



MEETING SUMMARY

Date: February 5, 2020
Time: 6:00 - 8:30 p.m.
Location: Maplewood Fire Station, 1955 Clarence Street

ATTENDEES

Name	Community of Residence or Affiliation	Present
Committee Members		
Dave Anderson	Vadnais Heights	X
Curt Cooper	Vadnais Heights	
Samantha Crosby	Maplewood	X
Lisa Freese	Saint Paul	
Richard Johnstone	White Bear Lake	
Laura Keithahn	Maplewood	
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	X
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	X
Yin Thong	Maplewood	
Julie Vang	Saint Paul	
Carolyn Wensman	White Bear Township	
Michael Werner	Vadnais Heights	
Cyndy Whiteford	Saint Paul	
Project Staff and Other Attendees		
Frank Alarcon	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X
Beth Bartz	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X
Cassie Fitzgerald	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X

Name	Community of Residence or Affiliation	Present
Jim Gersema	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X
Andy Gitzlaff	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X
Barbara Howard	Minnesota Department of Transportation Cultural Resources Unit	X
Alicia Valenti	Rush Line BRT Project Staff	X

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Welcome and Introductions

Bob Morse brought the meeting to order and facilitated introductions.

Project Updates

Follow-Up from October 30 Meeting

Frank Alarcon provided follow-up information regarding the following topics from the previous Community Advisory Committee:

- **Federal Transit Authority Transit-Oriented Development Planning grant:** Ramsey County completed the application in November 2019 and anticipate a decision in early 2020.
- **Platform height:** Metro Transit is testing operations for 10-inch and 12-inch platforms. Decisions about platform height are expected to be made in the next few months.
- **Ramsey County Rail Right-of-Way Design Guide:** Frank said that a draft document will be available for review and input by the end of February.

Schedule for Remainder of Environmental Analysis Phase

Beth Bartz outlined the schedule for the remainder of the environmental analysis phase and highlighted project milestones that will occur in 2020 and 2021. Beth said that an Ownership and Maintenance Technical Report is being developed. Mark Lynch asked what the format of the report will be. Beth answered that it will be a 15- to 20-page document. Andy Gitzlaff said that the document is less important than the process of developing it, which required coordinating with cities, watershed districts and other agencies to identify who owns facilities such as bridges and retaining walls and who is responsible for maintaining them. Jim Gersema added that the report will not address how facilities are maintained and that maintenance plans will require further coordination.

Beth noted that station area planning documents will be shared by the end of March 2020. Mark asked if these plans will address future land use and necessary city council actions. Beth clarified that these documents will not establish plans but will summarize previous work that examines a number of station area aspects that influence transit use, including potential for redevelopment and the quality of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Beth said that the Transit-Oriented Development Planning grant would enable cities to advance these plans by developing zoning change recommendations, redevelopment opportunities and other specific actions proximate to each station. Mark asked to confirm that the station area planning documents currently being developed are a summary and not a plan for future work. Beth affirmed that they would be.

Beth said that project staff will meet with the city council of each project area community to secure a resolution of support for the project's 15 percent plans. Beth said that this is not an approval of the

project, but an acknowledgement that cities have reviewed 15 percent plans and are comfortable using them to advance the environmental analysis. Andy clarified that this process helps make sure that project area communities remain informed about the project's progress and have an opportunity to provide input on design plans.

Beth shared that project staff aim to have the Environmental Assessment for the project published in December 2020 and that its release would be followed by a public comment period and open houses. Beth said the comment period and open houses are expected to occur in December 2020 and January 2021, but that the schedule may shift based on agency coordination. Beth said that an environmental decision is anticipated for April 2021, at which point the project will transition from Ramsey County to Metro Transit. Bob asked what would happen if a city did not pass a resolution of support. Beth said that project staff have worked closely with all project area communities throughout the environmental analysis phase and do not expect that any city would not pass a resolution of support. Andy added that project staff work to secure resolutions of support for 15 percent design plans so that any issues can be resolved before reaching 30 percent completion.

Engineering Updates

Jim Gersema provided an overview of changes to design plans and continued agency coordination. Jim noted that traffic signals or gates are being considered for Mendota Circle, Wells Street and Frank Street. Zack Mensinger asked if gates would be similar to the ones along Hiawatha Avenue for the METRO Blue Line. Jim said this type of gate is an option. Eric Saathoff asked if the gates would have arms. Jim said this style of intersection control is an option. Therese asked how long it would take a bus to pass through an intersection. Jim said it would only take a few seconds. Zack said that drivers sometimes disregard traffic controls and that implementing gates would improve safety. Jim agreed that signals or controls would promote safety and said that additional signage is also being considered. Dave Anderson asked if Mendota Circle is a city street. Jim confirmed that it is and that it serves very little traffic. Mark asked how little traffic it serves. Jim clarified that Mendota Circle essentially acts as a driveway while Wells and Frank streets serve slightly more traffic. Therese asked if a gate would be lowered six times an hour. Jim confirmed that it would be, and that the operation of a gate is the reason a traffic signal is also an option. Mark asked if the three streets would only allow right turns onto and off of Phalen Boulevard. Jim said they would all allow full access.

Sam Crosby asked who bought the house adjacent to Sergeant Joseph Bergeron Memorial. Frank said that Saint Paul Parks and Recreation bought it and plan to incorporate the property into the park and potentially build a restroom and/or restroom facility as part of the park master plan. Jim noted that this work is not part of the Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project. Therese asked if the Bruce Vento Regional Trail will be striped. Jim said that it may be striped in some areas to facilitate smooth pedestrian and bicycle travel and noted that a sidewalk has been proposed to encourage separation of pedestrians and bicyclists in busier parts of the trail. Sam asked if landscaping would be low at roundabouts to promote visibility. Jim said that the intent is to preserve visibility and roundabouts will likely be landscaped with turf to avoid blocking sightlines, but details of this kind will not be determined until later in the design process.

Jim described the proposed Highway 36 station park-and-ride. Mark asked if there was an option for a surface lot without an additional level of parking. Jim said that based on projected park-and-ride demand only a two-level facility is being considered. John O'Phelan asked if the size of the Maplewood Mall Transit Center parking structure would be increased. Jim said that it would not be because it is not yet utilized at capacity, but that there would be changes to the Maplewood Mall Transit Center to facilitate efficient bus operations and transfers. John noted that the former Sears

property at Maplewood Mall may present an opportunity for improvements. Jim said that the city has completed visioning work for the area. Frank added that this work is part of the North End Vision Plan, which calls for a variety of land uses, especially mixed-use development, and a much more walkable and bikeable environment. Frank said that these changes would be beneficial for Rush Line ridership.

Eric asked if bicyclists would still be able to use the shoulder of Highway 61 north of Buerkle Road. Jim said that project staff have discussed bicycle infrastructure needs in the area with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and that the Bruce Vento Regional Trail extension is expected to fill the current gap in bicycle infrastructure. Jim said that the existing shoulder will largely be repurposed for a business access and transit (BAT) lane, but that a small shoulder on the outside of the BAT lane may be maintained.

Section 106 Cultural and Historic Resources

Overview

Barbara Howard described the Section 106 process, how it applies to the Rush Line BRT Project and the four criteria used for identifying historic properties. Mark asked if properties can be deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places based on more than one criterion. Barbara said that they can and that all four criteria are considered when evaluating properties for historic significance. Barbara noted that the cultural resources team is augmenting information available through the National Register of Historic Places throughout the Section 106 process and cited the former 3M administration building as an example. Therese asked if the 3M building is in the Rush Line BRT Project area. Barbara confirmed that it is within the area of potential effect. Mark asked under which criteria it is eligible for the National Register. Barbara told him it is eligible under Criterion A, association with a historically significant event, and Criterion C, design or construction type, style or method.

Barbara said that nearly 800 properties were included in the area of potential effect, which is the study area for the Section 106 process. Barbara stated that 12 new properties are being evaluated for historic significance and that approximately 700 properties were submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office as not significant. Mark asked if these properties would be reexamined for any future project. Barbara confirmed that they would be and added that project staff submit notes, photographs and other information about each property to the State Historic Preservation Office. Therese asked if residential properties comprise the majority of properties under evaluation. Barbara confirmed that they do. Andy asked if the evaluation assesses all properties that will be 50 years old or more when the project begins operating. Barbara confirmed that it does, said that all properties built before 1979 were examined and added that the evaluation can be challenging because some properties that are not currently significant may be significant in ten years.

Mark asked how far from the route the area of potential effects extends. Barbara said it extends by about 250 feet from the route in most places and more in station areas and near bridges. Therese asked how impacts to the LS&M corridor are considered since it is already used as a trail. Barbara said that concerns can relate to things like engine noise, though this is less of a concern because Rush Line BRT is expected to use electric buses, or operational noise and changes to the character of the trail. Therese asked whether any houses would be removed to construct the project. Barbara confirmed that no houses would be removed. Eric asked why visual effects would be considered. Barbara said that the setting is critical for some historic properties and provided the 3M headquarters on I-94 as an example of an historic property that may experience a visual effect as a result of the Gold Line BRT Project. John asked if visual effects could be of concern in an area with a famous view. Barbara said yes and cited an example in which the view depicted in a painting was considered

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significant. Mark asked how many properties are still being examined for significance. Barbara restated that 12 properties had already been newly identified and another 12 to 24 are still under evaluation.

Barbara shared that Weaver Elementary School is eligible for the National Register based on its architecture and significance to postwar education. Barbara said that evaluation is underway to make sure the trail underpass will not detract from the architectural design of the school and that impacts are not anticipated. Barbara highlighted two 1868 railway artifacts that may be affected by the project and said that when adverse effects are resolved, the Cultural Resources Unit will write a memo documenting the historical findings and mitigation measures.

Discussion

Barbara asked the meeting attendees which properties are important to their communities because of their historic qualities. Therese said that Borchert's Meat Market is a community asset to Maplewood residents. Barbara said the building that includes Borchert's was not found to be significant but that it can be evaluated further. Mark stated that the White Bear Lake community deeply values the downtown and the lake and that visual impacts are also a concern near Marina Triangle and the Goose Lake causeway. Barbara said that these will be considered as part of the environmental analysis and that while lakes are not considered significant in their own right, project staff have prepared a report about the significance of White Bear Lake's history as a resort community to its residents.

Therese noted that there used to be a train depot serving the LS&M corridor where the fire station is now located. Barbara confirmed the history and shared that project staff have conducted archaeological evaluations but not found anything of significance. Therese said that the park savanna has some examples of historic and wayfinding signage. Barbara said that the resolution of adverse effects to historic properties often includes this type of signage at historic properties and along nearby trails. Bob added that the train depot in White Bear Lake, the Cup and Cone ice cream shop and the 4th Street railroad pavilion are valued by the community. Mark asked if the Section 106 process considers whether an historic property could benefit from increased exposure. Barbara confirmed that it does and that while a project may have visual or auditory impacts, the increase in visitors resulting from a project can be beneficial. Barbara said that parking impacts are also assessed to make sure that historic properties can remain viable with changes in traffic.

Frank asked Barbara to highlight the evaluation of Lowertown Historic District and Union Depot. Barbara said that project staff are coordinating with Gold Line BRT Project staff for the evaluation of the entire Lowertown Historic District and said that Saint Paul's Heritage Preservation Commission will also review station designs for Gold Line BRT. Barbara said that project staff are evaluating Union Depot individually and as part of the Lowertown Historic District and are aiming to minimize effects, though no major impacts are anticipated. Barbara added that the goal is to have station design consistent with the historic district. Zack noted that building transit near Union Depot and in the LS&M corridor is, in a way, returning these areas to their historic uses for transportation. Barbara agreed. Therese asked if Railroad Park is considered significant. Barbara confirmed that it is recommended for evaluation and clarified that the area of potential effects along that portion of the route is small because there will not be major road reconstruction in the area.

Public Engagement

Frank provided an overview of public engagement work completed since the previous Community Advisory Committee meeting in October 2019. Therese asked about the White Bear Lake

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neighborhood drop-in discussion held in January 2020. Frank said that this meeting was for people who live a short distance from the site of the proposed Downtown White Bear Lake station to answer questions about the Rush Line BRT Project and how it relates to the planned expansion of the school campus nearby. Frank said project staff are working closely with city staff and the school district to coordinate the two projects. Frank played an animation of the planned Downtown White Bear Lake station. Therese asked if all buses used on the Rush Line would be 60 feet long. Frank confirmed that they would be because anticipated peak-hour passenger loads exceed the capacity of 40-foot buses. Sam asked if smaller buses would be used during off-peak times. Frank said that the difference in cost for operating 40-foot and 60-foot buses is negligible and that there would be little benefit in switching out buses. Therese asked if there would be a greater risk of hitting curbs in 60-foot buses. Jim said that the turning radius for 60-foot buses is smaller because of the articulation in the middle of the bus, thus reducing the chance of hitting curbs.

Bob highlighted the comment that people are interested in public art at stations and asked if it would be possible to incorporate art. Zack noted that there is public art at several METRO Green Line stations. Therese said that White Bear Lake residents might be interested in showcasing the city's history as a resort community. Bob asked if the Community Advisory Committee could take any action regarding public art. Andy said that Federal Transit Authority Capital Improvement Grants program, which will be used to fund construction of the Rush Line BRT Project, cannot be used to fund public art in a traditional sense. Andy added that other grant opportunities were used to implement public art at METRO Green Line stations. Mark asked if art could be incorporated into station design. Andy said that stations will have consistent branding to promote system comprehensibility, but that there will be some customizable elements. Bob said having customization at stations is important. Mark asked if it would add cost and Frank confirmed that it would. Dave said that having public art would be great if possible, as it would help integrate the route and stations into surrounding communities and boost economic and community development. Zack asked if station designs could have space available for communities to add public art. Frank said that the current station designs leave space in station footprints that could be used for art. Jim said that in future phases of the project, design elements including art will be further discussed and defined using guidelines from Metro Transit.

TraNeicia Sylvester noted the QR codes used to advertise events and businesses at Pulse BRT stations in Richmond, Virginia and asked if something similar could be implemented with Rush Line BRT. Frank said that input on the topic would be sent to Metro Transit for consideration in the next phase of the project and that it will include lessons learned from Richmond. Bob said that as the Community Advisory Committee, they could advocate for public art. Mark said it would be great to consider using QR codes and evaluate station design possibilities. Therese added that telling the history of the route through art could help build community buy-in. TraNeicia asked if it would be possible to gather input about station design elements. Frank said that once the project is in the project development phase and project staff are working on more detailed station design, there will be public engagement about artistic elements, architecture of the structure and other station elements. Therese noted that she had seen a Rush Line BRT billboard on Beam Avenue and asked if it had led to much engagement. Frank confirmed that Ramsey County ran Rush Line BRT ads in local media and on billboards and bus shelters in fall 2019 to raise awareness about the project and that it had led to a significant increase in social media engagement and comments submitted.

Frank asked meeting attendees for suggestions for public engagement events in 2020. Therese said that the annual Independence Day celebration at Hazelwood Park and the Ramsey County Fair could be good places to engage with the community. Frank said that while Rush Line might not have staff at the fair, there will likely be Rush Line literature at the Ramsey County booth. Mark suggested a pop-

up meeting at Costco and Frank confirmed that visiting grocery stores has been an effective way to reach community members. Frank added that visiting hospital cafeterias at lunchtime has also led to high quality engagement.

Bob asked if the committee should make a motion about art at stations. Therese asked if the committee should first talk about the role of each community in design. Mark said it would be sufficient to pass a motion in support of art at stations. Andy suggested adding public art at stations as a future agenda to allow for more in-depth discussion.

Station Access

Beth described the main ways that people access transit in the Twin Cities based on Metro Transit's 2016 on-board survey. Zack asked if the on-board survey was distributed systemwide. Beth said that it was and that it includes local bus, express bus, light rail and commuter rail riders. Beth said that 88% of Metro Transit riders access transit by walking and that similarly, most riders are anticipated to access Rush Line BRT by walking to stations and that the project is being designed to improve the pedestrian environment around stations. Beth described the Federal Transit Authority's ridership model and the one used by the Metropolitan Council. Mark asked if the Federal Transit Authority model accounted for climate and geography. Beth said the model is calibrated to local travel behaviors and thus would account for those factors. Therese asked if the model is based on current data or future projections. Beth said that it anticipates future conditions as much as possible and noted that the Federal Transit Authority model is more focused on transit behavior, whereas the Metropolitan Council model considers all types of travel. Mark asked if the model considers other changes, such as addition of a lane on Highway 36. Beth said that it does account for planned improvements to the regional transportation system. Beth added that project staff are currently working with the Federal Transit Administration and Metropolitan Council to assess the forecast results produced by each model. Therese asked if a changing political climate could factor into the ridership model. Beth said that the model only accounts for funded future projects.

Therese said that many people have asked why Rush Line BRT is being built when ridership on the 64 in Maplewood appears low. Beth said that Rush Line BRT will improve transit service and reduce travel times, which will make transit a more attractive option and encourage more people to use transit. Therese noted that she is unable to take a bus from Maplewood to White Bear Lake and asked if that was because there is a lack of demand for service between the two cities. Sam said that the issue is lack of supply and that she and Therese would both take the bus between the cities if service were available. Mark asked if the ridership model could evaluate what ridership would be if the bus were routed on Highway 61 and if those numbers would then be used to evaluate cost effectiveness. Beth confirmed that is how the model is used and said that there is demand for the type of service that Rush Line BRT would provide. Frank added that the previous phase of planning examined several route possibilities and compared expected ridership on each to determine the preferred route. Therese said that another factor was that Ramsey County already owned much of the land needed for the chosen route. Frank said that the need to acquire less land was a part of the decision but that many other factors were also considered.

Eric asked when walkshed and bikeshed analysis maps will be available. Beth said these would be available by the end of March. Therese asked which documents would be available at the end of February. Frank said the draft Ramsey County Rail Right-of-Way Design Guide and public engagement summary would be available by the end of February. Sam asked if the walkshed and bikeshed maps would be shared at the next committee meeting. Frank said they would be if the co-chairs agree to covering the topic.

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Frank said that the future agenda items that were discussed would be added to the agenda for the next meeting and that a Doodle would be sent to schedule the next meeting in spring 2020.