Blue Line Extension Townhall Meetings: March 25/30, 2021
Today’s Topics

• Timeline
• Route Options
• Discussion
2021 Timeline
Project Transition

• August 2020: After a multi-year effort to negotiate with BNSF that included many levels of government and offers including buying the corridor, it was time to move the project forward
Alignment Principles

• Meet Federal Transit Administration New Starts criteria
  ▪ Maintain BLRT Purpose and Need
  ▪ Maintain mode
  ▪ Minimize travel time
  ▪ Maximize ridership
  ▪ Maximize community and economic development
  ▪ Maximize project rating
  ▪ When appropriate, pursue opportunities to serve even more people and destinations, especially areas with lower rates of car ownership/vehicular access and those with mobility challenges
Alignment Principles

• Maintain existing alignment as much as possible
  - Maintain existing termini: Target Field Station in Minneapolis and Oak Grove Station in Brooklyn Park
  - Serve the existing corridor cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Robbinsdale, Golden Valley, Minneapolis, and their major destinations

• Mitigate negative impacts
  - Complement existing and planned METRO transitways
  - Minimize residential, commercial and environmental impacts
  - Support safety and connections prioritizing people walking, biking, and rolling
  - Maximize carbon pollution reduction
Engagement Principles

• Meaningfully engage stakeholders
  ▪ Honor and build on previous robust community engagement
  ▪ Tailor engagement practices to meet the needs of the individual communities in the corridor
Engagement Principles

• Engage, inform, and consult diverse communities to co-create project solutions that reduce disparities
  ▪ Ensure corridor communities of all races, ethnicities, incomes and abilities are engaged so all communities and corridor cities share in growth opportunities, with an emphasis on low-income and cultural communities
  ▪ Use community goals, priorities, and criteria for growth to inform decision-making
  ▪ Adjust strategies and approach as needed to ensure corridor communities are fully represented in engagement efforts
Project Goals

• Select & adopt a community supported alignment by the end of 2021
  ▪ Evaluate route options for benefits and impacts
  ▪ Advance conceptual engineering
Approach & Timeline

December 2020 – March 2021
- BLRT Project Principles
- Develop Initial Route Modifications

Late Spring – Summer 2021
- We are Here
- Evaluation Based on Initial Screening Criteria and Community Feedback
- Refine Route Modifications

Winter 2021
- Evaluate Based on Project Goals, Objectives, and Evaluation Criteria
- Route Modifications Recommended for Evaluation in EIS

TIER 1: Qualitative Evaluation Grounded in Project Purpose and Need

TIER 2: Quantitative Evaluation
2021 Milestones

Tier 1: Initial Screening
- Routes options released for analysis and discussion

Tier 2: Route Evaluation
- Draft report with routes evaluated against project criteria with additional engineering work, and preliminary station locations released for comments
- Final draft report with recommended route released for comments

Recommended route
- Route advances for further engineering and environmental work in 2022
2021 Activities and Beyond

• End of 2021: Adopt a community supported route
  ▪ Conceptual engineering for new route options, including station locations
  ▪ Evaluation of project benefits and impacts
  ▪ Identify a community supported route
  ▪ Identify environmental path moving forward

• Beyond 2021
  ▪ Begin environmental analysis
  ▪ Municipal Consent
  ▪ Develop construction ready engineering plans & design details
Initial Route Identification
Project Areas

• Project route options
  ▪ Confirmation of route options for Areas 1 & 2
  ▪ Preliminary options for Area 3

• Options based on:
  ▪ Adopted Project Principles
  ▪ Conceptual review of LRT right of way and operational needs
  ▪ Applicable previous work
  ▪ Community feedback on key destinations and connections
Area 2
Area 3 Considerations: Public Right of Way

- To fit the LRT guideway, sidewalks, and two travel lanes about 75 feet of right of way is needed
- When additional right of way is available other elements can be included: boulevards, bikeways or street parking
Area 3 Considerations: Compatible Land Use

- Light rail is better suited to higher density residential and commercial areas.
- Best to place routes where the LRT investment can also leverage related community benefits.
Area 3
Area 3 Connections
Feedback Sought

• Begin discussion on the new options to advance
  ▪ Validate if the options presented seem right
  ▪ Understand what options are resonating with residents and businesses
  ▪ Identify if anything is missing
  ▪ What opportunities or issues does the community see right away
  ▪ What other information is needed to support a route option
  ▪ Begin discussion about desired station locations along new portions of the route

• Evaluation goals, which will help refine objectives and evaluation criteria to help analyze the benefits and impacts between options
Multiple Methods to Share Feedback

- Leave comments on the interactive map
- Take a survey
- Provide general comments online or by emailing sophia.ginis@metrotransit.org
- Recording of tonight’s meeting: BlueLineExt.org
- We will come to you: invite us to an event or gathering
Next Steps: Evaluation Criteria Goals

• Improve transit access and connections to jobs and regional destinations.

• Improve frequency and reliability of transit service to communities in the corridor.

• Provide transit improvements that maximize transit benefits, while being cost competitive and economically viable.

• Support communities’ development goals.

• Promote healthy communities and sound environmental practices including efforts to address climate change.

• Advance local and regional equity and work towards reducing regional racial disparities.
Next Steps: Continue to Seek Solutions

Project Goals, Objectives and Criteria

Conceptual Engineering and Design
- Engineering Analysis to Understand LRT & Roadway Configurations
- Potential Station Locations
- Right of Way Impacts

Community Benefits
- Further efforts to address anti-displacement, equitable development and community wealth building

Previous Project Commitments
- Address investments related to the previous alignment
Discussion

Area 1: The current route and stations along West Broadway in Brooklyn Park are expected to remain the same.

Area 2: Project stakeholders identified Bottineau Blvd (County Road 81) as a potential focus of initial analysis.

Area 3: There are many potential routes so engagement and in-depth analysis is needed.

NOTE: these are a few of many potential links between the Lowry and West Broadway routes and Target Field Station.
Stay Connected!

• Project website: BlueLineExt.org
  ▪ Project news, maps, surveys, what we’re hearing
  ▪ Committee meeting materials: agenda, handouts, presentations, meeting minutes
  ▪ Sign-up for GovDelivery project updates
  ▪ Connect with staff for your questions or schedule a presentation

• Follow us:
  ▪ Twitter: @BlueLineExt
  ▪ Facebook: MetroBlueLineExtension
Question Reference Slides
Route Options: Not Recommended

• Penn & Emerson/Fremont were not recommended as they did not meet the multiple Project Principles:
  ▪ Complement existing and planned METRO transitways
  ▪ Minimize residential, commercial and environmental impacts

• Both roadways have narrow Right of Way

• METRO C & D Lines are a valuable part of transit network
Route Options: Not Recommended

- Lyndale between West Broadway & Lowry
  - Narrower right of way
  - Significant residential impacts
  - Houses are closer to the sidewalk/street
Route Options: Not Recommended

- Highway 55 to Highway 100
  - Does not serve as many riders and destinations
  - Longer route could result in increased travel time
  - Greater diversion from previous alignment
  - Very little initial support for this corridor