

METRO Gold Line Corridor Management Committee

Notes for the August 2, 2018 Meeting

Metropolitan Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Alene Tchourumoff, Steve Morris, Darrell Paulsen, Paul Reinke, Stan Karwoski, Brian Lamb, Andrea Date, Jane Prince, Jim McDonough, Lisa Weik, Rafael Ortega, Stan Suedkamp, Brian Isaacson

1. WELCOME (CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS AND ROLL CALL)

Chair Alene Tchourumoff called the monthly meeting of the METRO Gold Line BRT Corridor Management Committee (CMC) to order at 2:30 p.m. on August 2, 2018.

Chair Tchourumoff welcomed the two Community and Business Advisory Committee (CBAC) co-chairs, appointed as CMC members in July 2018. Darrell Paulsen (Community Representative) and Steve Morris (Business Representative) introduced themselves.

Committee members and other attendees introduced themselves.

2. REVIEW OF MEETING NOTES

Chair Tchourumoff asked if anyone has any comments or questions about the June 7, 2018 meeting notes. Mayor Stan Suedkamp noted that a comment on the bottom of Page 4 was attributed to him, however, the comment was made by Commissioner Stan Karwoski.

No additional comments to the June 7, 2018 meeting notes.

3. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

Chair Tchourumoff gave opening remarks. She highlighted that, about 3% of the Gold Line BRT project design is complete. Gold Line project partners are collaborating on design and scope refinement of the project. CMC will be involved in process of identifying, discussing and making important decisions. Public engagement and outreach activities so far are impressive. Project partners were present to listen and respond to comments from the community along with Gold Line staff who were on-hand to answer questions. Items to be constructed with the Gold Line project must be studied under the Environmental Assessment (EA), even if it's paid for locally, without federal funds. Items studied in the EA may or may not be included in the final project scope.

4. STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Liz Jones (Gold Line Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator) presented the stakeholder and public engagement update. The past 4 to 6 weeks have been busy with multiple Open Houses and community outreach events.

Two corridor-wide Open Houses held in July:

- West; July 17, 2018; 5:00-7:00 pm; Grace Lutheran Church, St. Paul
- East; July 18, 2018; 5:00-7:00 pm; Guardian Angels Catholic Church, Oakdale

Three Neighborhood Meetings (east side of Saint Paul) held to review the station locations where input is needed on design options:

- Mounds Boulevard vs. Maria Avenue Station - community preference was Mounds
- White Bear Avenue Station (Hazel Street vs. Van Dyke Street) - community preference was Hazel
- Hudson Road between Etna Street and White Bear Avenue (mixed traffic vs. dedicated guideway) - community preference was mixed traffic

General comments from the community included interest in connecting further east to such as Stillwater and into WI, interest in park and rides, concerns about increased parking in neighborhoods, pedestrian safety, pedestrian connections, and bridges (new and reconstruction).

Detailed comments will be tracked as the Environmental Assessment (EA) progresses. The outreach team also had great success door knocking in the two neighborhoods (White Bear Avenue and Mounds/Maria) where input was needed on station location/design options. Outreach teams made connections with almost 200 residents and recorded the community's station location preferences and comments. Additional ongoing outreach activities such as mailings, social media, stakeholder meetings with businesses, community events and pop-up events will continue throughout the project. Other efforts include building relationships with the community, nonprofit organizations and associations.

Commissioner Rafael Ortega asked about the number of Hmong and Hispanic community members that the neighborhood outreach teams spoke with. Liz Jones replied that outreach teams had flyers translated into four languages; Hmong, Spanish, Somali and Karen, and spoke with many people interested in Hmong and Spanish flyers. Individuals were not asked to self-identify, but the teams reached a diverse population. To promote the Gold Line outreach events, 500 to 700 mailings were sent to neighborhood residents, including apartment complexes. The outreach team is also continuing to engage with the community through pop up events at various locations. Liz expressed that face-to-face communication is important, and she has a personal interest in reaching people without internet or online access.

Mayor Paul Reinke asked Liz Jones to discuss how the feedback received during conversations with the public weighs in for project decisions. Liz responded that the public's comments and preferences are tracked and recorded as official project documentation. The public's comments and preferences are brought to the table when Gold Line staff, Issue Resolution Teams (IRTs) and Project Partners make recommendations on project scope.

5. REVIEW OF PROJECT SCOPE TO BE INCLUDED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Chris Beckwith (Gold Line Senior Project Manager) opened the discussion by presenting the statistics (total attendees and meeting hours) for Gold Line Scope Refinement meetings held since March 2018 for the IRTs, TAC, CBAC and CMC. Several staff from the various Gold Line stakeholder agencies/project partners have participated in this process and built great partnerships. Chris and other Gold Line staff reviewed the environmental scope refinement process, CMC scope refinement tasks and the EA Scope exhibits handout.

Environmental Scope Refinement Process Graphic

1. Community Planning (ongoing) – communities are always working on comprehensive plans
2. Station Area Planning (2017-2018) – subset of community planning; working directly with the communities around the station areas on development/redevelopment, access to stations, pedestrian connections etc.
3. EA Scope (2018) – subset of station area planning. Items need to be studied in the EA, to be built with this project

4. Local Scope (2018-2019) – what partners have requested or will request to be built with the project, but not funded out of the Gold Line project budget
5. Gold Line Project Scope (2019) - Gold Line project budget

CMC Scope Refinement Tasks:

- Today – review the scope currently in the EA and stakeholder feedback
- September 2018 meeting – confirm EA scope
- Fall/Winter 2018 meeting(s) – review 15% design and updated costs
- 2019 meeting(s) – confirm final scope, review 30% design and final costs for Engineering Phase

Charles Carlson (Director, BRT Projects) discussed the proposed Downtown Saint Paul station locations. These are different from the rest of the corridor, because of the additional constraints of a busy downtown environment. The Gold Line team is working on simpler routing structure and platform options through downtown.

- Smith Avenue Ramp (Smith Avenue and 5th Street) – reviewing an on-street facility. Smith Avenue is the recommended station location. Parking lot at the location is proposed for development that will provide a clean pedestrian path from the Xcel Energy Center to the proposed Gold Line station.
- Xcel Energy Center – station is not recommended in this plan due to traffic and pedestrian congestion in front of the building
- Landmark Center – ongoing design considerations will include proximity to historic resources
- Adjacent to Green Line Central Station – location is close to recently renovated bus stops, which makes the addition of BRT-specific stops more cost-effective
- Robert Street and Jackson Street Station (new) – previous station spacing from Minnesota Street to Wacouta Street was over a half mile, which is a long distance for a downtown environment. Gold Line staff recommended the addition of a station at 5th Street and Robert Street and the other station would be on the other side of the Met Council building.
- Broadway Street (next to CHS Baseball Field and Green Line Operations & Maintenance Facility) – station is not recommended in this plan. Broadway Street closes dozens of times a year for CHS field events and weekends for the Farmer's market
- Gold Line staff has reviewed a routing that would use Sibley Street and Wacouta Street to get in and out of downtown
- Union Depot - Two routing alternatives will be studied in the EA. One routing option ending behind the Union Depot and the other option will serve new stations through downtown while routing in front of the Union Depot.

Hally Turner (Gold Line Deputy Project Manager) discussed the three city of Saint of Paul locations where there are design options:

Mounds Boulevard Option – Door Knocking outreach showed community preference for Mounds over the Maria option. The ramp from west bound I-94 would be shifted a bit further south in order to fit in the guideway. This option limits the impact to private properties and avoids a complete acquisition of the 652 Conway Street building which has affordable housing. Gold Line staff received guidance from the city of Saint Paul to avoid impacting this building. The City has asked the project to include separating sanitary sewer from storm water at local cost. The proposed Mounds station is more visible for traffic traveling on Mounds and Kellogg while preserving bus-only lanes. Hally reported that Bus Operators indicated a preference for bus-only lanes. The section of the Noise Wall that will be impacted will be replaced.

Maria Avenue Option – Station location is proposed at the corner of Conway and Maria and would maintain mixed traffic from downtown. Some parking impacts at the proposed station location. The community and bus operators expressed concerns about travelling through tight residential streets, particularly in the winter. There appears to be strong preference for Mounds. This is also reflected in the City's adopted station area plan.

Pedestrian Bridge at Maple (local cost example) – MnDOT has asked that the project keep that pedestrian crossing in the EA, and MnDOT will pay for it separately.

Earl Street Station – General feedback from businesses in the area is that it's more important to have parking on both sides of the street than two-way travel. The 1% design assumption was that the project would impact Earl Street, but the new assumption at this point is that the project will be able to save it. This has a Split Station design for improved pedestrian crossing (far-side stops). Pedestrians can walk behind the bus. The bridge over Johnson Parkway is a culturally/environmentally sensitive area. IRTs are reviewing the potential impact to designated City parkland in MnDOT Right-of-Way.

Cul-De-Sac on Wakefield – The City is exploring closing this access before Gold Line is delivered. This is not included the EA scope at this time. Coordination is ongoing with the City on this issue.

U.S. 61/I-94 Interchange – Guideway will have minor property impact to Wilson Ridge Apartments. Proposed station location is at the Cul-De-Sac on Clarence. Two options for pedestrian connections options. At-grade crossing was discussed with MnDOT and is considered a viable option. Community preference is for east connection.

Hudson Road – Two design options; mixed traffic that would avoid impacting the pedestrian bridge or dedicated guideway that would impact the pedestrian bridge. Strong community preference is for mixed traffic. This option has less Right-of-Way impact. Gold Line design does not preclude future bridge replacement. Commissioner Jim McDonough asked if the decision to move forward with mixed traffic is final. Hally Turner responded that the project has discussed this with the city of Saint Paul (Councilmember Jane Prince and Bill Dermody) and there's email confirmation on mixed traffic, with no new bridge. Commissioner McDonough expressed concern that since Gold Line is the first truly dedicated BRT line, the more it moves away from a "true" BRT system, the less opportunity there is to demonstrate its success, and use it as a BRT model. This is an important time, because we can't go back if it's not included in the EA. Hally replied that BRT Guideway expert (Edgar Torres) has reviewed and commented that this segment is short, and the average daily traffic is about 200 vehicles. Due to the low traffic volumes, this segment operates like dedicated guideway.

Councilmember Prince stated that from her perspective, the feedback at the public meeting was not overwhelmingly for mixed traffic. It showed people on both sides of the issues, and she is willing to still reexamine both options. Hally Turner noted that this feedback will be taken back to the IRT process. This option requires a more immediate decision, because of the impact to the environmental analysis and due to the 50 properties near the Kennard Street bridge that may have some impacts from the pedestrian bridge replacement. The full dedicated guideway option has more impact to properties (increases impact about 5 to 10 feet per property) than the mixed traffic option. Commissioner McDonough asked when the decision was made. Hally Turner replied that it was made shortly after the Hudson Road community meeting, and it followed the same process with the project committees as other design decisions.

CMC members asked additional clarification questions about mixed traffic vs. dedicated guideway options. Commissioner Ortega asked for clarification on the 200 vehicles at the cul-de-sac. Hally replied that it's approximately 200 vehicles average daily traffic, but the details on the hours/time of the day is not available at this meeting. Commissioner Lisa Weik commented that as options are being reviewed, it's important to

keep corridor-wide impact in consideration, including travel time differences between the station options and the overall percentage of the nine-mile corridor impacted by the dedicated vs. mixed traffic option. Hally noted that Edgar Torres with Kimley Horn will be in town in a couple of weeks and it would be helpful to bring his expertise into the conversation. Chair Tchourumoff concluded the discussion by recommending that Gold Line staff coordinate further with the City and County. This item be discussed further at the September CMC meeting.

Hazel Street (between Ruth and White Bear) – Community preference was Hazel. The property developer of the building under construction to the left of the station location footprint has been to several meetings and had conversations with Gold Line staff. The developer is also planning a Phase 2 project at the vacant lot to the left of the footprint.

Van Dyke Option – Community comments showed a preference for Hazel, because the Van Dyke option is between two buildings, and gives the feeling of a “tunnel” and does not have a clean sight-line. The community also expressed concerns about potential safety issues. One consistent comment in favor of Van Dyke is the quicker access to businesses on White Bear Avenue.

Chair Tchourumoff enquired about the owner of the parcels to the right of the White Bear Avenue Station, and if it is being held for future development. Gold Line staff responded that it is MnDOT property/public Right-of-Way, and MnDOT is holding on to the property at this time. Mayor Suedkamp asked about the possibility of using that parcel as a park and ride location. Marc Briese stated that discussions to date with the City of Saint Paul have been about potentially using that property as a storm water treatment location or as a park.

Mayor Reinke asked for clarification about the connectivity principles and if the project is designed for connectivity, from Woodbury to Downtown Saint Paul. Hally Turner explained the connections at the Hazel and Van Dyke station options (Page 9). Marc added that the project is taking a two-fold approach to bike and pedestrian connections; filling existing gaps in the system and providing access to the park and rides and stations. The last two pages of the exhibits show dash black lines representing in-place/existing bike and pedestrian facilities.

Sun Ray Station – Chris Beckwith noted that there was some feedback from the public meetings that the proposed location is too far from Cub Foods. The proposed location is on the west side of the Sun Ray property, because it's closer to the potential park and ride. It's important to maintain close connectivity and visual sight line from the proposed park and ride to the station. Sun Ray is the only Gold Line station that is a crossover station. This will require adequate signage and pedestrian safety discussions. This area is a pinch-point, and there will be some potential property impacts, but not building impacts to TJ Maxx (an anchor store for Sun Ray). Original 1% design showed a possible acquisition of TJ Maxx, but the IRT reviewed and updated the design to avoid a TJ Maxx property acquisition. There will be some impacts to parking in front of Sun Ray.

McKnight Road (Saint Paul/Maplewood) – A grade separated crossing is the IRT's preferred technical recommendation for the McKnight area. It is cost-neutral and provides the most options for future traffic adjustments that the County and City are considering. The McKnight Case Study was discussed during the June CMC meeting. The project is considering three options for the pedestrian connection going over the bridge; helix/circle, switch-back, or a long ramp. The helix will be studied in the EA because it is the most impactful to 3M, a historic property.

3M Campus/Driveway Access – 3M has been supportive of the project. The proposal is to close the driveway due to some potential traffic movement impacts with leaving the driveway open (turn lanes, queuing, acceleration and deceleration lanes etc.). 3M would like to discuss this further. There is a dedicated

guideway along the 3M property, and the existing Hudson Road remains in place. It's important to provide pedestrian connections/accesses to the Maplewood station along Hudson Road that are not going through the 3M private campus, which is a main concern for 3M. The project is also working with 3M to discuss opportunities to merge sections of trail without necessarily having public trails intersect with 3M's private trail system.

Century Avenue Bridge – This is on a dedicated guideway until it reaches the Tanners Lake connection/T-intersection, and then goes into mixed traffic. This section is through mixed traffic because Tanners Lake is a constraint (narrow Right-of-Way and potential environmental impacts). The Cities recommended that the trail on the north side of Hudson at Century is added to the EA scope. The towing business will be a full acquisition, and the new owners were aware when they purchased the property.

Oakdale/Landfall (North Side of Hudson) – the trail on the north side of Hudson is in the EA, but needs discussions on how it will be funded. This location is important to the city of Oakdale and Landfall, and the Gold Line team has been in discussions with the Cities and businesses. Commissioner McDonough asked when the decision was made to go with mixed traffic. Chris Beckwith responded that this was early decision, and it was the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). Mixed traffic was part of the early environmental studies. Commissioner Karwoski also noted that if there's still an opportunity to evaluate dedicated lanes, this should be revisited. Mayor Suedkamp clarified that when this was initially reviewed, there was a pinch point between the lake and the freeway. Additionally, there are two major Landfall businesses on that road, so there's limited clearance. Landfall also has a high water table, and a storm water reabsorption system (Watershed District) is built into the parking lots to help reabsorb storm water. Widening in that area would change that structure environmentally. Mayor Reinke concurred with Mayor Suedkamp about earlier discussions about the pinch point aspects and expressed support for the decision to go with mixed traffic, with the addition of the pedestrian/bike connection.

Greenway Avenue Station – Serves the city of Landfall and city of Oakdale. Public meeting feedback included comments about pedestrian safety. A fully dedicated guideway on the north side would potentially have more business impacts. East of the Greenway Station goes from mixed traffic to curbside running (dedicated bus lanes) continuing on Hudson towards the Apostolic Bible Institute (ABI) The project is evaluating in the EA scope an option to soften that tight curve (15MPH advisory curb) to make it safer. The project is working with ABI on their concerns about the section indicated as "Driveway Access to Be Closed". The city of Oakdale has requested to include the trail sections on both sides of Hadley (between Hudson and 4th Street) in the EA scope. The city of Oakdale also has some planned Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) work that would expand Hadley from a two-lane section to a three-lane section. The trail section and CIP work will be included in the Gold Line EA scope, but construction will be funded at local cost.

Hadley Avenue towards 4th Street – This will transition to a mixed traffic configuration. Trails on both sides of 4th Street be included in the EA, but funded at local cost. There is public support to create the additional pedestrian connections, particularly to access the jobs/businesses on Hale Avenue. The project team is proposing to include the 4th Street bridge replacement in the EA scope. Commissioner McDonough expressed concern about moving to mixed traffic at this location, despite the available Right of Way/parcel(s). He also asked how moving to dedicated guideway affects the 4th Street bridge. Mayor Reinke reported that there is a proposal from the Reagan family to develop the large parcel. The proposed parcel buildout is a driving force for widening Hadley to three-lanes and the redevelopment potential on the west of the Apostolic Bible Institute and the new cross entrance at the Apostolic Bible Institute and the vacant property on the north side of 4th Street. Marc Brieese (Gold Line Design and Construction Manager) noted that the Gold Line team is advancing an option at concept level, that would replace the 4th Street bridge and have a dedicated guideway along 4th Street. The direction received has been to not replace the bridge unless there is a transit reason for it. Chris Beckwith noted that the bridge is not currently included in the

\$420 million cost estimate. Mayor Reinke and Mayor Suedkamp explained that going to dedicated guideway on 4th Street would require the bridge to be replaced, because there needs to still be accommodations for general traffic lanes on that bridge.

Commissioner McDonough asked about making the same short transition on the west side. Commissioner Karwoski responded that his recollection is that the bridge had remaining service life in it, and because the land was not developed early on, the traffic justified not widening the bridge. However, he and Mayor Reinke and others in the community have discussed widening the bridge. This is an ongoing discussion in the adjacent residential community, because of the inability to travel over the bridge as a pedestrian and the limited sight lines.

Commissioner Weik commented to MnDOT staff that she observed that signage on I-694 does not identify the 4th Street bridge, and a lot of citizens asking about Gold Line are not aware of where the 4th Street bridge is located. It may be helpful to add signage, which could be helpful with Gold Line public input. Brian Issacson (MnDOT) acknowledged the comment.

Woodbury Area – This segment will be held for discussion at the September CMC meeting.

Bielenberg Drive – Commissioner Karwoski commented that a resident in the Bielenberg Drive area expressed concern about potential impacts of the road on the Tamarack Nature Preserve.

Commissioner McDonough asked if the Maria option can be taken out, since there appears to be a strong consensus for Mounds. Hally responded that this issue is pending MnDOT technical review, and MnDOT's response is expected by September. Staff is hopeful CMC can provide direction to remove Maria as an option at the September meeting.

Commissioner McDonough also asked Gold Line staff to ensure that the two routing options at the Union Depot are also called out on the exhibits.

Brian Isaacson (MnDOT) to provide feedback by the September CMC meeting.

6. NEXT STEPS

Chair Tchourumoff concluded the discussions by asking CMC members to review the exhibit handouts and submit comments and topics for discussion at the September CMC meeting. Decisions on the final EA scope will be made at the September meeting.

7. ADJOURN (NEXT MEETING)

The next scheduled meeting is September 6, 2018

Chair Alene Tchourumoff adjourned the meeting at 4:05 p.m.

Meeting Materials Provided:

Meeting Agenda, August 2, 2018

PowerPoint Presentation, August 2, 2018

Gold Line Environmental Assessment Scope 11x17 Exhibit (Draft)

Respectfully Submitted,
Banke Oyewumi, Recording Secretary