



Blue Line Extension Corridor Management Committee

Minutes of the April 12, 2018 Meeting

Present: Jim Adams, Chris Berne, Joanie Clausen, Gary Cunningham, Catherine Fleming, Jacob Frey, Rich Gates, Linda Higgins, John Humphrey, Regan Murphy, Mike Opat, Matt Rentsch, George Selman, Alene Tchourumoff

Not in attendance: Pat Bursaw, Denise Butler, Shep Harris, Brian Lamb, Jeffrey Lunde, Scott McBride, Peter McLaughlin, Jon Olson, Olga Parsons, , Marika Pfefferkorn, Lona Schreiber, Kale Severson, Aasim Shabazz, Tim Willson

1. Call to Order

Chair Tchourumoff convened the meeting at 1:32 pm. She noted that the BAC co-chairs were appointed this week, and they are Candance Oathout and Matt Rentsch.

2. Approval of February 8, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Chair Tchourumoff asked the committee to review the meeting minutes from the February 8, 2018 meeting. Linda Higgins motioned approval of the minutes; George Selman seconded. Minutes were approved.

3. Chair's Update

Chair Tchourumoff shared a few updates. The federal appropriations bill was passed a few weeks ago, and it included \$2.64 billion for the Capital Improvements Grant (CIG) program. The funds go to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for designation and distribution as projects become ready through the CIG program process. As a region, we need to articulate to FTA where we are with our projects. We have four projects under review by FTA right now: Blue Line Extension, Gold Line, Orange Line, and Green Line Extension. We want to show the FTA we have a broad coalition of support across the region from the public, elected officials, and the private sector for the development of these projects.

In February, the Metropolitan Council announced the new development values along the existing and planned LRT lines. The Council is tracking \$8.4 billion in development, including \$500 million already invested along the Blue Line Extension.

In January, the Council released its 2017 ridership numbers, which saw record ridership on the Blue Line, Green Line, and Northstar. The Blue and Green Lines saw 3% to 4% increases over 2016, and Northstar saw an 11% increase. We are seeing a lot of success from both ridership and development standpoints.

The Council is also working on advancing the arterial BRT system in the region. The construction of the C Line was kicked off a few weeks ago, which will be the second arterial BRT line in the region. The A Line was first, and it has seen a 33% increase in ridership since implementation. The Council is also planning for implementation of the D Line, which would largely replace Route 5, the highest



ridership route in the system. The governor has proposed \$50 million for additional implementation of other routes like the D Line.

There are a few proposals at the legislature that could impact transit projects. One proposal would prohibit the co-location of freight rail and light rail. There are other systems in the US that operate safely in co-located corridors, including Dallas, Denver, New Jersey, LA, Sacramento, St. Louis, Charlotte, Portland, and San Jose. We are working really hard to make sure we have a design and a system that is safe. Another bill would require the Council to develop a non-fixed guideway transit system development and implementation plan, which could not include LRT or streetcar.

4. 90% Cost Estimate

MarySue Abel presented. In January the 90% plans and specs were completed, which allowed the project office to complete the 90% cost estimate. As design advances, the cost uncertainty becomes less and less so the contingency can be reduced. There will be contingency through construction because there will still be unknowns.

The total project budget did not change from 60% to 90% design – it is still \$1.536 billion. The contingency was reduced from 25% to 21%. Contingency is usually around 20% for a 90% cost estimate so the project office feels comfortable with this number. The base year estimates were updated to 2018, and the year of expenditure moved from 2018, 2019, and 2020 to 2019, 2020, and 2021.

In dollars, the contingency went from \$297 million to \$262 million. Those dollars went to the following:

- Design refinement: \$10-15 million
 - Bridges/retaining walls
 - Brooklyn Park OMF
 - Contaminated soil
 - Systems integration
- Schedule refinement: \$15-20 million
 - Revenue service date moved from 2021 to 2022
- Finance charges: \$10 million
 - Revised local funding disbursement schedule

There are Four main risk categories: requirements, design, market, and construction. Related to requirements, we are still working on BNSF agreements. The project office has had a lot of coordination with Xcel, but the towers are on BNSF property so that is tied to the BNSF negotiations. The 90% plans were sent to BNSF for review, so we hope to have a dialogue with them in the near future. The design risks have been largely mitigated. Market risks include construction bids, right-of-way, and schedule delay. Construction risks include unforeseen conditions and contaminated soils.

Joanie Clausen said the City of Golden Valley met with Keith Ellison recently, and he is concerned about the tariff on steel. Have we considered how that could affect this project? MarySue Abel said it has not been considered at this point. We'll have to evaluate it as we get to the 100% estimate, but that is part of the market risk contingency.



5. Olson Memorial Highway Design

Roadway Design

Jim Toulouse presented. Key issues identified for Olson Memorial Highway in 2015 included:

- Designated principal arterial
- Functions as reliever for I-394
- Pedestrian crossings in poor condition
- No bicycle facilities

Public feedback regarding the design of Olson Memorial included:

- Slow vehicles down; cars exceed posted speeds
- Prioritize pedestrian safety and walkability, including north/south connections
- Add bike lanes

The project office convened an issue team with MnDOT, Hennepin County, and the City of Minneapolis. After review, the group recommended that six lanes is still the right width due to the traffic volumes, but the speed limit will be lowered to 35 mph and the design includes some horizontal geometric changes to help slow down traffic. Traffic signals and left turn lanes will remain at Lyndale Ave, Bryant Ave, Van White Memorial Blvd, Humboldt Ave, Morgan Ave, and Penn Ave. A new signal will be installed at Thomas Ave. There will also be three new pedestrian-only signalized crossings at Russell Ave, the secondary station access at the Penn Ave station, and at James Ave. Lighting will be a mix of high/low standard lighting along the length of the corridor.

From south to north, Olson Memorial Highway will include a 6-foot sidewalk, 10-foot boulevard, three through traffic lanes, a left turn lane in some locations, the LRT guideway, three through lanes, a 10-foot boulevard, 10-foot bike lane, 2-foot buffer, and 6-foot sidewalk.

Gary Cunningham asked if the lighting today meets city standards because it is not well lit now. Alicia Vap said the current lighting is roadway lighting only, and what will be installed is roadway lighting in combination with pedestrian scale lighting. The new lighting will provide more light than is provided today.

Commissioner Higgins asked how we will be sure the lighting won't be intrusive to people that live along the corridor. Alicia Vap said the City follows the dark sky ordinance, so it will be LED lights that point down. The lights that will be installed along Olson Memorial Highway are currently used elsewhere in the city.

Catherine Fleming asked if the traffic light at Thomas Ave was a new light. Jim Toulouse said yes it was new. The median is currently an open median, and for it to remain open with the LRT in place it will need a traffic signal. Catherine said she is concerned that having signals at both Thomas and Russell will back up traffic. Jim said the signals will all be interconnected to assist in moving traffic efficiently.

Pedestrian and Bike Facilities

Alicia Vap presented. Bike facilities will be added from the western edge of Wirth Park to 7th Street and will vary in width between 8 and 10 feet. There are not many separated bike facilities in the city currently, but there are a few. There will be a 2-foot buffer between the separated bike lane and



sidewalk. The buffer material will be tooled concrete, and it will change to a deeper grove on corners to indicate to pedestrians and bicyclists that you are crossing into a multiuse zone.

Commissioner Higgins asked to clarify if the 2-foot buffer was 2 feet high or 2 feet wide. Alicia Vap said it will be 2 feet wide.

The bridge on Olson Memorial Highway over I-94 will be widened to the north to change the 8 foot walk to a 12 foot walk to provide more space for bikes and pedestrians.

Median and Landscaping

The City of Minneapolis will own and maintain the landscaping near the Van White and Penn stations and at the mid-block crossings at Russell and James. The landscaping will include a variety of plantings, and the project office is incorporating lessons learned from Saint Paul staff that have been maintaining the plants along the Green Line. The plantings will be irrigated. There will also be an intertrack fence along the corridor that will act as a visual deterrent to prevent people from crossing. The design will also incorporate aggregate and permeable pavers, but the details are still being determined.

Project office staff are working closely with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board on replacing trees in the corridor. The park board wants the trees to frame the street and make a canopy. The project will be adding 240+ trees in boulevard and will relocate around 50 median trees to nearby parks in north Minneapolis.

Stations

The stations at Van White and Penn are considered to be sister stations so the architecture is very similar. All stations have the same basic footprint and layout. The Van White station canopies will have gold/copper colored shingles to fit in with the historic Hennepin County library and the canopy ends will have a light glow in the evening.

At Penn Ave, the shingles will be a blue/green that changes depending on the light. The canopies at this station will also have panels on the ends that glow.

OCS Poles

OCS poles are part of the system that provides power to the trains. The project office wants to further tie the two stations together, and one way to do that is to add color variety to the poles. There will be 50 poles between Sheridan and Bryant.

There were community meetings last summer to get input on the treatment options. The concepts were refined based on the feedback received, and two concepts have been carried forward. The project office staff will discuss the two concepts with internal stakeholders at Metro Transit to decide which concept will be implemented.

With the first concept, the poles would be painted five different colors, transitioning from green to blue to purple from west to east. To help signify mid-block crossings, the poles will be striped in those locations. Community input indicated that they wanted purple to be incorporated because Prince's childhood home is nearby. The second concept would have purple paint on the poles that



would change in height to mimic the rolling geography of the area. There has generally been more support for the first concept as people think the second concept might be harder to notice.

Mayor Frey asked if the 240 trees were in addition to the existing stock or if that is the number that will be replaced. Alicia Vap said 240 is the number that the project will be planting. Overall, there will likely be a small deficit. Mayor Frey said he is concerned if there is deficient because he wouldn't want to lose a substantial amount of the green space. Alicia Vap said that the number of trees planted should be close to replacement but she will double check the numbers.

Council Member Cunningham said he is hearing that people are concerned about getting across the street, which is more an issue of signal timing and asked if we doing anything in particular given the high number of seniors in the area? Jim Toulouse said all the pedestrian crossings are designed for a single stage crossing. If someone were to start halfway through the walk time, there are additional pedestrian push buttons in the median refuge to reengage the walk signal if someone doesn't it make it all the way across the street. The standard engineering practice is to have the walk signal timed to a standard walk speed based on the width of the crossing. That timing can always be adjusted if it is found to be insufficient. Council Member Cunningham said he wants to be reasonable since the signal timing affects the trains too, but he also wants people to know they have been heard. The second biggest concern he has heard is that snow will not be cleared.

Commissioner Opat said he is glad the project office is looking at OCS poles with this level of detail but he is concerned about their staying power. After five years, will all the paint colors be maintained? He would argue for whatever is the most sustainable.

6. City of Crystal Update

John Sutter, the community development director of Crystal, presented on a few projects and policy changes in Crystal related to the Blue Line project.

The Bass Lake Road Streetscape Project should begin construction in May. It is a \$600,000 project funded by the City and County. The streetscape was built in the 1980s and is falling apart. The City decided to tear it out and build something new that is more pedestrian friendly. They will concentrate plantings on corners and use colored concrete to create visual separation between the sidewalk and road. They are not taking away any traffic lanes, but they are improving pedestrian crossings and adding a 12-space bay of on-street parallel parking. The stretch of buildings looks like a strip mall because of its façade, but they are actually physically separate buildings like an old fashioned main street. The City hopes that by fixing the public realm they will see the private sector respond with investments.

There is also a 2019 project in Becker Park. There are two major elements, the first of which is a stormwater infiltration project to reduce flooding in the large commercial area and improve water quality in Twin Lake. The funding is split between the City, the Council, and the Board of Soil and Water Resources. The second element is the reconstruction of Becker Park. It will transition from ball fields that aren't consistently used by the community to a town square type park. There will be improved trails, a water feature, and an accessible playground. They also wanted to better connect the Blue Line station to the commercial area to the west of Becker Park, so there will be an



east/west connection on the north side of the park. There will also be a better north/south connection through the park to the potential development opportunities on the south side of the park.

The City recently adopted a new unified development code. It is generally less restrictive as the City is trying to regulate the right things. It increased the maximum apartment density from 22 to 40 units/acre and increased the maximum height for apartment buildings from 3 to 5 stories. Other pending changes include reducing the minimum single family lot width from 60 to 50 feet and reducing the minimum two-family lot width from 100 to 80 feet. The City is also looking to allow accessory dwelling units. The intent is to allow more naturally occurring affordable housing.

The City is also working on a transit-oriented development (TOD) overlay district. It wouldn't zone out existing uses. It would focus on the form of development rather than the use to make sure things relate better to the public realm. The City doesn't want their zoning ordinance to stand in the way of TOD if that is what the market wants.

Commissioner Opat asked if the TOD overlay would accommodate a 6 or 7 story apartment building. John Sutter said yes it could; each project would go through its own approval process, but if there is a market for something new and different they want to allow it to happen. Commissioner Opat asked John to explain the issues with the water in the park. John said they have surface flooding that occurs at Broadway and Bass Lake Road because there is a lot of runoff from the hardscape that can't be treated onsite. The water feeds into the stormwater system and surcharges. The City has sandy soils so they will use infiltration to help with rate control and water quality treatment. The problem originates with the hardscape developed before people thought too much about stormwater. Commissioner Opat noted that Crystal had to bring this project to the watershed district to levy funding. It is always a lot of work for staff of smaller cities to make these types of projects happen.

7. 2018 Look Ahead

Federal New Starts Report and Federal Appropriations

Mark Fuhrmann presented. Every year FTA publishes a map of New Starts projects across the county. Here in Minnesota we have the Green Line, Blue Line, and Gold Line. There are five projects across the country currently in engineering, including the Blue Line, Green Line, and three others. Those three others are our immediate competition for funding. Mark is in contact with each of those projects and noted that the project in North Carolina lags the other four projects by a few years.

For 2018, \$2.6 billion was appropriated for the CIG program. 2017 had previously been the single highest year of appropriations but it was exceeded in 2018. Existing New Starts projects have \$1.108 billion, new New Starts projects (including the Green Line and Blue Line Extensions) have \$399 million, core capacity projects have \$716 million, and Small Starts (including Orange Line) have \$401 million. FTA made apportionments for three Small Starts projects this week. There was also \$26 million apportioned for oversight.

Joanie Clausen asked if the other projects in engineering are in front of us in line for funding. Mark Fuhrman said Seattle has submitted their FFGA application, and Santa Anna has too and has also



discussed with FTA what their 2018 grant might look like. Neither of our projects have submitted their FFGA application yet. North Carolina is years behind the two in the Twin Cities.

Chair Tchourumoff said this money appropriated by congress takes a lot of work, and thanked Congressman Ellison's staff that were present at the meeting for their work on it.

BLRT Schedule Look Ahead

Dan Soler presented. The project office has a list of goals and activities to focus on this year. The main one is completing critical third party agreements (including with BNSF). This is a prerequisite for completing some of the other things on the list, like submitting our application for the FFGA. BNSF has agreed to look at the plans to determine where, how, and if the plans meet their passenger rail principles. The project office believes they do, but BNSF needs to look at and understand the 90% plans, which will take some time. The project office will continue to work with BNSF over the coming weeks and months to keep things advancing. We don't want to take plans to 100% without knowing that we have agreement on the design elements in the rail corridor. Ultimately, we are looking to submit our application for our FFGA in 2018.

There are also final design details to work out not related to BNSF (e.g., the parking structures in Brooklyn Park and Robbinsdale) so those are still in the works, but the project office staff is smaller than what it was. The project office will continue to work towards achieving these goals this year.

8. Adjournment

Councilmember Cunningham motioned to adjourn. Rich Gates seconded. Chair Tchourumoff adjourned the meeting at 2:47 pm.

**Next CMC Meeting: Thursday, May 10, 2018
Hennepin County Rockford Road Library
6401 42nd Avenue North
Crystal, MN 55427**