



# Community Meeting Summary

METRO Blue Line Extension (BLE)

## North Loop Community Meeting

Wednesday October 18, 2023, 5:30 p.m. – 7 p.m.

The Neu Neu, 514 N 3<sup>rd</sup> St, Minneapolis, MN 55401

Attendance: 150

Format: 30-minute presentation followed by a 1-hour Q & A session.

### Comment Summary/Themes:

- Accessibility and Connectivity
  - Desire for transit mall on 10<sup>th</sup> Ave because it will benefit bikers, pedestrians, and transit users
  - Preference for recommended route as it will serve transit-dependent communities
  - Connectivity between the suburbs and Minneapolis will benefit many
- Traffic
  - Eliminating vehicle lanes on 10<sup>th</sup> Ave will contribute to traffic issues in the North Loop
  - Light rail will improve traffic issues because it will remove some cars from area roads
  - Preference for BRT advancement
- Safety and Crime
  - There are pedestrian safety issues on busy roads and the light rail will contribute to the problem
  - The crime on the light rail needs to be addressed before advancing routes
  - Desire for more security staff on trains and at stations and better enforced fare/ticket collection
  - Light rail will bring crime to the area and negatively impact the surrounding neighborhood
- Property Impacts
  - Train proximity and noise will disrupt residents
  - Property values will decrease
  - Historic building impacts
- Community Development
  - The light rail will bring more resources to the city
  - Minneapolis' transportation infrastructure is behind compared to other cities so light rail is necessary

### Comments

- Have a little faith that the staff know what they are doing. Ask your questions, but when they choose a path forward, trust them.
- I want to acknowledge all the safety concerns. The light rail can be really scary right now. Fares are not what is making it unsafe. It is that we are facing a mental health crisis, addiction, and housing issues. Transit is a symptom of these issues. The state, county, and city need to address this all.
  - **Project Response:** Currently, we are working to expand access to social service through partnerships with community-based partners (Transit Service Intervention Project). For more information on this safety initiative visit: <https://www.metrotransit.org/public-safety>



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- I ride the trains and buses all the time with my bike all the time. Light rail is a great value to the city. Before the pandemic, everyone was paying and there were more cops. We should have turn styles to get people to start paying and have this planned for new lines. The city should create that revenue from riders. For the future, we need to make sure people are paying their fair share.
  - **Project Response:** METRO Transit is currently studying alternate fare compliance systems.
- We want staff to actually look at people's tickets, like in Chicago and other cities. This will improve safety.
  - **Project Response:** METRO Transit is currently studying alternate fare compliance systems.
- The project is right by our house and we are concerned that eliminating traffic on 10<sup>th</sup> Ave will impact residential side streets. In addition, the noise of the trains is a concern. Putting it on 10<sup>th</sup> Ave is too close to our homes, buildings, and bedrooms.
- I feel like we are here looking at the worst option. There is no point at looking at trains because there will be self-driving cars in the near future. There are better modes of transport. Explore improving BRT, not expanding light rail. People will not use light rail.
- I am pro blue line, it will benefit me.
- I want to express strong support for the route going down 10<sup>th</sup> Ave.
- The world is already set up for car drivers already. We want one street (10<sup>th</sup> Ave). Many people cannot afford cars. When we are looking at equity it is handicapped people, low-income people, etc. There is a lot of time to figure out these problems (such as crime) since the train will not be built for a few years. We can work on our issues and find solutions. Please consider Fremont Ave station, there is high demand and a lot of riders. Ride the D line and talk to those riders. I think Blue Line is a bold solution that will serve a lot of people.
- I am for community development. We need people to access North Loop to make it a better place. We must think about the future, and how Minneapolis will develop. We are behind the times compared to cities such as Chicago and NYC. Transit is a key component to bringing people back to the city. We need more stops. More stops will help areas develop and riders can walk. We do not want people coming from the suburbs to park their cars. If safety is an issue, we need to address it and therefore improve access to transport.
- This is about regional mobility and BRT cannot provide that. There are a lot of transit-dependent people who need to come between Brooklyn Park and Minneapolis. Saving 30 minutes on a commute is life-changing. As a North Loop resident, it is a benefit to live in the North Loop and not own a car.
- I support the blue line. Transit lines near highways are not used. Self-driving cars are not coming. If they did, they would still contribute to traffic. There are many people here who are poor, who do not have access to cars and who depend on light rail. Using the pink line would move people away from jobs and areas that need to be served. As someone who went to the U of M and lived near a light rail, train noise is not an issue.
- Plymouth Ave station is a good option. I think that we drive too much in this neighborhood – I support the bus and the train.
- I am really happy that the route has been moved from our neighborhood (Lyndale). Thank you.
- The data points to the best option - which is the current recommended line

## Comment Cards:

“Please put long-term considerations over temporary construction concerns! The station near 10<sup>th</sup> and Washington does a much better job of serving transit users – the pink alternative would force them to walk several extra minutes every time! Walkshed modeling is pretty informative on this. Station safety will be



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better closer to high density too. More eyes on the street and general activity is better than a tucked away spot along the freeway.”

“I live at 8<sup>th</sup> and Washington. I don’t have a preference for the route in terms of safety, convenience, etc. My concern is about the traffic on 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. That is my access to the world: the farmers market, downtown, the highway. As long as I don’t have to drive over 3 minutes out of my way compared to today, I am fine with either route. I currently drive down 10<sup>th</sup> 4-6 times per day (work, school bus drop off, kid errands, shopping...). Adding 30 minutes/day to my car time would be a significant lifestyle reduction. I do ride the bus to light rail whenever I can, and I’m pro-transit. I just can’t use transit for all of my needs.”

“As a North Loop resident, I 100% support the recommended alignment, it makes the most sense for station location and provides the most access for all people. Please don’t listen to the NIMBYs, you are the professionals.”

“The solid Blue Line is the best option. It is the most beneficial to easily access North Loop jobs and residents. It will also clear out car traffic and make it the most friendly to pedestrians. Additionally, a transit mall that excludes cars should be chosen. It’ll make the street more pleasant and usable for bikers, pedestrians and transit.”

“Please stop capitulating to the NIMBYs! This is an investment for long into the future. You know that the useful route and station area is on 10<sup>th</sup>, not next to the highway. Stop giving these selfish people the time of day!”

“I support the proposed route, including a 10<sup>th</sup> Ave transitway. Generally, transit stations on freeways are significantly worse. It doesn’t make sense to move LRT away from people.”

“I support a station on Washington Ave because of the access to North Loop and other destinations. Plus, one-seat ride from heavily congested NW Metro into downtown and airport. Would love to see attention to underpass near 10<sup>th</sup> Street- how can we make it an amenity like underline in Miami.”

“SOLID LINE ALL THE WAY. Transit mall option is the best- U of M Washington Ave is great. On slide 20 there is a bike lane, maybe make it protected? Highway stations don’t serve people. Don’t listen to these people who say the solid line option would be bad. They don’t actually take transit. This will be an equitable solution if they choose the solid line.”

“I really like the transit way idea- bikes and trains- very similar to the U of M transitway.”

“I live in the North Loop because of the scale of public transit and walkability. I use the transit option that is most efficient and most accessible. I am not pro-car but do own a car. The biggest thing I see for ridership is improving the light rail to be competitive. It takes the Green Line 1 hour to get from downtown Minneapolis to downtown St. Paul. It takes a bus or car 20 mins. Please, if you want this to be successful use the right transit method. Do not put a tram where a regional train should be.”

## Q & A Session:

- This area is incredible. What they are not mentioning is the crime associated with light rail terminals. A beautiful area is going to turn into a nightmare. The crime associated with the light rail is going to make the neighborhood unsafe. Why is there not more security on trains and at stations?
  - **Project Response:** *Metro Transit is taking steps to improve public safety on the light rail. Metro Transit’s Safety and Security Action Plan highlights some of the following safety improvements:*
    - 100+ police officers regularly patrolling stations and vehicles



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- Real-time monitoring of cameras at all LRT, BRT stations and light rail vehicles
- Partnerships with peer law enforcement agencies
- Supplemental security officers at four busy locations
- For more information on this safety initiative visit: <https://www.metrotransit.org/public-safety>
- Slide 12- Do you think that there are no benefits to the 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> route (pink line)?
  - **Project Response:** *We want to put the line where the people are, but that doesn't mean we do not see the benefits of the pink line; however, there are more challenges and less overall community benefits with the 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> route along I-94 as compared to the 10<sup>th</sup> to Washington route option.*
- 918 loft resident – I have heard that the Northbound car vehicle option would extend through 3<sup>rd</sup> Street but neither one will allow cars to the end so our street will become a cul-de-sac. We will be impacted by noise and more. The train will be 15 feet from residents. All we have seen in mockups are commercial spaces on the ground floor when in reality residents live on the ground floor and will be impacted. We have not heard about mitigation either. We are a small building with 30 people, and we will have to compensate for any long-term issues and construction impacts.
  - **Project Response:** *The design and environmental process is just getting underway with traffic and noise impacts being studied in order to better understand the potential impacts and potential mitigations.*
- Robbinsdale resident – personally I like the idea of being able to use the light rail to travel from Robbinsdale to downtown MPLS and the airport. Municipal consent? – I am curious about the process.
  - **Project Response:** *Once a light rail route and station locations are decided, the Metropolitan Council seeks Municipal Consent from the affected communities. Municipal Consent is a process of local review and approval of the physical designs. During this process, the public is able to comment on the plans and public hearings are held.*
- I think it is important to show respect for everyone, whether they agree or disagree. I have not been told the benefit to the residents of the North Loop from this project. I understand going to certain destinations. There have not been improvements to safety. We do not have enough police officers in the community to keep us safe. As people who are invested in this neighborhood, what are we getting?
  - **Project Response:** *Close availability of frequent service light rail transit is the primary benefit to all the communities served along the planned Blue Line Extension route.*
- It sounds like there are a lot of issues with light rail. Have you thought of advancing BRT with a dedicated lane?
  - **Project Response:** *LRT was recommended over BRT because of BRT's lower ridership, limited vehicle capacity, fewer passengers per revenue hours, and greater impact to general roadway traffic compared to LRT. A BRT line is a form of rapid transit, however the utilized buses have a much lower capacity per trip than the three car trains used for LRT.*
  - *LRT is also the right service for this community, which includes some of the highest numbers of households who do not own a car and rely on transit to meet every day needs. This area has also historically been underserved and underinvested in through past transportation planning.*



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- *This project is an extension of the existing Blue Line, which will provide a one seat ride to many key destinations, including the MSP Airport and Mall of America. BRT would not be an extension of an existing line and would not provide the same level of service.*
- *The Blue Line Extension is a critical piece of our regional light rail network, which is designed to be the backbone of our regional transit system. Light Rail works in complement with local and rapid bus routes to help people move efficiently throughout our region.*
  
- I am concerned about the 918 lofts property value impact. The deduction will be 50% - who wants a train in their front yard? I am not saying we can't have transit. We should take the money we are saving from the Gold line and give it to impacted property owners.
  - **Project Response:** *Historically the implementation of LRT has not shown decreases in property values. Instead, the LRT infrastructure has often encouraged new development that can also drive further investment and increase property values. The project's Anti-Displacement program is planned to help address situations when increasing property values create economic pressures on existing residents and business owners to sell and leave.*
  
- I live at 918 lofts and I know the project is going to happen, but I have a preference for the pink line. There is a higher cost to go down the pink line, but there is a huge cost to the residents of 918 lofts. I do not see the big deal of moving the alignment two blocks over.
- Why would you take the train from someone's backyard (Lyndale) and put it in someone else's? Put the train on the highway!
- I am concerned about the blue line and how it will impact traffic – has there been a study done on the impacts?
  - **Project Response:** *The design and environmental process is just getting underway with traffic and noise impacts being studied in order to better understand the potential impacts and potential mitigations.*
  
- I want to broaden the train to the North Loop. I am a car driver and I need it for work. When you think about the expansion of this neighborhood – I am very much worried about the traffic. My biggest concern is walking safely across the street. Pedestrian safety has only been getting worse. We do not have traffic lights here and we do not have control of traffic here now; adding a train will only make this worse. We are going to shut down the arteries to get out of the neighborhood by putting the line down 10<sup>th</sup>. People will not walk to the train if they are not safe. In addition, crime is increasing. How are you looking at current and future traffic? What are you doing about the issue of safety?
  - **Project Response:** *The design and environmental process is just getting underway with traffic and noise impacts being studied in order to better understand the potential impacts and potential mitigations.*
  
- There needs to be an understanding that improvements are needed on Washington Ave. Will these improvements happen? I think that analysis needs to address improvements on Washington and there needs to be policy implementation to ensure that improvements are made.
- I am not opposed to light rail, but I have two concerns. Are there other route options that will not go down 10<sup>th</sup>? There are other commercial areas that will not impact residents. Also, safety. I rode the light rail going home from the concert and was lucky to get home. There needs to be a system where people must pay. That will improve safety.
  - **Project Response:** *The route modification report does a full analysis of many different routes and colors. That is the report that included Lyndale and other routes. If you are talking about*



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*the commercial area, that could be the pink line. In terms of safety, if it is inaccessible then people are not safe. We are getting a little better, but we are not all the way there. We are going to do a study on fare collection. Each month we do a great day in transit and staff flood the system. We are trying to be present on the train.*

- I am a bike rider and transit user to reduce gas and car usage. As a commuter who likes to reverse commute out of this city, I hate driving to the suburbs. I like the idea of taking cars off the road. The approach through 10<sup>th</sup> Ave supports reducing traffic. I encourage people to take the train and support the Blue Line. I understand the impacts, but what is stopping a loud car or semi-truck from going down a residential road? With the anti-vibration tracks, what does the data say on semi-truck in comparison to electric trains?
  - **Project Response:** Thank you for your feedback. Vibration impacts related to the LRT are currently being evaluated in the SDEIS

### Event Photos:

