



METRO Blue Line Extension Meeting of the Business Advisory Committee

December 6, 2022

8:00 AM – 9:30 AM

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

BAC Members: Ian Alexander, Terry Austin, John Barobs, K.B. Brown, Dan Doerrer, Kelsey Faulks, Michelle Gibson, John Hacker, Candace Oathout, Mike Opat, Tyrone Pluckett, Donna Sanders, Jamar Smith, Chris Webley, Sabrina Williams

Agency Staff and Guests: Nkongo Cigolo, Neha Damle, Cathy Gold, Nick Landwer, Olu Oresanya, Trevor Roy, Koehl Simmons, Dan Soler, PaNhue Vue, Annie Xiong, Kjerstin Yager, Jer Yang, Kelcie Young

Meeting Summary

1. Call to Order and Welcome (Nkongo Cigolo)

Nkongo Cigolo called the meeting to order at 8:02 AM.

2. Introductions (Nkongo Cigolo)

Nkongo introduced himself to the group and provided an opportunity for BAC Members and agency staff and guests to introduce themselves.

3. Review Membership and BAC Charter (Nkongo Cigolo)

Nkongo reviewed the BAC charter and provided an overview of the BAC by explaining the purpose of the BAC and stating the responsibilities of the BAC Members. Responsibilities of BAC Members include attendance, participation, reporting back to their organizations, and respectful discussions. According to Nkongo, membership in the BAC will last around 2 years. Nkongo stated the BAC will have 2 co-chairs and provided a summary of the additional responsibilities of the co-chairs.

Discussion

- Mike Opat stated that he does not believe the BAC is not ready to select co-chairs because most of the members are not appointed yet. Mike said believes the first phase of the BAC was hijacked by anti-displacement work and stated a desire for the BAC to represent businesses or non-profits along the Blue Line extension, such as Elim Church rather than regional organizations with an interest in transit. Mike emphasized that he believes anyone appointed by Metropolitan Council should not be a co-chair.
- Michelle Gibson stated in the Teams chat, "We need to make sure that the Native Black Community is always involved because we are talking about a historically Black Community here!! Native Blacks on the Northside feel left out of this process, you need to seriously do a canvassing study. KB Brown verbally addressed Michelle's comment stating that, as a native Northsider, he has been involved in the process since day one. KB agreed with Mike Opat's comments that the past phase of the BAC was



highjacked by project staff. Donna Sanders agreed with KB and stated the West Broadway Business Coalition has been doing outreach for the past 2 years. Terry Austin also agreed with KB. Michelle stated she is the executive director of Bob's reward club. She believes the project is not focusing on the entire Northside, but mainly on businesses on West Broadway. Michelle stated she believes there is a disconnect because BAC members do outreach into their social circles and get stuck. KB stated this is not true and they have been doing outreach to the entire community for several years, "if you don't know about the Blue Line Extension in the Northside, you do not want to know". Nkongo stated that the project has held several outreach events in North Minneapolis.

- Chris Webley said he appreciates all the comments that have been made. He agrees with KB that businesses should know about the project. He stated that just knowing is different than engagement, there is always ways to improve engagement. Chris expressed a desire for more productive BAC meetings. Nkongo stated that the meeting agendas are co-determined by the BAC co-chairs, which have yet to be appointed. Nkongo emphasized anti-displacement is a key component of the Blue Line Project. Mike Opat pointed out that not all of the communities have appointed a BAC member yet. Nkongo stated the only community not to appoint a member so far is Golden Valley. He stated that he would suggest the next meeting be held in person so members can meet each other face to face and select a co-chair. Dan Doerrer agreed with Nkongo's idea. Mike Opat agreed that co-chairs should be selected during the next meeting. Stated that some cities have not appointed all their members, including the Robbinsdale Chamber of Commerce.

4. Project Update (Nkongo Cigolo and Nick Landwer)

Nkongo started the BAC presentation. Nick Landwer summarized the past 2 years of work on the project, stating over the past 2 years the project has pivoted from the freight rail corridor to County Road 81, released a route modification report, created a new route from Brooklyn Park, through Crystal, Robbinsdale, and into Minneapolis. Nkongo gave an overview of public feedback from recent engagement events in Minneapolis, Robbinsdale, and Brooklyn Park. Nkongo gave a summary of recent engagement findings including overall themes and a summary of comments. Kelcie Young gave a recap of the next environmental steps. Currently the project is in a phase of preparing a supplemental draft environmental impact statement. Cathy Gold stated the anti-displacement group will be meeting this Saturday, focusing on cultural and business displacement. Nkongo then provided an overview of the project schedule.

Discussion

- Mike Opat stated there is still an enormous amount of design work to be done in Robbinsdale. Nobody here should think the design work in Crystal and Robbinsdale is complete.

5. Next Meeting: May 3, 2022

Nkongo stated the next meeting of the BAC will be January 3rd, most members agreed to move it to Tuesday January 10th. Dan expressed a desire to meet in person. Nkongo agreed to move the meeting to the 10th and proposed meeting in-person at the project office.

6. Adjourn

Nkongo adjourned the meeting at 9:29 AM.