

## **METRO Gold Line Corridor Management Committee**

### **Notes for the April 4, 2019 Meeting**

#### **Metropolitan Council Chambers**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Nora Slawik, Marylee Abrams (for Bryan Smith), Mary Brandt, Andrea Date, Francisco Gonzalez, Stan Karwoski, Sheila Kauppi, Wes Kooistra, Rafael Ortega, Darrell Paulsen, Jane Prince, Paul Reinke, Stan Suedkamp, Lisa Weik

#### **1. WELCOME (CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL)**

Chair Nora Slawik called the monthly meeting of the METRO Gold Line BRT Corridor Management Committee (CMC) to order at 2:33 p.m. on Thursday, April 4, 2019. Prior to the meeting, many of the CMC members participated in a Gold Line bus tour.

Committee members (and other attendees) introduced themselves and each were asked to mention one thing they liked about today's Gold Line tour or one thing they are looking forward to about the Gold Line.

New CMC member and Community and Business Advisory Committee (CBAC) Business Co-Chair; Mary Brandt was on a Gold Line tour last year, and it gave her a better idea of the corridor and the hassles and challenges that have to be overcome.

Darrell Paulsen (CBAC Co-Chair) liked the new bus used for today's tour. He was excited to envision how many people will use the automatic rear-facing securement station (for mobility passengers). It's also great that most of the Gold line alignment will be in dedicated guideway.

Mayor Marylee Abrams (alternate for Councilmember Bryan Smith) enjoyed the opportunity to participate on the tour. It was amazing to drive through the route and experience a vision of what the Gold Line will look like. It was also impressive to see the number of residents and businesses that are going to be positively impacted.

Mayor Anne Burt (City of Woodbury) is not officially a CMC member, but has been following the Gold Line for a few years as an interested citizen. It was great to ride the route and see some of the challenges on the alignment. She also enjoyed the conversations with other participants on the tour.

Councilmember Andrea Date enjoyed hearing about some of the early success stories and opportunities for redevelopment and revitalization along the corridor.

Commissioner Lisa Weik commented that her favorite part of the tour was seeing the proposed location of the Helmo-Bielenberg bridge and hearing about redevelopment opportunities.

Sheila Kauppi (MnDOT Metro District) was not on the tour but is looking forward to the Gold Line service running to Woodbury.

Chair Slawik agreed that it was great to see the proposed location of the Helmo-Bielenberg bridge and the redevelopment on the corridor. She attended two meetings this week with FTA personnel in attendance, and the feedback from them was excitement about the Gold Line project. There aren't many dedicated guideway projects nationally and they're seen as a novelty. This is an exciting project for the Twin Cities metro area.

Wes Kooistra was not on the tour, but he noted that Metro Transit is always excited about these large projects and the partnerships. It is wonderful to watch a project that will drive a stronger presence east of the city of Saint Paul.

Councilmember Jane Prince commented that the Gold Line is a game changer for her ward and the east side. She apologized that things were not as tidy as she would have liked in her section of the tour.

Commissioner Rafael Ortega was glad to see all the new participants on the tour.

Commissioner Stan Karwoski commented that the overall tour was good. Since there was no press/media on today's tour, it may be valuable to plan another tour in a few months and invite the press to join.

Mayor Stan Suedkamp was not on the tour but is thrilled with the progress that Gold Line staff have achieved and the activities to define and advance the project.

Mayor Paul Reinke is most excited about the economic development that's going to take place in the city of Oakdale. The new Helmo-Bielenberg bridge is going to be phenomenal and the Helmo-Greenway Station is a huge plus for the community.

New CMC member; Councilmember Francisco Gonzalez (Metropolitan Council Representative, District 12) commented that it was nice seeing how the corridor communities are meshing together in a sustainable way. Kudos to Gold Line staff for a great tour.

## 2. REVIEW NOTES FROM FEBRUARY 14, 2019

Chair Slawik asked if anyone has comments/edits to the February CMC meeting notes. No comments.

## 3. DISCUSSION ON PROJECT SCOPE AND COSTS

Charles Carlson (Director, BRT Projects) recapped the highlights from the project scope and costs information presented at the last CMC meeting in February. No actions/decisions are expected from the CMC today. Gold Line staff will return in May with proposed actions on the updated scope items.

Project Base Scope Costs have advanced from the 2016 estimate (\$420.7M) to the new 2019 estimate range (\$415M-\$439M). One of the major cost drivers reflected in the 2019 estimate is a final decision about bus propulsion (electric vs. diesel vs. hybrid). There's a lot of interest in and support for electric buses. Metro Transit is debuting electric buses on the C-Line BRT in June 2019. The project team will use the evaluation of the operational experience of C-Line buses as well as modeling the continuing evolution of the electric bus industry before recommending a decision for the Gold Line project.

2019 Schedule Look Ahead (Second Year of the Project Development Phase):

- **May 2019** – CMC recommends and sets the project scope and corresponding funding for the purpose of obtaining a rating from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). CMC actions in May will help advance the engineering, and the project scope, costs, ridership data etc. These will be part of the New Starts application materials that will be submitted to the FTA in September.
- **July-August** – Local Funding Commitments for Engineering phase.
- **August** – Prepare Estimate for New Starts Application.
- **September** – New Starts application/request will be submitted to the FTA. This kicks off the federal evaluation process to assign a project rating. This rating shows how competitive the Gold Line BRT is against other BRT and New Starts projects across the country.
- **October 2019** – Environmental Assessment (EA) document will be published for public comments.
- **November 2019 to January 2020** - Prepare and apply to enter New Starts Engineering phase
- **January 2020** – Environmental Decision Document; anticipated Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is expected at the end of Project Development.

- **January 2020** – Anticipated entry into the engineering phase. Project scope/budget and the federal share/match are locked in at this milestone.

Charles reviewed the Scope Requests map and list. The represented scope requests are not necessarily items needed to operate the Gold Line but are significant enhancements to the local communities and the built environments surrounding the Gold Line. They help deliver a higher quality project for the investments. These investments are included in the overall project and eligible for the 45% federal match.

Chris Beckwith (Gold Line Senior Project Manager) outlined the progress made since the February CMC meeting. Gold Line staff have continued evaluating the potential scope items in more detail. Input has been received from the Project Management Team (PMT), Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), CBAC and meetings with Washington and Ramsey County Commissioners and the cities. These discussions have shown that there's strong and unwavering support for the proposed investments/scope requests.

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge and Roadway Improvements (\$10.3M).**

- \$9.85M cost constitutes items directly related to and benefiting the project including; bridge, center-running guideway and trails.
- \$450K cost is for the addition of a center left turn lanes on Hadley Avenue requested by the city of Oakdale. This additional investment is not required for the Gold Line but is beneficial to the future development between the Helmo and Greenway stations and was requested to be added by city staff. This is FTA funding-eligible local work, so Oakdale would be responsible for 55% and FTA will provide a 45% match. Design and construction would be delivered by the Gold Line project. Mayor Reinke noted that the language about cost-sharing is very strong. He asked if this is included in Oakdale's current Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). Lyssa Leitner (Gold Line Deputy Project Manager) replied that the City Engineer informed project staff that it is included in the current CIP. Project staff will re-confirm and coordinate with Oakdale.

**West Etna Trail and Tunnel (\$6M).** Trunk Highway (TH) 61 and I-94 interchange is currently a complicated intersection for pedestrians and motorists to navigate. The proposed West Etna investments includes a 125-foot tunnel connection. Some concerns expressed by stakeholders include; safety/security concerns, the Connect MN/MnIT fiber optic line that poses a substantial risk from a construction perspective and the unresolved issue of which entity will be responsible for ownership and maintenance of the tunnel. Other opportunities for the neighborhood includes:

- **Beyond Gold Line** - Saint Paul's Johnson Parkway Trail Project scheduled to occur in 2020.
- **Within Gold Line** - East Etna connection expansion work (\$370K) including some ADA improvements at the TH 61 and Burns Avenue intersection (\$500K/TBD).

Councilmember Prince agreed that the TH 61/Burns intersection is dangerous. If the project is eliminating the connection on the west side of Etna in favor of accessing from the east side, then something significant must be done to make that crossing safer. Project staff have been in discussions (TAC meetings) with MnDOT and Saint Paul about future plans/improvements for the intersection. The technical/TAC recommendation is that if the \$6M West Etna proposed improvements are eliminated, then \$500K should be included as a placeholder for improvements to make the East Etna connection safer and to upgrade for ADA. The \$500K estimate will probably not cover everything desired for long term investments at Burns/TH 61. Additional local funding may be required because of limits to what Gold Line project scope/funds can cover.

Councilmember Prince emphasized that creating the connection down to Burns gets users to a major hub of the bike system that includes the Grand Round at Johnson Parkway, Mounds Park Battle Creek, Fish Hatchery, Morgan and Upper Afton trails. If the \$6M improvement on the west side of Etna is eliminated, she asked if a portion of the \$6M cost from the west side can be spent on the east side connection. Lyssa

Leitner clarified that a previous study outside of the Gold Line project recommended grade separation at the TH 61/Burns intersection. Just putting in additional ADA ramps will be helpful, but potentially a lot more than \$500K will be needed to make the roadway and pedestrian environment safer. TAC recommendation is that the project continues conversations with MnDOT and Saint Paul, to figure out what the \$500K estimate potentially covers. It's important to determine what is within or outside the project's scope. Councilmember Prince asked Sheila Kauppi if MnDOT has any current plans for the TH 61/Burns intersection. Sheila Kauppi agreed that there's a need for grade separation at this location. MnDOT's metrowide plan identified it for grade separation but it is not currently funded. MnDOT has not yet gone through the process (public involvement or purpose and need development). MnDOT needs that process to occur before the design solution is determined at that location. Gold Line staff clarified further that the connection along Johnson Parkway is a new pedestrian underpass. The distance to the station from the west Etna connection is just over half a mile, and just under a mile when using Johnson Parkway. Commissioner Ortega advised that MnDOT and Gold Line staff work together to integrate the planned projects/network in the neighborhood. Sheila Kauppi concurred.

Commissioner Ortega expressed concerns that going with the east Etna connection could potentially mean losing ridership. It's difficult to visualize people (south of TH 61) walking a mile to the bus stop. Lyssa Leitner responded that this area has been reviewed a great deal. There is evidence that pedestrians are presently doing that movement which is an unsafe condition. Commissioner Ortega asked if people are crossing for transit reasons or for other reasons. Lyssa Leitner replied that people are possibly walking through there to gain access to the daycare center and bus stop.

Mary Brandt commented that a CBAC member residing in the neighborhood voiced concerns about maintenance and safety/crime issues with the proposed West Etna tunnel. Lyssa Leitner added that the CBAC member was happy to hear that the Johnson Parkway project will occur in 2020 and felt that it would be a positive advancement for the neighborhood.

Commissioner Karwoski noted that he likes the idea of grade separation at TH 61/Burns intersection. He lived in that area for a long time and understands that the intersection is dangerous.

Chair Slawik concluded by asking project staff to continue discussing options/solutions to this issue.

Chris Beckwith reviewed potential actions/recommendations anticipated at the May CMC meeting.

- **Potential Action #1:** "The CMC recommends continuing design advancement for up to \$439M of Gold Line BRT project base scope." Formal recommendation of the project budget will occur prior to applying for New Starts Engineering phase (late 2019/early 2020)
- **Potential Action #2:** Addition of scope request and planned funding for scope requests.

Lyssa Leitner noted that from a process standpoint, CMC provides recommendations for what should be included, and local partners with costs in the project (counties and potentially cities) and the Metropolitan Council make the final recommendation.

#### 4. UPDATE ON STATION DESIGN

Lyssa Leitner and Liz Jones (Gold Line Outreach Lead) presented the station design advancement status, schedule, principles/concepts and components. The schedule includes community outreach activities, workshops, CBAC input, station area design advancement to inform 30% costs and shelter concepts. The intent is to collect information about community preference before the design team starts designing. Andrea Arnoldi is the engineering/design team's Architecture Design Lead. Shelter concepts will not be available until next year. Lyssa Leitner reviewed Station design principles/concepts:

- **Identity:** consistent and recognizable Gold Line BRT branding across all stations.
- **Safety & Comfort:** prioritize physical safety/protection, well-lit stations and open sight lines to and from stations.
- **Connectivity:** emphasize visual and physical connections with logical pedestrian movements.
- **Context:** complement and minimize effects to natural landscape features and historical resources.
- **Resiliency:** durable and maintainable materials that are easy to maintain/replace.

Lyssa Leitner gave an overview of station area/zones and BRT platform elements (robust shelter, pylon sign, changeable message sign, heating elements, ticket validator, variable message sign, tactile warning, ticket vending machines, information kiosks, waste & recycling receptacle, cameras etc.) The plan is to have Light Rail Transit (LRT) station-like branding at Gold Line BRT stations.

Mayor Reinke asked about station heating elements. Lyssa answered that the project is investigating and discussing station heating options. Chair Slawik and Mayor Reinke agreed that snow melt and pavement heating and glass panels (similar to LRT) are important components of a premium BRT customer experience. A-Line BRT has a lot of these amenities.

Liz Jones reviewed the community outreach/engagement activities completed and planned in 2019. The intent is to inform the design team of what is important to each community before they start designing. Outreach activities include interactive pop-up events in all the cities on the corridor and an online survey. About 200 people have responded to the Gold Line Station Design Survey and additional feedback is expected before the survey closes on April 19<sup>th</sup>.

Mayor Suedkamp enquired if there are aspects in the design addressing station safety features (safety of users particularly elderly and vulnerable people). Gold Line staff confirmed that Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) guidelines are being implemented to address safety.

Commissioner Karwoski asked the project to consider including design elements and complementary features to the station design to make Gold Line stations as appealing as possible. Washington County has discussed the possibility of unique ornamental artwork rather than plantings at some stations. Chris Beckwith clarified that the original Blue Line and Green Line LRT projects' art installations were allowed to have federal match, however that rule has since changed. Gold Line could set up a separate committee like the Southwest LRT project, to raise funds for art station work. Councilmember Prince stated that the City of Saint Paul would be very interested in participating. Commissioner Karwoski asked if Metro Transit can develop some guidelines for consistency and synergy while still maintaining uniqueness. Mayor Slawik concluded that this suggestion should be discussed further and asked Metro Transit to provide some guidelines and recommendations. Karwoski suggested that 3M could potentially set the example at the Maplewood station location. Mayor Suedkamp commented that it's important to establish firm ownership, maintenance and upkeep policies/procedures for all station features/amenities.

Mayor Reinke asked about the status of the "Resolution of Support" letters related to the Kellogg Avenue Bridge project. Gold Line staff confirmed that a template letter was developed and sent out through TAC members to coordinate sending letters individually per county and city. Councilmember Ortega, Councilmember Prince and Mayor Abrams asked if the letters can be provided as soon as possible. The letter is a priority on the city of Saint Paul's legislative agenda. Jan Lucke (Planning Director, Washington County Public Works) stated that a letter is on the Gold Line Partners agenda for next week but will be circulated electronically to Gold Line Partners committee members for approval in order to get it to St. Paul in a timely manner. Gold Line Partners' Chair; Commissioner Karwoski will then officially sign the letter on behalf of the committee. We'll get it to you by Monday. Commissioner Ortega noted that the Kellogg Bridge project cost is about \$40M.

Chair Slawik reminded CMC members to reach out to Gold Line staff if they have any further questions.

## 5. NEXT STEPS/MEETING

The next scheduled meeting is May 2, 2019.

- May CMC meeting - CMC recommendation on the project base scope (\$415M-\$439M).
- June 6, 2019 CMC meeting agenda topics to be determined.
- July 4, 2019 meeting will be cancelled.

## 6. ADJOURN

Chair Slawik adjourned the meeting at 3:48 p.m.

### **Meeting Materials Provided:**

Meeting Minutes, February 14, 2019

Meeting Agenda, April 4, 2019

CMC PowerPoint Presentation, April 4, 2019

Gold Line Station Design Survey

Respectfully Submitted,

Banke Oyewumi, Recording Secretary