



DISTRICT COUNCILS COLLABORATIVE *of Saint Paul & Minneapolis*

Monthly Update – November 18, 2008

651-249-6877 • www.dcc-stpaul-mpls.org

Next Governing Council Meeting: Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2008 • 7–9 PM • Central Corridor Resource Center

Met Council Schedules Central Corridor Open Houses

These Open Houses are an important opportunity to provide comment before the Environmental Impact Review is brought to a close and the Final Environmental Impact Statement is released. Hear and respond to possible alignment changes and information not previously disclosed. See detailed engineering plans, property and access impacts, and location of traction power substations. Talk with Project engineers and planners. Get your questions answered.

Monday, Dec. 1, 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. / Model Cities, 839 University Ave., St. Paul

Tuesday, Dec. 2, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. / Alliance Bank Center Food Court, 55 E. 5th St., St. Paul

Wednesday, Dec. 3, 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. / Central Presbyterian Church, 500 Cedar St., St. Paul

Thursday, Dec. 4, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. / Brian Coyle Center, 420 15th Ave. S., Minneapolis

Saturday, Dec. 6, 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. / Goodwill Easter Seals, 553 Fairview Ave. N., St. Paul

DCC Priority Issues

Public Art/Station Design and Public Involvement

Despite DCC's advocacy efforts, Met Council Members voted to move forward with public art contracts that assign stations prior to any community visioning. Kirstin Sersland Beach did offer an amendment supporting the DCC's request, but CCPO staff argued that there was not enough time in the project schedule for the community to undertake a proper public art visioning process.

The Central Corridor Project Office (CCPO) is forming Station Arts Committees for each station area, to begin work in December 2008. Committees are open to anyone who lives or works within a mile of a station and are tasked to advise artists and CCPO staff, to share knowledge about the culture and history of adjacent neighborhoods, and to assist with community outreach and communications. Each committee will include a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) member who will report back to the CAC. Artists are expected to have their design work completed by March 2009.

Washington Avenue Transit/Pedestrian Mall, Washington Avenue Bridge, and At-Grade Alignment

DCC Representatives working on the neighborhood traffic impacts of closing Washington Avenue for the Pedestrian/Transit Mall have finished their initial set of meetings with Project Partners most directly engaged in these issues. Discussions with the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County focused on the "Betterments" for which each jurisdiction has agreed to be responsible. Betterments are transportation improvement projects that Project Partners have agreed to pursue outside the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (CCLRT) Work Scope and budget.

Granary Road is a critical Betterment, to provide a more desirable route for truck traffic which now travels on University Avenue from Hwy 280 to the University of Minnesota Campus. It will also provide an alternate route for traffic to the University of Minnesota's new stadium and proposed Biosciences complex. The City of Minneapolis is the lead organization on this Betterment and it faces two primary challenges: 1) the project is expensive and there is stiff competition for funding; and 2) neighborhoods at both ends of the road (Marcy-Holmes in Minneapolis and St. Anthony Park in St. Paul) have raised concerns that the road, if built as suggested, would "dump" traffic into residential neighborhoods and degrade their quality of life. The City of Minneapolis hopes to complete the middle segment from 25th to Malcolm prior to construction of the LRT to provide a detour for University Avenue traffic.

The second critical Betterment is to relieve congestion at the Franklin intersection with East River Road and 27th Avenue. Hennepin County, which has jurisdiction over this intersection, is the lead agency and is seeking a consultant to study design alternatives for the intersection.

Finally, the committee met with David Levinson, a professor of civil engineering at the University of Minnesota, who reviewed traffic studies related to the committee's areas of concern. He encouraged the DCC to continue pursuing options to enhance the livability of streets and to urge transportation planners and engineers working on the project to test options, such as bringing University Avenue down to one lane, prior to ruling them out.

Advocacy for Stations at Western, Victoria, and Hamline

On October 24th, Congresswoman McCollum's staff convened a second meeting of the Transportation Equity/Stops for Us campaign and elected officials serving St. Paul and Ramsey County. The meeting focused on strategies to secure funding to build out the missing stations at Western, Victoria, and Hamline. The group identified the Fridley Station on the North Star Commuter Line and the Bloomington Station on the Hiawatha Line as funding precedents for constructing the missing stations. The group also identified other organizations and elected officials who may have an interest in joining the table.

Access To and Through the Corridor

Jess Rosenfeld from the City of Saint Paul's Planning and Economic Development Department met with the Access Committee to discuss the upcoming Central Corridor Bicycle and Pedestrian Study. Funding for the study is through the Transit for Livable Communities' federally-funded Bike Walk Twin Cities initiative, which also has funds to implement non-motorized transportation projects. Rosenfeld stressed that study consultants will be preparing an implementation plan as one of their deliverables.

DCC Governing Council Explores Options for New Structure as an Independent Nonprofit

At its November 2008 meeting, the DCC Governing Council took action to authorize the Executive Committee to begin working to establish the DCC as a 501(c)(3) non-profit. This action was prompted by a decision of University UNITED's board of directors to cease being the DCC's fiscal sponsor in September of 2009, which is when the current grant period from The Saint Paul Foundation comes to an end. The Executive Committee has begun amending the DCC By-laws and the Memorandum of Understanding, which member organizations will be asked to sign to renew their membership in the DCC. The DCC will continue its work on the Central Corridor LRT through mid-2012, but may want to broaden the DCC's Purpose to allow for the possibility of collaborating on other issues that extend across neighborhood boundaries if the impacted neighborhood organizations agree.

CCLRT Planning Process and the Met Council

- ❖ **CC Management Committee (CCMC)** — After two months with no meetings, the CCMC met on November 12th to receive a series of updates. Staff presented **traffic studies of downtown St. Paul**, which show that intersections do not worsen with the introduction of LRT. A similar intersection study of **University Avenue and surrounding areas** shows intersections at Rice, Lexington, Hamline, Snelling, and Berry Street failing in 2030 afternoon rush hours when LRT is introduced. To mitigate these conditions, the CCPO will explore operational/signalization strategies along with modifications to intersection designs.

Staff also provided a progress report on the **Washington Avenue Pedestrian/Transit Mall**. The street cross-section under serious consideration includes: a) a 25-foot-wide zone in the middle of the street to accommodate a center platform that will serve trains going in each direction and a 20-foot pedestrian zone at each end of the platform; b) a 14-foot lane that LRT and buses will share; c) a 12-foot outside lane that bicycles and emergency vehicles will share; and c) 12-foot sidewalks (minimum) for pedestrians. A design charette is planned for December at which time Project Partners will come to agreement on the final design.

The **Washington Avenue Bridge Pedestrian Deck** is not in compliance with current code requirements, and it is unsafe if a large number of pedestrians congregated near one of the support columns. Hennepin County, which owns the bridge, will pay for the \$10 million in repairs that are needed. This retrofitting is not considered part of the CCLRT project and will not affect the Cost Effectiveness Index. The County hopes to re-open the full Pedestrian Deck in April 2009. Preliminary retrofit recommendations for the **main bridge deck** where trains and vehicles will travel are due in December; cost estimates are expected in January '09.

The **freeway ramps near the Cedar-Riverside/West Bank station** are being studied to determine which configuration will produce desirable development parcels while meeting other project criteria. Once configuration is decided Project Partners will work to reach agreement on who will pay for different project elements.

Finally, the CCMC was updated on the Public Arts component (see above).

- ❖ **Community Advisory Committee (CAC)** — The October meeting of the CAC was reported in last month's DCC Update. The next meeting will be November 20th, with the same updates as presented to the CCMC.

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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