

# Executive Summary

## History of Project

The Central Corridor transit-improvement project in its various incarnations has been a topic of community conversation for the past 25 years. In July 1988, the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority approved its first Community Participation Program. Over the ensuing years, the citizen involvement program has remained “flexible and responsive to different stages of projects,” as the authority originally directed. From February to April 1989, the authority held 10 public forums to gather community input before drafting a countywide Comprehensive Light Rail Transit Plan that identified the Central Corridor as its top priority.

Seventeen years and hundreds of community meetings later, the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority published a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Alternatives Analysis for proposed transit improvements in the Central Corridor, the 11-mile stretch between the city centers of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The DEIS was published in the Federal Register on April 21, 2006, signaling the start of a 45-day public comment period. During this period, which ended June 5, 2006, comments were collected by authority staff via phone, mail, E-mail and at four public hearings at sites along the Corridor.



## Public Comment Summary

Public comments on the DEIS and the project proposal were overwhelmingly positive and heavily favored light rail as the preferred mode of transit in the Central Corridor.

A total of 916 people, agencies and organizations offered comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, including 180 who spoke at the Central Corridor Coordinating Committee public hearings. 684 favored LRT as the locally preferred alternative, 92 opposed LRT and 140 expressed no opinion on mode.

More than 570 people attended the four public hearings, held at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis on May 22, Lao Family Community in St. Paul on May 23, and, on May 24, at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul and at St. Paul's Central High School.

Written, E-mail and voicemail comments received by the Railroad Authority:

- E-mail: 500
- Phone: 18
- Mail: 218
- Public hearing testimony: 180

### Issues Raised

The comments received from the public raised a number of concerns and issues that should be addressed in preliminary engineering. Also attached to this summary are separate lists of issues and concerns drafted and adopted by the St. Paul City Council and the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority. A complete list of issues raised follows:

- Impact of project on businesses: 112
- Impact of project on existing bus service: 80
- Number/location of stations: 77
- Impact of project on parking: 66
- Alternative alignments not considered by DEIS: 57
  - Need for project to encourage transit oriented development: 54
  - Traffic and pedestrian safety: 54
  - Impact of project on property taxes: 47
  - Cost of project: 39
  - Gentrification/neighborhood preservation: 38
  - Impact of project on traffic congestion: 38
  - Need for more citizen involvement: 37
  - Impact of project on air quality: 37
  - Low speed of LRT in Corridor: 29
  - Impact of project on affordable housing: 28
  - Need to explore building LRT on elevated tracks: 27
- Construction impact on businesses and nearby homes: 26
- University of Minnesota tunnel: 25
- Impact of project on low-income residents/seniors: 25
- Need for improved streetscape: 24
- Impact of project on bicycles: 24
- Impact of project on crime and safety: 21



- Needs of the disabled/ADA compliance: 19
- Alternative modes not considered by DEIS: 18
- Need for project to include public art: 17
- Need to explore building LRT underground: 16
- Lessons of Rondo neighborhood: 16
- Noise/Vibration: 16
- Ability of traffic to turn off University: 15
- Impact of project on the Snelling/University intersection: 15
- Impact of project on north-south traffic/buses: 15
- Station design: 14
- Impact of project on land use: 13
- Need for connection to Amtrak/Other transit: 12
- Impact on District Energy: 8
- Need for LRT to have signal preference at intersections: 8
- Need for grade-separated tracks: 8
- Impact of project on Interstate 94 traffic: 8
- Incorporate open space: 7
- Eminent domain concerns: 7
- Labor issues/prevaling wage: 7
- Need for longer public comment period: 6
- Need for dedicated bikeways: 6
- Need for Community Benefits Agreement: 6
- Impact of project on watershed/storm sewers: 5
- Impact of project on University of Minnesota traffic: 4
- Project cost impacts of building a new University of Minnesota stadium: 4
- Need to build project in stages: 4
- Utility relocation costs: 4
- More information on fares: 4
- Effect on property values: 3



- Need to explore privatization of transit: 2
- Impact on historic resources: 2
- Need to explore building LRT on a single track: 2
- Need to explore LRT connections to State Fair: 2
- Impact of project on emergency vehicles: 2
- Train design: 2
- Need for snow-removal plan: 2
- Need to communicate with public in multiple languages: 2
- Need to adhere to project budget: 2
- Need for better communication with public: 1
- Impact on geodetic control monuments: 1
- Impact of design-build option: 1
- Maintenance funding: 1
- Representation of funding partners in decision-making: 1
- Impact of project on sales tax collections: 1
- Need to use disadvantaged business enterprises: 1
- Need for “equitable development”: 1
- Need to narrow University Avenue to two lanes: 1
- Need to upgrade sidewalks along University Ave.: 1
- Impact on parks: 1
- Soil pollution: 1
- Need for trash pickup: 1



## Public Outreach Efforts

The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority and its staff made presentations and answered questions at a series of community meetings, including those sponsored by the Central Corridor Equity Coalition, St. Paul City Councilwoman Debbie Montgomery and the St. Paul District Councils Collaborative (see Appendix for chart of meetings attended during comment period).

The authority distributed 1,500 postcards and 200 posters advertising these public hearings. Flyers were

translated into six languages and hundreds of each were posted along the corridor. Samples of each are included in this public comment report.

Staff members walked University Avenue to meet with residents and business owners, answering questions and inviting people to these hearings. Staff members briefed the press on status of the proposal and appeared on a Hmong language public affairs show on KFAI-FM to encourage participation by the Asian community. Staff members also appeared on public affairs shows and in news reports on KTLK Radio, WCCO Radio and on all three local television network affiliates.

Advertisements were placed in the following newspapers to advertise the hearings:

- St. Paul Pioneer Press
- Minneapolis Star Tribune
- Asian Pages
- The Bridge newspapers Website
- City Pages
- Como Midway Monitor
- Downtown Journal
- Gente de Minnesota
- Hmong Times
- Hmong Today
- Insight News
- Lillie Suburban newspapers
- One Nation News
- La Prensa
- Southwest Journal
- Spokesman-Recorder
- Sun Focus newspapers



The Rail Authority also created an E-mail listserv and sent regular e-mail updates to the more than 100 people who have subscribed to the service. More than 70 churches, temples, synagogues and other houses of worship were asked to post flyers and to include hearing dates and public comment opportunities on their Websites and in their weekly bulletins. Samples of print and Web advertisements, listserv messages and the letter sent to clergy are included in this public comment report.