



METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
METRO Blue Line Extension Corridor Management Committee
August 13, 2015
Brooklyn Center Community Center
6301 Shingle Creek Parkway
Brooklyn Center, MN 55430

Committee Members Present: Chair Adam Duininck, Lona Schreiber, Scott Schulte, Mike Opat, Meg Forney, Jeffrey Lunde, Jim Adams, Andy Snope, Betsy Hodges, Marika Pfefferkorn, Shauen Pearce, Scott McBride, George Selman, Barbara Johnson

1. Call to Order:

Chair Adam Duininck called the August 13, 2015 meeting to order at 1:05 pm.

2. Approval of July 16, 2015 Minutes

Commissioner Opat made the motion to approve the July 16 minutes and motion was seconded by the group.

3. Outreach Update

Ms. O'Connell wanted to reiterate that this is just the beginning of the planning stage for BLRT, not the final plan. All comments that are collected at these forums are available online at the Blue Line Extension website. If constituents are not able to attend open houses, they can access this information on the website as well as contacting the Outreach coordinators for their area. Ms. O'Connell thanked all the elected officials that have attended open houses.

- Brooklyn Park had the largest open house on August 11, with over 120 attendees, which included Hennepin County presenting their plans for West Broadway construction.
- Last night, Golden Valley Open House had over 50 attendees. Chair Duininck attended.
- On July 28, the city of Robbinsdale Open House had over 30 attendees.
- On July 29 the Minneapolis Open House was well attended, with over 50 attendees.

Again, if there are questions regarding the project, the website has additional information and who to contact at BlueLineExt.org.

4. Olson Memorial Highway: Technical Issues #2 and #3

Nick Landwer presented on the Olson Memorial Highway planning. OMH is currently a six-lane highway and will continue to be six-lane.

Review of slides (current views) slides 13-21

- There are no ADA curb-cuts

- Need for a wider walk area
- Need for new signal systems to provide safe crossing

Question: Mayor Betsy Hodges questioned what the actual the crossing distance is; Nick Landwer stated the median will be wider, approximately 130 feet.

Question: Marika Pfefferkorn referred to ADA complaints on noise in the area, and motion sensors. Mr. Landwer responded that audio testing (AVP) as well as other testing has been done, and the plan meets the ADA standard. Mr. Landwer stated that environmental lights will come on in the evening. Scott McBride (MnDOT) stated that between Hennepin County, MnDOT and Met Council, there has been extensive testing done according to requirements and standards.

Proposed improved conditions include:

- 3 lanes east bound and west bound (six total)
- Design and post for 35 mph speed limit (to reduce current speeds)
- Provide for pedestrian connections and safety (add 3 mid-block crossings, push buttons, better design crossings)
- Accommodate for two-way cycle track on north side
- Reduce lane widths to 11 feet
- Introduce lane shifts
- Enhance lighting along the corridor

Question: Shauen Pierce asked Mr. Landwer what the crossing time is. Mr. Landwer stated estimate is at 35/40 seconds for single phase. Ms. Pierce addressed the need to extend that to at least one minute for wheelchair users.

Question: Chair Duininck asked Mr. Landwer if the proposed new crosswalk between Newton Avenue and Oliver Avenue (slide 30) is the same design as University Avenue in St. Paul and Mr. Landwer stated yes, exactly the same.

Question: Marika Pfefferkorn asked if the project is going to compensate for the removal of green space. Mr. Landwer stated the trees along the median are owned by the Minneapolis Park Board and the Park Board is planning to find room for existing trees (replant 1:1 mitigation). Ms. Pfefferkorn requested added green space and the opportunity to discuss options, Asked that trees be replanted along the center median. Mr. Landwer stated there is not a lot of opportunity to plant along the center median without widening the street but there are discussions going on with MnDOT and the city as to how to add green space.

Meg Forney discussed the Excelsior Boulevard remodel and the wonderful job they did with the median and slowing down traffic in the area. She requested a graphic of proposed walkways and crosswalks, to see how they will connect into neighborhoods and parkland in particular; suggested

bollards, reducing height of lighting. Have we explored what the walk shed is for each station? Per Mr. Landwer, yes, there have been a number of pedestrian counts done and will explore this. Ms. Forney requested speed limits even lower than 35 mph.

Question: Mayor Hodges asked if the crossing at Van White Avenue would be wider or shorter. Mr. Landwer stated the intersection would be typical to the Penn Avenue proposed crossing, one difference being Van White and Bryant Avenue are both signal light crossings. Mr. Landwer referred to the current graphic and the proposed width, which is wider because of the guide ways.

Mayor Hodges: requested wider intersection at Van White for pedestrian experience.

Question: Andy Snope asked what kind of traffic study was done on commuter traffic in the area. Mr. Landwer expressed there were extensive traffic studies done in 2008, 2013, and 2014. Evaluations on lane capacity, road configurations and speed impacts were reviewed. The City of Minneapolis, Met Council, Traffic Operations staff and MnDOT reviewed the studies. Most of the traffic is coming from the west. The lane capacity accounts for the traffic volume, and not so much the speed limits per Mr. Landwer.

Shauen Pearce asked 4 questions:

1. What are the single phase crossing times at Humboldt Avenue intersection? (Impacts Park, School, Homes in the area)

Mr. Landwer stated Intersections are constructed similarly to Penn Avenue. Median may be narrower or wider but the crossing times will be the same.

2. Over-flow continues from Glenwood Avenue over the last few years. What are the plans?

A Study was done on how the traffic flow would impact Glenwood. This is outside the project area and not part of the project, per Mr. Landwer.

Ms. Pearce requested copy of study on traffic flow and impacts on Glenwood Avenue.

3. What are mitigating conditions re: noise at Humboldt Avenue and at Van White? (Signal lanes are close to homes).

Per Mr. Landwer, all crossing distances, lanes, and guide ways are the same as Penn Avenue, and will be consistent through the area. Regarding noise mitigation- AVP's are set at a standard level, and a noise impacts are being studied by a consultant.

4. Cycle track-how were they determined to be north of OMH instead of South of OMH?

Mr. Landwer stated the cycle lanes were introduced and proposed by the Hennepin County Community Works department. Keeping the trail on the north side of OMH is a continuation of existing trails and a structure already in place.

Ms. Pearce: Requested clarification on median issues and safety-not enough crossing time. Requests specifics of exact time allotted to cross the street, north to south, whether boarding the light rail or just crossing the street, she feels it (median) will impact pedestrians.

Mayor Hodges: provided an update with data from BLRT website on specifics of Van White Boulevard proposed plans (earlier discussion). The west side of Van White will be 10 ft wider; the east side 14 ft wider at this intersection, adding 24 feet. Mr. Landwer stated the median changes in widths in this area, but the focus overall is the pedestrian experience. The travel lengths and guide ways are consistent along the corridor.

Mayor Hodges expressed this is still not clear to her, and asked if it would increase time to cross street?

Scott McBride (MnDOT) clarified the traffic modeling study at great detail and said the plan will be traffic calming with lower speed levels, narrowing lanes, and signaling crosswalks between signals, shifting the alignment, pretty much everything we can to provide calming and a positive pedestrian experience. The exposure to traffic is going down, which is the most danger to pedestrians. Mr. McBride wanted to reiterate the fantastic job the project planners have done.

George Selman stated the plan is not perfect, but a whole lot safer, better than current design, especially for handicapped individuals. Mr. Selman has attended a number of vigorous CAC meetings and wanted to provide his input on the process.

Mayor Hodges asked if there was going to be a vote today. Her vote would be no.

Chair Duinick stated this is still at the planning stages and technical issues and there are many steps to accomplish before the CMC votes on proposed design. It can be voted upon one issue at a time or as a package.

Mr. Landwer reviewed slide 35 in detail and reviewed the IRT recommendations.

Barbara Johnson wants to make sure that green space isn't lost and asked who owns the property on the south side of Highway 55 coming into Minneapolis from Golden Valley?

Scott McBride responded providing history of purchase, stating MnDOT purchased the land from the City of Minneapolis in 1968 for an interchange, that was planned. Process is to establish a fair market value of land, then put it up for sale.

Mike Opat addressed the loss of green space and asked to consider saving/salvaging green space on the south side of Highway 55, through eliminating a frontage road. He also requested that the proposed cycle track be consistent with Wirth park paths and are placed appropriately. Make sure everyone is on the same page.

George Selman: As a reference, the trail on Wirth lake is actually a walking bridge, and there is a Luce line that runs along north side of Highway 55.

Question: Would that bridge include an extension that would connect the Luce line to trail on the north side of Highway 55?

Shauen Pearce: Requested clarification as to whether proposed cycle lanes will interact with current greenway cycle lanes. From a pedestrian perspective, *“Better isn’t necessarily good enough for her community”* and she referred to multiple deaths at the Van White/Humboldt Avenue intersection.

Safety and livability are essential to her. Ms. Pearce stated current proposals are better than they have been, but asked how we are going to adequately know that LRT isn’t going to further separate Harrison from the near north end Heritage Park. How will it negatively impact economic development in the area and how will it work to make a livable community? Ms. Pearce stated she does not want to wait ten months down the road when technical decisions have been made and want to make sure they can support the plan.

Mayor Hodges: Design at present does not reduce lanes which would, according to her, not reduce noise, speed. She stated she does not believe the proposed design is toward “calming.” Reiterated that when it is time to vote, her vote will be no.

Chair Duinick stated we should look further at this and get back to it in the future.

Continuing with Technical Issue #3: Olson Memorial Highway Crossing Key Issues-Mr. Landwer reviewed slides #37-44

- LRT is center running on OMH
- Need to connect to freight rail corridor
- Existing OMH bridge structure

Mr. Landwer explained the proposed bridge structure at Thomas Avenue. In response to an earlier question on pedestrian crossing, there is an existing bridge there, will offer a ten foot walkway, up to 12 feet.

Barbara Johnson: Is there a different grade difference between the two bridges at Thomas Ave? Yes, there is a 4 foot grade difference, with different beams underneath.

Shauen Pearce: what is the speed at this area? Answer: 30-35 mph and at Thomas Ave, 25 mph around the curve, will slow on the downgrade. This is similar to the design on University Avenue.

Olson Memorial Highway Crossing Recommendations: Slide #44:

- LRT center running on OMH
- Reconstruct WB OMH span
- Connect to freight rail corridor north of OMH bridge
- Continue to work with MnDOT, Hennepin County and Minneapolis on design

5. Bass Lake Road Station: Technical Issue #7

Nick Landwer is presenting for Alicia Vap today.

Technical Issues to be resolved:

- Bass Lake Road Station Park and Ride
- Community Input from May and June open houses: Support an addition of park and ride
- 167 spaces would relieve space issues at Robbinsdale Park/Ride
- Traffic operations at Bass Lake Road
 - Conduct traffic remodeling
 - Analyze grade separation at Bass Lake Road

Question: George Selman asked what the white triangle is on slide 47. Mr. Landwer stated it is an underground storm water system.

6. **Transmission Line Coordination Update: Technical Issue #14**

Jim Toulouse provided Transmission Line Coordination Update (slides 52-54)

The Xcel Energy Transmission line Corridor is shared with BNSF. Transmission line is needed by Xcel.

BPO has held regular meetings with Xcel Energy. Xcel Energy feedback to BPO:

- Xcel intends to own and maintain a transmission line in this corridor.
- Protect Xcel's ability to access and maintain transmission line structures as necessary

- Accommodate Xcel's ability to replace transmission line structure in the future if not replaced at this time.

7. Systems Introduction

Traction Power Substation (TPSS)

Mr. Toulouse reviewed the substation system and how it converts AC to DC power to operate trains. The system requires a climate controlled environment with the following placement criteria:

- Located within 500' of track preferred
- Spacing of approximately 5000' between substations
- Requires closer spacing for steeper track grades
- Located at-grade to minimize cost and provide adequate access for maintenance

TPSS Site Features:

- Requires 40'x80' footprint
- TPSS enclosure
- 10' minimum clear zone around TPSS enclosure
- Maintenance vehicle parking space
- Requires fencing and access gate (Grounded architectural or chain link)

Mr. Toulouse reviewed Green line and Blue line designs for Signal bungalows. Slides (68-70) were reviewed. They contain communications, signal and switching controls. Require climate controlled environment.

- Specific placement criteria:
 - located near special trackwork
 - located within line of site of special trackwork and equipment testing
 - requires access for maintenance
 - located at-grade

Rail Signals were reviewed (slides 73-74). There are two types:

- Interlocking Signals
 - located at LRT interlockings
 - convey route direction and authority to LRT trains

Bar Signals

- Integrated into traffic signals
- operate as an independent or concurrent phase of the traffic signal (Same model in use at University and Transfer Road, St. Paul).

Xcel Energy Transmission Line Corridor:

- 115 kV transmission line on BNSF ROW by permit
- Existing transmission line feeds Xcel's Indiana Avenue Substation at 33rd Avenue North and Indiana Avenue North
- Transmission line characteristics:
 - Double circuit steel lattice structures (4)
 - Single circuit steel lattice structures (35)
 - Single circuit wood poles (36)

Question: Lona Schreiber asked how many transmission lines would be needed. Mr. Toulouse responded that there are 14 substations proposed, and 5-6 interlocking signals.

Xcel Energy Transmission Corridor:

- Remain in current location
- Steel poles east of LRT tracks (smaller footprint)
- Steel poles west of BNSF tracks
- Steel poles between LRT tracks

Other issues:

- Compatibility with freight rail improvements
- Constructability
- Electrical clearances

Next Steps:

- Deadline is contingent upon a BNSF agreement with the project.

Marika Pfefferkorn requested that questions asked today be set aside and answered and addressed at the next meeting. She asked that the questions and answers be sent out prior to the next meeting in September.

8. Adjourn

Mike Opat moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:35 pm. Motion seconded.

Next meeting: NOTE CHANGE OF LOCATION

Thursday, September 10, 2015

1:00-2:30 pm

Rockford Road Library

6401 42nd Avenue North

Crystal, MN 55427 <http://www.hclib.org/rockfordroad>