



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Community Advisory Committee Meeting
June 5, 2017
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, Steve Schmidt, Stefan Watkins, Giuseppe Marrari, Jason Greenberg, George Selman, Catherine Fleming, Chris Berne, Ken Rodgers, La Shella Sims

Agency Staff and Guests: Sam O’Connell, Nick Landwer, Rachel Dammel, Dan Pfeiffer, Nick Ollrich, Jim Toulouse, Juan Rangel, Sophia Ginis, Dan Soler

1. Approval of March 6, 2017 Meeting Minutes

Minutes were approved with no edits.

2. Project Overview

Sam O’Connell presented.

The Metro system includes two existing light rail lines, the Blue Line and Green Line. The Green Line Extension and Blue Line Extension are scheduled to open in 2021.

The Blue Line Extension includes 11 new LRT stations and 13.5 miles of double track. The line will serve Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Robbinsdale, Golden Valley, and Minneapolis, and 27,000 daily riders are estimated by 2040.

The committee watched a project overview video. When the project gets to 90% design, the project office will develop more detailed animations.

Catherine Fleming asked how long the end to end travel time would be. Nick Landwer replied it would be 31 minutes from Oak Grove Parkway to Target Field Station.

Ken Rodgers said it would be helpful when the animations are made to include audio descriptions. Sam O’Connell said the animations would be narrated and a transcription would be available. Ken added that he is talking about more than narration, but also including detailed descriptions of what is being shown.

La Shella Sims asked if the train would go under the existing tracks near Target Field. Jim Toulouse said the existing bridge will be extended for the Green Line Extension. The Green Line will stay above traffic level past Royalston, and the Blue Line will come off the bridge down to grade sooner.

The current project budget is \$1.536 billion. The federal government will pay for 49% of the project, and the rest is paid for with local funds.

Decision-making and issues resolution happens through a number of committees, including:

- Issue Resolution Teams (IRTs)/Design Resolution Teams (DRTs)
- Technical Project Advisory Committee (TPAC)
- Business and Community Advisory Committees (BAC and CAC)
- Corridor Management Committee (CMC)
- Met Council

Catherine Fleming asked if there would be any design or budget changes based on the elimination of CTIB. Dan Soler said there would not be design or budget changes because of the changes at CTIB. CTIB was a method to collect local taxes for transit projects, but Hennepin County will be picking that up so it will just be a different mechanism to collect the taxes.

Chris Berne asked if Hennepin County's increased share of project funding would also cover the state's share. Dan Soler said that once CTIB dissolves, Hennepin County could implement up to a ½ cent sales tax to raise funds for transit and will use those funds to cover the state's share.

Stefan Watkins asked why Brooklyn Park is the only city contributing funding. Dan Soler said they have added some additional elements with the West Broadway reconstruction not required for the LRT project, which is what Brooklyn Park is paying for. Similarly, MnDOT is paying for some of the costs associated with the reconstruction of Olson Memorial Highway.

La Shella Sims asked what Dakota County's role is in the CTIB dissolution. Dan Soler said Dakota County still needs to approve the dissolution but it's anticipated that they will do so. La Shella Sims asked if money from Blue Line could be reallocated to Southwest if Southwest needs additional funding. Dan Soler said no, the Southwest project has similar commitments from their local partners to make up their local share of funding.

Jason Greenberg asked if the funding sources were still in flux or if they have been locked in. Dan Soler said they are locked in with all the local funding sources except state funding, which Hennepin County will cover with the anticipated ½ cent sales tax. Once all the local funding is locked in, the project can then apply for their full funding grant agreement (FFGA) with the FTA. President Trump's proposed project zeros out FTA's Capital Investment Grant program, but we are hoping that Congress will allocate funds to the CIG program. There are five projects in the country that received approval to enter engineering but don't have FFGAs, two of those are the Blue Line and Green Line Extension projects. The fact that we got approval to enter engineering puts us in a good position to receive federal funding.

Roles, Responsibilities, and Resources

There are advisory committees that support both the Met Council and Hennepin County, including the CAC and BAC, because many of the stakeholders are the same. Hennepin County is leading the station area planning process.

The BAC and CAC:

- Serve as a voice for the community
- Advise Corridor Management and Community Works Steering Committees
- Provide input on the design of stations, the operations and maintenance facility, bike and pedestrian facilities, and park-and-ride facilities
- Serve as an information resource and liaison to the community

CAC member responsibilities include:

- Serving a 2-year term and attending meetings
- Actively participating in discussions; being a voice to advance the broader interests of the community
- Reporting back to the entity you represent
- Providing feedback on communication and public involvement efforts
- Listening to and respecting the viewpoints of others
- Accepting the outcomes of Met Council decisions

Committee leadership:

- Co-chairs provide a corridor-wide perspective
- Roles and responsibilities of the co-chairs include:
 - Leading committees through their tasks and ensuring charter compliance
 - Identifying topics/issues of committee concern
 - Developing meeting agendas with BPO and Hennepin County staff
- Chris Berne is interested in serving another term as co-chair. If others are interested in serving as co-chair, let Chris Berne know.

BPO staff role:

- Identify topics/issues for advisory committee feedback and CMC guidance
- Development meeting agendas with advisory committee co-chairs
- Distribute agendas and meeting summaries
- Post committee presentations/meeting materials on the project website (BlueLineExt.org)

CAC membership:

- Communities appoint members:
 - Minneapolis: 3 members
 - Golden Valley: 2 members
 - Robbinsdale: 2 members
 - Crystal: 2 members
 - Brooklyn Park: 3 members
 - Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board: 2 members
- 10 members appointed by Corridors of Opportunity Engagement Grantees
- 2 at-large representatives appointed by Met Council and Hennepin County Community Works

BAC membership:

- Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park appoint 2 members each
- Minneapolis Regional, TwinWest, Robbinsdale, and North Hennepin Area Chambers of Commerce appoint 1 member each
- 3 at-large representatives are appointed by Met Council and Hennepin County Community Works

Committee resources:

- Committee pages on BlueLineExt.org
- E-newsletter
- Text and email alerts
- One-pagers
- Maps and plans
- Documents

Community outreach coordinators:

- Sophia Ginis – Minneapolis
- David Davies – Crystal, Robbinsdale, and Golden Valley
- Juan Rangel – Brooklyn Park

Communication and outreach tools:

- Advisory committees
- Project website
- Newsletters/fact sheets/one-pagers
- Social media
- Media briefings/tours
- Videos/animations
- Community meetings
- Property owner meetings
- Door-to-door canvassing

Chris Berne commented that oftentimes committees are just window dressing and are not taken seriously, but that is not the case with this project; he has seen real changes that have resulted from CAC input. He is looking forward to hearing the new perspectives the new committee members bring to the table.

Stefan Watkins asked if the committee members had any attendance commitments beyond the monthly meetings. Chris Berne said each city might have different meetings the representatives are expected to attend; beyond that they just need to make sure they are interacting with their community and serving as a resource.

3. Traffic Signal Coordination

Nick Ollrich presented.

There are two primary types of control along the alignment:

- Automatic Block Signaling (ABS) LRT Operation
 - Used on the freight rail corridor
 - Corridor is separated into sections or “blocks” and LRV spacing and movements are controlled with a series of automatic rail signals
- Bar Signals: Line-of-Sight LRT Operation
 - Used on Olson Memorial Highway and West Broadway
 - Bar signals, which are part of the traffic signal system, control LRT movements through intersections
 - Vertical bar is equivalent to a green light and horizontal bar is equivalent to a red light

Transit signal priority and preemption are used to provide an advantage to LRVs as they move through an intersection:

- Transit Signal Priority (TSP) changes traffic timing to assist the efficient movement of transit vehicles
- Preemption is typically associated with emergency vehicle preemption or railroad preemption
- It is a spectrum from priority to preemption. Examples include the following:
 - On the priority end, coordinated timing plans are used in downtown Minneapolis
 - Methods in the middle of the spectrum are used on University Ave for Green Line
 - On the preemption end, automatic gates are used along Hiawatha

The Blue Line Extension will include:

- 23 intersections controlled by bar signals (e.g., Olson Memorial Highway and Penn Ave)
- 8 highway-railroad grade crossings with automatic gates (e.g., Corvallis Ave-railroad grade crossing)
- 3 highway-railroad grade crossings with automatic gates and traffic signal preemption (e.g., Bass Lake Road-railroad grade crossing)

The goal of TSP is to provide efficient and reliable transit travel times without unduly impacting other modes. Each intersection is evaluated to determine the appropriate level of priority, taking into consideration LRT needs, pedestrian and bicycle needs, and vehicle traffic needs. Technology advances continue to improve TSP capabilities.

Predictive priority will be used for Blue Line operations:

- Uses LRT detection upstream
- Serves LRT phase when the LRV arrives at the intersection, if possible
 - Emergency vehicle priority would override the LRT call
 - Pedestrian clearance is always served
 - Minimum vehicle phases are always served
- Controllers can serve other phases with demand immediately after LRV clears
 - Gives left-turn and cross-street traffic more opportunities to be served, especially during longer cycle lengths

Next steps:

- Design a robust detection system that provides flexibility in operations
- Investigate signal controller capabilities during design and operations planning
- Work with operating agencies to identify operational priorities and understand tradeoffs
- Use a data-driven approach to identify impacts and determine if adjustments are needed

Catherine Fleming asked if there would be training regarding bar signals and what they mean because it's not intuitive. Nick Ollrich replied that the goal is that the public does not pay attention to the bar signals since those are only meant for the LRV operators. Catherine Fleming asked about the placement of the left turn signals. Nick Ollrich said there will be one directly overhead and one off to the side as you are turning. Catherine Fleming asked what the flashing train sign means. Nick Landwer said it means a train is coming and only turns on when a train is approaching. Catherine Fleming commented that when she is downtown by the time she hears the train horn and bells the train is basically already there so it would be nice to have more advance warning.

La Shella Sims commented that on University Avenue the LRT signs are in competition with all the roadway signs, that people don't realize how quiet the train is, and that the audible walk signals at pedestrian crossings are not intuitive.

La Shella Sims asked how they determine when a gate arm is needed. Nick Ollrich said that decision is driven by the type of corridor the train is operating in (e.g., is the train going with or crossing traffic).

La Shella Sims noted that there are lots of people crossing Olson Memorial Highway so you also have a potential safety issue. Nick Ollrich replied that there will be pedestrian refuges at all the crossings of Olson Memorial Highway, and they are working with the City of Minneapolis to time the signals so someone can make it all the way across in one phase.

La Shella Sims asked if the LRT signal would override the freight signals. Nick Landwer said the LRT and freight rail will not cross, LRT will always stay on the east side of the freight rail. Jim Toulouse added that the LRT and freight tracks are parallel and do not interact, but the crossings along the corridor will communicate.

Ken Rodgers commented that he is happy others brought up some issues that are very important to the accessibility community. One of these issues is the machine gun sound at the pedestrian crossings, which is in the current Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The previous pedestrian crossing guidelines included an announcement of what street you could cross. The City of Minneapolis decided not to match the MUTCD guidelines on the audible signals, but every other city changed to the machine gun signals. Ken is advocating for not changing the audible signals to match the current MUTCD guidelines along the Blue Line route and instead keeping the audible announcement. Ken asked if the visual countdown timers would be included in the pedestrian crossing signals. Jim Toulouse replied that they would be. Ken said the new MUTCD guidelines also remove the audible countdown timers but leave the visual countdown, which is discriminatory. Minneapolis also overrides this guideline and still includes the audible countdown. Ken's understanding is that each city gets to decide which guidelines they follow. Nick Ollrich said that it is

correct that Minneapolis chooses to not follow the updated MUTCD, but he's not sure what kind of liability that opens them up to. The current MUTCD is in draft form and is open for public review and comment. Ken said his understanding is that that comment period has passed, and that there was one comment that blind people need to focus on traffic noise rather than the countdown timers, and that comment was the basis of the decision for removing the audible countdown. Justin Youngbluth commented that if it's like construction codes, you have to follow the minimum guidelines but can choose to go above and beyond. Ken said he knows this is a larger issue than this project but would like the project to make sure that along the corridor we have all the safety tools in place.

Catherine Fleming asked how impediments on the tracks are detected. Nick Landwer said there isn't a system that detects if something on the tracks, but the operator does their best to stop according to the operational procedures. Stefan Watkins asked if there was any automated stopping procedure that would override the operator. Jim Toulouse said not that he was aware of.

Ken Rodgers commented that he is glad there are people operating the LRVs, but because there are human operators there is some variability in where the LRV stops. This is an issue because sometimes there are pedestrians with a walk signal crossing in front of a stopping train. Is there some way to alert pedestrians crossing at a walk signal that a train is still moving on the track they are crossing? Nick Landwer said there isn't anything he is aware of but he will follow up with the operations team on this issue.

Justin Youngbluth asked if there were plans for an app to let you know when a train is pulling into the station, similar to the U of M app that tracks all of the campus buses in real time. Dan Pfeiffer said that the current Green and Blue Line message boards operate off of the schedule time, but Metro Transit has started to use real time message boards on the A Line and a beacon that lights up and flashes when the bus is approaching. Nick Landwer added that Metro Transit is working on a system-wide app but he isn't sure when it will be rolled out.

La Shella Sims noted that it would be good to do education regarding safety before the line opens. Sam O'Connell said they will start doing that closer to when the line will open.

4. 60% Plans Update

Nick Landwer presented. 60% plans were completed in May and were shared with project partners for review and comment. Comments are currently being addressed, and changes will be included in the 90% plans. Design details to resolve prior to 90% plan production include:

- Robbinsdale park and ride
- Oak Grove park and ride
- West Broadway streetscape
- Olson Memorial Highway streetscape

The project budget was updated with the 60% plans. Compared to the 30% plans:

- No change in project budget (still \$1.536 billion)
- Total project contingency decreased from 29% to 25%
- No change in escalation factor (3%)

- Base year estimate updated from 2016 to 2017
- Forecast year of expenditure remained 2018, 2019, and 2020

Steve Schmidt asked if the 90% plans were still scheduled to be complete in September. Nick Landwer said there will likely be a minor adjustment to the schedule but they should be complete sometime this fall.

Advanced Construction: Bassett Creek Storm Sewer Relocation

100% plans are complete for the Bassett Creek storm sewer relocation, and they are getting ready to go out to bid. The storm sewer conflicts with the Van White Station and LRT guideway. This is a critical path element – completing this as part of the advanced construction reduces construction staging and phasing of Olson Memorial Highway. The relocation needs to occur during the low flow time period for stormwater, which is fall/winter. The storm sewer was also identified on MnDOT's structurally deficient list so MnDOT is partnering on this work.

Schedule:

- June: two bid packages released
 - Material procurement
 - Tunnel construction bid package
- July: award material procurement contract
- September: award construction package
- Fall 2017: construction begins
 - Closure of Olson Memorial Highway to start after October 27th, allowing completion of I-94 work
 - Up to 12 day closure of Olson Memorial Highway between Bryant and Van White

The estimated cost of this project is \$4.4 million and will be shared with MnDOT.

Catherine Fleming asked if \$4.4 million would be enough and how they can guarantee it will be done correctly. Nick Landwer said they understand there are really poor soils in this area and they have done extensive testing. They are confident the design they have will work with the poor soils.

Giuseppe Marrari asked if the pipeline before and after the reconstructed portion would be structurally sufficient. Jim Toulouse said the pipeline on the north side was recently reconstructed with the redevelopment. On the south side, they are reconstructing 50 more feet than they have to, but old infrastructure does always carry a risk. The work on the south side will likely occur outside of the 12 day road closure since it is outside of the roadway area.

La Shella Sims asked if the reconstructed pipe would be compatible with future development. Nick Landwer said they aren't doing anything that would preclude future development.

5. Other Comments

George Selman said that in the past CTIB provided scholarships for Rail-Volution and asked if project office staff could find out if CTIB or other organizations would be offering scholarships this year.

6. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm. The next CAC meeting is scheduled for August 7, 2017.