



Blue Line Extension Corridor Management Committee

Summary of the March 11, 2021 Meeting

Members Present: Charlie Zelle, Reva Chamblis, Robert Lilligren, Irene Fernando, Jeff Lunde, Elie Farhat, Tonja West-Hafner, Jim Adams, Bill Blonigan, Shep Harris, Gillian Rosenquist, George Selman, Philippe Cunningham, Jeremiah Ellison, Felicia Perry, Mike Elliott, Kathi Hempken, Mike Opatz, Chris Meyer, Jason Greenberg, Denise Butler, Ricardo Perez, Tim Baylor, Mike Steinhauser, Bridget Rief, Mike Barnes, Wes Koistra, Qannani Omar, Kathi Hemken

1. Call to Order

Chair Zelle welcomed everyone and convened the meeting at 1:32 PM.

2. Approval of February 11, 2021 Minutes

Chair Zelle asked the committee to review the meeting minutes from the February 11, 2021 meeting and asked if there were any edits or comments. Bill Blonigan made the motion to approve the minute; Mike Elliot seconded the motion. Meeting minutes were approved.

3. Committee Reports

Chair Zelle asked the committee chairs to introduce themselves. Jason Greenberg introduced himself as the chair for the Community Advisory Committee. He also shared that the other co-chair could not be present, Felipe Sosa. Felicia Perry, Mike Steinhauser, and Tim Baylor are the co-chairs for the Business Advisory Committee introduced themselves. Jason Greenberg provided an update on the Community Advisory Committee. At the last meeting the group met for the first time, introduced themselves, elected co-chairs and met project staff. Felicia Perry shared an update on the Business Advisory Committee. They appointed three co-chairs, had a project overview, and learned about the components for the project. They also discussed furthering the community engagement and have their next meeting planned for March 22, 2021.

4. Initial Route Identification

Chair Zelle introduced the topic of the initial route identification process. He emphasized that these are initial routes. Dan Soler, Hennepin County, introduced himself and shared the steps to route identification. These included reestablishing the Project Management Team, which is Met Council and Hennepin County staff together, and coming to the decision to move away from the BNSF railway alignment. He reviewed the Project Principles which were approved by the CMC in December 2020. Another piece of this process was bringing back together the Issue Identification Teams and Advisory Committee structure and conducting initial engagement. He reviewed the project areas, which help organize the way engagement and route development is being considered.

Nick Landwer, Metropolitan Council, reviewed considerations for each project area. Area 1 does not need to be modified. This aligns with the Project Principles, expectations from the community and the FTA. Area 1 has four existing stations and the operations and maintenance facility. Nick Landwer reviewed some of the key connections/destinations of this area. Next Nick Landwer reviewed Area 2. This area has multiple station areas and connections that can be preserved, although the route



will move. He highlighted that there are additional geographical barriers, such as Crystal Lake to consider here. The additional area that could be served by this new route is the North Memorial Hospital. Nick Landwer shared a map of Area 2 and highlighted the route and former station locations; this route aligns with the project principles and community feedback. He shared considerations for Area 3. For Area 3 it was the most important Project Principles were to minimize impacts, complement the existing transitways and when appropriate, serve even more people and destinations. This route might be an opportunity to serve more transit-reliant people. Part of the Area 3 route development process considered public right-of-way width and current City of Minneapolis zoning. The Area 3 map focuses on West Broadway and Lowry Avenues. He emphasized when it came to the links around Target Field there is a challenge of how to cross 94. These are just a few of the options to consider.

Nick Landwer briefly described a number of route options that were considered that did not make the final route options map including Fremont, Penn, and Emerson Avenues. He reviewed Lyndale Avenue north of West Broadway and how the narrowness of the right-of-way makes light rail implementation difficult. He also reviewed Highway 55 and Highway 100 which get away from the original route and will not have the ridership or meet needs of the corridor. Mike Steinhauer asked about traffic patterns and counts as well as environmental review of center-running alignment in Area 2. Nick Landwer said they are starting to look at traffic impacts as well as the intersections along that corridor. Ricardo Perez, Blue Line Coalition, said they prepared a statement. Denise Butler, Blue Line Coalition said that this information was not shared with their community and coalition until this morning. She said she questions whether Lowry meets the Principles of the CMC. She questions why this was brought forward. She wonders why the old alignment is not shown as it may provide helpful context. She would like to make sure that no decision is made for today and would like the community to be brought into the conversation at this point. Nick Landwer said that this is not the end all but the beginning of conversations. Dan Soler emphasized that there is no recommendation or vote here today. This is the initial roll out of ideas for routes. They are meant to begin the discussion. There is more on the agenda today to discuss the process going forward. Ricardo Perez said that they did not have time to react because their coalition is not one organization but a coalition of many groups. He shared that their communities may be disconnected from this topic, and/or occupied by the [Derek Chauvin] trial going on. Their coalition has not had the time and their organizations might have limited capacity for these conversations due to available funding and the other events happening now. He said that there is not an active conversation on anti-displacement strategies and policies in this route review. They found out about the BNSF alignment not going forward very shortly before the decision was public. He said that they have not had information in enough of an advance and the lack of communication has continued in the past year.

Mayor Harris, Golden Valley said that he appreciated the comments from the Blue Line Coalition. He emphasized the complications that BNSF created, and that Golden Valley was not pleased but understands this. He also said they will continue to be at the table and hope to support other transit options (BRT) in the Highway 55/Highway 100 corridor.



5. Route Evaluation Next Steps

Sophia Ginis, Metropolitan Council reviewed the ways that this project will be communicate, including a number of different news and media outlets. There is a new Facebook page as well as other social media engagement opportunities. There is also a website, BlueLineExt.org that has information and a link to the interactive map. The public can also directly contact Sophia Ginis. The project staff will attend community meetings. At this point there are a lot more questions than answers, and there is a lot of feedback needed.

Council Member Chamblis, Metropolitan Council, appreciates the Blue Line Coalition and the ideas and concerns they brought. She said that she would look forward to defining anti-displacement in this process and having it as part of the plan for developing strategies to support community and have economic development.

Sam O'Connell, Metropolitan Council, shared the high-level next steps for the project and the schedule that is intended. She highlighted a few initial next steps. This includes updates to the project goals, objective sand criteria. It also includes conceptual engineering and design, community benefits, and previous project commitments. She provided a look ahead for 2021 and what to anticipate.

Mayor Elliott, Brooklyn Center, shared that he would like to underscore the comments from Council Member Chamblis and the Blue Line Coalition regarding anti-displacement. He shared some quotes to emphasize the importance of these conversations. He said that they need real information and data about the communities living in these areas and the impacts. They need real policies that center anti-displacement.

6. Community Consultants Next Steps

Joan Vanhala, Hennepin County shared an update on the Community Engagement Cohort Contractors. They have organizations in each area, with the most organizations focusing on Area 3, Minneapolis. Commissioner Fernando, Hennepin County, expressed gratitude for everyone who attended the meeting. The project team and her staff want to be sure they are accessible to all of the municipal leaders in the corridor.

7. Adjournment

Chair Zelle asked if there were any further questions or comments from the committee. There were none. The meeting adjourned at 3:03 pm. **Next CMC Meeting: April 8, 2021**