

Executive Summary

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Project Background

The Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority (RCRRA) initiated the Central Corridor scoping process in 2001 and conducted the Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS) over the following four years. RCRRA's role as project lead ended in 2006 with a series of public hearings and the selection of the locally preferred alternative, light rail transit operating on University and Washington avenues. Since 2006, when the Metropolitan Council became the project lead, the Central Corridor Project Office identified several issues that resulted in changes to the alignment and required additional analysis and disclosure of potential impacts. A Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) outlining these issues related to the Central Corridor Light Rail project was published on July 11, 2008. The Metropolitan Council held three public hearings prior to taking formal action to revise the locally preferred alternative on August 27, 2008. Public and agency comments on the AA/DEIS and the SDEIS will be responded to in the preparation of the Final Environmental Impact Statement later this year.

Changes disclosed

Key changes that the SDEIS disclosed include:

1. Revised connection of the Central Corridor to the Hiawatha LRT in Minneapolis.
 2. Transit/pedestrian mall at the University of Minnesota with LRT running on Washington Avenue.
 3. Potential additional stations at Hamline Avenue, Victoria Street or Western Avenue in St. Paul.
 4. Changes to the LRT alignment and location of stations within the Capitol area.
 5. Changes to the LRT alignment and location of stations in downtown St. Paul, including a diagonal alignment through the 4th and Cedar streets block and the consolidation of two stations into one on that block.
 6. Preliminary locations for traction power substations needed to power the LRT trains.
 7. Impact of potential three-car train operations on the Central Corridor.
 8. Need for and impacts of constructing a storage and maintenance facility in downtown St. Paul.
 9. Need for and impacts of modifications and/or improvements required to the Washington Avenue Bridge for LRT purposes.
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Public Outreach Efforts

A 45-day public comment period followed the publication of the SDEIS. In accordance with State and Federal law, public hearings were held to gather feedback regarding the issues documented. An open house was held prior to each public hearing in order to give the public the opportunity to ask project staff informal questions and become informed about the project.

The dates and locations of the SDEIS public hearings are listed below:

- **Monday, August 4, Noon** (12:00 p.m.), Wilder Foundation, 451 Lexington Parkway N., St. Paul.
- **Thursday, August 7, 6:00 p.m.**, Brian Coyle Center, 420 15th Avenue S., Minneapolis.
- **Saturday, August 9, 2:00 p.m.**, Goodwill Easter Seals, 553 Fairview Avenue N., St. Paul.

Hearings locations were determined according to placement and accessibility along the corridor. Legal notice of the hearings and the comment process was provided in three publications;

- Minneapolis Star Tribune
- St. Paul Pioneer Press
- Finance and Commerce

An electronic copy of the document was posted on the Metropolitan Council's website at <http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/SuppDEISJul08.htm>. Paper copies of the SDEIS were made available for public review at the following locations:

In St. Paul

- Metropolitan Council library, 390 N. Robert Street
- Central Corridor Project Office, 540 Fairview Avenue North, Ste 200
- MnDOT's Transportation Building Library, 395 John Ireland Boulevard
- Hamline-Midway Library, 1558 West Minnehaha Avenue
- Merriam Park Library, 1831 Marshall Avenue
- Rice Street Library, 1011 Rice Street
- Rondo Community Library, 461 North Dale Street
- St. Paul Central Library, 90 West 4th Street
- St. Anthony Park Branch Library, 2245 W. Como Avenue
- Central Corridor Resource Center, 1080 University Avenue

In Minneapolis

- Franklin Library, 1314 E. Franklin Avenue
- Minneapolis Central Library, 300 Nicollet Mall
- Southeast Library, 1222 4th Street SE
- Hennepin County Law Library, 300 S 6th St., Government Center

In addition, seven community outreach coordinators managed efforts to inform the public about the SDEIS and encourage feedback regarding the issues. Community outreach coordinators distributed flyers to business owners, posted flyers in public locations, and informed residents along the corridor.

A description of the SDEIS content and process was included in the Central Corridor LRT project monthly publication “Making Tracks.” Subsequently, the publication was sent to 90 media contacts at radio, television, and wire service outlets as well as newspaper and online publications.

Public Comment Summary

As of August 20, 2008, 61 comments were received. Some of the consistent concerns regarding the SDEIS raised by public comment include:

- Impact on University Ave. business/concern about loss of parking-16
- Build additional stations (environmental justice issues)-15
- Impact of project on existing bus service/reduction in bus service-11
- Environmental justice concerns (including gentrification)-10
- Pedestrian/bicycle safety-9

The following list shows a total of the specific concerns voiced as a part of the SDEIS public comment process.

- Build additional stations (environmental justice issues)-15
 - Impact of project on businesses on University Ave./concern about loss of parking-15
 - Impact of project on existing bus service/reduction in bus service-11
 - Environmental justice concerns (including gentrification)-10
 - Pedestrian/bicycle safety-9
 - LRT not right solution-7
 - Concerns about noise/vibration impacts -6
 - Concern about traffic displacement caused by U of M pedestrian mall/regional traffic patterns-6
 - Concerns about Historic Preservation-6
 - difficult north-south pedestrian movements (divides University Ave.)-4
 - Concerns about cost of the project/taxes-4
 - supports LRT-3
 - Supports Transit Oriented Development on West Bank -3
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- Ensure attractive/pedestrian friendly streetscaping features-3
- Impact of ROW acquisition - Downtown St. Paul (Diagonal)-3
- Community involvement in public art process-3
- Impact of ROW acquisition - Downtown St. Paul (Diagonal)-3
- concern regarding loss of skyway network-3
- Concerns about overflow parking/hide and riders -2
- Travel-time concerns-2
- Concerned about location of maintenance facility (Downtown St. Paul)-2
- Concerns about ADA/loading accessibility for Central Presbyterian Church -2
- support alternative alignment other than University Ave. -2
- Concerns that no reduction in impervious surface will affect watershed area-2
- Primary station at Hamline Ave. rather than Lexington Pkwy.-1
- Ensure adequate mitigation measures for U of M hospital -1
- oppose connection with Hiawatha LRT in SDEIS-1
- Oppose alignment down Cedar St. in St. Paul -1
- Concerns about SDEIS understatement of impact of utilities work on consumer prices-1
- Eliminate pedestrian crossing in favor of on-street parking-1
- support tunnel option through the U of M-1
- supportive of continuing process of consultation to identify/resolve sec. 106 cultural resource effects-1
- support redevelopment of Granary Rd. beyond I-35W-1
- Concern about access to businesses-1
- Concern about community involvement process-1
- Concern about shift of Rice St. station-1
- Oppose redevelopment of Granary Rd beyond I-35W-1
- Support extension of E River Rd to Main St. -1
- support 3-car train platforms-1
- Increase bicycle access along the corridor-3
- build park and ride lot at Midway Center bus barn site-1
- support at-grade alignment through U of M campus-1
- Concern about EMI and RFI impacts-1
- Need for a pedestrian bicycle overpass on University Ave. in Marcy Holmes Neighborhood-1

Two public agencies provided comments on the SDEIS

- USDA
- Army Corps of Engineers
- City of St. Paul
- City of Minneapolis
- Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority
- Hennepin County
- Minnesota Historical Society – State Historic Preservation Office

- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission

Comments were accepted through August 25, 2008 by:

- Speaking in person at one of the public hearings.
- Calling the Central Corridor LRT Project Office and leaving a message on the comment line at 651-602-1645.
- Emailing comments to Kathryn O'Brien at kathryn.obrien@metc.state.mn.us or
- Mailing comments to:

Kathryn O'Brien
Central Corridor LRT Project Office
540 Fairview Ave. N., Ste. 200
St. Paul, MN 55104

Central Corridor LRT Project Overview

The Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Project linking downtown St. Paul and downtown Minneapolis via Washington and University avenues would be the fourth in a planned network of rail and bus "transitways" in the Twin Cities. 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, which will begin operation in late 2009, at the new Downtown Minneapolis multimodal station. The Metropolitan Council would be the grantee of federal funds. The regional government agency is charged with leading the design and building of the line in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The Central Corridor Management Committee, which includes the mayors of St. Paul and Minneapolis and commissioners from Ramsey and Hennepin counties, provides advice and oversight. The Central Corridor LRT Project Website is www.centralcorridor.org