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Memorandum

To: Brian Olson – Dir. of Public Works, City of Ramsey
From: Jim Lasher
Project: Ramsey CMAQ Grant
Subject: Modal Change from Bus to Rail
Date: November 1, 2011

The City of Ramsey was approved for a CMAQ grant as part of the 2005/2006 regional solicitation that included providing new express bus service from the City of Ramsey to Downtown Minneapolis as well as the construction of 200 new park and ride stalls. The City of Ramsey has most recently been approved for a new commuter rail station along the existing Northstar Commuter Rail line. Construction is scheduled to begin early in 2012 with full operations of the new rail station in December of 2012. In various meeting with MnDOT State Aid staff, FHWA staff and Met Council staff, a question has arisen regarding the pending change of mode from bus to rail and its impacts on the original CMAQ grant, which used bus service and not rail service, to mitigate congestion for the region. This memo will attempt to address questions brought forth by agencies regarding this change.

BACKGROUND

The City of Ramsey submitted a CMAQ Grant Proposal on August 16, 2005 to the Transportation Advisory Board that was successfully scored and ultimately approved for funding by the Met Council on March 15, 2006 for program year 2009. Funds for the CMAQ were allocated to the two elements of the project as follows:

New Bus Service	\$1,458,993
Park and Ride Expansion	<u>\$4,170,000</u>
Total CMAQ	\$5,628,993

When the CMAQ Grant was approved in March 2006, the existing Northstar Commuter Coach (express bus service along the future Northstar Commuter Rail Line) was running at or near 100% capacity without the availability to add buses due to funding constraints. However, the approved City of Ramsey CMAQ Grant would not be available for up to three years to assist with this problem. To that issue, the City of Ramsey elected to make a formal request to the Met Council to “Advance Construct” the CMAQ grant funds to allow for the added bus service and park and ride stalls to add much needed capacity to the Northstar Commuter Coach system at a time when it was desperately needed.

In May 1, 2006, the City of Ramsey made a formal request to the Met Council to Advance Construct the CMAQ Grant. In a May 10, 2006 memo from Carl Ohrn and Kevin Roggenbuck to the TAB Programming Committee, Met Council staff recommended that the City of Ramsey CMAQ Grant be approved for “Advance Construct” status....

“Staff feels the transit service portion of the project meets the four conditions and recommends the TAB approve it for Advance Construction”.

CITY OF RAMSEY INITIATES NEW BUS SERVICE

Accepting the results of their Advance Construct request, the City of Ramsey moved forward with CMAQ funded bus service with the understanding that they would advance city funds for the service costs and would be reimbursed once the CMAQ funds were available.

The current Northstar Express bus service was managed by the Northstar Corridor Development Authority (NCDA) and Anoka County. On November 14, 2006, the City of Ramsey and NCDA entered into a Joint Powers Agreement to run new express bus service from the City of Ramsey to Downtown Minneapolis called the *Ramsey Star Express*.

The bus service was contracted by NCDA with First Transit to deliver the new Ramsey Star Express bus service from Ramsey Town Center (now known as “*The Core*”) to the 5th Street Transit Center in Downtown Minneapolis for a total of four AM peak and PM peak trips (8 total trips). The first day of services for the Ramsey Star Express was January 22, 2007. The Bus Service Contract runs through March 31, 2009 with 5 options for a period of 6 months each (a total of 2.5 years of option period service).

CHANGE OF TRAVEL MODE FROM BUS TO RAIL

The City continues to provide the Ramsey Star Express bus service to date and is committed both financially and contractually with First Transit to continue the service until the first day of Northstar Commuter Rail services at the Ramsey Station. In making this commitment, the City has ensured the availability of continuous public transit services from the park and ride location in the City of Ramsey.

The City of Ramsey was required to stop all bus service once train service is started as a condition of entering the Transit Taxing District. Subsequently, the City will stop all bus service and allow bus passengers to convert to rail passengers. This will ensure that there is no transit redundancy in the CR 10 corridor (running train and bus along the same corridor).

PARK AND RIDE CONTINUOUS SERVICE

The City of Ramsey is currently constructing the park and ride expansion as proposed in the 2005 CMAQ Grant. Upon completion, the City of Ramsey Municipal Parking Facility will now contain a total of 350 park and ride stalls that will be available for use by patrons of both the existing bus services, prior to train service commencing, and to future commuter rail service. The form, layout and function of the park and ride stalls are identical in their usage for either bus or rail park and rider users.

FUTURE RIDERSHIP & EMISSION SAVINGS

Upon completion, the project will still provide the identical number of park and ride stalls once service is converted to rail from bus so the potential SOV trip emissions calculations will remain the same. Additionally, as the train is currently running the exact same route and has ample capacity without adding cars or trips to accommodate the Ramsey Station, the emissions generated today will actually go down as a result of the duplicative bus service being eliminated. (The assumption here is that the train will be required to stop and start one additional time on its AM and PM trip and this action will most likely generate fewer emissions than the complete 27 mile bus trip to downtown Minneapolis.)

Ridership, due to the increase in fare from \$3.00 to approximately \$4.50, will initially most likely have a slight negative impact on daily usage when passengers are converted from bus to rail. However, as fuel prices continue to increase and potential passengers see the value added in consistency in travel time for rail, when compared to bus travel, ridership should regain its normal growth pattern. The City of Ramsey is also adding a significant number of multi-family apartment units directly adjacent to the Ramsey Station. This will also help increase ridership.

SUMMARY

The City of Ramsey has been a good steward of the public CMAQ funds and made bus service improvements and park and ride improvements according to the terms and conditions of their original grant. As this region grows and local bus service becomes LRT and express bus service becomes BRT or commuter rail, this issue of "modal conversion" will become more and more prevalent. I believe the primary intent of the CMAQ grant was to simply build park and ride stalls and transport people to downtown Minneapolis on public transit. Although the mode will change, the goals are still the same: eliminate SOV travel and increase public transit usage. To that end, it is my opinion that the City of Ramsey has accomplish this goal and will continue to do so after the change from bus to rail in 2012.

C: JoAnn Olsen – LSA
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