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**Sponsor:** Public Works

**Meeting Date:** 12/17/2024

**Title:** Reallocation of Riverview Corridor Funds

**File Number:** 2024-682

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**Background and Rationale:**

Transit and transportation initiatives in Ramsey County are funded through two sources: a property tax levy through the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) and a sales and use tax imposed through the Ramsey County Board. At the November 19, 2024, Transportation Funding Board Workshop, commissioners expressed their desire to provide guidance for the reallocation of funding designated to the Riverview Corridor to countywide transportation improvements prior to county staff developing and presenting a formal reallocation plan to both boards in the Spring of 2025.

Ramsey County has been actively planning for the implementation of transit and transportation initiatives for over 25 years leading to the successful implementation of Union Depot, METRO Green Line, Borealis passenger rail and the opening of METRO Gold Line in March 2025. Funding for transit and transportation helps Ramsey County reach its goals in prosperity and opportunity by proactively seeking to improve transit and multimodal transportation options throughout the county and region. Providing fast, frequent and reliable transit connections between areas of concentrated poverty and employment, health care, shopping, recreation and education reducing the time and monetary burden on these communities to undertake daily activities. Increasing the coverage and removing gaps in the multimodal network allows more trips to be made by walking and biking which can improve overall health by making safer and more convenient to be physically active. Additionally, focusing on how walking and biking can connect to transit, commonly known as the first and last mile, can make more destinations accessible further reducing the cost burden of automobile ownership.

The RCRRA was formed by the Ramsey County Board in 1987 and in 2007 it adopted a capital improvement plan to guide expenditures of its property tax levy. The capital improvement plan has guided the development of the Union Depot, Green, Gold, and Purple Lines, the Riverview Corridor, and passenger and freight activities. In 2017, the Ramsey County board enacted a ½ cent sales and use tax for transit and transportation improvements (Resolution B2017-143). This resolution prioritized sales tax funding for the construction and operation of the Green, Gold, and Purple Lines as well as the Riverview Corridor. Additionally, the board authorized the use of funds for the Ramsey County All Abilities Transportation Plan and 2017 to 2021 Transportation Improvement Program if revenue exceeded what was needed to build and operate the transit projects.

In September 2024, Ramsey County ended work on the Riverview Corridor creating an opportunity to reallocate \$730 million in funding identified for its implementation. At the November 19, 2024, county board workshop commissioners discussed options for the possible reallocation of this funding consistent with the goals of the Ramsey County All Abilities Transportation Network which includes a transportation hierarchy of pedestrians, people who bike, people who use transit, drivers/parkers and freight operators. The Board broadly supported the following investment categories as presented.

- Transit.

- Multimodal Improvements.
- Railroad Improvements and Expansions.
- Roadway Improvements.
- Property Acquisition.
- Transformative Infrastructure.

At the conclusion of the workshop, commissioners expressed their support for the reallocation of Riverview Corridor funding and directed staff to bring a resolution before the RCRRA and Ramsey County boards in December directing staff to develop a detailed transit and transportation investment plan based upon the reallocation of the Riverview Corridor funds consistent with the investment categories presented at the workshop and to bring this plan to the boards for discussion and approval in the Spring of 2025.

At the same workshop, there was acknowledgement of significant opportunities to leverage momentum at Union Depot. The board requested a recommendation for the immediate allocation of funding for the implementation of short-term improvements at Union Depot including, but not limited to, wayfinding, signage modernization and capital maintenance.

The board provided further direction to staff that the transportation plan should emphasize the priorities established in the Ramsey County All Abilities Transportation Plan, clarify which funding responsibilities (Ramsey County, RCRRA, or Metropolitan Council) and clarify transportation investments to foster climate resiliency and assist in the initial transition of portions of county fleet away from fossil fuels.

**Recommendation:**

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Direct Public Works staff to develop a refined transportation improvement plan utilizing Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority Property Tax Levy and Ramsey County Local Option Sales Tax funds previously identified for the Riverview Corridor.
2. Direct Public Works staff to develop a detailed transit and transportation investment plan based upon the reallocation of Riverview Corridor funds consistent with the investment categories presented at the November 19, 2024, board workshop for Ramsey County board discussion and approval in the Spring of 2025.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Ortega, seconded by Commissioner Xiong.

Motion passed.

Aye: - 6: Frethem, McGuire, Moran, Ortega, Reinhardt, and Xiong

By:   
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Jason Yang, Interim Chief Clerk - County Board