

Light Rail-Nicollet Alignment 3C
April 7, 2007 WA Office
7-8:30pm

Attendees: Nick Boetcher-resident, Alex Bauman-resident, Mary Cable-Sullivan Supermarket, Mohamed Armeli, Alex Anderson-guest, non-resident, Tammy Wong-Rainbow Chinese, Gus Parpas-Christos, Eric Grumdahl-resident, CM Robert Lilligren, Brooks Mahoney-resident, JoAnn Christ-Black Forest, Marian Biehn, Staff

Alex gave a bit of history of on the BA-CI meeting joint meeting and the origin of the original resolution. A basic motion had come out of BA meeting not supporting the 3C alignment. The joint BA-CI resolution gave more specifics as to why it 3C was not supported.

Brooks doesn't feel that characterizing the LRT as a BA vs. resident issues is accurate. There are Business owners who are residents. Eric also said that the revers was true. The guest in attendance has participated in some of the SWT Community Advisory Committee meeting and he saw the notice for the Task Force meeting and was interested in the topic.

Gus likes the BA-CI meeting resolution from Jan 14-- it looks comprehensive but maybe more could be added. Brooks said that the Task Force was to formulate a motion that could be supported by both the BA & CI. She would like to make it clear that trains in the greenway are an asset—she is not opposed to trains. Her motion supports 3 different points.

Would a station on the greenway preclude the opening of Nicollet Ave? —probably not. Nicollet Av should be reopened and anything that interferes with opening Nicollet would be oppose

What is charge of CAC? Purpose is to bring input from the n'hoods to the county. Other LRT routes might be part of that input. Katie Walker said that alternatives can be brought in advance of their scoping meetings. A challenge of the resolution will be to communicate that the neighborhood is not opposed to light rail but it is WHERE it is located. Try to make a recommendation that it makes light rail an option but in a way that is feasible for the n'hood and set the criteria and study bar high so all if installed it will be an asset to the neighborhood and not a loosing proposition for the businesses.

Both NRP \$\$ and n'hood businesses have invested in Nicollet Ave and the n'hood to put the light rail on Nicollet would destroy that investment. Gus (Christos) has been on the avenue for 21 years. Has been through a lot--problems with crime, social issues, tear up of Nicollet as well as other development issues, but if the traffic & pkg is disrupted on Nicollet for LRT construction, his and other businesses would not survive. The last tear up of Nicollet took 6-12 months and was detrimental to their business. LRT down Nicollet will destroy what Nicollet has become and not recover. Is that where we want to be? Bringing people (customers) back is very hard—took over a year to recover from the last Nicollet Ave tear up.

Alex wanted to get input from Lake St businesses on their experience during the Lake St reconstruction—he asked if anyone had experience with that. Per Mohamed construction along Lake killed many businesses—many are small businesses like along Nicollet. Fragile economy now and to add street/LRT construction would be lethal. N'hood fought hard against Kmart going in and lost—n'hood is fragile. There is anticipation that we would rollover. The economy and business make up on Nicollet is very unique and but very fragile. The small businesses could not survive extended construction. New businesses might come in but it would be the franchises—not the character that we have. People feel safe coming here now—have worked really hard to make Eat St a good place to come. People will come if it is convenient. Might loose the character of the n'hood.

What if construction was not a problem? With an LRT stop at 28th and 26th it would be great for business and the neighborhood. The issues of the ones who will pay the price and the ones who will benefit are not the same. The benefit of mass transit is undeniable but need to do it in a way that minimizes the cost. Is there compensation for the businesses during down time? No compensation available to businesses during construction. Hold out little hope for financial help from city or county.

The construction along Lake was designed to take one season per section. But the Lyn Lake has taken longer. The businesses at Lyn-Lake are really hurting. Rumors persist that businesses are closed adding to the problem. Per CM Lilligren people love rail. They will take rail over bus. They see Nicollet as a sexier route if it is rail—and rail over all else—this is a dangerous perspective. Streetcar is a viable option, is more community and business friendly and more in scale with the neighborhood and streetscape while having the sex appeal. LRT is not our one chance to get rail on Nic Ave. We can get Streetcars that are much more community friendly. LRT is a heavy gauge and much more invasive. Midtown Community Works goal is to get rail in the Greenway to serve as the E-W route to Hiawatha.

Time frame on other rail decisions—Chicago, Nicollet, Greenway etc are part of 4 lines for other rail options. MCW is trying to find funds for the study. They hope to have rail in the greenway within a couple years – which would then not allow for LRT to come down the Greenway to Nicollet. SWT is a 2015 timeframe.

Next public opportunity for input is the scoping meetings which take in all comments for the Environmental Impact Study. This is an important step and we need to put all our concerns on the table so all can be thoroughly examined. Share the concerns of the businesses on the short term impacts. But there is great potential for an LRT line but there is no guarantee that it will happen.

Are we acknowledging the possibility of the streetcar as part of this process or is it mixing up 2 different topics? The other transit options need to inform the discussion on the LRT position. LRT too heavy too plow through a community corridor. Nicollet is a street car street.

There is a question about the first 3 comments on Alex's proposed motion—if they are accurate. Could be a shifting of bus service. Need to find a common ground and make recommendations on where and how the LRT should be located and installed. Gus disagreed—we are not experts on rail transit and need to offer a clear up or down on if we are for or against it and the reasons why.

We need a unified position so we can stand up and say where we stand. Cedar Isles Dean will do this and so should we. Street car is a better option for Nicollet Ave. LRT is all about moving people downtown.

The discussion was brought back to the “task” of the task force – to have a neighborhood resolution for discussion at the April BA & CI meetings. Alex asked if anyone wanted to sponsor a motion.

Brooks moved her motion that she had previously submitted highlighting the last three “resolved”

Brooks Motion:

Whereas, The Whittier neighborhood, the city of Minneapolis, the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, the Nicollet Avenue Business Association, the Whittier Business Association and individual business owners have restored businesses and business traffic between Franklin Avenue and Cecil B. Newman Lane;

Whereas, The Whittier Neighborhood, the Lyndale Neighborhood and the Minneapolis City Council are still working to reopen Nicollet Avenue at Lake Street (Kmart site);

Whereas, To run the LRT underground from the Greenway to Franklin Avenue would disrupt traffic at both the entrances and exits of the tunnel, rendering Nicollet Avenue useless, it would push more traffic onto residential streets and would reduce available street parking;

Whereas, LRT from the Greenway to Franklin Avenue would duplicate transit service on Nicollet Avenue and with the proposed station locations would poorly serve the residents and businesses of Whittier;

Whereas, LRT under Nicollet Avenue or a parallel street would put unnecessary strain on historic homes and buildings;

Resolved, That the Whittier Neighborhood does not support the proposed Southwest Transitway Route 3C to run the LRT on the Greenway turning north to run underground on Nicollet Avenue or a street that runs parallel to it.

Resolved, That the Whittier Neighborhood does support the Southwest Transitway LRT running on the Greenway to Nicollet Avenue with a transit station (East Street Station) built for an easy transfer to Metro Transit bus routes to continue downtown or to other destinations.

Whereas, The number of people served would be greatly increased;

Whereas, The cost savings would be substantial;

Resolved, That the Whittier Neighborhood suggests that the Southwest Transitway LRT continue East from Nicollet Avenue to connect to the Hiawatha Line near the Lake Street Station, creating a logical path from Eden Prairie in the west to the MSP Airport and the Mall of America in the East.

Discussion: There was discomfort with the last 2 resolutions of her motion. Already been decided that Greenway is not an option for a full E-W for LRT. Maybe not an option but is a valid N'hood position. Possibly combine the last 2 components into an E-W option. Better to support the MCW proposal. The neighborhood wants to retain the historic homes and housing that would not survive the construction or continuous vibration. If we supported only the 1st resolve we would reach the same n'hood deadlock. There are folks in the n'hood who do want LRT. State a "no" position and lay out the rationale as the why.

Destin suggested looking at the original BA-CI motion. Brooks was asked if she would accept a Substitute motion. Brooks withdraw her motions and the Joint BA-CI Motion from Jan. 14 was moved with the additional language:

Motion:

Based on the currently presented alternatives, the WA supports the Kenilworth Alignment supplemented by a Nicollet Ave streetcar and a Greenway streetcar connecting the SW LRT and the Hiawatha line.

The Whittier Alliance does not support the proposed SW Transit Nicollet Ave. alignment (3C) as currently presented for the following reasons:

- The reduced likelihood of a Midtown Greenway trolley or street car serving the entire Greenway from the western suburbs to the Mississippi River
- The reduced likelihood of a study or implementation of streetcar or trolley along Nicollet Ave
- The likelihood of reduced, rerouted or eliminated bus service currently serving the area
- The proposed line and station locations poorly serve the commercial nodes at 26th & Nicollet and Lake & Nicollet
- Vehicular traffic currently along Nicollet will be forced on to the residential streets

- The proposed Nicollet Ave trench from the Greenway and approaching Franklin Ave and the tunnel in the midsection of the Nicollet route may:
 - Render Nicollet Ave useless as a through street
 - Render reopening of Nicollet at Kmart infeasible
 - Isolate and render nearly useless the area between Cecil Newman (29th St) and Kmart
 - Eliminate Nicollet Ave parking
 - In the short term and likely in the long term, be detrimental to the commercial and retail business along Nicollet Ave
 - Be disruptive of the urban fabric of Nicollet Ave, the Greenway and the neighborhood
- Even without factoring in the immediate (and possible long term) negative economic impact to the Nicollet commercial corridor, the projected cost of construction for the trench and cut & cover tunnel doesn't provide for a well executed system and appears to be underestimated based on the current cost findings for the U of M tunnel, the additional station installation along the Greenway, the cost of required station access & amenities (ADA, stairs, etc) for a trench and the flat increase in projected rider ship.

Discussion: Suggest that tone be softened. After discussion about how to soften the language it was decided to include the 1st paragraph and 1-2-3 of Alex's motion from the Task Force with the deletion of 3C.

The Whittier neighborhood and Whittier Alliance recognizes the following benefits of the proposed route 3C of the Southwest Transitway.

- *Improved transit speed, reliability, frequency and connectivity*
- *Access to increased customer and investment base*
- *Minimized traffic congestion through grade separation*

Nick said that there are contradictions in the statements. Some of the wording was modified. It was decided to leave the "3C" designation in the benefits part of the motion. The motion was presented with the inclusion of the amended language, the inclusion of the LRT "benefit" paragraph and 3 items.

Motion Carried with the inclusion of the amended language, the "benefits" and 3 bullet points and the 3C information

CM Lilligren stated for the record that he had not votes and had been silent during discussion of the motions.

The area where we have the most influence currently is in the creation of the list for the "Impacts" to be studied in the EIS for both long and short term. Eat Street would be gone—might argue that that is okay but let it change on it's own rather than because of LRT. We need to add more to the EIS components and have it reviewed by Katie Walker. We should err on the side of overloading the EIS and include everything.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:30pm

Summary respectfully submitted by Marian Biehn