

Making Tracks

Dec.
2009



Six Pages

Infill stations' review to be done by late February

The Federal Transit Administration will receive a draft environmental assessment by the end of the month for the three potential infill stations proposed for Hamline, Victoria and Western.

The assessment will focus on how social, economic and environmental impacts of full construction of the three infill stations may differ from impacts disclosed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The FEIS presumed that only below-grade infrastructure for the three stations was being provided as part of the project. The purpose of the assessment is to facilitate adding one or more stations if funds become available in the future.

After Minnesota's Environmental Quality Board publishes the draft, the Central Corridor LRT Project will hold public hearings at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Jan. 27 at the Hallie Q. Brown Center at 270 N. Kent St. in St. Paul. The FTA will complete the environmental assessment process with issuance of an amended Record of Decision or a Finding of No Significant Impact by the end of February.

The FTA is expected to approve the project's entry into final design shortly thereafter.

Seven-month schedule for restoring 5th & Cedar skyway

Crews will remove the Fifth and Cedar Street skyway connection in downtown St. Paul when they demolish the vacant Bremer Bank building, but will re-establish the connection within about seven months. The building is to be demolished to make way for the Fourth & Cedar Station where the Central Corridor LRT tracks will make a diagonal turn from Cedar onto Fourth Street.

The dates for the work are still being evaluated. The project will seek to synchronize the time the skyway connection is not in place with the time snow is not on the ground.





New main decks, four additional trusses for river bridge

Engineers propose replacing the Washington Avenue bridge's main decks and adding four trusses at a cost of \$56 million to ready the bridge for carrying Central Corridor LRT trains, one lane of traffic in each direction and pedestrians on an upper deck.

The 2006 Draft Environmental Impact Statement had assumed limited rehabilitation for the bridge over the Mississippi River to make it able to carry LRT vehicles.

In the fall of 2008, however, the Central Corridor LRT Project's preliminary engineering work identified a need for improvements to fix structural deficiencies.

Engineers completed structural and material testing last winter and conducted detailed structural analysis and developed rehabilitation alternatives through the summer. They completed preliminary engineering and a cost estimate for the selected rehab option this fall.

The proposed bridge construction schedule would begin next August with nine months of preliminary stage work on the substructure. Contractors would work in stages on the westbound, eastbound and center roadway portions. They would begin 13 months of work next November on the westbound portion, 10 months of work in January 2012 on the eastbound portion and three months of work in October 2012 on the center.

During the westbound work, crews would close the westbound roadway to traffic and the pedestrian deck above those lanes. They would maintain one lane of traffic in each direction while demolishing the existing westbound bridge deck, erecting new truss members and constructing a new composite deck. They would repeat the process for the eastbound work, closing the eastbound roadway to traffic and the pedestrian deck above those lanes.

While constructing the guideway and system elements in the center, crews would maintain one lane of traffic in each direction and keep the pedestrian deck fully open.

The project will pay for \$30 million of the work, with the remaining amount to be funded with state General Obligation bond monies for local bridges and federal funds allocated to the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

More



FOURTH STREET IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS...COME ON DOWN!



Crews maintain access to Sibley Square parking ramp (left) on Fourth Street in downtown St. Paul during advanced utility relocation.

Jerry Blakey (right) of Lowertown Wine & Spirits wants customers to know he will be open throughout construction on Fourth Street.



David Wein of St. Paul was able to get his Christmas tree Dec. 12 at the St. Paul Farmers' Market, despite the Fourth Street work. The project maintains access to the farmers' market via the eastern access on Fourth.





Everything old is new again

Workers relocating utilities on Fourth Street to prepare for Central Corridor LRT construction found this iron cable car yoke. In the late 1800s, cable cars ran in the middle of Fourth where LRT trains will operate.

Construction unearths piece of St. Paul transit history

Contractors working on Fourth Street advanced utility relocation turned up a remnant of St. Paul's old cable car system that predates the streetcar era.

Crews found an iron yoke, which once encased the cable car conduit. They found the yoke near a curb where it was likely relocated during some past street reconstruction project because the conduit, or trench, would have originally run down the middle of the street. Project staff and project partners had anticipated finding a remnant of the cable car system.

The yoke, which is a couple of feet in diameter, was turned over to the Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority for preservation.

A cable car system operated in St. Paul during the late 1800s. Most cable car lines used a metal form called a yoke to support the rails and form the conduit. The cable ran through the conduit on a series of pulleys. Most conduits had an open slot, through which a grip extended to reach the cable.

There were two cable car lines in St. Paul. The yoke found on Fourth was from the Selby Avenue line that opened in 1888. It began at Fourth and Broadway, continued along Fourth to Selby and then out Selby to St. Albans Street. Electric streetcars replaced the line in 1898.

When local transit historian John Diers was researching his 2007 book, "Twin Cities by Trolley," he said he came across a 1953 news article about sewer crews discovering a section of cable car conduit under Seventh Street where the East Seventh Street line operated from 1889 to 1893. Diers is working on a book about St. Paul's Union Depot for the University of Minnesota Press.





Community outreach coordinator Hue Pham talks with general contractor Kiet Nguyen (middle, photo at left) about opportunities to help build the Central Corridor LRT line.

Asian-American business and community leaders (bottom left) gathered after the evening session for a photo with Central Corridor LRT Project staff.



Richard Ji of the Chinese-American Business Association of Minnesota (bottom) was the host of the evening session. He encouraged businesses to work with the Metropolitan Council on the project.



Two **Asian Employment and Business Opportunity sessions** drew about 170 people Dec. 2 to learn about the Central Corridor LRT Project's Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE) program and how firms may become DBE certified. Minority-owned businesses and job seekers learned how to obtain a role in the project's construction. Five firms are pursuing DBE certification as a result of the event.





Community outreach coordinator Rita Rodriguez (right) talks in Spanish with brothers Jose (left) and Gonzalo Martinez about the project's 18 percent workforce goals for minorities and how individuals may obtain jobs on the largest public works project in state history. The project has a 6 percent workforce goal for hiring women.

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 will 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 new 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.

For questions or comments, email centralcorridor@metc.state.mn.us or call 651-602-1645. For more information, visit: www.centralcorridor.org

