

# **METRO Blue Line Extension Quarterly Community Project Update Meeting**

**Wednesday, May 15, 2024**

**5 PM – 7 PM**

**In-Person at Capri Theater**

**Agency Staff and Guests:** 28 non-staff attendees – 27 gave contact info

## **Meeting Summary**

### **1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions – Nick Landwer**

Nick Landwer, Design and Engineering Director, Metro Transit, began the meeting at 5:15pm and welcomed everyone.

### **2. Schedule Overview – Nick Landwer**

Nick provided a brief overview of the 2024 project milestones including the publication of the SDEIS, publication of the Anti-Displacement Coordination Action Plan, and the municipal consent process.

### **3. Environmental Update – Kelcie Young**

Kelcie Young, Environmental Manager, Metro Transit, provided the environmental update and defined the terms EIS and SDEIS. Kelcie also discussed the purpose and need of the project, saying that the Blue Line LRT aims to satisfy long-term mobility and accessibility needs for the northwestern region of the Twin Cities. The final portion of this segment of the meeting included a list of all topics studied in the environmental process and a brief timeline for when the environmental documentation will be ready for public review.

### **4. Municipal Consent – Shahin Khazrajafari**

Shahin Khazrajafari, Deputy Project Director, Hennepin County, went over the definition of Municipal Consent and clarified that while it is part of the design process, it's not the end point of it. He also announced that the municipal consent period is expected to be between August and October 2024, and that design occurs both before and after it. After the involved cities and the County vote, the project reaches the final design stage.

## 5. Design Update – Nick Landwer

Nick discussed the design progression of the project, using 30-60-90% terminology. He also clarified the differences between these three phases because they are industry specific; the general public is not familiar with this language.

### Brooklyn Park

- Oak Grove Parkway Station
  - Will include a Park-and-Ride facility, size is TBD.
  - Has an Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF).
  - Potential for Transit Oriented Development (could look like residential buildings).
- 93<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Station
  - Center platform concept is used to reduce rider confusion about which platform to be on for north and southbound trains.
- 85<sup>th</sup> Avenue Station
  - Center platform concept is used to reduce rider confusion about which platform to be on for north and southbound trains.
- Brooklyn Boulevard Station
  - Sits in a commercial-oriented roadway intersection with shopping, grocery, and dining.
- 63<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Station
  - Has an existing Park-and-Ride facility.
  - There is a proposed grade-separated pedestrian bridge from the top level of the park and ride to the station platform)

### Crystal

- Bass Lake Road Interchange
  - Proposed grade-separated interchange on County Road 81. Station/train are down at grade level with Bass Lake Rd, but the traffic flow on County Road 81 arches over that.
  - Will have a 170-car Park-and-Ride facility.
  - **Audience Question (summary)** – How does the interchange work? Where are the on/off ramps and traffic lights if you need to access Bass Lake Rd?
    - **Project Response** - Nick elaborated that the ramps would function similarly to ramps found under other major highways and county roads. To enter or exit County Road 81, there are lights that moderate traffic. And if you needed to reenter County Road 81, you have that option.

### Robbinsdale

- Downtown Robbinsdale Station
  - Location is currently TBD but proposed to be south of 40<sup>th</sup> Ave on Lakeland Ave N because of its potential for improved bike and pedestrian

connectivity and proximity to the proposed Park-and-Ride at the existing US Bank site.

- Station placement includes partial demolition of the Elim Church gym to fit the station.

#### Minneapolis

- West Broadway and 21<sup>st</sup> Ave N (James Ave Station and Lyndale Ave Station)
  - Route goes along 21<sup>st</sup> Ave, but W Broadway will see road improvements too.
  - West Broadway roadway updates include improvements to traffic, utility, lighting, on-street parking, shade trees, bike opportunities, outdoor seating, and outdoor opportunities for businesses.
  - Proposed bridge across I-94 to host train tracks placed on 21<sup>st</sup>.
  - Stations are within a few blocks of the existing METRO E Line bus route.
  - **Audience comment (summary)** – Regarding the high volume of accidents at the intersection of West Broadway and Washington Avenue, how will the train tracks interact with this intersection to not contribute more chaos? In the meantime, will there be cameras placed out there to check how often accidents occur?
- North Loop Access Improvements
  - New potential access roads in North Loop

### **6. Anti-Displacement Update – Cathy Gold**

Cathy Gold, Hennepin County Lead, provided updates on the list of next steps that were previously established at earlier meetings. She elaborated on which steps are currently in progress and which ones have already been addressed. She also announced that a regional anti-displacement fund is in the works at the state's federal level. The last section of the anti-displacement update included details on the Coordinated Action Plan (CAP), which is a list of action items that the project team, community members, and project stakeholders may take to address concerns with anti-displacement.

- **Audience comment** – Is the \$10 million match for the anti-displacement fund going to come from raised taxes or existing governmental funds?
  - **Project response** - *It could be a mix of both, but we already have funds for this, so raised taxes aren't likely.*
- **Audience comment (summary)** – about displacement – anyone that has a business on Broadway shouldn't be displaced. Is there going to be a new Park-and-Ride facility in North Minneapolis? Why do the suburbs only get that? Why are they [suburbs] prioritized? Why is it that the project team keeps coming to North Minneapolis but doesn't offer solutions? If North Minneapolis gets a parking ramp, then businesses won't complain about where their customers and staff will park.
  - **Project response** - *There have been conversations between the City and County, and they've come up with ways to bring parking on Penn, which currently doesn't have parking.*

- **Audience comment (summary)** – I have been a building owner since 1984 and I don't have a parking lot, so if we take street parking away to accommodate train tracks, what do we expect me and my business tenants to do if no one can park when they go to work?

## 7. Community Engagement Update – Kjerstin Yager

Kjerstin Yager, Outreach Coordinator, Metro Transit, provided updates on the Cultivate Arts initiative, explaining that 10 artists have been selected for June through October engagement in 2024. These artists will help the project team inform and consult with impacted communities. They will also act as a bridge between cities and stakeholders to recognize the importance of art as an economic driver for healthier communities. Kjerstin also shared ways people can leave feedback on the project, and directed the audience to the project's website and social media.

## 8. Q&A Session

Comment about displacement concerns. It's important to keep housing affordable when transit comes in because when rent increased significantly along the Green Line, people were mad about that. Things that are technically classified as "affordable housing" aren't actually affordable. New housing is great but be careful about rent.

Question about road reconstruction on W Broadway. Audience asked about the center turn lane and sought clarity if there was only one lane of traffic in both directions?

**Project response** - *one lane of traffic in each direction will happen, but the benefit is that people aren't waiting for people to turn, they can continue driving.*

Question about if meeting attendees can see previous slide decks to learn more about the station design updates for stations not mentioned at this meeting.

**Project response** – *You can go to the website to find information, including an Interactive map.*

Question about stops in residential neighborhoods: is there any discussion on putting a sound barrier up to mitigate noise pollution?

**Project response** – *The environmental work the project is doing includes noise impacts. They've done studies about it, but we acknowledge that we do need to focus on residential neighborhoods specifically because of how existing freeways impact noise.*

Question about the meeting audience's parking ramp concerns in North Minneapolis. All parking ramp comments at this meeting have to do with a desire to use them for communal use, whereas the project team only talks about parking ramps for transit-oriented development – like you "park" and "ride" instead of "park" and "visit" a nearby

shop. It's like the project team is avoiding people's concerns about how losing parking in North Minneapolis will hurt businesses in the long run.

**Project response (summary)** - *The purpose of transit-oriented parking ramps is quite literally so people can park and ride transit.*

Question about the concerns with Washington Ave and W Broadway intersection – lots of accidents, so can there be a bridge to elevate the station to prevent even more accidents from happening?

**Project response** - *We like to keep stations at grade. The bridge at 21<sup>st</sup> is just to go over 94. But the tracks will lower and be level with Washington.*

Question – Is there an estimated cost for the anti-displacement plans?

**Project response** – *We are in the developmental process and are still trying to understand the cost impact. More clear, hard costs will come later, but we're still trying to understand the problem and figure out the appropriate cost for that.*

Question – Is there an estimated timeline to get the anti-displacement plan finalized?

**Project response** – *the plan won't be finalized, we are developing something new, so we need the flexibility to pivot when we need to when we are trying to address what needs to get addressed.*

Question – When there will be answers for people on West Broadway? Answers should've been answered a long time ago, 9 months ago (that's how long they've heard the same response from the project team: "We're having conversations and are listening, we will have answers later"). So, if the meetings are here to listen and work with the communities, then people deserve answers. 9 months is plenty of time to give people answers. Why aren't there answers?

Comment – Don't only do 1:1s with business owners (reference to Nick's comment about trying to talk to the 1984 building owner 1:1 to address her concerns) because you're isolating people. You need to address everyone's concerns because it's West Broadway as a collective, not a few people here and there.

Comment - One of the biggest concerns in North Minneapolis is parking losses as a result of accommodating the train. Buildings need parking. There's no parking here. People need options: do they want to stay? Then they can stay. If people want to leave, then they can leave. The project needs to be supportive in case people want to keep their businesses on Broadway. Parking is already a problem here, that's why people keep bringing up parking at every meeting.

Comment – the reason there are so many parking problems is because people have to drive, they don't have a choice because the public transit infrastructure isn't there to support car-free. So, if people have to drive, of course they're going to want parking!

**Suggested topics for next quarterly meeting:**

- Include updates on all stations instead of a select few (due to meeting time constraints, the stations not brought up today were covered in prior meetings, but it was misleading for audience because they thought the project team was skipping these stations altogether).
- Discuss parking in North Minneapolis.