



**METRO Blue Line Extension
Business Advisory Committee Meeting #5
September 8, 2015
Blue Line Project Office
5514 West Broadway Avenue, Suite 200
Crystal, MN 55428
8:00 AM – 9:30 AM**

Meeting Summary

BAC Members: Alison Pence, Mark Steinhauser, Denny Walsh, Jim White, Charlie Jacobsen, Brad Clift

Agency Staff and Guests: Dan Pfeiffer, David Davies, Jessica Laabs, Juan Rangel, Nick Landwer, Jim Toulouse, Paul Danielson, Erik Hansen, Sophia Ginis, MarySue Abel, Scott Walker, Robyn Caufman, Dan Soler, Kathryn O'Brien

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Outreach Update: Community Open Houses

Golden Valley – concerns about environmental issues, stations and parking around stations

Safety and security seemed to be a common theme, people are interested in this. Also property impacts along the corridor.

BPO is working with city staff to plan the next round of open houses in mid- to late October. These meetings will be environmentally focused, with new roll plots showing any updates to design concepts.

Walsh: Anything that stands out based on going through these meetings a couple of times now?

Davies: Seems pretty typical, but we're now at a point where we can start talking more specifically about environmental issues, which people have been anxious to hear more about.

3. Station Area Planning Update

Darlene Walser from Hennepin County gave an update on the station area planning process. A lot of the planning is centered around economic development and land use – what we see today, and what we want to see in the future.

Darlene walked through an example from Robbinsdale on what the process looks like:

1. Community meeting to understand needs and desires, vision
2. Design workshop – beyond just where the station is located, but what the area wants to be 30 years into the future (showed visuals of potential scenario)

A big issue in Robbinsdale is getting the parking garage in scale with the rest of downtown area, and connecting pedestrians, parking, and transit to the community; building off the Main Street concept.

This process will be continued in other communities in the next number of months.

4. Technical Issue #6: Robbinsdale Station

Nick Landwer reminded everyone of how the Robbinsdale station appeared in the DEIS.

Pedestrian movements at 41st Ave N: as with all intersections, want to make this “quiet zone ready.” Quite a bit of improvement would be necessary, and pedestrian movements and safety are an issue. A pedestrian tunnel would need to be deep (15-20 feet) and with long ramps to access. This would have impacts to Triangle Park and parking at Sacred Heart Church. There is also a safety factor if people just cut across at-grade to avoid the longer ramps. To avoid these impacts, BPO investigated a pedestrian crossing at-grade. Nick showed visuals of what this would look like as a pedestrian.

Other issues at which BPO was asked to look included concerns about traffic impacts with an at-grade LRT crossing. Grade separations were investigated. LRT over 42nd Ave N would have substantially more right-of-way impacts and visual impacts to downtown; if LRT ran under 42nd Ave N, a below-grade station would have very high retaining walls and visual barriers to/from downtown.

There is a desire to improve visibility to/from station platform and add a passenger drop off on the south side of the parking ramp. BPO is looking at relocating the transit center function to within the parking ramp. Traffic is also a concern and BPO looked at this.

Dan Soler: Robbinsdale City Council is excited to see LRT, but has concerns about how it fits into the context of the downtown. City Council sees the success of this station as the “whole picture”, with future development, and would like to see Hubbard Marketplace put into private/redevelopment use. BPO spent a lot of time looking at putting LRT under 42nd, but the impact of having the station below grade is more of an impact to downtown.

Steinhauser: Initial number of spaces was 475, but now 550...and 100 spaces have also been added to Crystal. Seems the height of this structure would affect the character of the city.

Soler: The height of the ramp is based on what came out of the station area planning process. It looks like an out-of-character ramp without a 2-story liner building in front of it – that’s why the whole picture of redevelopment is important. Modeling shows Robbinsdale could handle 700-800 spaces; that is too many. As we get to final design, we want to be in the 550 range. The design of the building can be refined.

Walser: This was a key piece of the design workshop; the 2-story retail on the front of the ramp is a key detail. It’s in the model at scale in the station area planning drawings.

Soler: It works in the city council’s mind with these other concepts for redevelopment. The city wants to keep these “liner development” scenarios in the mix.

Nick continued with a discussion of necessary traffic improvements. The entire downtown area was modeled – existing, future growth with no LRT, and with LRT. Concerns have been expressed regarding what a 550 space ramp does to downtown. Mitigation is needed: Need left-turn lanes on W. Broadway to 42nd Ave; improved left-turn phasing; and retiming W. Broadway/42nd Ave N traffic signals. With these improvements, intersection will operate at acceptable level of service.

Soler: We will be continuing to discuss with operations folks in the coming months. We have also talked about making 41 ½ a two-way street, but the city has said no.

Steinhauser: Where would the entrance [to the parking garage] be on 42nd?

Soler: No entrance on 42nd.

Recommendation:

- Center platform
- At-grade pedestrian crossing at 41st Ave N
- At-grade intersection at 42nd Ave N
- Relocate transit center function to parking ramp (550 total spaces)
- Associated traffic improvements to W. Broadway/42nd Ave N

5. Technical Issue #7: West Broadway Crossing

DEIS showed matching up the existing skew at this crossing. Longer medians are needed to make it quiet-zone ready. Bicycle and pedestrian safety is also an issue here.

Recommendation:

- Proceed with quiet zone ready design
- Roundabout on east side
- Maintain full access to 48th Ave/Welcome Ave
- Continue coordination with city, county

Soler: The layout was a challenge because it was important to the City of Crystal that all movements today be maintained.

Steinhauser: I think it's a good solution. I like the roundabout.

6. Technical Issue 11: Oak Grove Parkway

The wide-open nature of this area presents both challenges and opportunities. This location is just south of the Target campus. The need for a park-and-ride structure was evaluated here and at 93rd; but new development is occurring at 93rd which shifted the focus to the Oak Grove location. 500-800 acres are ready for development, and BPO is worked closely with Target to understand its vision. The existing roadway structure doesn't line up well for future development.

It is the desire of the city and Target to have a visible LRT platform to integrate transit into the future "downtown" area. A bike/pedestrian friendly environment is also desired. The DEIS proposed a 900- space ramp; further analysis indicates need for 750-800 spaces.

BPO developed a re-route of West Broadway to provide a better grid for redevelopment and a better traffic situation. The proposed large median is able to accommodate Xcel transmission towers and also stormwater. Oak Grove Parkway is also realigned to connect to a future interchange at Hwy 169.

Walsh: Does budget get impacted much with construction of new roadways?

Landwer: This will be a partnership with the city and county to determine what is required for LRT, and what is needed for future development.

Opening day requirements include a station and park-and-ride with 2 accesses and associated roadway construction, as well as access to the operations and maintenance facility. West Broadway reconstruction will also be required. Some of these improvements may be done prior to opening day for LRT, based on the activities of the city and Target.

Soler: Because we're the first people up here to this "blank canvas," we set the stage. We need to know what the backbone of the roadway network will be. It doesn't mean the capacity of these roadways is needed on Day 1 of LRT service, but the time is now to get the improvements in, so BPO will be working with the city and Target to make sure this configuration supports the redevelopment of the entire site, and then how and by whom this infrastructure gets constructed.

Recommendation:

- Center platform station west of W. Broadway between Oak Grove and Main Street
- Ramp with 750 spaces near station
- Construct W. Broadway with wide center median
- Construct Main Street and intersection to ramp
- Construct road west of park and ride from Oak Grove Parkway to Main Street
- Work with city and county to determine cost participation

7. Technical Issue # 12: OMF Location

Dan Soler noted it has always been part of the project to have an OMF facility in the northern area of the project, and the DEIS identified 2 potential locations of about 15 acres in size. The site at 93rd is now off the table due to development occurring at this site, so the area north of 610 has been the focus. In this area, the Rush Creek Regional Trail and other parkland, wetlands, and Xcel Energy transmission lines must be worked around. The City of Brooklyn Park asked to possibly move to a north/south configuration further to the west of the parcel, to be adjacent to a new north/south roadway (Xylon). With this location and configuration, the required site size has been reduced to 10.8 acres. This leaves approximately 20 acres of city property available for redevelopment to the east of the OMF.

Recommendation:

- Location near 101st/Xylon in north/south orientation
- Continue coordination with the city

8. Technical Issue #13: Freight Rail Update

Continued dialogue with BNSF has resulted in pointing toward "BNSF Commuter Principles." BNSF has shown they can add a 2nd track without any significant infrastructure improvements; so if BPO wants 50 feet, would need to reconstruct bridges at Plymouth Ave, Theo Wirth Pkwy, Golden

Valley Rd, and 36th Ave to allow for this potential future expansion of freight rail. Reconstruction of these bridges was not included in the BLRT's DEIS scope and cost estimate, but this is the message BNSF is giving at this time. Corridor protection treatments are also a topic of discussion with BNSF, to reduce their liability as a result of commuter operations.

Poor soils are also an issue and are in some cases too deep to dig out. Other stabilization techniques will be necessary in this area (drive pile, put platform on top). This will also be a coordination item with BNSF.

9. Environmental Update

Kathryn O'Brien summarized the status of the environmental process. The environmental team is coordinating closely with the engineering team. Sochacki Park is a good example of the iterative process happening between the teams – detailed review of construction options indicates that impacting the park is the best option to avoid other impacts related to stormwater, wetlands, floodplains, and soil stabilization. Building a bridge in this area seems the best solution.

Avoiding long-term impacts can also bring greater short-term impacts to the park during construction, i.e. bringing heavy equipment into the trench. There are not a lot of opportunities for good access or storage areas. Storage in other areas would probably require acquisition of homes to create construction staging areas; therefore, conversations about staging in Sochacki Park are being conducted. This requires engagement with a number of agencies, cities, and the community. Kathryn anticipates this will be a topic at the upcoming community meetings in October.

Pence: Remind me why we are running up the rail corridor? There seems to be so many issues. Beginning to appreciate why so many of the comments in Golden Valley were environmentally-related.

Soler: This part is tough, but it would be tough somewhere else too. Building these bridges will be hard, but filling it in would be equally difficult because each "scoop in" means there would be need to be an equal "scoop out" somewhere nearby, to mitigate the floodplain impacts.

Not the same scale of park, but Met Council did have temporary impacts to the Bohemian Flats park area on Central Corridor, so we have done this before.

10. Adjourn: Next BAC meeting October 6th

Soler: As we move into meetings in the fall, we'll roll out what the project looks like now in terms of scope and estimated costs.