

# MEETING SUMMARY

## POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #1

**Date:** November 5, 2020

**Time:** 9:30-11:00 a.m.

**Location:** Virtual

## ATTENDEES

### Committee Members

Name	Organization	Present
Mike Barnes	Minnesota Department of Transportation	X
Tyler Blackmon	Community representative	X
Kris Fredson	Metropolitan Council	X
Debbie Goettel	Hennepin County	X
Bill Huepenbecker	Saint Paul RiverCentre	X
Pat Mancini	Business representative	X
Terry Mattson	Visit Saint Paul	X
Steffanie Musich	Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board	X
Rebecca Noecker	Saint Paul City Council	X
Rafael Ortega, Chair	Ramsey County Commissioner	X
Jill Ostrem	United Hospital	X
Bridget Rief	Metropolitan Airport Commission	X
Seth Taylor	Local 563	X
Chris Tolbert	Saint Paul City Council	X
Shannon Watson	Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce	X
Pat Mancini	Business representative	X

### Agency and Project Staff

- Frank Alarcon, Ramsey County.
- Ken Iosso, Ramsey County.
- Brian Isaacson, Ramsey County.
- Jennifer Jordan, Ramsey County.
- Michael Rogers, Ramsey County.
- Lyssa Washington, 4RM+ULA.
- Jessica Laabs, Kimley-Horn.
- Mona Elabbady, SRF Consulting.
- Alicia Valenti, SRF Consulting.

## Members of the Public<sup>1</sup>

- Richard Adair.
- Scott Berger.
- Alex Burns.
- Steph Chappell.
- John Flipse.
- Brennan Furness.
- Kathryn Hansen.
- John Hoeschler.
- Mathews Hollinshead.
- Aaron Johnson.
- Craig Johnson.
- David Kelliher.
- Craig Lamothe.
- Mike Luke.
- Jack Martinson.
- Tom Matoff.
- Jane McClure.
- Joe McKinley.
- Gary Meyer.
- Lisa Moe.
- Adam Muilenburg.
- Heather Peterson.
- Kent Petterson.
- John Pickerel.
- Tanya Refshauge.
- Michael Ringrose.
- Joseph Scala.
- Heidi Schallberg.
- James Schoettler.
- Jay Severance.
- Gregory Struve.
- G. T.
- Scott Thompson.
- Adam Yust.
- Jim (no last name provided).

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY

### 1. Virtual Meeting Procedures

Commissioner Rafael Ortega, committee chair, called the meeting to order and Jessica Laabs provided an overview of virtual meeting procedures.

### 2. Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Ortega welcomed the Policy Advisory Committee and members of the public, and Mike Rogers led introductions.

### 3. Approval of Meeting Calendar

Commissioner Ortega presented the meeting calendar for approval. There were not questions and the meeting calendar was approved.

### 4. Policy Advisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities

Mike Rogers described the project committee structure and provided an overview of the decision-making process as well as the Policy Advisory Committee charter.

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<sup>1</sup> This list includes members of the public who signed in.

## **5. Riverview Locally Preferred Alternative Overview**

Jennifer Jordan provided an overview of ongoing transit planning projects in Ramsey County. Jennifer described the transportation needs in the Riverview Corridor and the locally preferred alternative. Jennifer explained the implementation plan for the project, the tasks that will be completed during the engineering and pre-environmental phase, and the key technical issues to be addressed. Jennifer detailed the plan for coordinating with Native American tribes throughout the environmental and pre-environmental phase. Jennifer summarized previous work that has been completed to plan for the Riverview Corridor transit investment.

## **6. Engineering and Pre-Environmental Phase Work Scope**

Jennifer described the contract structure for the engineering and pre-environmental phase and the responsibilities of each project team.

Jessica Laabs described the timeline, the key tasks for refining the locally preferred alternative and the Issue Resolution Team structure. Jessica outlined the work that will be completed in the engineering and pre-environmental phase. Jessica provided an overview of key tasks for the cultural resources evaluation.

Frank Alarcon described the purpose of the station area planning work and the four key tasks that will be completed as part of this work.

Lyssa Washington provided an overview of the key tasks that will be completed for the communications and community engagement portion of the Riverview Corridor project. Councilmember Noecker said that during the last phase of the project, the way that public input was presented to the Policy Advisory Committee was summarized in such a way that it made it difficult for Policy Advisory Committee members to understand how prevalent a comment was in the community. This was due to summaries not providing enough additional information on the number of comments received. She would like to see input summarized differently so that Policy Advisory Committee members can better understand the number of comments received as well as how many comments were being received on any specific issue.

Mike Rogers described the key tasks to be completed by the project management consultant team.

## **7. Engineering and Pre-Environmental Phase Schedule**

Mona Elabbady provided an overview of the overall project schedule and the tasks that the consultant teams are currently working on, including a cultural education training, development of a coordinated master schedule and creation of a consultant coordination plan, data gathering and the formation of Issue Resolution Teams.

## 8. Committee Membership Applications

Frank shared that an upcoming task is to form two community committees to provide input for the development of the Riverview Corridor: the Community Advisory Committee and the Station Area Planning Task Force. Frank said that Ramsey County will release the application the week of November 9 and described the purpose and structure of each of the two committees. Kris Fredson asked how these opportunities would be advertised. Frank said Ramsey County would announce and promote the committees through the Riverview e-newsletter, on the project website and on social media. Frank added that the communications and community engagement consultant would also assist with promoting the opportunity in order to achieve a diverse applicant pool for both committees.

## 9. Public Comment (see Attachment for additional information)

### Alex Burns – Lyndale Avenue, Minneapolis.

Alex chairs the Land Use and Transportation team for the Sierra Club North Star chapter. The Sierra Club has been monitoring Riverview due to expected benefits for environmental justice and climate action. The Sierra Club is supportive of the project as an important component of the mass transit system. Although the distinction between modern streetcar and light rail may not be critical, they believe the corridor deserves to be treated as light rail and regardless of mode, dedicated transitway throughout corridor is crucial.

### Mathews Hollinshead – Saint Paul resident.

Mathews affirmed the importance of dedicated right-of-way. It is important for the project to appeal to choice riders with efficiency and coverage. He is concerned that without dedicated right-of-way, the project would encounter bottlenecks and alienate choice riders. He hopes service to the Ford site can be integrated into the project, potentially along the rail spur.

Mathews later added that he was a member of the city/county transit task force in 1999 that was the origin of the concept of the “transit triangle.” He thought of the triangle as having a uniform mode and branding so people would understand all three routes were the same type of transit. He thinks a scaled-up regional design is needed for the Riverview Project rather than something that is more of a downtown circulator or tourist attraction like those in Kansas City and Milwaukee. He shared that he is a member of Citizen Advocates for Regional Transit and the Metropolitan Council’s Transportation Advisory Board.

### Greg Struve – Hartford Avenue, Saint Paul.

Greg is a registered civil engineer and an associate with Citizen Advocates for Regional Transit. Greg noted the December 2017 Policy Advisory Committee decision to include the Ford site as a checkpoint in the project’s approval. Greg also highlighted its resolution to reconvene in December 2020 to determine whether the project would become a reality by 2025 and begin to develop alternative plans if necessary. He indicated global changes over the past year have greatly affected public transit and that the criteria used to select the locally preferred alternative

in 2017 is now outdated. He suggested the current technical and financial outlook should be considered to determine whether the current locally preferred alternative is likely to become a reality by 2025.

### **Aaron Johnson – Montreal Avenue/West 7<sup>th</sup> Street area, Saint Paul.**

Aaron expressed his support for project overall. He echoed the idea that modern streetcar is too small-scale for the corridor and that light rail would be more appropriate. He believes public transit should be given priority for drivers and advocates greater right-of-way for transit on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **James Schoettler – Saint Paul resident.**

James asked if project leaders would be willing to consider genuine alternatives to the locally preferred alternative, including alternatives previously considered. He also asked about consideration of public input. He said the Riverview Corridor is one of the three most important rail transit arteries in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and this project must be a regional-scale rail transit project. If it is not, it will fail the city, county and east metro. He believes light rail vehicles must be used to stop at the shared METRO Blue Line and Green Line stations and light rail vehicles would have to operate in traffic on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **Jay Severance**

Jay Severance appreciated the overview of the locally preferred alternative and is encouraged by the process that will be used to address issues and alternatives. He is concerned about moving forward with the current locally preferred alternative due to several issues. Jay is a member of Citizen Advocates for Regional Transit and emphasized the group's regional focus. He believes the Riverview Corridor is the preeminent leg of the "transit triangle" and he hopes to have opportunities to share opinions on the project and its design. He suggested visiting the Citizen Advocates for Regional Transit website.

### **Councilmember Rebecca Noecker**

Councilmember Noecker said that James raised a good question about incorporating public input into the project decision and said it would be beneficial to clarify the extent to which previous decisions may be reconsidered. Mike Rogers answered that the current Engineering and Pre-Environmental phase is focused on the locally preferred alternative that was adopted by cities, counties and the Metropolitan Airport Commission in 2017. Mike highlighted that the locally preferred alternative included a lot of space for refinement and adjustments based on the environmental and engineering data gathering that will occur in this phase of work. Mike said that as project staff examine the routing for downtown Saint Paul, the airport and Fort Snelling, certain aspects of the project could be reassessed, and that the current locally preferred alternative will be advanced as far as possible. Additionally, the analysis in this phase would build upon work completed in the Pre-Project Development Study, not revisit its analysis.

## **Tyler Blackmon**

Tyler Blackmon reiterated that there is desire for as much dedicated right-of-way as possible and said that residents of the West 7<sup>th</sup> and Highland Park neighborhoods deserve the high-quality transit found in other communities throughout the Twin Cities. He added there is a clear need for improved transit in the corridor in the short term as well and that he hopes this can be achieved while the Riverview Corridor plans are developed.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

- None identified.

## **NEXT MEETING**

February 4, 2021, 9:30-11:00 a.m. (virtual)

# **Attachment to Meeting Summary – Comment Follow-Up Riverview Policy Advisory Committee Meeting #1**

**November 20, 2020**

Several Policy Advisory Committee member comments were received following the public comment portion of the Policy Advisory Committee meeting on November 5, 2020. While these public comments are captured in the meeting summary, additional follow-up on the Policy Advisory Committee member comments is provided below.

In summary, the Engineering and Pre-Environmental Phase is committed to focusing its initial analysis on modern streetcar as the Locally Preferred Alternative and determining its ability to meet the revised Purpose and Need. Once we have this information, we will similarly develop and analyze the Best Bus Alternative prior to identifying interim improvements to the existing system to alleviate deficits in service along the Route 54.

Additional details are provided below.

## 2017 Policy Advisory Committee Resolution

In December 2017 the Riverview Policy Advisory Committee passed three resolutions related to the Riverview Project. One of the resolutions resolves that “In December 2020, the Policy Advisory Committee will reconvene to reevaluate the technical and financial outlook for the Riverview Corridor Project, to determine whether the chosen LPA is likely to become a reality by 2025 and make alternate plans if necessary”.

The Policy Advisory Committee will not reconvene in December 2020 to make a decision on the project, as the technical and financial analysis need to inform this decision is just now beginning. At the time that this resolution was passed it was assumed that the project’s engineering and environmental analysis would be nearly complete by December 2020, providing the information necessary to make an informed decision. Unfortunately, this work was delayed due to changes in how the federal environmental process would be applied to the Riverview Corridor (Executive Order #13807). Additionally, during the delay Ramsey County and its partners focused on engaging the Native American Tribes and other stakeholders. The information needed to allow the Policy Advisory Committee to make an informed decision on the technical and financial outlook of the LPA will be completed as part of the three-year Engineering and Pre-Environmental Phase which is now underway.

## Streetcar Alternative

The Engineering and Pre-Environmental Phase will build upon the Pre-Project Development Study that resulted in the selection of a modern streetcar connecting neighborhoods, anchor destinations and employers in downtown Saint Paul, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, Mall of America as the corridor’s Locally Preferred Alternative.

It will revisit and revise the Purpose and Need to account for any changes since the Pre-Project Development Study. It will advance engineering and environmental analysis to identify opportunities, constraints, mitigation and fatal flaws associated with the Locally Preferred Alternative’s route and vehicle. This analysis may result in changes to the route, particularly in those areas highlighted on the Locally Preferred Alternative map (e.g. Downtown, Seven Corners, W. 7<sup>th</sup>/CP Spur, River Crossing/Ft. Snelling, Mall of America). It may also necessitate changes to the vehicle itself which is why there will be

## **DRAFT Attachment to Meeting Summary – Comment Follow-Up Riverview Policy Advisory Committee Meeting #1**

analysis of a Best Bus alternative. This alternative will be advanced if Modern Streetcar is found to have a fatal flaw or be unable to meet the Purpose and Need.

The Engineering and Pre-Environmental Analysis will not be a reevaluation of the universe of alternatives that was done as part of the Pre-Project Development Study.

### **Better Bus Service**

Route 54 is the Hi-frequency route that currently serves the Riverview Corridor. It provides 10-15 frequency between 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. out of a larger span of service from 4 a.m. to 1 a.m. The route also benefits from limited stops allowing for a competitive travel time. While this route functions well today there is a desire to improve service in the interim prior to the implementation of Modern Streetcar. The Engineering and Pre-Environmental Phase will explore multiple ways to improve this service including operating (frequency and span of service) to capital (buses, stations, offboard fare collection, etc). This analysis can then be used to identify improvements for route 54 prior to the implementation of Modern Streetcar.