The Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project and Saint Paul’s Central Corridor Development Strategy

Railvolution Conference
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What is Central Corridor?

- The Twin Cities second LRT line, connecting downtown Saint Paul and downtown Minneapolis – 11 mile alignment, 7 of which are in Saint Paul.

- The Central Corridor links five major centers of activity in the region – downtown Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, Midway regional shopping area, State Capitol complex, and downtown Saint Paul.

- 16 new stations, plus five stations shared with the Hiawatha LRT line in downtown Minneapolis.

- Proposed cost $930 million (sources of funds are Federal, State, Ramsey and Hennepin Counties).
What is Central Corridor?

Alignment and stations as shown in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, April 3, 2006
What is Central Corridor?

Example of LRT Placement on University Avenue
Project Partners

- Metropolitan Council (regional planning agency)
- Ramsey County
- City of Saint Paul
- Hennepin County
- City of Minneapolis
- University of Minnesota
- Minnesota Dept. of Transportation
“Two Tracks of Central Corridor”

Track #1 - Light Rail Transit Project
- Construction of the LRT Line
- Metropolitan Council is the lead agency

Track #2 – Central Corridor Development Strategy
- City of Saint Paul is lead agency
- Creation of Central Corridor Development Strategy
- Development planning (i.e. land use)
Track #1 – Light Rail Transit Project

- Project Timeline
  - Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approval to proceed – December, 2006.
  - Preliminary Engineering (PE) – 12-18 months; started August, 2007.
  - Final Design and Apply for Funding – 12 months (2009)
  - Construction – 30-48 months (2010-2013)
  - Line Opens (2014)
Track #2 – Central Corridor Development Strategy

- Creates a vision and strategy for how Central Corridor in Saint Paul should grow and change over the next 20-25 years in response to the LRT investment.

- Developed by two citizen task forces – University Avenue and Capitol/Downtown using a broadly participatory process.

- Adopted by the Mayor and City Council as part of the City of Saint Paul’s Comprehensive Plan on 10/24/07.

- Detailed station area planning now underway.
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This first section, “Where We Are Today”, introduces the Development Strategy and answers a series of important questions: What opportunity does the LRT provide for the Central Corridor and Saint Paul? Why do we need a Development Strategy? How was the community involved? How does the Central Corridor work today? The purpose is to introduce the Central Corridor, and to provide some background on the role and importance of this study.

In this section you will find:

Section 1.1 – “The Opportunity” describes the positive change that an investment in light rail transit can generate over time, and the role that a shared vision and strategy can play in guiding that change to improve mobility, neighborhoods and economic opportunities.

Section 1.2 – “What is the Central Corridor” provides a detailed account of the Corridor and this process. It lists the study objectives, the process involved, and key dates in the planning and future construction of the Central Corridor LRT.

Section 1.3 – “The Corridor Today” is a broad look at the many lenses through which the community view the Central Corridor in Saint Paul – as a place of diversity and community; as a corridor for transportation and mobility; and as an area of economic growth and development opportunity.
Colliers Market Analysis

- Plan for what the market can support.

- Development potential estimated by station area – Westgate, Raymond, Fairview, Snelling, Lexington, Dale, Rice, Capitol, Downtown

- Total estimated development potential for Central Corridor, 2010-2030:
  - Rental Units: 9,000-11,000
  - Ownership units: 1,750-3,000
  - Office: 9 million sq. ft.
  - Retail: 750,000 sq. ft.
  - Hotel: 1,000 rooms
Section 1 establishes an understanding of what the Central Corridor is, and how a shared vision and strategy for its future development can help it improve over the next 30 years. The purpose of this section, “What We Want”, is to begin describing these improvements – the community’s vision for the Central Corridor - as recorded throughout the Development Strategy process.

In this section you will find:

Section 2.1 – “The Vision”, which answers the important question: What kind of place do we want the Corridor to become?

Section 2.2 describes the foundation for the Vision in an accompanying set of “Principles”, which are the ‘Big Ideas’ public investment in the Central Corridor LRT should help to achieve.

Section 2.3 takes a closer look at each of the Principles through a series of related “Objectives & Strategies”. For each Principle, a set of Objectives describe things the community actually wants to see happen or change over time; while recommended Strategies provide some ideas for getting started on these through new programs and partnerships that will be necessary to achieve the Vision.

Section 2.4 – “90 Initiatives for the Corridor”, outlines many tangible initiatives that can begin the process of positive change along the corridor. This is a comprehensive account of all the places the community said weren’t working well enough, and which future growth and development in the Corridor should help to improve.
Our Vision for the Future of the Corridor:
The Central Corridor will build on its assets to become a place that has stronger businesses, more vibrant neighborhoods, and more beautiful urban places. Along University Avenue and in the downtown, the Corridor will invite residents, shoppers, employees and visitors to linger on safe, pedestrian-friendly, attractive, tree-lined boulevards; establish a home and sense of community in stable and diverse neighborhoods; and work and invest in an area that provides a range of employment and economic opportunities.
The Principles

1. Reposition Saint Paul in the Region
2. Benefit and Strengthen the Diverse Communities along the Corridor
3. Link and Foster Economic Activity
4. Improve People’s Mobility throughout their Community
5. Improve the Image and Quality of Life along the Corridor
6. Involve Collaboration from Design to Operation
90 Initiatives for the Corridor
Building on the Vision, Principles and Initiatives identified in Part 2, Part 3 - “What It Should Look Like” outlines a series of directions with respect to the Building Types, Streetscapes and Open Spaces along the corridor. The purpose of this section is to translate the objectives, strategies and initiatives into a series of built form and open space responses that can inform the recommendations in the Strategy.

In this section you will find:

In Section 3.1 - “Public Spaces and Places” a streetscaping and public realm framework is introduced. This aims to help attach the LRT to the Central Corridor through strengthened connections, pedestrian-friendly streets and a series of new and improved districts and open spaces.

With the public realm framework in place, Section 3.2 - “Defining Areas of Change and Stability” examines the potential for change along the corridor and identifies those areas along the corridor where new development or change is expected to occur and inversely those areas where the existing character should be preserved and enhanced.

Section 3.3 - “Towards a Transit Supportive Corridor” takes the areas of change and identifies a series of appropriate building responses along the Corridor that respond to the unique and changing conditions along the route. For each building type the intentions and a series of principles are provided. These are then applied to a demonstration site along the Corridor to illustrate what development might look like and how it might occur.

Section 3.4 - “In the Downtown” takes a more focused look at the LRT as it traverses through the downtown. It examines a series of strategies and opportunities aimed at promoting greater balance between vehicles and pedestrians, enhancing transit connections, and re-activating the street level.

Part 3 concludes with Section 3.5 - “At Stations” which outlines a series of 10 key principles for station design aimed at celebrating the stations and enhancing their accessibility, functionality and civic benefit to the corridor.
Key Principles of New Development

1. Making Development Fit

2. Transit-Supportive Densities

3. Transit Supportive Access, Circulation & Parking

4. Green, Attractive & Connected pedestrian environment
Defining Areas of Change & Stability

LRT has the potential to result in many positive changes along the Corridor. Identifying the potential for positive change and ways to manage this change is the primary aim of the Development Strategy.
Responding to Different Places – 7 Development Typologies

Low Rise Neighborhoods

Marketplace Intensification

Urban Villages

Half-Depth Infill Sites

Larger Front & Back Sites

Full-Depth Infill Sites

Urban Infill Blocks
Connecting The LRT To The Downtown
Having described how the community would like to see the Corridor change and improve over time (Section 2), and illustrating what that change should look like (Section 3), this last section presents recommendations on “How We Get There”. These implementing policies, programs and strategies have been crafted to help guide future decision-making so that investment and growth in the Corridor is compatible with the community Vision for the future of the Corridor as set out in Section 1.

In this Section you will find:

Section 4.1 introduces the concept of a “Transit Opportunity Zone” - an enabling policy layer that identifies the Corridor as a priority for new tools, programs and capital improvements; and which contains a transit-supportive planning and development regulatory framework.

Section 4.2 – “Regulatory Framework Recommendations” begins with the question “What does a Transit-Supportive Regulatory Framework Look Like?”, and identifies a series of best-practice ‘tests’ for the regulation of transit-oriented development opportunities. Using these ‘tests’ as a reference, it goes on to identify the strengths and potential gaps in Saint Paul’s planning framework, with recommendations for transit-supportive ‘tune-ups’.

The Development Strategy concludes with Section 4.3 – “Implementation – 19 Community-Building Strategies”, which expands on the strategies identified in Section 2 with specific recommendations on building new partnerships, setting new standards, and conducting further planning and analysis. This section goes on to elaborate on approaches for six of the priority issues, concerns and objectives identified by the community. These include strategies for a Green and Sustainable Corridor, an Inclusive Housing Strategy, Parking Management, Strengthening Local Businesses, Securing Community Benefits, and Mitigating the Effects of LRT construction.
Transit Opportunity Zone (TOZ)

A multi-faceted, geographically-defined zone that supports and encourages opportunities for improvement and investment along the Corridor.

The zone is comprised principally of two policy layers:

1) An **Enabling Layer** for focusing a range financial and policy initiatives

2) A revised **Regulatory Layer** of transit-supportive planning and development directions
An Enabling Layer: 20 Community-Building Strategies

Implementation Strategy

- Consider using existing programs
- Request additional funding
- Consider innovative programs
Where Do We Go From Here?

These images are meant to illustrate the desired end results – memorable new meeting places, vibrant streets, strong neighborhoods, and an accessible and balanced transportation network – of the vision, principles, recommendations and development scenarios described in the Draft Development Strategy.

Over the coming weeks the Task Forces will continue to review and comment on the Draft Development Strategy. A joint task force presentation in Spring 2007 will present the revised and endorsed recommendations of the Task Forces to the Saint Paul Planning Commission, with review and final approval of the Development Strategy by the Mayor’s office and City Council anticipated for late spring 2007.

The completion of the Central Corridor Development Strategy does not represent the end however, but rather the beginning of a long-range planning and decision-making process for the Corridor. Once adopted, the recommendations contained within the Development Strategy will form the foundation of:

- Detailed station area plans;
- Special studies on parking management, station design, streetscaping, and others;
- Regulatory amendments and future site plan reviews; and,
- New community-based partnerships for improving the quality of life and place along the Corridor.
Next Steps

- **Station Area Planning** – more detailed planning for ¼ mile around proposed stations (now underway).

- Coordinated with Met. Council station design process as part of preliminary engineering.

- **Interim Zoning Overlay** approved - temporary requirements in place for 1 year while zoning study completed.

- Zoning overlay key elements: minimum buildings heights and floor area ratio at station areas; building and parking placement requirements; reduced parking requirements; limit on auto-oriented uses.
Other Implementation Activities

- Central Corridor Housing Working Group
- Construction and Business Mitigation Planning
- University Avenue Design Center (Central Corridor Resource Center)
- Parking Management Working Group
- Central Corridor Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- On-going participation in Preliminary Engineering process
- Related efforts: Invest Saint Paul; Sustainable Saint Paul
More Information

- Visit www.stpaul.gov and click on Central Corridor

- Visit www.metrocouncil.org and click on Central Corridor