



METRO Blue Line Extension Corridor Management Committee (CMC) Meeting Summary

Date & Time	April 13, 2023 1:30 – 3:00 PM
Location	F.T. Heywood Chambers, 560 N 6th Ave, Minneapolis
CMC Members	Charlie Zelle, Jeff Lunde, Bill Blonigan, Aaron Wagner, Jim Adams, Jason Greenberg, Ricardo Perez, Marion Greene, Suzanne Sobotka, Irene Fernando, Dan Doerrer, Gillian Rosenquist, Mike Barnes, Tara Watson, Nick Thompson
Not Present	Robert Lilligren, Reva Chamblis, Hollies Winston, Tom Olsen, Bridget Rief
Project Staff	Chris Beckwith, Nick Landwer, Dan Soler, Nkongo Cigolo, Kelcie Young, Jer Yang

1. Call to Order and Welcome

Metropolitan Council Chair Charlie Zelle called the meeting to order at 1:37pm.

Chair Zelle welcomed the Corridor Management Committee (CMC) members and allowed members to introduce themselves. Chair Zelle added that the Committee will offer an opportunity for community members to address the CMC for up to three-minutes each.

Chair Zelle advised that members of the public may submit written comments to Nkongo Cigolo, Metropolitan Council by April 21st, 2023. Those written comments will be attached to the meeting notes for the next meeting. Materials and handouts for this meeting are posted on the project's website at bluelineext.org.

Chair Zelle reminded members that Brooklyn Park and Crystal Design Decision has been brought in front of the committee in the last two recent CMC meetings, and as for this meeting staff will cover the Robbinsdale design decisions, project update, environmental work, and anti-displacement activities.

Kathy Neitzke, resident of Lyn Park neighborhood; Tracy Penny, a member of the public; and Eva Young, resident of Lyn Park neighborhood each addressed the CMC during the comment period. *(Note: Video of the comments provided can be viewed in their entirety and in the speakers' own words at bluelineext.org under "Committees" and the video link to today's meeting.)*



2. Approval of March 9, 2023, BLRT CMC Meeting Summary

Chair Zelle asked for motion to approve the March 9 CMC meeting minutes.

Commissioner Jeff Lunde, Hennepin County motioned to approve of the meeting minutes. Mike Barnes, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) Metro District Engineer, seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved.

3. Community and Business Advisory Committee Reports

Co-Chair Jason Greenberg, Community Advisory Committee (CAC), provided an update from the April 5th CAC meeting, and shared that there were many great conversations. Co-Chair Greenberg reported that the CAC members discussed how much of the design decisions have already been finalized, and learned from the project staff that many of the design decisions are still in the process of being finalized and much work is still ahead. Co-Chair Greenberg added that CAC members talked about how the comment period for the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) process works and the range of feedback that is expected. Other discussions revolved around Robbinsdale alignment, station location, elevated rail at 42nd Avenue and County Road 81.

Co-Chair, Pastor Dan Doerrer, Business Advisory Committee (BAC), provided an update from the April 4th BAC meeting, reporting that the BAC members discussed similar topics as reported by Co-Chair Greenberg. In addition, the BAC members discussed the length of construction, and whether it will be done in segments. Co-Chair Doerrer added that the BAC members were concerned about the design work and would like the project to consider multimodal transportation into the design.

Chair Zelle, thanked both the CAC and BAC Co-chairs for the updates.

4. Project Update

Christine Beckwith, Blue Line Project Director, provided an update on the Blue Line Extension project and reported that the project continues to work towards a policy recommendation this summer. Ms. Beckwith reported that there have been questions raised concerning outreach feedback and how that feedback is being considered. Ms. Beckwith shared that feedback collected through the community outreach work is reviewed and used as an input to refine the design of the alignment. She gave several examples of how feedback over the last several months as led to adjustments with the project. Dan Soler, Hennepin County, added that as the project continues to collect more feedback, the refinement continues along with that.

BAC Co-Chair, Dr. Tara Watson asked for clarification on the letter recently sent to property owners requesting permission to perform an Environmental Site Assessment (Phase II). Co-Chair Watson reported that property owners have raised concerns that if they agreed to the letter, they are agreeing with the project and would like to ask of the project to reconsider the context of the language to ensure property owners have the correct information before giving their permission. Ms. Beckwith responded that the project team will review the letters to ensure the right message is conveyed based upon



the type of work that needs to be done. Mr. Soler, Hennepin County, added that the outreach team is in communication with many property owners and continues to be available to answer any questions concerning the letters.

Commissioner Irene Fernando, Hennepin County, added that the purpose for requesting permission is for the study of the environmental work.

Ms. Beckwith advised that the project has shifted the schedule slightly to ensure that Anti-Displacement policy recommendation can be brought forth to the CMC, which means the Design Decisions for Minneapolis will be brought to CMC in June for discussion, and a policy recommendation to follow in the summer.

5. Environmental Update

Kelcie Young, Blue Line Environmental Manager, provided a recap of the overall environmental schedules and stated the Environmental team continues to work on preparing the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) and plans to have it published by the end of 2023. Ms. Young shared that the next steps will be to identify and finalize a preferred route and prepare the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS) which will include mitigation commitments. Ms. Young advised that there is an upcoming Federal Register Notice which is a parallel step to the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) Notice that was published in the fall of 2022. The Federal Register Notice will be a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare the Supplement Environmental Impact Statement and will provide another opportunity for public comments.

Ricardo Perez, Blue Line Coalition, asked how the public will be made aware of when the comment period happens. Ms. Young responded that there will be communication through email, the project's website, and committee meetings.

Ms. Young shared chapter 7 of the SDEIS that is up for review, which is related to Environmental Justice Impacts, reporting that the process begins by identifying the presence and locations of Environmental Justice communities (this includes Black, Indigenous, people of color, and low-income populations) and then consideration of potential affects. Ms. Young highlighted that this chapter is a summary of the other impacts from other SDEIS chapters that was shared at previous CMC meetings.

Mr. Perez asked how much change to the Environmental Justice chapter from the previous alignment to the current alignment. Ms. Young responded that the environmental review consists of data and analysis of impacts throughout the alignment.

6. Robbinsdale Design Decisions

Nick Landwer, Blue Line Director of Design and Engineering, shared the design principles guiding the project through design decisions and the work that will help inform the SDEIS review.



Mr. Landwer shared the draft Review Design Decisions Document handout for the Robbinsdale alignment. Mr. Landwer stated that in spring of 2022, the route recommendation called for center-running light rail transit at-grade on County Road 81 with reconstruction of the portion of the bridge over Highway 100. Ongoing evaluation of the downtown area configuration for traffic operations including Right-of-Way (ROW) impacts, station placement, and if there could be a park and ride.

Mr. Landwer provided an update on the framework that has been evaluated in downtown Robbinsdale explaining that the Design team has evaluated a few options for station location with a park and ride structures. The preferred downtown station placement with a park and ride structure favored by city staff and members is to build a station south of 40th Avenue and a park and ride on the northwest corner of County Road 81 and 40th Avenue. Mr. Landwer added that there is still much work ahead to assess safety, pedestrian crossing, size of the park and ride and how to incorporate transit connections, and mobility accessibility.

Mr. Landwer covered the Lowry Avenue Station (Formerly known as the North Memorial Hospital Station), which is an elevated station with access towers on both ends of the station.

Mayor Bill Blonigan, Robbinsdale, stated that North Memorial Hospital has reached out with concerns on light rail impacts to their heliport. Mr. Landwer acknowledged the existence of a heliport at the North Memorial Hospital and added that the project is evaluating impacts on both the heliport and the light rail.

Mr. Landwer informed that the project continues to partner with the city of Robbinsdale to refine station locations and design to ensure that we optimize rail operations with existing traffic operations and right of way impacts. Mr. Landwer added the project received a letter from the city expressing concerns about safety and security and how to address them.

Council Member Gillian Rosenquist, Golden Valley, asked for clarification on how the decision was made for the station location in downtown Robbinsdale, and expressed that the selected option puts the station furthest away from the service center. Mayor Blonigan explained that it was a city council consensus on the station location for a couple of reasons. The city felt that the placement of the station on the south side of 40th Avenue and County Road 81 offers the best service for the densest resident population in that area. Mayor Blonigan added there is a proposal for an elevated structure, which can improve the safety of traffic, pedestrian linkages, and public safety.

Council Member Aaron Wagner, Robbinsdale, requested that the project include Robbinsdale's letter as part of this meeting summary. *(Note: letter is attached for reference)*



Nkongo Cigolo, Blue Line Outreach Manager, reported that the project held a Robbinsdale Open House on March 6th, 2023, and shared some of the feedback; the communities have expressed that downtown Robbinsdale has become a vibrant social area and light rail could bring more foot traffic into the area with the consideration of safety around light rail such as additional lighting and noise impact mitigation. Mr. Cigolo expressed that the project will continue to engage with the Robbinsdale communities with the warmer weather ahead.

Mr. Landwer shared a preview of the upcoming Design Decisions for Minneapolis, stating the focus will be on route option from Target Field Station to West Broadway, route option for light rail on West Broadway or 21st Ave, number of stations, and Penn Ave station location.

7. Anti-displacement Update

Cathy Gold, Hennepin County, provided an update on the Anti-Displacement timeline from last year up to February 2023, reporting that the Anti-Displacement working group wrapped their last two workshops in February and Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) has been working hard to put together the report to bring to the May 11 CMC Meeting.

Chair Zelle thanked Ms. Gold for reporting updates on Anti-Displacement.

8. Next Meeting: May 11, 2023

9. Adjourn

Chair Zelle adjourned the meeting at 2:53pm.



WRITTEN COMMENTS SUBMITTED



City of Robbinsdale

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March 30, 2023

Christine Beckwith
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Re: City of Robbinsdale – Design Comments on the METRO Blue Line Extension

Ms. Beckwith

The City of Robbinsdale appreciates the opportunity to express feedback regarding preliminary design concepts for the proposed METRO Blue Line Extension light rail project. Further, the City appreciates the work of, and continued partnership with the project office. The City is eager to continue conversations with the Robbinsdale City Council, residents, businesses, visitors, community stakeholders, and City staff to advocate for the interests of the City. Recognizing the project continues on a timeline with significant milestones, the City has created this letter to document serious concerns as we move towards the request for Municipal Consent.

The City Council has established that top priorities need to be addressed. They include:

1. **Public Safety** – The City Council shares the concerns of residents related to Public Safety. This includes addressing station area planning, any potential parking structure, pedestrian access (those going to-from transit and those near the system), and what appears to be (a lack of) enforcement issues. A part of this concern is that the City has observed significant behavioral issues at the existing bus-hub in Robbinsdale, and wants assurances these are addressed along with future mitigation efforts. Complaints throughout the metro have noted that riders on transit do not feel safe - **we are requesting a formal response** from the Metropolitan Council as to their plan on how to mitigate existing issues, and further enhance future experiences.
2. **Updated Data/Data Justification** – The City Council recognizes concerns from the community in regard to data and projections that the project office have used. This includes critical information like projected ridership and estimated trips-generated used for the original FTA application. Council is again **requesting formal notice of any upcoming adjustments to ridership projections**, and an explanation/justification for the use of any “pre-Covid” data/projections being used. A major concern causing the desire for updated information, is that the project office has stated the downtown Robbinsdale stop will potentially host more boardings than other stops along the line.
3. **Anti-Displacement Programs and Policies** – The City Council supports community concerns related to potential displacement of residents and businesses along the Blue Line LRT corridor. To start, the City Council **formally requests the project office commit a significant amount of resources** to communicate the project generally,

but also anti-displacement efforts. Further, the City requests that jurisdictional authorities covering the entire corridor (to include Hennepin County, the Metropolitan Council, and State of Minnesota) support Anti-Displacement policies and procedures, with programming and resources, both during and after rail construction.

4. **Engineering/Planning Concerns** – The City Council and City staff have continued to engage with residents and the project office to identify concerns, generally. This includes:

- Recognition that a center-running, at grade line requires space such that alterations to the existing corridor would be detrimental. These include potential loss of access to frontage roads, loss of pedestrian facilities, loss of (water treating) landscaping, parking in commercial areas, and turning lanes.
- Potential that the LRT will promote development/redevelopment that is heavily weighted towards high density residential over commercial, and further burden resident property taxes due to a lack commercial/industrial.

5. **Requesting Full Disclosure of Intended Takings** – The City Council, along with the community, has seen a variety of images that reflect different amount(s) of takings along the corridor. This may include private property, and **Council is requesting a formal description in its entirety.**

6. **The City Expects Continued Conversation on General Planning to Enhance Immediate and Residual to the Corridor** – The Robbinsdale City Council understands the desire of the project office to engage with the City as further details are considered. However, the City desires assurances that the City will have a role in engineering and architectural design. This may also include transfer of resources, including potential properties.

7. **North Memorial/South Station** – The most recent round of conversations with the project office included station area planning for the downtown area, but not the proposed “North Memorial” stop. Council has heard concerns about the bridge design that is required to elevate a stop at North Memorial. Further, Council requests the project office continue conversations with North Memorial and neighbors of the south area of Robbinsdale.

Station Location

The City Council considered two vicinities for a station location in the downtown area – near 41st Avenue and near 40th Avenue. After considerable discussion about the benefits and concerns of each, the City Council supports a station nearer 40th Ave (with a preference south of 40th Ave). Understanding a station closer to 41st Ave would benefit the downtown area more, Council supports an option that better serves Robbinsdale residents, including an abundance of naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH), including transit dependent population(s). Finally, South 40th Ave includes more than 450 units of NOAH, many of which would be included in the project office’s projected ridership.

Park and Ride / Transit Station Location

Robbinsdale City Council considered several options when discussing a Park and Ride/Transit Station Location. Included in conversation were a parking facility providing additional parking for downtown during transit off-peak hours, the impact of traffic trip generation on local roads (not Hwy 81 or County Road 9), the potential size of the structure (relative to surrounding areas), and the incorporation of relocated (and potentially additional) bus routes/stops. Again, projected

daily boardings include (roughly) 2,200 out of 3,500 will be coming from buses. This projection is met with skepticism without further data.

During conversation, it was understood that some sites may not be available due to potential redevelopment. Further, Council as acknowledged, several questions remain about the need for a parking/park and ride facility at all (as noted, Council is requesting further information to justify the need for a park and ride). Ultimately, the City Council expressed favor that the project office consider the “US Bank” site (northwest corner of Hwy 81 and 40th Ave N) as the preferred site for any parking structure.

Park and Ride size – The project office has shared information that a parking structure could be justified at a level of 500-600 vehicles. While that number has fluctuated, concern remains about the justification generally, and updated modeling is sought by the City Council. However, the City Council does see some benefit in some parking, as it will help mitigate park and riders from taking street parking in adjoining neighborhoods. Again, it was recognized that a multi-story structure with excessive size, would not fit with the nature of the neighborhood.

Based on discussions and review of available information, the City Council feels that a right-sized parking structure is preferred. Finally, further design and detail will require community and Council review to minimize adverse impacts caused by additional traffic trips and the placement of bus stops (to better understand bus traffic concerns, including planning that limits congestion as Council will not support extended layovers or long-term queueing of buses).

Grade Separation

A part of the HNTB review investigated whether a grade separation (an elevated track) along the “downtown” portion of the corridor was feasible. The primary focus was grade separation at the intersections of 41st Ave and 42nd Ave. This correlates with identified concerns relating to potential impacts on adjoining commercial properties. A grade separation will mitigate takings required for a grade running line, and will also mitigate traffic and pedestrian (to include bicyclists) movements across those intersections. Based on Council discussion, Council preference is a grade separation of the Light Rail Line over 41st Ave and 42nd Ave. Finally, grade separation will mitigate some public safety concerns as it will reduce the response times of public safety vehicles.

Alignment

The City Council gained consensus that the alignment of the line should be center running.

In closing - The Robbinsdale City Council appreciates the ongoing relationship with the project office and Corridor Management Committee. As continued conversations consider priorities for a parking structure, priorities for station planning, (Who does the LRT serve – residents or visitors?), the City Council wants to ensure the positives outweigh the negatives. With that, the City Council fully recognizes that the LRT project will provide transit options, especially for those who are transit dependent and may ultimately reduce dependency and cost of owning automobiles and theoretically reduce vehicle congestion. Again, thank you for the opportunity to formally address the project office and Corridor Management Committee.

Best,



Tim Sandvik
City of Robbinsdale – City Manager