



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Business Advisory Committee Meeting #2
June 2, 2015
Blue Line Project Office
5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200
Crystal, MN 55428
8:00 AM – 9:30 AM**

Meeting Summary

BAC Members: Randy Boushek, Mark Steinhauser, Denny Walsh, Alison Pence, Jeff Washburne, John Slama, Charlie Jacobsen, Ben Colglazier, Jim White

Agency Staff and Guests: Dan Pfeiffer, David Davies, Sophia Ginis, Jessica Laabs, John Welbes, Juan Rangel, Nick Landwer, Dan Soler, Jim Toulouse, Kathryn O'Brien, Paul Danielson, MarySue Abel, Erik Hansen, Alicia Vap, Ryan Wilson, Janet Kennison, Scott Reed

1. Welcome and Introductions

Following introductions, Dan Pfeiffer called for nominations for co-chairs. Denny Walsh stated his interest.

2. Outreach Update: Community Open Houses

A community meeting was held in Crystal on May 28. Upcoming meetings include: June 4 in Minneapolis/Golden Valley, June 11 in Robbinsdale, and June 17 in Brooklyn Park.

It was noted that it would be good to have flyers available for BAC members to take back to their organizations.

3. Design Update/Discussion

Preliminary Park-and-Ride Space Demand

Three park-and-ride locations were identified in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS): 93rd (moved to Oak Grove Parkway); 63rd Avenue; and Robbinsdale. The DEIS identified need for 2,025 total spaces across these three locations, and these numbers have been revisited as the project is advancing. Two models apply in determining the number of spaces: ridership model and park-and-ride-model. Assumptions were explained for both models. BPO feels comfortable with the park-and-ride numbers right now, but noted that ridership is still being refined.

The year 2040 unconstrained park-and-ride demand total is 2,375 spaces, with numbers going up considerably in Robbinsdale. Constrained 2040 matches the DEIS estimate at 2,025 total spaces. Constrained capacity in year 2020 shows parking need of 1,675 total spaces. These numbers tell us we should build all spaces from Day 1 and accommodate the riders. Constrained scenarios would result in loss of riders.

Robbinsdale has high demand but is constrained in physical space. BPO is continuing to work with Robbinsdale to locate an appropriately sized park-and-ride.

Colglazier – Where are you looking? Looking at existing facility?

Landwer – Looking at the existing site, but has physical constraints.

Colglazier – Is Golden Valley in the mix?

Landwer – We are considering it.

Soler – City of Golden Valley has expressed interest in some parking in the city, and we likely will try to get some parking spaces in Golden Valley.

Walsh – How do you determine where park-and-rides will be? Is it up to the cities to figure it out?

What about Crystal station?

Landwer – Crystal station surface parking is difficult to place, not a lot of room.

Walsh – How do you reconcile that, getting people to the station?

Landwer – We assumed this is a walk-up or drop off station. Difficult to find a spot for parking in Crystal.

Boushek – This is all based on modeling, do we have any back-checking of previous models to see how accurate they were?

Landwer – Yes, it is based on regional modeling. Before/after studies on other projects are used to calibrate the model. There is a high confidence level in these numbers.

Walsh – Is there some kind of conversation with cities and Met Council on incentives for high density development, like in Crystal where the station is assumed as a walk-up? How do we get involved?

Landwer – This is happening through the station area planning process, beginning in August in Crystal.

Davies – Discussions happen mostly with city staff, but there are opportunities for community working groups.

Soler – We work closely with the county and would bring those elements into the BAC for updates.

Walsh – Would like to be involved in this discussion.

Steinhauser – When do the conversations culminate with traffic considerations, grading, etc. for park-and-rides?

Landwer – Looking at traffic right now.

Soler – Any park-and-ride analysis includes traffic.

Colglazier – Are existing MTC routes and facilities being looked at?

Nick – Service planning elements will occur later in the project. Vap – We have some preliminary feeder network information. Goal of feeder network is to supplement LRT.

Colglazier – Can existing lines be used as a shuttle?

Soler – For every commuter, there is a breaking point with things to balance – travel time, transfers, etc.

Danielson - Noble park-and-ride example (just east of Oak Grove station location); direct routes out of there are better than LRT, so those riders don't become LRT riders. There is a sensitive balance in figuring out what makes sense for LRT.

63rd Ave Station Park and Ride: Recommendation

Alicia Vap reported that BPO has been meeting with various stakeholders to address issues. The Issue Resolution Team (IRT) prefers center platform vs. side platform for easier rider experience and less cost. Pedestrian overpass was also recommended, as well as bus stops on 63rd. Parking is the biggest issue, as there is a heavy draw for a park-and-ride. DEIS assumed a 3rd level to existing parking ramp. Other options include a new 2nd ramp or new surface parking. Current ramp wasn't designed to accommodate a 3rd level, and it would be quite a substantial effort and cost to upgrade. Adding a 2nd ramp requires loss of 25 spaces to the existing ramp; for a total of about 750 spaces overall. Also looked at bus stops on 63rd to mitigate for loss of the bus turnaround. The City wants to "energize" 63rd and get more people on the street. This is a constant with all 3 parking options. The surface parking option is most cost-effective and adds flexibility for adding structured parking in the future. This option totals about 715 spaces. The IRT recommending surface parking – most flexibility, most cost-effective, fits best with neighborhood.

Soler – Comparing structure (750 spaces) to surface (715 spaces), it's quite a bigger cost just for 35 more spaces. Structured parking is at least \$15K per space.

Colglazier – Is there no bus turnaround, is that not needed?

Vap – Turnaround is used now for an express bus service, which will be eliminated as part of the LRT project.

Soler – Transit operations folks are OK with it not being here.

Brooklyn Boulevard Station: Recommendation

Station has been changed from split to center platforms, and a secondary access from 76th is being added. BPO is looking at bus stops and continuing to explore the Starlite Transit Center. Previous design (split side platform) was the concept used primarily along University Avenue/Green Line, but has double the costs in several aspects (i.e. need 2 of multiple elements).

Jacobsen – Sees people using the Target parking lot as a park-and ride; it's closer to the station than the park-and-ride.

Vap – There is a similar situation to this at the Hamline station on the Green Line, and we haven't heard any issues. BPO will check with Metro Transit police to see if they are working with Target.

Soler – Do people park there now and go to Starlite?

White – Target is concerned about people using their parking for a park-and-ride, but Brooklyn Park hasn't seen it yet.

Freight Rail Update

Ryan Wilson, Freight Rail Coordination Manager at BPO reported on coordination with CP Railway and BNSF. BNSF currently has 100 feet of right-of-way, with intent for LRT to operate in eastern 50 feet. BNSF now operates in the middle of the ROW, so there is a need to shift them over to implement LRT. BNSF has been amenable to working with Hennepin County and the project staff, and monthly meetings have been occurring since the end of 2014. Conversations focused on what improvements are necessary for BLRT, and what changes or shifts need to be accommodated for the existing BNSF tracks in order to facilitate BLRT? BNSF's intent is to continue to own and operate on this corridor, i.e. BPO would purchase a long-term easement instead of purchasing property from BNSF. They want to maintain ability to make future capacity improvements and would like a barrier built to provide safe operations between freight and LRT.

Ryan shared potential corridor protection treatments: moat, crash wall, retained embankment. One single treatment will not be the right fit for the entire corridor. BPO is looking for the right blend to address safety concerns but also work within the context, i.e. standing water/poor soils, homes close to the outside of the ROW, etc.

Right of way pinch points – there are about 10 locations where the ROW is less than 100 feet due to BNSF selling off some of their property, which results in some private property impacts. Next step is to advance improvements for inclusion in the FEIS.

Colglazier – There's a lot of water there now (Golden Valley/Robbinsdale area), so wouldn't a moat/ditch erode the rail integrity over time and require maintenance?

Wilson – There are technical ways to bridge over pond and other wet areas that are being considered; also need to consider environmental impacts.

Slama – Haven't heard much lately about BNSF's plans to make improvements in Crystal. How does that get incorporated and evaluated?

Wilson – CP & BNSF have been working on a potential project to take eastbound CP trains and run down the Monticello subdivision to downtown Minneapolis. BNSF has stated this is a project they were planning before, and they've said they'll work with BLRT, but nothing specific has been shared about options or status.

Soler – If they are making that connection, we would like them to do it on new alignment proposed for BLRT, but we haven't heard anything new in past few months on status.

Soler – Freight rail coordination is probably biggest risk to the project in terms of cost and operations during construction and during revenue service.

This info will go to the Corridor Management Committee (CMC). Next BAC meeting is July 7.

Boushek – If SWLRT gets bottled up, does that affect this project?

Soler – Yes, probably in some shape or form. From a regional perspective, workforce and funding intersect. These are two large capital improvement projects, but it's not unprecedented that multiple projects happen in the same region.

Boushek – Is it conceivable that this project could get done if SWLRT doesn't get done?

Soler – Yes, absolutely. This line stands on its own and is not dependent on SWLRT. Question is not if SWLRT doesn't get done, but what does SWLRT become instead?

Colglazier – What is status of Golden Valley stations?

Vap – The DEIS included two stations in Golden Valley, but the Plymouth Avenue station was not included in the cost estimate. It has been recommended by the CMC to continue to analyze Plymouth Ave and Golden Valley Road stations and another recommendation will be made in the fall when the budget is refreshed.

Soler – Hennepin County and City of Minneapolis have gone on record to say they support both stations being constructed. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has said they are not opposed to a station at Plymouth Avenue, but want to make sure all environmental issues are covered. Golden Valley supports both stations, but primarily Golden Valley Road station. Ridership is a big factor. BPO will do full engineering and environmental on both stations and will bring back to committees the results of the analysis, cost, and ridership to look for a recommendation on a final decision.

4. Member and Committee Reports/Public Forum

No comments.

5. Adjourn

Next BAC meeting July 7th.