

# Rapid transit: stage 1

## Downtown-Jubilee corridor gets funding

PAUL TURENNE  
Sun Media

The city and the province have agreed to fund a rapid transit corridor from downtown to Jubilee Avenue, and eventually, in an as-yet unfunded phase, on to the University of Manitoba, but it's still unclear whether people will be riding trains or buses down that line.

The governments announced a funding commitment yesterday for the \$138-million first phase of the Southwest Rapid-Transit Corridor, which is expected to run as a dedicated route beside the CN rail tracks along Donald Street and Pembina Highway over to Jubilee.

A downtown leg from the University of Winnipeg to The Forks will run on existing roads, while the remainder — Phase 2 of which is planned to eventually reach Bison Drive — will be on a new, dedicated route.

The plans call for heated, full-service stations along the line, including six downtown and three more down to Jubilee, then eight more down to the U of M. The city hopes commercial and high-density residential development will cluster around those stations.

Mayor Sam Katz said the first phase of the corridor will be built to accommodate buses — the existing fleet, for now — but maintain the capability of



JASON HALSTEAD/SUN MEDIA

Winnipeggers check a map outlining the rapid-transit route.

converting to light rail.

"I do not believe that bus rapid transit will get the majority of people out of their cars. I do believe light rail transit will do that," Katz announced at a news conference yesterday. "(Light rail transit) is just around the corner. In the very near future our city will have LRT."

However, Katz backed off on when talking with reporters afterward, saying "there are no guarantees" a light rail transit system will be built in the near future.

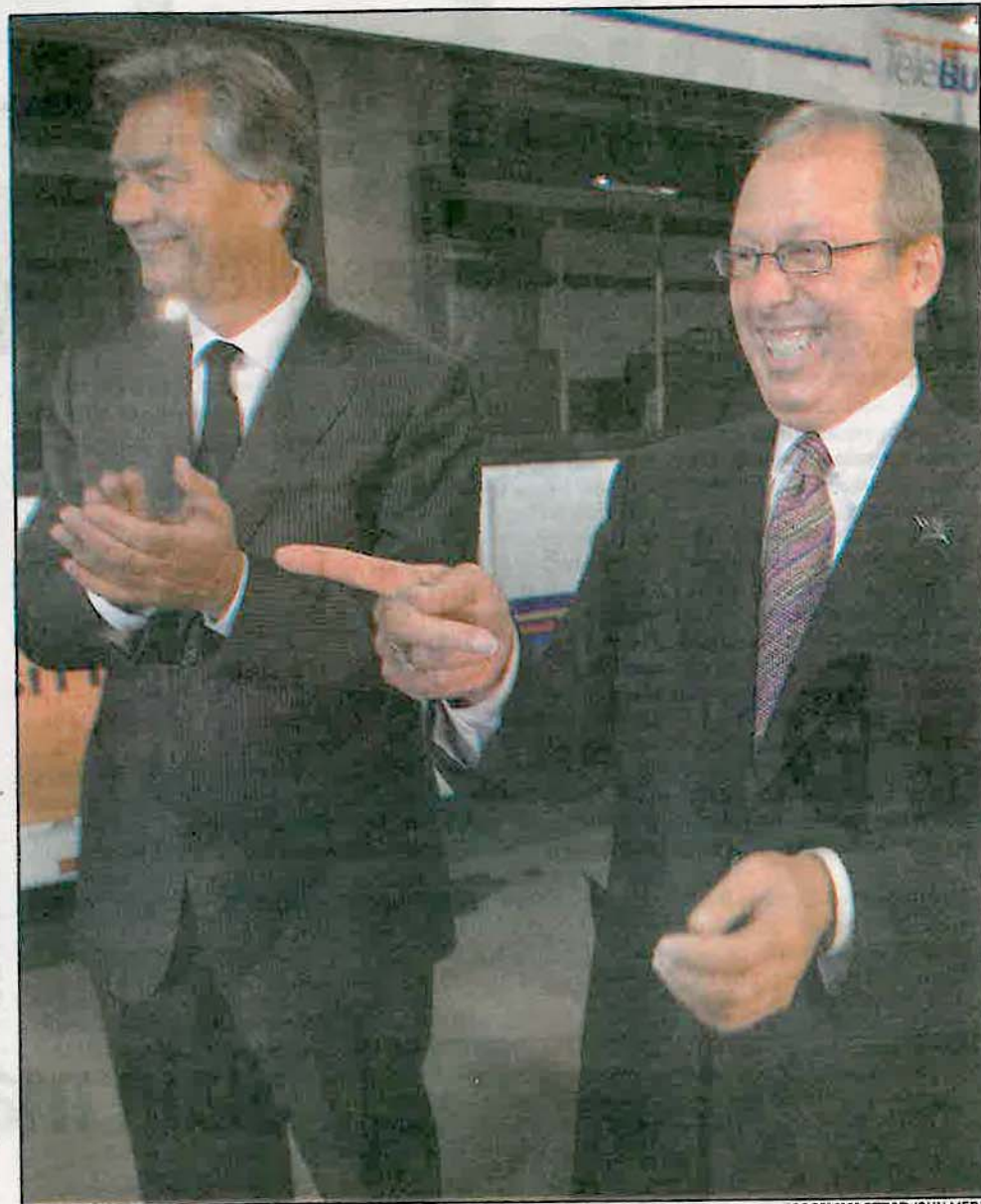
Premier Gary Doer said rail will cost more than a busway and he would prefer to have either a rail or bus line built rather than both. Doer said he would leave it up to the city to choose the mode of transport.

A flashy video screened at the media conference showed both trains and buses. The total cost is estimated at well over \$300 million by the time the corridor reaches the U of M.

Katz would not say what arrangements the city expects to make with CN but did hint that it might not involve buying the tracks. "We're certainly willing to discuss plans in more detail," said CN spokesman Kevin Franchuk. "We're awaiting further information on this project before we can comment further."

Construction on the first leg will start once the financing is in place, possibly by the end of the year. Each phase is expected to take three years to build.

paul.turenne@sunmedia.ca



JASON HALSTEAD/SUN MEDIA

Katz (right) and Doer answer questions about the first phase of the rapid-transit corridor.

## It's back to the future for Katz on Murray's plan

In March 2004, Premier Gary Doer, Winnipeg mayor Glen Murray and then-Liberal MP Reg Alcock announced they were funding a southwest bus rapid-transit corridor that would run from downtown to Jubilee Avenue along the CN Rail tracks.

It was to be the first of six planned busways.

Construction was supposed to begin that fall and would have been completed by now at an initially estimated cost of \$50 million, plus the cost of special high-tech buses.

But that was before Murray

left the mayor's office in May 2004 to run in the federal election against Steven Fletcher in Charleswood-St. James. Murray lost and Sam Katz won his spot at City Hall.

In September 2004, Katz pulled the plug on the rapid-transit line, put \$43 million

of the funding into recreation instead and left \$7 million for other transit system upgrades.

At the time, Katz — who stood by the decision yesterday — said he still believed rapid transit would be in the city's future "when we're in a

position to do it." City council confirmed the funding shift later that month.

In the spring of 2005, a rapid-transit task force led by Coun. Russ Wyatt recommended a bus rapid-transit system with a combination of dedicated corridors and on-

road lanes. The first phase was estimated to cost \$90 million.

The city has adopted pieces of the report like diamond lanes, but until yesterday had not confirmed any money for a rapid transit corridor.

— Turenne