



METRO Blue Line Extension
Joint Business Advisory Committee/Community Advisory Committee Meeting
October 26, 2015
Crystal City Hall
Crystal, MN 55428
6:00 AM – 8:00 PM

Meeting Summary

BAC Members: Brad Clift, Charlie Jacobsen, John Slama, Jim White

CAC Members: Gene Bakke, Chris Berne, Kate Catron, Steven Schmidt, LaSheila Sims

Agency Staff and Guests: MarySue Abel, Laura Bannon, Robin Caufman, Paul Danielson, David Davies, Mark Fuhrmann, Erik Hansen, Jessica Laabs, Nick Landwer, Caroline Miller, Kathryn O'Brien, Dan Pfeiffer, Juan Rangel, Lisa Rasmussen, Jim Toulouse, Alicia Vap

Jeff Geisler (EMI), Janet Moore (Star Tribune), DJ Forbes (The Trust for Public Land)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Went around the room

2. Revised Project Scope

Recap of July 2015 project scope and cost estimate – MarySue Abel

Cost uncertainty reduces as design percent complete increases, resulting in a higher level of confidence. The project is currently in the Project Development phase, which will continue through August 2016. 30% engineering will begin at that time, and the project budget will be updated again per requirements of FTA.

The DEIS cost estimate was based on 1% engineering. The cost estimate developed in 2012 was just over \$1 billion, with a 34% contingency and 3% escalation factor with mid-point of construction as 2017. The new base year is 2015escalated to year of expenditure and an updated mid-point of construction.

Technical Issue Recommendations Recap – Nick Landwer

Technical Advisory Groups were identified during DEIS phase. During scope refinement, these issues have continued to be worked on and will lead into municipal consent plans.

Issue #1: Street and Olson Memorial Highway Intersection

Blue Line would run in the center of the intersection. Primary traffic movement is eastbound Olson Memorial Highway to southbound 7th Street and would not interfere with train operations. The big

issue is safety of pedestrians and bicyclists moving through the intersection. The project office is working with the city of Minneapolis on how to tighten up the intersection while still accommodating traffic. Safe zones for pedestrian crossings and bike lanes run through on both sides of the street.

Jacobsen: When SWLRT builds that bridge, they will be fixing this intersection so it doesn't have to be done twice when BLRT comes through?

Landwer: With SWLRT elevated, BLRT needs to be below. We are coordinating with SWLRT on the bridge structure and overhead power that is built as part of that project.

Issue #2: Olson Memorial Highway

Olson Memorial Highway (OMH) is a principal arterial, and a reliever to I-394. It currently has 6 lanes with boulevards and sidewalks on both sides. The recommendation is for the roadway to continue as a 6-lane principal arterial, as the traffic analysis showed that other configurations would cause traffic issues. LRT would run in the center of OMH from 7th Street to the freight rail corridor. A full reconstruction of the roadway is being recommended, with some narrowing of lanes to reduce crossing distance for pedestrians. Room is also being left for a future 12-foot cycle track on the north side of the roadway (this is not part of the scope of this project, but could be accommodated in the future). Six new traffic signals will be constructed, as well as 3 signalized mid-block pedestrian crossings.

Jacobsen: Do the pedestrian signals sync up with trains?

Landwer: They will be synced with rest of traffic signals, but will likely not stop the train, and the pedestrian may have to wait to cross all the way if the train is passing. This is similar to crossings on University Ave for Green Line.

Issue #3: Olson Memorial Highway Crossing

It is proposed to maintain the eastbound bridge and construct a new westbound bridge just to the south of the existing bridge. LRT would be center running and transition to the freight rail corridor under new westbound Olson Memorial Highway bridge.

Issue #4: Plymouth Ave and Golden Valley Road stations

Advance design of both stations is included in the cost estimate. A park-and-ride is not included in the cost for the Golden Valley Road station; coordination with Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board on property impacts and design of potential park and ride is ongoing.

At Plymouth Avenue, center platform station is proposed, including reconstruction of the Plymouth Avenue bridge. This will also require a shift to Bassett Creek and the trail. The station would be at freight rail grade "in the trench," with stairs and elevator for access.

The Golden Valley station also has center platform, and includes reconstruction of Wirth Parkway and the Golden Valley Road bridge. With reconstruction of Golden Valley Road, there is the ability to

shift LRT further to east and continue the freight rail on its existing alignment, with LRT on structure across the Golden Valley Pond area.

Sims: Not clear if Plymouth Avenue station is going to be built or if it's still being studied?

Landwer: Our recommendation includes both stations to advance with design and include in cost estimate.

Sims: Just want to be clear and straightforward when relaying to other people.

Issue #5: Golden Valley Alignment

The biggest issue here is to minimize impact to the floodplain. This can be done by retaining freight rail on its existing embankment and constructing bridges for LRT. This also solves issue of poor soils in the area.

Issue #6: Robbinsdale Station

The Robbinsdale Station includes a center platform just south of 42nd. The recommendation includes a 550 space park-and-ride with transit center incorporated to facilitate transfers between bus and LRT. Minor traffic improvements are proposed at the signal to accommodate cars leaving the park-and-ride. Both crossings at 41st and 42nd will be at-grade. The project office is working with the city on the view corridor into the downtown area; and if the station should be shifted to be a key visual feature. Transit Oriented Development space is also shown in this area.

Issue #7: Bass Lake Road Station

Bass Lake Road station includes a center platform to the south side of Bass Lake Road with a 170-space surface parking lot. This requires acquisition of one commercial property; otherwise it would be on public right-of-way. Bass Lake Road crossing will be at-grade.

Issue #7A: West Broadway Crossing

Related to Bass Lake Road, there is desire to maintain the mobility of West Broadway and keep access to neighborhoods on both sides. A roundabout is proposed.

Issue #8: 63rd Ave Park and Ride

Includes a center platform north of 63rd Avenue. The existing park and ride space will be adequate. A pedestrian overpass is also recommended between the parking ramp and platform.

Berne: Earlier we talked about surface parking to the north, what is status?

Landwer: Ridership shows existing parking ramp is adequate. Some of the buses now in the bus turnaround are now out on 63rd. Keeping the bus turnaround area provides some operational flexibility in the case of an event; could be changed later if demand proves higher.

Issue #9: Brooklyn Blvd Station

Brooklyn Boulevard station includes a center platform with access from signalized intersections. There would be bus facilities on West Broadway (both sides).

Issue #10: Crossing of CR 81 at 73rd

The original recommendation was to cross diagonally at-grade through the intersection. This works fine for traffic operations, but concerns have been raised regarding county reconstruction of this roadway, maintenance, and safety. In response to safety and maintenance issues, the recommendation is to bridge LRT over the intersection. CR 81 is currently an oversized vehicle route. Project staff is currently checking with the county to see if this can change, otherwise the bridge will need to be taller. Staff is also coordinating with the county on planned CR 81 reconstruction (2019).

Berne: Is Hiawatha a moving route? Would this bridge be similar?

Fuhrmann: I believe they are taller at Lake Street and Highway 62.

Sims: Notice on map the BNSF freight and road ROW, is this area still within city limits?

Landwer: Yes, we are in Brooklyn Park. Map shows ROW for BNSF Railway. We leave BNSF in this area.

Issue #10: Reconstruction of West Broadway

LRT will run in the center of West Broadway, with two lanes of traffic in each direction and a trail on the outside. The county roadway project is from 78th Ave to just north of 93rd. South of there, LRT will match the cross section of the county roadway.

Issue #11: 93rd Avenue Station

Station would include a center platform south of 93rd Avenue. A bus route goes along 93rd. There would be a signalized intersection at 93rd, with unsignalized access at 92nd Avenue, similar to mid-block crossings on University Ave (Green Line).

Issue #12: Oak Grove Parkway Station

Just north of 93rd, LRT becomes side-running. Part of the project is to construct a new bridge across 610 for LRT. The Oak Grove Parkway station would include an 850-space park-and-ride with a center platform station. Additional non-revenue track would bring light rail vehicles in and out of the maintenance facility. As part of this roadway project, the recommendation is to construct West Broadway with a wide center median for several reasons: better placement of Xcel towers and room for tree screening; open areas designated for development; and necessary road improvements would make an environment not hospitable to pedestrians, so a median provides a refuge. A larger median could also be used for stormwater storage and runoff. Staff recommends to reconstruct Oak Grove Parkway up to 101st to keep access to Highway 169, and also to construct a section of Main Street and a north/south connector between Oak Grove Pkwy and Main Street to provide secondary access. Project staff is working closely with the city and county in this area to identify cost participation opportunities.

Berne: What we're seeing here isn't necessarily completely in the scope?

Landwer: Everything in the scope and cost estimate includes these improvements.

Abel: The cost participation would come into the overall funding sources of the project.

Berne: So the city might have to participate in what we're seeing now?

Landwer: Yes, and the county.

Issue #12: Operation and Maintenance Facility (OMF)

The OMF is proposed as a 10.8-acre site, brought down from the DEIS estimate of 15 to 17 acres at the request of the city. The site includes parking on the north side and construction of Xylon Avenue to service the OMF, with possible further extension by the city. Staff has consulted with building and fire officials to make sure there is adequate access for emergency vehicles – they are happy with the proposed design. The city has said it is looking at this area as the “signature park” – including an events center location and possibly a water tower.

Issue #13: Freight Rail

LRT is proposed to operate on the eastern 50 feet of existing 100-foot ROW owned by BNSF. The railroad has indicated corridor protection is needed. Several options are being investigated: ditch (moat), retained embankment, or wall. It is also recommended to reconstruct 4 bridges over the BNSF corridor. This saves at least one very long freight rail bridge. There are 10 proposed crossings with the rail, and all at-grade crossings are being designed to be quiet zone ready.

Issue #14: Transmission Line Coordination

South of the Indiana substation, existing Xcel transmission line would be shifted from the east side to a mono pole on the west side. This enables construction to start on the east side. North of the Indiana substation, Xcel has asked that the lines be kept where they are.

Issue #15: Traction Power Substations (TPSS)

A load flow study has been completed, and 17 TPSS locations are needed to run the trains. These are typically located every 5,000 feet, but can be closer or further apart in some cases. TPSS locations have been shown generally in a 300-foot circle. Specific locations will be refined in coordination with local stakeholders.

Issue #16: Parks

Staff will continue working with the parks on specific issues: Sochacki Park, trail connections; Theodore Wirth, right of way and construction impacts (i.e. potential staging areas during construction).

Sims: In regards to freight safety, I know SWLRT safety issues have been raised because of hazardous materials that may be carried through there. There are certain restrictions on movement through city limits – speeds, parking, times of day, etc. Is this being addressed?

Landwer: We are working to coexist with freight rail, but as far as their operations, they want to continue to operate the way they do today. We will not affect their operations. We don't have a lot of pull as to how the railroads operate.

Sims: Back at OMH I think at Humboldt, there is an elementary school and a lot of children. Is there anything about putting something up to protect those areas?

Landwer: That will be more of a final design issue, and we'll certainly be looking at areas like that. There are lots of areas along OMH today that are a "free for all," lots of crossings in haphazard way. We will want to make sure we are directing people to specific crossings when the LRT is there.

Sims: I know on campus, there is a big fence to keep the students from crossing. My concern for the children in my neighborhood is just as profound and want to make sure they are protected.

Landwer: I agree, absolutely in final design we will be looking at those opportunities to deter people.

Berne: Status of 39 ½ and Maplebrook Parkway?

Landwer: Maplebrook Parkway is part of the county project, and they are going forward with a signalized, full access intersection. We will coordinate with them. At 39 ½ we had a public meeting, and we are getting comments back on whether to keep it open or closed. The majority of comments so far are to close it, but we'll need to work with the city council on a final determination.

White: At Shingle Creek and West Broadway, putting new bridge in. City has plan to put trail across it at some point. Is there thought on how to connect in with that? Will people be able to cross?

Landwer: Nothing specific has been said about a trail crossing.

White: Good thing to be aware of.

Project Recommendation Summary – MarySue Abel

A high-level summary of technical issues was given, from Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park. These items were not in the original DEIS scope and are now recommended:

- OMH reconstruction – DEIS assumed partial reconstruction, now recommended as full
- Addition of a Plymouth Avenue station with elevator and stair tower
- Grimes Pond and Golden Valley Pond LRT structures. DEIS did not assume these, but they will help with soil and floodplain issues.
- Roadway bridge reconstruction at Plymouth Ave, Theo Wirth Pkwy, Golden Valley Road, 36th Avenue
- Bass Lake Road and surface park-and-ride
- 63rd Ave Station was in DEIS scope, but pedestrian overpass is now added
- LRT bridge construction over CR 81 and 73rd Avenue instead of at-grade intersection
- Roadway network north of TH 610
- DEIS assumed 26 light rail vehicles, recommendation is now for 28
- Freight rail corridor protection treatments
- Reference to 13.5 miles of ballasted track includes non-revenue track to OMF.

There are many more items within these major scope items that will be coordinated as design advances.

Slama: Corridor protections – is that making assumptions for what is being carried for freight right now, or there consideration for future freight?

Landwer: Less about cargo, more due to proximity of freight rail and LRT.

Jacobsen: Is there anything from the original scope that has been reduced or taken off the table?

Abel: Some of the floodplain mitigation identified in the DEIS is not needed based on design modifications to reduce impacts. Downsizing the OMF is another example.

Rasmussen: 63rd Avenue park-and-ride, the higher number of parking spaces is now not needed.

Vap: Stations going from split to center allows for shared amenities and infrastructure.

Jacobsen: These are important too, when people hear about costs going up, they want to know what's gone down.

Project Scope Discussion

This is the presentation that will be brought to CMC along with the cost – it was posed to the group: Does this provide the clarity needed, or is there additional info required?

Berne: What has been taken out needs to also be added, CMC will have the same questions.

Bakke: Also include how we are saving money and minimizing costs – this is important for residents to see.

Jacobsen: Presentation-wise, a couple of technical issue slides were out of order geographically.

Berne: Circulated a memorandum through CAC. Golden Valley City Council made it very clear they are looking for parking at that station, and it's not included. Is it a cost issue, acquiring land issue, how are we going to address that with Golden Valley?

Landwer: It's more that we need to work with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board on acquisition of that property. We're moving forward with design, but right now we don't have a "yes" from the Park Board.

Vap: Park Board will take this under consideration at their meeting on November 4th that they will continue to work with the project office on the design and what it means from a ROW perspective.

Berne: If they do approve a park and ride, is it inferred there would be city participation in cost?

Abel: After CMC recommendations, there will be an iterative process of taking things out, putting things in. There are opportunities moving forward to add that park-and-ride in once we know more from the Park Board.

Vap: From a staff perspective, this scope was meant to be a snapshot in time, this is where we're at with the Park Board, and we'll know more in the coming months.

Next Steps

Oct 29 – Rolling out scope and cost to CMC.

Nov 2/3 – Regularly scheduled CAC and BAC meetings to review cost

Nov 12 – Back to CMC seeking recommendation/resolution on project scope and cost estimate

Nov 23 – Met Council Transportation Committee

Dec 9 – Full Met Council, includes recommendation to release municipal consent plans

December – Municipal consent plans to cities for review
March 2016 – complete municipal consent approval process
Aug 2016 – 30% design plans and specifications
Aug 2016 – Apply with FTA to enter engineering

It was noted that a year's worth of work was presented at this meeting, with a lot of great progress made to get to 15% design. The efforts and input of the committees in this process was recognized and appreciated.

Berne: When is the revised EIS date?

Abel: Final approval expected August 2016. It would be after the Record of Decision (ROD) that we would apply into entry to engineering.

O'Brien: Actual FEIS will be published toward the end of June 2016. We once considered combining the FEIS and ROD, but because of Minnesota environmental requirements this didn't coordinate well for scheduling and document release.

Clift: Wouldn't mind meeting with CAC more often. Have learned a lot from hearing from community members. Why are we separate?

O'Connell: We took surveys, and the CAC responded that it's easier to meet in evenings, and businesses said mornings were better. We think there could be a great benefit to combining, but we will leave that up to the chairs of the committees.

3. Member and Committee Reports/Public Forum

No comments.

4. Adjourn

7:37pm.