



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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Uniform Skyway Hours – Saint Paul is open for late night and weekend business

The City Council took public testimony on an ordinance proposed by Councilmember Dave Thune to set standard and uniform hours for the skyway system. The hours set would be from 6:00 am to 2:00 am seven days a week. The idea percolated up from the Capitol River Council (CRC), which is the District 17 council representing downtown residents and businesses. The CRC's Skyway Governance Advisory Committee passed a formal resolution requesting standard and uniform hours late in 2007.

The Saint Paul skyway system connects about 40 blocks downtown, and is more than 5 miles long if laid out in a straight line. The City constructed the skyway bridges between 1973 and 2001, and purchased pedestrian right-of-way easements from the building owners for interior linkages. Most of the skyway pedestrian rights-of-way are open from 6:00 am to 2:00, but some close earlier – anywhere from 7:00 pm to midnight. It is these early closings that brought this issue to the Council.

While the skyway system was growing, the population of downtown residents was also growing. In 1973, there was only a handful of residential buildings downtown. Today there are 8,000 residents living within a few blocks of the skyway system. Those residents hold season tickets to the Ordway, Minnesota Opera, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Wild Hockey, Roller Girls, Park Square Theatre, Actors Theatre, and History Theatre. Those residents frequent Artists' Quarter jazz club, Fitzgerald Theatre, Kincaids, St. Paul Hotel restaurants, LoTo, and many other late-night businesses in the city.

People testifying in favor of the uniform hours ordinance included: (1) Larry Englund, Chair of the Skyway Governance Advisory Committee and member of the Capitol River Council, (2) Kae Peterson, a 92-year-old frequent skyway user and petition organizer for setting uniform hours, (3) Karolyn Kirschgesler, President of the Rivercentre Convention and Visitors Bureau, (4) Mike Fish, night club owner and representative of the Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association, (5) Jay Severance, owner of a small business located on the skyway system, (6) Rick Cardenas, downtown resident and advocate for disability rights, and (7) Rod Halverson, Downtown condo president and past president of CRC.

Councilmember Thune said, "People who live, work, and visit downtown depend on the skyway system, as do the businesses they frequent. We want to make sure that Saint Paul is open for late-night and weekend business."