



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Community Advisory Committee Meeting
July 11, 2016
Blue Line Project Office
5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200
Crystal, MN 55428
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

Meeting Summary

CAC Members: Carol Vosberg, Ken Rodgers, Chris Berne, George Selman, Rich Baker, LaShella Sims, Steve Schmidt

Agency Staff and Guests: Dan Soler, Sophia Ginis, Dan Pfeiffer, Rachel Dammel, Juan Rangel, Daniela Lorenz (BP intern), Kathryn O'Brien, Sam O'Connell, Nick Landwer, Jim Toulouse, MarySue Abel, Emily Carr, Paul Danielson, Scott Reed, Alicia Vap

1. Approval of May 9, 2016 Meeting Minutes

Chris Berne asked a clarifying question about the statistics listed under Item 2. There were no other questions or comments, and the minutes were approved.

2. Environmental Update

Kathryn O'Brien presented. The Final EIS will be published on Friday. Copies will be available in libraries and city halls along the corridor, and the document will be posted online. The online version is in an accessible format. Comments will be accepted through August 15th.

NEPA/MEPA Process

- What's been done?
 - Alternatives Analysis: 2008-2010
 - Draft EIS Scoping: 2012
 - Draft EIS: Published in March 2014
 - Evaluated four LRT alignments and a No Build Alternative
 - Identified a Locally Preferred Alternative (LRT on Highway 55/BNSF corridor/West Broadway in Brooklyn Park)
 - Comment period closed May 2014
 - Final EIS: July 2016 (anticipated)
 - Evaluates the BLRT project (preferred alternative) and a No Build Alternative
 - Identifies project effects and mitigation measures
 - Responds to comments received on the Draft EIS

- What's next?
 - Record of Decision (NEPA)
 - Anticipated September 2016
 - Summarizes the project and the basis of the agency's decision
 - Includes mitigation commitments and outlines program for mitigation monitoring
 - Determination of Adequacy (MEPA)
 - Formal action by Met Council that the EIS:
 - Addressed issues raised in scoping
 - Provided responses to substantive comments on the Draft EIS
 - Was prepared in compliance with applicable rules and statutes

Overview of Final EIS

- What does it cover?
 - Purpose and need
 - Alternatives considered
 - Anticipated impacts
 - Measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate project impacts
 - Overview of public involvement and agency coordination
 - Responses to Draft EIS comments received
- Overview of Select EIS Categories
 - Environmental Justice
 - Overview
 - Documents regulatory context and methodology
 - Identifies minority and low-income populations (EJ populations)
 - Discusses public involvement with EJ populations
 - Provides analysis for environmental categories that could affect EJ populations
 - Project-wide EJ finding: no disproportionately high and adverse impacts on EJ populations
 - EJ Populations
 - BLRT corridor will serve significant EJ populations and transit dependent populations
 - Minority populations are concentrated in North Minneapolis, portions of Crystal, and southern Brooklyn Park
 - Low-income populations are concentrated in similar areas as minority populations
 - Transit Impact
 - Improved transit service for EJ communities to access:
 - Key employment destinations
 - Colleges

- Shopping centers and community facilities
 - Serves North Minneapolis EJ community
 - Van White Station
 - Penn Station
 - Plymouth Station
 - Connection to proposed C Line BRT at Penn Station
- Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act of 1966
 - Overview
 - Protects publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife and/or wildfowl refuges, and public/private historic sites as part of transportation development
 - Required for all federal transportation projects
 - Timeline
 - March 2014: Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation in Draft EIS
 - July 2016: Amended Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation in Final EIS
 - September 2016: Final Section 4(f) Evaluation in ROD
 - Preliminary Determination
 - Theodore Wirth Regional Park – de minimis use
 - Glenview Terrace Park – de minimis use
 - Sochacki Park: Mary Hills Management Unit – temporary occupancy
 - Sochacki Park: Sochacki Management Unit – temporary occupancy
 - South Halifax Park – temporary occupancy
 - Minneapolis Public Schools Athletic Field – no use
 - Becker Park – temporary occupancy
 - Park property adjacent to Rush Creek Regional Trail – temporary occupancy
 - Grand Rounds Historic District – direct use
 - Homewood Historic District – no use
 - Osseo Branch, St. Paul Minneapolis & Manitoba Historic District – direct use
 - Section 4(f) Mitigation
 - Theodore Wirth Regional Park and Glenview Terrace Park – de minimis use (about two acres of the approximately 750 acre facility)
 - Replacement parkland, trail reconstruction, new trail construction and trail connections, trailhead construction, reconstruct Theodore Wirth Parkway and Golden Valley Road intersection, revegetation of disturbed areas
 - Need MPRB’s concurrence with the de minimis determination
 - Chris Berne asked if they anticipate any issues with receiving concurrence. Kathryn O’Brien said staff

has indicated they will recommend concurrence to the park board, but they won't know for sure until the vote happens.

- Rich Baker asked if the two acres of impact included the Golden Valley Road Station. Kathryn O'Brien said that it did. Rich asked if that calculation included the land trade with the park board. Kathryn replied that they can't start the right-of-way acquisition process until the Record of Decision is published, so after that they can start negotiating with the park board.
- Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act
 - Protects federal investments in park and recreational resources
 - Coordination with DNR and NPS required
 - Sochacki Park: Sochacki Management Unit
 - Temporary construction staging to exceed six-month requirement
 - Requires "conversion" of 6(f) property
 - Replacement property under consideration is "beehive" oven roadside rest area in Robbinsdale near interchange of Highway 100 and CR 81

LaShella Sims asked if this project worked with the MPCA's environmental justice advisory committee. Kathryn O'Brien said other folks in the Met Council may be working with them on more of a policy level, but they have not worked with them specifically for this project.

3. Adjusted Project Scope and Cost Estimate Recommendation

MarySue Abel presented.

Background

The municipal consent plans reflected 15 percent engineering, and we are now at 30 percent. Uncertainty will shrink as the engineering progresses, but there will always be some level of uncertainty. The cost provided during municipal consent was a cost estimate, and now the project needs to set the project budget, which then sets the federal cost participation.

The municipal consent scope and cost estimate recommendation was \$1.496 billion. The project scope did not include:

- Additional items to support the Golden Valley Road Station
 - Park and ride
 - Golden Valley Road and Theodore Wirth Parkway intersection
 - Trail connections
- Continued study of the feasibility, justification, environmental impacts, cost, public outreach, and jurisdictional support for pedestrian bridges over CR 81
 - Brooklyn Park at 63rd Avenue
 - Crystal at Bass Lake Road

Project Cost Participation

- Previous project scope included costs for elements that benefitted MnDOT, Hennepin County, and Brooklyn Park
- Project partners pay for benefits received as part of the project through cost participation
- MnDOT: \$8.2 million
 - Equivalent to mill and overlay of Olson Memorial Highway
 - 50 percent of removal and replacement of existing traffic signals on Olson Memorial Highway
 - Relocation of Bassett Creek stormwater tunnel
- Hennepin County: \$4.1 million
 - Portion of West Broadway Avenue north of TH 610 to Winnetka Avenue
- Brooklyn Park: \$8.2 million
 - Segments of street and utilities north of TH 610 consisting of:
 - Oak Grove Parkway from Xylon Avenue to Target North Campus entrance
 - 99th Avenue from Rhode Island Avenue to West Broadway Avenue
 - Rhode Island Avenue from 99th Avenue to Oak Grove Parkway
 - Xylon Avenue north of Oak Grove Parkway
- Ken Rodgers asked if the cost participation was the actual cost of these improvements. Nick Landwer said they are based on actual costs and include federal participation. Rich Baker noted that these costs add up to only about one percent of the total project cost. Steve Schmidt asked if the contribution will be cash or in-kind and if the agreements were finalized. MarySue Abel said they will be cash contributions, and Nick Landwer added that the agreements aren't signed but they are pretty confident in them.
- Provides an opportunity for federal participation (49% federal, 51% local funding split)
- Does not increase CTIB, HCRRA, or state cost participation

Project Scope and Cost Estimate Recommendation

- Three primary drivers of adjusted cost estimate:
 - Advanced design
 - Environmental mitigation and requirements
 - Scope additions
- Advanced design: \$26 million
 - Bridge refinement
 - Parking ramps cost adjustment
 - Rail system elements
 - Traffic signal adjustments
 - Retaining walls
 - TPSS (reduction)
- Environmental mitigations and requirements: \$14 million
 - Noise walls
 - Sochacki Park restoration

- Funding Sources
 - FTA: 49%
 - CTIB: 30.19%
 - State: 9.74%
 - HCRRA: 9.74%
 - Hennepin County: 0.27%
 - MnDOT 0.53%
 - Brooklyn Park: 0.53%

- Contingency and Risk
 - Contingency is budget set aside to account for project risks
 - Want to hold at a minimum of 28%
 - Remaining risks include:
 - Requirements
 - BNSF negotiations
 - Xcel transmission towers
 - Design
 - Floodplains
 - Poor soils
 - Wetlands
 - Market
 - Construction bids
 - Right-of-way
 - Finance costs
 - Schedule delay
 - Construction
 - Unforeseen conditions
 - Contaminated soils

Summary

- Adjusted cost estimate to reflect 30% level of design
- Addresses environmental mitigation and requirements
- Includes cost sharing with MnDOT, Hennepin County, and Brooklyn Park
- Holds project contingency at 28-30% to cover cost and schedule risks associated with further project development and construction

Discussion

Chris Berne shared some of the comments that were made at the CMC meeting last Thursday. The City of Crystal was very concerned about the ongoing maintenance of the pedestrian bridge at Bass Lake Road, and the mayor did not think the city council would be willing to take on that cost. MarySue Abel added that they have been in conversation with the City of Crystal since the CMC meeting. Carol Vosberg asked what happens if they don't reach an agreement. MarySue Abel said they don't need to have an operations and maintenance agreement at this stage, but they know

these issues can become a stalemate if you wait too long. Crystal, the County, and Metro Transit have all made it clear that they don't want to maintain it, so they thought it was important to start having these discussions. George Selman asked what the estimated maintenance cost was. Nick Landwer said they have some research on it, and he doesn't know the number off the top of his head, but they are expensive, need heating and air conditioning, and can be a safety issue. Paul Danielson added that maintenance also includes eventual replacement after 10-15 years. Steve Schmidt asked if this maintenance issue also included the bridge, not just the elevators. MarySue Abel said it includes everything, and the owner and the maintainer could be different entities. Carol Vosberg asked who owns other elevators in the area or system. MarySue Abel said Metro Transit only owns elevators that are directly on their facilities. In this case, the elevator would not land on the LRT station. Kathryn O'Brien added that there are no pedestrian bridges that have elevators in the county. There are only two pedestrian bridges that the County owns due to legacy agreements, and the County has stated that they will not own any others.

Chris Berne said there was also concern at the CMC that the additions to the rail control station and Hiawatha OMF were being put on this project even though they may be needed for Southwest. Alicia Vap replied that they did not build in additional capacity when the Hiawatha Line was originally built, so each project requires building additional capacity. Nick Landwer add that the BLRT project is the tipping point that is causing the need for additional space. Chris Berne noted that as the existing fleet ages, there will be more need to do the overhaul maintenance that occurs at the Hiawatha facility. Nick Landwer added that in order to receive federal funding, you need to keep project scopes limited and you can't build for all future projects.

Chris Berne said another comment made at CMC was related to the market risks. With the construction of the Southwest line potentially overlapping construction of the Blue Line, there is concern that there won't be enough construction workers, or the bids will be very high because construction firms won't be in need of work. MarySue Abel said that this an issue that they are very aware of and they are working with Southwest to see if there are ways they can coordinate construction.

Chris Berne asked if they can give some sense of what the contingency was for the Green Line Extension at 30% design and how that worked out. MarySue Abel said they are within a couple percentage points of each other. Rich Baker asked what the current contingency was for Southwest. MarySue said they are at 90% design so their contingency is in the lower 20s.

LaShella Sims said she has been asked if the Green Line could hold up the Blue Line project and wanted to know if she could give an answer at this time. MarySue Abel said the best thing to do is to talk to your representatives. The Blue Line doesn't need its state funding until next year's legislative session, but Southwest not having their funding may not position us well for getting our funding. LaShella Sims asked if the Southwest project doesn't move forward if the Blue Line could still get built. Sam O'Connell said if it came to that point the Met Council would have to make that decision.

Chris Berne asked if there was a date that FTA needs the state match before adverse effects start happening to the Southwest project. MarySue Abel said they are on track to submit their New Starts application in early August to get an updated rating and determine if they get in the presidential

budget, which happens once a year. So if they don't get in this year's presidential budget, they would have to try again next year. Chris Berne asked if there was a risk of FTA saying that we don't have our act together so Southwest goes to the end of the list. MarySue Abel said yes, that is a risk. Dan Soler said he worries about that all the time, but all we can do is be ready.

4. Real Estate Value Research

Dan Pfeiffer presented.

There was a press release that was discussed at the May meeting that did not mention gains in real estate value in Robbinsdale and Brooklyn Park. Dan Pfeiffer spoke with the author, who said those cities were not left out intentionally, the quote in the press release just did not include them. The author of the study does expect positive gains in Robbinsdale and Brooklyn Park as well.

The Federal Housing Finance Agency recently made housing data public for a few major cities. Researchers mapped out the changes in home prices over the past 25 years, which was reported on in the Washington Post Wonk Blog in late June.¹

LRT and Real Estate Value Research:

- Impact of light rail on residential and commercial property values has been studied extensively since the 1990s
- Studies look at property values and whether they increase or decrease based on distance from the station
- Results consistently show that residential values increase near stations
- Benefits of improved accessibility outweigh the nuisance impacts

Literature review cited in CTS report:

- Chen et al. (1998) [Portland] looks at positive accessibility effect (measured by distance to LRT station) and negative nuisance effect (measured by distance to LRT line) using prices of single-family homes sold from 1992 to 1994
- Garrett (2004) [St. Louis] distinguishes nuisance and accessibility effects of LRT systems on single-family homes within a one mile radius of station areas by measuring distance to track and accessibility
 - Within a 445 meter radius of LRT station, there is a \$45.91 per meter decrease away from the station
- Hess and Almeida (2007) [Buffalo] found that property values increase by about \$7.58 for every meter closer to a LRT station
- Lewis-Workman and Brod (1997) [Portland] found that holding everything constant, homes 305 meters closer to transit are worth about \$760 more than other homes
- Cervero and Duncan (2002) [Los Angeles] found that multi-family homes and condos near the East Line command a 17.3% and 6.4% premium, respectively

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/06/27/americans-are-paying-more-to-live-in-the-very-places-they-once-abandoned/>

Hiawatha Line: Impacts on Land Use and Residential Housing Value – Key Findings²

- Significant positive accessibility effect for single family properties located within station areas; location closer to LRT stations is associated with higher property values, an effect that extends beyond a half mile
- Negative nuisance effect for properties that are close to LRT tracks is of a smaller magnitude than the positive, accessibility effect

LaShella Sims asked if there were any studies yet on the Green Line. Dan Pfeiffer said it'll probably be a few more years before we start seeing them. Sam O'Connell added that if CTS comes out with any new studies they will be sure to share those with the CAC.

5. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 pm. The next CAC meeting is scheduled for August 8, 2016.

² <http://www.cts.umn.edu/research/projectdetail.html?id=2008067>