



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Business Advisory Committee Meeting
April 12, 2016
Blue Line Project Office
5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200
Crystal, MN 55428
8:00 AM – 9:30 AM**

Meeting Summary

BAC Members: Brad Clift, Charlie Jacobsen, Alison Pence, Mark Steinhauser, Denny Walsh, Jeff Washburne

Agency Staff and Guests: Mary Sue Abel, Paul Danielson, David Davies, Sophia Ginis, Erik Hansen, Jessica Laabs, Nick Landwer, Kathryn O'Brien, Dan Pfeiffer, Juan Rangel, Scott Reed, Jim Toulouse, Alicia Vap

1. Call to Order

Denny Walsh called to order.

2. Approval of February 9, 2016 Meeting Minutes

Clift moved to approve the minutes. Washburne second. Motion passed.

3. Municipal Consent Summary – Mary Sue Abel

Crystal voted to *not* vote on municipal consent, but if 45 days passes, it's considered an approval. BPO continues to work on each of the issues identified in the resolutions by each of the cities.

Walsh: If they don't pass a bonding bill, what happens to this project?

Abel: BLRT is not counting on anything out of the bonding bill this year; this year is big for SWLRT. Local partners (Hennepin County, CTIB) are currently providing funding for the project. . Once the state approves its share of funding for BLRT, money may be redirected to the local partners to account for Next year's session will be important for BLRT.

Walsh: State bonding won't hold things up when the feds agree to their share?

Abel: That will be next year. Before we apply for the Full Funding Grant Agreement, we have to show we have the local 51%. We plan to apply for FFGA right after spring legislative session next year, and anticipate we would receive it in early 2018 (about a 10-month process through FTA).

4. Corridor-Wide Safety/Security – Nick Landwer

In the end, we need to certify that the system is safe, so we follow steps throughout to make sure we can achieve that certification. In the project development phase, we review hazards, threats and vulnerabilities and create a list of critical items to address. In the engineering phase, we have a safety and security review committee to ensure design conforms to safety criteria and critical items are being addressed. During construction, all installations are verified and tested to make sure they are in conformance. The outreach team will also begin a public safety campaign later in the construction phase. Operation plans and procedures are also established during construction. In the activation phase, there are a number of reviews and training exercises, and the final safety certification report is issued to indicate we are ready to operate.

Jacobsen: Seems like this is a very thorough plan, is this the same plan other rail projects have used? Is this level of planning and safety because there were issues in the past?

Landwer: This is fairly similar to what we did on Central Corridor. We continue to refine based on what we learn, but it's pretty consistent across projects.

Jacobsen: Why is this so visible?

Landwer: Because there is federal money, we have certain requirements to meet. This is a little more formalized because it's so large.

Abel: It's unique too, a lot of these cities have never had a light rail train running through it. It's new to them so they need to be trained in how to navigate and be around it.

Vap: The procedures and policies are not unique in terms of FTA requirements, but new to the communities.

Our primary goal is to operate safely, and that involves a number of partners.

Specific safety features:

- Blank-out signs for traffic - when no train, blank/plain
- Bar signals on poles - tells train if they have through movement or need to stop
- Station and tracks - open and transparent platform/good visibility, clear signage, safety railings, emergency phones, and video monitoring (Green Line/Central Corridor has up to 12 cameras on each platform that are constantly being monitored). Exterior fencing discourages track crossing.
- Changeable signs to give info on arrival times, etc.
- Pedestrian and bike crossings - countdown timers, truncated domes to mark crosswalk, push button with audible tones, signs to mark crosswalks and alert drivers where not signalized.
- Warning devices when train is approaching - bells and lights.
- At mid-block crossings, pedestrian boxes - forces pedestrians to look back the other direction
- Inter-track fences and railings to deter pedestrians crossing the tracks
- Gated intersection crossings - structure with flashing lights and gate arms that come down as trains come through

- Station platforms - well-lit, PA systems
- Metro Transit Police Department - over 200 officers out riding buses and trains, including officers who speak languages reflective of riders
- Public safety campaign - videos, posters, bike safety campaign, PSAs, etc.

5. Golden Valley Road Park & Ride, Trails and Intersection - Alicia Vap

In November, CMC added scope for these items. An update was provided on how those have been advanced.

Park & Ride

Staff went through many steps working with the church and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) to come up with a design that's also beneficial for park users. Park & Ride is situated in the triangle parcel south of the proposed platform. The parking lot sits higher in grade than the platform.

Bikers or pedestrians can access the station via switchback trail or vertical circulation system (elevator). Vertical circulation design has been modified a bit to separate the two uses. Bass Creek Regional Trail will be constructed on the south side of Golden Valley Road.

Next steps – staff will be giving a progress report to MPRB in May. Project office staff and MPRB staff continue to work on this and other issues along the alignment that impact MPRB properties. A land swap is still possible to acquire the land needed to build the Golden Valley Road park and ride.

Golden Valley Road Station - Trails

There is currently a trail that follows Theodore Wirth Parkway off to the northeast. Staff are working with MPRB, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, and 3 Rivers Park District to extend the trail in Sochacki Park and extend all the way down to Theodore Wirth Parkway. The new trail would go underneath new Golden Valley Road bridge and connect with the parkway.

Golden Valley Road/Theodore Wirth Park intersection

This is a big intersection, and can be difficult. Two options are currently being considered:

- Traffic signal - free rights go away, green space is opened up. Access to Glenwood Parkway residences both north and south of the intersection was a concern. Southern Glenwood access is maintained by an access on Golden Valley Road. Northern Glenwood residents would lose their access to the intersection, but they have easy access to Theodore Wirth Parkway. Good level of service under this option.
- Single-Lane Roundabout - Designed with an additional fifth “leg” to access 3 homes on Glenwood Parkway. Good level of service, smaller footprint than existing, but larger footprint than traffic signal. Roundabouts can feel uncomfortable for bicycles and pedestrians.

Updates have been provided to Golden Valley City Council and MPRB. Public comments regarding intersection design are currently being received. MPRB, Golden Valley, and Hennepin County staff

will provide a recommended design. CAC was very strongly in favor of signal vs. roundabout. MPRB also prefers signal. Hope to achieve resolution yet in April. Since this is MPRB property, they will likely have greater weight in this decision.

6. Section 106 Process (Cultural Resources) Update – Kathryn O'Brien

Anytime federal money is involved in an undertaking, impacts on historic resources must be considered. Staff is currently in the process of documenting adverse effects to historic properties. There are 17 properties in the project area that meet eligibility requirements. Six of these have no anticipated effects.

Those considered eligible and anticipated to be subject to adverse effects. Possible mitigation is noted:

- Sumner Branch Library - no direct impacts, design review
- Wayman African Methodist Episcopal Church - no direct impacts, design review
- Labor Lyceum - no direct impacts, design review
- Floyd B. Olson Memorial Statue - no direct impacts, design review
- Homewood Residential Historic District - no direct impacts, design review
- Osseo Branch Line/Great Northern Railway Historic District - direct effects
- Grand Rounds Historic District: Theodore Wirth Segment - direct effects related to stations
- Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Robbinsdale - no direct effects, quiet zone proposed
- Robbinsdale Water Works - no direct impacts, design review and construction protections
- Hennepin County Library, Robbinsdale - no direct impacts, design review and construction protections, noise mitigation
- West Broadway Avenue Residential Historic District - design review and construction protections, noise mitigation

Staff is working on developing final Memorandum of Agreement with consulting parties.

7. Design Topics – Jim Toulouse

TH 610: Brooklyn Park

Through review with partner agencies, slight modifications have been made. Municipal consent plans had skewed intersection; curvature has been shifted to the north to square up the intersection.

39 1/2 Avenue Closure: Robbinsdale

Closure proposed to promote safety for at-grade rail crossing and reduce noise impacts.

8. Schedule Update – MarySue Abel

Upcoming big milestones:

- FTA completes legal review of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in May, with publish date end of June to meet goal of Record of Decision (ROD) in August
- Risk Assessment will be performed in May. This is important as the cost estimate is prepared for August.
- In June, staff will start updating advisory committees on any new scope items, including various environmental commitments that weren't previously known, and potential pedestrian bridges in Crystal and Brooklyn Park, among other things. Scope changes will be presented to advisory committees, but any cost changes would first be provided to CMC.
- August final approvals - FTA issues ROD for FEIS, CTIB/HCRRA actions on budget, Met Council action on scope and budget, submit application for New Starts and entry into engineering. This is the first time FTA will assign a rating to this project.

Jacobsen: When you publish to Federal Register, I assume there are a number of government agencies, but are there private watchdogs waiting for this to come out?

O'Brien: Certainly there will be agencies who need to review and approve certain elements. I don't know that there is the same level of awareness and controversy around this that might be around other projects. While the Federal Register is the legal requirement, the outreach team will be doing other notifications for the general public.

There is still a period of oversight for the project where FTA will be ensuring the mitigation measures identified in the FEIS are being implemented.

Abel: Concurrent with Federal Register, will also be published at the state level.

O'Brien: Yes, Minnesota has state environmental requirements.

Steinhauser: This project runs independently of Southwest, no domino effect there?

O'Brien: Correct, from the environmental standpoint, this has independent utility.

Abel: They are separate projects, but certainly politically they are tied.

Clift: When people actually start to get involved with building this thing, is there a process for bids to go out to the different providers?

Abel: There will be a competitive bidding process. Heavy construction planned for 2018 and 2019 (civil work), and 2020 (systems work). We're currently looking now if we would do any advance construction in 2017; if so, we would probably be bidding that at this time next year. Otherwise near end of 2017 for 2018 construction.

Today there is actually a Horizontal Construction Career Fair to inform companies of what is to come (information on back of meeting materials).

On Central Corridor, we had about 600 contractors working on that project, and BLRT is bigger. Consider that SWLRT that will be having some overlapping construction years, there will be lots of work in the region.

9. Future Meeting Topics – Alicia Vap

Alicia inquired about any other topics the group would like to cover in future meetings.

Walsh: Would like to see some updates on the Crystal ped bridge issue.

Abel: We certainly would like to see resolution by the end of May.

Walsh: The issue is that a magnet is being created to bring all of these people in, but haven't addressed a way to safely get them across.

Landwer: County is looking at doing some advance work in the at-grade crossing.

Washburne: Working with a group of U of M Capstone students looking at 10-12 larger metro areas that are in various stages of transit, and considering the housing impacts and policies that helped to counter some of the displacement/gentrification. Also collecting comments from cities on what they would have done differently. Wondering if this would be of interest to have the students come in and present findings.

Walsh: That would be great to get in front of cities so they can understand what's to come.

Abel: Have we shared with all of you some of the development patterns around the Blue Line and Green Line?

Vap: That would be a good opportunity to tap into the Community Works Steering Committee meeting.

Washburne: In May there should be some initial docs and findings available.

10. Member and Committee Reports/Public Forum

No comments.

11. Adjourn

Adjourned at 9:20 a.m.

Next regularly scheduled BAC meeting May 10th.