

MEETING SUMMARY

POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #2

Date: February 4, 2021

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
Tim Busse	City of Bloomington	X
Kris Fredson	Metropolitan Council	X
Debbie Goettel (policy aide Mike Ohama attended in her place)	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
Jamie Tincher (alternate Russ Stark)	City of Saint Paul	X
Chris Tolbert (policy aide Caitlin Grady attended in his place)	Saint Paul City Council	X
Shannon Watson	Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce	X

Agency and Project Staff

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

Members of the Public¹

- Richard Adair.
- Nathan Bakken.
- Melissa Barnes, MnDOT.
- Daniel Bruggeman.
- Joe C.
- Tiana Carretta.
- Jason DeBoer-Moran.
- David Elvin, MnDOT.
- Joe Gladke, Hennepin County.
- Tom Goodrum, Loucks.
- Elizabeth Harriman, WSP.
- Chuck Hubbard, Canadian Pacific Railway.
- Brian Isaacson.
- Jerome Johnson.
- William Jones.
- Michelle Leonard, 494 Corridor Commission.
- Alex Lindsay.
- Kathleen Lonergan, Allina Health.
- Spencer Ludtke.
- Sara Maaske, Metropolitan Council.
- Scott Mareck, Ramsey County.
- Jane McClure.
- G. Meyer.
- Lisa Moe.
- Pat Mosites, Metropolitan Airport Commission.
- Shona Mosites, Metropolitan Airport Commission.
- Emily Northey, Fort Road Federation.
- Kent Petterson.
- Sara Pflaum, MnDOT.
- John Pickerel.
- Anna Potter.
- Scott Reed, HDR, Inc.
- Michael Ringrose LTK.
- Collin Rust.
- Joseph Scala.
- Heidi Schallberg, Metropolitan Council.
- Amy Schmidt, Ramsey County.
- James Schoettler.
- Jay Severance.
- Laurie Siever.
- Greg Struve.
- Adam Yust.
- John Zwier.

¹ This list includes members of the public who signed in.

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. Engineering and Pre-Environmental Updates

Jessica provided an overview of upcoming project work, including confirmation of the purpose and need as well as evaluation criteria.

Purpose and Need Revisions and Process

Jessica described the importance of the purpose and need and reviewed the purpose statement developed in the Pre-Project Development Study. Russ Stark asked if mobility had a specific definition for use in the context of the purpose statement, noting that mobility sometimes refers to the free flow of traffic. Jessica confirmed that mobility is about a freedom of choice in how to move through the corridor, though it is not focused only on traffic. Shannon Watson suggested including visitors as well as residents, businesses and region in the purpose statement. Tim Busse noted that this project will link the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, Mall of America and downtown Saint Paul, and suggested that hospitality industry workers be included in the purpose statement as well as travelers to acknowledge that the project will be beneficial for both residents and visitors. Councilmember Noecker expressed agreement with this suggestion. Shannon added that regional connectivity is an important part of the purpose statement, as this project will provide transit service in a critical corridor, adding an important link for transit users traveling to and from Maplewood and Woodbury. Bill Huepenbecker also expressed support for adding visitors to the purpose statement. Terry Mattson suggested providing a list of top destinations served by the project, such as the Xcel Energy Center and Mall of America, if appropriate. Terry added that this infrastructure would serve an increase in visitors and create positive economic development opportunities, making it a necessity for the community.

Jessica reviewed the four needs identified in the Pre-Project Development Study and proposed updates to those needs. The Pre-Project Development Study noted constrained access within the corridor and to regional transportation system as a need, which was more relevant when trying to determine an alignment and mode. The proposed changes to the need statements address future travel patterns and demand for high-amenity service serving everyday needs such as appointments and grocery shopping. The proposed changes also address growing and changing travel demand need.

Russ stated that the proposed changes meet the needs of people who currently rely on transit, but that the need statement should be clearer about meeting future need and serving people

who want to live near transit. Jessica said that this would be a good item to incorporate, as the need statement is based on travel demand and other data, and that there is plenty of data that shows transit investments support development. Councilmember Noecker noted that people may be more inclined to use the project because it is rail-based and suggested incorporating a note about this pattern into the statement if possible. Tim shared appreciation for considering changes in population and employment and said it would be important to monitor changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, such as decreases in office demand. Jessica said that these changes are addressed to some extent under future travel need. Jessica added that project staff are working on the best way to capture such changes and that they will continue evaluating relevant data throughout the engineering and environmental processes. Jessica clarified that the function of a purpose and need statement is to provide a framework for decision-making. Jessica said that project goals and objectives will also be used as a reference point throughout the project.

Jessica said that project staff are working closely with tribal nations to determine how to recognize unique resources in corridor, and that project staff have made some changes to reflect commitment to minimizing impacts to natural and cultural resources. Jessica noted that Bdote is significant area for tribal partners and that project staff are working to honor it in the project. Councilmember Noecker said that minimizing impacts to businesses and cultural and natural resources seems like a commitment of the project work rather than a goal of the project. Councilmember Noecker noted that project opponents might claim that if the goal is to minimize business impacts, then the project should not be completed. Russ said that the project goals and objectives overall look solid, though use of the word “amenity” is a concern. Russ stated that on past projects, funding partners have avoided paying for features called amenities because they were not deemed necessary, and such features should be prioritized to create a high-quality experience for users.

Jessica said that project staff would work to address the comments received, including use of the word “amenity”, incorporation of regional connectivity into the purpose and need statement, reconsideration of how objectives and guiding principles may differ. Jessica shared that a next step for the project will be to evaluate more data and invited the Policy Advisory Committee members to share any data that may be relevant to the project. In February and March, project staff will provide a full purpose and need statement for the Technical Advisory Committee and Project Management Team to review. There will also be public comment on the needs framework. The Policy Advisory Committee will be asked at the April 1 meeting to approve the purpose and need for release to the Federal Transit Administration for review.

Approach to Project Issue Resolution Teams

Mona Elabbady explained the approach to issue resolution teams, which will be comprised by technical staff from relevant agencies and areas to help work through complex technical issues on the project. Mona said that the goal of this phase is to refine the locally preferred alternative. Issue resolution teams will meet monthly or biweekly as needed, and different team members will attend each meeting as is appropriate. Mona noted that private entities may be invited as needed. Issue resolution teams will determine benefits and impacts and refine costs. Mona described examples of issues that the issue resolution teams will address, such as connecting

to Union Depot and the METRO Green and Blue Lines, and crossing the Mississippi River. Mona shared the agencies and organizations that will participate in each issue resolution team. Mona provided an overview of first agenda for each team and the next steps for this effort.

Bridget asked who would participate in the issue resolution teams and what the role of the Policy Advisory Committee would be. Mona said that project staff developed the issue resolution team rosters in partnership with the Technical Advisory Committee, which consists of staff from partner agencies. Mona said the intention of the issue resolution teams is to work closely with technical staff and that some Technical Advisory Committee members will be participating in issue resolution teams along with other agency staff. Russ stated that the issue resolution teams make it clear that there are lots of high-level issues to work on throughout the project and asked if there is prioritization of issues, such as crossing at Fort Snelling? Mona said this has been a key discussion item for the project staff and that issue prioritization will be one of the first issue resolution team undertakings. Jessica said that generally, potential alignments are the top issue, and that decisions regarding the Canadian Pacific Spur and alignment through downtown Saint Paul and Fort Snelling will drive a lot of other decisions.

Councilmember Noecker said that I-35E, Shepard Road and West 7th Street are three approximately equivalent ways to travel through the project area. Councilmember Noecker asked if traffic would be prioritized on I-35E and Shepard Road to differentiate West 7th Street as a transit priority street and asked whether this issue would be discussed with issue resolution teams or the Policy Advisory Committee. Mona confirmed that issue resolution teams would discuss this question. Jessica added that this conversation also ties into the West 7th Streetscape Plan. Tyler Blackmon asked if issue resolution teams address the question of dedicated right-of-way or if that discussion would occur later. Mona confirmed that issue resolution teams would discuss the question of dedicated right-of-way and noted that having a better understanding of potential alignments will help guide the discussion.

Upcoming Tasks

Mona described the upcoming environmental and engineering tasks.

4. Cultural Resources Updates

Background Research Report

Jennifer Jordan described the background research report and previous work completed for the cultural resources evaluation. Jennifer said that project staff are considering a cultural landscape study that would cover a broader area around the project.

Upcoming Tasks

Jennifer said that project staff expect to have a draft background research report for architecture history and archaeology completed and sent to Ramsey County by the end of February.

5. Communications/Community Engagement Updates

Lyssa Washington provided the community engagement update. Lyssa said that project staff are working with project partners to develop outreach and engagement activities that align with

project milestones. Project staff are also looking for community organizations to partner with for ongoing efforts.

Public Engagement Summary

Project staff have received and responded to 11 comments via the Riverview Corridor website as well as a few from Facebook. Lyssa stated that most comments address the project cost and the membership of the Community Steering Committee and Station Area Planning Task Force.

Look-Ahead and Schedule Coordination

Lyssa shared the upcoming schedule for public engagement. Councilmember Noecker noted that the purpose and need statement might be a challenging item for engagement and said that people are more likely to be interested in the project timeline, so there should be additional context for this public engagement effort. Lyssa said that project staff are still crafting an approach to capture comments and educate people about the purpose and need, which may include infographics and surveys. Project staff will include opportunities for communities to express whether the purpose and need resonate with them for supporting businesses, attracting visitors and achieving other goals. Councilmember Noecker voiced appreciation for this effort and said that it would be important to engage with the community in a meaningful and authentic way. Lyssa stated that this is a priority for project staff and that information about additional opportunities for engagement around future project milestones will be shared.

6. Community Advisory Committee and Station Area Planning Task Force Updates

Kevin Roggenbuck provided an overview of the application and selection process for the Community Advisory Committee and Station Area Planning Task Force, including promotion and outreach efforts. Kevin shared that the opportunities were advertised in non-English newspapers, cultural media, the Community Reporter and Highland Villager, and through other means to make sure the information reached a broad audience. Kevin said that there were only six applicants from Bloomington and west of the river and that project staff are working to increase representation from that area as well as representation from Ward 3. A Policy Advisory Committee subgroup is working on a list of recommended appointments. Kevin noted that the Policy Advisory Committee subgroup representing Saint Paul identified a need to increase diversity within its applicant pool and was reaching out to additional people of color to gauge their interest in applying to be on the committees. Kevin said project staff expect to request the Policy Advisory Committee to approve membership of both groups at its April meeting.

Shannon asked if the application would be reopened or if project staff are using a targeted outreach approach. Kevin said that project staff are not publicly reopening or restarting the application campaign; Policy Advisory Committee members are doing targeted outreach to community organizations, neighborhoods and individuals to recruit additional applicants. Project staff are also working with Mayor Busse and his staff to recruit additional South Loop applicants.

7. Project Schedule and Agency Coordination

Overall Schedule

Mona provided an overview of the key milestones for the next 60 days and key items to complete in 2021, including refining the locally preferred alternative and sorting through complex technical issues. Mona said that more advanced engineering work and environmental analysis to further refine the locally preferred alternative will occur in 2022 and 2023.

Federal Transit Administration Coordination

Project staff met with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) via conference call on January 25. Project staff provided a project update and an overview of the schedule as well as areas where FTA input is desired. FTA noted where they would want to be involved in the process.

8. Public Comment

John Zwier – Hamline Avenue, Saint Paul.

John would like to make sure that transfers from local bus or rapid transit bus to streetcar are considered. John suggested incorporating data from intermodal transfers between local bus and the METRO Blue and Green Lines. John suggested highlighting the Science Museum of Minnesota as one of the major destinations served by the project as well as the potential Riverwalk development. John also suggested considering offering both local and express service on the route so those who want to travel from downtown to the airport can travel more quickly and to benefit local residents.

Richard Adair – Upton Avenue, Minneapolis.

Richard regularly attended corridor management meetings for the Southwest Light Rail extension and has an idea of where there might be issues with the Riverview Corridor project, particularly upon seeking funding from the legislature. Richard suggested limiting use of the word Bdote to areas of cultural significance and saying “river crossing” for other areas. Richard suggested emphasizing the importance of a smooth transition to rail transit that will enhance access and increase ridership for residents and visitors.

James Schoettler – Eleanor Avenue, Saint Paul.

James highlighted the potential river crossing from the southwest corner of the Ford site (now called Highland Bridge) over the intersection of Hiawatha Avenue and 54th Street. James said this crossing is superior to the Highway 5 option given its proximity to the 55th Street/Minnehaha Falls station serving the Blue Line as well as the veterans hospital. James asserted that this crossing has several advantages, including direct service to the Ford site and avoidance of the impact to historic Fort Snelling as well as up to \$250 million in cost savings compared to the current locally preferred alternative. James said that this option should be shared with tribal partners as it would inform their response and preference for the river crossing alignment. James said if this option is not shared, the Policy Advisory Committee and Ramsey County may be subjected to accusations of not conducting a truly participatory process. James said that the

project has a duty to investigate and present this alternative before asking tribal partners for a decision.

Spencer Ludtke – Juliet Avenue, Saint Paul.

Spencer said that his understanding is that improved bus is a backup or alternative to modern streetcar. Spencer encouraged the Policy Advisory Committee to consider what improvements could be made for local bus service during this phase of the project. Spencer noted Councilmember Noecker’s reference to rail bias and said it seemed to be a factor in selecting the locally preferred alternative. Spencer said it will be important to accept history and make decisions for a more equitable society moving forward and suggested that the Policy Advisory Committee consider the idea of rail bias historically, understand why people might want rail instead of bus, and think about what might be achieved with bus service rather than rail.

Jason DeBoer-Moran – Saint Paul.

This comment was read by Councilmember Noecker, on behalf of her constituent Jason DeBoer who was unable to stay for the entire meeting. Jason said that as the purpose and need statement is refined, it will be important to keep in mind that it is not only about service to downtown Saint Paul and the airport but also about access to local resources along the route. Jason said Riverview Corridor will serve not only air travelers and visitors going downtown but also residents who are accessing grocery stores, local businesses and other resources along the route without having to wait 15 minutes for a bus.

9. Next Meeting

April 1, 2021. The first Tuesday of every other month works for PAC members.