

# MEETING SUMMARY

## COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #3

**Date:** February 17, 2022  
**Time:** 5:00-7:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Virtual

### ATTENDEES

#### Committee Members

Name	Community of Residence or Affiliation	Present
<b>Committee Members</b>		
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	
Sam Burns	Saint Paul, Ward 1	
Stephany Carpenter	Saint Paul, Ward 2	X
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
Joe Landsberger	Station Area Planning Task Force Co-Chair	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	
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
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
Jay Demma	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Laura Michlig	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Kristin Zschomler	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Scott Mareck	Ramsey County Public Works	X

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY

### 1. Welcome

Kevin Roggenbuck welcomed everyone to the third meeting of the Riverview Community Advisory Committee (CAC) 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.

### 4. Blue Line/Riverview Connection (RBC) Study Overview

Scott Mareck provided an overview of the Blue Line Riverview Connection Study. The study area is focused on transit connections around the Ford Site/Highland Bridge development in Saint Paul. It will identify a roadmap of transit options, during a time when there is uncertainty about the future of travel behavior. The project will have an 18-month duration and is anticipated to be complete by May 2023.

Kevin Gallatin asked what the timing was for this study. Scott said this is a long-term timeframe – 10-15 years is the focus. Metro Transit did a recent study in the area and discovered service is adequate for the next 5+ years. Kevin requested the website of the study:

<https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/roads-transportation/multi-modal-planning/blue-lineriverview-connection-study>

Jay Severance asked if the team was looking at improvements to fixed rail. Scott said currently, we're not looking at the rail system at all, but we are looking at enhancements to existing ABRT, regular route transit and the use of microtransit (scooter, etc.).

Jay Severance asked if the team will be looking at use of the Canadian Pacific (CP) Spur. Scott said the spur is not owned by Ramsey County; it has been discussed as an option, but unknown at this time if it is a feasible option.

Eric Ecklund asked if there have been negotiations with CP about purchasing their Ford Spur right-of-way. Scott said at this time, the County has not negotiated. Katherine Bell mentioned that the University of St. Thomas may have the CP Rail site under contract.

Joe Landsberger inquired about the previously mentioned resolutions that were passed by the City and County. Have these resolutions been posted? They supposedly limit the study, and it would be good to have as information. Kevin said the resolutions are on the Riverview Corridor project website, in the “Project Library” at the very bottom.

Joe Landsberger said that he doesn’t understand not studying rail, but studying other modes, and requested clarification. Scott said the existing major rail in this neighborhood (the Blue Line and future Riverview Corridor) will be adequate to meet the needs and won’t be reevaluated. It will instead focus on smaller scale improvements.

Joe Landsberger asked what impact there will be for W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Scott said the development of the Riverview Corridor is assumed as a baseline condition in the study. The scope of this study will be feeders to the Riverview Corridor. This is about better ways to connect existing and planned transitways in the area, and to move about in the neighborhood through transit and last mile connections to all the facilities.

Sylvie Guezeon wanted to know other than the open house, what other (inclusive) modes of engagement are planned, such as with schools? She would like to see a connection with the schools and the universities in the area that are impacted by the project. Scott said there will be several different events, including a virtual open house, pop up events, community liaisons, online engagement, etc. Artists will be hired through Springboard for the Arts:

<https://springboardforthearts.org/jobs/community-artist-application-for-blue-line-riverview-connection-study-community-engagement-forecast-public-art-feb-28/>

Diane Gerth asked if “site” was referring to the 13-acre former rail yard or the trackage itself. She was informed that just the CP Rail spur is under contract. After further discussion, the committee generally agreed that the University of Saint Thomas acquired part of the rail yard.

Jay Severance stated that if CP still owns it and wants to divest, it will have to go through the Surface Transportation Board, which is a long process. But if it’s under contract, we missed out as a city and county. The County should make sure to find out what the status is. Railroad might have been Ford property, but the spur shouldn’t be under contract unless the public had an opportunity to purchase this.

Bill Lindeke shared that if the CP land south of the Ford Site is under contract for development, he hopes that Ramsey County or the City can make sure there’s an easement for transit and/or a recreational trail in place.

## 5. Station Area Planning Task Force (SAPTF) Update

Jay Demma gave a Station Area Planning update. The focus is currently on Saint Clair, Randolph, and Otto station areas. We are gathering input from the task force and developing preliminary concepts. We engaged the broader community last fall with an outdoor event at tabling event. Since then, we have used virtual strategies. The SAPTF is working with prominent stakeholders in these areas and talking about potential transit impact on the community. There is a focus on areas of change, opportunities for improvements to the public realm, opportunities for safer/enhanced connections, and pros and cons of station locations.

The Riverview Corridor team recently produced an online survey, that received 341 responses. The results have been compiled and the SAPTF is reviewing results to share with others soon. The full results will be posted on the project website.

The SAPTF will be refining concepts this spring, then will shift to either a western or eastern direction, depending on the focus of the engineering work. They will look at platform locations and are likely to do a task force walking tour and additional community engagement.

Diane Gerth asked about the survey. Twenty-four percent said safe biking is important. A lot of people do commute by bicycle, but the current proposed locally preferred alternative makes no reference to bicycles. There is no parallel route that goes to downtown. As the project moves forward, the team needs to pay attention to this number. It will be very unsafe to bike in a dedicated transit lane. Especially in residential areas, the community really wants safe areas to bike. The project team said that this issue would be addressed through the planning process.

Joe Landsberger said as co-chair of the SAPTF, it's been very frustrating to talk about these intersections. He does not know the alignment of rail, impact on business and parking, how to address the overpass at St. Clair, and other details. Other issues don't mean anything until there is some finality as to what kind of streetcar will be built down W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Jay said the team delayed the process of planning for these three station areas to get more information from the engineering team. The next step will be to come back to the SAPTF with more information.

Joe Landsberger then shared that one of major connectors is at Randolph. There are huge development areas, large industrial area, rail connector, etc. This hasn't been addressed in the study.

Jason DeBoer-Moran asked, isn't the objective of the Planning Survey to help determine what the station areas could look like so the community's desires are being met regardless of where the platforms and tracks might run? Jay said yes, this is the objective of the station area planning work, and that they are still gathering information in terms of what the area can look like. It was noted that working with the St. Paul Issue Resolution Teams (IRT) was initially delayed in order to focus on the river crossing. The St. Paul IRT will provide answers to help inform station area planning.

## 6. Engineering and Pre-Environmental (EPE) Update

### Saint Paul Issue Resolution Status

Grant Wyffels provided an overview of downtown Saint Paul issues being addressed through IRTs. The primary focus has been looking at Riverview Corridor connections to Union Depot. Three options are being considered: 1) Adding a 4<sup>th</sup> Street platform, 2) adding new tracks around shared use platforms and 3) operating on tail tracks. All have various impacts, challenges, and connection issues. The EPE team is looking at other alternatives in this area to address these.

Joe Landsberger wanted to know more about the City's request to consider W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street alignment. Who requested this? Grant said the request came collectively from Public Works and Planning staff.

Joe asked if a route to the back of Union Depot could connect to the CP Rail Spur? Grant said it could not connect to the CP Spur. It could utilize the existing train deck or align along Kellogg Street, but not along the river.

Bill Lindeke said he was glad to hear the team is looking at other options. He asked how the Lowertown historic district is being considered? Grant said the Cultural Resource team has been involved in the process and conversations and are identifying concerns as they occur.

Bill continued, asking if the district ends at W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street. It may be a reason to consider other options. Kristen Zschomler said the district ends at W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

Jay Severance noted the transition to studying better bus alternatives by Mid-March. He asked if the EPE has a good idea as to where the project is going to end up with this? Have the impacts on going from Xcel to Green Line been considered? There are a lot of issues on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> streets, such as grade and congestion issues. Are these being considered as well? Grant said the project team is considering all of these issues. There are challenges in other parts of downtown. And regards to schedule, the team would like to choose a preferred alignment by March, but it might be more difficult in downtown.

Eric Ecklund said the Riverview Corridor project should align with the Green Line for simplicity and allowing easy transfers. A second preference for him would be to use 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> streets.

Jay Severance voiced his concern that the team would abandon downtown and talk about a bus, according to the schedule. The team responded stating we wouldn't give up on rail alternative at that point but will be refining it and adding the best bus alternative alongside it.

Diane Gerth asked about Smith Street vs. W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street. She wants to make sure United Hospital is kept in the loop. There construction issues and noise issues that will impact procedures and they have nowhere to move. Is the team listening to them? Jennifer Jordan said the hospitals have representation on the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC). Currently, the focus is on W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street until we determine that it doesn't work. Smith Street isn't being discussed at this time.

## West 7<sup>th</sup> Considerations

Grant Wyffels gave an update on W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street IRT team – from the Mississippi River to Kellogg. They are looking at opportunities within the corridor for shared and dedicated lanes. They are currently conducting an operational comparison using the CP Spur from approximately Montreal Way to where it crosses W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Roadway jurisdictional issues are being addressed, along with bicycle and pedestrian connections; however, streetscape has not yet been addressed, but we are mindful of opportunities. The team understands issues with placement of catenary poles.

The team is exploring a potential diversion at Davern Street to align with development opportunities, as well as a potential alternative route on CP Spur to align with others. We are also looking at both center and side running typical sections.

Diane Gerth stated that it's really important to show graphics of what this looks like. She said that the issue of dedicated vs. undedicated lanes was decided five years ago in a prior study. Also, there have been many schematics for the track for every segment, but these need to be distributed to everyone. It is important for members of the committee to know what is going to happen – and what has already been determined. Why aren't these provided to the committee for review? They are not accessible on website. Can we get all the drawings for most of the corridor for the committee because there are many people who are new to the process that haven't seen them?

Bill Lindeke said that it was his understanding that what is, and what is not dedicated right-of-way (ROW) has not yet been decided. Jessica said he is correct and the EPE team is trying to have an alignment by March followed by public review. Also note that there have been changes to what was done five years ago. The committee hasn't had the chance to review the starting point. There will be tweaks, but they haven't all been determined yet.

Kevin Roggenbuck provided a link in the chat to the document referred to by Diane.

[https://www.ramseycounty.us/sites/default/files/Roads%20and%20Transit/Riverview/Detailed%20Alternatives%200218\\_final.pdf](https://www.ramseycounty.us/sites/default/files/Roads%20and%20Transit/Riverview/Detailed%20Alternatives%200218_final.pdf)

Jay Severance said it would be nice to see the visualizations of what a station is going to look like, similar to what is done across the river. He wants to know what he will see out the window on 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Jay said the visualizations will be coming, but they're not ready.

## Bdote/Fort Snelling Issue Resolution Status

Jessica Laabs provided an update on the IRT status in this area. They are working with tribes on the need for native rock disturbances, with preference that they will not be disturbed. They have eliminated the transit flyover option due to a range of impacts in the area.

Alternatives are being explored for how to connect across the river and use just the existing tunnel: Single-track alternative and mixed-traffic alternative. An operational comparison is underway to see how to fit two dedicated lanes of traffic across the river. We are exploring three scenarios for lanes – 1) No build, 2) two dedicated and 3) one dedicated and one shared lane. We are also discussing options for bike/pedestrian facilities crossing the river – such as in-line, elevated/truss or separate facility. There may be some possible rock disturbance for these options, so other options are being explored.



Joe Landsberger asked if the “no build” option was a bus alternative? Jessica said that is just for the sake of comparison in the traffic analysis.

Joe also mentioned that all the time that’s being dedicated to this study has led to decades of neglect for the corridor. Can rapid bus be done as an immediate/short term alternative, to provide some relief? This road is usually neglected, and it would be good if there was something as an intermediate. What is a fatal flaw here – what is the context of that? The team shared that if through the evaluation of these alternatives, if we find that an idea just doesn’t work, it can be due to a fatal flaw. Kevin used the Mississippi River flyover concept as an example of an alternative with fatal flaws.

Jay Severance asked why isn’t the team considering crossing the river anywhere besides Highway 5? Don’t abandon a rail solution without considering another crossing.

Jason DeBoer-Moran likes the crossing options but shared that there are some safety concerns with elevated bike/pedestrian facilities on bridge, and people behaving in a less than desirable way.

Meghan Kress agreed with Jason. She then asked how lane configurations are considered regarding impacts on transit service time and traffic congestion. Jessica said these factors are being considered.

Bill Lindeke said he really hopes the project explores a single-track option. It seems like the best solution with the least impact. There should be more single-track transit operations at pinch-points throughout the Twin Cities (i.e., a hypothetical Greenway streetcar).

Katherine Bell asked what the daily traffic count going over the bridge is? Kevin Gallatin answered that as of 2019, there are 58,000 vehicles on the Hwy 5 bridge daily.

Amanda Willis stated that her cargo bike might have some trouble with that first option. And it’s a short trail.

Eric Ecklund shared that having the trail above the traffic would be nice. Biking/walking right next to highway traffic with only a concrete barrier separating you isn’t pleasant, speaking from experience on the St. Croix Bridge and I-35W Minnesota River Bridge.

Joe Landsberger asked where will ramps, stop lights, etc. be at the tunnel. Jessica pointed them out on the slide showing the mixed traffic option.

### **Airport/Bloomington Issue Resolution Status**

Jessica Laabs provided an update. They are working on 82<sup>nd</sup> Street station area and connection to the Mall of America (MOA) station option. We are continuing to work with Metro Transit and suspended IRT for now.

Jessica shared information on the next steps for the EPE team; finish the W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street alignments, develop best bus alternative, and share this information with the public.

## 7. Communications and Community Engagement Update

Lyssa Washington provided an update on recent and planned engagement efforts. Past engagement included a pop-up event, Section 106 meeting, newsletters and social media posts, and billboards. Current and upcoming opportunities include a bicycle and pedestrian survey, frequently asked questions, upcoming district council meetings and a planned spring Open House.

Lyssa also noted that the next PAC meeting is on February 24.

Kevin Roggenbuck reminded attendees to take the Hwy 5 bike survey.

<https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/roads-transportation/transit-corridors-studies/riverview-corridor>

Bill Lindeke said that he saw the billboard the other day and was pleasantly surprised by it.

## 8. Cultural Resource Update

Kristin Zschomler provided an update on Cultural Resources, including the cultural landscape study, area of potential effect, identification surveys and an online mapping tool.

Joe Landsberger asked if Cultural Resources can use the Community Reporter, the Federation, and the District Council to engage further with W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Kevin said the project bought ads in the Villager and Community reporter to advertise the Section 106 public meeting.

Kevin Gallatin asked if tribes have expressed any concerns about viewshed around Pike Island? Kristen said they have expressed concerns about the viewshed, and this is being studied, including all the implications.

Jay Severance stated that several members have expressed concerns about the CP Spur. He requested that these concerns are passed along to the PAC. The County is key in this concern.

The Community Advisory Committee meeting ended at 7:04 p.m.