



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

Date & Time	November 9, 2023      1:30 – 3:00 PM
Location	F.T. Heywood Chambers, 560 N 6th Ave, Minneapolis
Attendees	Charlie Zelle, Irene Fernando, Jeremiah Ellison, Dan Doerrer, Suzanne Sobotka, Meg Forney, Karla Arredondo Payan, Therese Kiser, April Crockett, Anjuli Cameron, Jim Adams, Bill Blonigan, Yassin Osman, Reva Chamblis, Hollies Winston
Project Staff AD IGR	Nick Thompson, Chris Beckwith, Cathy Gold, Kelcie Young, Jer Yang Kareem Murphy, Brennan Furness, Loren Olson

### 1. Call to Order and Welcome

Chair Charlie Zelle, Metropolitan Council, called the meeting to order at 1:35pm.

Chair Zelle extended a warm welcome to the Corridor Management Committee (CMC) members and members of the public. Chair Zelle allowed members to introduce themselves.

Chair Zelle mentioned that today's meeting material can be found on the project's website at [bluelineext.org](http://bluelineext.org). Additionally, members of the public are welcome to submit their comments to Nkongo Cigolo, Metropolitan Council, by Friday, November 17, 2023.

Chair Zelle announced that in today's meeting, the members will be briefed on the project's latest developments, understand the project's rating process mandated by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), discuss engagement strategies, and review progress on anti-displacement initiatives. The meeting will commence with a 15-minute session for public comments.

Chair Zelle stated that during the Metropolitan Council meeting on November 8, 2023, the Council members endorsed a grant proposal to the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT). This grant, part of the USDOT's Thriving Communities regional pilot program, seeks to secure \$1-2 million over three years. The funding is intended to provide technical support for initiatives in economic development, land use, and specifically, anti-displacement efforts.

### 2. Public Invitation



In the public comment segment, various individuals expressed their views in this sequence: Christopher Salmons, a Minneapolis resident, followed by Matt Bruns, a representative from 918 Loft. The complete video capturing their remarks verbatim is available on the project's [website](#).

### **3. Approval of September 14, 2023, BLRT CMC Meeting Minutes**

Chair Zelle requested a motion to approve the CMC Minutes from September 14. Meg Forney, President of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), moved for approval, and Mayor Jim Adams of the City of Crystal seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

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

Dan Doerrer, Co-Chair of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC), shared insights from the recent BAC Meeting on November 7, 2023. He reported that the primary concerns of BAC members centered around Anti-Displacement, particularly urging a detailed examination of how zoning, assessments, and real estate taxes will affect businesses along the corridor.

### **5. Project Update**

Chris Beckwith, Metropolitan Council, gave an update on the project. She began with a review of the revised project timeline to initiate municipal consent. This adjustment, based on feedback from President Forney at the September 14 CMC meeting and the passage of the 2023-02 CMC Resolution with amendments including Section 4(f), has been incorporated. Ms. Beckwith also noted that the final version of the 2023-02 CMC Resolution is included in the packet for today's meeting.

Ms. Beckwith then detailed the timeline segments, starting with the progress on Anti-Displacement, where the Anti-Displacement Working Group (ADWG) is formulating an implementation framework. Following this, she discussed the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), happily reporting that the FTA is conducting several reviews and that the Blue Line Extension (BLE) Project has already received FTA feedback on the first review. Additionally, the timeline includes the Section 4(f) Evaluation, which coincides with the SEIS and pertains to park and recreation lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites. Ms. Beckwith mentioned that with the publication of the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS), the supplemental draft section 4(f) evaluation would be released concurrently. Both these elements are prerequisites for municipal consent.

### **6. Federal Transit Administration Project Rating Overview**

Ms. Beckwith gave a comprehensive briefing on the FTA Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program, noting it as the largest discretionary grant program funded by the federal government and managed by the FTA. It is designed to support capital projects for rail and bus rapid transit. Ms. Beckwith emphasized that the BLE Project qualifies as a New



Starts project, with a budget exceeding \$400 million. At the September FTA conference, Ms. Beckwith learned that there are currently 65 projects in the CIG program.

Ms. Beckwith also discussed the phases of the FTA New Starts Process, highlighting that the Blue Line Extension Project is in the engineering phase. Ms. Beckwith explained that the FTA New Start rating, which is assessed annually in August, requires projects to meet certain criteria before they can be rated. The BLE Project, as noted, is still compiling necessary components such as cost estimates, final route alignment, ridership updates, and more. Ms. Beckwith anticipates that the BLE Project will be ready for rating potentially 2024 or 2025. Ms. Beckwith elaborated on the workings of the FTA rating criteria, mentioning that the FTA splits the rating into two equal parts. This includes a 50% focus on project justification, encompassing six subcategories, and another 50% on local financial commitments, which involves three subcategories. To be considered, the project must attain at least a medium rating on a 5-point scale that ranges from low to high.

Ms. Beckwith discussed the aspect of ridership within the FTA Rating Criteria and its associated model, known as 'STOPS' (Simplified Trips on Project Software). She mentioned that the BLE Project will utilize the STOPS model for analyzing ridership. This approach aims to provide a level playing field and a more conservative model, ensuring accurate decision-making for funding CIG projects. This is crucial as the FTA must report to Congress and wants to guarantee that ridership estimates are not inflated. Ms. Beckwith also mentioned that the project expects to present the ridership model to the CMC members in early 2024.

Ms. Beckwith provided a detailed explanation about the use of the STOPS model, including insights from past studies on ridership models of previous alignments. She pointed out that with the adoption of the new STOPS model, there is an expected decrease in ridership numbers, despite no alterations from the original Regional Travel Demand model forecast prior to opening. This significant drop in projected ridership is a key reason why the FTA favors the use of their STOPS model over the Regional Travel Demand model.

Hennepin County Commissioner Irene Fernando highlighted the benefits of having consistent data, noting that providing more data can help members understand the context better.

Mayor Adams inquired about the consideration of social or safety factors in ridership projections. Ms. Beckwith clarified that the numbers are based on current actual ridership.

Commissioner Fernando requested clarification on whether the ridership figures were based on paid fares or total estimated riders. Ms. Beckwith confirmed that the numbers include all forms of ridership.



Karla Arredondo Payan, a member of the Blue Line Coalition, asked if there were any metrics that might influence the decision regarding ridership numbers. Ms. Beckwith indicated that factors like land use, zoning, economic development, and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) could affect ridership. Nick Thompson with Metropolitan Council added that FTA might introduce changes or new criteria that could impact these considerations.

## **7. Engagement Update**

Nkongo Cigolo with the Metropolitan Council presented a video that is set to be released to the public soon.

Mr. Cigolo updated on the recent community engagement activities of the BLE Project, mentioning that Community Outreach Coordinators have been actively canvassing businesses along the corridor and holding one-on-one meetings with businesses and various stakeholders. He also noted that the BLE Project recently participated in two major community meetings. The first was organized by Minneapolis Ward 3 Council Member Michael Rainville for the North Loop communities, and the second took place in North Minneapolis, hosted by Minneapolis Ward 5 Council Member Jeremiah Ellison. Council Member Ellison expressed his gratitude to the BLE Project team for their presentation at the meeting, commending its productivity and he expressed eagerness for more community engagement meetings in the future. Council Member Ellison acknowledged that while communities are outspoken, he appreciates the value that the BLE Project brings.

Mr. Cigolo mentioned the success of the recent Quarterly Community Meeting, a part of the legislative mandate, held on November 8, 2023. He noted that the BLE Project team is finalizing the meeting minutes, which will be distributed to CMC members once they are ready.

Mr. Cigolo highlighted that the BLE Project is actively gathering feedback and encouraging community input through various tools and surveys. He added that the Community Outreach team is making concerted efforts to engage with businesses, laying a foundational canvas by gathering information and tracking businesses for the Anti-Displacement program. This initiative aims to ensure businesses can continue to receive opportunities and maintain access throughout the construction phase. He also shared some of the feedback received during these business canvassing efforts.

Mr. Cigolo also informed that the BLE Project has formed a partnership with Elevate Hennepin to engage businesses along the corridor. He explained that Elevate Hennepin is a business support program by Hennepin County, which has been recently extended to the BLE corridor, and outlined some of the upcoming workshops.

Mayor Bill Blonigan of Robbinsdale inquired whether business owners who cannot attend the scheduled workshops could still access the information through other means,



such as electronically. Commissioner Fernando added that Elevate Hennepin is available to all businesses in Hennepin County. She emphasized that the workshops are an effort to assist businesses along the corridor, but they can contact Elevate Hennepin at any time for support.

Mr. Cigolo discussed the Community Engagement activities, highlighting the efforts of Community Cohort members in door-to-door outreach, setting up pop-up information tables, and utilizing various communication channels. He announced that there are several upcoming meetings, with the first being a virtual session scheduled for November 14, 2023, focusing on updates for the Minneapolis Community. This will be followed by two Elevate Hennepin Workshops, taking place on November 16, 2023, and December 17, 2023.

Mr. Cigolo provided an update on the Cultivate Arts initiatives, highlighting them as an alternative method for community engagement, particularly for those who may not participate in meetings and workshops. He noted that Cultivate Arts has organized 16 events this year. Additionally, Mr. Cigolo shared a video by Rammy Mohamed, offering a sneak peek of the September 17 Evolve Fashion Show, which showcased a gown inspired by the BLE recommended alignment. Mr. Cigolo also presented a schedule of the upcoming Cultivate Art events planned for the rest of this year.

Metropolitan Council Member Reva Chamblis expressed her appreciation for the efforts of Cultivate Arts and showed interest in their goals to collaborate with various cities in revitalizing communities, especially as some cities are considering the development of cultural art districts.

## **8. Anti-Displacement Update**

Cathy Gold, Hennepin County, gave an update on the progress of the Anti-Displacement initiative. She mentioned that since August 2023, monthly meetings have been conducted with Corridor Partners to collaborate and finalize a legislative strategy that will support the advancement of the Anti-Displacement Working Group (ADWG).

Kareem Murphy from Hennepin County Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) reported that the Hennepin County Intergovernmental Relations team, along with policy leaders from corridor agencies, have been collaborating on a corridor-wide Anti-Displacement legislative platform. This platform includes specific recommendations that are incorporated into the Anti-Displacement Resolution. Mr. Murphy noted that the ADWG is compiling a list of policy statements reflecting these recommendations. The primary focus is on areas where local governments may lack authority or sufficient funding. This includes aspects like local financial underwriting, land use, support for local businesses and community housing, as well as enhancing community vibrancy. The ADWG believes that these efforts will help unify the corridor and prevent displacement.



Brennan Furness from the Hennepin County IGR highlighted that the county and its local partners are set to adopt platform statements prioritizing Anti-Displacement efforts in the 2024 legislative session. He emphasized that the forthcoming step involves transforming these statements into concrete legislative strategies. The aim is to garner support from the ADWG for the corridor, advancing these initiatives with stakeholders and community advisory groups.

Loren Olson from the City of Minneapolis Government Relations provided further updates on the ADWG, stating that Hennepin County, Minneapolis, and other cities are in the process of adopting the Anti-Displacement Resolution. She noted that many of these policies align with existing city policies and emphasized that the overarching goal of the ADWG is to ensure that both communities and businesses benefit from the project.

Council Member Ellison remarked that a single entity alone cannot solve displacement issues. He expressed his appreciation for the efforts being made by each jurisdiction and encouraged everyone to approach the situation with greater creativity.

Ms. Gold shared the ADWG Framework Development which is a request out of the Resolution. Ms. Gold stated that ADWG is putting together a template of objective and goals that ADGW is working to achieved, such as breaking down what programs exist, what is the flexibility, and resources, and what is the gap that the corridor needs.

Ms. Gold also emphasized a recent meeting that took place on October 31, 2023, where the ADWG convened a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) and Workforce Development Mixer. The purpose was to provide an overview of the project and strategize ways to overcome potential obstacles as the project progresses.

## **9. Environmental Update & Next Steps**

Kelcie Young, Metropolitan Council, provided an update on the Environmental Review phase of the BLE Project, highlighting the ongoing work in this area. She mentioned a recent revision to the executive order governing Environmental Justice (EJ) last spring. This revision broadens the EJ definition to include communities that feel underserved or disproportionately affected by government actions. In the BLE Project, the Environmental team is actively identifying concerns for seniors and people with disabilities, focusing on geographic EJ concerns. This includes considering how current impacts and benefits are related to past harms.

## **10. Next Meeting: December 14, 2023**

## **11. Adjourn**

Chair Zelle concluded the meeting and adjourned it at 2:50pm.