



METRO Blue Line Extension Meeting of the Business Advisory Committee

Tuesday, August 8, 2023

8:00 AM – 9:30 AM

Blue Line Project Office
6465 Wayzata Boulevard, Suite 600
St. Louis Park, MN 55426

BAC Members: Terry Austin, John Barobs, KB Brown, Jamar Smith, Jamez Staples, Taylor

Agency Staff and Guests: Chris Beckwith, Nkongo Cigolo, Neha Damle, Catherine Gold, Nick Landwer, Emilee Roschen, Rattana Sengsoulichanh, Kaja Vang, Maxwell Wilson, Kjerstin Yager

Meeting Summary

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Nkongo Cigolo, Metropolitan Council, called the meeting to order at 8:11 a.m.

2. Adopt Meeting Minutes

3. Upcoming Meetings and Attendance

Nkongo Cigolo shared that the project team is preparing for the first Quarterly Meeting, on August 23rd, 2023, at the Capri Theater. The project team has been working with various community groups to form the agenda. Nkongo also shared that the team is continuing to meet with property owners along 10th and Washington Avenue to bring them up to speed and gather information on business operations.

4. Project Update

Chris Beckwith, Metropolitan Council, shared a brief update about the Timeline to Publish the SDEIS. Chris stated that the project team is hoping for a resolution in September for all the discussions held since February 2023.

5. Minneapolis Design Update

Nick Landwer, Metropolitan Council, shared the project staff's route recommendation. Chris Beckwith added that the project is recommending light rail tracks on 21st Avenue and improvements to West Broadway as part of the project. John Barobs asked if West Broadway was going to be revitalized either way. Chris responded that Hennepin County had it in their plan, but it wasn't funded yet, and the project made a change to incorporate it with the light rail project.

Nick began to walk through the different focus areas. Nick talked about how the Penn Avenue Station Area serves key connections and destinations. KB Brown asked why the station looked like it was in the middle of the block. Nick responded that the station is placed on the north side of the intersection, but it looks larger because it's showing the station area. Nkongo Cigolo shared that various meetings with businesses were held



in the area. Feedback heard was about parking concerns, resources for businesses during and after construction, safety and security, and the vision for West Broadway.

Nick shared that the project team has started to look at 21st and West Broadway as a corridor. With light rail on 21st, it would become a transitway. KB Brown asked if there would be vehicles on 21st. Nick confirmed that there would be no vehicles on 21st. KB asked about the houses on 21st. Nick stated that most of the houses have access directly to the roadway, and the north-south streets stay open. Jamez Staples asked about a map that shows the property impacts. Chris and Nick walked through a map with property impacts shown and stated West Broadway had more impacts than 21st, which was one of the driving forces for choosing 21st. Nkongo shared that there were various meetings held in the area and he shared common themes and concerns heard from the community.

Nick shared that the project is looking at an extension of 21st Avenue to get to Washington Avenue. By building a new bridge across I-94, better pedestrian and bicycle connections can be made to get across I-94. Nick stated that one of the key things is tying into the interstate and interchange. There would be a new intersection that can safely stop traffic and make pedestrian and bicycle connections. Nick added that a traffic study was done for traffic coming off I-94 going east, and this would help relieve some of the traffic on West Broadway. KB commented that it would relieve a lot of traffic and help Kemps. John asked if the protected bikeway would continue to the river road. Nick responded that there are railroad tracks, but it would connect to 2nd Street, which is a major north-south bikeway.

Nick talked about how the Plymouth Station on Washington Avenue would be center running with at-grade operations, which operate well with the general traffic. Nkongo shared that there were meetings held for the sub-option. The team talked to property and business owners and collected feedback from the online map and online survey. Nkongo shared that people liked the 10th Avenue option but had concerns about parking and safety.

Nick talked about the stretch of 10th Avenue that has a narrow right-of-way, making it challenging to get the light rail through. Nick shared that one option to get through is to make a portion of 10th Avenue a transit mall. This option would accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists, light rail, and emergency vehicles. There would be no general traffic allowed on this portion. The project team would need to focus on access to the properties along here. Nick noted that there's a fire station on 7th Avenue and they deploy east on 10th Avenue and their preferred option would be the transit mall. Another option would be to have a one-way street going northbound. This option would have light rail going in both directions with general traffic in the other lane going northbound. Nick stated this would take care of some of the traffic issues and would serve as a space for emergency vehicles and buses to deploy out. The challenge with this option would be bicyclists – they wouldn't have a dedicated bikeway. Chris emphasized that this is not a decision that would need to be made in September. Nkongo shared that there is continued engagement in this area.

6. Anti-Displacement Update

Catherine Gold, Hennepin County, shared some statistics on visits to the project website and the number of downloads of the report. Catherine shared some feedback that was gathered through a survey. Catherine walked through the timeline, adding that they are wanting the anti-displacement work to align with the project's timeline. Catherine shared that they will be working toward a framework and having regular reports



for the committees on the progress of policies and programs. A community engagement plan is also being developed. Catherine shared that the Anti-Displacement group is being transitioned into an advisory committee, to provide conversations for their input. The first official meeting is targeted for August 29th, to understand what's going on in each of the governments along the corridor. Catherine highlighted artwork that has been done and will be used to amplify the work and demonstrate that they will be in the community. KB Brown stated that he didn't hear any measures that were in place for existing businesses and residents on West Broadway right now. Catherine responded that there were outcomes and policies in the recommendation – the timeline is working toward having the framework that illustrates programs and resources. Catherine added that they are working on having the first agency meeting so that there can be a coordinated effort. The framework will need to be developed, hopefully by February so things can be offered to the community. Elevate Hennepin and other programs from other agencies will also help with the effort. KB commented that he thinks that the anti-displacement work should be done before the light rail work, and people would feel more involved. KB added that anti-displacement feels like a secondary part and the project is still moving. Catherine commented that anti-displacement is moving along with the project. The Met Council timeline is when the funding opportunities will come to fruition.

7. Discussion and Members' Feedback

Chris Beckwith asked what the group thinks about the staff recommendation. Jamar Smith stated it seems smart, as far as some things being heard in the community, and it's headed in the right direction that people asked to see. John Barobs stated that this alignment seems to be the best choice, it has the least number of impacts, it benefits both West Broadway and 21st Avenue, and provides access to a number of different communities. KB Brown asked what they should tell people who are asking about what resources are available. People are wondering what's available before, during, and after. Terry Austin stated that it's disappointing that we don't have anything on the table right now to ensure businesses before and after. People want to know how they will be employed during this time – we have to come up with a solution and have something that will benefit the people. KB added that not knowing the resources is where a lot of the frustration is. He added that the difficult part of engagement is that they don't have the answers they need. Jamar Smith asked if the anti-displacement work was a lesson learned from the Green Line. Catherine Gold responded that there was small business support, but they learned they needed more. Terry stated that parking is vital and there needs to be viable solutions for it. KB asked about parking on 21st, from the YMCA to Robbinsdale. Nick Landwer responded that there will be property impacts but those are now discussions to have with the community and find where it best fits. KB commented that corporate comes in different forms and anti-displacement would stop corporate greed. The issue is that there's no information to push back on it.

8. Next Meeting: August 8, 2023.

Nkongo Cigolo proposed to move the next meeting to September 12, 2023.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:37 a.m.