

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

BOARD OF REGENTS

Thursday, June 12, 2008

8:00 - 10:00 a.m.

600 McNamara Alumni Center, Boardroom

Board Members

Patricia Simmons, Chair
Clyde Allen, Vice Chair
Anthony Baraga
Dallas Bohnsack
Maureen Cisneros
Linda Cohen
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Steven Hunter
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David Larson
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AGENDA

1. Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Update - R. Bruininks/K.O'Brien (pp. 2-4)



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June 12, 2008

Agenda Item: Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Update

review review/action action discussion

Presenters: President Robert H. Bruininks
Vice President Kathleen O'Brien

Purpose:

policy background/context oversight strategic positioning

A report to the Board of Regents related to the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (CCLRT) line, including the northern alignment feasibility study and the Metropolitan Council's adopted Washington Avenue at-grade alignment with a University transit mall and mitigations.

Outline of Key Points/Policy Issues:

The CCLRT project will shape the University of Minnesota and the University community for generations to come. The University is a transit-oriented community and an advocate for effective transportation systems and policies statewide:

- Two-thirds of University commuters use bus, carpool or walking options.
- Over the last 20 years, the University has successfully developed an integrated transportation system that serves all members of the University community.
- Today more than 20,000 students and 2,000 faculty and staff utilize University-subsidized mass transit programs.
- The University community alone is expected to generate almost 30 percent of the daily riders on the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit line.

A well-planned transit system will provide easy, economical access to the University for roughly 80,000 people who live on, work on, and visit the Twin Cities campus from across the metropolitan area and the state each day. The University and the neighborhoods and business community will benefit from a metropolitan transit system that connects Minneapolis and St. Paul and is reliable, affordable, convenient and safe. The University is committed to strengthening this transportation system.

The following principles have guided the University in its planning for the CCLRT:

- The optimal operation of the Central Corridor LRT line is vital to a strong, regional, multi-modal transportation system.
- Safety is fundamental to the success of the operation of the line.
- The Central Corridor should realize development opportunities while reducing impact to the urban environment.
- The functionality and aesthetics of the University campus must be enhanced.

Since the Metropolitan Council voted in February 2008 in support of a Washington Avenue at-grade alignment with a University of Minnesota transit mall, the University, in coordination with the Central Corridor Project Office, the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, and Hennepin and Ramsey Counties, has pursued planning on two options: a feasibility study of the northern alignment and an analysis of the Washington Avenue at-grade alignment with a Pedestrian/Transit Mall and mitigations. Each of these alignments has benefits and risks.

The University CCLRT work team is preparing a report to the Board of Regents on the northern alignment feasibility study and at-grade on Washington Avenue with a mitigation plan. The Board will receive a summary presentation of these two efforts from University administration.

In addition, Metropolitan Council Chair Peter Bell will address the Board.

Background Information:

The University has reviewed and discussed transit options along Washington Avenue for many decades, more recent review and action by the Board of Regents includes the following:

September 6, 1996

Board of Regents approved the Twin Cities Campus Master Plan. The Master Plan states that Washington Avenue should be changed to a pedestrian-oriented boulevard with a single lane of traffic in each direction and the two outside lanes being dedicated to a busway route with the potential to accommodate LRT in the future.

April 5, 2001

Facilities Committee received information on the proposed Central Corridor LRT line between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul and approved a resolution that stated the following:

- Rescission of the July 1991 BOR resolution calling for a tunnel because of intensification of automobile use on Washington Avenue and the expansion of buildings in the corridor;
- That the Central Corridor planners consider the following alternatives for LRT or a dedicated busway through campus:
 - A route through campus on Washington Avenue below grade (tunnel) on the East Bank that would cross the Washington Avenue Bridge and connect with the Hiawatha Line at the Metrodome;
 - An alignment over the existing Bridge 9 that would follow the existing railroad corridor and then follow the University transit right-of-way.
 - A route on Washington Avenue at grade.

The resolution also requested that the administration return with recommendations on the alternatives. The Board unanimously approved the resolution during the April 6, 2001 Board meeting.

June 7, 2001

Facilities Committee received an update from University administration on the Central Corridor LRT. The presenters noted that the Central Corridor planners had asked the University to select two of the four possible proposed alignments. The four alignments being discussed were:

- Washington Avenue (Below grade – Tunnel);
- #9 RR Bridge and then continuing through the existing railroad corridor;
- Washington Avenue at grade; and
- #9 RR Bridge and then continuing on University and/or 4th Avenues.

The presenters noted that the administration would return with a shortened list of alternatives at the July 2001 committee meeting. No action was taken.

July 12, 2001

Facilities Committee reviewed and unanimously approved a resolution regarding the Central Corridor LRT. One condition of the resolution stated that because of changes on Washington Avenue since 1996, the Master Plan’s accommodation of LRT at grade on Washington is no longer determined to be appropriate. The resolution recommended the following alternatives be evaluated for the Central Corridor:

- LRT alignment over existing #9 RR Bridge continuing through existing railroad corridor; and
- A modified Bus Rapid Transit alignment on Washington Avenue with no exclusive transit lanes.

The resolution also stated that if the Central Corridor planners move forward with a Washington Avenue LRT alignment, the University requires the line to be below grade in a tunnel.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the resolution.

2004-2008

Since 2004, the Facilities Committee has received annual updates regarding the CCLRT planning efforts.

April 11, 2008

The Board of Regents received a preliminary update on the Northern Alignment feasibility analysis. No action was taken at the meeting.

May 21, 2008

The Board of Regents received a briefing packet that detailed the results of the northern alignment feasibility analysis and the Washington Avenue at-grade alignment with mitigations