

MEETING SUMMARY

POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #7

Date: December 13, 2023
Time: 9:30am-10:30am
Location: Union Depot Veterans Room

ATTENDEES

Committee Members

Name	Organization	Present
Rafael Ortega, Chair	Ramsey County Commissioner	X
Pat Mancini	Business Representative	X
Tim Busse, Mayor	Mayor, City of Bloomington	X
Jill Ostrem	United Hospital	X
Bridget Rief	Metropolitan Airports Commission	X
Seth Taylor	Laborers Union, Local #563	X
Russ Stark	City of Saint Paul	X
Amanda Duer	Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce	X
Brad Larsen	Acting Transit Director, MnDOT	X
Mike Rogers	Ramsey County	X
Tyler Blackmon	Community Representative, Highland Park	X
Bill Huepenbecker	Saint Paul Arena Company	X
Debbie Goettel	Hennepin County Commissioner	
Rebecca Noecker	Saint Paul City Council Member	
Jamie Tincher	Deputy Mayor, City of Saint Paul	

Shannon Watson	Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce	
Toni Carter	Council Member, Metropolitan Council	
Steffanie Musich	Commissioner, Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board	
Terry Mattson	Visit Saint Paul	

Agency and project staff

- Metropolitan Council - Elias Montesa (on behalf of Council Member Lee)
- Metro Transit - Nick Thompson, Ryan Heath
- Ramsey County - Jennifer Jordan, Kevin Roggenbuck
- Hennepin County - Bill Emory, (on behalf of Commissioner Irene Fernando)
- City of Saint Paul - Sean Kershaw, Anna Potter
- 4RM+ULA - Lyssa Washington
- Michael Lamb Consulting - Michael Lamb
- HNTB - Steven Brown, Jason Gottfried, Christian Campbell
- HDR - Scott Reed, Ryan Bauman
- Kimley-Horn - Jessica Laabs, Grant Wyffels
- Mead & Hunt - Christina Slattery
- Two Pines Resource Group - Michelle Terrell
- NEKA Creative - Kara Johnson

Members of the public

- Katie Nicholson
- Timothy Marino
- Paul Hardt
- Jay Severance
- Kyle Fisher

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

1. Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Ortega welcomed members and introductions were given. Commissioner Ortega noted that although the PAC hasn't met in a while (February 2022), the project has been active with technical work. Saint Paul and Ramsey County staff visited Kansas City in November 2022 to explore the KC Streetcar project and hold a meeting with local officials. The visit offered a refresh and informed a baseline for expectations moving forward. Following this, Saint Paul staff requested analysis of an additional streetcar

option. The project team and Issue Resolution Teams (IRT) focused on this option over the summer months.

2. Land Acknowledgement

Read by Jennifer Jordan (Ramsey County).

3. Agenda Summary

Jennifer Jordan (Ramsey County) provided a high-level project status overview

- Update meeting from February of 2022 to today December 2023
 - Diligently worked with IRTs to modify the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) alignment. Ultimately two streetcar options and one bus option resulted from the IRT process. Ramsey County will be looking for a PAC decision on which option(s) should be presented to the public for feedback. The preference would be for one streetcar option to move forward, but the County will follow whatever decision the PAC makes.
 - Streetcar Option 1.
 - 20 stations.
 - Dedicated center transit lanes from Mall of America (MOA) to Grand Avenue.
 - Shared lanes from Grand Avenue to Union Depot.
 - Streetcar Option 2.
 - 22 stations (added stations at Jefferson and Smith).
 - Dedicated center transit lanes from MOA to Victoria Street area.
 - Shared side-running lanes from Otto Avenue to Union Depot stations.
 - Bus Option.
 - The bus option would be Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (ABRT). This would primarily be along the current Route 54 bus alignment, with some changes in the Bloomington area. In Downtown Saint Paul, the ABRT would share infrastructure with Gold Line BRT.
 - Comments
 - Tyler Blackmon: Asked if there was the possibility of adding stations to Streetcar Option 1.
 - Jennifer Jordan: Ramsey County is looking to the PAC for feedback before going to the public for comments. The process is iterative and open to adjustments.

4. High level alignment status (Presentation)

(Jessica Laabs, Kimley-Horn) summarized recommendations of IRTs.

- Airport/Bloomington area.
 - Last PAC meeting: This area is the same as discussed at the last PAC. Riverview would interline with Blue Line, ending at MOA with a station on 82nd Street that is shared by both Riverview and Blue Line. This would be a change from the existing station at MOA and would require removal of the existing Blue Line tracks south of 82nd Street. An elevated station is preferred by the IRT.

- Current status: Recommendations are the same in this area as described in the last PAC.
- Continued Coordination.
 - The project will continue to coordinate with Metro Transit on user experience and walking time at a new 82nd Street station.

Future work will include simulation of Blue Line and Riverview service areas where both services will be operating.

- Bdote/Fort Snelling area.
 - Last PAC meeting: Tribal Partner Feedback
 - Jessica reiterated concerns and restrictions brought forth by tribal partners. The team is to avoid rock disturbance in the Bdote/Fort Snelling area.
 - Other topics were elimination of a transit flyover, single track vs. mixed traffic options over the bridge, multiple options for bike and ped improvements and bridge types, and connection to Blue Line at existing Fort Snelling station.
 - Current status.
 - Existing ramp from westbound Highway 62 to southbound Highway 5 would be removed to avoid or minimize rock impact while serving a new Historic Fort Snelling station. Other benefits would include a connection between the Fort Snelling chapel and the visitor's center.
 - New: Bridge concept
 - New bridge structure. 2 lanes of streetcar and 3 available traffic lanes. Bikes and pedestrians would be on a bridge level above traffic.
 - Continued coordination.
 - Traffic mitigation measures for river crossing and Hwy 5 ramp removal.
 - Potential improvements to station area.
 - Tribal input.
 - Potential visual impacts to river district.
 - Possible bike/pedestrian connections to Fort.
 - Transition from center to side-running
 - Bridget Rief, MAC: going from center lane to side running on bridge. Where would transition occur?
 - Shown in West 7th alignment.
- Saint Paul – West 7th Area.
 - Streetcar option 1
 - Center running alignment to Grand Ave station in dedicated transit lanes; mixed traffic in downtown.

- Pat Mancini: Option 1 eliminates street parking/ Option 2 preserves parking?
 - Jessica Laabs: Both options have parking impacts but Option 1 eliminates more parking than Option 2. There could be multiple options to add off-street parking as well to help mitigate any losses.
- Tyler Blackmon: Will ridership/travel times be analyzed?
 - Jessica: Yes. During the January meeting that data will be presented.
- Streetcar Option 2
 - Dedicated lanes going to Victoria Street center running with side running shared lanes beginning after Otto Ave station.
 - Additional stations at Jefferson Ave and Smith Ave
 - Russ Stark (City of Saint Paul) thanked Ramsey County for the opportunity to explore Streetcar Option 2 and noted that the project is trying to address a number of needs and desires in a tight area. He highlighted the shift from commute-based transit trips to all-day mobility trips and noted the importance of the economic development study to the city. He indicated that Streetcar Option 2 was preferred by the city because even though it isn't perfect, it best balances the needs in the corridor, including parking, access, and mobility.
- Continued coordination
 - Conduct economic analysis, study bridge crossing, interlining efforts: identify preferred streetcar option.
 - Advance design of pedestrian facilities and safe integration of pedestrians and vehicles
 - Identify streetscape opportunities.
 - Refine transition to dedicated transit lanes and Highway 5
 - Option 2 from center running to side.
- Streetcar alignment: Downtown
 - Kellogg Blvd. alignment recommended by IRT.
 - Serves areas of potential redevelopment
 - More direct route
 - Business feedback
 - Direction from Metro Transit to avoid interlining with Green Line. Looked at several alignments downtown (5th/6th/7th Streets).
 - Continued Coordination
 - Confirm cross section on Kellogg Blvd.
 - Side running track that meets St. Paul Planned improvements (Capital City Bikeway)

- Bus Option
 - Arterial Bus Rapid Transit option
 - 16 stations MOA to Kellogg Blvd
 - Buses share lanes with traffic.
 - 9 downtown platforms that perform similar function to Route 54 Alignment.
 - Uses Gold Line (dedicated) infrastructure downtown.
 - ABRT assumptions
 - No river bridge improvements; no new ped/bike connections (Lost opportunity)
 - Other options would require this as a result of ADA.
 - No stations at Historic Fort Snelling or MSP Terminal 2
 - Use existing MOA station - No new MOA alignment, mitigation at 34th Ave crossing still needed (existing issues).
 - Continued Coordination
 - Traffic impacts near Xcel
 - Station spacing/capacity
 - Electric bus
 - Streetscape plan in Saint Paul

5. PAC Comments:

- Bridget Rief: Do any of the MnDOT projects, particularly the bridge necessitate bike and pedestrian improvements? Is there any sense of timing that MnDOT would have to upgrade the Highway 5 bridge? Lack of connection is key concern for bus line.
 - Brad Larsen: Unfortunately, not versed in that topic but will bring discussion back to MnDOT Leadership.
- Pat Mancini: How does ABRT affect tribal and National Park concerns?
 - Jessica Laabs: No impacts with existing bridge, however, it would not allow for new Historic Fort Snelling Station which is desired by tribal partners along with the bike/ped improvements on new bridge deck.
- Pat Mancini: How do ABRT stations or platforms differ from streetcar platforms?
 - Grant Wyffels: Bus platforms are 30 ft shorter, 2 ft narrower. We have not performed station design yet (applying Metro Transit standards), - will need refinements. ABRT platform is smaller than

- streetcar platform. There will be a future study on specifics to Riverview corridor.
 - Mike Rogers: Bus platforms assumed to be similar to A Line platforms.
 - Comm Ortega: The streetcar and ABRT stations would not be similar.
 - Tyler Blackmon: Center running stations for streetcar, side running for BRT?
 - Mike Rogers: ABRT stations roughly same location as Route 54 stops today.
 - Commissioner Ortega: Design of streetcar is with Ramsey County until we get to operations phase.
- Pat Mancini: How do ABRT stations compare to streetcar stations?
 - Tyler Blackmon – stations would be side running. Correct.
- Commissioner Ortega: ABRT would be a Met Council Project if we choose bus.
- Russ Stark: If the solution was simple, it would have been done already. Compared to University Ave there is less ROW. There is a bump up against desires for efficient transit to space people want to exist in. Less center around the work commute trip and about people using transit for lots of different daily trips. Is it about a fast trip to the airport or about shorter daily trips. What would it be like to have a lighter system on the ground that wouldn't require as much hard infrastructure as the Green Line? What the street looks like in the future is an important consideration and the city likes Streetcar 2 option more.

6. Station area planning update

(Michael Lamb, Michael Lamb Consulting)

- The goal is to promote safe and direct station access as well as transit-oriented development (TOD) near station stops.
- A lot of the corridor is about preserving the character and uses that are in line with the city's comprehensive plan.
- A task force has been meeting almost monthly until early 2023, to review existing land uses, access and circulation and redevelopment opportunities.

7. Economic Development Assessment (EDA)

- There was a market analysis done in 2021 that this EDA work is updating. This updated analysis will be the basis for the EDA study we are currently doing.

- Anticipation of model runs the week of 12/19 to be heard about in January PAC meeting. Based on current iteration, Arterial BRT option, and streetcar option, and greenway option.
 - Economic development assessment, initiative working with Nicolle Goodman (Saint Paul), with Oklahoma City streetcar in mind.
- Will look at unit and acres of development.
 - Large, contiguous areas that can be redeveloped in parts, and many smaller locales providing smaller opportunities.
- Consideration of zoning updates to low-density residential. Anticipation from office conversation to residential along corridor.

8. Communication and Community engagement

(Kevin Roggenbuck, Ramsey County and Lyssa Washington, 4RM+ULA)

- Engagement activities
 - Focus on Enhanced Transit campaigns.
 - INPUTiD map has over 240 comments as a baseline with dialogue amongst community members within these comments.
 - Described several in-person and virtual engagement events to keep people informed.
- Community Advisory Committee (CAC) update
 - Membership includes residents, commuters, and business owners.
 - Meet prior to PAC meetings so their meeting summary can be shared with the PAC. Most recent meeting on Dec 5.
 - Concerned about connections and number of stations, speed of streetcar, parking, and learning more about the streetcar and bus options. Questions about technical issues and comparison results. Interest in greater details to coincide with January PAC and subsequent public engagement.

9. Cultural resources team update

(Christina Slattery (Mead & Hunt)

- Phase I architecture /history survey underway in coordination with MnDOT TH 5 project
- Cultural landscape study – underway (2022-2024)
- Phase I archaeology survey – to be initiated in 2024.

10. Next steps

(Jennifer)

- Jan 31, 2024 – present more detail on the streetcar and ABRT options to CAC and PAC.

- Anticipate Feb. PAC meeting if unable to get through all information and discussion.
- Will dive deeper into three alignment details (cost, run time, ridership, etc.) as well as economic impact assessment.
- Level of detail may necessitate accompanying February PAC mtg as well.
- Spring/Summer 2024 – public engagement.
- Summer/Fall 2024 – PAC action on next steps.
- Tyler Blackmon – Why are we not going to the public with both streetcar options? Very concerned about slow and expensive streetcar.
 - Jennifer – The PAC can decide to take one or two streetcar options to the public for comment.

11. Public Comment

- Tim Marino, Dayton Bluff resident – I depend on transit in this corridor. Riverview is a regional project and currently at 65% pre-pandemic ridership. Fully support the proposed Mall of America approach, as well as the double-decker bridge over the river. Existing pedestrian realm to/across that bridge right now is inadequate, so leveraging federal dollars would be a great bonus. Support the Jefferson Ave station being added. A streetcar/LRT is a better option. Looking at Blue Line LRT ridership rail projections, have a 42% higher than the bus and is important when looking at who is visiting businesses. Experience on Milwaukee Streetcar, shared lanes frequently block transit. If you give room to cars, they will take it and impact the streetcar negatively (parking). Xcel Energy center area gets crowded around events - dedicated lanes downtown should be prioritized over preserving on-street parking spots. When going to the public they should be given a look at both design options. As a regional project, a 100% dedicated ROW must be an option. Spending large sums of money on the project it should be significant improvement to existing.
- Katie Nicholson – Thank you PAC for public comment opportunity. Highway 5 Bridge is excellent, Kellogg Blvd ROW opens up a lot of opportunities. Riverview corridor needs 100% dedicated ROW. Why be held back by concerns parking concerns with regional transit corridor. We already have a lot of parking ramps/on-street Downtown. How many cars really need to travel along W 7th Street with other parallel roadway options. ABRT should not be considered as it is inadequate for corridor / regional transit needs. Currently an A Line rider, and it always gets stuck in traffic. Termini at MOA and Union Depot should allow for future transit extensions.