

Transportation Committee

Business Item
Item: **SW** 2007-407

Meeting date: December 10, 2007

Council Meeting date: December 12, 2007

ADVISORY INFORMATION

Date:	December 5, 2007
Subject:	Principles for Central Corridor LRT Major Scoping Decisions
District(s), Member(s):	7-Annette Meeks; 8-Lynnette Wittsack; 13-Rick Aguilar; 14-Kirstin Sersland Beach
Policy/Legal Reference:	FTA Guidance on New Starts Policies and Procedures
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Arlene McCarthy, Director MTS (651-602-1754) Mark Fuhrmann, Deputy General Manager, Metro Transit (651-602-1942)
Division/Department:	Metropolitan Transportation Services/Metro Transit

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the following principles to be applied when determining the Central Corridor LRT project scope to be continued through Preliminary Engineering:

Primary Principles

- Cost Effectiveness Index Impact
 - Ridership Impact
 - Capital Cost Impact
 - Operating Cost Impact
 - Travel Time Impact
- Safety and Security Impact

Secondary Principles

- Environmental Justice Considerations
- Land Use/Economic Development Considerations
- Deferrable versus One-Time Opportunity

Background

- The Metropolitan Council selected the Washington/University Avenue alignment and LRT mode for the Central Corridor in June 2006. The DEIS alternative is an 11-mile light rail transit corridor on University and Washington Avenues between St. Paul (Union Depot) and Minneapolis (Multi-modal Station) with 16 new stations, five shared stations with Hiawatha and a tunnel at the University of Minnesota.
- The Central Corridor DEIS alternative has an estimated cost of \$932 million based on 2010-2013 construction and 2014 start of revenue operations. In 2006, the DEIS alternative had a CEI of approximately \$25 with the corresponding target of \$22.99 or less ultimately required to secure a Full Funding Grant Agreement providing 50% federal funding. (The FTA has subsequently adjusted the CEI figures for 2007 reflecting a year of inflation such that the current target for federal funding is \$23.99 or less. The Central Corridor DEIS alternative CEI figure would be adjusted accordingly for one year, to approximating \$26.) The project scope must be reduced to achieve the federal CEI.
- When selecting the Central Corridor alignment and mode in June 2006, the Council determined that project scope decisions must be determined in a timely manner to ensure that financial resources are

used effectively, that the project schedule is maintained and that a viable project meeting FTA requirements can be delivered.

- The Council authorized design/engineering of project components, including potential additional items not included in the DEIS alternative, to approximately 30% design in the early stage of PE. The 30% technical analysis will provide information to facilitate the Council in determining a revised project scope to carry forward through completion of PE.

Rationale

The proposed principles are categorized as primary and secondary. The primary principles regarding the CEI, safety and security are not optional if the project is to be delivered with federal funding.

The CEI value is generally negatively impacted by decreases in ridership and increases in passenger travel time, capital costs (both design/engineering and construction costs) and operating costs. Given the comprehensive nature of the CEI, these factors are not recommended as individual principles.

Safety and security are a top priority and consideration for all transportation projects and operations. A successful light rail line, and one that is acceptable to the FTA, must address safety and security.

Environmental Justice considerations as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and as defined by the FTA require, in part, a project to avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority and low-income populations.

Existing and planned Land Use and Economic Development along the corridor are components in the New Starts evaluation and rating process. Timing, intensity and mix of emerging and potential land use as well as pedestrian connectivity are relevant factors.

Some project components, such as a station, can be added subsequent to the initial construction and start of revenue operations. Other project components, such as a tunnel, are realistically a one-time opportunity at the time of initial construction.

Funding

Determining a project scope which meets the federal requirements is necessary to secure 50% federal funding.

Known Support / Opposition

Based on public input during the DEIS project and early phases of PE, various stakeholders have differing opinions on the priorities for the Central Corridor LRT project.