



RIVERVIEW CORRIDOR

 **RAMSEY COUNTY**
Regional Railroad Authority

Open House Summary #1:

December 2014

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Table of Contents

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 1.0 | OPEN HOUSE OVERVIEW | 1 |
| 1.1 | Open House Format..... | 1 |
| 2.0 | OPEN HOUSE PROMOTION..... | 2 |
| 2.1 | Electronic Communications..... | 2 |
| 2.2 | Media Promotion..... | 2 |
| 2.3 | Flyer Distribution | 2 |
| 3.0 | ACTIVITIES TO COLLECT PARTICIPANT COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK | 3 |
| 3.1 | Corridor Maps | 3 |
| 3.2 | Comment Sheet..... | 3 |
| 3.3 | Public Feedback Boards | 3 |
| 3.4 | Dry Erase Boards..... | 3 |
| 4.0 | SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK..... | 4 |
| 4.1 | Comments from Corridor Maps | 4 |
| 4.2 | Feedback from Comment Sheets..... | 5 |
| 4.3 | Comments from Public Boards..... | 8 |
| 5.0 | SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECORDED BY STAFF | 9 |
| 6.0 | SUMMARY OF ONLINE COMMENTS OCTOBER 15 – NOVEMBER 15..... | 10 |

List of Tables

| | | |
|------------|---|---|
| Table 4-1: | Overall Open House Comment Themes | 4 |
| Table 4-2: | Transportation Modes to Open House | 5 |
| Table 4-3: | Transportation Mode Frequency: Union Depot Attendees | 5 |
| Table 4-4: | Transportation Mode Frequency: Nova Classical Academy Attendees | 5 |
| Table 4-5: | Transit Rider Routes..... | 6 |

List of Appendices

| | | |
|-------------|--|-----|
| Appendix A: | Promotional Material: Highland Villager Advertisement..... | A-1 |
| Appendix B: | Promotional Material: Community Reporter Advertisement..... | B-1 |
| Appendix C: | Map Layout Results: Union Depot – Oct. 29, 2014..... | C-1 |
| Appendix D: | Map Layout Results: Nova Classical Academy – Nov. 6, 2014..... | C-2 |
| Appendix E: | Example Comment Sheet | E-1 |
| Appendix F: | Board Comment Results | F-1 |
| Appendix G: | White Board Feedback: Union Depot – Oct. 29, 2014 | G-1 |
| Appendix H: | White Board Feedback: Nova Classical Academy – Nov. 26, 2014 | G-3 |

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1.0 OPEN HOUSE OVERVIEW

The Riverview Corridor Pre-Project Development (PPD) Study held its first round of public open houses in late October and early November 2014. Attendance and feedback received at the open houses provided a picture of the diverse corridor. The corridor is comprised of several distinct neighborhoods--each with its own set of complex issues, interests, and values. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the open house, the outreach efforts to promote the meetings, and summary of the comments and feedback received.

The purpose of these open houses was to invite the community to learn about the project and provide input on the transportation needs of the corridor to help shape the corridor vision. Comments from the open houses, along with comments from other public engagement activities, as well as existing and projected data related to corridor population, employment and transportation patterns, will be used to help form the corridor vision. The open houses were also an opportunity for all attendees, both stakeholders and community members, to directly engage with project staff and ask questions.

The open houses were held as follows:

| Date/Time | Location | Attendance* |
|----------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| October 29, 2014 4:00-6:00 PM | Union Depot 214 E. 4th St., St. Paul | 49 |
| November 6, 2014 5:30-7:30 PM | Nova Classical Academy 1455 Victoria Way, St. Paul | 52 |

*Excludes project management staff and committee members.

1.1 Open House Format

Each open house was two hours in length and included display boards about various aspects of the project and activities to solicit input and feedback from attendees. At the beginning of each meeting, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) Board Chair Rafael Ortega welcomed attendees and encouraged attendees to ask questions and stay engaged throughout the study. Various opportunities were provided to solicit written input from attendees. Staff members from RCRRA, City of Saint Paul, Metro Transit, Metropolitan Council, National Park Service and consultants were available to answer questions.

2.0 OPEN HOUSE PROMOTION

2.1 Electronic Communications

The open houses were advertised on the Riverview Corridor website (riverviewcorridor.com) and Facebook account (<https://www.facebook.com/RiverviewCorridor>). In addition to RCRRRA, other organizations including, City of Saint Paul and Metro Transit, members of the PPD Study Policy Advisory Committee (PAC), Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Public Engagement Advisory Panel (PEAP), were asked to share information about the open houses through their networks. Eleven people or organizations shared the Riverview Corridor Facebook posting about the open houses, ultimately reaching approximately 2,800 people.

2.2 Media Promotion

Advertisement space was purchased to promote the open houses in two local papers: the *Highland Villager* and *Community Reporter*. The ad in the *Highland Villager* advertised both open houses; however, due to the publication schedule, the ad in the *Community Reporter* promoted only the November 6, 2014, open house at Nova Classical Academy. The ads placed in the local papers are included in Appendices A and B.

The project team also sent a news release out on October 10, 2014, that generated media coverage in the *Pioneer Press* and *MinnPost*.

2.3 Flyer Distribution

Over 500 open house flyers were distributed to businesses in the corridor along W. 7th Street, in the Highland Park business district, and to downtown residences.

3.0 ACTIVITIES TO COLLECT PARTICIPANT COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK

The open houses included the following activities as opportunities to encourage and solicit feedback from participants:

3.1 Corridor Maps

Using aerial maps of the corridor, participants could note their needs or concerns and/or place color-coded stickers to mark where they live, work and any locations they frequently visit or wanted to highlight. The aerial maps with comments and stickers from each open house are provided in **Appendices C and D**. A summary of this feedback can be found in **Section 5.0 Summary of Comments and Feedback**.

In addition, the National Park Service provided a “walk-on” floor map of the River Valley which also showed transit lines in the area. Attendees were able to walk on the floor map and see an aerial view of the corridor.

3.2 Comment Sheet

A comment sheet (see Appendix E) was also provided, requesting responses (see Section 4.2) to the following:

- How did you get here today? (Car, bus, light rail train, bicycle, walked, etc.)
- On a typical day, what best describes how often you use these forms of transportation? (always, often, sometimes, rarely, never)
 - Motor Vehicle
 - Bicycle
 - Local Bus
 - Light rail train
 - Express bus
 - Walking
- If you are a transit rider, what route(s) do you take?
- What kind of transit improvements are needed in the Riverview Corridor?
- How can transit use in the Riverview Corridor be increased?
- Additional Comments

3.3 Public Feedback Boards

Two large boards were available for participants to provide written responses to the following questions: “Where do you like to go in the corridor and how do you get there?” and “Describe the corridor in one word.” Section 5.0, Summary of Public Boards, presents the common themes that emerged from this activity.

3.4 Dry Erase Boards

Participants were able to record their comment on a dry erase board and could take a picture holding their comment. Some participants chose not to have their photo taken with their comment. See Appendices G and H for images of this captured feedback.

4.0 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK

This section summarizes the common themes that emerged from each public engagement activity at both open house events. **Table 4-1** summarizes the overall themes heard at the public meeting by key topic area and open house location. Comments regarding specific transit modes were collected; however, there was no common theme as to the preference of mode.

Table 4-1: Overall Open House Comment Themes

| Union Depot Themes | Nova Classical Academy Themes |
|--|---|
| <p>General Corridor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete transit triangle; connect Saint Paul and the Green Line to MSP Airport and the MOA with the Blue Line. Improved transit with frequent, fast, reliable service to the airport and connection to regional system Improve connections to river; do not create another barrier to the river How will transit cross the river? <p>W. 7th Street</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need safety improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists W. 7th Street is too narrow to support rail Concern about business impacts: construction, traffic, property assessments and parking <p>Shepard Road</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less impacts to businesses and residents <p>CP Rail Spur</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep CP Rail Spur for bicyclists and pedestrians only <p>Existing Transit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Route 54 crowded in morning Offer more express buses | <p>General Corridor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete transit triangle; connect Saint Paul and the Green Line with MSP Airport and the MOA with the Blue Line. Improved transit with frequent, fast, reliable service Consider north/south connections to river Enhance the neighborhoods; do not further divide neighborhoods with transit <p>W. 7th Street</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need safety improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists Concern about business impacts: construction, traffic, property assessments and parking <p>CP Rail Spur</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep CP Rail Spur for bicyclists and pedestrians only <p>Existing Transit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep existing bus service; need more buses; need more stops <p>Ford Plant Site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions on future of site and how transit could serve the site |

4.1 Comments from Corridor Maps

Union Depot, October 29 (see **Appendix C** for details)

- Destinations and important residential, employment, and development centers identified
- Impacts/points of concern
- Connectivity inter-neighborhood, river, and regional
- Pedestrian safety concern on W. 7th Street

Nova Classical Academy, November 6 (see **Appendix D** for details)

- Destinations and important residential, employment, and development centers identified
- Connectivity to River
- Alignment suggestions
- Mode preferences
- Union Depot as transit hub

- Impact concerns
- Desire for community compatibility

4.2 Feedback from Comment Sheets

Eighteen comment sheets were submitted at the October 29 open house, and 17 comment sheets were submitted at the November 6 open house at Nova Classical Academy. Comments were provided by people who use a variety of transportation modes depending on where they live and how they choose to travel.

There were many commonalities between comment responses at both open house locations: the need for improved transit in the corridor and regional connectivity, concerns with access to the river, questions about impacts to businesses, concerns with rail modes, comments supporting bicycle and pedestrian on the CP Rail Spur and general improvements to bicycle and pedestrian safety in the corridor. More conversation about re-development locations along the corridor and how transit can support them, specifically the Ford Plant site, was highlighted at the November 6 Nova Classical Academy open house.

The following is a summary of the comment sheets received at the public meetings.

1. How did you get here today?

Table 4-2: Transportation Modes to Open House

| Mode | Union Depot | Nova Classical Academy |
|------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Motor Vehicle | 2 | 13 |
| Bus | 2 | 2 |
| Light rail train | 5 | 0 |
| Bicycle | 0 | 0 |
| Walk | 9 | 1 |

2. On a typical day, what best describes how often you use these forms of transportation?

Table 4-3: Transportation Mode Frequency: Union Depot Attendees

| | Always | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |
|------------------|--------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Motor Vehicle | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| Bicycle | 1 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 4 |
| Local bus | 4 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 1 |
| Light rail train | 2 | 5 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| Express bus | 0 | 0 | 7 | 6 | 4 |
| Walking | 10 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Table 4-4: Transportation Mode Frequency: Nova Classical Academy Attendees

| | Always | Often | Sometimes | Rarely | Never |
|------------------|--------|-------|-----------|--------|-------|
| Motor Vehicle | 3 | 8 | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| Bicycle | 2 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 1 |
| Local bus | 1 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Light rail train | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Express bus | 1 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 5 |
| Walking | 5 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 0 |

3. *If you are a transit rider, what route(s) do you take?****Table 4-5: Transit Rider Routes**

| Route Number | Respondents | |
|--------------|-------------|------------------------|
| | Union Depot | Nova Classical Academy |
| 2 | 3 | - |
| 3 | 1 | 2 |
| 4 | 1 | - |
| 6 | - | 1 |
| 7 | - | 1 |
| 9 | 1 | - |
| 16 | 1 | - |
| 21 | 2 | 2 |
| 23 | - | 1 |
| 46 | - | 2 |
| 54 | 9 | 4 |
| 62 | 1 | - |
| 63 | - | 1 |
| 64 | 2 | - |
| 68 | 1 | - |
| 70 | - | 2 |
| 74 | 3 | 5 |
| 77 | 1 | - |
| 78 | 1 | - |
| 83 | 1 | 1 |
| 84 | 5 | 5 |
| 87 | 2 | 3 |
| 94 | 4 | 2 |
| 118 | 1 | 1 |
| 134 | - | 3 |
| 265 | 1 | - |
| 445 | 1 | - |
| 515 | - | 1 |
| Green Line | 15 | 5 |
| Blue Line | - | 4 |

**Open house attendees were asked to identify specific transit routes in order to get an idea of which transit routes were frequently used by those who travel in and through the Riverview Corridor.*

4. *What kind of transit improvements are needed in the Riverview Corridor?*

Union Depot:

- Improved frequency, large capacity buses
- Better connections between: Mall of America, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, downtown Saint Paul, and the river
- Mode suggestions: streetcar, LRT, BRT
- Bike and pedestrian improvement: calmed traffic, improved bike trails

Nova Classical Academy:

- Mode suggestions: DMU [Diesel Multiple Unit], streetcar, no streetcar, BRT
- Connection: fast connection to airport, connection to the river
- Bus service: enhanced stations/boarding/electric signage, reliability, more frequent #54 service
- Improved safety for biking/pedestrians

5. *How can transit use in the Riverview Corridor be increased?*

Union Depot:

- Bus service: improved frequency, reliability, reasonable fares
- Rail options/fixed rail
- Transit education, employer incentives to use transit
- Good connections/desirable locations, park-and-ride

Nova Classical Academy:

- Mode suggestions: Light rail to complete triangle, streetcar system by the river
- Land use: keep community feel on W. 7th Street, high density development
- Education about transit
- Bus service: high frequency, faster, more stops along route 54, different style seats

6. *Additional Comments:*

Union Depot:

- Place stations so they can more easily accommodate dense development
- Great public meeting
- Let's create a mass transit system that the rest of the U.S.A. talks about!
- Better parking options

Nova Classical Academy:

- Concern of LRT on W. 7th Street cutting off neighborhoods between Shepard Rd., W. 7th Street and Highland Park areas
- LRT connecting to the airport is ideal; perfect metro triangle
- No streetcar
- More is needed to get people involved
- Bike friendly, address safety concerns
- LRT stops would be too far apart for W. 7th Street
- Lighting, landscaping improvement

4.3 Comments from Public Boards

Where do you like to go in the corridor and how do you get there?

Comments received centered around retail and grocery stores, general destinations like W. 7th Street and downtown Saint Paul, recreation and natural sites like the river, and locations for connection to other transit routes, such as the Green Line LRT and various bus routes.

Describe the corridor in one word.

Words recorded centered on themes of congestion, transportation connection, and personal connection with the corridor through words like “home”, “historic”, or “picturesque”. Big picture themes were also repeated through the use of words like “future”, “vision” and “potential”.

5.0 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECORDED BY STAFF

Questions and comments recorded by staff at both meetings:

Connectivity

- From the East Side, how can this make Saint Paul feel more connected?
- Don't want/need more transit or traffic on W. 7th Street; it will create a barrier to the river
- How will the new transit mode cross the river?
- Desire for improved bicycle connections
- Shepard Rd. is uncomfortable at night. Path has to be safe or need other options if not.
- Access from neighborhoods

CP Rail Spur

- Prefer to see a trail on the CP Rail Spur vs. public transportation
- Concern for yards facing CP Rail Spur
- Attendees don't like the idea of a train near their houses
- Utilize the railroad right-of-way for transit

General

- No one from this neighborhood will use this, except for people traveling from the airport to downtown
- Is there a mode and/or alignment that is favored?
- How does the population employment and other demographic data for the Riverview Corridor compare to Blue Line and Green Line (How well does this Corridor stack up)?
- Attendees surprised by the number of studies done over the years
- Attendees seemed positive about the potential for improved transit in the Riverview Corridor
- More people moving into downtown St. Paul, will there be reverse commute traffic for people living in downtown St. Paul who commute to Minneapolis for work?
- Will the National Park Service have concerns for the Riverview Corridor? Who has authority?
- Is it a through corridor or a destination corridor?
- Travel time is important
- BRT doesn't spur economic development (compared to rail)
- Traffic calming needed on Shepard Rd.
- Concern of tax increase on properties with the advent of an LRT – like Green Line.
- Place priority on a “one seat trip”. No transfers between modes
- Who does it serve? If their neighborhood, what are the neighbors getting from it?
- How many people within a half mile of a stop?

6.0 SUMMARY OF ONLINE COMMENTS OCTOBER 15 – NOVEMBER 15

The Riverview Corridor Pre-Project Development Study received comments from nine individuals through the website during the open house period. Those comments are shown below under general topical headings.

Need for transit investment in the corridor

- Current bus service on W. 7th Street is adequate.
- The critical missing link in the metro area transit priorities is the Riverview Corridor.
- The Riverview Corridor will be a big boost for downtown St. Paul.
- Additional transit can help revitalize W. 7th Street as the Green Line has done for University Avenue.
- Additional transit options can reduce traffic congestion and parking problems.
- There is a need for a transit connection between downtown St. Paul and the airport.

Transit modes

- The 54 bus service meets all of the transit needs.
- The 54 bus needs to be more frequent and needs better off peak scheduling.
- Light Rail Transit will best meet the needs of the community.

Location for the transit investment

- Light Rail Transit on W. 7th Street will be too disruptive to local businesses.
- There should be a transportation stop at Upper Landing. The Green Line is too far to walk.
- If Light Rail Transit is the option, it should use the rail corridor through the Ford redevelopment site and cross the river at the Ford Bridge.
- The CP Rail Spur is the best location for Light Rail Transit or Bus Rapid Transit.
- Do not put Light Rail Transit down Shepard Road, a river parkway for the Great River Passage.