



Community Meeting Summary

METRO Blue Line Extension (BLE)

Community Quarterly Update Meeting

Wednesday, November 8, 2023, 6 – 8 p.m.

Metro Transit North Loop Garage, 600 N. 8th Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55411

Attendance: 21 (signed in)

Format: 1 hour 20-minute presentation followed by 40-minute Breakout/Small Groups sessions.

Formal Presentation:

Presented by: Chris Beckwith (Metropolitan Council), Nkongo Cigolo (Metropolitan Council), Nick Landwer (Metropolitan Council), Kelcie Young (Metropolitan Council), and Cathy Gold (Hennepin County)

Project staff gave a project update on the following topics:

- A project overview given by Chris Beckwith of progress that has been made since the last quarterly meeting three months ago (Aug 2023). Shared the staff recommended alignment and next steps, including environmental process and municipal consent in 2024. An environmental update given by Kelcie Young, highlighting that the project is currently working on the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) that will be published in late spring of 2024; highlighted the environmental justice analysis that is a requirement for FTA and NEPA.
- Nick Landwer reviewed the preferred track alignment and stations for the Blue Line Extension for all proposed 12 stations.
- Nkongo Cigolo gave an overview of community engagement feedback that has been collected. Placed an emphasis on business canvassing the team has been doing recently to understand business operations.
- Cathy Gold shared information on Anti-Displacement. Ms. Gold revealed that community members, business owners, project staff, and government officials are working together to achieve the Anti-Displacement outcomes created by the Anti-Displacement Work Group in 2021. Ms. Gold shared about ongoing work to develop an anti-displacement policy agenda and highlighted the Anti-Displacement theme that “it’s not just about the train, it’s about the people.”
- Three breakout groups were split up by anti-displacement, design, and general project information/environmental to give community members the opportunity to ask questions about specific topics and design elements. Group conversations went until 8 p.m.

Comment Summary/Themes:

Parking

- Concerns for maintaining and potentially improving parking on/around West Broadway for businesses in the area

Construction

- Construction impacts to community and businesses

Alignments

- Concern that calling one alignment the “preferred alignment” is “teaching to the test”; would rather see study results that show it’s the better alignment before hearing that phrase.



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- Proponent of the preferred alignment, as walkshed for the alternate “pink line, along I-94” alignment is worse than that of preferred.
- Station location of the preferred alignment is “where people want to be.”
- Preference for the 10th street transit alignment, with additional idea to extend 8th street for peds cars and bikes past the viaduct to become another good throughway.

Design

- Those who reside near Target Field would like to know what that design will look like, how that area will be impacted (renderings, design details).
- Concerns with how 918 lofts can continue building maintenance with a transitway and nowhere to get a truck.
- Preference for transit malls wherever proposed; safer and easier ped crossing.
- Walkability to station areas – participant said that a 10-minute walk is a bit too far.
- Loved the idea that 10th avenue to be a transit mall.
- Concerns for residents who have moved in around Target field not having adequate access for their cars, and the compression of traffic on Washington and the safety concerns around that (ped safety, crash safety).

Robbinsdale

- Robbinsdale concerns, why is park & ride going where it is? Concerns for adding traffic to an already busy intersection near a hospital and Senior Living, and nearby residents giving up what could be developed space.
- Is there a preferred stop location for Robbinsdale? **Answer:** two stations are planned for Robbinsdale, the Lowry Station and the Downtown Robbinsdale Station.
- Would there be any consideration for not having park & ride in Robbinsdale? **Answer:** conceptual plans show a park-and-ride in Robbinsdale at 40th Avenue; removing the park-and-ride may have other negative impact to the project such ridership impacts.

Safety

- Safety concerns around crime and drug usage on station platforms. Shared information on Metro Transit safety and security action plan and the recent gains from its implementation.

Questions/Comments heard During Break Out/Small Groups:

General Project/Environmental

- Who would pay for damage caused by operating LRT, for example: street, sidewalk, nearby dwellings, cracks in homes etc. Wants to know the process of reporting and submitting for reimbursement. **Answer:** a damage claims process will be in place, a 24-hour construction hotline will be in place, a pre-construction survey will be conducted prior to construction to ensure that the pre-existing conditions are documented prior to construction.
- General questions about the Green Line Extension and comparing it to the Blue Line Extension.
- Can there be protected bike lanes on Washington Avenue? **Answer:** the comment is noted, and this will be addressed with municipal partners while design plans are advanced.



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- Is the project team planning to include BRT studies in the SDEIS report, and why LRT was chosen over BRT? **Answer:** the mode of transportation for the Blue Line Extension is light rail; prior analysis had already identified light rail as the mode for this corridor.
- How long would it take to ride LRT from Brooklyn Park to downtown Minneapolis? **Answer:** Travel time is not yet finalized, and we anticipate to have that information early next year (2024).
- Question about ridership analysis, and how often those are completed. **Answer:** ridership forecast for the Blue Line Extension is expected to be released early next year (2024).
- Question about where visualizations can be found. Directed to project website.
- What happens if municipal consent isn't given by a city? **Answer:** the project office will continue to work with our municipal partners to ensure that the municipal consent requirement is met.

Anti-displacement

- Conversation around what is anti-displacement and what that group does. **Answer:** a program to work with the community to prevent displacement as much as possible and support businesses and residents before, during, and after construction.
- Conversation around where the funding for this support is coming from. **Answer:** the program is still in the planning stages, but hoping to get philanthropic donations, as well as support from the local, state, and federal level.
- Concern that the parking ramp (with 500 spaces) will affect Robbinsdale businesses.
- Conversation/concern about those who have put in money for investments or start-ups – if they have already put in the money for a new business/investment and now they are being displaced due to LRT construction, will they be reimbursed or eligible for funding support? Or will they just lose all the money they put into something that cannot open. Make sure we think about that, and not just the pre-existing businesses.

Design

- Concerns regarding impact on historic buildings and what work is being done with protecting historical locations and buildings.
- Some that live in the North Loop were concerned with train noise and if there could be consideration for a “quiet zone.”
- Conversation about BRT and LRT.
- Why did the project team decide to keep some street parking on West Broadway – in North Minneapolis? **Answer:** in response to community concerns, parking impacts and other potential project impacts were analyzed prior to developing a staff-recommended route through North Minneapolis.
- Will there be pedestrian and bike lanes on the structure going over East of 194? **Answer:** Current concept includes bike facilities on this bridge. Design for this bridge is ongoing and in collaboration with municipal partners.
- Question about if more research is needed, why are we choosing a route now before that research is completed (10th Ave). **Answer:** additional analysis is needed to identify all of the impacts related to the proposed route; development of mitigation measures will also be addressed as part of the environmental assessment. Other route options previously identified will also be included in the environmental assessment report, but in order to begin the Federal Transit Administration's reviews, a recommended alignment should be selected.



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Event Photo:

