

RAMSEY COUNTY REGIONAL RAILROAD AUTHORITY

October 4, 2011

The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority met with the following members present: Bennett, Carter, Parker, Reinhardt, Rettman, McDonough – 6. Absent: Ortega – 1. Also present was Julie Kleinschmidt, County Manager and James Mogen, Assistant County Attorney, Ramsey County Attorney's Office.

Chair McDonough called the meeting to order at 9:20 AM.

AGENDA

Commissioner Reinhardt moved approval of the Agenda of the October 4, 2011 Regional Railroad Authority Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Parker. Roll Call: Ayes – Reinhardt, Rettman, Bennett, Carter, Parker, McDonough – 6. Nays – 0.

MINUTES

Commissioner Carter moved approval of the Minutes of the September 20, 2011 Regional Railroad Authority Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt. Roll Call: Ayes – Reinhardt, Rettman, Bennett, Carter, Parker, McDonough – 6. Nays – 0.

1. Contract amendment for the East Metro Rail Capacity and Engineering Improvements Study

Commissioner Rettman moved approval of the following resolution, seconded by Commissioner Parker. Roll Call: Ayes – Reinhardt, Rettman, Bennett, Carter, Parker, McDonough – 6. Nays – 0. (R11-37)

WHEREAS, The Gateway Corridor originates in St. Paul and travels east to Wisconsin generally following Interstate 94; and

WHEREAS, The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority has worked to advance The Union Depot Multi-Modal Transit and Transportation Hub (Union Depot) to the benefit of the citizens of Ramsey County; and

WHEREAS, The Union Depot will be a terminus for numerous transportation modes including Amtrak service, inter-city passenger rail, commuter rail, and Midwest Regional Rail (High Speed); and

WHEREAS, The railroad capacity constraints in the east metro are an obstacle to achieving Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority's vision for the Union Depot; and

WHEREAS, The East Metro Rail Capacity and Engineering Improvements Study (East Metro Study) was begun in 2010 to identify improvements required for enhanced freight capacity and for the implementation of increased Amtrak, commuter, inter-city, and high speed rail service to the Union Depot; and

WHEREAS, The East Metro Study through its stakeholder involvement process identified Option 4 as the preferred alternative for improving freight capacity while allowing for the introduction of Red Rock commuter rail and high speed rail to Chicago; and

WHEREAS, Since the endorsement of Option 4, a new option, Option 5, has been identified; and

WHEREAS, Option 5 has been discussed with the impacted railroads and other stakeholders with the resulting consensus that Option 5 is a promising alternative that merits further analysis and that it should be done as part of the East Metro Study; and

WHEREAS, The analysis of Option 5 is outside of the existing East Metro Study's scope of work; and

WHEREAS, The additional analysis will cost \$100,000 which will be split 80% federal and 20% local; and

WHEREAS, Federal funding is available within SG-2009-50 between the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority and the Metropolitan Council to cover 80% of the additional cost or \$80,000; and

WHEREAS, On August 25, 2011 the Red Rock Corridor Commission passed resolution 2011-02 agreeing to provide the \$20,000 local match for the additional analysis; and

WHEREAS, Due to delays in acquiring access to private property for the completion of survey work the study's final report will not be completed in time to allow for adequate time to receive and incorporate comments from stakeholders prior to the expiration of the contract on December 31, 2011; Now, Therefore, Be It

RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority approves the contract amendment with TranSystems Corporation Consultants to add Option 5 to the East Metro Rail Capacity and Engineering Improvements Study at an additional cost of \$100,000, to be funded by the Red Rock Corridor Commission and federal sources, through March 31, 2012; and Be It Further

RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority authorizes the Chair to execute the Contract Amendment.

2. Transitway Impacts Research Program 2011 Funding Request

Commissioner Reinhardt moved approval of the following resolution, seconded by Commissioner Parker.

Commissioner Rettman asked about the \$800,000 in funding for Transitway Impacts Research Program (TIRP) activities that has been provided by local sponsors since 2006 and the \$400,000 from federal and foundation sources in 2011; she wanted to know why this year's request is \$25,000 compared to last year's request of \$20,000; she also asked when the program will be completed.

Jan Lucke, Manager of Research Administration, Center for Transportation Studies, said contributions from sponsors have varied in amounts since the inception of TIRP. As part of developing a more formal contribution process, a small group of TIRP's program management team, which consists of representatives from each of the sponsor organizations, met this year to establish guidelines for contributions. These guidelines were not meant to be a barrier to participation, but rather to ensure that organizations of similar size were paying similar amounts. After reviewing previous contributions, the small group determined that the contribution target for a large county should be \$25,000, although a large county wouldn't be excluded from participating in TIRP if it didn't provide the full contribution of \$25,000. The local sponsor funding continues to be necessary to attract contributions from federal and non-profit sources, which typically require a one to one match. Without the base local funding, opportunities to seek additional federal, non-profit and private funding would be significantly reduced. TIRP's hope is that this research program will not end and that research can continue on transitways. TIRP feels that their research helps Ramsey County and others to make informed decisions about transitway planning in the Twin Cities area.

Commissioner Rettman asked about their annual budget and wanted to know what has been produced with the \$1.2 million received in funding since 2006. She noted that the cities are not contributing to this effort, and raised the question, is a program really sustainable if it is sustained with government funds?

Ms. Lucke said TIRP's annual budget has been \$100,000 to \$150,000 each of the last six years, which has funded seven robust studies, four of which are complete. She said they are constantly looking for funding sources to support the research. They did attract new funding sources this year, such as the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, US/DOT, and the McKnight Foundation. She said they are gaining momentum because people are finding value in their research.

Tim Mayasich, Director, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA), commented that RCRRA staff sees the research as valuable and beneficial. He said the progress of the research and the results of funding are demonstrated in today's presentation. He has raised the issue of city contributions at the project management level because the urban core clearly benefits from this research.

Ms. Lucke said TIRP did meet with the Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Interest has been expressed by the Minneapolis City Council and TIRP has been invited to present and will be given the opportunity to make the funding request. TIRP is meeting with the Saint Paul Planning Commission at the end of the month.

Chair McDonough said he supports the \$25,000, as there is value in participating in this effort, and if they approve today's request, he could send a letter to the City Council asking them to consider a financial contribution to the project, in addition to our financial support.

Commissioner Parker commented that she supports the RCRRRA's participation in this because solid research on the economic development impacts of transitways is beneficial. She thinks the Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul would jump at the opportunity to participate as well because they are the entity that is responsible for land use.

Roll Call: Ayes – Reinhardt, Bennett, Carter, Parker, McDonough – 5. Nays – Rettman – 1. (R11-38)

WHEREAS, Ramsey County and other Railroad Authorities and the University of Minnesota have supported research initiatives to study transitway projects' economic and community impacts through the Transitway Impacts Research Program; and

WHEREAS, The Transitway Impacts Research Program has requested \$25,000 from the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority to research residential and commercial property values, land use patterns, neighborhood impacts, and travel behaviors; Now, Therefore, Be It

RESOLVED, The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority approves the expenditure of \$25,000 for Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority's share of the Transitway Impacts Research Program for 2011.

3. Transitway Impacts Research Program - Presentation

[The presentation is on file with the RCRRRA office]

Jan Lucke, Manager of Research Administration, Center for Transportation Studies, said the Transitway Impacts Research Program (TIRP), founded in 2006, is a collaborative effort of a large number of state, regional, local, and national partners to investigate the economic, social, environmental and health impacts of transitway corridors. They hope to serve as a national model of inter-jurisdictional collaboration between government and academia. TIRP tries to maximize benefits to local partners by leveraging partnerships to support large-scale studies. Local sponsors have provided \$800,000 for TIRP activities since 2006, and this past year TIRP was able to leverage that funding to attract an additional \$400,000 in funding from federal and foundation sources.

Ms. Lucke said the remainder of the presentation would be given by Yingling Fan, Assistant Professor of the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs of the University of Minnesota, who is an investigator on one of their active projects. She said Ms. Fan will provide a sneak peek of their study's preliminary results related to the Central Corridor.

Yingling Fan introduced herself and said she would present the findings of her research for Assessing Neighborhood and Social Impacts of Transitways. Last summer, they conducted a survey of residents along the Central Corridor in the neighborhoods of Prospect Park, Hamline-Midway, Thomas-Dale, and Summit-University; they randomly recruited about 50 respondents in each neighborhood to participate in the study. In this survey, the participants were directly asked for their perception of the effects and impacts of the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (CCLRT) Project on their neighborhood. Key questions included whether their neighborhood has become a better or worse place to live and what effects the CCLRT project has had on their neighborhood over the past five years; whether they feel their neighborhood will become a better or worse place to live and how the CCLRT project will affect their neighborhood in the next five years. The overall results showed that people are more positive about transitway-related neighborhood change

than overall neighborhood change, regardless of the past or future. Results also showed that there is a racial divide in perceptions; White-Black perception differences were not significant, but White-Asian perception differences were striking and significant.

Commissioner Rettman asked if the participants of each neighborhood were actual residents of the area or if they included business owners and/or groups who may not actually live in the area. She also asked if there were striking differences in responses between each of the neighborhoods and if that information would be available in the final report.

Ms. Fan said all the responses were from people who physically live in the area and the survey was an exclusive door-to-door survey of residents. She said the responses were different between each area and this data will be included in the final report.

Ms. Fan said they also included visual preference questions to find out the participants' preferences of different residence and business development types, and the findings were both expected and surprising. The most popular development is low-density residential yet high-density business. It was also observed that with the racial divide, minorities have more tolerance for high-density residential development; whites have stronger dislike toward auto-oriented business development; minorities like both auto-oriented and high-density mixed-use business development.

Commissioner Carter asked if there were any conclusions to which minority populations preferred the different residential types.

Ms. Fan said they have not yet completed that analysis but they do have that data and could definitely look into those conclusions.

Chair McDonough commented that while the high-density residence types are not preferred, he wondered if it would make it more attractive to people when the amenities of retail and office are included in the same building. He said transit-oriented development livable communities focuses in on mixed-use high-density, and it may be helpful to understand if this combination makes it more preferable.

Ms. Fan agreed and said the project could do a follow-up survey with the original participants to further define the responses. She noted that the most preferred residential type among all racial groups was the small apartment building verses a very high-density apartment building.

Ms. Fan discussed the final findings of their study. In addition to asking respondents for their overall opinion about the CCLRT project in their neighborhood, they asked to rate the expected change of 18 specific neighborhood qualities. Respondents showed concerns about negative changes in the following dimensions and consider these changes to be CCLRT-relevant: strong concern about street quietness, parking and traffic congestion; moderate concern about pedestrian safety, bus services and security. Respondents were finally asked what changes they wanted in their neighborhood in order for transit to be a better option for them, and it was found that opinions varied among neighborhoods. Ms Fan shared the key messages from their study's findings.

Commissioner Carter commented that an increase in property taxes has been a particular concern for the Rhondo Community, and asked if there was any research on the impact of transit on property taxes as it relates to property value.

Ms. Fan said the impact of transit on property value was studied for the Hiawatha Corridor, but there is no current study that directly addresses the impact of transit on property taxes.

Commissioner Rettman asked if the final report will look at whether Central Corridor will attract living-wage as opposed to low-wage jobs. She said Hiawatha seemed to focus on low-wage jobs. She said she is sensitive to this because the Thomas-Dale neighborhood has lost a lot of its population and it's a concern whether or not the people of that community will be able to remain there in the future.

Ms. Fan said TIRP has another ongoing project, "Enterprising Twin Cities Transitways: Regional Competitiveness and Social Equity in an Integrated Land Use and Transit Context" which is exploring jobs that are essential to our regional economy, those that are high-wage or living-wage jobs. She said with Hiawatha, they did focus on low-wage workers because they wanted to ensure that they examine the social equity issues associated with a transit corridor and they did not pay specific attention to medium or high-wage jobs. Therefore, Hiawatha LRT was about low-wage jobs and they do not know what the impact is on the other two types of jobs. With CCLRT, what they tried to accomplish through the research is to promote integration rather than displacement of workers.

Chair McDonough thanked Professor Fan and Ms. Lucke for their presentation and work and said they look forward to seeing the final report. He said RCRRRA is a financial committed partner.

CORRIDOR UPDATES

- Minnesota High Speed Rail (MNHSR)
Commissioner Rettman reported that Mn/DOT decided on the Empire Builder as the preferred route, which greatly benefits MNHSR. At the MNHSR Commission meeting, the Commission also received the East Metro Rail Capacity and Engineering Improvements Study update.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair McDonough declared the meeting adjourned at 10:20 AM.