

MEETING SUMMARY

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #2

Date: October 11, 2021
Time: 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Location: Virtual

ATTENDEES

Committee Members

Name	Community of Residence or Affiliation	Present
Committee Members		
Safiyo Ali	Saint Paul, Ward 5	
Abenezer Ayana	Saint Paul, Ward 3	
Katherine Bell	Saint Paul, Ward 3	X
Daniel Bruggeman	Saint Paul, Ward 2	X
Sam Burns	Saint Paul, Ward 1	
Stephany Carpenter	Saint Paul, Ward 2	
Hanna Debele	Saint Paul, Ward	
Jason DeBoer-Moran	Saint Paul, Ward 2	X
Cristina Diaz	Saint Paul, Ward 2	
Eric Ecklund	Bloomington	X
Amelia English	Bloomington	X
Kevin Gallatin	Saint Paul, Ward 3	X
Diane Gerth	Saint Paul, Ward 2	X
Sylvie Guezeon	Saint Paul, Ward 1	X
Mary Hogan-Bard	Saint Paul, Ward 1	
Meghan Kress	Saint Paul, Ward 2	X
Matthew McMillan	Saint Paul, Ward 4	
Negatu Merkuria	Saint Paul, Ward 3	
Bill Lindeke	Saint Paul, Ward 1	X
Corrinne Ollman	Saint Paul, Ward 2	X
Lawrence Richardson	Saint Paul, Ward 3	
Jay Severance	Saint Paul, Ward 2	X
Bob Whitehead	Saint Paul, Ward 3	X
Amanda Willis	Saint Paul, Ward 3	X

Project Team Members and Other Attendees		
Jennifer Jordan	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Mike Rogers	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Kevin Roggenbuck	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Jessica Laabs	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Mona Elabbady	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Lyssa Washington	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Haila Maze	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Grant Wyffels	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Ebtehal Bahnasy	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Jay Demma	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Michelle Terrell	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Joe Landsberger	Station Area Planning Task Force	X
Avian Ciganko-Ford	Visitor	X
Jim Schoettler	Visitor	X
Janet Moore	Visitor	X

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

1. Welcome

Kevin Roggenbuck welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Riverview Community Advisory Committee and read the land acknowledgment.

2. Introductions

Ramsey County staff, participating members of the consultant team, stakeholders in attendance and the committee members introduced themselves.

3. Housekeeping Items

Kevin Roggenbuck reviewed several items with the committee including the group agreements, virtual meeting procedures and development of a file storage/sharing system.

Diane Gerth stated that it would be preferable to receive materials more in advance to allow for review prior to the meeting, other members agreed. Kevin Roggenbuck noted that this will be the intent going forward.

4. Selection of Committee Co-Chairs

Kevin Roggenbuck provided an overview of the Community Advisory Committee co-chair responsibilities. Kevin Gallatin and Amanda Willis were selected as co-chairs, as they were the only two members that volunteered.

Joe Landsberger requested background information on the two co-chairs. Kevin Gallatin replied that he is a resident of Highland Park, and has served on the Saint Paul Planning Commission,

MAC Oversight Committee, and Highland District Council. Amanda Willis replied that she is also a Highland Park resident and has served in multiple roles with the Highland District Council.

At this point, Kevin Gallatin assumed facilitation of the meeting.

5. Engineering and Pre-Environmental Update

Project Status and Ridership Forecasts

Mike Rogers provided background information on the project, including the prior selection of the preferred alternative of modern streetcar and the work to be covered in the current phase.

Mona Elabbady provided an update on changes in ridership forecasts, including the impacts of changing the forecasting model and other methodologies. The revised forecasts show a decline in forecasted ridership for arterial bus rapid transit, dedicated bus rapid transit, and modern streetcar alternatives. Despite these declines, due to other factors about the project and the way the Federal Transit Administration calculates project justification, the locally preferred alternative of modern streetcar still has a competitive “medium” projected rating overall.

Jay Severance asked if there’s a differentiation between dedicated vs. non-dedicated lanes in the project. Mona Elabbady said that the number of dedicated lanes is reflected in the travel times for each alternative; however, this is information that the engineering team will be working to refine as part of this current phase of work. She also noted that the ridership declines are a common issue facing transit systems nationwide.

Bill Lindeke asked about population growth change assumptions, how other transit experience elements (ride quality, noise, etc.) fit in, and how much of route is expected to be in mixed traffic. Mona Elabbady responded that the rail rating is based on overall improvement of rider experience and that the percent of the route in mixed traffic is subject to change.

Diane Gerth asked about the quality of the analysis in the prior study. Mike Rogers responded that it was done on the best available information at the time, and that there is better data now.

Diane Gerth expressed that this might be a setback that keeps improvements from advancing within the corridor. Mike Rogers responded that the project is still competitive based on the scoring process.

Joe Landsberger stated that it would be informative to present current status of ridership in the corridor, and with this new way of forecasting ridership what express bus would look like. Mona Elabbady responded that these numbers were presented earlier – arterial bus rapid transit is forecasted with 7,300 trips compared with 12,800 trips for modern streetcar.

Joe Landsberger also asked what was considered to drive ridership. Mona Elabbady noted that forecasts consider growth patterns in the area.

Joe Landsberger asked about how funding for the riverfront might inform potential alternative to route for transit line, and if Betty McCollum’s office knew about this. Mike Rogers replied that he has been informed, but it is unclear how it fits into riverfront initiative she is championing.

Jay Severance asked what congestion relief means as a metric in this context and expressed concern that this has a significant amount of shared ROW and believe it won’t relieve congestion. Mona Elabbady noted this is based on a Federal Transit Administration formula.

Airport/Bloomington Issue Resolution Team

Jessica Laabs presented an update on the Airport/Bloomington issue resolution team. The work of the group has focused on operational issues at intersections near the end of the line around the Mall of America, the interface with the existing Blue Line connection, and potential alternatives to address this and provide access for transit users. This included the presentation of both at-grade (Option 2) and elevated (Option 8) connection options to the Mall of America.

Jason DeBoer-Moran asked if Blue Line and Riverview would share the same track after 82nd and 28th. Jessica Laabs responded that this was the case.

Jason DeBoer-Moran noted that the current train/bus transfer at the Mall of America is frustratingly far and that he was concerned that we are creating something similar here. Jessica Laabs said this concern was being taken into consideration, especially as this is the highest ridership transit station in the state.

Amanda Willis asked about accessibility issues at station and noted that current wayfinding to transit at the station needs improvement. Jessica Laabs said both of these will be addressed.

Jason DeBoer-Moran stated that with the current setup, running to try and make it from bus to train can be really difficult and especially frustrating to arrive at the station to see your bus and/or train pulling away causing you to have to stand in the cold for 15 minutes waiting for the next vehicle. Sylvie Guezeon added that this was a great point.

Eric Ecklund commenting that he is in favor of Option 8 (elevated connection).

Bill Lindeke asked about the cost differential between the two options. Jessica Laabs noted that this was a factor, and it is being considered in the decision.

Jessica Laabs stated that the Airport/Bloomington issue resolution team is currently taking a break in meeting.

Bdote/Fort Snelling Issue Resolution Team

Jessica Laabs and Grant Wyffels presented on work of the issue resolution team, focusing on Bdote impacts and various tunnel and bridge crossing options. Tunnel alignments considered by single track and mixed traffic alternatives.

Bill Lindeke asked if MnDOT would support 10.5' lanes on the highway. Jessica Laabs stated that MnDOT would, given the constraints like this and because it was a short segment.

Jay Severance expressed concern that mixed traffic options look dangerous for traveling through, and with single track, it's a lot of trains to travel through the same point. He thought that neither seems viable. Jessica Laabs did clarify that this segment will only serve Riverview trains with 10-minute headways. She also clarified that the project team did look at non-locally preferred alternative solutions, but they didn't work better.

Bill Lindeke stated that he loves the creative engineering of the new bridge solution especially considering the hurdles faced from the plans from four years ago. He is in favor of the single-track option.

Eric Ecklund also said he was in favor of the single-track option.

Grant Wyffels presented on pedestrian access options.

Jason DeBoer-Moran stated he would love to see the existing bridge used. These next slides for bike/ped access are harrowing alongside such fast moving traffic, even with the bars and separation.

Kevin Gallatin said the prospect of slowing vehicle traffic into Saint Paul before the tunnel is intriguing. He wondered if it could create new options for shifting more traffic to Shepard Road instead of West 7th Street.

Joe Landsberger suggested possibly a different route through Highland.

Mike Rogers noted that there were some errors on the graphics on the slides. The project team will be correcting the presentation and reposting the file to the shared drive.

Amanda Willis stated that as you look into bike/ped options, it's important to note that a lot more e-bikes are in use these days - and they can be heavier in weight. In the current setup for Highway 5, she likely wouldn't be able to cross with her 65-pound cargo bike.

Kevin Roggenbuck noted that the project team will develop bike and pedestrian options that are ADA compliant and easy for all users.

6. Station Area Planning Update

Jay Demma provided an update on the station area planning process. This included an overview of the topics covered at the monthly May-September Station Area Task Force meetings. This included an overview of existing conditions, a walking tour of a portion of the corridor, a policy review, guiding principles exercise, and challenge/opportunity exercise. In the next few months, the process will focus on three stations at Saint Clair, Randolph, and Otto. An interactive map is available on the project website to collect comments on those locations, and an engagement event is planned for October 15.

Jay Demma shared an instant poll asking "What would you consider to be the most important neighborhood strength of the Riverview/West 7th Street? The 16 responses were as follows:

- A. Parks and open spaces. – 13%
- B. Businesses. – 13%
- C. Pedestrian-friendly character. – 38%
- D. Availability of transit. – 6%
- E. Historic character. – 31%
- F. Housing options. – 0%
- G. Other. – 0%

Jay Severance asked if the platform height at stations would be the same as for light rail transit. Jessica Laabs answered yes, they will be the same height.

7. Cultural Resources Update

Michelle Terrell gave an update on the cultural resources work. This includes the cultural landscape study that is beginning this fall. It also includes the initiation of the Section 106 process. Upcoming activities will include a public meeting later this year to introduce the concept, and an online interactive map to collect input on potential historic properties. The Area of Potential Effect will be identified in the first half of 2022, identification/Phase I surveys in 2022, and the cultural landscape survey will extend 2022-2023.

Joe Landsberger suggested elevating the cultural landscape study to include the immigrant communities that developed West 7th neighborhoods. The upper landing is a founding location for both City of Saint Paul and State of Minnesota. He also noted that West Seventh/Fort Road has seven historic buildings and two historic districts.

Sylvie Guezeon stated that she supports the emphasis on Dakota history, as did others in the chat.

Bill Lindeke said he just returned from the Wakan Tipi opening ceremony this evening, which was an inspiring start to the work we need to do here in Saint Paul and Minnesota about recognizing the thousands of years of Dakota history as we occupy Dakota land. He is glad this project is doing that.

8. Communications and Community Engagement Update

Lyssa Washington gave an update on communications and community engagement. This included an update on the planned in-person engagement on October 15, an update on the interactive mapping tools, explanation of the shared file system, and a list of upcoming meetings and potential future engagement opportunities.

The Community Advisory Committee ended at 8:15 pm.