

city of saint paul  
planning commission resolution  
file number 18-03  
date January 26, 2018

RIVERVIEW CORRIDOR LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE SUPPORT

WHEREAS, the Riverview Corridor is a transitway corridor in the cities of Saint Paul and Bloomington, Minnesota, serving urban and suburban communities; and

WHEREAS, a pre-project development study has been completed to analyze bus and rail alternatives in the Riverview Corridor study area connecting the Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, the Mall of America in Bloomington and the neighborhoods in-between; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Riverview Corridor Pre-Project Development Study is to evaluate and recommend transit service that enhances mobility and access to opportunities for residents, businesses and the region and to cultivate economic prosperity; and

WHEREAS, The pre-project development study was a joint local and regional planning effort conducted by Riverview Corridor Policy Advisory Committee and led by the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority in collaboration with local and regional partners; and

WHEREAS, the study included thorough technical analysis of alternatives including multiple bus and rail modes and multiple route alignments providing service within the study area; and

WHEREAS, the technical analysis identified two separate travel markets in the Riverview Corridor study area, including:

- The Highway 5 market, consisting of Downtown Saint Paul, the neighborhoods along W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, and the Mall of America.
- the Ford Corridor market, consisting of the area between the Riverview Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative and the Blue Line in Minneapolis encompassing the Ford Site; and

WHEREAS, the technical analysis and public engagement have led to the identification of a locally preferred alternative for the corridor that includes the definition of the mode, conceptual alignment and general station locations which can be refined through further environmental and engineering efforts; and

WHEREAS, Alternative 4b, serving the Highway 5 market, best meets the project's purpose and need and would likely qualify for Federal Transit Administration Capital Investment Grant Program funding; and

moved by Underwood  
seconded by \_\_\_\_\_  
in favor Unanimous  
against \_\_\_\_\_

WHEREAS, Alternative 4b is defined as modern streetcar within a dedicated and shared-use guideway for approximately 11.7 miles connecting Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul, the downtown, W. 7<sup>th</sup> and Highland Park neighborhoods in Saint Paul, the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and the Mall of America in Bloomington generally along Green Line, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets, W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Minnesota Trunk Highway 5, crossing under Fort Snelling, crossing over Minnesota Trunk Highway 55 and connecting to Blue Line (see attached figure); and

WHEREAS, the next phase of the Riverview project will include environmental analysis under the federal and state environmental review processes to discuss a set of reasonable alternatives and to determine if the locally preferred alternative can also be the environmentally preferred alternative through avoidance, minimization and mitigation of potential impacts while maximizing mobility, accessibility and surrounding economic development opportunities; and

WHEREAS, extensive public engagement activities were completed throughout the pre-project development study resulting in engaging over 4,500 people to gather public input on the multiple mode and route alternatives; and

WHEREAS, comments submitted by agencies, adjacent communities, the business sector and the public during the locally preferred alternative comment period and throughout the duration of the pre-project development study will be addressed accordingly in the environmental analysis phase of the project; and

WHEREAS, planning for the Riverview Corridor affords an opportunity to reimagine West 7th Street so as to better serve all those who use it today and those who will do so in generations to come; and

WHEREAS, planning and design of the Riverview Corridor must occur on a reasonable but aggressive timeline that reflects a sense of urgency to make the project a reality; and

WHEREAS, a robust transit network for the corridor will result not only from a strong central line but from multiple, convenient and frequent transit connections to that line; and

WHEREAS, the Riverview Corridor study has generated broader questions about the safety, livability and special purpose of West 7th Street in its current design that must be addressed regardless of the final mode and alignment selected; and

WHEREAS, there is serious concern about the safety of West 7th Street as it is currently designed for both pedestrians and bicyclists, especially senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, and families with small children; and pedestrian safety must be a prime concern of current and future car, bus or modern streetcar usage on the street; and

WHEREAS, the City of Saint Paul is currently revising its Comprehensive Plan and the draft Transportation Chapter of that plan calls for bicycle, pedestrian and transit infrastructure to be prioritized over motor vehicle transportation; and

WHEREAS, the businesses that line West 7th Street are the lifeblood of our community, providing critical services, retail, entertainment, hospitality and more, and planning and scoping for modern streetcar must prioritize the survival and vitality of businesses of all sizes before, during and after construction; and

WHEREAS, the character and layout of West 7th Street varies from segment to segment and the design process for both the street and the modern streetcar should recognize and evaluate these differences; and

WHEREAS, the public will continue to be engaged throughout the environmental review process and subsequent design, engineering and construction phases to ensure that the project is reflective of the needs of the diverse communities within the Riverview Corridor; and

WHEREAS, by selecting Alternative 4b as the Riverview Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative, the City of Saint Paul recognizes the need to partner with Metro Transit and the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority to work in consultation with Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority and the City of Minneapolis to develop and deliver separate transit, livability and economic development investments to the Ford Corridor as soon as possible;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Planning Commission supports the selection of Alternative 4b as the Riverview Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Planning Commission recommends that next phase of study for the Riverview Corridor must include:

- Analysis that prioritizes public safety.
- A design that prioritizes pedestrian and bicyclist safety along the entirety of West 7<sup>th</sup> Street and meets the Saint Paul Complete Streets goals and the priorities of the updated Comprehensive Plan.
- A plan for accommodating or relocating the bicycle infrastructure currently along West 7<sup>th</sup> Street.
- A community process to evaluate street layout and plan streetscape improvements along West 7<sup>th</sup> Street (including identifying funding sources and ongoing maintenance responsibilities), co-convened by the Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority, MnDOT and the City of Saint Paul. These improvements will be implemented concurrently with the Riverview Corridor design and construction process, regardless of the final mode and alignment chosen.
- A detailed plan and budget for construction mitigation based on lessons learned from other transit projects in the region and best practices from around the country and developed in conjunction with small business owners along the corridor.
- A design that evaluates the variations between different segments of West 7<sup>th</sup> Street in light of the goals described in this resolution.
- Maximizing Riverview's competitiveness for federal funding including analysis of phased construction plans and optimized implementation schedule.
- A plan for improved local bus service to feed the Riverview Corridor at critical connection points downtown and along West 7<sup>th</sup> Street; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Planning Commission recommends that the City of Saint Paul work collaboratively with the City of Bloomington, Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority, the Metropolitan Airports Commission and other stakeholders to undertake and develop station area plans for the proposed modern streetcar station areas based on market conditions, community input, Metropolitan Council guidelines, and expectations for development density, level of activity and design; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Planning Commission recommends that a parallel discussion among MnDOT, Ramsey County and the City of Saint Paul about the relationship and purpose of arterial corridors such as West 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Shepard Road and I-35E regarding their impacts on traffic patterns, speed limits and more including a subsequent discussion on the best arrangement for ownership and maintenance of West 7<sup>th</sup> Street; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Planning Commission recommends that at the completion of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, the PAC will reconvene to evaluate the technical and financial outlook for the Riverview Corridor project, to determine whether the chosen LPA is likely be under construction by 2025 and make alternate plans if necessary; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, the Planning Commission recommends the Saint Paul City Council adopt a resolution supporting Alternative 4b and forward to the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority and the Metropolitan Council for their consideration.