



# METRO Blue Line Extension Meeting of the Community Advisory Committee

Wednesday, September 13, 2023

6:00 PM – 8:00 0M

Microsoft Teams Meeting

**CAC Members:** Ellis Beck, Brett Buckner, John Chambers Dunn, Jason Greenberg, Jeff Guertin, Jonathan Hansen, Ryan Johnson, Mary Limbeck, Giuseppe Marrari

**Agency Staff and Guests:** Chris Beckwith, Neha Damle, Andrew Gillett, Catherine Gold, Rob Hume, Kyle Mianulli, Bojan Mistic, Joanna Ocasio-Maisonet, Emilee Roschen, Kerri Pearce Ruch, Menno Schukking, Kaja Vang, Kjerstin Yager, Jer Yang

## Meeting Summary

### 1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Co-chair Jason Greenberg began the meeting at 6:06 p.m. Kjerstin Yager, Metropolitan Council, took attendance.

Jason noted that there would be a vote at the Corridor Management Committee (CMC) meeting tomorrow and that he wouldn't be able to attend the whole meeting. Jason asked if anyone would be available to attend the meeting to represent the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), share an overview of the meeting, and vote for the alignment. Jonathan Hansen and Brett Buckner said they may be able to attend.

### 2. Adopt Meeting Minutes

Co-chair Jason Greenberg asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Brett Buckner made a motion; Jonathan Hanson seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved.

### 3. Project Overview

Chris Beckwith, Metropolitan Council, shared that the CMC action would be about a resolution saying what the alignment is and the station locations that would be studied. Chris noted that this wouldn't mean that everything is set in stone, but they still need to proceed to do the analysis.

Chris presented the project overview, talked about what will be presented for further study, and highlighted the next steps for the project. Chris shared updated engagement metrics from August 2020 to September 2023. She highlighted some of the various engagement activities, and unique initiatives done through project partnerships with Hennepin County. Chris gave an overview of the quarterly engagement meeting that was held on August 23, 2023. She shared that it was a corridor-wide update and that a summary and Q&A are available. Chris then talked through the project timeline and timeline to publish the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS).



## 5. Anti-Displacement Update

Catherine Gold, Hennepin County, talked through the anti-displacement timeline. Catherine talked about developing a framework to implement the work and looking at policies from a corridor level to help obtain objectives that were recommended in the report. Catherine shared that they met in August with agency partners and will plan to meet monthly. Catherine shared that Hennepin County posted a position to oversee all the anti-displacement initiatives and to manage them.

Catherine discussed that in the August meeting, agencies shared their thoughts on policies that they could share from their jurisdictions. Catherine shared that the Metropolitan Council and county commissioners will talk with state representatives and senators, making sure to have conversations on a state level about funding. In addition, the anti-displacement group will be developing a framework and an engagement plan. Next, Catherine walked through five next steps from the Recommendations Report. Catherine shared they hope to have a list of things to review with this group at next month's meeting, to meet with the anti-displacement work group, and to start looking at an engagement plan so that there's a comprehensive package to move forward with. Co-chair Jason Greenberg asked how the policies align with getting funding. Catherine stated that it's important to get the alignment on the map for the corridor so that they can know the impacts and the potential for displacement that could occur, which would help with understanding the cost and funding needed. Catherine added that not all the granting opportunities will be done with the county, they'll be administered by others. Co-chair John Chambers Dunn commented that it sounds like they are looking for solutions that benefit people and that there are a lot of variables. Catherine commented that it's timing too. Jason commented that there's funding available that needs to be tapped into and that there are things that we would need to create policy for that would dictate funding to address anti-displacement. Catherine stated that they want to be as proactive as possible to make sure that funding is available when the community needs it. Brett Buckner added that the big piece is on the private side and that there are a lot of owners along the line and a lot of opportunities. Brett asked how we bring North Minneapolis into the conversation and how we reimagine the space there. Catherine stated that the project has been meeting with property owners along the alignment and are making sure they are aware of the resources that are available but want to go beyond that with the anti-displacement efforts. Catherine added that they want to ensure people benefit from the project.

## 6. Review Track Alignment and Stations for Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Bojan Misic, Hennepin County, shared that the project design principles help guide the project's decisions and design and will continue to do so in the next engineering phase. Bojan talked through the alignment, stations, and Park & Ride in Brooklyn Park. Co-chair John Chambers Dunn asked if having tracks at grade helps to reduce the speed limit on County Road 81. Bojan responded that yes, it has the potential to help reduce speeds. Bojan added that from a preliminary traffic analysis, the roadway has a lot of capacity and therefore people tend to drive faster than the posted speed limit. Co-chair Jason Greenberg asked if there have been additional conversations with BNSF if the project will be crossing over their property. Bojan stated he hasn't been part of that conversation, but it's easier to go aerial and to provide better safety guidelines.

Bojan talked through the benefits and opportunities through Crystal. Bojan discussed how there would be minimal right-of-way impacts with the train now being in Hennepin County right-of-way. Bojan described the Bass Lake Road interchange and how things through that section would function.



Bojan talked about the benefits and opportunities in Robbinsdale. He described the potential Park & Ride site on the existing US Bank site just north of 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue, which would be able to serve the commercial area to the north and the residential area to the south. Bojan added that existing bus transfers from the Hubbard location would be incorporated into the Park & Ride location. Bojan noted that there are still opportunities to adjust the station location to where it makes the most sense.

Bojan discussed the Lowry Avenue station and how it was previously shown as an elevated station. Bojan shared that as the project team has been presenting this station, they have heard that it may not provide as good of access and have heard from the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board that there may be 4(f) impacts on the park. Bojan stated that there's still an opportunity to have a station at Lowry Avenue because it serves destinations in the area, but more work will need to be done to see if an at-grade station can be designed and incorporated. Co-chair John Chambers Dunn asked if there are any impacts or considerations because of the bridges that were just constructed there. Bojan responded that yes, but they would try to avoid as much impact as possible.

Co-chair Jason Greenberg asked if the Park & Ride station at the US Bank site would serve as parking for downtown Robbinsdale. Bojan responded that it would be the primary parking for commuters. Jason stated that he asked because at one point there was a discussion about using the Elim Church lot as a Park & Ride. He added that from a pedestrian standpoint if the station is south of 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue, how would people get connected to the Park & Ride? Bojan responded that pedestrians would have to cross 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue and County Road 81, but they will continue evaluating a station north or south of 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Jason asked how many spaces the Robbinsdale Park & Ride would be. Bojan responded that based on projected numbers, it could be around 500 spaces but that's not a set number. Jason asked how many spaces are at the 63<sup>rd</sup> Park & Ride. Bojan responded he did not know. Jonathan Hansen asked if the Park & Ride could be on the same side as the station so people wouldn't have to cross two roads to get to the station. Bojan responded that it's one of the reasons to have a station on the same side of 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue as the Park & Ride.

Bojan talked through the benefits and opportunities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue alignment in Minneapolis, and the portion east of I-94. Bojan gave an overview of recent engagement that had occurred between August and September 2023. Bojan noted that for the east of I-94 portion, the option that would require moving some of the off-ramps and would place a station at Plymouth Avenue is still on the table but it will require continued outreach to confirm the recommended option. Bojan talked through two of the options for the 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue portion – a transit mall or a one-way northbound option. Bojan discussed potential vehicle access for 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue if either of the mentioned options would be implemented. John Chambers Dunn asked if there were 6,600 cars going in both directions and if there were any studies done on how people misuse one-ways. Bojan responded that there's that risk of misuse, but he wasn't sure how often that happens. Brett Buckner commented that 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue has been used more this year with the closure of Plymouth Avenue. He stated that once Plymouth opens, there will likely be adjusted numbers. He added that the fire department and emergency vehicles use that route, and the project would need to be careful about how it plays out. Bojan stated that the numbers are prior to Plymouth being closed and that they are collecting data on the existing traffic to see how much traffic is going to 10<sup>th</sup>. Bojan added that they met with the fire department, and they told the project team that they prefer not to have vehicles on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Bicycles would be easier to maneuver around than cars. Brett asked if the parking ramp along 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue would be impacted as well.



Bojan said they also met with them, and they will have to modify their access. Brett commented that it's a good opportunity to have that parking ramp utilized for events in the area.

Chris Beckwith gave an overview of what the resolution at CMC would be about.

## **7. Environmental Update**

Neha Damle, Metropolitan Council, discussed the Notice of Intent, stating that it's a parallel federal step to the notice that was published last October. Neha stated that this has the same purpose and has a comment period which closes on September 18, 2023. Neha shared that the purpose of this notice is to alert interested parties for the preparation of the SDEIS and to provide information on the project. Neha added that even if the comment period closed, the project team will continue to accept public comments. Neha shared the topics that will be included in the environmental review and shared the next steps.

## **8. Discussion and Members' Feedback**

Jeff Guertin asked if the next meeting is on October 4<sup>th</sup>. Jason Greenberg responded yes, and the CMC would follow. Jeff asked how the vote at CMC tomorrow would be different from municipal consent in 2024. Chris Beckwith responded that the action at CMC tomorrow is to confirm what the project will be studying in the SDEIS, which doesn't represent the 30% plans that will be used for the municipal consent process. Jeff commented that the StarTribune had an article that wasn't clear about what was being discussed for the vote tomorrow, they made it sound like it was for municipal consent. Jason Greenberg commented that municipal consent happens in each of the individual cities, and then all that feedback goes to the CMC. Municipal consent happens with each of the city councils.

## **9. Next Meeting: October 4, 2023.**

## **10. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.