will link downtown St. Paul and downtown Minneapolis along Washington and University avenues via the state Capitol and the University of Minnesota. Construction would begin in 2010 on the planned 11-mile Central Corridor line, with service beginning in 2014. The line would connect with the Hiawatha LRT line at the Metrodome station in Minneapolis and the Northstar commuter rail line at the Target Field Station. The Metropolitan Council will be the grantee of federal funds. The regional government agency is charged with building the line in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The Central Corridor Management Committee, which includes commissioners from Ramsey and Hennepin counties, the mayors of St. Paul and Minneapolis and the University of Minnesota, provides advice and oversight.

Questions or comments? Call 651-602-1645 or email centralcorridor@metc.state.mn.us

For more information, visit: www.centralcorridor.org

