



METRO Blue Line Extension

Meeting of the Business Advisory Committee

Tuesday, November 5, 2024

8:00 AM – 9:30 AM

Blue Line Project Office

6465 Wayzata Boulevard, Suite 600

St. Louis Park, MN 55426

BAC Members: John Barobs, KB Brown, Dan Doerrler, Rita Endres, Jamar Smith, Chris Webley

Agency Staff and Guests: Jessica Case, Nkongo Cigolo, Mikayla Crowley, Neha Damle, Cathy Gold, Joleen Ketterling, Shahin Khazrajafari, Kyle Mianulli, Rattana Sengsoulichanh, Nick Thompson, Antoinette Uzamere, Kelcie Young

Meeting Summary

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Co-Chair Dan Doerrler called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Adopt Meeting Minutes

The October 8 meeting minutes were motioned for approval by Rita Endres and seconded by John Barobs. The October 8 meeting minutes were approved.

3. Follow-up from Previous Meeting

Nkongo Cigolo, Blue Line Extension (BLE) Project Team, stated that this topic was added to the agenda at the request of Dr. Tara Watson and asked for the topic to be tabled until later in the meeting as Dr. Watson had not yet arrived. Co-chair Doerrler agreed and proceeded with the meeting.

4. Environmental Mitigation Engagement

Kelcie Young, BLE Environmental Team, shared that most of the meeting time today will be workshop discussion around development of project specific strategies to address impacts of the project to businesses. Nick Thompson added that today's meeting is a really important step in determining mitigation strategies that will become part of the project and today is not the only point where input will be solicited. In the end, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approves and it is anticipated strong support will be received if there is good input from the community. Cathy Gold, Hennepin



County, also added that this work is just getting started and not everything is figured out yet. Ms. Gold stated the BLE project team will be pushing for mitigation strategies with the FTA based on the gathered feedback.

Ms. Young shared that over the summer the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) was published. Currently the BLE project is in the next phase of environmental review and developing the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS). The SFEIS will document the impacts of the project and set mitigation commitments. The BLE environmental team is currently working on analysis of the design changes that have occurred coming out of municipal consent and progression of the project's design. Project commitments are being developed and additional outreach is happening to build mitigation strategies into the project. Additional technical analysis is being performed in a few topic areas such as noise and vibration and the environmental team is working to understand impacts to historical and cultural resources. Ms. Young shared that the SFEIS is anticipated to be published next summer.

Ms. Young stated that project commitments are one way to carry out anti-displacement work throughout the BLE project. The FTA and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) require the project to develop strategies to address certain project impacts. The environmental team has a list of ideas that have been solicited so far and want to develop these into mitigation strategies in collaboration with the community and businesses. All mitigation strategies are subject to approval by the FTA.

Ms. Young stated there are efforts happening outside the BLE project to prevent displacement and build long-term community prosperity. These efforts include the Coordinated Action Plan and the Anti-displacement Community Prosperity Program (ACPP) board. Examples of items to be carried out within the BLE project include environmental review process to develop strategies to address impacts, project design, construction management and relocation assistance.

Ms. Young shared that much of what will be talked about today relates to impacts to environmental justice (EJ) communities. Today is about exploring and developing the mitigation strategies that will be a part of the federally funded project. The FTA wants to know what the community is proposing for adverse impacts to EJ communities such as business impacts during construction, loss of parking, community character and indirect displacement.

KB Brown asked Ms. Young to describe what indirect displacement means. Ms. Young replied indirect displacement includes items tied to the project but not through a direct action such as acquiring property. Examples include property values going up or concerns where property owners, renters or business tenants may get priced out. Indirect displacement could also be cultural displacement. KB Brown indicated one of the requirements of the money from the ACPP board is a match and asked if the project team is hoping to provide matching funds. Ms. Young, Mr. Thompson, and Ms. Gold help to answer that the funding would come from multiple sources including the project (if the strategy is



FTA approved), Hennepin County or Metropolitan Council. Discussions of those decisions will start as the strategies develop and that is part of what this group will be working on today when determining some of the mitigation actions to include within the project. Ms. Gold added that as far as the match for the \$10 M, it might be better if the project can stand alone and do what it can do, independent of the ACPP board. This would provide the opportunity for matches to extend that reach. Chris Webley asked about the timeline for the acquisition of properties. Ms. Young replied that the property acquisitions can move ahead after the conclusion of the environmental review next summer. The NEPA process indicates the project cannot move ahead with making offers until after the amended record of decision. Chris asked about the timeline for receiving federal funds. Ms. Young stated there is a future step to formally receive federal funding which will commence next fall. Ms. Gold indicated currently local funds are being used and the BLE project is in partnership with the FTA and in the Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program, but the project needs to get to a certain point before the FTA allows application for the federal funds.

Ms. Young provided an overview of the strategies under development and what the environmental team is looking for input on. These strategies included funding for community programs, cultural placekeeping design groups, storefront/virtual resource centers, workforce development, business support during construction and parking solutions near Penn and West Broadway. Ms. Gold added a rolling resource to go into the community is also being considered.

Ms. Young stated that three business strategies under consideration will be focused on today including business support during construction, online portal and storefronts and workforce development. Ms. Young indicated strategies under consideration for business support during construction include an online hotline, advance notice of access and utility disruptions, communication between businesses and contractors and public informational sessions. In addition, other considerations for business support include helping with business advertising and providing wayfinding for customers.

Considerations for online portal and storefronts include an app for affected businesses and people that provides relocation and anti-displacement resources, information regarding construction related disruptions and closures and other available information and resources to help people stay informed. Another consideration is to use the storefronts as a meeting or event space.

Ms. Young shared considerations for workforce development include improving job prospects, developing apprenticeships, trainings and mentorship programs, and hosting information sessions with subcontractors, vendors, the public and workforce development agencies. Other items include creating job related events, implementing local hiring initiatives, and supporting small businesses through Metropolitan Council Underutilized Business Program (MCUB). KB Brown asked when the workforce development is going to start and if they will be hiring within the community. Ms. Gold replied the work is starting now with getting resources and training to the community and looking at contract language. Ms. Gold indicated a strong equity-based workforce plan is being developed and



will be pointed to in the contract language. KB Brown asked if it is possible to have language in the plan that includes a list of businesses that are affected along the route. Ms. Young answered that was a good idea and mentioned the MCUB program. Nkongo Cigolo, BLE project team, added the MCUB is a Metropolitan Council program that provides a list of contractors for small procurements or smaller purchases and is a way for these businesses to get preferential access. Shahin Khazrajafari, Hennepin County, provided context on the procurement approach and how the project team was informing and seeking input on non-construction related elements such as Disadvantaged Business Enterprises and the need for utilizing local workforce through that process. The project team has met with potential prime contractors and key subcontractors to provide information on the project and try to understand what the barriers might be, where the interest lies and where contractors see this playing out. Mr. Khazrajafari indicated there was mutual interest in leveraging a local workforce by the contractors. KB Brown asked if there was language that could be added indicating every element of the project is invested in the local economy, i.e. whether it is food, printing, or some other service to allow local businesses being affected to also benefit from the contractors and project. KB Brown added that putting money into the environment will alleviate some of the pain of the construction. Mr. Khazrajafari replied to the extent the FTA allows us, this is one strategy to be explored. Ms. Young added there may be ways to build this goal into the project commitments and that is the next step. Mr. Khazrajafari replied there is interest across the board to find solutions for these concerns. Ms. Gold indicated there is also consideration underway to look at how DBEs could successfully graduate into larger companies by providing them with a scope of work that is independent from the contractor.

5. Business Mitigation Workshop

Notes from Group 1 with KB Brown, Chris Webley, and Jamar Smith

Business Support During Construction

- Wayfinding directions for specific businesses
 - Temporary and permanent
 - Signage for businesses within 2+ blocks
 - Non-generic signage
- Designated parking nodes
 - Key areas in corridor near impacted businesses
 - Utilize parking lots with possibility of micro buses
- Pedestrian signage
 - Contractors in charge of wayfinding signage
 - Work with project office staff to place signage and inspect
 - Business navigator to address
 - Could be go to for all project signage issues
 - Easier and quicker process than online
 - Boots-on-the-ground, speedy construction response



- Preferred business list for contractors and customers
 - Businesses within corridor allows businesses to retain and grow
- Utilize social media to advertise impacted businesses
 - Tik Tok, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook; multi-platform approach
 - Also use this during post construction and project updates
- Utilize project funding for business advertising
 - Umbrella contract with ad agency or give funding directly to businesses
 - However, outside contractor may not know area
- Generic impacted business fund
 - Leverage funds to address specific needs of each business

Workforce Development

- Staff retention of workforce that's already there
 - There can be issues with retention because of decreased hours and access
 - Connect businesses with technical programs
 - Generate pathway to going to businesses and supporting
- Trainings before construction and during construction
 - Youth training for construction opportunities
 - Cultivating your own workforce
 - Pathway to hiring
 - Utilize paid training programs
 - Scholarship programs
 - Flexible, supportive funding
 - Pay for training and pay during time of training or lump sum
 - Training with hiring guarantee
 - The more incentives the better

Online Portal and Storefront

- Both storefronts and online portal is beneficial
 - Multipronged approach
- Include technical assistance for businesses
 - More access to resources the better
 - Business advisor "office hours"

Notes from Group 2 with Co-Chair Dan Doerr, Rita Endres, and John Barobs



Workforce Development

- Community liaison to inform local businesses and organizations along the corridor of specific processes; such as bidding process to provide opportunity to keep things local on the project and encourage local businesses and organizations to be part of the process
 - Metropolitan Council assists in training people about the process
 - Active targeting to advertise opportunities
 - Liaison to make initial official contact and present everything relevant to that business
 - Come up with a full menu of options
 - Local businesses can determine their category
 - Use different modes of communication
- Leave room in our consideration for businesses we might not think of now
 - Ex: could book local musician for a BLE event
 - Advertise local business to contractors or others involved in construction
- Storefront should be hosted by staff who are knowledgeable
 - Crystal and Robbinsdale can share a storefront
 - When the storefront is closer it is easier to use and will get accessed more
 - Lease empty space right on the corridor so also helping a property owner
- Involve business leaders and employees along the extension to be ambassadors to the wider community when doing promotional pieces or videos
- Communication Methods should be more Community-based rather than official Met Council methods
 - Testimonials, success stories about use of process & experiences
 - Community corridor network to talk to others in community
 - Maybe people won't go to BLE, but would go to a community event
 - Finger on pulse of communities during project might help those who are disgruntled into dialogue in a new way

Business Support during Construction

- Knowing what's going on in real time is very important so businesses can prepare ahead of time
 - Signage – making sure people get to where they need to be
 - Provide talking points about project updates in area
 - Short draft of facts about project in bullet format
 - Includes construction timeline
 - Businesses can let customers know
- Temporary changes to street to accommodate parking issues
 - Shoulders could turn into parking spots
- Hotline is critical for real-time inform
 - Should be a real person because it is less frustrating to be able to talk to people



- Include immediate, quick, and constant updates on website
- Phases important because businesses don't want 4 years straight of construction
- Person on staff who can be at business staff meetings as liaison
 - One project staff per 2 cities; except Minneapolis has its own
 - A person the businesses could text and call and would be available
 - Well networked person who knows all point people on the project and very connected to the community
 - They disseminate the information back and forth
 - Translate information from contractor to businesses
- Might be beneficial for liaison to be separate from BLE project
 - Have a person that is part of the community builds trust with the community and provides credibility to the person giving information

Storefront

- Storefront can be a place where business owners can convene
 - Personally invite and put out a general call for feedback.
- Meeting with businesses directly impacted
- Let public know storefront is there for engagement and feedback, but in a different way than what is happening now
- Articulate big picture of transit to dispel myth
 - Collective activity
 - Community already has made alterations to the project design based on providing feedback
- Fact sheet with FAQs
 - Use existing data from Blue Line and Green Line LRT ridership
 - Address hidden grievances by showing how the BLE learned from other negative precedents and past mistakes with transit
 - Talk about the positive impacts and success stories with real life data



6. Discussion and Members' Feedback

After workshop, the group came back together and talked about the process. Rita Endres liked the smaller groups a lot. Co-Chair Doerrerr complemented the project staff for inviting the BAC into circles and appreciated the project staff for being responsive.

Ms. Gold thanked everyone for coming and participating and stated it helps to dive a little deeper and develop and expand the details to ensure the right work is being performed. John Barobs requested when the BAC meets, this format is continued.

John Barobs also mentioned a free Minneapolis Transportation Summit being hosted by Move Minneapolis on Nov 20 8:00 am at The Hennepin. The theme this year is exploring how businesses can survive and thrive during infrastructure construction projects. There will be two different panels. One panel will include business owners and organizations in the community facing upcoming projects, current projects or who have gone through the process in the past. Another panel will include people from government and other organizations talking about solutions. A link to more information will be sent out via email as a follow-up.

7. Next Meeting: December 10, 2024

8. Adjourn

Co-Chair Dan Doerrerr asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Rita Endres motioned, and John Barobs seconded it. Co-Chair Doerrerr adjourned the meeting at 9:37 am.

Meeting Materials: Agenda, Slides, one-pager Mitigation Engagement Strategies, October 8 Meeting Summary

Administrative Lead: Joleen Ketterling