



METRO Blue Line Extension
Meeting of the Community Advisory Committee
Wednesday, December 6, 2023
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Microsoft Teams Meeting

CAC Members: Ellis Beck, Thomia Brown, Brett Buckner, John Chambers Dunn, Kathy Fraser, Jason Greenberg, Jeff Guertin, Jonathan Hansen, Jericho Huggar, Ryan Johnson

Agency Staff and Guests: Joleen Ketterling, Shahin Khazrajafari, Ryan Kronzer, Nick Landwer, Kyle Mianulli, Richelieu Morris, Bojan Mistic, Kerri Pearce Ruch, Joanna Ocasio-Maisonet, Menno Schukking, Joan Vanhala, Kaja Vang, Kjerstin Yager, Jer Yang

Meeting Summary

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Jason Greenberg began the meeting at 6:05 p.m. Kjerstin Yager took attendance.

2. Adopt Meeting Minutes

Jason Greenberg asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from last month's meeting, Brett Buckner made the motion and Kathy Fraser seconded it, the motion was approved.

3. Upcoming Events

Kjerstin reviewed some upcoming events and collaborations that will be happening with local artists through Cultivate Arts in December.

4. Metro Transit General Manager Update at December CMC

Kjerstin also indicated that Lesley Kandaras, Metro Transit General Manager, will be providing an update at the December CMC meeting. Everyone is invited to listen to the update via the link provided either live or after the meeting. <https://metro council.org/Transportation/Projects/Light-Rail-Projects/METRO-Blue-Line-Extension/Committees/Corridor-Management-Committee.aspx>

5. New Project Staff Introductions

Nick Landwer, Metropolitan Council, introduced new employees to the project team.

Ryan Kronzer, Assistant Director of Engineering and Design for Metro Transit, has recently joined the Blue Line Extension project. Ryan has experience in light rail and design having worked for the past 11 years on the



Green Line Extension project. Ryan is a practicing architect who has experience in stationary planning and other elements of light rail along with urban design and land use.

Shahin Khazrajafari, Deputy Project Director, Hennepin County, will oversee the administrative side of the project in the areas of finance, project controls, risk, outreach, etc. Shahin has worked with Metro Transit and the Corp of Engineers.

Kyle Mianulli, Communications Administrator with Hennepin County, is supporting the METRO Blue Line Extension Project. He has been supporting this project for several years but as of September, he is on the METRO Blue Line Extension Project full-time. Kyle has a background in public communications and has worked with projects such as the Central Corridor and Green Line.

6. Communications Update

Kyle Mianulli, Hennepin County, provided a summary of the communications delivered in 2023 and plans going forward in 2024. Most of the communication outlets utilized were newsletters, social media, the project website, or print materials. Kyle reviewed statistics on the usage and engagement of these communication outlets. Print materials are still an effective method as they reach a broad audience. Kyle indicated previously we only focused on sharing project information, events, etc., but in 2024, would like to diversify the content we are sharing to include storytelling and finding new ways for people to relate and connect with the project.

Jason Greenberg mentioned that there have been recent conversations about many companies pulling back from using X (formerly Twitter) and he wondered if the communications team had talked about moving to a different platform for microblogging. Kyle said this was a good question and something his team thinks about and monitors. Kyle indicated there is a lot of activity on X and we continue to get good engagement, therefore, we continue to use it, but we are certainly tracking all our social media platforms to determine the most effective means. As an example, today we shared a survey on the North Loop route option, and it was retweeted 20 times and had many comments and likes. Jason agreed that if we are seeing engagement, he understands why we continue to use it.

Kyle shared that the communications team has leaned into campaign work over the past year. Hennepin County led two campaigns in 2023 with the goal of reaching as many people as possible. Kyle stated that we want people to have a sense of ownership over the results of this project. In 2023, the communications team had a broad strategy focusing on printed materials, radio, digital and out of home channels (ads at bus stops, transit stations and gas station TVs). The focus was on local cultural media outlets. Ads were produced in English and Spanish. Geographic areas were targeted with the goal of hearing from as many people as possible in the corridor and BIPOC audiences.

Over the course of the two campaigns, we had 13 million views and experienced a great marketing click-through rate for all the digital ads. The project communications outperformed industry averages. This indicates people are interested in this project and are paying attention. Kyle shared a list of the many media partners we participated with in 2023. Community media was a great platform. We also ran some ads on the larger platforms such as the Star Tribune and Pioneer Press, which we find is the best way to reach a broad audience.



A campaign recap video was shared with the group. The video is a combination of all community testimonial videos done in 2023. These were broad communication campaigns corridor wide trying to reach a broad audience.

Kyle shared that in 2024 they will refine and focus on the communications strategy. Storytelling will be a focus as it is a very accessible way for people to hear about the project. There will be more targeted messaging on the digital platforms as we move towards municipal consent. The project communications team plans to highlight community voices and ensure we are giving people the most relevant information and messaging along the corridor. This is a big complex project and there is a lot of information to share. A focus on creating more accessible ways for people to receive information will be important. A podcast will be launched as another way to provide detailed project information in a conversation accessible way. We will have a mixture of project staff and experts as well as community owners and business owners on the podcast. We will also continue to use traditional channels as they are an effective storytelling platform. Kyle mentioned they will continue to meet with the community and businesses on a regular basis to collaborate and provide support. The communications team will proactively work with media to share accurate project information and stories.

Jeff Guertin mentioned that the earlier slide stated 100k+ clicks. He wondered how the 51k number is different. Kyle replied that the 100k+ is inclusive of the 51,000 clicks. He also stated that about half of the project website visits were related to the promotion work. Jeff asked how success was gauged for non-digital ads. Kyle stated we cannot get to the level of detailed analysis with non-digital ads as we can with digital but with each media platform, we have our ways to gauge success. Reaching all the different platforms is also another way we partner and engage with groups in the corridor.

Jonathan Hansen stated he appreciated that most or all the video footage was shot locally as it helps increase authenticity versus using generic stock footage. He stated it would be great to have that in multiple languages and versions targeting specific communities (e.g. seniors in Robbinsdale version, transit-reliant people along W Broadway, etc.). Kyle shared that all the videos included people who live and work in the corridor. He also shared that they are starting a Spanish video language series. Assuming it is successful, they will be looking forward to doing that in other languages as well.

Jason Greenberg asked if there were a series of ads that received more responses than others. Kyle replied that all the ads performed well, and they were able to do detailed analysis with the digital media ads. They discovered Brett was a top performer. The highest engagement with the ads was at the beginning or middle of a campaign. The worst performing ads were at the very end of the campaign because we had a very broad reach. Kyle indicated that people are glad we are experimenting and being as innovative as we can. We haven't heard any negative feedback.

Kathy Fraser indicated there have been miscommunication or people not well informed about things. She asked if Kyle was getting a pulse of what people are saying in the communities. Kyle responded that in the next newsletter they are adding a new section called common questions where they will proactively address a lot of the questions they hear repeatedly. In 2024, being more proactive, addressing questions and sharing accurate information will be necessary.

Jonathan Hansen shared that the biggest thing he hears is that people have the mistaken impression that BRT is cheaper than light rail and doesn't require rebuilding roads. Kyle stated in the next newsletter they will be



providing information about the different types of transit services. Nick agreed and stated that we need to do a better job of communications and is happy to have Kyle onboard to help us with this.

7. Design Update

Nick Landwer, Metro Transit, provided an overview of the design of Lowry Avenue Station. There has been a lot of discussion regarding the challenges we have in this area. This station provides access to the Grand Rounds trail, Victory Memorial Park, and North Memorial Hospital. Nick reviewed the original concept and how they were designing the station to coordinate with brand new infrastructure. The train would come up W. Broadway and when it reached this area, the project office was anticipating a bridge structure to an elevated station platform. Nick reviewed the challenges of an elevated station platform. Riders would need to take stairs and/or an elevator to access or leave the station. With the station elevated, it is hidden behind the existing bridges and visually hard to see where and how to access it. A bridge is required with an elevated structure. The physical touchpoint to the park is visually impacted. Generally, there was a lack of broad stakeholder support as they were worried about impacts to the park, accessibility, etc.

Nick mentioned they pulled together a working group with the partners in this area including the City of Robbinsdale, the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, and the Minneapolis Park Board to propose a better solution. Nick shared a new concept being proposed with an at-grade station platform. This concept would involve slight enhancements to existing bridges and extending the bridges farther south a few hundred feet to open the area underneath allowing for better access. The intersection would be pushed to the east of the bridge to be more inviting and line up better for pedestrian, bike, and vehicle traffic.

Improved station access will offer more direct routes to the station and provide better access for people of all abilities. This design moves the station physically away from the hospital, but it makes a better connection for the employees who work at the hospital. Overall, the project can incorporate the station into the area by extending the bridge structures, opening up underneath and activating the area more.

Nick presented three visuals to better demonstrate how the Lowry Station at-grade concept would look. The existing bridge structure is above, and the existing piers will remain in place. The project would shave some of the bridge deck off to allow for space for the light rail. He stressed that these visualizations are only concepts and there are a lot of details missing such as signals, etc.

Next steps for the design team include continuing to collaborate with the partners in this area, refine the design, and determine the roadway and intersection configurations. The focus will be on access and connectivity in this area as we advance the designs.

Jason Greenberg thanked Nick and his team for listening and stated for the people in Robbinsdale it was a huge issue. He stated it seems like a major improvement relative to what people were saying before. Nick shared that getting feedback from everybody and taking a closer look will make this a much more solid project. Jonathan Hansen also appreciated this and iterated this new concept showed we listened to feedback.

8. Anti-Displacement Update

Nick Landwer, Met Council, covered for Cathy Gold of Hennepin County who was unable to join the call. Nick shared that the corridor partnership collaboration was preparing the workplan framework. Utilizing the



recommendations report, this group is identifying goals on how to achieve the outcomes. As they are gathering the information, they are identifying subject matter experts both inside and outside of the project. Specific topics are being evaluated to fit within the timeline and the group is determining the best path forward and action steps. The topics developed will encompass all the outcomes and these will be the chapters of the workplan framework. Nick did mention that when we build a train, we also must reconstruct the road and pavement is the relatively easy part. There are a lot of utilities and infrastructures underneath that need to be upgraded as well. Workforce development is key. We need the workforce in place to help us design the project, perform construction, and then operate the system.

Nick shared that the workplan topic matrix is a depiction of what we are doing now versus what we are doing later and what is happening outside the project versus what is happening inside the project. This matrix frames out the work we are doing, when we are doing it, and how it is being performed (inside or outside of the project).

Kathy Fraser stated support for both businesses and residents during the planning phase should be called out more specifically. She understands many of these things are probably wrapped up in more general items and being worked on by the anti-displacement group, but she feels it should be more prominent that we are supporting these groups. Nick stated that was a good observation and he assumes it is covered in there, but we will try to be clearer.

Brett Buckner asked if there were any initial projections on how many people it is going to take to build this project. For example, do we know how many high school students we need; are we being intentional to build the workforce within the community the project is being built; are we working with an academy or learning institution to begin preparing the training. Nick answered yes and stated we have a pretty good idea of what this is going to take, and it is a lot of people. We have been speaking with high school students and partnering with groups like Juxtaposition Arts. Nick said there will be many more meetings and Metro Transit itself has workforce development programs in place with area tech schools that we will capitalize on. Once in construction, this will be the second largest capital investment program in Minnesota history. Brett Buckner stated this is an enticing conversation especially as we are trying to hit specific numbers, determine who works on the line and analyze how the line is sparring economic development. Brett stated this really is a stimulus package for those that would normally get left out. Nick agreed.

Jonathan Hansen shared that the Robbinsdale City Council and the Mayor have expressed concern that Robbinsdale is going to get left out of the displacement money. Nick replied that we are working with all our community partners regarding this. Last week there were community meetings to discuss what opportunities exist. The anti-displacement funds are for the whole corridor, not just certain sections. Nick stated we are working with each community, city, and their staff to ensure everyone is included.

Joan Vanhala mentioned the METRO Blue Line Extension project partners have convened workforce/DBE stakeholders to begin to prepare the way for a robust representation from the communities in the corridor. She stated she has been behind the scenes working with Cathy Gold and individuals at Metro Transit. Hennepin County is a strong partner and since approximately April of 2023 Metro Transit and Hennepin County have been discussing how to prepare the workforce and how to make sure the actual construction provides opportunities for disadvantaged business enterprises. They have created an action list that has been reviewed twice by key stakeholders that represent both areas. Moving forward these groups will be splitting



into two, workforce and DBE. These groups will be digging into the details to ensure real solutions are developed and make people aware of the opportunities to help construct the line.

Brett Buckner stated communities are not used to being a part of the process so it may be bumpy up front and take a little more effort. He also stated if anything additional needs to be added, to not hesitate to reach out and let them know what they can do to amplify that voice.

9. Discussion and Members' Feedback

Jason Greenberg asked for final feedback or anything anyone would like to share. There were no additional comments.

10. Next Meeting: January 3, 2023.

Kjerstin stated there is a chance the January committee meetings will not be held, and she will keep everyone posted. Jason Greenberg thanked everyone for attending and providing feedback and comments.

11. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Meeting Chat:

[6:17 PM] Jonathan Hansen (Guest)

That unique open rate is significantly higher than the industry average, I would've loved that open rate back when I did email campaign work at a retail company.

[6:21 PM] Jonathan Hansen (Guest)

Creative!

[6:21 PM] Kathy Fraser

Nice job with the campaigns! I like that we targeted different ethnic groups and languages.

[6:25 PM] Guertin, Jeff

1. Earlier slide had 100k+ clicks, how is the 51k number different?
2. How is success gauged for non-digital ads?

[6:33 PM] Jonathan Hansen (Guest)

I appreciate that most or all of that video footage was shot here, helps increase authenticity vs using generic stock footage. Would be great to have that in multiple languages and versions targeted to specific communities (e.g. seniors in Robbinsdale version, transit-reliant people along W Broadway version, etc.)

[6:35 PM] Kathy Fraser



Have we gotten any feedback from community members near the blue line around the recent communication campaign?

[6:40 PM] Jonathan Hansen

That's the biggest thing I hear, people have the mistaken impression that BRT is cheaper than light rail and doesn't require rebuilding roads.

[6:45 PM] Kyle Mianulli

Thanks, all! Reach out any time if you're interested in chatting comms: kyle.mianulli@hennepin.us

[7:08 PM] Joan M Vanhala

Nick, If you would like I can talk about our workforce DBE efforts and partnerships.

[7:10 PM] Joan M Vanhala

Blue Line Ext project partners have convened Workforce/DBE stakeholders to begin to prepare the way for a robust representation from the communities in the corridor.