

# POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS PHASE

MEETING #3



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## MEETING SUMMARY

**Date:** July 26, 2018  
**Time:** 3-5 p.m.  
**Location:** Hiway Federal Credit Union

### 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	X
Ling Becker	Vadnais Heights Economic Development Corporation	X
Council President Amy Brendmoen	City of Saint Paul	
Tom Cook	Metro State University	
Paris Dunning	East Side Area Business Association	
Mayor Jo Emerson	City of White Bear Lake	
Jose Gonzalez	LatinoLEAD	
Councilmember Craig Johnson	City of Vadnais Heights	
Sheila Kauppi	Minnesota Department of Transportation	X
Sheila Kelly	White Bear Area Chamber of Commerce	X
Supervisor Bob Kermes	White Bear Township	
Councilmember Jim Lindner	City of Gem Lake	X
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	
<b>Alternates</b>		
Councilmember Kevin Edberg	City of White Bear Lake	
Commissioner Blake Huffman	Ramsey County	
Councilmember Bryan Smith	City of Maplewood	
Pakou Yang	Century College	X
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.
- Heather MacDougall, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority.
- Charles Carlson, Metro Transit.
- Daniel Pena, Metropolitan Council.
- Jeanne Witzig, Kimley-Horn.
- Rachel Dammel, Kimley-Horn.
- Jim Gersema, SRF.
- Beth Bartz, SRF.
- Marc Valencia, NewPublica.

## Members of the Public

- Dave Anderson, All Parks Alliance for Change.
- Romi Slowiak, Community Advisory Committee.

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Mayor Slawik welcomed the committee members and attendees and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

### 2. Overview of Project Activities

Jeanne Witzig provided a recap of project activities since the last Policy Advisory Committee meeting in May. At the May meeting, the Policy Advisory Committee approved the Community Advisory Committee members and reviewed the refined purpose and need and draft Communication and Public Engagement Plan. The project team also provided a walk-through of the Rush Line BRT Project route.

Since then, the project team has had multiple coordination meetings with agency partners. The project team had three calls with the Federal Transit Administration in June and July to discuss the project process and schedule. The next call is scheduled for the middle of August.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation has representatives on the Technical Advisory Committee and Project Management Team, but the project team also had a broader coordination meeting with the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

The project team also had meetings with Metro Transit to discuss ridership modeling and service planning.

### 3. Community Advisory Committee Update

Frank Alarcon provided an update on the Community Advisory Committee. The first Community Advisory Committee meeting was held on July 12, and the agenda included icebreaker introductions, discussion of the committee's role in the process, an overview of the project and small group discussion about station access, destinations, bike/pedestrian infrastructure and public engagement opportunities.

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Mayor Slawik added that the meeting was energizing, and it was great to get additional perspectives from the communities.

Frank Alarcon noted that feedback received from the Community Advisory Committee included interest in what vehicle type will be chosen, concern about space for wheelchairs and strollers, the importance of wayfinding and landscaping, and a suggestion to co-locate BRT stations with bikeshare stations. The project team will follow up with Community Advisory Committee members that were not able to attend.

The Community Advisory Committee will be adding a new member, Laura Torres, from the Payne-Phalen neighborhood. The project team is also looking to add a committee member from Gem Lake and from Maplewood to fill a vacancy.

The next Community Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for September 18. The committee will look at the proposed environmental scope of the project and will select their chair and vice chair. Feedback from the Community Advisory Committee will be shared at the September Policy Advisory Committee meeting.

#### 4. Public Engagement Update

Marc Valencia discussed recent and upcoming engagement activities. The project team has a deliberate engagement process that is focused on the quality of engagement rather than the quantity. The project team meets on a weekly basis to review engagement opportunities and makes decisions about attendance using the criteria of equity, inclusivity, maximizing voices heard and geographic representation. The project team actively looks for opportunities to reach all communities in the corridor.

Coming up in August, the project team will be attending National Night Out at Roosevelt Homes and will do a walk-and-engage event at Arcade Street and Payne Avenue to talk with businesses and residents in that area.

Key themes the project team has been hearing include:

- Employers are interested in improved transit to attract and retain employees.
- Interest from parents in their kids using transit.
- Need to improve transit access on the East Side.
- Connecting bus service is important.
- Engagement is relationship building.
- Safety of pedestrians and bicycles getting to/from stations needs to be a priority.

Erin Bailey noted that festivals might not be places where people with disabilities or families with small children go and asked if that was a factor in the engagement. Marc Valencia replied that that is a consideration. The project team is focusing on outdoor events now but will seek out communities and indoor events in the fall and winter.

Randy Anderson added that he could help set something up at Weaver Elementary School to engage with parents in the area. Many of those students walk on the Bruce Vento Trail to get to school.

Commissioner Reinhardt noted that the event last night (July 25) on the Bruce Vento Trail was great. The right-of-way was staked to show where the trail and bus would be, and that was helpful to help people visualize what it could feel like and how big the buffer would be.

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Community Advisory Committee member Romi Slowiak provided information on the Saint Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden that is recently started constructed at Phalen Regional Park.

### 5. Schedule Review

Jeanne Witzig provided an overview of the transitway development process and schedule. Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority completed the Pre-Project Development Study where the locally preferred alternative was selected in 2017. The project is now in the environmental analysis phase, which should finish in early 2020. Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority is the lead local agency for these two phases, then the project will transition to Metropolitan Council as they will ultimately be the operator (Metro Transit).

During the first six months of the environmental analysis phase, the project team has been working with communities and agency staff on technical issues to define the project for environmental analysis. The next six months will be focused on more technical analysis, and the second half of the two-year process is mainly review by project partners.

Key activities for the Policy Advisory Committee in the environmental analysis phase include:

- Review and confirm project definition for more detailed engineering and environmental analysis at September 27 meeting.
- Review 15 percent concept design prior to submittal to project area cities in May 2019.
- Review key findings from environmental analysis and project definition in the Environmental Assessment in late fall 2019.

Andy Gitzlaff discussed the municipal collaboration process for the project. Last fall the project had a structured process to get letters of support from the project area cities for the locally preferred alternative. During this phase, the project team will continue coordination with cities through the issue resolution teams and Technical and Policy Advisory Committees but is also proposing more formal touchpoints. In the spring of 2019, the cities will have an opportunity for review of the 15 percent design plans. The project team will encourage city partners to provide a letter or resolution in the summer of 2019 affirming the project scope. The project team would like to present to or have a workshop with the city councils at least once by early next year.

Mayor Slawik commented that it is important to bring the cities along in the process, so she wants the councils to be fully informed. Councilmember Bain suggested holding an open house for elected officials in all project area cities in January or February after new councils have been formed.

Andy Gitzlaff also noted that municipal collaboration will continue after the environmental analysis phase. State statute requires review if the project will impact a Trunk Highway or County State Aid Highway. The project will also have design review by project partners at 60 and 90 percent design.

### 6. Environmental Review Update

Jeanne Witzig provided a summary of the field review activities that have been occurring the last few months. Field work has included a tree inventory, cultural resource surveys, noise measurements and traffic counts at selected locations. Field personnel are working from public right-of-way and will likely be out until there is snow on the ground. The project team provides a field activity report to the Technical Advisory Committee members every week. Field personnel have letters indicating the work is for the Rush Line BRT Project with project staff contact information. If access to private property is needed, the project team will go through a right of entry process.

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Mayor Slawik noted there was some interest in the tree count at the Bruce Vento Trail pop-up event last night. Jeanne Witzig said that the inventory will help identify what types of trees are out there now and what may be impacted.

Erin Bailey noted that some of these current conditions could change before the project is constructed and asked if the analysis just reflected a point in time. Jeanne Witzig replied that there is a provision in the environmental requirements to account for time lapse in analysis. The analysis does try to accommodate some future changes. For example, the traffic analysis will forecast out to future years based on city comprehensive plans.

Mayor Slawik noted that Rush Line is already spurring development in Maplewood and that Crandall Arambula has been talking with developers and residents about station area planning and redevelopment opportunities. Councilmember Lindner added that Gem Lake did master planning for County Road E about 10 years ago, but now people are getting interested in the area, particularly with the Hy-Vee convenience store going in on the southeast quadrant of County Road E and Highway 61.

Terri Thao commented that it is important to also consider potential for business and resident displacement resulting from increased land values around stations.

Commissioner Reinhardt said one size does not fit all, and different parts of the corridor have different cultures and values so how do we make it work for everyone? We need to meet people where they are. Randy Anderson added that a roundtable/world café concept can be a good way to get feedback and for people get to know each other. Andy Gitzlaff stated that the station area planning work gets to those community level discussions, visualizing what the change could look like and how to best fit the community.

### **7. Highlights from Issue Resolution Teams and Station Area Planning**

Beth Bartz and Jim Gersema reviewed highlights from the issue resolution teams and station area planning process over the last couple months.

#### **WHITE BEAR LAKE**

The project team had a White Bear Lake working group meeting to discuss the downtown station and a stakeholder meeting with Kowalski's at Marina Triangle. The next working group meeting is scheduled for August 14 and will focus on the Marina Triangle and Cedar Avenue stations. Key themes the project team has heard so far include:

- The working group expressed a preference for the Downtown White Bear Lake station to be located at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Clark Avenue.
- Kowalski's expressed support for transit-oriented redevelopment at Marina Triangle.

Clark Avenue is a wider street with diagonal parking today, and US Bank had expressed interest in redeveloping their site to city staff. Crandall Arambula identified opportunities for redevelopment on this site, including a parking structure with ground level retail that could accommodate US Bank. From a design perspective, this station location would limit the time it takes to get into downtown White Bear Lake and would provide convenient bus operations.

Ling Becker asked if the area is set up for people to get across Highway 61. Jim Gersema said that 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and 4<sup>th</sup> Street are both signalized intersections with pedestrian crossings.

The Marina Triangle station would be located at Whitaker Street and Highway 61. There is land being used for parking in this area that is potentially underutilized. Crandall Arambula is looking at concepts

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to reorient the commercial uses toward the highway to maximize visibility of the businesses and take advantage of the lakefront for higher density housing and retail uses. The Highway 61 Issue Resolution Team is looking at how this station would function from a traffic and pedestrian access standpoint.

Commissioner Reinhardt noted that Ramsey County Parks is looking at a trail extension in this area that should be coordinated with this project.

Councilmember Lindner commented that the rail line west of Highway 61 is active but has minimal use with about two trains a day.

### COUNTY ROAD E

The first County Road E working group meeting was in May, and the second meeting is scheduled for August 14. Key themes from the first meeting included:

- Concerns about pedestrian crossings of Highway 61.
- An additional station at Buerkle Road should be considered.
- Businesses in the area lack awareness of the project so additional outreach is needed.

Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority's strategic communications consultant is developing a package of information for businesses. Councilmember Lindner commented that the project has been slow to gather momentum and interest in Gem Lake, but Hy-Vee might change that. He said the city has plans for this intersection included in their next comprehensive plan, but the pedestrian access is not easy. Jim Gersema noted that the issue resolution team has been looking at the station location and pedestrian access, and they want to focus on improving the at-grade crossing, which the project team will coordinate with the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Another topic addressed by the issue resolution teams was the I-694 crossing. There are two options under consideration: continuing in the rail corridor north of I-694 or locating the route to the east to avoid impacting rail property.

Traffic is a concern on Buerkle Road. The project team did a traffic analysis and identified solutions that can improve operations. Potential solutions include adjusting the traffic signal timing and adding two westbound left-turn lanes. These improvements could be included before or with the Rush Line BRT Project.

### MAPLEWOOD

Maplewood is preparing a small area plan for the Maplewood Mall area, so the project team is having that process take the lead in terms of station area planning. The station area planning efforts have been focused on the southern three stations in Maplewood. The first Maplewood working group meeting was held in May, and the next meeting is scheduled for July 31. Key themes heard from the working group to date include:

- High level of interest in the Frost Avenue station and redevelopment opportunities there.
- The Highway 36/English Street station is a potential park-and-ride location that could incorporate transit-oriented development.
- There are community gardens and a park in the Highway 36/English Street station area, and Rush Line would provide good access to those amenities.

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The Maplewood issue resolution team evaluated routing in the St. John's Hospital/Maplewood Mall area. The recommended route would circulate through the existing Maplewood Mall Transit Center, travel back to St. John's Hospital on Beam Avenue and turn up Hazelwood Street to provide better access to the front door of the hospital and other new development on Hazelwood Street.

There will be a public meeting on August 21 to kick off the city's small area plan and discuss the change in routing for the Rush Line BRT Project.

### SAINT PAUL

To date, there have been working group meetings for the Phalen Village station and Payne Avenue and Arcade Street stations. There will be a combined working group meeting for all three stations on August 16.

Key themes heard regarding the Phalen Village station include:

- There are benefits and tradeoffs to locating the station at Maryland Avenue or Johnson Parkway.
- Pedestrian crossings of Phalen Boulevard, Johnson Parkway and Maryland Avenue require consideration.
- The community sees Rush Line as a benefit to the area.

The project team is continuing to evaluate the Phalen Village station location and what will work best.

There were a number of station location options for the Arcade Street station. Phalen Boulevard is lower than Arcade Street, so the station could be at Phalen Boulevard level, at Arcade Street level or to the north at the Seeger Square shopping center. The working group expressed support for locating the station by Seeger Square at the intersection of Arcade Street and Neid Lane.

Payne Avenue and Phalen Boulevard are not grade separated like Arcade Street and Phalen Boulevard, and the working group agreed with the Payne Avenue station location.

For the Regions/Green Line station, the issue resolution team considered multiple platform locations and recommended putting the platforms on 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

### NEXT STEPS

The project team will continue to work through the station area planning and issue resolution team processes and continue engaging the public. The project team will bring the recommended project scope to the Policy Advisory Committee in September after it is reviewed by the Technical Advisory Committee.

Mayor Slawik offered to meet with anyone that is interested, and noted that if people have questions or ideas it would be best to let us know now.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

### ACTION ITEMS

Action Item	Responsible Party	Timeline
Review the draft frequently asked questions	Policy Advisory Committee members	August 20, 2018

## NEXT MEETING

September 27, 2018  
2:30-4:30 p.m.  
Maplewood Community Center – Banquet Room C  
2100 White Bear Avenue  
Maplewood, MN 55109