

Central Corridor

**News
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Central Corridor LRT Project

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Met Council, U of M reach agreement on Central Corridor LRT project

ST. PAUL (Sept. 1, 2010) – Representatives of the Metropolitan Council and the University of Minnesota have reached agreement on a plan to protect university research facilities from vibration and electromagnetic interference (EMI) caused by the Central Corridor light rail transit project.

The agreement came after a lengthy series of mediation sessions conducted by retired U.S. Magistrate Judge Jonathan Lebedoff. The pact still must be approved by the full Met Council and by the University Board of Regents.

“It has been a long and difficult process for everyone involved,” said Met Council Chair Peter Bell. “However, the final product is an agreement that will protect sensitive university research facilities, while keeping the Central Corridor project on time and within budget. It also will maintain the Council’s autonomy in the operation of this important new transit line.”

Bell expressed his appreciation to Judge Lebedoff, saying the mediator “quickly grasped the issues, kept us on task and demonstrated enormous patience in helping us reach this agreement.”

The lengthy agreement specifies the mitigation systems that will be used to protect university labs from vibration and EMI, establishes performance standards for those systems, provides for testing and monitoring to ensure compliance, and provides for remedies if the standards are not met.

As part of the agreement, the University will grant the temporary and permanent easements required for the Central Corridor project and drop the lawsuit it filed against the project in September 2009.

The 11-mile, \$957 million LRT line will operate on University and Washington avenues between downtown St. Paul and downtown Minneapolis, connecting with the existing Hiawatha line near the Metrodome. Construction of the project already is underway and is scheduled for completion in 2014.

As discussed previously, the agreement calls for the installation of:

- Floating slabs under approximately 1,450 feet of both tracks at various locations along Washington Avenue between Pleasant and Harvard Streets to absorb train-caused ground-borne vibration that might adversely affect University research labs.
- Dual-split power supply beneath about 3,150 feet of tracks along Washington Avenue between the east end of the Washington Avenue bridge and Ontario Street to cancel out train-caused EMI that might adversely affect University labs.

The agreement also establishes a framework for LRT construction activities, including limits for noise, dust and vibration during construction.

On Aug. 25, the Met Council awarded a \$113.8 million contract for construction of three miles of tracks and stations located within the city of Minneapolis. Previously, the Council awarded a \$205 million contract for the construction of the seven miles of track and stations located within the city of St. Paul. While some work is being done this summer and fall, construction will begin in earnest in 2011.

Construction began earlier this summer on portions of the project, including street improvements in the U of M East Bank campus area that will be needed when Washington Avenue is closed to auto traffic and converted into a transit-pedestrian mall for LRT and buses.

The Central Corridor LRT project is a key element in the Met Council's plan for a network of bus and rail transitways to help build transit ridership, slow the growth in traffic congestion and improve mobility. By 2014, when the Central Corridor project is completed, the region will have 115 miles of transitways.

The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. It runs the regional bus and light rail system, collects and treats wastewater, manages regional water resources, plans regional parks and administers funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The Council is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

About the Central Corridor LRT Project

The Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Project will link downtown St. Paul and downtown Minneapolis along Washington and University avenues via the state Capitol and University of Minnesota. Construction will begin in late summer 2010 on the planned 11-mile Central Corridor line, with service beginning in 2014. The line will connect with the Hiawatha LRT line at the Metrodome station in Minneapolis and the Northstar commuter rail line at the Target Field Station. The Metropolitan Council would be the grantee of federal funds. The regional government agency is charged with building the line in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The Central Corridor Management Committee, which includes the mayors of St. Paul and Minneapolis, commissioners from Ramsey and Hennepin counties and the University of Minnesota, provides advice and oversight. For details, visit www.centralcorridor.org