



SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AT MARCH/APRIL 2012 PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES GATEWAY CORRIDOR ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

A third series of four public open houses was held for the Gateway Corridor Alternatives Analysis in March-April 2012. The purpose of these open houses was to present the results of the evaluation of alternatives and receive public input on the rating of alternatives. Prior to the public meetings, the Gateway Corridor Commission had dismissed Alternative 7 – Commuter Rail. The open houses were held at:

Date	Location	Attendance*
March 27, 2012	Eastside Community Center St. Paul, MN	107
March 29, 2012	Chippewa Valley Technical College, Eau Claire WI	17
April 4, 2012	St. Croix Government Center Hudson, WI	23
April 5, 2012	Woodbury City Hall Woodbury, MN	46

*Attendance does not include WCRRA or consultant staff but does include those PAC/TAC members who signed in at each location. Attendance numbers do not include those individuals who did not sign in.

Each meeting was two hours in length (5-7 pm) and was conducted in an open house format with visual display boards, a short PowerPoint presentation, a question/answer session, 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 provided for individuals to provide written comments. Meetings were advertised on multiple websites (project, cities, counties, universities) and through Facebook; flyers were distributed to an e-list, neighborhood and business organizations, cities, counties and universities; a news release was distributed to the media; and posters were distributed to park/ride lots, transit stations, retail businesses, and community facilities in the St. Paul and Maplewood area.

The following is a summary of both verbal and written comments received at the public open houses, organized by general topic.

ST. PAUL – March 27, 2012

Comments on Alternatives

Alternative 1 – No Build

- My preference is No Build - the money could be used for better things.
- Existing bus service is reliable and frequent for St. Paul's East Side.
- I-94 will only get worse with No Build, TSM and BRT Managed Lane – people don't want to be "managed"

Alternative 2 – TSM

- I-94 will only get worse with No Build, TSM and BRT Managed Lane – people don't want to be "managed".

Alternative 3 – BRT – Hudson Road/I-94

- They should use 94 – that would be the best way for it.
- I think it would be more cost effective to go down Hudson Rd or I-94.
- Alt 3 or 8 would be the way to go!
- I prefer Alternatives 3 and 8.
- Put it on Hudson Road or down the middle of the freeway.
- There will be no economic development in St Paul with Alternative 3.

Alternative 4– BRT – 7th/White Bear/Hudson

- Alternative 4 gives the best bang for the buck
- Alternatives 4 & 6 waste money for limited benefits. Trains should not run down residential streets.
- Please cancel alternatives 4 and 6, just like the earlier plans for 3rd Street or Minnehaha.
- I am strongly opposed to Alternatives 4 and 6.
- I could see it going on E. 7th for ridership.
- It should not come through 7th or the east side at all.
- Don't ruin 7th Street.
- The East Side is already losing businesses – the 7th Street options will destroy 7th Street.
- Alternatives 4 and 6 are totally unacceptable – too much impact on neighborhood properties and too much transit travel time added
- A couple was very concerned about LRT or BRT down White Bear Avenue and wanted to know how they could stop it
- Why White Bear Ave? Too many homeowners affected seems the concern of citizens.

Alternative 5 – LRT – Hudson Road/I-94

- They should use 94 – that would be the best way for it.
- I think it would be more cost effective to go down Hudson Rd or I-94.
- South side of "94" – LRT.
- Put it on Hudson Road or down the middle of the freeway.
- My preference is Alternative 5– LRT

- Move LRT up to high ranking – Alt. 5.
- Gentleman indicated support for any rail/LRT option.
- I do not want the light rail on Hudson Road – 94.

Alternative 6 – LRT – 7th/White Bear/Hudson

- As complicated as it is, I support Alt #6.
- Gentleman indicated support for any rail/LRT option.
- I could see it going on E. 7th for ridership.
- If LRT were selected on East 7th/White Bear, it would draw me to this area.
- It should not come through 7th or the east side at all.
- I myself do not want the LRT to cut thru the E. 7th St. residential area!
- Alternatives 4 & 6 waste money for limited benefits. Trains should not run down residential streets.
- Please cancel alternatives 4 and 6, just like the earlier plans for 3rd Street or Minnehaha.
- I am strongly opposed to Alternatives 4 and 6.
- No 7th St LRT.
- Alternative 6 has too much impact.
- Don't ruin 7th Street.
- The East Side is already losing businesses – the 7th Street options will destroy 7th Street.
- Alternatives 4 and 6 are totally unacceptable – too much impact on neighborhood properties and too much transit travel time added.
- A couple was very concerned about LRT or BRT down White Bear Avenue and wanted to know how they could stop it.
- Why White Bear Ave? Too many homeowners affected seems the concern of citizens.

Alternative 7 – Commuter Rail

- Commuter rail doesn't serve St Paul at all.
- Gentleman expressed disappointment that Alt 7 has been removed.

Alternative 8 – BRT Managed Lane

- They should use 94 – that would be the best way for it.
- Alt 3 or 8 would be the way to go!
- Go down 94 – the benefit seems to be to move people from suburbia to the city – leave us alone and move the people.
- BRT on “94”.
- I think the freeway line is a better option because the main people who need this are the WI and suburb folks.
- I prefer Alternatives 3 and 8.
- I-94 will only get worse with No Build, TSM and BRT Managed Lane
- I think this would be great with all the traffic in the metro area and coming from Wisconsin. It would cut down on pollution.
- Alternative 8 misses Sun Ray and potential development opportunities

Other Alternatives

- Consider Mounds Boulevard, 7th or 8th, Broadway as alternative connection to 3rd St. Bridge. It would connect Metro U, state offices at Lafayette, new ballpark and Lowertown.
- Any thoughts of going vertical with the track in certain areas? Similar to the “L” in Chicago.
- How far north are you willing to move the alignment – what about moving it up to Hwy 36?
- Why not on 3rd Street?
- What about Phalen Blvd?
- Wasn’t there a streetcar on 7th Street at one time? Could we use the old tracks?
- Likes the idea of improved transit but believes any improvement should follow the CP rail corridor or Highway 36.

Property Impacts

- How will this affect my property value and option for renters?
- Where will the light rail be by my house? Will it be destroyed?
- These alternatives will decrease property values along the route, although property values at the stations will increase.
- What will the impact be on property values?
- Several property owners with homes along alternatives were concerned about whether their properties would be taken. They are concerned about making improvements to their homes if their properties will be acquired in the future.
- Where will there be property acquisitions?
- Business owner in Landfall concerned about impacts to property and how the property acquisition will be handled.
- Concerned about the property impacts of the BRT and LRT alternatives.
- Clarification requested regarding the impacts of Alternative 3 and 5 on residence.
- Where will it be on Hudson Road? Will it be behind the noise wall? Will it take property?
- BRT may take property.

Community Impacts

- It is important to preserve the community.
- What happens if you are wrong and the East Side is destroyed?
- Parts of 7th Street and White Bear Ave are residential streets – what does LRT do for our neighborhood?
- Swede Hollow history is more important than money.
- White Bear Ave currently is not the best neighborhood with more drug traffic, etc. Will this help?

Economic Development

- Request for information about studies on the economic development potential of LRT over standard buses – not convinced that economic development potential around LRT stations would be greater than at bus stations.
- People don’t hang around on White Bear Avenue – we’d rather see development and stations.
- Need more data on economic development claims.
- What are the benefits for the East Side? Can see the impacts but not the development benefits.

- For St. Paul and east side as a whole, LRT on 94 is what will maximize development and minimize neighborhood disruption. Our businesses suffer in competition to Woodbury and Maplewood – SP eastside businesses along 94 need help that will only come from LRT.
- BRT doesn't get the riders and doesn't do anything for development. BRT and LRT do NOT have save economic development potential!
- I believe LRT is the best option for development. The potential for development (commercial, retail, and new residential) is huge.

Business Impacts

- I work on Central Corridor and know how disruptive it can be. I've seen many businesses come and go under. Yes, you do help with advertising and loans but will they come back?
- What will the impact be on businesses? How many businesses have gone under on University Avenue?

Parking and Traffic Impacts

- These alternatives will take away street parking, driveway access, most left turns, boulevard trees, and access to several businesses.
- We won't be able to park in front of our houses.
- Where will the displaced traffic go?
- There is no such thing as a "walk-up station". You need to have parking for all stations.
- It would be better to put in park and ride.
- There have been multiple crashes at the intersection of White Bear Ave and East 7th Street – she is concerned that adding transit into the mix will further degrade safety.
- Concerns expressed about the safety of a train, particularly safety of children.
- What safety measures will there be for kids and pedestrians?

Accessibility, Pedestrians and Bicycles

- I am concerned about accessibility – there is a great distance to walk to stations.
- I used to take the bus to work but now can't walk far. Also, when the route changed (at my house), I had to go 1.5 miles east to go west.
- Have you thought about running bike paths along the LRT and BRT?

Questions about Technical Analysis or Alternatives

- Why the corridor is being built? Is it to cut down on traffic, to bring business to communities, to ease traffic pollution, etc.?
- Need more data on ridership.
- Who are the projected new riders – are they from the suburbs? Who are the people who will ride? What do people in the city get?
- What is the noise (decibel) rating for trains?
- Several people asked about the location of the noise wall when LRT/BRT is running adjacent to the highway.
- More information on how ridership forecasts were done – not convinced that LRT would actually generate more riders than buses.
- Skeptical about the cost estimate for commuter rail because high speed rail was going to be constructed between Milwaukee and Madison for \$600 million.
- What are the buffer widths near the managed lanes?

- Will managed lanes be for vehicles as well as buses?
- How do vehicles get access between the managed lane and the ramps?
- Not enough specific information regarding the impact of the proposed alternative routes.
 - If LRT goes along I-94 what will that mean? Will I-94 be widened?
 - If LRT is used for Alt 6 where would White Bear Ave be widened and where would East 7th be widened?
 - How many properties would be affected?

Woodbury – April 5, 2012

Comments on Alternatives

Light Rail

- I would much prefer the LRT. As a daily bus rider, I know the ease and speed of LRT are a huge improvement over the bus, especially for an older clientele. It's also much more environmentally friendly. Thank you for your consideration.
- No light rail, no trains! Too costly, this is not New York City. Cheapest is best. What is wrong with more highway lanes? You are not truly considering those of us who want to use our cars.
- Not light rail – way too expensive
- Light rail will not help me!
- Why do we even consider trains when we have such a small population? Why not buses?

BRT

- I prefer Alt 3 – BRT.
 - 1) Provides similar schedule as LRT for half the cost – ridership may improve with familiarity
 - 2) Better economic development and usability than managed lane – boarding on bridge is awkward
 - 3) More ridership than managed lane for similar costs – better stations at 3M and Sun Ray
 - 4) Could be upgraded to light rail with established corridor
 - 5) Dislike managed lanes – does not seem fair that single drivers with more money have faster commute
- The option using the bus that loads at stops in middle of freeway doesn't seem workable because of walking distance.
- Do not like managed lane BRT with toll
- My general sense is that effective use of buses and sane lanes makes the most sense.
- Several requests for clarifications about the differences between alternatives 3 and 8.
- Does BRT help express bus travel time?
- With BRT, since it is bus service, how do we know service will not be cut in the future?
- Can BRT be turned into LRT in the future?

Transit Services and Stations

- I am excited for expanded transit, wider range of hours, some improvements for express riders, better stations, helps reverse commuters
- Land fall residents supported a Landfall station and expressed an interest in adding a Landfall station to alternatives 3 and 5
- Many questions about specific service plan topics from current bus commuters.

- Some current commuters expressed concerns about impacts to existing express bus service and asked if current service will be maintained.
- What will the impact be on people who are currently using express transit to Minneapolis?
- Appreciative that existing express bus service will remain in place.
- How long will it take to get from Sun Ray to the airport of the Mall of America? Do we have any plans for feeder bus routes – this was really important to the success of rail in Washington DC.
- What is the travel time on the various alternatives?

Traffic and Additional Traffic Lanes

- Give us more auto lanes
- Like Alt 2 but would like an extra car lane – not toll
- We would rather have additional lanes for cars.
- Are we getting additional traffic lanes also?
- How much does it cost to build one lane of freeway?
- What are the vehicle volumes/counts on I-35W and I-94?
- How many people are in cars per day on I-94?

Costs and Funding

- Very difficult to make judgment without know the cost per ride. Cost needs to include initial capitol over period of time (20 years?) plus opportunity cost of the money plus annual operating expenses.
- Need to compare with cost of additional lanes of highway. We will always have roads, just a matter of how much and what is most cost effective. Roads are needed to deliver goods as well as people going to their destinations.
- What are the operating costs for the alternatives?
- Will the system pay for itself?
- Why would we subsidize a pristine system for disadvantaged people?
- What is the cost per rider? Can you spread the capital and operating cost over ridership and compare?
- Which option does the Federal Transit Administration prefer?
- Are there any particular funding sources that apply to individual alternatives?

Ridership

- What ridership is needed to justify building an alternative?
- Why is LRT ridership so much higher than bus?
- Are there any hybrid systems that use both LRT and bus?
- Where does most (60%) of the ridership come from?
- Do the ridership forecasts reflect a mode shift?

Economic Development

- There has been a lot of growth in suburbs like Woodbury. How will BRT help these areas continue to grow?
- Anything that can be done to make transportation better in the corridor is good for the area.
- Where is the job growth in the Twin Cities? Don't a lot of people work away from the downtowns? How will this help them?

Other

- What will be happening at Tanners Lake?
- Proposed bridge takes up area of current lake outlet (Landfall)
- Exactly where do these alternatives go along I-94? Are they at-grade or on separate structures?
- What is the timing of proposed improvements? General preferences for something to happen sooner rather than later.
- Pick the least costly method
- Make is SIMPLE

Hudson, April 4, 2012

Alternatives

- Like Alternative 3 for it being quicker to get to and from St. Paul.
- No Build is a stupid idea
- TSM is cheap but does it solve any problems?
- Commuter rail is too expensive but it would be a good thing if it went to Eau Claire
- What do the top rated alternatives mean for Wisconsin?
- How would the BRT Managed Lane be plowed?
- I also think 7th Street/White Bear should be considered but as a Phase II. I think to get people from the suburbs to take a bus we need to skip this section. There are too many stops and the travel time is too long

Questions/Comments on Technical Analysis

- How was ridership levels determined?
- How was the length of the line determined?
- How does the St. Croix River Bridge affect this project?
- How do you reflect the enthusiasm of riders for different alternatives?

Other

- Will there be a lot of reverse options?
- Like a walk-up at Sun Ray though as that area seems to have a lot of pedestrian traffic.
- What is the time table for construction?

Eau Claire, March 29, 2012

Commuter Rail and High Speed Rail

- Please consider having commuter rail or bus service go all the way to Chippewa Falls, WI, then down to Eau Claire. Can pick up a lot more people with very few new miles! There is a rail connection already and no current bus service between Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls.
- I strongly prefer the commuter rail option all the way to Eau Claire/Chippewa Falls. It will use less energy than buses. Should also serve as intercity for traveling outside commutes. Low price per mile! 1.2 billion for 100 miles is cheap! Great economic development for Wisconsin. A lot of people in the Twin Cities want to go to Eau Claire!
- Commuter rail is not in dense population area in MN but in WI projections are strong ridership
- Land use precludes development around commuter rail – could changes help commuter rail?
- Can we use this study to prove that commuter rail is good between Eau Claire and Hudson?

- Data generated by the AA should be used for future support of passenger rail.
- What is the difference between commuter rail and high speed rail?
- How would commuter rail perform just in Wisconsin?
- Why was commuter rail given a low rating for economic development and why does it cost so much?

Bus Alternatives

- Please create a bus stop at Hwy 95 7 I-94 in Lakeland for the commuter bus service options. There is a park & ride there. Can connect to Stillwater easier.
- How can Alternative 8 be rated “high” if the ridership is low?
- What would be needed to continue operating once improvements were built?
- Should take advantage of new technologies such as mobile office to increase productivity.

Other

- Is cost included in the St. Paul/Minneapolis issues?
- Can we add other alternatives?
- How have the WI governor’s negative thoughts impacted Wisconsin’s corridor options?

WEBSITE, FACEBOOK AND EMAIL COMMENTS

No Build

- We need to improve our terrible current system.

Commuter Rail

- I support Alternative 7 for the Gateway Corridor. As a resident of Oakdale, I would use this route which goes through areas where many of us live.
- I was disappointed to learn that the commuter rail solution has been taken off the table. The 100+ mile corridor lends itself perfectly for a commuter rail line from Eau Claire to St. Paul.
- The Eau Claire/Twin Cities route makes a lot of sense.
- This should definitely be kept alive.

BRT

- BRT would be a very inefficient and costly method in terms of initial startup costs and annual operation costs.

LRT

- I was disappointed to hear about the elimination of LRT from consideration for I-94 to Hudson and even further. I would have ridden that every single day to work.
- Light rail is a waste of time and a waste of money; putting people out of their buildings and their houses and neighborhoods; tearing up roads and sidewalks; destroying people’s lives.
- Both LRT options are very good.

Transit Service

- I would love to take an express bus from Hudson to downtown St. Paul.
- This corridor needs an investment in transit.

- People will not park their cars to take transit when the service is limited to downtown workers working 9-5.
- The Twin Cities is too spread out for transit to be useful.
- Please keep evening and weekend service as part of any selected plan.
- With the proposed stops between Woodbury and St. Paul, it seems the travel times would be much longer than the existing 351 route.
- With the stops in the middle of the interstate, it will take several minutes to walk from the parking lot to the stop.
- Retention of the existing express bus routes would be the best option for regular commuters.
- Please plan for sufficient parking and large enough buses/trains to accommodate all passengers without requiring them to stand. It would be nice to have stops next to the parking lots. Please have inside, heated waiting areas and a covered/indoor bridge to the mid-interstate stops.
- Why not just add express buses from Hudson. This would be cheaper than extra lanes and the buses can already drive on the shoulders. I suspect there isn't much demand outside rush hours.
- The benefits of transit are: (1) save on park, gas, wear and tear, (2) stress reduction, and (3) extra time.
- There should be a broader discussion of how this affects people who commute directly to Minneapolis or the University of Minnesota.
- Consider adding new express bus options or expanding existing ones.
- Infrastructure should be designed for Minneapolis express buses just as much as it will be for St. Paul buses.
- I am a property owner of one of the properties that may be affected. I support construction of any of the proposed transit lines. It would be a very beneficial investment into the city of Saint Paul and would bring more future development potential.
- I am a strong advocate of better public transit.

7th/White Bear/Hudson Alignment

- I always liked the LRT option through St. Paul's Eastside but an extra nine minutes may not be worth it. I would personally choose the LRT option along I-94.
- If you want to get east suburban people in and out of downtown St. Paul quickly and efficiently, then build the rail or bus lane on I-94. If you want to get East Side residents downtown quickly and efficiently, then use/improve the existing transit system.
- The 7th/White Bear/Hudson alignment will have a devastating effect on our community.
- Where will the regular White Bear and 7th Street traffic go when it is displaced by the light rail or bus lane?
- Where will the cars be parked in the neighborhoods around the stations?
- How far apart will the crossing points be for light rail or bus lanes?
- The 7th/White Bear/Hudson alignment fragments and divides struggling neighborhoods under the guise of "economic development".
- Comparing Hiawatha and Central to the residential areas of White Bear and 7th Street is absurd.

- How does this plan fit with the rezoning efforts that are being finalized in Dayton's Bluff?
- Fences, tracks, power poles, overhead wires, bells, increased and inefficient local traffic, reduced parking – how does all of this benefit the East Side?
- Based on the described 80' right-of-way for two-way light rail plus vehicle lanes and sidewalks, it looks like you will be at the front steps of most of the buildings along 7th Street. Do you intend on using eminent domain to clear land on either the north side or south side of 7th Street? Both sides?
- Our greatest concern is that the fair market value of property has significantly decreased since we acquired our properties and condemnation would have a negative impact on our financial future.

Technical Questions/Comments

- Will a concrete or ballast road bed be used for LRT?
- The numbers that were used to show typical daily ridership do not seem to be accurate.
- Please put a stop along Hudson Road in Landfall.
- Park/ride lots should be on the inbound (north) side of I-94 to provide the most benefit to transit riders. The proposed locations are all shown to be in Woodbury (south side of I-94) rather than in Lake Elmo (north side) with no explanation on how these decisions were reached. Information is requested on how these decisions were made.
- Appropriate to balance ridership utility with initial and recurring expenses