



METRO Blue Line Extension

Meeting of the Community Advisory Committee

Wednesday, April 9, 2025

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Microsoft Teams Meeting

CAC Members: Jeff Guertin, Jonathan Hansen, Ken Rodgers

Agency Staff and Guests: Nkongo Cigolo, Andrew Gillett, Joleen Ketterling, Shahin Khazrajafari, Nick Landwer, Bojan Mistic, Joanna Ocasio-Maisonet, Menno Schukking, Kaja Vang, Alicia Vap, Kelcie Young

Meeting Summary

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Jonathan Hansen, co-chair of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), began the meeting at 6:05 pm and welcomed everyone. Mr. Cigolo took attendance.

Mr. Cigolo welcomed two new employees to the Blue Line Extension (BLE). Alicia Vap is the new BLE Project Director who started on Monday. Alicia has over 20 years' experience in the transit field and over 15 years' experience at Metro Transit. Alicia recently led the Metro Transit's Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project as the Project Director. The Gold Line is a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts project built in partnership with Washington and Ramsey counties and this project opened for revenue service on March 22. Prior to leading the Gold Line project, Alicia led station design on the Green Line (Central) Light Rail Transit (LRT) project, architectural design for the Blue Line Extension 1.0 and worked with engineering and facilities staff for the start-up of the FTA Small Starts funded Orange Line BRT project. Alicia has her master's degree in urban planning from the University of Kansas.

Anna Beth Gunderson, Station and Facilities Design Lead, joined the BLE in February 2025. Anna Beth comes to the project with 8 years of experience working on a range of project types and scales including facilities management, residential design, and community-based architecture. Anna Beth has a master's degree in architecture from the University of Minnesota and is currently pursuing an architectural licensure.

Mr. Cigolo stated the Corridor Management Committee (CMC) meeting is scheduled for tomorrow at 1:30 pm.



2. Adopt Meeting Minutes

Co-chair Hansen indicated approval of the February meeting minutes will be completed via email to allow for all committee members to review and comment.

3. Environmental Update

Kelcie Young, BLE Environmental Team, shared the development of the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS) is continuing. Ms. Young indicated that over the past several months there have been policy updates that have affected the SFEIS. The environmental team is working closely with the FTA and updates have been made to the structure and language in the SFEIS to align with the new Executive Orders. Ms. Young stated it is important to note that the mitigation strategies to address the negative impacts of the project are still reflected in the SFEIS and part of the BLE project. The anticipated publication of the SFEIS is in early June with a comment period and the amended record of decision anticipated in August 2025.

4. Design Update

Bojan Mistic, BLE Design Team, provided a progress update of the 60% design plans focusing on Brooklyn Park and Crystal; the first two cities to receive the 60% design plans. Mr. Mistic indicated the last time this committee met, the design team talked about what to expect in the 60% design plans and that these would be different than what was previously seen. The 60% design plans will be 11x17 sheets and contain 13 disciplines for each city. Roll plots will be developed for public facing meetings. Mr. Mistic stated details will be added to the design plans post 60% regarding cultural placekeeping and any continued work with project partners.

Mr. Mistic reviewed the release schedule for the 60% design plans beginning with Brooklyn Park in May, Crystal in June and Robbinsdale and Minneapolis in July. Separate packages will be released in 2026 including the Robbinsdale Park & Ride, Oak Grove Parkway (OGP) Park & Ride, Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF), and Landscaping.

Mr. Mistic shared images and plan renderings for Brooklyn Park and Crystal starting with the Oak Grove Parkway Station and Park & Ride at the north end of the alignment. Mr. Mistic indicated the area surrounding the Park & Ride includes future potential private development scenarios. The street level view showed the air elevator tower of the Park & Ride.

Mr. Mistic reviewed the next station at 85th Avenue in Brooklyn Park. This station is expected to be a high-use station with public amenities nearby such as North Hennepin Community College and the Hennepin County Library. In the arial view, there are three canopies and a center platform which is consistent with the next three stations in Brooklyn Park. The street view shows the south side of the station with a mid-block crossing which is different from some of the crossings with a railing as pedestrians approach the station. More detail will be provided with this station design as plans progress.



The 63rd Avenue Station and Park & Ride is the southern-most station in Brooklyn Park. An existing Park & Ride structure will be utilized and the access to this station will be a signalized intersection or an elevated pedestrian overpass.

Mr. Misis shared visuals of the Crystal Lake Road Station. The dashed green line is the existing Crystal Lake Regional Trail. Through work with the city of Crystal and Three Rivers, it is being proposed to move this trail and avoid the existing crossing of the trail with the airport roads on the right side. The trail would cross Bass Lake Road and connect to the existing regional trail and cross under the proposed interchange. The roadway will be elevated above Bass Lake Road and the station will be at grade. On the west side of Bottineau, a new shared trail is being proposed that will connect to the station. Signage will be made available for the trail systems. This station has a park and ride. The site plan shows a pedestrian and car path that emergency responders can take if needed to get through the station which was a request from the city of Crystal. Input from community members will be solicited for the cultural placekeeping such as lighting, textures, wall coloring, station colors and patterns. Mr. Misis walked through an animated video of this station and a series of stills. Co-chair Hansen asked if this station will be well-lit. Mr. Misis replied, yes, there are lighting schemes being evaluated with light on both surfaces of the abutments and overhead.

Mr. Misis summarized the next steps which include presenting the 60% design plans for Robbinsdale and Minneapolis at future committee meetings as well as adding details for cultural placekeeping and details from continued work with project partners.

Co-chair Hansen asked if there could be a slide depicting the current trail system and a slide with the proposed future trail system to make it easier to visualize. Mr. Misis thanked Co-chair Hansen for the feedback.

Ken Rodgers requested that the videos and animation be narrated and available on the BLE website so those with visual impairments could access them. Mr. Cigolo replied that descriptions will be added to the adobe versions posted on the website that will describe the details being shown. Mr. Cigolo also indicated he will reach out to the information technology department at Metro Transit and collaborate with Ken to advance the animation. Jeff Guertin asked if there are best practices, standards, or third-party entities to assist with this. Mr. Rodgers indicated there are and the Metropolitan Council has knowledge of the different third-party entities that could add a narrative track to anything that is visual. Mr. Rodgers indicated he worries about adding alt tags to adobe files as it has been his experience unless they are done properly, it can cause more problems. Mr. Misis added there will be a meeting in the next month or so to go through some of the comments Mr. Rodgers had raised before and that will be a good opportunity to go through this in more detail.

5. Schedule Update

Shahin Khazrajafari, BLE Project Team, reviewed the 2025 schedule and indicated the project is on track with key milestones planned for this year. Currently the project is working on 60% design development and review. As the project moves into the latter part of the year, 90% design and cost estimates will begin. Shahin added much of the cultural placekeeping coordination will be ongoing and worked into the 90% design plans. Coordination with the FTA will continue with a ratings application submittal to the FTA later in the summer. An update on cost, schedule and ridership is planned at the July Corridor Management Committee (CMC) that will be reflecting the progress that has been made since municipal consent and the additional scope that has been added to the project. Public engagement and anti-displacement activities continue throughout the entire process.

Mr. Rodgers commented on safety concerns that need to be addressed in the BLE project to assist pedestrians with visual impairments to confidently cross the tracks. An example Mr. Rodgers provided was the platform at the Nicollet Station. There is nothing to prevent anyone from accidentally going down that ramp too far and find themselves in the middle of Nicollet Avenue. Nick Landwer replied that this is good input and something the design team is looking into. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled to discuss safety details. Co-chair Hansen indicated his interest in participating in this follow-up discussion.

6. Engagement Update

Mr. Cigolo shared that extensive engagement has been done to date from August 2020 with the preparation of the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) rolling into municipal consent and now advancing further into design. The engagement team has collaborated with communities along the alignment and the metrics show 933 events resulting in over 41,000 points of contact with the public. Mr. Cigolo stated the metrics do not include one-on-one meetings with property owners and various businesses. Various means have been utilized to engage communities such as social media, advertising, and newsletters on community and cultural media. Over 7000 calls and emails have been fielded. Approximately 250,000 postcards have been sent to various locations along the alignment. Art has also been used to continue to extend outreach and has yielded a positive outcome.

Currently the engagement team is conducting business and residential canvassing. A mailer was sent out in February to corridor properties informing them on what to expect in 2025 and gathering additional contact information. The engagement team is reviewing design changes with the communities prior to publishing 60% design. There is interest from various property owners wanting to know what the impacts will be. There is additional coordination being conducted with key property owners in the North Loop regarding impacts. In addition, design workshops have been conducted regarding the Lowry Avenue Station to gather input from the community regarding options to further advance the design of this station. Mr. Cigolo added this work would not have been possible without the help of additional engagement consultants and community-based organizations, who have served as the engagement cohort, and helped the engagement team reach out to the communities they serve.



Mr. Cigolo summarized the recent engagement events that were hosted and upcoming community events. Mr. Cigolo stated in 2025 the engagement team is continuing to coordinate one-on-ones with various businesses and property owners along the alignment.

Jeff Guertin stated there is a Home Owners Association (HOA) workshop listed on the Brooklyn Park city website for April 12. Mr. Cigolo replied this meeting is missing on the presentation slide but the engagement team is planning to attend. This HOA event is for all HOAs in Brooklyn Park. The engagement team anticipates fielding questions from the various properties along the route. Mr. Rodgers asked if the engagement team is still receiving negative feedback about the project with all the engagement touchpoints the engagement team has had. Mr. Cigolo replied most responses relate to impacts. Overall, there is support for the project. There are community members who do not support the project and the engagement team continues to share project information. Most community members appreciate the openness about what is being proposed. Typically, there is a lot of interest surrounding the project when there is a key decision point.

Mr. Guertin asked if the engagement team could provide a report on the metrics being presented and if there are themes or trends being seen. Mr. Cigolo shared there is a biweekly update that is produced that will be shared with this committee.

Mr. Guertin asked if the engagement team monitors social media to see what is being discussed outside of the meetings. Mr. Cigolo replied the communications team monitors social media.

Mr. Guertin mentioned a comment he received recently from a community member stating that there was another light rail fatality. This individual remarked that they didn't know how many people have been killed but there is more than one and there doesn't seem to be any accountability on that. Alicia Vap shared there is a Safety and Security Action Plan that began at the tail end of COVID to track concerns being seen systemwide. This plan uses a layered approach including Metro Transit police, community service officers (CSO), trip agents, and extra signage. Mr. Landwer added the data on any accidents are reviewed and if there are safety factors to be improved, the agency looks at this. Co-chair Hansen stated it should also be noted pedestrian fatalities from car accidents are over ten times higher than trains.

7. Discussion and Members' Feedback

Co-chair Hansen asked if anyone had anything additional to discuss. Mr. Cigolo mentioned the advisory committees were intended to continue until the environmental review process is complete and this milestone is coming near. The CAC could potentially be converted to a construction work group and additional details will be provided on timing of this. Mr. Cigolo indicated there are additional opportunities to collaborate and share feedback on this project. If interested in joining the cultural placekeeping workgroup, a link can be found in the chat. Recruitment will be completed at the end of next month. After April, the next CMC meeting will be held in July. If there are topics community members want to discuss in the next month, Mr. Cigolo asked that these topics be shared



with the team. Co-Chair Hansen recommended a topic of feedback being received from the changes being made to Lowry Station.

8. Next Meeting: May 7, 2025.

Co-chair Hansen thanked everyone for attending and providing feedback and comments.

9. Adjourn

Co-chair Hansen adjourned the meeting at 7:42 pm.

Meeting Materials: Agenda, Slides, February 5 Meeting Summary

Administrative Lead: Joleen Ketterling

Meeting Chat:

5:52 PM Meeting started

Kaja Vang 6:58 PM - Cultural Placekeeping Application Link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SL7VDRY>

METRO Blue Line Extension Cultural Placekeeping Design Groups Survey

Web survey powered by SurveyMonkey.com. Create your own online survey now with SurveyMonkey's expert certified FREE templates.