



Blue Line Extension Corridor Management Committee

Minutes of the June 15, 2017 Meeting

Present: Tim Willson, Linda Higgins, Jeffrey Lunde, Chris Berne, Adam Arvidson, George Selman, Jim Adams, Mike Opat, Peter Wagenius

Not in attendance: Adam Duinick, Gary Cunningham, Meg Forney, Myron Frans, Betsy Hodges, Rich Gates, Brian Lamb, Scott McBride, Regan Murphy, Shauen Pearce-Lassiter, Marika Pfefferkorn, Lona Schreiber, Scott Schulte, Andy Snope, Denny Walsh, Liz Wielinski

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Opat welcomed everyone and convened the meeting at 1:37 pm.

2. Approval of March 9, 2017 Minutes

Commissioner Opat asked the committee to review the meeting minutes from the March 9, 2017 meeting. Jim Adams made the motion to discuss the minutes; Chris Berne seconded the motion. Mayor Willson noted that the last paragraph on the first page of the minutes should be amended to correct the spelling of his name from Wilson to Willson. Chris Berne added that he needed to be added as a present member. Meeting minutes were approved.

3. Traffic Signal Coordination

Nick Ollrich provided an update on the traffic signal timing work. There will be two methods used: automatic block signaling (ABS) and bar signals. With ABS, the corridor is separated into sections or “blocks” and if a block is occupied by a light rail vehicle (LRV), another LRV is prohibited from entering the block. Bar signals will be used where LRT interacts with traffic signals at grade, and they are integrated into the traffic signal system.

Transit signal priority and preemption are used to give an advantage to the LRVs. Transit signal priority changes the signal to assist the efficient movement of transit vehicles. Preemption is typically associated with emergency vehicles and railroads. There is a spectrum of methods between priority and preemption that can be used, ranging from coordinated timing plans to automatic gates.

Along the Blue Line Extension corridor, 23 intersections will be controlled by bar signals. There will also be 8 highway-railroad grade crossings with automatic gates and 3 highway-railroad grade crossings with automatic gates and traffic signal preemption.

The goal is to provide efficient and reliable transit travel times, so each intersection is evaluated to determine the appropriate level of priority, looking at the needs of LRT, pedestrians and bicyclists, and vehicle traffic. Technology advances continue to improve TSP capabilities.



Predictive priority is used to detect upstream LRVs. The LRT phase will be served when the LRV arrives at the intersection, if possible. Emergency vehicle preemption will override the LRT phase, and pedestrian clearance and minimum vehicle phases are always served.

Next steps for traffic signal coordination include designing a robust detection system, investigating signal controller capabilities, working with operating agencies to identify operation priorities and understand tradeoffs at intersections, and using a data-driven approach to identify impacts and determine if adjustments are needed.

Commissioner Opat asked if there were any questions from the committee, and there were none.

4. 60% Plans Update

Nick Landwer provided an update on the 60% plans. The 60% plans were completed on May 10th and shared with project partners for review and comment. Comments have now been addressed and will be included in the 90% plans. Remaining design details to resolve prior to 90% plan production include the Robbinsdale park-and-ride, Oak Grove park-and-ride, West Broadway streetscape, and Olson Memorial Highway streetscape.

As part of the 60% plans, an updated cost estimate was developed. Compared to 30% plans, the project budget remained the same (\$1.536 billion), the project contingency was reduced from 29% to 25%, and the base year estimate was updated from 2016 to 2017.

Commissioner Opat asked what the next milestone would be. Nick Landwer replied that the next milestone is the 90% plans, which they plan on rolling out in November.

Advanced Construction: Bassett Creek Storm Sewer Relocation

The Bassett Creek storm sewer relocation is moving forward as part of the advanced construction package. The storm sewer needs to be relocated because it conflicts with the Van White Station and LRT guideway. Completing this relocation as part of advanced construction will reduce construction staging and phasing time for Olson Memorial Highway, saving months of time later on. The relocation needs to occur during the low flow time for stormwater, which is fall/winter.

The storm sewer has been identified on MnDOT's structurally deficient list, so Metro Transit is partnered with MnDOT on this project.

In June, two bid packages will be released – one for material procurement and one for storm sewer construction. The material procurement contract will be awarded in July, and then the storm sewer construction contract will be awarded in September. Construction will begin in the fall of 2017. A 12-day closure of Olson Memorial Highway will start after October 27, 2017, after MnDOT completes their work on I-94. The signed detour will be on I-394. The estimated cost for this project is \$4.4 million.

Commissioner Higgins asked if there would be roadwork on I-394 during this project. Nick Landwer replied that no work is planned on I-394 at this time. Commissioner Higgins asked how many people travel this route every day, and Nick Landwer replied that it is about 30,000 vehicles per day.



Mayor Willson commented that cars detouring through neighborhoods is frowned upon so they may want to take that into consideration. Nick Landwer said they are working with the City of Minneapolis and MnDOT to work on advanced warning signs but plan to have local access available.

5. Project Schedule Update

Dan Soler provided an update on the project schedule.

Previous project milestones achieved have included completing the NEPA process and Project Development phase in September 2016. At that time, the project scope and budget was set at \$1.536 billion.

In January 2017, FTA granted Entry into Engineering. In March 2017, 60% civil and OMF design was completed, and in May 2017 60% system design was completed.

Moving forward, an adjustment to the overall schedule is needed. The completion of 90% plans is now scheduled for November of this year instead of August. The project also needs to secure the full local funding commitment. CTIB's dissolution and the increase in Hennepin County sales tax allows Hennepin County to assume the remaining local funding share, including both CTIB's share and the state's share.

Negotiations regarding freight rail agreements also need to be concluded. BNSF and Metro Transit are working to finalize their agreements for the Southwest LRT project first before they will focus on Blue Line.

Federal funding also needs to be authorized in the Federal Budget. This project is one of five projects in Engineering in the May 2017 Annual FTA report (Southwest LRT is another of the five). The BLRT project has attained a medium-high rating. The president's proposed budget did not include any funding for the New Starts program, so we need congress to appropriate funds to the New Starts program for the 2018 fiscal year budget. The project office anticipates submitting the Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) application in May 2018 after above items are completed.

The previous schedule had the FFGA application in September 2017, but the railroad negotiations and federal funding will not allow that to happen. With the application in May 2018, we would expect to receive the FFGA in October 2018, which means heavy construction would be 2019-2021 instead of 2018-2020. Revenue service would be pushed back from late 2021 to mid-2022.

Chris Berne asked if this delay would change the schedule for the acquisition of homes along West Broadway. Dan Soler said the homes Chris is referring to are being acquired by Hennepin County, and the plan was to start buying right-of-way in earnest this summer, but given the delay it doesn't make sense for the government to do that now. They recognize that the delay would have an increased negative effect on those properties, so they are talking about moving forward with willing sellers later this year.

Mayor Lunde thanked Met Council and County staff for getting us to this point. The City of Brooklyn Park is concerned that these schedule delays will delay other projects the City needs to complete, which negatively impacts their residents who need a reliable transportation source. The City is going to launch an effort to educate people about the importance of this project, irrespective of what is



happening with Southwest LRT because Brooklyn Park shouldn't suffer because of issues with Southwest. Mayor Lunde stated that he isn't worried about the federal funding, but he is concerned about the railroad negotiations and that Southwest LRT will be resolved first. The City plans to invite all major gubernatorial candidates to a forum to make the case for the importance of the Blue Line Extension.

6. Remarks from Commissioner Opat

Commissioner Opat stated that the cities along the line have done a magnificent job in the compressed timeline they are dealing with. In terms of local funding, the Hennepin County Board did pass a resolution to dissolve CTIB and increase the sales tax. Commissioner Opat said that he did not vote for the resolution, not because he doesn't support this project but because he isn't yet comfortable with the details.

Commissioner Opat thinks we need to adopt Mayor Lunde's philosophy that we aren't going to stand by and wait. His primary concern is the negotiations with BNSF. He opposes the strategy of figuring out Southwest LRT's negotiations first and said we need to apply all our muscle to get those negotiations going. Waiting is what we've come accustomed to up here but he's tired of waiting. He said that we need to talk to legislators about being more aggressive, and we need more forthcoming reports from the Met Council about the status of Southwest LRT. Since the FFGA is dependent on rail negotiations, it needs to be a priority to get those done.

Commissioner Opat asked if anyone else had any questions or comments. George Selman said that historically CTIB has offered scholarships to Rail-Volution and asked that if any other bodies will be offering scholarships that it be announced to the CMC. Commissioner Opat said he would take that question to CTIB. Joe Gladke added that CTIB did discuss this, and they will not be offering scholarships but will provide funds to Rail-Volution so interested people can apply for scholarships through Rail-Volution.

7. Adjournment

Commissioner Opat asked if there were any further questions or comments from the committee. There were none. The meeting adjourned at 2:37 pm.

Next CMC Meeting: Thursday, August 10, 2017

Hennepin County Rockford Road Library

6401 42nd Avenue North

Crystal, MN 55427