



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Business Advisory Committee Meeting #3
July 7, 2015
Blue Line Project Office
5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200
Crystal, MN 55428
8:00 AM – 9:30 AM**

Meeting Summary

BAC Members: Randy Boushek, Brad Clift, Jeff Geisler, Charlie Jacobsen, Alison Pence, John Slama, Mark Steinhauser, Jeff Washburne, , Denny Walsh, Jim White

Agency Staff and Guests: Dan Pfeiffer, David Davies, Jessica Laabs, John Welbes, Juan Rangel, Nick Landwer, Dan Soler, Jim Toulouse, Kathryn O'Brien, Paul Danielson, Alicia Vap, Janet Kennison, Erik Hansen, Jim Geisler

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Outreach Update: Community Open Houses

Wrapped up round of open houses:

June 4 – Mpls/Golden Valley open house

June 11 – Robbinsdale

June 17 – Brooklyn Park

Another round of open houses in each city is being scheduled for late July/early August.

3. Community Works Update

Darlene Walser gave update on Hennepin County's efforts in working closely with the cities on station area planning. At the end of the day, it will be each city that will adopt and implement these station area plans.

Station area planning sets the table for the look, feel, and fit of the station into the community. Station area planning is about ½ mile around each station, or 10-minute walk. Looking at land use, types and character of buildings, access and circulation (how people get there), and public spaces including streets and trails. There is a specific effort to look at health issues – how can we design stations to promote people having health lives.

By next spring, station area planning should be done. Next piece will be to come up with an investment framework/implementation plan, since some of the items that will come out of station area planning are not part of the LRT project budget.

Walsh: For example at 93rd, with the ½ mile radius, there is a lot of new stuff and not a lot of opportunity for redevelopment. But Crystal has more opportunity for redevelopment. People have great ideas, how does it work? Who does it, how does it get done? **Walsler:** Could open doors for city to make zoning changes to allow the type of development they would like. Part will be public investment, part will be public investment. **Walsh:** Does the public investment come only from the city or Hennepin County? **Walsler:** All partners have to figure out what you need, and then what the best partners would be for getting it done.

Slama: We have the rail in place in other parts of the cities, do we have info on what has developed and where money has come from? These would be useful examples as we talk to our cities.

Washburne: How much latitude do we have to make recommendations or ask for tools that have worked for previous lines? County Commissioners are considering today a shift of funds to cover the gap on the Southwest line. It seems that local and regional organizations aren't making tools available on other projects. **Soler:** Where station area planning effort ties to LRT effort is when we build LRT line, we have to take into consideration what's there today, what stays. But, we also have to understand and use the station area planning efforts to determine if there are any other decisions we can make to best serve potential future uses, or not significantly impact the ability for potential future uses. **Vap:** Met Council TOD office has some information about redevelopment that has occurred along Hiawatha that could be shared.

Washburne: A lot of great ideas have come out of local planning, but it will happen in a much quicker timeframe if there are incentives. **Soler:** Biggest challenge is how to lay out what will happen where there is nothing, i.e. north of 610. You want to make decisions that provide the most flexibility, so we have to be careful.

Jacobson: How do you coordinate so you have space for a park-and-ride north of 610? **Soler:** We're working with the city and Target about plans. **Erik Hansen:** There are plans for around the Oak Grove station, but the issue is more how do you implement the infrastructure so it doesn't inhibit that development.

Several members noted it would be great if there was a database of information or some examples from previous lines or a city that we're looking at modeling ourselves after. **Walsh:** Example, at Crystal station at one corner there is blighted housing, I know the city would like to redevelop – but the feasibility of rebuilding is probably not financially workable without incentives. What are some examples of how something like that has been done? Darlene will pull some examples together from other cities as well as St. Paul. There was a collaborative that worked to promote and secure funding sources.

Slama: Interesting that you mention community health. Northwest Family Physicians are in an ideal spot now in terms of rail access, good example of what can happen.

4. Design Update/Discussion

Target Field Station Connection to I-94 Interchange: Recommendation

ABRT pilot stations, coordinating with this effort as well as Southwest and other improvements planned for the area. Key issues – need to coordinate with SLWRT and how they are connecting; unique geometry of 7th Street intersection; safety for peds and bikes.

BLRT needs to be down underneath SWLRT, which is above grade. BLRT will be responsible for rebuilding 7th Street intersection. Will have double thru lanes. Proposed is for a single phase pedestrian movement – should be able to get across in one signal. Intersection still operates acceptably in 2040 with this scenario.

Recommendation: to continue design according to this plan, LRT crosses and continues center-running through Olson Memorial Highway.

Slama: Signals missing from the Sketch-Up model? **Landwer:** Yes, those aren't yet developed in the model yet. **Soler:** Will be like typical LRT intersection.

I-94 Interchange: Recommendation

Key issues include LRT center running on existing bridge; structural reinforcement under LRT guideway; bridge left intact outside guideway; new signals installed at intersections.

Proposed bridge modifications similar to what was done on Highway 280 Bridge on the Green Line (Central Corridor) project. Reviewing what has been the cause of some of the accidents on this bridge to see what can be done to improve.

Washburne: When cut out bridge deck and build new, are they independent systems? **Landwer:** Structure not independent, but road deck structure is separate from LRT guideway, so if there are improvements needed to the road deck, those could happen. **Soler:** Benefits of not replacing, don't have to close bridge to implement LRT; can take middle out and still maintain traffic on the sides.

85th Station Configuration

Alicia Vap presented current status of this station. Exhibits will be brought out to the public for input.

Many bus routes access this location, so we're continuing to work on bus access. Also working with the college about platform location and safe passenger drop-off, potential for dedicated parking spaces.

Jacobsen: Is the roadway being widened? **Vap:** Yes, need to widen to accommodate center platform. Most impacts different from the DEIS are to the college property. **Soler:** West Broadway will get wide because tracks will be in the middle, and here it will get a little bit wider still.

93rd Station Configuration

Looked at multiple configurations including side platforms and split platforms on different sides. Primary access at 93rd intersection; secondary access at 92nd Avenue. Talking with Ebenezer Church to coordinate with their plans for expansion and inquire about spaces for passenger drop-off.

Same station layout with center platform and similar station access at all stations along West Broadway.

Washburne: What is the use? **Erik Hansen:** Spec warehouse.

Walsh: Doesn't look like a good place for anyone to be dropped off; kind of a no-man's land. **Erik Hansen:** By the time the rail is operational, all of the development identified as "future" will be there. **Walsh:** Doesn't seem like there is anywhere to park. **Vap:** Will talk to the church about potential for shared parking. If this doesn't work out, it's a drop-off/feeder bus/walk-up station.

Jacobsen: There is probably more people coming from the reverse direction to their job at these more industrial-type businesses. **Erik Hansen:** One business has located here because the station will be here. **Soler:** Will be important for us to find an area where we can have a pull-off.

5. DEIS Scope and Cost Estimate Update

Dan Soler gave an overview of the scope and cost of the project. \$1.002 billion is estimated cost to construct BLRT project as it was identified in the DEIS based on 1% actual engineering and a lot of assumptions. The more we know, the more refined the estimate will become.

Cost doesn't include only construction cost. Around June 2016, need a budget for the project. To do this – 1) revise, modify scope of project from what was studied in DEIS. This committee will have input into how the scope should change; 2) identify and account for risks; 3) accounting for "unknown unknowns", contingency. As we learn more, contingency will reduce.

We already know the cost estimate will need to be escalated to reflect a 2018-2020 construction period, instead of a construction midpoint of 2017 as previously assumed.

Risks include requirements (i.e. BNSF negotiations), design issues (i.e. floodplains, poor soils), market (i.e. schedule delays, commodity prices).

What's included in the cost estimate today: ballasted track, guideway structures (new bridges and bridge modifications), soil mitigation, 10 stations, OMF, roadway bridge reconstruction, roadway bridge minor modifications, partial reconstruction of OMH, reconstruction of at-grade crossings, park-and-ride sites (93rd, 63rd, Robbinsdale), relocation of 14 transmission towers, systems, some full and partial acquisitions, LRT vehicles.

What's not included in the cost estimate today: embedded track, grade separation at intersections (42nd and 73rd), corridor protection (BNSF), Plymouth Avenue station, pedestrian overpass at 63rd Avenue station, OMF site roadway realignment, space and equipment for major repairs, Park-and-ride at Golden Valley Road station, Bass Lake Road station, gated crossings on West Broadway.

Washburne: Appreciate the information about costs and variables – there are a lot of unknowns.

6. Member and Committee Reports/Public Forum

No comments.

7. Adjourn: Next BAC meeting August 4.