

Record of Public Comment on Central Corridor Preliminary Design Plans

Executive Summary

History of Project

The Central Corridor, the 11-mile stretch between the city centers of Minneapolis and St. Paul, has been a topic of intense study and ongoing community conversation for the past 25 years. The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority published a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Alternatives Analysis in the Federal Register on April 21, 2006, for proposed transit improvements in the Central Corridor. After a series of public hearings in spring 2006, light rail was selected by the Metropolitan Council as the preferred mode of transit in the corridor, and Washington and University avenues the preferred routes. At the end of 2006, the Met Council began the preliminary engineering phase of the project.

Under Minnesota State law, counties and cities must approve preliminary design plans for light rail projects, including location, length and termini of a route; along with general dimensions and approximate locations of stations and other facilities. The Commissioner of Transportation and the Regional Railroad Authorities are required to hold a public hearing on the plans. This hearing was held on May 29, 2008, in Ramsey County. The counties and cities along the line have 45 days from the hearing to approve the plans or to disapprove the plans and “describe specific amendments to the plans that, if adopted, would cause the local unit to withdraw its disapproval.” The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners held a public hearing on June 5, 2008, at Lao Family Community, University Avenue, St. Paul, to gather public input on the preliminary plans. The public comment period extended from April 30 to June 12, 2008. The board is scheduled to vote on the preliminary design plans on June 24, 2008.

Public Comment Summary

Public comments on the preliminary design plans were overwhelmingly positive, though many citizens and business representatives continued to raise concerns around several issues, including the loss of on-street parking, the need for additional stations in St. Paul and construction mitigation issues. A total of 47 people, agencies and organizations offered comments on the preliminary design plans, including 24 who spoke at a pair of hearings convened by Ramsey County (the first in concert with MnDOT and the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority). Twenty-three written comments were also received in person, by mail and by email. Twenty-four of the commenters expressed support for the project; seven expressed opposition; 16 expressed no opinion, but raised issues of concern.

Issues Raised

The comments received from the public raised a number of concerns and issues. Below is a summary of the issues, followed by the number of people who raised the issue in their testimony/written comments:

- Loss of on-street parking: 18
- Need for additional stations: 14
- Pedestrian access and safety: 10
- UM alignment: 9
- Impact on bus service: 9
- Impact on businesses: 8
- Station design: 8
- Effect on Cedar Avenue churches and businesses: 7
- Alternative alignments (I-94; Pierce Butler Route): 6
- Sidewalk width: 6
- Streetscape: 5
- Bicycle access and safety: 5
- Public art process: 5
- Noise/Vibration: 5
- Number of pedestrian crossings: 5
- Impact on open space: 3
- Dedicated bike/bus lanes: 3
- Handicapped accessibility: 3
- Impact on property taxes: 3
- Need to build project in stages: 3
- Location of power substations: 3
- Unsightly barriers along line: 3
- Connection to Union Depot: 2
- Train speed: 2
- Impact on historic resources: 2
- Snow removal: 2
- Gentrification/neighborhood preservation: 2
- Traffic congestion: 1
- Need for Community Benefits Agreement: 1
- Minority hiring: 1
- Traffic effects on residential streets: 1
- Effect on downtown skyway system: 1
- Effect on trucking operations: 1
- Grade changes on Cedar: 1