



## BLRT Minneapolis Community Meeting

Wednesday August 23, 2023, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Capri Theater

Attendance: 40

Format: 1 hour presentation followed by a Q & A session.

Comment Summary/Themes:

- Traffic
  - Concern that reducing vehicle lanes will block emergency vehicles
  - Preference for railroad arms over traffic signals
- Safety and Crime
  - Ice, snow and cold temperatures can be dangerous for those waiting at stations
  - Desire for more security at stations and along route
- Displacement
  - Concern that businesses along route will be acquired/impacted by the project and will be unable to build elsewhere
- Station Location
  - Connectivity to greater transit systems such as BRT
  - Located in walkable areas and close to where people are
  - Idea: Station at Fremont
  - Desire for more stations along route
- Route Location/Design
  - 5<sup>th</sup> Street should be considered as a route option
- Decision making process
  - Community representation amongst decision makers
  - Desire to see how data is used to determine route and station locations

Q & A Session:

- How do you reach the station (Lowry Avenue Station)? Elevators?
  - **Project Response:** Yes, in the current concept elevators and stairs
- In a previous CMC, elevating station at 40<sup>th</sup> in Robbinsdale was proposed, is that still the case?
- I am concerned about the ice at the Bass Lake Road Interchange in the winter. Based on the design, it looks like ice can form/build up and become a safety issue.
- Are traffic arms going to be considered at Broadway, I-94 and other busy intersections?
  - **Project Response:** At this time our design in Minneapolis does not use any traffic arms at Broadway/I-94/other intersections. We are currently opting to use traffic signals to control LRT crossings in these areas instead due to concerns about increased traffic and noise associated with gates.
- I noticed that there is not a station connected to the B-Line (BRT route). There is a good connection to downtown, is there still consideration for a station closer to Fremont Ave?



# Community Meeting Summary

## METRO Blue Line Extension (BLRT)

- **Project Response:** B Line is an east-west route running along Lake Street/Marshall/Selby and is not in the vicinity of the Blue Line extension, nor does it connect to downtown Minneapolis (it does connect to downtown St Paul, but this area is not served by the Blue Line extension). If this commenter meant the C or D lines, there are numerous connection points to each of those throughout the route (at 7<sup>th</sup>, Emerson/Fremont, and Penn).
- What if people do not want to walk? We shouldn't have to walk more than half a block. Why don't we put a station at 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>?
  - I agree. For security and safety reasons, a block is too long to walk to a station.
  - **Project Response:** Station spacing for LRT is a balancing act between allowing the line to operate efficiently and allowing for easy connections for riders. Stations in Minneapolis are spaced as little as half a mile apart. We have found this to be the optimal balance of minimizing walking distance from the station as best as we can without severely slowing down the run time. Having to walk more than half a block is unfortunately just a requirement of physically fitting the light rail – the station area itself is as long as some full city blocks in Minneapolis at (typically) 370 feet long. Improved bike connections around the route may also help extend the distance riders are comfortable traveling to reach a station. Outside of Minneapolis, many of the stations that are spaced farther apart are also served by park and rides and nearby bike trails for those who are too far away to walk.
- Plymouth Ave is very congested, making it difficult to move aside for emergency vehicles. If the lanes are reduced to one, how will emergency vehicles be able to get by?
  - **Project Response:** Plymouth Avenue does not have light rail on it and there are no lane reductions on Plymouth associated with the project. If this commenter was asking about 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, our current design shows 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue as a transit mall, meaning there would be no vehicles driving on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue that could block the passage of emergency vehicles. Emergency vehicles would still have full access to 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
- For the 10<sup>th</sup> Ave option, have you considered a short segment of light rail going down the center of the road like a street car?
- The station at Penn Ave is very vague and the image has no vivid detail. Do you have an image with more detail?
- Have you looked into the 5<sup>th</sup> Street option? There are a lot of abandoned buildings on 5<sup>th</sup>.
- I appreciate that you are listening. I strongly encourage you to continue to listen to us.
- I think we should continue to focus strongly on this recommended route. As soon as you do that, we can start imagining and we can work with you to prevent unnecessary property loss
- I am concerned about the use of eminent domain. If property is acquired, the owner should receive five times its value.
- I am curious to know why a station on James Ave is being considered over a station on Fremont Ave. A station on Fremont Ave makes the most obvious sense because it would connect to mass transit systems and to where the people are.
  - **Project Response:** The James Avenue station is in close proximity to the Davis Center, ZaRah, Shiloh Temple, North Commons, the YMCA, etc. This is ideal spacing (half a mile) for a second station at Lyndale, which is in close proximity to Cub Foods, Broadway Commons, etc. Both of these stations are also just a short distance from the destinations in the middle of them, such as Hawthorn Crossings and the D Line connections at Emerson and Fremont. This allows riders more direct access to the destinations in the immediate vicinity of each station, while also splitting the distance riders have to walk to the destinations in the center of the two stations.
- The last thing the Blue Line needs to be in predatory towards businesses. We are looking at all time building costs and interest rates. The buildings on the proposed route (Minneapolis) are cheaper than



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elsewhere, meaning if business owners lose their property because of the project, they will be unable to afford to rebuild elsewhere.

- There seems to be more room on Fremont for a station.
  - **Project Response:** Placing a station directly on 21<sup>st</sup> near Fremont would require a widening of the roadway to fit the station without eliminating many of the property impacts in the James area (because either way the light rail still has to turn from 21<sup>st</sup> back onto West Broadway), and consequentially would likely result in a higher total number of property impacts than are estimated with the current design.
- How many people on the advisory board are actually going to be impacted by the project? You are unable to understand the impact unless you experience it yourself.
- Traffic on Washington and Broadway is very congested. Is there a plan to put railroad arms or anything beyond just a traffic signal at these intersections and stations? Traffic signals are not sufficient at mitigating traffic if the roads are too busy and drivers do not always follow traffic laws.
  - **Project Response:** See response above.
- I think the 10<sup>th</sup> Ave (Minneapolis) option should be reconsidered or another stop/more security should be added. There are drug issues in the area and transportation will only make it easier for people to reach.
- More stations should be added in Minneapolis. I feel like we can have a station on Penn and James as well as Fremont and Lyndale. Fremont feels like a dead-zone. I know traffic is an issue, but if we added more stations we can fill gaps with decent running times. Extra stations can make up lost time and serve more areas.
  - **Project Response:** See response above. Adding stations increasingly closer together than the half-mile spacing we currently have shown in Minneapolis also requires a roadway that is consistently wider to fit all those stations. Beyond the issues with slow service described above, adding this many additional stations is highly likely to increase property impacts by a great deal because of that roadway widening.
- How did staff reach the conclusion to run East of I-94 over Lyndale? What was the criteria and why? Other than Lyndale homeowners' thoughts and feelings, what data was used in the decision-making process? We should look at ridership. It is illogical that the Lyndale route is no longer being considered because it is the route that would serve more residents.
  - **Project Response:** While an advantage of the current recommended route is hearing and responding to community concerns about Lyndale, there are numerous advantages to the current east of I-94 design that are independent of the concerns with the Lyndale route. The station at Washington serves the North Loop area and offers connections for approximately 2,500 residents within the station area and over 5,000 jobs. The proposed 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue extension reconnects North Minneapolis with the other side of I-94, which in turn adds new access to the Mississippi River and downtown Minneapolis, and improves bike and pedestrian connectivity to, from, and within North Minneapolis. Washington Avenue is significantly wider and as a result is predicted to have minimal permanent right-of-way acquisitions.



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### Event Photos:

