

**Saint Paul's North End – South Como Neighborhoods and Ward 5
to Host Public Transit Town Hall Meeting
Thursday, Nov. 13th • 6:30 p.m.
Arlington High School, 1495 Rice Street**

District 6 Planning Council and Ward 5 will be hosting a town hall meeting on Central Corridor LRT and Public Transit issues in District 6 / Ward 5.
The meeting is open to the public.

“Scrubbing” the Budget: How the Met Council Achieved a CEI of \$24.45

Over the last couple of months, Central Corridor Project Office (CCPO) staff have been engaged in “value engineering” and fine-tuning modeling to reach the new CEI of \$24.45. (The CEI cannot exceed \$24.49.) Material price increases that outstripped the inflationary adjustment to the CEI contributed to the need for Value Engineering. For example, steel for tracks was up 100%; asphalt increased 70%; and fuel costs were up 50%.

The principles of Value Engineering are to: meet design criteria, ensure public safety, operate efficiently, and reduce project cost increase. To that end, CCPO staff:

- Redesigned track slab reinforcing in keeping with lessons learned from Hiawatha
- Reduced the thickness of concrete adjacent to track to 4”, which is consistent with lessons learned from Hiawatha
- Modify the Washington Avenue alignment between Oak and Huron to minimize the turn lane and thus eliminate the need for Right Of Way acquisition
- Modify station foundations to minimize excavation needs
- Postpone construction of station canopy and shelters at the third (future) light rail vehicle location on lower ridership stations
- Postpone installation of second Ticket Vending Machine at each station platform
- Co-locate traction power substations (Union Depot & 4th/Cedar into one location at 4th/Cedar and Hiawatha connection & West Bank into one location in the West Bank Area)

In addition, the budget line item for inflation was reduced to 3% to reflect an anticipated slow down in inflation. (The budget previously allowed 3.5% for inflation.) And the contingency amount was reduced to reflect 30% engineering. The new capital cost budget in 2008 dollars is \$914.8 million.

Engineers have also revisited travel time from end to end. The previous travel time (min:sec) was 40:15; the new travel time is 39:13. This was accomplished by reducing the time allocated for curves and avoiding the signal at Robert Street by making alignment changes.

DCC Priority Issues

At the September 10th meeting, the Governing Council initiated its regular 6-month review and revision of its priority issues and work plan. Current priority issues are:

- Traffic mitigation strategies for neighborhoods impacted by the closing of Washington Avenue for a transit/pedestrian mall on the East Bank of the University of Minnesota
- Access through and to the Central Corridor LRT line

- LRT Station Design, including pedestrian access, public art, safety and security, and public participation in the planning and design process
- Mitigation strategies and funds to benefit neighborhoods
- Construction of stations at Western, Victoria, and Hamline

There was general consensus that core issues may not have shifted much, but we do need to update our work plan to reflect the current Central Corridor planning context. The Governing Council also agreed it is an appropriate time to ask the boards of member organizations for feedback on how they envision their communities benefiting from construction of the Central Corridor line. This feedback would be used to create new strategies for working together to maximize the benefits of LRT for neighborhoods in and near the corridor.

Washington Avenue Transit/Pedestrian Mall, At-Grade Alignment

The Washington Avenue Bridge is the critical Mississippi River crossing for the Central Corridor LRT line. The Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) discloses very little information about the structural status of the bridge, the repairs that are needed, and what mitigation will be required. Already, the outer edges of the pedestrian/bicycle deck have been closed to the public for safety reasons. In its comments on the SDEIS, the DCC called for the Washington Avenue Bridges to be repaired/replaced on par with the life expectancy of the rest of the line. The DCC has requested a meeting with CCPO engineers and consultants from URS, the firm under contract to evaluate the structural integrity of the bridge and propose appropriate solutions, to discuss these issues.

Advocacy for Stations at Western, Victoria, and Hamline

Over the last few weeks, Transportation Equity/Stops for Us campaign members have focused on completion of a new PowerPoint presentation that makes the case for constructing these stations. In the upcoming month, the group will return attention to the CEI and begin work on a Community Compact or Community Benefits Agreement to ensure that community concerns are addressed.

LRT Station Design and Public Art Engagement Process

Proposals from the 10 public artist finalists were due on September 10th. The selection committee should announce its decision by the end of September. A number of CAC members have been pressing for neighborhood committees to be set up to develop a vision and select one of the approved artists to work with, but so far no process or timetable has been released by the project staff.

CCLRT Planning Process and the Met Council

- ❖ **CC Management Committee (CCMC)**—The September meeting of the CCMC was canceled.
- ❖ **Community Advisory Committee (CAC)**—The September meeting of the CAC was canceled. However, Anne White, DCC representative on the CAC, contacted Robin Caufman and Kirstin Sersland Beach, Met Council member and chair of the CAC, to request that the meeting be reinstated on the basis that (1) the SDEIS identified many issues to be resolved in the FEIS with no indication of how the public would be involved in resolving issues and (2) nothing has been announced about the public art community process. The request was denied. Instead, Ms Caufman offered to meet with the DCC Executive Committee or Governing Council to review the issues raised in comments on the SDEIS and to discuss potential solutions.

DCC Executive Committee and Staff: Anne White, Chair, Union Park; Steve Wilson, Vice Chair, Summit-University; Bob Spaulding, Secretary, CapitolRiver Council; Ron Lischeid, Treasurer, University District Improvement Association; Phil Anderson, Member-at-Large, Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association; and Carol Swenson, Community Liaison.

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