

**REQUEST FOR ACTION
RAMSEY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Requesting Department: Economic Growth and Community Investment Service Team B2018-70

Committee: Board of Commissioners

Meeting Date: 2/6/2018

SUBJECT: Riverview Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative - Set Public Hearing Date

REQUESTED ACTION

Set the public hearing date of February 20, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. or as soon as possible, in the Council Chambers, 3rd floor of the Ramsey County Court House, 15 West Kellogg Boulevard, St. Paul, MN, on the selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Riverview Corridor.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Riverview Corridor is an 11.7-mile travel corridor between downtown Saint Paul and the Mall of America, including the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport, Bloomington South Loop, Historic Fort Snelling and Saint Paul neighborhoods along W. 7th Street.

The purpose of the Riverview Corridor Project is to provide transit service that satisfies the long-term regional mobility and accessibility needs for businesses and the traveling public, to improve access to opportunities for transit-reliant populations in the study area and to be a catalyst for redevelopment and reinvestment within the study area. Currently, the only end-to-end transit service in the Riverview Corridor is the Route 54 bus. The Pre-Project Development Study was a joint local and regional planning effort led by the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA).

After thorough technical analysis of many potential route segments and transit modes that were vetted through a Technical Advisory Committee, and with extensive public engagement through the Pre-Project Development Study, the Riverview Corridor Policy Advisory Committee selected Alternative 4b as the Locally Preferred Alternative. Alternative 4b best meets the project's purpose and need and would likely qualify for Federal Transit Administration New Starts funding. The Locally Preferred Alternative includes the definition of the mode, conceptual alignment and general station locations which can be refined through further environmental and engineering efforts.

The Riverview Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative 4b is defined as modern streetcar within a dedicated and shared-use guideway for approximately 11.7 miles connecting Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul, W. 7th Street and Highland Park neighborhoods in Saint Paul, the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport and the Mall of America in Bloomington generally along Green Line, 5th and 6th Streets, W. 7th Street, Minnesota Trunk Highway 5, crossing under Fort Snelling, crossing over Minnesota Trunk Highway 55 and connecting to Blue Line at the Fort Snelling station.

The next phase of the project will include environmental analysis under the Federal and State environmental review processes to avoid, minimize, and mitigate potential impacts while maximizing mobility, accessibility and surrounding economic development opportunities. The public will continue to be engaged throughout the environmental review process and subsequent design, engineering and construction phases to ensure that the project is reflective of the needs of the diverse communities within the Riverview Corridor.

FISCAL IMPACT

None. Funding for the next phase of work, preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, is available from the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority budget and Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority fund balance.

COUNTY MANAGER COMMENTS

For the Riverview Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative to be amended into the Metropolitan Council's 2040 Transportation Policy Plan, the Ramsey County Board is required to hold a public hearing on the Locally Preferred Alternative and pass a resolution of support for the Locally Preferred Alternative. Inclusion in the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan is required for the project to be eligible for federal funding.

PREVIOUS ACTION

None.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Resolution
2. Notice of Public Hearing
3. Figure 1 Riverview Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative
4. Proposed Schedule of Events

Draft Resolution

WHEREAS, The Riverview Corridor is a transitway corridor in the cities of Saint Paul and Bloomington Minnesota, serving urban and suburban communities; and

WHEREAS, A pre-project development study has been completed to analyze bus and rail alternatives in the Riverview Corridor study area connecting the Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul, Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport, the Mall of America in Bloomington and the neighborhoods in-between; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of the Riverview Corridor Pre-Project Development Study is to evaluate and recommend transit service that enhances mobility and access to opportunities for residents, businesses and the region and to cultivate economic prosperity; and

WHEREAS, The pre-project development study was a joint local and regional planning effort conducted by Riverview Corridor Policy Advisory Committee and led by the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority in collaboration with local and regional partners; and

WHEREAS, The study included thorough technical analysis of alternatives including multiple bus and rail modes and multiple route alignments providing service within the study area; and

WHEREAS, The technical analysis identified two separate travel markets in the Riverview Corridor study area; and

WHEREAS, One market, Highway 5, consists of the area along W. 7th Street to downtown Saint Paul, the neighborhoods in-between, Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport, and the Mall of America; and

WHEREAS, The other market, the Ford Corridor, consists of the area between the Riverview Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative and the Blue Line in Minneapolis encompassing the Ford Site (see attached map); and

WHEREAS, The technical analysis and public engagement have led to the identification of a locally preferred alternative for the corridor that includes the definition of the mode, conceptual alignment and general station locations which can be refined through further environmental and engineering efforts; and

WHEREAS, Alternative 4b, serving the Highway 5 market, best meets the project's purpose and need and would likely qualify for Federal Transit Administration Capital Investment Grant Program funding; and

WHEREAS, Alternative 4b is defined as modern streetcar within a dedicated and shared-use guideway for approximately 11.7 miles connecting Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul, the downtown, W. 7th Street and Highland Park neighborhoods in Saint Paul, the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport and the Mall of America in Bloomington generally along Green Line, 5th and 6th Streets, W. 7th Street, Minnesota Trunk Highway 5, crossing under Fort Snelling, crossing over Minnesota Trunk Highway 55 and connecting to Blue Line (see attached figure); and

51 WHEREAS, The next phase of the Riverview project will include environmental analysis
52 under the federal and state environmental review processes to discuss a set of reasonable
53 alternatives and to determine if the locally preferred alternative can also be the environmentally
54 preferred alternative through avoidance, minimization and mitigation of potential impacts while
55 maximizing mobility, accessibility and surrounding economic development opportunities; and
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57 WHEREAS, Extensive public engagement activities were completed throughout the pre-
58 project development study resulting in engaging over 4,500 people to gather public input on the
59 multiple mode and route alternatives; and
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61 WHEREAS, Comments submitted by agencies, adjacent communities, the business
62 sector and the public during the locally preferred alternative comment period and throughout the
63 duration of the pre-project development study will be addressed accordingly in the
64 environmental analysis phase of the project; and
65

66 WHEREAS, The public will continue to be engaged throughout the environmental review
67 process and subsequent design, engineering and construction phases to ensure that the project
68 is reflective of the needs of the diverse communities within the Riverview Corridor; and
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70 WHEREAS, By selecting Alternative 4b as the Riverview Corridor Locally Preferred
71 Alternative, the Ramsey County Board also recognizes the need to work collaboratively with the
72 City of Saint Paul and Metro Transit, and to work in consultation with Hennepin County Regional
73 Railroad Authority and the City of Minneapolis, to develop and deliver separate transit, livability
74 and economic development investments to the Ford Corridor as soon as possible; and
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76 WHEREAS, The adoption of the Locally Preferred Alternative into the Metropolitan
77 Council's 2040 Transportation Policy plan is a necessary step toward eligibility for federal
78 funding; and
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80 WHEREAS, The process to adopt the Locally Preferred Alternative into the 2040
81 Transportation Policy Plan requires the Ramsey County Board to hold a public hearing to collect
82 comments on the proposed Locally Preferred Alternative and to pass a resolution of support for
83 the Locally Preferred Alternative; and
84

85 WHEREAS, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners must establish a date and
86 time for the public hearing; Now, Therefore Be It
87

88 RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners sets the public hearing date
89 of February 20, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. or as soon as possible, in the Council Chambers, 3rd floor of
90 the Ramsey County Court House, 15 West Kellogg Boulevard, St. Paul, MN, on the selection of
91 the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Riverview Corridor.
92

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners will hold a Public Hearing at 9:00 a.m., or as soon thereafter as possible, on Tuesday, February 20, 2018, in the Council Chambers, third floor Court House, 15 West Kellogg Boulevard, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 55102. This Public Hearing will be conducted in order to accept comments on the proposed support for the Riverview Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative.

The Locally Preferred Alternative includes the definition of the mode, conceptual alignment and general station locations which can be refined through further environmental and engineering efforts. The Locally Preferred Alternative is defined as modern streetcar within a dedicated and shared-use guideway for approximately 11.7 miles connecting Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul, the downtown, W. 7th and Highland Park neighborhoods in Saint Paul, the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport and the Mall of America in Bloomington generally along Green Line, 5th and 6th Streets, W. 7th Street, Minnesota Trunk Highway 5, crossing under Fort Snelling, crossing over Minnesota Trunk Highway 55 and connecting to Blue Line (see attached Figure 1).

Additional information about the Riverview Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative can be found at <http://riverviewcorridor.com/>.

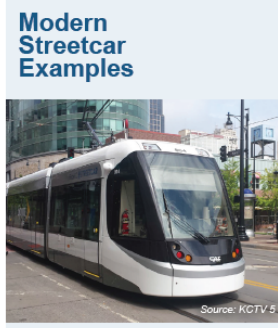
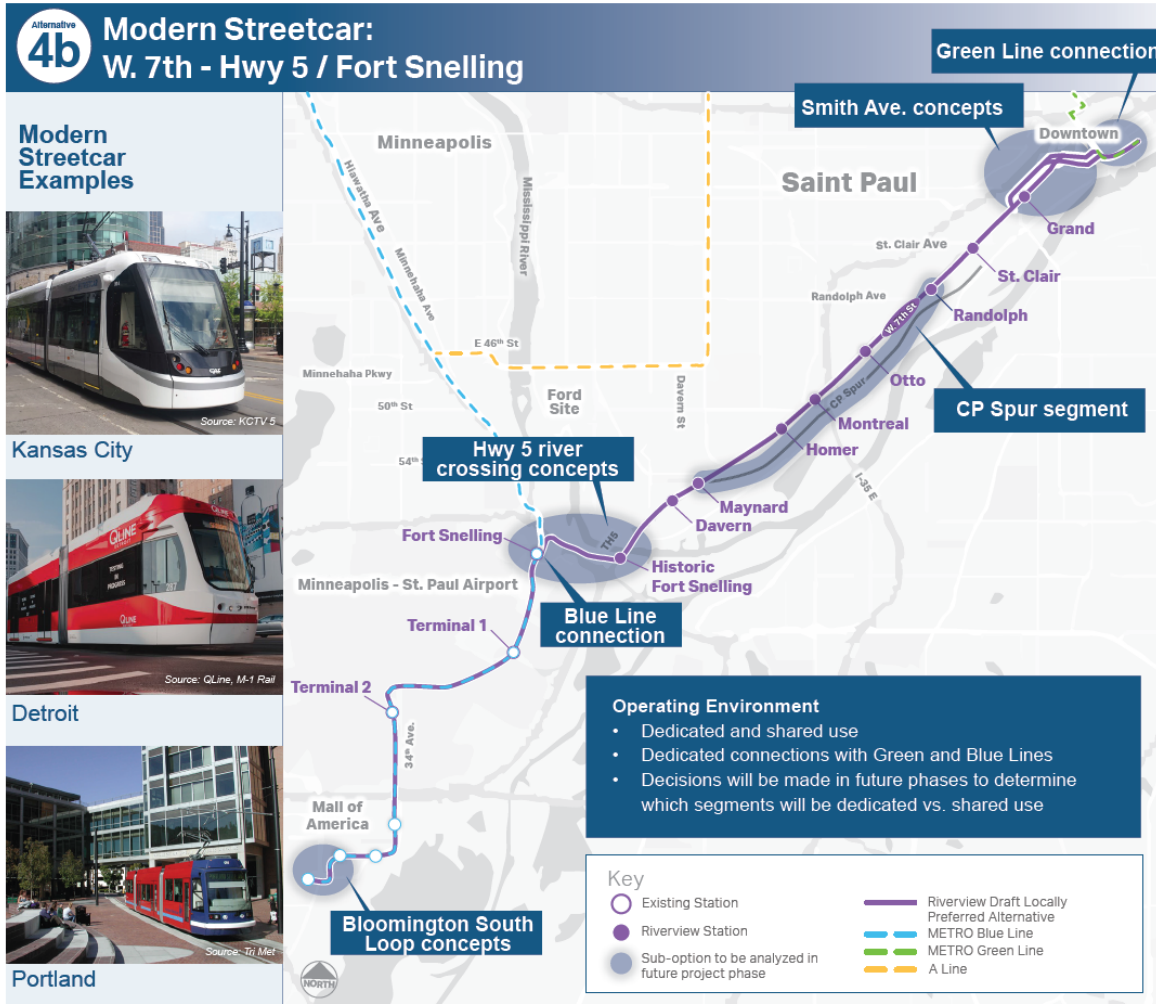
Any person wishing to express an opinion on the matters to be considered at the public hearing will be heard orally or in writing. Persons who intend to testify are requested to contact (651) 266-8014 or janet.guthrie@co.ramsey.mn.us prior to Tuesday, February 20, 2018.

Figure 1

Riverview Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative



RIVERVIEW CORRIDOR Draft locally preferred alternative



PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF EVENTS
SUPPORT FOR RIVERVIEW CORRIDOR LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Date

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|-------------|--|
| February 6 | Public Hearing Date Set |
| February 7 | Publication of County Notice in Official Newspaper – Ramsey County Review |
| February 20 | Hold the Public Hearing |
| February 27 | Ramsey County Board Action on Resolution of Support for Riverview Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative |