



**METRO Blue Line Extension  
Business Advisory Committee Meeting**

**April 10, 2018**

**Blue Line Project Office**

**5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200**

**Crystal, MN 55428**

**8:00 AM – 9:30 AM**

**Meeting Summary**

**BAC Members in Attendance:** Matt Rentsch, Randy Boushek, John Sutter, Alison Pence, Candace Oathout, Mark Steinhauser

**Agency Staff and Guests:** Jim Toulouse, MarySue Abel, Alicia Vap, Juan Rangel, David Davies, Nick Landwer, and Jennifer Swenson

**1. Call to Order/Welcome**

**2. Approval of January 8 Meeting Summary**

- Candace's first name was misspelled and will be changed in the previous minutes.
- Minutes are approved.

**3. BAC Co-Chair Selection**

- Matt Rentsch and Candace Oathout were nominated to be co-chairs of the BAC.
- Motion approved for Matt and Candace to be co-chairs of BAC.

**4. City of Crystal — John Sutter (City of Crystal)**

*This item was moved up in the agenda to accommodate the presenter's schedule.*

- Purpose of the update is to talk about what the City is doing around the proposed LRT station and what policy changes could impact the LRT station.
- Overview of the Bass Lake Road streetscape project
  - Project starts at Elmhurst Avenue and goes a quarter-mile west.
  - Why are we doing this project? It was built in the mid-1980s and is showing signs of wear.
  - This area is considered the City's main street.
  - They plan on adding a row of on-street parallel parking—they have found that "teaser parking" changed the perception of the public and impacts street level retail.
  - Landscaping will be concentrated at the corner.

- Retrofit existing HPS replaced with LED lights to improve light levels and security.
- Becker Park Update
  - Two major elements are a stormwater infiltration system and Becker Park reconstruction.
  - On the north side of the park the plan is put in a new, straight trail and will more directly connect the station to retail space and give people an alternative and more direct trail route.
  - Currently the two fields are seldom used, so they are going to turn them into a space that the whole community can use—transition to a “Town Square”.
  - Add a performance space, barrier-free playground, improved trails, and active water feature.
- New Zoning Ordinance Overview
  - The City was focused on regulating the right thing and what really mattered.
  - They may be the only City to allow rentals to have accessory dwelling units (ADUs), though the planning commission has expressed concerns about the ADU policy.
  - These things matter to the station area because there would be more affordable housing around the LRT but the City would still maintain a single-family home neighborhood feel.
- Proposed Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Overlay District Summary
  - Focused on the form of new development in relation to other properties and the public realm (streets, sidewalks, Becker Park). How does this relate to the area? How close are they to the roads?
  - “We don’t want our zoning ordinance to stand in the way of TOD, if that’s what the market wants.” – City of Crystal staff

**Mark:** Any plan to incentivize for building owners to add curb appeal?

**John:** The plan is to change the streetscape first and see how building owners respond and then they would consider adding incentives, such as the Façade Enhancement Program. The City is hoping that investing in the streetscape is enough to see business owners create more curb appeal.

**David:** Is there a plan to engage principle landowners of bigger parcels in the TOD overlay?

**John:** There is an approximate 10-acre opportunity site that is owned by Minnesota Grinding, Inc. that we are working with our TOD ordinance on what TOD could look like. Working with Minnesota Grinding, Inc. will help us come up with a concept for a true mix-used space.

**Matt:** Looking at your overlay district, are you looking at other possible connections (such as bicycles)?

**John:** We are working with the County to see if we can extend the Crystal Lake Regional Trail path a few miles. The biggest changes for us are in the south and northwest—how do we improve pedestrian and bike connections from Becker Park to CR 49?

## 5. 90% Cost Estimate — MarySue Abel (Metro Transit)

- Project budget is still at \$1.536 billion but our project contingency as changed from 25 percent to 21 percent—at 90 percent plans you typically want to be at 20 percent contingency, so we are happy with our number.
- Our current schedule is sliding a bit due to the negotiations we are working out with BNSF—moved our construction schedule out.
- Our contingency budget is set aside to account for project risks—at 90 percent we would like to see the BNSF negotiations and Xcel transmission towers (Requirements) crossed off. The last conversation we had with BNSF was positive and they are currently reviewing our 90 percent plans.
- Construction bids, right-of-way, schedule delay, unforeseen conditions, and contaminated soils (Market and Construction) are what we need contingency for.

**Randy:** Do we anticipate that the construction bids will come in higher than expected like they did on SWLRT?

**MarySue:** That is always a risk but we like to think that we have accounted for what our bids will be, but there are always unknowns as to what the conditions will be when bids come in and what other work is available at that time.

**Nick:** We had the luxury of seeing the SWLRT bids come in high, so that benefitted us on this project.

**Candace:** On the SWLRT project they wanted a corridor protection law—will BNSF want something similar?

**Nick:** On this project we have been having conversations with BNSF since day one, so we have corridor protection built into our design.

**MarySue:** Our corridor protection is a combination of walls, ditches, grade separation, trenches, and embankment walls. This is what BNSF is reviewing right now.

## 6. Olson Memorial Highway Design — Jim Toulouse and Alicia Vap (Metro Transit)

### Pedestrian and Bike Facilities

- What is the road going to be? It will remain a 6-lane roadway with the lanes narrowed to 11 feet and hopefully reduced speeds from 40 mph to 35 mph.
- We will be introducing three mid-block pedestrian crossings to offer protection across the roadway.
- There will be enhanced bike facilities along the corridor.

**Randy:** Will the lights on Highway 55 be synchronized?

**Jim:** They will be coordinated in the future.

**Nick:** The new signal system will be a lot more complex and enhanced—it will detect where the need is better than it can right now. The new system will also account for trains coming

through—which leg needs the most attention—should operate a lot more efficiently and they are all interconnected.

**Candace:** How will the pedestrian activate the signal?

**Nick:** There will be a pedestrian recall at all the lights and it will bring up pedestrian priority. It is designed so you have enough time to get across the road. We have run models that we go through to look at capacity and how that impacts traffic and pedestrians. The system is adaptable to changes to adjust to traffic flows.

- We will continue to monitor how areas are working with bikers and pedestrians and make adjustments as needed.
- Overview of the proposed pedestrian and bike facilities includes continuous two-way bike facility from Wirth Park to 7<sup>th</sup> Street, bike racks at Penn and Van White station areas, bike facilities connect users to 7<sup>th</sup> Street bike lane on the east and to Wirth Park trails on the west.

**Candace:** What kind of bike racks are you adding?

**Alicia:** We are adding bike hitches and they are not enclosed. Metro Transit is starting to focus on bike programs where you can have secured bike parking. On OMH where there is more volume, they are looking at leaving space to accommodate this. At park-and-rides we are planning on adding bike-and-rides that have covered secure bike parking. The City may add this as they develop this area in the future.

**Alison:** Have dockless bikes been talked about? In Seattle there were painted areas that people actually used, which was interesting.

**Alicia:** The City of Golden Valley is working with LimeBike on how we accommodate dockless bike facilities. We don't have room at our stations, but the Cities will have to figure out how to accommodate this.

### Median and Landscaping

- City of Minneapolis is taking on the maintenance for some of the areas that the planters will be going in on Penn, Van White, Russel, James, and the east side of Penn. There were a lot of lessons learned from the medians on University Avenue that will help guide this project.
- Reviewed OMH median design options that included permeable pavers for stormwater treatment, plants with irrigation at station areas and mid-block crossings, and use of aggregate and intertrack fence to deter pedestrian crossings.

**Candace:** Have you considered using graded permeable pavers that look like concrete for this area?

**Nick:** We are trying to discourage people from walking on this area so we are looking at pavers that discourage that.

- Overview of OMH Design: Trees—Our goal with trees is to plant them so they frame the streets like a canopy.
  - We are working with the park board and university to identify what size trees would work well in these median conditions.

### Stations

- Overview of Van White Boulevard and Penn Avenue Station—these are considered “sister stations” and the only difference between the stations is the canopy.
  - The community around the Penn Station wanted something more vibrant so the canopy is reflecting their input.

### OCS Poles

- Currently working with the community on what the overhead contact poles (OCS).
  - Concept A is a transition—five different colors based on the two-color station concepts and the community wanted purple because Prince’s boyhood home is near the area.
  - Concept B is a movement concept—uses the color purple to rise and fall along the corridor.

**Mark:** I like the rise and fall but it is a lot of purple, so I would pick the transition concept.

## **7. 2018 Look Ahead — Nick Landwer (Metro Transit)**

### Federal New Starts Report and Federal Appropriations

- Overview of where we are at nationally with funding.
- Federal funding is back in the program and we are starting to have conversations with the railroad again, so we are hopeful that we are in a good place and the schedule to will progress.
- FTA will start looking at how the funds will be allocated next month.

**Alison:** Would the FTA suggest coming the SWLRT and BLRT project to save money?

**Nick:** No, at this point it probably won’t be economical to put them together since they are two independent projects.

## **8. Adjournment**