



## METRO Blue Line Extension Corridor Management Committee (CMC) Meeting Minutes

Date & Time	May 9, 2024 1:30 – 3:00 PM
Location	F.T. Heywood Chambers, 560 N 6th Ave, Minneapolis
Members	Charlie Zelle, Yassin Osman, Bill Blonigan, Aaron Wanger, Khani Sahebjam, Jim Adams, Suzanne Sobotka, Meg Foney, Ricardo Perez, XP Lee, Therese Kiser, Lesley Kandaras, Dan Doerrer, Tara Watson, Irene Fernando, Cameron Anjuli, Candy Bakon, Jeremiah Ellison
Presenters	Michael Krantz, Eric Gustafson
Project Staff	Kelcie Young, Cathy Gold, Jer Yang

### 1. Call to Order and Welcome

Charlie Zelle, Metropolitan Council, Chair called the METRO Blue Line Extension (BLE) Corridor Management Committee (CMC) meeting to order at 1:32 pm. Chair Zelle extended a warm welcome to CMC members and members of the public. Chair Zelle allowed members to introduce themselves.

Chair Zelle noted that today's meeting materials are available on the project's website at [www.bluelineext.org](http://www.bluelineext.org). Members of the public may submit their comments to Kjerstin Yager by May 19, 2024.

Chair Zelle shared that today's meeting members will receive updates on Transit Oriented Development (TOD) which was rolled over from the April 11 CMC agenda and Anti-Displacement updates from city corridor, and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB).

Chair Zelle announced that today's meeting will start with a 15-minute public comment period.

### 2. Public Invitation

During the public comment period, several individuals had the opportunity to voice their comments in the following order: Jerome Johnson, a retired Transportation Economist based in Saint Paul; Tom Ritten, resident of Robbinsdale; Eric Hillman, resident of Robbinsdale; Kristel Porter; and Marticia, intern at West Broadway Business Area Creation. *(Note: Video of the comments can be viewed in their entirety and in the speakers' own words at [blueext.org](http://blueext.org), under "Committees" and the video link to today's [meeting](#))*



### **3. Approval of April 11, 2024, BLE CMC Meeting Minutes**

Chair Zelle asked for a motion to approve the April 11, CMC Meeting Minutes. Mayor Jim Adams, City of Crystal, motioned to approve the minutes and the motion was seconded by Khani Sahebjam, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). The minutes were officially approved.

### **4. Community and Business Advisory Committee Reports**

Dan Doerrer, Co-Chair of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC), provided an update on the recent BAC meeting held on May 7, 2024. He reported that BAC members expressed concerns and reservations about the current alignment. Co-Chair Doerrer also mentioned that businesses are uncertain about the impact of the proposed alignment on businesses along the corridor. Additionally, there are concerns about whether people will be able to afford to live along the corridor after the BLE is built. The BAC members agreed on the need for dialogue with each other rather than about each other. Tara Watson, Co-Chair of the BAC, added that members feel they are being used to "check a box" and are not truly involved in the discussions.

Irene Fernando, Hennepin County Commissioner, acknowledged the concern Co-Chair Watson raised and stated that there is ongoing work in progress and will communicate concrete progress with members.

### **5. Transit Oriented Development (TOD)**

Michael Krantz, Manager of Transit Oriented Development (TOD), Metro Transit, provided a high-level summary of TOD, including its benefits and expected outcomes, as well as a summary of some tracked development trends.

Mr. Krantz described TOD as moderate to high-density development served by frequent transit and pedestrian-friendly streets in neighborhoods with a mix of transit modes.

Mr. Krantz highlighted the benefits of TOD, which include improving health by offering opportunities for walking, biking, and using transit. Additionally, TOD enhances safety for pedestrians and cyclists and brings economic development and tax-based benefits.

Mr. Krantz highlighted the role of TOD in climate strategy, citing research from the University of California, Berkeley, which shows that urban infill, supported by TOD, can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by lowering transportation emissions.

Another benefit Mr. Krantz highlighted is advancing equity by making it easier for communities to access jobs, housing, healthcare, and food along the transit system. He noted the METRO Green Line as an example, where households along the alignment were much less likely to miss healthcare appointments after it started operating.

Mr. Krantz also shared that TOD applied for a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) TOD Pilot Planning Grant at the end of 2023 and was awarded the grant in April 2024. This grant will



support station area planning for the Minneapolis segment of the BLE and help advance the Anti-Displacement strategy.

Mr. Krantz provided details on the development trend reports previously mentioned. He explained that Metro Transit frequently receives inquiries about where it is making transit investments and how these investments promote new housing and job opportunities near transitways. Mr. Krantz noted that TOD is analyzed on a regional scale, including all multifamily permits from the past five years. He highlighted that high-frequency transit serves 3.2% of the region by land area. Since 2009, over 34% of all regional development and 43% of all multifamily development have been permitted near high-frequency transitways.

Mr. Krantz also shared the latest permit data from 2022, emphasizing that \$2.4 billion were permitted near high-frequency transitways. This includes over 8,300 new multifamily units, accounting for over 40% of regional development and 51% of new multifamily units permitted near high-frequency transit.

Mr. Krantz highlighted a new addition to the TOD data, which now includes the ability to track new affordable housing across the region. He noted that 79% of affordable housing has been built near high-frequency transit.

Mr. Krantz mentioned that Metro Transit receives questions about the tax implications of transit investments. In response, TOD began mapping this information, providing data on property tax per acre for the region and near high-frequency transit lines. He highlighted that from 2006 to 2022, there has been a noticeable increase in new developments near high-frequency transit lines.

Mr. Krantz highlighted data studied on the Green Line since 2009, revealing over \$7.8 billion in permitted development and more than 21,000 new housing units along this corridor. He noted significant project developments in this area. Mr. Krantz also shared property tax per acre data from 2006 and 2023, pointing out that most of the growth is driven by these new developments.

Mr. Krantz concluded his presentation on TOD by noting the ongoing high demand for dense, walkable neighborhoods served by transit. He cited a 2023 survey by the National Association of Realtors, which found that the most significant factor driving this demand is the preference for living in walkable transit areas.

BAC Co-Chair Doerrer asked if TOD could address the advantages of light rail versus arterial bus rapid transit for the BLE. Mr. Krantz responded that reports are available on the Metro Transit website, particularly tracking the A-Line, which is a newer line. While direct comparisons are challenging, he offered to share the data upon request.



Xp Lee, Council Member (CM), Brooklyn Park, asked if TOD has examined property values near the corridor and what trends have been observed. Mr. Krantz sought clarification on whether the inquiry pertained to properties within half a mile of the corridor or beyond that distance. Mr. Krantz responded that TOD has not conducted an analysis outside the half-mile range but noted that such analysis was included in the Anti-Displacement study.

Commissioner Fernando suggested that it would be beneficial to understand the impact of TOD awards being granted at different times compared to when the actual service begins. Mr. Krantz acknowledged the question and added that TOD has previously analyzed the timing of investments to determine where TOD funds are being allocated.

Commissioner Fernando noted that the BLE project has been ongoing for a long time and emphasized the importance of fulfilling promises to residents at each stage of the project.

Ricardo Perez, Blue Line Coalition (BLC) member, expressed gratitude to Michael Krantz for his presentation during the BLC meeting. He emphasized that while diversifying tax bases is important, it should not be achieved at the expense of the people. Perez inquired about how TOD could further leverage the Anti-Displacement efforts. He raised concerns about financing 79% affordable housing units at a 30% rate and stressed the importance of ensuring affordable housing options so that people can choose to stay rather than be forced to move. Mr. Krantz replied that he will gladly follow up with Mr. Perez regarding the application submitted for the station area planning grants. The next step is to initiate the scoping of the work.

Mr. Krantz cited research conducted by the Minneapolis Federal Reserve, which examined the impact of new market-rate housing. The findings revealed that for every 100 new market-rate units, there are 70 new vacancies in lower-income neighborhoods, thereby alleviating pressure on affordable housing.

Chair Zelle thanked Mr. Krantz for his presentation and emphasized the significance of nearly 80% of affordable housing being situated along high-frequency transit corridors.

BAC Co-Chair Watson asked about the timeframe for this increase to occur, expressing concern over a 62% increase. Mr. Krantz clarified that the data covers the period from 2006 to 2023, spanning a significant duration. He noted that much of this increase can be attributed to inflation, and when analyzed annually, it would equate to a few percentage points.

Mr. Perez mentioned that the BLC became aware of a light rail project in Atlanta, Georgia, known as the Atlanta Belt Line. He discussed a program called the Legacy Resident Retention Funds, designed to subsidize property tax increases for legacy residents affected by the light rail investment. He inquired whether a similar program could be implemented for the BLE corridor.



## **6. Environmental Update**

Kelcie Young, Metropolitan Council, provided an Environmental update, offering a sneak peek into the BLE Project's preparation for the publication of the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) expected around mid-June. Ms. Young mentioned that the BLE Project will announce the official publication date once confirmed by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). She highlighted a forthcoming 45-day public comment period and plans for a public hearing in July, where individuals can provide verbal testimonies. Additionally, she mentioned other community events being organized.

Ms. Young clarified that the purpose of these comments is to contribute to the development of the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS). She further noted that during the SFEIS phase, the BLE Project will finalize mitigation commitments based on feedback received.

Ms. Young highlighted that as the BLE Project moves toward publication, it's crucial to revisit the project's Purpose and Need, serving as a reminder of its objectives. The Purpose of need is to provide an improvement to transit service to satisfy long-term regional mobility and accessibility needs for businesses and the traveling public. Ms. Young shared that this serves as the foundation for the BLE Project's development and alternatives, aligning with the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Additionally, Ms. Young mentioned that the BLE Project reviewed and revised the project's need factors.

Chair Zelle inquired about public access to comments during the comment period and if there will be a readable transcript on the website for the public hearing. In response, Ms. Young explained that while the comments received will be accessible on the project website, they will be made available after the comment period concludes. This approach allows staff to respond to the comments received.

## **7. Anti-Displacement Updates**

Cath Gold from Hennepin County shared good news that this week, the Senate passed the transportation bill, which includes \$10 million for the Anti-Displacement Community Prosperity program. Ms. Gold noted that the bill establishes a community-led board, with local government representation, mirroring the Anti-Displacement Working Group (ADWG). This board will determine the best way to distribute the funds to advance the ADWG recommendations. She also mentioned that the funding must be matched by local government, the Metropolitan Council, and philanthropic sources.

Ms. Gold announced that today's Anti-Displacement update will be provided by city agencies and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), focusing on the BLE Anti-Displacement interventions and planning efforts. She expressed sincere appreciation to the ADWG for their collective work on the Anti-Displacement recommendations report.



Marion Greene, Commissioner, Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority (HCRRA) inquired whether there had been any discussions within the CMC Members or the ADWG about communicating to their respective legislators the importance of certain recommendations. Chair Zelle mentioned that the bill is expected to be reviewed in the coming day.

Commissioner Fernando acknowledged and thanked all the community members who testified on Anti-Displacement at the legislature.

Mr. Perez expressed excitement for the bill to pass and noted that is not over yet. He emphasized the deep commitment of the communities to this cause and stressed the importance of continuing the Anti-Displacement efforts at the same pace as securing legislative victories. Mr. Perez pointed out that without trust, the community might question the value of state funding. Additionally, Mr. Perez appreciated seeing Commissioners and elected officials testifying at the capital on behalf of the communities.

Eric Gustafson, Hennepin County, remarked that the Anti-Displacement collaboration has been unique, involving multiple municipalities and policymakers. Since the April 11 CMC meeting, there has been progress in clarifying roles and shared efforts to develop a co-creation model for Anti-Displacement. Hennepin County is committed to leading the Anti-Displacement initiatives and supporting cities, the Metropolitan Council, and the recommendation in their Anti-Displacement actions.

Commissioner Fernando asked that to be fair with time and allowing each city an allowable amount of time to present, Commissioner Fernando proposed that city updates on Anti-Displacement be divided up at upcoming CMC meetings. Chair Zelle agreed and wanted to respect the city presenter's time and asked if members were willing to extend the meeting another 10 minutes.

Jeremiah Ellison, Council Member (CM) of Minneapolis, agreed and emphasized the importance of respecting each city staff member's time, ensuring that it is not over-allocated. CM Ellison suggested being mindful of time management during the meetings. Mayor Adams added that the monthly CMC agendas have been very robust and proposed making them less so to allow CMC members and decision-makers to have more thorough discussions.

Mr. Perez expressed concern about the moving timeline for the BLE Project, including the SDEIS publication and municipal consent. He inquired about the upcoming quarterly Community meeting and whether the Anti-Displacement update could be discussed publicly.

Ms. Gold suggested that the Anti-Displacement updates from the city corridor be moved to the next CMC Meeting on June 13, 2024.



Mr. Perez noted that the ADWG has been officially convened and asked for an ADWG calendar of meetings, as well as access to meeting materials in advance, to understand how the process will unfold. He emphasized the importance of collective collaboration. Chair Zelle acknowledged that there may have been missteps with the ADWG and assured that collaboration will be improved.

CM Ellison noted that the ADWG was considered a bright spot and emphasized the importance of clear leadership within the workgroup. He expressed concern that a lack of clarity could erode trust and accountability, which he wants to prevent. CM Ellison offered his support to the ADWG, stressing the importance of maintaining the process so that ADWG members can confidently present information at CMC meetings or to communities.

CM Lee expressed support for bringing this issue to the community and suggested the possibility of holding a special CMC meeting dedicated to Anti-Displacement updates. This would allow city staff and community members to hear the latest updates.

Mayor Adams cautioned that having more weight on the corridor cities' Anti-Displacement updates to the broader public rather than MetC and Hennepin County, would create more attention in terms of emphasis and pressure. Mayor Adams noted that Anti-Displacement is not necessary for the cities project but a regional project.

Mayor Blonigan asked Ms. Gold for the house file number for the \$10 million bill that was passed, so city staff can help direct communities to legislator.

Meg Forney, President of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), raised a question regarding the potential postponement of the Anti-Displacement initiative and its impact on the release of the SDEIS and municipal consent. President Forney expressed concern about rushing these processes. In response, Nick Thompson, Metropolitan Council shared that the BLE Project schedules can accommodate the Anti-Displacement initiative for the June CMC meeting, allowing July for the release of the SDEIS and municipal consent.

#### **8. Next Meeting: June 13, 2024**

#### **9. Adjourn**

Chair Zelle announced that the next CMC meeting will be on June 13, though there may be updates regarding a potential special meeting before then. Chair Zelle adjourned the meeting at 2:56 pm.

Meeting Materials Provided:

Meeting Agenda, May 9, 2024

CMC PowerPoint Presentation, April 11 CMC Minutes, Letter from Blue Line Coalition, and Anti-Displacement Work Group and corridor communities.

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