



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Community Advisory Committee Meeting
March 6, 2017
Blue Line Project Office
5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200
Crystal, MN 55428
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

Meeting Summary

CAC Members: Giuseppe Marrari, Chris Berne, Catherine Fleming, Ken Rogers, Steve Schmidt

Agency Staff and Guests: Juan Rangel, David Davies, Rachel Dammel, Dan Pfeiffer, Caroline Miller, Sophia Ginis, Sam O’Connell, Nick Landwer, Alicia Vap, Ryan Wilson, Jim Toulouse

1. Approval of January 9, 2017 Meeting Minutes

Minutes were approved with no edits.

2. TAAC Workshop Debrief

Alicia Vap presented. The Metropolitan Council’s Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC) had a workshop to provide an overview on the project, station platforms, and station access, and had breakout sessions on the Penn Ave Station (signalized crossing, “Z” crossings, cycle track) and Golden Valley Road Station (navigation and access). Ken Rogers is a member of the TAAC and attended the workshop. Large plots with tactile features were used to delineate different project elements.

Outcomes of the workshop included:

- General support for design progression
- Signage for all users
- Design details important: pavements designed for wheelchair users, adequate width on stairs, signage
- Continue to stress importance of landscape placement and snow clearing to guide users to station
- Important to safely delineate bicycle trail users from pedestrians

Ken Rogers added that the bus stop, cycle track, and crossings where everything meets is an ongoing issue, especially as cities start putting in more bike trails – they haven’t fully thought through the intersections. There isn’t one solution that will work for all locations, but they want to point out where the dangers are and where people can be inadvertently injured.

Sam O’Connell noted that this Wednesday they are also holding a light rail vehicle workshop with the TAAC.

Ken Rogers stated that the rotating rapid flash beacons that were discussed for mid-block crossings are not safe for him because he can't tell when cars stop or don't since they don't have to stop. He has found that difficult to explain in a way that planners and designers can wrap their heads around, so he offered an opportunity for them to try to cross at a flashing signal from his perspective – being blindfolded and using a cane – to see if they are able to cross safely. He is working to organize that now, and it should happen in the next month or so. He hopes it changes the way they work moving forward and gives them a small glimpse into what it is like for someone that can't see.

Catherine Fleming asked if there are rest areas for pedestrians on the platforms. Nick Landwer replied that there will be benches and screened areas with heaters. Ken Rogers said they also discussed the needed for landing places for long approaches like at the Golden Valley Road Station.

Golden Valley Video

A video of the Golden Valley Road Station was shown to the CAC. There is a wall that delineates the edge of the roadway, and then is a gradual grade change to the vertical circulation building that includes both stairs and an elevator. The stairs and elevator lead directly onto the platform.

Ken Rogers asked if the vertical circulation building would block the view of the incoming or outgoing trains. Nick Landwer said no, the building is in the middle of the platform. Alicia Vap added that there is no public access behind the building so operators can see the people on the platform. Jim Toulouse said there is about a 30 foot walkway from the building to the end of the platform, so the vision triangle is better than if the building was on the end of the platform. Catherine Fleming asked if the elevator was the only access for people in wheelchairs. Alicia said there is also a switchback path. Steve Schmidt asked how big the elevator was. David Davies said it was big enough to fit a gurney. Alicia Vap said it meets code, and Nick Landwer added that they reviewed the design with police and firefighters. Ken Rogers asked how Metro Transit is notified if the elevator becomes inoperable. Jim Toulouse said he doesn't know if their SCADA system gets notified, but if not it should be able to at least notify their rail control operators. To notify riders, there is usually a sign on the elevator.

Catherine Fleming asked if there would be any directional signs on the platform. Alicia Vap said there would be, but they aren't shown in the video. The sign design will be part of the 90% plans.

Ken Rogers noted that if the landscaping is designed to help the accessibility community, it will also help everyone else navigate the platform.

Chris Berne asked how far people will have to go if they make it to the elevator and then find out the elevator is out of order. Nick Landwer said it is about 300 feet to the switchback. Chris Berne said it would be helpful to add a sign farther back so people can reroute earlier. Ken Rogers said the dilemma is that if you provide that sign visually, it would also need to be provided to people who can't see. Nick Landwer said they would see if it could be announced as well.

3. Construction Coordination

Nick Landwer presented. As they figure out how to construct the Blue Line Extension, they are working with the cities, county, and MnDOT on what other projects will be happening and how to coordinate with them.

There will be work for SWLRT and C Line in the corridor and on Penn Avenue, Glenwood Avenue, I-94, and I-35W/Lake Street.

Construction for Blue Line will occur from 2018-2021. Coordination will be needed for the following:

- Early construction projects (to begin in 2017):
 - Bassett Creek Tunnel – anticipate a 9 day closure of Olson Memorial Highway, needs to happen during low flow period
 - MCES forcemain/floodplain mitigation – needs to happen before any floodplains can be filled
 - Theodore Wirth Parkway Bridge – want to begin this year so it will be in operation by spring of 2018
- For SWLRT, the Royalston Avenue bridge will be closed for two construction seasons so Glenwood Avenue would be closed at that location
- C Line will be constructed on Penn Avenue from 2018-2019
- I-94 improvements will happen in 2017-2018 – most work should be done before BLRT construction starts

Catherine Fleming asked if the impacts to the neighborhoods around these projects has been considered. Jim Toulouse said they had a meeting today with the City of Minneapolis about 2017 projects, and these meetings will be happening more as construction gets closer.

There have been early agency coordination meetings since November 2016, and there will be ongoing construction staging meetings throughout engineering and construction. An Interagency Construction Communications Plan will also be developed.

Steve Schmidt asked if the construction will be in phases, or if the entire line will be under construction at the same time. Nick Landwer said they are currently working on construction staging plans to see how it will all work. When they get a contractor on board, the contractor will develop a detailed staging plan, but work all along the line is anticipated from the start of construction in order to finish on time.

Catherine Fleming asked if there would be construction during February 2018. Nick Landwer said construction would start during spring/summer 2018. Catherine Fleming said they don't want roads to north Minneapolis closed during the Super Bowl.

Chris Berne asked if work on the Bassett Creek Tunnel would start this fall or 2018. Nick Landwer said that will start in 2017. Chris Berne asked if having Olson Memorial Highway closed while the work on I-94 is happening would cause a problem. Nick Landwer said they are coordinating that with the other agencies and don't anticipate a major problem.

4. Olson Memorial Highway Update

Stations

Alicia Vap presented.

- Designs were shared in November 2016 with advisory committees and the community. Comments included:
 - Make station designs more unique
 - Color palettes could use warmth or a pop
 - Sister architecture of the two stations helps tie the corridor together
- Station design is advancing, incorporating comments, reviewing material/color options
 - Looked at Amundson Hall at the U of M and the U of M Children’s Hospital, which look very colorful and seem to change based on the light – trying to achieve a similar look but with different materials
 - Also looked at the Walker Library on Hennepin Avenue, has a pressed shingle effect – could do silver or copper on the stations
- Alicia Vap asked for feedback on the concepts from the CAC members.
 - Chris Berne asked if you could see the material from the road and the platform. Alicia Vap said you might not be able to from directly on the platform, but you can as you approach it. Catherine Fleming asked if the roof could be clear so you could see through it. Nick Landwer said the constraints are that it needs to carry a snow load and there are lots of wires that are run through there, but they can look into it.
 - Giuseppe Marrari asked if the panels could be added underneath the awning so you could also see it while on the platform or if there could be a few windows in the awning to allow sunlight in and let people look at the design.
 - Catherine Fleming asked if there was any development going on by Summit Academy. Sophia Ginis said they City of Minneapolis is looking at filling in development in that area but there aren’t any official plans yet.
- Alicia Vap asked if the development of the design is in line with the context and character words that were developed previously.
 - Giuseppe Marrari said the Penn station seems more warm and inviting than the Van White station with all the colors
 - Alicia Vap noted that one design option could be used at both stations, or they could do one design at each station
 - Chris Berne said he thinks they’ve done a pretty good job with the connection to downtown, being bold and bright, and having movement
 - Giuseppe Marrari asked if the backlit panels on the end of the station can match the colors on the Lowry Bridge. Alicia Vap said it’s possible, they would have to work with the City of Minneapolis and MnDOT on coordination. One potential complication is that they have to make sure the view to downtown from the library (a historic resource) retains its historic character. Giuseppe also said he thought they should tie in the colors of the Van White station more into downtown since it’s closer to downtown.

- Steve Schmidt said they need to be careful about the colored lights used so it's not confusing with the stop lights.
- Sam O'Connell asked Catherine Fleming what she's been hearing from folks. Catherine said some people were completely disconnected, but they are touting the project as a way to get to jobs in the suburbs.
- Next step: share advanced designs with the community

Trees

Alicia Vap presented.

- Over 240 boulevard trees will be impacted on Olson Memorial Highway due to the reconstruction
- Working with MPRB on a planting plan to:
 - Plant boulevard with street trees to frame the street and provide urban canopy
 - Use assortment of tree species for better tree health and variation
- Over 120 median trees will also be impacted
- Working with MPRB for relocation of over 50 existing median trees to nearby parks in north Minneapolis
- Need to pay attention to historic properties – will work with MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit and the State Historic Preservation Office on tree plantings near those properties
- Giuseppe Marrari asked if the canopy would block the street lighting. Alicia Vap said as the trees mature they will need to be trimmed to make sure they don't block the lights.
- Giuseppe Marrari asked if the relocated trees would be moved to parks that lost trees in the tornado a few years ago. Alicia Vap said she could look into that.
- Giuseppe Marrari asked if the list of tree species being considered could be made available. Alicia Vap said they can provide it. Giuseppe said there is also a list of historic trees in the City of Minneapolis and recommended staff check if they are impacting any of those.
- Chris Berne asked what percentage of the 360 trees to be impacted are ash. Alicia Vap said she wasn't sure what the exact percent was. Giuseppe Marrari said he thought most of the trees on the outside of the road were ash and most of the trees in the median were elm.

Floyd B. Olson Statute

Caroline Miller presented. The statue is located at Penn and Hwy 55 and is a historic property, eligible because it is the work of a master sculptor (Carlo Brioschi). The project will have an indirect adverse effect on the property, so a treatment plan is being developed. The treatment plan includes:

- Mitigation commitment to research siting of statue
- Explore potential locations for relocating statue
- Consultation with Section 106 consulting parties
- Site design/landscaping

Catherine Fleming asked if the pedestal is historic or just the statue. Caroline Miller said the pedestal is historic as well.

5. Upcoming Open Houses

Sam O'Connell presented. There is a series of open houses that will start towards the end of March. The purpose is to share with the public the recent design updates in each community and ask staff questions. There won't be a formal presentation. All the open house materials and the comment form will be available on the project website. After the open houses the feedback received will be shared with the CAC.

6. Other Comments

Catherine Fleming asked if they had thought about doing a contest with local artists to see what ideas they come up with. Alicia Vap said they haven't discussed that since they can't pay for public art. Sam O'Connell said that on the Green Line they had success engaging with local artists leading up to the opening of the line on safety campaigns and things like that.

Nick Landwer asked if there were any topics the committee members would like to have presented at upcoming meetings. Chris Berne said the big question for him is funding, what is happening with CTIB, and how it would affect budget and schedule for this project.

7. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm. The next CAC meeting is scheduled for April 10, 2017.