

Mayor, Transportation Secretary Announce Central Corridor to Have Neighborhood Stops

Project partners, foundations identify funding for three long-sought LRT stations

SAINT PAUL – Responding to changes in federal policy that now allows livability factors in funding decisions for transportation projects, Mayor Chris Coleman and Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, joined by several local officials, announced that funding resources have been identified to build three long-sought light rail stations on Central Corridor.

The announcement was made at the corner of Victoria Street and University, site of one of the proposed stops in the heart of Saint Paul’s historic Rondo neighborhood. The other two stations are proposed at Western and Hamline avenues.

“I’m here today to say that the trains are going to stop here. They are going to serve this community. And I am going to pay half the cost,” said Transportation Sec. LaHood, who was in Saint Paul and Minneapolis for a town hall meeting on transportation surface projects. “We know investment means more than just improved access to transportation between Saint Paul and Minneapolis. It means jobs and economic development along the corridor.”

“We are on track to build the three stations that will ensure that the neighborhoods most impacted by the light rail will benefit from its construction,” Mayor Coleman said. “For years, we and our community partners have voiced our concerns that the Central Corridor light rail brings value to our neighborhoods. Thanks to the Federal Transit Administration, Secretary LaHood, and President Obama’s administration, we can move forward.

“It took a lot of people a lot of time and effort to get us to this place. I especially want to recognize Councilmembers Melvin Carter and Russ Stark, County Commissioners Toni Carter, Janice Rettman and Jim McDonough, the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, and all the community partners who kept this issue alive. It is through our collective work and a strong partnership with the Obama administration that we will bring value to our neighborhoods with this investment.”

“Today’s announcement is a victory for the countless people who’ve stood up for these stops for over five years. As one we worked, we prayed, we shouted. And now we won. Central Corridor light rail transit will stop at Western, Victoria and Hamline avenues,” Ward 1 City Councilmember Melvin Carter said.

Missing from current plans for the Central Corridor because of long-standing federal funding constraints, the stations have been a rallying point for the community. The opportunity to include them in the project was created by a change in federal policy announced by Transportation Sec. LaHood on Jan. 13. In explaining the change, FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff pointed to the Central Corridor and the absence of the three stations as a reason for the FTA to be more flexible in its funding decisions.

Pending final approval by the Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority (RCRRA) and the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), the package includes a critical investment of \$520,000 from the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative. Previously, the city committed to building one of the three stations with a \$5.2 million investment.

With changes to the FTA’s guidelines, those investments are now being matched with funding from the federal government to build the other two stations.

“My colleagues Janice Rettman and Toni Carter deserve special recognition,” said Ramsey County Commissioner Jim McDonough, chair of Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority. “They identified the need for these stations years ago and have been steadfast in their advocacy for building this line in a way that serves the people who need it most.”

“It is symbolic of the strength of our community that the Funders Collaborative stepped to the plate so quickly and decisively to get this deal done,” said Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin, chair of Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority.

The Central Corridor Funders Collaborative includes eleven local and national funders, led by the McKnight Foundation, the Saint Paul Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, whose mission it is to invest in initiatives that support stable and thriving neighborhoods along the Central Corridor.

The total cost for three stations is \$15.6 million, half of which will be included in the Federal Transit Administration’s contribution to the total project budget. The balance is slated to come Saint Paul’s commitment, a \$1.56 million grant from the Counties Transit Improvement Board and a \$520,000 grant from the Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority in addition to the Funders Collaborative grant.

Final approval from the CTIB and RCRRA boards is expected in the coming weeks.