



## **MAYOR & COUNCIL COMMUNICATION**

**DATE: 9/1/15**

**Presentation**

**ITEM G**

**AGENDA ITEM:** Lake Elmo Market and Fiscal Impact Study

**SUBMITTED BY:** Clark Schroeder

**THROUGH:** Clark Schroeder, Interim City Administrator

**REVIEWED BY:** Clark Schroeder

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### **SUGGESTED ORDER OF BUSINESS:**

- Introduction of Item ..... City Administrator
- Report/Presentation.....City Administrator
- Questions from Council to Staff ..... Mayor Facilitates
- Call for Motion ..... Mayor & City Council
- Discussion ..... Mayor & City Council
- Action on Motion..... Mayor Facilitates

**POLICY RECOMMENDER:** City Council

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Metro Strong has suggested a meaningful contribution for a couple reasons. First; a contribution demonstrations support for the overall Bus Rapid Transit line through Lake Elmo. Secondly, the information gathered by the Market Study would be incorporated into our Comp Plan which we need to do anyway. It is the feeling from staff that the comp plan would be studying and guiding the area south of 10<sup>th</sup> also, so there is no point in doing this study twice. Contributing to the market study would allow us to use the data and leverage that for our own use. A meaningful contribution in this case would be between \$10,000 and \$30,000.

**SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED:** Lake Elmo is at an important turning point. The City has endorsed the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the Gateway Gold Line bus rapid transit (BRT) that is expected to run from St. Paul east into Washington County. The next step for Lake Elmo is to consider the implications the BRT has for future land uses in the parts of the City that will be the most transit accessible, likely the area bounded by the city limits to the east and west, I-94 to the south, and the proposed Fifth Street to the north. This is important because the communities along the transitway, by voting for the LPA, have indicated that they are in

favor of a successful transitway; but the transitway will only be successful if it is supported by surrounding land uses that will generate ridership, i.e., transit oriented development (TOD). Thus, this work will evaluate the future market demand for the kinds of TOD that might be appropriate for the study area. However, the work will not be limited to examining potential TOD only; we will also evaluate future demand for a variety of possible land uses, including those that are drawn to the area to take advantage of the access and visibility from I-94. The intent is to develop a market-driven profile of land uses that could be accommodated in the study area to both inform the Lake Elmo community about future options for the area, and to inform the land planning charrette activity.

**LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2014-71**

**A RESOLUTION TRANSMITTING THE CITY OF LAKE ELMO'S SUPPORT OF THE  
LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (LPA) TO THE RCRRA, WCRRA, and  
METROPOLITAN COUNCIL**

**WHEREAS**, the Gateway Corridor is a proposed project that will provide for transit infrastructure improvements in the eastern portion of the Twin Cities, and;

**WHEREAS**, the purpose of the project is to provide transit service to meet the existing and long-term regional mobility and local accessibility needs for businesses and the traveling public within the project area by providing all day bi-directional station-to-station service that compliments existing and planned express bus service in the corridor, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Gateway Corridor is located in Ramsey and Washington Counties, Minnesota, extending approximately 12 miles, and connecting downtown Saint Paul with its East Side neighborhoods and the suburbs of Maplewood, Landfall, Oakdale, Lake Elmo, and Woodbury, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Gateway Corridor Commission (GCC), in partnership with the Metropolitan Council and other project stakeholders, completed the Gateway Corridor Alternatives Analysis (AA) Study that in addition to the No-Build alternative recommended one bus rapid transit (BRT) and one light rail transit (LRT) alternative be advanced for further study in the federal and state environmental review process, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA); the Washington County Regional Railroad Authority (WCRRA), serving on behalf of the GCC; and the Metropolitan Council have initiated the environmental review process for the Gateway Corridor project, with FTA designated as the lead federal agency for this project, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Gateway Corridor project recently received the important Presidential designation as a Federal Infrastructure Permitting Dashboard Project, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Gateway Corridor project recently completed the Scoping phase of the environmental process, which resulted with the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) and the GCC recommending further study of the No-Build alternative, four BRT alternatives operating within a dedicated Guideway (A-B-C-D1-E1, A-B-C-D2-E1, A-B-C-D2-E2, A-B-C-D2-E3) and a managed lane alternative in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at the request of the FTA and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and;

**WHEREAS**, the BRT alignments that advance into the Draft EIS will be further defined and evaluated to minimize impacts to surrounding properties and the I-94 corridor which may include operating in existing lanes with mixed traffic at pinch points where right-of-way is constrained, enhance economic development potential, and reduce capital costs while providing required operating efficiency, with attention to mobility options for environmental justice populations, and;

**WHEREAS**, through the Scoping process, the PAC and the GCC recommended that the LRT alternative be eliminated from further study due to its higher costs while generating a similar ridership, and;

**WHEREAS**, the identification of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) is a critical first step in pursuing federal funding for the Gateway Corridor project, and;

**WHEREAS**, the adoption of the LPA into the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Policy Plan will conclude the FTA Alternatives Analysis process, and;

**WHEREAS**, the LPA will be one of the Build alternatives identified and studied in the Draft EIS, and;

**WHEREAS**, the LPA includes the definition of the Gateway Corridor mode and a conceptual alignment which can be refined through further engineering efforts, and;

**WHEREAS**, the LPA selection process does not replace or override the requirement to fully examine alternatives and determine the adverse impacts that must be avoided or mitigated under the federal and state environmental review process, and;

**WHEREAS**, the comments submitted by agencies, the business sector, and the public during the Scoping phase, as well as the additional comments received from adjacent communities since the Scoping phase, will be addressed accordingly through the Draft EIS process, and;

**WHEREAS**, the PAC and GCC each passed resolutions on July 24, 2014 recommending BRT Alternative A-B-C-D2-E2 (*see attached figure*) as the proposed LPA for review at the August 7 PAC sponsored LPA public hearing and inclusion in the Metropolitan Council's Draft 2040 Transportation Policy Plan, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Gateway Corridor PAC/GCC held a public hearing on August 7, 2014 as part of the LPA decision making process. A total of 35 comments were received through the proposed LPA review process, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Cities will be working collaboratively and with support from the GCC to complete a market analysis and station area plans for the areas around the BRT Guideway stations as a part of the Draft EIS process, and;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the City of Lake Elmo supports the LPA recommendation of the PAC and GCC and identifies the dedicated BRT alternative generally on the Hudson Road – Hudson Boulevard alignment that crosses to the south side of I-94 between approximately Lake Elmo Avenue and Manning Avenue is the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Gateway Corridor project (see attached figure).

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the City of Lake Elmo commits to undertaking and developing station area plans with the support of the GCC for the proposed BRT guideway station areas within its jurisdiction based on the results of a market analysis, community input, and Metropolitan Council guidelines and expectations for development density, level of activity, and design.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that through the Draft EIS process the PAC and the GCC will continue to evaluate and focus on transit service connections to the dedicated BRT system (A-B-C-D2-E2), including an efficient feeder bus network, as well as the number and location of stations throughout the Gateway Corridor to maximize service, accessibility, and surrounding economic development opportunities, while minimizing impacts.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the City of Lake Elmo commits to working with the Washington County Regional Railroad Authority, on behalf of the Gateway Corridor Commission, and the Metropolitan Council to address the comments submitted by agencies, adjacent communities, the business sector, and the public during the Scoping phase, as well as additional comments received during the development of the LPA, through the Draft EIS process, and the following areas of particular importance to the City of Lake Elmo.

1. The ownership and maintenance responsibilities of Hudson Boulevard were recently turned back to the City of Lake Elmo from MnDOT. If Hudson Boulevard is expanded to accommodate a BRT guideway or additional travel lanes for the exclusive use of buses it may increase the demands on the City to properly maintain the roadway. **The City of Lake Elmo requests analysis of appropriate jurisdictional control over Hudson Boulevard and robust consideration of a possible turn back to Washington County.**
2. Maintaining access for current land owners along Hudson Boulevard and planning for access for future development needs to be part of a functional ingress – egress policy. **The City of Lake Elmo requests the development of an access management plan for Hudson Blvd. that is supported by property owners, the City of Lake Elmo and Washington County.**

3. The City of Lake Elmo supports an easterly station in the proximity of the NW corner of Manning Avenue and I-94 to support economic development, including job creation, tax value, and traffic efficiency associated with the creation of a business park as guided by the City's Comprehensive Plan. Incorporating a Gateway station in Lake Elmo will require station area planning resources to ensure that Lake Elmo is maximizing economic development potential and ridership. **The City Lake Elmo requests thorough analysis of economic development potential to assist in guiding the placement of Gateway stations in the corridor segment from Keats Avenue to Manning Avenue as well as planning resources from the Gateway Corridor Commission and Washington County to assist with transit oriented development/station area planning.**
4. Lake Elmo Avenue serves as an important access point to downtown Lake Elmo. Due to the proximity of the road to both the Lake and developed neighborhoods, future expansion is constrained through the downtown area and the roadway cannot functionally handle additional growth in the regional movement of traffic beyond what is currently forecasted. **The City of Lake Elmo recognizes that while the Gateway Corridor project will likely not preclude an interchange in this location, it would like to take this opportunity to state to Washington County, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Federal Highways Administration that an interchange is NOT desired in this location.**
5. Safety and security at BRT stations for transit patrons and surrounding businesses and neighborhoods is very important to Lake Elmo. BRT Stations should be designed to be safe and secure environments that incorporate design elements to deter crime such as good lighting, visibility, security monitoring. **The City of Lake Elmo requests a safety and security plan to ensure that adequate resources are provided at a regional and local level to effectively address safety and security concerns at Gateway Corridor facilities.**
6. **The City of Lake Elmo would also support an A-B-C-D2-E3 alignment and continued evaluation as part of the Draft EIS.**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution adopted by the City of Lake Elmo be forwarded to the Metropolitan Council for their consideration.

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**Recommended Locally Preferred Alternative – BRT Alternative A-B-C-D2-E2  
(Conceptual)**

**ADOPTED BY THE LAKE ELMO CITY COUNCIL ON THE SIXTEENTH DAY OF  
SEPTEMBER 2014.**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION (SWOT):**

**Strengths** Lake Elmo would be able to use the market study in our comp plan. Lake Elmo would show continued support for the Goldline and corresponding development around transit stations by contributing to this study.

**Weaknesses** If no contribution is made the support for the BRT line would be in question.

**Opportunities** Market study would save money on our comp plan for that corridor

**Threats** Un-planned/unguided development along corridor could affect the future ridership of the BRT line.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommend that Lake Elmo contribute \_\_\_\_\_ out of our 2016 comp-plan budget to the Market and Fiscal Impact Study.