

# POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS PHASE

MEETING #1



## MEETING SUMMARY

**Date:** March 29, 2018  
**Time:** 3-5 p.m.  
**Location:** Ramsey County Environmental Health

### ATTENDEES

Name	Organization	Present
<b>Committee Members</b>		
Randy Anderson	School District 622	X
Erin Bailey	Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare	X
Councilmember Mara Bain	City of Forest Lake	
Ling Becker	Vadnais Heights Economic Development Corporation	X
Councilmember Amy Brendmoen	City of Saint Paul	X
Tom Cook	Metro State University	
Paris Dunning	East Side Area Business Association	X
Mayor Jo Emerson	City of White Bear Lake	X
Jose Gonzalez	LatinoLEAD	X
Councilmember Craig Johnson	City of Vadnais Heights	X
Sheila Kauppi	Minnesota Department of Transportation	X
Sheila Kelly	White Bear Area Chamber of Commerce	X
Supervisor Bob Kermes	White Bear Township	X
Councilmember Jim Linder	City of Gem Lake	
Patrick Opatz	Century College	
Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt	Ramsey County	X
Councilmember Sandy Rummel	Metropolitan Council	X
Mayor Nora Slawik	City of Maplewood	X
Terri Thao	Nexus Community Partners	X
Shannon Watson	Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce	X
<b>Alternates</b>		
Joyce Coleman	Century College	X
Councilmember Kevin Edberg	City of White Bear Lake	
Commissioner Blake Huffman	Ramsey County	
Councilmember Bryan Smith	City of Maplewood	
Yao Yang	Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce	

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## Agency and Consultant Team Staff

- Andy Gitzlaff, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority
- Frank Alarcon, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority
- Sonja Piper, Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Ellen Richter, City of White Bear Lake
- Mark Finken, City of Saint Paul
- Daniel Pena, Metropolitan Council
- Jeanne Witzig, Kimley-Horn
- Rachel Dammel, Kimley-Horn
- Jim Gersema, SRF
- Adele Hall, SRF
- Marc Valencia, NewPublica

## Members of the Public

- Denise Bricher
- Mary Erickson
- Dave Anderson
- Vicki Baucom
- Melanie Kleiss

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Reinhardt began the meeting with introductions.

### 2. Role of the Environmental Analysis Phase Policy Advisory Committee

Andy Gitzlaff provided an overview of the Policy Advisory Committee and its role. This committee will advise the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority. The Policy Advisory Committee will help identify project-related concerns and issues, develop solutions and share ideas. The committee charter includes more information, including voting rules. Meetings are anticipated to occur every other month. Andy Gitzlaff asked members to review the charter and let him know if they have any questions or if they think anyone else should be added to the committee.

### 3. Election of the Environmental Analysis Phase Policy Advisory Committee Chair and Vice-Chair

Commissioner Reinhardt asked for nominations for the Policy Advisory Committee chair. Commissioner Reinhardt nominated Mayor Slawik. No other nominations were made. The motion for Mayor Slawik to be named chair was approved unanimously.

Mayor Slawik welcomed all the new committee members and asked for nominations for vice chair. Commissioner Reinhardt nominated Mayor Emerson. No other nominations were made. The motion for Mayor Emerson to be named vice chair was approved unanimously.

#### 4. Rush Line BRT Project Overview

Andy Gitzlaff discussed the project process to date. The last phase was the Pre-Project Development Study, which was a feasibility study that looked at approximately 55 routes and seven bus and rail transit vehicles. The goals and objectives established during that phase will carry into the current environmental analysis phase. There were significant public engagement efforts during last phase, with over 5,200 people participating in over 100 events. There was also a deliberate effort to reach out to underrepresented communities. Terri Thao asked what the focus of the engagement was during the Pre-Project Development Study. Andy Gitzlaff said it was both raising awareness of the project and getting input on what people want to see and the benefits and challenges. The goal was to gather input that could influence the decision-making process. Jose Gonzalez asked who specifically was identified as underrepresented communities. Andy Gitzlaff said they worked with Metropolitan Council data to identify areas of concentrated poverty and communities of color. The county wants to strengthen those efforts and make deeper connections with underrepresented communities.

The key outcome of the Pre-Project Development Study was the locally preferred alternative, which includes the route, general station locations and type of transit. The locally preferred alternative is dedicated bus rapid transit (BRT) on a 14-mile route between Saint Paul and White Bear Lake. The locally preferred alternative was selected because it best met the project goals and was the most cost-effective solution. The county also intends to explore the possibility of connecting bus service from White Bear Lake to Forest Lake.

Mayor Slawik offered to bring any new committee members up to speed on the previous work if they have questions.

Mayor Slawik asked if there were any questions at this point. Melanie Kleiss, the executive director of the Lower Phalen Creek Project, asked where the project would follow the Bruce Vento Trail corridor. Andy Gitzlaff said that BRT would be co-located with the Bruce Vento Trail generally between Arcade Avenue and Beam Avenue.

A video made for the Gateway Corridor/Gold Line project was played to show an example of dedicated BRT.

#### 5. Project Schedule

Jeanne Witzig discussed the overall transitway development process. The project is beginning the environmental analysis phase, which is a two-year process for which Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority is the lead local agency. The project is anticipated to be handed off to the Metropolitan Council at end of the environmental analysis phase when it enters the project development phase of the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grants program as a New Starts project.

For the environmental analysis phase, the project needs to follow federal and state environmental requirements. The Federal Transit Administration is the lead federal agency. The Minnesota Department of Transportation is a key partner on the project.

The first six months of the environmental analysis phase will focus on working with cities on station area planning, collecting data on existing conditions, setting the public engagement plan and beginning preliminary engineering. The project team is also coordinating with the Gold Line BRT Project given its proximity and similarity to the Rush Line BRT Project. The next six months will be focused on refining station locations. Months 12 to 18 (the first half of 2019) will focus on technical analysis and documentation for the environmental review and conceptual engineering plans. The last

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six months will consist of public review and approvals of the environmental document and engineering plans. Mayor Slawik asked if the people living along the corridor will be involved in these steps. Jeanne Witzig said absolutely, the project team is putting together the engagement plan now and will discuss it more at a future meeting.

### **6. Environmental Analysis Phase Consultant Team and Project Advisory Committees**

Jeanne Witzig of Kimley-Horn is the consultant team project manager for this phase. Kimley-Horn's key partner is SRF, both of which are local firms that bring a depth of transit experience. Jeanne provided an overview of other firms on the consultant team, along with their area of expertise. Marc Valencia spoke about NewPublica and its role with public engagement. NewPublica is a persons of color owned business that specializes in engaging with people whose voices are typically underrepresented.

Andy Gitzlaff gave an overview of the other project advisory committees. The Technical Advisory Committee consists of all public sector technical staff, meets every month and will provide recommendations to the Policy Advisory Committee.

The Community Advisory Committee is new for this phase of the project. The county anticipates 15 to 20 members that will be identified through an open application process, which the county plans to announce on March 30. A subcommittee of the Policy Advisory Committee will review the applications and select Community Advisory Committee members. The county is looking for people who live and work in the corridor and wants diversity in demographics and geography. A Community Advisory Committee representative will give updates to the Policy Advisory Committee. The project team would like Policy Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee members to encourage people to apply. Mayor Slawik and Councilmember Brendmoen discussed a process to evaluate community committee members for another recent project. Mayor Slawik offered to provide information on the process. Andy Gitzlaff said if there is a good model to follow for evaluating applications the county is open to suggestions.

### **7. Environmental Analysis Phase Key Tasks**

#### **Environmental Process**

Jeanne Witzig discussed key tasks for the environmental analysis phase. There are four main components that are all integrated. For the environmental analysis, the Federal Transit Administration determined that an environmental assessment is the National Environmental Policy Act class of action needed for this project, which is the middle level between an environmental impact statement and categorical exclusion. For the state environmental review process an environmental assessment worksheet will be completed, for which Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority will be the responsible governmental agency. At the end of the two-year process, the project team anticipates a finding of no significant impact and a negative declaration, meaning that an environmental impact statement is not expected to be needed. This project is following a slightly different process than previous projects in the region by doing station area planning up front, which should make the process more efficient. The environmental analysis will cover transportation, community and social, and physical and environmental impacts.

Councilmember Johnson stated that Vadnais Heights is concerned about traffic at County Road E and Highway 61 and is worried about parking at the sports center and other businesses being taken by transit riders. How will that be addressed? Andy Gitzlaff said that the scope includes analysis of park-and-ride demand associated with the project. Councilmember Johnson said that if there is a station area planning committee for this area he would like to be on it.

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### **Station Area Planning**

Jeanne Witzig discussed station area planning. This process identifies the best locations for stations, then looks at how to enhance the surrounding area, where appropriate. Station area planning working groups will be formed, and the project team is working with city staff to identify people to be part of these groups based on geography (White Bear Lake, Vadnais Heights/Gem Lake, Maplewood and Saint Paul). The working groups will focus on particular stations and the opportunities and challenges for each. The plan was to target the week of April 16 for kick off meetings. There will be a series of three meetings for the working groups. The first is information gathering, the second will gather feedback on draft station concepts, and the third will review and refine final concepts.

Commissioner Reinhardt indicated concern about timeline of the first working group meeting as she does not think cities can recruit participants in time to begin meeting the week of April 16. Jeanne Witzig said that the project team has been working with cities at the staff level to identify names of potential participants but will take a step back to respect city processes and time needed for each city. Mayor Slawik added that this needs to be an open process. Andy Gitzlaff said that if the direction is to take more time the project team will do that and can tailor the working group process to each city.

### **Engineering**

Jim Gersema discussed the engineering process. In the first six months, the engineering efforts will focus on the guideway and how BRT will travel from station to station. The project will reach one percent engineering at end of the first six months. During the second six months, the routing and stations will be put together and the project will reach 10 percent engineering. In the third six months, the project will reach the 15 percent engineering level. At that point, impacts can be identified a comprehensive view of the corridor can be provided for stakeholders to review. There are a number of technical issues in the corridor, and the list will grow and contract as the project team works through the process. Issue resolution teams are being formed with agency representatives to address these technical issues, and these teams will have frequent meetings over the next six months.

Commissioner Reinhardt asked who was on the issue resolution teams. Jim Gersema said the county worked with city and agency staff to identify technical staff from the corridor cities, the county, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and Metro Transit.

### **Communications and Public Engagement**

Adele Hall discussed communications and public engagement. This phase will build on the engagement that occurred in the previous phase. The goal is not just to raise awareness of the project but also to gather input into the decision-making process. The engagement efforts will be rooted in Ramsey County's goal of inclusive engagement. The project corridor is diverse, and the engagement efforts are meant to be inclusive and to gather input from underrepresented communities. This input will inform decisions regarding station area planning, the alignment, environmental impacts, health impacts, the trail alignment and pedestrian safety. Multiple methods of engagement will be used, including pop-up meetings, focus groups, targeted events (such as site visits and tours), presentations to community organizations and public open houses. There will also be a consistent online presence throughout the project through the project website, social media, surveys and interactive mapping. The public engagement plan will document the engagement goals and will be updated periodically with strategies, schedules and input into key milestones. Andy Gitzlaff added that this plan will serve as a roadmap that will be shared with the Technical Advisory Committee then the Policy Advisory Committee at their next meeting. If there are events coming up that would be good for project staff to attend to engage the public, let the project team know. The project team will try to be strategic about events and will have criteria to evaluate which ones to attend.

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Paris Dunning asked how the engagement process will dovetail with the station area planning working groups. Adele Hall said that the station area planning process will have three phases. At the beginning, the project team wants to gather as much local knowledge as possible. The working groups are one way to gather that knowledge, but the same questions can be asked elsewhere, such as pop-ups or other events. During the next phase, the project team will come back with options. Focus groups or smaller group engagement might be more appropriate at that time. Throughout, the project team will tailor the engagement approach based on the input sought. Paris Dunning asked how the broader input received will impact the working groups' thinking. Andy Gitzlaff said that representatives from the Community, Technical, and Policy Advisory Committees will act as conduits, and the working group input will flow up to the Policy Advisory Committee to make decisions. Commissioner Reinhardt added that all the information that is gathered will be provided to the appropriate working groups and ultimately it all comes to the Policy Advisory Committee.

Commissioner Reinhardt noted that the corridor got its name from the original end point, Rush City. Mayor Slawik added the project is proposed as the Purple Line, although this is not official yet.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Vicki Baucom, Saint Paul resident, asked that project staff reach out to the mobility disabled community and make sure they can access the stations.

Melanie Kleiss, executive director of the Lower Phalen Creek Project, stated that her organization is working on a feasibility study to daylight portions of Phalen Creek, and they see opportunities to work with the Rush Line BRT Project. The creek could be an amenity that attracts people to the Rush Line.

## ACTION ITEMS

Action Item	Responsible Party	Timeline
Mayor Slawik to provide input on Community Advisory Committee application review process	Mayor Slawik	April 13, 2018
Project staff to coordinate with cities on station area planning working group participants	Consultant Team	March 30-April 13, 2018