

Appendix E

Stakeholder Comments

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Neighborhood Meeting

June 30, 2009

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From: buckley@grar.com [mailto:buckley@grar.com]
Sent: Thursday, July 09, 2009 8:44 AM
To: Taiwo Jaiyeoba
Subject:

Please don't bring the bus down Lafayette. We have a problem at Lafayette and Michigan now with the students crossing from Michigan and backing up the traffic because the person cannot turn until foot traffic has cleared. The riders and the non-profits will gain from the bus, yet we the tax payers are asked to pay more taxes and have the bus affect our quality of life. Please call me if you can.

John Buckley, CRS, GRI, RAM
J. Buckley & Associates, Inc.
301 Crescent NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

phone: (616) 451-9696
fax: (616) 451-9740

buckley@grar.com

-----Original Message-----

From: Julie Connors [<mailto:jaconnors@sbcglobal.net>]

Sent: Friday, July 10, 2009 3:23 PM

To: Taiwo Jaiyeoba

Subject: Rapid Silver Line Planning

Dear Rapid Planners,

I am writing with arguments that I hope will help convince you why it is so important that the "Alternate to Locally Preferred Alternative" route be adopted for the future Bus Rapid Transit System. I am excited about the project, but also believe that a beautiful historic neighborhood is not an acceptable casualty to progress in Grand Rapids.

North Lafayette is a neighborhood. It is a place where where home owners live with their families and renters are sociable with their more permanent neighbors. Owner-buyers on the north end of Lafayette take great pride in their homes and work to keep the community around them well-groomed, pleasant, and friendly. If the new bus route were to run on this part of Lafayette, it would increase the already dense traffic on the street. This increase in bus traffic and vibrations would make the street much less desirable for families with children who may not be safe playing outside and who find it difficult to sleep at night because of loud traffic sounds. This increase in traffic will drive away the owner-buyers who keep the hill beautiful.

I understand that property values can rise when public transit become available to an area. Unfortunately, this does not hold true for the north end of the route. North Lafayette is not only within walking distance of many employers, but it is already well served by public transit, and it is even walking distance from the main bus terminal. People who work on the southern end of this route are not likely to live downtown, so that convenience is not an attraction.

This is an important project and I think that the alternate route which would not pass through the Heritage Hill community is a good and viable alternative. I urge you to adopt this alternate route and help ensure that this beautiful neighborhood can continue to be just that in the future.

Sincerely,

Julie Connors

From: Dennis DeLano & Merritt Taylor [mailto:230fountainstreet@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, July 16, 2009 9:56 PM
To: Taiwo Jaiyeoba; heritage@heritagehillweb.org
Subject: RAPID comments from neighbors in Heritage Hill

July 17th, 2009

Merritt Taylor and Dennis DeLano
230 Fountain Street NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
230fountainstreet@gmail.com

Taiwo Jaiyeoba
Director of Planning and Program Development of the Rapid
Tjaiyeoba@ridetherapid.org

Dear Taiwo,

We understand that there are two possible routes considered for the RAPID and wanted to express our voice in support of the neighbors and the Heritage Hill association for the route that runs adjacent to Heritage Hill rather than the currently proposed route that runs through our neighborhood. That is we support the route that runs along Ransom, to Crescent, to Bostwick (see link below).

As the Heritage Hill Association has cited in correspondence with you, there is the preservation of significant historical and architectural structures in question here, and we need to be sure that they are protected from excessive noise and traffic, which clearly can be degraded by pollution and vibration. Further, there is a working, active neighborhood at risk in this planning decision.

We recently moved to Grand Rapids as a young couple and were deeply impressed that city planners had chosen to preserve a quiet neighborhood so close to all that downtown Grand Rapids and the Medical Mile have to offer. We think that others who are considering a move to Grand Rapids from other cities will feel the same way, and this neighborhood would be in danger if there is excessive noise and traffic by the introduction of the RAPID right through, rather than adjacent to the Heritage Hill area.

We think that our perspective offers insight into how newcomers to West Michigan will view the urbanization and beautification of downtown and we think that having the route run adjacent to Heritage Hill will support the movement of people into a livable downtown and Heritage Hill area. We feel that the alternative route would reflect the precedent set by conversations between city planners and neighbors in previous decades--to serve the community, to maintain access and to preserve this neighborhood. It places much of the traffic in areas that are already dedicated to commercial interests, rather than having it run through high traffic streets that would no longer be friendly to children and

families. It is difficult to imagine young couples wanting to bring their families to a neighborhood that is intersected by such active bus lines. As your work in Sacramento clearly demonstrates, there is a strong need to create transit access to communities and to maintain livable communities. Walkable, family-friendly, quiet neighborhoods are critical and that is clearly what we have and wish to preserve in Heritage Hill. We feel the alternative route fits those dual needs.

I understand that the deadline for comments was July 10th, but hope that our belated responses will still be considered by the RAPID planners.

Many thanks for considering our voice.

Merritt Taylor and Dennis DeLano
230 Fountain Street NE

“Alternate to Locally Preferred Alternative” (ADJACENT to Heritage Hill but not through)

For image: <http://www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=2980979>

Hi Taiwo –

When Heritage Hill was designated a National, State and Local historic district in 1972, the National Trust reviewed every house for its architectural significance to the neighborhood. While all 1,300 structures in Heritage Hill are important, 270 (20%) received the Trust's top rating.

Of the 49 houses on the proposed bus rapid transit (BRT) route (the three blocks of Lafayette, and adjoining Fountain and Lyon), 25 received this noted architectural rating. This is over half (51%) of the houses on these streets that the National Trust deemed major. This concentration shows how important these streets are to the neighborhood. While the entire Heritage Hill Historic District is a jewel, these particular streets need to be cherished and placed in an architectural treasure "lock box".

These streets, these houses, and these neighbors cannot be subjected to the increased vibration and congestion that the BRT will bring. Not only is it the 40 to 60-foot bus traffic that at peak times will travel our streets every 8 to 10 minutes, it will also bring two 60-foot long transit stations as well as the related development around these transit stations that every urban planner touts. This neighborhood is developed; it is a historical and architectural treasure to the Grand Rapids' region that neighbors successfully saved from the wrecking ball in 1968. We fought the urban renewal mentality of "*out with the old, in with the new*" of the 1960's and we continue to stridently protect our neighborhood.

There is a very valid alternative route on Bostwick that puts access to the BRT in the center of the concentration of Michigan Street's 10,000+ employees, visitors, and students. It provides easy access for Spectrum, MSU, Van Andel Institute, DeVos Children's Hospital, the Lemmon Holton Cancer Pavilion and it is not a long walk for GVSU. The Bostwick location is the most appropriate placement of the two 60-foot transit access stations as well. These stations belong in a commercial corridor, not in a residential historic district. The future development of Michigan Street, east of Lafayette, will be well served when the Michigan Street Corridor gets its second BRT route. The associated transit stations can be planned as part of the new construction that will occupy the current acres of surface parking lots that are ripe for future and concentrated development.

The Heritage Hill Historic District has been a stable anchor for Grand Rapids and the Michigan Corridor. It is not in the way of development, it enhances it. Neighbors will not allow Heritage Hill to be burdened and compromised anymore than it already has been with the massive development on Michigan Street. We do not oppose this progress, we often applauded it, but we also will not let it destroy our 150+ year heritage.

Heritage Hill supports the BRT and eagerly anticipates the reduction in traffic congestion on our streets when the Ransom, Crescent, Bostwick route is in full operation.

Silver Line BRT Community Meeting

COMMENTS CARD

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS BY JULY 10 AND MAIL IT TO THE ADDRESS BELOW.

THANK YOU.

The Heritage Hill Association Board of Directors and members on the Route of Lafayette Blvd & Franklin support the BRT route to Grand Rapids, West & East. The damage to historic structures from the vibration and intense use of these narrow residential street makes the use of Lafayette extremely problematic.

MAIL IT TO:
The Rapid, Planning Department,
300 Ellsworth Avenue SW,
Grand Rapids, MI 49503-4005
Tel. (616) 456-7514 • Fax (616) 456-1941

Silver Line BRT Community Meeting

COMMENTS CARD

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS BY JULY 10 AND MAIL IT TO THE ADDRESS BELOW.

THANK YOU.

I would expect data based decisions. For example, if a concern is raised regarding bus noise can we discuss this in terms of decibels. Is there an engineer's response to concerns about vibration.

I have great apprehension about the suggestion that buses including BRT should not exist in residential areas.

The reasons for the original alignment continue to exist. The reasons to change need to be articulated and subjected to scrutiny.

MAIL IT TO:
The Rapid, Planning Department,
300 Ellsworth Avenue SW,
Grand Rapids, MI 49503-4005
Tel. (616) 456-7514 • Fax (616) 456-1941

Jim Bachmeier
GVSU
331-2188



July 10, 2009

Mr. Peter Varga
Executive Director/CEO
The Rapid
300 Ellsworth Avenue SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503-4005

RE: Proposed Alternate Route-Heritage Hill Neighborhood

Dear Peter:

First, I want to thank you for hosting the community forum regarding routing decisions on the BRT. I thought the session was well run and informative. I am writing to you to express my views on how the process should continue. The University continues to believe the original alignment best meets the needs of the largest number of transit riders and this is in the best interest of the riders, the transit system and thus ultimately in the best interest of the community. More important than our point of view on the alignment is how the information and decision making process progresses. I believe you are off to a good start in that regard. We believe a fact based decision is the best outcome, even if it does not support our point of view.

Some of my thoughts are:

- The original route was established based on sound facts. Any change in the route needs to follow the same fact based approach.
- This is a project with at least a 40 year life. The future growth on Michigan will likely be to the east. Moving the stop westward seems to discount that likely scenario.
- The "not in my neighborhood" concerns need to be considered, but the true impact has to be weighed. If there are concerns about noise, these need to be discussed quantitatively. How loud are buses relative to current and future traffic? This is a proposal to drive a rubber tire vehicle down an existing busy asphalt road. If BRT changes the character of the neighborhood, we believe that should be demonstrated through a factual discussion.
- The success of the project depends on a ridership base. If the route is moved, the ridership numbers need to be reassessed and the change in that ridership number needs to be a consideration in the final decision.
- There have been inferences that the sec 106 study is a hurdle. If that is true, that needs to be clearly articulated. How big a hurdle? Again, this is a 40 plus year project.

The decision ultimately made has to be supported by factual data. I hope that is the intention of the transit staff as they continue their study and evaluation. And, if that factual data does make a case that the original route significantly damages the Heritage Hill neighborhood, we would like to have that presented in an open forum. We might, when presented with these quantifiable facts (noise levels, property value concerns, etc.) change our position and agree with the neighborhood. They are our neighbors and partners and we do care about their points of view. We are open to the discussion.

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

James D. Bachmeier
Vice President for Finance and Administration

From: Matthew Large [mailto:cowboylarge@hotmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, July 16, 2009 4:48 PM
To: Taiwo Jaiyeoba
Cc: Barb
Subject: RAPID Silver Line and Heritage Hill

Dear Taiwo Jaiyeoba,

I am writing on behalf of my wife Kimberly and myself in regards to the proposed **Silver Line** that would be routed through **Heritage Hill**.

My wife and I live on Lafayette Ave, NE and we would like to formally oppose, in this e-mail, the Silver Line on our street. Hopefully, you'll understand our concerns.

We are not opposed to progress in Heritage Hill. What we are opposed to is the added stress on our 100 year old home that the constant vibrations of many, many large buses would inflict. The traffic on our street is really heavy and it's hard enough as it is blindly backing out of our driveway without worrying about the added buses.

The condition of the street is already horrible with it's patchwork of pot holes and half hearted attempts at repairing the damage. Buses would exacerbate this problem a hundred-fold.

Also, we are worried about the increased foot traffic on our street. Every day, we pick up garbage that people walking by throw into our yard and bushes. I cannot imagine more litter than we have now from people on their way to the bus stops. We love our street and we want to keep it beautiful and crime free.

In addition to the above mentioned reasons, we oppose frequent buses constantly idling at the stop light that is 2 houses down from us. Our home is already covered in soot from the hospital's garbage incineration facility a block away and adding bus exhaust to that equation would make our living space unbearable.

The noise level is already at a high level when you consider the myriad of college rentals, the current heavy traffic, and the hospital helicopter noise pollution. We have a new baby on the way and we'd love to have a safe, clean, and quiet street for it to grow up on.

There has to be another route that these buses can travel that wouldn't slice through our beautiful historical community that is definitely one of the jewels in Grand Rapids crown. We work so hard to keep our community beautiful and we'd hope that you'd assist us in that venture by finding an alternate route for the Silver Line.

Best Regards,

Matt and Kim Large

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From: Mike Lehmkuhle [mailto:mlehmkuhle3@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, July 08, 2009 8:34 PM
To: jaconnors@sbcglobal.net; Taiwo Jaiyeoba; John Buckley
Subject: request regarding the routing of the new silverline bus route

Hello Ms Jaiyeoba,

I would like to express my desire that you choose the "Alternate to Locally Preferred Alternative" (ADJACENT to Heritage Hill but not through) for the new Silverline bus route. My concern is with the noise and pollution which would be brought into our residential community. I believe the alternate route through a commercial zone is consistent with the zoning intent.

Also, the intersection of Lafayette and Michigan is already a bottleneck for anyone trying to make a turn.

Thank you for your consideration,

Michael Lehmkuhle
223 Crescent St NE

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Public Information Meetings

October 29, 2009

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Silver Line Bus Rapid Transit
Project Update Meeting · October 29, 2009
www.rapidilverline.org

Your comments on Silver Line are welcome!

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS AND LEAVE IT BEHIND OR MAIL TO THE ADDRESS BELOW BY NOVEMBER 6, 2009.

I would like to see the details of the possible route through the Medical Mile / Heritage Hill stretch. For example, I would like to see data on the Barclay option. That is, I believe the city of GR should put its traffic flow where its mouth is & allow counter-traffic up Lyon from Ransom to the east to Barclay - easily done with a few signs & some concrete barriers. Only 5 or so parking spaces lost. In the alternative, College should be reviewed. I think Bostwick would be a very poor option.

Thank you for attending!

The Rapid, Planning Department
300 Ellsworth Avenue SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503-4005
Tel. (616) 456-7514 • Fax (616) 456-1941



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