



**METRO Gold Line Corridor Management Committee
Notes for the May 2, 2019 Meeting
Metropolitan Council Chambers**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Nora Slawik, Bryan Smith, Mary Brandt, Andrea Date, Sheila Kauppi, Wes Kooistra, Rafael Ortega, Darrell Paulsen, Jane Prince, Paul Reinke, Stan Suedkamp, Lisa Weik, Jim McDonough

MEMBERS ABSENT: Stan Karwoski

1. WELCOME (CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL)

Chair Nora Slawik called the monthly meeting of the METRO Gold Line BRT Corridor Management Committee (CMC) to order at 2:34 p.m. on Thursday, May 2, 2019. Committee members and other attendees introduced themselves.

Chair Slawik welcomed attendees and gave opening remarks.

Overall, the Gold Line BRT project is in a good place and making excellent progress and if we want to, we could build the project for close to the original \$420M estimate. That says a lot about the great work the counties (Washington County and Ramsey County) have provided in in the pre-project development phase as they developed the Gold Line route and station areas. Counties really laid the right groundwork and made realistic assumptions. Today, our job is to decide if it makes sense to stay with that original number or make additional investments that will enhance both the BRT project and the communities it will serve.

2. REVIEW NOTES FROM APRIL 4, 2019

Chair Slawik asked if anyone has comments/changes to the February CMC meeting notes.

Sheila Kauppi (MnDOT Metro District North Area Manager) noted a correction to a comment on Page 4 related to the Burns Avenue intersection about a potential interchange. It should be noted that MnDOT has not yet gone through the process (public involvement or purpose and need development). MnDOT needs that process to occur before the design solution is determined at that location.

No additional comments.

3. CBAC UPDATE

Community and Business Advisory Committee (CBAC) Co-Chairs; Darrell Paulsen and Mary Brandt presented the April 25, 2019 CBAC meeting update. Last week's meeting was a short discussion and an interactive workshop-style session to gather CBAC input on station architecture/design elements. CBAC members were shown maps of the current station area design for each station. They wrote their ideas on post-it notes and posted them on the maps. Most comments were positive. Landscape Architects present at the meeting were very helpful at interpreting the maps and providing valuable project-related information (e.g. parking lot over a wetland vs. changing the design to avoid the wetland). Mary Brandt felt that we should maintain our wetlands because they were there first.

CBAC also discussed the proposed West Etna trail and tunnel connection cost, safety, and how it would affect neighborhood residents. The \$6M tunnel would save neighborhood residents five minutes of walk time. The CBAC residential member representing that area was not very enthusiastic about it and she

commented that the high cost of the proposed connection outweighs the benefits to the approximately 200 residents in the neighborhood. The West Etna connection is one of the actions for CMC to decide on today.

Commissioner Lisa Weik asked if the project is still on track for a groundbreaking in 2021. Chris Beckwith (Gold Line Senior Project Manager) responded that the project is working on a very tight schedule in the Project Development (PD) phase, but still on track for the 2024 Opening Year.

4. UPDATE ON PLATFORM HEIGHT ANALYSIS

Charles Carlson (Director, BRT Projects) presented a recap and update on platform height analysis. A significant amount of work has been completed to-date and a lot of work is underway on this topic. The November 1, 2018 CMC recommendation confirmed downtown routing as the preferred alternative and directed a platform height evaluation task. “All stations will be evaluated for level boarding, including those downtown. Near-level boarding will be considered only on a case-by-case basis with input from the project advisory committees.” This work is ongoing and will extend for some time as staff advance the project engineering and design.

The term “level boarding” is in quotes below because staff is finding a range of heights that people have called level boarding. It’s defined and applied differently on various BRT systems. Ultimately, the focus is improved, premium rider experience of BRT. Interest in Raised Platforms / “Level Boarding” includes:

- **Accessibility** – minimize or eliminate barriers for riders with disabilities using the system.
- **Visual Language** – raised platform is key design element (visually distinct) of premium BRT service.
- **Equity** – stations are consistent across the corridor, and full amenity stations are provided in downtown Saint Paul.
- **Equality** – consideration for all abilities for boarding/alighting and movement on and off the platform.

Level Boarding Definitions:

- Level Boarding (14-inch curb or higher) – Ramp is usually deployed. Typically for BRT buses only.
- Near-Level Boarding (9-inch curb or higher) – Ramp is deployed. Usable by BRT and other buses.
- Standard Boarding (6-inch curb) – This is not being considered, consistent with transitway guidelines around platform height and CMC direction.

Work Done Since November 2018 CMC:

- Research and phone calls with over a dozen BRT systems in the U.S. with raised platforms. Project staff reviewed the choices that different agencies have made, in a workshop setting.
- Evaluated the concept/engineering feasibility of 14” platform in constrained downtown area.
- Investigated the floor level of different BRT buses.
- Observed METRO Red Line BRT docking operations during snow events.
- Coordinated with Rush Line BRT project to ensure that concepts developed at shared stations are compatible.
- Data collection for local and express bus services on 5th and 6th Streets in downtown Saint Paul.

Ongoing Evaluation and Next Steps:

- Additional discussion (experiences, lessons learned and operational issues) with other regions.
- Coordination with existing local and express customer needs to ensure easy and safe transfers to and from Gold Line.
- Develop height recommendation(s) with evaluation factors and broader considerations.
- Share findings and seek input from Transit Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC).

- Review and seek input through project committees and project partners.

Mayor Stan Suedkamp expressed concerns about the engineering/design (speed associated) at the pinch point area between Tanners Lake and I-94 where a walkway/bikeway is planned. It looks like the current plans do not show a barrier, but the speed limit still remains at 40MPH. The fence between the freeway and Old Hudson is frequently being patched because people run into it. We may be ignoring a danger, and should either address the barrier nature or address the speed factor at that location. Charles Carlson replied that in addition to platform height, vehicle speed and the clear zone associated with them and the ongoing general design of BRT are all considerations that the project is currently addressing/evaluating.

5. DISCUSSION AND ACTIONS ON PROJECT SCOPE

Chris Beckwith outlined the scope discussions for today's meeting.

We've discussed a lot of great investments for Gold Line and how to fund them. Today, CMC is only providing a recommendation to staff to continue with designing those proposed scope items. CMC is not locking in the budget today. CMC is directing staff to proceed with scope that could increase cost. The summer will focus on the funding commitments by August for the New Starts submittal to FTA. This information is what FTA uses to assign the project a rating (which will be public in February 2020). The project scope/budget (federal cost share/match) is locked in/set in early 2020 as part of the Engineering application.

Summary of Today's CMC Potential Actions:

Action #1: "The CMC recommends continuing design advancement for up to \$439M of Gold Line BRT project base scope."

Action #2: "The CMC recommends that the GBRT project will include (design and construct) \$21.9 million in additional scope requests."

GBRT Base Scope:

- Project can be delivered for close to \$420M; however,
- Additional BRT elements add value and are a priority for project partners (up to an estimated \$439M)

Chris Beckwith clarified that Action #1 is the "bread and butter" of the Gold Line. These are items that are most directly related/vital components of the BRT (stations and operations). Project can be delivered for close to \$420M.

Mayor Paul Reinke noted a couple of comments, resulting from discussions with several residents that are inquisitive about this project. Some of them are supportive and others are cynical about the costs. Items in Gold Line's 15% Plans do not meet Oakdale's Small Area Plans. For example, in Gold Line 15% design, the Helmo Avenue Station's parking lot is shown as a tear-drop shape with up to about 150 parking stalls. However, in Oakdale's small area plans, the configuration is more of a typical rectangular shape with about 106 stalls. Mayor Reinke added that the city's plans should probably take precedence. Chris Beckwith responded that at this time, the location shown in Gold Line's design matches the same location approved in conversations with the City. Design Advancement and Refinement Team (DART) meetings are facilitating ongoing coordination with the city. Project staff will take the cues from the city and work together on citing Gold Line's park and ride configuration/shape to fit what the city envisions.

Mayor Reinke mentioned that another example is the touchdown point at the new Helmo-Bielenberg bridge where the design/bridge location could change because of the existing pipeline issue. As that design advances, he is maintaining to the residents that there are no impacts to usability of those sites. Chris

Beckwith responded that this issue has also been addressed at DART meetings, where city staff and project staff worked closely to figure out how the Gold Line infrastructure and the city plans would work together. The project understands that it could decrease some of the city's developable parcels. City staff are currently reviewing how that could affect Oakdale's future development plans (by consultant Crandall Arambula).

Mayor Reinke commented that another individual reviewed observed lots of potential work items (e.g. proposed pedestrian connections/trails, retaining walls etc.) being considered in the enhanced scope. Chris replied that the reason those items were labeled potential work is because the project needs CMC to approve the action allowing project staff to proceed on designing those proposed items. Marc Briese (Gold Line Design and Construction Manager) added that the bucket of extra scope items are actually part of potential Action #2 today which also includes; bus propulsion, raised platforms, heating elements etc.

Councilmember Prince commented that she has a similar situation with a small neighborhood east of Trunk Highway 61 (Etna Street Station). The plan is to go out to meet with the residents to explain the plans/designs. Lyssa Leitner (Gold Line Deputy Project Manager) replied that Liz Jones (Outreach Lead) plans to set up a neighborhood meeting and is making calls to some of the residents to find out what times work for them. Liz will then contact Councilmember Prince to confirm her availability.

Mayor Reinke commented that there's a hierarchy of Right of Way elements and a hierarchy of use e.g. along Hudson Road/trail. The use of the existing ROW should belong to the cities first (depending on the cities' policies/practices) and then as the Gold Line project needs to buy more ROW, then it purchases more ROW. Lyssa Leitner clarified that it depends on the ROW location and who owns it i.e. MnDOT, city and county ROW all of which are partners to this project. The success of the freeway operations, general purpose lanes, pedestrian connections and the Gold Line BRT all have to fit together. Those decisions have been very different depending on the location, so this has to be dealt with on a location by location basis.

Mayor Suedkamp commented that just as a general consideration, Hudson Road in Landfall and the ROW associated with that was deeded several years ago to Oakdale because they have a lot of infrastructure buried in the roadway. Recently, with the change of ownership at Harley Davidson, a portion of the property bordering Tanner's Lake (between Century Avenue and Harley Davidson) was deeded back to the city of Landfall. The primary ROW from the roadway center would be Oakdale but moving towards the lake/bluff area, some ownership belongs to Landfall, and the highway department also owns a triangle there. Lyssa Leitner confirmed that the city Administrator brought this up to project staff a month ago and staff is aware. Chair Slawik agreed that it's a very challenging area.

Motion: Action #1 - "The CMC recommends continuing design advancement for up to \$439M of Gold Line BRT project base scope."

Motion By: Commissioner Rafael Ortega

Seconded By: Mary Brandt

Motion passed unanimously.

Chris Beckwith clarified that Action #2 relates to a series of investments (estimated at \$21.9M) that are additional BRT elements that add value and are a priority for project partners. They are important to the community and will help pedestrians, cyclists and others access the Gold Line BRT and offer additional community benefits beyond the Gold Line BRT itself.

The update since the last CMC meeting is continued support from the two counties to include these additional scope requests and counties have also committed that there would be local match. Cost sharing

policy discussions are ongoing between the counties and the cities. As requested at the last CMC, project staff conducted a walk analysis in the West Etna area to confirm that, without the West Etna connection work included in the scope, residents would have a 5 minute longer walk. Lyssa Leitner reiterated to the group that the May actions are the CMC giving the project team the go-ahead to continue to design the proposed refinements. This does not lock in project cost/scope (locked in at 30% design).

Scope Requests Recommendation/Updated Ledger (\$21.9M total cost):

4th Street Bridge/Roadway Improvements (total costs reduced from \$10.3M to \$10M) - Discussions with Oakdale resulting in removal of pedestrian connections along Hadley Avenue (about \$300K).

West Side Etna Connection (\$6M) - Etna Station to Burns (tunnel) from TAC recommendation is eliminated.

East Side Etna Connection - Pacific to Burns (\$370K+ \$500K for TH 61/Burns intersection improvements) Project staff has done more research on what the \$500K could cover and worked with MnDOT and the city. The \$500K placeholder could accommodate some helpful, worthwhile intersection improvements (may not be a long-term solution). Project staff to continue discussions.

Marc Briese confirmed that the TH 61/Burns intersection improvements would include ADA-related improvements (including upgrading the signal control) at all quadrants except for the southwest quadrant, which will be improved by the City of Saint Paul as part of the 2020 Indian Mounds Regional Trail project.

Councilmember Prince asked about the \$370K at East Etna. Chris Beckwith responded that the \$370K is the original cost of the East side Etna work. Marc Briese added that the \$370K would cover a trail connection along TH 61 between Pacific and Burns. Charles Carlson noted that the \$370K is to connect down to Burns and the extra \$500K is everything associated with the intersection. Councilmember Prince added that it's critical with the work on East Etna that people are able to cross TH 61 at that location. The recommendation from CBAC about the proposed West Etna connection being dropped is really appreciated. It's important to me that the neighborhood representative provided feedback that it's not a critical connection, especially in lieu of the costs.

Motion: Action #2 - "The CMC recommends that the GBRT project will include (design and construct) \$21.9 million in additional scope requests."

Motion By: Commissioner Weik

Seconded By: Councilmember Bryan Smith

Comments:

Commissioner Weik commented that it's important to take a step back and highlight the significance of the actions passed today. This is a significant regulatory milestone. Thank you to the amazing and talented project partners, project staff and Chair Slawik. Gold Line BRT will be amazing for the East Metro and the public and business community on the corridor are saying they need this. It's crucial to keep the east metro connected to the Twin Cities. Citizens are counting on this connection (mobility) to downtown businesses and the reverse commute into Woodbury. The only criticism heard is that they have to wait until 2024 for the line to open. It was also great to read in the April CMC notes that the FTA is excited about this project.

Chair Slawik added that it's great to hear the Gold Line project highlighted at national conferences and our region has something to be proud of. Thanks for your leadership and tenacity that moves these types of project forward.

Councilmember Prince thanked all the Gold Line Partners who provided the Letter of Support for the Kellogg Street Bridge project. The letters were extremely helpful and thank you for your support.

Mayor Suedkamp asked for clarification on the format for the FTA submittal in September and asked if there will be a packet for CMC review. Chris Beckwith explained that the submittal will be mostly written documents, financial spreadsheets with budget and cost sharing data, land use information and ridership data. Lyssa Leitner noted that the packet will be submitted to the counties for review. It's still based on 15% design, and it essentially tells the federal government to continue to include the Gold Line project in their pipeline. It however does not lock in the design. Chris Beckwith added that early September 2019 is the deadline for all New Starts projects in the Twin Cities and around the country seeking federal funding. Project staff will continue coordinating with the counties/cities on any materials needed from them.

6. NEXT STEPS/MEETING

Chair Slawik thanked project staff for their efforts and gave closing remarks.

Now that we've revised the project's scope that will be designed, we have to make sure that we keep the project on schedule for FTA approval. Some of the improvements being made along the line may require cost sharing between Washington and Ramsey Counties and their cities. By August 2019, those cost sharing agreements will need to either be formalized with a resolution or a written agreement so they can be included in the New Starts annual report we will submit to the FTA by their early September deadline. Documenting those cost sharing agreements is part of the process we will use to obtain a revised project rating from the FTA. We are making excellent progress. Particularly, the financing and timing are what moves us forward.

The next scheduled meeting is June 6, 2019. No new required actions and may not need to meet. (*Update: this June meeting was cancelled.*)

July 4, 2019 meeting is cancelled, and the next scheduled meeting is August 2019.

7. ADJOURN

Chair Slawik adjourned the meeting at 3:23 p.m.

Meeting Materials Provided:

Meeting Minutes, April 4, 2019

Meeting Agenda, May 2, 2019

CMC PowerPoint Presentation, May 2, 2019

Respectfully Submitted,

Banke Oyewumi, Recording Secretary