



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Community Advisory Committee Meeting
February 8, 2016
Blue Line Project Office
5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200
Crystal, MN 55428
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

Meeting Summary

CAC Members: Justin Youngbluth, Chris Berne, Ken Rodgers, Giuseppe Marrari, Carol Vosberg, George Selman, Gillian Rosenquist, Rich Baker, La Shella Sims

Agency Staff and Guests: Andrew Gillett, Sam O’Connell, Jennifer Swenson, Rachel Dammel, Juan Rangel, Sophia Ginis, Dan Pfeiffer, David Davies, Scott Reed, Alicia Vap, Paul Danielson, Emily Carr, Dan Soler

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chris Berne opened the meeting and asked if there were any changes to the minutes from the last meeting. Chris had one change on page 5 – in Chris’s conversation with Alene Tchourmoff he was told offers would be made in Q3 of this year, not Q4.

2. Municipal Consent Update

Dan Soler presented.

Four of the six municipal consent hearings have been held (Brooklyn Park, Golden Valley, Minneapolis, and Hennepin County). Crystal moved their meeting from February 2nd to February 16th due to the weather. Robbinsdale’s meeting will also be on February 16th.

Both the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County took action on the municipal consent plans at their transportation committee meetings. The full councils will hear the action on February 12th for Minneapolis and February 9th for Hennepin County.

The remaining actions are scheduled as follows:

- Brooklyn Park: February 22nd
- Crystal: February 29th
- Robbinsdale: March 2nd
- Golden Valley: February 16th

Dan commented that all hearings so far have been well attended.

George Selman said that he has received a lot of comments that people have liked the road signs announcing the meetings.

Gillian Rosenquist would appreciate it if staff attending the meetings could brush up on station-specific information before the meetings (e.g., ridership information).

3. 63rd Ave/CSAH 81 Intersection

Alicia Vap presented. On November 12th, the CMC directed BPO to work with stakeholders to study a pedestrian bridge at 63rd Avenue/CSAH 81.

CSAH 81 is a house moving route, and the freight tracks also have a high clearance. Due to the needed height, the pedestrian bridge ramp needs to be longer than usual. The proposed ramp would have a loop on the east side of CSAH 81 and a switchback on the west side. The structure is almost 1,900 feet long.

Information requested by the CMC included:

- Feasibility
 - The bridge is technically feasible, but requires clearance over freight rail and CSAH 81 house moving route
- Justification
 - Higher number of pedestrians anticipated with LRT station
 - Walk time via pedestrian bridge more than triple that of at-grade crossing (11 minutes vs. 5.5 minutes)
- Environmental impacts
 - Visual impacts
- Cost
 - \$15-17 million
- Public outreach
 - January 11th City Council Work Session: City not supportive of advancing pedestrian bridge, would rather enhance at-grade crossing
- Jurisdictional support
 - Hennepin County will not own or maintain

At-grade intersection enhancements could include:

- Wider median, removal of dual left turn lane
- Pedestrian crosswalks
 - Widen from 6-8 feet to 12 feet for visibility, add black paint for contrast
 - Raise crosswalks in free right turn lanes
 - Add stop bars (indicate to cars to stop behind the crosswalk)
- Advanced pedestrian/bike signage (e.g., “Turning vehicles stop for pedestrians”)
- Streetscape enhancements on corner

Chris Berne asked what the projected speed limit is at this intersection. Alicia responded that 55 mph is the current speed limit, but the County is working with MnDOT to do a speed study.

Carol Vosberg asked if lighting was considered. Alicia said additional lighting would be added on the corners to help make the intersection stand out.

4. Bass Lake Road/CSAH 81 Intersection

At their November 12th meeting, CMC also directed BPO staff to study a pedestrian bridge at Bass Lake Road/CSAH 81.

On the west side of CSAH 81 and south of Bass Lake Rd, the land is in public ownership so have some room to work with but not much. On the east side, there is also somewhat limited area due to the apartment building and the desire to minimize right-of-way acquisitions.

Two designs were advanced:

- Two elevator design
 - 24 feet tall
 - Pier in middle
 - Elevator ramp is adjacent to platform
- Elevator and ramp design
 - Elevator on west side and ramp on east side
 - Ramp on east side is over 200 feet long
 - Will need to determine how to clear snow from ramp

Dan Soler said they looked at about nine different alternatives, but the bottom line is the height can't really change no matter how you shape the bridge. The two designs presented are the ones that Crystal staff and city council wanted to see more details on.

Information requested by the CMC included:

- Feasibility
 - Both options are technically feasible but require clearance over the CSAH 81 house moving route
 - Elevator needed on west side due to right-of-way constraints
- Justification
 - Higher number of pedestrians anticipated with LRT station
 - Walk time via pedestrian bridge would be about double that of the at-grade crossing (4.5 minutes vs. 2.5 minutes)
- Environmental impacts
 - Visual
 - Cultural resources (proximity to Becker Park)
- Cost
 - Two elevator design: \$11-13 million
 - Elevator and ramp design: \$8-11 million
- Public outreach
 - January 14th and January 25th City Council Work Sessions: Council favors advancing pedestrian bridge options and some form of at-grade intersection enhancements
 - January 25th County Station Area Planning Open House: community members expressed support for a pedestrian bridge

- Jurisdictional support
 - Hennepin County will not own or maintain
 - City of Crystal will not own or maintain

Dan Soler said that the City Council sees it as a necessary improvement as a result of the station at Bass Lake Road. There is some negotiating that needs to happen regarding who would own and maintain it.

Rich Baker asked if there would be stairs in the elevator towers. Alicia Vap replied that there would be.

Ken Rodgers asked what happens if one of the elevators is inoperable. Alicia Vap said they'll have to work through that but you'd likely have to cross at-grade or take the stairs. There will still be a safe at-grade crossing. Paul Danielson added that elevators should failsafe down to the first level. Justin Youngbluth said the elevators should be linked together so if one doesn't operate the other won't either.

Carol Vosberg asked if there was a local precedent for who owns pedestrian bridges. Alicia Vap said it varies. Dan Soler added that most of the time pedestrian bridges are tied to a trail of some kind so whoever owns the trail owns the bridge. If the bridge is strictly a vertical connection to a station platform, then it would be owned and operated by Metro Transit. In this situation, CSAH 81 and the traffic signals are owned by the County. The City wants a bridge that connects city owned sidewalks, but the City says that the pedestrian bridge is needed for LRT. Typically, if it's your road, it's your bridge. The argument here is but for the station, you don't need the bridge.

George Selman asked who would maintain the at-grade crossing. Dan replied that would be the County.

At-grade intersection enhancements could include:

- Wider median, narrowed lanes
- Pedestrian crosswalks
 - Widen from 6-8 feet to 12 feet for visibility, add black paint for contrast
 - Raise crosswalks in free right turn lanes
 - Add stop bars
- Advanced pedestrian/bike signage
- Streetscape enhancements on corner (e.g., additional lighting)

Chris Berne asked if there has been discussion about having flashers to warn of upcoming traffic signals. Dan Soler said MnDOT has pulled away from using advanced warning flashers in the metro area, but he doesn't know the County's position on them. The Crystal City Council feels that this is not a great at-grade pedestrian crossing, and they feel they need to provide a choice for folks to not cross the street at grade.

Dan Soler noted that this issue will be in front of the CMC on Thursday, and the project office will be looking for the CMC to give additional direction.

5. Noise Analysis Update

Scott Reed presented. To give a high level overview of anticipated impacts, there would be few impacts along Olson Memorial Highway, some impacts along the trench in Golden Valley and Robbinsdale, and then more impacts when LRT comes out of the trench in Robbinsdale and Crystal, especially by at-grade crossings. North of Bass Lake Road, impacts would lessen, except at some crossings. There would be relatively few impacts along West Broadway Avenue; the roadway noise dominates there so the train noise doesn't add much. The train noise has more impact in the relatively quiet trench and Crystal/Robbinsdale town center areas.

Trains typically sound their horn at every at-grade crossing. This would cause several hundred noise impacts. Mitigation strategies include:

- Quiet zones at intersections shared with freight
 - Trains would still sound their bell but not their horn, eliminating many impacts
- Installing wayside devices at quiet zone intersection
 - Bell would sound just at crossing rather than as the train approaches the crossing
- Noise barriers
 - Variable heights based on conditions
 - Have a good sense of where they would be located, working now on how high they will be
 - Design work on material types, textures, and colors will continue after the Final EIS
- Interior testing at receptors where, even with implementation of mitigation measures, impacts remain
 - Noise analysis considers the noise you would hear outside your home
 - Will test to see the noise level would be inside the home
 - May prompt additional mitigation (e.g., insulation similar to what MAC does for residents near the airport)

Overview by city:

- Minneapolis
 - Noise barrier near Plymouth Ave Station
 - Interior testing at 4 properties located in Homewood just north of Olson Memorial Highway

Ken Rodgers asked if Scott could describe the noise walls. Scott said they will look more like a large fence than a giant noise wall. As long as it's a dense enough material to block the sound it could be a variety of materials, it just can't have gaps. On average, the height will be about 8 feet. They will be located outside the right-of-way parallel to the tracks. In some location, retaining walls or an addition to retaining walls will serve to mitigate noise. Ken asked how the noise walls don't pose a hazard to non-sighted individuals. Dan Soler replied that in this area the walls are in the trench. Outside the trench, other safety factors are taken into consideration.

Gillian Rosenquist asked what the impact will be to the parks in Golden Valley, including to the wildlife and people in the parks. Scott Reed said that the train itself blocks the noise from bouncing off the wall into the park. Gillian said she saw at the open house there was still an area in Golden

Valley that had an impact. Scott replied that there is one property that would need interior testing to see if additional mitigation is needed.

- Golden Valley
 - Noise barrier on east side of BNSF corridor along Kewanee Way
 - Interior testing at 1 property located south of Golden Valley Road Station
- Robbinsdale
 - Quiet zone and wayside audible devices at 3 intersections:
 - 41st/Noble Ave
 - 42nd Ave
 - 45½ Ave
 - Assuming closure of 39 ½ Ave – recommending as noise mitigation measure
 - Want confirmation from City Council
 - Noise barriers
 - East side of BSNF corridor: along Indiana Ave on north side of Grimes Pond with gap at substation, continuing up to 40 ½ Ave and from 45 ½ Ave to 47 ½ Ave
 - West side of BNSF corridor: north of 36th Ave corridor from 38th Ave to 40 ½ Ave and along Railroad Ave between 41st Ave and 42nd Ave
 - Interior testing at 18 properties:
 - 3 along Indiana
 - 1 at 36th Ave
 - 2 at 38th Ave to 40 ½ Ave
 - 3 along Regent
 - 3 near TH 100
 - 6 at 45 ½ Ave
- Crystal
 - Quiet zone and wayside audible devices at 3 intersections:
 - West Broadway
 - Corvallis
 - Bass Lake Road
 - Noise barriers on east side of BNSF corridor from 47th Ave to south of Corvallis
 - Interior testing at 1 property: apartment building just north of West Broadway
- Brooklyn Park
 - Quiet zone and wayside audible devices at 2 intersections:
 - 63rd Ave
 - 71st Ave
 - Interior testing at 3 properties near 93rd Ave

6. Sochacki Park Update

Scott Reed presented. Generally when referring to Sochacki Park, we are referring to the original component in Robbinsdale. Access to the park is needed to build the bridge over Grimes Pond. Staff

looked at other alternatives that would not impact the park, but they would have very significant impacts on residents in the area (including home acquisitions).

Staff initially focused on the southern end of the park to avoid tree removal, but in talking with park staff many of the trees there are invasive so they would like to have them removed and replaced with native species.

Mitigation plan developed with input from staff at:

- Three Rivers Park District
- Cities of Robbinsdale and Golden Valley
- Golden Valley Open Space Committee
- Robbinsdale Park and Rec Committee

The mitigation plan focuses on:

- Appropriate clean up and restoration of BLRT construction staging areas
 - According to the MPCA, there has been lots of dumping in the park – need to clean up whatever we disturb
- Enhancements to trails and other park features
 - Enhance trail through park to Mary Hills Nature Area
 - Build trail connection from Theodore Wirth Park to Mary Hills

Next steps:

- February 2: GV public hearing
- February 8: Sochacki Park JPA Board meeting
- February 9: Robbinsdale public hearing
- February 16: Golden Valley City Council action
- March 2: Robbinsdale City Council action

Gillian Rosenquist said she wanted to reiterate that the Golden Valley open space committee was disappointed to see that there weren't plans for the southern portion of the park. They are excited about the invasive species removal, but they'd really like to see the plans for what will be happening in Golden Valley and how the use of the park will be impacted during the construction phase. Scott Reed said they are finishing the overall draft of the parks impact analysis so he can share that information. Dan Soler noted that a lot of commitments have been made since the presentation to the open space committee in December.

Dan Soler expressed his thanks to Golden Valley and Robbinsdale staff, councils, and committees because while there will be some pain associated with construction, it will end up being a win-win for all parties.

Scott Reed added that construction staging will be a continuing discussion. The Final EIS will include some information about how conceptually those impacts can be minimized, but the dialogue will continue through 30, 60, and 90 percent design and construction.

Gillian Rosenquist said there is some discomfort since that additional information is coming after municipal consent so the more information we can give them the better.

7. Future Topics: Committee Feedback

Sam O'Connell presented.

Key themes from discussion and follow up emails included:

- Safe connectivity by all modes and for all ages and abilities
- How technology can be used to improve transit operations and attractiveness
- Park-and-ride ramp features (rain gardens, car sharing, charging stations)
- Environmental impacts and mitigation measures
 - Noise, vibration, light
 - Construction plans

Sam said to let her know if anyone thinks of additional topics. The BAC also went through this exercise so if there are overlapping topics they may see if there is an opportunity for a joint meeting.

Chris Berne asked how the BAC input aligned with theirs. Sam O'Connell said that safety was a big one (including wayfinding). David Davies added that economic development was probably the second priority, and health equity was also included.

Dan Soler added that the technology item is something Metro Transit's marketing folks are working on related to how to get to their stop and what people do once they get off at their stop, trying to help transit users get their full trip planned.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:36 pm. The next CAC meeting is scheduled for March 7, 2016.