

T Transportation Committee

Business Item

Item: 2009-126

Meeting date: April 13, 2009
For Metropolitan Council: April 22, 2009

ADVISORY INFORMATION

Date:	April 4, 2009
Subject:	Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Memorandum of Understanding with City of Saint Paul
District(s), Member(s):	District 13: Richard Aguilar District 14: Kirstin Sersland Beach
Policy/Legal Reference:	Mn Statute Section 473.3993, Subd. 4
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Brian J. Lamb, General Manager, 612-349-7510 Mark W. Fuhrmann, Deputy General Manager, 651-602-1942
Division/Department:	Metro Transit / CCPO

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to execute the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Project Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Metropolitan Council and city of Saint Paul addressing impacts of project delivery within Saint Paul.

Background

City of Saint Paul granted Municipal Consent of the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (LRT) preliminary design plans in July 2008. Metropolitan Council's (Council) Central Corridor Project Office proceeded with development of 30% preliminary engineering plans based on the approved scope and alignment of the LRT project. Project delivery through a fully developed urban corridor will create some impacts. As a result, the city requested development of a memorandum of understanding with the Council that would establish the framework and expectations between the partner agencies. The Saint Paul MOU has 22 articles that can be summarized into three themes.

Design

City of Saint Paul believes the largest public investment in the history of Saint Paul should improve the appearance of the LRT corridor. The MOU commits the Council to designing the project to incorporate all the necessary baseline elements. Should the city desire betterments, it may commit in advance funding to the Council for enhanced station design, improved streetscape appearance and more ornate catenary poles. If the city is unable to commit advance funding, a project contingency management process will be established whereby Saint Paul and all project partners may request to access available contingency dollars at a given contingency hold point.

The preliminary engineering revealed serious flaws with the original location of the project's operation and maintenance facility on Ramsey County owned property east of Union Depot and south of Kellogg Boulevard. The project proposed and the city granted Municipal Consent for a new location of the maintenance facility in the vacant Diamond Products building located on the east end of the Lowertown neighborhood. The MOU calls for the Council and project to create a more pedestrian friendly façade of the building on the Broadway and Prince Street sides and consider green roof technologies.

Access

Small and big businesses alike are anxious about access during construction and post construction. The MOU requires the Council to implement strategies to provide continued access to properties along the LRT route during the construction phase. This will include efforts to limit heavy construction to one side of University Avenue in a given stretch at a time. While construction is taking place, wayfinding signage will be provided to direct customers to businesses.

Scope

The Council approved in February 2008 development and build-out of at least one infill station that will have the first call on available project contingency. The MOU reiterates this commitment.

The MOU calls for the Council to conduct a “sector study” for the Central Corridor two years prior to beginning LRT service that would retain or improve overall transit service to be provided by LRT and bus service. The Council conducted such a study prior to Hiawatha LRT opening that reoriented many bus routes to connect directly with the high frequency LRT service.

Rationale

A Memorandum of Understanding will create the framework and expectations governing the complex nature of Central Corridor LRT Project delivery in the city of Saint Paul.

Funding

There is no direct project funding impact caused by this MOU. The MOU is careful to delineate the Council’s project responsibilities under the baseline design and Saint Paul responsibilities in the form of advance funding necessary to ensure inclusion of requested betterments. Only if project contingency is available at designated contingency hold points, Saint Paul and other project partners may request the Council to consider committing contingency dollars for a specific betterment.

As design is advanced for the Operation and Maintenance Facility in the Diamond Products building, there may be some additional cost for converting the blank brick wall facing Broadway Street and Farmers Market into a pedestrian friendly space with windows and doors.

Known Support / Opposition

Saint Paul City Council unanimously approved the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Project Memorandum of Understanding at its March 18, 2009 meeting.