

# DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

## COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #6

**Date:** January 29, 2024  
**Time:** 5:30-6:58 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	
Hanna Debele	Saint Paul, Ward 3	
Jason DeBoer-Moran	Saint Paul, Ward 2	
Cristina Diaz	Saint Paul, Ward 2	
Eric Ecklund	Bloomington	X
Amelia English	Minneapolis	
Kevin Gallatin, Co-chair	Saint Paul, Ward 3	X
Diane Gerth	Saint Paul, Ward 2	
Sylvie Guezeon	Saint Paul, Ward 1	X
Meghan Kress	Saint Paul, Ward 2	
Negatu Merkuria	Saint Paul, Ward 3	
Bill Lindeke	Saint Paul, Ward 1	X
Corrinne Ollman	Saint Paul, Ward 2	X
Jay Severance	Saint Paul, Ward 2	X
Bob Whitehead	Saint Paul, Ward 3	
Amanda Willis, Co-chair	Saint Paul, Ward 3	X
Joe Landsberger, ex officio	Station Area Planning Task Force Co-Chair	X
Wendy Underwood, ex officio	Station Area Planning Task Force Co-Chair	

Project Team Members and Other Attendees		
Jennifer Jordan	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Kevin Roggenbuck	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Grant Wyffels	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Jessica Laabs	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Lyssa Washington	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Robin Caufman	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Kara Johnson	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Raquel Strand	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Mona Elabaddy	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Jackie Nowak	Riverview Corridor Project Team	X
Paul Hardt	W. 7 <sup>th</sup> Fort Road Federation	X
Christian Noyce		X
Henry McDaniels	District 3	X

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY

### 1. Welcome

Kevin Roggenbuck welcomed everyone to the Riverview Community Advisory Committee meeting 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 and virtual meeting procedures.

### 4. Agenda

Co-Chair Kevin Gallatin reviewed the agenda with the committee.

### 5. Overall Project Status

Jennifer Jordan noted the team and committee has spent quite a lot of time in the current phase in identifying and confirming streetcar and bus alternatives. Looking ahead to upcoming milestones, on Feb. 29 we will look to the PAC to decide on what options will be presented to the public. Then public engagement will be a focus over the summer. Those findings will be presented to PAC in the fall to determine next steps.

## 6. Recap of Streetcar Options

Jennifer Jordan provided an overview of the two streetcar options. Similarities between the two include an elevated MOA station at 82<sup>nd</sup> Street, a new Hwy 5 bridge, and both run on a mostly dedicated track (option 1 dedicated to Grand and shared from Grand to Union Depot; option 2 dedicated to Otto and shared from Otto to Union Depot). Option 1 has 20 stations and option 2 has 22 stations with additions at Smith and Jefferson.

## 7. Travel Time, Ridership and Cost

Grant Wyffels explained that the travel time calculation was done for peak hours, in mixed traffic, and includes dwell time, acceleration/deceleration at stops and interlining delay in the westbound direction. He also noted that traffic signals are programmed for transit signal priority but there are still delays, particularly in congested areas such as Kellogg at West 7<sup>th</sup> Street and near 35E. Travel time also factors in speed limits.

Jackie Nowak explained that ridership is based on a mathematical model with data from 2019. As soon as more current data is available, this will be updated. With the data currently available, ridership numbers compare estimated 2019 to estimated 2040. In looking ahead to 2040 and factoring in employment population changes, there is a small difference in ridership estimates between option 1 and option 2 with option 1 being lower based on slower travel time due to the additional stations.

Grant went over the cost projections as being very close in comparing the two options. Costs are estimated based on 2023 construction costs as a base and then modeled to factor inflation costs to 2033 when the project would be expensed. The estimated costs include the elevated MOA station, the new Hwy 5 bridge, new track, roadway reconstruction, utilities, right-of-way, the vehicles and a 40% contingency.

Similarly, there is a slight difference in forecasted operating costs with option 2 being slightly higher due to the two additional stations.

## 8. Difference Comparisons

Jennifer provided an overview comparison of the two streetcar options. There is a small difference in the extent of dedicated lanes, and there are slight differences in travel times and costs due to the extra stations for option 2. Key differentiators when it comes to dedicated lanes or shared lanes are transit speed and reliability which increase with more dedicated lanes.

Other differentiators include pedestrian transit access, crossing West 7<sup>th</sup> Street, parking availability, business access and vehicle turning movements.

## 9. MOA and Fort Snelling

Jessica went into detail starting at Mall of America, end of line station. The plan recommends bringing in Riverview streetcar and the Blue Line LRT into an elevated station at 82<sup>nd</sup> Street. This addresses current congestion issues at 24<sup>th</sup> and Killebrew. It also frees up the adjacent land for future development. Two platform renderings were shown, one from the Riverview side of the platform and one from the other side which includes the view below with Blue Line LRT.

Riverview would interline with Blue Line LRT at the existing Bdote/Fort Snelling station. Accommodation for a dedicated Riverview station is also proposed. At the MSP Airport tunnel, Jessica noted that a rule change in tunnel operations is being discussed with partner agencies. The ramp at WB Hwy 62 to SB Hwy 5 will be removed. Mitigation includes a two-mile detour

northbound on Hwy 55 and back. This plan minimizes bedrock disruption, visual and other environmental impacts; goals established with and in collaboration with Tribal partners. Additional traffic modeling at a regional level would be necessary in future phases.

The Hwy 5 bridge concept is a full replacement within the existing footprint and accommodates bike and pedestrian access on top. There is likely an opportunity for cost-sharing with other partner agencies.

Only five lanes of transit and roadway can fit inside the tunnel under Fort Snelling. Jessica described an option where two lanes run southbound to the airport and one lane to St. Paul that is not supported by MnDOT. The other option has two lanes northbound to St. Paul and one lane to the airport that is not supported by Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC). There are significant challenges with the one lane to St. Paul option, particularly with safety concerns at several ramp merge points.

Where the streetcar transitions to center running on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Jessica described a new signal and ramp reconfiguration where Mississippi River Boulevard accesses westbound Hwy 5.

## 10. St. Paul

Jessica described the differences in the two streetcar options on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street. For option 1, the streetcar travels on a dedicated, center lane to Grand Avenue. For option 2, the streetcar travels on dedicated track to the Otto Avenue station and transitions to a side, mixed-use lane just beyond Otto Avenue to Grand Avenue and includes two additional stations at Jefferson and Smith Avenues. Several renderings were shown to illustrate the lane transitions and the center/side lane options.

Jessica explained the risks to transit speed and reliability with the different options. Option 1 has more dedicated track and less opportunity for vehicle stoppage but also means longer crossing distances for pedestrians. Vehicles could potentially block the track on option 2 and it is more sensitive to congestion, but it also allows for more parking and a center turn lane. In addition, there is an opportunity for curb extensions with option 2, crossing at unsignalized intersections and shorter crossings. Option 1 does not provide a lot of opportunity for green space or streetscaping.

One of the biggest differences between the two options is parking. Parking with option 1 removes on-street parking from West 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Option 2 retains 400 spaces. Option 1 only allows traffic on side streets to turn left at fully signalized intersections, and with option 2 left turns would be allowed at all intersections. Jay asked what is included in the capital cost of the Mall of America station and the Hwy 5 bridge. Grant explained that the station would cost \$50M in 2023 dollars which translates to about double at \$100M with inflation to 2033, which is included in the overall cost estimate. And the bridge is estimated to be \$240-250 in 2033 dollars, also included in the overall cost estimate.

Kevin G expressed concern over the hinderance of shared lanes and asked the confidence in the time projections and that unknowns are accounted for. He also asked about closing side street intersections. Grant explained that the traffic volumes are lower north of 35E and that good design and enforcement will help. These times are assuming all intersections are open but there is conversation with St. Paul about options and possibilities when it comes to closing off some of the smaller streets.

Joe acknowledged that the project is complex. He asked, starting at the bridge, how do pedestrians and cyclists access the upper level and what's involved in the building process. Christian also commented that the pedestrian bridge level will need some amenities such as trees and benches.

Grant explained that access is tied into the bluff at the top of the southwest side of river for a seamless connection through Fort Snelling. The east side connection will need more advancement in the next phase.

Joe stated that streetcars seem to be at the expense of neighborhoods and disruptive to neighborhood access. He also said that parking is a very big issue, as is access to businesses. He is concerned about the access to loading/delivery for local businesses. Are new parking ramps going to be built into costs and where would they be put? He is also curious about the timing for the Route 54 bus and would like it to be included as a comparison.

Staff explained that a bus comparison would be provided at the February meeting. Loading and unloading for local businesses will be taken into consideration.

Jennifer spoke about how a variety of upcoming projects affect each other and teams are working to coordinate, particularly along the downtown portion of the alignment. The options presented here provided differences in location of the track, but both scenarios presented were for shared use lanes – the difference was where they aligned along Kellogg. She also summarized all the streetcar option differences that have been previously discussed.

## **11. Next Steps/ Final Comments and Questions**

Jennifer went over next steps including the PAC meeting on Wednesday, January 31, and the February 29, PAC meeting where we will present the bus option in detail, provide a comparison between the bus and streetcar options, and present findings from the economic development analysis. Spring and summer will be a time for community engagement. Fall will bring all findings back for direction on a path forward.

Joe spoke to the Locally Preferred Alternative, and specifically how it has been reconfigured in downtown Saint Paul. Jennifer's purpose of this phase was to refine the LPA alignment. For the downtown LPA alignment, it became clear that property impacts and lack of right of way space were challenging. At that point, the PAC directed the project team to explore different alignments downtown.

Jay expressed concerns over the long period of planning for this project and asked for more specific clarification of the project phases. He is concerned that it is a lot of money and a lot of time paired with unknowns such as non-consensus from key partners on bridge crossing.

Staff explained that once this current phase is finished, it will be followed by a two-year environmental process and a two-to-three-year engineering process.

Christian asked why dedicated lanes were not maintained on Kellogg, through downtown. Staff explained that this was at the City of St. Paul request.

In the meeting chat Jay asked a question regarding the preservation of 6 lanes on the bridge with a narrowing at the tunnel to maintain the undisturbed bedrock goal. Answered through the chat, staff indicated this creates similar issues with congestion and conflicts when transitioning

down a lane to get through the tunnel. Also, the merge distance required would take up a lot of the bridge.

Kevin G. shared that he feels things have accelerated a lot and they've been given more detail.

Jay requested any existing data that shows safety statistics comparing dedicated versus shared traffic lanes.

The Community Advisory Committee ended at 6:58 pm.

## Comments in the virtual meeting chat

Jennifer, you may want to speak up if you speak again in the future, it was a bit hard to hear you as it was a little quiet.

Sylvie's iPhone to Everyone 6:09 PM

My apologies, I have to hop off.

kevin.roggenbuck to Everyone 6:10 PM

thank you Sylvie

Eric Ecklund to Everyone 6:18 PM

Just an observation: If I'm parking in an area along West 7th I prefer parking on a side street over parking on West 7th because of how busy West 7th can be.

Christian Noyce to Everyone 6:21 PM

Was going to mention something similar Eric. I notice just the count of parking on the main road when usually a study area considers about a fourth to a half mile on each side. So the parking study area probably should be counting those too.

I know the mall of America stop has been discussed before so I may have missed it but can the new station be configured to continue on if there is ever an extension of the blue line on that side?

4RM+ULA Staff to Everyone 6:28 PM

All,

4RM+ULA Staff to Everyone 6:29 PM

We have information to share on downtown as well.

Jay Severance to Everyone 6:30 PM

any way to preserve 6 lanes on bridge & narrow to five through the tunnel?

how do streetcar option travel times compare to the 54 bus

Eric Ecklund 6:33 PM

Jay, if I remember right the 54 bus takes approximately 39 minutes between Union Depot and Mall of America.

Christian Noyce to Everyone 6:35 PM

I will make a comment that the pedestrian bridge level will need some amenities such as trees and benches. I can see it as an iconic ped bridge... St. Paul's High Line!

Bill Lindeke to Everyone 6:36 PM

according to Google, if you got on the 54 right now you'd be at the MOA in 40 minutes

Christian Noyce to Everyone 6:36 PM

I know we are behind schedule so feel free to respond via email later, can you explain why in option 1 there isn't dedicated lanes for the street car in downtown?

Jessica.Laabs 6:37 PM

Christian, similar comments also were mentioned in the Issue Resolution Team. The programming and planning of that upper deck space would be done in coordination with other stakeholders with agreements for maintenance, etc. Lots of opportunity!

Bill Lindeke to Everyone 6:40 PM

I have to run. Thanks for the informative presentation!

kevin.roggenbuck 6:40 PM

thank you Bill

Jay Severance to Everyone 6:42 PM

Is the ridership number of passenger trips per year?

Mona Elabbady to Everyone 6:42 PM

ridership is trips per day

Jessica.Laabs 6:43 PM

Re: 6 lanes on bridge and narrowing to 5 through the tunnel, this creates similar issues with congestion and conflicts when transitioning down a lane to get through the tunnel. Also the

merge area required would take up a lot of the bridge anyway. This will definitely be an area of further refinement and regional traffic analysis.