

## **Central Corridor Light Rail Transit Memorandum of Understanding**

July 1, 2008

The University of Minnesota has been constructive partner in the development of the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (CCLRT) line for many years. The original proposal for the line included a tunnel under Washington Avenue as the line traversed the East Bank campus. Earlier this year, when it was determined that the cost of a tunnel might preclude this important transit project from receiving federal funding, an alternate alignment on Washington Avenue at-grade was proposed by the Metropolitan Council, the agency in charge of this project. That change necessitated a through study and analysis of the potential impacts to campus and the neighboring communities and businesses. After many months of work, an agreement stipulating how these impacts will be addressed is complete.

### **Memorandum of Understanding**

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (CCLRT) project will be presented to the University of Minnesota Board of Regents on July 9, 2008 for their approval. The MOU is an agreement between the Metropolitan Council, the Regents of the University of Minnesota, the City of Minneapolis, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority, and Hennepin County (the Parties). The MOU lays the framework for addressing the impacts of the CCLRT and defines the mitigations that will be submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for funding.

The MOU commits the Parties to working together cooperatively to resolve any outstanding project-related matters including mitigation impacts, design issues, construction issues, and operations matters for the Washington Avenue at-grade alignment with a transit/pedestrian mall. The MOU will define the scope and commitment of the Parties to the project mitigations and provide direction to develop a second MOU to address specific details of design, construction, and operations.

### **Mitigations**

With traffic removed from Washington Avenue, cars and trucks will use other roads around the University and in the neighboring communities. These travel routes must be anticipated and accommodations made to handle the additional traffic. Additionally, not everyone coming to the University will use light rail and public access to the University must be maintained for the patients coming to the hospital and clinics and the thousands of other daily visitors. The mitigations in the MOU address these traffic concerns and other potential impacts.

The mitigations addressed in the first MOU are of three types. The first, **improvements included in the base budget**, are necessary to ensure the functionality of the CCLRT line. They include traffic signals and other roadway improvements directly along the

project route, such as the intersections at Huron Blvd./23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue/25<sup>th</sup> Avenue/University Avenue.

The second group of mitigations, **mitigation measures**, addresses traffic and other environmental impacts resulting from the construction and operation of the line. These mitigation measures are estimated to cost up to \$27 million. Included in this group is funding for the Washington Avenue transit/pedestrian mall, campus area streets, impacts to mission-critical research, and impacts to campus historic districts.

The third type of mitigations, **betterments**, will improve the overall regional transportation system and in particular create better traffic flow around the larger University area. The Parties agree to pursue these betterments and seek funding outside of the project costs. The construction of Granary Road, an extension to East River Road, and a redesign of the East Franklin and East River Road intersection are included in the betterments.

Importantly, the first MOU recognizes that all mitigation measures may not have been identified at the time the agreement is signed. Those identified to date will be included in the budget submitted to the FTA; those not yet identified but which subsequently turn out to be required by the FTA will also be included in the project budget.

#### **The Second Memorandum of Understanding**

A provision for a second MOU is addressed in this first agreement. That MOU will be developed and finalized no later than January 31, 2009 to guide the design, construction, ownership, right-of-way, operations, and maintenance of the CCLRT.

The University has consulted with faculty whose expertise has helped inform the development of the mitigations. In particular, research faculty whose work is likely to be impacted by the construction and operation the CCLRT line have been consulted. In the near future, the University will broaden the consultation as we develop plans for the design of the transit/pedestrian mall. There will also be a number of forums for the wider University community and the neighboring communities and businesses.