

Comments Received by E-Mail

Note: Phone numbers and E-mail addresses redacted but maintained in official record

Monday, June 02, 2008

Good Morning, Mr. Allen Lovejoy and Mr. Art Coulson:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at Goodwill/Easter Seals on May 29th. I am writing to follow-up for purpose of clarification.

I had the opportunity to talk with Dan Soler following the comment session. Dan Soler perceived my comments presented as describing more room for parking. That is not correct.

The purpose of my comments were to advocate for and describe the prevention of removing space from sidewalk /boulevard, especially where there is a great amount of space between the LRT ROW and the inside traffic lane.

At an intersection where there are two traffic lanes and a left turn lane, when the two traffic lanes cross the intersection, these two traffic lanes should not continue straight through by taking space away from sidewalk boulevard, and with ten to eleven feet of space between the LRT ROW and the left traffic lane.

The result of what I advocate for and describe would be as follows: The traffic lanes would curve a little, slightly to the left after crossing the intersection, and again curve to the right if the next block has a left turn lane. I do not think this curve angle would be intrusive with a 30 mph speed limit.

Again, I think we should avoid removing sidewalk boulevard wherever possible, and where possible *add* space to the sidewalk/boulevard.

Thank you

Paul Nelson
1015 Charles Avenue
Saint Paul, MN

June 4, 2008

I am one of the owners of Midtown Commons, located at 2314, 2324 and 2334 University Ave. The current design for the station directly in front of our building is very troubling. I sat on the Station Area Planning Committee and all we discussed was how to make the area "pedestrian friendly". The street currently has a 12'-13' sidewalk, a full row of on-street parking and the little known buffer of approximately 8 feet before the vehicle traffic lane begins. The proposed design is going to be very hard to live with and goes to the other extreme. What is proposed is a sidewalk of only 9 1/2' and the vehicle traffic would drive right next to the sidewalk. The buildings and fence that are part of University Avenue from Raymond Avenue to LaSalle will make this very UN-pedestrian friendly. Perhaps on a nice summer day it will

be OK walking along the sidewalk, but add in any rain and the fact that the gutter will be full of water and this will be a terrible place to walk. Now, lets talk winter. October, November, December, January, February, March, April and this year into May, the slush and plow berms make this newest design ridiculous. Whoever is putting this light rail together is blind to the very negative impact this will have on that stretch of University Avenue. I hope more attention is paid very soon to this problem. My family and I began the restoration of this section of University Avenue and it's buildings 20 years ago and I believe we have created a very pedestrian friendly environment and we can't understand how irresponsible the city and the Met Council have been trying to fit the LRT onto University Avenue.

Jack McCann

Partner

Midtown Commons 2314, 2324, 2334 University Avenue

McCann Developments 2300 Myrtle Avenue, 2325 Endicott St.

Update Company 970 Raymond Avenue, 2380 Wycliff St.

-----Original Message-----

From: Jim Schueppert

Sent: Friday, June 06, 2008 10:59 AM

To: St Paul City Council; Ramsey County Board of Commissioners

Cc: Hennen, Mary Ellen; Church of St. Louis, King of France

Subject: Written Comments on Central Corridor LRT Project

Remarks to City Council of St. Paul
and Board of Commissioners of Ramsey County

My name is Jim Schueppert and I have been a property owner in St. Paul for 32 years. I am a member of the Church of St Louis, King of France, which has been in the 10th-Cedar neighborhood since 1868 (140 years)

- First, on the northeast corner (where the Elmer Anderson Bldg exists)

- Next, on Exchange St where the Fitzgerald Theatre now exists

- Now, since 1909 on the southeast corner.

Indeed, St Louis is an old inner city church as is our neighbor Central Presbyterian contrasted to the new suburban type churches. These churches are architectural gems; not to be duplicated. Central Presbyterian is on the National Historic Register along with The Exchange Building across the street. Our church, eligible for selection to the National Register, was designed by Emmanuel Masqueray-- the architect of St Paul's Cathedral and the Basilica in Minneapolis.

Over the 18 years I have been a parishioner we have invested, I believe, over \$5 million in a new roof, new bell towers and bells, a new organ, air-conditioning, interior renovation etc. Recently, we elected to invest ½ million in a new boiler and heating system. Why do I say this -- no we are not being evicted. But, many of our members are older people who live downtown or live on the outskirts of the city and have a French heritage. These people will find it more difficult to attend St Louis because of limited parking, difficult access and safety concerns with the trains. They will pass no less than 10-15 feet out the front door of the church. How do we conduct funerals, weddings and other celebrative events? How long will the 700 plus families continue at St Louis? We have approximately 75 people who attend 6:45 AM daily mass who struggle now to find adequate parking. How long will they continue to attend? I hope longer than the attorneys, accountants, bankers and other major employers who have left downtown St Paul.

We live in a different era than what existed 20 or 30 years ago when Cedar St was selected. By the way what happened to Town Square and the People Mover? Downtown St Paul has changed considerably since then. It is more residential with developments in lower town, the river flats and in the renovated old buildings and newly built structures. Even where the old police station existed they are proceeding with a 20-30 story condo tower. The three major hospitals have invested \$½ billion during the last 10 years. Excel, Ordway, River Centre and the

Science Museum are new destinations. We are trying to develop the river front. Now, will someone please explain to me how this all ties in with light rail transit moving down Cedar and 4th streets? What are the economic benefits? What will they be in another 10 or 20 years? Do you think this will bring customers to Macy's? What is the vision for downtown St Paul?

I do support Light Rail--especially after I see what it has accomplished with the Hiawatha line and with gasoline at \$4 per gallon. But lets do it smartly.

-----Original Message-----

From: Goldman, Richard

Sent: Monday, June 09, 2008 2:11 PM

To: comments@regionalrail.org

Subject: Central Corridor Comment

After watching the Central Corridor Animation (which by the way had no sound at my work computer and at my home computer), I am concerned that certain concerns are being ignored to facilitate the approval process. For example:

1. the tracks will run down the middle of the street, which means that passengers will have to cross at least 2 lanes of vehicular traffic to get to a station. Pedestrian crossing now relies on traffic lights and 'WALK' signals, I saw none in the animation.
2. There were no flashing lights, crossing gates, signs, barriers, or left-turn lanes included in the animation, all of which I understand to be necessary to ensure the safety of LRT passengers, pedestrians, and vehicular traffic (both on and crossing University).

In other words, people may be excited about the Central Corridor because of how it looks in the animation, as opposed to getting a more realistic view of University Avenue with LRT. Personally, I am in favor of a new transit option on University Avenue, but I wonder if the public understands the full impact of this project on the central corridor. The only people excited about the project when completed should not be the LRT riders.

Thank you...Rich Goldman

Rich Goldman
Programmer/Analyst 4
I.T. - Payroll/Personnel
HealthEast Care System
Midway Campus

June 9, 2008

From: Alliance for Metropolitan Stability
2525 E. Franklin Ave.
MPLS, MN 55406
Contact: Russ Adams, Executive Director

The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability is focusing our comments in support of the construction of the additional stations at Hamline Avenue, Western Avenue, and Victoria Street in St. Paul.

The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability is a broad coalition of 20 faith-based, social justice, and environmental organizations advocating for public policies that promote community reinvestment and responsible land-use in the metropolitan area. By invitation of University Avenue community organizations and as directed by the Pro-

gram Committee of our Board of Directors, we have provided staff support to coalition organizing efforts along University Avenue in response to the future development of the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Project.

We are a member of the Transit Equity/Stops for Us Coalition which represents a total of 67 constituency-based and/or citizen participation organizations. Our collective focus is to ensure that three additional stops are built at Hamline Ave., Western Ave. and Victoria Street. These stops are part of a larger equity strategy for the future development along University Avenue.

Community members have heard in the planning process that the infill stations at these intersections may be paved over to allow for additional parking. The possibility of paving over these infill stations sends the message to the community that their concerns for equitable transportation access for their businesses and residents are not being taken seriously. Both Ramsey County and the City of St. Paul should make their municipal consent contingent on eliminating any plan to pave over these future stops along the corridor.

The environmental justice communities of the east University Avenue neighborhoods deserve a deliberative solution based effort by their public representatives to build the three stations at Hamline, Victoria, and Western. Their voices should be heard and valued with equal consideration as other entities along the proposed Central Corridor LRT line. Both Ramsey County and the City of St. Paul need to fulfill their pledges to make these stops a reinvestment priority for the Central Corridor LRT.

-----Original Message-----

From: RayBryan

Sent: Monday, June 09, 2008 2:49 PM

To: comments@regionalrail.org

Subject: Central Corridor Comment

I think that the LRT would be much greater community asset using the pedestrian, bike and LRT corridor to Dinkytown combining the strengths of all these alternate transportation modes as opposed to the Washington Avenue route that will have the negative effects of disrupting traffic and displacing automobile travel into the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

--Raymond C. Bryan

Raymond C. Bryan	The battle is sometimes
Raymond Compute	to the small for
795 Raymond Ave	the bigger they are
St Paul MN 55114	the harder they fall.
USA Amiga - Commodore	-- James Thurber --
 http://www.raymondcomputer.com

June 11, 2008

I am submitting these comments on Central Corridor Light Rail preliminary design plans to be part of the public comment record and I am requesting that a copy of the public comment record be mailed to me, or I can pick up a copy at the Metropolitan Council reception desk or information center if you send a copy there for me to pick up.

Lisa Lee
181 Sherburne Ave.
Saint Paul MN 55103-2038

Three Benefits Erroneously Claimed for Central Corridor Light Rail Transit

The following 3 benefits appear as a kind of logo/letterhead for the Central Corridor newsletter and comment card: Improving mobility, Easing congestion, Strengthening our communities. Central Corridor light rail transit (LRT) does not provide these benefits. It does the opposite.

1. Improving mobility. Central Corridor light rail transit will decrease mobility.

==Central Corridor LRT will decrease mobility for transit users. Bus routes are proposed to be cut, rerouted, and reduced in frequency in order to offset some of the high operating and maintenance costs of LRT and to guarantee riders for LRT. Yet LRT doesn't provide better service than the existing Route 50 bus, which has similar stops. The illusion that LRT is faster is created by giving LRT HONOR SYSTEM of fare payment. If all the passengers that get on LRT had to pay one at a time as they boarded, LRT would probably be slower than the bus. You could give selected bus routes honor system of fare payment. LRT is slower than the Route 94 bus that runs on I-94, but Route 94 will be eliminated outside of peak periods. LRT does not stop at Hamline Ave. to serve Concordia University or the gigantic Target store. The Route 16 bus does. LRT does not stop at Victoria St. where LRT meetings are held! Peter Bell, chair of the Metropolitan Council, will hold one at the Brownstone Building, University Ave. at Victoria St. at 6:00 PM on June 18, 2008. Route 16 bus does serve those 2 stops but it will be drastically cut in frequency. LRT riders will have to walk into the middle of University Ave. every time they get on or off the train, adding additional hassle, especially for riders carrying several bags of groceries or a child in a stroller.

==Central Corridor LRT will decrease mobility for pedestrians. Pedestrians will no longer be able to cross at every cross street, due to the hazard of crossing a train with cars that weigh 52 tons each.

==Central Corridor LRT will decrease mobility for drivers. Hundreds of parking spaces will be eliminated, resulting in longer walking for people trying to testify at the Legislature, to patronize a small business on University Ave., to go to the Fitzgerald Theatre or Park Square Theatre in downtown Saint Paul. Turns will be restricted at various intersections in corridor. The problem will be accentuated for those who depend on on-street parking in order to carry out their jobs in downtown Saint Paul, making deliveries, making service calls.

==Central Corridor LRT is very immobile compared to the bus, which is why it can't increase mobility. It cannot turn a street corner, it has to cut across the block. So property, either buildings or land has to be taken. To meet our transportation needs, we need to be able to adapt to future needs. LRT is inadaptible. It took an additional \$40 million just to bring Hiawatha LRT in a U shaped loop up to the Mall of America instead of stopping short a couple blocks away--\$40 million taken from bus purchase money. You can buy more mobility for the dollar by investing in bus. Bus didn't need \$40 million to get to Mall of America. It simply crossed the street westbound to get there.

2. Easing congestion. Central Corridor light rail transit will increase congestion. This is well known to planners. Congestion is too many cars in the same place at the same time. Light rail takes over 2+ lanes of right of way for its exclusive use leaving 2 lanes less space for traffic or parking. In addition, light rail interrupts the flow of traffic it crosses. The proposal to put light rail in a tunnel on the east bank of the University of Minnesota was to relieve light rail transit induced congestion: congestion caused by cramming cars into the reduced space left after squeezing light rail into the space. The other proposal to eliminate all traffic on Washington Ave. is another effort to hide light rail caused congestion. Take the cars off totally so you can't see the congestion that would have been there. Light rail is predicted to cause lots of congestion from cars on Snelling Ave. trying to cross University Ave. Hiawatha corridor LRT has increased congestion of cars trying to cross LRT.

3. Strengthening our communities. Central Corridor light rail transit will weaken existing small businesses and low income residents. By eliminating parking, Central Corridor LRT will make it harder for small businesses to be solvent, by discouraging customers to come to them. Building off street parking costs money. LRT will also cause a rise in property tax rates for the businesses. Many residents along Central Corridor rely on on-street parking for their vehicles. They will be competing for those spaces with people who want to park near a LRT station to avoid the cost of parking in downtown Saint Paul or downtown Minneapolis.

Building multiple LRT lines is unsustainable. Each billion dollar rail line costs more than 2 bus systems of over 100 routes each but provides service only equivalent to 1 bus route. The capital costs are staggering compared to the benefits. The disadvantages are staggering compared to the advantages. The operating costs are a burden. Saint Paul officials say they don't have money to keep the libraries open longer. They don't have money to run the recreation centers. Ramsey County says they don't have money to run the nursing home. Metropolitan Council says it needs to raise bus fares due to lack of money. But they have money for rail, a new general sales tax for rail and now the motor vehicle sales tax diverted to rail.

Reducing the service on Route 16 University Avenue bus line reduces personal safety, because it is hazardous due to crime and climate to walk the longer distances that people will need to walk with LRT. Example: suppose someone wanted to go from an LRT meeting at Victoria and University to Target at Hamline and University. LRT doesn't stop at either location. So someone has to wait longer at Victoria for Route 16 or walk all the way from Victoria to Hamline, a very long walk. Especially at night when there's a wind chill of minus 20.

LRT will create a barrier between north and south side of University Ave.

LRT makes money for land speculators and consultants who come here from other states. Rather than build unwieldy, land hog/money hog LRT, it would strengthen the communities to use transit money for increased bus service. People from the community could be hired as bus drivers and make a living wage to support their families.

-----Original Message-----

From: David Colby

Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2008 5:27 PM

To: comments@regionalrail.org

Subject: Central Corridor Comment

June 11, 2008

Dear members of the Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority,

I am the pastor of Central Presbyterian Church located at 500 Cedar Street in Saint Paul. Preliminary engineering plans call for the light rail line to run immediately in front of our historic church. We have been in close communication with members of the Met Council staff. However, there are a number of issues we would like to see successfully addressed.

1. Vibrations. We are very concerned about the impact of vibrations on our historic structure, built in 1888, during both construction and operation. Cedar Street is very close to bedrock, which is a good transmitter of vibrations. Testing has been conducted by the Met Council, but the results have not been released or verified. We strongly request that no action be taken on the track alignment until these vibration tests can be released.

2. Handicapped Accessibility. Our only ADA-compliant accessible entrance is through an alleyway off Cedar Street. We have been told by traffic engineers for Central Corridor that we will likely not have access to this alleyway.

3. Parking for funerals. The only way caskets can be brought into our sanctuary is through the main entrance on Cedar Street. With no street parking on Cedar, solutions need to be found that will allow for funerals.

4. Pedestrian Safety for those entering the church
5. Noise disruptions during construction, and then during operation that will interfere with worship and cultural performances.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. David D. Colby
Central Presbyterian Church
500 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

-----Original Message-----

From: sheldon gitis
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2008 12:48 PM
To: comments@regionalrail.org
Subject: Central Corridor Comment

Art Coulson
Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority
RCGC-West, Suite 6560
50 W. Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55124

There are striking and frightening similarities between the Washington Avenue Bridge and the collapsed 35W Bridge. Both bridges are fracture-critical, 1960's vintage structures and both bridges wound up carrying far larger volumes of motor vehicle traffic than that for which they were designed. How can any sane, responsible, public official or agency recommend routing a light-rail line over an over-used, corroded, 50-year old, fracture-critical bridge?

A northern alignment, including the already developed Central Corridor Transitway running between the huge, unnecessary and undesirable surface parking lots near the TCF Bank football stadium and the Fairgrounds, was never considered. As an alternative to the insane plan to run the train over the 50-year Washington Avenue Bridge, the alignment in portion of the corridor between Como Avenue to the north and University Avenue to the south, including the already developed transitway serving both the Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses and the Fairgrounds, should, for the 1st time, be evaluated.

Sheldon Gitis
1030 Manvel Street, #2
St. Paul, MN 55114

-----Original Message-----

From: Paul Nelson

Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2008 1:07 PM

To: Centralcorridor@ci.stpaul.mn.us; comments@regionalrail.org

Cc: 'Transit for Livable Communities'

Subject: Revised CC Comment June 11 2008

Wednesday, June 11, 2008

Good Afternoon, Mr. Allen Lovejoy & Mr. Art Coulson:

I am adding the following comments from TLC to my comments below of June 2nd.

"Bicycling Amenities. Ideally, TLC would like to see the addition of a bicycle lane in both directions. This would accommodate the ever growing number of bicyclists and provide a natural buffer between car traffic and sidewalks. If this is not feasible under current state-aid standards, we recommend that the outside travel lane be 14 foot wide (the inside would be 11 foot) in order to improve the experience for bicyclists, and pedestrians".

I *know* the difficulty of fitting bike lanes on University with LRT, specifically getting the bike lanes through intersections with stations is not currently feasible. However, TLC's comments intrigue me. Although it still may not be easy to get a 14 foot lane through a station intersection, I think it is worth serious consideration and effort.

Whether we make an effort to accommodate bicycle transit on University or not, I think we will still have bicycle travel on University after LRT is built, regardless.

Again, I support preserving as much human space, boulevard, sidewalk, bicycle as possible, and *adding* to the boulevard sidewalk space where feasible, resulting in curving the lanes slightly, closer to the LRT ROW.

Thank you.

Paul Nelson
1015 Charles Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55104

-----Original Message-----

From: Theresa M. Olsen

Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2008 1:56 PM

To: comments@regionalrail.org

Subject: Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Comment - Full Speed Ahead!

I am excited to see the plans progress for the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Project.

I support the idea of a surface-running LRT on a pedestrian mall through the U of MN campus on Washington Ave. As a transit user of primarily the 16 and 50 routes, with occasional meetings and events at CDES and the Gateway alumni center, this would more easily allow a direct pedestrian connection for transferring between buses and the LRT than if the LRT were on the far side of campus.

In Saint Paul, I encourage including the utilities and necessary preparations for the future stations, even though the stations themselves may not be funded at this time.

When reading the plans, a note for clarity of the traffic signal at the Raymond Station would be helpful. From my discussion following the most recent public meeting at Goodwill, this is a signalized intersection only activated by a pedestrian wishing to cross the street.

I would encourage the use of pervious paving wherever feasible, especially in the pedestrian realm and the remaining parking areas. This would help remedy the surface ponding on roadways and sidewalks as recently experienced in impervious areas by our frequent heavy storms.

I would advocate a light colored floor/ground plane (high albedo with a SRI, or Solar Reflectance Index, of 29 or better; i.e. white concrete or white pavers) to temper the urban heat island effect. As a pedestrian, in the summer months along bituminous and even grey concrete roadways, the selection of material can further re-radiate the heat already absorbed by the surface. I also highly advocate providing shade trees, but in the absence of funding for streetscaping, providing the base structure with the high albedo would help until shade can be provided.

I also encourage improving the north-south connections along the line, including pedestrian, bike, and transit movements. For instance, the Pelham Boulevard bridge over I-94 does not have a

sidewalk on the east side, forcing pedestrians to walk in the street or cross at the bridge to the other side.
I believe this condition occurs at Cretin and other I-94 bridge crossings.

Thank you for this opportunity to voice my opinion.

Terry Olsen AIA, CSI, LEED AP
Project Manager/Project Architect
Facilities Division
TKDA
444 Cedar Street, Suite 1500
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101-2140
www.tkda.com

Resident: 542 Pelham Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55104

-----Original Message-----

From: Jeanne Scheffert
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2008 3:18 PM
To: comments@regionalrail.org
Subject: Central Corridor Comment

I would like to be counted as one of those people who is in direct opposition to the Light Rail going down Cedar Avenue.

There has got to be a better route and one which will not disrupt places of worship, hospitals, fire stations and Minnesota Public Radio headquarters.

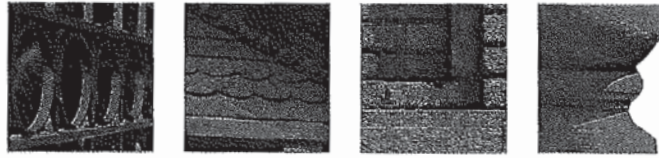
Is this just going to get pushed through as the Dome in Minneapolis did with people scratching their heads when it was all over wondering how this 'thing' got plunked down in the middle of downtown Minneapolis?

I am a very concerned citizen and I can't believe the Metropolitan Council is even considering using Cedar Street as their route.

We are not only being railroaded, we are being light-railed by the Met Council and everyone else who is involved in this fiasco.

6-12-08
Jeanne Scheffert
1830-2 Donegal Drive
Woodbury, MN 55125

The following comments were received after the public comment period deadline, but have been included in the comment record for consideration by the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners:



HISTORIC SAINT PAUL

June 11, 2008

Mr. Allen Lovejoy
City of Saint Paul
25 West 4th Street
1500 CHA
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Mr. Lovejoy,

Light rail transit along University Avenue presents both challenges and opportunities to the preservation of historic and cultural resources. For that reason, I am writing on behalf of Historic Saint Paul to comment on the preliminary design plans for the Central Corridor light rail transit route. We are a nonprofit organization with the mission to preserve, protect and enhance the historic character of Saint Paul neighborhoods. Through our advocacy and neighborhood preservation work, we hope to leverage historic resources along the Central Corridor as assets in community and economic development.

Historic buildings along the Central Corridor have the potential to serve as dynamic gathering places and can orient both the community and transit riders to the station areas. Therefore, it is critical that the stations be situated in a manner that is sensitive to these historic resources. We are concerned about the preliminary design plans for the Raymond Avenue, Rice Street and Union Depot stations. These three areas are of particular concern for the following reasons:

- The proposed Raymond Avenue station is located at the heart of the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District. The locally and nationally-designated historic district recognizes this area's role as a national transportation center. The station is positioned directly in front of several buildings that contribute to the character of the district. This proposed location may have a negative effect on the integrity of the district.
- The proposed Rice Street station encroaches on Leif Erickson Park (an integral element in the State Capitol Grounds) and is located directly across from the Ford Building (an important landmark in the transportation and industrial history of our city). This proposed location may alter the character of these historic landmarks.
- The proposed Union Depot station is located in front of the Union Depot Building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This position will drastically alter the appearance of the streetscape in front of the Depot. Furthermore, the platform layout encroaches on the landscape in front of the Depot.

In addition to these issues regarding the stations, we are concerned about the alignment of the light rail route along Tenth Street. As it is currently proposed, the alignment will restrict access to the principal entryways for two historic churches. This may impede the churches' ability to conduct services such as weddings or funerals.

318 Landmark Center • 75 West 5th Street • Saint Paul, MN 55102 • 651.222.3049 • fax: 651.222.7783
www.historicsaintpaul.org

Celebrate Heritage | Renew Neighborhoods | Strengthen Community

It is our hope that as engineering proceeds, special efforts will be made to mitigate the potentially harmful effects of light rail transit on these historic areas and places. As a consulting party in the Section 106 process, we have been in conversations with the Metropolitan Council staff regarding these issues and we believe that favorable solutions are obtainable.

I appreciate your willingness to entertain these comments and I hope that we can continue to partner with the Metropolitan Council, Ramsey County and the City of Saint Paul to address these concerns.

Sincerely,


Carol Carey
Executive Director
Historic Saint Paul

cc: Art Coulson – Ramsey County

From: Veronica Burt
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2008 5:49 PM
To: centralcorridor@ci.stpaul.mn.us; comments@regionalrail.org; carissa.ptacek@dot.state.mn.us
Subject: Central Corridor Public Hearing Comments from Historic Rondo Committee

Public Hearing and Elected Officials:

Please review the below Central Corridor Preliminary Design Public Hearing Comments from the Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee prior to making your final recommendations relative to the project.

Veronica Burt
Public Policy Advocate/Organizer
JUST Equity/Central Corridor Equity Coalition

Dear Central Corridor Preliminary Design Public Hearing Officials:

We are the Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee, an African American base of concerned and impacted community members on the eastern end of the proposed LRT project slated for University Avenue. Our community, Aurora St. Anthony, centers I-94 and University Avenue between Lexington Ave. and Rice Street. We are disturbed that many of the issues currently garnering the attention of decision makers have woefully overlooked the concerns expressed by a growing segment of our community and its supporters. While project officials haggle with the University of Minnesota over their mitigation concerns, nearing a cost of 27 million out of an overall mitigation budget of approximately 40 million, the totality of our concerns go unacknowledged, unanalyzed, marginalized and unresolved.

Many of us depend fully on public transportation and while we agree that improvements to the system are of great benefit to the region as a whole, we want it built in a fashion that would minimize harm and maximize benefits to our existing community. Unfortunately the project's current proposal accomplishes neither of these outcomes and if light rail is to run through our community it must be built right or it must be built somewhere else – most notably Pierce Butler - our version of the U of MN's northern alignment that if properly analyzed could avert much of these negative impacts all together!

In the eyes of many, the proposed line would whisk through our neighborhood leaving nothing but a host of negative impacts compiled on those that had already befallen our community when I-94 was built destroying both our economic engine and neighborhood cohesion. Certainly if done without regard to our wellbeing, the LRT investment and the induced redevelopment it brings would not only resurface these wounds but exacerbate them.

Unfortunately the Metropolitan Council has failed to adequately address and resolve the comprehensive set of issues we've placed before them. To do so of course takes time, intentionality and adherence to a set of environmental justice and equitable development principles. Since this is not occurring, we believe that the Metropolitan Council is unduly pushing the process forward in advance of adequately resolving our issues. A few weeks back in an interview on Minnesota Public Radio, Congressman Jim Obestar referenced legislation he is sponsoring that would evaluate transit projects taking into account factors such as economic and environmental effects and not simply those of cost and ridership measures. In our view, these newer possibilities may open the door to have our comprehensive set of environmental justice concerns addressed and resolved. Public hearing officials, as you deliberate please consider that environmental justice stakeholders on the eastern end of the proposed alignment have raised numerous issues that deserve resolution before pressing full steam ahead on this project.

Be that the I-94 transportation investment misdeed left an indelible scar on the well being of our community – it would be a shame upon the state, region, county and the city to be careless and inconsiderate implementers of yet another large scale transportation investment that could have devastating effects if not done right.

In the footsteps of work done by the Central Corridor Equity Coalition, an earlier collection of grass roots community groups, environmental justice issues of low-income and minority stakeholders have not only highlighted the project's adverse impacts but have also proposed comprehensive community based solutions as follow.

- Promote Transportation Equity and Convenient Access: Proposed stops are 1 mile apart from Snelling to Rice. Population concentrations elsewhere along the line are .5 miles apart. Add stops at Western, Victoria and Hamline to provide convenient LRT access for transit dependent population to connect to regional job

centers and support neighborhood based economic development at these LRT stations. Roughing in stations to possibly build them out later essentially conveys the message that the community will not get its fair distribution of stops - such a proposal also goes against one of three environmental justice principles namely, to prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

- Designate a Dale Street/Historic Rondo Station: Similar to rail stations traversing other ethnic communities such as Chicago's Bronzeville, Denver's Historic 5 Points or L.A.'s Little Tokyo Station, designate the Dale stop as Dale Street/Historic Rondo complete with Rondo related art depictions guiding visitors to the community's historic interior and commercial corridor envisioned for the western end of Selby Avenue. Within the broader community proposed theme of the "World Cultural Heritage District" stretching from Lexington Ave. to Rice Street, promote this stop as a cultural heritage destination to attract cultural tourism (see City of St. Paul's Central Corridor Development Strategy p.16, 5.2.5).
- Maintain current service level of #16 Bus: The #16 has one of the highest riderships in the MTC bus system. The proposed reduction in service from 10 to 20 minutes during peak hours and 30 minutes midday, Saturday and Sunday is a disservice to those who depend on the block to block service needed to meet their daily needs. The eastern segment of the line has the highest concentration of transit dependents.
- Mitigate for commercial and residential parking loss: Designate ample areas for shared and off street customer parking; provide residential parking permit relief to prevent hide and ride parking on neighborhood streets.
- Mitigate for short and long term business loss: As construction occurs and land value continue to escalate, small and ethnically owned businesses that create the distinct character of the eastern end will be forced from the area attracting large chain store operations. Prevent commercial gentrification/displacement; keep businesses afloat during the construction phase and support the long term sustainability and the creation of new locally owned small and ethnic businesses - similar to the city of Seattle, provide an \$80 million slush fund; designate the area as a World Cultural Heritage District; promote the district as a cultural tourist destination.
- Mitigate for the preservation of area housing affordability and the compounded loss of future community cohesion: The LRT investment is poised to induce private investments within the neighborhood driving up values and forcing current low-income and minority homeowners and renters out of the area. Prevent residential gentrification/displacement as land value rises; land bank to preserve affordability; mandate affordability in new construction; incorporate property tax freezes and rent controls; intensify minority homeownership programs to support the preservation of the cultural character of the area and maintain the customer base of ethnically owned business establishments.
- Ensure limited placement of Traction Power Substations: Environmental Justice communities often times receive far greater costs than benefits when it comes to large building projects being built within their neighborhood. To prevent a possible concentration of TPSS' and the acquisition of much valued land within our community, we require that the locations be identified and agreed upon early in the process and that an over-concentration of these substations do not become concentrated in our communities. Examining the current design plans, there appears to be more Traction Power Substations (at the estimated size of 85 ft. long x 45 feet wide) than the built out stops we have been petitioning for (4 spaced about a mile apart starting near Hamline to Rice Street)! WE DON'T WANT OUR COMMUNITY TO BE OVERBURDENED BY ELECTRICALLY POWERED GISMOS' - ESPECIALLY WHEN THE ADDITIONAL STOPS AT HAMLINE, VICTORIA AND WESTERN ARE NOT YET GUARANTEED TO BE BUILT!!!
- Ensure local hiring: Assist with wealth building opportunities in our impacted low-income/low-wealth community; develop in advance well funded supports with plans of action and a pipeline of constituents to help prepare and ensure that local residents receive construction and other redevelopment related job opportunities.
- Ensure minority contracting: Develop in advance well funded supports with plans of action and a pipeline of constituents that helps to prepare and ensure that minority businesses receive LRT and other redevelopment related contracting opportunities.
- Ensure store front to store front improvement: Rebuild curbs and side-walks; provide new street lights, planters and trash receptacles - send a message that the avenue is safe and attractive.
- Incorporate a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA): When I-94 was built promises were made to the community but were not kept. To guarantee follow through on commitments use a legally enforceable contract, signed by community groups and by the developer of the project, setting forth a range of benefits the developer agrees to provide as part of the project.

Thank you, we look forward to your support in regards to these matters. Should you have questions feel free to

contact Veronica Burt our community organizer.

Sincerely,
The Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee & Supporters

Nick Khaliq – Area Business Owner/President NAACP, 586 W. Central Ave,
Veronica Burt – Cultural Organizer, JUST Equity/Central Corridor Equity Coalition,
Debbie Montgomery – Resident, 1016 W. Central Ave.
Metric Giles – Resident, 771 Univ. Ave.
Pat Lamb – Resident, 280 Ravoux #206
Dennis Presley Sr. – Ward 1 Community Organizer, Got Voice Got Power,
Barbara Horton – Resident, 180 Wayzata St. #303
David McCall – Resident, 771 Univ. Ave.
Rena Moran-Stewart – Resident, 671 Aurora Ave.
Steven Tamu Jones – Supporter, 254 Arlington
Bertha Douglas – Resident, 730 Fuller Ave.
Betty Charles - Area Business Owner, 979 University,
Melvin Giles – Resident, 855 Aurora,
Art Weddington – Supporter, 765 6th Street East
Charlotte Drake – Supporter, 1730 Graham Ave. #451
Al Oertwig – Supporter, 509 Fred Street.
Ebony Phillips – Supporter, 1120 Galtier St.,
Debra Goins – Resident, 1131 Dayton Ave.,
Damon Drake – Resident, 639 Aurora Ave.,
Pat Black – Resident, 745 Aurora Ave.,
Eugene Barringer III – Resident, 305 Selby,
Barb Rose – Supporter, 177 W. Delos St.,
Maisha Giles – Resident, 771 University,
Wilber Anderson – Supporter, 642 Front,
Yvette Mims – Supporter, P.O. 65192, 612-558-7331
Leetta Douglas – Resident, 730 Fuller Ave.

From: Barb Thoman
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2008 4:47 PM
To: comments@regionalrail.org
Cc: Schuster Lea ; 'Dave Van Hattum'
Subject: Central Corridor Comment

Barb Thoman, Program Consultant
Transit for Livable Communities
626 Selby Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104
June 12, 2008

Dear Mr. Coulson:

Transit for Livable Communities (TLC) is writing to offer our comments on the preliminary design plans for the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit line. Transit for Livable Communities is a non-profit organization that advocates for expanded public transit, and improved facilities for bicycling, and walking. We have a network of nearly 9,000 Twin Cities' residents who support our mission. We strongly support light rail in the Central Corridor and we are eager for this project and other rail and bus projects to move forward.

Dave Van Hattum from our staff provided TLC's testimony at one of last week's public hearings on the design plans. That testimony is summarized here. TLC supports:

- The addition of one or more stations along the east end of the line between Snelling and Rice Street to improve accessibility for neighborhood residents and provide greater opportunity for transit oriented development.
- "High frequency" bus service on the #16 bus line and greatly expanded North-South connecting bus service.
- Better utilization of the thousands of existing off-street parking spaces and use of incentives that reduce the need to drive and park. For example, adoption by the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul of a requirement for a travel demand management plan for all new developments along the corridor and parking-cash out for all employers.
- Minimum 10 foot sidewalks the full length of the corridor. With on-street parking eliminated along most of the corridor, the proposed 4 foot sidewalk buffer zone (between motor vehicles and pedestrians) is critical to creating an inviting pedestrian environment. We also encourage a thorough examination of using the outer most travel lane, exclusively for buses, bicyclists and parking during off-peak hours. We encourage the Metropolitan Council to allocate some of its flexible Surface Transportation Program funds for pedestrian and bicycling improvements along the corridor.
- Ideally, TLC would like to see the addition of a bicycle lane in both directions. This would accommodate the growing number of bicyclists and provide a natural buffer between car traffic and sidewalks. If this is not feasible under current state-aid standards, we recommend that the outside travel lanes in each direction be 14 foot wide (the inside would be 11 foot) in order to improve safety and comfort for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- More attention should be paid to station design that makes them easy to clean and maintain. Use of more attractive poles to hold and carry the overhead wires as compared to the industrial look of this infrastructure on Hiawatha LRT. Public art should reflect the character of the surrounding neighborhoods. TLC supports including members of the station area communities in the process to design stations and select artists and landscape designers.

If you have any questions about our letter, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Lea Schuster
Executive Director