



**METRO Blue Line Extension**  
**Meeting of the Corridor Management Committee**  
**July 14, 2022**  
**1:30 PM**  
**Metro Transit Heywood Council Chambers**

**CMC Member Attendees:** Jim Adams, Mike Barnes, Bill Blonigan, Reva Chamblis, Jeremiah Ellison, Irene Fernando, Jason Greenberg, Becka Thompson, Nick Thompson, Robert Lilligren, Jeffrey Lunde, John Pacheco, Felicia Perry, Suzanne Sobotka, Tonja West-Hafner, Charles Zelle

**Meeting Summary**

**1. Call to Order and Welcome**

Chair Charlie Zelle, Met Council, called the meeting to order at 1:34 PM. Chair Zelle introduced Chris Beckwith as the Project's new Project Manager.

**2. Approval of June 9, 2022 BLRT CMC Meeting Summary**

Chair Zelle asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Jeff Lunde made a motion and Council Member Tonja West-Hafner seconded. The minutes were approved.

**3. Community and Business Advisory Committee Reports**

Jason Greenberg, CAC provided a recap of 7/13 CAC meeting. Jason shared that the committee received an update from C Terrence Anderson with CURA and discussed environmental next steps. Jason stated that members can reapply to be a part the CAC during the next phase of the project and that the committee will reconvene in October.

Felicia Perry, BAC shared an updated about the BAC meeting. She stated that they received an update from Ed Goetz with CURA, who talked about updates from the Anti-Displacement Working Group. There was good discussion and concerns raised for the timeline of when the Anti-Displacement Group is with releasing recommendations. There were requests to have the Working Group report to the BAC and to provide more detail. It was good feedback, and they also went over the design and environmental next steps. The committee also discussed recruiting folks for the next phase of work.

**4. Anti-Displacement Working Group Update**

Lee Guekguezian, CURA, provided an update on Anti-Displacement. June 4<sup>th</sup> was the Anti-Displacement Working Group daylong meeting. They discussed the impacts of the METRO Blue and METRO Green Lines. This was a combination of CURA's research and other studies that reviewed property values and other data. The group went through an exercise of co-



defining displacement. The group found that impacts regarding displacement were different for the different lines and generally were happening sooner and sooner in the Twin Cities. For the original Blue Line, the property value increases started only when the line opened and impacted initially only the west side of the line. For the Green Line, this happened as soon as the project received full funding. The group reviewed initiatives that are happening nationally. They also had a panel of people who shared their experiences and lessons learned living and owning businesses along other lines. There will be another day-long workshop in September and two public open houses in August. Cathy Gold, Hennepin County, shared that the agencies are convening internal working groups. They are looking at all the recommendations that were pulled from the initial meetings. The workshop was kept to members of the Working Group. The general public could listen into the event virtually.

Council Member Lilligren asked Lee to expand more about the part where she referenced the impacts to residents. Lee said the panel detailed their past experience with light rail construction and iteration and shared what worked and what did not work. Some things that worked were that they had adequate funding and support for residences and businesses but there was a need for more clear and constant communication during construction. There was also a general interest in construction impacts and concern of where the folks working on the construction were coming from, questions about whether people from the community were being employed. Another big piece is that there was not enough focus on households and residents for where they were at.

Council Member Ellison shared that he was cautiously optimistic about the project. He was optimistic because the infrastructure is well needed in this community, yet cautious because the anti-displacement work needs to be done right and other places have not gotten it right in the ways he would like to see. Ellison expressed that he was curious how specific recommendations are going to come from this group and asked whether recommendations be explicitly laid out or if it will be more high-level on goals and details would be left up to policy makers to figure out. Lee responded that the purpose of every government having internal working groups along with the working group is that we want governments to take time to come up with what's realistic and within resources. When governments talk to community, they have already thought through policies that are being talked about. This Anti-Displacement Working Group is important for identifying exactly what of the 27 policies, needs to be modeled out. Lee gave rent control as an example as it can look different in each city and stated that once policies are identified then her team can get into the nitty gritty of the policies and get to the point of implementing it.

Commissioner Fernando asked if there was a parallel review needed in terms of authority of local entities and the will of the policy makers. It really supports feedback around timing which means we need to be able to review in our separate entities in a way that allows us to



activate more readily. She also shared the website is really easy to navigate. Inviting further accountability to the County so there can be time to receive the ideas and process them in ways that align with authority. Increased access to information, regular reporting, what's been offered today is really robust and really good information to have in the public forum. Fernando then stated that counties have a specific obligation to work with vulnerable residents.

Felicia Perry said that she's been trying to find data to answer several questions around commercial property ownership: how many businesses operating along this line actually lease or own the building they're operating in? If they don't, then who is the person who leases or owns it? What are the demographics, including where they live and their access to resources? Lee responded that may require a combination of quantitative spatial data and qualitative missing piece data. CURA has a team of qualitative researchers who have received increased funding to interview folks along the corridor. They are trying to have a qualitative data set that is representative of the experience and demographic piece. Lee said that this is challenging because this corridor expands across many different cities. Perry added that while addressing anti-displacement, also think about anticipated money, be future thinking about the strategy and resources.

Commissioner Lunde shared that he has heard up to 70% rent in this area and that may be a variable for displacement if landlords decide to cash out which may drive gentrification faster. Lee responded that it is important to model these policies in different places. Rent control is contentious and has varying effects in varying places.

Jason Greenberg asked a question about displacement pressures and how some of it has to do with the previous experience with the metro area, developers, and everyone knowing LRT is coming. Is that the main reason, or is there anything unique that will create these pressures earlier than what's been seen? Cathy Gold responded that potentially along West Broadway because there are a number of commercial properties that are not functioning right now. Cathy said that from some research she's done she didn't see that they're owned by people in the corridor and it's a concern. Commissioner Lunde added that the County has been talking about how the cities and the counties own some of the tax forfeiture properties and what can be done to potentially use as an asset for the anti-displacement teams so that they don't go to open market and don't pass to people who are not going to use them. Lee shared that data of outside institution investment has increased since 2008 and that it's not specific to this alignment but when talking about big infrastructure projects, the opportunity for redevelopment, we only see this type of investment increase and then see the effects it has on tenants and properties owned by institutional investors who don't live in this state. That would be important to pay close attention onto as this project continues.

## **5. Design & Environmental Next Steps**



**a. Update on Environmental Evaluation**

Kelcie Young, Metropolitan Council, provided an update on the environmental evaluation. She identified that the first phase has a Final Environmental Impact Statement. The project is now in a new phase where the federal government is working with the project on a environmental re-evaluation memorandum. The memo recommends a Supplemental EIS as he NEPA Class of Action. They are recommending that because the new route has impacts to locations not previously reviewed in the environmental process. This phase will be for the next 1.5-2 years. Other parts of this phase include municipal consent, other associated engineering, and design. Kelcie reviewed the environmental schedule through Winter of 2023. Commissioner Fernando asked if the environmental anticipated next steps are FTA facing actions. Kelcie responded yes, they own those steps, but the Project will also do a state level environmental review in parallel. Fernando also thanked the staff for their work in the last 23 months.

**b. Issue Resolution Process**

Nick Landwer, Metropolitan Council, shared an overview about the Issue Resolution process which includes regular meetings with city staff and project team. They are developing a full list of issues that need to be resolved and discuss during the regular meetings. They work to resolve those issues so they can be updated in the design and environmental review process.

**i. Brooklyn Park: Previous Design Refresh**

a. They are reviewing new changes to the current station area designs, which were pretty advanced in the old phase and updating designs to fit new development and new environmental requirements that have occurred over the past few years.

**ii. Crystal: County Road 81/Bass Lake Road Intersection**

a. Crystal's Bass Lake Road intersection has a number of options to help improve traffic flow, with the implementation of light rail. One example is building an overpass for the intersection. This offers benefits to traffic and allows the station to stay at grade.

**iii. Robbinsdale: Downtown Station Placement**

a. Robbinsdale is reviewing station placement. This includes the station for downtown Robbinsdale, North Memorial Hospital and station access, as well as connections to the Grant Rounds and neighborhoods there.

**iv. Minneapolis Evaluation of Routing Between Target Field and West Broadway**

a. They are reviewing connections to West Broadway from Target Field Station to support the neighborhood input and review all options.



Council Member Chamblis shared she is happy to see Brooklyn Park being intentional for redesign in that area. She has heard many businesses may or may not be aware of the phase starting. The project needs to make sure there's robust engagement with existing businesses, and that they are involved in the refresh. We need to make sure we have representation where we have existing and past engagement gaps. Chamblis also mentioned that she's heard community members want to get support to be part of the design efforts. Felicia Perry asked what engagement looks like and how would the process of entities or organizations be able to participate. Nick Landwer responded they will continue with their robust engagement efforts. They do meet often with property owners along the corridor to keep them updated and will continue to have frequent public open houses. Nick Thompson, Metropolitan Council, added that the Issue Resolution process helps incorporate a small project team to focus in on issues along the corridor and work to resolve them.

#### **6. City of Robbinsdale's CMC Request**

Mayor Bill Blonigan shared the City of Robbinsdale's resolution. He stated that the primary duty of government is to the people and not the railroad. He emphasized that they are not trying to delay the plan but are looking to find ways to get BNSF back to the table. Robbinsdale's council feels that Minneapolis and Brooklyn Park are "big brothers" to Robbinsdale, and they are not being considered. Chair Zelle responded that they don't take this request lightly and that they are disappointed the BSNF corridor cannot be used for the project. There have been concerted efforts to make co-location in the railroad corridor possible but there are two reasons they cannot entertain this as a motion – at this point we believe it's a hard no and the cost of delay. Commissioner Lunde added that they have heard the concerns coming from Robbinsdale but don't believe going back to the negotiating table with BNSF would change anything. Additionally, there isn't a good connection from West Broadway to the rail corridor. Council Member Ellison added that the new route serves North Minneapolis, and the old route bypassed it. Commissioner Becka Thompson, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, asked why the project hasn't considered going underground. Chair Zelle responded that it's a great question, and Commissioner Lunde added we should get a memo. Dan Soler, Hennepin County, responded that there isn't one simple answer but can pull the reasonings together.

Mayor Jim Adams had a comment that when the new route was approved it was supposed to be a time to reconsider the voting roster back to state statute. Adams asked if it can be put on the agenda for next time. Chair Zelle responded that they will take it under consideration.

Council Member Chamblis expressed that she feels this corridor meets the needs of the community. Hearing all the issues, concerns, needs, and requests is the only way for us to come up with the best possible solution which is why continued engagement of our residents and businesses is critical to see what our best options are in every city.



**7. Next Meeting: Canceled, August 11, 2022**

Chair Zelle pointed out that the next meeting is canceled.

**8. Adjourn**

Chair Zelle adjourned the meeting at 3:00 PM.