

MEETING SUMMARY

Date: September 18, 2018
Time: 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Location: East Side Enterprise Center

ATTENDEES

Name	Community of Residence or Affiliation	Present
Committee Members		
Dave Anderson	Vadnais Heights	X
Mark Bayuk	White Bear Lake	X
Sam Crosby	Maplewood	X
Frederick Dahm	Maplewood	
Raquel de la Bastide	Vadnais Heights	
Lisa Freese	Saint Paul	
Richard Johnstone	White Bear Lake	X
Laura Keithahn	Maplewood	X
Mark Lynch	White Bear Lake	X
Sandy Matzdorf	White Bear Lake	
Bob Morse	Vadnais Heights	X
Darrell Paulsen	Maplewood	
Brent Peterson	Saint Paul	X
Eric Saathoff	Saint Paul	X
Shoua Salas	Saint Paul	
Romi Slowiak	Saint Paul	
Therese Sonnek	Maplewood	X
TraNeicia Sylvester	Saint Paul	X
Yin Thong	Maplewood	
Laura Torres	Saint Paul	
Julie Vang	Saint Paul	X
Carolyn Wensman	White Bear Township	X
Michael Werner	Vadnais Heights	X
Cynthia Whiteford	Saint Paul	
Project Staff and Other Attendees		
Frank Alarcon	Rush Line BRT Project Team	X

Name	Community of Residence or Affiliation	Present
Beth Bartz	Rush Line BRT Project Team	X
Adrian Diaz	Rush Line BRT Project Team	X
Sean McDonnell	Rush Line BRT Project Team	X
Luke Soiseth	Rush Line BRT Project Team	X
Alicia Valenti	Rush Line BRT Project Team	X
Lara Stilp	St. John's Hospital	X
John Slade	Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing	X

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

1. Welcome and Introductions

Frank Alarcon made opening remarks and facilitated introductions among members of the Community Advisory Committee and other meeting attendees.

2. Recap of July 12 Community Advisory Committee Meeting

Project Overview

Frank provided a review of the project need, purpose and goals, as well as the locally preferred alternative.

Role of the Community Advisory Committee

Frank described the role of the Community Advisory Committee. This committee will advise the Rush Line BRT Project team and decision makers on key project design, station area planning, environmental analysis and operational plan decisions from a community and business perspective. The committee will advise on communication and public engagement techniques and opportunities. TraNeicia Sylvester asked if the Rush Line BRT Project team would like members of the Community Advisory Committee to attend community events. Frank said that project team members attend community events in order to talk to people where they already are and that members of the Community Advisory Committee are welcome to join project team members at these events if they are interested.

Frank gave an overview of the structure and role of the Policy Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and station area planning working groups. Therese Sonnek said there was a station area planning working group session for her Maplewood but that she hadn't received an invitation. Frank stated that he would share the meeting notes with her and make sure she is invited to any future station area planning working group sessions in Maplewood. Julie Vang asked if committee members and meeting notes are public information. Frank said yes and directed her to the Rush Line BRT Project Library on the project website for a list of Policy, Technical and Community Advisory Committee members. Beth Bartz added that summaries from station area planning working group meetings are more informal and are not posted online but are available upon request.

Frank explained the environmental analysis phase, summarized the overall project schedule, and outlined the four key tasks of the environmental analysis phase.

3. Chair and Vice Chair Election

Role and Responsibilities

Frank described the role of the Chair and Vice Chair. TraNeicia asked if the Chair would receive support from staff. Frank said yes, project team members would be in contact with the Chair and ensure that they would have any information and materials needed, especially in preparation for speaking to the Policy Advisory Committee. Bob Morse asked where Policy Advisory Committee meetings are held. Frank stated that they are typically held in Saint Paul or Maplewood so that they are accessible by transit for people who would like to attend for the public comment period. Therese asked for clarification regarding meeting schedules for the Policy Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee. Frank said that Policy Advisory Committee meetings are typically held bi-monthly on the fourth Thursday of the month and Technical Advisory Committee meetings are held in the morning on the second Thursday of each month. Therese asked if the Vice Chair also attends Policy Advisory Committee meetings. Frank said that there is no requirement, but that the Vice Chair is encouraged to attend and that anyone is welcome to attend because the meetings are open to the public.

Election

Frank said that one person, Bob Morse, had expressed interest in running for Chair, and asked if anyone else had interest in running for Chair or Vice Chair. TraNeicia said that she would be interested in either role and Therese said that she was interested in serving as Vice Chair. Frank asked Bob and TraNeicia if either preferred Chair or Vice Chair. Therese withdrew her candidacy. Sam Crosby suggested voting on Bob as Chair and TraNeicia as Vice Chair. Frank asked the candidates for their opinion on the motion. TraNeicia said as Vice Chair she would like to have strong communication with the chair to learn about the process and stay informed about the project. Mark Lynch asked if there was any reason the two candidates would be unable to serve jointly as co-chairs. Frank said no and asked the candidates if they would be willing to act as co-chairs. TraNeicia and Bob both said yes. Sam Crosby moved to vote on TraNeicia and Bob as co-chairs. All members present voted in favor.

4. Project Updates

Beth provided an overview of the project's public engagement activities from July through September 2018. Beth summarized events the project team has attended and highlighted those that were suggested by the Community Advisory Committee at the July 12 meeting. Beth reiterated the goals of public engagement, outlined the main themes from public engagement to date, noted topics of interest the project team has encountered and described the ways input is being used to shape the project. Beth then highlighted what the project team has been hearing about the project. Beth stated that online engagement will be added to public engagement efforts and introduced the WikiMap that will be used to gather public input on the project starting in late September. Frank noted that the map is currently in draft form and requested feedback on its functionality from Community Advisory Committee members. Frank stated that he would send out a link to the draft interactive map after the meeting.

Beth then provided an update on station area planning activities. Ten station area planning working group meetings have been held in Saint Paul, Maplewood, Vadnais Heights and White Bear Lake, plus targeted interviews with stakeholders.

5. Upcoming Project Activities

Beth described upcoming project activities. The Environmental Assessment is part of a required federal environmental process that evaluates the project's potential impact to the natural and built environments. Bob said that a lot of the future stations are on existing roads and highways and asked what new noise the buses would add. Beth said that the buses themselves are not expected to be loud because Metro Transit is looking to transition away from diesel vehicles, but that the implementation of bus lanes can alter traffic patterns in some areas, which can have potential noise impacts. The Environmental Assessment identifies measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate any potential impacts identified. Public engagement for the Environmental Assessment will include presentations to stakeholders, targeted gatherings and targeted online input opportunities. The Environmental Assessment is anticipated to be published for public comment in the second half of 2019.

The Health Impact Assessment identifies health indicators that would potentially be affected by the project. John Slade said that for the METRO Green Line Extension, the Health Impact Assessment examined environmental determinants of health and asked if the Health Impact Assessment for the Rush Line BRT Project would do the same. Beth said that the Health Impact Assessment workshop scheduled for October will answer that question, as its purpose is to identify which measures to study and what data sources are available and to make other key decisions for the analysis. Frank added that all members of the Community Advisory Committee, Policy Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee would be invited to the workshop as well as health experts. Frank said that the workshop is tentatively scheduled for October 30, 2018 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Frank announced that a corridor tour will be scheduled for mid-November. Members of the project advisory committees will be invited to this tour so that they can learn more about the route and get to know members of the other committees. Mark Lynch asked how the tour will work north of St. John's Hospital, where the guideway will be co-located with the Bruce Vento Trail in the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority right-of-way. Frank responded that the tour will visit the station areas and then travel on roads parallel to the route.

6. Station Area Planning and Preliminary Engineering Walk-Through

The second half of the meeting comprised a walk-through of the route from Union Depot station in Saint Paul to downtown White Bear Lake. Beth shared that the purpose of the walk-through was to review the project elements to be studied in the Environmental Assessment, which reflect input from the project advisory committees and public engagement efforts. The Community Advisory Committee was asked to consider the locations of stations and platforms, location of the BRT guideway and the position of the Bruce Vento Trail relative to the BRT guideway. Next steps for the project include approval of the project definition by the Policy Advisory Committee and advancement of environmental analysis and engineering.

Large roll plots of the recommended Rush Line BRT Project definition were placed on tables for committee members to examine. Beth began the project walk-through in downtown Saint Paul. Beth explained that in downtown Saint Paul, the Rush Line BRT will operate in mixed traffic on Sibley Street, Wacouta Street and Kellogg Boulevard when departing from and arriving to Union Depot and will then operate in business access and transit (BAT) lanes on 5th and 6th streets. BAT lanes are bus-only lanes located in the outer traffic lanes that private vehicles can use only to turn right into and out of destinations adjacent to these lanes. Beth said that the project team is currently evaluating whether the project will operate in mixed traffic or in a dedicated guideway on Robert Street and that

this will depend on traffic impacts. Lara Stilp asked if the BAT lanes will work within the existing width of the roadway. Beth said that they will.

Beth described the location of the 10th Street station. Mark Lynch asked if the Regions/Green Line station would be the final northbound stop for a transfer between the Rush Line and METRO Green Line. Beth confirmed that it would be. John asked if there was a short walk between the two stations. Beth said there would be a short walk because the Regions/Green Line station will be oriented to provide easy access to Regions Hospital while remaining close to the METRO Green Line Robert Street station.

Beth described the Olive Street and Cayuga Street stations. Bob said the project is six years away and that there is already a Hy-Vee planned for the route and asked how much development is anticipated along the route. Beth answered that development of that nature is not part of the project but that it is being evaluated through the station area planning process. Beth added that there may be intensification of development and an increase in property values, as when the METRO Green Line was built, and that farther north there will likely be more opportunities for development. Bob asked what the role of cities is in this process. Beth stated that the project team coordinates closely with city staff on all project elements within their cities, and engages with city councils as necessary and that coordination with cities has been a good opportunity for synergy among the groups as local municipalities develop their comprehensive plans for 2040, including land use plans.

Beth described the Payne Avenue and Arcade Street stations. Beth stated that east of Arcade Street the Rush Line begins to operate with the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority right-of-way. Frank explained that Ramsey County acquired this abandoned railroad right of way in the early 1990s to preserve it for future transit use. Beth then gave an overview of the dedicated guideway and future co-location with the Bruce Vento Trail. Therese asked how much distance there will be between the trail and guideway. Beth said it will vary from six to 30 feet, depending on other factors including topography, retaining walls and trees. Mark Lynch noted that there is limited space under the Forest Street bridge. Beth explained that it is a pinch point where the guideway may narrow to one lane total with a signal to manage buses passing each other. Frank added that more often than not, buses will not need to pass through this segment at the same time so the effect on travel time should be minimal. Therese asked how the guideway will be designated so that cars don't drive in them. Beth said the lanes will likely be painted with symbols or a solid red color. Therese asked if stations will be bypassed in the event that no riders need to get on or off at a station. Beth said they likely would not be, as the buses will likely not have a way to request a stop, but that this determination will be made later when the project is led by Metro Transit. Mark Lynch noted a signalized crossing of the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority right-of-way and asked if it was for pedestrians. Beth confirmed that it was planned to provide safe access to the trail.

Beth described the locations where the BRT guideway will cross the Bruce Vento Trail. Beth said it was designed this way to maintain distance between the guideway and homes located adjacent to the route. Therese pointed out an area near the Larpenteur station and stated that the street is narrow because the sides slope down, then asked if it would be dug out. Beth said there is not enough space for the guideway at the top of the right-of-way, so they will likely cut down the berm to make it sufficiently wide for both the Bruce Vento Trail and the BRT guideway.

Beth continued explaining the route and station locations. Beth explained that the BRT routing to the Maplewood Mall and St. John's stations were refined to provide better access to the transit center and hospital. When reviewing the Maplewood Mall and St. John's Boulevard stations, Therese asked if the rail line west of Interstate 35E would continue operating. Beth confirmed that that rail line is not anticipated to be affected by the Rush Line project. Beth said that near the County Road E station,

right turn islands would be eliminated to enhance pedestrian safety and explained that both platforms would be located south of County Road E to provide easier access to destinations near the station. Dave Anderson asked if there would be a pedestrian bridge. Beth said that the project team had considered it, but that it would be difficult to build in a way that is accessible and that it may even decrease pedestrian safety if people choose not to use it. Dave expressed concern that this would exacerbate congestion caused by bottlenecks in the area. Beth said there will be different traffic management strategies used through the project area to increase safety. Therese asked if speed limits on Highway 61 would be reduced. Beth explained that in Minnesota, a speed limit cannot be changed until a traffic study is completed, and the new speed limit must be the 85th percentile speed of vehicles traveling on the road being studied. Beth said that this policy could potentially lead to a speed limit being increased instead of reduced. Mark Bayuk asked if Interstate 35E would be expanded to five lanes. Beth said that is not within the purview of the project.

Beth described the Marina Triangle and Downtown White Bear Lake stations. Therese expressed concern about the height of potential development accompanying the downtown station, including a possible park-and-ride. Beth said that the building illustrated in the station concept is not part of the project, but it is an idea to relieve concerns about parking, and that any development near the station would go through the standard city approval process. Bob noted that several large events are held in the area. Beth stated that the project team (and in the future, Metro Transit) will coordinate with the City of White Bear Lake to resolve any possible issues related to downtown events.

Members of the Community Advisory Committee provided the following written comments and questions on the roll plots:

- Business access transit lanes on Robert Street are a good idea.
- Mt. Airy station is in a lower-income area that needs more safety measures.
- Near Mt. Airy station on Jackson Street dedicated lanes would be okay if there is not much traffic.
- The guideway is close to the trail at Earl Street. Will there be barriers?
- Is there a bridge southeast of the Arcade Street station?
- It gets congested at Arcade Street and Phalen Boulevard. How long is the wait to turn?
- The Payne Avenue station is in a good location.
- Will people cross the railroad tracks and jump the fence to access the Cayuga Street station?
- The Cayuga Street station location is good.
- Traffic near Cayuga Street is horrible and backs up.
- The YMCA is an important destination near the Arcade Street station.
- Will the vacant lot southeast of the intersection of Arcade Street and Phalen Boulevard be developed?
- The Arcade Street station needs to be at grade.
- The new BRT ramp east of Arcade Street will be good.
- Better pedestrian and bicycle amenities are needed on Arcade Street for crossing the railroad and accessing destinations south of Phalen Boulevard.
- Arlington Avenue is steep. Will there be grading?
- The proposed Cook Avenue station will need a traffic light for pedestrians.
- The proposed Cook Avenue station should be called Hmong Village station.

- The proposed Cook Avenue station is a great addition.
- The crosswalk near Cook Avenue and Hmong Village is too long.
- High-intensity activated crosswalk beacons are needed near the proposed Cook Avenue station.
- How many people are going to use the Larpenteur Avenue station?
- Add trees in the median on Beam Avenue.
- If Kohlman is used as a trailhead, it should have a bridge.
- The intersection with the Gateway Trail needs an overpass or underpass because it is highly used.
- Consider a pedestrian bridge at County Road D.
- The speed limit should be reduced to 35 miles per hour from County Road D to downtown White Bear Lake.
- Higher and better uses are needed north of Newtrax on Highway 61.
- Will the potential joint-use parking facility be too tall for the existing character of downtown White Bear Lake?
- There should be a blinking yellow to turn left from northbound Highway 61 to westbound 2nd Street.
- Can there be a lighted system to pause traffic for pedestrians at the intersection of Highway 61 and 2nd Street?
- Bruce Vento Trail should connect with Lake Avenue Trail at Trunk Highway 96.

7. Next Community Advisory Committee Meeting

The next formal Community Advisory Committee meeting will be scheduled for January 2019. In the meantime, Community Advisory Committee members are encouraged to participate in the October 30 Health Impacts Assessment workshop and the mid-November corridor tour. More details of these activities will be shared with Community Advisory Committee members when they become available.