



PUBLIC INPUT FINAL REPORT

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Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	3
1.1	Public Input Goals and Objectives.....	3
1.2	Marketing and Branded Collateral	3
1.3	Public Relations.....	4
1.4	Digital Engagement: MindMixer	4
2.0	Advisory and Policy Committees	4
2.1	Advisory Committee.....	4
2.1	Policy Committee.....	6
3.0	Phase Specific Activities.....	6
3.1	Phase One: Stakeholder Interviews	6
3.2	Phase Two: Targeted Neighborhood Meetings	7
3.3	Phase Three: Station Area Planning Workshops	8
3.4	Phase Three: Mayor and Commissioner Meetings.....	8
3.5	Phase Three: Rapid Board Meeting	8
3.6	All Phases: Public Open Houses	8
3.7	All Phases: Allendale-Specific Input	9
3.8	All Phases: Agency Meetings	9
3.9	All Phases: Letters of Support	10
4.0	Conclusion.....	10
4.1	Public Input Summary.....	10

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Public Input Goals and Objectives

Public engagement for the Laker Line Advanced Conceptual Engineering study included 15-months of comprehensive outreach throughout the corridor and the Grand Rapids metro-region. The process included an impressive combination of marketing and brand recognition with digital and traditional engagement tools and technologies. From the beginning, the key goals for the public engagement process were to:

- Build on successful community outreach and communications process deployed during previous planning efforts led by The Rapid and others (City of Grand Rapids, City of Walker, etc.)
- Facilitate coordination of community outreach and project communications with the technical planning, environmental, engineering, and design tasks to support a sound, community-based decision-making process
- Provide transparency through the open exchange of ideas and preferred alternatives
- Engage and inform the entire community, including businesses, citizen groups, government, underserved populations, and other stakeholders about rising ridership demand, the need for enhanced service, and the long range vision to serve community need
- Establish community understanding and informed, lasting support for the LPA
- Meet all public involvement requirements to support project progression

The following provides a succinct, yet comprehensive overview of the Laker Line public input process. First is a summary of the techniques that carried through the entire 15-month project, including the marketing, public relations, and the crowd-sourced digital engagement tool, MindMixer. Second includes the Advisory and Policy Committee structure. Finally, phase-specific activities are described, with the associated results and outcomes contained as appendices.

1.2 Marketing and Branded Collateral

Essential to the public input process was establishing the Laker Line brand. The logo was used throughout the process, and was advertised on The Rapid bus fleet both internally and externally. The external signage appeared for the last 12 months, with gradual replacement with other campaigns. Inside the Route 50-51 specific buses, clips of the infographic were posted to help relay back to riders the issues we had heard about current service, as well as explaining opportunities of enhanced transit. Below are highlights from the marketing effort:

- Under US-131 at Pearl Street, there was a decal with web address and logo, measuring 10'x10', facing the only covered station and a campus "hub" near the University.
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) provided stakeholders a quick overview of the project and contact information
- The Laker Line website, Facebook and Twitter pages were managed to provide regular project updates, and also to educate viewers, friends, and followers about local and national trends in transit and bus rapid transit facts and figures. Further, the website served as a repository for all Laker Line study materials.
- All meetings were well advertised using traditional and digital outreach mechanisms. Post cards, printed and email invitations, newspaper advertisements, emails to all students, faculty and staff, social media tools, banners, table tents, flyers, and yard signs.

- A pop-up Education Station transformed a Silver Line BRT platform and wind screen, providing an experiential “route” visitors followed with blurbs about the Silver Line and information about the Laker Line Locally-preferred Alternative.

1.3 Public Relations

Public relations included regular interface with traditional media, including local, regional and national television, radio and print sources. Coverage was secured through editorial board briefings and a leadership letter from The Rapid Board and Grand Valley State University was distributed to elected officials, covering project FAQs and a summary of the engagement process. Other public relations activities included press releases, composing talking points and articles in advance of events, and securing day-of-event coverage, especially at the three open house meetings.

1.4 Digital Engagement: MindMixer

Digital engagement utilized the on-line platform of MindMixer. MindMixer included on-line polling/surveying that was used at various stages of the project to test, prioritize and weigh alternatives. The results were immediate and available for public review and commentary 24-hours per day, 7-days a week throughout the project. The project team created surveys, on-line polls, open ended questions, and photo shares to complement the face-to-face engagement opportunities. The MindMixer Idea Report is included as an appendix. Additionally, MindMixer input has been captured within the three Project Engagement Reports, also located in the Appendix.

2.0 Advisory and Policy Committees

2.1 Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee was comprised of community members and staff from adjacent communities. Members provided an essential communication link to their constituencies and combined their grassroots knowledge of community issues with the technical expertise in roadway and utility design standards to form a well-rounded understanding of the opportunities and constraints along the corridor.

1. Participating in mobile bus meetings, when feasible, helping to amplify project reach by providing a local voice to the process and engagement strategy
2. Identifying social media groups, list-servs and other regular community meetings and forums to disseminate information and elicit input.

The following includes the Advisory Committee meetings and the purpose and outcome. Sign in sheets are included in the appendix.

Date	Purpose	Outcome
September 26, 2013	Existing conditions	Gathered input on stakeholder interviews, existing land use, and other service challenges and assets
October 31, 2013	Experience current Route 50 service	Rode Route 50, discussed opportunities and constraints
December 12, 2013	Development of Alternatives	Refined preferred mode as BRT
January 16, 2014	Goal Selection	Selected goals and reviewed purpose and need evaluation criteria
March 6, 2014	Purpose and Need	Reviewed and commented on purpose and need statement
May 1, 2014	Fatal Flaw Analysis	Reviewed and commented on fatal flaw analysis
June 12, 2014	Determine evaluation criteria, discuss segments, review technical analysis	High bike capacity, concern about center lane through the DT
July 24, 2014	Tier 2 Evaluation Results	Refined alignment, selected configurations, and discussed operations plan
September 11, 2014	Review preliminary LPA	LPA reviewed and gathered concurrence on alignment through downtown
November 7, 2014	Recommend LPA	LPA recommended with minor text amendment relating to phraseology

2.1 Policy Committee

The Policy Committee was comprised of key officials from affected agencies in the study area. The role of the Policy Committee was to provide local policy guidance. The Policy Committee, together with the Advisory Committee recommended the Locally-preferred Alternative to The Rapid Board. A list of meetings, including the meeting purpose and outcome are provided below. Sign-in sheets and the member list are included as an appendix.

Date	Purpose	Outcome
December 12, 2013	Development of Alternatives	Reviewed and determined preferred mode as BRT
May 1, 2014	Review evaluation criteria, discuss segments, review technical analysis	Confirmed route not terminate at Central Station
November 7, 2014	Recommend LPA	LPA recommended with minor text amendment relating to phraseology

3.0 Phase Specific Activities

3.1 Phase One: Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews offered important context-specific insights into their constituent groups, helping shape the outreach and project goals and objectives. The following includes a list of stakeholders who met with the project management team within the first two months of the project. Many of the stakeholders later become members of either the Advisory Committee or Policy Committee.

Name	Affiliation
Andy Johnston	Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
Barbara Holt	Mayor (former), ITP Board Chair (current)
Nola Steketee	West Grand Neighborhood Association
Jim Reminga	Rockford Construction
Mark Rambo	GVSU

Name	Affiliation
Frank Wash	City of Walker Community Development Director (now Assistant City Manager)
Dave Bulkowski	Director, Disability Advocates of Kent County, Kent County Commissioner
Mark Murray	CEO, Meijer
Jerry Alkema	Township Supervisor, Allendale Charter Township

3.2 Phase Two: Targeted Neighborhood Meetings

Targeted neighborhood meetings allowed the project team to attend regularly-scheduled meetings with various community organizations and agencies that had interest in the Laker Line. The project team provided an overview of the project, asked for input about any assets or opportunities for the study, and provided contact information to enable participants to continue voicing their perspectives. The following includes a list of agencies or organizations visited during the targeted neighborhood meetings. Sign-in sheets and a report of outcomes from the targeted neighborhood meetings are included in the appendix.

Agency/Organization
Downtown Grand Rapids Incorporated
Belknap Neighborhood Association
West Fulton Business Association
Allendale DDA
SWAN/John Ball Neighborhood Association
West Grand Neighborhood Association
DAKC-Concerned Citizens
Standale DDA
Heritage Hill Neighborhood Association

3.3 Phase Three: Station Area Planning Workshops

Station area planning workshops provided the neighborhoods of greatest impact an opportunity to identify characteristics along the corridor for locating BRT stations. Stakeholders identified key features along the corridor, such as on-street parking, sidewalk widths, bike accommodations, and adjacent uses to consider when locating stations. Additionally, participants noted desired amenities for proposed stations. A report of outcomes from the station area planning workshops is included in the appendix.

Agency/Organization
West Fulton Business Association
SWAN/John Ball Neighborhood Association
Standale DDA

3.4 Phase Three: Mayor and Commissioner Meetings

The project team met with the Mayor of the City of Grand Rapids and Commissioners representing all wards to discuss the recommended Locally-preferred Alternative. The meetings provided officials an opportunity for one-on-one conversation about the study process and outcomes; helping them to understand the decision-making process. Commissioners shared their support for the project and outcomes, and asked The Rapid to continue exploring and expansion of fixed route services through the westside of Grand Rapids. Meeting materials are included in the appendix.

3.5 Phase Three: Rapid Board Meeting

On December 17, 2014 the Rapid Board unanimously adopted a resolution approving the Laker Line Locally Preferred Alternative. During the meeting, the Rapid Board discussed the merits of the project and the importance of building a transportation system networking both fixed route and existing Bus Rapid Transit routes. Additionally, a comment was made about the need for additional fixed route service to the west side of Grand Rapids. A copy of the resolution and the minutes of the meeting are included in the appendix. Additionally, a copy of the resolution is also included at the conclusion of this report.

3.6 All Phases: Public Open Houses

Public open houses occurred prior to key decision points and were held throughout the corridor, with identical sessions offered throughout a given day. Open House sessions included presentations, thematic, informational input tables, and interactive hands-on activities. Public open house meetings were scheduled during each phase of the study, Phase 1 during the Purpose and Need to develop goals and objectives, Phase 2 to evaluate alternatives, and Phase 3 to present the Locally-preferred Alternative. Results of the public open houses are included in the appendix, and are presented by phase. Phase three includes a link to the video simulation of the Locally-preferred Alternative at three key segments along the route.

Location	Date	Purpose
Walker	November 21, 2013	Gather input to develop purpose and need; define alternatives
GVSU Main Campus		
The Rapid		
Walker	April 17, 2014	Select alignments, discuss routing, determine lane configurations
GVSU Main Campus		
The Rapid		
GVSU Pew Campus	October 14, 2014	Present draft Locally-referred Alternative for feedback

3.7 All Phases: Allendale-Specific Input

Throughout the process participants identified improvements to the current Route 50 and 51 service, as well as routes 36 and 47. The project team also heard from Advisory Committee members, and others, about the importance of service to the Allendale Town Center at 68th and M-45. While current land use and development patterns do not support enhanced service to the area, there may be potential for future fixed route service west of the Grand Valley State University Main Campus. Input specific to the Allendale Town Center is included in the Appendix.

3.8 All Phases: Agency Meetings

Knowing the potential sensitivities associated with altering roadways and lane configurations, the project team met with the Michigan Department of Transportation, City of Grand Rapids and City of Walker various times throughout the project. These meetings provided the project team and local agencies opportunities to collaborate and share detailed information related to the potential traffic impacts. Agencies shared their long-range plans for vehicular, transit and non-motorized transportation, as well as historic and existing data related to trips, crashes, signalization and other related information. Meeting notes from the agency meetings are included in the appendix.

Date	Stakeholder(s)	Purpose
March 26, 2014	City of Grand Rapids	Discussion of initial alignment concepts, roadway configuration options

Date	Stakeholder(s)	Purpose
March 26, 2014	Grand Valley State University	Alternative alignment considerations, service to campus areas
April 16, 2014	MDOT	Alternatives for detailed evaluation, potential roadway configurations and station design considerations
April 17, 2014	City of Walker	Roadway configuration options and station locations through Walker
August 12, 2014	City of Walker, MDOT	Results of alternative evaluation, station locations and design considerations
August 13, 2014	City of Grand Rapids, MDOT	Results of alternative evaluation, station locations and design considerations, second phase extension
August 22, 2014	Grand Valley State University	Results of alternative evaluation, preferred station locations and features for campus areas, coordination on complementary investments and plans.

3.9 All Phases: Letters of Support

Several agencies have provided written support for the Laker Line. Included in the appendix are support letters for reference.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 Public Input Summary

The following provides a summary of public input activities, outreach and participation throughout the three phases of the project. When taken in whole, it is apparent that the study engaged thousands of stakeholders and provided many and various types of opportunities to provide input and offer feedback and support for the Locally-preferred Alternative.

Phase 1: Purpose and Need-Public involvement activities undertaken during Phase I of the project between September 2013 and January 2014 included:

- A series of 13 stakeholder interviews with representatives from public and private institutions, the business and development community, disability advocates, and community interests along the corridor.
- Three public open houses attended by 240 people
- 26,169 emails sent updating students, faculty, and staff about the project
- MindMixer on-line forum with 733 visitors, 3467 page views, 78 ideas and 132 comments
- Website, Facebook, and email distribution list
- News releases and media coverage
- Newsletter, FAQ, and infographic

Phase 2: Alternatives Development-Public involvement activities undertaken during Phase II of the project between February 2014 and June 2014 included:

- Three public open houses attended by 191 people
- 711 postcards sent to property owners along the corridor
- 26,169 emails sent updating students, faculty, and staff about the project
- Six neighborhood meetings attended by 95 people
- MindMixer on-line forum with 2320 visitors, 8897 page views, 201 ideas and 344 comments
- Website, Facebook, and email distribution list
- News releases and media coverage
- Newsletter, FAQ, and infographic

Phase 3: Detailed Definition of Alternatives-Public involvement activities undertaken during Phase III of the project between July 2014 and November 2014 included:

- One public open house attended by 95 people
- 26,169 emails sent updating students, faculty, and staff about the project
- Three station area planning meetings attended by 54 people
- MindMixer on-line forum with 3270 visitors, 11,768 page views, 206 ideas and 397 comments
- Website, Facebook, and email distribution list
- News releases and media coverage
- Infographic
- Pop-up exhibit of locally-preferred alternative during ArtPrize on Silver Line BRT Station seen by thousands of visitors

Specific tallies for social media:

- Twitter: 66 followers; 10 mentions; 133 tweets
- Facebook: 699 friends; combined weekly reach 2970; 107 posts

INTERURBAN TRANSIT PARTNERSHIP BOARD

RESOLUTION NO. 7

Fiscal Year 2015

Moved and supported to adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP) has successfully concluded the Laker Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Advanced Conceptual Engineering (ACE) phase with a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) recommendation by the Laker Line Advisory & Policy Committees, and;

WHEREAS, the ITP has completed extensive public outreach and meetings with various community, business, and institutional stakeholders along the study corridor.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the ITP Board hereby approves the Laker Line BRT LPA, that it be included in the Grand Valley Metro Council's (GVMC) long range transportation plan, and to submit a grant application to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for funding through the Capital Investment Program, Project Development for Small Starts.

CERTIFICATE

The undersigned, duly qualified and acting Secretary of the Interurban Transit Partnership Board, certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted at a legally convened meeting of the Interurban Transit Partnership Board.

Robin Crothers

Robin Crothers, Board Secretary

Dec. 17, 2014

Date