



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

Date & Time	August 10, 2023      1:30 – 3:00 PM
Location	F.T. Heywood Chambers, 560 N 6th Ave, Minneapolis
Attendees	Charlie Zelle, Reva Chamblis, Irene Fernando, KB Brown, Jeremiah Ellison, Hollies Winston, Aaron Wagner, Gillian Rosenquist, Meg Forney, Mike Barnes, Suzanne Sobotka, Jacob Frey, Jim Adams, Jeff Lunde, Denise Butler, Karla Arredondo Payan, Marion Greene, Anjuli Cameron
Staff members	Nick Thompson, Chris Beckwith, Cathy Gold, Nick Landwer, Dan Soler, Nkongo Cigolo

### 1. Call to Order and Welcome

Chair Charlie Zelle, Metropolitan Council called the meeting to order at 1:34pm.

Chair Zelle extended a warm welcome to the members of the Corridor Management Committee (CMC) and provided an opportunity for the members to introduce themselves. Additionally, Chair Zelle expressed a special welcome to the two new Metropolitan Council Members joining the CMC.

It was conveyed by Chair Zelle that the meeting materials for today are accessible on the project's website, [bluelineext.org](http://bluelineext.org). Members of the public are encouraged to share their comments with Nkongo Cigolo of the Metropolitan Council.

Furthermore, Chair Zelle communicated that the meeting would commence with a 15-minute period dedicated to public comments.

### 2. Public Invitation

In the time allocated for public comments, a few individuals took the opportunity to speak, following the sequence of Tony Richardson, who serves as the Co-Chair of Stop Light Rail on 81 (SLR81) and Robbinsdale resident; followed by Wade Girard, a Crystal resident; and concluding with Caren Shaw, the founder of SLR81 and a resident of Robbinsdale.

### 3. Approval of July 13, 2023, BLRT CMC Meeting Summary

Chair Zelle requested a motion for the approval of the July 13, 2023 CMC meeting minutes. Hennepin County Commissioner Irene Fernando made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Mayor Hollies Winston of Brooklyn Park. The meeting minutes were officially approved.



Chair Zelle would like to acknowledge that there have been many press articles about the Blue Line Extension project and wanted to take this time to open up for a discussion as a committee.

President Meg Forney from the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) inquired whether the committee could receive an update on the progress of Anti-Displacement prior to the presentation on the Minneapolis design decision.

Commissioner Fernando expressed the importance of ensuring that property impacts are communicated transparently and acknowledged that this is a significant concern. She mentioned that Hennepin County has integrated anti-displacement efforts into their disparity reduction plan, particularly as the county is in the process of formulating their budget.

Mayor Hollies from the City of Brooklyn Park concurred and added that when conversations about equity and disparity arise, it presents a chance to tackle these issues not just in a specific locality but across all segments of the alignment and all cities involved.

Co-Chair KB Brown of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) emphasized that North Minneapolis has faced years of isolation and insufficient investment. When addressing displacement, it's crucial to take into account the well-being of the residents and businesses in North Minneapolis.

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

BAC Co-Chair Brown delivered a report on the most recent BAC Meeting held on August 8, 2023. Co-Chair Brown mentioned that businesses are expressing apprehension regarding the Anti-Displacement measures as the light rail project advances. Businesses are uncertain about the strategies in place to help them and the communities to sustain their presence in the area. There's also a lack of clarity about the financial support and assistance available for those facing displacement.

Mayor Winston raised a query about the way the corridor is referenced. He expressed a desire to comprehend the overall net improvement in these areas of disparity and how such improvements are assessed. Mayor Winston conveyed his concerns and expressed an interest in understanding how opportunities can effectively trickle down to those who require support due to displacement, rather than confining the allocation to specific areas only.

Vice-Chair Reva Chamblis from the Metropolitan Council acknowledged the raised concerns and conveyed that there is a provision within the Anti-Displacement plan that will address these issues. Hennepin County Commissioner Jeff Lunde supplemented by noting that the county's assessment not only encompasses potential gains but also



considers lost opportunities. He explained that there's a specific measurement utilized within the real estate and development processes for this purpose.

## **5. Anti-Displacement Update**

Cathy Gold from Hennepin County presented a status update on the Anti-Displacement efforts. She reported that the anti-displacement website has garnered more than 6,300 visits, and there have been over a thousand downloads of the complete Anti-Displacement report. Ms. Gold also shared some of the feedback received from the anti-displacement survey.

Ms. Gold also shared the timeline for Anti-Displacement efforts, aligning it with the project's schedule. She stated that the aim is to unveil the draft framework for Anti-Displacement in March 2024, followed by the finalization of the framework by the summer of the same year. Resource coordination will also be a priority to optimize efforts for the Blue Line Extension project, as stakeholders collaborate to comprehensively understand and support the various aspects under their jurisdiction. Ms. Gold mentioned an upcoming meeting scheduled for the end of August 2023, aimed at engaging with both Community and Agency partners. Among the ongoing efforts is the development of a Community Engagement Plan. Furthermore, on the county level, efforts are being made to align budget allocations with the goal of providing financial support for anti-displacement initiatives and increasing staffing resources to effectively implement the anti-displacement plan.

Ms. Gold showcased an artwork centered on the statement "It's not about the train, it's about the people."

Mayor Jacob Frey of Minneapolis sought clarification regarding the timeline of the Anti-Displacement framework. He expressed concerns about its alignment with the Municipal Consent phase, questioning whether this synchronization could impact funding prospects. He emphasized the importance of having prior knowledge about available funding opportunities before reaching the Municipal Consent phase.

Ms. Gold highlighted the objective of the Anti-Displacement initiative to actively engage with various stakeholders, including private entities, non-profit organizations, philanthropic partners, federal and state agencies. This engagement aims to secure substantial financial resources. The overarching goal of Anti-Displacement is not only to support the current project but also to establish a model applicable to broader large-scale projects at the state and federal levels.

Council Member Jeremiah Ellison from Minneapolis conveyed agreement with the concerns raised by BAC Co-Chair Brown and Mayor Winston previously. He provided insights into the historical challenges faced by North Minneapolis, outlining the reasons for residents' apprehension about the light rail project and its potential displacement effects. Meanwhile, Mayor Winston noted that much of this historical context extends



beyond Minneapolis into neighboring cities. The Anti-Displacement strategy requires site controls, and as the light rail alignment becomes more definitive, certain communities might struggle to believe that adequate funds are allocated to prevent conflicts between the project and displacement issues. Mayor Ellison urges the committee to consider it earnestly, emphasizing the need to work towards a decisive resolution.

Mayor Frey reconsidered the timeline concerning municipal consent and expressed apprehensions about potentially placing the council and the city in a challenging position. He highlighted the risk of granting or denying municipal consent while uncertainties linger about funding opportunities for anti-displacement efforts. Mayor Frey stressed that achieving clarity would be beneficial for all stakeholders involved.

Commissioner Lunde pointed out that while awaiting information about funding opportunities for anti-displacement, an actionable step currently available is to urge the project staff to investigate potentially affected properties. This investigation would provide information regarding what will happen to the properties after the project, and if feasible within legal bounds, whether these affected properties could be restored to their initial state. Taking this step can establish a shared understanding of a pre-defined course of action ahead of time.

The BAC Co-Chair raised a crucial query regarding Anti-Displacement and relocation. The concern centered around property being acquired – the question arose: where could relocation take place? This issue is particularly pertinent for businesses situated along the alignment, who are seeking answers.

Commissioner Fernando explained that the process follows a governing sequence where each jurisdiction can independently take action, including providing assistance for relocation. At Hennepin County, efforts are underway to clarify existing strategies and funds that align with Anti-Displacement goals. In the upcoming months, they will be working to identify viable solutions for the ongoing work. Commissioner Fernando concluded by emphasizing the necessity of collective collaboration to strengthen the Anti-Displacement measures.

## **6. Project Update**

Chris Beckwith, representing the Metropolitan Council, recognized the need to manage time and thus refrained from delivering a project update. Nevertheless, she did highlight an important announcement for the upcoming month's CMC meeting: the project is actively working on formulating a proposed resolution. Additionally, Ms. Beckwith acknowledged the letter received from Mayor Winston of Brooklyn Park, and added that a copy of the letter is included in today's meeting materials.

## **7. Minneapolis Design Decisions**



Dan Soler from Hennepin County conveyed enthusiasm in presenting the Minneapolis route recommendation, underscoring the extensive historical effort of studies and engagements spanning in the year. A year ago, the project declared its intention to thoroughly examine numerous route alternatives within Minneapolis. This process involved evaluating various route options and progressively refining them to determine the optimal choice.

He emphasized the significant extent of public involvement, showcasing the countless engagement activities with communities along the alignment. Furthermore, numerous meetings were held with each city to collect valuable feedback, which contributed to the meticulous process of narrowing down to the ultimate recommended route. Mr. Soler shared his excitement of the level of comments and feedback for the preferred alignment.

Nick Landwer from the Metropolitan Council delved into the specifics of the staff's route recommendation. He outlined that the proposed light rail extension would proceed from Robbinsdale into Minneapolis, with a central alignment featuring a station positioned at the northern terminus of Penn Avenue North on West Broadway Avenue. This strategic placement of the station would enable convenient access to the METRO C-Line as well as essential businesses within the vicinity.

Mr. Cigolo discussed the project's involvement in this particular section and communicated that the engagements focused on various facets of the alignment options recommended by the staff. These discussions covered subjects including parking, available resources for businesses, safety measures, security concerns, and a vision for the future of West Broadway.

Mr. Landwer proceeded by elaborating on the route, detailing that it would proceed southbound along West Broadway Avenue North, transitioning onto James Avenue North, ultimately connecting to 21st Avenue North. This alignment proposal included a station at James Avenue North and another station located at Lyndale Avenue North on 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue North. He underscored that the project had meticulously assessed the diverse needs of this area, ensuring provisions for bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicular traffic.

Mr. Landwer emphasized that comprehensive enhancements would be introduced to West Broadway, aimed at benefiting the community and contributing to the overall improvement of the Blue Line Extensions. Mr. Soler accentuated that this specific route segment, named "West Broadway and 21st Avenue," encompasses the alignment as a single segment. Any enhancements made to West Broadway would be an integral part of the improvement process.



Mr. Landwer further elaborated on the 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue North route options, discussing them in terms of a transit mall and highlighting the significance of the James Avenue station. This station presents opportunities for serving the YMCA, the Minneapolis Public School Service Center Davis Center, and providing a convenient connection to the METRO D-Line. As for the Lyndale Avenue North station, it offers services to churches, Juxtaposition, and local businesses.

Mr. Cigolo informed the members that the project has actively involved the community in this particular segment area through various means, including workshops, one-on-one meetings, door-to-door outreach, surveys, updates during business meetings, and listening sessions. He also shared some of the feedback received during these engagement efforts.

Mr. Landwer continued with the presentation explaining that light rail will continue center running on 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue North, transitioning into a roadway and light rail bridge over Highway I-94. The route would then continue onto Washington Avenue in an eastern direction. The introduction of this new bridge would provide an additional means of connecting North Minneapolis to the eastern section of the Mississippi River. As the light rail proceeds further along Washington Avenue, a station at Plymouth Avenue North will be established, offering an opportunity for the North Loop neighborhood, businesses, and transit opportunities connections.

Mr. Cigolo conveyed that as the project introduces the East of I-94 option, there have been continuous interactions with the local communities along this alignment. This has involved door-to-door canvassing, one-on-one discussions with businesses and property owners, virtual meetings, and surveys. Mr. Cigolo reported that the project has garnered positive feedback regarding the route option, although there have been some concerns expressed about potential parking impacts and safety and security.

Mr. Landwer delved deeper into the challenges posed by Washington Avenue North and its intersection with 10th Avenue North. He explained that these challenges primarily stem from building structures and limited ground space. Mr. Landwer then presented the proposed solutions for accommodating the light rail on 10th Avenue North. He emphasized the project's objective to retain some existing features such as sidewalks, bike lanes, two-way traffic, and ultimately arrived at the idea of transforming 10th Avenue North into a transit mall. This configuration provides flexibility, including options for bike lanes, pedestrian walkway, emergency vehicle access or a setup like the 21st Avenue Transit Mall, which restricts vehicular access. The ultimate aim is to create a connection to Target Field Station at Target Field Stadium.

Mr. Cigolo conveyed that the project has initiated engagement with businesses and communities in the specific segment along 10th Avenue North, and this outreach effort will persist in the area.



Chair Zelle expressed gratitude and thanked the three presenters for their excellent efforts.

Council Member Ellison appreciated the project's responsiveness to community input and was pleased to see that some of the feedback had been taken into account and incorporated into the design. He also mentioned his anticipation for the Anti-Displacement framework and its potential benefits for the communities.

Mayor Frey raised a question about the engagement process, seeking clarification on the numbers presented regarding the feedback received and the methodology employed. He followed up with another question aimed at identifying the key entities advocating for the route options.

In response, Mr. Cigolo explained that the Engagement Team had interacted with numerous communities along the corridor. The comments shared during the presentation were derived from feedback obtained through an online survey and various events held throughout the corridor. Mr. Soler mentioned that many formal engagement initiatives took place. The project employs dedicated Community Outreach Coordinators and collaborates with a Cohort team to facilitate and enhance the engagement process.

Commissioner Lunde expressed gratitude for the engagement efforts and emphasized the importance of selecting a route that can enhance the well-being of the local communities.

MPBR President Forney expressed her enthusiasm for the aligned vision and suggested the possibility of constructing a land bridge if a bridge will be built. She also pointed out that if there are concerns about displacement, safety, and security, this presents an opportunity to address those issues. Additionally, she recommended considering a review of zoning regulations to ensure that everyone can benefit from the enhancements.

Mayor Frey noted that he envisions the most significant economic impacts occurring to the east of I94 and sees it as an investment opportunity. He also expressed concerns regarding 10th Avenue and the need for effective communication with the neighborhood to ensure that residents are well-informed about the forthcoming light rail project and to address any potential concerns.

**8. Next Meeting: September 14, 2023 (Extending to 2 hours)**

**9. Adjourn**

Chair Zelle informed the members the resolution will be up for a vote next month. He then proceeded to conclude the meeting and adjourned it at 3:04pm.