



METRO Blue Line Extension

Meeting of the Business Advisory Committee

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

8:00 AM –9:30 AM

Meeting Summary

BAC Members: Alex Burns, Candace Oathout, Chris Webley, John Hacker, J. Kevin Croston, Jackson George, Ian Alexander, Jennifer Cutter, Jimmy Loyd, Kenya McKnight-Ahad, Matthew Kenning, Mike Steinhauser, Ryan Borne, Timothy Baylor, Felicia Perry, Lucien Moldovan, Steph Hanna

Agency Staff and Guests: Sophia Ginis, Jesse Struve, Jim Voll, Joan Vanhala, Kristine Stehly, Kyle Mianulli, Nick Landwer, Trevor Roy, Sam O’Connell, Rebecca Hughes, Andrew G Gillett, Nick Landwer, Daniel Soler, Kerri Pearce Ruch, Liz Morice

Meeting Summary

1. Call to Order/Welcome and Introductions

Sophia Ginis, Metropolitan Council, called the meeting to order at 8:06. She shared an overview of the agenda and what to expect with the meeting. Dan Soler, Hennepin County, welcomed the group.

2. Committee Housekeeping Discussion

Sophia provided an overview of the charter for the Business Advisory Committee. She reviewed the charter text for responsibilities of members and membership. Mike Steinhauser asked if there should be a representative from education. Felicia Perry said she had some ideas for people who could fill that need. Sophia reviewed reporting requirements and the roles of co-chairs. Three co-chairs were nominated: Felicia Perry, Tim Baylor and Mike Steinhauser. Mike Steinhauser said that he liked that Tim Baylor represents both Robbinsdale and Minneapolis. After a discussion of the three chairs committee members asked if all could be appointed. Dan Soler said that having three chairs was a possibility and could strengthen the role and help to represent the committee well. Felicia Perry, Mike Steinhauser and Tim Baylor were all appointed by the committee as the co-chairs.

Sophia inquired if the group agreed with the timing of meetings. Ian Alexander asked if the meeting could be Wednesday. Other members expressed that Tuesday worked better for them.

3. Project Update

Dan Soler shared a description of the project staffing structure which includes a combination of Met Council and Hennepin County staff working together for several different components of the project including Community Works, Design & Engineering, Environmental Review FTA New Starts Process, and Communications and Engagement. He reviewed the issues with the originally planned alignment and BNSF. He



emphasized that the community engagement is a robust part of the project. He reviewed the recent project history regarding BNSF. Dan described the process for the analysis of potential routes and the high-level schedule going forward. He emphasized that they will be reviewing project benefits and impacts. The route will need support from municipalities along the way and have FTA approval. Dan shared what to expect as route options develop including a review of how the corridor can be divided into three areas with different needs and opportunities, as well as impacts from the change from the BNSF corridor.

Sophia highlighted what is not included in the upcoming routes. They currently have very initial engineering. There will not be a full analysis of project right-of-way impacts or benefits. They do know some of the stations from past alignment but where the route has changed significantly those are unknown. These are not areas that are ignored, but they just are not yet completed. She said they have received a lot of feedback about routes, but they will need more feedback going farther and this is an important part of the process. There is a lot of big work that is needed including on anti-displacement strategies, equity, investments related to the previous alignment and other issues based on community feedback. Sam O'Connell, Metropolitan Council, greeted the group and said she values the time of the group and looks forward to meetings that are a good use of everyone's time. Kenya McKnight-Ahad noted that this corridor is often considered the "cultural corridor" and she wonders what commitment there is to racial equity because it is not expressly written here. She said that she would like to see that more explicitly included and will drive that point in these conversations to make sure that is a part of that conversation now. Tim Baylor confirmed that he and Felicia will also work for that. Sophia Ginis also mentioned that the project staff appreciate that feedback, will work on making racial equity included in this and look forward to future work together on that. Catherine Oathout shared a concern about pedestrian safety going forward. She expressed that past station areas did not do the best job of solving those issues. She is concerned that for example at North Memorial, a pedestrian bridge might need to be included. Sophia said that safe walking design is an important part of this project development.

Sophia Ginis shared an overview of the evaluation criteria goals. She shared that these are part of the old environmental process but have been reviewed and updated. She highlighted that the last goal was a new goal recognizing the need for equity. Ryan Borne asked if there is a timeline for federal funding or if that has been decided. Sophia clarified that the project would still need to apply for federal funding. Dan Soler said that the project as we know it is still in the queue for federal funding. The project will need to apply after all the design and other route planning needs are complete. Mike Steinhauser said that the whole line needs to improve the quality of infrastructure for businesses and people along the line. Dan Soler said that there will be impacts but minimizing those impacts while creating future benefits is the balance. Alex Burns shared that he appreciated that this transit investment is designed to support transit-oriented lifestyles. Kenya McKnight-Ahad said she hopes that this investment does improve access for all communities but not at the expense of those who are transit-dependent and depend on transit. Felicia Perry asked if anti-displacement or anti-gentrification were apart of this, and if not would like to add that as part of a goal. Sophia confirmed that it could be strengthened in the criteria. Felicia shared that it would be very powerful if that was explicitly included.

4. Furthering Public Engagement

Sophia shared info regarding the communications and engagement approach. She reviewed commitments within that plan including a community-centric approach, focus on transparency and trust, and adjusting methods to meet people where they're at and based on the ongoing dialog. They approach engagement knowing that they don't know everything and will go wherever is needed to get the public involved.



Joan Vanhala, Hennepin County, shared a brief update regarding the interviews and listening sessions from the initial engagement.

5. Upcoming Meetings:

Sophia proposed an additional meeting, which would be an additional joint meeting for the CAC and BAC Monday, March 22nd at 6:00 PM. The conversation will be about the routes. Ian Alexander asked about the content that would be shared and if it would be overshadowed by Derek Chauvin’s trial. Sophia confirmed there will be more discussion of the routes in April and throughout the year. Felicia Perry asked if there are ways to make have the message around this penetrate through this during this time. Kyle Mianulli, Hennepin County, said that this has been a consideration and there is a plan to share this information with multiple news and communication outlets, to both receive and give information.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned the meeting at 9:35 AM.