

Meeting Minutes

RAMSEY COUNTY RAILROAD AUTHORITY MEETING

The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority met on January 25, 2005, in Council Chambers, Third Floor Courthouse.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Rafael Ortega
 Commissioner Tony Bennett
 Commissioner Susan Haigh
 Commissioner Jim McDonough (arrived at 10:35 a.m.)
 Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt
 Commissioner Janice Rettman
 Commissioner Jan Wiessner

OTHERS PRESENT: Kris Longhenry, David Twa, Steve Morris, Julie Kleinschmidt, Kathy DeSpiegelaere, Lisa Falk, Eric Hesse, Jim Tolaas, Alicia Vap, David MacMillan

Chair Ortega called the meeting to order at 10:30 am.

ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA

1. Approve minutes from January 18, 2005 RCRRA meetings

A motion was made by Commissioner Bennett, seconded by Commissioner Wiessner, to approve the minutes from the January 18, 2005 RCRRA meeting.

Roll call vote was taken:

Ayes – 6, Nays – 0
Motion accepted.

POLICY AGENDA

2. Phalen Boulevard Environmental Process

Alicia Vap noted the RCRRA approved an easement in 2004 for construction of Phalen Boulevard, preserving a 39 foot section for transit use in future. She introduced Lisa Falk, City of St. Paul Public Works - Project Manager and the City's consultant, Eric Hesse of Liesch Associates.

Lisa Falk reported that at the February 8th RCRRA meeting, formal approval for the two plans (Response Action Plan and Construction Contingency Plan) will be requested of the RCRRA. She explained that the City is asking for a "No Further Action" letter and a "Non-Take Closure" letter to cover the entire corridor that the RCRRA owns in addition to the City parcel purchased from Budget Towing. She stated that the City wants approval to bury contaminated soil from the Budget Towing property under the Phalen Boulevard right of way and that City staff will recommend to the City Council to accept liability in the future.

Eric Hesse addressed the details of the environmental process. Discussion was held regarding the easement location and the potential risk involved in accepting contaminated soil from a previously privately-owned property, as well as the need to ensure adequate space for transit in the future.

County staff was asked to ensure that the plans are appropriate, and that the County is well protected. The City would save approximately one million dollars by burying the soil rather than removing it from the site. Discussion was held regarding the City's timelines and the possibility of approving the letters and indemnification together.

3. Approve construction plans for the Phalen Boulevard from Payne Avenue to Johnson Parkway in St. Paul

Discussion was held regarding the environmental update and the construction plans. Jim Tolaas, Ramsey County Public Works, was asked to indicate his comfort level with the construction plans and amount of land that would be left remaining for transit. He indicated he was comfortable with the plans, and that the proposed containment of contaminated soil in the bed of the roadway is an appropriate technique given current standards. He added that the risk is small, and if the City is willing to accept indemnification, the County's interests are protected.

A motion was made by Commissioner McDonough, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt, to approve the construction plans for the Phalen Boulevard from Payne Avenue to Johnson Parkway in St. Paul.

Roll call vote was taken: Commissioner Rettman voted no; Commissioner Wiessner was absent:

Ayes – 5, Nays – 1
Motion accepted.

WHEREAS, The Northeast Corridor right of way, extending from Kellogg Boulevard in St. Paul to Beam Avenue in Maplewood was acquired by Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority in 1992;

WHEREAS, The Northeast Corridor was acquired to preserve the property as a future option for a light rail transit line; and

WHEREAS, The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority has approved Easement 049 with the City of St. Paul for a permanent easement to use RCRRA right of way for the construction and permanent roadway, Phalen Boulevard, from Payne Avenue to Johnson Parkway in St. Paul, a length of 1.6 miles; and

WHEREAS, A condition of Easement 049 is that the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority approve the Construction Plans for the Phalen Boulevard from Payne Avenue to Johnson Parkway; Now Therefore Be It

RESOLVED, That the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority approves the Construction Plans for the Phalen Boulevard from Payne Avenue to Johnson Parkway in St. Paul.

Discussion was held regarding a potential problem of original ownership of the contaminated soil. Lisa Falk pointed out that when the City constructs the roadway, they will be cleaning up all the contaminated soil and the County will have approximately 4 feet of clean soil in their right of way, and the City may not be interested in indemnifying all the contaminated soil. There was further discussion of tracking where soil with varying levels of contamination is placed, how it may be contained, and what levels of indemnification would be available and what level the City might be willing to accept. Chair Ortega summarized that the RCRRA would not approve importing contaminated soil into the right of way unless RCRRA is completely indemnified.

4. Legislative Update

This item was not addressed.

5. Central Corridor Update

Steve Morris commented that there is nothing new to report.

In other business, Chair Ortega thanked Commissioner Haigh for all her work and leadership on the Central Corridor.

The meeting adjourned at 11:25 am.