



METRO Blue Line Extension Project Decision Board Meeting

Date & Time	December 18, 2024 9:00 am-10:30 am
Location	Blue Line Extension Project Office, North Conference Room, 6465 Wayzata Blvd, Suite 600, St Louis Park, MN 55426
Members	Charlie Zelle, Irene Fernando, Reva Chamblis, Marion Greene, Jeff Lunde, Ben Schweigert, Peter Hanf,
Project Staff	Nick Thompson, Dan Soler, Shahin Khazrajafari, Nick Landwer, Kelcie Young, Jer Yang

1. Call To Order

Charlie Zelle, Chair of the Metropolitan Council called the METRO Blue Line Extension (BLE) Project Decision Board (PDB) Meeting to order at 9:06am.

2. Minutes from November 20, 2024 Meeting

Chair Zelle asked for motion to approve of the November 20 PDB Meeting Minutes.

Irene Fernando, Hennepin County Commissioner motioned to approve the minutes, and it was seconded by Reva Chamblis, Metropolitan Council Member.

The minutes were officially approved.

3. Resolution 24-PDB-005 – Approve 2025 Meeting Location & Schedule

Chair Zelle asked for motion to approved of the 2025 PDB Meeting schedules. Council Member Chamblis motioned to approve the 2025 PDB Meeting dates, it was seconded by Commissioner Fernando.

The Resolution 24-PDB-005 was officially approved.

4. Project Updates – Lowry Design

Nick Landwer, Metropolitan Council, provided an update on the Lowry Station design. Mr. Landwer explained that during the Municipal Consent process and the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) review, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) and the City of Minneapolis requested for the BLE project to reassess the Lowry Station design, expressed concerns about park and trail crossings. Additionally, North Memorial Hospital expressed concerns about the Lowry Avenue intersection crossing and the potential impact of gate arms on emergency access to the hospital.



Mr. Landwer explained that the initial Lowry Station design for Municipal Consent was developed by a team comprising the BLE Design team, representatives from Minneapolis, North Memorial Hospital, and MPRB staff, who collaborated throughout the 2024.

Dan Soler, Hennepin County stated that the Municipal Consent design plan (Option A) was a revised version, incorporating feedback from stakeholders and other entities.

Mr. Landwer noted that today's handout includes a packet outlining the nine options the BLE team re-evaluated for the Lowry Avenue Station design. He shared that the BLE project team held a public workshop in early December 2024, where the community reviewed these options, with support expressed for both the current Municipal Consent design (Option A) and Option H design.

Mr. Landwer explained that as the team evaluated the nine options, the design team developed an evaluation matrix based on the Municipal Consent option. This matrix assessed how each alternative compared in addressing concerns such as safety, accessibility, park and trail impacts, hospital access, traffic, infrastructure connectivity, neighborhood activity, impacts on new bridges, and construction costs. He then provided an overview of each of the nine options.

Commissioner Fernando asked about the team's progress in decision-making based on the options and feedback. Mr. Landwer responded that Option A is the preferred choice, citing significant drawbacks with the other options, and noted that Option H is the next preferred alternative. Mr. Soler added that the BLE Project still needs to present these options to the MPRB in January 2025.

Chair Zelle asked whether MPRB had concerns about the other options. Mr. Soler confirmed that MPRB had expressed additional concerns. He noted that another public meeting is planned, with Minneapolis specifically requesting a meeting to be held there. Additionally, the options will be displayed on boards at the December 19, 2024, BLE Corridor Management Committee (CMC) meeting.

Mr. Soler explained that these alternatives options are not alternatives instead of the Municipal Consent design, but alternatives that address a topic that was brought up during Municipal Consent. Nick Thompson, Metropolitan Council added that there was question raised about the decision-making process and explained that PDB members will provide input on the design decisions.

Jeff Lunde, Hennepin County Commissioner, emphasized the importance of presenting these options to Robbinsdale. Mr. Soler noted that the BLE Design team has been sharing the options with Robbinsdale staff and will meet with the new Robbinsdale City Council in January 2025.



Commissioner Fernando recommended that the team create a timeline and list of key meetings and public event dates. Mr. Soler confirmed that the BLE team will continue sharing these options throughout December 2024 and January 2025.

Commissioner Fernando inquired whether MPRB is required to vote on the options. Mr. Soler explained that the Lowry Station Design affects a section of Theodore Wirth Parkway, impacting both the Grand Rounds—a historic and park resource. He noted that this falls under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) within the Section 4(f) review process.

Commissioner Lunde requested a timeline for the Section 4(f) review. Kelcie Young from the Metropolitan Council stated that an anticipated de minimis determination is planned, pending the FTA's recommendation in February 2025 for the Section 4(f) pathway. Mr. Soler added that discussions in January and February 2025 could impact the timeline if the selected option deviates from the Municipal Consent design. He noted that the EIS document is currently advancing based on the Municipal Consent design but would need modifications if the design option changes.

5. Next Meeting: January 15, 2025

6. Adjourn

Chair Zelle concluded the meeting and adjourned it at 10:01 am.

Meeting Materials Provided:

Meeting Agenda and PDB PowerPoint Presentation December 18, 2024

Meeting Minutes, November 20, 2024

Lowry Avenue Station Design Options

Respectfully Submitted,
Jer Yang, Blue Line Ext. Administrative Lead