



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Community Advisory Committee Meeting
October 10, 2016
Blue Line Project Office
5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200
Crystal, MN 55428
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

Meeting Summary

CAC Members: Vicki Moore, Steve Schmidt, Gillian Rosenquist, Giuseppe Marrari, Carol Vosberg, Catherine Fleming, Ken Rodgers, La Shella Sims, Rich Baker

Agency Staff and Guests: Dan Pfeiffer, Juan Rangel, Rachel Dammel, David Davies, Colin Evenson, Sam O’Connell, Alicia Vap, Jim Toulouse, Nick Landwer, Kathryn O’Brien

1. Approval of July 11th and August 8th Meeting Minutes

Minutes were approved with no edits.

2. Environmental Update – Record of Decision

Kathryn O’Brien presented. The Record of Decision (ROD) was signed on September 19, 2016. The ROD formally concludes the environmentally review process and signifies FTA’s commitment to the project. It also lays out the final mitigation commitments for the project. Any changes in mitigation need to be approved by FTA.

Next steps:

- Develop mitigation monitoring program
- Finalize environmental permitting
- Comply with requirements of Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement (historic interpretive design elements, construction protection plan development)

Catherine Fleming asked if the ROD addressed the timeline and budget for this element of the project. Kathryn O’Brien replied that it is part of the overall budget. Catherine Fleming asked what would trigger a supplemental document. Kathryn O’Brien said it depends on FTA’s interpretation of the change, and FTA would make that determination. Catherine Fleming asked if any changes in federal leadership could affect this project. Kathryn O’Brien said since it’s already signed, changes in administration would not affect the ROD.

3. Design Updates

Freight Rail Corridor

Nick Landwer presented.

- Construction Staging
 - There is limited working space within the freight corridor
 - Has been identified as critical path for construction
 - Freight rail operations will be maintained during construction
 - Multiple phases will be needed for construction
 - First stage – structural stabilization, build load transfer platforms, BNSF rail stays in existing location
 - Second stage – load transfer platforms in place on west side, foundations for Xcel towers installed on west side, new track installed for freight, shift transmission lines from east to west side
 - Third stage – Xcel transmission towers in service, freight rail shifted over to permanent location
 - Fourth stage – load transfer platforms built on east side to start constructing LRT track
 - Fifth stage – construct base and tracks for LRT
 - Two years of construction needed in this area

Catherine Fleming asked if there had been discussion of putting the transmission lines underground. Nick Landwer said there are issues with the lines overheating if they are underground. They also need huge vaults, which is structurally and physically hard to do. Catherine asked if there would be Xcel service interruptions. Nick said Xcel will have to manage that but they'll try to work during a low demand time frame. Catherine asked if there will be an increase in capacity. Jim Toulouse replied they will stay the same. Catherine asked if there would be a safe zone established so the public can't access the construction zone while they are doing electrical work. Nick said there will be a clearing zone where there is no vegetation, but the lines will be substantially higher than they are today.

Carol Vosberg asked if there is an existing bike path in the trench and where that will go. Nick Landwer replied that it will be rebuilt close to its current location. Carol asked if there will be stations in this area shown in the picture. Nick said Plymouth Ave Station will be built in this area.

Ken Rodgers asked when the transmission lines get moved if they put new wire in or if they move the existing wires. Jim Toulouse said they will put new wire in. BNSF will also get new tracks.

Vicki Moore asked if the freight rail upgrade will carry the existing weight limit of the tracks or if it will be increased. Jim Toulouse said he doesn't know what the current load limit is, but if the standards have changed it may be increased. Vicki asked if they could let them know if the load limit changes. She also asked how many feet will be between the freight and LRT. Nick Landwer said the minimum is 25 feet, and in those locations there is a protection wall. Vicki asked what kind of cargo will be coming through the corridor once LRT is running. Nick said their primary customer currently is a lumber yard. Vicki said that as much information as can be provided on what will be carried would be helpful.

Rich Baker asked how long this section of the corridor is (Section 2A). Nick Landwer said it's roughly two miles long. Rich asked how much of the two miles will need load transfer platforms. Nick said a good portion of it will need some sort of soil corrections. Rich asked why it's needed now if it wasn't needed for the existing freight rail. Nick said the existing rail has settled and BNSF just keeps filling it in. LRT doesn't have tolerance for that settlement so it needs to be corrected structurally.

Gillian Rosenquist asked if the powerlines would be moved to the west in this full section of the corridor. Jim Toulouse replied that they would.

Vicki Moore asked if double stacked containers would come through the corridor and they tipped over if the 25-foot separation would be enough. Nick Landwer said the 25 feet meets current standards for separation. Because this is a spur, it's unlikely double stacked containers would be used.

La Shella Sims asked if there have been conversations about safety and how the freight fits in with environmental justice. Nick Landwer said they will be meeting modern design standards so that will increase safety. In terms of future capacity, this project won't add or detract from BNSF's capacity. How they will operate and function is separate from this project. La Shella replied that the freight rail also has some responsibility for safety and environmental justice and having conversations with the neighborhoods. Sam O'Connell added that this issue is on Governor Dayton's radar and there is now someone in the governor's office who works on freight rail issues. La Shella said she thinks it would be appropriate to have someone from the railroad come speak to this body.

Catherine Fleming asked if it was possible that the freight train could be at both the Golden Valley and Plymouth Ave stations at once. Nick replied that it is possible but wouldn't affect LRT operations.

Steve Schmidt said we need to remember this is a short amount of track on their whole system, and the rest won't be changing just because of changes to this short piece of track.

- Canadian Pacific Rail Crossing
 - Location of existing BNSF/CP rail crossing
 - Will relocate BNSF track and crossing diamond 15 feet to the west of the current alignment
 - Will construct new LRT bridge structure over CP rail
 - Bridge will be 1,334 feet long
 - There will be 24-foot clearance from top of rail to bottom of structure
 - Bridge spans are about 120 feet apart
 - Need to maintain freight rail operation during construction of new LRT bridge

Plymouth Avenue Station Area

Jim Toulouse presented.

- Plymouth Avenue Bridge
 - Project will replace Plymouth Ave bridge – design includes LRT portal, freight portal, and trail/creek portal

- Will be a four span bridge and allow for a wide bottom creek rather than a channelized creek
 - Length will be expanded by about 65 feet
- Met Council Environmental Services pipe under existing creek will be reconstructed
- Opportunity to create a more natural channel for Bassett Creek under Plymouth Ave and disturb less vegetation
- Will construct a pedestrian bridge over Bassett Creek to the trail at Plymouth Ave

Gillian Rosenquist asked how bikes would get up to Plymouth Ave. Jim Toulouse said they will put a tunnel along the staircase, which is what the park board opted for instead of a longer path.

La Shella Sims asked if there would be an elevator to the station. Jim Toulouse said there will be stairs and an elevator from the bridge down onto the platform.

Giuseppe Marrari asked how long the Plymouth Ave bridge would be unavailable for. Jim Toulouse said it will probably be one construction season, which is six to nine months. There will be coordination with other projects in the area and to make sure east-west crossings are available.

Steve Schmidt asked if the reconstruction of the creek area is being designed for a 100-year flood. Jim Toulouse said yes, the bridge will be two feet above the 100-year flood elevation.

Vicki Moore asked if there could be a temporary walkway bridge to connect to Theodore Wirth Park during construction of the bridge. Kathryn O'Brien said that since this is parkland they have to be cognizant of impacts to other areas of the park. Nick Landwer added that their goal is to limit the time of disruption as much as possible.

- Secondary Access

- Two access points are typical for LRT platforms for public safety purposes
- Primary access is from Plymouth Ave bridge via elevator/stairs on south end of platform, and second access was planned at southern track crossing
- Limited sight distance for train operators and passengers at southern track crossings
- Due to this safety concern, southern track crossing removed and access added at north end of platform

Ken Rodgers asked if there was an alternate path if the elevator is inoperable. Jim Toulouse said there would be an ADA compliant walkway from the north end of the platform.

Giuseppe Marrari asked if there would be any concerns that bicyclists would try to go down the ramp and cross the tracks. Jim Toulouse said the wall size itself (6 feet tall) should be a deterrent. Jim said there will also be robust signage that the ramp doesn't connect to the trail on the west side of the tracks. Alicia Vap added that there will also be a fence along the bike trail and the station area.

Catherine Fleming asked if there was any discussion of economic development in this area. Nick Landwer replied that this block is all parkland with residential on the south side. Alicia Vap said the county did station area planning, and she believes the neighborhood and the city wanted to focus

development more on Plymouth and Penn and leave the single family residential the way it is in this area.

OMF Architecture

Colin Evenson presented.

- OMF will be located in Brooklyn Park at northern terminus by Oak Grove Parkway station
- Site is 10+ acres
- There will ¼ mile of non-revenue track to get to the OMF
- There will be some sort of parkland on three sides of the site – the south side is planned to be a mixed use development
- Building will be about 26 feet tall and the west wall will be almost 600 feet long
 - Designers introduced varying vertical bands of reflective material to reflect parkland setting back out and break up the long wall
 - Color scheme – slate gray to make the building feel smaller, more muted; office area will be lighter to contrast with the slate gray and provide identifiable front door

Steve Schmidt said the Brooklyn Park planning commission has recently discussed design of long buildings and would recommend they look at that. They have also been adamant that rooftops are properly screened (e.g., new building along 169, buildings along 610 on south side except Olympus building). Colin Evenson said they have been looking to see how many pieces of equipment they can take off the roof and put inside on a mezzanine. They will also group as many pieces of equipment together that they can on the roof. Carol Vosberg added that the building feels so flat and industrial and asked why it is fenced. Colin Evenson said they fence the whole area for security purposes since there are loop tracks on site. Steve Schmidt also noted they the planning commission has recommended that projects such as this have a work session prior to having a public hearing.

Vicki Moore asked if they've considered solar panels on the roof or a green roof. Steve Schmidt replied that he didn't think solar panels would work in Brooklyn Park and that green roofs have fallen out of favor a bit.

La Shella Sims asked where the OMF would be in relation to the college. Nick Landwer said it is a few miles north, near the Target campus.

Catherine Fleming asked if there would be environmental concerns for the activities inside the OMF. Kathryn O'Brien said they will go through a permitting process, particularly for the painting station, and there will be protocols established for disposal of wastes. Colin Evenson added they also do a large amount of recycling.

Colin Evenson also noted that they took people from the City of Brooklyn Park on a tour of the OMF in Saint Paul to demonstrate how quiet and clean they are.

Sam O'Connell added that the OMF offers well-paying jobs and will be an employment opportunity for the area. She also noted that this is one thing we hope to get feedback from the public on during open houses we'll have in November.

4. Station Design Update

Alicia Vap presented.

Blue Line stations each have unique architecture, which the neighborhoods liked but was difficult for maintenance and accessibility. Green Line platforms are much more consistent but are differentiated by station art and colors. Artwork is not part of the project budget for this project – it is now prohibited by FTA.

Design priorities:

- Respond to lessons learned from past projects
- Provide safe and accessible facilities
- Enhance customer experience
- Develop design consistency
 - Customer wayfinding
 - Constructability/cost
 - Maintenance
- Respond to character and context of each site
- Incorporate Section 106/Secretary of Interior Standards

Things that can vary:

- Concrete platform treatment
- Column paint color
- Standard glass panel sizes
- Underside material and color
- Roof edge

Next steps:

- Preview station design concepts at November meeting
- Share concepts at November community open houses
 - Educate community about station design evolution
 - Receive feedback about concepts – did we miss anything? are we on the right track?

Sam O’Connell added that they pulled in information from the station area planning process about what people liked and what they didn’t, and we want to share that with the community as well.

Ken Rodgers asked if there was any possibility of partnering with community organizations to build community art on the stations. Sam O’Connell replied that on Southwest they are working on varying color and texture, but Hennepin County is also working to bring together both the public and private sector to discuss art at the stations. Part of the conversation is about who owns and maintains any art that is built.

Vicki Moore said it sounds like Metro Transit is moving towards uniformity, and she doesn’t think her community will see what they expect of the station in their neighborhood. Alicia Vap said that everything above the shelter top can look different from station to station, so that’s what the architects have been focusing on. Sam O’Connell added that there has been a deliberate effort to

focus on what makes each station area unique and what the communities provided during station area planning.

Catherine Fleming asked if advertising space is sold on platforms. Alicia Vap said there are typically large information kiosks with routing and schedule information on one side and advertising on the other. Catherine asked if the money from the advertising sales could be used for art. Alicia replied that that revenue goes toward operations.

5. Discussion

Steve Schmidt asked what funding still needs to fall into place. Sam O'Connell said that most of the local funding has been secured, except for the part from the legislature. We also still need to apply to FTA for funding after we have all of our local funds in place. Kathryn O'Brien added that there is an agreement called a Full Funding Grant Agreement, that we don't have yet, but that does give some protection to a project's federal funding.

Catherine Fleming asked if the project is limited on where the funds can come from. Sam O'Connell said not really and noted that Brooklyn Park has recently put in additional funding. We are competing nationally so it is important to demonstrate our local funding is secure.

Vicki Moore said she doesn't think there has been enough discussion of how this project will benefit greater Minnesota. Sam O'Connell added that given the number of suppliers needed to build the line, almost all of the counties in the state will benefit economically from it.

6. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 pm. The next CAC meeting is a joint meeting with the BAC and is scheduled for November 7, 2016 at the Crystal Community Center.