



Blue Line Extension Corridor Management Committee

Summary of the February 11, 2021 Meeting

Present: Charlie Zelle, Revan Chamblis, Wes Kooistra, Lynnea Atlas-Ingretson, Irene Fernando, Jeff Lunde, Susan Pha, Olga Parsons, Bill Blonigan, Shep Harris, Gorge Selman, Gillian Rosenquist, Abdi Salah, Mike Elliott, Kathi Hemken, Mark Steffenson, Mike Opatz, Alicia Vickerman, Bridget Rief, Mike Barnes, Tonja West-Hafner, Chris Meyer, Nichole Buehler, Jeremiah Ellison

Not in attendance: Jacob Frey, Marion Greene, Denise Butler

1. Call to Order

Chair Zelle welcomed everyone and convened the meeting at 1:31 PM. He asked members to introduce themselves.

2. Approval of December 10, 2020 Minutes

Chair Zelle asked the committee to review the meeting minutes from the December 10, 2020 meeting and asked if there were any edits or comments. Dawn Hoffner called a roll for the approval of the minutes. Meeting minutes were approved.

3. Discussion and Adoption of CMC Charter

Sam O'Connell shared the purpose of the charter and CMC member responsibilities. She reviewed the voting and non-voting members and highlighted that an alternate is allowed to serve if the primary member is not able to attend. She also reviewed committee logistics, such as meeting summaries are approved at the following meeting and posted at that point (along with agendas and meeting recordings) on BlueLineExt.org.

Chair Zelle opened the floor for discussion about the CMC charter. He shared that as the alignment changes, there may be amendments to the membership of this group. Mayor Blonigan moved to adopt the charter. Councilmember West- Hafner seconded. Commissioner Fernando asked a question for clarity about amending the charter. Chair Zelle clarified that the group may want to revisit the charter but that could be brought forth at a later point. Mayor Harris inquired about how the changing alignment would impact municipal consent. Chair Zelle said that the project would be following the guidance in statute about seeking municipal consent as changes are confirmed.

The charter was approved by the committee.

Chair Zelle also asked that if anyone has questions to not wait for another meeting, reach out to him or others.

4. Communications & Engagement: Commitment



Sophia started by grounding the group in the values of engagement, including having a community-centered approach. She reviewed the commitments to be transparent, focus on trust, reach people where they are, and adjust methods based on ongoing dialog. She reviewed the communications & engagement approach, which includes dedicated project staff that work with corridor residents and businesses. There will be community and cultural consultants to further reach and input. She emphasized the importance of planned release of technical information and decision points. She reviewed the Public Involvement Plan inputs including demographics, accessibility, and environmental justice.

Cathy Gold shared an engagement update. She reviewed the activities of the past months and the results of feedback received. She shared the takeaways of listening sessions and stakeholder conversations which included recommendations on the approach to engagement. She reviewed the results of the surveys including key destinations and opportunities. She reviewed the timeline for contracting with the next group of community and cultural consultants. She described engagement plans, including a tiered contracting approach. They will have multiple community consultants that will do outreach, education, and engagement.

Chair Zelle asked for feedback and comments on the engagement process. Mayor Elliott said the group is working with the right lens. He appreciates the idea of moving at the speed of trust. He was happy to see affordability and the issues of displacement addressed upfront. He said that the approach sometimes in the past was to approach issues of equity and racial justice after, and that does not work. He also thought that the organizations doing the engagement work were the right ones. He would also like to see more diversity in the place where decisions about engagement are being made. He suggested outreach at the transit center in Brooklyn Center since it is a gateway to other communities via transit.

Chair Zelle said that the cost of not doing it right the first time is high. Mayor Hemken asked if anyone will be doing engagement in New Hope since the line will go so close to New Hope. Sophia replied that when there are more events in person, they hope to go to New Hope. George Selman asked why Brooklyn Center is a voting member on the committee and New Hope is not. Chair Zelle said that it was in recognizing that Brooklyn Center has been on the committee and active partner for years.

Nichole Buehler from the Blue Line Coalition said its great the project is recognizing the need for anti-displacement policy. She asked what the commitment is from the different cities on the line to put those policies in place including rent control, just-cause eviction, and others that would help residents benefit from the transit. Chair Zelle said that was a good comment and something that should be considered. Mayor Elliott said that it is an incredibly important comment and question. He asked if they could have a future meeting when it seems appropriate. Chair Zelle said that request was noted.

5. 2021 Project Roadmap



Dan Soler shared a review of the various parts of the Blue Line Extension Project staff team. He emphasized that Met Council and Hennepin County staff are working together to bring multiple elements of the project forward, and he reviewed that project development structure. He also emphasized that in addition to Community Works, design and engineering, environmental review, and communications and engagement, they needed to be moving forward items like housing affordability as a full group that is was a topic that needed partnership beyond Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council.

Dan Soler explained the goal of having, by the end of the year, a community-supported alignment that does not use BNSF right-of-way, and maintains the existing corridor as much as possible. They will be releasing the preliminary route options shortly. In early summer the routes will be evaluated against project criteria and additional engineering work to inform impacts and options. He walked through the next steps in 2021 including adopting a community supported alignment. Beyond 2021 they will need to confirm the environmental approach and conduct analysis. He gave a preview of what to expect based on each project area for new route options. The corridor can be divided into three areas with Area 1 and Area 2 having to confirm the potential route and Area 3 having more options to review. The route options are based on the adopted Project Principles and the conceptual review of other inputs such as community feedback, right-of-way, and operational needs.

Sam O'Connell shared a little about what to expect for engagement with the route development process and what feedback is sought. She said they would like community members to identify if anything is missing and what is resonating. They would like to seek feedback on the goals and objectives, and understand what information is needed or missing from community and business members in the corridor. Sam O'Connell also reviewed what would not be including in the upcoming route release including full design plans, potential Right-of-Way impacts, full analysis of project benefits, stations locations, project risks and costs. The route options will be high-level. She highlighted that anti-displacement measures and strategies are very important, and they understand how important that is to the community. Equity and concerns regarding community benefits will also be critical, as well as investments related to the previous alignment. Sam emphasized that this is not a full list, and that there will be more issues that are not yet known that will be brought forward and discussed as they come up.

Chair Zelle asked for comments and questions. Councilmember Ellison said he appreciated that the conversation surrounding anti-displacement. He wants to make sure that as routes are released, that there is an explanation of some of the routes that may seem natural to the community but may not work. It would be good to have a clear explanation (Lyndale for example) of why these do not fit. The City is trying to implement anti-displacement strategies. He said that Harrison is the most gentrified area of the city, and this was impacted by the former alignment. Some people feel that they had the worst of both worlds in that way, gentrification because of the infrastructure and no infrastructure. He said that trust moves at the speed of policy and money. We need to show people that we are willing to invest in the communities they call home. He said he is in support of this and will work for this. Bridget Rief had a request that the group talk about the movement to the



roadway corridor in CSAH 81 because there might be impacts to the Crystal airport and the airport commission will need to approve that. Dan Soler said they are aware of that, they remember working with them for the BNSF corridor, and they will continue working with them. It will be a part of the early engineering analysis.

Kerri Pearce Ruch shared some updates about the Bottineau Community Works including how Bottineau Community Works has been integrating with the LRT project and planning for the next steps in the process. She highlighted how this relates to issues of affordability and access to opportunities that were discussed during the engagement section. She also shared how Bottineau Community Works is connecting with similar projects across the country. In 2021 they will be building on small business and economic support, advancing bicycle and pedestrian connections, and promoting quality, equitable transit-oriented development.

Commissioner Fernando expressed gratitude for all the materials that were put together for the meeting. She shared that Hennepin County and the Met Council have received a lot of feedback about the need to keep momentum and communicate about the next phases. She hopes that the CMC members see themselves in this and asks for feedback as they continue.

6. Advisory Committee Reappointments

Sophia Ginis said that they are excited about the new CAC and BAC rosters and have the kick-off for those committees, March 1, and March 2 respectively. They will share the roster at the next CMC meeting. Councilmember Chamblis said she is very excited about the new appointments, as well as the focus on housing and anti-displacement discussions. She is excited to have some advancement and to have more BIPOC engagement.

7. Next Meeting

The next CMC meeting will be Thursday, March 11 at 1:30 PM.

8. Adjournment

Chair Zelle asked if there were any further questions or comments from the committee. Mayor Hemken asked if the slides would be shared, and Chair Zelle said they would be available online. The meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.