



METRO Blue Line Extension
Meeting of the Community Advisory Committee
Wednesday, November 6, 2024
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Microsoft Teams Meeting

CAC Members: H. Ellis Beck, John Chambers Dunn, Kathy Fraser, Jeff Guertin, Jonathan Hansen, Ken Rodgers

Agency Staff and Guests: Leila Bunge, Jessica Case, Nkongo Cigolo, Michaela Crowley, Neha Damle, Megan Danielson, Andrew Gillett, Cathy Gold, Joleen Ketterling, James Mockovciak, Menno Schukking, Antoinette Uzamere, Graham Zuehlke

Meeting Summary

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

John Chambers Dunn began the meeting at 6:07 pm and welcomed everyone. Nkongo Cigolo took attendance.

2. Adopt Meeting Minutes

John Chambers Dunn asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from October 9. Jonathan Hansen indicated there was a question about an image in the chat and the image was a screenshot of google maps showing the intersection of Lowry and Victor Memorial Parkway. Nkongo stated this will be added to the meeting summary. Jonathan Hansen made a motion to approve the minutes and John Chambers Dunn seconded it.

Nkongo indicated the next Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is going to be scheduled on December 11 to align with the other committee meetings in December.

3. Environmental & Anti-Displacement Update

Neha Damle, Blue Line Extension (BLE) Environmental Team, shared that this meeting is meant to be a workshop to solicit input from members of the CAC on proposed mitigation strategies to address impacts of the project.

Neha shared that over the summer the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) was published. Currently the BLE project is in the next phase of environmental review and developing the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS). The SFEIS will document the



impacts of the project and set mitigation commitments. The BLE environmental team is currently working on analysis of the design changes that have occurred coming out of municipal consent and incorporating design changes informed by the comments that were received on the SDEIS. Additional technical analysis is being performed in a few topic areas such as noise and vibration and the environmental team is working to understand impacts to historical and cultural resources. Neha shared that the outreach on strategies to address impacts will take place now through the summer of 2025. The SFEIS is anticipated to be published next summer.

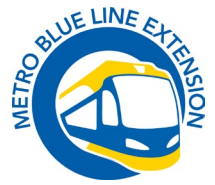
Neha indicated that the project is working closely with anti-displacement to see which of the anti-displacement strategies can be brought into the project. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) require the project to develop strategies to address certain project impacts. These strategies need the approval from the FTA to be eligible for the federally funded project. Neha shared that to complement what the project can do; partners are working together outside the BLE project to not only prevent displacement but to build long-term community prosperity. Examples of items to be carried out within the BLE project include the environmental review process to develop strategies to address impacts, project design, construction management and relocation assistance. Examples of the work outside of the BLE project include the Coordinated Action Plan and the Anti-displacement Community Prosperity Program (ACPP) board.

Neha stated that overall strategies are being developed in addition to specific strategies as they relate to environmental justice (EJ) communities. Jeff Guertin asked if there was a registry of the impacts that have been identified. Neha indicated the impacts were identified in the SDEIS. Nkongo added that in the materials that were sent out prior to this meeting, there is a document named Environmental Mitigation Overall. Nkongo shared on the second page of this document there is a table that lists other impacts that have been identified in the SDEIS.

Neha stated that based on community feedback and discussion with city partners and stakeholders, some of the identified adverse impacts to EJ communities are business impacts during construction, loss of parking, community character and indirect displacement.

Neha provided an overview of the strategy options under development or consideration and indicated the environmental team looked at other projects internally and nationwide to brainstorm. These strategies include funding for community programs, cultural placekeeping design groups, storefront/virtual resource centers, workforce development, business support during construction and parking solutions near Penn and West Broadway.

Neha explained the community investment strategy involves investing in community organizations to strengthen community and offset construction impacts. Funding to these organizations will help capacity, address needs, and strengthen community institutions. Funding is allocated based off effectiveness in offsetting impacts and the ability to meet public needs.



Neha described the strategy of cultural placekeeping and indicated the SDEIS identified impacts to cultural togetherness. Neha added that this corridor consists of many cultures and histories and the BLE project would like to retain and strengthen them as much as possible. Neha stated to make the community feel like their own, these cultural placekeeping design groups would be created to guide the creation of architectural, aesthetic, and visual elements.

Along the corridor it has been identified that the 21st Avenue community amenities, character, and cohesion will be impacted. Project staff will meet with community cultural placekeeping groups to develop and decide public realm improvements along 21st Avenue and use funding to build neighborhood organization capacity.

Neha shared there are two avenues being considered for business support during construction. First is construction support and ideas discussed are having a 24/7 hotline where people can call in and get answers to their questions and concerns, providing advance notice of access and utility disruptions, appointing staff members as liaisons between businesses and contractors, and hosting public informational sessions on a periodic basis. The second avenue of business support includes items such as advertising for businesses along the corridor and providing signage for customers to find the business they want to go to and making it easier for the customers to reach that business.

Neha described an online portal such as a web-based application would track relocation or anti-displacement resources, provide information regarding construction related disruptions and closures, and be a place to go for other available information and resources. The BLE project team is considering two storefronts, one in Brooklyn Park and one in Minneapolis. The storefronts would gather information from contractors and staff, find resources during construction, be a place where community members could ask project-related questions and be a meeting, open house and event space. The storefronts would be staffed by a Blue Line or a Metropolitan Council staff member who has good knowledge of what is going on during the project.

Neha described the strategy of public realm improvements to offset impacts to community character and improve existing infrastructure. Modernizing elements to improve the experience for those who walk, roll, bike or take transit include options such as streetscape, creative design, mobility hubs, sidewalk patterns, banners, lighting, benches, pedestrian safety improvements and park and ride upgrades.

Neha indicated workforce development is an important strategy and one that has been mentioned frequently. This strategy would improve job prospects and lower indirect displacement risks by economic conditions through increased workforce development. Workforce development would be guided by contractors, the public and other interested parties. Ideas include developing apprenticeships, trainings, and mentorship programs, hosting information sessions with subcontractors, vendors, the public, and workforce development agencies, creating job-related



events such as job fairs, implementing local hiring initiatives and supporting small businesses through the Metropolitan Council Underutilized Business Program (MCUB).

4. Environmental Mitigation Workshop

Nkongo Cigolo, BLE Project, explained the purpose of this evening's workshop is to collect feedback from the committee members to help advance the engagement on these topics. Nkongo stated that preparation of the SFEIS will include the strategies for how the project is going to address impacts identified in the SDEIS and how the project will prevent displacement. Nkongo shared that this same type of workshop was shared with the Business Advisory Committee on Tuesday. Nkongo added that preliminary discussions have begun with the FTA and the feedback received through the engagement process will help with those conversations.

The committee members were split into two groups for the workshop portion of the meeting.

21st Avenue Community Character

Group 1

- Good effort to think about what you can do during construction and the results and how that will shape the community
- Provide public facing information on the justification for specifically focusing on 21st Avenue
- Provide examples of what outcomes could be from this strategy
- Make things more accessible to mainstream
- Have a lot of lighting, especially around business locations for safety, but considerate of residents
 - Lighting design for construction, so that it does not project into residences
 - Lighting that project downward
- Consider crime safety during construction process
- Make sure that the signage is safe and ADA approved
 - Ensure construction signs do not hang over sidewalks and public right of ways – people might run into them
- Consider pedestrian safety when crossing at active construction time
 - Provide detours or assistance

Group 2

- Consider how car access will still be available – especially for church on 21st Avenue (Faith Tabernacle)

Community Investment

Group 1

- Station safety



- Have community program where organizations can adopt station and share responsibility for cleaning and maintaining the station
 - Promotes ownership and pride
- Create space for community organizations to staff a table that provides services for people who need help on the platform and mitigate the “unsavory” characters on the stations
 - Helps with having extra pair of eyes
 - Organize schedule

Group 2

- Identify where the greatest needs are and work with organizations that help with those needs and be able to measure the impact
- Home repair organizations – homes are old along corridor and people might be more likely to stay if homes are repaired
- JXTA or other arts organization along corridor for various forms of art that creates a good aesthetic
 - That investment helps them weather the project

Public Realm Improvements

Group 1

- Helping intersections and crosswalks be consistent in an area
- Benches would make it easier to move around/travel as a pedestrian
 - Benches and respite areas, pay attention so that they aren’t used for people to sleep on
 - Maybe arm rests across so no one can lay down
- Good lighting to represent or give visibility to businesses that are open
- Water hook-up at station
- Waste receptacles
- Waste bins on the train
- Signage that provides direction to public restroom
 - There are kiosks that are directories, they can be near the restrooms like in Downtown Minneapolis

Group 2

- There should be a broad path from 21st to W Broadway for pedestrians going to businesses and light rail
 - Wider than normal sidewalk
 - Signage
 - Benches by station
- Greenery and lighting to make it more inviting



- Cohesion – make it consistent throughout the line, don't forget about any part of the light rail
- Lighting and bistro tables on W Broadway for places along the corridor like Sammy's

Cultural Placekeeping Design Groups

Group 1

- Funding to sponsor a muralist to do paintings on areas near by the station or for each city
 - Have local groups take charge of this
 - Builds ownership
 - Less likely for vandalism
- Clarify what are the restrictions of the design opportunities
 - Footprint will be the same
 - Materials, colors, bike racks, lighting influenced by historical piece relevant to community

Group 2

- The community does want to see something that is representative of their communities
- Highlight something from community at each station including artwork
 - North Memorial hospital can be highlighted at Lowry Station
 - There was a renowned terraced theater that was torn down, so they could include that
 - Helps feel like it's part of community and celebrate community
 - Library and NHCC with art that reflects that
- People are apprehensive about the aesthetics of the light rail
 - Could work with community partners to do the art like JXTA

Business Support During Construction

Group 1

- At least two weeks' notice preferred
- Chatbot in addition to hotline
 - More accessible
- Customer perspective – how to communicate to customers (including those outside construction zone)
 - Business is still open, include hours
 - How to navigate area
 - Stories in local newspapers to reach wider audience
- How to keep/retain customer base during construction?
 - Business event – highlight businesses being affected
 - Sidewalk event at project storefront



Group 2

- Provide funding to businesses to add a door to back of businesses with parking
 - Provides access during construction, helps retain employees
- Set up shuttle in transit parking to access businesses
- Marketing services a plus, helps businesses with limited reach increase their reach
 - Utilize project socials to amplify businesses
 - Direct mail
- Maintain and grow customer base helps businesses more than direct financial assistance
- Biggest complaint on Green Line: timely information
 - Information in advance is critical, allows alternate plans for disruptions to business
 - Create access maps
- Appropriate lighting for pedestrians to navigate businesses

Online Portal and Storefronts

Group 1

- Both options reach different audiences
 - Could be used as a marketing space for affected businesses
- Share information in each city's city hall, other community spaces
- Locations: Minneapolis (along W Broadway) former Walgreens, Brooklyn Park former CVS space
 - Suggestions: Starlight Village (Brooklyn Park)
- Informing people of construction as early as possible, with a lot of noise is a priority

Group 2

- Pros of App
 - Push notifications
 - First space consumers look for information
 - Information hub for project
 - Marketing push for app
 - Website mirroring app
- Multiple options preferred approach
 - Storefronts important to avoid information overload and for those with difficulty navigating apps/digital
- Locations for storefronts
 - Minneapolis – former Walgreens along W Broadway off Lyndale
 - Brooklyn Park – former CVS, former Cub Foods at Starlight Village
 - Repurpose vacant properties along corridor
 - This option leaves community resource as gift back for putting up with headaches of construction



- Make sure storefront has an active phone number
 - Separate from project line: those at storefronts have more direct knowledge of community

Workforce Development and small Business Commitments

Group 1 & 2

- Help people start businesses along line
- Making sure those affected are reaping benefits of this line through job prospects, aid to start businesses
 - Implementing a local hiring preference – who should qualify and distance from line
 - Cities along line
 - Broad net, include nearby suburbs
 - Looking to advance and benefit community through job trainings and job placements for marginalized communities, those exiting criminal justice program
- Include pay for trainings?
 - Creates incentive
- Project storefronts could also be centers for hiring, job interviews, job placements
- Mainly for community members being impacted by the economic hardship related to project impacts
 - Include those adjacent to route
- Help people start businesses along line

Cathy Gold added that Hennepin County is looking to advance strategies to benefit the community such as a local hiring preference, ways to advance opportunity for people along the corridor, adding information within the contract language for contractors, lifting up the people who are unemployed and provide training, and assisting youth members to advance into a career.

5. Discussion and Members' Feedback

John Chambers Dunn appreciated the discussion at tonight's meeting and indicated the next CAC meeting is scheduled on December 11. John asked for any final comments. Nkongo asked the group what they thought about this experience and meeting format. Kathy Fraser replied that she thought it was engaging and gave the group an opportunity to hear different perspectives and ideas and bring forth recommendations. Ken Rodgers agreed that he liked this format and thought it seemed to inspire more conversation. One suggestion Ken made was, if possible, when about to move from one location to another, can more than a 10-second warning be made so the person speaking could finish a thought. Leila Bunge, Kimley-Horn, replied that this is a feature of Microsoft Teams and the transition does happen quickly but communication with regard to this could be improved. John Chambers Dunn liked having the structured type of conversation and having the handouts ahead of



time to read through what was going to be covered. Jonathan Hansen agreed and liked this format as it was engaging.

Jonathan Hansen asked if a vote should be conducted to replace Jason Greenberg as co-chair since he will no longer be attending the meetings. John Chambers Dunn asked if this was a permanent change. Nkongo replied that there is a clause in the charter that says elected officials cannot be part of the CAC. John Chambers Dunn made a motion to vote for Jonathan Hansen as the new co-chair. Ken Rodgers seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion approved unanimously. Nkongo stated Jonathan Hansen will be added as the co-chair on all future communications.

6. Next Meeting: December 11, 2024.

John Chambers Dunn thanked everyone for attending and providing feedback and comments.

7. Adjourn

John Chambers Dunn made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Jonathan Hansen seconded it. The meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm.

Meeting Materials: Agenda, Slides, one-pager Mitigation Engagement Strategies, October 9 Meeting Summary

Administrative Lead: Joleen Ketterling

Meeting Chat:

None