



METRO Blue Line Extension
Joint Meeting of the Business and Community Advisory Committees
April 15, 2015
Summit Academy OIC
935 Olson Memorial Highway
Minneapolis, MN 55405
6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Meeting Summary

CAC Members: Steven Schmidt, Carol Vosberg, Christopher Berne, Justin Youngbluth, Gene Bakke, George Selman, Kate Catron, Gillian Rosenquist, Giuseppe Marrari, Daniel Bonilla, Manysavanh Phothisane, Carol LaFleur

BAC Members: John Slama, Denny Walsh, Mark Steinhauser, Alison Pence, Stella Whitney-West, Stephen Erickson, Randy Bouskek, Charlie Jacobson

Agency Staff and Guests: Mark Fuhrmann, Sam O’Connell, Dan Pfeiffer, Sophia Ginis, Rachel Haase, Robin Kaufman, Kathryn O’Brien, John Welbes, Alicia Vap, Paul Danielson, Scott Reed, Darlene Walser, Dan Soler, Nick Landwer, Jim Toulouse, Emily Goellner, Marc Nevinski, Andrew Gillett, Denise Engen, Kim Berggren, Gary Cunningham, Gail Dorfman

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mark Fuhrmann welcomed the committee members to the first meeting for Business and Community Advisory Committees (BAC and CAC). Sam O’Connell asked committee members to introduce themselves and say what success of the Blue Line Extension project would look like to them. Responses included community acceptance; finding solutions to the various issues the project faces in the corridor communities; making sure community voices are heard; having a positive impact for everyone in the community; meeting the needs of the communities, including those with mobility challenges; delivering the project on-time; having LRT be safe and quiet for those along the corridor; building on what was started with the existing Blue Line; having people ask why we didn’t do it sooner rather than why it is there; use by a diverse pool of users; enhancing community connections, benefitting the corridor communities as well as the region as a whole; and providing economic development in communities served along with transportation for patients/clients/families.

2. Project Overview and Introduction to Staff

Dan Soler gave an overview of the Blue Line Extension LRT Project. He noted that success from the Met Council’s perspective is providing a transportation improvement and economic driver that meets the needs and concerns of the communities and is delivered on time and on budget.

This project is an extension of the Blue Line and a link in the area's LRT and public transportation system. There will be 10 or 11 new LRT stations and 13 miles of double track going through five communities: Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park. 27,000 daily rides are estimated by 2030. LRT has been successful in the region; both the existing Blue Line and Green Line have met ridership projections.

The project breaks into roughly three pieces: the portion along Olson Memorial Highway, the portion in an existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad right-of-way corridor, and the portion along West Broadway Avenue.

Dan Soler gave an overview of the project, including route, schedule, budget, and funding sources. He then introduced members of the project team, city staff, and council members. A video of a flyover of the corridor was shown.

3. Roles, Responsibilities, and Resources

Sam O'Connell presented. The BAC and CAC are shared advisory committees to the Blue Line Extension Corridor Management Committee (CMC) and the Hennepin County Community Works Steering Committee. Members of the BAC and CAC were appointed to share their own viewpoint as well as the views of the community they represent. The committees advise the CMC and Community Works Steering Committee, provide input on design, help maximize benefits of the project as it moves forward, and serve as resource for the community.

The BAC and CAC fit in the middle of the decision making process, which begins with Issue Resolution Teams (IRTs) then advances to the Technical Project Advisory Committee (TPAC). The technical information from the IRTs and TPAC is then presented to the BAC and CAC. The input from the BAC and CAC is provided to the CMC, which advises the Met Council. The Met Council will make the decisions on budget and scope of the project.

BAC and CAC members are appointed for a two year term. Members should report back to their appointing organization. We would like feedback from the committee members on communications and public involvement. We want members to feel safe and free to express their thoughts and opinions so it is important to listen to and respect the viewpoints of others and accept the outcomes of the Met Council's decisions.

To lead each advisory committee, we will seek co-chair appointments that have a corridor-wide perspective. The co-chairs will help set the meeting agendas and lead their committee. BPO and Hennepin County staff will identify topics for advisory committee feedback and guidance, develop agendas with the co-chairs, distribute agendas and meeting summaries, and post materials on the project website.

Sam O'Connell provided an overview of the BAC and CAC, including membership, roles, and responsibilities, as shown in the presentation.

Resources available to committee members include the project website (www.BlueLineExt.org) (each committee will have its own page), e-newsletters, text and/or email alerts, one-pagers about the project and issues, maps and plans, and other documents.

4. Hennepin County Community Works Overview

Darlene Walser, Hennepin County, is leading the community works part of the project, which is everything outside the LRT rails. The County had a transitway pre-planning study in 2012/2012 that looked at different stations along the LRT line. Focus of Community Works is stimulating economic development, strengthening and connecting people and places, innovating and advancing sustainability, enhancing the tax base, and leading collaborate planning and implementation. The County is able to leverage their investments with partnerships to investment in supporting community visions.

While BPO is working on the engineering, the County will build on the pre-planning work that was done and look at station area plans in more detail. After that they will look at the investment framework – as communities come up with ideas that aren't part of the project budget, how will those get funded?

Station area planning involves looking at the 11 stations and the ½ mile radius around them, which is about a 10 minute walk, and asking the following types of questions: What do people want to see in this area? What types of places do you want to create? How do you get to the stations? What existing elements do you want to see preserved? What would you like to see develop? What should the place feel like?

The first phase of station area planning looked at the 4 stations in Minneapolis and Golden Valley. This phase of planning is wrapping up and the investment framework phase will start later. The second phase that is looking at the 5 Brooklyn Park stations, 1 Robbinsdale station, and 1 Crystal station is starting now and will continue into next spring.

The County is in the process of creating a steering committee led by Commissioners Opat and Higgins that will begin meeting at the end of April.

5. 2015 Look Ahead

Design and Engineering

Nick Landwer presented. Activities included in the engineering phase include station design and selection of public art for station areas, identifying right-of-way needs and beginning the property acquisition process, final design and engineering, final cost estimate, revised risk assessment, freight rail reconstruction, construction invitation for bids, and light rail vehicle procurement.

Nick Landwer presented that 15 technical issues that have been identified in the corridor that are being addressed with the IRTs with city and park board staff, as shown in the presentation.

Environmental

Kathryn O'Brien presented. BPO is looking forward to publishing the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in a little over a year from now. It will include analysis on potential impacts to land use, community, property, businesses, historic properties, parks, visual, safety, transportation, water

resources, soils, plants, animals, noise, vibration, contaminated sites, and air quality. The Final EIS also makes final commitments to mitigation, which is taken very seriously by the federal government.

In addition to coordinating with the engineering team, coordination with key agencies is underway, including the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Three Rivers Park District, State Historic Preservation Office, US Army Corps of Engineers, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and Wetland Conservation Act entities (Local Governmental Units).

Public Involvement

Sam O'Connell presented. BPO has an outreach team with coordinators for each community. These coordinators serve as the first point of contact for their communities and bring community input back to the rest of the team.

There will be public meetings throughout the course of the project that will be tailored in terms of size and format to best address the issues to be discussed. The outreach team will also update the project website, send out a newsletter, post information on Twitter and Facebook, send direct email, and develop other materials.

6. Questions and Answers

Page 2 of the charter under the membership section mentions the southwest metro. This will be corrected. The number of members from Brooklyn Park also needs to be corrected. Draft charters were provided tonight, and the content of the charters will be discussed at the first regular meeting of each committee. Updated charters with these corrections will be provided to committee members.

Should members attend public meetings? If you are able to participate in the events in your community it is a great opportunity to hear community voices, but it is up to you to decide what you are comfortable with in your role. If you are not able to attend events, summaries of what was heard will be provided at the next committee meeting.

What role will the BAC and CAC have in the station choice for Golden Valley? The decision has been made to do environmental and engineering investigation for both stations. More detailed information will be brought back to the committees for a recommendation. *When will the decision be made?* This fall BPO plans to have a project recommendation as a whole (a re-scoping of the project) that will go through the committees.

Are there other pieces of the transit system that will serve the east metro? The map included in the presentation shows projects that are currently active, but there are other projects in preliminary planning stages that would serve more areas in the region.

Will there be times when the committee is presented with information that is not yet public? Topics will have at least been discussed with city/agency staff. There may not have been general public outreach or meetings yet, but all information committees see will be posted on the project website, and the public can attend any of the committee meetings.

When will first meeting be? The first regular meetings will be the first week of May. A survey will be sent to members to identify the meeting time.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.