



METRO Blue Line Extension
Meeting of the Corridor Management Committee
June 9, 2022
8:00 AM
Metro Transit Heywood Office Chambers

CMC Members: Jeff Lunde, Irene Fernando, Bill Blonigan, Jim Adams, Tonja West-Hafner, Becka Thompson, Gene Montanez, Rebecca Fabunmi, Jeremiah Ellison, Felicia Perry, Sarah Ghandour, John Pacheco, Reva Chamblis, Gillian Rosenquist, Chair Charlie Zelle

Meeting Summary

1. Call to Order and Welcome

Chair Zelle called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from September 24, 2021

Commissioner Lunde moved to approve the minutes, Councilmember Tonya West-Hafner seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

3. Committee Reports

CAC

Gene Montanez provided an update on the CAC meeting. They discussed the recommendation and talked about future of the project. They are asking that if the light rail is built it is heavily advertised so that it is used by all the communities in the area.

BAC

Felicia Perry shared there was general support for the route recommendation at the BAC June meeting and also there were several points of concern and comments of note. She highlighted the environmental documentation and emphasized the importance for it to be accessible to all residents. The need to engage with the residents in regard to specific routing along 21st was a topic. The committee discussed the need to bring together the residents and business community to discuss the route. There was also an emphasis for the anti-displacement work happening at the same time as the route moving forward.

Zelle asked for questions. Jeff Lunde thanked the committees for volunteering and sticking with the committees during the challenging time we're in.



4. Route Recommendation Report

a. Staff Recommendation

Chair Zelle emphasized that the project office has collected comments on the staff recommendation and that the comment period was extended. Sophia Ginis, Metropolitan Council, provided a brief overview of the process to define the route modification. She shared an overview of the ways the project team has incorporated feedback into the process. She emphasized that today is important in order to move forward. She shared that this group has been working on a route modification since August of 2020. She pointed out that the initial Draft Route Modification Report did not have a recommendation intentionally, so that more information could be sought and processed during the draft report comment period. The Route Modification Report comment period received over 1,100 comments, gathered through the in-person meetings and various online methods (interactive map, comment forms and emails). Sophia shared a graphic summarizing the types of comments. Sophia shared that the largest category was general support or opposition. There were design priorities shared and comments about concerns regarding impacts. There are many people here today who also would emphasize that more engagement is very important.

Dan Soler, Hennepin County, shared the staff recommendation for the route. This includes West Broadway Avenue and County Road 81 in Brooklyn Park, County Road 81 in Crystal and Robbinsdale and West Broadway Avenue in Minneapolis, connecting to Target Field Station in Downtown Minneapolis. Much of the route in Brooklyn Park remains unchanged. In Southern Brooklyn Park, Crystal and Robbinsdale, the route is taken from rail right of way to the center of County Road 81. They are recommending reviewing connections from Target Field Station to West Broadway in Minneapolis.

The Route Modification Report includes an addendum that highlights feedback received including resolutions from the City of Minneapolis and City of Robbinsdale. Robbinsdale's resolution details concerns about how light rail will impact Robbinsdale. The other feedback highlighted included looking at additional options for connection to West Broadway. The other area emphasized is anti-displacement and the timing of those recommendations during the environmental process. Dan shared an overview schedule and highlighted the immediate next phase of environmental review, municipal consent, engineering and station area planning. The anti-displacement recommendations and implementation is happening throughout the process and are included on the schedule. He described in more detail the upcoming steps for the environmental documentation, further developing design details and continuing public engagement.

b. Resolution



Chair Zelle acknowledged that while the project is continuing to identify the exact route, the route recommendation report identifies the general alignment. Dan clarified that specific engineering questions such as position within the street, elevated or not, and 21st versus West Broadway, will be answered during the engineering phase of the project.

Chair Zelle opened the floor for questions. Commissioner Fernando commented that many residents in this area feel like they've been here before with unfulfilled government promises, and there has been immense progress on this project. She wanted to acknowledge that these are people's homes and expressed that she appreciated the feedback from residents. Fernando stated that as the project moves forward, the project will continue to engage residents, businesses, and the community. Fernando asked, how do we make actionable this rolling implementation concept with regards to anti-displacement? Fernando expressed appreciation for the current state of the project, given previous setbacks.

Seeing no more questions, Chair Zelle asked if there was a motion to adopt the resolution and for discussion on the resolution. Commissioner Lunde made a motion and Councilmember West-Hafner seconded.

Commissioner Lunde shared that the group has been through the green box before (in the environmental period on the schedule) and many design questions came from that time. Many project questions can only be answered through the environmental process. There is federal funding for anti-displacement work, the project cannot get access for this until the environmental phase; the draft route needs to be adopted before we can get there. Lunde asked, how can we take public land that we acquired during construction and use that for community good? In the Central Corridor in St. Paul, the route needed to be adopted prior to receiving federal funding for loans and public support. There is a lot left to do.

Blue Line Coalition Member Perez said it is unfortunate the anti-displacement work is not further along. There are projects that have disproportionately hurt communities of color, such as the Rondo neighborhood. The Blue Line Coalition is not in opposition to the route, there needs to be transit in the community, but the Blue Line Coalition cannot vote yes right now because their community is uncertain about the impacts.

Councilmember Rosenquist shared that the community is stronger when the region is stronger and that is why she will be supporting the route recommendation. However, Golden Valley also needs transit investment, and they want to make sure that those identified needs are not overlooked and want to continue to find ways to connect those residents with transit. Chair Zelle noted that it is important to continue to build the system.

Councilmember Ellison shared that he was pleasantly surprised by the group openness to focused on anti-displacement and anti-gentrification and include those efforts in the project. The city has a commitment to anti-displacement, and he does not see anything that



contradicts the resolution passed by the city in CMC action today. He emphasized that the ball cannot be dropped on this. He insists that the project continue to engage the communities along the former route to remedy the loss. It is encouraging that the project is re-entering the green space [the environmental phase on the project schedule], and he is prepared to support the resolution.

Councilmember Chamblis said that it is important to look at community engagement at the top of this process and continue to expand and support assessment of community impacts. She notes that there has already been an assessment of the different categories of impacts along route alternatives and the same should be done for 21st Avenue and the alternate routes to downtown Minneapolis. She stated that she supports expanding engagement, and that anti-displacement efforts are put front and center. There is a need to move beyond engagement to equity action.

Mayor Blonigan said that he will vote against the resolution. He asked the CMC to go to Governor Walz, Representative Omar, Senator Smith, and Senator Klobuchar to bring BNSF back to the table. BNSF has reneged on their long-standing commitment to cooperate in this corridor. There must be pressure on BNSF from the congressional delegation. The congressional delegation should be less focused on the interests of BNSF and more focused on their constituents. He said that what occurs in Robbinsdale does not affect the alignments in Minneapolis or Brooklyn Park. He asked that the CMC at least support Robbinsdale in a resolution to get elected officials to try to work with BNSF. He would like to bring that resolution to the next meeting.

Councilmember Chamblis noted that the cost of a corridor protection wall is a new factor that should be considered by Robbinsdale. She asked that Robbinsdale consider this as a regional project that impacts the entire corridor.

Commissioner Thompson shared that she would support the idea to go back to the old alignment in Robbinsdale. The West Broadway corridor is incredibly narrow and there is construction along this corridor at Highway 81 right now. She asked if there is a timeline for a decision on the alignment (21st, West Broadway, Lyndale, or Washington).

Dan Soler, Hennepin County, said that the route recommendation gets us into the environmental and design process. A key measure in Minnesota is municipal consent, and at 30% engineering the project will ask for municipal consent. Those items will need to be decided by then. He estimated that the project will reach that point in the timeline at a year from now. The route recommendation gives guidelines to do more work.

Councilmember Ellison asked if Councilmember Chamblis' earlier points were a motion to amend the resolution. If so, he said he would support that motion. Chair Zelle said that it could be an amendment.



Councilmember Chamblis clarified that her motion is to expand the engagement and assessment of route alternatives between West Broadway and downtown Minneapolis and along 21st Avenue. It should be as robust as the engagement and assessment that was done for the West Broadway and Lowry alternative. The amendment was written and read aloud to the group.

Mayor Adams shared that Crystal has issues trusting the process and there are items that need to be resolved. He is not ready to move forward and is most concerned about the pedestrian bridge crossing. Crystal has a proposed station but no supporting transit network, and those that rely on transit are not being served. Crystal has repeatedly asked for traffic lanes to be preserved, and they have seen everything but that. He supports Robbinsdale's plight, and Crystal does not support this.

Councilmember West-Hafner noted that Brooklyn Park has many stations and the resolution would do a lot to create equity in the city. She has not heard anything from the council or mayor to not support the route. She shared that she is in full support of adopting this resolution.

A voice vote was called by Chair Zelle.

Council Member Chamblis, Commissioner Lunde, Commissioner Fernando, Rebecca Fabunmi, Councilmember Rosenquist, Councilmember Tonya West-Hafner, Commissioner Becka Thompson, Felicia Perry, Councilmember Pacheco, and Sarah Ghandour, Gene Montanez and Chair Zelle voted yes.

Mayor Blonigan, Mayor Adams, and Ricardo Perez voted no.

Mayor Blonigan asked for a rollcall vote. A rollcall vote was taken.

Council Member Chamblis, Commissioner Lunde, Commissioner Fernando, Rebecca Fabunmi, Councilmember Rosenquist, Councilmember Tonya West-Hafner, Commissioner Becka Thompson, Felicia Perry and Chair Zelle voted yes. Councilmember Pacheco and Sarah Ghandour were not called but provided verbal yays in the voice vote; the record should state that they supported the resolution.

Mayor Blonigan, Mayor Adams, Ricardo Perez and Gene Montanez voted no.

The resolution was adopted

5. Next Meeting: July 14, 2022

6. Adjournment