



METRO Blue Line Extension

Meeting of the Business Advisory Committee

Tuesday, April 4, 2023

8:00 AM – 9:30 AM

Blue Line Project Office
6465 Wayzata Boulevard, Suite 500
St. Louis Park, MN 55426

BAC Members: John Barobs, Dan Doerrer, Rita Endres, John Hacker, Jamar Smith, Jamez Staples

Agency Staff and Guests: Nkongo Cigolo, Neha Damle, Catherine Gold, Nick Landwer, Bojan Mistic, Emilee Roschen, Dan Soler, Kjerstin Yager

Meeting Summary

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Co-chair Dan Doerrer called the meeting to order at 8:06 a.m.

2. Adopt Meeting Minutes

Co-chair Dan Doerrer asked for a motion to approve the minutes. John Hacker made a motion and Rita Endres seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved.

3. Upcoming Meetings and Attendance

Nkongo Cigolo, Metropolitan Council, reported that there is an open house April 17, 2023, for Minneapolis and a virtual corridor-wide meeting on May 17, 2023. Nkongo added that the project team is continuing to door knock and are available to participate in community events and stakeholder meetings.

4. Project Update

Nkongo Cigolo stated that this month has a focus on the City of Robbinsdale. Nkongo provided an overview of the project, and he pointed out that the goal is to have the line open in the timeframe of 2028-2030.

Nkongo shared some of the design refinements that have been informed by outreach in each city. Nick Landwer, Metropolitan Council, added that the input the project receives from committees and the public does get incorporated into the project and help inform what best suits the community and how the project can make it better.

Nkongo reviewed the design decisions schedule. Nkongo discussed that May will be focused on the reporting of the anti-displacement work. It was intended to add a second CMC meeting in April to report on the anti-displacement work but there is a national event being held in the Metro area and scheduling would be difficult. So, the schedule has shifted a month resulting in Minneapolis shifting to June and anticipating a CMC recommendation in July. Rita Endres asked when meetings would be held in July. Nick responded that they would have to figure that out being that there is a holiday is that same week.



5. Environmental Update

Neha Damle, Metropolitan Council, provided the environmental update. Neha reported that the project is working with the FTA on a federal register notice, a parallel step to the Minnesota EQB step from the Fall. The FTA advised the project to hold off on the federal notice because it starts a particular federal regulation step. Neha stated that the project is now working with the FTA to publish the notice, possibly this week or the following week. Once the notice is published, a 30-day comment period would follow.

Neha shared that this month's chapter focus is on Environmental Justice. Neha reported that the first step is to determine the presence/location of environmental justice communities using Census block data and information gained through outreach activities. Nick Landwer asked Neha to give a brief description of what Census block-level data is. Neha discussed that the project takes the Census block data and incorporates it into the corridor and the project's different types of communities along the corridor. Nick added that people get confused by the information because we do not have individual household information. Dan Doerrer asked if it was information of the actual city block. Nick responded, no, it is an area, not the individual households. Neha added that getting individual information through outreach is very important and it helps give perspective to each household.

6. Robbinsdale Design Elements

Nick Landwer reviewed the Project Design Principles. Nick stated that these principles help guide decisions and plans moving forward. These principles are key in how the project moves forward in design and how the project can be intentional with the work being done. Nick discussed how the Design Decisions Document outlines key decision-making processes, input, consideration, stakeholder, and other outstanding issues. This document is helpful to inform the design and environmental work.

Nick reported that the Robbinsdale alignment is proposed to be center-running on County Road 81, at-grade whenever possible in the downtown area. The project is evaluating the configuration in the downtown area, working to understand the potential of elevating the line through the downtown. In Robbinsdale, there would also be a reconstruction of a portion of the bridge over Trunk Highway 100, a downtown station, a park-and-ride downtown, and a station at Lowry Avenue.

Nick shared layouts of the alignment through Robbinsdale. Nick reported key decisions for the City of Robbinsdale – configuration of the guideway, location of the downtown LRT station, location and transit connections of the downtown park-and-ride, and the station at Lowry Avenue. Nick shared the downtown station options with the park-and-ride. He stated that the city council's preferred option is a station on the south side of 40th Avenue with a park-and-ride on the northwest corner of County Road 81 and 40th Avenue. The city believes this would best serve the downtown and the higher density residential housing in the area. John Barobs asked if this would be the last park-and-ride as you go south. Nick responded, yes, and discussed that at the north end in Brooklyn Park there's a large park-and-ride by Oak Grove Parkway, a park-and-ride at the existing 63rd transit station, intended to have at least a surface lot in Crystal, and this one in Robbinsdale would be the last one. Jamar Smith asked if there's a reason for the city's preferred station and park-and-ride choice because it is split compared to other options. Nick responded that the city wanted a station that served the downtown area and the high density residential just south of the station and felt that option does that and is the best fit for a transit function. Jamar commented that the city references safety and their preferred option has a couple of crossings to get to the station from the park-and-ride. Nick said that 40th Avenue is not a high-volume road, but this option is the preference for now. Jamar commented that there is not a lot of



shopping on the south side of the proposed station. Nick responded saying that is a good point and that the city is looking for input.

John Barobs asked, from a multi-modal aspect, what buses and bike paths are intersecting in this area. Nick responded that the downtown is working on bike lanes and the project would look at how first and last mile work. Nick added that the Crystal Regional Trail continues through the area for bike access. The project would also be addressing sidewalks.

Nick stated that the project is working with the city to right size the park-and-ride. The model will help identify the demand for how many stalls are needed. Dan Doerrler asked if the park-and-ride will be designed to add on to it if more stalls are needed in the future. Nick responded, it is probably something that needs to be considered. Nick added that the 63rd Avenue park-and-ride was looked at to add another level, but it was not designed for it.

Nick shared that the Lowry Station would have a vertical circulation on either side of the station, with good connections to the hospital and surrounding Robbinsdale and Minneapolis neighborhoods. Nick stated that the project would continue to collaborate and work on these designs with the North Memorial campus, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the City of Robbinsdale, and the City of Minneapolis. Nick mentioned that the train would stay elevated above Abbott Avenue as it is a main access point for the hospital. Nick also added that the hospital is concerned about their helicopter pad. The project will want to evaluate whether LRT operations would be impacted by the helicopter pad and vice versa. The project will also continue coordination with the City of Robbinsdale to refine station locations design, existing traffic, right-of-way, and reducing the project's footprint and impact. Nick stated that the project will make sure to right size the park-and-ride with the sensitivity of the downtown characteristics and incorporate the transit piece. Nick added that the project will continue to address safety and security.

Nkongo Cigolo presented community feedback from the March 6, 2023, open house in Robbinsdale. Nkongo reported that the themes were similar as to what the team has been hearing in Robbinsdale with previous outreach.

Nkongo reported that in May, committee meetings would be focused on the anti-displacement work. Nkongo then previewed the Minneapolis design decisions for June.

7. Anti-Displacement Update

Catherine Gold, Hennepin County, shared the timeline for the anti-displacement work. Catherine reported that the draft report, being prepared by CURA, will be available for corridor representatives and workgroup members to review and provide feedback in mid-April. A final report will be available at the end of April. Catherine stated that the anti-displacement work would be the focus of the May advisory committees and CMC meeting. Catherine added that the second phase of the anti-displacement work would begin in May. Jamar Smith asked if it is anticipated for other phases beyond phase 2. Catherine responded, yes, there will need to be a lot of outreach to ready people for the investments/programs. Catherine added that this would have to be delivered corridor-wide and it is a possibility that the project would have to contract out work to help with the outreach efforts. There will be phasing throughout the project. Dan Doerrler asked if there's a place on the website that covers common questions on federal versus local funding. Nkongo Cigolo



responded, there's a FAQ section. Catherine said it would be good to have talking points for the advisory committees, so messaging is consistent.

Jamar Smith asked if construction would happen in different phases. Nick responded, construction would happen in different areas but not the whole corridor all at once. Nick added that the project will have an idea of how to stage construction, but the contractor may end up having another idea. Dan Doerrer asked if the community would be able to check in on the sequencing of the construction. Nick responded, yes. Dan Soler, Hennepin County, said that on University Avenue, there were small construction work groups. Catherine added that the project does not want to disrupt anything wholly. Nick also added that construction could maybe be a few months or a season for a particular section. Jamar stated that the perception is that businesses would be impacted for 4 whole years.

Jamar said that there's mixed emotion in the community and asked if there is a notion to not have the project. Jamar asked if they should start to think about being solution oriented or if there is there still an opportunity for community to organize against the project. Nick responded that the best thing to do is to be solution oriented and figure out how to best work with the community. Nick added that the project team intends to build this project. Dan Doerrer commented that there are people who are opposed to LRT through Robbinsdale but the reality is that the city is already backing the project. Dan Soler commented that transit in the Metro region is owned and operated by Metropolitan Council. The local funding and support come from the regional rail tax. The county board has goals to expand the LRT system and the county board has authorized funds for the project.

8. Discussion and Members Feedback

Rita Endres stated that it was helpful to hear that construction is not going to be 4 years of continuous construction of the whole corridor.

John Barobs stated that it's important to have a multi-modal focus connecting the route. Access to regular bus routes, bike and pedestrian access, connection to neighborhoods, and the park-and-ride locations to have EV charging. Think along the lines of what this will look like in 2028-2030. Dan Doerrer added that the park-and-rides to be equipped to handle increased demand.

John Hacker asked how much time is anticipated between each train. Nick Landwer responded that there will be a three train configuration that is designed for 10-minute headways. John Barobs asked about the hours of operation – when do the trains stop. Nick responded, the trains stop at 12:30 a.m. and start back up between 4 and 5 a.m. Nick added that a window for cleaning and maintenance is needed. John Barobs asked if there would be talk of extending the hours of operation beyond 12:30 a.m. Nick responded yes, if the ridership is there. Dan Soler added that work schedules could have an impact too. John Barobs added that from the standpoint of neighborhoods, a window of quiet would be nice.

9. Next Meeting: May 2, 2023.

10. Adjourn

Rita Endres motioned to adjourn the meeting. John Barobs seconded the motion. The meeting ended at 9:25 a.m.