



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Community Advisory Committee Meeting
May 9, 2016
Blue Line Project Office
5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200
Crystal, MN 55428
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

Meeting Summary

CAC Members: Gene Bakke, Kate Catron, George Selman, Carol Vosberg, Chris Berne, Gillian Rosenquist, La Shella Sims, Catherine Fleming

Agency Staff and Guests: Sam O’Connell, David Davies, Rachel Dammel, Lt. Michael Johnson, Nick Landwer, Jim Toulouse, MarySue Abel, Paul Danielson

1. Approval of April 11, 2016 Meeting Minutes

There were no comments on the meeting minutes.

2. Safety & Security – Metro Transit Police Department

Lt. Michael Johnson presented. He works with Metro Transit Police West Command.

The Metro Transit Police was created by the legislature in 1993, and the statute was updated in 2008. It is a fully licensed police department with about 200 officers.

They protect the transportation needs of:

- 90,000,000 passengers per year
- 1,400 bus operators
- 910 buses
- 100 light rail vehicle operators
- 75 light rail vehicles
- 24 Northstar engineers/conductors
- 8 locomotives/18 passenger cars
- 8 facilities
- 90 cities
- 8 counties (Hennepin, Ramsey, Anoka, Dakota, Scott, Washington, Carver, and Sherburne)

The department is split into East Command (Saint Paul side of the cities) and West Command (Minneapolis side of the cities). The Blue Line Extension will fall under West Command.

Officers are deployed in a variety of ways:

- Squad assignments
- Foot beats
 - Saint Paul and Minneapolis
 - Bike officers
- Teams dedicated to riding:
 - Bus
 - Light rail
 - Northstar
- 7th/Nicollet substation
- Alliance Bank substation
- Mall of America substation
- Counter Threat Unit (CTU)
- Special events

The Metro Transit Police also have:

- 4 canines – explosive detection and patrol
- Crash reconstruction unit

Policing strategies:

- Neighborhood oriented
- Policing beats Downtown Improvement District (DID), 7th/Nicollet, BOMA, BCTC, MOA
- Operators Academy
- Be good partners, plug-in, and assist

Partnerships:

- TSA
- FAMS (federal air marshals)
 - Conduct VIPR (visual intermodal inspection and response) details
- APD (airport police)
- BPD
- MPLS
- SPPD
- MN HSEM (grants)

Some details on the different modes the Metro Transit Police cover include:

- Bus operations:
 - Fare inspection on Red Line (similar to light rail)
 - Typical bus has a minimum of five cameras that are always recording
- Light Rail:
 - 12 officers dedicated to Blue Line
 - 22 officers dedicated to Green Line

- Security features:
 - PA system
 - Cameras
 - Emergency phones
 - Verbal message sign boards
- Northstar Commuter Rail:
 - Officers on morning and evening rush hour
 - Share track with BNSF and trains operated by BNSF train crews
 - Trains dispatched out of Fort Worth, TX

Metro Transit Police cover a number of special events, including:

- Twins – 80 games
- Saints – 54 games
- Vikings – 10 games
- Gophers – 9 games

The police department conducts a number of emergency management trainings, including:

- Crash drills
- Active shooter drills

Other routes that will soon be added to their jurisdiction:

- A-Line – 2016
- C-Line – 2019
- Orange Line – 2019

Gillian Rosenquist said that a concern in Golden Valley is that the stations are below street level and asked how the police would address that or if they have a similar situation elsewhere. Lt. Johnson said there are some more secluded park-and-rides on Northstar that they monitor for break-ins, and the parking at the Golden Valley station will be covered by cameras. They have not experience safety issues on the Northstar stations that are more secluded.

Carol Vosberg asked how the police communicate with communities. Lt. Johnson said that for Green Line they had monthly meetings with Saint Paul senior commander to address any issues that were arising. If any issues start to occur in a neighborhood, they can contact the Metro Transit police. Officers attend community meetings as well. Carol Vosberg asked if they will add more officers for the Blue Line Extension. Lt. Johnson said yes, but he can't say how many at this time. Carol Vosberg asked if there are call boxes at every stop. Lt. Johnson said yes, and they go to the rail control center which dispatches officers (functions like 911). Response time can be within seconds.

Ken Rodgers said visually impaired people can't see the emergency call boxes and asked what can be done to ensure that people like him can detect them. Nick Landwer said they can look into audible features. Ken Rodgers asked who monitors the cameras and if they are all visible at once. Lt. Johnson said they aren't all actively monitored but they can be accessed at any time. The transit and rail control centers also have access to the camera system. They typically pull up the busiest

locations since that's where issues tend to be. The cameras are always recording, and the footage is retained for about a month.

Kate Catron asked Ken Rodgers if it would be helpful if the call boxes were in the same location on every platform. Nick Landwer said the platform footprint is fairly consistent but not exactly the same. Ken Rodgers said that depending on the situation, especially if he is disoriented, the sound is really an important beacon. Carol Vosberg asked what other places have done to address this issue. Sam O'Connell added that about two months ago for the Green Line Extension they invited the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC) to a platform mockup and had Ken and others come in and share what the challenges for them are. La Shella Sims asked if that activity included people in wheelchairs. Sam O'Connell said yes, it also includes people in wheelchairs, the elderly, and others.

La Shella Sims asked if the call boxes can be reached by people in wheelchairs. Paul Danielson said yes they can be.

La Shella Sims said that the Minneapolis public school system mandated that students ride public transit and asked if there are reports regarding behavior that can be accessed. Lt. Johnson said they don't have many school pass issues. That is something they track in their reporting, but it isn't something that the public can access. If there are issues, they can revoke the student's bus pass. La Shella Sims noted that since the discipline is handled by the police that might be first time juveniles are introduced to the justice system instead of discipline being handled by the school. Lt. Johnson said minor incidents are referred to the school.

George Selman asked if the Metro Transit Police interacted with all police departments or just the large ones. Lt. Johnson said they work with all of the jurisdictions (including the airport police) that transit is located in and will partner with all of the communities along the Blue Line Extension. Paul Danielson added that when Northstar started up, Minneapolis and Big Lake were treated the same way – all the cities went through the same trainings.

George Selman said one of the earliest opposition to LRT is that it will bring crime to the community. His response is that it's not adding more work for the police department, it's adding more resources for their police. He asked if that was correct. Lt. Johnson said yes, they act as an extension of the city police, and there will be more officers present. For the Green Line, crime didn't increase, some just moved to a different mode. George Selman asked if someone is on or near the platform and dials 911, will Metro Transit Police accept dispatch calls from Hennepin County? Lt. Johnson said yes.

Catherine Fleming asked if technology for shots fired will be on the trains. Lt. Johnson said he is guessing no since that is a City of Minneapolis initiative. It also wouldn't work in a closed area since it needs to triangulate the sound.

Chris Berne asked if they also coordinate with the University of Minnesota police. Lt. Johnson said yes, they also work closely with that police department as well.

David Davies added that as an example of how Metro Transit Police are present in a community, he went to a community safety event as a resident of Minneapolis a few weeks ago, and Metro Transit police were there to discuss transit in that specific community.

3. Hwy 81 Pedestrian Crossings at Bass Lake Road & 63rd Avenue

Nick Landwer presented. At the February CMC meetings, the CMC directed staff to continue its efforts towards development of an at-grade crossing or bridge crossing at 63rd and a pedestrian crossing at Bass Lake Road for the eventual inclusion in the scope of the project.

- Bass Lake Road Pedestrian Crossing Intersection Improvements
 - Hennepin County is implementing improvements in 2016:
 - Wider median, add pedestrian push button in median
 - Widen crosswalks from 6-8 feet to 12 feet for visibility, add black paint for contrast
 - Raise crosswalks in free right turn lanes
 - Add stop bars
 - These improvements are happening now because they won't be impacted later by construction of the LRT project
- Bass Lake Road Pedestrian Bridge
 - BPO to recommend for June 2 meeting:
 - Pedestrian bridge design with construction cost estimate
 - Operations and maintenance plan
 - Site analysis underway – utility coordination, pier location
 - Research maintenance responsibilities at other jurisdictions
- April 26 Brooklyn Park Tour
 - Columbia Heights Pedestrian Bridge
 - Pedestrian bridge constructed in 2011, replaced former structure built in 1970, owned by MnDOT and maintained by Columbia Heights
 - Elevators were considered for new structure but eliminated due to maintenance concerns
 - Close proximity to several schools
 - At-grade crossings were removed
 - Generally high compliance with school children, supported by educational campaign
 - Poorer compliance with general public (about ½ cross illegally at-grade)
 - 66th and France Intersection Improvements
 - Pedestrian bridge awarded regional solicitation funds, at-grade improvements constructed instead
 - France Ave is 6-lane road with turn lanes
 - Average daily traffic of 30,000 cars per day, 35-45 mph speed limit (similar to CR 81)

- Free rights removed
- Roadway: lanes narrowed, wider crosswalks, set back from intersection, “Dutch” planted corners (raised planters on corners to add protection)
 - Ken Rodgers asked Nick Landwer to better describe the planted corners. Nick said the planter pushes pedestrians to the crosswalk location rather than the corner of the sidewalk. Chris Berne added that cars ignored the stop bars and blocked the cross walk, so that is an issue that would need to be addressed. Ken Rodgers said blind people get their bearings by going to the corner, so this would be totally different and would not be something blind people would expect. Catherine Fleming added that people will creep up to get the corner if they are trying to take a right turn. Ken Rodgers asked if those intersections had accessible pedestrian signals. Jim Toulouse said that the signals were retrofitted when this project was done.
- Median: widened, added push buttons and decorative lighting
- 63rd Avenue Pedestrian Crossing
 - BPO to recommend for June 2 CMC meeting:
 - Pedestrian crossing improvements with construction cost estimate (for both at-grade and bridge crossings)
 - Recommend operations and maintenance responsibilities

Chris Berne asked if buses would have to stop at LRT and freight tracks. Paul Danielson said that buses are currently exempt from stopping before crossing LRT tracks, but they will have to coordinate with FRA on this issue.

Ken Rodgers asked what the speed of the freight rail is. Paul Danielson replied that the speed limit for the area that would be shared with LRT is 25 mph.

La Shella Sims asked what would happen if someone didn’t get the whole way across a pedestrian crossing. Nick Landwer said that if you start crossing when the walk sign comes up, you should be able to comfortably cross the whole way. If people start after the walk signal has been on a while, they can stop in the median, and they are proposing adding push buttons in the median to call the walk sign to come back up.

Chris Berne asked if Hennepin County would wait to make the improvements at 63rd until this project decides what they are doing. Nick Landwer said those improvements can’t be made now because construction of the LRT would require the improvements to be redone.

4. Noise Walls

Kathryn O’Brien presented. She noted that the target date for publishing the Final EIS is June 24th.

Update on noise walls:

- Identified as mitigation measures for light rail vehicle generated noise
- Noise walls identified at locations in Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, and Crystal

- Three cross sections in locations with noise walls:
 - Noise barriers on retaining wall
 - Retaining walls as noise barriers
 - Noise barrier only
- Golden Valley noise walls
 - Kewanee Way from Manor Drive to north of 26th Avenue
 - Required noise barrier height of 10 feet (not the same scale as highway noise barriers)
 - Retaining wall will be used as base for noise barrier where possible
- Robbinsdale
 - Indiana Ave from 31 ½ Ave to north of 33rd Ave
 - Required noise barrier height of 10 feet
 - Retaining wall will be used as base for noise barrier where possible
 - East side of corridor from 34th Ave to 40 ½ Ave
 - Required noise barrier height varies from 6 feet to 8 feet
 - Retaining wall will be used as base for noise barrier where possible
 - West side of corridor from 36th Ave to end of June Ave
 - 6 foot crash wall used as noise barrier/crash wall hybrid
- Crystal
 - East side of corridor from 45th Ave to Corvallis
 - Required noise barrier height of 10 feet
 - Break in barrier required at W Broadway crossing

Kate Catron asked why in Robbinsdale on the west side only a crash wall is needed and not a noise barrier when the west side is closer to the freight tracks. Kathryn O'Brien said the noise analysis focused on LRT, and the freight didn't really have noise impact. LRT is much more frequent, and freight is pretty minimal in what it adds to the existing ambient noise. There is more impact on the east side because the homes are closer to the LRT tracks.

Catherine Fleming asked what the acceptable noise level is. Kathryn O'Brien replied that it varies, but FTA defines impacts as moderate or severe. Severe impacts are typically an increase of 5 decibels or more from existing conditions. The louder the existing ambient noise, the harder it is to get into the severe impact category. Catherine Fleming asked what the impact to the environment would be from vibration. Kathryn O'Brien said the vibration from LRT is very minimal. The tracks are a continual smooth surface (they are made from continuously welded rail) so for a typical structure there won't be any vibration impacts. There may be impacts where there is very sensitive research equipment (e.g., at the University of Minnesota by the Green Line). Gene Bakke added that keeping the wheels round also keeps the vibration down, which is done for LRT but usually not freight.

La Shella Sims asked if any noise mitigation is needed where the train enters the trench from Olson Memorial Highway since there are homes in that area. Kathryn O'Brien said there are four homes in that area where interior testing will be done. Tonight the information focused on noise walls, but there are some areas where building a noise wall doesn't make sense.

La Shella Sims asked how the freight line will be impacted when construction starts. Nick Landwer said their designers and engineers are working on how to maintain rail traffic during construction. There may be times where freight traffic needs to be shut down, but it wouldn't be for long.

Chris Berne asked if Kathryn O'Brien had any information regarding Hennepin County's plans for noise mitigation for the W Broadway roadway project. Kathryn O'Brien said the last she knew noise mitigation was not needed. Nick Landwer said the City is considering building a uniform fence along W Broadway.

5. Design Updates

Traction Power Substations (TPSS) & System Elements

Jim Toulouse presented. Systems elements break down into two main items: signal bungalows and grade crossing bungalows.

- Systems elements locations
 - Location review looked at parcel ownership and followed the following order in determination of optimal sites:
 - Met Council property
 - Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority property
 - Other public agency property (MnDOT, county, city)
 - Private property acquired as part of the LRT project
 - Vacant private property
 - 15 TPSSs
 - 6 on public parcels
 - 0 on BNSF right-of-way
 - 9 on private parcels
 - 15 signal bungalows
 - 7 on public parcels
 - 2 on BNSF right-of-way
 - 6 on private parcels
 - 12 grade crossing bungalows
 - 1 on public parcel
 - 10 on BNSF right-of-way
 - 1 on private parcel

Gillian Rosenquist asked if the locations were best guesses. Jim Toulouse said yes, they've identified parcels they would like to use but the locations aren't finalized yet.

Catherine Fleming asked if the locations along Olson Memorial Highway were on residential properties. Jim Toulouse said they would be on MnDOT right-of-way but adjacent to residential properties. Catherine Fleming asked if there were any hazards associated with them. Jim Toulouse said not that he knew of.

Next steps for TPSSs and Systems Elements:

- Continue working with project stakeholders to finalize locations

- Develop site plans
- Investigate fencing and screening options as design advances
 - TPSSs are typically fenced off
 - Signal and grade crossing bungalows are typically less screened

Gillian Rosenquist asked if trees and brush would need to be cleared for the location along Kewanee Way. Jim Toulouse said they are looking at an area that is already partially cleared, but some additional clearing may be needed.

Golden Valley Road/Theodore Wirth Park Intersection

Nick Landwer presented. A signalized intersection was recommended by the MPRB, City, and County. A signal offers better bicycle and pedestrian access and would function at an acceptable level of service for vehicular traffic.

The next step is to receive public comments regarding design details at public meetings this summer.

6. Met Council Press Releases Discussion

Sam O'Connell presented. There were three news releases the Met Council issued in the last few weeks. The first is about development along the Green Line (does not include stadiums). The second is about transit access being a major factor for home buyers. The third discusses the employee and employer perspective of light rail and the reverse commute opportunity it provides.

Chris Berne said that he requested this be an item on tonight's agenda. In the second press release it states that property values in LRT-connected neighborhoods along the Blue Line Extension in Minneapolis, Golden Valley, and Crystal are expected to perform better than their control group and better than the region. Robbinsdale and Brooklyn Park are not included in that list, so Chris is looking for more information on what the impact would be to property values along the W Broadway corridor. Sam O'Connell said some research conducted by the Center for Transportation Studies was also included in the committee's packet. It is generally accepted nationally that property values near transit investments (within ½ mile) will go up for both commercial and residential properties. Chris Berne said he is more interested in what happens to the properties that are within a couple hundred feet, not ½ mile away. Sam O'Connell said that they are required to do before and after studies on land values so that will be done for the Blue Line Extension as well and will add to the ongoing body of research in the region.

Catherine Fleming asked if they could make the parcel data available to the committee that shows which parcels are available and who owns what. Sam O'Connell said that the TOD office is working to inventory that information, and Hennepin County has parcel information available online. She will follow up with Catherine and they can make that information available.

George Selman said it might be valuable to do a tour for folks to see what it is like right along the line and get a sense of the noise level and what it's actually like when it is operating. Sam O'Connell said they are doing that for the Green Line Extension and it could be arranged for the Blue Line CAC too if they wanted. George Selman said it would also be helpful for the residents that would actually be impacted.

Chris Berne asked if the data for the before and after study can be shared with the communities and broken down by distance away from the project. Sam O'Connell said the before and after study for Central Corridor (Green Line) will be available in about a year. They can do some more digging with the Center for Transportation Studies to see what finer level of detail is available.

7. 2016 Outreach Overview

Sam O'Connell presented.

- Key topics for 2016:
 - LRT operations
 - Safety and security
 - Environmental process
 - Right-of-way process
 - Survey work – environmental, geotechnical
 - Technology
 - Parks
 - Presented via one-pagers, newsletters, website content, community presentations
- Corridor-wide activities:
 - Topics:
 - Station design
 - 30% civil design
 - Park-and-ride design
 - Traction power substations/signal bungalows
 - Fencing/streetscaping
 - Open houses, community meetings/presentations, newsletters, website, city council presentations
- Community-specific activities:
 - Topics:
 - Roadway modifications
 - Aesthetics
 - Environmental testing
 - Operations and maintenance facility design
 - Property owner meetings
 - Neighborhood meetings/presentations, property owner meetings

8. Meeting Schedule

MarySue Abel presented.

The advisory committee schedule over the next couple months will include:

- Update on project scope
 - TPAC: May 31
 - Joint CAC/BAC meeting: May 31 (will be held at Crystal City Hall)
- Recommendation of project scope and budget
 - CMC: June 2

- Action on project scope and budget
 - CMC: June 23

The schedule for the funding partners will be as follows:

- Recommendations on project scope and budget
 - CTIB: June 15
 - HCRRA: June 21
- Update on CMC recommendation on project scope and budget
 - HCRRA: June 12
 - Metropolitan Council: July 13
 - CTIB: July 20
- Approval of project scope and budget
 - Metropolitan Council Transportation Committee: August 8
 - Metropolitan Council: August 24

9. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 pm. The next CAC meeting is scheduled for May 31, 2016 at Crystal City Hall. The meeting that was originally scheduled for June 6 will not be held.