

METRO Blue Line Extension Project Decision Board Meeting Minutes

Date & Time	October 16, 2024 9:00 – 10:00 AM
Location	Blue Line Extension Project Office, North Conference Room, 6465 Wayzata Blvd, Suite 600, St Louis Park, MN 55426
Members	Charlie Zelle, Irene Fernando, Reva Chamblis, Ben Schweigert, Lisa Cerney, Jeff Lunde
Project Staff	Nick Thompson, Dan Soler, Shahin Khazrajafari, Jer Yang

1. Call To Order

Charlie Zelle, Chair of the Metropolitan Council, called the METRO Blue Line Extension (BLE) Project Decision Board (PDB) meeting to order at 9:08 AM and welcomed both members and the public to the meeting.

2. Minutes from September 24, 2024 Meeting

Chair Zelle requested a motion to approve the minutes from the PDB meeting held on September 24, 2024.

Irene Fernando, Hennepin County Commissioner, made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Metropolitan Council Member Reva Chamblis. The minutes were then officially approved.

3. Post-Municipal Consent Next Steps

Shahin Khazrajafari from Hennepin County presented a look ahead and outlined the next steps for the BLE project. He noted that as the project enters its next phase, there are three key actions that need to be addressed: National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance, design work, and the submission of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) rating. NEPA was discussed at the October 10, 2024 Corridor Management Committee (CMC) meeting, and a significant milestone for NEPA is the issuance of the amended Record of Decision (ROD) scheduled for July 2025. This will align with the next major step: the FTA’s Capital Investments Grant (CIG) program rating submission in August 2025. The August 2025 FTA CIG rating submittal is a hard constraint, as a deadline established by the FTA for submittals every year.

Dan Soler, Hennepin County added that in 2024, the goal for the BLE project was to complete the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement phase of NEPA, which



included publishing the SDEIS, gathering comments, holding a public hearing, and finalizing the SDEIS. As the project moves into 2025, the focus will be on preparing the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS) and finalizing the FTA process.

Chair Zelle asked when the environmental review would be completed. Mr. Khazrajafari responded that the review is expected to be finished by summer 2025, noting that there are three rounds of FTA reviews. Nick Thompson from the Metropolitan Council added that the first round of FTA review begins next week.

Commissioner Fernando asked if there would be a summary from the Municipal Consent process outlining what is officially part of the mitigation plan and what might fall outside of its scope, given that many partners voted "yes" on municipal consent with conditions. Mr. Thompson responded that there will be a formal mitigation plan and clear next steps.

Mr. Khazrajafari continued that alongside NEPA activities, the BLE project is currently evaluating post-Municipal Consent scope refinements and additions, and developing a construction schedule informed by project design, as well as the industry feedback received on the proposed contract packaging and procurement strategy. The procurement strategy is anticipated to be complete by November 2024, allowing for a construction schedule and subsequent project cost estimate update to be prepared in the following months. This will become a part of the packet submitted to the FTA for rating in August 2025.

Chair Zelle asked for clarification on who makes the decision regarding the ROD. Mr. Khazrajafari explained that the ROD is issued by the FTA and is based on the BLE project's scope. If there were any changes to the scope after the amended ROD is issued, the project would need to undergo some additional level of environmental analysis, depending on the scope and magnitude of the change.

Mr. Thompson added that, the amended ROD is also required for initiating Right of Way (ROW) acquisitions, and issuing notice and orders for utility relocations, both of which are critical steps in project implementation.

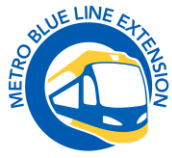
Commissioner Lunde emphasized the importance of early and clear communication with property owners during the ROW acquisition process and having proper anti-displacement plans in place ahead of this.

4. Next Meeting: November 20, 2024

5. Adjourn

Chair Zelle concluded the meeting and adjourned it at 9:39 am.

Meeting Materials Provided:



Meeting Agenda, October 16, 2024
Meeting Minutes, September 24, 2024
PDB PowerPoint Presentation

Respectfully Submitted,
Jer Yang, Blue Line Ext. Administrative Lead