



Blue Line Extension Corridor Management Committee

Minutes of the November 29, 2018 Meeting

Present: Alene Tchourumoff, Matt Rentsch, Lona Schreiber, Tim Willson, George Selman, Colleen Toberman, Rich Gates, Joanie Clausen, Scott McBride, Brian Lamb, Jim Adams, Chris Berne, Marika Pfefferkorn, Abdi Salah, Catherine Fleming

Not in attendance: Pat Bursaw, Denise Butler, Gary Cunningham, Jacob Frey, Shep Harris, Linda Higgins, John Humphrey, Jeffrey Lunde, Jaime Makepeace, Peter McLaughlin, Regan Murphy, Jon Olson, Mike Opat, Olga Parsons, Shauen Pearce-Lassiter, Kale Severson, Aasim Shabazz, Andy Snope

1. Call to Order

Chair Tchourumoff convened the meeting at 1:34 pm.

2. Approval of April 12, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Chair Tchourumoff asked the committee to review the meeting minutes from the April 12, 2018 meeting. Scott McBride motioned approval of the minutes; Tim Wilson seconded. Minutes were approved.

3. Chair's Update

Chair Tchourumoff

Several updates on transit in the region in the past couple of weeks including:

- Southwest LRT received a letter of no prejudice, which is approval from the FTA to start early construction. This allows us to spend local money on construction. Everyone is invited to the groundbreaking on Friday 11/30 at 2:30 pm.
- On Thursday 11/29 we received a notice from FTA on funding for the orange line, which is already under construction under the leadership of MnDOT. This notice is bringing the federal money to that project.

This has been exciting news for transit over these past couple of weeks in the region—really talking about building out the regional transit system to support the economic vitality of our region. Chair Tchourumoff announced that this will be her last meeting as chair with the Met Council. She will be going to the Federal Reserve Bank with Minneapolis starting on Monday December 3, 2018. She expressed her appreciation to everyone helping with the development of transit in the region and sticking together to move these critical projects forward. This is also the last meeting for a few others with whom Chair Tchourumoff wanted to share a few special thank-yous. These people included Commissioner Higgins (Minneapolis), Mayor Tim Wilson (Brooklyn Center), Rich Gates (Brooklyn Park), Council Member Schrieber, and Council Member Cunningham. Certificates of appreciation were given to each of these people. Tchourumoff recognized City staff and their efforts to engage community members to increase the trust the community has in the government and ultimately how their feedback makes our projects better.



Tchourumoff talked about the Met Council transition process. With a new governor elect, there is a new opportunity for people to serve on the Met Council. There are 16 seats available and a chair. You can apply to be a council member on the Secretary of State website <https://www.sos.state.mn.us/> (this process might be different for people that are already serving in elected government positions). The current council will continue to serve until the beginning of March.

Member Schreiber thanked Chair Tchourumoff for the incredible work she has done in a short period of time. Tchourumoff had a seamless transition when she took over as Chair at the Met Council and she was seamless with our group.

4. Hennepin County Community Works Update

Kerri Pearce Ruch presented and Andrew Gillett was at the meeting as well. The presentation will include an update to what they completed in 2018 and what they have coming up in 2019. They are taking full advantage of the time that they have on Bottineau for planning and preparing communities for what is to come.

Hennepin County has two grant sources that provide a majority of their funding. They have an FTA TOD Advanced Planning grant and also a grant from the McKnight Foundation. One of the key pieces of work they completed in 2018 was on housing and development around station areas. They completed the following:

- Housing Inventory — looks at existing housing conditions in the area
- GAPS Analysis — needs for housing in the corridor
- Commercial Market Feasibility Analysis
- Commercial Site Analysis

Both reports are finalized and are available on their Bottineau Community Works website.

These analyses led to cities participating in doing TOD and zoning work that included engagement with a consultant that set the stage for TOD zoning updates to all the suburban cities along the corridor. They also partnered with LISC on a corridor development initiative at two station areas and provided a deeper engagement opportunity for community members and business owners around station areas. This was done at the 85th Avenue Station and Robbinsdale Station.

Also funded through the FTA planning grant, they looked at infrastructure in the suburban cities. This builds on the work that was done during station area planning and it had several components. They partnered with a consultant and worked with cities all along the corridor to build on the station area circulation and connectivity assessment; they went through an evaluation process that narrowed down 10 bike and pedestrian connection implementation plans that will move to 60% design. The hope is that cities will take the 60% plans and decide how they would like to move forward with implementation.



The FTA portion also funded a Shared Mobility Feasibility Study that looks at last mile connections. They have a number of large employers that are a little bit outside of the ½ mile 10-minute walk, so the consultant was asked to look at how to move people from station areas to large employers and other destination areas. That report is not quite done but close to being finished.

They had some additional funding from Blue Cross Blue Shield that was used for a Bike/Ped Demonstration project. These were projects that were identified in station area planning that were high priorities for communities. They tested out some concepts to see what works; one was done in each corridor and some of them were so successful that they are more permanent, while others provided good data and feedback.

They have a placemaking component that was funded through the McKnight Foundation, Cultivate Bottineau: Culture, Community and Commerce. They have been working with local artists to identify art projects and potential places in the corridor for public art. This started with Springboard for the Arts this fall and will continue through 2019.

Another piece of work done in 2018, that is funded through the McKnight grant, was looking for ways to support city policymakers and their staff in best practices. They try to bring in national and regional experts that are doing projects in the metro area so cities have opportunities to learn and draw on their best practices and see how they might work in Bottineau corridor communities. Hennepin County did 2 events in 2017, and in 2018 wrapped things up with a 3-day technical assistance panel led by ULI Minnesota. The report from that panel will be available within the next couple of weeks.

Chair Tchourumoff asked if recommendations were made.

Kerri Pearce answered that the final report includes recommendations for cities and station areas.

Community engagement is a priority for Hennepin County and they try to infuse it into everything they do. In the past, Hennepin County tried to build on previous success such as partner with the Health Equity Cohort and the Blue Line Coalition. In 2018, they hired a separate community engagement consultant from infrastructure contract for some innovative engagement ideas and to give extra attention to community engagement. This was a beneficial practice, and they are planning on doing this again in the future. Hennepin County included community engagement in Cultivate, house and zoning work, and Corridor Development Initiative (CDI). CDI is a series of 4 workshops that take place every 2 weeks, where citizens participate in a variety of exercises, ask questions of developers and city staff, and in the final workshop they compile recommendations for city policymakers. Those reports are being finalized and will be available.

Looking to 2019, they know that planning is not enough and there must be a move towards implementation. A couple of examples of how some cities are doing this include Brooklyn Park passing their TOD ordinance in July 2018, and other suburban cities are working on getting things in front of the council in 2019.

In 2019, Hennepin County will also be working on the remaining phase one of Cultivate projects and after that they will have about two-thirds of the grant money left to do some larger public art and



placemaking projects (phase 2). They will also be wrapping up the infrastructure work from this year and working with cities to move forward and implement the bike/pedestrian plans that were identified as priorities.

Wayfinding is a component of work that is FTA funded that has not started yet. They are waiting for infrastructure work to finish and the marketing and branding initiative before they do a deep dive into wayfinding. They just closed on an RFP process that is going to engage businesses before construction to help prepare them and explain how to take advantage of what the LRT line means for their business. It is anticipated that these services will begin in early 2019.

Innovative financing strategies is a component to the FTA Planning grant that is underway with the Met Council, being led by the TOD office. These strategies have a strong focus on equitable business and housing development near station areas. City partners expressed a desire that development that goes into station areas betters the community and mitigates displacement. The RFP will be issued by the Met Council in January 2019.

The Bottineau LRT project provides an opportunity to refresh the existing brand and give the corridor a brand of its own. An RFP is prepared to go out next week for place branding for the LRT project. This will help attract people and bring an understanding to what is available here and why they should come visit the Twin Cities.

Questions/Comments

Tim Wilson shared that transportation to and from stations is very important to Brooklyn Center. He is hoping they will see a rapid transit hub that connects to the BLRT. He is glad to hear that a study is going on.

Lona Schreiber asked what wayfinding is.

Kerri Pearce Ruch explained that it is a variety of things that can include directional signage—when you get off of the BLRT platform, how do you get to major destinations and attractions? Are there any opportunities for an app to help with this?

Marika Pfefferkorn asked about how the branding will include cultural corridors? How will the people you contract with do both/and (city and cultural) for the branding?

Kerri Pearce Ruch talked about how branding work doesn't work if it isn't informed by the community. They will be working with community groups and organizations—starting from the ground up—to get input and create an authentic brand.

Chair Tchourumoff suggested that everyone share lessons learned from the Reconnecting Rondo project.

5. BLRT Project Update (29 minutes)

Dan thanked everyone for getting back together. As he was reflecting on the future and where the project is at, he started to think about other LRT projects he knows about. As he read some of the chair's remarks on Southwest, they mentioned how Southwest is taking a step forward after 20 years of work. When thinking of recent work, he worked on Central Corridor for 7 years, but he also



worked on the initial planning for the Midway, University Avenue, and I-94 corridors for 12-14 years before that. These projects are marathons, and they are somewhere along that race right now.

The Northwest Corridor goes back many years and puts us where they are today in 2018. Currently, they can't see the finish line, but they're on the course and moving forward to make this project happen. The BPO has been in place for 4 years as well as the CAC.

They have some major milestones ahead of them that are hard to put specific times on. But these are the milestones that will take them from where they are today, to applying for a full funding grant agreement that would bring them to the path to completing construction and opening day. Many of these tasks are fairly easy, but completing critical third-party agreement is not.

There are three key elements that make it difficult for a project to apply for a full funding grant agreement:

- Completing environmental process—completed and does not expire
- Federal funding provided by FTA, which they cannot do until 100% of local funding is committed—completed
- Critical third-party agreement (e.g., utilities, major university, railroads)—not completed

They have to work towards completing third-party agreements, including the railroads which may be the toughest of all. They will need several third-party agreements to co-locate with BNSF on the Monticello subdivision between Highway 55 and Brooklyn Park. This goes back to 10 years of work with the draft environmental impact statements and looking at different alternatives; this was the chosen route. Since that time, there have been a lot of changes with laws around the country and other factors, but there is change on their side as well as the railroads. The railroads have changed some leadership around and are always changing and moving where their priorities are. As much as can be done has been with this administration and the current governor. Without the threat of eminent domain, two parties need to come together to make a deal. With the start of a new administration, they will take a pretty significant crack at moving that piece forward.

Alicia gave Dan an article on the Kenwood corridor; there were still some thoughts back then about how as communities develop, railroads produce corridors, just like highway and freeways. Even though a railroad corridor is in private interest, there is still an ability to utilize that for the public good. They think they have provided a solution for BNSF that says they can continue their current operations, have the possibility of expanding, and operate with us co-located. Assuming that this milestone gets moving, they can start to pull other things into place including working out their final risk assessments and finalizing their plans that are currently at 90% design.

Currently in the project office, they are finalizing parking and ride structures plans and bringing those to 90% design; finalizing mitigation measures with the 106 process; doing some work on the Franklin Operations and Maintenance Facility, which is now a part of the Green line project; and continuing to work with the FTA. Their staff and their partner staff are being allocated to other projects as well. The majority of project office staff are consultants, and while they have reached the level where the consultant design work is complete, the contracts are still in place. The project office



will remain and key project staff will continue their work, but they will temporarily lend staff to other projects while keeping the core team together. This will allow them to fund the salaries and costs from those key staff from other accounts in order to wisely spend money.

They currently suspended their right-of-way acquisition activities. They are not bringing the plans to 100%; if one were to put them on the shelf and take them off, then they would no longer be at 100%. They are comfortable with where the design is at, and consequently putting it to the side for now. They will not be getting ready for their FFGA. They have some work they want to do as advanced construction. This will be deferred until after this upcoming spring.

The main focus for the beginning of 2019 is engaging how they can work with BNSF to convince them that this can be a positive partnership and they can work together as a co-located corridor. This is not grim news; this is a step in the process and a piece in a long project. Dan is confident they can get there—they just need to make these things happen.

Thank you to the CMC and the time they put in. A unifying presence will be needed amongst the local government agencies to stick together and show that the creation of this corridor makes sense. Monthly CMC meetings will not be put on the schedule for 2019; March is a good time for a check-in.

Chair Tchourumoff notes they will need to check in with the next chair about scheduling.

Tim Willson commented on being the mayor of Brooklyn Center for the past 12 years. He said that he is looking forward to not being mayor because he had to make an oath that almost gives him less rights than normal residents. He has enjoyed advocating for Brooklyn Center and it has been an extreme privilege to serve there. Chair Tchourumoff thanked him for his service.

Jim Adams provided a quick update on Crystal to the group. Crystal has been working in their station area and just finished the streetscape. They are hoping that Becker Park will become a destination for their city and the Blue Line. They are looking forward to all the improvements.

6. Next Steps Discussion

Dan Solar covered this in his presentation.

7. Adjournment

McBride motioned to adjourn. Joanie Clausen seconded. Chair Tchourumoff adjourned the meeting at 2:21 pm.