After more than three months of discussion, research and testing, Metropolitan Council Chairman Peter Bell and Minnesota Public Radio President Bill Kling announced today that the Met Council and MPR have entered into an agreement to mitigate the impact of light rail transit (LRT) on the MPR Broadcast Center on Cedar Street.

“This is a good agreement,” Bell and Kling noted. “It protects the integrity of the MPR Broadcast Center – a tremendous asset to our city, our community and our state – and moves the Central Corridor light rail project forward – a project that will be an economic and environmental boon for all of us. It wasn’t an easy agreement – both sides had serious, legitimate problems and concerns to be addressed. And it isn’t a perfect agreement – everyone had to ‘give’ on items of great importance to reach this compromise. But it is a reasonable agreement, one that creates a framework for today and for the future.”

“This agreement is the product of months of painstaking work by consultants and staff of both the project and MPR,” Bell said. “It will protect the world-class broadcast facilities of MPR while keeping this vital transit improvement project on schedule and within budget. The Central Corridor LRT line is a vital element in the Council’s vision to expand our transit system, grow ridership and improve mobility for everyone. It also will provide improved access to employment, educational and economic opportunities along the corridor and beyond.”

“I’m pleased that we’ve reached an agreement that allows light rail to go forward and that largely protects our unique broadcast facility from the noise and vibration of the trains,” said Kling. “The Met Council took our concerns seriously and worked with us to craft a plan that will address the most significant impacts of the LRT line running so close to our studios.”

As part of the agreement, MPR will seek other sources of funding for window reglazing to mitigate LRT noise impacts on critical listening spaces within its broadcast center, an effort supported by both the Met Council and the City of St. Paul.

The 11-mile, $914 million LRT line will run on University and Washington Avenues from downtown St. Paul to downtown Minneapolis, connecting with the existing Hiawatha line and terminating at a new intermodal station near the new Twins ballpark. That station also will serve the new Northstar commuter rail line, which is scheduled for completion this fall.

Under the mitigation plan, the Central Corridor project will:

- Install a 700-foot-long floating slab or its performance equivalent for the full length of the MPR building and two nearby historic churches to mitigate vibration and ground-borne noise from the train.

- Move a planned crossover switch from a location near MPR to a new location north of I-94, removing another source of LRT-generated vibration.

- Work with MPR to design, install and pay for modifications to three MPR studios to achieve “acoustical isolation” from LRT-generated noise.

- Maintain LRT vibration levels below specific thresholds within 32 recording and broadcast studios in the MPR Broadcast Center.

- Restrict the use of train horns in a “quiet zone” in the area immediately surrounding MPR and the churches.

Under the agreement, the Council will monitor the noise and vibration impacts of the line during its construction, testing and first year of operation to ensure the effectiveness of the mitigation plan and address any variances of agreed-upon mitigation criteria.

The Council hopes to complete preliminary engineering on the project in September and obtain federal approval to begin final design, with the goal of starting construction next year and launching passenger service in 2014.

The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. It runs the regional bus and light rail system, collects and treats wastewater, manages regional water resources, plans regional parks and administers funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The Council is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

Minnesota Public Radio® is one of the nation's premier public radio companies producing programming for radio, Internet and face-to-face audiences. With its three services — News & Information Service, Classical Music Service and The Current — operating a 38-station regional radio network and serving a regional population of 5 million people, MPR has 100,000 members and more than 840,000 listeners each week, the largest audience of any regional public radio network. American Public Media is the nation’s second-largest public radio production company (after NPR) reaching an audience of 16 million people each week.