



**Minneapolis**  
City of Lakes

**Office of the Mayor**

**R. T. Rybak**  
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Council President Johnson & Council Members,

I am sending this letter to call a special meeting of the Minneapolis City Council for Tuesday, September 25, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. The purpose of this meeting is to vote on the 35W & Lake Transit/Access Project which will come to Transportation & Public Works earlier the same day.

The votes we will take next Tuesday represent a landmark moment in a success story that has turned controversy into consensus. We have indeed come a long way:

### **“Hitting the Re-Set Button”**

On December 7, 2007, the City Council passed a critically important resolution on the 35W Access Project, as it was then called. It passed by a vote of 12-1 with my strong support. I have attached that resolution to this letter.

In passing this resolution the City Council “hit the re-set button” on a project that had stalled. Despite good work by many people over many years, that project had grown to a cost of nearly \$500 million and threatened to grow further. It included the rebuilding of nine bridges over 35W. In included building seven new ramps and demolishing four. Most distressing was what project did not include: a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station at Lake Street. At that time, the project only included an empty space where a future transit station could later be built. Regardless of intent, the project was, in effect, “freeway expansion now, transit maybe later.”

This was not consistent with our values or our plans for implementing our values. Moreover, even those who did not share our concern about balancing roads and transit recognized that the project had become simply too expensive to move forward.

Fortunately, both the region’s successful use of the Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA) and the City’s position on Municipal Consent for the Crosstown project allowed us to make great progress towards our goal of bringing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to 35W. This included the construction of a new BRT station at 46<sup>th</sup> Street.

Our 2007 Resolution built on the these successes and refocused our work on our highest priorities: 1) A high quality inside lane multi-modal BRT station at Lake Street; 2) a high quality connection to the Midtown Greenway; and 3) access at Lake Street.

### **A Project That Can Get Built**

As a result of our resolution and a companion resolution by Hennepin County, today, instead of being presented with an “all or nothing” \$500 million project, we now have the ability to make informed choices from a menu of project components that would total \$150 Million if we included all those components.

Let me describe the package I support:

We will build a groundbreaking state-of-the-art BRT station at Lake Street that will show this region just how great Bus Rapid Transit can be. We will build a “green crescent” connection to the Midtown Greenway which will augment the success of that incredible public amenity. We will build two new exit ramps from 35W, a southbound ramp to Lake Street and a northbound ramp to 28<sup>th</sup> Street. These ramps will bring new customers to businesses, both large and small, along the Lake Street Corridor. Again, we are building on past successes and growing our tax base.

It is a credit to the work of both staff and volunteers on the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) that we can advance a project that will add so much to our City.

There is only one project component I cannot recommend at this time. The Northbound entrance to 35W costs \$37 Million, almost twice as much as the next most expensive ramp. We will build other project elements such that the Northbound entrance to 35W can be added in the future, but our paramount concern right now is to approve a package that can move forward quickly.

The package I just described is the one that can get built. There is a strong consensus among the four partner agencies working to make it happen. We have received clear indication that Hennepin County, Metropolitan Council and Minnesota Department of Transportation can support this package.

### **Why We Should Vote Now**

When the City Council hit the reset button in 2007 and asked for a menu of options on the station and ramps, we knew full well that a new Project Advisory Committee (PAC) would convene and planning and engineering for a new project would take years. It made sense to have the right information before making decisions.

We also knew that a time would come when policy makers would need to choose which discretionary components to include in the project. We have known for months that September of 2012 would be the time to choose. Now that we know which components should move forward, we should not delay.

City and County Public Works Staff have made clear that from this point forward the engineering work would be slowed down by continuing to design to multiple scenarios. This is the biggest reason for urgency in voting. Based on my conversations with Federal leaders, I anticipate there will be new opportunities for funding worthwhile infrastructure projects. But we can only apply if we are ready. This project must be made ready as soon as possible.

This alone is reason to move ahead. But four weeks ago the White House added another reason. It sent out a “use it or lose it” directive that places in jeopardy \$8.9 million worth of federal funds earmarked for this project. Sending the clearest possible message of City support before October 1<sup>st</sup> will maximize our chances of keeping \$8.9 million associated with this project.

### **What Is At Stake**

In our 2007 Resolution, we said the City’s highest priority on 35W is to be a partner in regional efforts to increase use of transit. In this regard, the stakes could not be higher. Bus Rapid Transit was supposed to start operating on 35W in 2012. It has not. As we in Minneapolis predicted, the Crosstown project has frustrated rather than addressed the movement of buses from the inside-lane BRT station at 46<sup>th</sup> Street to the outside-lane bus shelters at Lake Street. BRT buses skipping past Lake Street customers is totally unacceptable. So action is needed.

Of course, BRT is not just for citizens of Minneapolis. Through the UPA process, we built a broad bipartisan, urban/suburban coalition to support building BRT from Downtown Minneapolis to Lakeville. This is critically important. There are no new freeways coming to Downtown, so we must maximize the capacity of the lanes miles we have already built through transit and innovation. Moving ahead will benefit Downtown and the regional economy.

BRT service for our citizens and the region is just the beginning of what is at stake. Providing access to Lake Street businesses and a connection to the Midtown Greenway are crucial. These in turn will greatly increase the likelihood of reopening Nicollet Avenue sooner rather than later.

### **Partnerships**

We have all done great work: elected officials, citizen volunteers, city and county staff. We have brought fiscal discipline and an essential focus on our highest priorities. We now have a defensible project which fits hand-in-glove with regional transportation plans.

What is needed now to make this project a reality is to remember that we only get things done when we work in partnerships. We must sometimes compromise to build those partnerships. A project that has the support of the City, the County, the Metropolitan Council, MNDOT, and private sector businesses big and small is a project that can get done faster.

Minneapolis has led. It is our turn to lead again on Tuesday.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and curves, representing the name R.T. Rybak.

Mayor R.T. Rybak  
City of Minneapolis

**RESOLUTION 2007R-640**  
**By Glidden, Colvin Roy**

**Supporting the development of a fiscally responsible plan and providing a high quality inside lane multi-modal BRT station at Lake Street, a high-quality connection to the Midtown Greenway, and access at Lake Street as part of the I-35W access improvements and Lake Street Reconstruction.**

Whereas, the highest priority for the City of Minneapolis on 35W is to be a partner in regional efforts to increase use of transit; and

Whereas, global warming is a recognized threat to our environment and economy which can be addressed in part by providing transit choices for commuters that are cost-effective, reduce carbon pollution, and create shared economic benefits; and

Whereas, the City of Minneapolis strongly supports implementing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on 35W as soon as possible and this vision is shared by a broad, bipartisan coalition of mayors, city council members, county commissioners, and legislators along the entire 35W corridor south of Downtown; and

Whereas, the U.S. Department of Transportation's decision to award a \$133 million Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA) grant to 35W is a huge step forward toward implementing this shared BRT vision; and

Whereas, full BRT service on 35W should include at least two high quality inside lane stations in Minneapolis at Lake Street and 46th Street; and

Whereas, the UPA grant does not include funding for a BRT Station at Lake Street, and failure to construct a new station at this location would either require buses to cross over from the inside lane to the outside lane at Lake Street, or otherwise bypass Lake Street altogether, neither of which is a sound or acceptable option; and

Whereas, a weakness in the final UPA application was that it did not include a transit-dedicated lane in both the northbound and southbound directions; and

Whereas, any actions we take to make the UPA program more successful increases the chance that further UPA dollars or similar funding will be available in the future; and

**Midtown Greenway**

Whereas, the City recognizes and supports the increased development and high and growing bicycle and pedestrian use of the Midtown Greenway; and

Whereas, the City supports planning for the potential of adding rail transit in the Midtown Greenway to connect the neighborhoods and businesses along the corridor to

a future network of transit lines including the Hiawatha LRT, 35W BRT, and Southwest LRT lines; and

### **Access at Lake Street**

Whereas, the decision to build 35W without complete access at Lake Street was a disservice to the City of Minneapolis and the neighborhoods and businesses on Lake Street, and the City strongly supports complete access at the Lake Street interchange to and from 35W, including the multi-modal BRT station, as soon as possible; and

Whereas, transportation projects in Minneapolis should use the best urban design principles that strengthen community cohesion and function through the built environment, share benefits among all facets of the community and create more transit use by large employers; and

### **Current Proposal**

Whereas, the estimated cost for current proposal to provide complete freeway access at Lake Street grew and grew to include many expensive components not necessitated by providing access at Lake Street; and

Whereas, the current cost of the 35W Access Project is in the range of \$430-480 million, not including full costs of additional connections to I-94, and is not currently funded; and

Whereas, the Minnesota Department of Transportation is delaying transportation projects across Minnesota due to lack of funds and Governor Pawlenty has twice vetoed transportation funding bills; and

Whereas, there is a substantial pent up demand for transportation dollars across Minnesota and even if a transportation bill were passed in the next legislative session, there is no guarantee that the current 35W Access Project proposal would be funded; and

Whereas, Governor Pawlenty has asked for ways to reduce the cost of the project; and

Whereas, the region's needs for a inside lane BRT station at Lake Street, a high quality connection to the Midtown Greenway and access at Lake Street are urgent and must not be held up by adherence to financially and politically unrealistic proposals;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by The City Council of The City of Minneapolis:

That the City of Minneapolis supports refocusing its 35W efforts on developing a fiscally responsible plan which include the City's highest priorities: 1) A high quality inside lane multi-modal BRT station at Lake Street; 2) a high quality connection to the Midtown Greenway; and 3) access at Lake Street.

Be It Further Resolved that the portions of the current 35W Access Project north of 28th Street and south of 31st Street should be reprioritized into either a) a second phase of a new Lake Street Access Project; or b) a second project to be pursued after funding is secured for the City's higher priorities described in the first resolving clause.

Be It Further Resolved that staff be directed to work with Hennepin County, as the acting lead agency, MnDOT, the Metropolitan Council, State Legislators as well as residential neighborhood and business stakeholders, to develop a new proposal consistent with this resolution and maintaining appropriate components of the mitigation program adopted by the Project Advisory Committee.

Be It Further Resolved that Public Works staff be directed to study whether or not to include a northbound exit ramp from 35W to 28th St, including cost estimates of the project with or without that ramp. Public Works staff must report back to the Transportation and Public Works Committee with an update no later than March of 2008.

Adopted 12/7/2007. Yeas, 12; Nays, 1 as follows:

Yeas - Hodges, Samuels, Gordon, Hofstede, Ostrow, Schiff, Lilligren, Colvin Roy, Glidden, Remington, Benson, Goodman, Johnson.

Nays - Lilligren.