



MAYOR & COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

DATE: 1/5/16
REGULAR
ITEM 13

AGENDA ITEM: Gateway Corridor Route and Station Locations in Lake Elmo

SUBMITTED BY: Clark Schroeder

THROUGH: Jan Lucke

REVIEWED BY: Clark Schroeder

SUGGESTED ORDER OF BUSINESS:

- Introduction of Item Jan Lucke, Washington County
- Report/Presentation.....Jan Lucke, Washington County
- Questions from Council to Staff Mayor Facilitates
- Discussion Mayor & City Council

POLICY RECCOMENDER:

Staff

POLICY BEING SET:

Three possible options have been identified as a potential route for the Gateway Corridor between Lake Elmo Avenue and Manning Avenue. The action is to identify the preferred route between Lake Elmo Avenue and Manning Avenue.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None. The City of Lake Elmo is not committing to any fiscal responsibilities for the proposed action, beyond the already approved money for a market analysis of the I-94 corridor.

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED:

Three options have been identified as a potential route for the Gateway Corridor between Lake Elmo Avenue and Manning Avenue. The action is to identify the preferred route among the three options in the form of a resolution of support (attached). Details on the process and technical considerations are included in the following pages. The action is NOT a vote to construct the corridor, rather to amend the locally preferred alternative (LPA) that is already in the Metropolitan Council Transportation Policy Plan.

The LPA action is a statement of support from each community to confirm they are in agreement with the proposed route and type of transit. A statement of support means that each community is willing to assess in more detail what transit could mean for their community. This includes investigating scenarios for land uses and development around each transit station.

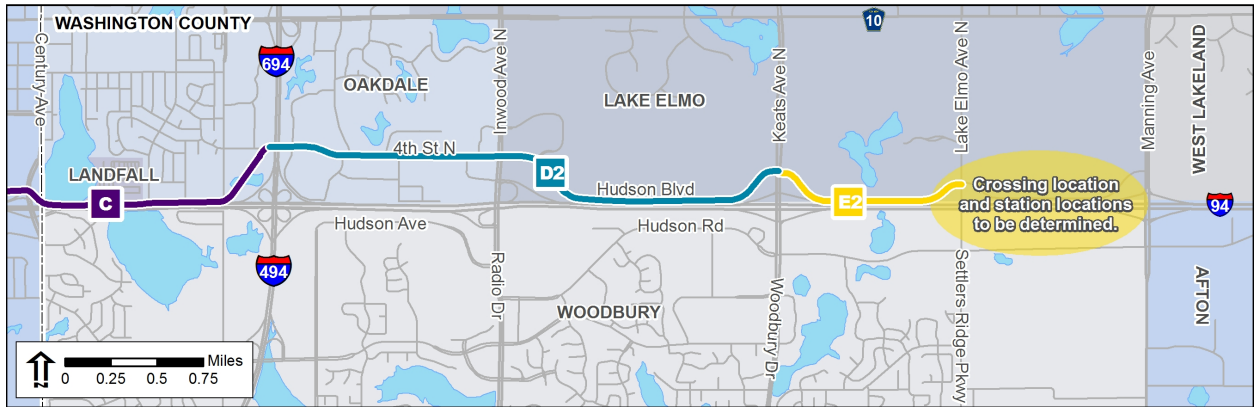
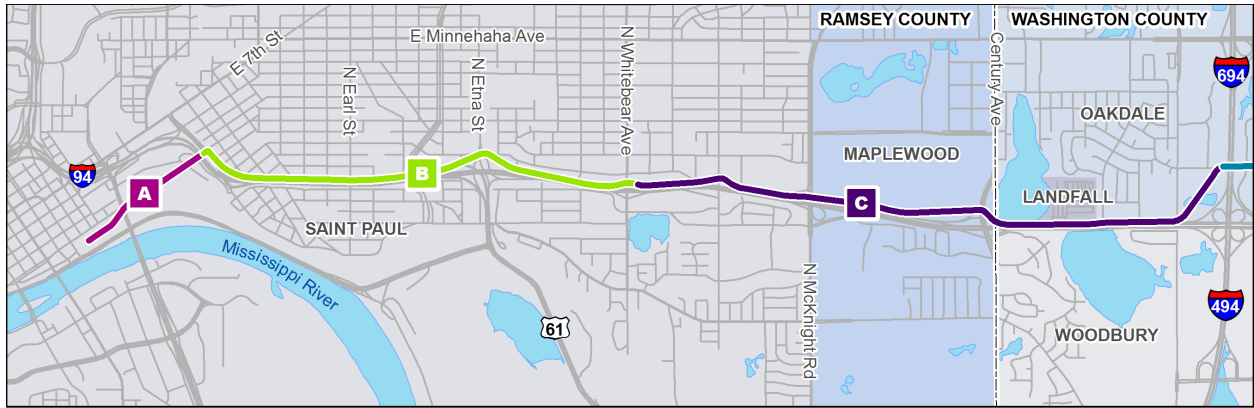
Lake Elmo will have access to support in developing such scenarios. The Gateway Corridor was recent awarded a \$1 million grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Transit Oriented Development Pilot Program allowing for more support and collaboration on decisions that will be made related to the transit stations in 2016 and 2017. In addition, the Gateway Corridor is fortunate to be undertaking this process with the support of East Metro Strong, a public-private partnership of businesses, cities, and counties working together to bring more and better transit investment to the East Metro. Lake Elmo is currently engaged in an East Metro Strong-supported study; East Metro Strong will provide an update on this work at the January 5, 2016, City Council meeting.

If approved by all cities and counties in the corridor, the complete LPA will be included as one of the routes in the Gateway Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement submitted to the Federal Transit Administration in February 2016 for technical and legal review and released for public comment in summer 2016. The preferred alignment would also be included in the next phase of study to take place over a 24-month period between mid-2016 to mid-2018 that would bring the project from its current 1% design to approximately 30% design and include robust station area planning.

Background

In September 2014, based on technical, policy and community input, the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) was identified for the Gateway Corridor project. The Gateway Corridor will provide for a dedicated guideway for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) from Union Depot in Saint Paul to Manning Avenue generally along the I-94 corridor. The far eastern portion of the LPA was depicted as a 'yellow bubble' generally on the Hudson Road-Hudson Boulevard alignment that crosses to the south side of I-94 somewhere between Lake Elmo Avenue/Settlers Ridge Parkway and Manning Avenue. The yellow bubble area is called the E-Segment. This route option was not finalized due in part to the fact that Metro Transit had not yet determined the location of an express bus park-and-ride facility that is being planned in the vicinity of Manning Avenue and I-94. Local partners also wanted to have further conversations with elected officials, property owners, and stakeholders before this section was finalized.

All Gateway Corridor cities and counties, including Lake Elmo, adopted a resolution for the LPA with a yellow bubble generally on the Hudson Road-Hudson Boulevard alignment in fall 2014 (Attachment 1). This same LPA was adopted by the Metropolitan Council as part of the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan in February 2015, with the expectation that the route in Segment E would be further analyzed and refined over the next year. A map of the LPA that was adopted in fall 2014 is below.



Approved Locally Preferred Alternative (Fall 2014)

Technical Analysis

Over the past year, additional analysis and coordination has taken place so the preferred route could be refined to determine a more defined route between Lake Elmo Avenue/Settlers Ridge Parkway and Manning Avenue. Key factors considered in the refined LPA include cost, flexibility, ridership, economic development potential, and operational efficiency/system integration. Several proposed routes were considered by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Community Advisory Committee (CAC), and Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) taking these factors into consideration. The following options were considered for inclusion in the refined LPA process. You will note that the station locations remain constant in each option.

Option A

The route crosses I-94 on the existing Lake Elmo Avenue/Settlers Ridge Parkway overpass in mixed traffic, where there is a proposed station location in Woodbury. The route then heads east on Hudson Road to Manning Avenue. The route goes north on Manning Avenue in mixed traffic to Hudson Boulevard to the end/start of the line station location in Lake Elmo. This station location also coincides with the proposed location of the Metro Transit express bus park-and-ride.

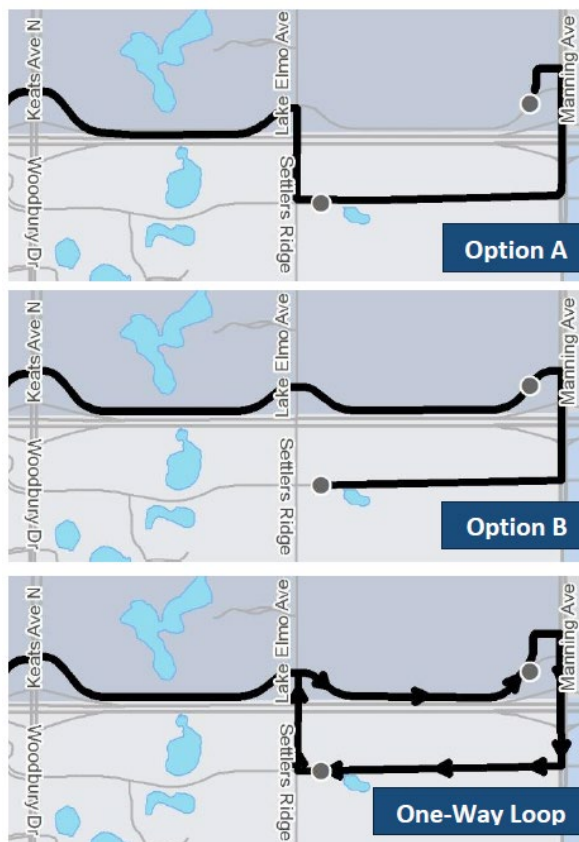
Option B

The route stays north of I-94 in Lake Elmo along Hudson Boulevard to Manning Avenue, where there will be a station location (as well as the express bus park and ride). It then travels south on Manning Avenue in mixed traffic, then west along Hudson Road to the end/start of the line station location near Settlers Ridge Parkway in Woodbury.

Option C

This route involves a one-way loop whereby the route stays north along Hudson Boulevard in Lake Elmo to Manning Avenue, then heads south into Woodbury on Manning Avenue in mixed traffic. It then heads west on Hudson Road to Settlers Ridge Parkway, where there is a station location. It then goes north across the freeway into Lake Elmo turning east onto Hudson Boulevard, to the end/start of the line station location near Manning Avenue.

Option C was eliminated from an operational perspective, as loops have been proven to cause confusion to riders and Metro Transit has refused to accept any additional loop routes given these challenges.



Options A and B were compared against each other using the following metrics: lowest travel time to Union Depot, lowest cost for Segment E, highest ridership gain, and overall transit rider experience.

Based on the analysis and the metrics noted above, Option A was selected as the preferred alignment for the purpose of holding the public hearing and receiving comments. Option A had the lowest travel time from Union Depot, the lowest relative cost, the highest ridership gain, and a better overall transit rider experience. This option was recommended by the CAC, TAC and the PAC for public comment.

Details of the analysis are in Attachment 2 and will be included in the presentation to the Council.

Public Input and the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Approval Process

The PAC and Gateway Corridor Commission recommended the refined LPA be released for public comment on August 13, 2015. At the public hearing on September 10, 2015, held at Woodbury City Hall, the public was provided an opportunity to comment on the proposed route. Additional comments were accepted at an open house in Lake Elmo on August 19, 2015 and via email or mail through September 24, 2015. The cities of Lake Elmo and Woodbury (note: Woodbury acted on 12/9/15) and the Washington County Regional Railroad Authority are now asked to provide resolutions of support for the refined LPA, so that it can be forwarded to the Metropolitan Council for adoption into the Transportation Policy Plan. All comments received can be found here:

<http://thegatewaycorridor.com/documents/2015/2015%20LPA%20Comments.pdf>

After the Gateway Corridor Commission, Cities of Lake Elmo and Woodbury, and Washington County pass resolutions to confirm the LPA the information will then be sent to the Metropolitan Council and an administrative amendment will be done on the TPP.

Additional Considerations for the Action

What a “yes” vote means:

- Does not come with an implicit or explicit expectation for future action.
- Continues down a path of providing a transportation alternative for those that live in Lake Elmo and cannot drive, including seniors and persons with disabilities, or choose not to drive.
- Allows Lake Elmo to continue to explore a range of residential and commercial development opportunities/visions in the Old Village and along I-94 and test whether the market place can deliver those opportunities/visions with or without a transit investment.
- Distinguishes Lake Elmo from other communities that are trying to attract high quality commercial development.
- Provides more options to work with the residential and commercial market and through those options have more control over Lake Elmo’s destiny
- Includes Lake Elmo in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement to be submitted to the Federal Transit Administration in February 2016 for technical and legal review and released for public comment in Summer 2016. Also includes Lake Elmo in the next phase of study to take place over a 24-month period between mid-2016 to mid-2018 to bring the project from its current 1% design to approximately 30% design.
- Does not change the accepted Metropolitan Council residential forecast of 18,200 residents, 7,100 households, and 3,800 jobs in 2040. The total of existing and approved but not yet constructed households are below the forecasts, as are residents and jobs. Taking into account the roughly 1850 housing units approved by the city there are roughly 2200 more housing units that would need to be planned for by 2040. These housing units will be planned in both sewer as well as non-sewered areas of the city and will need to be accounted for in the 2018 comp plan. The housing units which will be planned for sewer areas of the city will need to have a density of at least 3 units per acre on average. The transit area planning densities would need to meet the Met Council expected densities; this density could be made up of employment, students, residential or a combination of any of them. Finally, the Met Council expects the city to plan for sufficient land to accommodate forecasted growth and land to meet the Cities affordable housing allocation through 2040.

What a “no” vote means:

- Removes Lake Elmo from consideration of all day bus rapid transit service and forecloses on the exploration of the benefits and protections bus rapid transit service may

bring Lake Elmo.

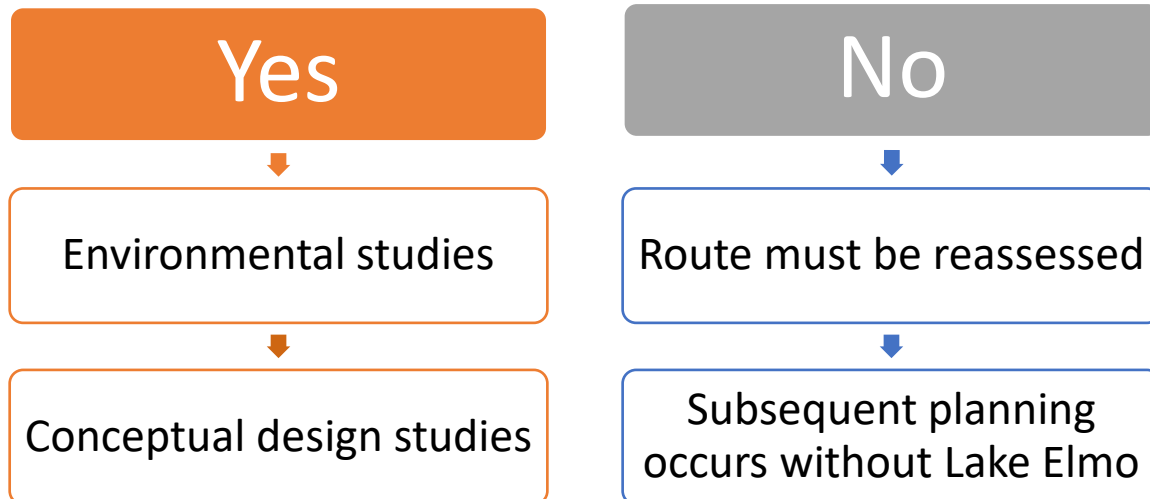
- Because the East Metro Strong-supported study is to help study issues related to transit, stopping consideration of transit would also result in termination of the contract with East Metro Strong and payment of 20% of costs incurred to date.

The discussions held with the City as part of the East Metro Strong-supported study raised—and began exploring—a variety of issues that will affect Lake Elmo’s future. The loss of the planned work supported by East Metro Strong and the loss of access to the support available through the FTA grant together would mean the loss of substantial resources which would help the Lake Elmo understand these issues and shape its response to them.

- Delays submittal of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement to the Federal Transit Administration while the Gateway Corridor takes time to establish a route and termini that the remaining local partners support.

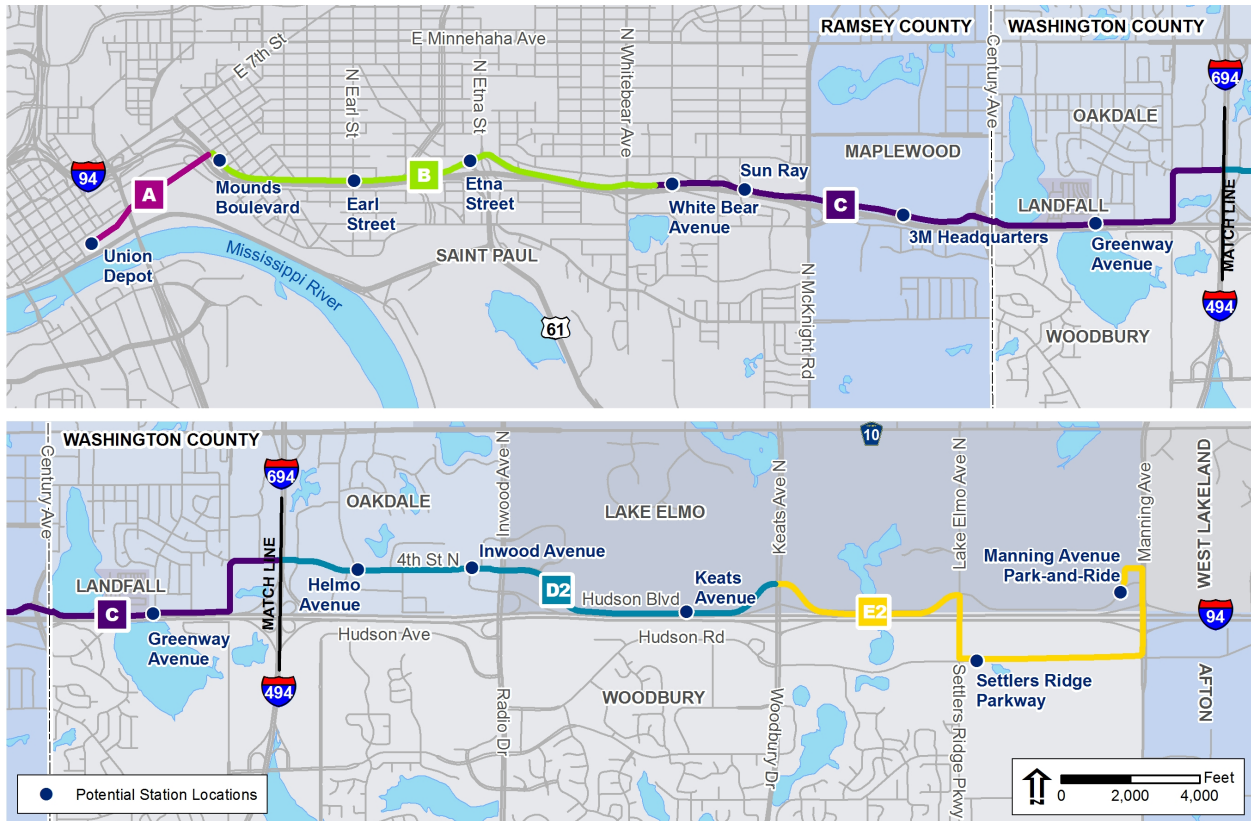
Summary: Yes and No

Voting yes or no on studying the “E2” Gateway Corridor rapid transit alignment



RECOMMENDATION:

A resolution transmitting the city of Lake Elmo’s support for the locally preferred alternative – segment E alignment refinement in Lake Elmo and Woodbury to the Gateway Corridor Commission, WCRRA and Metropolitan Council.



Updated Locally Preferred Alternative (Recommended by PAC November 2015)

ATTACHMENTS:

1. City of Lake Elmo Resolution No. 2014-71 Support for the Locally Preferred Alternative
2. Analysis for route options in Lake Elmo and Woodbury
3. Resolution 2016-2 Support for LPA -E2