

RIVERVIEW CORRIDOR MAJOR INVESTMENT STUDY
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT REPORT

Presented to the
Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority
November, 2000

RIVERVIEW CORRIDOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT REPORT

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Executive Summary:

Riverview Corridor Major Investment Study Public Involvement Program and Its Influence on Study Outcomes to Date

The Riverview Corridor Major Investment Study Public Involvement Program was designed to assure that public needs are understood by decision-makers and met by the locally preferred alternative chosen by the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority. Throughout the study process, public input has been sought, gathered and recorded. This report contains both a summary of concerns raised during the public comment period on the study report and the verbatim comments.

While the Major Investment Study report was designed to outline the technical, environmental and economic feasibility of the four transit alternatives identified in the previous study, the study report was influenced by public comments that have been received throughout the study process.

Though public inputs during the study process varied widely, a number of common themes emerged. Public comment gathered during the study process made clear that any transit investment implemented in the corridor would need to address the following issues:

- General support for improved mass transit regionally and within the corridor
- A need to prevent the loss of housing units in the corridor
- A need for any transit system to effectively co-exist with automobile traffic
- A need to prevent loss of parking for area businesses
- A fear of possible negative neighborhood impacts caused by construction of light rail transit
- A fear of escalating costs of light rail transit
- A need for a long term source of operating funds for transit
- A need to preserve the natural and historic amenities already existing within the corridor
- A need for any transit improvement to serve neighborhood as well as regional needs
- A need for any transit investment to be cost effective

There were voices in the community that objected to any transit investment in the corridor based on one or more of the concerns listed above.

Two public bodies representing citizens of the corridor have taken action address these concerns. The Saint Paul Planning Commission, using data from the draft MIS report, developed a new alternative for a busway that is designed to address projected congestion and transit needs in the corridor without eliminating housing and parking. This new alternative utilizes an appropriation from the State of Minnesota to fund a significant portion of capital costs.

The Saint Paul City Council, representing all citizens of the City of Saint Paul, unanimously passed a resolution in support of the alternative developed by the Saint Paul Planning Commission.

RIVERVIEW CORRIDOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT REPORT

The Riverview Corridor Major Investment Study has featured an aggressive grass-roots public involvement program. The purpose of this program was and continues to be to assure that stakeholders in the communities that would be affected by transit investment in the corridor have meaningful opportunities to shape the outcome of the study. Outreach efforts have sought input from residents and business owners within the study area, organizations that represent residents and business owners, officials elected by residents of the study area, and regional stakeholders.

The majority of these efforts have taken place at the neighborhood level and those efforts are documented in this report.

Presentations and discussions in all public involvement activities focused on the objectives of the Riverview Corridor Major Investment Study as developed early in the study process. In each case, presenters stressed to the community members that four technological options were being studied for application in the corridor in a variety of alignments. The four technological options described were:

- **No Build**
- **Transportation Systems Management**
- **Bus Rapid Transit (Busway)**
- **Light Rail Transit**

Given the consistent level of controversy surrounding light rail transit, staff and consultants working on this project stressed in the content of presentations that the study was designed to place equal emphasis on each of the options.

The public meeting process began with interviews with 46 representatives of the community conducted in January 1999. Those interviews were used to frame the public involvement issues at the beginning of the study. Dates and participants in these meetings are listed in Addendum 1.

The first large public meeting was the public scoping meeting held in March 1999 to introduce the study to the affected neighborhoods and set the parameters of the study. The process continued with two series of Station Area Public Meetings to test preliminary results. These meetings were arranged and funded through the Riverview Corridor Major Investment Study and, in many cases, co-facilitated by neighborhood district councils and business associations. In all cases, these meetings were publicized at a level that exceeded requirements of the Federal Transit Administration and the higher standard expected in Ramsey County. Meetings are listed in Addendum 2.

Publicity methods to draw citizens to the meetings included the following:

Paid Display Advertising in the following publications:

- Asian Pages
- Insight News
- Highland Villager
- Saint Paul Legal Ledger

- Pioneer Press
- Riverview Times
- Saint Paul Voice

Media Relations with the following publications:

- Pioneer Press
- Highland Villager
- Star Tribune
- Legal Ledger
- Skyway News
- Community Reporter
- Riverview Times
- Saint Paul Voice
- Asian Pages
- Insight News
- Spokesman

Notices mailed to:

- Transit Vision Task Force members
- SRF Study mailing list
- Interviewee mailing list
- Community contact list

Flyers/Special notices were distributed in areas surrounding the meeting sites.

The format for these meetings included an open house with opportunity to ask questions of transit planners, consultants and elected officials as well as opportunities to review displays and printed matter relating to the Riverview Corridor. Each meeting included a formal presentation and questions and answer period. The goal was to assure that interested residents had access to all information on the study and the opportunity to affect the results and resolve concerns.

Attendance at these meetings varied from fewer than 10 to 125. The scoping meeting and at least one meeting in each series of station area public meetings included representation from the offices of City Councilmembers Mike Harris, Chris Coleman and Kathy Lantry.

The outcomes of each of these public meetings were reported in a newsletter published by the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority. Newsletters were mailed to an extensive mailing list that included attendees at all meetings, individuals who have expressed interest in transit and community development issues, members of community councils, elected officials and news media.

In July 1999, the Study conducted a survey of corridor residents to determine the level of understanding and support for the alternatives under study. The survey was conducted by C.J. Olson Market Research. The sample was designed to reflect the demographics of the resident population and was statistically valid.

In the spring of 2000, the study extended invitations to organizations interested in presentations intended to test information coming out of the study in order to allow public input in the final study report. The following individuals and organizations accepted the invitations:

Pastor Walt Wietzke, St. Mark's Lutheran Church
Pastor Jack Dreier, St. Lukes Lutheran Church
Curt Milbern, East Side Area Business Association
East Side Area Business Association (ESABA) Board of Directors
Phalen Corridor Initiative (PCI) Board of Directors
Highland District Council Transportation Committee
Special public meeting on West 7th Developments
St. Lukes Lutheran Church Congregational Meeting
St. Marks Lutheran Church Congregational Meeting
West Seventh Federation Annual Meeting
Daytons Bluff District Council Meeting
Cami Zimmer, Saint Paul Transportation Management Organization

Throughout the study process, input was sought from a technical advisory committee convened to provide feedback on all aspects of the study while it was in progress. This committee met eleven times between April 1999 and July 2000 to review data developed for the study, community issues raised during the study and to suggest area for further study. Members of the Technical Advisory Committee are:

Chair: Mark Filipi, Metropolitan Council
John Byrd, Metro Transit
Kathryn Despiegelaere, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority
Natalio Diaz, Metropolitan Council
Gary Erickson, Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority
Joe Gladke, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Lorrie Louder, Saint Paul Port Authority
Alan Lovejoy, Saint Paul Planing and Economic Development Department
Steve Morris, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority
Steve Osman, Minnesota Historical Society-Historic Fort Snelling
Gregory Page, Riverfront Development Corporation
Dennis Probst, Metropolitan Airports Commission
Dan Soler, Ramsey County Public Works Department
Scott Thompson, Metro Transit
John Tocho, Minnesota Department of Transportation
John Wirka, Saint Paul Parks Department

The Draft Study Report was delivered to the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority and adopted for purposes of public review on August 22, 2000. An extended public comment period was set to end on October 20, 2000. The adoption of the draft study received significant media coverage and the Study staff arranged a series of meetings with community groups along with two public hearings held at locations within the corridor. Comments were aggressively solicited through media coverage, public presentations and the study website.

Presentations on the Draft Study Report were given and comment was taken from the following organizations and their members:

- Friday, August 18, 2000 - Saint Paul Transportation Management Organization at the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce Office
- Tuesday, September 5, 2000 - Phalen Corridor Initiative Board Meeting at Norwest Bank
- Wednesday, September 6, 2000 - Upper Swede Hollow Neighborhood Association Board Meeting at 729 East 7th Street, Saint Paul
- Thursday, September 7, 2000 - Highland District Council Board Meeting at Hillcrest Recreation Center, 1978 Ford Parkway, Saint Paul
- Friday September 8, 2000 - Saint Paul Planning Commission at Saint Paul City Hall/ Ramsey County Courthouse, 15 West Kellogg Blvd, Saint Paul
- Monday, September 11, 2000 - Daytons Bluff District Council at 798 East 7th St., Saint Paul
- Wednesday, September 20, 2000 - Capital River Council Board Meeting at First National Bank Building Room N-110, 332 Minnesota Street, Saint Paul
- Wednesday, September 20, 2000 - East Side Area Business Association at Aires Precision Sheetmetal, 720 Olive Street, Williams Hill Industrial Park
- Thursday, September 28, 2000 - Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee at Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce Offices
- Tuesday, October 10, 2000 - Payne Arcade Business Association at East Team Police Station 722 Payne Ave.
- Thursday, October 12, 2000 - Payne Phalen Community Council at 1014 Payne Avenue, St. Paul

Large group public meetings were held on October 11 and October 17 at the following locations:

Wednesday, October 11, 2000
West Seventh Community Center Gymnasium
265 Oneida Street
St. Paul, MN 55102
Open House/ Questions Answered
5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Listening Session/ Public Comment
7:30 p.m. 9:00 p.m.

Tuesday, October 17, 2000
St. Lukes Lutheran Church
1807 Field Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55116
Open House/ Questions Answered
5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Listening Session/ Public Comment
7:30 p.m. 9:00 p.m.

These meetings were publicized through advertising in community newspapers, publicity through local organizations, media placements in major newspapers, the study website and other community methods. All comments made at those meetings were transcribed.

Addendum 1

Catalog of Initial Meetings with Community Members to Frame Public Involvement Issues

Along with numerous informal informational meetings, representatives from the Riverview Corridor Major Investment Study have met with and answered questions for the following individuals in the corridor. These meetings were carried out at the outset of the study to determine awareness of community opinion leaders and to seek counsel for ongoing public involvement efforts:

- November 24, 1998 – Ann Brisano, Riverview Economic Development Association
- November 25, 1999 – Anne Hunt, Neighborhood Energy Consortium
- December 8, 1998 – Nacho Diaz, Metropolitan Council
- December 8, 1998 – Brian Merchant, Highland Community Council
- December 31, 1999 – Meg Gravelle, Jewish Family Services
- January 4, 1999 – Commissioner Bennett, Ramsey County
- January 4, 1999 – Commissioner Susan Haigh, Ramsey County
- January 4, 1999 – Mark Moeller, R.F. Moeller Jewelers, St. Paul
- January 5, 1999 – Gail Martenson, Sibley Manor Social Worker
- January 7, 1999 – Julie Benick, Dayton’s Bluff Community Council President
- January 8, 1999 – Rolf Middleton, MSP Companies
- January 11, 1999 – Councilmember Chris Coleman, St. Paul
- January 11, 1999 – Carl W. (Buzz) Cummins – St. Paul Transportation Management Organization
- January 11, 1999 – John Labosky, Capital City Partnership
- January 11, 1999 – Jim Smith, West Seventh Community Center
- January 12, 1999 – Laurel Severson, 3M Administrative Services
- January 13, 1999 – Ellen Biales, Summit Hill Association Executive Director
- January 13, 1999 – Bill Buth, BOMA
- January 13, 1999 – Eric Hare, Irvine Park Association
- January 13, 1999 – Richard Miller, Fort Road Federation Board
- January 14, 1999 – Lester Collins, Council on Black Minnesotans
- January 15, 1999 – A. Sheffer Lang, Center for Transportation Studies, University of Minnesota
- January 15, 1999 – Councilmember Kathy Lantry, St. Paul and Bob Connor, Council Aide
- January 18, 1999 - Carol Andrews, St. Paul Bicycle Advisory Committee
- January 18, 1999 – Art Leahy, Metro Transit General Manager
- January 18, 1999 – Paul Mohrbacher, Science Museum of Minnesota/Capitol River Council
- January 18, 1999 – Betty Moran, West 7th/Fort Road Federation
- January 19, 1999 – Sunny Floum, Vocational Improvement Program, Jewish Family Service
- January 19, 1999 – Peggy Lynch – Friends of the Parks

- January 19, 1999 – Penny Harris, Metropolitan State University Associate V.P. Of Public Affairs
- January 20, 1999 – Councilmember Michael Harris, St. Paul and Dan Smith, Legislative Aide
- January 21, 1999 – Roger Diestler, Sibley Manor Caretaker
- January 21, 1999 - Dan Galles, West End Business Association President
- January 25, 1999 - Shawn Bartsh, Highland District Council President
- January 25, 1999 – Lyle Wray, Citizens League Executive Director
- January 26, 1999 – Councilmember Dan Bostrom, St. Paul
- January 26, 1999 – Ed Johnson, Fort Road Federation Executive Director and Patrick O’Hare, Assistant
- January 26, 1999 – Jerry Trooien, JLT Group, St. Paul
- January 27, 1999 – Holly Crouse, West End Business Association
- January 27, 1999 – Sarah Pillow, Macalester Groveland Community Council
- January 27, 1999 – Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County
- January 28, 1999 - Councilmember Jay Benanav, St. Paul
- January 28, 1999 - Seiglinde Bier, Highland Community Council/Transportation Committee
- January 28, 1999 – Pastor Jack Drier, St. Lukes Lutheran Church, 1807 Field Ave., St. Paul
- February 10, 1999 – Commissioner Jan Wiessner, Ramsey County
- February 10, 1999 – Robert Wider, St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee

Addendum 2

Catalog of Public Meetings

- Thursday, March 25, 1999 - Riverview Corridor Transit Study Scoping Meeting at West Seventh Community Center Gymnasium, 265 Oneida Street, St. Paul
- Monday, June 7, 1999 - Station Area Public Meeting at Minnesota Brewing Company Rathskeller (In cooperation with the West End Business and Professional Association), 882 West Seventh Street, St. Paul
- Tuesday, June 8, 1999 - Station Area Public Meeting at St. Lukes Lutheran Church, 1807 Field Avenue, St. Paul
- Tuesday, June 8, 1999 - Station Area Public Meeting at Minnesota History Center Irvine Room, 345 Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul
- Wednesday, June 9, 1999 - Station Area Public Meeting at Metropolitan State University Founders Hall L122, 700 East Seventh Street, St. Paul
- Wednesday, June 9, 1999 - Station Area Public Meeting at Galtier Plaza Seventh Floor Conference Room, 175 East Fifth Street, Saint Paul
- Monday, September 13, 1999 - Station Area Public Meeting at Metropolitan State University New Main/Great Hall, 700 East 7th Street, St. Paul
- Tuesday, September 14, 1999 - Station Area Public Meeting at West 7th Community Center Gymnasium, 265 Oneida Street, St. Paul
- Wednesday, September 15, 1999 - Station Area Public Meeting at Ramsey Room, Landmark Center, 75 West 5th Street, St. Paul

Community Organization Presentations/ Q&A Sessions/ Public Input Opportunities

Less formal public presentations have been delivered to the following groups throughout the course of the study. Study staff and consultants have sought out interested groups and individuals as venues for these presentations. The purpose of the presentations is to outline the objectives of the study, to provide updated information from the study and to continue gathering feedback from the community on their needs.

- March 18, 1999 - Highland Area Community Council Board Meeting
- March 23, 1999 - West 7th Community Council Annual Meeting
- April 21, 1999 - Highland Area Community Council Annual Meeting
Panel Participants:
Commissioner Rafael Ortega
Commissioner Tony Bennett
Councilmember Mike Harris
Councilmember Chris Coleman
- May 21, 1999 - St Paul Transportation Management Organization
- June 1, 1999 - St Paul Building Trades- Dick Anfang
- June 3, 1999 - Highland District Council Transportation Committee Chair, Paul Heinerscheid
- June 7, 1999 - Busway presentation at Metro Transit
- June 8, 1999 - West End Business and Professional Association
- June 16, 1999 - Minnesota Congressional Delegation staff
- July 8, 1999 - Lee Pao Xiong, Metropolitan Council

- July 13, 1999 - Capital River Council Land Use Committee
- July 13, 1999 - West Side Community Council Land Use Committee
- July 21, 1999 - Capital River Council Board of Directors
- July 26, 1999 - Highland Area Community Council Land Use Committee
- July 26, 1999 - Montreal Hi-Rise Resident Council
- July 27, 1999 - Summit Hill Association Traffic & Parking Committee
- July 28, 1999 - Sibley Manor Small Group Presentation
- July 29, 1999 - Meeting with Sen. Randy Kelly and staff
- July 30, 1999 - Saint Paul Planning Commission
- August 4, 1999 - West End Business Organization
- August 9, 1999 - Metro East Development Partnership Annual Meeting
- August 22, 1999 - Highland Area Community Council Transportation Subcommittee
- September 8, 1999 - Transit Options Open House- Bloomington City Hall
- September 10, 1999 - Brewery Area Small Group Meeting
- September 15, 1999 - Capital River Council Board of Directors
- September 16, 1999 - Riverview Economic Development Association
- September 24-28, 1999 - Rail-Volution Conference
- Representatives from:
 Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce
 Saint Paul Transportation Management Association
 Transit for Livable Communities
- October 5, 1999 - Phalen Corridor Initiative Board of Directors
- October 5-6, 1999 - Transit Primer Seminar for Highland Area Community Council
- October 14-16, 1999 - Presentation at Mayor's Design Forum, Saint Paul National Guard Armory
- October 15, 1999 - Saint Paul Transportation Management Organization
- October 25, 1999 - Dayton's Bluff Community Council/ Upper Swede Hollow Neighborhood Association
- October 28, 1999 - Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee
- November 9, 1999 - Neighborhoods First (A Neighborhood Grassroots Organization)
- November 18, 1999 - Saint Paul Transportation Management Organization
- November 23, 1999 - Transit for Livable Communities
- January 7, 2000 - Metropolitan State University Administration
- February 14, 2000 - Pastor Walt Wietzke, St. Mark's Lutheran Church
- February 15, 2000 - Pastor Jack Dreier, St. Lukes Lutheran Church
- February 24, 2000 - Curt Milbern, East Side Area Business Association
- March 22, 2000 - East Side Area Business Association (ESABA) Board of Directors
- April 4, 2000 - Phalen Corridor Initiative (PCI) Board of Directors
- April 4, 2000 - Highland District Council Transportation Committee Special public meeting on West 7th Developments
- April 2, 2000 - St. Lukes Lutheran Church Congregational Meeting
- April 9, 2000 - St. Marks Lutheran Church Congregational Meeting

- April 10, 2000 - West Seventh Federation Annual Meeting
- May 8, 2000 - Dayton's Bluff District Council Meeting
- June 26, 2000 - Cami Zimmer, Saint Paul Transportation Management Organization
- October 23, 2000 – St. James Catholic Church small group meeting

**Riverview Corridor Major Investment Study
Summary of Comments Received During Public Comment Period
August 22, 2000- October 20, 2000**

Below is a summary of the public comments received by the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority during the public comment period. All of the written comments received and verbatim transcripts of oral comments received are attached to this report.

The study received comments from three government bodies with jurisdiction over the Riverview Corridor Area, from staff of two government agencies, from nine private community agencies and organizations, four community councils/ neighborhood associations, and 170 individuals.

Comments from Government Bodies with Jurisdiction over Riverview Corridor

To date, the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority has received notice that three governing bodies representing the citizens of Saint Paul have approved resolutions commenting on the Riverview Corridor Major Investment Study.

Saint Paul Planning Commission

The Saint Paul Planning Commission passed a resolution in support of a Bus Rapid Transit alternative based on Alternative 7 in the study. A description of the modified alternative is included in this report. The Saint Paul Planning Commission is a volunteer citizen body appointed by the Mayor to advise the Mayor and City Council on planning and land use issues within the city of Saint Paul. The Commission represents a variety of constituencies within the city of Saint Paul including residents, businesses, and landowners in the city.

Saint Paul City Council

The Saint Paul City Council unanimously approved the modified Bus Rapid Transit alternative supported by the Planning Commission with several conditions including the expressed need for broad community involvement in subsequent planning stages. A description of the alternative approved by the City Council is included in this report. The Saint Paul City Council is a 7 member elected body collectively representing the entire resident population of the City of Saint Paul.

Metropolitan Council

The two members of the Metropolitan Council who represent the City of Saint Paul (Lee Pao Xiong- District 13 and Fred Perez- District 14) sent a letter urging the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority to select a busway alternative and alignment within the Riverview Corridor. A copy of the letter is included in this report. The letter states that such a selection would place the Riverview Corridor as a top candidate for state and federal funding through the Metropolitan Council. The Metropolitan Council is appointed by the Governor as the Twin Cities' Regional Planning body.

Comments from Staff of Government Agencies

The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority has received staff comments from two government agencies with jurisdiction over portions of the Riverview Corridor.

Minnesota Department of Transportation

The Minnesota Department of Transportation provided comments on the Riverview Corridor MIS. Their comments focused on four areas: impacts to West 7th Street, TH 5 and I35E; impacts on an existing and future Metro area transit network; impacts to effected freight railroads and shippers; and the process for which capital costs were arrived at for the build alternatives. In each of these areas, MnDOT expresses concerns about the study data and urges further study. MnDOT is the state agency charged with transportation and transit planning and road construction.

United States Department of the Interior- Mississippi National River and Recreation Area

Joanne Kyril, Superintendent of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area provided detailed comment on the MIS as it relates the MNRRA comprehensive management plan. The response notes that, while a transit investment in the corridor would have positive impact on the economic vitality of the area, the alternatives may limit public access to the river and have an adverse impact on natural, cultural and scenic resources. Concerns raised by the LRT alternatives include visual impacts of overhead wires near the river bluff and impacts on parkland caused by the need for a new bridge at Highway 5. They are concerned about impacts on wetlands if the Swede Hollow alignment is chosen. MNRRA would prefer that none of the options be constructed to disturb the river bluff and that any disturbance be mitigated with proper restoration techniques. They have similar concerns about any disturbance of the riverbank. In conclusion, MNRRA urges the RCRRA to choose an alternative that addresses the transportation needs of the corridor with the least impact on the resources of the Mississippi River.

Positions taken by Private Community Agencies and Organizations

Nine private community agencies representing a variety of constituencies have taken official positions on the Riverview Corridor Major Investment Study and provided them to the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority. Those positions are briefly described below and copies are included in this report.

East Side Area Business Association (ESABA)

The East Side Area Business Association passed a resolution supporting Alternative number 2, modest improvements to the existing bus systems in the corridor. ESABA represents 72 businesses located primarily on the eastern end of the Riverview Corridor.

Friends of Swede Hollow

Friends of Swede Hollow passed a resolution opposing the use of Swede Hollow Park or the Bruce Vento Recreational Trail as a mass transit corridor. Friends of Swede Hollow is a private not for profit organization of people with a common interest in enhancing and preserving Swede Hollow Park.

Gateway Interfaith Table for Affordable Housing (GIFT)

The Gateway Interfaith Table for Affordable Housing (GIFT) issued a statement supporting improved transit that preserves affordable housing. Specifically, they advocate for one for one replacement of housing lost to transit, relocation benefits for displaced residents and full preservation of the Sibley Manor affordable housing development. GIFT represents 14 faith communities in or near the corridor.

Phalen Corridor Initiative

The Phalen Corridor Initiative (PCI) passed a resolution asking that PCI continue to be involved in all further discussions of transit improvements in the Riverview Corridor in order to ensure that East Side interests are served by the alternative chosen. The Phalen Corridor Initiative is a public private partnership dedicated the economic development of Saint Paul's East Side neighborhoods.

St. Frances de Sales and St. James Catholic Churches

Fr. Dennis Dempsey, Pastor for the parishes of St. Frances de Sales and St. James in the West 7th Neighborhood sent a letter expressing the concerns raised by his parishioners. He indicated that the LRT alternatives would be unacceptable to his parishioners and suggested that an improved bus system as part of a regional system would serve the needs of the community.

Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce

The Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce has issued a detailed resolution in support of a dedicated busway in the Riverview Corridor as one leg of an improved Metro-wide transit system. Their resolution also calls for replacement of any parking lost and a dedicated funding source for operations. The Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce is the largest local business organization in Minnesota and represents 1700 businesses and professional associations mostly in the Saint Paul/ East Metro Region.

Saint Paul Convention and Visitors Bureau

The Saint Paul Convention and Visitors Bureau issued a resolution in support of improved transit in the Riverview Corridor. Specifically, they indicate that the Riverview Corridor route is a critical link for commuters between Saint Paul and the rest of the Twin Cities Area. The Saint Paul Convention and Visitors Bureau is a public private partnership with 364 member organizations representing approximately 20,000 employees.

Saint Paul Transportation Management Organization

The Saint Paul Transportation Management Organization issued a resolution in support of Bust Rapid Transit in the Riverview Corridor. The resolution indicates that BRT will provide residents within the corridor with greater access to key destinations within the corridor and the region. The Transportation Management Organization is a public/private partnership formed to promote and coordinate efficient and environmentally sound transportation networks to assure continued growth and prosperity for Saint Paul and the Eat Metro Area.

West End Business and Professional Association

The West End Business and Professional Association (WEBPA) issued a resolution in favor of transportation improvements within the Riverview Corridor. They state that development of the transportation corridor will serve as a catalyst to help West 7th take full advantage of its strategic position between downtown Saint Paul and Minneapolis Saint Paul International Airport. They further state that any parking lost must be replaced and access to turn lanes on and off West 7th Street be maintained. WEBPA represents nearly 80 businesses located between Downtown Saint Paul and the airport.

Positions taken by Saint Paul Community Councils

Saint Paul is served by a network of 17 community councils representing residents of the distinct neighborhoods within the city. Among other duties, these councils advise elected officials on planning and land use issues within their districts. Volunteer residents of the neighborhoods direct the Community Councils. The directors of three of Saint Paul's District Councils have taken positions on the Riverview Corridor Major Investment Study Draft. Full copies of those positions are included in this report.

District 5 (Payne Phalen)

District 5 issued a resolution opposing any use of Swede Hollow Park for mass transit. Their resolution also calls for ample community review of any transit plans that would affect their jurisdiction before a final plan is adopted.

District 9 (West 7th/ Fort Road Federation)

District 9 issued a resolution stating that the Riverview Corridor MIS Draft Study does not meet any of its stated goals. The resolution opposes any regional transportation investments that do not specifically serve the West 7th neighborhood or that damage the neighborhood; supports Transportation System Management improvements on existing bus routes in the corridor; supports Bus Rapid Transit on Shepard Road; requests a three month extension of the public input process; and recommends that a community developed plan for River Bluff replace the bus maintenance plan proposed in the MIS Draft Report. The resolution further requests that all transit planning entities undertake a simulation test of the route approved by the City of Saint Paul.

District 15 (Highland Park)

District 15 issued a detailed resolution asking for an extension of the public comment period; asserting that it is unwise public policy to chose a transit solution based on available funding; supporting improvements to the metropolitan transit system; supporting the initial development of the Central Corridor; supporting improved bus service in the Riverview Corridor; concluding that the build alternatives described in the draft study will not solve transit problems in the Riverview Corridor; objecting to construction of a new river crossing for transit improvements; opposing transit alignments that have a harmful impact on natural resources specifically the River Bluff and Swede Hollow; expressing concern about any alternative that would remove on-street parking; and expressing concern about the removal of homes and businesses in the corridor. The resolution goes on to express specific concerns for the Highland area. They concluded that the MIS Draft study does not adequately describe the impacts on traffic of any of the build alternatives or who the anticipated users of the system will be. They express concern about the environmental amenities of the corridor, and ask for a full description of all impacts. Finally the resolution asks that all governmental bodies refrain from making any decisions in regard to the Riverview Corridor until they can address all concerns described, clearly identify the problems that will be solved by any solution, and specifically explain how the proposed solution solves the problem.

Upper Swede Hollow Neighborhood Association (USHNA)

The Upper Swede Hollow Neighborhoods Association (USHNA) represents the neighborhoods at the eastern end of the corridor including portions of Daytons Bluff, the Lower East Side, and the Swede Hollow area. They advocate for a two-phase approach eventually leading to light rail transit in the Riverview Corridor. They oppose Bus Rapid Transit because it does not appear to effectively address transportation issues in the area nor does it provide the opportunities for economic development that an investment in LRT would provide. They state clearly that no build is not an option. Specifically they advocate for Phase One development of Transportation Systems Management including a park and ride facility at Metropolitan State University and parking facilities at 3M. Phase Two would be development of a light rail system from the northeastern portion of Saint Paul to the Airport/ Mall of America complex.

Public Comment from Individual Citizens

The RCRRA received 61 oral comments and written comments from 109 individuals in response to a broadly publicized solicitation for public comment on the Riverview Corridor Major Investment Study. Written comments were received between the Study's release on August 22, 2000 and October 27, 2000. Oral comments were taken at two public listening sessions and a public hearing before the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority. The written comments and transcripts of the oral comments are included in this report.

Comments from individuals indicated a wide diversity of views within the community in regard to the draft results of the Riverview Corridor Major Investment Study. While the comments from individuals show no consensus ideas coming from the community there are a number of themes that did emerge. We have attempted to summarize those themes in this report.

Any transit improvements in the Riverview Corridor should include improvements in pedestrian/ bicycle access- particularly on the Highway 5 Bridge.

The single issue that drew the most comments was the need to improve regional accessibility for bicycles and pedestrians. Sixty-one citizens submitted comments on this issue.

Specifically and overwhelmingly, citizens commenting on bicycle related issues spoke in favor of better access to the river crossing at Highway 5 and suggested that any transit improvements in the Riverview Corridor mitigate barriers to non-motorized traffic on the bridge. Other issues cited by citizens in this category are:

- Creating legal access to the terminal at Minneapolis Saint Paul international airport for bicycles.
- Using the opportunity provided by transit improvements in the corridor to improve bicycle access throughout the corridor.
- Making sure that transit improvements along West 7th do not reduce or eliminate bicycle access to West 7th Street.
- Assuring that transit improvements also improve access in the corridor for pedestrians and people with disabilities.

Beyond bicycle related issues, citizens commented on a variety of topics related to transit improvements in the Riverview Corridor and the alternatives considered in the study. While many people spoke specifically about the mode alternatives included in the study, most of the comments were directed at impacts of the modes studied. Below are summaries of the issues raised.

General Support for Improved Mass Transit

Many of the comments from individuals included general support for mass transit improvements throughout the region. Reasons for this support included the need to provide mobility for low-income people, to provide mobility options other than the automobile, and to promote housing and economic development in the city. While stating this support, many of the same commenting citizens said that they would not use transit because it cannot be made to serve their needs.

Comments on Transit improvements in general

A large number of the people who provided comment stressed that they believe mass transit is important to Saint Paul and the Twin Cities region. They spoke of the need for better non-automobile transportation alternatives between the cities and the suburbs. Among the needs they cited are:

- Completion of the transit triangle
- An easy way for commuters to get into and out of the corridor area
- Providing better mobility for low income residents of the corridor
- Increasing opportunities to get around in the city without cars

Several of the citizens who provided comment said that there is no need for transit improvement within the corridor. They cited underutilized bus routes in the corridor as a clear signal that there is little or no demand for additional transit between downtown Saint Paul and the airport/ Mall of America complex.

Concern that a transit corridor may divide the West 7th Neighborhood

Many individuals stated opposition to any of the build alternatives based on the perception that a fixed guideway transit system would create a barrier in the neighborhood. Comments from the West 7th neighborhood in particular cited loss of housing and damage to their neighborhood caused by the construction of Interstate 35E as their reason to oppose any further transportation investment in the area. Other points on this theme included the fear that a transit investment would mean the construction of massive park and ride lots in the heart of a residential neighborhood and more on street parking by non-residents.

The need to preserve housing in General

Once again citing the impacts on the West 7th Neighborhood by I-35E, many of the comments focused on the damage done to a neighborhood when large numbers of housing units are removed and their fear that any of the build options would do just that.

The need to preserve low income housing in particular

A number of commenting citizens focused on the need to preserve any low-income housing. Among the needs discussed were “one for one” replacement of any low income housing units and the need to preserve all units at the Sibley Manor Housing development.

The positive impact of improved transit in low-income communities

Several commenting citizens focused on the mobility difficulties that low-income residents face particularly in getting to jobs. Employers and low-income workers are not confident that the current transit system can get workers to jobs. Reliable and regular transit would provide low-income people with transportation options that they do not currently have.

Concerns about cost effectiveness of any of the transit improvement options

A large number of commenting citizens raised concerns about the costs of any transit improvements compared to projected benefits. Common themes included:

- Cost per new rider for light rail is too high
- Cost per new rider for Bus Rapid Transit is too high
- Any mobility problems in the corridor can be solved through comparatively inexpensive improvements in current bus system
- Current bus system is perceived to be underutilized therefore any new system will also be underutilized.

Concerns about the costs to the neighborhoods from inadequate investment in transit

Other commenting citizens spoke of the negative effects on the corridor if investments are not made to improve transit in the corridor. Among the costs discussed are missed opportunities for housing and economic development and problems caused by projected congestion.

Questions about who would be served by a transit investment in the Riverview Corridor

Comments expressed concern that any transit improvements between the East Side and the Mall of America would not serve the residents of corridor. Among the themes that emerged under this heading were:

- Many neighborhood residents object to their area providing transportation for suburbanites going to work or events downtown.
- The belief that a transit investment in the corridor is intended to serve only tourists and not residents of the corridor.
- The belief that any investment in the corridor would benefit the Mall of America to the detriment of Saint Paul.

Concern about future congestion if there is inadequate investment in transit

Commenting citizens spoke of their concern that failure to implement any of the build alternatives will cause Downtown, the West 7th Area and the new Gateway development to become unacceptably congested.

Concern about future congestion if the build alternatives are implemented

Several commenting citizens stated their belief that use of lanes on West 7th Street as dedicated transit routes will cause Downtown, the West 7th Area and the new Gateway development to become unacceptably congested.

Concern about the impacts on businesses in the Corridor

While organizations representing businesses in the corridor and several individual businesses indicated a need for significant transit improvements in the area, several business related issues were raised by individuals who commented. Many of the commenting citizens indicated their belief that any of the build options would cause a significant loss of parking that would damage businesses. One business organization leader echoed that concern but stated that it would not be an issue if parking loss is kept to a minimum. Other business people indicated their concern that any option that would take transit off of West 7th Street would reduce business traffic.

Concern about the inflexibility of build alternatives

Some of the commenting citizens expressed concern that the build alternatives become committed to a specific alignment and would not be able to respond to future changes in

the traffic market. They typically supported bus improvements that can be easily modified.

Concern about Environmental impacts on parks and natural resources

Several commenting citizens indicated their belief that transit should not be built on the RCRRA owned right of way in Swede Hollow Park and that no alternative should be considered that would limit access to or reduce parklands.

Concerns about Safety

Commenting citizens living near the Canadian Pacific Railroad Right of Way expressed concern about the safety of running either LRT or Bus Rapid Transit near their properties. Specifically they questioned the ability of Metro Transit to assure that children and pets would not be put in danger by frequent trains or busses. One commenting citizen expressed concern about potential derailments close to his home.

Concerns about Noise

Commenting citizens said that they fear that increased transit either in the form of LRT or increase bus operations, would increase noise in the neighborhood.

Support for Specific Alternatives

Each of the alternatives studied had advocates and detractors among the commenting citizens. Those who supported the build alternatives (LRT and Bus Rapid Transit) generally said they support them because they believe a fixed guideway system will do a better job of generating economic development, of reducing travel times throughout the system and of preventing some of the future congestion in the neighborhoods. Those who spoke against the build alternatives object to the costs per additional rider, the perceived disruption to residents and businesses, and to the notion that their neighborhood would be used only as a way to get between downtown and the Airport/Mall of America complex. There was also a great deal of comment about the perceived lack of need or demand for increased transit capacity in the corridor. Finally, several commenting citizens expressed concern that a fixed guideway system would increase traffic congestion in the corridor.

Nobody spoke specifically against Transportation Systems Management or no-build. Those who spoke in favor of no build or Transportation Systems Management cited a perceived lack of demand for increased transit capacity in the corridor, the perceived underutilization of the current bus system and the perceived comparative lack of disruption to the neighborhoods.

Suggested alternatives not included in the study

Acknowledging a need for some transit investment in the corridor, several of the commenting citizens offered alternatives that were not part of the Riverview Corridor MIS. They were:

- Express bus service between the East Side and the Airport/ Mall of America Complex along Shepard Road.
- Reversible traffic lanes on West 7th Street
- Construction of a vintage trolley system along West 7th Street
- Construction of a monorail
- Construction of a system using Personal Rapid Transit technology
- Construction of a subway system
- Redirecting any transit corridor up Smith Avenue and along Interstate 494
- Funding of a Jitney bus system along Shepard Road
- Construction of a busway along Interstate 35E
- Improving traffic flow by prohibiting semi-trailer trucks on West 7th Street
- Development of a water taxi or hovercraft system on the Mississippi River

Concern that a decision is being driven by state busway appropriation

Several citizens said that they believe that a busway is only being considered because of an appropriation for a busway from the Minnesota legislature. Some speakers said that the RCRRA must not let its decision be influenced simply by the availability of significant funds for a specific project. Some speakers said that, if RCRRA is to build a transitway using that money, it should consider different routes or assure that a transitway going through the Riverview Corridor is sensitive to the needs of the neighborhood.

Expressed problems with the Riverview Corridor Major Investment Study Process

Several commenting citizens indicated their dissatisfaction with the Major Investment Study Process. Specifically, there were several requests for an extension of the public comment period. Some commenting citizens indicated that they felt there was not enough opportunity for public involvement in the study process and that they were not well enough informed about the study. Commenting citizens also asked that any decisions be delayed to allow more alternatives to be studied.

Expressed issues with the accuracy of the study

Commenting citizens who disagreed with the findings of the study indicated that they felt many parts of the study are inaccurate or incomplete. Among the portions called into question by commenting citizens were the projected population and job numbers, the cost estimates and the projected ridership figures. Some commenting citizens asked for guarantees that the projections are accurate before they can support any investment.

Please note that a number of individuals provided written commentary and spoke at one or more of the public meetings. These individuals delivered essentially the same messages each time.