

**METRO Gold Line Community and Business Advisory Committee (CBAC)  
Harding High School; East Side Community Center  
1526 East Sixth Street, Saint Paul, MN 55106  
Notes for the June 26, 2018 Meeting**

Members Present: D'Angelos Svenkeson, Darrell Paulsen, Doug Swalboski, Jessica Johnson, Mary Brandt, Nancy Volkman, Nyagatare Valens, Regina Rippel, Steve Morris, Torin Gustafson

Members Absent: Allison Hawley March, Chai Lee, Donald Gonser, Ernesto Ortiz-Diaz, Heidi Schumacher, Hussein Khatib, Jorge Samper Zelaya, Joseph Skeen, Koua Lee, Molly Gagan-Vlaisavljevich, Pat Cosgrove, Rebecca Nelson, Reva Jones-Simmons, Richard Kramer, Robert Crawford, Tom Gianetti

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Hally Turner, Interim METRO Gold Line Deputy Project Manager, convened the meeting at 6:07 p.m. and led introductions around the room.

Hally Turner is temporarily acting as the Deputy Project Manager for Lyssa Leitner while she is out on maternity leave until September.

**2. INTRODUCTION OF CBAC CO-CHAIRS**

Liz Jones, Gold Line Community Outreach Coordinator, announced that Metropolitan Council Chair and Chair of the Gold Line Corridor Management Committee (CMC), Alene Tchourumoff, selected the CBAC co-chairs. Darrell Paulsen, Maplewood Station Resident, and Steve Morris, Tamarack Station Business Representative, will serve as co-chairs of the Gold Line CBAC.

CBAC co-chairs are tasked with leading the committee through their tasks and ensuring charter compliance. Co-Chairs will identify agenda topics, and they will also serve on the CMC.

**3. FIRST MEETING SUMMARY**

Hally Turner asked for approval of the May 29 CBAC meeting notes. Notes were approved unanimously by CBAC members.

**ACTION:** Liz Jones will post the May 29 CBAC meeting summary to the Gold Line project website.

Hally Turner led a brief overview of the Gold Line project that recapped some of the topics discussed in detail during the May 29 CBAC meeting.

Gold Line will be a part of the METRO system. The METRO system is a network of transitways with frequent, all-day service between stations with enhanced amenities. Gold Line will connect with the Green Line light rail transit (LRT) at Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul.

Gold Line will serve two counties and five municipalities in the east metro. It is expected to have ten stations outside of downtown Saint Paul. Service is anticipated to begin in 2024, and it is estimated to

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have a capital cost of \$420 million and an annual operating cost of \$5.1 million. Costs are inflated to assume 2024 service. By 2040, Gold Line is estimated to have 8,000 daily riders.

Dedicated bus rapid transit (BRT) operates in exclusive bus-only lanes. BRT has limited stops, it's given signal priority, transit riders pay before they board, boarding is near level, stations have improved features, and provides frequent all-day service that operates seven days a week.

Metro Transit is the lead agency responsible for developing and eventually operating the Gold Line. However, the project is being developed as a collaboration of public partners, including Metro Transit, Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), Ramsey County, Washington County, and the Cities along the corridor—Saint Paul, Maplewood, Landfall, Oakdale, and Woodbury.

The Gold Line project was authorized \$25 million in funding over the next two years for the Project Development phase. Gold Line is in the Project Development phase until 2020. During this time, the team will be working on completing the environmental review and advancing the project design. The Engineering phase is expected to take two years to complete as the project team creates the specifications and blueprints that will guide the construction of the project. Construction is anticipated to take two years with Gold Line service expected to begin in 2024.

Gold Line is competing with transit projects around the nation for federal funding from the New Starts program. There are currently nine other New Starts transit projects in the Project Development phase around the nation.

The project has five key goals: 1) Improve mobility (ridership & travel time); 2) Be cost-effective & economically viable; 3) Support economic development; 4) Protect the natural environment; and 5) Preserve & protect quality of life. Decisions about the project should align with these goals.

#### 4. CBAC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Liz Jones recapped the Gold Line committee structure. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) provides technical guidance to the CBAC and CMC. The CBAC advises the CMC on the project design. The CMC advises the Metropolitan Council, Ramsey County and Washington County on the design and construction of Gold Line. Technical design information will be brought to CBAC to receive input before any decision is made.

The CBAC Charter was discussed at the previous meeting. CBAC's purpose is to serve as a voice for the community, advise the CMC, provide input on design (e.g. stations, operations, bike and pedestrian, bus lane locations, etc.), and serve as an information resource and liaison to the community.

Liz Jones noted that members can always ask her questions and share comments with her about the CBAC Charter.

#### 5. PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS

Hally Turner led the CBAC members through the pedestrian connections aerial maps of the corridor which shows the existing connections and the potential connections. The light blue dots on the maps are the proposed station locations. The dotted pink circle is approximately a quarter mile walk radius around the station—in general, it will take five minutes to walk. The dotted black circle is

approximately a ten to fifteen-minute walk from the station. The green line is the places where project staff expect construction to impact existing sidewalks.

- Steve Morris, Business Co-Chair, asked if there will be an easement or property acquisition to build the bus lanes or build the sidewalks near the stations? *That is to be determined. We do not know the full property impacts yet, but we'll continue to learn more as the project advances its design.*
- Jessica Johnson, Etna Street Resident, asked if property owners will be assessed for rebuilding the sidewalk or for putting new sidewalk in front of their homes? *We don't know if property owners will be assessed. The City completes special assessments and each city may have different procedures.*
- Regina Rippel, Mounds/Maria Resident, stated that MnDOT just built a new noise wall between I-94 and Hudson Road near the Mounds/Maria stations. *There may be impacts to the noise wall, but we are uncertain yet. Regardless, project staff are working with MnDOT.*

Hally Turner continued explaining the pedestrian connections aerial maps. The yellow line is potentially new sidewalks where there are no existing sidewalks. It's important to develop the pedestrian infrastructure around transit stations to limit obstacles to getting to transit. The blue line is the sidewalks the cities or another organization are planning to construct.

- Darrell Paulson, Resident Co-Chair, asked why Gold Line materials show the sidewalks that other agencies or organizations plan on to construct? *They are still important connections to the proposed Gold Line stations even if this project itself will not be constructing the sidewalks or trails.*
- Mary Brandt, Mounds Blvd Resident, asked for clarification on what types of pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure the cities or other organizations could build. *The blue line on the aerial map could be sidewalks, bike trails, or multi-use trails. The blue lines are not new roads.*

Hally Turner led the CBAC members through the potential pedestrian connections on the corridor aerial map. The two light blue dots on Mounds Boulevard and Maria Avenue are optional station locations for the area. The Mounds Boulevard option would anticipate building two new sidewalks to connect to the station, and the Maria Avenue sidewalks are green because they already exist and are expected to be impacted by construction.

- Regina Rippel asked where Metropolitan State University is located on the map to orient herself. *The University is near the top left corner of the aerial map.*

Regardless of station location, a sidewalk will be built crossing the intersection of Plum Street and Bates Avenue to restrict vehicle access to Hudson Road. The next station will be located at Earl Street.

- Jessica Johnson asked if there will be impacts to the Earl Street bridge during construction? *There could be impacts to the Earl Street bridge during construction. May just be impacts to structural supports or it could be more extensive.*
- Regina Rippel asked if there is no other proposed station between Mounds Boulevard/Maria Avenue and Earl Street? *Correct, there is a station located about every half-mile from the previous station.*

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- Regina Rippel asked why there would be anticipated impacts to the Earl Street bridge? *The existing bridge is very wide can be unsafe to walk across and the sidewalks are narrow. Construction provides an opportunity to redesign the platform of the bridge if a new bridge is needed to be constructed.*

The Johnson Parkway is the blue trail near Earl Street station. The City of Saint Paul has approved and programmed this trail into the Grand Round project.

- Darrell Paulson asked to clarify that Grand Round is a City project and asked where the funding is coming from for this project? *Grand Rounds is a city bike trail project. This is not a Gold Line led initiative, so project staff are uncertain on the project's funding, but we can get that information.*

**ACTION:** Hally Turner will look into the funding allocated for the City of Saint Paul's Grand Round project.

Hally Turner noted that project staff will start each meeting answering the questions they could not respond to during the previous meeting.

- Doug Swalboski, Sun Ray Business, asked if the City of Saint Paul will be building a bridge over I-94 for Johnson Parkway pedestrian connections? *No, they plan on an underpass under I-94 to connect both sides of the freeway.*

Near the Etna Street station, project staff are working with MnDOT about potential pedestrian connections south of I-94. The orange line is a proposed grade separated bridge. The dashed yellow line across I-94 show that the potential sidewalk or trail would go under the I-94 bridge. The yellow line parallel to I-94, south of the freeway was added later as a potential pedestrian or trail connection because it provides better access into the neighborhood south of I-94.

- Nancy Volkman, Helmo Ave Resident, asked if there is an existing connection for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross Highway 61 south of I-94? And if not, would the project consider adding that? *No there is no existing connection, but there is a pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Highway 61 and Burns Avenue.*
- Doug Swalboski asked if MnDOT has any plans for I-94 near the Etna Street/Highway 61 intersection? *With the exception of adding MnPASS lanes, MnDOT has no plans for this stretch of I-94 nor the intersection. Gold Line is proposed to go over the intersection of I-94 and Etna Street with a new bridge.*
- A community member in attendance at the CBAC meeting asked how the sidewalk or trail from the Etna Street station would go under I-94? *The sidewalk or trail would parallel to the Highway 61 entrance or exit ramp. There is room there for a trail.*

Chris Beckwith, Gold Line Project Manager, clarified that the trails shown under the I-94 bridge near Etna Street may be an either-or option. The trail could be either west or east of the intersection.

- Doug Swalboski recommended that in the case of an either-or option, the project staff should look at the population density east and west of the intersection, and the side with more density should be selected for the trail.
- Steve Morris asked how the project plans on handling surface parking. *We will provide more information about parking at the next CBAC meeting.*

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Continuing east, there is a gap in proposed pedestrian connections beyond the existing infrastructure. In this area, project staff are exploring bus-only lanes and a mixed traffic option.

- Steve Morris asked what is the circle east of Etna Street and located between Old Hudson Road and Hudson Road? *It is a staircase to access a pedestrian bridge over I-94.*

Next is the station near White Bear Avenue. The bus will travel through an underpass at White Bear Avenue in bus-only lanes. Project staff are considering Van Dyke Street and Hazel Avenue for the station location. Regardless of the station location that is selected, the Gold Line project plans on building select proposed sidewalks shown in yellow depending on which station location is selected.

Crossing Ruth Street, Gold Line staff proposed an underpass with bus-only lanes. Construction would impact the existing the sidewalks above the proposed underpass.

- Nancy Volkman asked to clarify if the bus lanes will go under Ruth Street? Yes.
- D'Angelos Svenkeson, At-Large Representative, asked what was the decision or history behind Gold Line that the route does not go south of I-94 into more suburban areas? *Gateway Corridor Commission considered many route options, including those south of I-94. However, because of a combination of public impacts, property impacts, population density and space for development, the north side of I-94 was selected as the best route. Travel time was also a consideration. Gold Line could not keep crossing I-94 to access north and south neighborhoods and businesses because transit riders want competitive travel times.*

Gold Line construction is expected to impact the sidewalk along Culver's near the Sun Ray station. The gray box on the aerial map is a proposed park-and-ride ramp in the location of the existing Sun Ray Transit Center.

- Doug Swalboski asked how Gold Line will cross over Ruth Street? *The bus would cross under Ruth Street. Then it would travel closely along Hudson Road. The roadway is narrow between I-94 and TJMaxx, and we expect that during construction, Hudson Road will move closer to I-94. Gold Line staff want to keep as much land as possible available for potential redevelopment.*

Gold Line staff expect minimal impact to parking in the Sun Ray development. The orange line is a proposed bridge over McKnight Road. The City of Maplewood is looking at making improvements to resolve general traffic issues at the intersection of McKnight Road and I-94. Gold Line will avoid impacts to this intersection by building a bridge over it.

- Nancy Volkman stated the McKnight Road and I-94 intersection was recently worked on and there is currently construction on the intersection.

The project will build a new trail along the south side of 3M, beginning where the east side of the McKnight Road bridge starts.

- Nancy Volkman asked where the BRT route goes after the McKnight Road bridge? *Guideway will continue along the yellow line. The road is between the potential new trail and I-94.*

At the Maplewood Station, the City is considering a trail connection over I-94. The project would work with 3M to provide a pedestrian connection to the main building on the campus. The land in this area is private property.

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- Nancy Volkman asked if project staff were referring to the blue line along Century Avenue? *No, we are discussing the blue line between the guideway and the 3M campus.*

The proposed trail in front of 3M will continue, grade separated, over Century Avenue. On the east side of Century Avenue, there is a new sidewalk that MnDOT constructed last year. The blue line on the west side of Century Avenue is the 3M trail.

- Torin Gustafson, Maplewood Business, stated that 3M traditionally has private paths for employees. It would make most sense for this trail to be a public/private trail. The proposed trail to the north of Century Road will help people from the neighborhood access trails and Gold Line.
- Steve Morris asked if there will be property acquisition along the southwest side of Tanners Lake? *We have been working with the boat store in the area and they are aware the project is coming. We have also been working with the Harley dealership on the southeast side of Tanners Lake where we also expect property impacts.*

At the Greenway Avenue station, the City plans on building blue trail leading north. The Gold Line project's environmental scope ends at the yellow line leading north from the station.

- Nancy Volkman asked if there is expected to be mixed traffic at the Greenway Avenue station? *Yes, there will be mixed traffic between the boat store and Greenway. Looking at the traffic in the area and impacts to the lake, it is not necessary to have bus-only lanes in this area.*
- Nancy Volkman asked if drivers can get onto Century Avenue from Hudson Boulevard? *Yes, drivers will be able to make the connection from Hudson Boulevard to Century Avenue.*

The Gold Line route will take Hadley to 4th Street and use 4th Street to go over I-694.

- Nancy Volkman asked for more details about the 4th Street bridge? *Currently the existing bridge will stay. There is a potential to look at grading on the east and west of the bridge to help with sight issues, particularly when pedestrians or bicyclists are present.*
- Nancy Volkman asked if it would make sense to have a trail leading from both sides of the bridge if there is no sidewalk built on 4th Street bridge? *The City of Oakdale would build the blue sidewalks and it is uncertain if they would put in trail without a sidewalk on the bridge.*

At the Helmo Avenue station, the project will build sidewalks to the park-and-ride on Helmo Avenue. We are also proposing sidewalks on the potential Helmo Avenue/Bielenberg Drive bridge. The bridge may be mixed traffic or bus-only. Project staff are making the case to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to pay for the auto traffic portion of the bridge.

- Nancy Volkman asked to clarify that a mixed traffic bridge is not confirmed. *Correct, however the mixed traffic bridge is in the environmental assessment, which is a "win" for the project.*
- Nancy Volkman asked what good does it do to have the bridge in the environmental? *If it's not in the environmental assessment, the bridge would no longer be under consideration to be built as part of the Gold Line project. Only the infrastructure in the environmental assessment can be built with FTA funding. It is not common for the FTA to allow infrastructure not solely dedicated to transit into the environmental assessment. There are also*

*opportunities to provide mixed traffic lanes if the capital cost comes under \$420 million or the funding for the bridge could come from another source other than the FTA.*

- Nancy Volkman stated that the City of Oakdale does not have money to pay for mixed traffic lanes on the Helmo Avenue/Bielenberg Drive bridge.
- Steve Morris noted the 4th Street bridge has a lot of traffic. It is very narrow and as it stands today, there is no room for sidewalks. Improvements to 4th Street bridge would be beneficial. *Scale is helpful to consider when looking at improvements to 4th Street bridge. If construction is done on the bridge, there will be 50 properties impacted. There are sight line impacts to historic properties, and the architectural design will be expensive to reflect neighborhood characteristics.*
- Steve Morris asked if the Gold Line project team has any information on MnDOT's plans to fix traffic congestion at the I-94 and I-694 interchange? *There are minimal planned improvements to fix congestion issues. One option could be a flyover bridge, and the Gold Line project must save room for this. Our project will not preclude any future improvements on the I-94 and I-694 interchange.*

Hally Turner noted that based on the limits of the environment assessment, there is more improvements the Gold Line project can do parallel to I-94 than it can do perpendicular to I-94.

At the Tamarack Road station there are more potential pedestrian connections. The blue line south of the station may be built if a development goes in and the city asks that developer to pay for the trail.

Near the Woodbury Theatre station, Gold Line is considering another stop at the park-and-ride at the end of the route.

- Steve Morris asked if Bielenberg Drive will be mixed traffic? *Yes for the section near Tamarack Nature Preserve*
- Nancy Volkman noted that her neighborhood would be incredibly disappointed if the Helmo Avenue/Bielenberg Drive bridge is not mixed traffic. *It's the Gold Line project team and the City's priority to make a mixed traffic bridge work. The FTA gave us good feedback on the bridge and they didn't say "no." Washington County has the mixed traffic bridge in their funding application. We are not interested in delivery this project without mixed traffic lanes. Also, our park and ride is north of I-94. There is no way for transit riders south of I-94 to access it without the mixed traffic bridge.*
- Doug Swalboski noted that the project team should prioritize improvements to the 4th Street bridge.
- Steve Morris asked if the project team has traffic data on 4th Street bridge? *We don't have it yet, but we will work with the cities to get it.*

Hally Turner noted that information on the route overview and pedestrian connections discussed today will also be brought to the public at upcoming meetings. Input from CBAC and the public will be provided to the CMC before design decisions are finalized.

## 6. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Liz Jones stated two public open houses will be held in July. CBAC members were asked to hang up or pass out flyers at their business or in their community.

The project team will also be hosting smaller, targeted meetings where invites are limited to select residences and businesses near White Bear Avenue, Mounds Boulevard and Maria Avenue, and Etna Street.

CBAC members are welcome to attend any of the upcoming meetings.

- Doug Swalboski asked how the project staff are conducting promotions for the targeted meetings? *A direct mailing will be sent out and staff will go door-knocking.*
- Doug Swalboski recommended sharing information on the East Side Group Facebook page.
- D'Angelos Svenkeson noted that 5:00-7:00 p.m. can be difficult time for some people because they could be picking up kids or be working a late shift. He asked if there will be other opportunities to engage these people? *Staff will be door-knocking and tabling community events this summer.*
- D'Angelos Svenkeson stated that a better time to hold some meetings may be from 9:00-11:00 a.m. or from 7:00-9:00 p.m.
- Mary Brandt stated that on the flyer it looks like the entire meeting lasts from 5:00-7:00 p.m. She recommended moving "Attendees are welcome to drop by anytime" to underneath the time and date.
- Mary Brandt also asked if they will be translating the flyer into other languages? *The flyer and handouts from the open house will be translated into Somali, Spanish, Hmong, and Karen.*
- Jessica Johnson recommended CBAC members put a stack of flyers in a Little Libraries near their homes.

## 7. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no public comments.

## 8. ADJOURN

Halley Turner adjourned the meeting at 7:39 p.m.

### Meeting Materials Provided:

PowerPoint Presentation, June 28, 2018

Corridor-Wide Pedestrian Connections, P1

Corridor-Wide Pedestrian Connections, P2

Corridor-Wide Pedestrian Connections, P3

July 2018 Open Houses Flyer

**Next Meeting:** July 26 from 6:00 to 7:30 pm at the East Side Learning Hub at Harding High School