

Court International Building, Ground Floor-RM #150 2550 University Avenue West St. Paul

Meeting of the Central Corridor Business Advisory Committee

Monday, July 20, 2009

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Tanya Bell, Kathy Bjerke, Lori Fritts, Lu Hang, David Jones, Jeannine Kessler, Brenda Kyle, Jim Roth, Jim Segal, Brian Thoemke.

Others Present: Robin Caufman, Joey Browner, Dana Happel, Karri Plowman, Rita Rodriguez, Jessica Hill, Hue Pham, Mary Richardson, Sara Penman, Linda Jungwirth, Amy.

1. WELCOME

Jim Roth opened the meetings at 4:02 PM. Around the room introductions were made.

2. PROJECT UPDATES

Robin Caufman mentioned that the FEIS was available for public review and that the comment period ends on Monday July 27th. Xcel has started some utility re-location work in down town St Paul area. We are learning a lot and working on setting up communication strategies.

Rita Rodriguez and Hue Pham talked about what has been taking place with their parking workshops. They have conducted seven out of eleven workshops. They were able to bring the businesses together at these workshops introductions and allowing the business owners to talk about their concerns and issues in and around their businesses. A whole team of city officials, engineers and designers attended to observe and listen to what the businesses had to say concerning their needs. The design team came up with some potential solutions.

Jeannine Kessler asked about business participation. What business owners by volume? Was it small business owners or large businesses and did you see any kind of stratification? The meetings have been well attended by a combination of businesses – small, large, owners, businesses etc.... We were really pleased with the turn out and the end result of businesses now communicating with each other and now willing to share parking spaces.

Jim Roth asked what is happening to all the other comments and issues that are raised in the workshops. Design related issues are being incorporated into the design process and other issues related to land use and zoning are being forwarded to the city planners. Dan Soler (Traffic Engineer) is at all of these workshops and is able to hear all the information and take it back to his design team. One of the outcomes will be a little design plan for each of the walk areas. All the city planning staff and zoning staff attend these workshops as well to follow up on zoning issues.

Jessica Hill reported working on the design of West Bank ramps between Washington and Cedar. She has been working with the city, county and U of M as well as community over the past year on how to design this interchange to free up land for development. 70% of the neighborhood was wiped out by highway 94 and 35w. The issues are that one area is owned by the county, one area is owned by the city and one area is owned by the U of M so where should the ramp go to allow for development? She has also met with Stadium Village property owners

to discuss project updates, side walk alignment review, traffic patterns, delivery access and parking.

Mr. Roth asked if there are specific issues in Minneapolis such as hide and riders in residential areas. There are a lot of issues that come up that can only be resolved by the city such as student parking in the limited parking that is already in place. Parking is not a new issue. As you move East towards Prospect Park the issue of hide and ride is going to be more of a problem because it is already taking up a good majority of the parking right now which will become worse. Working with the city and community on how to plan on preventing hide and ride in the future will be something that they will need to work on. The neighborhood wants a balance of putting in on-street parking only where it is completely needed by businesses.

Dana Happel reported meeting and communication with businesses to make sure they are all up to speed concerning what is going on with the Xcel Energy utility work going on in downtown St Paul at this time and how it will affect them, signage, deliveries etc. We have met individually with various downtown property owners as well to discuss concerns with access and area ways. We are also trying to work with the tenants as well to make sure everyone is included in information of what is going on in their area. We have done a pretty good job with the three different public meetings and the collaboration with businesses.

Karri Plowman commented that the project office has communicated very well with the downtown businesses and properties. This week he has been trying to solve the issues related to business marketing during construction in Lowertown.

Jim Roth thanked everyone for their presentations and commented on how the BAC has been meeting for over two years now and in these past meeting how easy it was to think how far out the construction seemed to be and but now it is reality and Xcel is in downtown right now. The meeting and communications with these businesses pertaining to what is going to be happening is very important. Future agendas will focus on business mitigation and what should be done to assist businesses.

3. Business Mitigation /Marketing

Karri Plowman- talked about business preparation informational sheet that Ellen Watters drafted title "What Businesses Need to Know." He indicated it is ready to distribute to businesses and the BAC members what would be one of the best ways for this information to be conveyed to corridor businesses.

Brian Thoemke suggested the outreach staff distribute the sheet when they meet with businesses.

Lor Fritts commented being delivered first class mail is one way people are going to realize that it is just not a flyer or one more piece of information but it does say that this is official business.

Mr. Plowman suggested a cost effective way might be to ask larger businesses where a lot of traffic comes through it they would be willing to post signs in their buildings.

Ms. Robin noted that the project office planned to do a mailing in September. We would be willing to include information about the small businesses consultants who have been hired to assist businesses and this one-pager.

Tanya Bell suggested the creation of a key message that could be used by all the project partners such as an elevator speech that is relaying that we're open for business message.

Mr. Plowman next report was that the St Paul and Midway Chamber were teaming up with other business organizations to conduct two or three business listening sessions to create a marketing campaign that states that Central Corridor is alive and open for business. He noted signage will help. He anticipates the meetings will be in the fall. He also plans to talk to the major media so they are aware of the marketing campaign and to keep the informed that the businesses are still open.

Tanya Bell noted that people will feel that it is more credible when written in the press. The ability to take those voices of authority and credibility and have them speaking the same sort of message to public and businesses. Consistency will make people feel more confident in the outcome and really think that it is important for it to start to occur today.

Jim Segal asked if a census has been done for all the businesses along the corridor. He suggested sending a monthly construction newsletter to the businesses via the mail.

Ms. Cauffman noted that this is a work in progress. The outreach coordinators have built a database of business owners and property owners from market data, the county tax data, business surveys and door to door. The weekly construction updates have primarily gone to businesses in the down town area where construction is underway. These updates have been sent via email because most of the businesses indicated they prefer emails.

Jeannine Kessler suggested a companion piece to the "What Businesses Need to Know" information one-pager -- "What Customers Need to Know about the LRT. This could be used to communicate to customers what is going on so they will know that the business is still open. This should be something that every retail business has right now while customers are still coming into their businesses to know that they will be open for business.

Lori Fritts suggested creating some kind of cards to let customers know.

Jim Segal commented that this information should not be communicated too soon because it might scare off customers in advance to stop coming. I think more than communication we should put more money into marketing to build the customer base before construction begins. .

Mr. Plowman said he says he can see creating a marketing piece "We Are Alive" or a post it note stating what you need to know as a customer.

David Jones asked if there is a budget for marketing and communication. Mr. Plowman said he is working to secure funding from foundations. He has researched how other cities funded business mitigation activities and found that they have a different structure or funding source. Jim Roth asked if there will be some communication coming from the project about construction updates. Ms. Cauffman said there will be communication. The Met Council is responsible for construction communication and directional signage. Mr. Segal voiced fear as a small business owner needing help with keeping their businesses open during construction and indicated the he

hoped business mitigation funds were part of the project budget. Ms. Cauffman noted that business mitigation is not part of the project scope partly due to budget constraint.

Mr. Roth informed the BAC about the First Friday Group that meets monthly. The group is convening a subcommittee to develop a marketing plan and raise funds for implementation. David Jones asked if there is money available to hire consultants. Mr. Roth responded that the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative has provided funding.

Ms. Fritts noted that there are a lot of entities involved that are looking for funding; we need to understand as a group what the budget is for the various activities. Tanya Bell suggested that the marketing message should live beyond the 4 year construction stage.

Tanya Bell asked if they will they give pro bono staff to help on the project? Should deal with people from the retail world when discussing this issue.

Lori voiced concern about how we are going to sustain businesses. Start with a plan and the different things talked about and talk to people before the construction starts of how to handle various issues.

Karri reported that we have reached the point where we will be asking the BAC to get more involved asking neighbors and get their advice on this. Susan and Guy Gilmore, Tammy Mursel and Jeff Nelson from NPR have all volunteered to help. We will be asking businesses to get more involved with their communities in getting this information out. Jim Roth added that we should bring more active members into the BAC to help build support for funding. Tanya suggested including small and big companies such as Target because they can be very supportive of the community. Jim Segal noted that the business community is more supportive of the big boxes than the community because businesses need each other.

David Jones noted that if you look at the last 20 years of community development and the city of St Paul has done how important is university Avenue itself to them? The issue is if anyone in St Paul cares about whether or not all the money at work spent over the last 20 years will continue on the long term to solidify the avenue and to continue to help the businesses to achieve what they want to achieve this is the time to get involved. It will be tough for the small businesses.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Jim Roth asked for any last thoughts or comments before adjourning the meeting at 5:30 PM

Next Meeting: August 17, 2009