



Federal Government Makes It Official:

Federal Transit Administration Comes to Town Bearing Commitment to Pay Half of Central Corridor LRT

ST. PAUL – April 26, 2011 – Central Corridor LRT partners signed on the ceremonial dotted line today, sealing the deal on the federal government's commitment to pay half the cost of building the rail line between Minneapolis and St. Paul.

According to the head of the Federal Transit Administration, the Twin Cities region demonstrated a strong state and local partnership with solid funding commitments to qualify for the level of financial support that the federal government today committed to the project.

"This project truly embodies the president's vision for winning the future through infrastructure investment. It will create thousands of construction jobs now while paving the way for many thousands of jobs that will come to the Twin Cities through the economic development successes surrounding the new rail line," FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff told an enthusiastic gathering of more than 100 local, state and federal officials at the Harold E. Stassen Building in St. Paul. The building overlooks the route and the future site of the Capitol East Station.

Overall, the project will create 3,400 construction, management, engineering and operation jobs through 2014. Once up and running, LRT trains will take people to and from their jobs, school, medical appointments and other critical destinations.

State/Local Funding Commitments

The cause for celebration was the signing of the Full Funding Grant Agreement between the FTA and Metropolitan Council as the grantee. The FFGA contractually commits the federal government to paying \$478 million or half the cost of building the \$957 million line linking St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Thirty percent of the project funding comes from the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), 9 percent from the state, 7 percent from Ramsey County, 3 percent from Hennepin County and less than 1 percent

from Met Council, the city of St. Paul and Central Corridor Funders Collaborative.

By 2030, weekday ridership – projected to exceed 40,000 – will top Hiawatha LRT ridership as people gain new access to nearly 300,000 jobs in the two downtowns, at the University of Minnesota and in the neighborhoods in between.

“Central Corridor represents an historic economic opportunity to connect St. Paul residents to jobs, businesses, services and educational opportunities throughout the region,” said Mayor Chris Coleman. “At the same time, it’ll transform one of St. Paul’s most iconic streets and strengthen the communities that surround it.”

“On this day that is 30 years in the making, we must recommit to making Central Corridor all that it can be: to heal the wound that a freeway opened in the West Bank decades ago, to fully integrate light rail with every mode of transit, and to connect transit-dependent communities to every opportunity,” said Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak.

A Regional Network of Transit Corridors

“We are turning into reality our vision of a network of interconnected transitways,” said Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin.

McLaughlin is also the chair of the Counties Transit Improvement Board, comprised of the five metro counties investing their sales tax to expand transit options, mitigate congestion, enhance economic growth and improve environmental stability for the region.

The Central Corridor light-rail line will revitalize University Avenue as a lifeline between Minneapolis and St. Paul. Streetcars operated on University Avenue continuously from December 1890 to Oct. 31, 1953. With a streetcar operating as often as every three minutes, there was an energy and vibrancy to the street life along the avenue.

Supporters expect Central Corridor line will rekindle that same kind of energy and enthusiasm as neighbors meet neighbors, students meet professors and business people meet customers aboard busy trains and at busy rail stops.

“When completed, this project will bring the community together in a way not seen since the age of the street car, but also in a manner modern and contemporary,” said Ramsey County Commissioner Jim McDonough. In

addition to his support for the rail corridor, Commissioner McDonough is active in returning the Union Depot to its former glory and ensuring Central's St. Paul terminus is a hub of activity as well as a multimodal transit hub.

Thirty Years in the Planning

After initial planning activities that date back as far as 1981, the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority began work in 2001 to prepare an Alternatives Analysis and Environmental Impact Statement. The AA and EIS were released in 2006 and identified LRT as the mode of choice, and University and Washington avenues as the preferred route. The project was turned over later that year to the Metropolitan Council to design and build the line.

Today, Central Corridor LRT is the largest single public works project ever in the state of Minnesota.

"The federal grant commitment of \$478 million is the largest federal grant ever received in Minnesota for a transportation project," said Metropolitan Council Chair Sue Haigh.

"With this agreement with the Federal Transit Administration, the Twin Cities region will have generated more than \$1 billion in FTA grants, including \$364 million for Hiawatha, \$157 million for Northstar and \$478 million for Central Corridor."

Rep. Betty McCollum, whose district includes the rail line, collaborated with state and local officials to secure federal funding for Central Corridor as a member of the House Appropriations Committee.

"Today's federal commitment to the Central Corridor represents a great achievement for Minnesota," McCollum said. "The Central Corridor is an investment in infrastructure that will help meet the demands of our growing community and create new economic opportunities for generations to come."

"With this commitment, the federal government has recognized that the Central Corridor is not only an important part of an efficient transportation system in Minnesota, but also a vital piece of our efforts to ensure economic vitality in the Twin Cities and beyond," Sen. Al Franken said. "This new rail line will offer a critical transportation alternative for commuters and create badly needed jobs in our region."

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 began in 2010 on the planned 11-mile Central Corridor line, and service will begin 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 new Target Field Station.

The Metropolitan Council is 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.

Funding is provided by the Federal Transit Administration, Counties Transit Improvement Board, state of Minnesota, Ramsey and Hennepin counties' regional railroad authorities, city of St. Paul, Metropolitan Council and the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative. For details, visit www.centralcorridor.org

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