

Gateway Corridor Health Impact Assessment An Opportunity for Ramsey County Community Engagement

Introduction to the Gateway Corridor

The Gateway Corridor is a planned approximately 12-mile dedicated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line located in Ramsey and Washington Counties in Minnesota. The corridor runs generally parallel to Interstate 94 (I-94), connecting downtown Saint Paul with its East Side neighborhoods and the suburbs of Maplewood, Landfall, Oakdale, Lake Elmo, and Woodbury. The transitway will connect the eastern parts of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area to the broader regional transit system through Union Depot multimodal transportation hub in downtown Saint Paul.

Health Impact Assessment

Health impact assessments (HIA) evaluate the potential health effects of a plan, project or policy before it is built or implemented. HIAs can be conducted for a wide range of projects; a major benefit of the HIA process is that it brings public health issues to the attention of decision-makers in areas that fall outside of traditional public health arenas, such as transportation, infrastructure, or land use. The Gateway Corridor HIA focuses on land use around each of the proposed Gateway stations. The HIA will use input from targeted community engagement to decide on several “health indicators” that are important to the corridor and will help to inform station area planning efforts, local land use controls, and comprehensive plan updates.

Engagement of the Saint Paul-Ramsey County Community Health Services Advisory Committee

As part of the HIA, the Washington County staff leading the project would like to bring in additional representation that includes local public health stakeholders to help inform each step of the process. Health-oriented community groups and health care agencies may be engaged through the Saint Paul-Ramsey County Community Health Services Advisory Committee (CHSAC), the SHIP Community Leadership Team (CLT) and Active Living Ramsey Communities. The HIA team will also be engaging Living Healthy in Washington County (LHWC), the Community Leadership Team for Washington County.

Importance of Ramsey County’s Involvement

The Ramsey County Community Health Improvement Planning (CHIP) process identified ‘social determinants of health’ as the number one priority to improve the health of the county, followed by nutrition, access to health services, mental health, and violence prevention. HIAs provide a framework to help implement these health improvement goals to enhance public health. For the Gateway Corridor HIA, we would like Ramsey County’s input in advancing ongoing public health planning to develop a tool kit for implementing land use decisions that embrace positive health outcomes. With such input, the tool kit can become a valuable resource for Ramsey County in ongoing public health planning around transportation, land use, and the CHIP priorities.

Anticipated Engagement

The HIA process is interactive, flexible, and iterative. Timelines and requests of the stakeholders may change throughout the process. The tentative information below outlines the most that the HIA Management Team would anticipate asking of the Saint Paul-Ramsey County CHSAC throughout the HIA process.

Timeline

Scoping Phase

January-March 2015

Purpose: Gather input on health indicators to inform scoping and assessment processes

Role for CHSAC:

- Learn about health impact assessment and the Gateway Corridor
- Provide input on potential health indicators
- Identify any additional community groups or stakeholders the project should engage

Optional One-day training:

March 2015

Purpose: Gather input and prioritize health indicators for assessment process

Role for CHSAC:

- Learn more about the value and purpose of HIA
- Demonstrate connections between land use and community health issues
- Discuss indicators and research questions for Gateway Corridor HIA
- Outline next steps

Assessment Phase

April 2015

Purpose: Identify relevant data and resources for health indicator assessment

Role for CHSAC:

- Receive an update on the Scoping Phase
- Comment on how this information could be useful for ongoing public health planning efforts in Ramsey County

Recommendations Phase

May-June 2015

Purpose: Review and gather comments on the recommendations

Role for CHSAC:

- Receive an update on the Assessment Phase
- Provide input on draft recommendations

Reporting Phase

August-September 2015

Purpose: Present HIA Recommendations

Role for CHSAC:

- Review and comment on draft materials