



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. When did the Funders Collaborative form, and why?

A. We made the decision to create the Funders Collaborative in late 2007. Most of 2008 was spent learning about issues along the Corridor, building relationships with the many stakeholders involved, recruiting our members, raising money, and hiring a director. Earlier this year, we began work to create an investment strategy -- a road map that outlines the outcomes we envision and the types of investments we'll make to help achieve those outcomes.

The Funders Collaborative formed because we believe the Central Corridor Light Rail Line has the potential to both strengthen the regional economy *and* positively impact development in the diverse and low-income neighborhoods along the Line. The light rail line will have both expected and unexpected impacts. Left unattended, the transit investment has the possibility to displace existing residents and business owners with rising costs and gentrification.

As foundations which care about these neighborhoods, we want to have greater impact on these issues and believe we can play an important role as a catalyst for positive change. By working together and investing strategically and proactively, we believe we will have an impact on both a local and regional scale. This is a historic opportunity to encourage and support corridor-wide development that will benefit the neighborhoods, residents and businesses along the line for generations to come. The Funders Collaborative is one of many organizations and partners focused on ensuring that we take advantage of this opportunity.

Q. What is the primary focus of your work?

A. We work corridor-wide with local resident organizations, community groups, nonprofit and business coalitions, and public agencies to ensure the adjoining neighborhoods, residents and businesses broadly share in the benefits of public and private investment along the Central Corridor Light Rail.

Our work focuses in four primary areas: Affordable housing, ensuring a strong local economy along the route, creating vital transit-oriented places, and ensuring effective coordination and collaboration.

We pursue three activities to help make the most of Corridor opportunities:

- **Promoting learning** so decisions affecting the Corridor are well informed and far-sighted.
- **Building shared solutions** through learning, the creation of corridor-wide strategies and goals, innovative thinking, and effective implementation.
- **Investing capital** through the Catalyst Fund in strategies aimed at achieving the corridor-wide outcomes described here.

Q. You say the Funders Collaborative is interested in promoting learning. What do you mean by that?

A. The task of helping local people and places benefit from this large investment in public transit is complex. There are often competing interests and issues. There are many stakeholders. And, there are no road maps for how to best do this work. For these reasons, we believe that we as a Collaborative, our members as individual foundations, and our partners as key Corridor stakeholders need to learn as much as possible so that we all have the information we need to make well-informed, far-sighted decisions. We believe learning includes understanding the current environment along the Central Corridor, what other cities have done on these issues around other light rail lines, and what other innovative ideas have been used on similar non-light rail transit projects in the Twin Cities.

Q. What does “seeking shared solutions” mean to the Funders Collaborative? How is the Collaborative helping to formulate or find those solutions?

A. We believe the best solutions are shared – created by a broad group of stakeholders representing all sectors with a stake in the issue. We help to create shared solutions by assisting in the formation of multi-sector, issue-based partnerships; sharing our vision, ideas, and national perspective in these partnerships; and by supporting the work through our Catalyst Fund.

Q. The Collaborative talks about “corridor-wide” strategies. What’s the outcome you want?

A. We are interested in strategies that can address issues at scale, in multiple neighborhoods across the Corridor. Issues of affordable housing, economic development, etc. have relevance in all the neighborhoods adjacent to the Corridor. Building corridor-wide strategies means thinking about ideas that can impact an issue broadly. We understand that the implementation of these strategies will differ across neighborhoods, as each location has somewhat different conditions and needs.

Q. What types of resources does the Funders Collaborative invest?

A. The Funders Collaborative invests the following resources in pursuit of our vision: Time and energy of our members and staff, access to national expertise and best practices, and investment capital through the Catalyst Fund.

Q. Specifically, what types of initiatives do you fund through the Catalyst Fund?

A. We invest in groups of organizations to create corridor-wide strategies that address issues of affordable housing, a strong local economy, vibrant transit-oriented places, and effective coordination. We also fund individual -- or groups of -- organizations to create learning and implementation projects that support these strategies.

Q. How much money is the Funders Collaborative planning to raise and spend throughout the project?

A. The Catalyst Fund has a goal to raise \$20 million over the ten-year initiative. We have raised \$5 million to date.

Q. Do you expect to add new Catalyst Fund members, and thus increase your investment over time?

A. We welcome new members at any time. These members will help us achieve – not increase – our \$20 million goal.

Q. What has the Funders Collaborative funded to date?

A. We have made 11 investments worth over \$800,000, including investments in research, national consultants, planning, and implementation. Our investments have ranged from \$3,000 to \$400,000. A complete list of grants can be found on our website at funderscollaborative.org.

Q. What percent of the investments made by the Catalyst Fund are planning related and what percentage will go to actual implementation of things like affordable housing options?

A. We don't have a pre-established goal for investments in planning vs. implementation. Over the life of the Collaborative, our intention is to primarily support implementation. Planning is a necessary first step to implementation and, thus, will likely receive a great percentage of our investments early on.

Q. How do you respond to the individual businesses along the line that are worried about parking issues and loss of business? How *are* these businesses going to survive?

A. There is no doubt that the Central Corridor Light Rail Line will change the market for businesses along the route. These changes will be profound both during construction and as the new market develops around the operating light rail line.

We believe existing businesses should be able to stay and take advantage of this new market. We also believe that they will need a combination of strategic supports – information, technical assistance, financing – and a willingness to evolve their business plan, if they are to survive construction and parking changes and thrive in the environment. The Funders Collaborative is one of many organizations and partners focused on ensuring this happens.

Q. What is the relationship of the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative to the Metropolitan Council?

A. The Funders Collaborative has the same relationship with the Metropolitan Council as it does with the other 80 stakeholders in the Corridor. We work closely with all stakeholders, including nonprofit, community-based, institutional, business, and government stakeholders. As a result, the Metropolitan Council is one of the Funders Collaborative's many partners.

Q. Has a foundation or funders collaborative – with a mission such as yours -- ever been part of a Light Rail Transit project in another state?

A. Funders in other states have worked together to promote transit-oriented development and regional transportation reforms. We believe the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative is unique in its membership (local and national), geographic concentration (one transit line), and focus on supporting implementation on a broad set of issues (ranging from transportation, transit-oriented development, affordable housing, economic development, etc.).

Q. Once the Central Corridor light rail is up and running, will the work of the collaborative be finished?

A. The Funders Collaborative is working on issues of how the new light rail line will impact neighborhoods and people in the long-term. The changes in these places will not be immediate or cease once the train begins operations. The Funders Collaborative, therefore, is envisioned as a ten-year initiative – continuing its work through and after construction.