

# MEETING SUMMARY

**Date:** July 17, 2019  
**Time:** 6:00 - 8:30 p.m.  
**Location:** Maplewood Fire Station, 1955 Clarence Street

## ATTENDEES

Name	Community of Residence or Affiliation	Present
<b>Committee Members</b>		
Dave Anderson	Vadnais Heights	
Curt Cooper	Vadnais Heights	
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	
Zack Mensinger	Saint Paul	X
Bob Morse	Vadnais Heights	X
John O'Phelan	Maplewood	
Darrell Paulsen	Maplewood	
Brent Peterson	Saint Paul	X
Eric Saathoff	Saint Paul	X
Romi Slowiak	Saint Paul	
Therese Sonnek	Maplewood	X
TraNeicia Sylvester	Saint Paul	
Yin Thong	Maplewood	
Julie Vang	Saint Paul	
Carolyn Wensman	White Bear Township	
Michael Werner	Vadnais Heights	
Cindy Whiteford	Saint Paul	
<b>Project Staff and Other Attendees</b>		
Barbara Howard	Minnesota Department of Transportation Cultural Resources Unit	X
Frank Alarcon	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X

Name	Community of Residence or Affiliation	Present
Beth Bartz	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X
Cassie Fitzgerald	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X
Jim Gersema	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X
Alicia Valenti	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY

### Welcome and Introductions

Bob Morse brought the meeting to order, provided an overview of Community Advisory Committee member attendance at public engagement events and summarized feedback received at these events.

### Project Updates

#### *Field Activities*

Beth Bartz described recent and ongoing field activities: noise measurements, architectural/historic survey and Harvest Park parking counts. Therese Sonnek asked if parking only at the park’s surface lot was being counted or if the street nearby was included. Beth said that the parking lot and adjacent streets were included. Beth added that parking counts were taken during various activities throughout the day on both weekdays and weekends to determine demand at different times.

#### *Design Refinements*

Jim Gersema gave an overview of 15 percent design plans. Therese asked what 15 percent plans are. Jim said that 15 percent plans are engineering designs that are 15 percent of the way to completion, with sufficient detail to understand project impacts and conduct environmental review work. Beth added that 15 percent plans allow for examination of project aspects including potential land acquisition needs and potential impacts to wetlands and the floodplain. Beth said these plans will also identify areas where construction activity may occur and locations where infrastructure such as retaining walls will be required. Frank added that these updates are proposed refinements made to the project definition that was reviewed by the Community Advisory Committee and approved by the Policy Advisory Committee in September 2018.

Jim described the following proposed refinements:

- Addition of signal at Whitaker Street.
- Highway 36 station park-and-ride concept.
- Lower Phalen Creek Project coordination.
- Adjustment of Arcade Street station northbound platform.
- Adjustment of 10th Street station southbound platform.

#### *Whitaker Street Signal*

Jim stated that the project is proposing a signal at the intersection of Highway 61 and Whitaker Street to improve pedestrian safety. Jim noted that there are signal spacing concerns with this addition that require further coordination with the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

### Highway 36 Station Park-and-Ride

Jim described the proposal to construct a parking facility at the Highway 36 station near Gervais Avenue and Highway 61 within Harvest Park. This facility would serve both park users and transit riders. As part of this concept, Harvest Park's existing surface parking lot would be mostly or entirely converted into green space, resulting in no loss of green park space. Therese asked if the Maplewood Parks Department had approved the concept. Jim said that city staff are supportive of the concept and interested in incorporating the concept into the upcoming master planning process for Harvest Park. Therese stated that having parking near the sports fields is important. Jim said that some of the surface lot may be retained for this reason.

Eric asked if the new parking facility would be a park-and-ride serving Rush Line BRT riders. Jim confirmed that it would be, but that it would also serve park users and potentially operate as a trailhead facility for the Bruce Vento Trail. Jim noted that when park use is highest (evenings and weekends), park-and-ride demand is generally lowest, so the two markets complement each other. Laura Keithahn asked if there would be a Rush Line BRT station at this location and if the parking would accommodate bus riders. Jim confirmed that there would be a station and that parking would be used by transit users. Jim added that park-and-ride users are expected to primarily be traveling to downtown Saint Paul, but that some will travel to other destinations. Therese asked if the parking facility would be a surface lot. Jim said that in order to meet demand for transit and park parking, it will likely be a structured facility.

Laura expressed concern that people would park at St. John's Hospital to access the St. John's Boulevard station and stated that the hospital only has enough parking capacity to serve patients, employees and visitors. Beth said that other businesses with parking adjacent to stations share this concern. Beth stated that Metro Transit is aware of parking needs and that project staff have identified where park-and-rides will be located. Beth added that there will be ongoing discussion of parking management strategies such as signage, enforcement and parking permits. In the case of St. John's, park-and-ride users will be directed to park at the nearby park-and-ride facility at Maplewood Mall Transit Center. Beth said that in the future, project staff will coordinate with property owners and managers regarding parking.

Therese asked if local bus service would be eliminated in the area as a result of the project, noting that there are routes that partially overlap with the proposed Rush Line BRT route in Maplewood. Jim confirmed that there will be service adjustments to maximize connections to the Rush Line BRT, but no routes are expected to be eliminated.

### Lower Phalen Creek Project and Capital Region Watershed District

Jim provided an overview of coordination with the Lower Phalen Creek Project and Capital Region Watershed District. Frank said that Lower Phalen Creek Project is a nonprofit organization working to bring parts of historic Phalen Creek to the surface after it was moved underground long ago. Sam Crosby asked if Phalen Creek is located where the Bruce Vento Trail currently exists. Jim said that part of Phalen Creek is currently underground near portions of the Bruce Vento Trail. Therese asked if it was the same creek as the one in Swede Hollow and Jim clarified that the Swede Hollow creek does not carry the water from Phalen Creek in its current arrangement. Mark Lynch asked if the project is similar to the daylighting of Shingle Creek near Shingle Creek Crossing. Jim said that it is similar, but that Shingle Creek was fully restored as a creek while the Lower Phalen Creek Project proposed would resemble the original creek without matching the historic creek's meandering alignment. Jim stated that Lower Phalen Creek Project staff had identified public right-of-way where the creek could be daylighted, which included parts of the Ramsey County rail right-of-way intended

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for transit. Jim said there are areas where the daylighted Phalen Creek and Rush Line BRT can coexist and others where it isn't feasible under present conditions, though future redevelopment of properties along Phalen Boulevard could provide additional space for creek daylighting.

Jim said that between Arcade Street and Neid Lane, the land can be graded to meet Capitol Region Watershed District stormwater management requirements and achieve daylighting of the creek. Jim said that between Arcade and Earl streets, there is less room to daylight the creek because of a new development and other physical constraints. Jim said that a pipe can be constructed to carry water through this area and that future redevelopment may allow for daylighting to be accommodated. Mark asked where the pipe is currently. Jim said there is a tunnel underneath Phalen Boulevard. Jim added that though Phalen Creek water cannot share Rush Line BRT stormwater treatment facilities between Earl and Frank streets, facilities could be constructed to work toward the goals of the Lower Phalen Creek Project. Eric Saathoff asked if the Lower Phalen Creek Project supported this plan. Jim said that Lower Phalen Creek Project did not express an opinion on this plan after meeting with the project team about it and that coordination meetings with Lower Phalen Creek Project are expected to continue. Mark asked how stormwater facilities and the creek would interact. Jim said that this determination requires additional coordination with the Capitol Region Watershed District to make sure any daylighted creek elements will have clean water.

### *Arcade Street Station*

Jim described the proposed movement of the northbound platform of the Arcade Street station from Arcade Street to Neid Lane and the benefits of this refinement with respect to bus operations and customer experience. Therese asked if it would be closer to businesses as a result of the move. Jim said it would provide approximately the same amount of access. Frank added that the new platform location would be much easier for riders to understand. Jim noted that it also facilitated more convenient transfers to and from local bus routes. Zack Mensinger asked if the route of the 74 would change. Jim said that changes to the route 74 are not anticipated, but the stop serving route 54 might move slightly. Eric asked if the station would be off the current roadway on Neid Lane. Jim said that the station would be in the lane.

### *10th Street Station*

Jim provided an overview of the proposed relocation of the southbound platform of the 10th Street station from the south side of the intersection with Robert Street to the north side. Jim noted that nearby residents were concerned about the compatibility of a transit station with Pedro Park. Jim said that a benefit of moving the platform north of the intersection would allow for co-location of the BRT station and local bus stop, facilitating easier transfers. Brent Peterson asked if all local buses would share platforms and stops in downtown Saint Paul. Jim said the buses will be in the same location but would not necessarily share the same platform because of considerations including platform height and in the case of the 10th Street station, the local bus stop would be located closer to the intersection.

### *Public Engagement*

Frank summarized all public engagement efforts conducted since the beginning of the Environmental Analysis Phase, highlighted recent events and efforts related to minority populations and the Ramsey County rail right-of-way, and briefly described themes of feedback received.

### *Pulse BRT Visit*

Cassie Fitzgerald provided an overview of the upcoming trip to tour the Pulse BRT in Richmond, Virginia that Ramsey County has planned for project partner staff and advisory committee members. Cassie described similarities between Rush Line BRT and Pulse BRT and detailed the planned activities for the trip. Zack asked what the density in the Pulse BRT corridor is like compared to the project area communities. Frank said he did not have that information on hand. Eric asked how many people would be able to go. Beth said that agency partners are limited to two stipends per agenda, but that as many people from the Community Advisory Committee would be accommodated as possible. Mark asked if Pulse BRT was the only BRT system in the Richmond area. Cassie confirmed that it was. Therese asked if they had other mass transit. Cassie said there is local bus service but not rail transit in Richmond (other than Amtrak intercity service). Mark asked if there are plans for more transitways. Frank said there is interest in an extension of the Pulse BRT to the west. Bob asked what the fuel source is. Cassie said it is compressed natural gas. Beth noted that it would be helpful to see bus and signal operations, bicycle and pedestrian connections, and comfort of vehicles. Frank highlighted some of the planned meetings with people in Richmond who were involved in delivering the project. Sam asked if there is BRT elsewhere in the Twin Cities. Beth confirmed that there is BRT in the region, but that it is different than Rush Line BRT will be. Therese asked about how the Pulse BRT operates. Cassie noted areas where there are center-running lanes, mixed traffic lanes and business access and transit (BAT) lanes. Mark asked if the Pulse buses have doors on the left for stations where the guideway is center-running. Jim said that stations are configured to allow boarding on the right. Therese asked if Richmond gets snow. Frank said that they do, but not as much as in the Twin Cities. Therese asked if there are other BRT lines that operate in northern cities. Frank mentioned a BRT line in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

### **Visioning Framework**

Beth provided an overview of the Visioning Framework and public engagement efforts related to the Ramsey County rail right-of-way. Zack asked what time the “Tuesdays on the Trail” public engagement event series was held. Beth said they were 4:00-6:00 p.m. Beth summarized the public input gathered throughout the public engagement effort. During the discussion about trail landscaping, Mark asked for clarification on the term “understory”. Beth said that understory is the layer of vegetation underneath the tree canopy. Laura asked if the guideway would be close to houses. Beth said it would depend on the section of the right-of-way and noted that the trail would be west of the guideway up to Larpenteur Avenue; at Larpenteur Avenue, the trail shifts so that it is east of the guideway. Laura asked to clarify how close the guideway would be to houses and Therese asked if it would be closest near Lake Phalen. Jim said that it depends and referred to the 15 percent plans.

Beth described options for separating the trail from the BRT guideway. Therese asked where the snow would be moved after plowing and whether it would impact plantings in between the two. Beth said snow will be maintained to keep plants healthy and clear the trail and guideway. Jim noted that the planting or swale would be approximately eight feet wide, allowing space for snow storage. Mark asked if the separation would be smaller in places where the right-of-way is narrower. Jim said the goal is to maintain separation while also maximizing distance from the trail and guideway to adjacent houses. Beth noted that vertical separation will also affect how the trail and guideway interact with each other and the surrounding area. Eric asked if the creek would serve as a buffer between the guideway and the trail. Jim said that it would require a width of 50 feet, which would be challenging spatially and would create a subpar environment for right-of-way users. Beth added that one of the goals is to create the natural atmosphere that Lower Phalen Creek Project is aiming for.

Beth highlighted options for treatments where grade separation is required. Zack noted that there were a few underpasses in the design plans and asked if they would be designed to minimize water collecting at the bottom of a slope. Jim confirmed that the downslope would be minimized, and the guideway would instead be raised to accommodate the underpasses.

Beth described the desired trail amenities. Eric asked for information about lighting the right-of-way. Beth said there is expected to be lighting along portions of the right-of-way and that minimizing light spillage onto adjacent properties is a consideration for selection of lighting treatments. Beth said that safety will also be prioritized when identifying lighting options. Therese asked how the lighting would look. Jim said that Metro Transit has requirements for lighting at stations, but that lighting options for other parts of the right-of-way have not been determined. Therese noted that lighting would help with user safety and expressed concern about light spillage. Alicia Valenti said that at the Visioning Framework workshop, attendees preferred mid- to low-level lighting, which will be considered in drafting the Visioning Framework. Jim said that modern lighting allows for a lot of control in where the light is directed. Beth noted that the Visioning Framework will articulate principles for the design of the right-of-way but will not determine exactly how it will be designed. Therese asked if natural stone was an option for any surfaces. Beth said that it is challenging in terms of cost, maintenance and stability.

Frank asked attendees to suggest venues and events for future public engagement efforts relating to the Visioning Framework. Therese mentioned local Facebook groups and NextDoor. Zack suggested sharing information with the Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition. Sam suggest the Twin Cities Bike Log. Eric said that the Saint Paul Bike Classic might be a good time to talk to people. Therese noted that the Gateway Trail has many organized events, some of which may cross the Bruce Vento Trail, and suggested attending a Hmong Festival. Laura suggested MarketFest in downtown White Bear Lake. Therese asked if there have been any public engagement efforts at the Maplewood Library. Beth said project staff have had a presence at two public meetings for the North End Vision Plan at the library.

### **Environmental Assessment**

Beth described the purpose of an Environmental Assessment and provided an overview of the technical report schedule. Therese asked when the traffic analysis would be conducted. Beth said it's in process and that traffic counts are completed at times when roads are expected to be at their busiest and with awareness of construction projects and other irregularities impacting traffic volumes. Beth described the land use and economics technical report. Laura said the report should address the topics of most interest up front, such as parking and how businesses would be affected. Beth confirmed that changes to on- and off-street parking are addressed. Laura asked if that information would be included in the technical report. Beth confirmed that it would be.

Beth stated that noise measurements were taken and that the noise analysis accounts for how changes in traffic patterns might affect the noise level in an area. Mark asked if these estimates would be evaluated after Rush Line BRT begins operating and how that analysis would be conducted. Beth said that before and after studies examine where changes and impacts occurred, like in the recently completed Green Line Before and After Study. Frank added that the Transitway Impact Research Group at the University of Minnesota is funded by counties, Metro Transit and the Minnesota Department of Transportation and distributes funding to researchers examining the impacts of transit in the Twin Cities. Beth described the Environmental Justice Technical Report and Executive Order 12898, implemented in 1994, that established environmental justice requirements. Therese asked if the Executive Order establishing environmental justice is still in effect and Mark asked to confirm that it is a federal requirement. Beth confirmed that it is a federal requirement and still in effect. Beth described the cultural and historic resources technical report.



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Beth provided an overview of preliminary findings, noting that minimal to no noise and floodplain/wetland impacts are anticipated. Beth said that the most significant areas of study are acquisitions, historic resources and water resources. Beth said that there are two endangered species present in the corridor: the Long-Eared Bat and Rusty Patch Bumble Bee. Beth said project staff are working with the Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine if there will be an impact on either species. Therese asked if this evaluation included construction impacts. Beth confirmed that it evaluates potential impacts during construction and during operation of Rush Line BRT. Therese asked if migratory behavior would be affected. Beth said that impacts to migratory behavior would be evaluated as part of the environmental assessment. Beth added that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is primarily interested in endangered species, so common urban wildlife are of less of a focus of this analysis. Mark asked if new landscaping could benefit endangered species. Beth confirmed that it could, and that project staff will seek specific habitats and plant species to support rusty patch bumble bees and long-eared bats. Beth said that the project is not likely to impact air quality that transit often contributes to improvements in air quality. Beth noted that the water resource environment would likely be improved by the project.

Frank concluded the meeting and stated that the next meeting will likely be held in October.