

RAMSEY COUNTY REGIONAL RAILROAD AUTHORITY

January 11, 2011

The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority met with the following members present: Bennett, Carter, Ortega (late), Parker, Reinhardt, Rettman, McDonough – 7. Absent: 0. Also present was Julie Kleinschmidt, County Manager and Phil Carruthers, Director of Civil Division, Ramsey County Attorney's Office.

Chair McDonough called the meeting to order at 11:02 AM.

AGENDA

Commissioner Parker moved approval of the Agenda of the January 11, 2011 Board Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt. Roll Call: Ayes – Carter, Parker, Reinhardt, Rettman, Bennett, McDonough – 6. Nays – 0.

MINUTES

Commissioner Carter moved approval of the Minutes of the January 4, 2010 Board Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Parker. Roll Call: Ayes – Carter, Parker, Reinhardt, Rettman, Bennett, McDonough – 6. Nays – 0.

1. Subordinate Funding Agreement (RCRRA-1) with Metropolitan Council

Commissioner Carter moved approval of the following resolution, seconded by Commissioner Parker. Roll Call: Ayes – Carter, Parker, Reinhardt, Rettman, Bennett, McDonough – 7. Nays – 0. (R11-06)

WHEREAS, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority is a funding partner of the Central Corridor construction; and

WHEREAS, The construction funding agreement provides for reimbursement to the Authority for staff provided to the construction effort; and

WHEREAS, Dan Soler, a RCRRA Engineer, has been working out of the Central Corridor Project Office providing traffic engineering services; and

WHEREAS, The agreement with the Metropolitan Council for Mr. Soler's services expired December 31, 2010; and

WHEREAS, The agreement with the Metropolitan Council allows for additional RCRRA staff time to constitute and in-kind contribution of the RCRRA's financial contribution for the project; Now, Therefore Be It

RESOLVED, That the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority approves the Subordinate Funding Agreement (RCRRA-1) with the Metropolitan Council for Central Corridor Construction Staff Support from January 1, 2011 through December 31, 2011 at a cost not to exceed \$170,000, and Be It Further

RESOLVED, That the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority authorizes the Chair to execute the Agreement.

(Commissioner Ortega arrived at this point)

2. Central Corridor Project Update – Mark Fuhmann

Tim Mayasich, Director, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA), introduced this item and said RCRRA Staff thought now would be a good time for the Board to receive an update on the current status of the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project.

[The Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Project Update is on file with the RCRRA office]

Mark Fuhrmann, Program Director, Central Corridor LRT Project, Metropolitan Council, introduced himself and thanked the Board for the invitation to present this update. He said the presentation would provide updates on the project's progress and successes from 2010, the Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) and construction activities for 2011. Robin Caufman, Manager of Public Involvement, would also provide information on the public involvement side of construction.

Mr. Fuhrmann gave an overview of the project's key milestones for 2010. He said it was a little less than a year ago when Ray LaHood, Secretary of Transportation, and Peter Rogoff, Administrator, Federal Transit Administration (FTA), enacted a policy change that gave the Central Corridor LRT Project the opportunity to add the three infill stations along University Avenue at Hamline Avenue, Victoria Street and Western Avenue. The infrastructure for these stations had been in the plans, but this new policy allowed the stations to be built with the rest of the project. On May 25, 2010 they received approval from the FTA to formally enter Final Design and on May 28, 2010 the Met Council submitted their FFGA application. Met Council spent much of 2010 assembling construction bid packages. The last one was awarded at the December meeting for the Operation and Maintenance Facility in St. Paul. It was a good climate for the construction bidding process in 2010 allowing the bids to come in at or under budget throughout the process.

Commissioner Rettman commented that some of the Commissioners have been contacted by a handful of University Avenue businesses with concerns about the absence of parking and lack of funds to restore the parking needed in the area. She asked if any of the \$34.8 million below budget could be used to address the parking issues along the Central Corridor.

Mr. Fuhrmann said the \$34.8 million will be set aside in an account at the project office that would require all major funding partners, including the Metropolitan Council, Counties Transit Improvement Board, and the Regional Railroad Authorities of Ramsey and Hennepin County, to authorize expenditure of any of those funds. He said to her question about parking, they have worked closely with the City of St. Paul who made awards to some of those businesses for grants to make parking improvements around their businesses. He said that none of these funds could be available for parking infrastructure because the project's environmental clearances did not include adding parking.

Commissioner Rettman asked if parking infrastructure refers to parking ramps. She added that almost 1,000 parking spaces have been taken away along University Avenue and have not been restored. She said the original Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) did not envision the loss of the 980 parking spaces but rather a loss of 300 to 400 parking spaces. She asked if there is any possibility for these spaces to be restored using the under budgeted funds.

Mr. Fuhrmann said parking infrastructure means parking ramps or surface lots. He said the environmental clearance approvals are already in place for the project. He emphasized that the City has a number of measures that are planned which could be cross-street parking availability and adding meters to the remaining parking spaces to encourage turnover. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) did identify the higher number of spaces that would be displaced, which is that figure mentioned by Commissioner Rettman. The project scope, budget and environmental clearances did not contemplate actual physical replacement of those parking spaces. The funds could not go toward the parking needs because there would need to be amendments to the environmental document, which would take a year or more.

Commissioner Bennett commented that the parking issue has been a concern of his and several of the Commissioners since the beginning of the project planning.

Commissioner Carter asked if there is active discussion at the Metropolitan Council about other ways in which the Metropolitan Council might be able to address this issue with the help of community development funds, and if the Board can gain insight to that with the coming months.

Mr. Fuhrmann said there are the Livable Communities Development grants that are competitively solicited and awarded by the Met Council. He said he is aware that in the cycle last year, there were some applications from for parking grants. However, these were not successful awardees for those grants. There are more opportunities as they move forward for similar or repackaged applications to be submitted to the Met Council for parking measures. They will need to compete competitively but the door is open to apply for those Livable Community funds.

Commissioner Carter said as they continue to look at the needs of the Corridor, they should continue to focus on these possibilities.

Mr. Fuhrmann continued the presentation covering the 2010 construction highlights; the focus was the construction that took place on Fourth Street in downtown St. Paul to relocate underground utilities to accommodate future rail line on Fourth Street. Civil East Construction also took place at the Capitol area and on Robert Street between University Avenue and 12th Street for utility relocation. The rail yard east of the Operations and Maintenance Facility will be underneath the Lafayette Bridge and the soil in that area is being surcharged to prepare for that construction. Close coordination is occurring with the Minnesota Department of Transportation bridge construction.

Mr. Fuhrmann clarified that surcharge refers to the dirt that had to be placed on the site of the future rail yard to compact and compress the soils to allow for a solid foundation for the rail yard.

Mr. Fuhrmann said they are tracking and will be regularly reporting their Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and workforce progress for each of their contractors against the goals; the goals are 15% DBE, 18% minority workforce and 6% female workforce.

Commissioner Carter asked about the projection of meeting these goals and if there was coordination with their partners in the communities to ensure that they know of the work ahead of time and are able to prepare for the particular job categories.

Mr. Fuhrmann said for the DBE component there are now over 100 DBE firms that are under contract/subcontract in the project. For the workforce inclusion, the Met Council has been working to encourage those minority and female work communities to prepare and become qualified for the different trades necessary for this project. He said the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative provided a grant to the Met Council to set up an LRTworks.org website. This site allows the workforce to see the upcoming opportunities and to work with the workforce training center to become trained and ready to apply for the jobs. They did do a census of the number of jobs they created on the Central Corridor and the tally showed that 571 people worked on the project in 2010. That number will be greater in 2011.

Mr. Fuhrmann updated the Board on the Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA). He said they have confirmation that the package has left the FTA and still needs to be reviewed by the Office of Secretary of Transportation and the Office of Management and Budget. They have received positive feedback that it is in good order. Its final stop is a sixty-day Congressional Review, which is simply a courtesy review by Congress with no action required. The project is on track for a late March 2011 FFGA. With that schedule, Met Council will be the first FFGA awarded by President Obama's administration.

2011 will be a very busy year for the project. The focus of construction in 2011 will be on the west end of Ramsey County. The segment between Westgate Station and Hamline Avenue Station will begin in March 2011, as will the area around the Capitol and downtown St. Paul. The segment between Hamline Avenue and Rice Street Capitol Station will not go under full construction until 2012. He said they continue to work closely with the RCRRA Staff to coordinate the construction of the terminal station for Light Rail with the Union Depot Project.

Robin Cauffman, Manager of Public Involvement for the Central Corridor LRT Project, discussed Construction Communication and Coordination. She referred to a map of the Community Outreach Coordinator territories and said most of the coordinators have been on the project for at least three years. There are at least two outreach coordinators per district at all times. This way there is always someone familiar with the project to communicate with stakeholders.

Chair McDonough commented that the electronic weekly project updates received by most of the Commissioners have been extremely helpful in giving them information needed to communicate about the project when they are out in their communities.

Ms. Caufman talked about the Central Corridor Project Office's different venues for communication. She said there is a 24-hour construction hotline, which is 651-602-1404, and is the quickest way to contact an outreach staff person. The construction hotline and website address are posted on blue signs throughout the entire corridor. Also for communication they provide complaint forms, a variety of public meetings, construction tours, neighborhood updates, thorough information on their website and weekly construction updates. Another important aspect to their communication is to assure that they provide ample notice for upcoming construction activities, road and driveway closures, and utility shut-offs. Signage is an important part of communication. In addition to the required maintenance and traffic signs, there is allowance in the contract to provide additional signage for notifications such as open businesses, alternative access paths/routes, etc. There are requirements in the contract to minimize impact to businesses such as maintaining pedestrian and vehicle access to properties, restoring streets and sidewalks in a set amount of time, and implementing a contractor incentive program with the community. The contractor is encouraged to work with the community and exceed the minimum requirements of being proactive, professional, responsive and courteous, and also to provide opportunity for the public to evaluate the performance. Two construction communication committees (CCCs) consisting of community groups were created, one for downtown St. Paul and one for the Capitol area, for the purpose of evaluating the contractor's performance on a quarterly basis. The CCCs are given the opportunity to provide face to face feedback to the contractors and together they work out issues. There has been almost 100% attendance for these committees. Lastly, Ms. Caufman mentioned that the Business Resource Collaborative was launched in June of 2010 and serves as resource site for businesses.

Commissioner Rettman asked if the outreach coordinators have received any requests for better lighting at the Farmers' Market in St. Paul's Lowertown. She also asked if the handling of dust control during construction on University Avenue is included in the construction contract.

Ms. Caufman said they have received some requests for lighting and that she would find out the status of this issue. She also said she believed dust control was written into the construction specifications. She knows there were issues with dust in downtown St. Paul and water trucks were used to get it under control.

Commissioner Carter commented that last month she began to collect concerns from some of the businesses along University Avenue and asked Ms. Caufman to comment on any unforeseen issues that might have come with the start of construction on the avenue and how they have managed these issues.

Ms. Caufman said they have been meeting individually with the businesses along University Avenue in segment 1, the area between Emerald and Hamline Avenues, and they have so far received fairly positive response from their involvement and communication efforts with the businesses. They are currently working on a publication or four page brochure that will outline the construction phase to let people know what to expect.

Chair McDonough thanked Mr. Fuhrmann and Ms. Caufman for the information they provided in the presentation.

CORRIDOR UPDATES

No updates were reported.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair McDonough declared the meeting adjourned at 11:40 AM.