



METRO Blue Line Extension
Meeting of the Community Advisory Committee
Wednesday, August 7, 2024
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Microsoft Teams Meeting

CAC Members: Ellis Beck, John Chambers Dunn, Kathy Fraser, Jason Greenberg, Jeff Guertin, Jonathan Hansen

Agency Staff and Guests: Nkongo Cigolo, Neha Damle, Andrew Gillett, Cathy Gold, Eric Gustafson, Joleen Ketterling, Nick Landwer, Kyle Mianulli, James Mockovciak, Richelieu Morris, Menno Schukking, Nick Thompson, Kaja Vang, Jer Yang

Meeting Summary

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

John Chambers Dunn began the meeting at 6:02 pm and welcomed everyone. Nkongo Cigolo took attendance.

2. Adopt Meeting Minutes

John asked if anyone had anything to add to the June 26 meeting notes. None were voiced. John Chambers Dunn asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Jason Greenberg made a motion and John seconded the motion.

3. Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement Summary of Comments

Neha Damle, Environmental Team for the Blue Line Extension (BLE) Project, shared a summary of the comments received during the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) comment period. A total of 251 comments were received and the most common method used to submit comments was online. Comments were also received verbally, via mail, letters, voicemail and email. Various agencies also sent in comments. Neha mentioned the main themes of the comments are being solidified and will be presented at the Corridor Management Committee (CMC) tomorrow.

John asked the group if anyone had heard feedback from their neighbors at National Night Out events. Nkongo replied that the community outreach team attended the Heritage Park event and overall heard support for the project. Representative Ilhan Omar attended as well as Council Member Jeremiah Ellison. Comments were not collected but the community outreach team shared



information about the project with attendees. Kaja Vang, Community Outreach Coordinator, stated many of the neighbors appreciated that we attended the Heritage Park National Night Out Event. Overall, there was a positive vibe from everyone and there were no negative reactions or comments. Half of the participants had knowledge of the BLE project and were up to speed with the timeline. The other half did not have the most up-to-date information. The community outreach team shared roll plots and station locations.

John asked if the public is aware of what the next steps are. John stated he felt like there was some misinformation being shared and community members who could use the service didn't know what was going on. Kaja replied that some participants the community outreach team spoke with do not have a full understanding of what the next steps are. Information about the SDEIS and municipal consent process were shared in addition to how these processes impact the project and the community. Kaja indicated there may be a few challenges emphasizing the impact of municipal consent and how community members can partake.

Nkongo replied that John brings up a good point and as communication efforts are planned, the project tries to reach out to community members who are beyond the half mile radius of the corridor. Nkongo stated that postcards have been sent out regarding the SDEIS and open houses were conducted prior to publication of the SDEIS. During this time, various communities were reached out to beyond the original alignment. Nkongo indicated the project will continue to do that and have already begun communication efforts with the municipal consent process. Nkongo requested that the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) members share any thoughts or ideas on how to improve on the messaging or reach more community members. Nkongo indicated social media has been used as a platform to target various communities by interest such as biking, transit, etc. and some success has been achieved with that.

John stated he was surprised by community members with the impression that the work needed to stop on the project, and we are not even at that phase yet. In response, John clarified that the project had not been started yet and there were still opportunities for commenting.

Kaja replied that a few participants at National Night Out did ask about the construction on a new bridge downtown and the impression was that construction on the project had already started. In addition, two community members talked about the work being done on Olson Highway. Clarification was given that that was a MnDOT project and not a Metro Transit project.

Jason Greenberg shared that he attended seven block parties last night and there is some misunderstanding regarding the project and a lot of questions as to why this project has taken so long and questions around the SDEIS. Jason added that Robbinsdale is a little more informed because there is a loud vocal contingency of people who are against it. In individual conversations, some community members support the project, some are against the project, and the vast majority are still trying to learn what is going on.



Jonathan Hansen shared that a lot of people in Robbinsdale know about the project but since there has been a relentless campaign of people against it, there is so much information out there that is completely inaccurate. Some community members are claiming that the new bridges over Lowry are going to be dismantled and rebuilt, which isn't true. Jonathan shared that community members are asking why the project is starting the municipal consent process at only 30% design. Jonathan indicated there is misinformation being shared about the environmental impact, speed, and safety.

Jason replied to the question about ways to get more information about the project to the public. Jason suggested social media but also radio, print, billboards, advertising across every medium, and sending out mailers on a consistent basis to those beyond the current audience.

Nick Thompson, Interim Project Director for the BLE project, stated that the project team intentionally did not want to do any marketing during the SDEIS comment period but now that the comment period is closed, Hennepin County has put together a large communication campaign that will hopefully reach new people during the municipal consent comment period.

Jeff Guertin replied that there is a misconception about what municipal consent is and what the communities are responsible for including the disagreement action. Jeff stated that this is now the time to make that point clear to the public. John Chambers Dunn shared that there is time later in the agenda to discuss municipal consent.

Jason shared that from his perspective when doing the advertising, there is a time and place, but he feels like advertising was not done or effective because there were only 251 comments received. Jason stated that more needed to be done to make sure community members are aware that they can provide feedback. Nick responded that advertising information about the SDEIS comment period did occur.

Kyle Mianulli, Communications Administrator for the BLE project, responded that there was a robust advertising campaign regarding the SDEIS. Kyle shared that two campaigns were run: paid advertising on local radio stations and local newspapers and social media posts by the Metropolitan Council with marketed layers of targeting. Kyle indicated the project is always looking to improve on the communication strategy. Jason asked if 251 comments received is a good number. Kyle replied that there were 14,000 hits on the SDEIS webpage which is significantly higher than typically seen. The BLE webpage typically has about 3000 hits per month. Kyle shared that the SDEIS is a complicated thick document and asking people to read, understand, and provide feedback is a big ask. Kyle stated that in full transparency, more digital comments were expected. Kyle indicated it has been a while since a communications update has been provided and this will be added to a future meeting agenda.



Neha mentioned that the letters received from different organizations about the SDEIS are made up of multiple organizations within themselves and the environmental team considered each letter as one comment. Within each letter, there are many more comments. Neha shared that feedback will be accepted throughout the process, not just during the comment period.

Jonathan Hansen shared that he did see advertising a few different times about the SDEIS comment period. Jonathan stated that he heard from some people that said they didn't understand the SDEIS or that they think the project is going to happen either way, so they didn't feel like putting in the effort.

John Chambers Dunn shared that to distill the information being received from his neighbors is very difficult to get to the right people and suggested as the project moves along, it almost feels like something with a QR code on it that community members can scan to provide feedback live is what is needed.

Kaja replied that the community outreach team is trying to be culturally relevant with how engagement is being provided and trying to maintain compassion and empathy for community members. The challenge is knowing how to acknowledge one's lifestyle and get them to care about the project because it impacts them, their neighbors, and the entire city.

Neha shared that the next step is preparation of the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS) and analysis for design changes related to 30% design will inform the development of the SFEIS. Neha shared that one of the main steps performed with the SFEIS is the development of mitigation commitments. The environmental team is moving ahead with a mitigation work plan which will include specific additional technical analysis, outreach, and design development. Outreach around mitigation will take place in the fall of 2024. The environmental team is anticipating publication of the SFEIS in mid-2025.

Ellis Beck wanted to make the point that he thinks there are a lot of positive things happening to reach out to people and keep them informed but he felt the National Night Out events illuminated the fact that the battle is being lost due to a complete lack of communication or misinformation. Ellis stated a positive message needs to be shared that is true and factual.

Jason stated that the question he gets the most is regarding how the contaminated soil is going to be addressed. Neha replied that any ground where the project will be built will need to be cleaned up. Several different pollutants have been tested for and depending on the level of contaminated materials present will determine if the soil can be repurposed or needs to go to a landfill. Neha shared that the results are still being received.

Nick Thompson added that most of this process would occur during the construction phase. Jason indicated the public was worried about contamination getting into Crystal Lake. Neha replied that the



contaminated materials would either be hauled out or reused for the undersoil layer on which the pavement will be placed. Neha shared there are regulatory requirements that need to be followed. Neha also added one of the project benefits identified in the SDEIS will address mitigating the contamination that exists today.

Jonathan shared that not addressing contaminated soils that currently exist is not going to solve anything and pointed out that replying to community members that the removal of contaminated materials will be handled in a regulated way would allay some of the concerns.

4. Anti-Displacement Update

Eric Gustafson, Hennepin County, shared information on anti-displacement. Eric shared that Hennepin County has continued to move forward with planning and activities to support the outcomes identified in the Anti-Displacement Working Group (ADWG) report which was published 1 1/2 years ago by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA). Hennepin County together with the Metropolitan Council, the cities, and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board developed a Coordinated Action Plan (CAP) for anti-displacement. The CAP is a compilation of activities that includes almost 70 programs and initiatives. Over 50 of these programs and initiatives already exist to address the needs of the corridor communities and can be adapted. A draft of the CAP is now under review by the Anti-Displacement Community Prosperity Board (formerly the ADWG). The CAP will be published for public review and comment next week once the SDEIS comment period is wrapped up. In the meantime, Hennepin County is advancing anti-displacement planning and implementation of the plan. Two meetings were convened this week with workforce development providers who will be helping to train people into light rail transit (LRT) jobs.

Hennepin County worked with the communities to successfully lobby state legislation for \$10M in funds to support anti-displacement work and is excited to support the new board that was created by legislation. The Anti-Displacement Community Prosperity Board has met 3 times and is identifying priorities which will lead to applications for the investment of the \$10M received from the state legislature with an equal match from nonstate sources. Eric shared that these actions will be important as continued lobbying for additional resources, especially at the federal level, occurs.

John Chambers Dunn asked about the confidence level for the funding. Eric replied that \$10M is a good start and it comes with both the challenge and benefit of requiring an equal match from nonstate sources. The match could involve new dollars from local government, leveraging existing programs, or a match from philanthropy and foundations or private donors. John asked if there is a risk with the government changing over in the fall. Eric replied yes there is always some risk when things are changing at the state or federal level, but it is probably a bigger risk to the project itself and getting the support the project needs from the federal government.

Eric stated the intention has always been to try to raise additional dollars and there are two or three different philanthropic organizations on the board. It is still the intention to activate these



organizations. John asked if this money is locked in regardless of who is on the committee or whether there are changes to the project. Eric replied yes, the funds have been awarded by the legislature and there are procedural steps that the board must follow.

Jason shared that anti-displacement means different things to different people and asked if there was a plan for how the money will be dispersed. Eric replied that there is a 38-page plan (CAP) which goes into detail about how the needs will be met for the residents that live in the corridor today and the businesses that exist. In addition, there are subgroups within these groups where a small number of individuals will be displaced by the project. The CAP lays out the ways to minimize the impacts when properties are taken and there are clear policies in place. Eric shared that for existing businesses there is an array of existing business support programs aimed at helping businesses adapt and get through the construction phase, Eric shared that this work starts with targeted outreach and navigation for the business owners and residents. Eric mentioned there are requests for proposals out now to set up contracts with community-based organizations that have established relationships in the corridor. A good business navigation program currently exists that will be refined and expanded.

Jason asked if an equal amount of attention will be given to all the cities along the alignment. Eric replied that this is something that will be considered when looking at requests for proposals. Eric shared that local government varies from very complex and well-staffed to very small and the same is true for the nonprofit industrial complexes. Eric stated that close attention will be paid to this and equitable outreach capacity will be put in place throughout the corridor.

Jonathan Hansen stated he looked forward to reading the CAP and hopes small local businesses and any residents impacted will get money to help them find a location to relocate and enough advance notice. Jonathan asked how many anti-displacement funds Eric felt this project would need overall. Eric replied that this is a great question and there is no good way to estimate the figure. Eric shared that focusing on additional fundraising and building more resources in support of this work will be important.

Jeff Guertin asked what the \$20M will be used for. Eric replied that the statute that created this funding has four specific areas identified such as affordable housing, business support, infrastructure around the station areas, etc. Jeff read a document that had 45 outputs or recommendations for the group but wasn't sure how these would get prioritized. Jeff added that we need to get this right, understand where the funds are going and what the project will pay for.

John asked if the project would displace homes or just businesses. Neha replied there would be some parcels that would be fully impacted but the project is trying to minimize the level of impact and relocation may not be needed for some.

5. Municipal Consent Update

Nick Thompson provided an update on municipal consent. Nick stated besides the comment period for the SDEIS, and the CAP being released next week for public review, the project is currently



undergoing a third public process of municipal consent. Nick stated this is a state level process where each of the cities along the alignment and the county are asked to provide an official action in support of the design of the project (currently at 30% design) including the number of stations, locations, and alignment of the track. The municipal consent process itself started a week ago when the actual design plans were submitted. On August 26, a joint public hearing is scheduled between the Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, and the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority. Each of the cities and Hennepin County must take action within 45 days of the joint public hearing. The process for how official action will take place is decided on by each city and the county. Nick shared that all open house and public hearing dates are in the process of being confirmed. Currently, Minneapolis is the last entity scheduled to act on 10/2. The official action must occur before October 10 and the three options to vote on are 1. Support the project as is 2. Take no action 3. No to the design but must provide a list of the changes requested in design that if occurred would result in providing approval.

Nick stated that meetings have been occurring weekly for the past few years with each of the cities and the county to discuss the design plans. The design plans are roughly 30% design and there are still details not known, but the intent of the law is for the Metropolitan Council to formally ask whether the design can proceed based on where the stations and track are located. Nick shared 30% design is a good point to conduct municipal consent as it is early enough in the process if a city would like to move a station or make changes and still be able to maintain the schedule. Nick added it would be difficult to get input if municipal consent was not conducted until the end of design. Nick stated that municipal consent is a check-in to see if the project is on the right track but is not the last point where each of the cities or county has a say in the project. After municipal consent, more information is learned about utilities, traffic, and mitigation elements that may impact or change the design. The design of the project will become more refined as work progresses towards construction. Nick added that municipal consent is a unique process for Minnesota but is also used on major highway projects.

John Chambers Dunn asked whether the BLE project team has continued to have conversations with the City of Crystal about their concerns. Nick replied that conversations have been occurring with every city. The design team has listed the issues addressed by each of the cities related to design and reviewed each to determine which ones pertain to municipal consent. John shared that the City of Crystal indicated a concern that the street being proposed as the roundabout during construction is not up to city code and the city is asking that the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County pay to have Broadway upgraded to the standards needed. Nick stated the project is aware of the issue and expects that the city's action will reference it but was not sure whether this will be part of municipal consent or resolved outside of the project.

Jason asked if a city were to disapprove and list a contingency of the project that was connected to the project but not a design consideration, would this be considered in municipal consent. Nick pointed back to the statute, and shared that the BLE project team will analyze the contingency and make a recommendation to the Metropolitan Council Board indicating whether the element is part



of the project. If the element is outside of the project, it would not be considered as part of municipal consent.

Jonathan Hansen mentioned there was a good graphic on municipal consent in one of the previous presentations and suggested sharing that information and providing examples of what the cities could ask for in municipal consent would help significantly. Nick replied there are materials related to this geared towards the public in the communications campaign. Nick also stated at the city and county level, municipal consent is a statutory process so there is a lot of coordination between legal counsel and the representatives of the cities. This process has been performed before on this project and is a good model to point back to for each of the cities as to how it worked last time.

Jason shared that he is running for city council in Robbinsdale and has talked to a lot of people within his ward. Jason has been explaining the municipal consent process and the three actions a city can take. Jason has explained there is not an option to just say no and the project stops and that he gets a lot of positive feedback from that. Jason has also shared to community members that Rapid Bus Transit is outside of the scope of this project. Nick replied that each city is considering the design plans within their municipal boundaries. Hennepin County is looking at the design of the entire project.

Jeff Guertin shared a link to the project website in the chat and stated that is the crux of our problem. The project website tells the public nothing about what was just discussed. Jeff stated for those who don't go to the website, there is a bigger problem. Jeff stated that getting the correct message out there will help with the miscommunication about the project. Nick replied there are additional communication materials in a more simplified version ready to go. The BLE project team will follow up to make sure that this group gets that information very shortly.

6. Discussion and Members' Feedback

John Chambers Dunn appreciated all the comments, concerns, and answers. John asked for final feedback or anything anyone would like to share.

Jonathan Hansen asked what percent design is in currently. Nick Landwer replied that the municipal consent plans shared were based on 30% plans. Nick shared the northern third portion of the alignment is farther ahead as much of this portion did not change. Nick shared that the design plans are far more advanced than when municipal consent was asked for the first time. John Chambers Dunn asked why there are more details now. Nick Landwer indicated it is because of where the project is in the process. Nick shared there is a sequence by law that needs to be followed and the municipal consent process needed to occur after the SDEIS was published.

Jonathan added that it needs to be relayed to the public what each percentage of design means. Nick Landwer responded that at a high level 15% is a very rough sketch, 30% design includes 2D drawings, 60% design begins to produce 3D drawings and details subsurface work, and 90% design is



refinement and the addition of fine details. At this stage, specifications are ready to be documented for the contractor. Neha added that as design advances, the environmental work informs design as it progresses towards 60% design. Jonathan indicated a great graphic regarding this was previously shared and would be helpful to share with the general public.

Jason stated there is confusion around the municipal consent process and why 30% design is good timing. More information needs to be provided on the project website, the newsletter, via social media on how municipal consent really works. Nick Thompson replied this was a good point. Nick shared an example of Lowry Station at North Memorial Hospital. Nick indicated the design of this station has evolved tremendously but the important thing about municipal consent is whether there should be a station at Lowry, not about the exact design of the station. Nick shared there is still a lot of work after municipal consent to make this the best station for the public. John Chambers Dunn responded that when the CAC members talk with their neighbors, this point should be emphasized, and the question is whether a stop should be in this location. Nick Thompson indicated the City of Minneapolis has made a request for another station at Broadway and Washington and this is an example of a municipal consent item.

Jason asked to revisit a conversation from the last CAC meeting regarding SDEIS. Jason asked if there was a mechanism for community members who feel they will experience a noise impact, but it is not represented in the analysis done thus far in the SDEIS. Jason provided the example in Robbinsdale where a light rail station will be right outside community member's houses. Neha responded there are different types of analysis that the modelers do such as run times, frequency, speed, distances of the properties, and existing conditions. More work will continue to be done and more data gathered around certain locations and what the mitigation measures will be. Neha shared that community members can route comments to the community outreach team who will share with the environmental team or through their city who can have conversation with the BLE leadership. Nick Thompson indicated the specific address of the property would be very helpful.

James Mockovciak added there are multiple variables for determining noise and vibration impacts and some of these impacts may not necessarily be right along the corridor. Neha stated the SDEIS mostly addresses the operational phase but mitigation efforts to minimize the impact of noise and vibration will occur during construction.

Jonathan Hansen reiterated that some community members are spreading miscommunication about the new bridges near Lowry stating they will be torn down and rebuilt from scratch. The public should be made aware of the correct information. Nick Thompson replied that the design plans submitted do modify one of the bridges and additional bridges are being added as part of the project, but efforts are being made to maintain the investments that have been made.

Jeff Guertin stated this was an interesting and productive meeting. Jeff requested that the CAC members reread the charter. CAC members are to advise on communications and outreach strategies. Jeff suggested the CAC reconsider the structure of the committee to ensure the work gets



accomplished as a meeting topic. Jeff stated the charter is such that CAC members are conduits of information in both directions. CAC members are responsible to report back to the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County what they are hearing and why it occurred. Lastly, Jeff stated the BLE project and Orange Line overlap. This needs to be recognized and messages relayed.

Nick Thompson appreciated Jeff's comments and shared that the BLE project team can be responsive to the agenda items the CAC would like to have.

7. Next Meeting: September 4, 2024.

John Chambers Dunn thanked everyone for attending and providing feedback and comments.

8. Adjourn

John Chambers Dunn made the motion to adjourn and Jason Greenberg seconded it. The meeting adjourned at 8:09 pm.

Meeting Materials: Agenda, Slides, June 26 Meeting Summary

Administrative Lead: Joleen Ketterling



Meeting Chat:

[5:50 PM]
Meeting started

[6:12 PM] Guertin, Jeff (External)

Majority of feedback I'm getting is desire to know price and timing.

Same as Kaja - none are aware of the timeline or decision process

[6:20 PM] Guertin, Jeff (External)

Hearing a theme - project communications are not effective at reaching the public

[6:28 PM] Jonathan Hansen (Guest) (Unverified)

I saw advertising about the SDEIS comment period a number of different times.

[6:36 PM] H Ellis Beck (Unverified)

tech issue ill figure it out

[6:36 PM] H Ellis Beck (Unverified)

feel free to move on haha

[6:37 PM] H Ellis Beck (Unverified)

haha nope, just getting old. new computer setup

[6:48 PM] Kyle Mianulli (Guest)

I have to run. Please send any and all comms/advertising questions or suggestions my way!
Kyle.Mianulli@hennepin.us.

[6:49 PM] Thompson, Nick

back in 2 minutes



[6:59 PM] Damle, Neha

be right back

[7:00 PM] Damle, Neha

back

[7:16 PM] Cigolo, Nkongo

Property impacts can be found in Chapter 4 of SDEIS

[7:16 PM] Cigolo, Nkongo

[Blue Line Extension Chapter 4 Community and Social Analysis \(metro council.org\)](http://metro council.org/Blue-Line-Extension-Chapter-4-Community-and-Social-Analysis)

[7:20 PM] Guertin, Jeff (External)

That law needs to be summarized extremely carefully and clearly in public communications

[7:21 PM] Guertin, Jeff (External)

Success will blunt the disinformation sources

[7:21 PM] Cigolo, Nkongo

Thank you, Jeff!

[7:31 PM] Guertin, Jeff (External)

Project web page that addresses municipal consent. Totally misses the mark:

[7:31 PM] Guertin, Jeff (External)

<https://metro council.org/Transportation/Projects/Light-Rail-Projects/METRO-Blue-Line-Extension/Design-Engineering/Municipal-Consent.aspx>



[7:42 PM] Guertin, Jeff (External)

Excellent point Nick - need to relate to the public what the design stage gates (percentage design) mean