



METRO Blue Line Extension

Meeting of the Community Advisory Committee

Monday, March 1, 2021
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Meeting Summary

CAC Members:

Kathy Fraser, Cory Funk, Caroline Kalloh, Craig Gottschalk, Jason Greenberg, Gene Montanez, Scott Booher, Felipe Sosa, Cathy Spann, PeggySue Imihy, Guiuseepe Marrari, Catherine Fleming, Ken Rodgers, Adam Hutchens, John Wolhaupter, Ellis Beck, Neeyra Estrada Pena, Brett Buckner, Jennifer Hill

Agency Staff and Guests: Sophia Ginis, Andrew Gillett, Jason Tintes, Cathy Gold Dan Soler, Jesse Struve, Jim Voll, Joan Vanhala, John Sutter, Kerri Pearce Ruch, Kristine Stehly, Kyle Mianulli, Nick Landwer, Sam O’Connell, Liz Morice

Meeting Summary

1. Call to Order/Welcome and Introductions

Sophia Ginis, Metropolitan Council, called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. She shared an overview of the agenda and what to expect with the meeting. Sam O’Connell, Metropolitan Council, welcomed the new members that they appreciated the group member’s time and valued the input from their work. Dan Soler, Hennepin County, also extended his welcome to everyone and shared a little about the structure of the groups. The new members introduced themselves.

2. Committee Housekeeping Discussion

Sophia Ginis reviewed the charter text for the group. She shared the purpose of the group and asked for feedback on this purpose. She listed the responsibilities of members, reporting requirements and other important characteristics of being members of the CAC. Catherine Fleming asked for an introduction regarding the CMC for the group. Sophia shared the responsibilities of co-chairs to report to the CMC and participate with. Sam O’Connell emphasized the that the CMC is very interested in what the CAC has to say, and there is a formal part of the agenda for CAC members to share summaries of the discussions and concerns of the CAC.

The group discussed a possible change to a different night of the week, suggested by Adam Hutchens. Several people weighed in, with the possibility of Wednesday nights working for other members of the group. Sophia offered to send out a doodle poll to review a potential new meeting time.



Brett Buckner inquired about connecting with other members. Caroline Kalloh asked about committee members connecting in specific cities meeting in smaller groups. Jason Greenberg asked if they could meet on their own and asked what the parameters were regarding that. Sam O'Connell emphasized that its important to document meetings and capture the content of what is discussed. She also shared that contact info is private, but Sophia can include that permission request in the email about the scheduling poll. Jason Greenberg said Felipe Sosa said they would be interested in being co-chairs. She asked for a sign of support for the co-chairs. Sophia announced that based on approval shown by their peers, the new co-chairs were Jason Greenberg and Felipe Sosa.

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 described the process for the analysis of potential routes and the high-level schedule going forward. He reviewed the issues with the originally planned alignment and BNSF. Dan shared what to expect as route options develop including a review of how different areas of the corridor are impacted differently by the change with BNSF.

Sam O'Connell highlighted what is not included in the upcoming routes. The route options that people will see will not include a full analysis or design, route configuration, all right-of-way impacts, ridership, travel time, station locations, an inventory of project risks or costs. These are not areas that are ignored, but they just are not yet completed. She emphasized that there are continued conversations on anti-displacement strategies, equity, investments related to the previous alignment and other issues based on community feedback. Catherine Fleming asked what the complications may be with the federal government. Sophia Ginis said that FTA would like to see the community-supported route. They are continuing to engage the FTA, they meet quarterly, and they are up to date. Dan emphasized that project's mode (BRT, etc.) and termini. The FTA is concerned that the route is community-supported. Jason asked about communities investing and developing around light rail and how this impacts communities that were developing with the old alignment. Dan Soler shared that many of the station area plans will need as the route goes south. Scott Booher inquired about how much optimism regarding the new route development, and the ability of the project to find a community supported alignment within the year. Sam O'Connell shared that staff initially were not optimistic, and the community was rightfully disappointed, and she said that the passion people have shared around this project has shown this is possible. Dan Soler emphasized that over 100 million dollars were spent developing the old project. Changing the alignment and moving forward was a difficult decision for policy makers, and to find the right investment moving forward. Sam O'Connell shared the project goals with the group for review and feedback.



4. Furthering Public Engagement

Sophia Ginis shared info regarding the communications and engagement approach. Caroline Kalloh asked a question about park and ride lots and whether the locations have been identified. Sophia emphasized that these are an important part of the project.

Joan Vanhala, Hennepin County, shared an update regarding the interviews and listening sessions from the first round of engagement during the new direction. She provided a summary of the activities. She said overall the community is frustrated about the change, but they are ready for solutions. Joan shared key destinations from the survey responses. She also reviewed the schedule and process for finding engagement consultants, and how they identified additional consultants to meet those community needs. Catherine Fleming asked how these groups will stay connected with the CAC and BAC. Joan said that was an important point going forward. She also asked about the survey and if people are interested in going to jobs (from the corridor). Sophia shared that the survey results were very consistent with the Metro Transit survey results as a whole. Sophia emphasized that during Covid, outreach was more difficult, and this is such an important time for decision-making.

5. Upcoming Meetings:

Sophia Ginis proposed an additional meeting, which would be an additional joint meeting for the CAC and BAC Monday, March 22nd at 6:00PM. Several members shared that they would be ok and in favor of this. Sophia emphasized that this would not happen on a regular basis. Ken Rogers had a question about the consultant contracts, and if any groups were specific to people with disabilities. Joan Vanhala said that no group was specific to people with disabilities. Ken said this should not be an afterthought, or an aside, but an intentional part of engagement. Gene Montanez shared that he thought the project was very doable. Dan emphasized that this is a transformative project and this work should be fun in addition to rewarding. Sophia shared her appreciation of the committee's participation, and items to expect shortly.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned the meeting at 8:10 PM.