



METRO Blue Line Extension

Meeting of the Community Advisory Committee

Wednesday, December 11, 2024

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Microsoft Teams Meeting

CAC Members: Kathy Fraser, Jason Greenberg, Jeff Guertin, Jonathan Hansen, Ryan Johnson

Agency Staff and Guests: Nkongo Cigolo, Neha Damle, Andrew Gillett, Joleen Ketterling, Shahin Khazrajafari, Nick Landwer, Menno Schukking, Kaja Vang, Jer Yang, Graham Zuehlke

Meeting Summary

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Jonathan Hansen, co-chair of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), was in attendance but having issues with his microphone so Nkongo Cigolo, Engagement Team for the Blue Line Extension (BLE) project, began the meeting at 6:08 pm and took attendance. Nkongo stated that at the last CAC, Jonathan Hansen was elected as the co-chair replacing Council Member Jason Greenberg. Council Member Greenberg stated he has been elected as a council member for the city of Robbinsdale and will step back from his role as a member of the CAC to step into being a council member full-time. Council Member Greenberg stated this will be his last meeting and in the new year another Robbinsdale representative will be added to this meeting.

2. Adopt Meeting Minutes

Co-chair Hansen asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from November 6. Council Member Greenberg made a motion to approve the minutes and Ryan Johnson seconded it. No updates to the minutes were voiced. The November 6 minutes were approved.

3. Environmental Update

Neha Damle, Environmental Team for the BLE, provided an environmental engagement update. Neha shared that engagement efforts to date included workshops with the Business Advisory Committee (BAC), CAC, Blue Line Coalition (BLC), and the Engagement Cohort. Presentations were given to business chambers in November and early December. Neha stated that yesterday the 21st Avenue Community Character workshop was held at the Sanctuary Church in Minneapolis. The Environmental Team has an open call for members to join cultural placekeeping groups to inform the design of the project and how cultures in the corridor can be reflected.



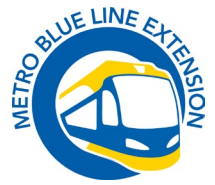
Upcoming engagement opportunities include continuing to solicit feedback from key stakeholders from the community on strategies to address impacts. Additional community meetings and events will be held and display boards at community locations with surveys and handouts will also be made available.

Neha shared that the BAC, CAC, BLC, and Engagement Cohort provided valuable feedback at the workshops including how businesses can be supported through construction, paid training and hiring guarantee for workforce programs, suggestions for storefront locations, and recommendations for how the BLE project can engage with community members around the mitigation strategies. Neha stated all feedback is very real for what these community members have experienced before and what they are interested in.

Co-chair Hansen asked if the intent of the third storefront was that it be shared by the cities of Crystal and Robbinsdale. Neha replied originally two storefronts were discussed but after receiving feedback that the storefronts should be easily accessible throughout the corridor, it was decided to add a third storefront that would be shared by both cities.

Nick Landwer, Engineering and Design for the BLE, shared an update on the work that has been completed regarding parking at Penn Avenue and West Broadway. Nick stated that today the Capri Theater sits on the south side of West Broadway and the Five Points Building is on the southeast corner of the intersection. In between these two sites is a parking lot owned by the city of Minneapolis with 80 parking stalls that is being used by the businesses in this area. Nick shared that the Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON) has begun development next to the theater which takes up some of the city-owned parking. Towards Penn Avenue and 23rd Avenue, there is another area that will be included as part of this development with NEON and will include parking to maintain the existing 80 stalls. Nick indicated with the BLE Light Rail Transit (LRT), the Five Points Building will be purchased by the project and 80 parking stalls will be maintained. Nick added there is the potential with future redevelopment after the BLE LRT is built to evaluate a district parking solution. Most of the on-street parking goes away on West Broadway but in this area, there is the opportunity to maintain a few on-street parking stalls.

Council Member Greenberg asked why the project plans to destroy a building that is active and in use (the Five Points Building) and is not doing something across the street where there is rubble, and the area needs help. Nick replied as part of the design, the intersection in this area is being widened to get the LRT tracks through here. The project is trying to stay away from the new Broadway Flats building and with any design, the project still is within 20-25 feet of the Five Points Building and as such, there is no way to avoid the impacts to this building. The BLE LRT project will expand into the properties on the north side as well and there is the opportunity for development in this area.



Co-chair Hansen indicated at the public meeting held about this area, the current lack of parking was discussed and while it is good the parking will have a net zero loss, is there something that can be done in collaboration with the city of Minneapolis to increase the off-street parking. Nick replied that the County will be involved with the purchase of the Five Points Building and redevelopment and potential district parking would offer opportunities to expand the parking.

Council Member Greenberg stated there is going to be a station right there and the potential that more than 80 people will park here to utilize that station. Nick replied that as a practice the Metro Transit and city of Minneapolis does not provide park and rides in urban areas as the intent is for people not to be driving in from the suburbs to use this station. Council Member Greenberg suggested a plan be developed for more parking in this area. Nick shared that the city of Minneapolis is used to and might allow permitted parking if it becomes a problem.

4. Design Update

Nick provided an update on the Lowry Avenue Station Design options. Nick stated with municipal consent, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), cities of Minneapolis and Robbinsdale, and North Memorial Hospital asked the BLE project team to take a deeper look into the design and reevaluate the options for Lowry Avenue Station. Nick shared a bit of history regarding the Lowry Avenue Station design and stated at the beginning of design for this station, a project had already been let by the County to construct two new bridges for safety concerns in this area. Options were then designed to minimally disrupt this new infrastructure investment. The original design included a flyover structure towards North Memorial Hospital and had a station that was grade separated up in the air. Nick stated grade separated stations are not ideal due to accessibility. Option A, submitted for Municipal Consent, was designed to bring the station down to at-grade in between the two bridges with one of the bridges being slightly impacted. As a part of Municipal Consent, concerns were raised about the parkway and trails and the gated crossing at Lowry potentially disrupting ambulance response times. A meeting was facilitated with key stakeholders to reevaluate the design options and a workshop event was conducted in early December with community stakeholders to collect feedback.

Nick briefly reviewed each of the nine design options with renderings and shared the benefits and drawbacks of each option. Nick shared that Option H addresses most of the concerns from the MPRB, cities of Minneapolis and Robbinsdale, and North Memorial Hospital but would be a higher cost requiring more items to be constructed.

An Evaluation Matrix was created to evaluate all design options and the requirements such as accessibility, safety, park and trail impacts, hospital access, connectivity, impact to new bridges, constructability, and cost. Nick stated a public open house was hosted in Robbinsdale last week and there will be another one coming up.

Nick indicated Option A and H are the most viable options that meet the needs for transit and the existing community. More engagement will be conducted with stakeholders and a consensus from



the design workshop group will be solicited. Nkongo added a link in the chat that includes all the information being shared. Nkongo stated the CAC members can provide feedback regarding the Lowry Avenue Design on this site.

Council Member Greenberg thanked Nkongo for sharing the website and asked if the BLE project team had received a consensus on the feedback. Nick replied that a lot of comments were received but nothing definitive has been determined. Nkongo added that a summary of the comments will be shared with the CAC members. Nkongo shared that the first event was held in Robbinsdale, and a second one will be held in January in Minneapolis to advance the conversations on the Lowry Avenue design.

Kathy Fraser asked a question in the chat about who would pick up the cost for the bridge construction referred to in Option H. Nick replied that the project would cover the cost, but the project would have to evaluate whether funding would have to be paid back as federal funding was used to build the two existing bridges. Nick stated that is why the original design (Option A) was recommended in Municipal Consent.

Co-chair Hansen stated it is good to see the homework and that various options were considered. Option H looks good overall, but his concern is losing the connection between the parkway and Lowry as this area experiences heavy traffic during rush hour. Nick replied that there is no perfect option, but Option A would fit the community well, is safe, and fits the needs of local transportation and transit.

Council Member Greenberg stated that the LRT center running at the same elevation as CR 81 would be his preference. Nick replied that the drawbacks of this option are transitions going back and forth, losing a bridge and the access and visibility of the station. Individuals who use the system regularly have provided the same feedback. Nick indicated the homework is being shown here but the BLE project is not recommending Option D. Council Member Greenberg replied that it is misleading to show this option if it is not a viable option and people will come to these events and talk about their preference. Council Member Greenberg suggested Options A and H should be indicated as the viable options and explanations of why the other options will not work made available. Nkongo replied that the engagement process is happening now showing all the options as requested through Municipal Consent and informing community members that a decision will be made upon conclusion of the engagement phase. Nkongo added that Option A and H are the two options that best fit the requirements for traffic and transit in this area, but all of the design options are being shown to reveal the homework that has been done by the design team. Council Member Greenberg stated the Engagement Team needs to be clearer about how this is being presented. Nick replied the concern has been heard and is understood. Nkongo indicated this design will have to go through the Corridor Management Committee (CMC) and this is happening in coordination with the municipal partners and the MPRB.

Council Member Greenberg reiterated that from a community engagement standpoint, it should be made clear that these are the two options being recommended and why.



Nick Landwer provided a brief design update of the 21st Avenue Corridor which will be converted into a car-free transitway from I-94 to James Avenue in Minneapolis. Nick stated that the north-south street crossings in this area will be maintained. There will be two stations at Lyndale and James Avenue. The current design prioritizes minimizing property impacts. The design includes sidewalks on both sides, a two-way bikeway, pedestrian lighting, and some ground level green boulevard plantings. Nick shared that planting trees in this area are an issue because of electrical wires. There is also a telecommunication building with wiring, cabling, and fiberoptics that will need to be accommodated for with the LRT.

Nick added that there are a lot of underground utilities in this area such as gas, water, sewer, storm sewer, fiber, phone and electric. The utilities will need to be pulled as parallel infrastructure to the side of the LRT for better maintenance accessibility. Visuals showing typical sections along the corridor were shown to provide a visual of what this corridor will look like. Nick ran an animated video that showed the train running along the corridor.

Nick summarized that the current 21st Avenue design tries to minimize property acquisitions and the transitway is being kept at a minimum of 60 feet where possible. This creates constraints with adding additional amenities. The BLE project is soliciting feedback from the community about what the desires are in this area regarding trees and greenery, pocket parks, cultural placekeeping and wayfinding elements and underground utilities. The questions asked to the community include are you satisfied with this current design or do you want us to look at other amenities even if it means purchasing more property. The topics covered at last night's workshop included identifying the community needs and priorities, identifying priorities and locations for public realm improvements, cultural placekeeping, and discussing where right-of-way might be increased to include amenities.

Nkongo shared that some of the comments received were related to setting up additional amenities along 21st Avenue. A follow-up meeting will be hosted early next year to advance this work. Neha shared that the Environmental Team is beginning to receive feedback on 21st Avenue and there will be more discussions internally and with the community.

Co-chair Hansen asked if an example could be shared about what kind of amenities are being requested. Neha replied that some examples given were a bike fix-it shop along the bikeway, more lighting, and water fountains available for pedestrians. Neha indicated a summary of the workshop will be sent to this group along with the summary from the Lowry Avenue Design workshop that was conducted.

Co-chair Hansen stated that the bike fix-it shop is an idea suggested before and there was a lot of interest for this at Lowry and the Parkway.

5. Discussion and Members' Feedback

Co-chair Hansen asked if anyone had anything additional to discuss and mentioned that last month's meeting that included a workshop was good and appreciated the summary that was written from that.



Nkongo shared that in 2025 it is not anticipated that the CMC will be facilitated every month, but it is anticipated that the BAC and CAC meetings will continue. Nkongo indicated topics of interest will be sought after by this group and workshop details reviewed prior to going to the public if the timing is right. Co-chair Hansen stated this sounds like a good approach.

6. Next Meeting: January 8, 2024.

Co-chair Hansen thanked everyone for attending and providing feedback and comments.

7. Adjourn

Co-chair Hansen asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kathy Fraser made a motion to adjourn and Jeff Guertin seconded it. The meeting adjourned at 7:33 pm.

Meeting Materials: Agenda, Slides, November 6 Meeting Summary

Administrative Lead: Joleen Ketterling

Meeting Chat:

5:49 PM Meeting started

Jonathan Hansen: I apologize, I'm not sure what has gone wrong with my audio. I'm going to leave the meeting and come back in.

Jonathan Hansen: Back

Nkongo Cigolo: [Designing a Lowry Station for all - Metropolitan Council](#)

Designing a Lowry Station for all - Metropolitan Council

Kathy Fraser: Who will have to pick up the cost of the bridge reconstruction for option H?