



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Community Advisory Committee Meeting
July 6, 2015
Blue Line Project Office
5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200
Crystal, MN 55428
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

Meeting Summary

CAC Members: Chris Berne, Giuseppe Marrari, Catherine Fleming, Steven Schmidt, Justin Youngbluth, Rich Baker, Daniel Bonilla, Carol Vosberg, Gillian Rosenquist, La Shella Sims

Agency Staff and Guests: Dan Pfeiffer, Sophia Ginis, David Davies, Jim Toulouse, Juan Rangel, Sam O’Connell, Nick Landwer, Alicia Vap, Dan Soler, Paul Danielson, Kathryn O’Brien, Emily Carr, Scott Reed, Samantha Markman, Laura Baenen, Darlene Walser

1. Welcome and Introductions

Dan Soler welcomed the committee members. Dan Pfeiffer asked if the CAC members had reviewed the previous meeting notes and if anyone had any comments. Chris Berne had one word change: on the May 4th meeting notes, page 7, item 7 “elected officials” should be “appointed officials.”

2. Outreach Update: Community Open Houses

Sam O’Connell presented on the open houses since the last CAC meeting.

- June 4th – Minneapolis and Golden Valley
 - Wrap up of station area planning process
 - Approximately 140 attendees
- June 11th – Robbinsdale
 - Beginning station area planning process
 - Approximately 40 attendees
- June 17th Brooklyn Park
 - Beginning station area planning process
 - Approximately 60-70 attendees

We are planning another round of open houses for the end of July and hope to get this information out by the end of the week.

Chris Berne asked who was taking the lead on promoting the meetings. Sam O’Connell responded that BPO is taking the lead on this round of meetings and will be handing out fliers in addition to distributing electronically.

3. Community Works Update

Darlene Walser presented. Hennepin County Community Works is partnering with communities along the line to plan what will happen outside the rails to take advantage of this investment.

Station area planning is community based. They have community working groups for each station to figure out what each station wants to be. The outcomes of the station area planning process are then incorporated into the city comprehensive plans.

They look at the area ½ mile around stations (about a 10 minute walk) and consider land use, types and character of buildings, access and circulation, and public spaces. The County also takes into consideration healthy equity (i.e., how the way a community is built affects people's health).

Minneapolis and Golden Valley just completed their station area plans. Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park are starting their station area planning processes now. There were kick off meetings for Robbinsdale on June 11th and Brooklyn Park on June 17th. The community working group for Crystal will start in August.

Rich Baker added that the station area planning process is an opportunity to have a say in how the stations end up working out, and he does see evidence of the input in the plans.

Gillian Rosenquist encouraged people to expand the focus of the conversation beyond the ½ mile radius to other issues in the community that need to be linked to this effort.

Darlene Walser agreed and said that the process is as good as the community input they get. At the end of the day it won't be the County's plan since they have no land use authority, it will be the City's plan so this is an opportunity for the community to give input on their City's plan.

Dan Soler added that we need to make sure we serve existing developments but we also need to make sure we don't prohibit development and future plans to make communities the best they can be. We need to serve both what's there today and what may be there in the future.

Catherine Fleming asked if this process has funding. Dan Soler replied that if there are things that are necessary for the LRT project they would be covered by the project, but the County also looks at funding. Darlene Walser added that the next step is determining the investment framework and prioritizing improvements (what needs to be there on opening day and what would come later as development happens).

Steven Schmidt said that he was at the kick off meeting for Brooklyn Park, and he agrees that you need to look at the city as a whole. His concern is that people had to pick a station table to sit at so you could only give input on one station. He would suggest that going forward there are separate meetings for each station so people can give input on any station they are interested in rather than having to choose one.

Darlene Walser replied that they had organized the meetings at the same time because of feedback they heard from the community that they needed to look at the city as a whole not each individually.

Rich Baker said he didn't think that worked well for the Minneapolis and Golden Valley joint meetings. Gillian Rosenquist added that people sat through a lot of information that they didn't feel was relevant to them.

4. Design Update/Discussion

Target Field Station Connection to I-94 Interchange

Nick Landwer presented. BLRT is center-running down Olson Memorial Highway. SWLRT also comes in to downtown Minneapolis in this area. A-Line BRT stations will also be in this vicinity.

Technical Issue #1 – Target Field Station Connection

Key issues:

- Connection requires coordination with SWLRT
- 7th Street intersection has a unique geometry
- Intersection is challenging for safe pedestrian and bike access

SWLRT will be on a structure over 7th street, and BLRT will be at grade. As part of the SWLRT project bikeways will be added along 7th Street.

Rich Baker asked how far the bikes lanes are extended. Nick Landwer replied that they extend to Plymouth Avenue. Rich asked if there was a connection to the Cedar Lake Trail. Sam O'Connell replied that the connection is to the south, but the trail and bike lanes are on different grades. Rich Baker stated that it would be great to make that connection easier.

Rich Baker asked how pedestrian traffic would work where BLRT comes down to street level. Nick Landwer said that pedestrian crossings still need to be worked out, but they will narrow the traffic lanes and add a pedestrian refuge in case pedestrians don't make it through the whole intersection. Dan Soler added that the reconstructed intersection will actually be slightly smaller and easier to cross than the existing intersection. Current design is a two stage crossings, new intersection will allow a single stage crossing.

Daniel Bonilla asked why the BLRT was brought to grade and not on a bridge like SWLRT. Nick Landwer replied that the SWLRT project's decision to go above grade forced BLRT to run at grade. Sophia Ginis also stated that North Loop residents also wanted to minimize the amount of transportation infrastructure in the community. Dan Soler said that there isn't enough room to have both elevated, and BLRT can make the at-grade crossing work from a traffic standpoint. Nick Landwer added that the heaviest traffic movement is the right turn from Olson Memorial Highway onto 7th Street, which is compatible with the train movement.

Catherine Fleming asked if there was any development going on in that area. Dan Soler replied that Metro Transit owns the facility to the northeast and there is a bank there, but the Royalston area does have potential for development and is a potential location for the MLS stadium.

Giuseppe Marrari asked what would keep pedestrians from crossing over 6th Avenue. Nick Landwer replied that they need to figure out how to direct people to the intended crossings.

Daniel Bonilla said that it seems like we are creating a bottleneck by reducing eastbound through lanes to one lane through the intersection. Justin Youngbluth asked if traffic counts had been done

in this area. Nick Landwer said there have been traffic studies and coordination with the City of Minneapolis. Dan Soler added that we look at existing traffic volumes and project into the future. We may not have considered special events such as soccer games, but our analysis shows that the single through lane works since most of the vehicles turn right, and a second lane is added on the other side of the intersection. Left turns are prohibited.

Gillian Rosenquist asked if the approach coming out of downtown will resemble the structure near 26th Avenue on the Hiawatha Line. Nick Landwer replied that it will be similar but slower since the trains are just leaving the station (10 mph). Gillian noted that she has witnessed an accident at 26th Street so pedestrian safety will be extremely important here since the trains will be accelerating near the pedestrian crossing. Dan Soler said that when the trains are at Target Field Station, a detection signal will be sent to the traffic signal so it's at the right phase when the train comes through. The train drivers will also know that they need to keep the speed down since the sight lines are limited.

La Shella Sims added that there is a lot going on with HERC and the apartments and other facilities in the area. Gillian Rosenquist said that lots of people aren't familiar with the downtown area which makes it more difficult to navigate. Dan Soler said that the local bus stops being built for A-Line will also eventually serve the C-Line. People are getting more familiar with operating around LRT, but we need to make sure all the proper safety measures are implemented so people can get around safely.

Recommendation:

- Continue with intersection design as shown in presentation
- BLRT crossing east of 7th Street to center median
- Center running LRT on Olson Memorial Highway

Technical Issue #2 – I-94 Interchange

Key Issues:

- LRT center running on existing bridge
- Bridge requires structural reinforcement under LRT guideway
- Bridge left intact outside of guideway
- New signal systems installed at intersections

There will be two lanes of traffic in each direction with a left turn lane on either side.

Rich Baker asked if the tracks were at the same grade as the deck surface. Nick Landwer said that there were at the same grade.

Recommendation:

- Center running LRT on existing I-94 bridge
- Continue coordination with MnDOT and the City of Minneapolis on final design of the interchange

85th and 93rd Station Configurations

Alicia Vap presented.

85th Avenue Station

The DEIS showed a split platform on either side of 85th Avenue.

Recommendation:

- Center platform south of 85th Avenue
- Continuing to look at where passenger drop off could be located off-street

The Draft EIS assumed pedestrian access from the intersection. They are looking to provide secondary access to the platform on the southern end. They are also looking at bus stop locations.

Dan Soler said that Chris Berne and Carol Vosberg got an opportunity last week to see the devices used on the unsignalized pedestrian crossing locations on Central Corridor. At the end of the platform where there is not a traffic signal, signs are used to indicate the pedestrian crossing, and there is an active warning device when the train is approaching. These wouldn't be needed at Brooklyn Boulevard or 76th as both are at signalized intersections. We don't have a system designed today for the 85th Avenue station, but we feel it's important to have more than the signal access at this station.

Carol Vosberg said that it is so congested at this intersection today and asked how many lanes would there be. Alicia Vap said that it will be two lanes like it is today with left turn lanes.

Catherine Fleming asked if impacts to residents were considered when deciding the platform configuration. Dan said there was a little bit less right-of-way acquisition needed, but it is a small amount. Catherine asked how close it gets to houses. Chris Berne said it's about 20-25 feet from the right-of-way to the houses. Dan Soler added there is more distance to the tracks since the roadway and sidewalks are inside the right-of-way.

Carol Vosberg asked why the tracks aren't more to the east since there is space there and it is farther from the residents. She thought it seemed like a missed opportunity to make this a station area with more amenities since the northeast quadrant is undeveloped. Alicia Vap said that the college owns that land and has plans to develop it. Dan Soler added that the tapering the tracks to bring it to the east has far reaching effects as it has to happen over a distance. There are also homes to the north of the library so then those would be closer to the tracks. Emily Carr added that North Hennepin Community College is doing their master plan and has a performing arts center and plaza planned for that site. Creating a public space at this intersection is a high priority for the City and they are in discussions with the college about this area. Rich Baker encouraged Carol to get involved in the station area planning process for this station.

93rd Avenue Station

In the DEIS the station was located off of the alignment on the east side with a park-and-ride and proposed maintenance facility. Because of private development that happened in that area, the project needed to reconsider the location of the station and other facilities. They looked at many

different configurations and are recommending a center platform on the south side of 93rd with access from the intersection at 93rd and from 92nd Avenue.

They are exploring options for passenger drop-off locations. There will be bus stops on 93rd Avenue.

Steven Schmidt asked if 92nd would be signalized. Nick Landwer replied that it would not. Steven said that since that there will be three major developments in this area he highly recommends that someone take a look at signalizing it. Dan Soler replied that the project will look at various improvements, including adding a signal at 92nd, but we would have to show that it would work with the signals at 93rd and 94th.

5. DEIS Scope and Cost Estimate Update

Dan Soler presented. The goal is explain what is currently included in the cost estimate and what isn't. The amount of engineering that is done at the end of the DEIS is 1%. The major elements are known but a lot of uncertainty remains. Two things make up cost uncertainty: what is and is not included in the project and identifying and clearing the risks associated with the project.

The preliminary cost estimate is based on the DEIS scope, minimal engineering, and initial risk identification. The cost of a project is more than the capital cost to construct a project; it also includes soft costs such as engineering staff and the project office. As the level of design increases and risks are further defined, the cost estimated is updated and refined.

The project budget is based on the scope (revised and approved), risk (identified and unaccounted for), and contingency (for unknown unknowns). The budget is prepared for FTA New Starts application into the Engineering Phase, which is anticipated in June 2016.

The DEIS cost estimate is \$1.002 billion. That includes 34% for contingency and a 3% escalation factor. We need to keep making the contingency smaller by furthering the design. The base year estimate was in 2012, and the midpoint of construction was assumed to be 2017.

Contingency is budget set aside to account for project risks. Risks include:

- Required risks are ones that need to be addressed first
 - Xcel transmission towers
 - BNSF negotiations
 - Municipal consent
- Design risks are currently being worked on and will help identify the design and what needs to be built into the cost
 - Floodplains
 - Poor soils
 - Wetlands
- Market risks take into account where the project will be in the world of construction bidding (what other projects are going on in the area)
 - Construction bidding
 - Right-of-way
 - Schedule delay

- Construction
 - Unforeseen conditions
 - Contaminated soils

As the project progresses, it can release the amount of contingency that needs to be set aside.

Elements included in DEIS cost estimate:

- Guideway and track
 - Ballasted track
 - Guideway structures
 - TH 610 LRT bridge (Brooklyn Park)
 - TH 100 LRT bridge (Robbinsdale)
 - TH 100 BNSF bridge (Robbinsdale)
 - LRT bridge over existing CP rail line (Crystal)
 - I-94 bridge modifications
 - HERC LRT bridge (Minneapolis)
 - Soil mitigation costs (at exploration level)
 - We now know this will be an issue in some areas (e.g., Grimes Pond) and a non-issue in others
 - This can be pinned down as we move forward, but it won't be perfect by the time we need to set the budget
- Stations
 - 10 stations
 - 1 elevator at Golden Valley Road Station
- Support facilities
 - OMF for routine maintenance
 - Storage space for 26 vehicles
- Sitework and special conditions
 - Roadway bridge reconstruction
 - TH 55
 - Roadway bridge minor modifications
 - 36th Avenue
 - Golden Valley Road
 - Theodore Wirth Parkway
 - Plymouth Avenue
 - Partial reconstruction of Olson Memorial Highway
 - Reconstruction of all at-grade crossings
 - Park-and-ride sites
 - 93rd Avenue (structure)/Oak Grove Parkway (surface): 800 stalls
 - 63rd Avenue: 725 stalls
 - 565 existing
 - 160 additional with a third level added to the existing facility
 - Robbinsdale: 500 structured stalls

- Relocation of Xcel transmission towers
- Systems
 - 13 traction power substations
 - Grade crossing protection gates for LRT and/or freight
 - 10 at-grade crossings
 - 12 signalized intersections
- Right-of-way
 - 17 full acquisitions
 - 56 partial acquisitions
 - Acquisition of 50-feet of BNSF right-of-way
- Vehicles
 - 26 vehicles
 - 15% spare ratio
 - Assumed 2-car consists

Elements not included in the DEIS cost estimate:

- Guideway and track
 - Embedded track
 - Grade separation at intersections
 - 42nd Avenue
 - 73rd Avenue
 - Corridor protection for BNSF
 - DEIS estimate included costs to buy property and relocate tracks, but not corridor protection measures
- Stations
 - Plymouth Avenue Station that requires vertical circulation and bridge replacement
 - Pedestrian overpass at 63rd Avenue Station
- Support facilities
 - OMF site roadway realignments
 - Space and equipment for major repairs
- Sitework and special conditions
 - Park-and-ride
 - Golden Valley Road Station
 - Bass Lake Road Station
 - Roadway reconstruction on West Broadway
 - Candlewood to 93rd Avenue (funded by Hennepin County Capital Improvement Program)
 - Full reconstruction of Olson Memorial Highway
 - Grade separated pedestrian crossings
- Systems
 - Gated crossings along West Broadway

- Right-of-way
 - Acquisition for additional park-and-ride sites
- Vehicles
 - 3-car gap train
 - 20% spare ratio

Next steps:

- July-August 2015: Review DEIS cost estimate and scope with advisory committees and Met Council
- November 2015: Refine project scope for Municipal Consent and update cost estimate
- June 2016: Prepare project budget for request to enter engineering

Catherine Fleming asked if the project is responsible for identifying ongoing costs. Dan Soler said that we take long term operations and maintenance costs into consideration, but they don't need to be covered in the project budget. If any facilities that are built will eventually be owned by a city, they will be aware of those responsibilities. Catherine asked if community impacts are part of the soft cost analysis. Dan said that on Central Corridor there were a number of other organizations that came forward to provide small business loans to help during construction, but the project can only take on what is federally eligible.

La Shella Sims asked if something extends the project timeline if it also increases the cost. Dan replied that it depends on the length of time. If it's one month, no; but if a construction season is missed, it adds a 3% acceleration cost.

Dan Soler said that this will be a conversation we come back to, especially as we start to have resolution on some issues. He stated his appreciation for bringing up issues that project staff might not see.

6. Member and Committee Reports/Public Forum

Catherine Fleming said we should start looking at workforce mitigation – starting to train people or identify workers in other areas.

7. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 pm. The next CAC meeting is August 3, 2015.