



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Community Advisory Committee Meeting
September 8, 2015
Blue Line Project Office
5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200
Crystal, MN 55428
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

Meeting Summary

CAC Members: Justin Youngbluth, Gillian Rosenquist, Rich Baker, George Selman, Chris Berne, Catherine Fleming, Steve Schmidt, Denetrick Powers, Giuseppe Marrari, La Shella Sims, Ken Rodgers

Agency Staff and Guests: Emily Carr, Darlene Walser, Juan Rangel, Paul Danielson, Sophia Ginis, Rachel Haase, Sam O’Connell, Dan Pfeiffer, Scott Reed, Alicia Vap, Jim Toulouse, Dan Soler, David Davies, Kathryn O’Brien, Nick Landwer

1. Introductions

Chris Berne welcomed the committee members and asked if anyone had comments on the minutes from the previous meeting. No one had comments.

2. Outreach Update

Sam O’Connell presented. There were five open houses in July/August with about 250 total attendees and 125 comments received. Some of the key themes included:

- Supportive of project
- Concerned about:
 - Traffic impacts
 - Parking
 - Safety/security
 - Property impacts

Meeting materials and comment summaries are available on the project website.

The next round of open houses are planned for mid to late October, and we are working on securing dates and locations. These meetings will be focused on environmental issues and have updated roll plots.

Chris Berne noted that they are working on setting up a meeting with Hennepin County on the traffic signal at Maplebrook Parkway. This will likely be the third week of September.

3. Station Area Planning Process Update

Darlene Walser presented. Hennepin County is in the middle of the station area planning process, which is a community-based planning process that looks at the ½ mile area surrounding the proposed LRT stations. This process has been completed for Minneapolis and Golden Valley and is ongoing for Crystal, Golden Valley, and Robbinsdale.

Darlene presented some of the input from the Robbinsdale community at meeting on June 11:

- Residents love where they live – want LRT and related development to preserve and enhance character of the downtown
- Pedestrian scale, walkable design, and safe station access
- Parking structure integrated with downtown, compatible scale and character
- Visual/physical connection to the rest of downtown
- Want it to provide a community gathering place

Input from businesses in the area was also solicited. At 41 ½ Avenue, the main feedback included:

- Add pedestrian walkway from Hubbard Marketplace to West Broadway and CR 81
- Add retail to front of parking structure
- Expand successful business core on West Broadway

George Selman said he was very impressed with the process and quality of the results. The process doesn't shy away from tough decisions and is a great reflection of the community's vision.

Next steps:

- Brooklyn Park
 - Design workshop September 28 – October 2
 - Community meeting October 1 at 6:00 pm
- Crystal
 - Community meeting September 29 at 6:00 pm
 - Design workshop November 3-6
 - Community meeting November 5 at 6:00 pm
- Next year the County will look at what was in the community visions that is not included in the BLRT project and will start identifying an investment framework for those elements
- Get updates at www.hennepin.us/bottineau

Rich Baker noted that the results for Robbinsdale look very different than for Golden Valley, and he would like to discuss this further with Darlene. Denetric Powers also asked to be included in this conversation.

4. Robbinsdale Station – Technical Issue #6

Alicia Vap presented. The DEIS identified a side platform with a general station location. Issues to be resolved included:

- Pedestrian movements at 41st Avenue N
- Grade separation of LRT at 42nd Ave N
- Station location, parking ramp, and future development
- Traffic improvements

Pedestrian Movements at 41st Avenue N:

- Church and parochial school nearby – community wanted to make sure crossings were safe
- Analyzed potential for grade separated pedestrian crossing at 41st Avenue N
- Grade separation on north side impacts park land and public safety complex
- Grade separation on south side impacts residential and institutional uses (Sacred Heart Church parking lot)
- Advance design and safety measures for at-grade design

Grade Separation of LRT at 42nd Avenue N:

- Concerns about traffic impacts with at-grade crossing
- Analyzed grade separation: LRT over and LRT under at 42nd Ave N
- LRT over 42nd: more right-of-way impacts and visual impacts to downtown
- LRT under 42nd: below grade station with high retaining walls and limited visibility to and from downtown

Station, Parking Ramp Location, and Development Opportunities:

- Station
 - Converted to center platform
 - Location could slide up to 65 feet to the south from where it's shown today – will continue to work with City and residents on preferred location
 - Passenger drop off incorporated on south side of parking ramp
- Parking Ramp
 - DEIS proposed 500 space parking ramp
 - Current design is a 550 space structure
 - Analyzed other sites for parking ramp but location adjacent to station provides best access to/from station
 - Relocate transit center function currently at Hubbard Marketplace into parking ramp
 - Adjustments will be made during design to make more space for development opportunities

Traffic Improvements:

- Proposing to add left turn lanes from West Broadway to 42nd Avenue
- Change signal phasing and timing to optimize number of cars that can get through intersection
- Intersection will operate at an acceptable level of service with those improvements

Recommendations:

- Pedestrian movements at 41st Ave N
 - Maintain at grade
 - Continue to explore design and safety aspects of crossing
- LRT crossing at 42nd Ave N
 - Maintain at-grade crossing with gates at 42nd Ave N

- Station, parking ramp location, and development opportunities
 - Center platform with opportunity to shift south for better connections and visibility into downtown
 - 550 space park-and-ride adjacent to station with incorporated transit center function
 - Opportunity for development
- Associated traffic improvements
 - Acceptable traffic operations in 2040 with LRT and ramp with modifications to West Broadway and 42nd Ave

Catherine Fleming asked if the timing of traffic signals would accommodate easier pedestrian crossing across 42nd – current timing doesn't allow pedestrians to get all the way across. Dan Soler replied that the retiming would look at pedestrian timing along with turn signals. Hennepin County owns that signal so they set the timing, but BPO will work with them on it.

Alicia Vap noted that FTA has a program that provides funding to help foster development, but those conversations are just starting.

Gillian Rosenquist asked if the crossing at 39 ½ would be closed. Dan Soler said BPO is talking with City staff about whether or not it would be closed, but it has not yet been decided. There will likely be a neighborhood meeting to get input. The benefit is that it's one fewer crossing with LRT; the negative would be that it would impact pedestrian mobility.

Catherine Fleming asked if there would be increased freight rail traffic behind Lee Square off of 36th Avenue. Gillian Rosenquist replied that the LRT won't go behind that area. Catherine asked if there would be green space included by the station. Alicia Vap said there may be opportunities for that but it isn't set yet. George Selman noted that the station area planning vision included a welcoming green space.

5. West Broadway Crossing – Technical Issue #7

Nick Landwer presented. The DEIS showed a crossing that mirrored the existing crossing at this location – S curve that isn't very conducive to vehicle or pedestrian/bike traffic. The project's goal is to make crossings quiet zone ready. To make that work, the median would need to be extended farther, eliminating some left turns.

Issues to be resolved:

- Rail crossing of West Broadway in Crystal
 - Provide quiet zone ready crossings
 - Provide for safe pedestrian, bike, and vehicle crossing
 - Maintain access to neighborhoods on the east and west sides
 - Maintain continuity of the County Road
 - Limit property impacts

Recommendation:

- Proceed with design
 - Quiet zone ready

- Roundabout on east side
- Maintain full access to 48th Ave/Welcome Ave
- Would be limited property impacts
- Continue coordination with City of Crystal and Hennepin County

Ken Rodgers asked if the roundabout was single lane or double lane. Nick Landwer replied that it would be single lane. Ken said he would like there to be focus on the pedestrian crossings through the roundabout. Nick said with the roundabout the bike/pedestrian crossing will be more squared up with West Broadway rather than skewed like existing configuration. Ken asked if alternatives to a roundabout were considered. Nick said they looked at a number of alternatives, but to keep a full access intersection on the east side without a roundabout they would have substantial property impacts (i.e., take a few residential properties). Sophia Ginis asked Ken if roundabouts were difficult to navigate for blind people. Ken said yes, extremely, because there is no walk signal. Blind people use cars to block as they cross the intersection, and that isn't possible in a roundabout. Nick Landwer added that they are looking at adding in sidewalks and crosswalks where possible and are working with the City.

La Shella Sims asked if the crossings could be intentionally designed to accommodate accessibility for blind people. Nick Landwer said they will continue to work on this issue. Ken Rodgers added that it's not just an issue for blind/visually impaired pedestrians, but if it's difficult for them it's also difficult for sighted people. Roundabouts keep car traffic moving, not pedestrian traffic.

6. Oak Grove Parkway – Technical Issue #11

Nick Landwer presented.

Issues to be resolved:

- Determine location of LRT station north of TH 610
- Determine location of park-and-ride facility
- Determine roadway and utility network necessary for BLRT opening day
- Analyze how BLRT improvement fits within future development scenarios
- Continue collaboration with City of Brooklyn Park, Hennepin County, Target, and MnDOT

Station, Parking Ramp Location, and Future Development

- Station
 - DEIS located station on west side of existing West Broadway south of Oak Grove Parkway
 - Desire to improve visibility to/from platform to downtown; explore shifting platform to improve visibility
 - Provide pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment
 - Provide a center platform
- Parking Ramp
 - DEIS proposed 900 space parking ramp
 - Analysis indicates required parking capacity of 750 spaces
 - Support development opportunities

Current design has reconfigured West Broadway that can accommodate Xcel transmission lines and green space; realigned Oak Grove Parkway to 101st; and station on west side of West Broadway.

BLRT Opening Day Requirements:

- Station
- Parking ramp
 - 750 spaces
 - Accommodate development opportunities
- Roadway network
 - West Broadway from TH 610 through Oak Grove Parkway
 - Oak Grove Parkway through West Broadway intersection
 - Main Street through West Broadway intersection
 - Road west of ramp from Oak Grove Parkway to Main Street

Recommendation:

- Station
 - Center platform west of West Broadway between Oak Grove Parkway and Main Street
- Parking Ramp
 - Approximately 750 space park-and-ride west of West Broadway between Oak Grove Parkway and Main Street
 - Ramp design to support development opportunities
- Roadway
 - Construct West Broadway with wide center median
 - Account for Xcel transmission lines
 - Reconstruct Oak Grove Parkway from Target Campus to 101st west of OMF
 - Construct Main Street and intersection to ramp
 - Construct road west of park-and-ride from Oak Grove Parkway to Main Street
 - Develop cost participation scenario for roadway improvements

Catherine Fleming asked if there had been thought given to using green energy or solar panels on LRT facilities. Nick Landwer said at this point they are still working to pin down the size and location, but as design advances Metro Transit will evaluate energy sources and what is cost effective.

Chris Berne asked why the need changed from 900 spaces to 750 spaces at the park-and-ride and if this would impact the other stations between Oak Grove Parkway and the next park-and-ride at 63rd Ave. Nick Landwer replied that development models have changed since the DEIS and refined where ridership is being pulled from, but they are pretty comfortable with where the number is at now.

Rich Baker asked Nick Landwer to clarify what he meant when he mentioned an eventual parking ramp at 169 and 101st. Nick said the City is looking at it but an intersection at 169 and 101st is not necessary for the LRT project. Rich asked how much the reconstruction of the roadways etc. would cost and why the other stations aren't getting the same infrastructural investment. Nick said they are currently working on the cost estimates so they don't have that yet. Some of the infrastructure

around the Oak Grove station may end up being built by other development before LRT gets there. Dan Soler added that the first person that gets to a site often has to take on a lot of the infrastructure needs in the area. For items that are necessarily required for LRT, BPO will work with the City, County, etc. to discuss cost participation. Kathryn O'Brien added that the OMF has been reoriented from the DEIS design to avoid parkland impact, but it now cuts off the continuity of 101st Avenue.

Gillian Rosenquist said that the message they got as part of the station area planning process was that in order to justify a station at Golden Valley Road, they need to open themselves up to redeveloping the area. There seem to be mixed messages in the different station areas. Dan Soler replied that that isn't the case in the Golden Valley Road station area as that station is justified regardless of redevelopment. Paul Danielson added that because it's the end of the line, the 750 spaces will come from north and west of the station area as well. The elements that will be included may change based on cost estimates.

Emily Carr added that the City asked that the project and County look at realigning the road network because the current configuration would not support development.

Justin Youngbluth asked if smaller facilities could be built initially and then have developers add on as they build. Nick Landwer said this is where the cost participation discussions come in to cover what isn't required for the project.

Chris Berne said that this area is one that the City of Brooklyn Park has been planning for years to be prime development land. He's assuming part of this discussion has been what would make this work for the City. There really isn't another place for the OMF, which takes a lot of land out of the tax base, and somehow it needs to be acceptable to the City of Brooklyn Park.

Steve Schmidt said that it is important to remember that this is conceptual and developers will ultimately need to do a lot of the work (e.g., building the retail component). Many things will change before things get built. Development beyond the station area will occur as well so we need to allow for the park-and-ride to be expanded if needed. Including retail on park-and-rides is great but there may not be a developer ready to build it when the parking ramp opens.

La Shella Sims asked what the benefit to north Minneapolis is from this project. Nick Landwer said it provides a reverse commute opportunity to jobs north of Minneapolis along the corridor. Dan Soler added that this is very different from Central Corridor, which has a fairly consistent setting. With BLRT, each community is different so what happens around each station area may be very different. The whole concept of how the alignment was developed along TH 55 was to allow for development along the south side of TH 55. There are opportunities in each community, but they aren't all equal. We do our best in each community to provide the opportunities that make it work.

7. OMF Location – Technical Issue #12

Alicia Vap presented.

DEIS assumptions:

- Location
 - Included two possible locations:
 - 93rd Ave N/West Broadway
 - 101st Ave N/Winnetka Ave N
 - Private development on 93rd site eliminated this location
- Size
 - Up to 15 acre site

Location:

- Property at 101st Ave N/Winnetka analyzed
- Recommended location considered preserving property for future development, avoiding wetlands, and avoiding park and trail impacts

Size:

- Initially proposed 14.25 acre site
- Reduced footprint by tightening track radius, realigning internal functions, and eliminating ring road

BPO staff took a tour of an OMF with the Brooklyn Park City Council back in June. Based on the feedback received, BPO modified the design and were able to reduce the size of the site plan, work out some access issues, and tighten curves.

Recommendation:

- Location near 101st Ave N and new Xylon Avenue N in north/south orientation
- Continued design coordination with City

Catherine Fleming asked if they are definitely able to obtain the land for the OMF, and if not, if there is a plan B? Alicia Vap said that the property is owned by the City, but at this stage in the environmental process they can't start negotiations with property owners. The City is supportive of the plan though so they don't foresee an issue.

8. Freight Rail Update – Technical Issue #13

Dan Soler presented.

BNSF coordination update:

- Dialogue continues regarding use of BNSF corridor
- BPO most proposed improvements consistent with BNSF Commuter Principles
 - “Any commuter operation cannot degrade BNSF’s freight service, negatively affect BNSF’s freight customers or BNSF’s ability to provide them with service”
 - “BNSF will not incur any liability for commuter operations that it would not have but for those operations”

Managing potential impacts to current/future BNSF freight service:

- Preserve BNSF's ability to make a future capacity improvement within the remaining right-of-way in a configuration that can be constructed today without any LRT facilities
- Meeting this Commuter Principle will require reconstruction of bridges over the BNSF corridor at Plymouth Avenue, Theodore Wirth Parkway, Golden Valley Road, and 36th Avenue
 - Reconstruction is needed due to current pier structure of bridges
 - Freight tracks go down the center for the most part currently
 - Reconstruction of bridges was not in original concept plan
 - Have not agreed to details of how this would be paid for

Rich Baker thinks the D1/D2 decision should be revisited because reconstructing these bridges is a substantial added cost. Dan Soler said to go back to that decision would be to take the process back to before the DEIS.

Locations with poor soil stability:

- Located commonly on BNSF corridor from TH 55 to 36th Avenue
- Geotechnical explorations found peat, organic clay, and soft clay, often at significant depth
- Range of soil stabilization techniques necessary to support LRT and freight in some locations
 - Load transfer platform over controlled modulus columns
 - Conventional bridge

Gillian Rosenquist asked if the project would have to build a two track bridge at Grimes and Golden Valley ponds. Dan Soler said the project will not pay for the double bridge for freight tracks, but there would be room for it if BNSF wanted it.

Catherine Fleming asked if these additional costs would eliminate the possibility of the Plymouth Avenue station. Dan said no, that's a policymaker decision, but a Plymouth Ave station is currently included in the design.

La Shella Sims asked what a service road would be used for on the freight tracks. Dan Soler said it's for maintenance. La Shella asked if BNSF will still own the full corridor or if Metro Transit will buy it. Dan said they anticipate buying a permanent easement. This would not be a lease with ongoing payments.

9. Environmental Update

Kathryn O'Brien presented. The environmental process identifies adverse effects, and then the first thing you do is see if you can avoid it. If you can't avoid it, you minimize, and finally you mitigate.

In Sochacki Park, if you add any fill to the floodplain you need to remove fill somewhere else. To avoid putting any additional fill (and therefore floodplain impacts), LRT will be built on a bridge – avoiding long term impacts to floodplains. The project has also been looking at how to construct the bridge. The DEIS discussed the potential for temporary impacts during construction. A detailed review of options for construction access for equipment/materials indicates that use of Sochacki Park is the best option to avoid other impacts (e.g., taking homes in order to have a laydown area for construction).

Next steps:

- Continue to engage DNR and NPS to complete Section 6(f) process
- Engage park stakeholders and users
- Identify options for construction use (if allowed)
 - Limitations on type and duration of construction activities
 - Commitments to maintain access for park users
 - Provisions to ensure safety of park users/staff
 - Commitments for restoration after use

Justin Youngbluth asked if mitigation would include reconstructing the road since it would likely be damaged by construction equipment. Kathryn O'Brien replied that would likely be included in construction specifications to restore to existing conditions or better.

Gillian Rosenquist asked how long temporary means. Paul Danielson said they currently anticipate it would be nine months. Jim Toulouse added that they can limit the construction time frame in the contract specifications.

Catherine Fleming asked if there are any toxins in this location and if they would be released into the environment during construction. Kathryn O'Brien said they don't anticipate much excavation, but a more detailed evaluation of the potential for contaminated materials will be completed next year in April. By avoiding the need to use a lot of fill or excavation, that has minimized the impact from potentially hazardous materials.

10. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm. The next CAC meeting is scheduled for October 10, 2015.