



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Community Advisory Committee Meeting
April 11, 2016
Blue Line Project Office
5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200
Crystal, MN 55428
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

Meeting Summary

CAC Members: Kate Catron, Steve Schmidt, Chris Berne, Carol Vosberg, Justin Youngbluth, Denise Butler, Giuseppe Marrari, Ken Rodgers, Catherine Fleming, Rich Baker, La Shella Sims, Denetrick Powers, Gillian Rosenquist

Agency Staff and Guests: Dan Pfeiffer, Laura Baenen, Sophia Ginis, Rachel Dammel, Juan Rangel, Nick Landwer, Emily Carr, Jim Toulouse, Caroline Miller, MarySue Abel, Kathryn O'Brien, David Davies, Scott Reed, Alicia Vap

1. Approval of February 8, 2016 Meeting Minutes

There were no comments on the minutes.

2. Municipal Consent Recap

MarySue Abel presented. Municipal consent was completed on March 2nd. The Crystal City Council voted to not vote on municipal consent, which counts as approval after the 45-day action period. All of the other cities and the county approved municipal consent. The cities put together resolutions with items they would like to see worked on as the project progresses. These items will be the focus of the Design Resolution Team meetings.

Ken Rodgers asked why Crystal voted to not vote instead of to approve municipal consent. MarySue Abel replied that they had some concerns with the process and whether or not the pedestrian bridge would be included.

Chris Berne asked to discuss why the votes weren't unanimous in the cities where that was the case. In Brooklyn Park, one council member was opposed to LRT and another would've liked to see more information from the Met Council. Robbinsdale and Golden Valley were unanimous in support of approving municipal consent. The Minneapolis City Council voted 10 to 3 to approve municipal consent. The three no votes would've preferred that the width of Olson Memorial Highway was reduced to four lanes.

3. Corridor-wide Safety/Security

Nick Landwer presented. This a topic that came from previous CAC discussion about topics they would like to hear more about.

Safety is a top priority in project design. Safety starts in pre-design and continues through operations. System safety tasks by project phase are outlined below:

- Project development
 - Safety certification planning
 - Preliminary hazard analysis
 - Evaluate hazards and probability of occurrence
 - Focus on elements that are high risk and have higher probability of occurrence
 - Want to mitigate as much as practicable
 - Threat and vulnerability assessment
 - Critical items list
- Engineering
 - Form Safety & Security Review Committee
 - Address items on critical items list and evaluate any changes in project to make sure they meet safety protocol
 - Verify design conformance to safety criteria
 - Supplemental hazard analyses
- Construction
 - Verify construction conformance to safety criteria (e.g., check that tactile strips are correct dimensions and in correct place)
 - Verify integrated testing
 - Public safety campaign
 - Develop operating rules, procedures, plans
- Activation
 - Pre-revenue operations
 - Run trains without passengers to make sure everything works correctly)
 - Emergency preparedness training and exercises
 - Have emergency responders in every city in corridor stage training operations
 - State and federal readiness reviews
 - FTA and state safety officers will look at plans and do site visit to review how everything works and where there might be issues
 - Final safety certification report

Catherine Fleming asked if any tests were done with common people and not people who are educated and familiar with the systems. Nick Landwer replied that they try to identify issues in the design and include deterrents, and they also build on the 12 years of LRT operational experience in the region.

Chris Berne asked if there will be any special emphasis with the Harrison School along 55 during the public safety campaign. Nick said yes, the campaign will be discussed later in the presentation.

LRT Safety Features

- Vehicle and Train Safety Elements
 - Blank-out signs for traffic (shows image of train when train is approaching)
 - Catherine Fleming and Carol Vosberg asked how you are supposed to know that the train image means that a train is coming. Sophia Ginis replied that this is an additional measure to increase awareness, the left turn signal is also red.
 - Rich Baker asked if there could be a sign that says “train coming.” Nick Landwer replied that that wouldn’t be compliant with sign guidelines and would only work for English speakers. Signs along the LRT corridor will be included as part of the public education campaign.
 - Bar signals on poles for trains (traffic signals for train operators)
- LRT Design Elements: Station and Tracks
 - Open and transparent platform design for visibility
 - Clear signage
 - Video monitoring
 - Exterior deterrent fencing discouraging track crossing
 - Safety railings
 - Catherine Fleming asked if wire or something could be added so kids can’t slide through and if the signs could be reflective. Nick Landwer replied that stations are well lit so the signs should be illuminated.
- Security Features
 - Safety elements designed into the station
 - Security cameras
 - Real time monitoring and video recording
 - Catherine Fleming asked what the response time was if something is seen. Nick Landwer said he doesn’t know but can find out. The security system has also a PA system so they can talk to people on the platforms.
 - Emergency phone
 - La Shella Sims asked if there was an emergency button. Nick said there are emergency phones in visible locations.
- Pedestrian & Bike Elements: Crossings
 - Countdown timer
 - Truncated domes mark crosswalk
 - Sign marks crosswalk and alerts drivers
 - Push button and audible tones announce when crossing is permitted
 - Ken Rodgers asked if the other stations would be retrofitted. Nick Landwer said he wasn’t sure since the cities own a lot of the signals. Alicia Vap added that there is an ongoing study of safety improvements that will publish

recommendations in a year or so. Ken Rodgers said that according to the current federal MUTCD standards, the auditory signals are no longer required at crossings but they are crucial to people who can't see. Nick Landwer said that will be an important issue for the TAAC (Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee) to help work through.

- La Shella Sims said that the walk signals click at you instead of saying "walk" and the "wait" on the don't walk sign can be hard to hear sometimes.
 - Ken Rodgers added that ADA compliance is the minimum threshold that needs to be met, you can always do more, and we should strive to do more. It's the law, but it's not the best we can do.
- Warning Devices
 - Not activated when no train, activated when train approaching
 - Warning devices alert pedestrians to approaching trains
 - Signs instruct people to look both ways before crossing
 - Crossings are design to be protective zones but also make you turn which prompts you to look
 - Intertrack Fences and Railings
 - Short wall with railing on top – guides people through but allows for visibility
 - Fencing with chains deters people from crossing tracks, but if they do end up on the tracks they are still able to get out
 - Gated Intersection Crossings

LRT Security Features

- PA system on station platforms
- Metro Transit Police Department
 - Over 200 full time and part time officers
 - Uniformed and plain clothes
 - Ride buses and trains along with patrolling routes
 - Average 1,700 hours per month on board
 - In 2014, 1,347,000 passengers were checked for fare compliance on the METRO system
 - Continuing efforts for police to reflect the communities they serve

Public Safety Campaign

- Website
- Brochures
- Training
- Videos
- Posters
- Public service announcements
- Bike safety

La Shella Sims asked if the project office will be in contact with businesses and organizations that serve the blind or deaf. Nick Landwer replied that there is an advisory committee to the Metropolitan Council, the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC), that will be involved as design progresses.

Chris Berne asked if a review of best practices around the county has occurred. Nick Landwer said that a peer agency did review the existing system and put together a draft report. They will consider the recommendations in the design of this project.

Ken Rodgers noted that, for the most part, the pedestrian crossings on the Green Line are at intersections and asked how many of the stations on the Blue Line Extension are at signalized intersections. Nick Landwer said he believes there are two stations where the secondary access to the platform crosses a road and does not have a signal. Ken Rodgers said the only safe way to cross for someone with a visual impairment is with a signal. He can't tell when a car stops at a flashing warning light. Alicia Vap added that the stations by the freight rail will have active warning devices with lights and auditory signals. Ken Rodgers said he feels that there is a lot of defensiveness when he brings up issues with the current system and how he experiences it. He doesn't want defensiveness, he wants a partner to help make it better. Nick Landwer said they do want to work with him, and they will look at those two stations without signals.

Catherine Fleming asked if there is a long distance between the crosswalks and businesses in the area and how that affects economic development. Nick Landwer said that they have been working with the Business Advisory Committee, and they are working to make sure crossings are safe. Typically, there would be a crossing about every two blocks. For instance, along the 1.5 miles where LRT will run along Olson Memorial Highway, there are 10 crossings.

Ken Rodgers said that the reconstruction of University Avenue for Green Line was building line to building line and asked if that was the case of this project. Nick Landwer said along Olson Memorial Highway the construction is mostly curb to curb within MnDOT's right-of-way and will also include sidewalk improvements. Along West Broadway, the buildings are set back farther than along University. Ken Rodgers asked if the alignment of the tracks was centered or more to one side. Nick Landwer replied that the tracks are in the center of the road.

4. Golden Valley Road Park & Ride, Trails, and Intersection

Alicia Vap presented. The CMC added scope items for three Golden Valley Road Station improvements at their November 12th meeting.

- Golden Valley Park & Ride
 - Proposed park and ride is located on MPRB property
 - Planning on about 100 spaces but some reconfiguration might be needed
 - 3 tiers of parking with one entrance
 - Area set aside for trailhead facility
 - Stairs will have a bike runnel (groove in stairwell so you can walk your bike up/down stairs)

- Pedestrian ramp access to station from Theodore Wirth Parkway, Golden Valley Road, and the parking lot
- Retaining wall an change in elevation will separate from the bus stop
- Next steps
 - Identify parcels to be used in land swap with MPRB
 - Land swap and/or purchase easement to be part of comprehensive BLRT property request to MPRB
 - Presenting at upcoming MPRB meeting
- Trail Design
 - Three Rivers Park District proposed Bassett Creek Regional Trail along Golden Valley Road
 - New north/south trail connecting to Sochaki Park trail on the north and to the Theodore Wirth Parkway trail on the south
 - Access to the station via Theodore Wirth Parkway trail
 - New trail on MPRB and Three Rivers Park District property and would be owned and maintained by those agencies
- Golden Valley Road Intersection
 - Golden Valley Road is a county road and Theodore Wirth Parkway is owned by MPRB
 - Current condition includes free rights at every corner of intersection
 - Not necessarily the safest for bikes and pedestrians
 - Evaluated a signalized intersection and a roundabout
 - Signal option:
 - Would allow portions of existing road to be turned into green space
 - Access to Glenwood Parkway would remain on south of Golden Valley Road. North of Golden Valley Road, Glenwood Pkwy would turn into a cul-de-sac to preserve a mature stand of trees.
 - Would have a good level of service in 2040
 - Would have less of a cultural resources impact than the roundabout option
 - Gillian Rosenquist said she is concerned that adding the park and ride not far from the signal would cause a bottleneck. Nick Landwer said the traffic turn into and out of the park and ride would not impact the signal. The signal would operate a level of service A or B and would operate better in 2040 than it does today.
 - Roundabout option:
 - Single lane roundabout
 - Glenwood Pkwy would feed into roundabout – access would be right-in/right-out
 - Smaller footprint than existing intersection but larger than signalized option – wouldn't get as much green space back
 - Would have good level of service

- City and MPRB staff have been made aware of the issues Ken Rodgers has raised regarding visually impaired pedestrians and roundabouts
- Giuseppe Marrari said he uses this intersection every day, sometimes in a car and sometimes on a bike, and people don't know what they are doing with the existing design. He thinks the roundabout would add to the confusion, which is what seems to cause the traffic issues rather than the traffic volumes. He thinks the signalized intersection seems like it would work much better.
- Gillian Rosenquist said Golden Valley has an older population and they tend to dislike roundabouts.
- La Shella Sims said education would be needed because a lot of people don't know how to use roundabouts. Gillian Rosenquist said there will be two new roundabouts soon about a mile away so there will be more familiarity with them before this project is built.
- Gillian Rosenquist added that the proximity to the Courage Center also needs to be considered.
- Next steps
 - Receiving public comments regarding intersection design
 - Denise Butler asked what the public comment process looks like. Alicia Vap said that David Davies has received comments, but they are trying to be sensitive to the fact that this is MPRB's decision to make. Kathryn O'Brien added that Theodore Wirth Parkway is owned by the MPRB and is considered parkland. David Davies noted that whatever comments they receive are shared with the jurisdictional partners and the City of Golden Valley.
 - MPRB, Golden Valley, and Hennepin County staff to provide BPO with recommended design
 - Golden Valley was leaning towards the roundabout; the MPRB and City of Minneapolis were leaning towards the signal

5. Section 106 (Historic Properties) Update

Scott Reed presented. Section 106 refers to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. It requires FTA to consider the effects of their projects on historic properties. It is a separate law from the National Environmental Policy Act, but the FEIS will include the information about Section 106.

Process:

- Initiate 106 process – completed in 2011
- Identify historic properties – completed in 2014
- Assess adverse effects – completed in Q1 2016
- Resolve adverse effects – ongoing to Q2 2016
 - This is done in a consultation process with the cities, county, MPRB, State Historic Preservation Office, MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit, and FTA

Properties with No Adverse Effect

- Great Northern Railway District/Soo Line Historic District
- Theodore Wirth Parkway Bridge
- Northwestern Knitting Factory
- Minneapolis Warehouse Historic District
- Jones Osterhus Barn

Properties that May Be Affected

All of the following properties are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; none are currently listed.

- Sumner Branch Library
 - No direct effects
 - Mitigation may include design review, construction protections
- Wayman AME Church
 - No direct effects
 - Mitigation may include completing NRHP nomination
- Labor Lyceum
 - No direct effects
 - Mitigation may include design review, construction protections
- Floyd B. Olson Memorial Statue
 - Statue will not be physically altered or impacted, but plaza in which it is located may have sidewalk and landscaping changes
 - Used to be in median of Olson Memorial Highway but was moved. Stayed eligible because of sculptor who made the statue.
 - Mitigation may include historic property treatment plan, completing NRHP nomination
- Homewood Residential Historic District
 - No direct effects
 - Mitigation may include design review, construction protections, noise mitigation
- Osseo Branch Line/Great Northern Railway Historic District
 - BLRT will use right-of-way for stations, substations, signal bungalows
 - Mitigation may include interpretative elements, property documentation
- Grand Rounds Historic District: Theodore Wirth Segment
 - BLRT alignment will be located on east side of Theodore Wirth Park within existing BNSF right-of-way
 - Mitigation may include design review, interpretive elements, preservation planning

- Sacred Heart Catholic Church
 - No direct effects
 - Mitigation may include design review, construction protections, noise mitigation (quiet zone implementation)
- Robbinsdale Waterworks
 - No direct effects
 - Mitigation may include design review, construction protections
- Hennepin County Library, Robbinsdale Branch
 - No direct effects
 - Mitigation may include design review, construction protections, noise mitigation (quiet zone implementation)
- West Broadway Avenue Residential Historic District
 - No direct effects
 - Mitigation may include design review, construction protections, noise mitigation (quiet zone implementation)

La Shella Sims asked if Olson Memorial Highway would be going back to four lanes. Scott Reed said that it would be six lanes. Nick Landwer said that they looked at a number of configurations, and with four lanes traffic would fail and backups would cause traffic to go into the surrounding neighborhoods. Six lanes work from a traffic perspective, and to make it safer the design includes narrower lanes and a lower speed limit. La Shella Sims said she thinks this design has racial undertones because no other areas have six lanes through a neighborhood. Sophia Ginis said that fewer lanes could actually be worse for the neighborhood because the traffic would detour and the congestion could cause unsafe driver behavior. Kathryn O'Brien added that an environmental justice review is a component of the FEIS. Last year a lot of work was done to see how the road could be improved, and the designs were taken out to neighborhood meetings for input.

6. Design Topics

Jim Toulouse presented. There have been two minor design changes since municipal consent.

- TH 610 (Brooklyn Park)
 - Interchange coordination with proposed alignment of West Broadway
 - Municipal consent plans showed the intersection being skewed
 - Refining geometrics via the Design Review Team and MnDOT layout review, in coordination with the City of Brooklyn Park and Hennepin County
 - Will push curvature further north so intersection will line up squarely
- 39 ½ Avenue Closure (Robbinsdale)
 - Closure proposed to:
 - Promote safety by closing an at-grade rail crossings
 - Reduce noise impacts by eliminating train bells and crossing devices

7. Schedule Update

MarySue Abel presented. We are working towards completion of the project development phase by August 2016. To get there, the following items will occur over the next few months:

- May
 - FTA completes legal review of FEIS
 - Perform BPO risk assessment
- June
 - Publish FEIS in Federal Register
 - Update advisory committees on project scope
 - Present final project scope and budget recommendation to CMC
- August
 - FTA signs Record of Decision
 - CTIB and HCRRA actions on project scope and budget
 - Council action on project scope and budget
 - Submit application for New Starts and Entry into Engineering
 - Budget included in application sets federal match. If more money is needed down the road, it will need to come from local sources.

Catherine Fleming asked what kind of funding the project would get and if there is oversight associated with the funding. MarySue said the funding will be 49% federal and 51% local and it has a lot of oversight. The full funding grant agreement is anticipated in 2018. Until then, Metro Transit has an agreement with FTA that the work that is being done currently is eligible for the federal match. The 30% plans and FEIS establish the scope of project, and FTA will monitor any changes.

8. Member Reports

Denise Butler noted that there is a career fair tomorrow at Summit OIC about careers in the construction field.

9. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 pm. The next CAC meeting is scheduled for May 9, 2016.