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July 24, 2015

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Dear Planning Commission Members,

We are writing with regards to the proposed Gateway Corridor, or Gold Line, as it is now called.

We represent St. Paul Youth Services, a 40+-year-old community-based institution originally founded by the Saint Paul Public Safety Department to redirect young people starting to get in trouble with the law.

Over time, we've become a leading Twin Cities provider of behavioral support services. We impact the lives of 1,200 children ages 5-18 each year through early intervention behavior programs, family engagement, crisis counseling, and restorative justice services. 9 of 10 young people we serve do better in school, stay out of the criminal justice system, and resolve family conflicts. Our offices are located at 2100 Wilson Avenue, directly across Wilson Avenue from the Sun Ray Library.

We learned two weeks ago that the site plan for the Sun Ray station includes our office and adjoining property. We have not been engaged in any discussions on the project and in fact, have talked with neighboring businesses who were also unaware of it. This raises concerns about how the site plan will affect our organization's location, both in the short and long term. How will our clients be served while the project is underway? Will our agency be viable given the potential disruption to our services and the resulting loss in clientele? Will the jobs of our 37 employees be in jeopardy as a result of these changes?

We are champions of public transit - many of the youth and families we serve depend on it for their mobility. However, any plans need to take into account the impact on the communities who will be most disrupted. We are particularly active with the East Side neighborhood of St. Paul, where we regularly host trainings for neighborhood residents, the Sun Ray Library, and other public and nonprofit agencies on strategies regarding youth.

If we are to continue the vital services that we provide, then we need to be involved in plans, such as the Gold Line, that could significantly impact the future of our agency. We are here this morning to request that we will be included step-by-step in the planning process for the Gold Line as it pertains to the Sun Ray station. Only through this engagement can we hope to avoid serious negative impacts to our organization and the population that we serve.

Please contact us at your earliest convenience to discuss our engagement in the next steps. The best contact point is Dr. Tracine Asberry, Executive Director at (651) 252-6251.

Respectfully,

Cheryl Schmura
St. Paul Youth Services
Board Chair

Tracine Asberry, Ed.D
St. Paul Youth Services
Executive Director