



Business Leadership Public Commitment Citizen Involvement

MIDTOWN COMMUNITY WORKS PARTNERSHIP

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF CHANGES TO THE XCEL ENERGY HIAWATHA PROJECT

February 12, 2009

WHEREAS, Xcel Energy has proposed the “Hiawatha Project,” a project in which Xcel Energy would construct and operate high voltage power lines along the Midtown Greenway and/or a nearby parallel roadway between Hiawatha Avenue and I-35W and construct two new substations;

WHEREAS, the Midtown Community Works Partnership recognizes that businesses in the Lake Street/Midtown Greenway corridor have experienced electricity quality or supply issues that have adversely affected them, and that the electrical infrastructure needs to provide the quality of power required for the commercial corridor now and in the future to accommodate new development;

WHEREAS, the Midtown Greenway is a regional amenity and public space which serves thousands of users daily most months of the year and has served as the catalyst for development along its edges and the Lake Street corridor is a commercial corridor which serves tens of thousands of users daily and has undergone the most vibrant redevelopment of all Minneapolis commercial corridors;

WHEREAS, consistent with the MCW Partnership’s Corridor Framework Plan, the Urban Village, Midtown Exchange, and at least six other new proposed developments approaching \$1 billion in new investment are oriented to the Midtown Greenway;

WHEREAS, the City of Minneapolis adopted the Midtown Greenway Land Use and Development Plan (MGLUDP) on February 23, 2007, which states the following vision for the Midtown Greenway: “The greenway area...will grow as a place where the natural and built environments work together, where mixed-use development patterns of varying intensity are complemented by open space and traditional urban neighborhoods. New private development, and enhancement of the public landscape, will add to its commercial, residential and recreational assets, and strengthen its sustainability and connectedness”;

WHEREAS, the Midtown Community Works Partnership has worked for ten years to support a vision of the Midtown Greenway as a transit corridor, pedestrian and bicycle trail, catalyst for community and economic development, opportunity for new urban open space, and a historic landscape;

WHEREAS, unsightly overhead high-voltage power lines would discourage future development along the Midtown Greenway as currently envisioned by the Midtown Community Works Partnership Corridor Framework Plan and the Midtown Greenway Land Use and Development Plan, negating over ten years of planning and hundreds of millions of dollars in investment by members of the Partnership, the City, the County, the community and others;

WHEREAS, Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority bought the Midtown rail corridor with the intention of using it for a future transit line, the construction of which could be impeded by a high-voltage power line along the Midtown Greenway corridor because of conflicts between power line infrastructure such as pole foundations or retaining walls and new transit line infrastructure for station platforms, retaining walls or substations;

WHEREAS, a 2.8-mile length of the Midtown Greenway is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul Grade Separation Historic District; included among the “character-defining features” of the historic landscape resource is the “Spatial Organization” of the Greenway, including the “long unobstructed views of the bridges and the trench from both levels;” locating a power line of this size on the Corridor will adversely impact this historic resource by introducing a new feature that is visually incompatible in size, scale, and design with these historic features;

WHEREAS, there are 17 bridges on the 29th Street Corridor between 5th Avenue and Hiawatha Avenue that are approximately 100 years old and will need to be replaced or reconstructed in the near future and installing a power line along 29th Street could make this construction work more difficult and expensive;

WHEREAS, the negative aesthetic impact of overhead high-voltage power lines would have a detrimental impact on existing buildings or structures in the Greenway Corridor including Midtown Exchange, which would be located less than 100 feet from the planned power line, the Martin Olav Sabo bicycle bridge over Hiawatha Avenue development, and well-established residential neighborhoods;

WHEREAS, plantings for Arbor Day have occurred along the Midtown Greenway since 2001 and would be disturbed by the Hiawatha project; in particular the Hiawatha substation is proposed at the site of the Hiawatha Greenspace project, a “Gateway” landscape feature begun in 2008 which leads to the new Sabo bicycle/pedestrian bridge;

WHEREAS, Xcel Energy is working on a needs assessment for the Hiawatha Project that would accompany its permit application to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission but the content of this assessment has not yet been completed or made public;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Midtown Community Works Partnership continues to support a vision for the Midtown Greenway as a future transit, bicycling and pedestrian corridor with mixed-use development complemented

by landscaped green spaces, and the Partnership finds that the Xcel Hiawatha Project as proposed is incompatible with this vision;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Midtown Community Works Partnership recognizes the need for businesses along the corridor to have more reliable power as soon as practical and feasible, and supports Xcel's initiative to study alternatives for more reliable power sources within an appropriate timeline so as to minimize the length of time the business and residential community continues to suffer from unreliable power;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that if a further analysis of current and future electricity needs fails to yield a successful alternative, the Midtown Community Works Partnership supports exploring an upgrade to the existing power distribution system;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that should high voltage power lines be determined as the only feasible solution, the Midtown Community Works Partnership opposes placement of these power lines above ground in the Midtown Greenway, and concludes that an option for underground placement would be below 28th Street East; and concludes that the cost of the Hiawatha project should therefore be borne by the entire NSP rate base;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Midtown Community Works Partnership requests further study of both substation locations, recognizing the Midtown Phillips designation of the proposed Midtown Substation site as green space, and hereby requests Xcel to consider an alternative Hiawatha substation site which is an important planned public green space, or if not feasible, to prepare a mitigation plan for the Hiawatha substation site that compensates for the trees and plants installed, volunteer and staff hours, and provides alternate, safe access to the Sabo bridge for bicyclists and pedestrians;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Midtown Community Works Partnership supports further legislative clarification of the process and cost responsibilities for the installation of new substations and high voltage power lines, especially in urbanized communities.

Attest: 
David Orbuch, Chair

Dated: February 12, 2009