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Northside Transportation Network (NTN), UROC – June 17th, 2010
Notes by Joan Vanhala – all changes/corrections welcome

Present: Raymond Dehn – Northside Residents Redevelopment Council, Maria Bernardy, Rob MacIntyre, Phyllis Hill– ISAIAH, Fred Olson, Joan Vanhala – Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, Jim Erkel – MN Center for Environmental Advocacy, Senator Linda Higgins, Sarita Turner – West Broadway Business Area Coalition, Erin Jeribeck – West Broadway Business Area Coalition, Representative Bobby Joe Champion, Brent Rusco – Hennepin County, Tina Curry, Naima Richmond, Aneesa Parks, Jamil Ford, Trevor Tungseth, Eric Roerish, Natalie Yaeger, LaShella Sims – MICAH & resident, Staci Horwitz

Welcome – Representative Champion

1. Updates

Review Mission: Any changes? capitalize “n” in North Minneapolis. Discussion: concern about community involvement in this group. Overview of the history of this group. People raised hands who were residents – 13 Northside residents are present at this meeting

SWLRT Station Area Planning: an FYI for this group – Southwest Transitway project is conducting Station Area Planning for the Minneapolis stations this summer and fall. The Minneapolis stations are at Royalston, VanWhite Blvd, Penn Ave. & 394, 21st, and West Lake. Joan Vanhala will send out the dates if people are interested. See <http://www.southwesttransitway.org>

Bottineau Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Request for Proposals (RFP): this group’s input will have influence the RFP for bids from consultants who will conduct the DEIS. We can also have influence in the selection of the contractors and their work plan for creating the DEIS . The core planning team for this group has talked with Carol Swenson, District Councils Collaborative of Saint Paul & Minneapolis Executive Director (works on Central Corridor LRT issues) and with Brent Rusco, Hennepin County about the opportunities and the focus of this influence. Hennepin County will need to have our feedback for the RFP by mid-July. The core planning team also asked to be on the review committee for selecting the consultants – so far the answer is a strong NO.

Website: not available yet. West Broadway Business Area Coalition is waiting for the funding to be able to do the work. Fred Olson offered up his website as a temporary resource. The group thought this was a great idea.

Hennepin County D1/D2 Investigative Stakeholder meeting June 3 – there was a good turn out of community residents with a heated discussion about the impacts of the Penn alignment to peoples homes. It was the first time for many of the residents to attend a meeting. Hennepin County presented on the process, timeline, and the 4 alignment options. Many residents were shocked at the concept to remove housing on the east side of Penn Ave. There was also a lot of concern about safety issues

2. **Environmental Study 101 – Jim Erkel, MN Center for Environmental Advocacy:** Hennepin County is currently drafting a Request for Proposals for a consultant team to create the Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS) for the Bottineau Transitway. This document will be an extensive study of the Bottineau Transitway and is a federal requirement of New Starts proposals. New Starts is the name of the funding program at the federal level for light rail transit projects. This environmental review will bring all the documentation and permits required into one document.

The Bottineau Transitway DEIS will go in-depth on the purpose and need for the project, scoping and screening issues, the alternatives studied, mitigation to adverse impacts, and the permitting process. In the DEIS the word “environment” “includes the natural and physical environment and the relationship of the people with that environment.” This means that DEIS will also include an analysis of the social economic effects of the project on all communities it is proposed to travel through. There will also be a required analysis of any environmental justice communities (see <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ej2.htm>)

Once the DEIS is complete, it will be published and there will be a public 45 day review period where all public comment (oral testimony at public hearings, emails, written testimony, any additional documentation) will be received. The project staff will be required to respond to all public comment. These responses will also be publicly published.

The current approximate timeframe for the Bottineau Transitway DEIS to be completed is about 1 ½ years. This is a multi million dollar document that will require a team of consultants and will include community engagement as it moves forward. See attached powerpoint.

Now is the best time to influence the final outcome of the project. As the Bottineau Transitway moves forward it becomes less flexible to study additional issues and more expensive to study additional issues.

Discussion:

Clarification of the current process – Alternatives Analysis is happening now, the Environmental Impact Study starts now, the Bottineau Policy Advisory Committee will be considering the D1 & D2 Alternatives at their next meeting in July. Hennepin County project staff anticipates a preferred alignment to be chosen within 1 to 2 years. The Bottineau PAC leadership would like that to be sooner.

The community’s concern is for Hennepin County to straight forward in their information. What is the best alignment that serves the community? The Alternatives Analysis looked at 21 alternatives that included Bus Rapid Transit, commuter rail, and light rail transit.

The Federal Transit Administration is encouraging Bottineau Transitway project staff to move forward. Hennepin County will be able to investigate other alignments during the development of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement if the community wants them to and makes a good case

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for why. The more alternatives that are studied in the DEIS the more its costs. Money will be driving how decisions are made. Politics will be driving how decisions are made. And technical and engineering considerations will be driving how decisions are made.

Its not just about alignment – the question for the Northside is what does it want from a major transportation investment? The community should have been more involved in the Alternatives Analysis process. There is a concern about transit connections throughout North Minneapolis.

Next meeting Thursday , July 15th 6:30pm @ ?? group asked to meet some where else so that we do not have to leave by 8pm.