



# METRO Blue Line Extension Meeting of the Community Advisory Committee

March 1, 2023

6:00 p.m.

Microsoft Teams Meeting

**CAC Members:** Ellis Beck, Thomia Brown, Brett Buckner, John Chambers Dunn, Kathy Fraser, Jeff Guertin, Jonathan Hansen, Jericho Huggar, Giuseppe Marrari, Ken Rodgers, Steve Spaulding

**Agency Staff and Guests:** Chris Beckwith, Lex Brand, Nkongo Cigolo, Neha Damle, Rob Hume, Nick Landwer, Joanna Ocasio-Maisonet, Koehl Simmons, Dan Solar, John Sutter

## Meeting Summary

### 1. Call to Order and Welcome

John Chambers Dunn started the meeting at 6:02 pm. John explained the focus of this month will be on the route in the City of Crystal. Nkongo described upcoming events, he said that next week there will be a public meeting in Minneapolis evaluating the two route options between Target Field and West Broadway; East I-94 and Lyndale Avenue. On March 7th, there will be another public meeting in Minneapolis regarding the West Broadway and 21st Avenue route options. Additionally, Nkongo stated there will be additional open houses in Robbinsdale and Minneapolis coming up.

### 2. Project Update

Dan Soler, Hennepin County, gave the project update. Dan stated that the project team wanted to be more deliberate in explaining the way the Blue Line Extension fits into the METRO system. Dan explained difference between light rail routes (LRT) and bus rapid transit routes (BRT). Viewing a map of the future BRT and LRT network, John Chambers Dunn asked how long these routes are planned out in advance. Mr. Soler explained that some of the higher performing regular bus routes are candidates to be elevated to BRT routes and although there is not an official list past what is shown here, there are some discussions of other future BRT routes.

### 3. Environmental Update

Neha Damle, Metropolitan Council, provided the environmental update. Ms. Damle shared that Chapter 4 is primarily focused on community and social analysis, and Chapter 5 is about the physical and environmental analysis. John Chambers Dunn asked if the Chapter 4 topics take consideration of the community impacts during construction. Ms. Damle explained that there will be both short term and long-term impacts studied. Brett Buckner asked what is included in the visual impacts. Ms. Damle explained that the visual impact will include a discussion of current views within the corridor and compare them to those after the project. Nick Landwer, Metropolitan Council, stated that if there are any particular views, those will be studied.

John Chambers Dunn asked if the greenhouse gas section will include an analysis of emissions that are avoided due to people using the train rather than driving. Ms. Damle explained that the project will do a study on the comparative impacts to vehicle miles traveled and that impacts can also mean benefits, such as a reduction in



Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT). Mr. Landwer, Metropolitan Council, explained that although construction will last four years, that does not mean there will be four years of construction in one spot, and the project will try to complete the most disruptive work in a single season. Jonathan Hansen asked Nick to clarify a comment he made about utility work that can be done during civil construction. Mr. Landwer gave an overview of some of the work that can be done concurrently with the project.

Mr. Landwer explained the project design principles. He stated that these design principles have been guiding the team throughout the project and would continue to help guide the environmental work. He talked about how the Design Decisions Document will be used through the whole process, the outstanding issues and decisions keep this a living document.

Ken Rodgers asked whether there are specific footprints for stations or not. Mr. Landwer stated the project team is beginning to get into station design now and although this design was previously completed, some design work will need to be re-done.

#### **4. Crystal Design Elements**

Mr. Landwer reviewed the alignment through the City of Crystal. He explained that the project is looking at two design options for the station location on Bass Lake Road: six-lanes at-grade with LRT and an elevated four to five lane Bass Lake Road. According to Mr. Landwer, the project team is studying the traffic capacity and refining the station design. Mr. Landwer explained that a grade separated intersection could help improve the intersection at Bass Lake Road and County Road 81. Jonathan Hansen asked for more information about pedestrian access to the station, Mr. Landwer explained pedestrians would not need to cross traffic with the grade-separated intersection. Mr. Landwer said that the grade separated intersection will provide safety and access benefits. John Chambers Dunn asked about the surface parking lot shown on the plan. Mr. Landwer explained it would be a Park and Ride lot with 70 surface parking spots. Brett Buckner asked about the cost to the City. Mr. Landwer explained that for the most part, improvements that support the project will be paid for by the Met Council and Hennepin County and existing city infrastructure will be paid for and maintained by the city. John Sutter, City of Crystal, agreed with Mr. Landwer stating that Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council will be responsible for maintaining these bridges.

#### **5. Community Engagement**

Nkongo Cigolo, Metropolitan Council, gave the community engagement update. Mr. Cigolo stated that the Crystal open house was very well attended and thanked John Sutter for his help in advertising the event. Major concerns included safety, lighting, the possibility of a noise wall. Brett asked if there were any overall community concerns, John Sutter stated some in the community have concerns about physical safety, impacts to property, impacts to traffic, noise impacts, or financial impacts. John Chambers Dunn described that some of the noise concerns may be unfounded because traffic on the existing County Road 81 is very loud and although some members of the public are worried the train may add to the traffic noise, in reality the traffic is likely to drown out the sound of the train.

Ken Rodgers stated that around the airport, noise impacts are mitigated by replacing windows in houses to provide soundproofing. Mr. Landwer stated that if the noise impacts of the train are not within federal guidelines, those impacts will be mitigated for in some way, although that may not necessarily be soundproofing windows. Jeff Guertin pointed out that elevating County Road 81 may create some noise



impacts, Mr. Landwer replied that the team has considered this and will study these impacts if an elevated design is chosen.

Mr. Rodgers asked if riders would have to switch trains at Target Field to continue south. Mr. Cigolo stated that they will not. Mr. Landwer explained it would be a one seat ride from Brooklyn Park to Bloomington.

## **6. Anti-Displacement**

Dan Soler, Hennepin County, gave the anti-displacement update. Mr. Soler stated that Phase 1 (recommendations) of the report is ending. Nkongo added that in March, CURA will provide their report from Phase 1, and in April, CURA will present their report to the CMC. In May, CURA will reconvene and begin Phase 2 (implementation).

## **7. Discussion**

Jonathan Hansen said that the tight diamond interchange looks like the way to go and stated that that is the kind of creative thinking he thinks the community needs. Mr. Buckner asked is there can be a bus tour for the CAC would be possible. Mr. Landwer said that they should do it, Dan implied it may be best to wait until winter is over.

Mr. Rodgers wanted to assure the CAC that although the project is in a lull of learning and waiting, there will be work.

## **8. Adjourn**

John Chambers Dunn dismissed the meeting at 7:30 pm. Next meeting will be April 5th.

### **Chat**

John Sutter 6:50 PM: I'm just here in case anyone has questions for Crystal staff.