

Meeting of the Central Corridor Business Advisory Committee

Monday, February 15, 2010

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: David Jones, Jeannine Kessler, Jim Roth, Jim Segal, Emily Reller, Kay Baker

Others Present:, Craig Blakey, Robin Caufman, Karri Plowman, Rita Rodriguez,

1. Call Meeting to Order/Review Meeting Minutes

Jim Roth, BAC Co-Chair called the meeting to order at 4:07 PM. He asked the BAC members to review the minutes; Robin Caufman made the requested changes to revise Jim Segal's comments and remove Jim Roth from the attendance list.

2. Project Update

Robin Caufman provided a project update on activities since the January BAC meeting including FTA's changes to the CEI weight; addition and funding of the infill stations into the project scope and inclusion of \$45 million in the President's budget for Central Corridor. She also provided an update on the various contracts that are on the street including Civil East, Civil West, Advance Traffic Improvements and light rail vehicles.

3. Parking Update

Craig Blakely presented an update on the parking solutions work of the City of St. Paul. He started by reviewing the process and referred to the City's "Parking Solutions for the Central Corridor" document. He noted that the document focuses on the 11 "critical areas" but also includes design guidelines and an application for the City's parking program.

He noted that while the parking study focused on business parking; there are other stakeholders such as employees and adjoining residential areas. The City's parking solutions program provides funding for a variety of activities including cleaning up the alleys to improve the interface between businesses and residential areas as well as make them more attractive and safe. The program includes \$1 million in forgivable loans to improvement parking and funds to repave up to 20 alleys. The funding for the forgivable loans is the annual STAR program. The program is to make small common sense solutions and encourages coordination or sharing of parking improvements. Eligible expenses include landscaping, stormwater management and relocation/centralization of refuse and recycling. One of the other solutions that seems popular in the applications received so far is the concept of stacked parking where there is sufficient space for employee parking at the edge with spaces for public parking in a second row.

Craig talked about the City Council's interest in doing a larger scale demonstration project or parking improvement district. One potential site is the NW corner of Snelling and University. Cutting into the bank and constructing a retaining wall would result in creation of 30 new parking spaces off of the alley. It requires leasing land from the property owner, establishing a parking district, investing in ~\$300,000 in improvements and assessment to the benefitting property owners to pay for management and operations. The City is in the process of initiating discussions with the property owner and adjacent businesses.

David Jones asked if City considered adding structured parking. Mr. Blakely noted that the city does not have the resources to build parking ramps.

Jim Segal noted that the concept plan assumes CVS participation. Designers developed plans that work best with flow; we'll need to talk to all property owners.

Karri Plowman asked if the streetscaping betterments go north and south for a block on Snelling.

Mr. Blakely noted that one of the common themes or concerns heard in all of the parking workshops is safety and lighting.

Next, Mr. Blakely talked about the over 50 parking program pre-applications that the city has received. They total well over the \$1 million available for the program so that City will have to make difficult decisions.

The next step in the process is to review and rank the applications. The City will create a review committee, with feedback from the City Councilors prior to the St. Paul HRA awarding the forgivable loans.

Craig noted that this has been a very labor intensive process and will continue to require work and collaboration between businesses. The City is hoping to have the awards made this spring so the improvements can be made this summer and fall and in place prior to construction in 2011.

The City is looking at corridor wide solutions including on-street parking management and enforcement. The City Council has created a Parking Policy Staff Group to study these issues and make recommendations.

Jim Roth asked if the City had tallied the net gain of parking. In some cases it doesn't result in a net gain but it may improve access and appearance.

David Jones asked if the program can replace 1:1 the spaces lost. Mr. Blakely noted that the program will not replace parking 1:1 but it will improve the utilization of existing parking.

Jeannine Kessler asked about the current utilization of parking. Mr. Blakely stated that the existing parking and space is not being maximized. Stacking parking, improving access, improving pedestrian access, better lighting and sharing parking will better utilize parking.

Kay Baker asked if people will parking in the cross streets.

Jim Segal asked how businesses with no space for parking can benefit from the program. Mr. Blakely noted that where there is 100% lot coverage, these are areas that would benefit from the parking improvement district. For example, the block that Ax-Man is on has an opportunity for a longer term solution. However, the City can not force the implementation of an improvement district but hopes it happens.

Rita Rodriguez shared her experience of talking to businesses and property owners. Many of the property owners are willing to work with their neighbors in order to retain their tenants. Meeting with businesses has resulted in businesses and property owners thinking outside of the box.

David Jones asked Mr. Blakely to talk about parking meters. Mr. Blakely said that they are looking at including parking meters on University Avenue but not on the north-south cross streets. Many businesses do not want meters and think that this is too dramatic of a change for University Avenue.

Mr. Blakely reviewed the process which started with aerial views and then taken to the street level. He noted how much work this has been and acknowledged the outreach coordinators efforts. The design consultants are providing up to 2 hours of free design work.

Kay Baker asked if the outreach coordinators are still willing to staff tables at businesses.

Jim Roth acknowledged the amount of work that has been done and staff should be commended.

4. Adjournment

Jim Roth adjourned the meeting at 5:24 PM

Next Meeting: March 15, 2010