

# MEETING SUMMARY

## POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #3

**Date:** April 1, 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	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	City of Saint Paul—Russ Stark alternate	X
Chris Tolbert	Saint Paul City Council	X
Shannon Watson	Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce	X

#### Agency and Project Staff

- Jennifer Jordan, Ramsey County.
- Mike Rogers, Ramsey County.
- Ken Iosso, Ramsey County.
- Brian Isaacson, Ramsey County.
- Kevin Roggenbuck, Ramsey County.
- Frank Alarcon, Ramsey County.

- Mona Elabbady, SRF Consulting.
- Jessica Laabs, Kimley-Horn.
- Grant Wyffels, Kimley-Horn.
- Lyssa Washington, 4RM+ULA.

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

- Abenezzer Ayan.
- Ben Tomhave.
- Bob Whitehead.
- Craig Johnson.
- Emily Northey.
- Eric Ecklund.
- Greg Struve.
- Heidi Schallberg.
- James Schoettler.
- Jane McClure.
- Jay Severance.
- Jerome Johnson.
- Joe Gladke.
- Joe Landsberger.
- John O'Neill.
- Jon Solberg.
- Joseph McKinley.
- Joseph Scala.
- Katherine Bell.
- Kathleen Carruth.
- Kevin Gallatin.
- Kevin Miller.
- Laurie Siever.
- Lisa Moe.
- Mary Hogan-Bard.
- Mathews Hollinshead.
- Michelle Leonard.
- Mike Luke.
- Nick Thompson.
- Peter Grafstrom.
- Sara Maaske.
- Sarah Ghandour.
- Scott McBride.
- Spencer Ludtke.
- Sylvie Guezeon.
- Tanner Schulz.

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Rafael Ortega, committee chair, called the meeting to order and Mike Rogers led introductions.

### 2. Virtual Meeting Procedures

Jessica Laabs provided an overview of virtual meeting procedures.

### 3. Engineering and Pre-Environmental Updates

#### Purpose and Need Revisions and Process

Jessica presented an updated purpose and need framework, including goals and objectives, and pointed out edits that were made based on Policy Advisory Committee comments. Steffanie Musich asked what the project would do to minimize impacts to cultural resources and what the

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

timeline for this work would be. Jessica said that the full purpose and need statement outlines all project goals and objectives, including statements about minimizing impacts. Jessica shared that the revised purpose and need statement is under review by tribal partners and the Technical Advisory Committee. There is a 45-day review period that will conclude in mid-April. Once the review period ends, project staff will address comments and then publish the purpose and need statement for public review during the month of May. Project staff have committed to thoughtful review of tribal feedback. The next Policy Advisory Committee meeting will be rescheduled to accommodate public review before approving the final statement and will be held in July after Independence Day. Rebecca Noecker asked if other work would continue during review of the purpose and need statement or if the review would cause other tasks to be paused. Jessica confirmed that other work items would continue during this review period.

## Update on Issue Resolution Teams

Jessica reviewed the four Issue Resolution Teams and high-priority issues that are being addressed. Grant Wyffels noted that each Issue Resolution Team meets monthly to advance work on addressing technical issues.

### AIRPORT/BLOOMINGTON

Grant described efforts to resolve alignment questions around the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport while accounting for planned future development in Bloomington and described key considerations for this decision-making. Grant said that cost, traffic and rail operations are important considerations. The 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue and American Boulevard intersection is a key intersection because introduction of the Riverview on this segment of the METRO Blue Line will double the number of trains resulting in traffic changes that need to be understood. Project staff also want to make sure not to create queuing issues on ramps serving I-494. Grant noted that 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue is a major utility corridor and private utilities are now being located along 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue due to lack of space in 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Additionally, the City of Bloomington intends to build a pedestrian/bicycle corridor along the east side of 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue and wants to make sure there are good pedestrian connections throughout the area.

There are multiple route options to serve the Mall of America. Bloomington officials have said that if the terminal station is not located in the mall itself, there is a desire to place it further north so it is more centrally located to development in the South Loop. Project staff are working with airport and city staff to understand potential train queuing issues and avoid creating an operational chokepoint or travel time issue. Jessica noted that Issue Resolution Teams are composed of public agency staff and the Mall of America is therefore not represented in this group, but project staff will be coordinating with mall leadership and have communicated with Bloomington city staff about mall coordination.

Tim Busse expressed appreciation for the ongoing coordination efforts and noted that a significant amount of development is ongoing and planned in the South Loop in large part because of the Riverview project. He said that new apartments are building less parking because people are living without cars more. Chair Ortega asked how many housing units are in development. The mayor said there are close to 800 units in the pipeline right now and that

developers are very interested in the South Loop area because the transit options are so attractive.

### **BDOTE/FORT SNELLING**

Grant said project staff are assessing ways to connect through Fort Snelling and are collecting input from tribal partners and meeting with MnDOT about the river crossing. Project staff are evaluating options for connecting to the METRO Blue Line with consideration for route options and the constraints of the existing bridge. There are significant cultural resources in the area and project staff are considering options for using previously disturbed areas because working in existing right-of-way is beneficial for minimizing impacts. Grant noted that where new track is built there is more potential for disturbance.

Grant noted that there is a need to study how rail and loading impacts of the project would affect the existing Highway 5 bridge. Project staff is collaborating with MnDOT to review possible bridge cross sections. There are two major alignment options in this segment and project staff are coordinating with tribal partners to evaluate each. There is a planned memorial near Fort Snelling and project staff will also evaluate how future construction might affect this memorial. Grant said that interlining Riverview and the METRO Blue Line at Fort Snelling is another technical issue requiring further examination.

Russ Stark said that the Bdote/Fort Snelling area seems to be the most complex question for the project given the environmental, cultural and technical issues to resolve. Russ said that it would make sense to try and answer questions in this segment as soon as possible because the project is so dependent on this area. Jessica said this point is well taken and that Saint Paul city staff have expressed similar sentiments. Jessica said that project staff are evaluating several options with consideration of critical criteria as well as potential impacts of each option.

### **SAINT PAUL GENERAL (NOW NAMED SAINT PAUL-WEST 7<sup>TH</sup>)**

Grant said that the Saint Paul- General Issue Resolution Team is working to understand the distinct neighborhoods and physical roadway character along the route as well as traffic volumes and parking needs. Project staff are evaluating the feasibility of transferring ownership of Highway 5 (West 7<sup>th</sup> Street) from MnDOT to Ramsey County or the City of Saint Paul. Project staff are conducting a traffic study to identify critical traffic impact areas and examine existing traffic patterns. Grant noted that MnDOT is also planning a major mill and overlay of Highway 5. The Issue Resolution Team will continue collaboration with project partners and set parameters for streetscape designs. An important component of developing the streetscape design is understanding the project alignment and reviewing West 7<sup>th</sup> Street for right-of-way width, lane use, land use context and other characteristics. West 7<sup>th</sup> is the designated route in the Locally Preferred Alternative and is the main focus of current work. If significant challenges arise with the West 7<sup>th</sup> alignment, the team may investigate use of the CP Rail Spur for all or part of the route to address those challenges. This information would be brought to the Policy Advisory Committee for their direction on any changes to the Locally Preferred Alternative's route.

Grant said that project staff recognize West 7<sup>th</sup> Street is a great street in Saint Paul with a lot of diverse areas and qualities, and that the project plans to address each area based on its unique characteristics. Understanding traffic patterns is important: traffic volumes on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street are

three times higher west of I-35E than volumes east of I-35E. Grant reiterated that project partners are discussing ownership of this portion of West 7<sup>th</sup> Street (Highway 5) and added that ADA improvements and pedestrian enhancements will be incorporated as part of MnDOT's planned mill and overlay.

Pat Mancini asked what input businesses would be able to provide on streetscape designs. Jessica said that project staff are currently only seeking general input while working to identify the build alternatives. Jessica noted that the City of Saint Paul is interested in collaborating on station area planning efforts and that the project communications team is planning to conduct business outreach beginning in 2022. Lyssa Washington confirmed that this is the plan. Kevin Roggenbuck added that he will be attending meetings with business associations in the near future and that project staff recognize the importance of reaching businesses as well as residents. Jessica noted that project staff are open to suggestions for how to reach businesses. Pat said it would be nice to give input on station visuals and similar work products.

Project staff are working to understand the neighborhood context and character as well as the City's priority travel modes in each part of the corridor. Plans for trees, lighting, sidewalk furnishings and other streetscape elements will not be developed until later in the project. Chris Tolbert said it will be important to provide updates on engagement efforts and results. Chris said that pedestrian and safety improvements were discussed in the first Policy Advisory Committee meeting and these improvements are an important topic for engagement efforts and collaboration with MnDOT. Chris said improving safety on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street would be a major improvement because it is more of a highway than a street, which makes it unwelcoming and uninviting for people walking or biking. Chris asked for more detail about the CP rail spur and the reasons for considering moving the route off West 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

Mike Rogers said that the locally preferred alternative confirms West 7<sup>th</sup> Street as the preferred alignment, though there are some areas, including the rail spur, that may be investigated further if West 7<sup>th</sup> has significant challenges. Mike said that there could be major challenges on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street such as utilities, traffic, land use and topography, and that the rail spur is included as an option in case the project cannot be routed along some portion West 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Routing on the rail spur may be more feasible west of I-35E because it serves the neighborhood and businesses while West 7<sup>th</sup> Street is very close to the bluff; routing the project on the rail spur east of I-35E would more directly impact homes and businesses. Chris Tolbert stated that he did not remember these conversations. Mike Rogers said that if project staff encounter issues on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street, the issues will be documented and presented to the Policy Advisory Committee for a decision on the route. Mike noted that project staff would share this information with the other project advisory committees as well.

Chris said that the Highway 5 crossing is the primary issue both from an engineering and a cultural resources perspective and that resolving this issue would help guide other decisions. Chris shared his support for prioritizing resolution of the crossing. Rebecca Noecker said the resolution passed in 2017 embodied top priorities for the project including pedestrian safety, streetscape design and sensitivity to the unique neighborhoods in the corridor and voiced her appreciation for embedding these priorities into the current process. Rebecca added that there is currently a need for pedestrian and bicyclist safety improvements along West 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Rebecca said that the City would prefer to avoid major changes in the corridor because of the

Riverview Project and asked if there were opportunities for interim upgrades. Rebecca asked how the conversation about ownership of Shepard Road and West 7<sup>th</sup> Street is being conducted, noting that responsibility for operations and maintenance should be considered. Jessica confirmed that various conversations are starting within Ramsey County and MnDOT to understand the potential cost of turning West 7<sup>th</sup> Street to Ramsey County or Saint Paul and what preparation would be needed to facilitate this change. Mike Rogers said that Saint Paul will be brought into the conversation and that the focus is on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street, though Shepard Road and I-35E may also factor into the discussion because they are parallel and because both West 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Shepard Road feed into I-35E.

## SAINT PAUL – DOWNTOWN

Grant said project staff are currently reviewing design opportunities and challenges of the alignment in downtown Saint Paul and working through tradeoffs with different alignments. Issues to address include interlining the Riverview project with the Green Line at Cedar Street and Union Depot, planning rail operations on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets, and arranging for layover time in front of Union Depot on 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Project staff are also working to determine whether the project will operate along West 7<sup>th</sup> Street or Smith Avenue just outside downtown.

The next steps for the Downtown Saint Paul Issue Resolution Team are to resolve operations questions and tradeoffs for a station in front of Union Depot. Grant noted that depending on the decisions made, other connection points might be needed in downtown Saint Paul. The 4<sup>th</sup> Street platform in front of Union Depot will require a different platform configuration than what currently exists in order to accommodate both Green Line and Riverview vehicles. The north platform would need to be expanded to fit additional trains, or the tail track between the Union Depot station and the Broadway Street operations and maintenance facility. Depending on the staging and operation of trains, there may be major impacts to 4<sup>th</sup> Street in this location affecting adjacent properties, parking ramps and access.

The Issue Resolution Team is currently primarily focusing on the West 7<sup>th</sup> Street alignment while also evaluating Smith Avenue.

Rebecca highlighted that vehicle selection is noted as an issue for each segment and asked why it is included for all four distinct segments. Jessica clarified that the same vehicles would be used throughout the corridor but because conditions vary so widely throughout the route, certain sections might affect what type of vehicle can be used based on travel speeds, turning radii and other needs. Grant added that light rail vehicles used on the METRO Green and Blue Lines interface with existing operations and maintenance facilities and said that using similar vehicles for the Riverview project is preferred to reduce maintenance needs, though there will be some limitations for vehicle selection based on specifics of the Riverview alignment. Project staff will coordinate with Metro Transit in the selection of vehicles.

## Upcoming Tasks

Jessica provided an overview of the tasks that will be advanced over the next 60 days. Jessica noted that cost will be a major consideration for project design to ensure the project is competitive for federal funding. Project staff are working to understand how streetcar differs

from light rail in terms of flexibility and other nuances and will share this information with Ramsey County and project advisory committees through design criteria discussion.

## **4. Cultural Resources Updates**

### **Background Research Reports**

Jennifer Jordan said project staff have completed background research for the archaeology and historic resources reports. These reports set the groundwork for Phase I analysis and historic properties review. Jennifer said that Ramsey County is in the process of amending the cultural resources contract to add a Cultural Landscape Study.

### **Cultural Landscape Study**

Jennifer said that the Cultural Landscape Study has an expanded scope that incorporates natural resources and that Ramsey County is working closely with the four local Dakota tribes to review work scope. The study will include significant engagement with these tribes to meet project and tribe needs. The Cultural Landscape Study also encompasses a larger area than the Cultural Resources Study and will document the interconnected nature of the landscape, landmarks, sites and natural features of Bdote and their significance to Dakota people. This work is being completed per a recommendation from the Federal Transit Administration. Once the contract is amended, research and engagement will occur in fall and winter 2021 and the report will be completed in spring 2022.

## **5. Communications/Community Engagement Updates**

### **Call for Artists**

Lyssa Washington explained the call for artists to build relationships and engage with communities. Lyssa said that these efforts may include pop-up events. Applications are due April 25.

### **Public Engagement Summary**

Lyssa provided update on public engagement efforts. The first larger public roll-out of the project will occur this summer and will include an opportunity to comment on the project's purpose and need.

## **6. Approval of Community Advisory Committee and Station Area Planning Task Force Members**

Frank Alarcon described the efforts to form the Community Advisory Committee and Station Area Planning Task Force. Frank said that both groups include people who live and/or work along the corridor and that they will provide input on various aspects of the project. The Community Advisory Committee will advise project staff and the Policy Advisory Committee on topics including the environmental analysis, engineering and public engagement. The Station Area Planning Task Force will be focused on creating station area plans for stations within Saint Paul. These plans will address future land use, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, placemaking and other related topics. Frank reviewed the process used for soliciting and

evaluating applications. Rebecca Noecker moved to approve both lists of recommended members. Tim Busse seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The Policy Advisory Committee also agreed that additional members can be solicited for these committees should members resign or additional representation is needed.

## 7. Tribal Coordination Recap

Jennifer reviewed coordination with tribes, which includes the ongoing 45-day tribal review of the draft purpose and need statement. Project staff met with the four local Dakota tribes to preview Fort Snelling alignments and gather input. Jennifer noted that the tribes are participating in the Bdote/Fort Snelling Issue Resolution Team and the Technical Advisory Committee. In addition to Issue Resolution Team and individual meetings, project staff have distributed the preliminary alignments to all 11 federally designated tribes in Minnesota and offered to meet and review project work. Jennifer said that the tribes are reviewing the Cultural Landscape Study scope of work and feedback is expected in early April.

## 8. Public Comment

### Jay Severance

Jay asked if there is there a process through which people can submit comments via email to the Policy Advisory Committee. Jay said the route needs to operate in 100 percent dedicated right-of-way or it will not adequately meet the needs of the current gap in the transit system.

Mike Rogers confirmed that members of the public can send comments to [info@riverview.com](mailto:info@riverview.com), and comments will be shared with Policy Advisory Committee members as appropriate.

### Jerome Johnson

Jerome shared that the owner of Canadian Pacific Railway wants to merge with Kansas City Southern Railway and that significant public support will be needed for Congress to approve the merger. Jerome encouraged committee members to contact Minnesota congressional representatives and other state leaders and ask that they not support the merger unless ownership of the CP Rail Spur is transferred to Ramsey County or the City of Saint Paul.

### Mathews Hollinshead

Mathews asked if the Station Area Planning Task Force would have to focus only on station locations that have been finalized, or if it would not begin its work until the locally preferred alternative is finalized.

Mike Rogers shared that there will be a kickoff meeting at which the schedule will be shared.

### James Schoettler

James recalled the need statement addressing the gap in the METRO system. James said that following through on this would reveal that there are two separate and distinct transit needs in the corridor: local service on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street and regional service to the light rail system in the



west metro as well as the system that needs to evolve in the east metro. James said that to achieve regional connectivity, the project needs to be scalable with dedicated right-of-way and substantial distance between stations because the route is so long. There is a need for bus-type service on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street and rail connections to regional system. Ideally the corridor would use light rail to accommodate connections to existing stations at the Minneapolis-Saint Paul Airport and Union Depot. The CP Rail Spur and additional alternatives are available to connect to downtown Saint Paul. By discerning between the two separate travel needs and building accordingly, many of the problems described in today's meeting would be solved. James shared enthusiasm for working together to create an outstanding public transportation system.

## **9. Next Meeting**

TBD.