

**METRO Gold Line Community and Business Advisory Committee (CBAC)  
Exhibit Hall at Johnson Elementary School  
740 York Ave, St Paul, MN 55106  
Notes for the February 28, 2019 Meeting**

Members Present: Darrell Paulsen, Mary Brandt, Pat Cosgrove, Torin Gustafson, Allison Hawley March Jessica Johnson, Regina Rippel, Heidi Schumacher, Doug Swalboski

Members Absent: Robert Crawford, Donald Gonser, D'Angelos Svenkeson, Hussein Khatib, Jorge Samper Zelaya, Joseph Skeen, Koua Lee, Molly Gagan-Vlaisavljevich, Nyagatare Valens, Rebecca Nelson, Reva Jones-Simmons, Richard Kramer, Ernesto Ortiz-Diaz, Nancy Volkman

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Darrell Paulsen (CBAC Resident Co-Chair, Maplewood) called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. and led attendee introductions.

CBAC members introduced themselves and each mentioned one or two things that excite them about transit and Gold Line BRT. Comments included; connectivity and access to jobs, fast transit to draw people from downtown Saint Paul to surrounding east metro neighborhoods, economic development and opportunities along the corridor, better transit options, building out a more regional transit network and a connected metro area, similar to the west metro.

**2. PREVIOUS CBAC MEETINGS**

**a. Review October Meeting Notes**

Darrell Paulsen asked if anyone has any comments or questions about the October CBAC meeting notes. Lyssa Leitner (Gold Line Deputy Project Manager) gave a summary of the October discussion (CBAC input on the downtown Saint Paul alternatives; Union Depot terminus vs. routing through downtown). No comments to the October 25, 2018 meeting notes.

**3. CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (CMC) UPDATE**

**a. November and February meetings**

Lyssa Leitner provided a recap of discussion topics addressed at the November and February CMC meetings. CMC confirmed the preferred alternative (routing all the way through downtown) at the November meeting. The Gold Line Corridor Map and Project Fact Sheet have been updated. Union Depot connection/transfer and Woodbury I-494 park and ride changes are outlined on the updated map. The February CMC meeting addressed project cost updates. CMC input on this item will be shared on item number 6 on the agenda.

Darrell Paulsen reported that CBAC committee has three open positions. A solicitation was sent out to CBAC members for the CBAC Business Co-Chair position vacated by Steve Morris (Woodbury), who is now a city of Woodbury Councilmember. Mary Brandt (Mounds/Maria Business) has agreed to take on the business Co-Chair role.

**Motion called by Darrell Paulsen to appoint Mary Brandt as CBAC Business Co-Chair.  
All agreed. Motion passed unanimously.**

Tom Giannetti (Greenway Station Business/Landfall), former owner of the Harley Davidson store is now retired. Chai Lee (Sun Ray Resident) is now a Metropolitan Council member and is no longer the representative for the Sun Ray area. Met Council Chair; Nora Slawik is expected to nominate a Met Council Member to be the CBAC representative member soon.

#### **4. SAN DIEGO BRT TRIP DEBRIEF FROM PARTICIPANTS**

The San Diego trip/tour was a success. 43 participants, including four CBAC members, policy makers (CMC), MnDOT, Metro Transit, Gold Line Corridor city and county staff and project office staff went on the trip. San Diego's South Bay Rapid Transit opened about a week prior to the tour.

CBAC participants discussed their observations, highlights and lessons learned during the tour.

It was valuable to learn about the amount of cooperation between all the stakeholders/entities involved in the whole process, and how everyone's needs were taken into consideration. Another observation was how well they weaved/interconnected different economies together.

One of the San Diego transit lines toured was over 10 years old, and accessibility and lack of level boarding (wide horizontal gaps at stops) was a noticeable issue that impacted rider experience.

Some residential developments were extremely close to the transit line, as close as a few feet from residents' doorsteps. It was also interesting to learn that they acquired funding for the transit project construction first and then acquired the land/Right-of-Way afterwards. In some areas they had dedicated the land and signed it for transit (e.g. "Future Site Rapid Transit Corridor") many years prior to the actual project. The choice to construct the one-lane bridge resulted in delays/constraints, and the Mayor of that city expressed that she wishes they had the hard conversations early on and did it right the first time. It was a short-term decision with long term negative impact.

San Diego station and shelter designs were unique and complementing to the areas, and the communities took ownership of station designs. It's important to carefully consider where Gold Line stops are located, and how Minnesota's cold climate could affect the people waiting for buses. Heat elements in Twin Cities transit stations were raised to avoid damage, consequently, heat does not adequately reach people situated lower e.g. wheelchairs. It may be valuable to consider ways to redesign where the heat source is housed at stations.

CBAC member reported that the general consensus from trip participants is that it's imperative to "do it right the first time". Gold Line has an opportunity to avoid mistakes observed in San Diego.

#### **5. 2019 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT UPDATE**

Liz Jones (Gold Line Community Engagement Coordinator) reviewed engagement activities held so far in 2019, future events and planned outreach strategies.

- a. 3 pop-up and outreach events held in Saint Paul
- b. 3 individual stakeholder meetings held
- c. The outreach team reached about 200 community members. Feedback included excitement and support for transit. The outreach team also heard comments about more transit opportunities being available in the west metro (Minneapolis area) compared to the east metro. Darrell Paulsen commented that to win public support, Gold Line should be promoted as a premium service and a new, innovative way to travel.
- d. 2019 engagement will focus on three major aspects:
  - i. Ongoing general project information

- ii. Two outreach open houses planned, during the Environmental Assessment (EA) document's release for public comments (30-day period required by the FTA) in Fall 2019. Lyssa Leitner explained that the EA (prepared on behalf of FTA) is developed by project office staff/consultants who are technical experts in different disciplines (e.g. air quality, noise analysis, economic benefits, endangered species etc.) The draft EA is currently under the FTA's First Administrative Review.
- iii. Public input to inform/shape architectural and BRT design concepts
- iv. Upcoming outreach events – Oakdale Indoor Farmer's market (March 2<sup>nd</sup>) and Woodbury Community Expo (March 30<sup>th</sup>)

## 6. UPDATE ON PROJECT COMPONENTS AND COST

Lyssa Leitner presented a detailed overview of the project scope and cost updates discussed at the February 14, 2019 CMC meeting. See presentation/handout for additional details.

**Cost Uncertainty by Project Phase** – Projects tend to have a lot of cost uncertainty in the early stages of design/development. The more uncertainty an item has (e.g. Right of Way property acquisitions), a the contingency is added to the cost.

**Gold Line Cost Estimating Process** – In the 15% design phase (Q1 2019), it's considered a "cost estimate", and it becomes a "budget" at 30% design/Engineering (Q4 2019). The federal funding match/share is then locked in, and any additional costs over the budget become local responsibility. Gold Line is planning to request a 45% federal match in order to be competitive with other projects nationwide that are also seeking federal funds.

**2018 Design Refinements** – Major design refinements over the past year include; upgraded pedestrian connections at all stations, upgraded downtown stations with full amenity platforms, refined park and ride locations, grade separated crossings, trail connections, electric bus fleet and high platform height for easier boarding.

**Project Cost Update** – 2016 estimate was \$420.7M. Updated 2019 estimate is \$415-\$439M (including 30% total project contingency and 3.5% escalation factor). The 2019 estimate also reflects market changes/trends, inflation costs and modified forecast year from 2023 to 2024. Cost deducts include; Helmo-Bielenberg Bridge Regional Solicitation funding/grant, Right of Way cost reductions, updated finance charges and updated professional services costs.

**BRT Guideway & Sitework** – Hudson Road mixed traffic (cost deduct). Retaining walls (cost increase). Noise Walls (cost increase). Traffic signal changes (cost increase) - traffic signal costs are anticipated at about \$1M by the time the project reaches construction. Darrell Paulsen asked about the "innovative" traffic signals observed in San Diego. Lyssa Leitner clarified that preemption technology (extended green light) and Transit Signal Priority is assumed at most Gold Line signals. Similar technology is already in use on University Avenue in Saint Paul.

**Bridges** – Cost savings at multiple bridges; Earl Street, TH 61 Interchange, Maple Street pedestrian bridge (underpass) and Hazelwood Street pedestrian bridge. Cost increase at Ruth Street (bridge under Ruth) allows for a better and faster experience for users. Cost neutral at McKnight Road (overpass/bridge over McKnight). Ramsey County is figuring out what needs to happen on McKnight do to projected 2040 congestion issues and bridging over the road ensures the BRT project won't dictate the long term traffic solution.

**Stations** – Cost increase at downtown Saint Paul stations due to upgraded full amenity platforms. Cost savings at the other Gold Line stations.

**Right-of-Way (non-Park-and-Rides)** – Cost savings corridor-wide. Full acquisitions no longer necessary at; TJ Maxx, residential area between Maple and Cypress Streets and Hazelwood residential.

**Park and Rides** – Park and Ride structures have been eliminated corridor-wide. Cost savings at Sun Ray (from structured to surface parking lot). No-cost change at the new Woodbury I-494 Park and Ride lot. Cost increase at Helmo (modified location from 4th Street to 2nd Street and Right of Way acquisition and relocation of tenants is now necessary).

**Vehicles** – Cost increases for Bus Fleet (one additional/spare bus) and Bus Types (electric). Hybrid buses were initially assumed, but Metro Transit is moving away from hybrid buses to diesel or all-electric buses. Mary Brandt asked why Metro Transit is keeping diesel buses. Lyssa Leitner clarified that Metro Transit is not yet getting rid of the current hybrid or diesel buses, but no longer purchasing new hybrid buses. Electric battery capacity is reduced in extreme cold temperatures. Metro Transit is in the process of testing, studying and collecting data on electric buses. C-Line BRT will debut electric buses (50% of fleet) in mid-2019. Darrell Paulsen and Mary Brandt expressed concerns that there may not be sufficient time to assess impacts and get accurate data.

**EA Scope Cost Update and Table/List** – Gold-colored items are included in the overall scope and must be replaced because the project is hitting them or are direct connections to stations. Pink-colored items are items associated with replacing the 4<sup>th</sup> Street bridge. Purple and green-colored items are pedestrian components. All are eligible for the FTA's 45% grant/match and the local share is the other 55%. CBAC input is needed on whether these additions are worth the cost. The overwhelming feedback from CMC members is that the add-ons are valuable, and it's important to include them earlier rather than later. It becomes more challenging to add costs/scope the further along the project progresses.

- **Project Base Scope (\$415-439M)** – Total Estimated Cost
- **4<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge and Roadway Improvements/Reconstruction (\$10.3M)** – Highest cost.
- **West Side Etna - Etna Station to Burns [tunnel] (\$6M)** – This proposed tunnel has raised the most questions. Gold Line staff will enquire whether the City of Saint Paul has “definite” plans to construct the bike connections to Burns on Johnson Parkway next year. CBAC members that live and work in the area think it would be a nice connection to have but the benefits do not outweigh the maintenance and safety concerns.
- **East Side Etna (\$370K)** – Trail connection from Pacific to Burns. MnDOT has pushed for this because it's difficult for bikes and pedestrians to get through the area. Jessica Johnson (Etna Street Resident) agreed that the Burnes/61 intersection is a wide and terrifying crossing and a necessary pedestrian connection for the project to include, as individuals are already making the crossing in the current, unsafe conditions.
- **Maple Ped Bridge (\$4.8M)** – The current bridge is not ADA-compliant (too steep).
- **McKnight Bridge (\$3.3M)** – New trail on the BRT bridge to connect across McKnight. Jessica Johnson asked whose responsibility it is to maintain the trail. *Lyssa Leitner responded that this is to be determined, due to a legal question about Met Council owning*

*bridges/maintaining infrastructure that don't have a transit purpose.* Doug Swalboski (Sun Ray Business) commented that the major problem is pedestrian/bike safety issues along McKnight (N/S pedestrian access). Torin Gustafson (Maplewood Business) agreed that McKnight is difficult to cross, especially at night. He noted that he would like to see more details about the proposed trail.

- **Century Underpass (\$1.2M)** – Trail to connect the Maplewood side of McKnight and Century.

Doug Swalboski – What is the total cost of all the improvements? *If all of the items would be included, the cost is about \$465M (45% federal government share).*

Regina Rippel (Mounds Boulevard Resident) commented that it appears that the proposed changes are not necessarily just due to the Gold Line BRT. They are general improvements that could be done for the community, as part of making the Gold Line more functional. There needs to be discussions around cost-sharing. Other CBAC members also agreed with this comment. *Lyssa Leitner noted that Washington County Board has a workshop on March 5<sup>th</sup>, and the board could suggest cost-sharing. On county road projects, cities are typically asked to cost-share on some trails. Policy makers have offered various perspectives, but they've been clear that the project should do what makes sense, and "do it right the first time".*

Doug Swalboski requested a status update on Apostolic Bible Institute (ABI) in Oakdale. *Gold Line staff have a follow-up meeting with ABI on March 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss the updates made for them.*

Doug Swalboski asked who is responsible for the East Side Review article about future development. Several customers were concerned about impacts to Sun Ray. *Gold Line staff explained that the counties and cities have been working with a consultant (separate from Gold Line project) to assess future developments/concepts. Members of the community have been confused that this is part of Gold Line. Gold Line staff is working with the consultant to ensure that information presented (e.g. developments shown over historic properties at Dayton's Bluff) is more accurate.*

Mary Brandt asked when CBAC feedback is due, and when the scope/cost decision will be made. *Ramsey County and Washington County are funding about 50% of costs, so they are in the main decision-making role. Both County Boards have meetings next week to start conversations and will then reach out to the cities. CBAC members should provide any feedback/questions within the next couple of weeks. CMC decision/vote is anticipated at the April or May meeting.*

Jessica Jones noted that she would like to know who will be responsible for maintenance of the West Side Etna tunnel (under the 1-94 exit ramp). Safety concerns with unmaintained tunnels.

## 7. UPCOMING CBAC MEETINGS

- a. March meeting is canceled.
- b. The next scheduled meeting is; Thursday, April 25, 2019 (6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.)

## 8. ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

### Meeting Materials Provided:

Meeting Minutes, October 25, 2018

Meeting Agenda, February 28, 2019

Meeting PowerPoint Presentation, February 28, 2019

Scope and Cost One-Pager, February 26, 2019

Project General Fact Sheet, January 30, 2019

Updated Corridor Map