

Press Release

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Contact: John Vaughn
UABA Interim Executive Director
651.430.3766
612.408.7418
jandjvaughn@comcast.net

UABA Submits Light Rail Comments to Met Council

Today, the University Avenue Betterment Association, known as UABA, submitted over 250 pages of analysis to the Met Council as part of the required public comment for inclusion in the Environmental Assessment being prepared for Federal District Court Judge Donovan Frank. This requirement was consequent to an opinion issued earlier this year by Judge Frank in regards to the Rondo Lawsuit in which the court found that the Met Council had inadequately analyzed the impacts of Light Rail construction on University Avenue businesses.

Recently, the Met Council further upset the small business community by issuing a draft Environmental Assessment predicting a mere 2.5% drop in business revenue by comparing LRT to a suburban Houston highway expansion project.

UABA's submission contains an extensive comparative analysis and suggests several more appropriate comparables, such as a similar light rail project in Seattle and the recent Lake Street reconstruction.

UABA's submission was prepared by a team of volunteers, utilized no paid staff, and received no government or philanthropic funding. All materials and time were 100% donated.

In addition to contending that the Met Council gave primary consideration to a project that is not relevant, UABA is strongly arguing that the Met Council has been deficient in not conducting baseline traffic, pedestrian, and sales revenue studies so that the true impacts of light rail construction on businesses can be measured.

"It is almost as if they do not want to know so they cannot be held accountable. Well, that is going to change. We all need to face the facts."

-Jack McCann, UABA Board President.

UABA is two years old and has 237 members, making it the largest business association on University Avenue. It has focused on advocating for more parking, better targeted and timelier implementation of resources for small businesses to survive construction such as a business compensation fund, and for local government, nonprofits, and philanthropic organizations to better listen to and respond to the needs of small businesses.

Next week, UABA will conduct a storefront vacancy survey and compare it with December 2010 data, thus creating an apples-to-apples tracking system for changes in the commercial vacancy rate. This will in turn be done on a quarterly basis during light rail construction. UABA will be using the same business list that the Met Council uses.

The UABA submission can be found by the end of the day today at www.universityavenuebiz.com.