



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Community Advisory Committee Meeting
October 5, 2015
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, Kate Catron, George Selman, Ken Rodgers, Steve Schmidt, Carol Vosberg, Catherine Fleming, Rich Baker, Gillian Rosenquist

Agency Staff and Guests: Dan Pfeiffer, Sam O’Connell, David Davies, Juan Rangel, Rachel Haase, Sophia Ginis, Denise Engen, Emily Carr, Nick Landwer, Jim Toulouse, Dan Soler, Scott Reed, Caroline Miller, Kathryn O’Brien, Alicia Vap, Paul Danielson, MarySue Abel

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chris Berne welcomed the committee members and asked them to review the previous meeting summary. Chris noted that he attended the CMC meeting after the last CAC presentation, and he saw that what is talked about at the CAC does have an impact on what is presented to the CMC.

No one had comments on the meeting notes.

2. Hennepin County Community Works Update

Denise Engen presented and provided an update on the station area planning process.

Last week there was a design workshop in Brooklyn Park (September 28-October 2) where they looked at all five stations in the city. Agency and consultant staff met with approximately two dozen stakeholders. They also held two community meetings and talked with approximately 240 people over the four days.

A market analysis was conducted that informed the station area planning process. A few key items learned:

- There are limited available sites (besides at Oak Grove Parkway) for major new development/redevelopment in the near term
- There is demand for multi-family housing
- Greenfield development is less expensive than redevelopment

Station types differ throughout the city:

- 63rd Ave: neighborhood
- Brooklyn Blvd: retail

- 85th Ave: institutional
- 93rd Ave: employment
- Oak Grove Pkwy: mixed-use

Next steps:

- Robbinsdale: Community meeting on October 21st from 6:00-8:30 pm
- Brooklyn Park: Community meeting on November 4th from 6:30-8:30 pm
- Crystal: Design workshop from November 3-6, community meeting November 5th at 6:00 pm

Presentations from the community meetings will be posted on the County's and Brooklyn Park's websites.

Ken Rodgers asked what the goal of the public input is. Denise said they hope to design a community that can access employment, education, healthy foods, and recreational opportunities, so the input is on both the physical design of the station area and the community's priorities and ideas for what the area within a 10 minute walk should look like.

Catherine Fleming asked if the feeder bus system is included as part of these discussions. Denise said they hear about that a lot, but the feeder bus system is something Metro Transit will develop as the project advances. They focus more on biking and walking to the station.

3. Project Ridership Estimates

Dan Soler presented.

Ridership forecasts are calculated using the regional travel demand model to estimate future daily weekday trips on the Blue Line Extension. The model uses existing and forecasted population, employment, and household data and is consistent with the Met Council's Thrive 2040 plan and city comprehensive plans. The model is verified by checking if it closely represents what is happening today, and then the model is run for the future year with the Blue Line Extension added in. This methodology complies with FTA requirements.

LRT service assumptions include:

- Current fare structure and hours of service
- Feeder bus network
- 10 minute frequency of service
- 31 minutes from Target Field to Oak Grove Pkwy Station
- Current downtown Minneapolis parking rates

Transitways included in the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan:

- Blue Line, Green Line, Red Line, Northstar
- Also assumed Red Line Stage 2, Orange Line, Green Line Extension, Gold Line, Snelling BRT (A Line), Penn BRT (C Line), Chicago-Emerson-Fremont BRT (D Line)

The DEIS projected 2030 ridership of 27,000 daily rides. A few things have changed:

- Horizon year moved from 2030 to 2040
- Frequency of service changed from 7.5 minutes to 10 minutes (negative impact)

- End to end running time increased (negative impact)
- Station added at Plymouth Ave (negative impact)
- Updated development assumptions to match Thrive 2040 (negative impact)
- Added C Line BRT (negative impact)
- Updated model/validation and feeder bus assumptions (positive impact)
- Park-and-ride capacity constraint (negative impact)

The revised projection is 27,000 average weekday boardings (assumes 11 stations and 5 park-and-rides). Various scenarios were run adding and removing park-and-rides, stations, etc., and ridership varied only by a couple hundred riders so the project office is very confident in the estimate.

Gillian Rosenquist asked if Metro Transit has ever looked at zoned pricing and if that would affect ridership. Dan Soler said they use it on Northstar and inside the downtown areas, but it hasn't been modeled for this project. The model does include the standard pricing.

Justin Youngbluth asked if this model will be used to see if it makes sense to build some of the stations that get really low ridership. Dan Soler said the total ridership (27,000) is a very important piece in the New Starts process (as part of the cost-effectiveness index), but ridership isn't the only reason you build a station. You also have to consider the area you are serving, if it's underserved, etc. The cost-effectiveness index does need to be at a certain level to allow the project to move forward, but the project office feels that 27,000 riders is a solid number.

Catherine Fleming asked if special events or weekend activities are included in the model. Dan replied that we're required to normalize the ridership across the county so it has to be done based on average weekday ridership, but we know that there are benefits that aren't reflected in the model.

Rich Baker asked if the fact that the DEIS and revised estimates were the same mean that ridership will be flat between 2030 and 2040. Dan replied that with the changes, we anticipate that the 2030 number will be less than 27,000 since the region will be growing slower than we thought during the DEIS. With Central Corridor, average weekday ridership is approaching the 2030 forecast, but ridership doesn't grow at a constant pace; it may slow down as we approach 2030.

Carol Vosberg asked what the ridership needs to be for the project to be cost-effective. Dan replied that ridership is only one piece, so we don't exactly know what that break-even point is yet.

Chris Berne asked if the parking at Oak Grove Pkwy has 850 spaces (as shown in today's presentation) or 750 spaces (as shown in the last presentation). Nick Landwer replied that it has been updated to 850 spaces.

Steve Schmidt asked if the 565 spaces at 63rd included new parking. Alicia Vap said that is the number of existing spaces.

4. Golden Valley Road and Plymouth Avenue Stations

Alicia Vap presented.

Both stations were included in the DEIS but only Golden Valley Rd Station was included in the cost estimate. Further engineering analysis and environmental review has been conducted for both stations, including:

- Floodplains, wetlands, and noise
- Cultural resources and impacts to parkland
- Parking, cost, and ridership

Other non-technical factors have also been analyzed, including comments from public meetings and events.

Quantitative Factors Comparison:

| Factor | Plymouth Avenue | Golden Valley Road |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Housing structures (2010)* | 873 | 977 |
| Population (2010)* | 2,579 | 2,218 |
| Employment (2010)* | 102 | 733 |
| Homes within 10 minute walk | 565 | 349 |
| Projected daily ridership | 230 | 900 |
| Bus frequency (2040) | 1 route every 30 minutes | 2 routes every 30 minutes |
| Right-of-way impacts | ½ acre | ½ acre |
| Vegetative impact | Medium | High |
| Wetland impact | Minimal | None |
| Floodplain impact | Minimal | Minimal |
| Cost | \$13M-16M | \$15M-18M |

* Within ½ mile of station

Qualitative Factors Comparison:

| Factor | Plymouth Avenue | Golden Valley Road |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Serving Minneapolis residents | High | Medium |
| Serving Golden Valley residents | Low | High |
| Environmental justice | High | Medium |
| Access to regional park | High | Medium |
| Health equity | High | Medium |
| Bicycle trail access | High | High |
| Access to the Grand Rounds | High | High |
| Existing adjacent sidewalk network | High | Medium |
| Access to job centers | Low | Medium |
| Adjacent neighborhood impacts | Medium | Medium |
| Visual impacts | Low | Low |
| Opportunities for parking | Low | Medium |
| Future redevelopment opportunity | Low | Medium |

Catherine Fleming asked if employment along TH 55 was included. Alicia said no, initially they were only considering the area within a 10 minute walk, but since the initial qualitative assessment lots of employment centers just outside that radius have been brought to their attention.

Next steps:

- Met Council receives feedback on station comparison from CAC/BAC and project partners
- Project office staff will recommend one or both stations in revised scope and cost estimate at October 29th CMC meeting
- Decision to include one or both stations will be part of the scope and cost estimate decision at the November 12th CMC meeting

Rich Baker asked if they need to provide feedback right now or if they have other opportunities before October 29th because he would like to discuss this with the people he is representing. Dan said there will be a joint BAC/CAC meeting on October 26th so that would be an opportunity for further input, but it would be ideal if the CAC could provide some feedback tonight. Members could send more information via email as well. Rich asked what the date is that after which major feedback or new thinking will be difficult to incorporate. Dan said Friday, October 16th would give staff enough time to pull together the feedback and incorporate it into their recommendation.

Chris Berne provided his contact information if members would like to send him their thoughts, he will make sure they get to the project office staff.

763-425-8197 (home)

952-544-2422 (office)

chris@bernescale.com

5. 73rd Avenue Crossings

Nick Landwer presented.

The DEIS included an at-grade crossing of CR 81 at the 73rd Avenue intersection. Some concerns were raised with the intersection performance and traffic operations. An at-grade analysis was recommended at the April 9th CMC meeting as LRT at-grade was not found to impact intersection operations. Additional feedback and concerns were raised related to the following:

- High-speed, 6-lane roadway with vehicles traveling faster than the posted speed limit (55 mph)
- LRT would cross diagonally through the intersection
- LRT track and roadway may have maintenance conflicts
- CR 81 is designated as a “moving” route (oversized loads take this route so higher clearance would be needed)

After additional analysis, staff is recommending a grade separated crossing of CR 81 and will continue coordination with Hennepin County and City staff on the CR 81 roadway project.

Catherine Fleming asked if this would be similar to the grade separation at Van White. Nick said the grades are under 4% on the way down so it should be a smooth transition similar to crossing 62 on the Blue Line.

Rich Baker asked what the additional cost would be. Nick said the current estimate is an additional \$25-30 million.

6. Transmission Line Update

Jim Toulouse presented. An Xcel transmission line is also located in the BNSF corridor.

Issues to be resolved:

- Compatibility with freight rail improvements
- Compatibility with LRT improvements
- Constructability
- Electrical clearances
- Maintenance access in the future

Potential transmission line accommodations include:

- Remain in current location
- Steel poles east of LRT tracks
- Steel poles west of BNSF tracks
- Steel poles between LRT tracks

Recommendation:

- South of the Indiana Substation: shift the existing 115 kV transmission line to new poles west of the BNSF track
- North of the Indiana Substation: leave the existing 115 kV transmission in place west of the BNSF track

Justin Youngbluth asked if this would cause a problem with BNSF and their ability to add a second track in the future if they choose. Jim replied that if needed they can move some of the existing wooden poles if BNSF chooses to add a second track, but the new poles will be outside the clearance envelope.

7. Traction Power Substation Update

Jim Toulouse presented.

TPSS locations convert electrical power (AC to DC) to operate the trains. They require a climate control environmental. Placement criteria include:

- Located within 500 feet of track
- Spacing of approximately 5,000 feet between substations to maintain continuous power to trains
- Requires closer spacing for steeper track grades
- Located at-grade to minimize cost and provide adequate access for maintenance

Location of TPSS sites is determined by a load flow study.

- 17 locations identified
- Initial location review and refinement by BPO staff
- Additional location review with project partners as part of the IRT process

Location review looked at parcel ownership and followed the order below in determination of the optimal sites:

1. Met Council property
2. Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority property
3. Other public agency property (MnDOT, county, city)
4. Private property acquired as part of the LRT project
5. Vacant private property

Catherine Fleming asked if the number of locations is based on 2040 demand and what safety measures are in place at the locations. Jim Toulouse replied that the number of TPSS sites is based on the frequency and operating times. For safety measures, the sites are fenced in, there are cameras, the doors are alarmed, and there is redundancy built in so if one location has a problem the train can still function.

Current site locations include two in Minneapolis, two in Golden Valley, three in Crystal, three in Robbinsdale, and seven in Brooklyn Park.

Recommendation:

- Continue working with project stakeholders to finalize locations

8. Outreach Update

Sam O'Connell presented. There is a series of open housing coming up. They will be environmentally focused, including information on:

- Noise/vibration
- Water resources
- Stormwater
- Cultural resources
- Wildlife

There will also be updated roll plots showing the latest alignment and stations.

The meetings are as follows:

- Crystal: October 19th from 5:00-7:30 pm at Crystal Community Center
- Brooklyn Park: October 20th from 5:00-7:30 pm at Hennepin Technical College
- Robbinsdale: October 21st from 6:00-7:00 pm at Robbinsdale Middle School
 - This meeting is combined with a Hennepin County station area planning meeting
- Golden Valley: October 28th from 5:00-7:30 pm at Golden Valley City Hall
- Minneapolis: October 29th from 5:00-7:30 pm at Harrison Community Center

There will also be a public meeting on the potential closure of 39 ½ Ave in Golden Valley this Wednesday, October 7th at Golden Valley City Hall.

Kate Catron asked what will happen with the feedback from the meeting on 39 ½. David Davies said they will solicit written response and provide those to the City Council.

Catherine Fleming asked if air quality information and contamination potential would be discussed at the upcoming open houses. Kathryn O’Brien said they’ll know more about hazardous materials as the environmental site investigations occur next year.

9. Advisory Committee Schedule

MarySue Abel presented. Upcoming meetings include:

| Date | Committee | Agenda |
|---|------------------------|--|
| September 28 October 1 October 5/6 | TPAC CMC CAC/BAC | - Ridership - Present results of Golden Valley Rd & Plymouth Ave Station analysis - 73 rd Avenue crossing - Environmental update - Schedule for roll-out of updated project scope and cost estimate |
| October 5/6 October 12 October 15 | CAC/BAC TPAC CMC | - Presentation of issues 13-15 - TH 55 recap |
| October 26 October 26 | TPAC CAC/BAC | - Presentation of recommendation on revised project scope |
| October 29 | CMC | - Presentation of recommendation on revised project scope and cost estimate |
| November 2 November 2/3 | TPAC CAC/BAC | - Discussion on revised project scope and cost estimate |
| November 4 | MPRB | - MPRB resolution on project as it relates to park property |
| November 12 | CMC | - Final recommendation and CMC action on revised project scope and cost estimate |
| November 23 | Met Council | - Met Council Transportation Committee recommendation on revised project scope and cost estimate |
| December 9 | Met Council | - Met Council action on revised project scope and cost estimate; authorize the submittal of Municipal Consent plans to cities and county |

Chris Berne asked if the CAC will go on a hiatus after the Met Council action. Dan Soler said there may not be a December meeting, but he would anticipate that we’ll start back up again in January.

George Selman noted that the CMC and Met Council meetings are open to the public if anyone wants to attend. Sam O’Connell added that the Met Council meetings can also be viewed online.

10. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 pm. The next CAC meeting is a joint meeting with the BAC and is scheduled for October 26, 2015 at Crystal City Hall.