



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Community Advisory Committee Meeting
September 11, 2017
Blue Line Project Office
5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200
Crystal, MN 55428
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

Meeting Summary

CAC Members: Vicki Moore, George Selman, Sten Pearson, Ken Rodgers, Steve Schmidt, Stefan Watkins, Giuseppe Marrari, La Shella Sims, Chris Berne, Catherine Fleming

Agency Staff and Guests: Juan Rangel, Rachel Dammel, Kerri Pearce Ruch, Sam O’Connell, MarySue Abel, Jim Toulouse, David Davies, Rachel Auerbach, Alicia Vap, Peter DeMuth, Dan Pfeiffer

1. Approval of March 6 and June 5, 2017 Meeting Summaries

Minutes were approved with no edits.

2. Selection of Co-Chairs

At the June meeting, Chris Berne stated he had interest in continuing to serve as co-chair and asked others to let him know if they were interested. Catherine Fleming also indicated she would be interested.

Sam O’Connell said they would like to see a recommendation from the CAC regarding the co-chairs, and then that recommendation will go to the chair of the Met Council to approve.

George Selman noted that Jason Greenburg had expressed interested to him but he isn’t present tonight.

The CAC recommended that Chris Berne and Catherine Fleming serve as the co-chairs.

3. Hennepin County Bottineau Community Works Update

Kerri Pearce Ruch presented. Hennepin County is focused on the areas around the stations that are outside the scope of the BLRT project.

They have three major work areas:

- FTA Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
- McKnight Intersections
- Blue Cross Blue Shield

FTA Pilot Program for TOD

The Metropolitan Council was awarded an FTA Pilot Program grant for TOD in October 2016, and Hennepin County is a sub-recipient and is managing much of the work. Focus areas of this grant

include housing and zoning, infrastructure, innovative financing, community engagement, and economic development.

A consultant has been selected for housing, zoning, and market analysis (Perkins + Will), which is going to the county board for approval later this month. RFPs for additional work will be forthcoming.

The innovative financing work is being led by the Metropolitan Council.

McKnight Intersections

The focus areas of the McKnight Intersections grant are arts and placemaking, small business support, and tying theory to practice. Cities have identified station areas that they think would benefit from placemaking, and the planning for these efforts will begin this fall. Hands-on technical assistance will also be offered to small businesses to help them prepare for and cope with construction (e.g., helping individual business owners with debt reduction plans, social media, etc.). ULI is helping city staff and policymakers think about how TOD can fit in with their goals and what that can look like.

Chris Berne asked if the arts piece is just discussion or if it includes buying and installing art since the grant will end before construction of the LRT line is complete. Kerri replied that the art element is more focused on placemaking than on buying pieces of art (e.g., hosting events or putting art in public spaces along the corridor to draw people in and build awareness of the line that is coming).

Steve Schmidt asked who was providing input on these grants. Kerri said the McKnight grant has a coordinating committee, which includes representatives from the Blue Line Coalition, Springboard for the Arts, and Twin Cities LISC.

Blue Cross Blue Shield

The Blue Cross Blue Shield effort focuses on a Health Equity Engagement Cohort (facilitated by Nexus Community Partners), bike/pedestrian demonstration projects, and advancing health equity strategies from station area planning.

Bike/pedestrian demonstration projects currently underway include:

- Improving the crossing from the bus stop to the Courage Center in Golden Valley
- Installing temporary bike racks in parking spaces outside of Wicked Wort in Robbinsdale (could be made permanent)
- Making pedestrian enhancements between the farmers' market at Dragon Star and Starlite Transit Center in Brooklyn Park

Potential future demonstration projects include:

- Opportunities at Van White and Queen Avenue in Minneapolis
- Possible Bass Lake Road pedestrian improvements in Crystal

Members of the public can participate in these demonstration projects and in their evaluation process.

Discussion

Ken Rodgers asked what form the business support would look like with the McKnight grant. Kerri said the format is still being worked out, but it could be grants, forgivable loans, low-cost design assistance, or something else. Ken asked if the façade improvements would emphasize barrier removal and ADA improvements. Kerri said that so far the discussion has been mostly about storefronts but accessible entries could also be considered. Ken also asked about the pedestrian/bike demonstration projects, noting that there is tension at intersections with bike lanes as they can interfere with accessible paths of travel, which are required by law. He said there is a lack of coordination between the disability community, bike users, and the designers of bike paths. There should be a way to work it so everyone can win, but it will require coordination. Kerri replied that that is a very helpful comment for the County as they start to look at bike and pedestrian connections in station areas.

La Shella Sims said she agrees with Ken that there is a lot of tension between bikes, pedestrians, and vehicles, and safety among the modes need to be coordinated.

Steve Schmidt asked Ken if he or other members of the TAAC have been invited to participate in the County's efforts. Ken said they have not, but the disability committee and bike committee have tried to work together and it went well at first but didn't resolve any issues. They will keep trying to work together, however. With the experimental bike lane configurations going in, the accessibility elements are not being thought through until afterwards and there is already a problem. Ken said they have reached out to FHWA regarding guidance or best practices, and FHWA is working on it but isn't ready to publish anything yet.

Vicki Moore added that if it is within the scope of the grant it would also be helpful to do education on rules for bikes and how cars and bikes should interact.

4. New Starts Update

MarySue Abel presented. The FTA New Starts Annual Report for FY 2018 was published and made official the project's medium-high rating. The New Starts application was updated and submitted last Thursday for the FY 2019 New Starts Annual Report, and a medium-high rating is anticipated.

The New Starts rating is composed of two elements: the project justification rating (50%) and financial rating (50%). The project justification rating is made up of six factors (economic development, mobility improvements, environmental benefits, congestion relief, cost effectiveness, and land use). The financial rating is made up of three factors (current capital/operating condition, commitment of capital/operating funds, and reasonableness of capital/operating cost estimates). The project received a medium for project justification and high for financial, which averages out to medium-high.

Vicki Moore asked how many other projects are ranked high. MarySue Abel said there are five other projects that are currently in the Engineering phase, and she doesn't believe any are ranked high – the highest is medium-high.

Chris Berne asked where negotiations with railroads fall into this equation. MarySue Abel said that is not part of this rating, but those negotiations must be done to apply for the FFGA.

The 2017 New Starts submittal for FY 2019 includes some new information, including:

- Land use and economic development: advances since 2016
- Financial management plan: CTIB dissolution and full local funding commitment
- Revised project schedule: shift FFGA application from September 2017 to May 2018
- Ridership: adjusted for reduction of Robbinsdale park-and-ride from 550 spaces to 400 spaces

MarySue said they anticipate hearing from FTA in February what the updated rating is. In addition to the railroad negotiations, the other element needed to apply for the FFGA is funding identified in the federal budget.

Chris Berne noted that the shift in schedule changes the opening date from 2021 until 2022.

Steve Schmidt said he recently saw an article that indicated that limits on railroad liability also need to be in place. Sam O'Connell confirmed that is something they will need to work through.

5. Right-of-Way

Sam O'Connell said that the project is moving towards 90% design, so they are looking at the list of everyone they need to be in contact with because they need to partially or fully acquire their property. Letters will be sent out this month asking property owners that will be impacted to contact BPO if they haven't yet. Other nearby properties will receive a postcard with general project information.

Catherine Fleming asked what the backup plan is if people don't receive mail and if the notices go to renters too. Sam O'Connell said the letters will go to the property owners for the parcels that will be acquired, and renters will receive the postcard with general information. If we still haven't connected with property owners after the letters, the BPO team will knock on doors to reach people. Catherine Fleming asked if there was any sort of public notice about the property impacts. Dan Pfeiffer said legal paperwork will be filed, so if someone is going to buy a home that information would be found during closing. Sam O'Connell said the maps of property impacts are also posted online. Chris Berne noted that there are also disclosure requirements for those selling property. La Shella Sims asked if realtors also have to disclose this project. Chris Berne said that realtors do have a duty to disclose to potential buyers.

Chris Berne asked if the notifications that will be sent out will include properties along West Broadway since those are being handled by Hennepin County. Juan Rangel said they are coordinating with Hennepin County, and the properties along West Broadway will only receive one letter that will come from the County.

Steve Schmidt asked when offers will be made, and then what happens if funding doesn't come through. MarySue Abel said there are only a handful of properties that are full takings that need appraisals, and these letters are more of a heads up. Until the FFGA is secured, they will start with properties that have other uses in case this project would fall through.

Sam O'Connell suggested they have someone from the right-of-way team come to a future meeting to answer any further questions the group has.

6. Bassett Creek Storm Sewer Update

Construction Overview

Peter DeMuth presented.

The storm sewer project includes two bid packages, one for material procurement and one for tunnel construction. On July 31, 2017, the material procurement contract was awarded to Max Steininger, Inc. On August 25, 2017, the tunnel construction contract was awarded to Minger Construction Companies, Inc.

This fall utility installation across Olson Memorial Highway will occur. This will include:

- Precast box culvert
- Two 42-inch MCES conveyance pipes
- A 12-day closure of Olson Memorial Highway between W Lyndale Ave and Van White Blvd that will start after October 27, 2017 to allow for the completion of I-94 work
 - Closure dates have been coordinated with MnDOT, Hennepin County, and City of Minneapolis
 - Minger anticipates working 24 hours per day during the closure

In the winter of 2017/2018, work will include cast-in-place concrete and in-place lining of the MCES sewer. This will require:

- Lane closures on Olson Memorial Highway for north closure concrete placement between Olson Memorial Highway and Heritage Park townhomes
- Helical pile installation in the Summit OIC parking lot for south closure concrete placement
- 36-inch pipe installation within the existing egg-shaped sanitary sewer for the MCES lining

Cleanup and restoration will then occur in spring 2018.

Vicki Moore asked if the new tunnel would be larger than the old tunnel. Jim Toulouse said the new tunnel will match the downstream tunnel that was upgraded about 10 years ago.

Catherine Fleming asked if they city would be doing anything special for the traffic rerouted from Olson Memorial Highway. Peter DeMuth said they have been working with the City on the detour route and timing. Jim Toulouse added that the detour is for regional traffic, and there will still be local access available but it will only be one lane. While they can sign detours, they can't legally force traffic to not take public roadways so unfortunately they can't guarantee traffic will follow the signed detour. Vicki Moore suggested the project meet with the Harrison Neighborhood Association so people are aware there will be more traffic in the neighborhood.

Outreach and Communications

Sam O'Connell discussed outreach and communications for the Bassett Creek storm sewer project.

Key messages of will include:

- Project description
- Duration of construction
- Detours for vehicles, trail users, and bus riders
- Where to get more information

- Who to contact if you have questions

There will be coordination/information sharing meetings with MnDOT, Metro Transit, Hennepin County, and cities.

Media used will include both traditional (TV, cable access, radio, newspapers) and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Next Door). A short video will also be created that can be easily shared.

Neighborhood and community communications will include:

- Neighborhood/community briefings
- Community open house in October
- Leave behind one-pager/poster
- Project website and newsletter
- Variable message signs
- GovDelivery

Catherine Fleming said to make sure businesses along Olson Memorial are notified, and when bus stops are closed it would be helpful if the bus closed signs indicate where it does stop. Sam O’Connell said the outreach activities will include outreach to businesses.

Stefan Watkins asked if the HOV lane on 394 could be used to alleviate traffic during construction. Jim Toulouse said the discussions with MnDOT did not get to that point.

La Shella Sims asked where the detour will begin and end. Jim Toulouse said the signed detour will begin between 100 and 394. MnDOT has a policy that they only detour traffic from MnDOT roads onto other MnDOT roads. East of Penn Avenue the road will be narrowed to one lane to deter regional traffic from using Olson Memorial Highway but local traffic will still be able to get through.

7. West Broadway Stations

Alicia Vap presented.

Station design was established in 30% plans, and the design for the three stations along West Broadway include:

- Center platforms consistent on all station platforms
- Consistent layout of shelters, ticket equipment, and signage on all platforms

Station design is advancing as they work towards 90% plans, which includes finalizing:

- Material choices, including color
- Details such as lighting or other unique design elements
- The station area, including access

The three stations on West Broadway are considered sister stations – they have a similar look and feel but have differences:

- 93rd Avenue Station
 - Station is located south of 93rd in the middle of West Broadway
 - Rectangular rapid flash beacon (RRFB) will be used at the pedestrian crossing south of the platform

- City will be adding street trees in boulevard, pedestrian scale lighting, and planters
- Canopy will be made of expanded metal material, and they are considering backlighting the end panels
- Light spires (decorative light poles) will tie in with canopy material
- Between the car barriers will give indicator of where there is a gap between cars for visually impaired riders
- 85th Avenue Station
 - Station located south of 85th in the middle of West Broadway
 - Access on south end will have a RRFB
 - Canopy will be made of different color metal panels, and they are exploring lighting of panels along the long edge of the canopy parallel to train
 - Light spires will tie into station architecture
 - Same amenities as described for 93rd Avenue Station
- Brooklyn Boulevard Station
 - Station located south of Brooklyn Blvd in middle of West Broadway
 - Both accesses are from a traffic signal
 - Canopy will have metal panels with a wavy pattern with backlighting on the ends
 - Light spires will tie into station architecture
 - Same amenities as described for the other two stations

Stefan Watkins asked if all stations have an emergency call box and a wind enclosure. Alicia Vap said that emergency call boxes that go to the rail control center are on each platform. Shelters are also located on each platform, the placement of which was determined with the use of wind modeling.

Sten Pearson asked if all light fixtures will be LED. Alicia Vap said they will.

Ken Rodgers said that the RRFBs are not accessible, so for him there is only one accessible path of travel to the platforms which use those, which he doesn't think is legal. He asked why there can't be a signal at the other end of the platform that is timed to not cause a traffic delay. Alicia Vap said she believes part of the issue is proximity – you can't have two signals that close together. Ken said that without a signal, he can't know if a car is stopping for the beacon, or if another car goes around a stopped car. Alicia said she will follow up with Nick Olrich about this. Ken said he knows that there are ADA requirements for the platform itself, but he isn't sure if there are ADA guidelines for accessing the platform. He can't see how the beacon would be considered accessible.

La Shella Sims noted that it is important to consider the brightness of the lights on the station canopies. Alicia Vap said they have design criteria they have to meet, so the station lighting has to be a certain brightness.

Ken Rodgers asked what the barrier is at the crossing to make sure you don't go too far. Alicia Vap said there is a curb and a railing. There are also tactile strips at the bottom of the ramps leading up to the platform. Ken said if there aren't vertical supports on the railing, a dog might not see the railing. He also noted that the tracks are the landmark he uses when he gets to the platform, but the tactile strips are really helpful when coming down the ramp from the platform.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 pm. The next CAC meeting is scheduled for October 9, 2017.