

MEETING SUMMARY

Date: May 12, 2020
Time: 6:00 - 8:30 p.m.
Location: Virtual Meeting

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 | |
| 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 | |
| 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 | |
| Cyndy Whiteford | Saint Paul | X |
| Project Staff and Other Attendees | | |
| Frank Alarcon | Rush Line BRT Project Staff | X |
| Andrea Arnoldi | Gold Line BRT Project Staff | X |
| Beth Bartz | Rush Line BRT Project Staff | X |

| Name | Community of Residence or Affiliation | Present |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|---------|
| Cassie Fitzgerald | Rush Line BRT Project Staff | X |
| Jim Gersema | Rush Line BRT Project Staff | X |
| Andy Gitzlaff | Rush Line BRT Project Staff | X |
| Tom Harrington | Rush Line BRT Project Staff | X |
| Dan McNiel | Rush Line BRT Project Staff | X |
| Victoria Reinhardt | Ramsey County Commissioner | X |
| Marc Valencia | Rush Line BRT Project Staff | X |
| Alicia Valenti | Rush Line BRT Project Staff | X |

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Welcome and Introductions

Frank Alarcon provided an overview of virtual meeting procedures. Bob Morse led introductions and an icebreaker. Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt gave opening remarks thanking the committee members for their involvement in the project.

Project Updates

Rush Line BRT Planning During COVID-19

Frank provided an update about planning for the Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project and other transitway investments during COVID-19. The Rush Line project continues to make progress and maintain its schedule while taking necessary precautions, such as holding project meetings online instead of in person.

Engineering

Jim Gersema gave an update about engineering progress, including the decision to use ten-inch platforms at stations. Eric Saathoff asked if a ten-inch platform provided “nearly level” boarding. Jim confirmed that it would provide fully or nearly level boarding (depending on bus operations) and said that this platform height facilitates smoother boarding by reducing the vertical distance between the platform and bus floor, noting that the ramp can still be deployed if needed.

Eric asked if Gold Line BRT had to add park-and-ride capacity to obtain a competitive Federal Transit Administration project rating. Andy Gitzlaff said that parking is a factor in the ratings because the Federal Transit Administration wants to ensure that people can access transitway investments and said that the Gold Line BRT Project is planning to add approximately 300 stalls at the Woodbury park-and-ride. Mark Lynch asked what the capacity of the Maplewood Mall Transit Center is in comparison with this facility. Andy said that it has approximately 1,000 stalls.

Environmental Assessment

Frank described the environmental analysis phase and provided an update on the Environmental Assessment review and publication schedule.

Public Engagement

Frank explained how public engagement efforts are changing as a result of COVID-19. To eliminate person-to-person contact, engagement this summer will mostly be online.

Station Design

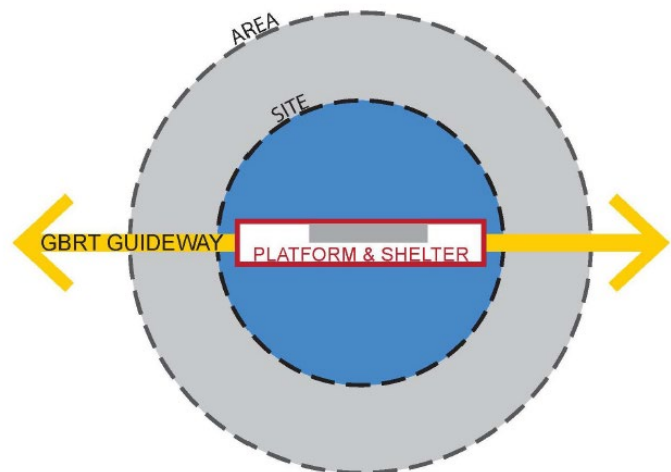
Overview

Frank provided information about the timeline for station design as it relates to project milestones, indicating that the current environmental analysis phase will end at approximately a 25 percent level of design in early 2021. Frank noted that the design of vertical elements of stations begins at the 30 percent design stage, which we be part of the next phase of work after the project has transitioned to the Metropolitan Council. Project staff will share Community Advisory Committee and community input on the topic with the Metropolitan Council when the project transitions from Ramsey County to the Metropolitan Council. Tom Harrington stated that during the remainder of the environmental analysis phase, station site design will be advanced and noted that Frank would lead a discussion later in the meeting regarding a statement on station design from the committee.

Andrea Arnoldi indicated her role as the architecture lead for the Gold Line BRT Project and described the station design work that the Gold Line BRT Project has completed in the process of developing 30 percent design plans including public engagement, station site design and the timeline for various design decisions. Mark asked if all Gold Line BRT stations have a similar character. Andrea confirmed that the shelters are consistent at all stations, noting that consistency in design is important for system recognition by users and for efficient maintenance and operations by Metro Transit. Mark asked how new transit lines with different themes would be integrated with Gold Line BRT and Rush Line BRT stations as they are implemented. Andrea said that shelter design will be uniform throughout each project, but there is potential for community input on landscaping as well as the design of the platform and station site. A diagram of the shelter, platform, station site and station area is shown in Figure 1. Andrea also noted that the existing urban fabric of downtown Saint Paul will influence the character of shared Rush Line and Gold Line stations in the area. Frank added that at the previous Community Advisory Committee meeting, Barbara Howard of the Minnesota Department of Transportation Cultural Resources Unit gave an overview of the Section 106 process and asked if the historic nature of Lowertown and buildings in the neighborhood would influence station design.

Andrea said that Gold Line BRT is undergoing the Section 106 process and that the draft Gold Line BRT station design is currently under review by Section 106 consulting parties. Andrea said that project staff have used preliminary feedback from the Cultural Resources Unit and Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission to refine shelter designs to be more consistent with the historic nature of Lowertown by making

Figure 1: Gold Line BRT Station Diagram



changes such as using darker colors and lowering the profile of the shelter.

Sam Crosby asked when there would be opportunities for communities to provide input on station design. Andrea said that a lot of core outreach, including an online survey and series of workshops, shaped Gold Line BRT shelter design and station sites, and that public engagement is ongoing for advanced design. Sam asked to clarify how station elements could be used to create variety among stations. Andrea said that several different approaches can be used, citing the varying station and platform designs along the METRO Blue Line and the uniform station design with custom public art along the METRO Green Line. Andrea noted that public art used to be a component of transitway projects, but in 2016 public art became ineligible for Federal Transit Administration funding. Andrea said that landscaping, railing design, colors, forms and textures can be used to provide variation and reflect community input. Andrea shared that Metro Transit is willing to consider ways to implement public art within or near Gold Line BRT stations. Andrea said the implementation of art would be separate from the design and implementation of Gold Line BRT and the process for doing so is not yet completely defined. Funding would have to come from a source other than the FTA. Mark asked who the stakeholders in the planning process are. Andrea said that primarily cities and counties currently involved in part because they are funding partners.

Therese asked how long it takes to advance from 15 to 60 percent design. Andrea said it took approximately a year and a half for Gold Line BRT. Therese asked if the project has reached the 30 percent design milestone. Andrea confirmed that 30 percent design concepts were submitted in January 2020. Therese asked if the Rush Line BRT Project is proceeding on a similar timeline. Frank said 15 percent concept plans were recently submitted and the project is on track to reach approximately 25 percent design by the time the project transitions to the Metropolitan Council in April 2021. Tom added that the project is anticipated to reach 60 percent design in mid-2022. Therese asked if Rush Line BRT is proceeding more slowly than Gold Line BRT. Tom clarified that Gold Line BRT design has been ongoing without any breaks, but that Rush Line BRT design will require time for procuring a new design team as the contract moves from Ramsey County to the Metropolitan Council. Mark asked if the reason for this discrepancy is that different counties are leading each project. Frank said that Gold Line BRT transitioned from Washington County to the Metropolitan Council early in the design process, when plans were approximately one percent complete. Rush Line BRT will be transitioning at approximately 25 percent design. Andy added that one of the reasons that the Rush Line BRT Project is not addressing station design in-depth is that Metro Transit will own and maintain shelter facilities. Andy added that the input gathered in the environmental analysis phase will be sent to Metro Transit for consideration in future station design efforts. Therese asked if the role of the Community Advisory Committee members will end when the project transitions to the Metropolitan Council. Frank confirmed that it will and said that the committee structure for future phases of the project has not yet been determined.

Online Survey

Frank introduced the station design survey and the input being sought. Alicia Valenti shared the draft survey with the Community Advisory Committee and walked through each question. Sam asked if it was possible to add an "other" option for survey takers to better describe how they plan to use a given station. Alicia said that it would be added. Dave said that it would be helpful to edit the introduction to draw people in. Alicia said that it would be refined. Cindy Whiteford expressed that it might be a challenging time to conduct a survey given the current pandemic. Frank thanked Cindy for this comment and acknowledged that there are many unknowns regarding the future of transit, which may affect the information gathered. Mark noted that Rush Line BRT will not begin operating until 2026

and that there may be substantial changes between the present and the start of Rush Line BRT operations, both related to the pandemic and independent of it.

Therese asked who will maintain stations during the winter and how snow and ice will be addressed. Cindy asked how sanitation and public health would be managed. Frank said that Metro Transit will handle snow removal, trash maintenance, repairs and other maintenance tasks and that Ramsey County is currently coordinating with project area communities, Metro Transit and the Minnesota Department of Transportation to determine which agencies will be responsible for other aspects of ownership and maintenance. Frank said that the Ramsey County rail right-of-way and Bruce Vento Trail are being considered as part of this process. Frank added that in terms of operational changes during the COVID-19 pandemic, Metro Transit is disinfecting vehicles and facilities nightly, limiting the number of passengers that can be on buses and trains and implementing rear-door boarding. Frank noted that long-term changes are still unknown. Dave asked if the survey was asking about characteristics that transit riders might use to evaluate stations such as information about where other stations are and when the next bus will arrive. Alicia stated that real-time arrival signage will help riders navigate and noted that the survey asks about priorities including wayfinding signage for destinations near stations. Cindy restated concern about the timing of the survey. Sam said this is a great time for a survey as it will illustrate whether people are considering using transit again and allow for tracking changes in responses over time. Dave added that the survey could be beneficial if survey responses demonstrate a departure from the results of previous surveys.

Mark asked if it would be possible to ask for people to describe their neighborhood or city in two to three words instead of just one. Alicia confirmed that the question would be revised. Eric Saathoff asked why there is a question about entry at separate doors or offboard fare payment when those were already decided. Alicia clarified that the survey is seeking input on which of these features are priorities. Victoria Reinhardt suggested that the question be revised to make it more clear that these boarding features will be included. Alicia said this change would be made.

Frank provided an overview of draft text for a station design statement to be forwarded from the Community Advisory Committee to the Policy Advisory Committee and project partners. Mark expressed support for the statement. Therese expressed concern about ambiguity with use of “sufficient” as a descriptor. Mark said that leaving the statement relatively vague has value and that there will be many opportunities for people to express their feedback. Therese noted that the Gold Line BRT stations appear to be very uniform. Mark said several aspects of the Rush Line BRT Project are still undecided and that its approach to station design may be different than that of Gold Line BRT. Mark added that leaving the statement as written allows space for continuity across stations and unique features for different communities. Bob agreed and noted that design consistency is important for cost effectiveness and for building a consistent atmosphere along the route. Victoria noted that Pulse BRT stations in Richmond, Virginia are consistent and recognizable throughout line while also being unique to each station area as an example of what is possible with station design. Zack Mensinger added that some degree of consistency is beneficial for costs and maintenance. Bob called a vote on the station design statement. All committee members in attendance voted in favor of the language, which will be presented by Bob Morse or TraNeicia Sylvester at the Policy Advisory Committee meeting on May 28.

Future Agenda Items

Frank stated that the next meeting will be scheduled for late summer 2020 and the walkshed and bikeshed analysis will be discussed. Therese expressed interest in design plans for the Bruce Vento Trail. Mark asked for more information about changes at the Maplewood Mall Transit Center.