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CENTRAL CORRIDOR  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
PUBLIC HEARING

May 24, 2006  
8:00 A.M.

Minnesota History Center  
345 Kellogg Boulevard West  
St. Paul, MN 55102

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 morning and welcome to the third of  
2 what will be four public hearings for the Central Corridor  
3 Environmental Impact Statement. My name is Dennis Probst and  
4 I'm the chair of the Central Corridor Coordinating Committee and  
5 I'll be serving as the moderator for these hearings.

6           Joining me at the desk this morning is Kathryn  
7 DeSpiegelaere, the director of the Ramsey County Regional Rail  
8 Authority. I'd like to make a few introductions before we  
9 continue. We have two members of our Coordinating Committee  
10 with us this morning, at least two that I know of. Commissioner  
11 Janice Rettman from Ramsey County is here and Bob Baker from the  
12 University of Minnesota is also with us this morning.

13           In addition, Fred Gates, who has actually been with us for  
14 all three hearings so far, from Representative Betty McCollum's  
15 office is joining us as well as three Met Council members that I  
16 know of: Brian McDaniel, Dan Wolter, and Rick Aguilar. Thank  
17 you all for being here.

18           The purpose of these hearings is to receive your comments,  
19 public comments, on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement  
20 that has been conducted for the corridor. It is an opportunity  
21 for the public to express its wishes for future transit service  
22 in the corridor and to address issues that need to be addressed  
23 in the future phases of the project development.

24           In preparation for these hearings Ramsey County Regional  
25 Rail Authority made presentations and answered questions at a

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1 series of community meetings including those sponsored by the  
2 Central Corridor Equity Coalition, St. Paul City Councilwoman  
3 Debbie Montgomery, and the St. Paul District Councils  
4 Collaborative.

5 Project staff distributed over 1500 postcards and 200  
6 posters inviting citizens to these public hearings. Fliers were  
7 translated into five languages and posted along the corridor.  
8 In addition, staff members walked University Avenue to meet with  
9 residents and business owners, answering questions and inviting  
10 people to these hearings.

11 Staff members briefed the press on the status of the Central  
12 Corridor proposal and appeared on a Hmong language public  
13 affairs show on KFAI-FM. Advertising was placed in the Pioneer  
14 Press, Star Tribune, and 15 other community and ethnic  
15 newspapers and news websites. The Rail Authority created an  
16 e-mail Listserv and sent regular e-mail updates to more than 100  
17 people who have subscribed to that service.

18 The agenda for this hearing is brief. We will first hear a  
19 short presentation on the project from Steve Morris. Then we  
20 will open the hearing for comments. I hope you signed in to  
21 speak when you came in and picked up a Citizens Guide for the  
22 project. If you did not and wish to provide comments, we'd ask  
23 that you please sign up now at the sign-in table. I would also  
24 point out -- I will remind you later as we go through -- that  
25 there are several other ways to provide comments -- written,

1 e-mail, and by phone -- outlined in the Citizens Guide.

2 With that I'd like to now introduce Steve Morris, the  
3 project manager for the Central Corridor, who will provide a few  
4 minutes of background information on the project and the next  
5 steps in the project.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Excuse me, sir. Could we please  
7 have the house lights up? A lot of us are trying to take notes  
8 and also still read things. It would more likely help.

9 MR. PROBST: Could we have a little more light, please?

10 (Lights turned up.)

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

12 MR. MORRIS: Thank you, Mr. Probst. And, again, I'd  
13 like to add my welcome to those of you who came this morning.  
14 I'll give you a quick overview just for a few minutes on the  
15 study itself, the study area, the process, some of the potential  
16 impacts that have been evaluated and how they've been evaluated  
17 and then the next steps for the process.

18 The study area we call the Central Corridor is generally  
19 that area between Downtown Minneapolis and Downtown St. Paul,  
20 encompassing the University of Minnesota and the Midway area.  
21 It is kind of bordered on the north by Pierce Butler and  
22 railroad tracks and on the south essentially by CP Rail south of  
23 I-94.

24 A variety of agencies have been involved in preparation of  
25 the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The federal agency

1 involved in the process is the Federal Transit Administration.  
2 The Central Corridor Coordinating Committee that Mr. Probst  
3 chairs has provided direction for the study and has included  
4 representatives from Hennepin and Ramsey County Rail  
5 Authorities, the City of St. Paul and Minneapolis, the  
6 University of Minnesota, Metropolitan Council, and the Minnesota  
7 DOT.

8 A variety of public involvement activities have happened  
9 along the corridor including scoping meetings to kind of set the  
10 parameters of the study about five years ago, a variety of  
11 community and agency meetings and public hearings, lots of  
12 interaction with local residents and nearby businesses about the  
13 project.

14 The Coordinating Committee originally set goals for the  
15 project including economic opportunity and investment along the  
16 corridor and the region, improvements for communities'  
17 environment, and improvements for transportation and mobility.

18 The purpose of these types of studies is to investigate a  
19 broad range of alternatives as a means of improving mobility and  
20 gradually narrow those down to alternatives that make sense for  
21 the corridor.

22 The Central Corridor itself, as those of us who are familiar  
23 with it, has a lot going for it. It has a growing population  
24 and employment, lots of commercial development and educational  
25 activities along the corridor, and it's always been a major

1 connection between the downtowns of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

2 The environmental study process started with the scoping  
3 process. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement was prepared  
4 and just recently approved for release by the Federal Transit  
5 Administration. We are now in the midst of a variety of agency  
6 reviews and these public hearings.

7 Next month the Coordinating Committee, after the close of  
8 the comment period on June 5th, will make a recommendation on  
9 whether or not to proceed with a locally-preferred alternative  
10 alignment and mode. If that happens then the Metropolitan  
11 Council would make a decision on whether to proceed and would  
12 request permission from the Federal Transit Administration to  
13 begin preliminary engineering.

14 All of the issues identified in the Draft Environmental  
15 Impact Statement and that are brought up in these hearings will  
16 be included in that preliminary engineering process and  
17 addressed. At the end of it, it will be the Final Environmental  
18 Impact Statement.

19 Two modes that are currently on the table are Light Rail  
20 Transit and Bus Rapid Transit. The alignments have been  
21 narrowed down to essentially University Avenue, but two modes  
22 are light rail and Bus Rapid Transit; light rail being vehicles  
23 similar to Hiawatha that operate on tracks in their own  
24 right-of-way and have power coming from overhead wires.

25 The alignment would operate on the same tracks in Downtown

1 Minneapolis as Hiawatha and near the Metrodome Station would  
2 divert off onto Washington Avenue, across on the existing  
3 bridge. There would be a tunnel at the University of Minnesota.  
4 The line would then get into the Midway on University Avenue and  
5 operate down the middle like the streetcars did 60 or so years  
6 ago, go behind the State Capitol, down Robert Street, get over  
7 onto Cedar, down to Fourth, and over to the Union Depot.

8 Bus Rapid Transit is an effort to get many of the benefits  
9 of light rail from a customer standpoint but at a lower cost.  
10 It's a combination of larger capacity vehicles and service  
11 improvements.

12 The Bus Rapid Transit Alignment under consideration  
13 operates, again, in its own right-of-way along University Avenue  
14 in St. Paul, but it has a different mode of operation in the  
15 University area and going downtown. Then it operates on  
16 existing bus lanes or other HOV lanes. It does not have its own  
17 right-of-way in the University of Minnesota or in both  
18 downtowns.

19 A variety of issues need to be addressed in the Draft  
20 Environmental Impact Statement by federal law and these include  
21 things like social and land use impacts; impacts on  
22 neighborhoods, both positive and negative; impacts on things  
23 like parking, traffic, and visual aesthetics, historical issues.

24 There are a variety of environmental impacts: Air quality,  
25 noise and vibration, water quality, soils, things like that we

1 do not have. Since this is already a built area we don't have a  
2 lot of issues of wetlands or those sorts of things.

3 The economic impacts of these projects can be significant.  
4 They have the ability to affect the local economic conditions.  
5 They have the ability to add transit-oriented development  
6 potential and other types of redevelopment along the corridor.

7 Transportation impacts include changes to existing roadway,  
8 potential improvements in travel time, and potential changes to  
9 existing transit service.

10 The Coordinating Committee with Mr. Probst here spent a lot  
11 of time evaluating a whole variety of alternatives and have  
12 narrowed it down to this group, and at the conclusion of this  
13 set of hearings they will make the decision between the options.  
14 That will then go to the Federal Transit Administration. It has  
15 a very complicated and comprehensive project evaluation process.

16 The idea is that the Federal Transit Administration can  
17 provide funding for approximately 50 percent of the cost of the  
18 transit project. In this case for Light Rail Transit that would  
19 be \$420 million in federal funding matched by the equivalent of  
20 state and local funds. Bus Rapid Transit the total is \$241  
21 million or approximately \$120 million federal and local funding.

22 If the project goes into preliminary engineering about the  
23 end of this year, that would take 18 months to two years to  
24 complete. The Final Environmental Impact Statement would be  
25 completed in 2008, final design in 2009, and construction could

1 begin in 2009 or '10 with service beginning in 2012. Again,  
2 thank you for coming and I'll turn it back to Denny.

3 MR. PROBST: Thank you, Steve. A couple other quick  
4 announcements before we continue. First of all, I have three  
5 additional folks I'd like to recognize who have joined us. St.  
6 Paul Councilwoman Debbie Montgomery is with us as well as Ramsey  
7 County Commissioners Victoria Reinhart and Toni Carter, both of  
8 them as well. Thank you for being here.

9 Also, we have interpretive assistance if anyone needs it. I  
10 believe they're up in the far corner up here. So if anyone  
11 needs or desires that assistance, those folks are there for you  
12 to help you. As well as one final announcement and that is if  
13 you have not already turned off or silenced your cell phones,  
14 we'd appreciate it if you'd do that now.

15 With that we are now ready to begin to receive public  
16 testimony. This hearing is an opportunity to take testimony  
17 from the public. It is not a question-and-answer period. If  
18 you have questions, I suggest that you step back out to the  
19 lobby. Staff will continue to be at the tables out there and  
20 they have the ability hopefully to answer any questions that you  
21 might have regarding the project.

22 Please respect the opinions of others and refrain from  
23 talking and clapping while they are speaking. Please identify  
24 yourself for the court reporter who is transcribing these  
25 hearings. She is to my far left over here. If you'd like to

1 provide comments without speaking at the hearings, please see  
2 the project staff or, if you don't already have one, get one of  
3 these (indicating). Otherwise you may provide, again, as I said  
4 earlier, comments in writing by mail, by e-mail or by telephone.

5 If you have provided comments or have sent e-mails to  
6 Commissioners or staff or anyone else, those are not or will not  
7 be automatically part of the official record. So if you have  
8 sent comments already to someone who you think might be part of  
9 the project, you need to send them to the official project  
10 website or mail them to the official project so they get  
11 included into the transcripts of the official record.

12 We have two microphones available again this morning on each  
13 side of the stage here to receive your testimony. The court  
14 reporter will transcribe that for the record. I will call names  
15 in the order that they have signed in and I would invite you, as  
16 I call several, if you'd make your way down to the podium and,  
17 of course, the microphones, that would be great.

18 There is a time limit in the interest of fairness both this  
19 morning as well as the folks at the two previous hearings and  
20 the folks who will be at the hearing this evening. Comments  
21 will be limited to two minutes. You'll receive a signal from  
22 our timekeeper. Alicia over here has two cards. One, she'll  
23 give you a notice at 30 seconds and then a second at the end if  
24 it's time for you to stop at the end of two minutes. If you  
25 have not, I will thank you for your testimony and invite the

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1 next speaker to the podium. So we would request that you honor  
2 that two-minute limitation.

3 The court reporter will prepare a transcript of the hearing.  
4 The project is not preparing a video or audiotape of any of the  
5 hearings. So any filming or other audio activities that you see  
6 going on is either private citizens or the media who might be  
7 here during the hearing.

8 With that I would like to begin the process here and I will  
9 start with the first name on the list and we will continue down  
10 until everyone has had a chance to speak. The first three  
11 speakers are Walt Vanderborght, Joseph Ring, and David Stokes.

12 MR. VANDERBORGHT: Thank you.

13 MR. PROBST: Mr. Vanderborght.

14 MR. VANDERBORGHT: Good morning, audience, and good  
15 morning, Chairman and Ms. DeSpiegelaere especially, seeing a  
16 woman in the representation of these county officials; and thank  
17 you for giving me the minuscule amount of two minutes. I will  
18 be very brief.

19 My statement is based on a World Bank Urban Transport  
20 Strategy Review regarding -- with respect to the public sector  
21 financing of urban transportation. This is the basis of my  
22 statement. I have two brief statements and I will be within the  
23 two minutes.

24 Statement number one is -- am I recording? Thank you. It  
25 is unrealistic to build sophisticated and costly technologies

1 with insufficient financial resources. So my question is:  
2 Where will the funds come from? But I will go to statement  
3 number two.

4 It's equally unrealistic to proceed with a lack or limited  
5 experience in the urban transportation system, although we have  
6 the Hiawatha experience. Question is -- which I shouldn't pose  
7 here -- who has the technical background and experience?

8 Now, I will answer my own statements in the positive. I am  
9 a positive engineer. I'm retired. University of Minnesota is  
10 keeping me alive. I'm very grateful to the state. I'm also an  
11 experienced engineer, public engineer. I worked for the public  
12 and the private. I have about 40 years of experience as an  
13 engineer in a variety of transportation. I have traveled all  
14 the transports that are on this sheet (indicating), all over the  
15 world; in Europe and in Asia and in the United States and in  
16 South America. So I am quite familiar with public  
17 transportation.

18 MR. PROBST: Thank you, Mr. Vanderborght.

19 MR. VANDERBORGHT: Pardon me?

20 MR. PROBST: Sorry. That's your --

21 MR. VANDERBORGHT: My time is up?

22 MR. PROBST: -- two minutes.

23 MR. VANDERBORGHT: I would like to answer in the  
24 positive that our entire region is very much qualified to design  
25 and construct the rolling stock, the electric generator

1 expansion at the St. Anthony Falls and the Ford Dam --

2 MR. PROBST: Thank you, sir.

3 MR. VANDERBORGHT: -- in the future -- with the future  
4 of implementing a bus system that would be operating on  
5 electricity instead of diesel fuel. This has been experienced  
6 in Boston, Massachusetts. The system in Boston is entirely  
7 electrical

8 MR. PROBST: Thank you, Mr. Vanderborght. If you have  
9 additional comments we will take them in writing. (Pause) If  
10 you have additional comments --

11 MR. VANDERBORGHT: I understand.

12 MR. PROBST: -- we'll take them in writing. Thank you.

13 MR. VANDERBORGHT: Thank you, Madam DeSpiegelaere, for  
14 your time.

15 MR. PROBST: Let me make a quick point to everyone  
16 here. If you cannot finish in two minutes you can also submit  
17 written comments and written comments carry the same weight as  
18 any oral comments that are given at these hearings. Sir.

19 MR. RING: Good morning. My name is Joseph Ring. I am  
20 the president of the Prospect Park East River Road Improvement  
21 Association. Our organization has reviewed the Draft EIS and  
22 according to our organization's resolution passed in 2002 which  
23 calls for a mode of transit of light rail and an alignment down  
24 University Avenue, we find that the Draft EIS is in compliance  
25 with our standing resolution.

1           So we support the Draft EIS, although our organization does  
2           have four areas of concern. One is that any alignment on the  
3           line on Washington Avenue going through the University of  
4           Minnesota should be maintained at below-grade. Two, streetscape  
5           improvements on University Avenue through Prospect Park must  
6           also be maintained. Three, the Greenway Park Drive Road which  
7           is proposed in the land planning process must be constructed  
8           before the Central Corridor construction begins. This is  
9           especially important with the addition of the new U of M  
10          stadium. Four, if the location of the U of M football stadium  
11          would require an increase in the cost of the construction of the  
12          LRT, that location should be adjusted to ensure that those costs  
13          are not added to the cost of the project.

14          And the closing comment, PPERRIA strongly encourages the  
15          Central Corridor Coordinating Committee to work closely with the  
16          Stadium Area Advisory Group to maximize the synergy between  
17          light rail and the new U of M stadium in order to minimize the  
18          traffic impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods. Thank you.

19                 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. Mr. Stokes.

20                 MR. STOKES: Good morning. My name is Dave Stokes. I  
21                 live in St. Paul. I'm a board member on the Midway Chamber of  
22                 Commerce and I'm also with a real estate company, Welsh  
23                 Companies. I work with many of the businesses in the Midway  
24                 area. I think that transit in the Central Corridor is going to  
25                 be a great benefit to the Midway area. I think that in

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1 particular light rail is the best solution. It will provide the  
2 best long-term solution to transit in the area.

3 I think while many of these folks who want this light rail  
4 hoping to connect people to the two downtowns, I work with many  
5 of the commercial businesses in the area and I think one of the  
6 big pluses to light rail is to provide access for employees and  
7 others who come to the Midway area to do their work and to have  
8 their jobs. I also think that on the side it will also  
9 eventually in time encourage other development in the area.

10 One concern is the disruption that will happen during the  
11 construction period and I think the efforts to develop a  
12 construction mitigation task force will do a lot to solve the  
13 issues of the businesses in the area, but just, again, I want to  
14 say I support light rail on University Avenue. Thank you.

15 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. The next  
16 speakers are Ed Felien, Roxanne --

17 MS. BACIGALUPO: Bacigalupo.

18 MR. PROBST: Thank you. And Bill Buth.

19 MR. FELIEN: Good morning. Thank you. My name is Ed  
20 Felien. I'm with Pulse of the Twin Cities newspaper and I'm  
21 here really because my father was for 40 years working for  
22 Railroad Express Agency. He knew trains and he also knew trucks  
23 and delivery and it's to honor his memory that I'm really here  
24 because I'm sure his reaction to driving a train down University  
25 Avenue would have been -- he'd call it asinine.

1 I have a couple of questions. First of all, why was the  
2 Burlington Northern route rejected? In your Draft Environmental  
3 Impact Statement you have one sentence that says, "The  
4 Burlington Northern line was rejected." That's all there is in  
5 the Environmental Impact Statement. I'm puzzled by that.

6 Was it rejected because the Soo Line was difficult to  
7 negotiate with or the Burlington Northern line was difficult to  
8 negotiate with? If that's the case I mean certainly eminent  
9 domain is the way they got the right-of-way. It certainly could  
10 be a way in which they could have taken it back, the city could  
11 have taken it back.

12 And Burlington Northern stands to benefit tremendously from  
13 economic development, as I think the previous speaker indicated.  
14 This kind of light rail is going to encourage light rail  
15 development.

16 The speed of delivering passengers from Downtown Minneapolis  
17 to the University, to the Midway, or to the final destination,  
18 Downtown St. Paul, could be done -- is 35 minutes according to  
19 your estimates by light rail, which I think is optimistic, but  
20 it could be done in less than half that time if you had  
21 exclusive right-of-way along the Burlington Northern routes and  
22 had those four principal stops: Midway, University, and  
23 Downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul.

24 I think one final consideration that hasn't been taken -- it  
25 certainly is going to help economic development, but it's not

1 going to -- it's going to destroy the cultural developments that  
2 have been taking place that can't withstand that kind of  
3 interruption. Thank you very much for your time.

4 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. Roxanne.

5 MS. BACIGALUPO: Thank you. My name is Roxanne  
6 Bacigalupo. I live Downtown St. Paul in Cosmopolitan  
7 Apartments. The first station would be two blocks away from my  
8 apartment and I'd be very excited to have light rail going down  
9 University Avenue because I've been on 94 at any time that you  
10 get anywhere near 280 and you're not going anywhere. I believe  
11 light rail could really relieve congestion on that highway and  
12 it would be a great benefit to anybody in St. Paul and  
13 Minneapolis.

14 MR. PROBST: Thank you.

15 MR. BUTH: Thank you and good morning. My name is Bill  
16 Buth. The last name is spelled B-u-t-h. I'm the president of  
17 the Greater St. Paul Association of Building Owners and Managers  
18 and we're here today to say that we support light rail in the  
19 Central Corridor. It's desired, it's wanted, and it's needed  
20 and it must happen now. The economics of our city are in  
21 balance. The Central Corridor plan will have benefits for all.  
22 Transportation equals jobs. Jobs equals a growing economy.

23 Eventually there are very few people in this room today that  
24 were discussing this back in 1974. I happened to be in a group  
25 that was talking about the DPM, Downtown People Mover. Today

1 we're talking about LRT and if you do the math that's 22 years  
2 and that's too long. I served on the locating committee which  
3 was appointed by Ramsey County. I've done that for the past  
4 five years. We have identified the multimodal site. We're  
5 ready to accommodate LRT. Just do it. It's the right thing and  
6 it's needed. Thank you.

7 MR. PROBST: Thank you. The next two speakers are  
8 Deborah Maysack and Ginny Harris.

9 MS. MAYSACK: Thank you. My name is Deborah Maysack.  
10 I'm the president and CEO of the Arthritis Foundation, North  
11 Central Chapter. Our offices are located in the Midway area.  
12 We employ 12 employees. We also have a board of directors of 27  
13 individuals. We have nine standing committees of about ten  
14 people each and we have about 513 volunteers who put in 14,000  
15 hours last year to go to our programs and services and to  
16 implement our programs mostly in the Twin Cities area.

17 We are in support of light rail. We have thousands of hours  
18 and programs that do help people with arthritis. There is over  
19 one and a half million people in Minnesota affected by  
20 arthritis; one in three adults; one in two over the age of 65.  
21 Seniors need access to public transportation and we're in  
22 support of light rail to get them to our programs so that they  
23 can alleviate the pain and the suffering of arthritis.

24 In addition, I'm on the board of directors of the Midway  
25 Chamber. There's about 70 nonprofits that are located in the

1 Midway area and most of their constituents are low-income,  
2 immigrants, new Americans, and they also need public  
3 transportation to get to their facilities, to get to the  
4 programs and services. Thank you so much.

5 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments.

6 MS. HARRIS: Good morning. I'm Ginny Harris. Thank  
7 you for permitting me to speak. I'm a resident of Downtown St.  
8 Paul. I live in Kellogg Square. My windows face on Fourth  
9 Street. I have a major concern on noise and I don't know if it  
10 was addressed in the impact statement or it will be, but I'm  
11 concerned about construction noise and then the train noise  
12 going by my windows. However, I do live on the 25th floor.  
13 That may limit it somewhat. At the present time the only thing  
14 I hear are fire trucks. I can't hear any other traffic noise,  
15 but it is a big concern.

16 Other than that I am in favor of Light Rail Transit. I grew  
17 up in the Chicago area. When I moved here in '59 I was utterly  
18 appalled at the lack of public transit and the lack of rail  
19 transit because I had ridden it, you know, most of my life.

20 Another concern I have is I don't know whether your plans  
21 include keeping the 16 bus going, but I have ridden the 16 bus.  
22 There are many people who ride that bus and get on at one stop  
23 and two stops later get off. There are many people with young  
24 children who do that. There are many handicapped people who do  
25 the same thing. I'm concerned with the distance between stops

1 on the proposed light rail. If the 16 bus does not continue to  
2 run, these people are going to have a hard time getting to where  
3 they need to go. The beauty of that 16 bus right now is that  
4 you can get off at almost any corner.

5 Okay. The other problem I have is I used to ride the 54 to  
6 the Mall of America and then the 180 to Orchestra Hall. Once  
7 Hiawatha Line was established they took off the 180 bus. I'm  
8 afraid this might happen to the 94 and the 16 also. Now I might  
9 have to take the 94 to downtown. It's a long walk up to  
10 Orchestra Hall. However, the walk is good for me. But that's  
11 my final comment. Thank you so much.

12 MR. PROBST: Thank you. The next three speakers are  
13 Paul McGinley, Amanda Faletti, and Margaret Levin.

14 MR. MCGINLEY: Good morning. My name is Paul McGinley.  
15 I live at 643 White Birch Drive in Shoreview, Minnesota. I'm a  
16 member of the Midway Chamber of Commerce, the current board  
17 chair of the Northern Dakota County Chambers of Commerce,  
18 although I'm not speaking just from those perspectives.

19 I grew up on the east side. I lived in St. Paul for ten  
20 years of my adult life, five of those in the Midway at Blair and  
21 Griggs. I've worked for 39 years in St. Paul, the West St. Paul  
22 area, and I've owned two businesses in that area for the last 24  
23 years.

24 I'd just like to make a few points. I was at a meeting  
25 yesterday where we were discussing business growth in the core

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1 central areas of Minneapolis and St. Paul. I learned that one  
2 big factor in attracting and keeping big employers in the  
3 central cities is access to high-quality transit like Light Rail  
4 Transit. Why do the businesses see that as necessary is to  
5 attract and keep new and young workers who demand high-quality  
6 transit such as Target who employs 10,000 people in Downtown  
7 Minneapolis currently.

8 Secondly, if both bus and light rail can serve the ridership  
9 initially but after, say, five years in 2017 the bus can no  
10 longer meet capacity, it seems like an inappropriate investment  
11 and we'll be looking for another alternative five years down  
12 after implementation and other ways of handling that increased  
13 ridership which Light Rail Transit can accommodate.

14 Finally, my last point is that Light Rail Transit will  
15 provide for streetscape improvements and enhancements. It will  
16 attract more businesses to the Midway district, but more  
17 importantly it will also foster improvements and expansion to  
18 the businesses along University Avenue currently which will  
19 attract more customers and patrons all over St. Paul and the  
20 metro area which will be enhancements and stimulate it better  
21 for business and the residents in the district. I support light  
22 rail strongly. Thank you.

23 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments.

24 MS. FALETTI: Good morning. My name is Amanda Faletti  
25 and I work in St. Paul, Downtown St. Paul, and I support the

1 light rail because I work with businesses every single day and  
2 this is something that we need to help those businesses grow.  
3 Thank you.

4 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments.

5 MS. LEVIN: My name is Margaret Levin. I'm here as a  
6 member of Jewish Community Action, which is located in the  
7 Midway, and as a resident of the Hamline-Midway neighborhood in  
8 St. Paul.

9 As an environmentalist I believe that light rail is the best  
10 option for our community. Bus Rapid Transit does not provide  
11 benefits of light rail and I believe it would be a missed  
12 opportunity for the Central Corridor and for the Twin Cities  
13 region.

14 The presence of light rail would mark a huge and welcome  
15 shift towards investment in the core cities' transit needs and  
16 would provide potential environmental and economic benefits for  
17 our whole community.

18 However, I believe this project poses both opportunities and  
19 challenges. The promise of rapid trains along this main  
20 corridor can only be realized if all of the communities along  
21 the corridor have an opportunity for meaningful involvement in  
22 determining the outcomes of development, especially communities  
23 of color, people who are low income, immigrant communities, and  
24 senior citizens.

25 Also, it's important that existing affordable housing along

1 the corridor is preserved and that new affordable housing be  
2 created as new buildings are developed along the corridor. I  
3 would urge that these issues be addressed in the environmental  
4 justice section of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.  
5 Thank you very much.

6 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. Next  
7 speakers are Sonja Simonsen and David Simpson. (Pause) Mr.  
8 Simpson, why don't you go ahead and speak.

9 MR. SIMPSON: Good morning. My name is David Simpson.  
10 I'm a member of the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce and a  
11 resident of the Crocus Hill area of St. Paul. I strongly  
12 support the development of Light Rail Transit in the Central  
13 Corridor.

14 The reasons for my support are threefold: Number one, I do  
15 a lot of work in various cities around the country. I think the  
16 economic vitality of the Twin Cities frankly hangs in the  
17 balance if we don't move forward aggressively with  
18 infrastructures and improve mobility within the central part of  
19 our cities. Other cities such as Phoenix and Denver and Salt  
20 Lake are frankly ahead of us both in terms of planning and  
21 development and in terms of dedicating funding sources that will  
22 enable that to continue to improve mobility and to attract  
23 businesses and investment within the core areas of our cities.

24 That's related to a second issue and that is that many  
25 people don't realize that one of the reasons our highway systems

1 are becoming more congested is that the number of miles traveled  
2 per resident is increasing as well as adding to our population  
3 growth and a high-quality investment in light rail in the  
4 Central Corridor can provide people choices in terms of where  
5 they work and where they live and can enable them to choose  
6 lifestyles that require them to travel less each day. That in  
7 turn will benefit all members of the community including people  
8 who don't use the transit system but just benefit from the  
9 additional mobility on the highway system.

10 I've seen the benefits of Light Rail Transit in places I've  
11 lived. I moved here from Calgary in 1987. Their aggressive  
12 investment in light rail has added a great deal to their quality  
13 of life. I grew up in Portland, Oregon. I've seen on the  
14 Interstate Avenue Corridor, which is very similar to University,  
15 the transformative benefits of having that kind of investment.

16 So I do strongly support light rail and hope we move forward  
17 aggressively in that direction. Thank you.

18 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. Sonja.

19 MS. SIMONSEN: Good morning. My name is Sonja  
20 Simonsen. I'm a Hamline University graduate and also a board  
21 member of the Midway Chamber of Commerce. I also am employed  
22 currently with Wellington Management, a real estate asset  
23 management and development company in St. Paul.

24 I have now lived and worked in the Midway area for over 15  
25 years and the reason for my comments today are to encourage the

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1 development of Light Rail Transit along University Avenue.

2 I have two primary reasons for supporting Light Rail Transit  
3 and the first is the finance structure, fiscal reason. It's the  
4 superior nature of the light rail system in effectively  
5 transporting people between Minneapolis and St. Paul. It has  
6 been noted that the commute time for peak commuter hours is 73  
7 minutes by car, 50 minutes staggeringly enough on BRT, but only  
8 35 minutes on the LRT. We have thousands of clients and  
9 constituents as well as employees in the Midway area and it's  
10 important that we are able to get them to and from both  
11 downtowns in an effective manner.

12 The second reason I support LRT is both personal and  
13 financial again. The electric-powered LRT vehicles are  
14 obviously more cost-effective over the long term than a system  
15 that will be dependent on the often volatile fuel markets.  
16 Clearly LRT is obviously the more environmentally conscientious.  
17 I thank you for your time today and I encourage the support of  
18 LRT on University Avenue.

19 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. The next two  
20 speakers are Terri Fleming and Ken Smith, please.

21 MS. FLEMING: Good morning. I'm Terri Fleming and I am  
22 a lifelong St. Paul resident currently living in the Highland  
23 Park area of St. Paul. I am the current board chair of the  
24 Midway Chamber of Commerce and I am employed by Park Midway  
25 Bank, a locally-owned community bank of about \$200 million.

1 We've got two locations in the Midway area of St. Paul and  
2 employ about 45 full-time employees.

3 As I speak about light rail today I want you to know that I  
4 support it in all my capacities, the development of light rail  
5 along the University Avenue Corridor. I believe that light rail  
6 will provide a better transportation method to move people  
7 through the area and promote long-term economic development,  
8 increased property values, and make the area more viable for the  
9 small businesses and the medium-sized businesses who are my  
10 constituents and clients. Thank you. I support LRT.

11 MR. SMITH: Good morning. My name is Ken Smith with  
12 District Energy of St. Paul. On behalf of District Energy, I am  
13 pleased to make a statement supporting LRT. We applaud the  
14 efforts of this project to improve public transportation and  
15 ease congestion. District Energy also provides important  
16 benefits to the community. We were formed as 501(c)3 nonprofits  
17 to serve energy needs of St. Paul and today we serve over 80  
18 percent of the buildings in Downtown St. Paul.

19 Although we support LRT, we are concerned about the impacts  
20 that happen elsewhere in this project. Proposed routing  
21 potentially can impact two miles of the most critical  
22 distribution systems. The piping at Fourth and Cedar is our  
23 most critical arteries and impacting them impacts everything and  
24 the cost of such impact could approach \$20 million.

25 As small nonprofit companies with only 115 downtown

1 customers we do not have the means to defray these costs.  
2 Unless funded by the project, all costs would be borne by  
3 customers which would be very harmful.

4 We believe the DEIS has miscalculated the impacts of the  
5 systems. Its provisions for concrete slab over our systems  
6 would not be sufficient to avoid the multitude of conflicts with  
7 our shell piping systems. The county's consultants state in  
8 their August 2005 report that coordination and possible  
9 relocation of District Energy in Downtown St. Paul would be a  
10 major undertaking. We agree.

11 We understand the importance of collaboration is very  
12 important for projects to pass. Our very formation is the  
13 result of an extraordinary collaborative effort which has  
14 benefited the community in numerous ways. We have not only  
15 moderated the cost of energy in Downtown St. Paul. Our use of  
16 clean renewable energy substantially reduced air pollution and  
17 greenhouse gas production. We are now a model for this  
18 community during this time of escalating energy costs and the  
19 concern over global warming.

20 It is essential that the LRT not be achieved at the expense  
21 of one of our community's success stories and we respectfully  
22 request that alternatives be considered that lessen the impact  
23 of the existing structure and that funding be included for any  
24 piping relocations required to accommodate LRT.

25 We stand ready to work with any and all state boards and

1 units of government to address these issues and we look forward  
2 to being a participant in the process of doing our part to make  
3 this project, LRT, a great success. Thank you.

4 MR. PROBST: Thank you. The next three speakers are  
5 Brian Thoemke, Bob Baker, and Paul Mohrbacher.

6 MR. THOEMKE: My name is Brian Thoemke. I am president  
7 of Midwest Staffing Group and also a member of the board of  
8 directors for the Midway Chamber of Commerce. With my job we  
9 employ thousands of people here in St. Paul and Minneapolis, and  
10 it is critical that we do have light rail in the Central  
11 Corridor. These folks need better, safer, cleaner means of  
12 connecting to the different companies throughout the Twin Cities  
13 metro area.

14 Conversely, to continue to grow and be a viable greater  
15 metropolitan area, these companies throughout the Twin Cities  
16 also need these employees. Without light rail and without  
17 continued growth through the Central Corridor, the greater Twin  
18 Cities metro area will continue to fall behind cities such as  
19 Phoenix, Denver, Salt Lake City, Atlanta, and other cities  
20 throughout the U.S. that currently have light rail systems in  
21 place. It is critical to also eliminate congestion and improve  
22 the quality of life here in the Twin Cities metro.

23 I definitely support light rail here in the Central Corridor  
24 and I appreciate having the opportunity to speak. Thank you.

25 MR. BAKER: Good morning. My name is Bob Baker. I'm

1 the executive director of parking and transportation services at  
2 the University of Minnesota. My remarks are on behalf of the  
3 administration of the University.

4 The University of Minnesota supports the development of  
5 Light Rail Transit in the Central Corridor. A highly effective  
6 transit system is essential to our campus. The University has  
7 invested heavily to enhance service and accessibility. Already  
8 66 percent of the trips to and from campus are made via  
9 something other than single-occupancy vehicles.

10 Over 18,000 students and employees use transit as their  
11 primary means of commuting. About one-fourth of the projected  
12 ridership on the Central Corridor will be to and from the  
13 University of Minnesota. The Central Corridor will pass through  
14 a campus that attracts 80,000 people on a typical day.  
15 Washington Avenue is the hub for the University Residence Halls,  
16 Coffman Memorial Union, the graduate and professional schools,  
17 the Institute of Technology, the University libraries, and  
18 scores of heavily used classrooms. It's a 24/7 environment.

19 The University's Academic Health Center, hospital, and major  
20 new biomedical research facilities are located on the corridor.  
21 Over 400,000 people each year visit the outpatient health  
22 clinics alone.

23 On Washington Avenue rush hour happens ten times a day, at  
24 the beginning of every class period. Washington Avenue is one  
25 of the densest, liveliest pedestrian environments of any street

1 in Minnesota.

2 The Draft EIS provides for a tunnel to separate light rail  
3 from bus, auto, pedestrian, bicycle traffic. This is essential  
4 to optimizing the operation of the Central Corridor, thus  
5 ensuring optimal and predictable travel times along the avenue.  
6 Since the Draft EIS was prepared in 2002, exciting new  
7 developments such as the medical and bioscience research  
8 facilities and the new football stadium are on the horizon. We  
9 look forward to working with our regional partners in the next  
10 phase of the project.

11 In addition to my remarks here today, after having the  
12 benefit of participating in public hearings, the University will  
13 submit more detailed written comments in response to the Draft  
14 EIS. Thank you.

15 MR. PROBST: Paul.

16 MR. MOHRBACHER: I'm Paul Mohrbacher. I'm the past  
17 chair of the District 17 Downtown District Councils and I work  
18 at the Science Museum. The Capitol River Council  
19 enthusiastically supports the development of Light Rail Transit  
20 along the Central Corridor. The development of light rail  
21 between Downtown St. Paul and Minneapolis is long overdue. St.  
22 Paul needs Light Rail Transit along the Central Corridor to  
23 remain a viable player in the regional and national economy.

24 I'm just going to mention two of our recommendations.  
25 First, the multimodal transit center at Union Depot. It's

1 critical that the corridor extend from Union Depot to Downtown  
2 Minneapolis. Any proposal that stops the line short of Union  
3 Depot is not acceptable. To maximize transit use throughout the  
4 Twin Cities, transit improvements must connect seamlessly to the  
5 Twin Cities transit system. The multimodal transit center is  
6 critical for linking the numerous transit lines planned to  
7 intersect Downtown St. Paul at Union Depot.

8 The Central Corridor's success lies in its ability to fit  
9 into a larger network of transit for the Twin Cities at the  
10 Union Depot. We need to clarify how the Central Corridor will  
11 actually connect at the depot, and we need to think about strong  
12 connections from Union Depot to regional destinations like the  
13 Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport.

14 The second recommendation: Corridor alignment. The route  
15 of the corridor around the Capitol and into downtown is  
16 confusing. The corridor changes to different streets. Many  
17 times there are several 90-degree turns, which we understand are  
18 more expensive and noisy. Our recommendation is to examine the  
19 current alignment and propose sound mitigation measures and  
20 infrastructure changes to address our concerns. The city should  
21 address how the nonserved districts like the river and the  
22 entertainment district of downtown will be connected to LRT.  
23 Thanks.

24 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. Next two  
25 speakers are Amy Ireland and Jane Gundersen, please.

1 MS. IRELAND: Good morning. My name is Amy Schroeder  
2 Ireland and I'm a resident of the Hamline-Midway neighborhood  
3 and I work in Downtown Minneapolis. I'm very excited about  
4 light rail coming to University Avenue. I live about five  
5 blocks off of University, look forward to being able to walk and  
6 catch a predictable form of transportation to Minneapolis.

7 The buses right now are not consistent. I end up waiting  
8 much longer than expected. The 16 and the 50 often double up  
9 over one another. Wait 15 minutes for a bus. When I get off  
10 the bus at the other end there's the next one right behind it  
11 practically empty. The buses are often overcrowded. Light  
12 rail, I think, will alleviate that.

13 The air quality is terrible along University Avenue. When  
14 you're walking and waiting for the bus, the fumes are just  
15 terrible. I think light rail will improve that dramatically.

16 As far as there's been an uptake of crime in our  
17 neighborhood. I think having light rail will reduce the  
18 loitering at the different bus stops throughout the neighborhood  
19 and it will be easier to have the police patrol that people are  
20 actually waiting for transportation and not up to something  
21 else.

22 So as somebody who has tried driving to Minneapolis, I've  
23 tried taking the bus to Minneapolis, I've tried biking to  
24 Minneapolis. Nothing is particularly good and I look forward to  
25 light rail on University Avenue.

1 MS. GUNDERSEN: I'm Jane Gundersen. I live in the  
2 Calgary Tower, Downtown St. Paul. I've been there for 25 years.  
3 I was still working when I came and I would drive to work, but  
4 the 94 bus is the best way to get from downtown to downtown and  
5 now I use it a lot. Anything I'm doing in Minneapolis during  
6 the day, I don't drive and pay \$7 parking.

7 And the second part of my -- and I think that light rail  
8 should be on rail, not on University Avenue. If there's any  
9 train tracks someplace, I think that's better.

10 But another thing I'm concerned about is the Capitol because  
11 when they put in 94 they should have put it in back of the  
12 Capitol because Downtown St. Paul is an island between the  
13 Mississippi River and the Capitol and by putting some rails on  
14 this side you might make another piece out of the Capitol.  
15 Instead of being an island it will be a bunch of little islands  
16 and that's a serious thing to think about when you're making  
17 this plan. Thank you.

18 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. Next two  
19 speakers are Lori Fritts and Marvin Plakut.

20 MS. FRITTS: Thank you. My name is Lori Fritts. I'm  
21 here as a St. Paul resident and also as the president of the  
22 Midway Chamber of Commerce. The Midway Chamber has 425 business  
23 members that employ 50,000 people. The Midway Chamber board has  
24 been studying this and has been involved in this for many years  
25 and they do support light rail on University Avenue particularly

1 over Bus Rapid Transit.

2 Light rail will bring a projected 43,000 riders per day down  
3 the corridor. The proposal for Bus Rapid Transit, the projected  
4 demand for that would almost make the system obsolete at the  
5 time it was being built. I understand a bus would have to  
6 traverse the Central Corridor every two minutes to accommodate  
7 the demand which is, of course, impossible with the traffic that  
8 goes in particular on University Avenue.

9 The proposal for light rail currently does include  
10 streetscape. The proposal for BRT does not include any money  
11 for streetscape. It would simply be putting dedicated lanes,  
12 taking up that portion of University Avenue, without aesthetic  
13 improvements.

14 Certainly the board is well aware of the concerns of area  
15 businesses for survival during construction which is why we have  
16 worked to create a plan for a business advisory council in  
17 partnership and support with the Central Corridor Partnership,  
18 the Met Council, and city and county officials. We want to  
19 address business representation during preliminary engineering,  
20 a viability plan for businesses to survive construction, and  
21 actual construction mitigation.

22 We also understand that there's always competition for  
23 federal funds and we know how important local support is. We  
24 want to work to keep the Central Corridor to keep the money. We  
25 know this project is not yet funded. We do not want St. Paul

1 and the east metro left behind. We know the success of  
2 Hiawatha. There will be another like that one. We want to make  
3 sure that that \$840 million is not invested elsewhere. Thank  
4 you.

5 MR. PLAKUT: My name is Marvin Plakut. I'm the CEO of  
6 the Episcopal Homes in St. Paul located at University and  
7 Fairview. That's where our main campus is. On our Episcopal  
8 Homes Campus we provide services to 300 senior citizens. We  
9 employ just shy of 200 staff. Those 500 people need access to  
10 high-quality transit. We strongly endorse light rail as the  
11 preferred method. We believe that it's decades overdue.

12 On a more global level, every day we're able to read about,  
13 hear about the effects of global warming. It is real, and as a  
14 society we need to consistently make choices that are friendlier  
15 on that front. Thank you.

16 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. The next two  
17 speakers are Craig Johnson and Patience Caso.

18 MR. JOHNSON: Good morning. My name is Craig Johnson.  
19 I'm a Prospect Park, Minneapolis resident and former homeowner  
20 in the Summit-University neighborhood of St. Paul. I'm  
21 concerned that the plans for the Central Corridor Line are  
22 building in obsolescent features into the design. It's  
23 important that travel times be fast. This is a linkage among  
24 several other transportation links -- the Hiawatha Corridor, the  
25 Northstar Rail, maybe Red Rock, et cetera -- and if it takes 40

1 minutes to go from point to point people aren't going to use the  
2 service. It's important that the design maintain the tunnel  
3 under the University of Minnesota. This is really, really  
4 crucial.

5 Another feature that I think needs to be considered is to  
6 depress the right-of-way beneath major intersections on  
7 University Avenue to avoid the problems that occur on the  
8 Hiawatha line, for example, at East 26th Street, East 42nd  
9 Street. This would also make left turns and traffic control  
10 much more efficient. That is, take light rail out of the  
11 equation at Snelling and University, Vandalia, Rice and  
12 University, Lexington Parkway.

13 I'm rather surprised frankly that this 35 mile-an-hour-at-  
14 maximum speed limit is being considered. Well, that's my  
15 comment. Thank you very much.

16 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. Patience.

17 MS. CASO: Hi. My name is Patience Caso. I live in  
18 St. Louis Park, but I work for Transit for Livable Communities.  
19 We're a citizen-based organization working for greater  
20 investment in public transit including buses, trains, bicycling,  
21 and walking.

22 TLC believes that Light Rail Transit is the right technology  
23 for the Central Corridor. Light rail is the best at  
24 accommodating the projected ridership over the long term and it  
25 will provide current and future bus riders with improved

1 service. LRT is the most cost-effective way to move large  
2 members of transit riders. In its first full year of operation  
3 the Hiawatha Light Rail carried 11 percent of the Metro Transit  
4 riders at 8 percent of the cost and that efficiency occurs  
5 because a two-car train can carry up to 250 riders while an  
6 accordion bus can carry approximately 80.

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

15 TLC asks you to consider the following items as you move  
16 forward in preliminary engineering: One, increase the number of  
17 stops along University Avenue and reduce the number of stops in  
18 Downtown St. Paul. Two, substantially expand the north-south  
19 bus service connections to the University Avenue Corridor.  
20 Three, make the corridor safer and more pleasant for walking and  
21 biking. Four, provide assistance for existing businesses along  
22 University Avenue before, during, and after construction.  
23 Strive to balance the opportunity for development with the need  
24 to preserve uniquenesses and other characteristics of the  
25 corridor. And, five, provide the greatest possible opportunity

1 for public comment and public educational process. Thanks.

2 MR. PROBST: Thank you. Next two are Chip Welling and  
3 Tom Eggum.

4 MR. WELLING: My name is Chip Welling. I live in  
5 Merriam Park and I'm speaking today as a citizen but I'm also on  
6 the boards of the Merriam Park Community Council and University  
7 United. Mr. Chair and members of the committee who are here, I  
8 appreciate this opportunity to comment on the proposal to build  
9 LRT.

10 I regularly ride the current bus service here and in St.  
11 Paul. I came here today on the Number 21. I've also ridden LRT  
12 in a number of other cities including San Diego, Denver, and  
13 Portland. I strongly support the proposal to build LRT in the  
14 Central Corridor for several reasons.

15 First, LRT will provide much better transit service to the  
16 current riders of the Number 16 and 50 buses. Secondly, more  
17 new riders will be attracted to LRT than would be attracted to  
18 the bus. And, third, building LRT will promote and support  
19 development along the corridor that is friendlier to pedestrians  
20 and requires much less parking than does the current auto-  
21 oriented development of which we have so much.

22 In order for St. Paul to realize the full potential of LRT,  
23 we will have to view it as an integral and valued part of our  
24 transportation system in the Central Corridor. This would mean  
25 that we give transit priority over cars in some cases. It would

1 mean that the city would not require developers to provide as  
2 much parking with LRT as we require now.

3 On the other hand, if we view LRT as an add-on, not  
4 something integral to University Avenue, then we would continue  
5 to prioritize moving cars. This would slow the train and  
6 undermine the safety of pedestrians crossing the street coming  
7 to and from the stations.

8 If St. Paul and Ramsey County reject LRT, I hope that  
9 Hennepin County and Minneapolis will move quickly to build a  
10 second LRT line likely in the Southwest Corridor of Minneapolis  
11 and Eden Prairie. In that event at least part of our region  
12 will be working toward a future with appealing and effective  
13 transit. Thank you for hearing my comments.

14 MR. PROBST: Thank you.

15 MR. EGGUM: Good morning. I'm Tom Eggum. I'm a  
16 resident of St. Paul, former St. Paul city engineer and public  
17 works director, and currently, among other things, working at  
18 TKDA, a downtown design firm located on the proposed LRT route.  
19 I support LRT on University Avenue. I favor mass transit and  
20 believe it's a necessary and a critical part of solving St. Paul  
21 and the Twin Cities' transportation problems.

22 Trains are more likely to be used. People who wouldn't be  
23 caught dead riding a bus will hop on a train. I also favor  
24 trains because of the community development potential. This can  
25 be very positive if done carefully with attention to existing

1 small businesses and neighborhoods. Thank you.

2 MR. PROBST: Thank you. The next speakers are Harry  
3 Melander, Larry Olson, and Tim Griffin.

4 MR. MELANDER: Thank you. My name is Harry Melander.  
5 I am the executive secretary of the St. Paul Building Trades  
6 Council. Our organization represents unionized construction  
7 workers, men and women, that work in this industry. Our  
8 organization and its 24 affiliates strongly support the LRT,  
9 encourage it to move forward at a quick pace.

10 We also encourage individuals that will be developing this  
11 to consider minimum wage structures that exist within the  
12 construction industry, that the project have a site  
13 stabilization agreement on it, and also that the work force that  
14 the LRT will travel to will be reflected in the way that it  
15 should be. Thank you.

16 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments.

17 MR. OLSON: Good morning. I'm Larry Olson with Metro  
18 Plains Development in the St. Paul Midway area and also managing  
19 partner of Spruce Tree Centre at Snelling and University and  
20 University Center at 1919 at Fairview and University. I'm here  
21 to support development of light rail on University Avenue.

22 Our two office buildings house over 60 businesses with a  
23 thousand employees and tens of thousands of customers. The  
24 reason that tenants locate here is because of mass transit.  
25 They are a mix of for-profit, nonprofit, and governmental

1 agencies.

2 Over the last 12 years we've seen continuing improvement in  
3 the Midway area and the existing transportation has been  
4 critical to that. The introduction of light rail as an option  
5 will continue the improvement of the St. Paul Midway. Thank  
6 you.

7 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments.

8 MR. GRIFFIN: Good morning. My name is Tim Griffin.  
9 I'm representing two organizations today. First, the St. Paul  
10 Mississippi Design Center, a program of the St. Paul Riverfront  
11 Corporation, and, second, the American Institute of Architects,  
12 St. Paul Chapter. I'm the director of the design center and  
13 president of the St. Paul Chapter.

14 The Riverfront Corporation is a nonprofit organization whose  
15 mission is to reconnect St. Paul with the Mississippi through  
16 the principles of the St. Paul Framework Plan which also  
17 encompasses the eastern portion of the Central Corridor Light  
18 Rail Line from the Capitol to the Union Depot.

19 The American Institute of Architects, St. Paul Chapter  
20 represents 400 architects living and practicing in St. Paul and  
21 our focus of this year is developing livable communities,  
22 sustainable design, and educational development marked for the  
23 future.

24 Both organizations strongly support LRT as a key  
25 infrastructure investment in the 21st Century version or vision

1 of St. Paul. I have four points, two dealing with the Draft EIS  
2 and two optimistically dealing with preliminary engineering to  
3 come forward.

4 The first is that understanding the need to carry BRT as an  
5 alternative, both organizations would like to seriously debate  
6 the Central Corridor Coordinating Committee when that decision  
7 is taken if, in fact, the BRT is highly rated as is shown on  
8 pages 8 and 9 in the document. We strongly recommend that LRT  
9 be the -- Light Rail Transit be the preferred transit mode.

10 The second is just an observation in terms of the table of  
11 contents of the Draft EIS, and that's dealing with the inherent  
12 segmentation of doing an EIS. The challenge really to  
13 environmental designers is to see how these chapters relate and  
14 come together as opposed to stratifying in dealing with  
15 different portions.

16 Finally, I look forward to preliminary engineering and  
17 riding the LRT. Thank you.

18 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. Next two  
19 speakers are Alden Drew and David Morris.

20 MR. DREW: Good morning. I'm Alden Drew. I'm a  
21 business owner in the Westgate Development in St. Paul and a  
22 resident of Prospect Park. I'm also here as a member of the  
23 Midway Chamber of Commerce and a trustee of the Episcopal Homes  
24 on University, but primarily as a private citizen.

25 Living in Prospect Park and working in Westgate I walk to

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1 work so I'm usually shocked when I have to drive anywhere.  
2 Seeing traffic backed up all the way to this intersection coming  
3 down here heading to Minneapolis and then having to pay \$5 to  
4 park when I could have taken LRT for \$2 made me realize that  
5 this is long, long overdue, but in my lifetime I've lived in  
6 Chicago and New York and San Francisco, all of which exist  
7 partly because they have rapid transit systems. New York and  
8 Chicago have had theirs for over a hundred years which speaks to  
9 the importance of doing something like LRT for the long, long  
10 haul.

11 In traveling I've ridden trains in London, Paris, Amsterdam,  
12 and Tokyo; all world-class cities. Most lately I've ridden the  
13 train in Minneapolis which is on the way to becoming a world-  
14 class city and if St. Paul has any pretense of becoming a  
15 world-class city we need LRT. Without it not only can't we be  
16 world class, we can't even beat Minneapolis.

17 (Laughter)

18 MR. MORRIS: Thank you for allowing me to speak. My  
19 name is David Morris. I'm vice president of the Institute for  
20 Local Self-Reliance which is based in Minneapolis and  
21 Washington, D.C. and I came to Minnesota in the early 1980s to  
22 work with then Mayor George Latimer on economic development  
23 projects which included a district energy system which was  
24 successful and a transport system which was not successful at  
25 that time.

1 I wanted to speak to the issue of financing that has been  
2 brought up a couple of times and I think that what we have here  
3 is a significant public investment that leads to private gain  
4 and private loss and that we can look at it in those terms and  
5 perhaps develop a financing scheme that deals with both the  
6 givings part of public investment and the takings part of public  
7 investment.

8 The takings part is more easily understood and that is that  
9 businesses are going to be hurt during construction through no  
10 fault of their own. I know there's a construction mitigation  
11 task force. I hope that they come up with a program that can  
12 compensate businesses for their lost income. If we have to  
13 compensate 200 businesses at \$50,000, which would be a  
14 significant and handsome compensation, that would still only be  
15 three to four percent of the overall cost of the system in terms  
16 of capital cost; and so I think that we should really take that  
17 into account because we are, in fact, taking from them.

18 On the other side of the coin is the givings piece of it  
19 which is that the land values will increase within probably a  
20 quarter of a mile of those transit stops and so we should tax  
21 very significantly the windfall profits. That is, the increase  
22 in the value of that land over and above of what the general  
23 value of land would be beyond a quarter of a mile. That self-  
24 financing concept has been applied successfully in Hong Kong.  
25 Its rail transit system receives no subsidies. All costs

1 including interest on indebtedness are paid from taxing land  
2 grants derived from developing the areas around the stations.

3 So I hope that when we develop this we can develop a  
4 financing mechanism that takes into account both the losses and  
5 the gains in the private sector from the public investment.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. Next two  
8 speakers are Joan Thompson and Dave Carlson.

9 MS. THOMPSON: My name is Joan Thompson. I'm with  
10 Minnesota Wiring & Cable Company and we're an employer of 100  
11 people right now from both St. Paul and Minneapolis, and we'd  
12 really like to get to that 200 people and stay in St. Paul. In  
13 order to do that we need to accommodate our employees and get  
14 them to work.

15 I'd also like to mention, from a businessperson's  
16 perspective, that I'm engaged in a variety of activities and  
17 meetings. On one side at Capitol City Partnership, the St. Paul  
18 Foundation, St. Paul Port Authority, United Hospital, St. Paul  
19 Chamber, and on the other side Park Midway Bank, Midway Chamber,  
20 University of Minnesota, and Downtown Minneapolis for St.  
21 Thomas. It would be wonderful to have a vehicle other than my  
22 car to get from one side to the other.

23 Minnesota Wire is located right in the middle and that's  
24 exactly where we'd like to be because we can gain employees from  
25 both sides if we have good opportunities for transportation and

1 we also have the communities of the two cities.

2 We support Light Rail Transit as the preferred mode of  
3 transportation on University Avenue and in the Central Corridor.  
4 My employees need this. My employees want this. They want the  
5 most efficient, economical, and safe way to get to and from  
6 work.

7 It connects the two cities obviously, but more importantly  
8 it connects all the different neighborhoods that are in St. Paul  
9 and in Minneapolis and that's very important to get people from  
10 neighborhood to neighborhood, from city to city.

11 I think -- I haven't heard yet. We're not looking to the  
12 future. Our kids need this. We really have to make sure that  
13 we're thinking future generations, not just ourselves and living  
14 here today. More importantly it is the future. And, again, I  
15 support Light Rail Transit. It's vitally important to the next  
16 generation and let's just get this thing done. Thank you very  
17 much for listening.

18 MR. PROBST: Thanks for your comments. Mr. Carlson.

19 MR. CARLSON: Good morning. Thank you for your time  
20 and the opportunity to be able to speak this morning. It's  
21 appropriate that we're having this hearing in the History Center  
22 because we're making history today and we're hopefully going to  
23 be making history going into the future with the positive  
24 development of light rail and when, like Joan was talking about  
25 her kids and grandkids and other offspring, down the road

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1 great-great-grandkids are talking about what Minneapolis-St.  
2 Paul did in the early 2000s as far as being able to put light  
3 rail in, it will be exciting when they can talk about the  
4 history that we've been able to put together here and hopefully  
5 in the near future.

6 My name is Dave Carlson and I am the senior vice president  
7 of American Bank located at the corner of University and  
8 Snelling. I manage the commercial lenders there. We have ten  
9 locations of which four are in St. Paul and we have  
10 approximately 260 employees and 750 million in total assets  
11 which a lot of those customers' positive relationships are --

12 (Beeping noise.)

13 MR. CARLSON: Is that for me?

14 MS. VAP: No. I'm sorry. I'm not sure how to stop it.

15 MR. CARLSON: A lot of those clients are located along  
16 the proposed Central Corridor. Obviously I'm in support of the  
17 Light Rail Transit system and American Bank as an organization  
18 is in support of the Light Rail Transit in the Central Corridor  
19 as the preferred mode of transportation along University Avenue.  
20 I am involved as an active member and the bank is a member of  
21 the Midway and St. Paul Chambers of Commerce and we are excited  
22 about this opportunity and we're excited about Light Rail  
23 Transit being able to come into the Central Corridor.

24 I have a lot of clients and customers and vendors in  
25 Minneapolis. We have a branch location in Downtown St. Paul and

1 it will be exciting to be able to get on the train to be able to  
2 go to one of those locations rather than driving.

3 As far as this project is concerned, I'm not going to go  
4 through the data which supports this project because it's been  
5 talked about and commented on already. The project is a  
6 phenomenal opportunity for the community and the State of  
7 Minnesota which includes residential and business communities,  
8 private and public sectors. The question was asked earlier how  
9 can we afford this project. The answer is we can't afford not  
10 to do the light rail project.

11 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments.

12 MR. CARLSON: The sooner the better. Thank you and  
13 have a good day.

14 MR. PROBST: The next two speakers are Lisa Lee and  
15 Mike Madden.

16 MS. LEE: I would like to address the issues of  
17 capacity, convenience, and congestion regarding the proposed  
18 University Avenue light rail line. My name is Lisa Lee. I live  
19 near the line. I first met Kathy DeSpiegelaere in 1988 at the  
20 first light rail meeting. The light rail alternative adds 31  
21 light rail vehicles and removes 47 bus vehicles. So essentially  
22 you're losing seating capacity. I figure it was about 69 seats.

23 And as far as convenience, light rail will be going down  
24 University Avenue and having the same stoplights to observe as  
25 the bus. It will observe the same speed limit as the cars. So

1 the effective operating speed is 15 miles per hour. The express  
2 bus, which one speaker mentioned, going between the two  
3 downtowns takes 24 minutes according to the schedule between  
4 Sixth and Hennepin and Fifth and Cedar. Ten million dollars'  
5 worth of bus service will be cut in order to help afford the  
6 \$17.5 million annual operating cost of light rail. Those cuts  
7 in bus service include taking away all the express bus service  
8 except at rush hour.

9 As far as congestion, it has been documented extensively in  
10 the EIS that light rail will increase congestion. I asked a  
11 proponent once where is the most transit-friendly city. He said  
12 Boston and San Francisco. Well, Boston has become so congested  
13 perhaps because of development patterns that make it so  
14 expensive that people are living far out that they have built  
15 the world's most expensive public works project putting a  
16 freeway underground. So I think the devil is in the details and  
17 people should look at what this project actually is rather  
18 than --

19 MR. PROBST: Thank you.

20 MS. LEE: -- glorified generalities.

21 MR. PROBST: Mr. Madden.

22 MR. MADDEN: Mike Madden, 1768 Iglehart. Thank you,  
23 Mr. Chairman. I'd like to start by thanking Ms. DeSpiegelaere  
24 and Mr. Morris. They've been very responsive during this  
25 comment period. My support is for LRT on University Avenue and

1 maybe you heard the one about the traveling salesman going down  
2 the country road and he looks out his window and he sees a  
3 farmer in an orchard and the farmer is holding a pig up in the  
4 air underneath an apple tree and allowing the pig to snuffle and  
5 snort and pick out the most perfect apple in the tree and when  
6 it does he sets the pig down and the pig eats the apple and when  
7 the pig is done he lifts him up again, let's the pig choose the  
8 apple of its choice, sets the pig down again, and the pig savors  
9 every bite of that apple.

10 This goes on three or four more times before the salesman  
11 gets out of his car and he walks over and he says to the farmer  
12 "Whatcha doing?" and the farmer says, "I'm feeding my pig."  
13 Traveling salesman said, "Isn't that kind of time-consuming?"  
14 Farmer says, "What's time to a pig?"

15 (Laughter)

16 MR. MADDEN: Well, the emphasis that we place on  
17 traversing great distances in the least amount of time possible  
18 is responsible for a lot of the environmental problems we've got  
19 today. Most importantly sprawl but also air and water quality  
20 and global warming; and I think far more important is what  
21 happens between the beginning and the end of the line, whether  
22 that line is a highway or an LRT line; and in that regard I  
23 would support stations at half-mile intervals and I also feel  
24 that we have a mayor and city council right now that are poised  
25 to take full advantage of LRT in demanding that a transit-

1 oriented development accompany this mode and I guess that's  
2 about all I have to say is that the true benefit of this project  
3 is that we can return to a great city of higher densities and  
4 transportation.

5 MR. PROBST: Thanks for your comments. I think that's  
6 the best story we've heard so far.

7 (Laughter)

8 MR. PROBST: The final two speakers that I have signed  
9 up are John Mohr and Jim DeLuca.

10 MR. MOHR: Good morning. My name is John Mohr. I'm  
11 the chief executive officer of Lifetrack Resources, which is a  
12 nonprofit organization located at 709 University Avenue just  
13 west of Dale and University, and I'm here to speak on behalf of  
14 the LRT option.

15 We have 120 employees and we also serve about 10,000 people  
16 a year, many of whom take automobiles to our place of business;  
17 and clearly to us having a train running down University Avenue  
18 will only increase the access for the people who work at our  
19 place and also come to us for service. So we strongly favor the  
20 LRT option.

21 Speaking beyond the selfish interests of our organization  
22 and the people we serve, it's also clear to us at Lifetrack  
23 Resources that building a system in this metropolitan area of  
24 light rail only makes great sense and it is so clear that the  
25 next spoke in this system has to be the connection of Downtown

1 St. Paul with the rest of the emerging system. So we highly  
2 favor the LRT option. Thank you for allowing me to speak this  
3 morning.

4 MR. PROBST: Thanks for your comments. Tim DeLuca.

5 MR. DeLUCA: Good morning. Thanks for the opportunity.  
6 I'm Tim DeLuca from Braun Intertec Corporation. I'm a resident  
7 of Merriam Park. I'm also active in the Midway Chamber and the  
8 St. Paul Chamber and I come here in support of light rail. I  
9 won't go through all the facts. I'm sure they've been gone  
10 through quite a bit.

11 I think we can't afford not to take advantage of this and  
12 move it forward right now; and one thing I'd love to stress,  
13 though, is I think that we can also be accommodating about it  
14 and make sure that with the increased high density that someone  
15 brought up in the last couple speakers that we also accommodate  
16 affordable housing along that area, too, along that corridor so  
17 that, you know, this thing is for everybody and people aren't  
18 pushed out that are already there and then we consolidate the  
19 corridor and the controversy. I guess that's from a personal  
20 standpoint, but it makes sense for our whole community, too, but  
21 I'm truly in support of it as a Chambers and as a company. So  
22 that's all I have.

23 MR. PROBST: Thank you for your comments. That  
24 represents everyone who has signed up to speak. Is there anyone  
25 else who would like to make comments today? (Pause) Seeing

1 none, if you wish to provide additional comments before the June  
2 5th close of the comment period, please feel free to use all of  
3 the vehicles that are outlined in the Citizens Guide. Comment  
4 period closes at the end of business day on June 5th. With that  
5 I will thank you for being here this morning and hope you have a  
6 pleasant day. Thanks.

7 (Hearing concludes at 9:25 a.m.)

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Court Reporter: Linda G. Oman