COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING #6
Project Update
Environmental Assessment

• Technical reports address the following:
  – Purpose and need.
  – Stormwater.
  – Natural resources.
  – Noise and vibration.
  – Land use, economics and community resources.
  – Ridership and operations.
  – Traffic.
  – Environmental justice.
  – Hazardous materials.
  – Cultural resources.

Draft reports have been reviewed by the Technical Advisory Committee.
Environmental Assessment

• Technical reports inform the Environmental Assessment.

• Other topics to be addressed in the Environmental Assessment include:
  – Geology, groundwater and soils.
  – Bikes and pedestrians.
  – Visual resources.
  – Safety and security.
  – Utilities.
  – Air quality.
Recent Public Engagement Activities

- July 24: Maplewood Touch-a-Truck.
- July 25: Environmental Resource Expo at White Bear Lake MarketFest.
- August 10: CLUES Fiesta Latina.
- August 15: Pop-up at METRO Green Line Robert Street station.
- August 21: Maplewood End of Summer Celebration.
- August 27: Pop-up at Regions Hospital.
- September 17: Gem Lake City Council update.
Recent Public Engagement Activities

- September 19 and 29: Pop-up at Harvest Park – youth soccer.
- September 28: East Side Community Festival.
- October 8: Pop-up at HealthPartners Phalen Clinic.
- October 15: Pop-up at Minnesota Department of Natural Resources & Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.
- October 16: Presentation to Greater East Side Community Council.
- October 22: Presentation to Payne-Phalen Community Council.
- August-October: Meetings with businesses along Phalen Boulevard.
Public Engagement Themes

- Phalen Boulevard businesses.
  - Expect that increased transit options will boost employee recruitment and retention.
  - Questions about maintaining access during construction period.
- Saint Paul residents and employees.
  - Excitement for increased transit options downtown and on the East Side.
  - Interest in changes to the Bruce Vento Trail.
Upcoming Public Engagement

- Ramsey County Rail Right-of-Way Drop-In Discussions to be scheduled for early December.
- Meetings with public housing resident councils to be scheduled.
- Fall awareness/feedback campaign.
  - Community newspapers.
  - Billboards.
  - Bus shelters.
  - Downtown Green Line stations.

Pop-up at Regions Hospital, August 27
Harvest Park Parking Concept

- Relocate most or all parking to south end of park near Rush Line station.
- No net loss of green space.
- Facility would have capacity to serve both park users and transit riders (exact size to be determined).
- Presented draft concept at final “Tuesdays on the Trail” and two pop-ups at the park.
- City-led park master planning process may accompany parking changes.
Bruce Vento Trail Signage Update
Platform Height

BRT Platform Elements

- Pylon
- Shelter
- Real-Time Arrival Sign
- Ticket Validator
- Tactile Warning
Interest in Raised Platforms/Level Boarding

• Accessibility/Equity.
  – Minimize or eliminate barriers for riders with disabilities using the system.
  – Improve rider experience for other riders (e.g. older adults, riders with strollers or rolling shopping bags).

• Visual Language/Branding.
  – A raised platform is a key design element of a premium BRT service.
Platform Height

~14” Platform (Level Boarding)
- Minimal vertical gap.
- Horizontal gap varies depending on design, technology, and execution of docking.
- Bus ramp may not be needed.
- BRT only; other buses would stop at separate platform.
- Additional maintenance and operational considerations.

9-11” Platform
- 3-5” vertical gap.
- Bus ramp is deployed.
- BRT and other buses can stop at same platform.

Standard Curb (6”)
- 8” vertical gap.
- Bus ramp is deployed.
- Not under consideration for Rush Line.
Discussion

What platform design choices can make Rush Line a premium service for all users?
Pulse BRT Peer System Visit
Richmond, Virginia
Pulse BRT Peer System Visit

- October 2-4, Richmond, Virginia.
- 7.6 mile route opened in 2018.
- Connects:
  - Residential areas.
  - Healthcare providers.
  - The state capitol.
  - Small business areas.
  - Downtown business district.
Pulse BRT Peer System Visit

- Runs in mixed traffic, dedicated lanes and business access and transit (BAT) lanes.
- Daily boardings more than double weekday ridership goal.
Pulse BRT Peer System Visit

- 35 participants from project advisory committees, partner agencies and project staff.
- Met with representatives from:
  - Greater Richmond Transit Company.
  - Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation.
  - Virginia Department of Transportation.
  - City of Richmond.
  - Henrico County.
  - Virginia Commonwealth University.
  - Local businesses and community organizations.
Pulse BRT Peer System Visit – Key Takeaways

- Good use of dedicated lanes.
- Open and inviting station design, but wayfinding could be improved.
- Good connectivity with other bus routes.
- Focus on the pedestrian experience.
- Many destinations along the route.
- Well-trained, friendly bus operators.
- A rapid boarding process that includes level boarding and off-board fare payment.
- Other takeaways?
Transit-Oriented Development Planning Pilot Program
About the Program

• Federal Transit Administration competitive grant program.
• Provides funding to integrate land use and transportation planning with transit capital investments.
• Planning funded through the program must:
  – Examine ways to improve economic development and ridership.
  – Foster multimodal connectivity and accessibility.
  – Improve transit access for pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
  – Engage the private sector.
  – Identify infrastructure needs.
  – Enable mixed-use development near transit stations.
• Recent local experience: Gold Line BRT.
TOD Planning Grant Application for Rush Line BRT

• Funding would be used for a station area planning process that includes:
  – Public engagement.
  – Real estate market analysis.
  – Housing gap analysis.
  – Station concepts and development plans.
  – Implementation plan.
• Would build on preliminary station area planning work from 2018.
• Application due November 18; decision expected spring 2020.
• Planning process.
  – With timely decision, could begin approximately late 2020 and last through late 2022.
  – Led by Ramsey County in partnership with cities and Metro Transit.
Ramsey County Rail Right-of-Way Design Guide
Background

- Pre-Project Development Study (2014-2017) identified locally-preferred alternative with route using Ramsey County rail right-of-way between Arcade Street and Buerkle Road.
  - BRT guideway to be co-located with Bruce Vento Trail along this portion of the route.
Background

• Ramsey County rail right-of-way was once the Lake Superior & Mississippi Rail corridor, active 1870-1980s.
• First direct rail connection between Saint Paul and Great Lakes Port of Duluth.
• Eligible for National Register of Historic Places.
• Ramsey County purchased the right-of-way in the 1990s to reserve for future transit use.
• Seven-mile southern segment of Bruce Vento Trail completed in 1990s.
Design Guide

- Design Guide area:
  - Arcade Street station to Buerkle Road station; does not include section of Ramsey County rail right-of-way between Beam Avenue and County Road D.

- Goal:
  - Develop a safe and context-sensitive BRT guideway and shared use trail plan incorporating relevant user, stakeholder and public guidance along the Ramsey County rail right-of-way.
Existing Conditions

- Generally independent of surrounding street network.
- Typical right-of-way is 100 feet wide; expands to 150 feet wide north of County Road C East.
- Bruce Vento Trail:
  - Multiuse trail separated from surrounding areas by vegetation.
  - 12 feet wide in most places and reduced to 10 feet in some places.
  - Currently lacks striping.
- Surrounding uses are primarily parks and open space, residential and commercial/industrial.
Design Guide Process

Ramsey County Rail Right-of-Way Design Guide

1. Public Engagement
   - Involves Community

2. Public/Stakeholder Input
   - Informs Project

3. Guiding Principles
   - Articulates Input

4. Recommendations
   - Documents Direction

Ongoing Technical Evaluation

Design Plans
Public Engagement

- Public engagement regarding right-of-way began in 2015 during Pre-Project Development Study.
- March 2019: Design Guide Workshop with city staff and project advisory committee members.
- June 2019: Tuesdays on the Trail, Hmong community gathering, pop-up meetings, online survey.
  - Promoted via social media, newsletter, county website, flyers and targeted mailing.
Public Engagement

- **Input sought:**
  - Top priorities for right-of-way, such as safety and security of users, design and accessibility.
  - How people plan to use the Ramsey County rail right-of-way after Rush Line BRT is constructed.
  - Design of the Bruce Vento Trail and BRT guideway.
  - Trail amenities.
What We Heard: Key Themes

- Maintain natural, shaded atmosphere of the trail.
- Promote safety and security for all users (pedestrians, bikers, transit riders).
- Preferred amenities are trash/recycling receptacles, drinking fountains, informational kiosks and benches.

Tuesdays on the Trail, June 18
Draft Guiding Principles

1. **Landscape impacts and character:** Preserve the existing landscape and enhance the right-of-way with ecologically beneficial, resilient, seasonally diverse and low maintenance vegetation.

2. **Safety and security:** Address physical safety and personal security concerns by reducing and/or removing perceived security concerns and minimizing physical safety conflicts at crossings and in other areas.
Draft Guiding Principles

3. **Access and borders:** Retain ease of access while promoting safe crossings of the guideway to access the trail and surrounding neighborhoods.

4. **Maintenance:** Use design strategies and materials that are durable, affordable and do not require excessive or unanticipated maintenance practices.

5. **Operations:** Provide a safe, high-quality trail and BRT user experience.
Draft Design Guide Recommendations: Trail and BRT Guideway

- The trail is recommended to remain a 12 foot wide shared-use path with a shoulder at least 2 feet wide on each side; a narrower path may be used near obstructions.
- BRT guideway and separation:
  - 26-foot wide guideway would be used exclusively for buses and, when needed, emergency vehicles.
  - Guideway and trail would be separated by a vegetated buffer of varying widths.
  - Fences may be implemented where needed for safety.
Draft Design Guide Recommendations: Buffers and Screening

- Use vegetated buffers and topography to preserve privacy between right-of-way and surrounding properties.
- Use topography, ditches, fencing and railings to prevent crossing and access in unsafe locations.
- Preserve existing vegetation as much as possible and add native, diverse plants.
- Design elements such as fencing and walls with natural finishes or muted, earth tone shades.
- Avoid use of bollards on the trail because they present a safety hazard to users.
• Use hardy, low-maintenance vegetation and deciduous trees for shade while preserving visibility near intersections.
• Use ornamental, flowering or otherwise interesting plants in station areas.
• Consider using shrubs, multi-stem and single-stem trees for stormwater facilities.
• Minimize density and height of plants in open areas to maintain visibility, especially at crossings and station areas.
Draft Design Guide Recommendations: Safety

• Select vegetation that preserves visibility at stations and throughout corridor and place amenities in high-activity areas.

• Use pedestrian-scale lighting at stations and lighting for both pedestrians and drivers at intersections; use minimal lighting through corridor to limit light pollution for nearby homes.

Potential intersection lighting strategy at Larpenteur Avenue station
Draft Design Guide Recommendations: Safety

- Avoid obstructing pathway illumination and lines of sight.
- Use signage to promote safety, help navigation and display motor vehicle restrictions.
- Use fencing, bollards and other tools to prevent motor vehicles from accessing the right-of-way at crossings.
Draft Design Guide Recommendations: Environment

• Preserve existing vegetation where possible, reestablish habitat and maintain wildlife crossings.
• Manage stormwater using bioswales and other natural management options.
• Use green slopes where possible for mitigating steep slopes.
• Use fencing to promote safety at station areas and in places where a vegetative buffer is not feasible.
Draft Design Guide Recommendations: Environment

- Install amenities and wayfinding in a manner consistent with other Ramsey County parks and trails:
  - Benches.
  - Trash and recycling receptacles.
  - Bicycle repair stations.
  - Dog waste pick-up stations.
  - Trail route maps and directional kiosks.
- Consider additional amenities in higher-activity areas, such as:
  - Drinking fountains.
  - Picnic tables and shelters.
  - Interpretive signage.
Draft Design Guide: Next Steps

- December 2019: Drop-in discussions and online survey to present draft Design Guide.
Discussion

• Do these principles and recommendations reflect your community’s priorities for the corridor?
• Are there areas where you would like to see additional refinements to recommendations?
• Other questions or comments?
Next Meeting

• Discussion.
  – Suggest future agenda items.
• A Doodle poll will be distributed for the next Community Advisory Committee in winter 2020.
Thank you!

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