



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

MELVIN W. CARTER III
Councilmember

August 4, 2009

Chair Bell;

As you know, I am a strong supporter of Central Corridor Light Rail Transit because I believe in its strong potential – *if done right*, to connect people along the Corridor with a new and much needed set of resources and opportunities.

'Done right' means planning, building and operating this line in a way that enhances both the region at-large and the specific neighborhoods along University Avenue. Unfortunately, there exists a rapidly growing sentiment that this project, as currently planned, holds the potential to produce both the greatest cost and least benefit for the residents and business owners who have planted their lives in closest proximity to the Corridor. This understandable concern is evidenced by several recent events, most notably the filing of a Federal Civil Rights complaint against the project. While I do acknowledge that some of the concerns articulated in the Civil Rights complaint fall outside the natural scope of this specific project, I do share some of the concerns articulated within.

The most basic benefit LRT must provide is enhanced transit service – especially to the highly transit-dependent residents and small businesses along the Corridor. Unless fully mitigated, the decrease in transit service identified in the Title VI Report near Western and University puts me in a position to have to choose between the needs of our region-at-large, and the best interests of the local constituents whom I serve. This is unfortunate, as I believe that this project can happen in a way which serves both. That said, the dilemma is simple for me to navigate. **As my primary job is to advocate for my constituents, I must actively and adamantly oppose any prospect of implementing a near-billion dollar transit project in a way that actually decreases transit service for the people I represent.**

Additionally, we must identify practical, effective solutions to mitigate the loss of on-street parking during and beyond construction – specifically its impact on the myriad small, local, minority-owned and multi-generational family businesses which have thrived along University Avenue for decades. We at the City are working diligently to identify and implement solutions to this surmountable challenge, and need your ongoing assistance to identify opportunities within the Metropolitan Council, State of Minnesota and elsewhere to support these solutions financially.

Ultimately, we must remain vigilant to repair and maintain support for this project, particularly among the people most directly impacted by it. Maintaining this support will require engaging community members in meaningful, ongoing dialog about the practical advantages and challenges of LRT construction in our city, and using those interactions to inform our work moving forward.

I have attempted to advocate for these and other project improvements from the inside, as a champion with concerns. To that end, I have expressed my unequivocal support for the project to neighbors, federal representatives and members of the media; encouraged others to work through their concerns with the project within the community input channels convened by the Metropolitan Council; and most recently, declined to add my name to the federal complaint that several of my constituents and partners have already signed. I have endorsed and abided by the belief that delays or roadblocks which threaten the project's budget and/or schedule were undesirable and unacceptable. **Unfortunately, this approach has proven ineffective, producing few significant, tangible improvements to the project in regard to my constituents.**

Conversely, I have observed others who chose a more adversarial approach – even to the extent of jeopardizing the whole line – rewarded handsomely with specific answers and dedicated funding to address their concerns and keep the project 'on track'. I will not attempt to enumerate here the full set of obvious

challenges this fact creates for me, as I continually reassess my own effectiveness and identify strategies for my engagement moving forward.

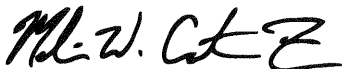
To be clear, I am still a supporter of light rail transit on University Avenue, and I continue to believe in its promise and potential, if done right. In that spirit, so as to remain a steadfast community champion for CCLRT, I respectfully and specifically request that the Met Council:

1. Clearly, definitively and consistently articulate that the project **WILL** mitigate any loss of transit service at University & Western Avenue, as required by the MOU between the City and Met Council;
2. Identify and appropriate a dedicated source(s) of funding to mitigate the loss of transit service at Western and University, to correspond with budget required to implement mitigation plans. Also, if this item will not be funded from the mitigation budget, please identify an alternate source;
3. Commit publically to maintaining 16A bus service at current levels;
4. Commit to full build-out of at least one of the three "infill" stations as the uncontested top priority for next available project funds – not just contingency dollars released from the project;
5. Assert full build-out of stations at Hamline, Victoria and Western Avenues as a long-term Met Council priority;
6. Participate in community-driven efforts to draft a Written Agreement that documents the roles of each of the project partners in addressing major community concerns, such as those articulated above;
7. Raise baseline streetscape along University Avenue to create a safer, more pedestrian-friendly environment, and better reflect the vibrant urban communities along the corridor;
8. Work proactively to identify and secure State/ Met Council funding to assist the City of Saint Paul's efforts to mitigate the loss of on-street parking, as well as impacts on small-businesses and low-income residents along University Avenue during and beyond construction. Specifically, we currently need Met Council support for:
 - Use of Livable Communities Development Act (LCDA) program funds to assist with development of a comprehensive Central Corridor Parking Strategy;
 - City of Saint Paul's request for TIF-District pooling in 2010 legislative session and beyond.
9. Please provide, at your earliest convenience, thorough written responses to the attached list of questions.

While these certainly do not represent an exhaustive list of my concerns regarding the project, they are the ones I consider most urgent, and absolutely critical to winning back our community's trust and respect for the project.

Finally, I request a meeting at your earliest convenience to discuss these requests, and create a plan for moving forward in a way that allows me to continue my role as a wholehearted supporter and advocate for the project. I look forward to our continued work together to move our community forward!

Sincerely in service,



Melvin W. Carter III

CCLRT Questions from Council Member Carter:

- 1) Given the disparity in funding for mitigation to the University of Minnesota, the City is concerned with the timing and prioritization for use of contingency funding.
 - a. When will prioritization for use of contingency funding occur? I understand that construction contracts must be executed before any actual release of funds, but setting priorities this fall seems like appropriate timing.
 - b. What individual or body is the final decision maker on prioritization and specific expenditures? I trust there will be an open process and that the Central Corridor Management Committee will make specific recommendations to the Metropolitan Council.
- 2) Please clarify the anticipated timeline for when construction contracts and the Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) will be finalized, as well as the schedule for contingency funding release.
- 3) The City is working very diligently to identify funding for enhancements as part of the initial construction. We are also concerned about funding for additional improvements beyond the enhancements – specifically, the stations at Hamline, Victoria and Western Avenues.
 - a. What is the earliest time the City can request funding for these stations (provided they are not already financed with contingency funding)? We are assuming this can happen as soon as the Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) is signed. Is that accurate?
 - b. Can we request funding in the 2010 Legislative Session without jeopardizing the project? If it does jeopardize funding, how does it do so?
- 4) Provided the Metropolitan Council gets a FFGA to its satisfaction and the project proceeds on schedule, will the Metropolitan Council support our efforts to achieve such funding? In what ways?
- 5) Mitigation funding is a sore spot for many along the Corridor. Please provide a fuller written explanation as to how past decisions were made, and specifically why so much of the mitigation wound up at the University of Minnesota when the rest of the Corridor, which is also impacted, has considerable unmet needs.
- 6) What is the objective criteria used to determine which impacts should be mitigated and which should not? More specifically, why is the station spacing issue raised throughout the last three years not an impact worthy of mitigation?
- 7) Why is the Washington Avenue Transit/Pedestrian Mall so expensive, and how was some of its cost left out of the base project cost?
- 8) The median along University Avenue is in fact the responsibility of the project; the Metropolitan Council should be more concerned about the project's overall aesthetics and how it fits into University Avenue. Why is the landscaping in the median considered a betterment for which the City must seek outside funding, and not part of the base project?
- 9) I have reviewed the infill station scenarios recently presented to the Central Corridor Management Committee, and have questions related to the data included.
 - a. What is being used to determine "funding impact" for each of the infill station scenarios recently presented to the Central Corridor Management Committee?
 - b. The cost for each station has been estimated at \$5.5million. How then, is the budget impact of scenario D estimated at \$8 million when the infrastructure for each station is included in the base project at \$1.5 million each?