

POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS PHASE

MEETING #8



B R T

MEETING SUMMARY

Date: May 30, 2019
Time: 2:30-4:30 p.m.
Location: Maplewood Community Center

ATTENDEES

Name	Organization	Present
Committee Members		
Mayor Marylee Abrams	City of Maplewood	X
Randy Anderson	Independent School District 622	
Ruby Azurdia-Lee	Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES)	
Kit Brady	Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare	
Council President Amy Brendmoen	City of Saint Paul	X
Tom Cook	Metro State University	X
Paris Dunning	East Side Area Business Association	
Mayor Jo Emerson	City of White Bear Lake	X
Monte Hilleman	Saint Paul Port Authority	
Councilmember Craig Johnson	City of Vadnais Heights	X
Sheila Kauppi	Minnesota Department of Transportation	X
Sheila Kelly	White Bear Area Chamber of Commerce	X
Councilmember Jim Lindner	City of Gem Lake	X
Supervisor Scott McCune	White Bear Township	
Councilmember Kelly Monson	City of Forest Lake	
Liz Moscatelli	Vadnais Heights Economic Development Corp.	X
Patrick Opatz	Century College	
Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt	Ramsey County	X
Terri Thao	Nexus Community Partners	X
Councilmember Susan Vento	Metropolitan Council	X
Shannon Watson	Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce	X
Alternates		
Councilmember Kevin Edberg	City of White Bear Lake	
Councilmember Bryan Smith	City of Maplewood	
Pakou Yang	Century College	
Yao Yang	Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce	

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Agency and Consultant Team Staff

- Andy Gitzlaff, Ramsey County Public Works.
- Frank Alarcon, Ramsey County Public Works.
- Cassie Fitzgerald, Ramsey County Public Works.
- Kathryn Hansen, Metro Transit.
- Barbara Howard, Minnesota Department of Transportation.
- Adele Hall, SRF.
- Jeanne Witzig, Kimley-Horn.
- Rachel Dammel, Kimley-Horn.
- Brian McClung, MZA & Company.

Members of the Public¹

- Bob Morse, Community Advisory Committee co-chair.
- James Watson.
- Maggie Lorenz.
- Craig Capeder.
- Jay Langer.
- Denise Brother.
- Melanie Kleiss.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mayor Emerson welcomed the committee members and attendees. There are two new Policy Advisory Committee members, Liz Moscatelli with the Vadnais Heights Economic Development Corporation and Kit Brady with Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare. Mayor Emerson asked the committee members and attendees to introduce themselves.

2. Recap of April Policy Advisory Committee Meeting

At the last Policy Advisory Committee meeting in April, updates were provided on public engagement activities, the Ramsey County Rail Right-of-Way Visioning Framework and the Vadnais Sports Center parking study. Project staff also shared engineering updates, visualizations and a summary of the walkshed and bikeshed analysis. The project schedule was also discussed.

3. Station Planning Process

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

Kathryn Hansen from Metro Transit's Transit-Oriented Development Office presented. Kathryn has been with Metro Transit for seven years and was previously in the development industry. Metro Transit's Transit-Oriented Development Office was established five years ago.

¹ This list only includes members of the public who signed in.

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The Metropolitan Council's definition of transit-oriented development is, "Walkable, moderate to high density development served by frequent transit service with a mix of housing, retail and employment choices designed to allow people to live and work without need of a personal automobile." Transit-oriented development allows people to live and work without need for a personal automobile. The total cost of owning a car averages about \$8,500 per year.

In 2013, the Transit-Oriented Development Office set the following policy goals:

- Maximize the development impact of transit development.
- Support regional economic competitiveness.
- Support a 21st century transportation system.

The Transit-Oriented Development Office has transit-oriented development projects on Metropolitan Council-owned land, such as park-and-rides that are not fully utilized. They also offer many programs and resources. For example, last week the office held a forum on parking ratios for multi-unit developments with the cities of Minneapolis and Brooklyn Park. The office also prepares a report on development trends along transit routes. The 2018 report found that about 30 percent of development in the Twin Cities metropolitan area occurred in the 1.7 percent of land area that is along six existing and planned transit lines. The Transit-Oriented Development Office also partners with cities and counties to help them implement transit-oriented development in their communities.

The Federal Transit Administration wants transit agencies and communities to think about capturing value along alignments, so they promote joint development by allowing Federal Transit Administration funds or Federal Transit Administration-assisted property to be contributed to eligible joint development activities.

To be transit-oriented development ready, cities should consider the following:

- Multi-modal infrastructure needs, including sidewalks, bikes and how they connect to the regional system.
- Identify development opportunities, including redevelopment to higher ridership uses.
- Supportive plans, policies and incentives in place.
 - For cities, this starts with their comprehensive plan and zoning in station areas. It can also include incentives to add public elements to private developments.
- Transit-oriented development opportunities marketing plan.
 - The cities along the METRO Green Line Extension are marketing themselves as the job corridor, and the cities along the METRO Blue Line Extension are doing a study to develop their brand and identify. What does Rush Line want to be known as?

Councilmember Lindner asked if there are numbers on how many employers offer transit benefits, such as free or reduced cost transit passes, to their employees. Kathryn Hansen said she can check on what numbers are available and get back to him. She noted that when a developer comes to a city, the developer is often asked to develop a transportation demand plan that evaluates how people to get to the development. One example of a transit incentive is the Transit-Oriented Development Office is working with property managers along the METRO Blue Line Extension to give residents a transit pass for a limited period of time to encourage use.

[Note: Following the Policy Advisory Committee meeting, Kathryn provided the following information. More than 300 organizations provide their employees access to discounted, unlimited-ride transit

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passes (valid for \$3.25 fare)² with the Metropass transfer pass program. Metropass is available to groups with five participants; each pass costs \$83 per month. An employer can pass the cost of the pass onto the employee or, like over 50 percent of the existing organizations in the program, the company can subsidize a portion of the cost and earns tax credits. This program has been in existence for over 20 years.]

Shannon Watson commented that she recently met with Doug Baker, the chief executive officer of Ecolab, and he stated that he cares about transit because the people he is trying to recruit care about transit. Businesses are at a competitive disadvantage without it.

Sheila Kelly added that on the route tour on Tuesday Kit Brady noted that Gillette gives transit vouchers to employees.

Commissioner Reinhardt added that Metro Transit works with employers to offer incentives. If Ramsey County subsidizes employee transit passes, Metro Transit will give a reduced rate.

Andy Gitzlaff commented that last year at this time, Rush Line was in the midst of its station area planning process, and now we are moving into the next phase where we have the station area planning visioning work, walkshed and bikeshed analysis and a market study. Kathryn Hansen and Metro Transit's Transit-Oriented Development Office will help take all that information and summarize it to provide something useful for the cities. Those summaries will come to the project advisory committees in the next few months. Andy encouraged the project area cities to meet with Kathryn.

COORDINATION WITH MAPLEWOOD'S NORTH END VISION PLAN

The city of Maplewood has been going through an extensive public engagement and design process to develop a vision for the area around Maplewood Mall and St. John's Hospital. Rush Line would have stations by both those locations, so this has been a great opportunity to plan in concert with one another. City and project staff have been collaborating on locations of key elements and engaging with stakeholders in the area.

Mayor Abrams noted that the city had a very successful open house for the North End Vision Plan last night (May 29). The community is excited about it, and, as a result of the vision plan and Rush Line, developers are paying attention to what is happening in the area. Mayor Abrams thinks it will be a great area for thriving businesses in the community and that residents will benefit as well.

4. Public Engagement Update

Adele Hall provided a summary of recent public engagement activities. This week on Tuesday, May 28, there was a route tour with county commissioners, Metropolitan Council chair and members, project advisory committee members, area legislators, local elected officials and congressional staff. Councilmember Vento commented that she was impressed by the development in the St. John's Hospital area and how many people, including both patients and employees, will benefit from the project. She also noted that the tour was very well organized and that it really helped to see the route up close. She is glad to see that is a lot of care and coordination with the Bruce Vento Trail and was impressed to hear how the design has been modified to reflect community engagement. The project really is a collaborative process.

Public engagement activities have ramped up since the last Policy Advisory Committee meeting and will continue throughout the summer. One current focus area is along the Ramsey County rail right-of-

² If participants ride any route with a fare above \$3.25, stored value on the GoTo card is required.

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way, and the area along Robert Street, especially by the 10th Street station in downtown Saint Paul, has been another focus area this month.

Main themes from recent public engagement activities have included the following:

- East Side Freedom Library is interested in art and historic interpretation at stations.
- At Weaver Elementary School, there were questions about how the trail and BRT will fit together in the right-of-way, and project staff are sharing visualizations to show how it could look.
- At Cinco de Mayo, the project received a positive reception, and project staff interacted with many transit riders.
- At the Maplewood bike rodeo, there were many parents and kids aware of the project, concerns about how the BRT and trail will fit together, and some confusion about whether Rush Line will be light rail or BRT. Ramsey County has signs in their right-of-way that mention light rail, but those will be updated this year.
 - Commissioner Reinhardt noted that those signs went up in 1998, and the verbiage on signs was determined by the neighborhoods through a public engagement process.

Frank Alarcon provided more detail on the 10th Street station. Through a separate process, the city of Saint Paul is designing a plan for Pedro Park at 10th & Robert Street and showed plans to the community that included a southbound Rush Line platform adjacent to the park. The city heard concerns about that platform location, so project staff are looking with fresh eyes at whether the platform could be on the other side of 10th Street by the Lunds & Byerlys and Penfield development. With the far-side platform concept (adjacent to Pedro Park), the BRT platform would be separate from the local bus stop. With the near-side platform concept (adjacent to Lunds & Byerlys), BRT and local bus would be located on the same side of 10th Street, which is considered an advantage. Both a mixed-use development and an urban park would be good locations for a transit station, so project staff wanted to hear from people that live and work in the area to see what they prefer. Project staff organized drop-in discussions on May 8 and 9 to hear from residents and anyone else interested. Attendees were generally supportive of transit, and the preference among the attendees was for the near-side platform by Lunds & Byerlys. Project staff have also met with businesses and non-profits located at the intersection, including the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living, Penfield, Alano Society and Lunds & Byerlys. All four organizations are supportive of better transit downtown but had different perspectives on which platform configuration they preferred. The next steps to decide on the platform location will follow the typical committee process, where the Saint Paul Issue Resolution Team will make a recommendation, that recommendation will be presented to the Technical Advisory Committee, then the Technical Advisory Committee recommendation will be presented to the Policy Advisory Committee in July.

Councilmember Vento asked if Lunds & Byerlys had concerns about access to their parking. Frank Alarcon said the concerns they raised were about traffic flow on Robert Street and visibility of their business from the street, not parking access. Shannon Watson noted that having the station out front could bring in more customers.

Adele Hall stated that a major focus for the next month will continue to be on the Ramsey County Rail Right-of-Way Visioning Framework, which covers the area from Arcade Street to Beam Avenue along the route plus a short segment just north of I-694 where the BRT and trail will be co-located. Project staff have a series of questions they will be asking the public and several events planned on the trail.

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Project staff will be at four different locations each Tuesday in June, and there will also be an online survey to ask about preferences regarding what the rail right-of-way space should look like. The same questions will also be asked at the pop-up events on the trail. A mailer was sent to properties that back up to the right-of-way and properties on the next block over, which they should be receiving today or tomorrow, about the visioning framework and the upcoming events and survey. Project staff will also be doing pop-ups at Sun Foods, the Eastside YMCA and Frost Lake Elementary School and are considering engagement at CLUES in coordination with Ruby Azurdia-Lee. More regional engagement will be continuing as well, with project staff attending WaterFest at Phalen Regional Park, Train Day at Union Depot, a meeting at the Minnesota Department of Transportation materials lab and MarketFest in downtown White Bear Lake. Project staff will look for other opportunities for engagement in downtown Saint Paul after June, including with the hospitals and state agencies in the area.

5. Coordination Activities

Project staff now have a monthly call scheduled with the Federal Transit Administration, who will eventually sign the environmental document.

The White Bear Lake School District is looking at merging their south and north high school campuses onto the north campus, so there was a meeting last week to discuss. The school board will decide in July if this will be a referendum in November. The north campus is close to the Downtown White Bear Lake station on Washington Avenue between 7th and 8th Streets. The school district can only do so much planning before the referendum, but if it does pass it will move forward rapidly. The school district sees synergies with Rush Line for students and employees to take transit and lessen the need for parking spaces, which is important because space is at a premium. Mayor Emerson added that students would be able to take the bus to Maplewood Mall, the Hanifl Performing Arts Center and other destinations, which would provide value to both students and parents.

Project staff also participated in a second meeting with the Lower Phalen Creek Project and Capitol Region Watershed District. The Lower Phalen Creek Feasibility Study was completed and developed a plan to daylight the creek where feasible. It assumed using some property owned by Ramsey County on the north side of Phalen that has been preserved for future transit use. Project staff are working with the Lower Phalen Creek Project and the watershed district to figure out what could be done as part of the Rush Line BRT Project and where there are potential synergies with project stormwater treatment. Potential opportunities to accommodate the creek daylighting proposal include:

- Providing infrastructure to convey Lower Phalen Creek water between Arcade and Earl Streets.
- Constructing the Lower Phalen Creek channel between Arcade Street and Neid Lane.
- Constructing stormwater management features between Earl Street and Frank Street that complement the Lower Phalen Creek Project.

The section between Arcade Street and Earl Street will be difficult as the right-of-way is only about 70 feet wide, and only 40 feet in some places, so there is not room to fit everything. The project could set things up so when Seeger Square redevelops, more daylighting could be added there. Project staff will meet with the Lower Phalen Creek Project and the watershed district again to solidify next steps and what can be done as part of the Rush Line BRT Project. A more detailed update will be provided at the July Policy Advisory Committee meeting. The county has received various support letters for the daylighting project over the last few weeks, which are included in the committee's packet.

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Shannon Watson commented that she appreciates that this project looks for ways to say yes to community requests when possible.

6. Engineering Updates

There is a focus on engineering efforts as project staff work towards the 15 percent design plans that will be presented to the Policy Advisory Committee in July. The 15 percent plans will go through the project advisory committees first, then city staff will have the opportunity to review the design plans. Project staff will then refine the design based on comments received as we move forward. Project staff are also presenting to city councils at meetings or workshops to check in and see if there are other issues or ideas that we need to work through. The goal is that when the environmental document is published, the cities and public are not surprised about what is in it.

7. Public Comment

No public comments were made.

8. Upcoming Activities

The next two months will be an intensive time for public engagement and developing the 15 percent plans to present to the Policy Advisory Committee in July. Hand in hand with the engineering work, project staff are doing technical analysis for the environmental document and are coordinating those efforts with the Technical Advisory Committee. A summary of the environmental analysis will be presented to the Policy Advisory Committee this fall.

NEXT MEETING

July 25, 2019
2:30-4:30 p.m.
Maplewood Community Center