

MEETING NOTES

Technical and Community Advisory Committee Meeting #09

Date/Time: July 23, 2013 – 4 PM to 5:30 PM

Location: Minneapolis City Hall, Room 350 South Fifth Street, Room 333

Attendees

See attached sign-in sheet.

I. Welcome and Housekeeping

Charleen explained that the June meeting was cancelled to allow more time for partner agencies to review technical work. Another outcome from last June was a change in approach regarding selection and approval of a locally preferred alternative (LPA). Specifically, the City agreed to go out to the public before recommending an LPA, unlike what was discussed at the May 2013 TCAC meeting.

Charleen presented high-level information on results of the detailed evaluation of alternatives. The consultant team and members of the TCAC including David Frank, Cole Hiniker, Michael Mechtenberg and Joe Bernard participated in answering detailed questions.

Peter Wagenius requested clarification on the terms “local circulation” and “regional nature” regarding the types of trips served by enhanced bus and arterial BRT, respectively. The terms seem to imply that longer trips are higher in value than short as well as being confusing. Charleen agreed that the team will make this change.

II. Results of Detailed Evaluation of Alternatives

Three key questions to address purpose and goals of the project:

- What mode is best? (Comparison of 9.2-mile alternatives)
- What river crossing is best?
- What is the minimal operating segment (or “starter line”)?

What Mode is Best?

- Goal 1: Same alignment, same geographic area – therefore, no significant differences among alternatives.
- Goal 2: Streetcar has higher ridership and greater ability to accommodate future growth.
- Goal 3: Similar to Goal 1: Same alignment; therefore, development capacity and value are the same for enhanced bus and streetcar. However, streetcar has greater potential to spur development based on information from peer review and developer forum.
- Goal 4: Based on neighborhood meetings to-date, there are some questions regarding traffic. Charleen reiterated that no travel lanes would be taken under the enhanced bus or streetcar

alternative, i.e. these alternatives would operate in mixed traffic. Buses and streetcars would stop in the mixed traffic lanes at curb extensions, thus blocking traffic in those lanes for short periods of time. However, decreased boarding times, fewer stops and TSP are anticipated to mitigate this potential issue. It is anticipated that additional analysis will be done during environmental analysis to address individual locations in order to minimize impacts. On-street parking impacts are similar to traffic impacts and will be investigated further on a stop by stop basis during environmental review/detailed design. In conclusion, at this level of analysis, there is no difference between modes.

- Goal 5: Higher transit-reliant population for streetcar than enhanced bus. Otherwise, no difference between alternatives.
 - Comment: Streetcar has the potential environmental benefits of being more adaptable to “green the city” or reduce carbon footprint, as well as from water and soil quality, because streetcar is new construction, it would meet new permitting standards for more permeable surface.
- Goal 6: Divided into financial impacts and community sentiment. Financial impacts include several measures and were summarized in one slide.
 - Discussion of cost-effectiveness
 - What lifecycle is assumed? *Used information from FTA that includes a lifecycle for specific items such as rail vehicles (25 years).*
 - Provide context on cost-effectiveness to better explain this information, e.g. relative to other streetcar projects. *There are no other projects in the same league. Also, there has been a change in transportation legislation (SAFETEA-LU vs. MAP-21) and criteria and definitions have changed, so there is no appropriate comparison. Moreover, Portland streetcar (east side loop line) is the only project that has been funded through Small Starts.* Clarified that cost-effectiveness is defined differently for Small Starts than for New Starts projects and that the denominator used to calculate it is the number of “project boardings,” which is not the same as “new riders.” TCAC requested breakpoints. Clarify definition of cost-effectiveness (cost per boarding) and that it does not include other benefits like economic development.
 - Provide comparative cost information of other streetcar projects to help the TCAC understand cost estimates presented to them.
 - Need to better address parking impacts, e.g. the choice not to drive a car because of limited parking availability could be a benefit/incentive to ride streetcar.
 - Community support measure will be assessed during August 2013 outreach when detailed evaluation results are presented to the public.
 - Evaluation measures and results need to address integration with both the existing and future transit systems. For example, the benefit of a streetcar line to use existing rail tracks or infrastructure to serve future streetcar lines and other facilities such as an operations and maintenance facility.

What River Crossing is Best?

- Charleen presented the pros and cons of the Hennepin/First and Central/Third Bridge options. This topic generated the following concerns, comments and discussion:
 - Depending on Central/Third routing to Nicollet Mall, this option could connect to future Washington Avenue streetcar. However, Washington Avenue redesign between Hennepin and

- Fifth Avenue present these issues if Central/Third Bridge is used: There is already congestion today along Washington Avenue, particularly at the Central/Third intersection at Washington) and that results in a lack of transit service reliability.
- Concerns: Routing transit on East Hennepin would create congestion on Hennepin/First. Also that this alignment would result in Hennepin/First carrying a majority of transit vehicle volumes (streetcar and bus) and that there is no intention to reroute transit to better distribute service/volumes. Another concern is that routing transit through Hennepin/First would preclude plans/desires of the community to convert these two roads to two-way operations, specifically because the current plan proposed having streetcar run in the left lane. Too much focus south of Near Northeast instead of this area, which needs economic revitalization, slower auto traffic, encourage biking. Area also includes historic district. *Mayor Rybak is budgeting for a traffic study of the area for 2014 that would be done in parallel with additional work on streetcar.*
 - Concern regarding Measure 4.3: There is more congestion on Hennepin/First than Central/Third, contrary to information in presentation materials. TCAC needs to understand what Central/Third Bridge listing in the National Register of Historic Places means regarding construction cost and schedule if streetcar is routed via Central/Third Bridge.
 - If streetcar would run in left lane on Hennepin/First and other bus routes in the right lane, where/how would bikes be accommodated? Need to present more details to the public on this topic.
 - Charleen indicated that the exact, detailed streetcar alignment in this area is yet to be determined. There is still a lot of to be done, particularly during environmental review and subsequent design activities.
 - TCAC member asked for a commitment to study one-way vs. two-way traffic operations and impacts. *Steve Kotke indicated that the 2014 budget for a traffic study is part of the City's commitment. TCAC member emphasized need to engage the community as a whole and not just City/technical staff.*
 - Concern with congestion on Hennepin/First Bridge if other streetcar lines cross the River in this manner. *Charleen cited Nicollet Mall functioning as a transit spine for the City's streetcar plan. Streetcar is not the same as LRT; it is similar to local bus operations because of mixed-traffic operations. Streetcar infrastructure to cross the River is expensive so consider using the Hennepin Avenue Bridge as a spine for the City's streetcar network.*
 - Present more benefits of Central/Third Bridge, not just what it lacks. TCAC member commented that enhanced pedestrian connections could be part of a streetcar project.
 - Clarification that streetcar starter line assumes continued operation of Routes 10 and 59 on Central Avenue.
 - Will the public be asked to express preference for one River crossing option? *Yes, during the 30-day public comment period that starts early August. A paper and online survey will be made available asking for preference.*
 - Will the City indicate a preference for the Hennepin/First Bridge during the public comment period? *The results of the technical analysis will be presented but a preferred alternative will be part of the selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative which will occur after the public comment period.*
 - **Streetcar Starter Line**
 - Definition of Starter Line
 - Comment: The definition of streetcar project (specifically a 3.4-mile starter line) has already been presented to the public. What is the point of TCAC input because this has already been decided?

Expressed frustration with the role of TCAC. *Explained that City Council approval is regarding use of value capture revenue for streetcar implementation and is not specific to a particular definition of a starter line for Nicollet-Central. The exact definition of the starter line is still to be determined. The decision also identified the specific properties for value capture.*

- Streetcar starter line needs to go to Holy Land for better economic development.
- Concern that starter line is being marketed as “K-mart to Kramarczuk’s.” This alignment does not go far enough north to benefit the northern part of the Nicollet-Central study area. Perception that streetcar starter line is still primarily an investment in South Minneapolis. *Starter line needs strong anchors; there is no clear anchor to the south until we get to Lake Street, unlike north of the River, where University Avenue is a clear anchor.*
- Economic Development and Affordable Housing Analysis
 - Affordable housing analysis is based on existing data
 - How is potential development capacity determined? *Using existing zoning, comprehensive plans and small area plans that have been adopted.*
 - How are “economic development opportunity sites” defined? *Based on small area and comprehensive plans.*
 - Small area plan in East Hennepin area will be done in two months. What happens with this AA’s analysis with this new information? *It depends on how the LPA is defined but land use assumptions can be changed in future phases if small area plan is adopted into city’s comprehensive plan.*
 - How long does a streetcar have to operate before fare covers cost? *Cost-effectiveness does not account for revenue; it is defined as expense per rider. Regional average is about one-third of cost of transit service is covered by fare revenue.*
 - Why does streetcar starter line and economic development analysis not indicate need to serve Central Arts Wedge? *Analysis is based on current zoning and existing plans.*
 - Are the goals weighted to facilitate objective decision-making? *The goals are not weighted.*
 - Isn’t the detailed evaluation related to developing information to fill out application for federal funds? *Yes, some of study criteria are based on this. With new small area plan, include any new information. Also, based on the Metropolitan Council’s letter to the Mayor, regional criteria also need to be met.*
 - Why is there no weight on job creation? Are FTA [New Starts/Small Starts] criteria weighted? *No, all six are equal. Project needs to serve people (both population and employment) and balance with economic development.*
 - Areas north and northeast of downtown need help to develop/redevelop to attract more people to the City. Regarding Central/Broadway area, when was the last time any planning happened there? *The time is now to contact the governor and Met Council regarding the need for development/redevelopment. The Met Council hears same needs from many cities in the region. The region needs to weigh its priorities, i.e. where is the most benefit for expense? Other regions identify their values. No set formulae for determining priorities. Present peer city information on schedule, timeline, prioritizing projects as part of August public meetings to help address concerns about when a neighbourhood will “get theirs.”*

III. Outreach Activities

Three open houses scheduled for August 2013, along with numerous meetings with neighborhood and business associations along the Nicollet-Central corridor.

VI. Next Steps and Overall Schedule

- Request to add a meeting for East Bank neighborhood (suggested at Nicollet Island park pavilion or DeLaSalle). Eastside Food Coop is too far away from presumed starter line north end point. *City will look into this. Will probably ask TCAC for assistance. Flyers will be e-mailed out. Charleen encouraged the TCAC to participate in or present to neighborhood and business association meetings. Let her know if there are any other groups that she ought to meet with.*
- An LPA recommendation to the PAC will be made at its August meeting, after the open houses.

Meeting concluded at 6 PM.