

MEETING SUMMARY

Date: January 17, 2019
Time: 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Location: Maplewood Community Center Room A

ATTENDEES

Name	Community of Residence or Affiliation	Present
Committee Members		
Dave Anderson	Vadnais Heights	X
Curt Cooper	Vadnais Heights	X
Samantha Crosby	Maplewood	X
Lisa Freese	Saint Paul	
Richard Johnstone	White Bear Lake	
Laura Keithahn	Maplewood	X
Mark Lynch	White Bear Lake	X
Sandy Matzdorf	White Bear Lake	
Bob Morse	Vadnais Heights	X
John O’Phelan	Maplewood	X
Darrell Paulsen	Maplewood	X
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	
Yin Thong	Maplewood	
Laura Torres	Saint Paul	X
Julie Vang	Saint Paul	
Carolyn Wensman	White Bear Township	
Michael Werner	Vadnais Heights	
Cyndy Whiteford	Saint Paul	X
Project Staff and Other Attendees		
Frank Alarcon	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X
Beth Bartz	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X

Name	Community of Residence or Affiliation	Present
Andy Gitzlaff	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X
Alicia Valenti	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X
Maria Wardoku	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X
Jeanne Witzig	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X
Karyssa Jackson	Metro Transit	X

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Welcome and Introductions

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

Project Updates

Recent Advisory Committee Membership Changes

Frank Alarcon provided an update on membership changes within the Policy and Community Advisory Committees:

- Nora Slawik stepped down from the Policy Advisory Committee to lead the Metropolitan Council. Mayor Jo Emerson of White Bear Lake is Acting Chair and a chair election will be held at the next meeting of the Policy Advisory Committee.
- Curt Cooper of Vadnais Heights and John O’Phelan of Maplewood joined the Community Advisory Committee to fill seats left open by Raquel Byers and Frederick Dahm.

Field Activities

Jeanne Witzig gave an overview of archaeological work being conducted along the BRT route, particularly along the Ramsey County rail right-of-way. Jeanne said that there may be various types of archeological remains in the project area. Jeanne said that project staff are also evaluating all structures more than 50 years old along the BRT route to identify historic sites. Jeanne said that there are requirements regarding historic resources both above and below ground. Mark Lynch asked to confirm that staff are studying all buildings more than 50 years old. Jeanne said that staff typically use a buffer and examine buildings 45 to 50 years old and older. Mark observed that this would require examining a lot of buildings. Jeanne confirmed that it is a lot of buildings and that most are not historic, but that evaluation is necessary because a building may be historic because of the integrity of its structure, the significance of its architecture or previous inhabitants. Therese Sonnek asked if anything historic has been found. Jeanne said that staff found something that appears to be a privy.

Jeanne stated that project staff are also currently conducting traffic counts at intersections along the BRT route and that Highway 61 has been the focus of traffic counts for the past two months.

Public Engagement

Alicia Valenti provided an update on public engagement efforts for the project. Project staff are continuing to conduct public engagement efforts throughout the project area to raise awareness of the project and gather input regarding future stations and other aspects of the project. Alicia said that there is an online interactive map and an online survey regarding the planned downtown White Bear

Lake station where people can provide input in addition to in-person meetings. Bob asked how to access the survey. Alicia said that it is linked on the project website and Frank added that it will be available January 31 at 4 p.m. Frank requested that members of the committee share the survey with anyone they know who is interested in the downtown White Bear Lake station.

Purpose and Need

Jeanne described the purpose and need of the project. Bob noted that the next Policy Advisory Committee meeting is coming up on January 31 and that it may run long because of a planned question-and-answer segment regarding the planned downtown White Bear Lake station. Bob suggested that anyone interested should attend. Andy Gitzlaff said that this meeting will likely be rescheduled to February 28 to better align with project information and milestones. John O'Phelan asked if the Community Advisory Committee receives information regarding Policy Advisory Committee meetings. Bob said that they are notified by Ramsey County and Frank added that a notice is sent to the email distribution list one to two weeks prior to any Policy Advisory Committee meeting. Mark asked if the White Bear Lake City Council would make a decision regarding the planned downtown station prior to the meeting. Frank said the intention is to obtain guidance from the White Bear Lake City Council on the location of the downtown White Bear Lake station prior to the February 28 Policy Advisory Committee meeting.

Downtown White Bear Lake

Beth Bartz provided an overview of the Rush Line BRT planning process in White Bear Lake. Beth explained that a station area planning working group was assembled by the City of White Bear Lake to refine the locations of the stations planned within White Bear Lake city limits. Beth said the downtown station was of particular interest throughout this process. After examining numerous station location options within the downtown area, the station area planning working group recommended locating the station at 2nd Street and Clark Avenue. Ramsey County and the City of White Bear Lake received a significant number of negative comments regarding this station location, particularly because of a rendering that depicted a shared-use parking facility with ground-level retail along with the station. Beth said that parking facility was not necessary for the project but identified as a potential benefit for downtown, where parking can be scarce. On October 2018 project staff held two listening sessions at the White Bear Lake branch of the Ramsey County Library to gather input on community desires regarding the project and station. Beth said project staff also met individually and in small groups with stakeholders, including City Council members, throughout November and December. In response to the input provided by the community, the additional station location options for the downtown station are being evaluated. An open house was held on January 10 collect input on the station location options, and an online survey was launched on January 9 for the same purpose. The survey will remain active until January 31.

After the survey closes, public input will be reviewed and shared with the White Bear Lake City Council, and the council will be asked to provide guidance on a preferred downtown station location. Beth said the preferred station location will be studied in the Environmental Assessment along with the other twenty stations along the BRT route. Therese asked if the engineering team has a preferred site. Beth said that all options will work. Bob asked if there was a reason a preferred station location should be identified in February. Beth answered that a downtown location is needed for study in the Environmental Assessment and that studying all six station location options would be costly and likely unacceptable to the Federal Transit Administration. Beth said that the Federal Transit Administration prefers to have clearly defined projects before investing staff time and energy. Mark noted that the

mayor, city manager and a council member all attended the open house and that they are evidently invested in the project.

Health Impact Assessment

Frank provided an overview of the purpose and goals of the Health Impact Assessment and the October 30 Health Impact Assessment workshop. Frank identified and defined the four topics of study for the Health Impact Assessment:

- Access/accessibility.
- Connectivity.
- Jobs and employment.
- Affordable housing.

Frank outlined the draft recommendations made in the Health Impact Assessment. Darrell Paulsen asked where safety is discussed among the four topics, noting lighting and striping as important factors for people with low vision or who use a cane. Darrell said that there is a METRO Green Line station on University Avenue that is not well lit, so he avoids it, and that he would like to avoid similar issues with Rush Line BRT. Frank said that all stations will be well lit. Bob noted that lighting is also a concern for him and that architectural design can be leveraged to enhance accessibility. Darrell agreed and highlighted the need to use durable materials that would not wear down and lose their accessible quality over time. Cyndy Whiteford noted that at the Health Impact Assessment workshop, attendees were grouped based on what part of the project area they represented and that recommendations should reflect the differences throughout the corridor. Frank said the recommendations presented in the full Health Impact Assessment report will be specific to each area.

Frank asked for input on recommendations regarding access/accessibility and connectivity. Dave Anderson said that there has been discussion regarding different programs throughout the project area and that agencies may be able to create links in the network to increase connectivity, such as community centers integrating transportation with Rush Line BRT. Darrell suggested that there is an opportunity to integrate wayfinding with technology such as smartphone apps. Therese asked for connections to the Bruce Vento Trail to continue as cleanly as possible throughout construction and operation of Rush Line BRT, then asked how spread apart access points will be. Frank said that this will be determined through the Ramsey County rail right-of-way master planning process, which will be discussed next. Mark said that a lot of people in White Bear Lake use recreational trails and that it would be great to have signs on the trail directing people to the bus. Therese said users can bring bikes on the bus. Mark asked if they would be inside the bus like on the METRO Green and Blue Lines or outside the bus, like on existing local bus service. Frank said that this will be determined when vehicles are selected later in the planning process. John O'Phelan said that there are several nonprofits and community organizations along Payne Avenue and Arcade Street and that it would be beneficial to have signs on the bus pointing riders to neighborhood amenities. Therese Sonnek suggested wayfinding signs pointing to nearby restaurants and other attractions, such as the signs at freeway exits. Darrell said that buses already have GPS systems and that these could be used to indicate destinations found near upcoming bus stops. Eric Saathoff said that pedestrian and bicycle improvements on Arcade Street would be helpful in increasing access.

Ramsey County Rail Right-of-Way Master Plan

Jeanne provided context for the Ramsey County rail right-of-way master plan and an overview of the planning and engagement work that has been conducted already. Jeanne said that the Bruce Vento

Trail has garnered interest from the community and a goal of the Rush Line BRT Project is to co-locate the trail and the dedicated guideway in a manner that is safe and context-sensitive. Jeanne referred to significant public engagement work that was conducted throughout the Pre-Project Development Study. Jeanne said that over the last year, project staff have gone on the trail and to surrounding communities to learn what is important to trail users and nearby residents. Jeanne said that trail users are generally supportive of improved transit. Jeanne noted that areas of concern are safety, tree restoration, loss of wildlife habitat and a change in the existing views on the trail.

Jeanne said that examples of priorities of the master plan are acknowledging the area's history as a rail corridor, mitigating tree loss and implementing context-sensitive stormwater management solutions, among other priorities. Jeanne said that the master plan will be a living document reflecting the vision for the corridor and that it will be referred to during the engineering process. Cyndy asked for clarification on the term "context-sensitive". Jeanne explained that the right-of-way has different qualities in different places (for example, some places are close to backyards while others are more open), and the plan will reflect the diversity of the right-of-way rather than being uniform throughout. Therese highlighted the area from Larpenteur Avenue to County Road E as a segment of the trail that reflects this diversity with backyards, schools and retail and that users can stay separate from it on the current trail.

Jeanne asked what the meeting attendees like most about the trail as it presently exists. Therese said that people really like the sense of escaping from the rest of the world and that it would be important to plant the trail with densely- or quickly-growing flora. Therese asked what the landscaping priorities would be. Jeanne said that this will be determined through the master plan process. Darrell said that restoring the history of the corridor would make it feel different than it does currently because of changes in plant life throughout the area. Samantha Crosby said that co-location of the trail and guideway could improve safety as there will be more activity at trail crossings and drivers will be more cautious at these crossings as a result. John asked if it would be possible to plant trees earlier in the process to allow more time for them to grow in again. Jeanne said that grading working will be done as part of construction of the BRT, so trees cannot be planted early because the new plants will need to be protected and the existing berms add a challenge. Therese said that neighbors will want to know about fencing and whether the BRT line will be separated from their backyards. Jeanne said that accessibility of crossing the trail, trail access generally and wildlife safety will be considered through the planning process. Therese asked how the guideway and trail would be divided. Jeanne said that this will be determined in the master plan and that it will be sensitive to the natural habitat while making sure people are safe. Eric said that his hope is that he will be able to take his kids onto the trail and know that they would not accidentally veer onto the guideway.

Next Meeting

Bob asked when the next Community Advisory Committee meeting will be held. Frank said the meeting will be in the spring and he will send out a poll via email to determine the date.