



**Midtown Corridor Alternatives Analysis
Community Advisory Committee Meeting**

April 23, 2013

Cristo Rey-Colin Powell Center
2924 4th Ave S - Minneapolis, MN 55408

Meeting Summary

CAC Member Attendees:

First	Last	Neighborhood	2/19/13	4/23/13	8/20/13	11/12/13
Michael	Wilson	Cedar-Isles-Dean	Present	Present		
Jeff	Peltola	West Calhoun	Present	Absent		
Candace	Dow	East Isles	Present	Present		
Harry	Savage	East Calhoun	Present	Present		
David	Greene	The Wedge (Lowry Hill East)	Present	Present		
Rob	Binder	CARAG	Present	Present		
Muneer	Karcher-Ramos	Whittier		Present		
Amanda	Dlouhy	Phillips West	Present	Absent		
Eric	Weiss	Central	Present	Alternate: Nolan Peterson		
Tara	Beard	Midtown Phillips	Present	Present		
Patrick	Ciernia	Powderhorn Park	Present	Absent		
Shawn	Pearson	East Phillips	Present	Present		
Kathleen	Hoffer	Corcoran		Present		
Rolf	Scholtz	Seward		Present		
Thatcher	Imboden	The Ackerberg Group 3033 Excelsior Boulevard	Present	Present		
Cliff	Roberts	Retail Property Owner 3001 Nicollet Avenue		Present		
Dave	Johnson	Chicago Lake Dental 2900 Chicago Avenue S	Present	Present		
Julie	Ingebretsen	Ingebretsen's Scandinavian Gifts 1601 East Lake Street		Present		
Sheldon	Mains	SPOKES Bike Walk Connect 1915 East 22nd Street	Present	Present		
Aaron	Isaacs	At-Large Member Transportation Advisory Board	Present	Present		
Mary	Matze	At-Large Member Lake St. (Route 21/53) Commuter	Present	Present		
John	DeWitt	PAC Member/ CAC Co-chair	Present	Present		
Joyce	Wisdom	PAC Member/ CAC Co-chair	Present	Present		

NOTE: Patricia Fitzgerald represented Whittier at the February meeting.

Staff Attendees:

Michael	Mechtenberg	Metro Transit Planning	Present	Present		
Katie	White	Metropolitan Council Planning	Present	Present		
Joy	Miciano	Zan Associates	Present	Present		
Jill	Hentges	Metro Transit Community Outreach	Present	Present		



Meeting began at approximately 7:04 p.m.

1. Committee Introductions (ALL)

Committee welcomed new members since first meeting and did quick introductions around the table. There are still opportunities for members to join us from the Lyndale Neighborhood and Longfellow Neighborhood (including a business). We would also welcome a property owner, employer or employees from Uptown, Lyn-Lake, Whittier. Finally, anyone willing to help us engage their communities typically underrepresented in public process (including immigrants or New Americans), please invite them and Jill Hentges and/or Joy Miciano will reach out to them.

2. Purpose and Need (Michael Mechtenberg)

As discussed at previous meeting:

- Goals and objectives of Midtown Corridor Alternatives Analysis
- Staff integrated comments received from CAC members since first meeting and established the Purpose and Need for the study (available at website: midtowntransit.org).

Other Notes:

- The policy summary (shorter version) and the full document are now posted on the website.
- The policy summary will be presented to the PAC on May 8 for approval.
- We are now moving on to the next phase of the project which includes the Universe of Alternatives and the initial screening for list of finalists for deeper study within the AA package.

3. Community Updates - opportunity to hear back from neighborhoods and business organizations

- East Isles Residence Organization/Candace Dow: The neighborhood organization now has a transportation committee. The Annual Meeting was in April and there was some focus given to possible improvements for East Isles and Midtown Corridor. They surveyed at the annual meeting had 13 respondents.

ACTION 1: Candace will share the results of the East Isles survey with Midtown Corridor Project Management Team through Jill Hentges.

- CIDNA/Mike Wilson: Much time in his community is spent dealing with SWLRT; did a walk about for West Lake Street station for station planning; did not discuss connection to Midtown Corridor project. This is a concern as the west terminus for the Midtown Corridor is intended to be the West Calhoun Station. Would like to see better communication and interaction between SPO and Midtown AA for this complicated station area at/near West Calhoun. The Hill and Lake Press had 10 different articles on LRT, but want to keep the Midtown Corridor project in people's minds too. May issue of Hill and Lake Press will highlight the Midtown Corridor and Open Houses. The Hill and Lake Press is available online.

ACTION 2: Send links to articles to CAC members and add to website. Mike and Candace have also shared art copies of the newspapers as well. If needed, newspaper articles can be scanned and added to the website.

- The Wedge (Lowry Hill East)/David Greene: Will write an update on the project in the Wedge newsletter after each CAC. The Wedge paper isn't online yet.

ACTION 3: Could David save a copy of each article in The Wedge for Jill Hentges so that they can be added to the Media and News Coverage section of the website?

- Seward Business (SPOKES)/Sheldon Mains: There are some continuing concerns:
 - Do not orphan Lake Street, east of Hiawatha.
 - We want development promoted and encouraged, not hindered.
 - There are also concerns regarding the possible impacts to the Midtown Greenway.



- East Calhoun/Harry Savage: Informed ECCO Board of last CAC meeting. The biggest issues right now is getting bikeway down 36th St – how to deal with that and other development issues. Still considering all options for the Midtown Corridor study.
- Lake Street Council/Joyce Wisdom: At many of the meetings Joyce has attended (Annual Meetings, Board Meetings) there are way too many elected officials who are referring to this study as the Midtown Greenway Alternatives Analysis. Businesses are concerned along the full stretch of Lake Street. East of Hiawatha is concerned that a connection will be missed.

4. Universe of Alternatives - PowerPoint (Michael Mechtenberg)

- Initially identifying all different modes and alternatives and applied a very high-level screening analysis to eliminate alternatives that don't make sense for this set of conditions (for each of the two alignments) and identify those that should be studied as part of the Alternatives Analysis project.

Study Process (Slide 3):

- Still in Stage 1 but we are past the Goals and Objectives and moving towards Stage 2. In Stage 2 there is more detailed analysis that will take place, with ridership information and much deeper analysis and data collection.
- Different mode options weren't discussed in detail last time, so more detail on each mode was discussed.

MODES

Arterial BRT (new style/regular bus with unique branding, runs in mixed traffic, diesel or hybrid-mixed vehicles, more favorable on Lake Street because of its flexibility and ability to run in mixed traffic with little impact on parking)

- Q: How does this compare to regular bus?
A: Regular bus, lots of dwell time, because of fare collection and boarding. BRT has off-board payment; all doors open, front and back to board and unboard; and near level boarding. They also have signal priority (not signal preemption); signal will sense when bus is coming, will hold light to let bus by and through signal faster. Also nicer bus, stations, real-time schedule at stations and limited stops (approx. 1/3 of a mile apart); bypasses low volume stops.
- Q: What is the spacing for Route 53 (limited stop bus on Lake Street)?
A: About 1/3 every mile.
- Q: Concerned that people won't know about this compared to rail. How aware would people be of BRT?
A: Would give it distinctive branding—bus, name, route letter, more recognizable station. Example: have blinking light on top of station when bus is coming. Also, Snelling BRT will open in 2015 and that will increase the awareness of Arterial BRT in the Region.
John Dewitt comment: Flip side from Midtown Corridor Study: Street car in greenway wouldn't be seen, but subways are popular.
- Q: Who uses the GO TO card today?
A: Half of people uses GO TO card now, which helps boarding. GO TO card is least used on bus Routes 21 and 19, because fewer MetroPass (employer transit pass) eligible riders; also have to pre-pay; many are unaware of how to do that or don't have funding available. BRT would have GO TO card readers at both doors; off-board collection would be for those without GO TO cards.
Candace Dow comment: People selling transfers is common.
Tara Beard comment: Subway is a different beast, more of larger system, rather than a piece.
- Q: Are there safety issues with paying off-board versus on the bus?
A: Not aware of issues; have them on rail stations, but different than a bus station.



Arterial BRT continued

- Tara Beard comment: Was mugged waiting for a bus.
- Aaron Isaacs comment: Rail stations have monitoring cameras; emergency call buttons; police circulating which is not as common on bus stations.

Streetcar (operates on rails in mixed traffic; station similar and spacing is similar to BRT. Difference: fixed system, overhead electric catenary wire system)

- Sheldon Mains comment: It does not have to operate in mixed traffic.
- Q: Aren't streetcars supposed to stop more frequently?
A: Streetcars can have stops where we select; goal of project is to provide fast service so can place stations to do so.
- Joyce Wisdom comment: Stations in trench (Midtown Greenway) will cost more, so there will be fewer stations in the Greenway versus Lake Street. The additional cost can be attributed to the need for vertical circulation (a way to get from below grade to street level). Streetcar will stop less frequently in Greenway than transit (any mode) on Lake Street. Michael Mechtenberg agreed with Joyce Wisdom.

ACTION 4: Call out the cost of vertical circulation for this alternative.

Dedicated Busway (similar to LRT; dedicated lane for bus, barrier to separate. Stations more significant in design and construction than BRT; diesel or diesel electric hybrid vehicles)

- Q: There is concrete separation?
A: Yes.
- Q: What is experience with dedicated lanes and plowing?
A: Common in Canada and not an issue with snow.
- Q: How much room is needed for lane?
A: Approximately 24 feet.
- Aaron Isaacs comment: it depends on location, because 8 feet (minimum) is needed for one direction for ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act).

LRT (operates on rails in a dedicated right of way; not a problem on Greenway, but it is a problem on Lake Street; larger vehicle)

Commuter Rail (runs on rails in a dedicated guideway, vehicles powered by diesel electric locomotives)

- Not sure how to get in and out of Greenway.

PRT (Personal Rapid Transit)

- Not very familiar to staff. Better use in controlled environment (i.e. Airport); must have complete grade separated.
- Sheldon Mains comment: Took a college course in PRT, move on. All agreed.

ALIGNMENTS

Lake Street

- Streetcar
- LRT
- Dedicated Busway



Midtown Greenway

- Double/Single track streetcar
- Full Double-Track LRT/Streetcar
- Dedicated Busway
- Personal Rapid Transit
- Commuter Rail
- Streetcar Lake Street/Greenway Loop
 - This option was suggested by a PAC member
 - Challenges: confusing for riders; difference in speed (travel times would be slower on Lake Street and faster on the Midtown Greenway); capital and right of way cost much higher for building two sets of tracks in two different areas.

Purpose of Initial Screening (Slide 12)

- If you can dismiss more at this phase there can be a more detailed screening on viable alternatives.
- Sheldon Mains comment: on alternatives, should consider dedicated busway on western edge of Colfax and then BRT from there because there is more space from West Lake Station to Colfax -- especially where Lake and Lagoon are separated; could have dedicated lane on each and easily keep two lanes of traffic on Lake Street and one on Lagoon.
- David Greene comment: Removing parking on Lagoon will be an issue; already a big traffic area.

Screening Summary Table (Slide 13)

Six Screening Criteria:

- Consistency with regional and local plans
- Level of access provided to jobs and residents
- Ability to provide desired transit capacity and speed increases
- Compatibility with existing transportation modes and infrastructure
- Potential ROW impacts
- Community and stakeholder sentiment

Six criteria with different factors were rated and alternatives advanced based on criteria:

- Q: Who did the rating/screening? And are they open to modifications?
A: Project management team and TAC; open to comments. Project Management Team was harsh critics and rounded down on the averages. Goal was to differentiate these so that a few could advance. PMT (through Michael) is interested in feedback.
- David Greene comment: his neighborhood Board is excited about streetcar—please explain why Lake Street streetcar performed worse than BRT. Would like this explained to be able to share with the Board.

ACTION 5: Better describe and explain why streetcar on Lake Street will not advance for further study?

- Q: Is there an Excel spreadsheet that has the numbers and is this the lay person's overview?
A: More detailed information is online. Criteria are not defined in the presentation, but there is more consideration to the criteria.
- Q: Where is economic development captured in criteria?
A: Under community and stakeholder sentiment

Explanation of Criteria:

- Consistency with regional and local plans



Explanation of criteria continued

- Is the mode consistent with Met Council recommendations in Regional Transitway Guidelines and Transportation Policy Plan?
1. Level of access provided to jobs and residents
 - Quantitative measure: buffer of station, totaled up resident and jobs within ½ mile buffer. It was determined that more jobs were accessed on the Midtown Greenway alignment because of Wells Fargo—and so that alignment ranked higher. This is about access. Therefore, the vertical circulation issue in the Midtown Greenway balances with the access to jobs between the Midtown Greenway and Lake Street.
 - Aaron Isaacs comment: Don't buy balancing out; people will go where the nicer transit is.
 - Candace Dow comment: If looking at going to work, it doesn't account for Senior Citizens and kids.
 - Q: Did you take under 16 and senior citizens out?
A: No. Not just focused on going to jobs; it's focused on total population.
 - Q: What does vertical circulation mean?
A: Greenway is below grade, will need ramp or elevator to meet ADA.
 - Tara Beard comment: County doesn't allow vertical access on south side of Greenway, is this an issue?
 - Joyce Wisdom comment: The County doesn't all it because the south side is reserved for transit.
 - Thatcher Imboden comment: One of maps with BRT extends past Hiawatha, if included then there would be different jobs and access.
 - Michael Mechtenberg: Study area does end at Hiawatha, for BRT stops, only focus on study area itself.
 2. Ability to provide desired transit capacity and speed increases
 - Desired speed: is it going to get you there faster
 - Aaron Isaacs comment: Can do all those things but still be faster on Greenway.
 3. Compatibility with existing transportation modes and infrastructure
 - Bridges
 - Connecting to existing transit
 4. Potential ROW impacts
 - Houses taken down, building removed; mostly on end of project area.
 5. Community and stakeholder sentiment
 - Perception of economic development; rail option was rated as higher perceived level of development potential.
 - Q: Do we know where the development will be spurred?
A: No, that will be looked at in more detail

Arterial BRT on Lake Street: Rated as **Good**

- Top one of alternatives study
- Q: Level of access, rated fair, but streetcar is good-why?
A: Might be because of number of stations. Streetcar has more stop.

ACTION 6: Michael Mechtenberg will look into the explanation of this.



- Q: Where would the development be with the Midtown Greenway alignment?
A: There has been discussion about both sides of the Greenway.

Streetcar on Lake Street: Rated as Fair

- I-35W bridge-doesn't have enough clearance: 18' 6"; would have to rebuild bridge.
Aaron Isaacs disagrees with this number.
- Q: What's the difference in clearance if operating in mixed traffic?
A: Clearance is needed for trucks and the catenary (overhead wires) system.
- Joyce Wisdom comment: Need to consider that people in favor of streetcar on Lake Street don't necessarily live or have a business on Lake Street.
- David Greene comment: Concern for me is development potential for streetcar on Lake Street is greater and that option (streetcar on Lake Street) was dropped.
A: One of the things that dropped it was the public sentiment; people don't want to go through reconstruction again.
- Harry Savage comment: Why not 31st Street? Less businesses, less traffic.
- Joyce Wisdom comment: The effort is to build business community with transit. During construction, the buses moved to 31st and moved business away from Lake Street.
- Mike Wilson comment: Issue of parking scarcely mentioned. Like to pull up in front of business. How do businesses feel about losing parking?
- Julie Ingebretsen comment: Terrible
- Thatcher Imboden comment: Don't agree with premise of study area. Happy that BRT shows going to St. Paul. Is there a model where streetcar in the Midtown Greenway makes sense and BRT on Lake Street, east of Hiawatha to St. Paul is put in?
- John DeWitt comment: About 10 years ago at Mayor Rybak's request, a meeting was held to discuss the feasibility of extending a Greenway streetcar line east to the river. At that time, the reconstruction of that segment of Lake St. was about to begin. The group felt that there was nothing in the plans that would inhibit implementation of a streetcar line in the future.
- Michael Mechtenberg comment: Projects work in phases. This Phase 1 approach will not preclude a Phase 2.
- Thatcher Imboden comment: But only studying Phase 1 in the corridor undermines the study; BRT would be more appealing because it provides a regional connection.
- Aaron Isaacs comment: Between Hiawatha and Lake Calhoun has one of the highest ridership, east of Hiawatha has less ridership.
- Joyce Wisdom: Transit numbers are changing because it used to be light industrial east of Hiawatha, now it is transitioning to retail and increasing transit numbers.

ACTION 7: Provide current transit numbers for Lake Street.

- Sheldon Mains comment: People may see taking a streetcar to connect with CCLRT is better.
- Aaron Isaacs comment: It is not our role to change study area; not a fundamental flaw.
Thatcher Imboden comment: It is a fundamental flaw.

Skipped discussing LRT (in the Midtown Greenway) and Dedicated Busway (on Lake Street) because everyone agreed they are not viable alternatives.

Double/Single-Track Streetcar in Greenway: Rated as Good

- Advances for further study.
- Q: Would this involve removing embankment on the southside?
A: The project would limit impacts as much as possible.



Double/Single-Track Streetcar in Greenway continued

- Q: What are the costs with grade changes? There are concerns with residents at Irving and James related to vibration and noise.
A: Cost was not considered; vibrations will be looked at in detailed evaluation.
- Q: Did they look at traffic shift?
A: Not now, but will look at traffic analysis in the next level of evaluation.

Full Double-Track/Streetcar in Greenway: Rated as **Fair**

- Not recommended for further study.
- Higher impact: remove bridges, shift bike path, faster
Harry Savage comment: Single/double track will be popular; there will be a demand to put in double track.
Michael Mechtenberg comment: Single/double track would not preclude putting in double track in future.
- Sheldon Mains comment: Have historic impact impacts with double track.
- Aaron Isaacs: If single/double track is done right, capacity won't be an issue.
- John DeWitt comment: Minimize impacts by having double/single track.
- Q: Cost doesn't play a factor until mode is selected?
A: True. Cost is looked at later.

Loop Alternative: Rated as **Poor**

- Harry Savage: Seems like a good idea.
- Doubling impacts. Grade changes.
- Q: Would streetcar be set in turf like the Coalition recommends?
A: Would look at with turf and without and the cost difference.
- Michael Mechtenberg comment: Know streetcar in Greenway is popular, but know demand is high for transit east of Hiawatha on Lake. Will be looking if demand is there for a combination. Would be a phased project.
- Q: So would same level of service on Lake Street continue? One person mentioned that they live near Bloomington, and if local service went away, there would be nothing.
A: That is unknown at this point, but would look in detail in the service development plan.
- David Greene comment: Combination doesn't make sense; if start with BRT, no one is going to want streetcar.
- Candace Dow comment: People would have to transfer to another vehicle which people would not want to do.
- Michael Mechtenberg comment: East of Lake St has been studied during the Arterial BRT Study and this study can save time and money because station locations were identified in that study. It is possible the FTA would allow folding that work into the project although it's outside of current scope of work for this project.
- Q: Were comments of extending project study area brought up?
A: The FTA provided funding to look at current study area, not possible to look at longer corridor.

ACTION 8: Explain the Federal funding for enhanced bus vs. rail (the local share in each scenario).

- Q: Is it possible to look at impacts of extending corridor? Interested east of Hiawatha. Can a criteria exist now on how extending east impacts the current alternatives? Don't want east of Hiawatha abandoned. Can we include something in study that makes this a major issue?



- Thatcher Imboden comment: Looking at corridor because Midtown Coalition pushed to have corridor alignment.

Loop Alternative continued

- Sheldon Mains comment: With traffic numbers east of Hiawatha, can streetcar be looked at—streetcar has more impact on traffic—my perspective. Just don't want to preclude it.
Michael Mechtenberg comment: Streetcar and BRT impacts would be similar; difference is capital cost.
- Joyce Wisdom comment: Should think about how trolley comes out of Greenway and gets on Lake Street; crossing westbound traffic.

5. Upcoming Open Houses

Direction on Planning

What do you want to see at open house?

- Candace Dow: Recommend slide 13—with background on scoring; put information on website so people are primed with the information.
- Harry Savage: BRT should not be presented; ridiculous to present.
- Candace Dow and Sheldon Mains: Disagree.
- David Greene: Should lay out what was looked at in case there were any questions on what was studied.
- Tara Beard: Slide 13 may be enough for people, but should have more details about what the criteria was based on; flesh out what was included in criteria.
- David Greene: Need some thought on how to present information to people who have never heard of project. Possibly have a 15 min primer.
- Candace Dow: Will there be a presentation?
- Joy Miciano: Will discuss at Thursday's PMT meeting.
- Joyce Wisdom: Recommendation that there should be a presentation with the start time promoted.
- Mike Wilson: Helpful to have information for people who haven't been to meeting; also nice to have a board on vertical circulation, maybe a schematic.
- Thatcher Imboden: Show apple to apple comparison, don't show BRT going to St. Paul and streetcar not.
- Michael Mechtenberg: There is a PAC meeting before open house, if is supportive, may be shown at open house.
- Thatcher Imboden: How do you show modal preference versus geographic preference? How do you control input if not comparing apples to apples with public feedback?
- Michael Mechtenberg: First round of open houses, people very willing to share comments.
- Mary Matze: May help clarify what is goal, economic development impacts versus speed? May help to explain why we are studying one alternative versus another.
Michael Mechtenberg: Can talk at a high level, but are not there in study to talk about these details. The two alignments can be serving two different markets. Could acknowledge differences.
- Joyce Miciano: Also include what will be further studied, ridership, etc.
- Tara Beard: Lines of economic development in criteria should be taken off, because it is a perception, not a scientific evaluation.
- David Greene: What were the racial demographics at the last public meetings?
- Michael Mechtenberg: Majority white; some people of color.
- David Greene: It would help to have people of color there.
- Joyce Miciano: Did talk at first meeting that CAC would help to promote to people of color and transit riders.
- Mike Wilson: Posters on buses, announcements on stations should be put up.



Upcoming Open Houses continued

- Nolan Peterson: Need information on how this will change or replace local service. Show existing conditions
- Tara Beard: Would be interesting to show times of how long a ride would take.
Michael Mechtenberg: Hard to get that information.

Next Steps:

- Looking for support from PAC and then public meetings.
- David Greene: Committee is mostly white; decisions may be different if people of color were included. Should be a priority.
- Aaron Isaacs: Station location on Nicollet doesn't make sense with I-35W Access Project. And Calhoun Beach station-dot is where no one lives. Should be fixed before presented.
- Harry Savage: How much federal funding would we be losing if went with BRT over streetcar? Would like to know this.
Katie White: FTA does currently support Metro Transit's BRT office.
Michael Mechtenberg: Yes, can say if more expensive project, FTA will pay more. Cost won't be included in next round of public meetings.

ACTION 9: Will have more explanation of funding for next CAC meeting.

- Joy Miciano: Provided update on outreach. Project is available for small or large standing meetings (e.g. Mercado Central)
- Nolan Peterson: Should contact Horn Towers.
- Joy Miciano: Horn Towers is on the list to contact.
- David Greene: If it's not too late the May Day event would be good to have a table. (NOTE: It wasn't too late. There was a table with open house flyers at the May Day event.)