A CENTRAL CORRIDOR LIGHT RAIL STUDY

Making the Case for Three Additional Stops at Hamline, Lexington, and Victoria: Restorative Justice, Urban Design, TOD, Transit Dependency, and a Culture of Transit

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Neighborhood Revitalization: Strategies and Theories
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the promises of light rail transit, it is stunning to note that in Saint Paul past Fairview Avenue, the Central Corridor light rail stops get farther apart the more dense the housing, and the poorer, more transit dependent the community. This project explores the need for adding light rail stations at Hamline, Victoria, and Western avenues on the planned Light Rail Central Corridor along University Avenue. Ridership and travel time are key factors in securing federal funding as is fulfilling mandated federal environmental justice laws. Our study examines the environmental justice argument for adding the three stations, plus important demographic information: density, urban design considerations, and other factors that contribute to ridership and accessibility within the vicinity of the additional stations.

Methodology

To get at the heart of the problem, mixed methodologies were used:

- reviewed environmental (social) justice literature
- reviewed transit oriented development/environment (TOD/TOE) literature
- reviewed history of the area
- did extensive mapping
- conducted field work (site surveys)
- conducted community interviews (20-plus)
- completed station studies with SWOT analyses

The Numbers

Understanding the basic financing of the rail is important. The federal government relies heavily on what is called the cost effectiveness index (CEI) to decide whether to grant approval to transit projects. Metropolitan Council, the state governing agency, explains they are constrained from adding more stations by a cost effective index (CEI) calculated by the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) to be $23.99. At $25, the current CEI budget exceeds that. The total cost, excluding the three additional stations, is now $932 million (including $155 million for a tunnel at the University Of Minnesota, Twin Cities campus). To reach a CEI of $23.99, the total cost of the project cannot exceed $840 million. When the project obtains federal approval and moves into construction, the FTA finances half of the capital cost, $420 million. The state funds one-third of the total project cost, and Hennepin and Ramsey counties, together, contribute 17 percent of the total project cost.

It is also important to note that one station costs approximately $5 million, and stopping at one station takes 44 seconds. Current station spacing is 1 mile between Snelling and Rice streets. Bus 16 service frequency (University Avenue bus) will be reduced and won’t go to downtown Minneapolis anymore. It currently stops every 1/8 mile.

So what does the CEI really mean? The CEI is explained as so complicated that “only a few engineers know how to run the calculations,” says Robin Caufman, Community Outreach Manager of light rail transit (LRT) at Met Council. There appears to be a lack of transparency when describing how the numbers work. This creates what is perceived as decision making by technocrats instead of decision making by community. The CEI appears to the African American community as a way to establish urban planning in the same way as in the 1950s and 60s where it was believed that professional technocrats ultimately knew what was best for a region and could figure that out scientifically.
Environmental Justice

Environmental justice is another key FTA requirement and necessary to provide equitable transit service. The FTA states that “Environmental Justice is an important part of the planning process and must be considered in all phases of planning.” The FTA has three fundamental environmental justice principles they must follow according to Title VI law:

1) To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.

2) To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.

3) To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority populations and low-income populations.

Since these communities must host the negative externalities of light rail transit (wheel squeal, parking displacement, bell whistles), they need to be included as stakeholders in the planning process.

“The African American community is expected to give up stations for our community that would help our transit-dependent population and would be economic catalysts for our neighborhood revitalization—all for the regional common good. Let me tell you, as a community, the African American community of Saint Paul has given our share to the regional common good already. Beyond our share. It’s time to get something back.”

Veronica Burt, Rondo community member

Transit-Oriented Development Literature

Part of environmental justice as it relates to transit is good station and corridor design. Many scholars agree that transit-oriented development (TOD) is the most effective way to encourage ridership, decrease automotive dependency, and it even improves transit service equity.

Effective TOD should include commercial, housing, jobs, parks, and civic uses within walking distance to transit stops; pedestrian-friendly street networks that directly connect to local destinations; and provide a mix of housing types, density, and costs.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Leads to Transit Oriented Environment (TOE)

TOD is beneficial to the community because it encourages mixed-use of single family, multi-family, retail, and office space in traditional zoning that encourages people to live, work, shop, eat, learn, play, and visit in a compact area. The areas around the three proposed stations meet the high density and mixed-use criteria. These criterions have a high potential to promote economic prosperity to these economic needy areas.

Inviting streetscape, the grid, and pedestrian friendliness are important standards for TOD. Inviting streetscapes encourage local residents to move out of their cars and do more walking in their neighborhood. The formation of the grid and pedestrian friendly sidewalks also promote walking in the neighborhood, which creates social capital. The more people are on the street, the less likely crime will happen. TOE calls it “eyes on the street”— Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) that helps mitigate and prevent criminal activity.

Medium-high density mixed-use retail, residential, and office areas, pedestrian friendly streets, social capital, and “eyes on the street,” together create a culture of transit, which is essential to transit development and should be implemented in the Central Corridor development.
The three proposed additional stations will reduce the distance between two stations to half a mile, which creates transit accessibility. This accessibility will be highly beneficial to the local residents in the area, which in turn will have a high potential of increasing ridership. Table 1 shows the average station spacing in comparable American cities.

Table 1: Station Spacing: Common Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative U.S. Cities</th>
<th>Minimum Distance (mile)</th>
<th>Maximum Distance (mile)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portland, OR</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo, NY</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jersey City, NJ</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measurements taken from Google Earth (M. Bailey, DCC, 2007)

**Mapping**

Through extensive mapping we discovered several key demographic features: The Percent African American and Percent Asian maps show high concentrations of minority communities along the corridor. A large concentration of disabled persons exists near Victoria and University. Lower educational attainment translates into higher poverty rates. The population density map shows Skyline Towers as one of the most dense blocks anywhere along the corridor. Also, there are three blocks with densities between 351 and 843 persons per square block just south of University at Western. Higher densities beget higher ridership. Station stop placing should reflect that.

**Table 2: Demographic Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Thomas-Dale (Victoria)</th>
<th>Summit-University (Western)</th>
<th>City-Wide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Rate</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Vehicle Households</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Minority</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**History**

Hamline at University Avenue has been a big box commercial area for decades. Skyline Towers, built in 1972, is a 24-story affordable-living complex of 504 apartments with approximately 1000 residents. Today residents are predominantly new immigrants from Somalia. Victoria Street is the heart of the oldest and largest African American neighborhood in Saint Paul, which has deep roots of over 100 years. In the 1950s and 60s the I-94 freeway was built directly through the Saint Paul African American community, bulldozing huge swaths of homes and over 55 African American-owned businesses. The Hmong settled in the Western Avenue neighborhood in the late 1970s and 80s, creating a commercial surge of small businesses in the area.

**Site Surveys**

The immediate Hamline/University avenues area is best described as big-box commercial development with large footprints of asphalt parking. Walkability is poor throughout the area south of University Avenue and Hamline. The immediate vicinity of Victoria and Western on University avenue is predominantly small businesses, with good densities to support TOD, opportunity for development, and good building frontage.
Community Interviews

Nine Somali residents of Skyline Towers were interviewed. As a group they had very little or no information about the plan for LRT on University Avenue. They had little or no information about how the LRT will affect Bus 16, of which they are very dependent. They are very interested in being involved, in having their voices heard, and in having a station at Hamline and University avenues.

Six community members were interviewed for the Victoria/University area. Although no one person can speak for an entire community, there are some common concerns that reverberate in the Saint Paul African American community. What is clear from all the interviews is that the African American community understands that across the country and in Saint Paul their communities have historically suffered from urban planning and urban renewal in a manner that most other communities have not. The Saint Paul African American community believes they are expected to “take the hit” for the larger good of society, whether it be a faster freeway drive from Minneapolis to Saint Paul, or a faster light rail service between the two cities. Nieeta Presley remarks, “Our communities have historically been communities of disinvestment. Suddenly parts of one of our communities becomes a “hotspot” for redevelopment, but our community, the African American community, doesn’t benefit from that development. The minute an area we live in becomes lucrative we become overlooked, and expendable ‘for the regional good.’”

Veronica Burt explains, “What Met Council is doing with community participation is symbolic. It’s all symbolic. Here you are coming through a community with environmental justice stakeholders and they are using our statistics—our incomes, our lack of automobiles, our lack—to get approval from the FTA. They are using our lives, our backs, but we will be losing transit in the process. They will limit bus 16 that stops every eighth mile and not put light rail stops at Victoria or Western? What are they thinking? Seniors are going to walk a half mile or farther to the LRT stop at Dale?”

Veronica continues, “There really is no negotiating going on between Met Council and the African American community. This is one of the ways that it feels like Rondo all over again. Yes, Met Council has information meetings, input meetings. But actual negotiation where our community has some power, some leverage in the process? They’ve been careful to make sure that doesn’t happen. We need a space in the process to open up negotiations. Met Council blames it on the CEI. It’s all about money and time, just like when the freeway went through Rondo. They put the freeway through Rondo instead of through the industrial area of town to save drivers one minute of drive time. One minute.”

Five members of the Western area community were interviewed. Their focus was on adding a Western station for the longterm benefit of the community, especially the young and elderly. Value Her reflected on the importance of the LRT as access to the University of Minnesota and higher education for the Hmong community. He said “ . . the Hmong Student Association at the University of Minnesota is the largest student group at the U of M. Amazing. We need to hook up Western and the U of M for our Hmong students. They need that station to link them to their educations.”

SWOT Analyses

A SWOT Analyses was done on each of the station physical areas. These SWOT analyses reflected the earlier physical descriptions of each proposed station area.
**Recommendations**

After carefully analyzing all the necessary and imperative elements (environmental justice, demographic information, etc.), and other related analyses (personal interviews, mapping, fieldwork, literature reviews, etc.) related to the development of the Central Corridor Light Rail, we make the following recommendations:

- All three additional stations are strongly recommended; each proposed station has its own particular characteristics that warrant an additional LRT stop
- Met Council should grant equal weight to environmental justice considerations as to the constraint of the cost effectiveness index (CEI)
- TOD around Hamline, Victoria, and Western will promote economic prosperity, safer neighborhoods, and social capital
- More people of color from the community need to be involved in authentic decision making

**Conclusion**

Current station plans along the Central Corridor Line discriminate against sensitive transit-dependent communities. They will lose the frequency of their current bus service and not have neighborhood transit stations. Creating additional stations at Hamline, Victoria, and Western avenues will mitigate that inequity. Positioning transit-oriented development around the three additional transit stations will promote economic prosperity, social capital, and safer neighborhoods for these transit-dependent communities.
INTRODUCTION

Originally, Rondo was planned with a land bridge over the freeway. That’s one of the reasons people didn’t fight it hard at the beginning in the 50s. Then the plans were changed. Costs were cut. The same thing has happened with the LRT. In a 1980s draft of the Environmental Impact Study (DEIS), stops at Hamline, Victoria, and Western were in the plan. In an updated study around 1990, these stops were taken out. This shows the expendability of this community.

Veronica Burt, Rondo community member

Despite the promises of the Central Corridor Light Rail, it is stunning to note that in Saint Paul the light rail stops get farther apart the more dense the housing, and the poorer, more transit dependent the community.

The aim of this project is to explore the need for adding light rail stations at Hamline, Victoria, and Western avenues on the planned Light Rail Corridor along University Avenue. Ridership and travel time are key factors in securing federal funding as is fulfilling mandated federal environmental justice laws. Our study examines the environmental justice argument for adding the three stations, plus important demographic information: density, urban design considerations, and other factors that contribute to ridership and accessibility within the vicinity of the additional stations.

METHODOLOGY

It is important to thoroughly understand the sensitive issues within the areas of the proposed stations. The scientific method alone could hardly begin to solve such a complex issue, especially when it involves history and environmental justice concerns. In order to get to the heart of the problem, this study exercises mixed methodologies. If one method fails, another will capture it.

Environmental justice literature was reviewed. Literature on transit oriented development (TOD) and transit oriented environment (TOE) was also investigated to illustrate the importance of TOD and TOE to the communities around the proposed stations. The history of each area was researched. One of the intents of that research was to understand the tragic event of the building of Interstate 94 through the heart of Rondo, Saint Paul’s historic African American community. The history was also reviewed to help prevent the disaster from happening again. Extensive mapping provided visual images to convey demographic information that may greatly affect ridership from these communities. Fieldwork in the form of site surveys was performed to assess the current conditions and activities at the proposed station areas. Over twenty community members were interviewed. The LRT will have a major impact on people’s lives along the corridor, so their voices need to be heard. The last method used was the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threat (SWOT) analyses at each proposed station area. Our recommendations are a direct result of compiling our research and understanding the patterns that repeatedly surfaced.
ANALYSIS

Planned Stations and Additionally Proposed Stations

Figure 1 above shows the current planned stations for the Central Corridor and figure 2 on the next page illustrates the Central Corridor with the three proposed stations in black dotted circles. There are 21 stations along this corridor. Five of the stations are shared with the existing Hiawatha Light Rail Line. Note the wide gaps between Raymond Station and Fairview Station, and between Snelling Avenue, Lexington Parkway, Dale Street, and Rice Street stations. When the light rail enters Saint Paul, there are no stops between Raymond and Fairview avenues, understandable because it is mostly a nonresidential, low-density, industrial area. In Saint Paul past Fairview Avenue, the light rail stops are farther apart the more transit dependent the community and the more dense the housing.
The Numbers

An important element in planning transit infrastructure is the cost effectiveness index (CEI). The CEI is a ratio between time and ridership. The federal government relies heavily on this index to decide whether to grant approval to transit projects. Met Council explains they are constrained from adding more stations by a cost effective index (CEI) calculated by the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) to be $23.99. At $25, the current CEI budget exceeds that. The total cost, excluding the three additional stations, is now $932 million (including $155 million for a tunnel at the University Of Minnesota, Twin Cities campus) (Robin Caufman). To reach a CEI of $23.99, the total cost of the project cannot exceed $840 million (Robin Caufman). When the project obtains federal approval and moves into construction, the FTA finances half of the capital cost, $420 million. The state funds one-third of the total project cost, and Hennepin and Ramsey counties, together, contribute 17 percent of the total project cost (CC factsheet).
Construction of one station costs approximately $5 million, and stopping at one station takes approximately 44 seconds. Current station spacing is 1 mile between Snelling and Rice streets. Bus 16 service frequency will be reduced and it will no longer go to downtown Minneapolis. The bus stops every eighth mile.

So what does the CEI really mean? CEI is explained as so complicated that “only a few engineers know how to run the calculations,” says Robin Caufman, Community Outreach Manager of light rail transit (LRT) at Met Council. The FTA explains the CEI:

“II.B Cost Effectiveness: In its evaluation of the cost effectiveness of a proposed project, FTA considers the incremental cost per hour of transportation system user benefits in the forecast year. Transportation system user benefits reflect the improvements in regional mobility—as measured by the weighted in-and out-of-vehicle changes in travel-time to users of the regional transit system—caused by the implementation of the proposed New Starts project. The cost effectiveness measure is calculated by (a) estimating the incremental “base-year” annualized capital and operating costs of the project (over a lower cost “baseline” of transit service), and then (b) dividing these costs by the projected user benefits. The result of this calculation is a measure of project cost per hour of projected user (i.e. travel-time) benefits expected to be achieved if the project is added to the regional transit system. Proposed projects with a lower cost per hour of projected travel-time benefits are evaluated as more cost effective than those with a higher cost per hour of projected travel-time benefits” (FTA, 2007, p. 9).

Although explained here, there appears to be a lack of transparency when describing how the numbers work. This creates what is perceived as decision making by technocrats instead of decision making by community. The CEI appears to the African American community as a way to establish urban planning in the same way as in the 1950s and 60s where it was believed that professional technocrats ultimately knew what was best for a region and could figure that out scientifically.

**Environmental Justice Literature**

The numbers only tell part of the story of the FTA guidelines. Environmental justice is another key FTA requirement and necessary to provide equitable transit service. The FTA states that “Environmental Justice is an important part of the planning process and must be considered in all phases of planning” (Federal Transit Authority, 2000). Despite widespread agreement that environmental justice is a crucial factor in planning and implementing any transit project, and is required by Title VI law, there is some variation regarding exactly what environmental justice means. In the interest of consensus, the FTA has provided three fundamental environmental justice principles:

1) To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.

2) To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.

3) To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority populations and low-income populations.


The African American community is expected to give up stations for our community that would help our transit-dependent population and would be economic catalysts for our neighborhood revitalization—all for the regional common good. Let me tell you, as a community, the African American community of Saint Paul has given our share to the regional common good already. Beyond our share. It’s time to get something back.

Veronica Burt
Rondo community member
The Federal Transit Administration is required to ensure nondiscriminatory transportation in support of its mission to enhance the social and economic quality of life for all Americans. Enforcing the guidelines above will not only improve transit service equity, but it will also allow the Frogtown and Rondo communities to achieve a certain degree of historical restorative justice. It will also further encourage inclusive planning and development practices; since these University Avenue communities must host the negative externalities of light rail transit (wheel squeal, parking displacement, bell whistles), they had better be included as stakeholders in the planning process. If environmental justice is incorporated into the Central Corridor Development Strategy, then light rail will better serve these historically neglected inner-city communities.

Our communities have historically been communities of disinvestment. Suddenly parts of one of our communities becomes a “hotspot” for redevelopment, but our community, the African American community, doesn’t benefit from that development. The minute an area we live in becomes lucrative we become overlooked, and expendable “for the regional good.” We are pushed out. Folks that have struggled in these substandard areas become displaced through higher taxes and rents. It happened with Rondo, of course.

Nieeta Presley
Executive Director of St. Anthony-Aurora Neighborhood Development Corporation

When transportation officials were planning the highway that would connect the Minneapolis and Saint Paul downtowns, there was little thought of the negative externalities of such a project. Transit officials failed to foresee the displacement, grief, powerlessness, and root shock that would arise from the construction of I-94. According to Thompson Fullilove, M.D., “Root shock is the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one’s emotional ecosystem” (p.11). When one’s neighbors, friends, and family are forced out of your neighborhood, one’s surrounding social network is profoundly damaged. Urban renewal between 1949 and 1973 affected over 1600 African American neighborhoods across the country, and the shock and upheaval of that time is still being experienced by today’s generation. (Fullilove, 2004)

As they started one by one knocking down these houses, this cocoon that many of us had been blessed to be a part of started falling apart. One minute we’re living in this community where there’s Black businesses and people getting along and everything is just wonderful . . . then all of a sudden, you’re losing this family, and you’re losing that family. . . . It was like they dropped a bomb and pieces of the cocoon went scattering all over, never to be put back together.

Nathaniel Abdul Khaliq
Voices of Rondo

In Rondo, over 55 African American-owned businesses were bulldozed, along with hundreds of African American owned homes. As this happened across the country, African Americans lost the generational wealth they had available to pass on to the next generation (Rose Brewer, et al, 2006). Another example of what was lost, affecting the entire world, was the transfer of jazz knowledge in African American communities. Urban renewal tore up African American neighborhoods and the connection between homes, clubs, and music was destroyed. Jazz nearly disappeared except as taught in high school and college courses (Fullilove, 2004).
This relates to the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit because the current station placement, with no plan to put transit stations in these transit dependent communities, poses a similar threat of isolating and fragmenting these communities. They will lack adequate access to transit and they will not benefit from the economic prosperity, social capital, and safer neighborhoods that come with transit oriented development. If America does this once again—all over the country, to African American neighborhoods—what will the loss for the world be this time around?

Often masked as urban renewal, large-scale transit development or housing projects often create life-scarring angst and misery that may only be understood internally. Incredible collective grief, depression, and anxiety was experienced by the African American community by the dislocation of their communities with the onslaught of urban renewal. “Root shock, at the level of the individual, is a profound emotional upheaval that destroys the working model of the world that had existed in the individual’s head. Root shock undermines trust, increases anxiety about letting loved ones out of one’s sight, destabilizes relationships, destroys social, emotional, and financial resources, and increases the risk of every kind of stress-related disease, from depression to heart attack” (Fullilove, 2004, 14).

Transit-Oriented Development Literature

Part of environmental justice as it relates to transit is good station and corridor design. Many scholars agree that transit-oriented development (TOD) is the most effective way to encourage ridership, decrease automotive dependency, and it even improves transit service equity.

“Transit-oriented developments [TOD] situate residential units, retail outlets, and commercial space within a quarter-mile [walkability distance] of transit stations . . . When you’re living in [a densely populated area], you are an urban being . . . your quality of life is more of an urban quality of life, and the only way that quality of life can be protected from further degradation is to make life more convenient. The way that happens is to eliminate the need for an automobile to get your basics done” (Isaacs, 2002, 30). TOD also has a large repertoire of positive fringe benefits. “In addition to attracting in-fill development, TODs can provide other large-scale benefits . . . TODs can provide transportation choices, improve public safety around stations, reduce rates of
vehicle miles traveled, increase households’ disposable income, reduce air pollution and energy-consumption rates, preserve open space, decrease local governments’ infrastructure costs, and play a role in economic development... Lastly, TODs can increase ridership” (Isaacs, 2002:32).

To further illustrate this point, Peter Calthorpe in his book *The Next American Metropolis* has articulated his TOD vision. Effective TOD should emphasize and accomplish the following:

- Organize growth on a regional level to be compact and transit supportive
- Place commercial, housing, jobs, parks, and civic uses within walking distance to transit stops
- Create pedestrian-friendly street networks that directly connect to local destinations
- Provide a mix of housing types, density, and costs
- Preserve sensitive habitat, riparian zones, and high-quality open space
- Encourage infill and redevelopment along transit corridors within existing neighborhoods

(Calthorpe, 1993)

Compact development helps to curb urban sprawl—the enemy of TOD is expansive, land-consumptive oceans of parking and low-density single-use buildings. Walkability and proximity to job sites, access to commercial and retail establishments, and a range of housing types and densities are just as important as having pedestrian accessibility to centers of community such as parks, civic organizing spaces, and green or open spaces. Traffic calming will help encourage pedestrianism and TOD, which may be accomplished a number of ways. Maintaining the urban grid street pattern is essential, however, wider sidewalks, an appealing streetscape, good building frontage, and inviting urban-architectural design are needed to fully ensure that TOD is feasible. Preserving sensitive habitats, open spaces, and riparian ecologies will minimize any potential environmental degradation that may arise from transit projects such as the Central Corridor. Lastly, encouraging infill redevelopment will not only increase densities along the corridor, but it will also allow for more flexible mixed-use urban designs that are able to change and shift in order to better cater to market demand.

In fact, TOD has become such a hot topic at planning commission meetings and such a central idea to planning agencies across the nation, that many have actually institutionalized TOD into zoning code to ensure smart developments around transit nodes. “Some local governments pre-zone land around transit stations for high-density, mixed uses and expedite the permitting process for TODs” (Isaacs, 2002:32).

**Transit Oriented Development (TOD) leads to Transit Oriented Environment (TOE)**

Transit Oriented Development is an integral element in designing transit infrastructure. Local communities gain numerous benefits from transit development when TOD is seriously considered in all phases of planning. TOD is beneficial to the community because it encourages medium to high density of mixed use single family, multi-family, retail, and office uses that encourage people to come and live, work, shop, eat, play, and visit. As one can see from the density maps (pp. 27, 29, 30), the areas around the three proposed stations meet the high density and mixed-use criteria. These criterions have a high potential to promote economic prosperity to these economic needy areas. Inviting
streetscape, the grid, and pedestrian friendliness are important TOD standards. Inviting streetscapes encourage local residents to move out of their cars and do more walking in their neighborhood. The formation of the grid and pedestrian friendly sidewalks also promote walking in the neighborhood, which creates social capital. Residents are more likely to walk and talk to each other on the way to the park or the convenience store. Social capital potentially creates a network among the residents where they can share employment information and entrepreneurial opportunities, which in turn improves the economic conditions of the neighborhood. The more people are on the street, the less likely crime will happen. TOE calls it “eyes on the street”—a strategy first recognized by urban pioneer Jane Jacobs—that helps mitigate and prevent criminal activity. It is also referred to as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED).

Medium-high density of mixed-use retail, residential, and office areas, pedestrian-friendly streets, social capital, and “eyes on the street,” combine to create a culture of transit, which is essential to transit development and should be implemented as an integral part of the Central Corridor development.

Currently, the station spacing between Snelling and Lexington, Lexington and Dale, and Dale and Rice streets is one mile. One can see from table 1 that the maximum distance between two stations from four comparable U.S. cities is nowhere close to one mile apart. The three proposed additional stations will reduce the distance between two stations to half a mile, which creates transit accessibility (i.e. “transit stations or stops that are conveniently located and allow transit users to reach their destinations”) (Dittmar & Ohland, p. 22). This accessibility will be highly beneficial to the local residents in the areas, which in turn will have high potential of increasing ridership.

According to the study of Rosenbloom and Clifton (1996), transit use is higher in larger cities and the following factors are significant determinants of high ridership: employment and population density, socioeconomic status, and number of rail lines (Rosenbloom, S., Clifton, K., 1996). In addition, accessibility is another integral element that contributes to higher ridership (Pushkarev and Zupan, 1977; Wachs, 1989).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative U.S. Cities</th>
<th>Minimum Distance (mile)</th>
<th>Maximum Distance (mile)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portland, OR</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo, NY</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jersey City, NJ</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measurements taken from Google Earth (M. Bailey, DCC, 2007)

... the Hmong Student Association at the University of Minnesota is the largest student group at the U of M. Amazing. We need to hook up Western and the U of M for our Hmong students. They need that station to link them to their educations.

Vatou Her
Hmong State Farm Insurance businessman

A Central Corridor Light Rail Study
Making the Case for Three Additional Stops at Hamline, Lexington, and Victoria: Restorative Justice, Urban Design, TOD, Transit Dependency, and a Culture of Transit
David Arbit, Kimberly Nightingale, and Hoang Ton
Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
Mapping

The Percent African American and Percent Asian maps show the high concentrations of minority communities along the corridor. Members of these communities have high entrepreneurial participation rates (Census, 2000). Often times, entrepreneurial activities include start-up restaurants and businesses that promote local cultural tastes and traditions. These small-box businesses typically have slim margins. In turn, this means that minority small business owners are particularly vulnerable and susceptible to higher rents and property taxes as a result of gentrification along the Central Corridor. If the FTA is going to further divide the Rondo and Frogtown communities with a high-speed, low-frequency-stop light rail like they did I-94 and cause higher operating costs to business owners, they should at the very least
serve the communities they are affecting. The best way to do this is to include additional stops at Hamline, Victoria, and Western. Lastly, members of communities of color tend to have higher ridership rates (Dittmar & Ohland, 2004, 11). Hence, additional stops should be placed at Victoria Avenue and Western Avenue to capitalize on high ridership and transit dependency (and to improve physical mobility) for the African American and Asian communities, respectively (Diehlman, Djist, & Burghouwt, 2002; Kuby, Barranda, Upchurch, 2003).
Percent of Population in Poverty map is also very telling. Poverty (or low incomes compared to the metropolitan area or the nation) is a direct indicator of transit dependency and therefore transit ridership (Dielman, Djist, & Burghouwt, 2002; Kuby, Barranda, Upchurch, 2003). There are three major clusters of poverty along our section of interest between Snelling Avenue and Rice Street. The first is on the south side of University at Hamline Avenue. The second is within the northeast quadrant of the Dale Street walkability buffer. The third and last block group of concentrated poverty (typically 40 percent, here it is 34 percent of the population in poverty) is both north and south of University between Western and Rice streets. The first cluster of poverty at Hamline and University may be largely attributable to Skyline Towers. Skyline Towers is a 24-story high-rise just between I-94 and University at Hamline. The towers are predominantly occupied by recent Somali immigrants and they host a high percentage of transit dependent individuals and families. The second cluster of poverty happens to fall...
within the Dale Street walkability buffer. Since there is already a station planned for Dale, no further attention will be granted to this region. The third and last cluster of poverty is largely comprised of Hmong immigrants. Since GDPs and per capita incomes are typically lower in developing countries such as Laos, Cambodia, and Somalia, there is very little generational wealth transfer, so recent immigrants often struggle with poverty while they’re gaining solid footing in the economy.

Poverty aside, there are a disproportionately high number of disabled persons along the Central Corridor. The largest concentration of disabled persons is on University between Lexington and Dale avenues. Since Lexington and Dale are on the fringes of the disabled population, a light rail stop at Victoria would greatly alleviate the stress of moving around the city for disabled individuals. Physical disabilities prevent individuals from driving cars. Hence, they are far more dependent on public transit, which would increase ridership and create heavy usage of a Victoria stop.
The educational attainment map is very similar to poverty, but inverted. Lower educational attainment translates into higher poverty rates. So education serves as a proxy socio-economic wealth indicator. Lower educational attainment rates—such as those along University between Lexington and Rice—will produce higher ridership rates. This will only occur, however, with the addition of a Victoria and Western light rail stop. Otherwise, there is insufficient incentivizing at the micro level.
The population aged 5 to 17 years map is also very illuminating. Children aged 5 to 17 years are typically considered school-aged children. They are the most likely to be enrolled in school. Since “14 percent of [transit] ridership is school related” (Kuby; Barranda; & Upchurch, 2003:227), this is a prime opportunity to capitalize on high ridership rates in the school-aged groups. Besides, with both parents working several jobs to make ends meet, children can take charge of transporting themselves to school in a safe, reliable, cost-effective way. One major cluster of school-aged children is Skyline Towers. The Skyline Towers are outside of the Lexington walkability buffer but almost completely within the recommended Hamline stop—so children could far more easily walk to a Hamline stop than to the Lexington stop.
The population density map also sheds light on the additional stations argument. Once again, since Skyline Towers is a 24-story high-rise, it is one of the most dense blocks anywhere along the corridor. The Lexington stop is not walkable for individuals living in Skyline Towers. If there were a Hamline stop, however, the Central Corridor project would enjoy far greater ridership from higher densities at Hamline. Also, there are three blocks with densities between 351 and 843 persons per square block just south of University at Western. These blocks are mostly within a walkable distance from a Western station, but they are outside of the Dale and Rice Street walkability buffers. Higher densities beget higher ridership. Station stop placing should reflect that.
A Central Corridor Light Rail Study
Making the Case for Three Additional Stops at Hamline, Lexington, and Victoria: Restorative Justice, Urban Design, TOD, Transit Dependency, and a Culture of Transit
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## TABLE 2: DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Thomas-Dale (Victoria)</th>
<th>Summit-University (Western)</th>
<th>City-Wide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Rate</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Vehicle Households</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Minority</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Met Council DEIS

### History

#### Hamline and University Avenue

Hamline and University Avenue has been a big box commercial area for decades. The important historical piece in the neighborhood related to residents is Skyway Towers. Built in 1972 and located at 1247 St. Anthony Avenue, Skyline Towers is a 24-story affordable-living complex of 504 apartments with approximately 1000 residents. The complex sits adjacent to the I-94 Freeway. The apartment complex includes studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom apartments. Off-street parking is available. Amenities include an on-site grocery store, career advantage program (employment and professional development), youth academic mentoring and homework center, youth summer program, computer center, on-site social worker, ECFE (Early Childhood Family Education), and community events. The owner is CommonBond Communities, Minnesota’s largest nonprofit provider of affordable living. They have over 71 communities serving 6,200 people in 4,200 apartments. Skyline Towers is its largest single complex. Rental programs include Section 8, Section 42, and Section 236.

Skyline Towers has a history of being a gateway home into the Twin Cities for many people migrating from rural areas, other parts of the country, and other parts of the world. Today, residents of Skyline Towers are predominantly new immigrants from Somalia.

#### Victoria and University Avenue

Victoria Street runs north-south in the heart of the oldest and largest African American neighborhood in Saint Paul, which has deep roots of over 100 years on Victoria Street. Generations of African Americans have raised their families there. African Americans from all over the country return home to visit during Rondo Days, held the third weekend each July. The annual Rondo Parade travels down Victoria, which acts as one of the few road bridges linking both sides of the Rondo neighborhood across the I-94 freeway that is situated right in the middle of their neighborhood.

The African American community established itself in Saint Paul in the late 1800s and early 1900s, predominantly in the Summit-University neighborhood, defined by University to the north, Lexington on the west, Summit Avenue on the south, and John Ireland Boulevard on the east. Many African Americans came north to escape racist Jim Crow laws implemented in the South and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.

In the 1950s and 60s, federal urban renewal initiatives wreaked havoc in African American neighborhoods across the country. Urban renewal brought the I-94 freeway directly through the Saint Paul African American community, bulldozing huge swaths of homes and over 55 African-American owned businesses.
Western and University Avenue

Western runs north-south in the heart of the oldest and largest Hmong American neighborhood in Saint Paul, which has roots of over 30 years on Western and University avenues. A generation of Hmong and Vietnamese Americans have raised their families there, and the third generation is growing up there now. Hmong Americans, Vietnamese Americans, and African Americans share the neighborhood with other communities in one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the Twin Cities.

The Hmong American and Vietnamese American communities established themselves in Saint Paul in the late 1970s. Hmong and Vietnamese settled in Saint Paul after the United States pulled out of the Vietnam War. The Hmong community in Laos helped the U.S. govern-

ment during the war, and was subsequently resettled in Saint Paul from refugee camps in Thailand after fleeing the Lao government.

Wameng Moua, Editor of Hmong Today and a member of the Hmong Business Association, describes University Avenue at that time, “the history of the Hmong people on University Avenue goes back to the late 70s and early 80s. This was a red light district. Many businesses were boarded up and desolate. The opportunity was there and the Hmong community and the Vietnamese community came in and gave it a spark. Reignited the area. Twenty-five to thirty years later, it’s not vacant, but thriving. It goes back to the support from our communities. This is our home now. We are here to stay.”

They need to put in Western and Victoria stations with the LRT. No waiting for later. You have to do the right thing for the community now for the long term. Residents need transit, commercial businesses need transit to survive. If we have no stations at Western and Victoria, the economic boom of the LRT will pass right over the Hmong community. Especially Western, that is our heart.

Vatou Her
Hmong State Farm Insurance businessman

They need to put in Western and Victoria stations with the LRT. No waiting for later. You have to do the right thing for the community now for the long term. Residents need transit, commercial businesses need transit to survive. If we have no stations at Western and Victoria, the economic boom of the LRT will pass right over the Hmong community. Especially Western, that is our heart.

Vatou Her
Hmong State Farm Insurance businessman
Orthographic Photograph:
University & Hamline, St. Paul

Legend
- Local Streets
- University Ave
- 1/4 mile walkability buffer

Map created by David Arbit in November, 2007
Data source is NAIP (DOQ) Minnesota, 2003
Site Surveys

Hamline and University Avenue: Physical Description of Area

The immediate Hamline/University avenues area is best described as big-box commercial development with large footprints of asphalt parking. No corner has buildings that front the sidewalk. Instead, each corner has parking areas adjacent to it. A British Petroleum (BP) gas station sits at the northwest corner. At the northeast corner sits a closed and empty Midway-Chevy car dealership. Beyond the business frontage on the north side of University are medium-density single homes, duplexes, and small apartment buildings averaging 23 households per acre. Most of the homes were built between 1890 and 1930. On the southwest corner is a big box Discount Tire Company, with a Wal-Mart, Cub Foods, Borders Bookstore, and Herberger’s Department Store situated nearby. On the southeastern corner sits Hobbit Travel and Blockbuster Video, with a SuperTarget and large footprints of asphalt parking just beyond there. Just outside of the quarter-mile buffer of a proposed Hamline-University LRT station is Skyline Towers. Walkability is poor throughout the area south of University Avenue and Hamline.

Victoria and University Avenue: Physical Description of Area

The immediate vicinity of Victoria and University avenues is predominantly small businesses. On the northwest corner sits a Car-X chain. Beyond Car-X sits a long strip of U-Haul rental space. On the northeast corner is the Vietnamese restaurant Que Nha, with parking directly on the northeast corner. On the southwest corner is Best Steakhouse, and on the southeast corner is Tai Hoa BBQ, well known in the Twin Cities for its barbequed meats. Old buildings and houses stretch past the corners with commercial/business space at-grade and residential on top. Beyond the commercial strip of University, the area is predominantly single-family homes, duplexes, and apartment buildings. On the north side, homes are from the early 1900s. On the south side, many old homes were torn down during urban renewal of the 1960s and early 70s and suburban-style ranch houses were erected.
Orthographic Photograph: University & Victoria St. Paul

Legend
- Local Streets
- University Ave
- 1/4 mile walkability buffer

Map created by David Arbit in November, 2007
Data source is NAIP (DOQ) Minnesota, 2003
Orthographic Photograph: University & Western St. Paul

Legend
- University Ave
- Local Streets
- 1/4 mile walkability buffer

Map created by David Arbit in November, 2007
Data source is NAIP (DOQ) Minnesota, 2003
Western and University Avenue: Physical Description of Area

The immediate vicinity of Western and University avenues is predominantly small businesses. On the northwest corner sits Frogtown Chiropractic. On the northeast corner is May’s Market. On the southwest corner is the famous Vietnamese restaurant Mai Village, often frequented by the capitol crowd, and on the southeast corner is the Old Home cottage cheese and yogurt factory, currently for sale and architecturally a beautiful art deco design. A beautiful capitol view exists at this corner. The area has good density to support TOD, opportunity for development, and good building frontage. Beyond the commercial strip of University, the area is predominantly single-family homes, duplexes, and apartment buildings. On the north side, homes are from the early 1900s. On the south side, many old homes were torn down during urban renewal of the 1960s and early 70s and suburban-style ranch houses were erected.

Community Interviews

Community Voices from Hamline and University Avenues

Skyline Tower residents were interviewed on November 27, 2007. Nine Somali residents of Skyline Towers were present during the interview, four men and five women: Adar Ismail, Fadumo Jama, Fadumo Farah, Mohamed Haji, Abdulahi Ilmi, Amino Abdi, Qayro Hasan, Saciid Farah, and Fartun Osman, translator during the interview and president of Skyline Towers Resident Association. Fartun Osman had attended a Met Council meeting the following week and had an understanding of the LRT plans. As a group, however, they had very little or no information about the plan for LRT on University Avenue. They had little or no information about how the LRT will affect Bus 16, of which they are very dependent. They are very interested in being involved, in having their voices heard, and in having a station at Hamline and University avenues.

Fartun says, “This gentleman says they don’t want the train station if it will remove the stores we visit, like Target and Cub. . . .This other gentleman says, hasn’t the legislation already passed? Isn’t there already no hope for a station at Hamline Avenue?” (see appendix 1).

When asked about bus use, Fartun explains, “Most of our people take bus 16, especially women and children, older people. This gentleman says with all these train stops, the bus will be faster” (see appendix 1).

They are concerned about where the train will go. “Maybe the train won’t take us where we need to go. Then what?” (see appendix 1).

After learning that the Somali community near Minneapolis has a train station, Fartun interprets for the whole group, “The Somali community at Skyline Towers wants a train station at Hamline Ave. We need it. How do we get it? Who will listen to us?” (see appendix 1).
The community meetings are explained. Fatun says, “We will come to the meetings. As a group. We want to be involved. We want a station at Hamline for our people so they do not have to walk so far in the cold. Our people are not used to this cold. Should we protest on University and Hamline? We will protest if that will help” (see appendix 1).

Community Voices from Victoria and University Avenues
Several community leaders and residents were interviewed concerning the Central Corridor and the possibility of having stations at Victoria, Western, and Hamline avenues at the intersection of University Avenue. Four members of the community were interviewed as a group: Nieeta Presley, Executive Director of the local St. Anthony-Aurora Neighborhood Development Corporation at 774 University Ave.; Dennis A. Presley, Sr., Community Organizer of Got Voice, Got Power!; Veronica Burt, LRT Organizer, Public Policy and Community Advocacy Specialist, Central Corridor Equity Coalition, Just Equity, and Community Advisory Coalition (CAC) member; and Daniel Kravetz, St. Anthony-Aurora Neighborhood Development Corporation Outreach Worker (see appendix 2). Also interviewed at separate times were Mahmoud El-Kati, resident and retired professor of American Studies from Macalester College and Kate Cavett, author of Voices of Rondo, which won the Minnesota Book Award in 2005.

Although no one person can speak for an entire community, there are some common concerns that reverberate in the Saint Paul African American community. What is clear from all the interviews is that the African American community understands that across the country and in Saint Paul their communities have historically suffered from urban planning and urban renewal in a manner that most other communities have not.

Nieeta Presley explains past Met Council ideas, “Met Council wanted to put up walls along I-94 to block the freeway noise—sound barriers—but the community protested that. It was a big protest. We didn’t want any more barriers separating us as a community. We’ve already been split into two. We didn’t want them to separate us any more than they already had. We’ll take the noise before they do more community separating” (see appendix 2).

The conversation turns to the idea of roughing in stations to build later. Veronica Burt says, “There’s talk now of roughing in the Victoria and Western stations. Justice delayed is justice denied. You have to understand that “roughing in those stations” is the plan. The TOTAL PLAN. The process completed. Just like they were supposed to build a land bridge over Rondo when the freeway came in. Projects run out of money. We’re organized as a community right now. When the LRT is in, the tracks are laid, we’re not going to have the same people power to get those stations built, and Met Council knows that. Boston roughed in stations in their low-income neighborhoods. Those neighborhoods had to fight and fight and fight to get those stations built. Some have finally been built, but it’s not over. They’re still fighting to get all the stations built” (see appendix 2).

Veronica Burt says, “Doing LRT right, including the stations at Victoria and Western, particularly, in a respectful manner, would interject an aspect of healing for the community. Artwork designed around the stops and walkways that is community-based and addresses the history of the community could help with that healing” (see appendix 2).

Dennis says, “We’re concerned about foot mobility. Senior citizens and youth are going to have to walk a mile to get on transit. The great majority don’t drive. And the service of bus 16 will be limited” (see appendix 2).
Nieeta explains “People want this land. People living in suburbia are tired of driving. They want to live close to convenient transit. This area is suddenly lucrative” (see appendix 2).

Veronica talks about how that impacts the African American community. “Those who have been surviving are pushed out to the edges into substandard housing again. They can’t afford the new rents or the new, higher taxes. It’s a counter-effect—a Catch 22. The African American community that mostly lives between Dale and Western are chilly about this project. We need to do it in a way that maximizes the benefits and minimizes the damage” (see appendix 2).

Veronica Burt finishes, “Stops cost about five million. How about taking out some of the stations downtown? Have them get roughed in instead. We need stations at Western and Victoria. It’s a way to not repeat a terrible history, provide social justice for our transit dependent community, and to revitalize the neighborhood economy” (see appendix 2).

Dan explains, “We have to use other points of leverage. We need a space to open up a clear space of negotiations. Right now it’s very one-sided. We need to look at multiple levels of leverage. We’re transit dependent here and Met Council is not acknowledging the needs for frequent stops that go with that” (see appendix 2).

Nieeta sums it up, “We need good transportation. Why is it that we can’t benefit from LRT?” (see appendix 2).

Community Voices from Western and University Avenues

Several Asian American community leaders and residents were interviewed concerning the Central Corridor and the possibility of having stations at Victoria, Western, and Hamline on University Avenue. Three members of the Hmong Business Association were interviewed as a group: Vatou Her, State Farm Insurance salesman with an office on University Avenue; Chang Thao, manager of FoodSmart at 544 University Avenue; and Wameng Moua, Editor of Hmong Today. Phone interviews with Nicole Ly, Community Organizer with TakeAction Minnesota and a separate interview with Kathy Mouchepoua, Executive Director of the Center for Hmong Arts and Talent (CHAT) were also conducted. Va-Megn Thoj who works as a policy associate in Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman’s office was a helpful resource.

Vatou Her sums up the attitude of much of the Hmong community, “We see the long-term good for the community at having light rail stations at Western and Victoria. Good for business, good for travel. . . . The benefit of LRT is for the elderly and for the U of M students. Short distances need to be placed between stations for the benefit of the people, so they can walk to the stations and they are not so far away that the walk is too long” (see appendix 3).

Chang Thao talked of the relationship between downtown workers and the restaurants at Western and University, “It’s also an opportunity for business people in downtown Saint Paul to ride the LRT over for lunch. Have some good pho” (see appendix 3).

Wameng of Hmong Today commented, “(The) Hmong community wonders, is LRT coming? It doesn’t seem real yet. They don’t see the impact. There’s not much outcry or support. People are not really aware yet. The main concern is the construction and the disruption that will bring. Can businesses survive? Will agencies help with that? MetCouncil has
put no ads in *Hmong Today* or *Insight* newspaper about LRT. They need to reach out to the communities” (see appendix 3).

Wameng Moua continues, “It doesn’t make any sense at all to not have stations at Western and Victoria. We have ethnic diversity, shopping, restaurants. They are destinations with a real city feeling. If the stations are too far apart, the LRT is a deterrent for people to use. They are limiting bus 16 too. Western is one block to Lao Family Building. Also, Liberty Plaza, affordable housing privately owned and run by the Methodist church, is right at Western and I-94. It’s been a gateway housing development for refugees coming from Thailand since the late 70s. It’s nice” (see appendix 3).
SWOT Analyses

Hamline and University Avenues

Strengths
High % transit dependent population (1000 residents Skyline Towers, 504 apts average income under $10,000 yr.) Environmental justice for Skyline residents

Weaknesses
Every corner—terrible urban design

Opportunities
High % ridership potential
Access to daily shopping for riders

Threats
Big boxes could stay entrenched as is
Brownfield of BP gas station makes redevelopment expensive

Victoria and University Avenues

Strengths
High % transit dependent population
Mixed use exists with commercial business
Lots of restaurants and small businesses
Restorative justice for African American community
High disabled population—opportunity for higher LRT ridership

Weaknesses
Ugly U-Haul lot takes large footprint of University
Que Nha’s parking lot right on corner
Dilapidated buildings need work

Opportunities
High % ridership potential
Potential for Que Nha to turn parking lot into outdoor patio w/heaters to extend patio months
Beautiful church (half block off University) for sale could be community gathering place

Threats
Gentrification from higher property taxes and rents

Western and University Avenues

Strengths
High % transit dependent population
Environmental justice for Hmong and Vietnamese residents
Good building frontage and densities for walkability
View of capitol

Weaknesses
Aging building stock, not cost effective to renovate

Opportunities
High % ridership potential
Access to daily shopping for riders
Interesting Old Home art deco-design factory for sale
Lots of development potential

Threats
Gentrification from higher property taxes and rents
RECOMMENDATIONS

After carefully analyzing all the necessary and imperative elements (environmental justice, demographic information, etc.), and other related analyses (personal interviews, mapping, fieldwork, literature reviews, etc.) that relate to the development of the Central Corridor Light Rail, we make the following recommendations:

- All three additional stations are strongly recommended; each proposed station has its own particular characteristics that warrant an additional LRT stop
- Met Council should grant equal weight to environmental justice considerations as to the constraint of the cost effectiveness index (CEI)
- TOD around Hamline, Victoria, and Western will promote economic prosperity, safer neighborhoods, and social capital
- More people of color from the community need to be involved in authentic decision making

These recommendations not only serve as suggestions for the officials whom are part of the Central Corridor planning committee, but also to those who will be involved in developing future projects. This way, there will be more decision making from both those who are impacted by the project and those who wish to make a difference and enhance their communities.

CONCLUSION

Current station plans along the Central Corridor Line discriminate against sensitive transit-dependent communities. They will lose the frequency of their current bus service and not have neighborhood transit stations. Creating additional stations at Hamline, Victoria, and Western avenues will mitigate that inequity. Positioning transit oriented development around the three additional transit stations will promote economic prosperity, social capital, and safer neighborhoods for these transit-dependent communities.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Interview of Nicole Ly, Hmong Community Organizer, TakeAction Minnesota. Phone interview on November 19, 2007.

Interview of Mahmoud El-Kati, retired professor of American Studies at Macalester College on November 30, 2007 at the Golden Thyme Coffee Shop, 921 Selby Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104.

Interview of Kathy Mouchepoua, Executive Director of the Center for Hmong Arts and Talent (CHAT) on November 30, 2007 at Nina’s Coffee Cafe, 165 Western Avenue North, Saint Paul, MN 55102.

Interview of Adar Ismail; Fadumo Jama; Fadumo Farah; Mohamed Haji; Abdulahi Ilmi; Amino Abdi; Qayro Hasan; Saciid Farah; and Fartun Osman on November 27, 2007 at Skyline Towers, 1247 St. Anthony Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104.


Interview of Kate Cavett, author of *Voices of Rondo: Oral Histories of Saint Paul’s Historic Black Community*, Phone interview on October 17, 2007.

Interview of Robin Caufman, Community Outreach Manager, November 20, 2007 at Metropolitan Council, 540 N. Fairview, Suite 200, Saint Paul, MN 55104.

Interview of Nieeta Presley, Executive Director of St. Anthony-Aurora NDC; Dennis A. Presley Sr., Organizer of *Got Voice, Got Power!*. Veronica Burt, LRT Organizer, Public Policy and Community Advocacy Specialist, Central Corridor Equity Coalition member, Just Equity, CAC member; and Daniel Kravetz, St. Anthony-Aurora NDC Outreach Worker. St. Anthony-Aurora Neighborhood Development Corporation Outreach Worker, November 2, 2007, St. Anthony-Aurora Neighborhood Development Corporation, 774 University Ave., Saint Paul, MN 55104.

Interview of Hmong Business Association members: Vatou Her, State Farm Insurance salesman; Chang Thao, manager of FoodSmart; Wameng Moua, Editor of *Hmong Today* and real estate agent on November 15, 2007 at FoodSmart, 544 University Ave., Saint Paul, MN 55103.
Appendix 1

Interview of Skyline Tower Somali Residents

November 27, 2007 Interview, 10:00 a.m.

Skyline Towers
1247 St. Anthony Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104

Interview participants are all Somali immigrants who are residents of Skyline Towers:

Adar Ismail
Fadumo Jama
Fadumo Farah
Mohamed Haji
Abdulahi Ilmi
Amino Abdi
Qayro Hasan
Saciid Farah
Fartun Osman—translator, president of Skyline Towers Resident Association 651.210.4530

Kimberly Nightingale, University of Minnesota student at the Hubert Humphrey Institute, met with stakeholders of the Skyline Towers to listen to their issues and concerns related to the LRT on University Avenue and the impact of not having a station at Hamline Avenue.

Fartun Osman, president of the Skyline Towers Resident Association, acted as translator.

Many people were speaking all at once and with many questions, so the interview reflects at times the many voices Fartun Osman encapsulated in the translation.

Kimberly: Thank you for allowing me to visit with you and ask questions. It is a great honor.

Fartun: Thank you for meeting with us (there is discussion in Somali). Why are you interested in what we have to say?

Kimberly: Have you heard about the train coming down University Avenue?

Fartun: I have been to one meeting. One of the gentlemen has read about it in the papers. No one else has heard about it.

Kimberly: The government is planning to bring a train down University Avenue. It will connect downtown Minneapolis with downtown Saint Paul. Does the Somali community at Skyline Towers want a train station at Hamline Avenue?

Fartun: This gentleman says they don’t want the train station if it will remove the stores we visit, like Target and Cub.

Kimberly: The train will run directly down the middle of the street, so stores won’t be taken out. Probably more will be built.

Fartun: This other gentleman says, hasn’t the legislation already passed? Isn’t there already no hope for a station at Hamline Avenue?

(much discussion in Somali)
Kimberly: The first part of the planning is complete, but the final design is not complete. It can still change. Do people at Skyline Towers take bus 16?

(much discussion in Somali)

Fartun: Most of our people take bus 16, especially women and children, older people. This gentleman says with all these train stops, the bus will be faster.

Kimberly: Bus 16 will still operate, but not as much. It won't go down to Minneapolis anymore. The bus has more stops than the train. Bus 16 will be slower than the train.

(much discussion in Somali)

Fartun: Maybe the train won't take us where we need to go. Then what?

Kimberly: The train will link with the buses. You can transfer to a bus.

Fartun: That is what we thought.

Kimberly: The train will link Minneapolis and Saint Paul. There will be a train near the Minneapolis Somali Community linking to Saint Paul.

(absolute long silence, then more discussion in Somali)

Fartun: The Somali community at Skyline Towers wants a train station at Hamline Ave. We need it. How do we get it? Who will listen to us?

Kimberly: In America, the government in the past did not do a good job including communities with little power in decision making on transportation plans. There are rules now. Today, the government must listen to the people. You should come to the meetings. There are community meetings, Met Council meetings.

(Lots of discussion in Somali. One man raises his arm high)

Fartun: We will come to the meetings. As a group, we want to be involved. We want a station at Hamline for our people so they do not have to walk so far in the cold. Our people are not used to this cold. Should we protest on University and Hamline? We will protest if that will help.

Fatun: The men say it is time for their exercise class. It is time to go. Have someone tell us about where to go for these meetings. Thank you.

Kimberly: Thank you.
Appendix 2

Interview of Victoria/University Stakeholders

November 2, 2007 Interview, 10:30 a.m.

St. Anthony-Aurora Neighborhood Development Corporation
774 University Ave., Saint Paul, MN 55104

Interview participants:

Nieeta Presley, Executive Director of St. Anthony-Aurora Neighborhood Development Corporation. nieeta@aurorastanthony.org 651.222.0399 x101

Dennis A. Presley Sr., Organizer of Got Voice, Got Power! St. Anthony-Aurora Neighborhood Development Corporation Outreach Worker. dapsr2350@aol.com

Veronica Burt, LRT Organizer, Public Policy and Community Advocacy Specialist, Central Corridor Equity Coalition member, Just Equity, CAC member. univaveeequity@yahoo.com

Daniel Kravetz, St. Anthony-Aurora Neighborhood Development Corporation Outreach Worker. daniel@aurorastanthony.org

Hoang Ton and Kimberly Nightingale, University of Minnesota students at the Hubert Humphrey Institute, met with stakeholders of the St. Anthony-Aurora Neighborhood to listen to their issues and concerns related to the LRT on University Avenue and the impact of not having stations at Victoria and Western avenues.

Nieeta: Our communities have historically been communities of disinvestment. Suddenly parts of one of our communities becomes a “hotspot” for redevelopment, but our community, the African American community, doesn’t benefit from that development. The minute an area we live in becomes lucrative we become overlooked, and expendable “for the regional good.” We are pushed out. Folks that have struggled in these substandard areas become displaced through higher taxes and rents. It happened with Rondo, of course.

Veronica: Originally, Rondo was planned with a land bridge over the freeway. That’s one of the reasons people didn’t fight it hard at the beginning in the 50s. Then the plans were changed. Costs were cut. The same thing has happened with the LRT. In a 1980s Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS), stops at Hamline, Victoria, and Western were in the plan. In an updated study around 1990, these stops were taken out. This shows the expendability of this community.

Peter Bell, the head of Met Council, grew up near Victoria and University. He attended Maxfield Elementary School. He should understand from personal experience that this is Aspects of Rondo Revisited.

After the devastation of I-94, doing LRT right, including the stations at Victoria and Western, particularly, in a respectful manner, would inject an aspect of healing for the community. Artwork designed around the stops and walkways that is community-based and addresses the history of the community could help with that healing.

Dennis: We’re concerned about foot mobility. Senior citizens and youth are going to have to walk a mile to get on transit. The great majority don’t drive. And the service of bus 16 will be limited.
Nieeta: People want this land. People living in suburbia are tired of driving. They want to live close to convenient transit. This area is suddenly lucrative.

Veronica: Those who have been surviving are pushed out to the edges into substandard housing again. They can’t afford the new rents or the new, higher taxes. It’s a counter-effect—a Catch 22.

The African American community that mostly lives between Dale and Western are chilly about this project. We need to do it in a way that maximizes the benefits and minimizes the damage.

Katie McWatt, a well known African American, active in neighborhood engagement, and the first African American woman to run for Saint Paul City Council, made this comment about the LRT, “This clearly isn’t being built for us. This time around they’re not even trying to bribe us.”

Nieeta: Met Council wanted to put up walls along I-94 to block the freeway noise, sound barriers, but the community protested that. It was a big protest. We didn’t want any more barriers separating us as a community. We’ve already been split into two. We didn’t want them to separate us any more than they already had. We’ll take the noise before they do more of the same.

Dennis: There are lots of vacant homes in this area that haven’t been turned around and resold. Many have been vacant for over a year. My understanding is that INVEST SAINT PAUL is supposed to be rehabbing and reselling these homes. We’re concerned that if you get a bunch of these homes in a row, the city is going to tear down and build big apartment buildings. We’re concerned that TOD is going to alter the single family nature of the community.

What’s the purpose of the community outreach process? We’re trying to drive that process—go to our people in venues where they are. Many people—you’ll never see them at a public meeting. We’re doing the “foot-soldier work.”

Veronica: What Met Council is doing with community participation is symbolic. It’s all symbolic. Here you are coming through a community with environmental justice stakeholders and they are using our statistics—our incomes, our lack of automobiles, our lack—to get approval from the FTA. They are using our lives, our backs, but we will be losing transit in the process. They will limit bus 16 that stops every eighth mile and not put in stops at Victoria or Western? What are they thinking? Seniors are going to walk a half mile or farther to the LRT stop at Dale?

There really is no negotiating going on between Met Council and the African American community. This is one of the ways that it feels like Rondo all over again. Yes, Met Council has information meetings, input meetings. But actual negotiation where our community has some power, some leverage in the process? They’ve been careful to make sure that doesn’t happen. Met Council blames it on the CEI. It’s all about money and time, just like when the freeway went through Rondo. They put the freeway through Rondo instead of through the industrial area of town to save drivers one minute of drive time. One minute.”

The African American community is expected to give up stations for our community that would help our transit dependent population and would be economic catalysts for our neighborhood revitalization—all for the regional common good. Let me tell you, as a community, the African American community of Saint Paul has given our share to the regional common good already. Beyond our share. It’s time to get something back.
Victoria is a huge possibility for placemaking for the African American Community. Right now, the African American Historical District and Heritage Corridor is at Selby and Dale to Lexington and is a cultural tourist destination. Victoria from University to Selby was where a lot of African American businesses were before the freeway came in. Having a station at Victoria may help restore the African American economic engine.

Building the neighborhood economy around stations at Dale, Victoria, and Western with a lot of conscious effort, planfulness, and thoughtfulness could help restore the African American economic engine of small businesses that were plowed down when the freeway came through the middle of Rondo.

You should ask Toni Carter about the CCC research concerning Western Station.

Nieeta: One of the problematic issues is clarity on what governmental entity is responsible for what. Met Council builds the tracks and train, Ramsey County owns the road, and the City of Saint Paul is responsible for the land around the LRT—land use and land development.

The management team is Mayors Coleman and Ryback and Ramsey County Commissioner Toni Carter.

Dennis: There’s talk now of roughing in the Victoria and Western stations. Justice delayed is justice denied. Roughing in these stations is the Plan. The TOTAL PLAN. The process completed. Some day the land bridge will be built over Rondo and the Victoria and Western stations will be built, and the African American community, WE WILL BE GONE.

Veronica: You have to understand that “roughing in those stations” is the plan. Just like they were supposed to build a land bridge over Rondo when the freeway came in. Projects run out of money. We’re organized as a community right now. When the LRT is in, the tracks are laid, we’re not going to have the same people power to get those stations built, and Met Council knows that. Boston roughed in stations in their low-income neighborhoods. Those neighborhoods had to fight and fight and fight to get those stations built. Some have finally been built, but it’s not over. They’re still fighting to get all the stations built.

What we need is land banking—land preservation for CDCs so CDCs can do development in the neighborhood. It has the potential for a community-driven vision.

The land-use plan for the LRT—all the parts of the points that the state had to get to show the feds that the area is viable to redevelopment . . .

Nieeta: The state is getting the leverage to build the LRT off of our backs.

Dennis: You have to understand the history of African American migration in Saint Paul. Blacks came here to work at Armour’s Meat Packing Plant in South Saint Paul. Blacks settled around Jackson Street, then turned and came up. The lower end was Western, Victoria was the middle, and Dale was the wealthier area known as Oatmeal Hill.

Dan: We have to use other points of leverage. We need a space to open up a clear space of negotiations. Right now it’s very one-sided. We need to look at multiple levels of leverage. We’re transit dependent here and Met Council is not acknowledging the needs for frequent stops that go with that.
Nieeta: We need good transportation. Why is it that we can’t benefit from LRT?

Dan: We need to set a precedent. We need to benefit.

Veronica: Mayor Coleman says this is a good thing and it needs to be done right. If we can do the “done right” part, I agree.

Peter Bell says the community outreach costs too much money. Well, it’s part of the required process. But we want more than input. Input means nothing. We want influence. This is happening in our community. We deserve to have some voice of influence in the decision making.

Dan: Either do real community outreach or save your money.

Veronica: Stops cost about five million. How about taking out some of the stations downtown? Have them get roughed in instead. The DEIS has already established a reduction of bus service.

We need stations at Western and Victoria. It’s a way to not repeat a terrible history, provide social justice for our transit dependent community, and to revitalize the neighborhood economy.
Appendix 3

Interview of Western/University Stakeholders

Thursday, November 15, 2007

FoodSmart, 544 University Ave. St. Paul, MN 55103

Interview of Hmong Business Association Members

Interview participants:

Vatou Her, State Farm Insurance salesman
651.290.9106, vatou.her.ch1w@statefarm.com

Chang Thao, manager of FoodSmart
612.220.2930, cthao9@aol.com

Wameng Moua, Editor of Hmong Today
651.769.7646, editor@hmongtoday.com

Kimberly Nightingale and David Arbit, University of Minnesota students, conducting interview

Kimberly: How does the Hmong community feel in general about LRT in Saint Paul and possible stations at Hamline, Victoria, and Western?

Chang: The Hmong community would like to see more stations on the LRT line in Saint Paul. Particularly at Western, the heart of our community and the center for the Hmong Business community. Victoria is an important station too. Both Western and Victoria are in neighborhoods with lots of small business owners, homes, and duplexes.

Wameng: Hamline will definitely get a station. All that big box commercial up there—lots of money and power, for sure.

Vatou: We see the long term good for the community at having light rail stations at Western and Victoria. Good for business, good for travel.

Kimberly: Can you talk about the history of the Hmong community on University Avenue?

Wameng: The history of the Hmong people on University Avenue goes back to the late 70s and early 80s. This was a red light district. Many businesses were boarded up and desolate. The opportunity was there and the Hmong community and the Vietnamese community came in and gave it a spark. Reignited the area. Twenty-five to thirty years later, it’s not vacant, but thriving. It goes back to the support from our communities. This is our home now. We are here to stay. About half of the Hmong businesses own their buildings, and half do not.

Vatou: The benefit of LRT is for the elderly and for the U of M students. Short distances need to be placed between stations for the benefit of the people, so they can walk to the stations and they are not so far way that the walk is too long.

Chang: It’s also an opportunity for business people in downtown Saint Paul to ride the LRT over for lunch. Have some good pho.

Wameng: Hmong community wonders, is LRT coming? It doesn’t seem real yet. They don’t see the impact. There’s not much outcry or support. People are not really aware yet. The main concern is the construction and the disruption that will bring. Can businesses survive? Will agencies help with that?
MetCouncil has put no ads in *Hmong Today* or *Insight* newspaper about LRT. They need to reach out to the communities.

Vatou: They need to put in Western and Victoria stations with the LRT. No waiting for later. You have to do the right thing for the community now for the long term. Residents need transit, commercial businesses need transit to survive. If we have no stations at Western and Victoria, the economic boon of the LRT will pass right over the Hmong community. Especially Western, that is our heart.

Wameng: It doesn’t make any sense at all to not have stations at Western and Victoria. We have ethnic diversity, shopping, restaurants. They are destinations with a real city feeling. If the stations are too far apart, the LRT is a deterrent for people to use. They are limiting bus 16 too.

Western is one block to Lao Family Building. Also, Liberty Plaza, affordable housing privately owned and run by the Methodist church is right at Western and I-94. It’s been a gateway housing development for refugees coming from Thailand since the late 70s. It’s nice.

Vatou: Many Hmong live on the North side of University. Many Hmong have moved to the East Side where rambler homes are considered more “Hmong”—four bedrooms with garage and large yards. But Western and University is where they shop, their businesses.

Wameng: Hmong people see cars as an affordable luxury. They have had no luxury in their lives, so a car means a lot. Hmong parents like to give their children cars when they turn 16 or graduate from high school. It is a Hmong thing to do. You see hardly any Hmong riding the bus. Cars are lots of money though. If LRT comes to our neighborhood, children under 16 will ride it. Not so much pressure to get the car for the teenager then. Hmong children live with their parents until they marry. The parents need to provide for them and they want their children to be happy. I’m 33 and live with my parents. You want to get along. Not like Americans who move out at 18.

Vatou: Hmong Business Association just found out last week that the Hmong Student Association at the University of Minnesota is the largest student group at the U of M. Amazing. We need to hook up Western and the U of M for our Hmong students. They need that station to link them to their educations.
Appendix 4

Interview of Robin Caufman, Met Council

Tuesday, November 20, 2007

Metropolitan Council, 540 N. Fairview, Suite 200, Saint Paul, MN 55104

Interview of Robin Caufman, Community Outreach Manager
651-602-1457, robin.caufman@metc.state.mn.us

Kimberly Nightingale and Hoang Ton, University of Minnesota students, conducting interview.

Robin: Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority conducted an Alternatives Analysis in the early 1990s.

Shelved for lack of political will.

2001, revised and resurrected. Scoping studies done. Looked at 6 or 7 options. No build option, increased bus service option.

2002 Initial DEIS was conducted. Before this, legislation prohibited MetCouncil from studying future lines.

Ramsey County process as the lead on the project ended June 2006. Handed over to MetCouncil to choose preferred alignment and preferred mode.”

MetCouncil took formal action in June 2006.


The current cost (excluding the three stations—Hamline, Victoria, and Western—is $932 million. According to FTA, to bring the costs down to meet the CEI (cost effectiveness index), the project needs to hit a budget of $840 million. The $25 cost per mile per time needs to be brought down to $23 (To secure full funding—$23.99). The FTA will provide 420 million dollars for the project, or half the cost. The CEI is a complicated number that includes ridership, time, etc.—too complicated to work out except by a few engineers.

The Light Rail Corridor project has to be competitive with the rest of the projects that are being submitted to the FTA.

The FTA has limited dollars. They are concerned with future land use and cost. They have a restricted amount of dollars and they want to fund systems that are efficient and follows good land use practices.

The approval process has three steps: First approval step was Dec. 2006 when we submitted the New Starts Application. It was approved. It allowed Met Council to begin initial engineering. Met Council received grant funds—$45 million to do the Preliminary Engineering (PE). Ramsey County provided $5 million for PE. Hennepin County and some federal grants are also providing some money for PE.

The second approval will be a final design submitted early 2008.

The third approval will be the final submission in 2009.

Kimberly: How much does a station cost?
Robin: Each station costs $5 to $5.5 million.

Kimberly: When opened, did the Hiawatha Line meet its projected share of transit riders?

Robin: The Hiawatha Line exceeded ridership forecasts by 30 percent. The line is exceeding ridership forecasts for 2020. We found that 40 percent of riders are new to transit.

Kimberly: How do riders get to the Hiawatha Line?

Robin: A third by walking, a third by bus, and a third by car.

Kimberly: The engineers were way off on their ridership projections for Hiawatha. Might the engineers be way off for the Corridor as well?

Robin: The FTA restraints the ridership measurement to current users of transit... but yes, even so, the engineers have already taken the Hiawatha numbers into account. It's already been factored in.

Kimberly: Most transit-dependent users will have less transit once the LRT comes through Saint Paul, since stations between Snelling and Rice Street are placed one mile apart and Bus 16 will be limited to about half of what the current use is. We just found out that Bus 16 won't go to downtown Minneapolis anymore, either.

Robin: We are adding buses back to Lexington. All stations will have buses connecting to it. There's also a proposal to have a circulator bus from Snelling, down University, to Dale, then to Grand. We expect that someone who uses the 16 and is a half mile away from a station will transfer from bus 16 to the station closest to them. Studies show that people are willing to walk further for Light Rail than for buses.

Kimberly: What about the elderly and the disabled? It's not so easy for them to walk farther, particularly with our frigid winters. And they are heavily transit dependent. People in the Saint Paul community have said that for elderly and disabled people, transfers are particularly difficult.

Robin: They could continue on Bus 16.

Usually, public involvement is done by a private entity, but in this case Met Council is housing outreach staff. We have six outreach staff connected to six areas of outreach on the LRT. We have Somali and Hmong outreach staff.

It was because of comments from the community on the DEIS that MetCouncil is currently running a feasibility study on possible stations at Hamline, Victoria, and Western.

We send regular updates and information to over 20 newspapers in the Twin Cities area.
Appendix 5

Interview of other Victoria/Western Stakeholders

Besides the larger group interviews we conducted, we also interviewed the following individuals:

Interview of Kate Cavett, author of *Voices of Rondo: Oral Histories of Saint Paul’s Historic Black Community*, Phone interview on October 17, 2007.

Interview of Nicole Ly, Hmong Community Organizer, TakeAction Minnesota. Phone interview on November 19, 2007.

Interview of Mahmoud El-Kati, retired professor of American Studies at Macalester College on November 30 at the Golden Thyme Coffee Shop, 921 Selby Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104.

Interview of Kathy Mouchepoua, Executive Director of the Center for Hmong Arts and Talent (CHAT), Nina’s Coffee Cafe, 165 Western Avenue North, Saint Paul, MN 55102.

Although notes were taken, since specific quotes were not used, notes were not typed up for this appendices.