



Gateway Corridor Commission News Release

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Public Health, Land Use Interests Merge in Health Impact Assessment for Gateway Corridor *Gateway wins \$100,000 grant to fund the assessment*

A health impact assessment is underway to help inform land use changes around the Gateway Corridor's bus-rapid-transit stations proposed along Interstate 94 and Hudson Road between Saint Paul and Woodbury.

Plans for the assessment, funded by a grant from private foundations, were announced at the Nov. 4 Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting in Stillwater.

Gateway Corridor project leaders say the health impact assessment process will engage residents and businesses in discussions about how community design affects people's health. Washington County Commissioner Lisa Weik, chair of the Gateway Corridor Commission, is excited about bringing the two subjects together.

"It's a unique partnership—this joint effort between an infrastructure project and public health," Commissioner Weik said. "It will become more valuable as we understand more about long-term health and how it's connected to our surroundings."

"I'm particularly interested in how a transit amenity will help seniors, millennials and zero-vehicle households," Commissioner Weik said.

Health impact assessments use a flexible approach that brings together public health expertise, scientific data, and input from community and other stakeholders to examine the potential health risks and benefits of key policy proposals. Based on the potential effects identified,

assessments provide practical recommendations to capitalize on opportunities to improve community health and to minimize any potential health risks.

The grant will enable community leaders to explore the connection between transit, economic development and health. This is of great interest to East Metro Strong and its executive director, Will Schroeer.

“The next generation wants to live in communities that make it easy to be active, and easy to get to jobs and education,” Schroeer said. “Attracting young talent to an area is critical to attracting businesses that are seeking to employ that talent. The grant will help identify how we can enhance public health and economic development.”

The health impact assessment also has support from the Housing Redevelopment Authorities in Washington and Ramsey counties because of their focus on access to affordable housing and jobs.

The health impact assessment is supported by a \$100,000 grant from the Health Impact Project, a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts, with funding from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation.

The Gateway Corridor Commission is currently conducting the Draft Environmental Impact Study, which looks for ways the proposed transit service may affect the area. The health impact assessment will be conducted parallel to the DEIS and will focus on developing tools for agencies to implement land use decisions that promote health policies.

The health impact assessment will last approximately one year and will be led by Gateway Corridor staff with support from the Washington County Public Health and Environment Department.

About the Gateway Corridor rapid transit project

Gateway is a proposed bus rapid transit line that would run 12 miles in its own lane between the Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul and Woodbury next to Interstate 94 and Hudson Road. All-day transit service would stop at 12 stations and include connections to the growing regional transit system. The system could open for service by 2022 and will provide a focal point for new economic development opportunities as the region grows. The work is led by the Gateway Corridor Commission, which is comprised of local elected officials, business and community leaders. More information is available at www.theGatewayCorridor.com.

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