

ABOUT COMMUNITY, NOT A COMMUTE

Investing beyond the rail

THE FINAL REPORT

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Photo Credit: Robyn Hendrix



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ABOUT THE CENTRAL CORRIDOR FUNDERS COLLABORATIVE

The Central Corridor Funders Collaborative (2007 - 2016) was an innovative partnership supported by 14 local and national foundations seeking to create a “corridor of opportunity” along Minneapolis and Saint Paul’s Green Line Light Rail Transit (LRT). The Funders Collaborative supplemented the programs and grantmaking of its member foundations by working with community organizations, the business sector, and public agencies to encourage collaboration, planning, and investment beyond the rail.

The Green Line opened in June 2014, and the Funders Collaborative concluded its work two years later in June 2016 as planned. For more information, visit www.funderscollaborative.org.

ABOUT COMMUNITY, NOT A COMMUTE

On January 3, 2006, the newly elected Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman gave his inaugural address, outlining challenges and opportunities he saw facing his city.

The Central Corridor Light Rail Line represented both. The nearly \$1 billion project would link the downtowns of Saint Paul and Minneapolis and add a second light rail line to the regional transit system. Most of its proposed 11-mile route would run through neighborhoods that had weathered decades of disinvestment.

The Mayor talked not about transit and commute times, but how the project would affect life beyond the rail, declaring, “When completed, it will be a corridor of opportunity—a bustling, colorful consortium of new housing, environmentally-friendly transportation, small and large businesses, and rich in diversity.”

At that hopeful moment, there was not yet a plan for how one public official’s words would align with community realities across two cities. A multitude of agencies and stakeholders would be involved one way or another, but it remained unresolved how all would work to achieve long-term outcomes that were beyond the goals of the rail line construction project. And while everyone recognized the value of “alignment” and “collaboration,” they wondered if such niceties would survive, given demanding timelines, scarce resources and competing priorities.

Ten years later, the Green Line is a reality. Light Rail Transit (LRT) ridership is far ahead of forecasts and overall use of the Corridor’s transit system has nearly doubled since rail service became an option. The worst fears—of neighborhoods bypassed, small businesses crushed, gentrification driving out lower-income residents—have not been realized. Fulfilling the highest hopes is still years in the future.

About Community, Not a Commute tells the story of the community’s journey toward realizing that vision of opportunities for all—in particular, the role of public funding joined with private philanthropy in the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative. The Funders Collaborative served as both a cushion and a lubricant in the complex multi-sector effort to ensure the rail project delivered benefits to the communities beyond the rail. This report describes the goals of this ten-year philanthropic partnership; how we invested in community initiatives and the results achieved; what partners learned; and how the ripple effects of the work reach farther than we envisioned.

One sector, one organization or one community alone cannot accomplish changes on such a scale. We all have a role to play. While this is framed as an account of how philanthropy joined a moment of great change, it is truly a story about how so many diverse partners met challenges and seized a new opportunity together.

ONE CHANCE TO GET IT RIGHT

Versions of rail transit between Saint Paul and Minneapolis had been under consideration since the 1970s, nearly 20 years after the streetcar system ceased operation. In the 1980s, light rail was considered the best rapid transit alternative, but rail remained controversial and funding from the state had weak political support.

When federal funding became more available in the 1990s, the Central Corridor, later called the Green Line, had been under consideration for decades but the political and logistical path of least resistance was along state land acquired in the 1960s for an expressway into downtown Minneapolis that was never built. So in 2004, the Hiawatha Line, now called the Blue Line, became the region's first LRT, connecting Minneapolis to the airport and then to the Mall of America along the less-populated rail and auto corridor. The line quickly demonstrated that light rail transit attracted riders.

In the early 2000s, the Metropolitan Council, the region's planning body and transit authority, announced its intent to add a second leg to the light rail system between the downtowns of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

The Central Corridor LRT project presented transit engineers and planners with markedly different terrain. This route would travel down a busy commercial street, bisect neighborhoods, cross multiple jurisdictions and most of all, unearth a painful history.

In the 1960s, Saint Paul's predominantly African-American Rondo neighborhood was deeply scarred by the construction of Interstate Highway 94, which demolished hundreds of homes and scores of businesses. Four decades later, the project's impact still reverberated through the community.

The successive economic and social changes that followed the displacement of Rondo residents and

businesses inspired a fear that the LRT construction would repeat the freeway mistakes: disrupting vulnerable businesses, uprooting long-standing residents, scattering vibrant ethnic communities—and once again delivering its benefits to others. For many Asian and African immigrants who had not experienced the I-94 disruption, the Rondo story fit with their experiences of being marginalized.

On a metropolitan scale, the goals and interests in LRT also varied widely: the Green Line would help arrest sprawl; it was an urban revitalization project, an infrastructure-driven economic development strategy, a vital component of regional competitiveness. For years, public opinion was divided over whether the line should be routed along I-94, aiming for faster travel time, or along University Avenue where there were more opportunities for redevelopment.

Unsurprisingly, average citizens in the Corridor were unsure who was in charge, whether their voices would be heard and whether they would see any benefits. The Federal government was funding half the project; the then-governor was on record as opposing expansion of light rail; the Metropolitan Council was building and operating the line; the cities had responsibility for most things beyond the tracks; and neighborhoods and advocacy organizations lifted up a range of concerns that reflected the great diversity of the Corridor.

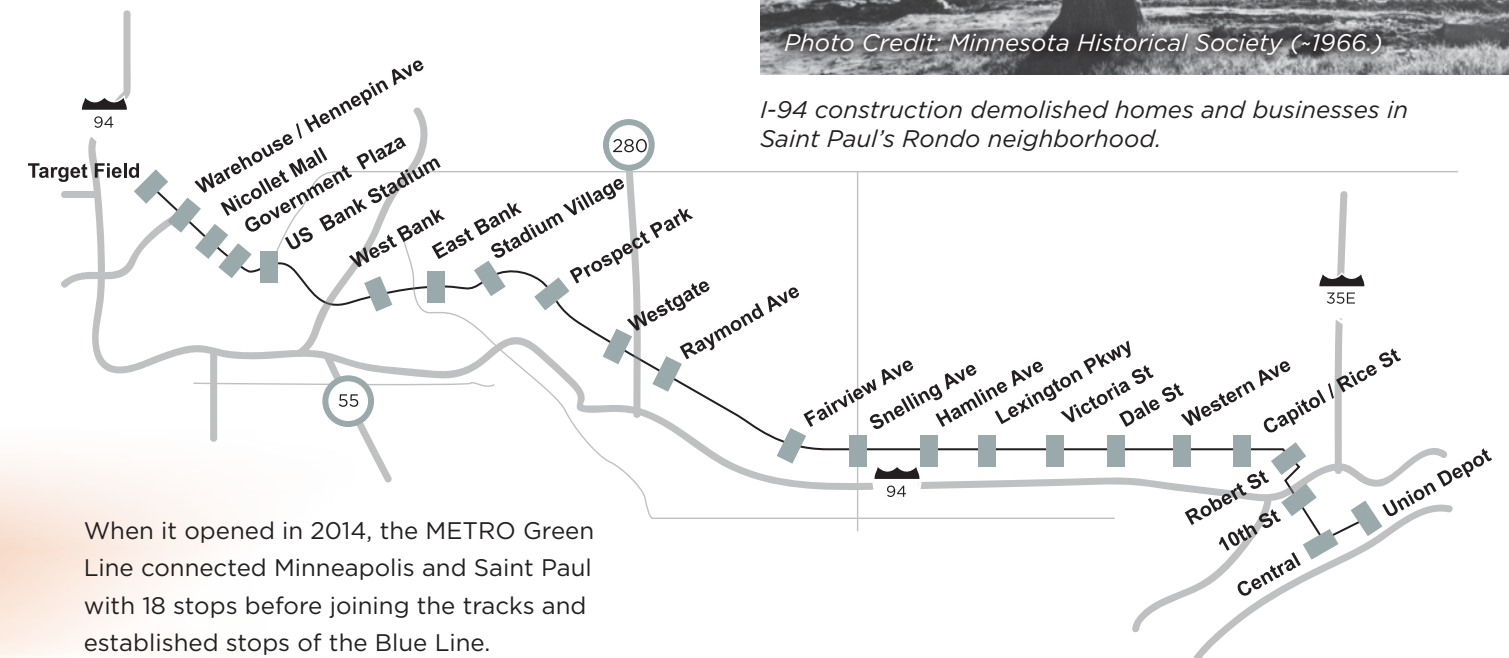
It was this climate Mayor Coleman acknowledged in his 2006 speech when he signaled a different approach:

“We will build this Corridor, but we will respect those who are touched by this effort. The developers, the big business owners, the small merchants, leaders from the faith community, educators, and people who simply love their neighborhood will be included. They will be listened to and heard, with patience and respect.”

The Green Line had an enthusiastic Minneapolis champion in then-Mayor R.T. Rybak, who saw the line as a critical piece of the region's transportation infrastructure. He lobbied with Mayor Coleman for state funding for the project and rallied support for connecting the Twin Cities. Despite this united front and sense of shared destiny, Minneapolis had fewer Green Line stations and new miles of track while Saint Paul had the most to gain — as well as lose — from the project.

The community vision had to encompass another powerful partner with a compelling set of concerns—the Metropolitan Council, designer/builder of the line and operator of the transit system. It worked under a mandate to complete the Green Line on budget and on time and faced the unpopular task of managing a federal funding process driven by a formula that rewarded cost-savings and fast travel times from one end of the line to another.

All these players wanted a more sensitive process that produced better outcomes for all. But how would we approach things differently—and how would we get it right?



When it opened in 2014, the METRO Green Line connected Minneapolis and Saint Paul with 18 stops before joining the tracks and established stops of the Blue Line.



TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE IS NEVER BUILT IN ISOLATION. CONSIDER HISTORY, CULTURE AND COMMUNITY FABRIC BEYOND THE RAIL.

Inherent in the construction project were very real fears that the concerns of nonprofit and neighborhood organizations and property and business owners had the potential to delay and derail the project.

While a deep sense of this history was not universal at the outset, the partners understood we had only one chance to “get it right this time.” By raising up the goals of community benefit and equitable development, the Green Line project could redeem a wrong and avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.



I-94 construction demolished homes and businesses in Saint Paul's Rondo neighborhood.



WHY A COLLABORATIVE? ALIGNED FUNDERS AND ALIGNED COMMUNITIES

With support from four local funders, the City of Saint Paul commenced work on the Central Corridor Development Strategy (CCDS) in mid-2006. Two task forces, totaling nearly 40 members, met over a period of nine months to develop the vision, strategies, initiatives and other recommendations to guide Corridor growth over the next 25-30 years. But the high-level planning consensus failed to resolve some major differences in what various community stakeholders hoped would be outcomes of the project:

- An opportunity to physically remodel the Corridor (green spaces, market-rate housing, etc.)
- A chance to deliver social justice (living-wage jobs, affordable housing, etc.)
- A way to remedy some of the collateral ill effects of the freeway project decades before.

The city governments and the Metropolitan Council were not widely trusted to represent the voices of residents and business owners. The nonprofit sector, with nearly 100 organizations doing work along the

Central Corridor, was divided according to geography and mission. Private investment would play a role in the envisioned city-building and place-making, but did not have a clear point of involvement in the planning for it. And such a comprehensive effort was beyond the scope and resources of any single sector.

To navigate this divide, the City of Saint Paul encouraged philanthropy to strengthen its role. After all, foundations were already investing in the Corridor. By acting together, perhaps they could more nimbly address neighborhood concerns; perhaps their financial leverage could convince partners to work together to make the Corridor a success. The national Center for Transit Oriented Development (CTOD) also encouraged foundations to embrace this moment. The strategy seemed to fit trends among funders focused on building sustainable cities with transit as a vehicle for opportunity.

The idea that several foundations might pool their resources in hopes of filling the gaps and repairing the mistrust began with a series of conversations in 2006 among funders.

A funders' collaborative could act as a calming and mediating force between sometimes suspicious sides: community-based groups and advocates on one hand and City Hall and the Metropolitan Council on the other. The funders could help government appreciate community views. A collaborative focused on shared, corridor-wide solutions was also a reminder to the nonprofit players that there was a financial reward for working together.

Funders began meeting regularly, inviting government officials to brief them, mapping relationships among nonprofits active in the Corridor and searching for gaps. They gathered information from similar projects in Baltimore, Denver, Seattle and the San Francisco Bay Area.

In December 2007, after two years of investigating and learning, nine foundations joined forces to formally launch the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative. Five other members later joined the effort.

Together the Funders committed to invest substantial resources over a ten-year period to coordinate initiatives for ensuring the benefits of the Green Line would be widely shared by all, especially disadvantaged communities.

As Gretchen Nicholls of Twin Cities LISC and The Big Picture Project describes, the Funders Collaborative was to be more than a large group protecting and disbursing a shared pot of money:

“A collaborative carried much more weight than if each foundation were investing independently. As the funders achieved alignment, so did the community partners. We knew that the way to get things done would require a bigger tent. And organizations were not rewarded for wanting to go it alone. The Funders Collaborative led by example, and that set the stage for great things to happen in the community.”



PHILANTHROPY PLUS COMMUNITY VOICES CREATED A NEW POWER DYNAMIC.

Large infrastructure projects can create an inherent power imbalance. Often, the people with the fewest resources face greater impacts and have less influence. A collaborative leadership model helps bridge imbalances, conflicting interests and turf issues. And it builds relationships among parties creating greater influence.



CENTRAL CORRIDOR FUNDERS COLLABORATIVE MEMBERSHIP

The Central Corridor Funders Collaborative was a funder initiative from 2007 - June 2016. Members included: The Annie E. Casey Foundation · The Bush Foundation · F.R. Bigelow Foundation · Ford Foundation · Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation · John S. and James L. Knight Foundation · Living Cities, Inc. · McKnight Foundation · The Minneapolis Foundation · Northwest Area Foundation · Otto Bremer Foundation · The Saint Paul Foundation · Surdna Foundation · Travelers Foundation

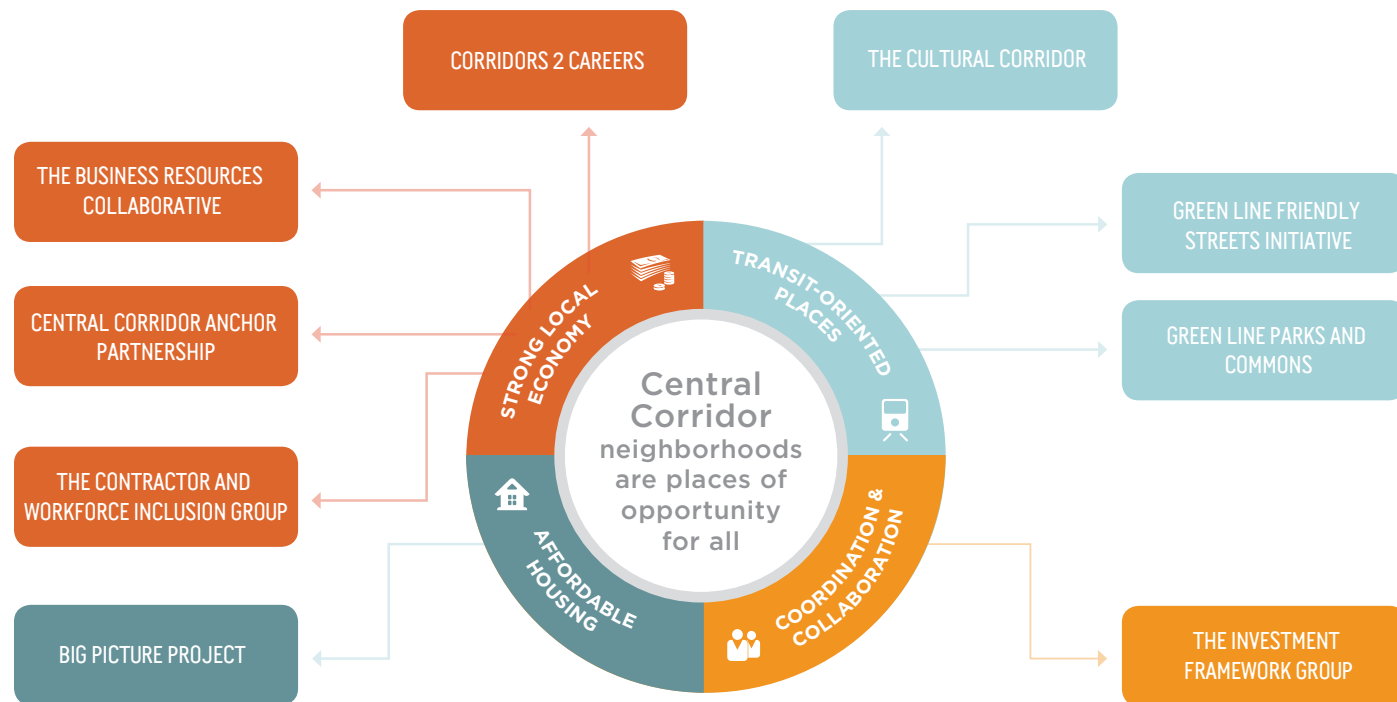
WORKING TOGETHER: THE NUTS AND BOLTS

The Funders Collaborative selected a lean, flexible structure led by a director and driven by a series of working groups chaired by community leaders with expertise and a strong stake in the outcomes.

In addition to the Funders Collaborative itself, nine working groups were organized over the first five years to advance four goals:

- Promote effective coordination and collaboration
- Build a strong local economy
- Ensure access to affordable housing
- Create vibrant transit-oriented places.

The working groups followed a somewhat standard process to help ensure that participants were representative, well informed, focused on implementing their strategies and accountable for results. The Funders Collaborative financially supported each step of the process, which included: convening, learning, planning, implementing, and measuring. The grant-making process was designed to be nimble with funding decisions made on a rolling basis, nearly every month.



As of spring 2016, four of the nine working groups have wrapped up with five continuing to work together in some fashion for at least another year.



- **THE BIG PICTURE PROJECT** involves a wide range of participants to set affordable housing goals and implementation strategies for the Corridor.
- **THE BUSINESS RESOURCES COLLABORATIVE** delivered coordinated information and services to support area businesses and property owners before, during, and after LRT construction.
- **THE CONTRACTOR AND WORKFORCE INCLUSION GROUP** advanced strategies to build capacity within the region's woman - and minority-owned businesses and to encourage contractor compliance with hiring and purchasing goals.
- **CORRIDORS 2 CAREERS** encouraged on-the-ground outreach to connect unemployed Central Corridor residents to training services while bettering the connections between employers, workforce providers, and residents.
- **CENTRAL CORRIDOR ANCHOR PARTNERSHIP** educational and medical institutions focus on the local community impact of its 13 members' combined investments in personnel, place-making and procurement.
- **THE CULTURAL CORRIDOR** group focuses on



SHARED LEARNING HELPS BRIDGE DIFFERENCES

Coming to communities to learn from them helped upend the old hierarchy of funder and funded. It valued other perspectives as a source of knowledge rather than a source of conflict, and established the point that building beyond the rail would require new learning from everyone involved.

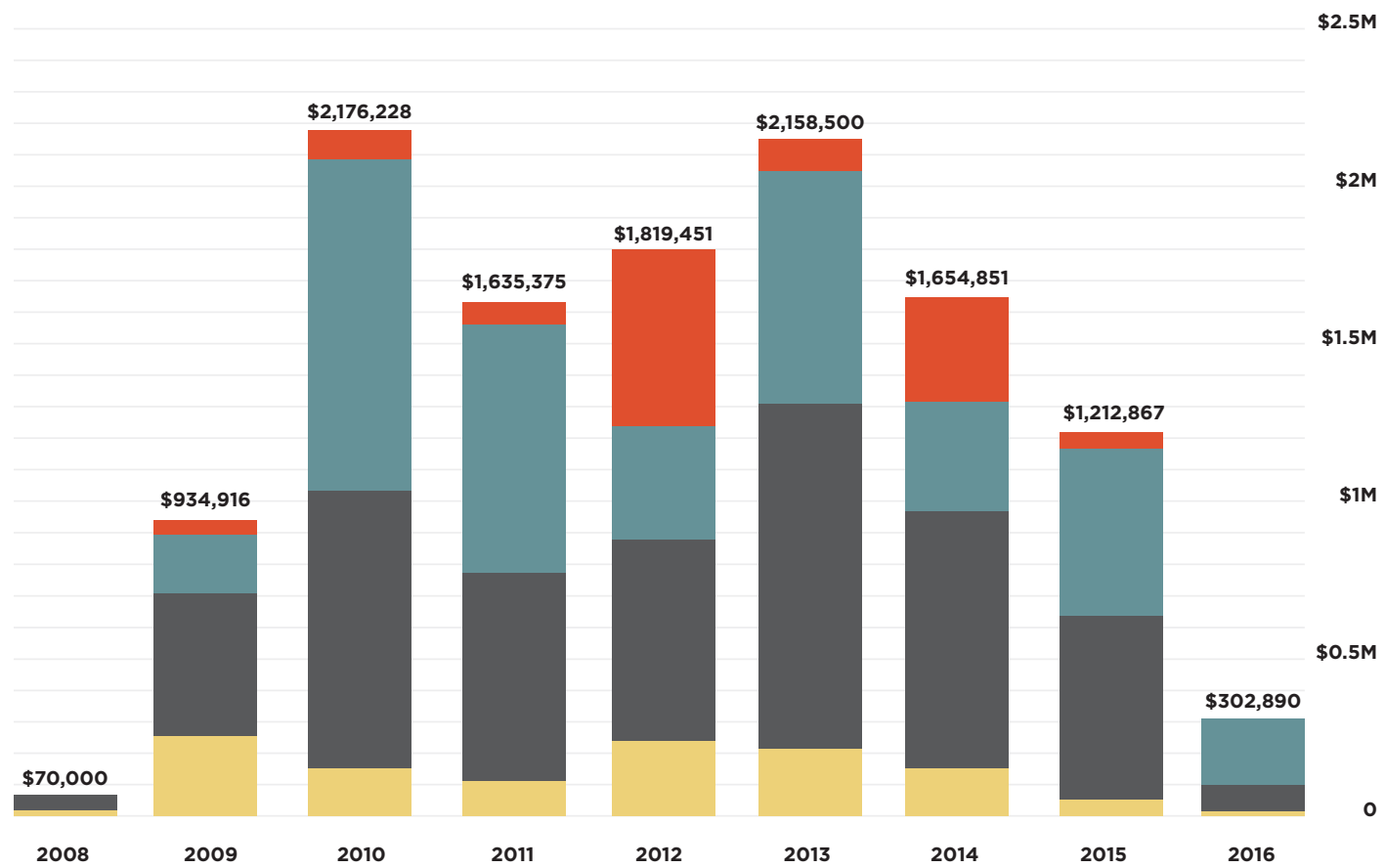
Learning as the first step in the process of working together was carried out through explicit learning activities, joint meetings and the commissioning of cross-sector studies or task teams. In some cases, the learning led to the formation of working groups or new initiatives. In almost all cases, it deepened relationships and refreshed ongoing work with best practices and innovative ideas.

maximizing the unique arts and cultural assets along the Green Line to foster economic growth, increase the vitality of station areas and attract additional investment.

- **GREEN LINE FRIENDLY STREETS INITIATIVE** works to create more vibrant, livable neighborhoods and healthier communities through transforming streets into places that are friendlier to all.
- **GREEN LINE PARKS AND COMMONS** helps integrate public and private investment in green space and common public gathering space, based on existing community plans.
- **THE INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK GROUP** developed a coordinated, strategic view of public investment and development-related policies designed to better attract private investment.

The following pages describe some of the main outcomes achieved through 2015 in each of the four goal areas.

CATALYST FUND GRANTS BY YEAR



TOTAL GRANTS: 162
TOTAL DOLLARS: \$11,965,078

- **Affordable Housing**
 12 grants
 \$1,359,650
- **Strong Local Economy**
 43 grants
 \$4,032,033
- **Vibrant, Transit Oriented Places**
 71 grants
 \$5,280,625
- **Coordination & Collaboration**
 36 grants
 \$1,292,770



POOLED PHILANTHROPY LEVERAGES MORE THAN DOLLARS

Flexible and substantial capital allowed the Funders to respond quickly to opportunities. Collaborating on funding also provided greater ability to leverage the relationships and expertise of other members.



OUTCOMES: STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY

Beyond the jobs created by building new LRT, good transit connections can stimulate new development, make workplaces more accessible to workers, increase foot traffic and customers for area businesses, and connect everyone to opportunities via the larger regional transit network.

While the economic development story of the Green Line will continue to unfold in the coming years, the Funders Collaborative sought to:

- Minimize the involuntary relocation or disruption of existing businesses
- Reduce construction disruption
- Strengthen the identities, appeal and offerings of local business districts
- Encourage development that creates new job and workforce opportunities
- Encourage training that prepares people for the expanded job opportunities available via transit.

ENSURING SMALL BUSINESS VITALITY

One of the most urgent and visible issues on the Corridor was how the hundreds of small businesses along the line would weather months of construction. Sidewalks and streets would be torn up and rebuilt, compromising customer parking and access, and car traffic would slow to a trickle for as long as two years.

Fear and agitation were heightened by the Federal Transit Administration and Metropolitan Council's official predictions that construction would have little effect on business activity along University Avenue. Those hard-to-believe assumptions enraged business owners and created an increasingly tense environment. But some community leaders faced the inevitable and adopted a strategy of preparing to survive the approaching disruption.

The Business Resources Collaborative (BRC) became the first official working group to form under Funders Collaborative sponsorship. Its membership included

community development organizations and business groups, along with representatives of the cities and the Metropolitan Council's LRT office. A joint strategy emerged, aimed at construction mitigation, business development and long-term economic growth for the Corridor, including an outreach campaign, business planning assistance, forgivable loans, and marketing.

While there was nothing easy about this period, when major construction was complete in 2012 and stations were coming out of the ground, the mood on the Corridor changed. Some businesses envisioned new opportunities and took advantage of the construction to remodel. In the Little Mekong district, more than \$1.5 million was invested in façade and parking improvements, installation of energy efficient equipment and lighting, and a complete remodel of three businesses—Bangkok Thai Deli, Ha Tien Grocery and May's building.

“Success to me wasn't so much about how many businesses went away and how many opened. For us, there were businesses that were barely hanging on during construction that are still around. Without mitigation dollars, they would have gone away. That was a fine line for many businesses. And now, many of those businesses are doing really well. For us, it was a success.”

— Va-Megn Thoj

Asian Economic Development Association

Since the Green Line's opening, many businesses are looking at how to capitalize on the new riders traveling through the Central Corridor.

“Tenants and property owners are starting to access opportunities in new ways to make improvements. When businesses put in hundreds of thousands of dollars of investments on their own, it is more than just a visual change—they are excited. It's indicative of a change on the Avenue in terms of better communication, partnership and optimism.”

— Isabel Chanslor

Neighborhood Development Center (NDC)

SMALL BUSINESSES EMERGED FROM CONSTRUCTION READY TO BENEFIT FROM THE GREEN LINE

- **450 BUSINESSES MADE PREPARATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS** prior to and during construction, receiving \$3,135,430 in loans, \$260,000 in façade grants, thousands of hours of training and technical assistance.
- **128 STREET-LEVEL BUSINESSES OPENED** fronting the Green Line during the four-year construction period, 13 more than closed or relocated. Of businesses receiving the most intensive assistance, only 1% of businesses closed during the construction period.
- **212 BUSINESSES WERE AIDED** by \$3.9 million in Ready for Rail forgivable loans.
- **IN 2015-2016, NINE BUSINESSES IN A ONE MILE AREA ALONG THE GREEN LINE ARE WORKING WITH NDC AND HISTORIC SAINT PAUL TO MAKE FACADE IMPROVEMENTS.** A \$160,000 matching grant program has leveraged additional investments of \$1,197,000 in these properties.

ENSURING THE LINE PRODUCED JOBS, BUSINESS AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Using the LRT construction to help lift disadvantaged people into the middle class was a top priority. With more than 5,500 construction, engineering and other workers taking part on the Green Line, it was imperative that the project meet its goals for employing women (6% of hours) and minorities (18% of hours) and contracting with disadvantaged businesses (15% of total contract value.).



PREPARE, SURVIVE, THRIVE IS A POWERFUL MODEL

A focus on preparing small businesses for construction, strengthening fundamentals, and providing resources during construction resulted in many businesses emerging ready to take advantage of LRT. The culturally competent delivery of technical and marketing assistance, capital improvement support and synergy with district branding complemented direct financial assistance to mitigate short-term losses. This model is being exported to other cities including Detroit, Syracuse, and Albuquerque.

Another early working group, the Joint Committee on Equal Opportunity, sought to maximize the participation of people of color and contracting firms owned by women or minorities. It did this in three ways.

First, the Metropolitan Council, labor unions, trade schools, construction companies, nonprofits, and government agencies hosted dozens of information sessions to recruit minority and women workers for the Green Line project.

Second, a website, LRT Works (www.lrtworks.org), was launched to match workers with jobs, companies and unions. By the fall of 2012, hundreds of workers had subscribed.

Third, a monthly oversight meeting was initiated to monitor progress on minority hiring and contracting. These meetings promoted collegiality among contractors, government officials and advocacy groups.



GREEN LINE CONSTRUCTION EXCEEDED ITS HIRING GOALS

- Women (7% of hours compared to goal of 6%)
- Minorities (19% of hours compared to goal of 15%)
- Share of contracts to disadvantaged businesses (DBEs) (18% of contract dollars compared to goal of 15%)

The supports developed for the Green Line project have influenced change longer term. According to Louis J. King, President and CEO of Summit Academy OIC:

“Construction Hiring Connection, which evolved from LRTWorks.org, helps the owners/ developers of large infrastructure projects forecast how many workers, in what trade, will be needed at a given point in a project. Then it directs them to qualified workers of color and women so they can meet state utilization goals. Using this for the construction of U.S. Bank Stadium has resulted in exceeding the state’s equitable employment goals for minorities (37% vs. 32%) and women (9% vs. 6%).”

Not everything went smoothly. Metropolitan Economic Development Association (MEDA), which worked with disadvantaged businesses contracting on the project, found that prime contractors were often slow in making payments to their subs, creating major cash flow challenges. In light of this experience, MEDA took a proactive approach with the next big project, the US Bank Stadium.

Jan Jordet of MEDA explains, *“We established a working capital fund for minority contractors on the stadium. But as a result of the Equity Plan designed by Wanda Kirkpatrick of the Metropolitan Council, only nine firms borrowed from the fund. The balance was supported by the prime contractors with quick pay programs. This was a systemic change for a major public project, which came directly from experience with the plan for the Green Line.”*

RESIDENTS ARE BEGINNING TO CONNECT TO JOBS, CAREERS AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

The Funders Collaborative sought to connect residents to training for the expanded job opportunities available via transit. Corridors to Careers, used Career Connectors – individuals with credibility in neighborhoods who had struggled with unemployment themselves – to work directly with unemployed residents to share available employment and training resources.

In the first phase, Ramsey County and the District Councils Collaborative connected 679 residents to workforce resources; with 65 reporting employment and 47 attending occupational training or classes. In a second phase, Goodwill-EasterSeals continued the

connector model, connected 18 individuals to training opportunities and made 71 new job placements that improved monthly incomes by an average of 130%.

EDS & MEDS ALONG THE CORRIDOR ARE MORE ENGAGED IN LOCAL HIRING AND PROCUREMENT

With more than a dozen hospitals, colleges, and universities (Eds & Meds) located near or along the Green Line, it made sense for Minneapolis and Saint Paul to adopt an approach successful in other cities, where “anchor institution” employers found new ways to hire local residents and procure goods and services locally.

Members in the Central Corridor Anchor Partnership are spending more than \$300 million annually with Corridor vendors. Through their partnership, they’ve jointly purchased an additional \$4 million in products and services from Corridor-based businesses and are looking for opportunities to shift additional out-of-state purchases, which would realize \$16.4 million in added revenue to local businesses.

Since 2013, the Anchor Partnership-sponsored Central Corridor College (C3) Fellows Program has enrolled 411 community college students preparing for a career in health care and placed 132 of these students in part-time positions at hospitals and care facilities along the Green Line. C3 Fellows were 72% low-income; 68% students of color; and 34% first-generation college students and are earning an average of \$14.44 per hour while completing their degree.

THE CENTRAL CORRIDOR IS ATTRACTING SUBSTANTIAL DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT

Since 2009, the Funders Collaborative has invested heavily in planning and design activities, helping cities and neighborhoods define the kind of growth they hoped for in their communities. These plans have set the stage for significant development along the Corridor.

- \$4.2 billion in development projects have come into the Corridor since 2009



TENSIONS BETWEEN HELPING PEOPLE NOW AND CHANGING SYSTEMS IN THE FUTURE ARE SIGNIFICANT

Corridors 2 Careers, more than any other project, faced the challenge of working directly with a high-need population, while also trying to change a workforce system that wasn’t meeting these needs.

The project acknowledged the criticism that its primary focus was not on getting unemployed residents jobs, but the findings were used to engage the Department of Employment and Economic Development, the state agency in charge of workforce development, in making changes.

As program consultant Ellen Watters says, *“The Connectors helped us push the workforce development system in ways that hadn’t been done before. Their insights, based on their own experiences brought real-world truth to a system that historically has been pretty isolated. Their innovation of using ‘navigators’ to meet people where they are—at the bus stop, in the shelter, at the jail—has impacted how DEED and other nonprofits will deliver workforce services.”*

- 19 private development projects received design reviews by the Central Corridor Design Center to help them reflect community plans.

In 2015, Minneapolis and Saint Paul City Councils officially designated 370 acres between Highway 280 and the University of Minnesota as the region’s first “Innovation District.” This district is planned as a high-density, resource-efficient neighborhood, connected to expanded laboratories and incubators at the University, which according to recent analysis, could support anywhere from 5,000 to 7,000 jobs within walking distance of the Green Line.

OUTCOMES: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable housing offers a vital step toward economic well-being and wealth creation for families with low and modest incomes. Both the supply and location of affordable housing are important.

Finding the right balance between attracting new development and resisting displacement of existing residents is essential, and a thorough understanding of the housing markets along the Central Corridor seemed a logical first step for the Funders Collaborative. But in 2008, just as the Collaborative was forming, the housing market crashed and financing all but shut down. Suddenly market-rate housing development was in trouble and access to home ownership was also thrown into doubt.

The Big Picture Project working group set out at this confusing time to assess the Corridor's housing prospects and to choose the right course of action. Two-dozen partners from the public, private and civic sectors included planners, bankers, developers, community advocates and an array of housing experts.

Housing advocates feared an affordability shortfall, given prior projections that most new units in the Corridor would be market rate. To assure a supply of affordable units, the advocates pressed the working group to establish numerical goals.

To that end, the Big Picture Project set a baseline goal of 2,540 affordable units along the Corridor by 2020, with a stretch goal of reaching 4,500. The goals include new construction and the preservation of existing affordable units.

To assure progress, the working group emphasized three strategies: Investing in the production and preservation of long-term affordable housing; stabilizing neighborhoods in ways that help low-income people stay in their homes and improving the overall quality of life along the Corridor.

THE CORRIDOR SUPPLY OF HOUSING IS GROWING WHILE ADDING AND PRESERVING AFFORDABILITY

- 3,573 units of affordable housing have been preserved or created since 2011 with the 2020 stretch goal of 4,500 units in reach
- 968 households have received help to stay in their homes or stabilize neighborhoods
- As of 2016, for every 5 units of market rate housing constructed along the Corridor, 1 unit of affordable housing is built.

HOUSING PARTNERS ON THE CORRIDOR PILOTED INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

The Frogtown Rondo Home Fund in partnership with the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood provided rental assistance to homeless and highly mobile families with children in area schools. In 2014, 49 participating families reported increases in housing stability, income, employment, and children's education, food and nutrition outcomes. This early success led to additional state funding in 2015 to increase the number of participating families and extend the assistance period.

To help finance 2700 University, a mixed-use, mixed-income project that will provide affordable units in a hot market, LISC created a new "mezzanine loan" product that can be a tool for future large projects seeking to mix market rate and affordable units.

The Twin Cities Community Land Bank helped numerous single and multi-family developers acquire and hold sites along the Green Line as their project financing was being arranged.

“The Land Bank's first strategic large-site acquisition, Western U Plaza, was a turning point for our role in community development and involved massive collaboration among intermediaries and funders. But most significant was the public/private partnership of Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation and the Sand Companies to fulfill the community vision of preserving the Old Home Creamery art deco façade, while creating a mixed-use development that includes 54 units of affordable housing.”

—Sandra Oakes

Twin Cities Community Land Bank



Construction of Western U Plaza in 2015.

RESIDENTIAL DENSITY IS INCREASING ALONG WITH STRONG TRANSIT RIDERSHIP

- Overall housing in the Corridor has seen a net gain of 4,757 units since 2011
- Residential density on the Corridor has increased from 8.9 to 9.7 units per acre since 2011
- Aided by increased development, nearly 12.4 million rides were taken on the Green Line during its first full year of operation. Average weekday ridership was 37,400 - just under the 2030 forecast of 41,000 rides. Ridership in the Central Corridor, including the Green Line and bus routes 16 and 94, increased by about 30 percent from 2014 to 2015 and has nearly doubled since 2013, when service was provided by buses alone.



EARLY BIRD GETS THE WORM

Nonprofit affordable housing developers saw the opportunity of transit-oriented development, took the risk and responded early, claiming sites and initiating mixed-use projects in transit-friendly locations. Their early start won local and regional government support to create a hedge against future gentrification.

OUTCOMES: VIBRANT PLACES

Light rail transit is not just about moving trains; it's about how the trains connect people to places and the opportunities they offer. The Funders Collaborative encouraged transit-oriented places with a mix of important ingredients:

- Destinations we need or want to visit—shopping, employment centers, parks, services and schools
- Easy connections with other modes of travel, whether via bus, bicycle or sidewalk
- Unique destinations—commercial districts, streets, parks and public squares—that celebrate heritage, culture, and diversity, and help to retain current residents and draw new residents, visitors, and investment.

This place-making and cultural work helps ensure that existing businesses and residents can afford to stay and want to stay because their neighborhoods remain authentic. In turn, these places attract new businesses, residents and investment that value authenticity.

This crossover appeal of places supports the economic and housing goals, as well as encouraging transit ridership to these lively destinations.

DISTINCTIVE CULTURES ARE MORE VISIBLE AS PROUD NEIGHBORHOOD AND CORRIDOR ASSETS, BUSINESS NODES

The Central Corridor as Cultural Corridor working group focused on maximizing the unique arts and cultural destinations along the Green Line, marketing them as districts and leveraging these assets to foster economic growth, increase the vitality of station areas as unique destinations and attract additional investment. Examples of these distinctive nodes include:



- **LITTLE MEKONG NIGHT MARKET**, modeled after the night markets of Asia, has attracted thousands to the Western Avenue Station area and raised the visibility of the neighboring establishments. By summer 2016, the area will be home to a new plaza to welcome visitors and residents.



Photo Credit: Pat O'Loughlin

- **MINNEAPOLIS' WEST BANK** has embarked on wayfinding strategies to better connect Green (and Blue) Line riders to the many food, cultural, and shopping destinations in the neighborhood.
- **THE CREATIVE ENTERPRISE ZONE**, at Raymond Avenue Station, is home to more than 900 businesses, with new breweries, marketing firms, printmakers, and other office users moving into the Zone.

- **LITTLE AFRICA** at Snelling station is working with area businesses to improve facades and incorporate art while showcasing the diversity of Saint Paul's African communities.

“One of the most meaningful things that's come out of the Midway Murals and Little Africa project is hearing from people of color and African immigrants how special it is to see people who look like them represented in the murals we did. Knowing that we set out to increase pride and visibility of these communities, that alone feels like a positive outcome. I also developed incredibly strong relationships with business owners and we've brought people into these immigrant-owned businesses who never would've gone there previously.”

—Jonathan Oppenheimer
Midway Murals project

Building on the artistic assets of the Green Line, the Funders Collaborative also made investments in Bedlam Lowertown, the Community Plaza at the Cedar Cultural Center, an expansion of TU Dance Center and the redevelopment of the historic Victoria Theater.

NEW GREEN AND OPEN SPACE BLOOMS ALONG THE CORRIDOR

As an urban area builds up, it can reduce the amount of open space. Conversely, green spaces where people can congregate and play make an area more attractive for development. The Green Line Parks and Commons group convened businesses, nonprofits, developers, governmental representatives and others to create a shared understanding of how to integrate green space and public gathering space in the Corridor, based on existing community plans.

Its “Greening the Green Line” report identified opportunities for incentivizing parks and commons by encouraging private developers to incorporate green spaces and plazas.

Some of the successes blooming on the Corridor include:

- **FROGTOWN PARK AND FARM**, a vision spearheaded by nearby residents, brings 13 acres of open space and will provide healthy foods in sustainable ways to a previously park-poor neighborhood.



Photo Credit: Hunt + Capture

- **THE UNIVERSITY AVENUE INNOVATION DISTRICT**, in Minneapolis' Prospect Park will incorporate green spaces as part of stormwater treatment and street design, as well as in a signature park.
- **GRIGGS PARK**, long hoped for by students at the nearby Gordon Parks High School and residents of the 500+ unit Skyline Tower, is closer to reality since the City of Saint Paul and Trust for Public Land have acquired the land.

“The new park represents equitable development because it will increase the amount of parkland in an area that has been recognized as park-deficient. This diverse community is excited as neighbors have been patiently waiting for a park for many years.”

—Dai Thao
Saint Paul City Councilmember - Ward One

In 2015, the Funders Collaborative supported the City of Saint Paul to make planning expertise available to private property owners and community advocates on how best integrate privately owned public spaces (POPS) into transit oriented development (TOD) projects.



Photo Credit: Ted Hall Photography

INTRODUCING NEIGHBORHOODS TO TRANSPORTATION CHOICES

While the Green Line itself is clearly a new transportation choice, we also envisioned easier ways for residents to access the Green Line by walking and biking. We invested in efforts such as:

- **THE “FROGTOWN CREW”** which empowered youth to engage residents around the Charles Avenue Bikeway and the neighborhood’s transportation plan.
- **THE FRIENDLY STREETS INITIATIVE** which has used innovative engagement techniques to get hundreds of people’s input to shape new bike routes and street and bridge designs.
- **FROGTOWN AND SUMMIT UNIVERSITY BIKE/WALK CLUBS** that hosted 13 bike rides and 10 walks with more than 300 participating and overcoming their barriers to biking and walking.
- **THE CYCLES FOR CHANGE BIKE CENTER** located on University Avenue is home to the organization’s bike library, youth education classes, Build-a-Bike and Earn-a-Bike programs and open shop.
- **NICE RIDE** kiosks and bikes near Green Line stations.



PLACE-MAKING IS NOT A FRILL

Place-making and community-based art provide the opportunity to refashion the community around stations. It is a vital part of the recipe for attracting and retaining residences and businesses near transit stations. The focus on place provides many ways to unite and bring in new interests and energy.

COLLABORATION REQUIRES CARE AND FEEDING

These participant comments reflect how collaboration takes time, communication and follow-through, which may require internal cultural shifts within the partner organizations:

“Being explicit about power sharing, accountability and authority up front helps allay fears and distrust, which can splinter the group when tough issues come up.”

“Collaboration works best when there is dedicated project management staff to help drive the project and collect and report data. This requires a funding source. Conflicts are more easily discussed among partners when dedicated project staff can serve in a moderating role.”

“The more we do, the more there is to do. Our individual workloads, when they are connected and inter-dependent with others, can result in a generalized/collective ramping up of work. There is a threshold beyond which workloads are too high and begin to yield diminishing returns.”

OUTCOMES: COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

Undergirding all of the work of the Funders Collaborative was the belief that our three main goals (a strong local economy, affordable housing, and vibrant transit-oriented places) could only be realized with effective collaboration—across sectors, among neighbors and throughout the Corridor. Promoting coordination and collaboration among so many varied interests was a challenge, and its importance became evident very early in the process.

THE GOALS OF THE FUNDERS COLLABORATIVE WERE TO:

- Enhance recognition of shared goals and strategic opportunities
- Keep resident and stakeholder groups informed, engaged and working together
- Reduce potential conflicts
- Increase the impact of foundation and stakeholder resources
- Advance progress toward shared goals.

STOPS FOR US: AN EARLY LESSON ON HOW TRAINS NEEDED TO CONNECT TO PEOPLE AND PLACES

The Twin Cities’ first light rail line, the Blue Line, had stations spaced about a mile apart along Hiawatha Avenue as it ran past medium-density neighborhoods in Minneapolis. This methodology was initially applied to the stretch of the Green Line through Saint Paul from Rice Street to the Minneapolis border.

While this station spacing satisfied the Cost Effectiveness Index (CEI), a federal formula designed to help achieve the highest ridership over the shortest running time, it looked like a repeat of I-94 in Rondo to residents of the transit-dependent neighborhoods being bypassed.

The Stops for Us coalition advocated for spacing stations at half-mile intervals with stops at Western, Victoria and Hamline. Their point: LRT isn’t just about offering a speedy transportation option for middle-class commuters; it’s a lifeline to struggling communities that rely on transit to meet basic daily needs. Furthermore, wherever there were stops on the Green Line, these neighborhoods had an increased shot at the promises of new development.

Ann Mulholland of The Saint Paul Foundation and long-time co-chair of the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative was Saint Paul’s Deputy Mayor at the time. *“The controversy placed leaders in an awkward position. The case for fairness was so strong, but there was also a fear that failure to meet the CEI formula would trigger the loss of federal support and kill the line altogether. With that, local attention would shift to the Southwest Corridor and then all of Saint Paul and the East Metro would be bypassed.”*

Seeing an opening in the new Obama administration’s views on transit, the Stops for Us campaign met with then – Federal Transit Administrator (FTA) Peter Rogoff, showing the overwhelming income and racial disparities along the segment. The coalition made an impression.

In January 2010, the FTA announced that the CEI would no longer be the sole pass-fail test on new transit lines in the U.S., but a variety of livability factors would also be considered. Federal policy had changed.

Over the next two weeks, local governments scrambled to pull together the \$7.8 million local match, with the Funders Collaborative raising the final \$520,000. This victory illustrated the strength of powerful local advocacy, coupled with a compelling argument and bolstered by coalition-building and working together.



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

People and places are at the heart of our work along the Green Line. We were able to support several initiatives that brought neighbors, visitors, artists, and other together in new ways.

- **CREATE: THE COMMUNITY MEAL** On September 14, 2014, Frogtown artist, Seitu Jones, engaged 2,000 people along a half-mile stretch of Victoria Street in an artistic meal focused on urban food systems and community connections.
- **BETTER BRIDGES** is a community-led effort using infrastructure to heal and connect rather than separate. It re-envisioned and reclaimed eight crossings of I-94 in Saint Paul's Green Line communities to break down psychological and physical barriers to walking and bicycling.
- **IRRIGATE** was a 3-year initiative designed in response to disruption created by the Green Line construction. Irrigate trained 600 artists as community organizers and leaders, facilitated partnerships between artists and businesses, and funded 150 small scale arts projects that created surprise, joy and delight during this difficult period.
- **THE DISTRICT COUNCILS COLLABORATIVE PILOTTED THE TRUSTED ADVOCATE MODEL** to get input into Metro Transit's "Central Corridor Transit Service Study." The model taps respected local advocates to ensure that the voices and concerns of limited English speaking and ethnic minority residents are heard in community planning. The model is being adapted and used by transportation agencies and community-based organizations to be more inclusive in their processes and decision-making.



Photo Credit: Andy King



SO LONG, BUT NOT GOODBYE INVESTING BEYOND THE RAIL LEGACY

Speaking of Saint Paul's Central Corridor at his inaugural ten years ago, Mayor Coleman said this about the future:

“When completed, it will be a corridor of opportunity—a bustling, colorful consortium of new housing, environmentally friendly transportation, small and large businesses, and rich in diversity. We will be connected in a new way to our Twin City.”

The Green Line has been completed. The worst fears about the project did not materialize. The trains are running and the transit system in the Corridor is serving more riders than ever. The Funders Collaborative is proud of its roles in helping to advance this vision.

But it is important to acknowledge that a community—unlike a construction project—is never really “completed.” It grows and evolves at a different pace, drawing on different resources and responding to a complex set of forces that themselves are changing.

While our goal was to make a substantial and ongoing impact in the Central Corridor, the partners had always recognized that this ongoing work belonged to the community. We intended that the Collaborative would be time-limited and eventually would go out of business. Our investment and involvement was the equivalent of laying in electrical, connecting rails, pouring pavement and building stations for the people and organizations who would collaborate, plan and shape their communities well into the future.

This report has summarized some of the outcomes beyond the rail supported by the Funders Collaborative that are visible right now. To conclude, we'd like to recognize three more systemic changes that represent the continuing impact of the stakeholders' work together and are examples of how ripples of change will continue to produce outcomes in new places throughout the region.

1. A CAR-ORIENTED METRO BEGINS TO SEE ITSELF AS A TRANSIT-CONNECTED REGION

The Hiawatha/Blue Line posed the first change to the Twin Cities transportation system in a long time. With the advent of the Green Line and its greater emphasis on TOD and multimodal connections, the region has a new transit mentality. The Green Line is a necklace of connected destinations with stations expressing the character of each neighborhood, representing a major departure from a freeway-focused past.

The Metropolitan Council has created a new TOD program with annual grant-making and a commitment to do more on land that they own. With new federal funding criteria for transit emphasizing affordable housing and transit supportive development policies, local governments are engaging in earlier station area planning with a focus on equitable TOD.

2. A COMMUNITY RESOLVES TO WORK THROUGH FAILURES TOWARD SHARED GOALS

Even when things failed or were in jeopardy, participants learned the power of getting people who shared goals together at the same table to establish relationships, enlarge perspectives and build trust.

For example, the failure to reach a community compact after two years of negotiations was a failure to some, but the fall-out was not over goals. It was the lack of a model that could deliver on the promises. The Funders Collaborative sought to bridge this gap by focusing on Corridor-wide, cross-sector approaches dealing with many of the issues raised by community partners.

Like many large infrastructure projects, the Green Line was subject to lawsuits. One of the suits included several of the partners in the Business Resources Collaborative, which tested the strength of the collaborative process early on. Their mutual respect and shared goals allowed work to proceed despite the potential for conflict.



“We realized that we had to shape the Business Resources Collaborative as a place where we stayed focused on supporting small businesses, regardless of what might happen with the larger project. This worked because those who were pursuing legal action against the project were willing to stay at the table and develop our multi-faceted strategy. We all had to have to confidence in the relationships we’d built and the commitment of the people who were doing the suing. They were doing the best thing to get their issues resolved in the best way that they knew how. Meanwhile, we couldn’t just stop. Ultimately, their efforts in the Courts led to a greater investment in the small business development strategy that they had helped to develop.”

—Nancy Homans

Policy aide to Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman

The Investment Framework working group never achieved the vision of a tracking system that would direct decision-makers toward the most powerful public investments for stimulating private investment. However, it did bring together a group of key public sector leaders who were focused on transit and TOD. Through this partnership the region successfully applied for \$5 million in HUD Sustainable Communities funding and \$15.7 million in grants and loans from Living Cities, which became the Corridors of Opportunity initiative. This work produced region-wide effects on transit planning, TOD, community engagement and equity.

As a result of these experiences the community as a whole has become much more sophisticated about collaboration and devising interrelated strategies to achieve big goals. Many groups have begun to work with new partners or are continuing collaborations that began with Funders grants. Organizations and individuals have also taken their Green Line experience to benefit other transit initiatives in the region.

3. COLLABORATORS LEARN TO MAKE SPACE FOR NEW LEADERS, PARTNERSHIPS AND INITIATIVES

It’s very difficult for institutions to make change on their own. Yet it’s also challenging to admit new players to the table and give them substantive roles, since these new collaborators tend to question assumptions, raise new concerns, challenge authority and disrupt established systems.

After ten years of collaboration in the Corridor, we see a greater openness to allowing community-driven change efforts time and room to breathe and grow.

We see a broader appreciation for working cross-sector and cross-issue, and a stronger commitment to establish or enlarge partnerships as a way of working. New partnerships, similar in composition to the Funders Collaborative working groups, are championing changes in North Minneapolis, in the workforce system, and along the Green and Blue Line extensions.

Finally, we see the power of closure and making way for new leaders who will carry forward what they have learned and apply it to new challenges and opportunities. For this reason, we regard our sunset in 2016 as a positive and empowering event.

CREATING RIPPLES OF CHANGE

While not every element of Mayor Coleman’s “colorful consortium” is in place, the conditions exist as never before for creating a true “corridor of opportunity.” Public, private and non-profit interests are aligned in new ways. Community organizations have increased skills, processes, resources and relationships to survive, adapt and thrive in the future. Large organizations like the Metropolitan Council are operating more inclusively. Multiple sectors cooperated to enable large regional initiatives like Corridors of Opportunity.

And equity is now recognized as a core value at the

start of infrastructure projects—not just in this region, but as a matter of national policy.

We hope this report shows vital ways that public and private institutions can be supporters and catalysts in their communities—and we will continue to play this role through our on-going philanthropic commitments in the Corridor.

We are confident that our partners and stakeholders will also carry this experience into the future, continuing to create ripples of change that will radiate beyond the rail—and beyond the Central Corridor for generations to come.





The Central Corridor Funders Collaborative worked with local resident organizations, community groups, nonprofit and business coalitions, and public leaders and agencies who shared our vision to make the Corridor a place of opportunity for all.

For more information, visit: funderscollaborative.org

The Central Corridor Funders Collaborative was a funder initiative from 2007 – June 2016. Members included:

The Annie E. Casey Foundation · The Bush Foundation · F.R. Bigelow Foundation · Ford Foundation · Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation · John S. and James L. Knight Foundation · Living Cities, Inc. · McKnight Foundation · The Minneapolis Foundation · Northwest Area Foundation · Otto Bremer Foundation · The Saint Paul Foundation · Surdna Foundation · Travelers Foundation