

RIVERVIEW MODERN STREETCAR PROJECT

MAY 2024 OPEN HOUSE

EVENT OVERVIEW

DATE: MAY 14, 2024

TIME: 5:00-7:00 P.M.

LOCATION: PALACE COMMUNITY CENTER, 781 PALACE AVE., SAINT PAUL

PURPOSE

The purpose of the meeting was for area residents, commuters, and other stakeholders to learn about the work of the Riverview Project team study of the design alternatives, recommendations from the team on next steps, and how to stay connected on future engagement opportunities as Ramsey County moves forward. Receiving comments from the public is beneficial for the technical staff and policy makers to make informed decisions.

EVENT ATTENDANCE

STAFFING

Name	Company
Lyssa Washington	4RM+ULA
Lauren Wiseman	HDR
Raquel Strand	BMI
Emily Dam	4RM+ULA
Jessica Laabs	Kimley-Horn
Grant Wyffels	Kimley-Horn
Mona Elabbady	SRF
Jason Gottfried	HNTB
Brandon Maurisak	HNTB
Michelle Vang	Kimley-Horn
Christian Campbell	HNTB
Alicia Uzarek	HDR
John Slack	Perkins and Will
Grant Martin	LOCi
Eve Onduru	Ramsey County

Mike Rogers	Ramsey County
Jennifer Jordan	Ramsey County
Kevin Roggenbuck	Ramsey County
Chris Barron	Ramsey County
Dan ***	MNDOT
Anna Potter	City of Saint Paul

We had a strong staff contingent that reflected the expertise and knowledge area of each of the key topics and points related to the display materials. Staff stayed throughout the event to provide information and support to attendees who were looking to learn more or voice their opinion about the streetcar and ABRT. In the event debrief with staff, it was agreed on that we had the appropriate staffing number and expertise in the room. It was observed that people were engaging in meaningful conversations with the experts.

ATTENDEES

NUMBER: The sign-in sheet shows 46 people attended the event, but there were closer to 80-100 people.

DEMOGRAPHICS: Mostly long-time residents and young families who are interested in learning more about the project or who came to express their opinion of the project.

MEDIA AND COVERAGE

Pioneer Press:

Leading up to the event, the Pioneer Press published a notice of the open house:
[Riverview Corridor open house to be held Tuesday by Ramsey County \(twincities.com\)](https://www.twincities.com/story/news/transportation/2024/05/01/riverview-corridor-open-house-to-be-held-tuesday-by-ramsey-county/728821700270001)

Frederick Melo, report with the Pioneer Press was present at the open house, but no article was written in response to the Open House.

My Villager:

The local neighborhood publication published an article regarding the Open House:
[A conversation on the future of transit in Riverview Corridor | General News | myvillager.com](https://www.myvillager.com/news/a-conversation-on-the-future-of-transit-in-riverview-corridor-general-news/)

COMMENTS AND CONVERSATIONS

THE FOLLOWING ARE NOTES AND COMMENTS FROM ATTENDEES, PROVIDED BY THOSE WHO STAFFED THE EVENT:

- Concerns over security on future streetcar.
- Perception that LRT has more security issues compared to bus.
- Spoke to 6 people who all prefer BRT because they believe it gets you a transit connection at a fraction of the cost. Several also felt that it was more flexible than streetcar.

- Concerns over on-street parking loss with streetcar option.
- Concerns about Riverview facing similar challenges as Green Line Extension (cost and scope).

Questions Asked:

- Stations: Questions about the permanence of potential station locations and how they will be finalized.
- Parking/Loading: Business owner expressed concern about parking removal and how the project will support businesses along the corridor. Questions were raised about whether semi and delivery trucks will be able to access businesses on West 7th and if traffic will be diverted onto adjacent residential streets.
- Traffic: Questions were raised about how car users will be able to turn around on West 7th Street and whether this would require turning into a neighborhood to redirect themselves in the opposite direction. There was interest in seeing improvements to the pedestrian environment and what access to the center running station would look like, with concerns based on current accessibility to Green Line stations.

Feedback Received:

- The visualization of the bridge was well-received, helping a resident better understand the benefits of the project. There was excitement about the opportunity to bike across the river with improved facilities.
- There was enthusiasm about the ability to use the Streetcar for events at the Xcel Energy Center.
- Overall, people liked being able to visualize and become comfortable with the changes the project will necessitate.
- Heard some concern about the difference in accessing side vs. center platforms.
- Need more information about the streetcar vehicles.
- Streetcar is not scalable – stations are built for only one car at a time. What happens when there are big events?
- Would like to see the route be LRT and use the CP Spur and Shepard Road, then put BRT on W 7th.
- Concerns about senior safety around having to walk further to stops – “this project is a mandate to use our cars”.
- Crime concerns.

THE FOLLOWING ARE POINTS THAT WERE MADE DURING OUR POST-EVENT DEBRIEF BY THOSE WHO STAFFED THE EVENT:

What We Heard:

- Streetcar is bigger than BRT.
- Attendees asked that as a proponent of streetcar, is there something I can do to get my opinion around to others?
- Anti displacement and business support.
- Parking concerns.
- Safety light rail vs bus.
- Impact to neighborhoods? Will traffic be diverted into neighborhoods?

- Traffic concerns-35E is a trouble spot.
- Bridge reconstruction, peds and connections.
- What work was done with the Tribes?
- BRT would be done in fragments.

THE FOLLOWING ARE COMMENTS FROM ATTENDEES AT THE EVENT VIA COMMENT CARD BOX:

<p>"I do not see how a streetcar makes sense economically or in any other sense. The plan-based or fed funding which only pays half compared to the BRT is extreme."</p>
<p>"I would like to see dedicated lanes for the streetcar downtown. I think it's possible geometrically if you narrow Kellogg to one lane in each direction, not including turning lanes."</p>
<p>"I'm wondering what you base numbers for economic expansion on. Losing 90% of parking to a streetcar is the type of thing that kills small local business. The streetcar is overpriced, unnecessary, and will drive down the budding local food, bar, and music scene along 7th."</p>
<p>"The biggest impact on the local W7th community, if a light rail is installed, will be the loss of local small businesses due to the restricted access (like University Ave) and loss of parking. I strongly prefer the ABRT option."</p>
<p>"I oppose the streetcar project. Rapid bus would be less costly and more flexible. Post covid world has not stabilized. We don't know the need/demand to plan a (word is illegible)... look at the failure of the light rail to Saint Paul."</p>
<p>"The ABRT is the only responsible option. The streetcar service will be the slower and it will cost at least 20x more. Development is not a justification. The estimate of 1,700 new housing units brings the local cost per unit to \$588k, about double the cost of building new homes directly. The price for commercial development is also \$6,300 sq ft < ten times the cost to build and give away. This makes no sense."</p>
<p>"Support increased public transit options on West 7th, keep up the good work! There's enough parking on side streets., don't need street parking down the busy road. Also supportive of access management."</p>
<p>"Please start listening to the community! Busses are great, add more and we will be fine, no need to tear up streets and add a slow trolley."</p>
<p>"Streetcar – bad idea. Expensive, reduced parking, bad for businesses on W 7th. Not good for elderly or disabled. Not good for plane travelers with luggage."</p>
<p>"Tsk Tsk! I must have misunderstood Thought I'd seen three different proposals for moving hoards of people from 'crapily' vacating downtown Saint Paul and airport and back. Instead of full court press propoganda for outrageously priced choo choo. Does nobody think of flexible, cheaper rapid busses anymore. One good thing! At 85 years old, I'll probably `be dead before bills start raining down on Saint Paul taxpayers to fund yet another mismanaged train that regular citizens avoid in droves."</p>