

[In these minutes: Light rail transit information, Safety Committee update, Office for Student Development updates]

STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE (SCSA)

MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2000

2:30 - 4:00

140 NOLTE CENTER

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the view of, nor are they binding on the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Percy Chaby (chair), Deb Cran, Tina Falkner, Darwin Hendel, Yasemin Kaygisiz, David Lenander, Ryan Nagle, Hoang Uyen Nguyen, June Nobbe, Gerald Rinehart, Janet Schottel, Cory Stingl, Jason Stingl.

REGRETS: Edward Ehlinger, Patrick Pederson.

ABSENT: Bryan Donaldson, Terry Hietpas.

GUESTS: Mark Cox, Jan Morlock, Jim Turman.

1. LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT INFORMATION

Jan Morlock and Mark Cox joined the committee to provide updates on the two light rail transit (LRT) projects, the Hiawatha line and the Central Corridor. The Central Corridor project is still in the planning stages to determine what method of transportation would be the most effective, light rail, dedicated bus ways, commuter rail, or some combination of these modes, where the line should be located, and where the stations should be. The Central Corridor project involves both Ramsey and Hennepin counties, MNDOT, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and the University of Minnesota. She then distributed handouts on the project and noted four public meetings within the next few weeks to receive public comments. The construction timeline is to have the line operational by 2004.

In terms of the University's involvement, there are several questions to be answered: Where should the sole University station be located? Where should the line cross campus? What will be the impact on existing transit? The University would prefer to have a light rail line submerged under Washington Avenue and then cross on the bridge, but this option might be too costly. If the line ran above ground on Washington Avenue, then how much room would be left for buses and cars? A second alternative is to have the line run North of campus, using the train tracks, and then place the station in Dinkytown.

Mark Cox then discussed the Hiawatha line. At this point, it appears to be a done deal as final funding is in place and the rail cars are being designed. Completion is planned for the summer of 2003. This line will have two stations to service the University, one at Cedar Riverside and the other at the Metrodome. Most people wanting to reach campus will use the Metrodome station since it will be a transfer point to the Central Corridor line and buses. The third connecting piece from St. Paul to the airport is also being planned.

Q: Will the Hiawatha and Central Corridors lines meet?

A: Yes, at the Metrodome.

Q: What would happen if the light rail line ran on University Avenue?

A: Light rail would use two lanes of traffic. The remaining lanes would be for other traffic. The Midway Chamber of Commerce has already approved this use since it will bring business to the area.

Q: Is the planning committee considering building lines vertically?

A: There has been talk of a Washington Avenue tunnel, but price is a major consideration.

Q: What will riders pay?

A: Costs will be the same as for the bus and passes will be useable for both. The University will work on having the U Pass acceptable on both.

Q: Was there an analysis done of where students commute from to maximize convenience?

A: No specific studies were done, but the hope is that mass transit will influence living patterns.

Q: What is the projected ridership?

A: Ridership is projected at 24,000 trips on the entire mass transit system. There is no way to tell at this point what percentage will be from the University.

Q: What will be the route for the Central Corridor?

A: It will follow I94 from St. Paul and then use University Avenue and Washington Avenue.

Q: What are the disadvantages to having the Central Corridor line through Dinkytown?

A: The Dinkytown station would be a greater distance from central campus, so the University would need to look at bus connectors. One advantage is that a Dinkytown station would revitalize the area.

Q: Has an environmental impact study been done for the Dinkytown route?

A: Not at this time, but it would be completed before any decisions are made.

Q: Does the University have a preference in where the station should be?

A: There is pressure for the University to approve the least costly station.

Q: How does LRT speed and time compare to current buses? Will the number of stops affect the speed?

A: LRT speed and time would be equal to express buses, although LRT would be given right-of-way at intersections and can go up to 50 mph. The number of stops will have an impact on speed.

Q: How many stops will be on the Hiawatha line and what will be the distance between the stops?

A: 15 stops are planned with roughly one mile between them.

Q: Will LRT affect the St. Paul Campus?

A: These lines will not directly affect campus, but there have been discussions of a North-South line in the future.

Q: Will bus routes be reconfigured to facilitate LRT use?

A: Metro Transit has plans to look at the entire mass transit system once the LRT is in place and make any changes necessary to facilitate LRT use.

Q: What will be the impact on I94 traffic?

A: The number of lanes currently used for traffic cannot be reduced, so accommodations will need to be made.

2. SAFETY COMMITTEE UPDATE

Percy Chaby reported that the Safety Committee has met to discuss campus lighting, but at this time there is no funding for replacing older-style bulbs on campus. The Committee is considering applying for a grant to fund 'Light in the Night Ways', which would be a set of campus routes that are lit and publicized to students, staff, and faculty.

Q: Would the St. Paul Campus be included in this plan?

A: The St. Paul Campus will be included in any planning efforts since there have been many complaints about poor lighting on the campus.

Q: Why are some emergency call boxes wrapped in plastic?

A: Some call box power or phone lines were cut during construction. There are no funds to reconnect them, so the boxes were wrapped instead to prevent use.

3. OFFICE FOR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT (OSD) UPDATES

Deb Cran said that OSD is beginning a strategic planning process to improve communication with the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Office of Multicultural Affairs. OSD will be looking at all the services it currently provides. The process will be completed in the spring and then a search for a permanent vice president will be conducted. In the meantime, Robert Jones will remain as the interim vice president.

She then asked for the committee's input on three questions: What things have helped you succeed/made it a positive experience for you at the University of Minnesota?, What things have been the most difficult in achieving your goals?, What would you like to see more of? It was decided that the questions would be e-mailed to the committee for comment.

Jim Turman then discussed Coffman renovations with the committee. He noted that the situation had not changed since the last meeting; legal issues still prohibit disclosure of many issues, Coffman Board of Governors will continue to be involved, the construction schedule has been pushed back, student fees will not rise during next year, and all abatement has been completed so that the building is ready for renovations.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

Percy Chaby stated that he had received a note from Craig Swan on the progress of student evaluations of teaching. The note said that data from spring semester classes has been collected, but that publication of the data on the web has been slower than expected. The hope is to have links in place for the fall semester 2001 schedule.

Q: What are the student evaluations of teaching? How are they different from regular course evaluations?

A: A few years ago, the Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) worked on the issue of collecting data that would be useful to students. From these meetings, a set of 10 questions was developed and approved by the University Senate in 1998. These questions were then included on the standard evaluation forms. Student responses to these questions would be made available on the web with a faculty member's permission. This last step has been delayed because it came at the same time as semester conversion and PeopleSoft. Craig Swan will continue to encourage faculty to permit disclosure and work on having the web links in place.

Q: Why does the release require faculty permission?

A: Because the information is considered employment related, state privacy laws stipulate that it be considered confidential unless permission is given.

A committee member then noted that Carlson has been publishing this information since 1993. The faculty response rate has been 90%.

With no further comments, Percy Chaby thanked all members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Rebecca Hippert
University Senate