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CENTRAL CORRIDOR
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
PUBLIC HEARING

May 23, 2006
5:00 P.M.

Lao Family Community of Minnesota, Inc.
320 University Avenue West
St. Paul, MN 55103



1 Dennis Probst, Moderator
Central Corridor Coordinating Committee Chair

2
3 Steve Morris, Project Manager
Central Corridor Project

4 Kathryn DeSpiegelaere, Director
Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority

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1 MR. PROBST: Good afternoon and welcome. This is the
2 second of what will be four public hearings for the Central
3 Corridor Environmental Impact Statement. My name is Dennis
4 Probst and I'm the chair of the Central Corridor Coordinating
5 Committee and I'll be your moderator for these hearings. If we
6 could have the conversations perhaps step out into the hallway,
7 that would be helpful. Thank you.

8 If there's anyone here who needs or desires assistance,
9 interpretive assistance, this evening, there are a group of
10 folks at the far table. I'm going to ask them to come up and
11 introduce themselves. If anyone desires that assistance, please
12 feel free to move back at any time. If you all would please
13 introduce yourselves using the microphone, I think that would be
14 great.

15 (Interpreters introduce themselves.)

16 MR. PROBST: Thank you. I have a few introductions I'd
17 like to make before we proceed further. To begin with, we have
18 two other members of the Coordinating Committee here this
19 evening. Our vice chair Song Lo Fawcett is here. If you would
20 stand, please. Also, Commissioner Janice Rettman, a member of
21 the Committee and Ramsey County Commissioner; and Jan Morlock
22 from the University of Minnesota has been one of our members.
23 In addition, Commissioner Toni Carter and Commissioner Jim
24 McDonough from Ramsey County are with us this evening as well as
25 Peter Bell, the chair of the Met Council, and Fred Gates from

1 Congresswoman Betty McCollum's office is here as well this
2 evening. So thank you all for joining us.

3 The purpose of these hearings is to receive your comments,
4 public comments, on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement
5 that has been conducted for the corridor. It is an opportunity
6 for the public to express its wishes for future transit service
7 in the corridor and to identify issues that need to be addressed
8 in future phases of project development.

9 In preparation for these hearings, the Ramsey County
10 Regional Railroad Authority made presentations and answered
11 questions at a series of community meetings including those
12 sponsored by the Central Core Equity Coalition, St. Paul City
13 Councilwoman Debbie Montgomery, and the St. Paul District
14 Councils Collaborative.

15 Project staff delivered 1500 postcards, 200 posters inviting
16 citizens to these public meetings. Fliers were translated into
17 five languages and posted along the corridor and staff members
18 walked University Avenue to meet with residents and business
19 owners, answering questions and inviting people to these
20 hearings.

21 Staff members briefed the press on the status of the Central
22 Corridor proposal and appeared on a Hmong language public
23 affairs show on KFAI-FM and advertisements were placed in the
24 Pioneer Press, the Star Tribune, and 15 other community and
25 ethnic newspapers and news websites. The Rail Authority also

1 created an e-mail Listserv and sent regular e-mail updates to
2 more than 100 people that subscribe to that service.

3 The agenda for this afternoon's meeting is brief. First
4 we'll hear a short presentation on the project from Steve Morris
5 who is project manager and then we'll open the hearing for your
6 comments. I hope you signed in to speak when you came in and
7 picked up a Citizens Guide to the project. If you did not and
8 wish to provide comments, please sign in now back at the sign-in
9 table and the list will be brought up here for us to
10 acknowledge. And with that, Mr. Morris.

11 If I could make one other comment. If everyone would, if
12 you have not already, please turn off or silence your cell
13 phones, it would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

14 MR. MORRIS: Thank you, Mr. Probst, and I'd like to add
15 my welcome to everyone this evening. We're glad to see such a
16 good turnout. I'm going to spend just a few minutes talking
17 about the recent history of this project. The Central Corridor
18 study area we'll spend some time on, then the various agencies
19 involved and the potential impacts and then the next steps.

20 The study area is generally the area between the two
21 downtowns encompassing the area from kind of Pierce Butler on
22 the north and CP Railroad Alignment on the south. It's long
23 been a major transportation corridor in the Twin Cities.

24 Many agencies are involved in this study process including
25 the Federal Transit Administration and the Coordinating

1 Committee that Mr. Probst chairs, and that involves the counties
2 along the corridor, the cities along the corridor, the
3 University of Minnesota, the Metropolitan Council, and the State
4 Department of Transportation.

5 The study has included a considerable amount of public
6 involvement including scoping public hearings several years ago
7 to identify the broad range of options to begin the study, a
8 variety of community agency meetings and public hearings along
9 the way particularly focused on local residents and businesses
10 that would be most impacted by the project.

11 The purpose of the project is to define transit alternatives
12 that would meet the mobility needs of the corridor and of the
13 region in the future. This area has a growing population, both
14 residential and employment; lots of educational facilities,
15 health care, and cultural activities along the corridor; and the
16 Metropolitan Council, the State DOT, and a variety of other
17 agencies and individuals feel that a connected intermodal
18 transit system is critical to the region's future economic
19 success. It also has a large transit-dependent population for
20 whom improved and excellent transit is a critical priority.

21 The Coordinating Committee developed goals for this project
22 including economic opportunity and investment, impacts on
23 communities and environment, and improvements in transportation
24 and mobility. The process included the scoping. It included
25 the development of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which

1 we're finishing up this evening, and agency review after these
2 public hearings will occur and a selection of the locally-
3 preferred alternative will be made and that alternative would
4 move forward into preliminary engineering and other potential
5 phases of development.

6 The range of options have been narrowed down to Light Rail
7 Transit and Bus Rapid Transit, both generally operating along
8 University Avenue. Light Rail now is in operation on Hiawatha
9 and the vehicles and operation would be quite similar on
10 University Avenue. They are powered by overhead electrical
11 lines and operate on tracks.

12 The alignment would share tracks in Downtown Minneapolis
13 with Hiawatha. It would operate in a tunnel through the
14 University of Minnesota and then get into the center of
15 University Avenue and operate behind the Capitol and through
16 downtown, terminating at Union Depot.

17 Bus Rapid Transit would have a similar alignment in St.
18 Paul. It is an effort to use improved vehicles and improved
19 operation to try and mimic the attractive service aspects of
20 Light Rail Transit but do it at a lower cost. The Bus Rapid
21 Transit Alignment would be, again, down the center of University
22 Avenue in St. Paul, but it would operate in mixed traffic in the
23 University of Minnesota and in both downtown areas.

24 Potential impacts are defined by the Environmental
25 Protection Act and include the impacts of social and land use

1 issues including displacement, effects on neighborhoods,
2 potential benefits, and impacts to things like parking, traffic
3 patterns, parklands and aesthetics, safety and security issues.

4 Also, there is information in the document on environmental
5 impacts: Soils, geography, air quality, noise and vibration;
6 the whole range of potential environmental impacts. The
7 document also talks about economic impacts; the ability to
8 affect local economic conditions and to enhance and attract
9 transit-oriented development and redevelopment. This is an area
10 that is already redeveloping and growing and it needs effective
11 transit service to support them.

12 Transportation impacts are another area that are discussed.
13 Some modification will be required of the roadway geometry.
14 There will be some changes in existing transit service and the
15 potential is there for improvements in travel time. In
16 particular, on this corridor where there is a lot of transit
17 service, a big issue is providing capacity that will allow the
18 area to continue to grow in the future and that's a major and
19 important part of this project.

20 The Coordinating Committee developed this wide range of
21 alternatives and started to narrow them down to these
22 alternatives that we have this evening using the criteria that
23 they had also developed. I won't go through the details of
24 that, but the Committee indicated a couple of years ago that it
25 appeared that because of the capacity demands of the corridor

1 that Bus Rapid Transit probably did not meet the long-term needs
2 of the corridor that Light Rail Transit did.

3 The funding for these projects is typically 50 percent
4 federal and 50 percent nonfederal. In the case of Light Rail
5 Transit, that budget would be \$840 million based on an opening
6 in 2008. For Bus Rapid Transit it would be \$241 million. The
7 Federal Transit Administration is the federal funding agency and
8 goes through a very elaborate project evaluation process before
9 they provide significant funding for these projects and we are
10 at the very early stages of that process.

11 The next steps would be the selection of the locally-
12 preferred alternative, preliminary engineering which would take
13 about two years to be completed in 2008. All of the issues
14 brought up as part of this hearing process would be discussed
15 and evaluated in that preliminary engineering process and would
16 be made part of the Final Environmental Impact Statement which
17 would be projected to be done in 2008. Final design in 2009.
18 Construction can start in 2009 or '10 and optimistically it
19 would begin in operation as early as 2012.

20 With that, again, I'd like to thank you for coming and turn
21 it back to Mr. Probst.

22 MR. PROBST: Thank you, Steve. We're now ready to
23 begin receiving testimony. This hearing is an opportunity to
24 take testimony from the public. It is not a question-and-
25 answer session. If you are here with questions and would like

1 to get them answered, I'd like to suggest that you speak with
2 one of the staff members at the table and they would be happy to
3 try to respond to any questions you might have relative to the
4 project.

5 I would also ask that you please respect the opinions of
6 others and refrain from talking or clapping while they are
7 speaking. When you do come to the podium we'd ask that you
8 identify yourself for the court reporter who is transcribing
9 these hearings.

10 If you'd like to provide comments without speaking at the
11 hearing, please see the project staff or the Citizens Guide --
12 and these are available at the back table -- and at the back of
13 it there is a sheet that you can provide written comments this
14 evening. It also lists a website or e-mail possibility. You
15 can do it by phone and you can also mail in.

16 I do want to make the comment that if anyone has sent
17 e-mails to Commissioners or other staff, those are not going to
18 be part of the official record. So if you have some comments
19 you want to have as part of the official record, you need to
20 send those to the project site or call in or send those in and
21 then they will be incorporated into the written record of the
22 hearing.

23 I would also point out that any written comments carry the
24 same weight as any oral comments that are received tonight, last
25 night, or either of the next two public hearings.

1 We have two microphones this evening on either side up front
2 here and they will be available for the testimony of those who
3 are wishing to do so. There is a court reporter to my immediate
4 right down here who is transcribing the meeting.

5 In the interest of fairness for everyone here tonight as
6 well as those who spoke last night and those who we assume will
7 wish to testify at the next two meetings, comments are going to
8 be limited to two minutes. You'll receive a signal from Alicia,
9 who is the second person to my right down here, at 30 seconds
10 giving you an alert that you have 30 seconds left and at two
11 minutes she will show a sign that says stop and at that point if
12 you haven't, I will thank you for your testimony and invite the
13 next person to the microphone. So we ask that you please do
14 your best to adhere to those time limits.

15 The project is not preparing a video or audiotape this
16 evening. So any filming that's being done is being done by
17 private parties or the media. I don't know if there's any media
18 here yet or not, but there may be later on. So that is not
19 being done by the project. All the testimony is being recorded
20 by the court reporter.

21 With that let us begin. I'm going to invite several people
22 up and if you would come up as people are finishing, that would
23 be great; and as people finish, we'll add a few more names and
24 continue through the list until everyone has had a chance to
25 speak. Again, thank you for coming this evening or this

1 afternoon and providing your ideas; and if you wish to speak,
2 again, and have not signed up, please do so at your next
3 reasonable convenience here, please; and with that we will begin
4 testimony this evening.

5 The first three members or persons are Joan Thompson, Ellen
6 Watters, and Tom Kingston, please.

7 MS. THOMPSON: Good afternoon. My name is Joan
8 Thompson and I'm with Minnesota Wire & Cable Company, 1835
9 Energy Park Drive, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108. And I am here
10 because I support Light Rail Transit on University Avenue as the
11 preferred mode of transportation for the Central Corridor.

12 It's very important to me to send a message today from an
13 employer's point of view. We have a hundred employees over in
14 Energy Park, not right on University Avenue, but our employees
15 still come from distances on both sides of where this light rail
16 would be and so for me I want my employees to get to work.
17 That's very, very important. And I need them there in the most
18 efficient, economical way possible and I do believe this is the
19 way to do it with the Light Rail Transit in the Central
20 Corridor.

21 I know that there will be economic development. We're a
22 35-year-old family business. We've seen economic development on
23 University Avenue for many years. I'm excited for what's going
24 to happen coming up in the next couple of years, let alone ten
25 or 20 years, and I feel that this is the very beginning of a lot

1 of good things that could happen.

2 And I know my employees could be standing here just as well
3 and saying the same things because they keep asking about what's
4 gonna happen, what's gonna happen with Light Rail Transit. I do
5 think there's a lot of groups that may be concerned and there's
6 a lot of reason for that, but in my heart I know that this is
7 the best thing for St. Paul.

8 It also connects neighborhoods, not just Minneapolis and St.
9 Paul. I really do believe it connects east side, west side with
10 Midway and it's the biggest stretch. You know, these are
11 neighborhoods, not just two big cities; and so that's real
12 important that we connect our neighborhoods as well as the two
13 cities. Thank you very much.

14 MR. PROBST: Thank you. Ellen.

15 MS. WATTERS: Yes. My name is Ellen Watters. I live
16 at 923 Bayless Avenue and for the last 16 years I've lived three
17 blocks north of University and for those same 16 years I've been
18 involved in discussions and attending hearings like this to say
19 I want light rail on University Avenue, and it's time we do
20 this.

21 I am not a bus rider, but I will ride light rail and that's
22 really what this is all about. It's providing transportation
23 options for thousands of people, some of whom are currently
24 transit riders, but there's a whole group of us who aren't who
25 will ride light rail as the Hiawatha line has shown.

1 In addition, the economic development potential of this, the
2 opportunity to improve the streetscape on University Avenue, to
3 attract new businesses, to support existing businesses like the
4 many Hmong and Asian-owned businesses who have transformed this
5 avenue in the last 15 years is incredible.

6 Certainly there are questions. There are concerns. We need
7 to make sure that during the construction period those
8 businesses that are here already are taken care of, but we know
9 from other cities that that's possible, that you can protect
10 those existing businesses; that, in fact, having light rail on
11 University will actually be a boon to many of them.

12 So between the ridership opportunity, the fact that we have
13 economic development potential with this line, that it will get
14 folks like me out of our cars and onto transit, that it will
15 help more than 50,000 workers who work in the Midway area along
16 University every day get to and from their jobs, it's an
17 incredible opportunity and we've been studying it far too long.
18 It's time to act. Thank you.

19 MR. PROBST: Thank you. Mr. Kingston.

20 MR. KINGSTON: Thank you, Chairman Probst. My name is
21 Tom Kingston. I'm the president of the Wilder Foundation. Our
22 main facility is located six blocks north of University Avenue.
23 We are strongly in support of light rail development.

24 The Wilder Foundation is investing \$40 million in a new
25 service center at Lexington and University that serves

1 low-income children and families, most from this immediate area
2 of the corridor. Anticipating the future needs of the community,
3 that facility is incorporating most of the transit-oriented
4 design features needed for our community and is building an
5 environmentally sustainable building as a model for the rest of
6 the Central Corridor.

7 The Foundation supports Light Rail Transit in the Central
8 Corridor for all of the obvious reasons that were mentioned
9 before; the economics of what it attracts, it's good for
10 regionalism, and most importantly Light Rail Transit is more
11 environmentally friendly than the alternatives, but the real
12 agenda of the Wilder Foundation above and beyond that is we have
13 particularly impacted our interest and impact of light rail on
14 low-income individuals and maintaining that light rail has the
15 opportunity right now to make many more services including
16 Wilder's 22,000 visits a year from the community much more
17 accessible for neighborhood folks.

18 It efficiently transports individuals from lower-income
19 communities to the five major employment centers -- both
20 downtowns, U of M, the airport, Mall of America -- and it
21 creates an opportunity for the community to ensure that viable
22 housing is maintained. It can be maintained along the corridor.

23 At this moment we're contacting HUD to see if they can do
24 some special work with us to ensure that people are not
25 displaced, low-income individuals, and we'll use our leadership

1 ability to make that happen. The Foundation is committed to
2 working with the corporate and community leaders to ensure that
3 neighborhoods with low-income families will take advantage of
4 this. Thank you.

5 MR. PROBST: Thank you. Our next speakers are Jules
6 Goldstein, Matt Auron, and Priscilla Zee.

7 MR. GOLDSTEIN: Yes. My name is Jules Goldstein. I
8 live in the Mac-Groveland neighborhood. I have a couple
9 concerns about the environmental impact study. One concern is
10 community involvement. I noticed looking at the map that the
11 five miles -- five and a half miles between Rice Street and the
12 St. Paul City Limits there are five stops. In the two and a
13 half miles between the City Limits and the Metrodome where it
14 merges there are five stops. It seems like the stop has a
15 certain benefit in Minneapolis. Of the four places along the
16 route where the gap is a mile or more, three of them are in St.
17 Paul.

18 My other concern is that the environmental impact study is
19 rather vague on the impact upon traffic, both traffic along
20 University and the traffic that has to cross University, and I
21 would hope that the final version allows more information on
22 that, particularly the 800-pound gorilla of the route, what
23 happens at University and Snelling. Thank you.

24 MR. PROBST: Thanks for your comments. Matt.

25 MR. AURON: My name is Matt Auron and I live at 64 Avon

1 Street South, Apartment 1 in St. Paul. I support light rail on
2 University Avenue as the preferred mode of transportation.

3 Like it's been mentioned before, I am not a bus rider,
4 although I would be a light rail rider. I believe light rail is
5 the next step in getting to a fully-integrated transit system in
6 the Twin Cities metropolitan area, which as we expand
7 geographically as a region I believe is absolutely critical.
8 Some figures I've seen on the Bus Rapid Transit line is that it
9 would be filled to capacity almost immediately as it would be
10 opened.

11 Light rail has the greater capacity to move more people and
12 it will serve as a connector of neighborhoods. It will reduce
13 car pollutants. It will reduce traffic. Businesses will
14 benefit from their employees being able to move in between the
15 two Twin Cities and to the University of Minnesota in a much
16 easier fashion and the light rail line will serve as the hub, as
17 I mentioned, between the two Twin Cities, at the University of
18 Minnesota Campus, and the emerging bioscience corridor to give
19 our region a further edge in terms of economic development and
20 accessibility and market. Thank you.

21 MR. PROBST: Thank you. Priscilla Zee. (Pause) The
22 next speakers then are Joan Pennington and Vernon Strom.

23 MR. STROM: I'm Vernon Strom.

24 MR. PROBST: Please come in, sir.

25 MR. STROM: I haven't -- oh, my name is Vernon Strom

1 and I live on Charles Avenue between Victoria and Milton; and
2 during the discussion on light rail I've heard very little about
3 the impact it will have on the people that already use
4 University; and I don't think you people have done a very good
5 job of that in either of the newspapers. I think you really
6 ought to utilize the newspapers to show just what kind of access
7 everyone's going to have to University after light rail, you
8 know.

9 My understanding talking to an engineer here is that on the
10 cross streets, instead of having access at every cross street it
11 will be every other one. Well, I didn't know that before I came
12 here. I understand that there will still be two lanes of
13 traffic each way. I didn't know that before I came here. And I
14 think that you people ought to utilize the newspapers more fully
15 to explain just how light rail is going to impact all the people
16 that already use University.

17 MR. PROBST: Thank you. I apologize. I skipped over
18 Laura Sweeney on the list. Laura.

19 MS. SWEENEY: I'm Laura Sweeney. I live on Sherburne
20 Avenue. I'm a bus-dependent senior citizen living in the Midway
21 area. The 16 bus is a lifeline. It stops frequently and
22 connects with all the major bus lines. The light rail will only
23 stop at Snelling, Lexington, Dale, and Rice. Supposedly there
24 will also be buses, but at a much reduced time and rate and
25 there will be no 50 or 94 buses at all.

1 What happens to a majority of the passengers who live
2 between these stops? The 20-minute trip may end up taking an
3 hour if you have to make bus transfers. People living on either
4 side of University Avenue will also have problems. There will
5 be many streets where they can't make turns or where pedestrians
6 can't walk. Going across the street to visit the cafe will make
7 you walk three or four blocks, maybe even more out of your way.
8 Stores like Cub, Target, and Wal-Mart will not have LR stops.

9 (Looks at document.) I got lost. And most of the small
10 businesses will not be near the stops either. You can find that
11 many of their customers do take buses. If you did a customer
12 survey in the businesses and asked if they took buses, I think
13 you'd find that many of them take the bus to shop, but they
14 couldn't because of -- they'd probably just buy a car and not
15 bother to come to University Avenue.

16 I think you're making a big mistake. Everybody says it will
17 serve everybody. It doesn't serve the car-less people. I can
18 tell you that.

19 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. The next
20 three speakers are Lisa Lee, John Swanholm, and Khue Yang.

21 MS. LEE: My name is Lisa Lee. I live at 181
22 Sherburne. I don't own a car and I'm very pro-transit and I
23 think improving the bus system would be a much better buy for
24 the money. We're looking at a light rail line. It's not a
25 light rail system. It's a line. We're looking at 31 vehicles

1 on a light rail line, 47 bus vehicles eliminated. This is
2 according to the Environmental Impact Statement. So essentially
3 you're actually losing some seating capacity. I figured it was
4 somewhere on the order of 60 seats. So for \$840 million you're
5 carrying less seated passengers than you would with the baseline
6 alternative.

7 The other thing is the Central Corridor Committee asked for
8 special dispensation from the FTA to not have to analyze an
9 improved bus alternative. Despite the exhaustive and detailed
10 very technical work, the document is seriously flawed because
11 the improved bus alternative, which I think is the
12 Transportation System Management, was not even looked at. When
13 you look -- okay. Now I only have 30 seconds.

14 So for the capital cost of LRT, instead of decreasing the
15 number of vehicles that you're operating you could have added
16 hundreds of buses and for the operating cost of LRT you could
17 have operated those buses because the operating cost of LRT,
18 according to the Environmental Impact Statement, is \$18 million
19 while the cost of operating 34 additional buses is \$4.3 million.
20 Okay. So you could have operated more than 136 additional buses
21 for the operating cost alone of LRT.

22 MR. PROBST: Thank you, Ms. Lee. Mr. Swanholm.

23 MR. SWANHOLM: Good evening. Thank you for allowing me
24 to speak tonight. I'm John Swanholm with St. Joseph's Hospital
25 administration. We're part of the HealthEast Care System and

1 personally and our organization are in strong support of
2 construction of Light Rail Transit on University Avenue with a
3 stop at St. Joseph's Hospital.

4 HealthEast Care System employs nearly 3500 full- and
5 part-time health care professionals along the Central Corridor
6 including several hundred at our corporate offices on 1700
7 University Avenue. Many of these employees live in the area as
8 well.

9 Light Rail Transit is a major connector with the Twin
10 Cities. It will stimulate growth, economic development, and
11 strategically transport people to fill business needs for
12 HealthEast and many other organizations. HealthEast treats tens
13 of thousands of local residents at medical facilities along the
14 Central Corridor including St. Joseph's Hospital, Downtown St.
15 Paul; Bethesda Hospital near the Capitol on 559 Capitol
16 Boulevard; HealthEast Downtown St. Paul Clinic next door to St.
17 Joseph's Hospital. Our Midway Clinic, Home Care, and HealthEast
18 Outpatient Care are all located on our same Midway Campus at
19 1700 University Avenue. We also have HealthEast City Passport
20 in Downtown St. Paul offering services to thousands of senior
21 citizens.

22 So the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit will secure
23 transit for our patients and for infrastructure which is
24 fundamental for access to quality health care, but it will also
25 provide options to help alleviate auto congestion, pollution,

1 and noise on Interstate 94 and the surrounding communities. As
2 a health care organization HealthEast is very concerned about
3 air quality in the Central Corridor. Light Rail Transit instead
4 of Bus Rapid Transit is the best option for improving air
5 quality and reducing traffic noise.

6 So Central Corridor Light Rail Transit will contribute to
7 the future prosperity of HealthEast Care System, the largest
8 health care system in the east metro area, serving thousands of
9 families with a full spectrum of health care and with the
10 Central Corridor we have the makings of a fully-integrated
11 transit system for the next century.

12 If I could add briefly, we ask you to consider modifying
13 your route in Downtown St. Paul to include a stop at St.
14 Joseph's Hospital. Thank you.

15 MR. PROBST: Thank you. Mr. Yang.

16 MR. YANG: Thank you very much for allowing me to speak
17 for a minute here. My name is Khue Yang. I am the chair of the
18 Minnesota Hmong Chamber of Commerce. Since the light rail is
19 being proposed coming to University Avenue, many of our
20 neighbors who are business owner and property owner locate
21 directly from University Avenue have a great concern about how
22 much impact it's going to have in their property and their
23 business as far as during the construction period.

24 Second part of that, is there even going to be any eminent
25 domain on their property? And as far as for their business

1 owner, they are very concerned how they're going to survive
2 during the construction period and we would like to see if this
3 question is going to be addressed or the answer to your business
4 owner on University Avenue. Thank you.

5 MR. PROBST: Thank you. If I may I'd like to also note
6 that State Representative Cy Thao has joined us this evening as
7 well. Thank you for being here. The next three speakers are
8 Emily Siebold, Dianne Nakajima, and John Luhman, please. Emily.

9 MS. SIEBOLD: My name is Emily Siebold and I live in
10 Cottage Grove, which obviously is not too terribly close to
11 University Avenue, but I do work in Downtown St. Paul and am in
12 support of light rail along the Central Corridor. I believe
13 that having light rail along University Avenue would be a more
14 efficient way to transport people and goods between Minneapolis
15 and St. Paul, to get them where they need to go. It would also
16 create for more economic development in the area as well as
17 decreasing emissions from automobiles and improving air quality.
18 Thank you.

19 MR. PROBST: Thank you. Dianne.

20 MS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, I'm Dianne. I choose not to speak.

21 MR. PROBST: Okay. Thank you. John.

22 MS. LUHMAN: Yes. My name is John Luhman. I am a
23 Department of Agriculture employee. I live out near Loring Park
24 near Downtown Minneapolis. I currently use transit, my bicycle,
25 to get around. I'm a well-versed historian on the transit

1 system in the metro area for many years.

2 It might be notable that University Avenue wouldn't be here
3 except for the 1891 opening of the electrification of streetcars
4 which drew a hundred thousand people in its opening in 1891 and
5 most of that right-of-way was only streetcar back then, cars,
6 but my main point today is, with all the stadium hullabaloo, to
7 give a long-term perspective of this.

8 For the same amount of money that the state and federal and
9 local people have to put in, about \$450 million, that's the same
10 amount of money that is being put in publicly for a single
11 stadium that was just passed. Instead of servicing a million
12 fans a year, this system will service six and a half to seven
13 million people, passengers of all classes, workers, and not to
14 mention the University of Minnesota benefiting. Essentially
15 three major cities -- Minneapolis, St. Paul, and the University
16 of Minnesota -- an all-connecting bus line whereas the stadium
17 essentially affects just the businesses downtown that are lucky
18 enough to park or feed the people that go down there.

19 Also, there are 11 miles of commercial distance that would
20 be serviced by the light rail versus essentially one mile at a
21 stadium and instead of about 65 days a year that the stadium
22 will be used -- I'm guessing there -- 365 days a year for light
23 rail.

24 MR. PROBST: Thank you. The next two speakers are
25 Grant Abbott and Bob DeLaVega.

1 MR. ABBOTT: My name is Grant Abbott. I'm the
2 executive director of the St. Paul Area Council of Churches and
3 a member of the Central Corridor Equity Coalition. I speak in
4 favor of the Light Rail Transit Alternative for the Central
5 Corridor with reservations and with hope.

6 I know good people disagree with this choice, especially the
7 fact that it is three and a half times more expensive to
8 construct than the Bus Rapid Transit Alternative. In response I
9 ask if you prefer the subway or the bus when you go to New York
10 or to Boston.

11 Light rail is a significantly more attractive mode of
12 transit than the bus. It has the capacity to turn the Central
13 Corridor into one of the most interesting and vibrant areas in
14 the Twin Cities. People will not only ride it to avoid the
15 hassle and cost of driving between the two downtowns. They will
16 also ride it to visit businesses along the corridor. The
17 diversity of the Twin Cities will meet along the corridor and it
18 will help to build a stronger and more unified community.

19 But as hopeful as I am about the benefits of light rail, I
20 have reservations that must be addressed. If these reservations
21 are not addressed, my enthusiasm for either transit alternative
22 will drop significantly.

23 History has shown a tendency of those in power in the Twin
24 Cities to devalue and discount communities of color when it
25 comes to significant transit decisions. The development of the

1 Central Corridor offers an opportunity to heal the wounds of the
2 past. How will these communities prominent at the east end of
3 the corridor be given a voice that will be heard in the
4 development process? What will be done to ensure significant
5 participation of people of color in the construction of the
6 light rail line? What will be done to protect the investment of
7 the businesses at the east end of the corridor during
8 construction? And what will be done to ensure that the poor and
9 elderly are not displaced by significant increases in property
10 taxes and rents due to the rising property values light rail
11 construction will bring? Will the worst fears of the African-
12 American and Asian-American communities comes to pass, being
13 driven out to make way for wealthier white businesses and
14 residents? This does not have to be.

15 Light rail development along the corridor cannot only
16 connect the two cities; it can also help heal the past and
17 contribute to the creation of a prosperous and valued diverse
18 Twin Cities. Thank you.

19 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. Mr.
20 DeLaVega.

21 MR. DELAVEGA: Thank you. My name is Bob DeLaVega. I
22 live on Western Avenue across the street right here, and I'm
23 here today to support light rail on University Avenue in the
24 Central Corridor for several reasons.

25 I've lived in this neighborhood and within a couple of miles

1 of this building for more than two decades. I work Downtown
2 Minneapolis. My wife works at the University. So a day doesn't
3 go by that we don't travel on this corridor. The congestion is
4 getting worse almost per second in a day-to-day way and it needs
5 to be addressed. I noticed one of your graphics shows that
6 you're anticipating a 70-minute travel time between the two
7 downtowns. That's unacceptable and that has to be addressed.

8 I think rail is the right way to go because the Hiawatha
9 Line has demonstrated that there are a lot of people that will
10 take rail that won't take buses. I take the bus occasionally
11 myself, but there are a lot of people that won't. I know
12 personally within the building that I work in I've talked to
13 several people who have chosen to take the Hiawatha Line to come
14 downtown where in the past they lived in neighborhoods with
15 buses but they didn't take the bus. So I think the rail is
16 important.

17 Third is regional economic competitiveness. My business
18 takes me to places like Salt Lake City and Denver. They're
19 building transportation systems that include rail. It seems to
20 me that we're going to be at a competitive disadvantage in years
21 to come if we don't catch up with what a lot of other
22 communities are doing.

23 Lastly, I'd just like to say as has already been pointed
24 out, when we do get into construction we need to be respectful
25 of the many small business owners, many of them right on this

1 street here, who have put a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into
2 their business. Thanks again for a chance to be here.

3 MR. PROBST: Thank you. There are some seats up in
4 front for those of you standing in the back. If you'd like to
5 sit down there are plenty of seats up here, so please feel free
6 to come forward.

7 Also, I've been asked to note that for those of you who I
8 have cut off before you were finished, if you have additional
9 comments you'd like to make you can leave them here tonight in
10 writing or use any of the other methods that are outlined in the
11 Citizens Guide.

12 The next two speakers -- three actually. Phyllis Goff. Mr.
13 Kidder didn't indicate for certain whether you wished to speak
14 or not so I will offer you the opportunity -- no. Okay. Sorry.
15 And the next speaker is going to be Dave VanHattum after Phyllis
16 Goff. And I don't see Ms. Goff. David.

17 MR. VANHATTUM: Good afternoon. My name is Dave
18 VanHattum and I work for Transit for Livable Communities. We're
19 located at Selby and Dale. Transit for Livable Communities is a
20 citizen-based organization working for greater public investment
21 in transit including buses, trains, bicycling, and walking. TLC
22 believes that Light Rail Transit is the right technology for the
23 Central Corridor.

24 Light rail can best accommodate the projected ridership over
25 the long term and it will provide current and future bus riders

1 with improved service. Light Rail Transit is the most
2 cost-effective way to move large numbers of transit riders. In
3 its first full year of operation, Hiawatha Light Rail carried 11
4 percent of Metro Transit's riders at 8 percent of the cost.
5 That efficiency occurs because a two-car train can carry up to
6 250 riders while an articulated or accordion bus can carry about
7 80 riders.

8 LRT on a dedicated right-of-way will ensure that transit
9 riders get to their destination in considerably less time than
10 either the Number 16 or Number 50 bus line. Further, travelers
11 can count on predictable travel times as LRT is unaffected by
12 congestion, vehicle crashes, breakdowns, or road construction.
13 LRT has level boarding through many doors, thus making it fast
14 and easy toward riders in wheelchairs or riders with bicycles,
15 strollers, groceries, luggage, et cetera.

16 In closing, TLC asks Ramsey and Hennepin County and the
17 Metropolitan Council to consider the following items: Increase
18 the number of stops along University and reduce the number of
19 stops in Downtown St. Paul; substantially expand north-south bus
20 service connections to the University Corridor; make the
21 corridor safer and more pleasant for walking and biking; provide
22 assistance for businesses along the corridor before, during, and
23 after construction; and strive to balance the opportunity for
24 development with the need to preserve the uniquenesses and other
25 characteristics of the corridor. Great cities have great public

1 spaces.

2 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. The next two
3 speakers are Stephanie Alstead and Nancy Vibar.

4 MS. GOFF: I thought you called Phyllis Goff as second.
5 I'm sorry.

6 MR. PROBST: Please proceed.

7 MS. GOFF: My name is Phyllis Goff. I'm a resident of
8 St. Paul and I'm here tonight to speak in support of LRT as a
9 preferred mode of transportation down University Avenue. I
10 speak tonight on behalf of myself.

11 I have personal experience in using this type of transit in
12 other cities as does my family. They use it for a mode of going
13 to work, to go to entertainment, and to visit other friends and
14 relatives; and so I support that.

15 I support also and appreciate the engagement of the
16 community in this process, especially given the history of the
17 Rondo community and, therefore, I appreciate any sensitivity to
18 ensuring that the African-American community in particular
19 continues to be engaged in how Light Rail Transit is carried out
20 between Minneapolis and St. Paul. Thank you.

21 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments.

22 MS. ALSTEAD: Hello. My name is Stephanie Alstead. I
23 live at 1206 Lafond. I've been a resident for 12 years and I
24 believe I heard about light rail and the need for this transit
25 along I-94 or University Avenue since probably about the first

1 year that I was there, and I am just very excited that we are
2 actually looking like we're going to go forward with something
3 here, and I'm really hoping to see light rail. I think it's an
4 exciting opportunity and a long time coming.

5 I'm actually a recent bus rider. I've recently taken a job
6 in Downtown St. Paul and I am moved by how many people depend so
7 much on mass transit and they don't have the choices that I have
8 and I think that that is a very important thing.

9 I believe light rail is -- it's a great mode of
10 transportation because of its convenience, its reliability, that
11 it's clean and quiet, and that it also allows us to experience
12 the area differently. That's certainly something that I've been
13 noticing with riding the bus. I'm able to see the stores that
14 are along my route instead of concentrating, as I individually
15 ride in my car, on just, you know, not hitting the next car or
16 making that next light; and as I'm a pedestrian in between bus
17 stops I notice so many other things and there's certainly more
18 opportunities to stop at the small businesses, and I certainly
19 welcome more small businesses as I live near Lexington where
20 there's certainly plenty of opportunity and not so much
21 development right there. It certainly connects the
22 neighborhoods and the neighbors as I begin to meet some of my
23 neighbors that are also riding mass transit.

24 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. I apologize
25 for the next name here. Is it Nancy Vibar?

1 MS. VIBAR: Yes. You said it right. I think I'm
2 probably one of the only people in this place that can say I
3 grew up here. I lived across the alley here all my life except
4 for now I moved a block and a half away. I don't want the
5 inconvenience of this down by me. I don't want to see
6 businesses that have come along here and built up -- because I
7 was here when there wasn't any businesses here. We had
8 after-hour houses or places like that here and they've come in
9 and built this up. You put two lanes down University Avenue and
10 the bus, where are people gonna park for these businesses
11 because these businesses do not all have parking lots and
12 they're very busy and you can't always get into their parking
13 lots. That's one of my worries too.

14 Plus, if you're building this are you going to have this
15 being built at night like 94 was and then all the noise comes
16 along with that? Plus there is a noise when these trains stop
17 and are we going to hear this all night too? So there is -- I
18 live here. I'm worried about all these problems and I'm not a
19 supporter of light rail and I'm being selfish because I do live
20 down here.

21 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. The next two
22 speakers are Roger Sorbel and Gary Shallcross. Gary.

23 MR. SHALLCROSS: I have some general and specific
24 comments. I'll try to get through as much as I can. The
25 pursuit of a new light rail line in the Central Corridor by the

1 Ramsey and Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authorities is a
2 remarkable parallel to the pursuit of war with Iraq by the Bush
3 administration about four years ago. Both adventures have been
4 championed by ideologues and self-interested contractors. Both
5 have witnessed the selective use of intelligence that ignored
6 obvious warnings in the past. Both have been supported by
7 politicians more interested in political posturing than in sound
8 policies. Both have been cheered by a media establishment
9 looking for feel-good stories more than the truth. Both have
10 had the support of a public too busy to pay close attention to
11 the facts.

12 And like the war in Iraq, I suspect the cost of the proposed
13 Central Corridor LRT will be vastly greater than its benefits
14 and will actually make life worse for both citizens and
15 beneficiaries. As many have said of the Iraq war so it can be
16 said of the LRT in the Central Corridor. Mainly that it amounts
17 to a fraud.

18 To substantiate this conclusion one need to look no further
19 than the Draft EIS submitted ostensibly to support approval of
20 the project. In Chapter 7, *Evaluation of Alternatives*, the case
21 is stated for LRT rather than BRT or some variation of existing
22 bus service as strongly supporting three key goals. Fulfillment
23 of these goals is measured according to a list of criteria for
24 which the LRT option is almost always given the highest grade
25 and extension of existing service, the baseline option, is given

1 the lowest.

2 However, these conclusions are contradicted by the very
3 information contained within the DEIS itself. With an objective
4 3C on page 721, travel time savings are graded best for LRT and
5 worst for the baseline. However, two pages earlier, Table 724
6 clearly shows that existing and baseline travel times are
7 considerably shorter than LRT. In fact, the travel time for
8 existing 50 express buses on University Avenue which stops about
9 as often as the LRT takes less than half the time proposed for
10 the LRT, 32 as compared to 75 minutes.

11 MR. PROBST: Thank you, Mr. Shallcross. The next
12 speakers are Nina Axelson, Scott Banas, I believe, and Vic
13 Rosenthal.

14 MS. AXELSON: Good evening. My name is Nina Axelson.
15 I'm here representing District 12, St. Anthony Park Community
16 Council. I'd like to start by thanking everybody involved in
17 the District Councils Collaborative and the work that they have
18 been doing to make sure that community opinion and best interest
19 are being represented in this process.

20 We have been supportive of light rail as a transit option
21 along University Avenue and I just quickly wanted to express
22 some of the concerns that we found with the Draft EIS.

23 We realize that parking is going to be a complicated
24 solution for the corridor. Some people are going to say there's
25 a need for more parking. Some are going to say there's a need

1 for less in order to have that balance of true transit-oriented
2 development and reduction of car trips. We just want to make
3 sure that we're cautious in the impacts that happen to the
4 neighborhood.

5 We look at the Draft EIS statement and there are a lot of
6 parallels drawn to the Hiawatha Corridor and it's very easy to
7 draw the parallel of the experience that neighbors there have
8 with parking and we want to make sure that our neighbors are not
9 going to experience that negative impact to draw away from the
10 benefits of having light rail in the corridor.

11 In addition to that, we also want to see a pedestrian and
12 bicycle environment so that our options to get out of cars are
13 not just limited to the light rail; that they do have an option
14 to walk and bike and that that is fostered as much in the
15 development process.

16 Along with that we want to make sure that bus service we
17 understand is going to be a way -- I hear a lot of people saying
18 I will get out of my car to get on light rail for this and if
19 parking isn't going to be the solution and we expect people to
20 be able to access light rail, I want to make sure that buses are
21 still going to be funded and that those bus routes are still
22 available because that's -- we've heard people say tonight there
23 are many people without cars and we don't want them driving over
24 to use the light rail.

25 I also wanted to say a little bit about smart development.

1 It is important to us that density and mixed use are strong
2 considerations. I think we're learning this in the few
3 development projects that are being considered right now for
4 University Avenue. I encourage planners to use a long-term
5 vision for design. I look at University Avenue right now and
6 what I see is a gray corridor. I want to see it turned into a
7 green corridor, long-term sustainable. Thank you.

8 MR. PROBST: Thank you. Scott.

9 MR. BANAS: Good afternoon. My name is Scott Banas and
10 I'm the president of Merriam Park Community Council. On behalf
11 of the Council and the residents of Merriam Park neighborhood, I
12 thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Central
13 Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

14 With regard to the threshold issue, the Merriam Park
15 Community Council supports Light Rail Transit on University
16 Avenue for three reasons. First, more riders would be attracted
17 to light rail than the Bus Rapid Transit. Second, transit-
18 oriented development will be better supported by light rail than
19 by Bus Rapid Transit. Finally, light rail is the only
20 alternative that can accommodate anticipated future Central
21 Corridor ridership in 2025 and beyond.

22 The Council support is qualified, however, by three
23 requests. First, the Council believes that light rail should
24 serve the people who live and work along the corridor in
25 addition to those traveling from downtown to downtown. To meet

1 this goal, it is necessary to add at least one or two stations
2 on University Avenue with special attention to serving people
3 who depend on mass transit as their only transportation.

4 Second, it is important to provide people with access to
5 light rail living north or south of the corridor. The Council
6 supports a network of connecting bus service so that people may
7 access light rail without driving and parking at or near a
8 station.

9 Finally, the Merriam Park Community Council emphasizes the
10 importance of ensuring that community voices be heard and have
11 influence throughout the planning, design, and construction of
12 the Central Corridor Project. A strong citizens advisory
13 committee should be created at the beginning of preliminary
14 engineering to serve for the duration of the project. This is
15 essential to ensure that the Central Corridor transit system
16 meets the needs of the people it serves from downtown to
17 downtown and all along the corridor. Thank you for your time
18 and attention.

19 MR. PROBST: Thank you. Mr. Rosenthal.

20 MR. ROSENTHAL: Good evening. My name is Vic
21 Rosenthal. I'm the executive director of Jewish Community
22 Action which works on social and economic justice issues in the
23 community. I'm also a board member of the Transit for Livable
24 Communities. Both organizations are part of the University
25 Avenue Community Coalition which is a broad-based coalition

1 working on equitable development and community participation.

2 I also happen to be a 20-year resident of this community.

3 I'm a strong supporter of expanding public transit and perhaps

4 the Light Rail Transit, but only if it's done the right way. If

5 it's done the right way it provides essential transit

6 alternatives for people in the community. If it's done the

7 wrong way it can be devastating economically to people and

8 businesses in this community. This must be seen as transit in

9 the community for people in the community and not just transit

10 through the community.

11 My concerns relate to the fact that the Environmental Impact

12 Statement lacks any real focus on the economic, racial, and

13 equity impacts of the proposed Light Rail Transit. This

14 community has already experienced upheaval and displacement from

15 the last major transportation system that was brought through

16 this community.

17 So following changes are definitely needed. One, we must

18 see some protection of businesses. There must be some

19 development of a mitigation fund for businesses that already

20 exist. There must be more stops, as has been said by others, to

21 assure economic development. Stops should be no more than a

22 half-mile apart. And we must deal with parking issues. We must

23 be assured that this system will create wealth in the community

24 and not displacement.

25 We must also assure protection of housing in neighborhoods

1 to deal with the possibility and likelihood of tax increases and
2 assure preservation of affordable housing; and, lastly, we must
3 assure that there be a broad-based community participation
4 approach that will be available for all the segments of the
5 community on a regular basis. Thank you.

6 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. The next two
7 speakers are Dyane Garvey and Steven Woodward. Dyane.

8 MS. GARVEY: I'm Dyane Garvey and thank you for this
9 opportunity for us to make our public comments. I want light
10 rail on University, but I do have some concerns. It seems stops
11 are too far and wide -- too far apart. I have family that live
12 here in this community. We're really in the heart of the Asian
13 community here; and many of us can remember a time when at
14 exactly this time right now you couldn't walk down University
15 Avenue; and many of the people have come in here -- the
16 Southeast Asians, Hmong and other Southeast Asian groups, have
17 come in here and have revitalized, purchased the dilapidated
18 buildings here, rehabbed it, opened their shops, and people have
19 started coming here.

20 We are here tonight because of the revitalization efforts of
21 the community here and so I'm really concerned with the stops.
22 While light rail would be great for University Avenue I'm very
23 concerned that the stops may not bring the economic development
24 that we all hope for because they're so far apart, and I'm also
25 very concerned that the businesses along University as well as

1 the Asian families living in this area are already struggling,
2 and I haven't heard anything about how we are going to help
3 these businesses stay in business while the project is in
4 progress. Any drop basically -- they basically live day-to-day
5 and have cash flow issues that they have -- they struggle with
6 every day and so I'm very concerned that any drop of business
7 will also put these businesses out of business. Additionally --

8 MR. PROBST: Thank you.

9 MS. GARVEY: -- I just also want to -- okay.

10 MR. PROBST: Steven.

11 MR. WOODWARD: Yes. I'm glad you could read my
12 writing. My name is Steven Woodward. I'm the Artist in
13 Residence for the City of St. Paul funded by the Building Owners
14 Management Association and currently working on a project in
15 regards to University Avenue, has some bearing on Light Rail
16 Transit.

17 I'm very much for Light Rail Transit as an individual living
18 in Lowertown right next to the depot, but right now I'm working
19 in the administration section of the Department of Public Works
20 trying to bring art into the city streetscape and as such
21 through Debbie Montgomery received a Star Grant to do just that
22 around the sidewalks of University -- the sidewalks surrounding
23 Rondo Library at University and Dale. And as part of my program
24 I'm not there to do my own work but to try to integrate other
25 cultures' arts and writings into that streetscape.

1 As such, I've spent the last two months contacting every
2 single cultural group on that University intersection,
3 University and Dale Street intersection, and in the process of
4 handing them my business card from the city, I also hand them my
5 own personal card with my own work over the last 20 years; and
6 after I explain the project through photographs and everything
7 else -- and what the project is very quickly, it's just putting
8 in pavers into the streetscape and it shows different cultural
9 motifs, be they poetry, quotes, historical sayings from all
10 these different cultural groups. Every single one of these
11 cultural groups that I've gone to recognizes what it is that I'm
12 doing and why it is I'm doing it. Everyone understands the arts
13 and the arts are critical to the inclusive nature of whatever is
14 going to be built up here.

15 I went to the City Council Chambers for this first meeting a
16 couple of days ago to say the same thing and I was so stunned by
17 the aesthetic within that chamber itself. The art speaks so
18 well just by themselves if given a chance to exist in public
19 space. I think the City Council Chambers is probably the best
20 example of that. We don't need a 30-foot-high onyx makeup of a
21 peace god on every stop, but the arts should certainly be
22 included.

23 I'd like to leave two of these brochures that I've handed
24 out to over 40 different groups here on the University Corridor.
25 Thank you.

1 MR. PROBST: Thank you. The next three speakers are
2 Nghi Huynh, Marlyna Trinh, and Ray Richardson.

3 MS. TRINH: Hello. My name is Marlyna Trinh. I own
4 the address 455 all the way to 459 University Avenue West. It's
5 right between Western and Dale. I live in this neighborhood for
6 almost 20 years and I'm also a business owner and also a
7 property owner. So as you can see, on University parking has
8 always been a major problem. So my question is when I was
9 looking at the map I noticed that there is no parking site
10 anywhere on the map so that we know where these light rail
11 people are going to park a car when they get on the light rail
12 because on University there's a major problem of towing cars
13 because, again, there's not enough parking spaces; and this
14 is -- business owners, they tow people's car if they don't park
15 it at, you know, wherever they shop.

16 And so basically I just know that University has always
17 been -- parking has always been a major issue. There's a lot of
18 towing and also I'm looking at the two lanes. Like you said,
19 middle road. My point is right now we have parking issues. So
20 having a light rail right in between it, I don't know where the
21 customers are going to park their car. I mean even the light
22 rail people getting in the light rail are going to park in the
23 neighborhood because behind the stores these houses -- they
24 don't own a garage. They park all their cars on the side and in
25 front of the sidewalks. So can you imagine any people getting

1 light rail from this end going over to the other end, they have
2 to park their car somewhere. So I'm just telling you that
3 parking, it's a major problem on University.

4 And the other question I have is the property tax. It goes
5 up every year as of right now even before we put the train on,
6 and also I would like to know if there's any compensation for
7 all these business owners and all these residents that live in
8 this neighborhood because due to the light rail on the
9 University you know there's going to be property tax going up
10 and I don't think it's fair for the residents and the business
11 owners have to pay for these property tax.

12 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments.

13 MR. RICHARDSON: Good afternoon. I'm Ray Richardson.
14 I'm just a concerned citizen. I live and work in St. Paul. I
15 grew up in Chicago. I'm a veteran rider of mass transit. I've
16 been riding the subway since I was five years old, used to ride
17 the train to White Sox Park to go to Cubs games and -- the
18 Whites and the Cubs games at Wrigley Field, and I also used to
19 ride the train every day pretty much to go to work and go to
20 school.

21 When I first heard about a light rail system here I was kind
22 of curious about knowing why they didn't think about running the
23 train down I-94. In Chicago they've had great success with that
24 kind of a system through the medians and the expressways and
25 Chicago's been a pioneer on that, but since I've been standing

1 here I've noticed that there's a passion for the businesses on
2 University Street.

3 Now I can understand why there's a system to propose on
4 University, but I strongly recommend -- and as a veteran rider
5 of mass transit, speed is important. Getting to work on time is
6 important. Getting to your appointments on time is important.
7 And if you're riding a train down the middle of a street and the
8 train has to honor lights and pedestrians and worry about
9 traffic, you're really defeating the purpose of trying to speed
10 up travel to make people not drive their cars and also to not
11 take a taxi, also get off the bus.

12 So I would really recommend maybe considering an elevated
13 structure on University to really avoid all the traffic delays
14 and traffic hassles you may get. I'm telling you, I've been
15 around the country in many cities and I haven't seen a highly
16 successful light rail system on the streets considering the
17 distance that you're running on University from, say, downtown
18 to all the way to Minneapolis. You can do it downtown, but to
19 run that long a distance it's gonna be tough and I would really
20 hope that maybe somebody would consider an elevated structure to
21 run over University to really save the traffic snarls and
22 parking. Thank you.

23 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments.

24 (Applause)

25 MR. PROBST: Nghi Huynh. Am I mispronouncing the name

1 or the person does not wish to speak?

2 MR. HUYNH: My name is Nghi Huynh. I'm resident,
3 business, and a property owner of University Avenue, 417
4 University Avenue, across from here. I have great concerns
5 about the impacts of light rail building on University Avenue
6 due to three main reason. Number one, parking. We already have
7 trouble parking. If the light rail come in we eliminate some
8 space for parking. Number two, of course, when the construction
9 it will disrupt the business during the time of construction of
10 the light rail; and, number three, the federal government just
11 give you the lump sum to do the light rail, to build the light
12 rail, but you have to look for the property tax. So with that
13 truly great impact on landowner. We very fear about how to run
14 a business on University Avenue.

15 Unless the light rail authority, the government have to have
16 some sort of good solution to deal with that issue then we can
17 go forward. Otherwise you just do something benefit a few but
18 create a great damage for a lot of us to come here to be the
19 business on University Avenue. Thank you.

20 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments.

21 (Applause)

22 MR. PROBST: The next three speakers are FOUNG HER,
23 JOAN PENNINGTON, and SAENG KUE if I'm -- any of those folks
24 here?

25 MR. KUE: Thank you. My name is Saeng Kue. I'm

1 resident of St. Paul. I live walking distance from University
2 Avenue or the impact area. I'd like to raise two concerns.
3 One, the resident, the Hmong resident living in that area. I
4 like to encourage to find ways to bring the Hmong resident to be
5 part of the planning process because I don't see many resident
6 here tonight so they have -- particularly the task maybe on the
7 properties or the resident or business.

8 Secondly, on the business, I'd like to bring the attention
9 to Hmong business are family-operated and they depend solely on
10 the income of the business. During construction we know that
11 there's going to be an interruption because the street be
12 closing and there's going to be impact on business, on Hmong
13 business. So I'd like you to find ways to compensate for the
14 loss of business of these family so they can pay for the more
15 years opportunity to raise family where this will be hard for
16 them to get by every day. Thank you.

17 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments.

18 MS. PENNINGTON: Good evening. My name is Joan
19 Pennington and I'm an employee of the HealthEast Care System and
20 I work at 1700 University Avenue in our corporate offices. In
21 addition to our corporate offices, HealthEast employs about 3500
22 full-time and part-time health care professionals along the
23 Central Corridor, many of whom live in the area as well.

24 The Central Corridor light transit is a major connector of
25 the Twin Cities that will stimulate growth, economic

1 development, and strategically transporting people to fill the
2 business needs for HealthEast and other organizations.
3 Therefore, I support construction of light rail on University
4 Avenue with a stop at St. Joseph's Hospital.

5 In addition to being an employer, we also treat thousands of
6 local residents in our medical facilities along the Central
7 Corridor including St. Joseph's Hospital in downtown, Bethesda
8 Hospital at 559 Capitol Boulevard near the State Capitol. In
9 addition, we also have many clinics including the St. Paul
10 Clinic, the HealthEast Midway Clinic. We also have a home care
11 business as well as outpatient care located on our Midway
12 Campus. HealthEast City Passport also is in Downtown St. Paul
13 and offers services for several thousand senior citizens in St.
14 Paul.

15 The Central Corridor Light Rail Transit will secure transit
16 for our patients and improve the infrastructure which is
17 fundamental for access to quality health care. The Central
18 Corridor light rail versus Bus Rapid Transit will contribute to
19 the future prosperity of HealthEast Care System, the largest
20 health care organization in the Twin Cities east metro, serving
21 thousands of families with a spectrum of health care needs.
22 With the Central Corridor we have the makings of a fully-
23 integrated transit system for the next century. Thank you.

24 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. Is Founge Her
25 here? (Pause) The final three speakers I have signed up are

1 George Brauer, Barb Bolar, Luther Bexell. George.

2 MR. BRAUER: I'm George Brauer. I live in Prospect
3 Park in Minneapolis and I want to say that I've heard concerns
4 that Light Rail Transit along University Avenue would just end
5 Prospect Park as we knew it. I'm worried about some of the
6 businesses that may have to close down if this is done. Isn't
7 there a better way to connect the Twin Cities by light rail
8 rather than have it around University Avenue?

9 MR. PROBST: Thank you. Barb.

10 MS. BOLAR: Hi. For the record, my name is Barb Bolar
11 and I'm a resident of the area. I have no issues really so much
12 with light rail, but I think that there's some things that we
13 should take into consideration.

14 The parking issues. They need to have some type of ramp
15 built. There are several businesses on University Avenue where
16 the car companies have closed. I mean perhaps purchasing some
17 of that space for parking because you have real issues. You
18 need to have more light into the area if you're going to have
19 this going on most of the night. The light on University Avenue
20 is very dim.

21 Some of us work evening shifts and some of us work different
22 hours and if you live in the area I don't think I would want to
23 be walking several blocks carrying packages of groceries because
24 I can't get a parking space in front of my home. There are
25 several single mothers on the blocks. There are people who have

1 day-care centers and the parking would be an absolute nightmare
2 when you're trying to tote the children from place to place
3 because you can't park in front of your home.

4 Some of us are also very active in the community and if you
5 go someplace in the evening -- say you go someplace like to a
6 theater show at 8 o'clock. You get out maybe 10, 11 o'clock at
7 night. Again, you're going to be walking around in high heels
8 not being able to have a parking space in front of your home.
9 Now that becomes a safety issue.

10 It needs to be better planning to where you're going to park
11 all these people because my understanding is you're going to
12 have over 1,050 right at University Avenue and Lexington. Now
13 you've got to have some parking. You're gonna have to park
14 somewhere, but it shouldn't change the quality of life for the
15 people that live in the community. That's basically what I
16 wanted to say.

17 But I think you should have better lighting and I think you
18 should have alternative parking for people in the community when
19 they're carrying packages or working different shifts so they
20 can come into their home, they can park in front of their homes
21 and not -- also, for the snow emergency routes people often park
22 on the off-street. If you have this type of parking for people
23 that don't move their cars and don't mind getting ticketed,
24 you're not going to have a place to park also. So just those
25 issues are a concern.

1 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. Mr. Bexell.

2 MR. BEXELL: I wish to submit that we are different
3 than Hiawatha and that St. Paul represents a very different
4 context within which the light rail is projected. If that is
5 true, there are several things that need to be put in place to
6 ensure and extend the stability of the area. That is to if not
7 consider an elevated train, perhaps a subway down portions of
8 University Corridor that would accommodate to the commerce that
9 is now going on.

10 Also then to take consideration of the fact that we have
11 populations that may be distressed by this kind of an operation
12 like 94 caused great distress and in that there ought to be some
13 incentives to stabilize and stay in the neighborhood, that
14 somehow we say to them if you stay you won't pay any additional
15 taxes than what has already been foisted on us by city and
16 county and school systems.

17 The other thing is to extend that stability by saying there
18 is going to be real estate exchanges, there's going to be
19 hopefully parking built and all the rest, that somehow those
20 real estate exchanges have some impact in building the ability
21 to extend the heritage of this neighborhood, especially that
22 where houses are right next to the city -- or to the University
23 Avenue and that there be opportunities for those who decide to
24 stay and those who decide to build a fruitful life and a
25 thriving life in this territory.

1 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. That
2 concludes the list -- it does not conclude the list. One more
3 speaker, Priscilla Zee.

4 MS. ZEE: Hello. I apologize for being late. I know
5 that my name was called earlier, but I was coming from the west
6 metro now. I'm here as a citizen and an employee of General
7 Mills, and I have spent the past year or so working on the
8 Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Line and am very much in
9 favor of seeing it built. I think it will be necessary for the
10 community here in St. Paul to stay connected. I believe it
11 needs to be Light Rail Transit versus Bus Rapid Transit.

12 I know the community along University Avenue and in the east
13 metro do not deserve a second-class system; and I know that the
14 Bus Rapid Transit system will not be at capacity and will not
15 fulfill capacity for the number of people that have to ride this
16 system; and I really, really truly believe that a lot of the
17 businesses along the avenue, having had the opportunity to walk
18 up and down the avenue and speak to them, truly will benefit
19 from this system.

20 Yes, there are certain concerns that need to be addressed
21 and yes, the construction period will not be an easy one, but I
22 do believe that if these businesses plan ahead of time and are
23 given enough resources they really can benefit from the system.

24 So I really appreciate your work and know that it is very
25 difficult to look at all sides of the issue, but I do believe

1 that this is the best system we have possible. Thank you.

2 MR. PROBST: Thanks for your comments. I believe that
3 does conclude all of the written sign-ups. Is there anyone here
4 that hasn't spoken that wishes to? Yes, sir.

5 MR. ARTH: David Arth. I'm a little concerned about
6 these fantasies that Met Council and other people in this
7 community have about light rail or any other nickel and dime con
8 games they have to satisfy their needs. It says here that even
9 after the fares are collected the state's still going to have to
10 pay 50 percent of the operating cost. I mean these are just
11 dark holes that we keep on throwing money down. They kill the
12 economy in the local area.

13 We got the Hiawatha Corridor that was overbudget by half as
14 much what they originally projected and it didn't do one bit of
15 economic good, that whole Hiawatha Corridor. If anything it
16 condemned it because if you're driving a car you can't get down
17 the road anymore. I don't know where you people come up and do
18 this B.S. and, unfortunately, the business owners here sound to
19 me like, "Well, if we got to have it then I need parking. If we
20 got to have it."

21 I never heard one person here in favor of anything, but they
22 are saying, "If we got to have it, this is what we have to
23 have." I don't think these people are in favor. I don't know
24 why the state should put a billion dollars -- a billion three is
25 what it's going to end up costing because your estimates are

1 always so much under and waste this money and then have to
2 supplement by hundreds of millions of dollars a year afterwards.
3 The State of Minnesota cannot keep on paying out for all this
4 B.S.

5 MR. PROBST: Any other comments? Sir, step forward.

6 MR. BANKS: My name is Roger Banks. I'm the policy and
7 research analyst for the State Council of Black Minnesotans
8 which is located at 2233 University Avenue. My statements
9 aren't designed to either support or detract from the proposed
10 project. It is more of a cautionary tale and it's a cautionary
11 tale in terms of the kind of displacement that these kinds of
12 projects have a tendency to generate.

13 We know what happened with Rondo. We know what happened
14 when the community developed some block plans and displacement
15 of these curbs and that kind of developmental strategy. What
16 I'm saying, in essence, and requesting is that some kind of
17 informational system, data collection and reporting process be
18 developed from the Day One to monitor and determine what impact
19 this program is having on the communities that it's going to be
20 built through or built within; and so what I'm saying, in
21 essence, is that we need a process that is open. We have
22 sunshine coming through. We need a process that is responsible
23 to the constituencies that this development project is going to
24 be dealing with.

25 So I'm requesting that some kind of data information system

1 that provides the population with -- regardless of what kind of
2 project is developed, that there be a data process set up to
3 monitor and evaluate and, therefore, use that information to
4 further improve the project. Thank you.

5 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. Anyone else?

6 MR. GITIS: My name is Sheldon Gitis. I live at 1030
7 Manvel Street in the Central Corridor in the south St. Anthony
8 Park neighborhood. Commissioner Rettman -- I guess she still is
9 back here -- informed me last night that over the past five
10 years Ramsey County has contracted with Dick Wells -- Wells
11 Mosville (phonetic), a young University certified highway
12 engineer, for consulting services I guess is the term and I have
13 a document that I'd like to present as my testimony saying I no
14 more welfare for Dick Mosville.

15 MR. PROBST: Any further comments? Seeing none, that
16 concludes the hearing for this evening. All the individuals who
17 have signed up have spoken. If you wish to provide additional
18 comments before the June 5th close of the comment period -- the
19 comment period closes at end of the business day on June 5th --
20 please feel free to use any of the methods that are outlined in
21 the Citizens Guide. You can submit them by mail, e-mail and by
22 telephone. So thank you for coming and have a pleasant evening.

23 (Hearing concluded at 6:29 p.m.)

24 * * *

25 Court Reporter: Linda G. Oman