



**SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AT PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES
INITIAL SCREENING OF ALTERNATIVES
GATEWAY CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS**

An initial series of four public open houses was held for the Gateway Corridor Alternatives Analysis. The purpose of these open houses was to present the project scope, the project goals and objectives, and the initial screening of alternatives for public review and comment. The open houses were held at:

Date	Location	Attendance*
February 23, 2011	Union Depot, St. Paul MN	15
February 24, 2011	Woodbury City Hall, St. Paul MN	44
March 1, 2011	Chippewa Valley Technical College, Eau Claire WI	24
March 2, 2011	St. Croix County Government Center, Hudson WI	26

*Attendance does not include WCRRA or consultant staff but does include those PAC/TAC members that signed in at each location.

Each meeting was two hours in length. Each meeting was conducted in an open house format with 14 visual display boards, a short presentation, and layouts of the alternatives. Project staff, consultants, and PAC/TAC members were available to answer questions. Post-it notes were provided for written input on the layouts. A form was also provided for individuals to provide written comments. The following is a summary of both verbal and written comments received at the public open houses, organized by general topic.

Comments on Transit Technology Alternatives

Commuter Rail

- A train from Eau Claire might be good
- I love commuter rail and light rail. I take the bus a lot.
- Isn't that commuter rail line too far away from the I-94 corridor in Minnesota?
- Commuter rail in next ten years
- Love to see commuter rail to Eau Claire before I'm too old to ride.

Light Rail

- Business people will ride trains and light rail but they won't ride buses.
- Favored LRT.
- LRT is too expensive, disrupts travel patterns, and adds to traffic congestion.
- People have been killed by LRT along Hiawatha.
- What is the difference between commuter rail and light rail? Can they run on the same track?
- Commuter rail is the only reasonable option for people who live in Wisconsin.
- Can both commuter and high speed rail operate on the same line? Would commuter rail cost as much if high speed rail were implemented first?

BRT and buses

- We really need more local bus service and not just during rush hours
- Would like to see local bus service to Woodbury (feeder service to park and ride lots) – for example, stops at Eagle Valley Golf Course and Woodbury City Center
- What is Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)? And how is it different from what we have now?
- Would there be different/special buses?
- Don't need rail – it has never paid for itself in any city – just need to improve the bus service we already have.
- I ride bus to work from Woodbury to UM. There is only one bus. If I miss that bus or it doesn't run for some reason, then I have to take a local bus to Minneapolis or St. Paul and catch a bus from there. The bus is often full when it gets to the UM.
- Consider commuter coach to Eau Claire – like Northstar did initially to Elk River then St. Cloud.

General transit

- Explanation of various transit technologies and differences among them
- Will this transit system be connected to other existing systems?
- Discussion of personal rapid transit (PRT)
- Transit does not serve people who work early or late hours or work away from transit routes.
- Don't think LRT or buses will help me since I work in two different locations.
- Fossil fuels will be limited in 20 years – we should be looking at technology that doesn't rely on them.
- Should take steps to ensure that riders pay their fare and not “game” the system (had heard reports that transit patrons are riding light rail for free)
- It's a great idea to look at improving links between western Wisconsin and the Twin Cities metro area.
- General comments in support of study process and transit in general
- Very glad that profile of transit is much higher now.
- Improved transit access to Woodbury and beyond would contribute to the quality of life and would provide safer and easier access to retail employees and local shoppers.
- Don't spend money on this now. Do not build a light rail or a bus lane. Put the bus on the same road I drive on.

Specific Comments on Alignment Alternatives

- Concern about putting LRT on 3rd or Minnehaha because the streets are too narrow and there are topography issues on both streets; may require taking homes
- Suggestion that 7th and Burns be considered as LRT alternative
- I would prefer Option 4. I and my neighbors rely on transit for work and errands. A LRT stop near Battle Creek Park would increase regional access to the park. I like LRT but only on I-94
- Suggestion that LRT be parallel to the UP freight line
- What does that “squiggle” around the I-494/I-694 interchange mean on the maps?
- Are you talking about LRT on both 3rd and Minnehaha Streets in St. Paul?
- Show the Red Rock line and Central LRT line on the layouts
- Stay north of I-94 (Woodbury) – the southwest quadrant has a large apartment complex; the southeast quadrant has an insurance building
- Use abandoned railroad northeast of TH 55 and south of E 26th Street in Minneapolis
- Suggest corridor south of I-94 along Valley Creek Road through Woodbury.
- Why are there different alignments off I-94?

- I prefer Option 7 – I want to ride a train.
- A route along Minnehaha is too dense and residential.

Congestion on I-94

- Concern about congestion on I-94
- Can the I-94 bridge handle forecast traffic without a new Stillwater bridge?
- We need more lanes and better care taken of roadways - LRT is a waste of taxpayer dollars.
- Open up emergency lanes during rush hours, especially from White Bear Avenue into St. Paul.
- Will it relieve congestion on I-94?

Concerns about Impacts

- What are the vibrations from a LRT vehicle?
- General concern about impacts to neighborhood and way of life
- What is the loss of economic impact of bus options – should consider that.
- Don't want train noise in our neighborhood (Tamarack Nature Center) – where will LRT and commuter rail be located?

Economic Development

- Importance of transit for economic development
- Once an alternative is selected, what will be the economic benefit to each community? How is this evaluated?
- This is essential for continued growth in St. Croix County
Agri-tourism and brew-tourism would thrive with this project

Accessibility for the Disabled (ADA)

- Consider ADA accessibility such as curb cuts to get to the vehicle and stations
- Comply with spirit and letter of ADA to provide wheelchair access for most feasible alternatives

Requests for Additional Information

- What is an EIS and how does it determine impacts?
- What is the existing bus ridership through the east St. Paul area along Minnehaha and 3rd St?
- Would like to see a comparison of the various transit alternative commute times to commute times by auto
- How did Denver pay for its LRT system?
- How many people are coming from Wisconsin and where are they going?
- When will we know how much it will cost?
- Will this be subsidized?
- How is Northstar commuter rail doing?
- For each alternative, do you also estimate the cost of right-of-way purchase?
- What is the cost of doing nothing? How can this be estimated in terms of dollars?
- How would infrastructure improvements for high speed rail dovetail with improvements recommended in the AA study?

Comments on Process

- Complaint about the lack of a participatory process in identifying the initial alternatives
- Not enough advance notice about public open houses (and Lillie Suburban Newspaper printed the wrong dates)
- 3M will be a critical player for the segment through Maplewood
- Who is doing this study?
- How can our neighborhood participate in decisions?
- Why is Washington County driving this study?
- Why are you going to Eau Claire?
- What kind of dialogue has there been between Minnesota and Wisconsin?