

METRO Gold Line Corridor Management Committee

Notes for the September 6, 2018 Meeting

Metropolitan Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Alene Tchourumoff, Paul Reinke, Stan Karwoski, Brian Lamb, Jane Prince, Jim McDonough, Lisa Weik, Rafael Ortega, Stan Suedkamp, Steve Morris, Darrell Paulsen, Harry Melander, Mary Giuliani Stephens, Sheila Kauppi

1. WELCOME (CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS AND ROLL CALL)

Chair Alene Tchourumoff called the monthly meeting of the METRO Gold Line BRT Corridor Management Committee (CMC) to order at 2:34 p.m. on September 6, 2018.

Chair Tchourumoff welcomed new CMC attendee, Mary Giuliani Stephens (Mayor of Woodbury), sitting in for Councilmember Andrea Date who can no longer attend CMC due to a new job. Mayor Stephens will be attending CMC until a new Mayor is sworn in.

Sheila Kauppi (MnDOT) will be replacing Brian Isaacson who left his position at MnDOT and now works at Ramsey County.

Committee members and other attendees introduced themselves.

2. REVIEW OF MEETING NOTES

Chair Tchourumoff asked if anyone has any comments or questions about the August 2, 2018 meeting notes.

No comments to the August 2, 2018 meeting notes.

3. CBAC UPDATE

Community and Business Advisory Committee (CBAC) Co-Chair; Darrell Paulsen presented the CBAC update report to the CMC.

Mounds Boulevard vs. Maria Avenue Station Option - Strong community preference for the Mounds Station location. Maria is too narrow, and loss of parking would be an issue. Mounds provides good infrastructure updates for pedestrians. The changes to the Mounds and I-94 ramp seem to address the safety concerns and traffic issues.

Hudson Road (Etna Street to White Bear Avenue) - Strong community preference for mixed traffic in this section.

White Bear Avenue Station Option (Hazel Street vs. Van Dyke Street) - Strong community preference for the Hazel Station location. The Hazel Station location is closer to the apartments near Ruth Street, includes more options for place-making and supports the station as a "destination". The Van Dyke location has limited visibility and would have some potential impacts to the private property development under construction near the location.

4. PROJECT SCOPE TO BE INCLUDED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (CONTINUED FROM 8/2 MEETING)

Chair Tchourumoff clarified that the next two agenda items are a continuation of the discussion from the last CMC meeting to confirm what will be included in the Gold Line project's Environmental Assessment

(EA). Chair Tchourumoff noted that the EA is not the “final word” on the project scope, but it lays the groundwork for the project and gives project staff the guidance needed to move forward on both the schedule and budget.

Marc Briese (Gold Line Design and Construction Project Manager) recapped the Gold Line Scope Refinement Process; Community Planning (ongoing), Station Area Planning and Alignment, EA Scope (confirmation today), Local Scope and Final Project Scope. Marc emphasized that today’s focus is not to finalize the overall project scope, but to have the CMC confirm the EA scope. Marc presented the updated EA Scope Concept Plans/Roll Plots (11x17 Handout):

Sheet 14A & 14B (Oakdale section between Greenway Avenue Station and I-694 and 4th Street) – CMC will not be asked to make any decisions on these today. Sheet 14A and 14B include the various options that will be included in the EA. Decisions will be made at a later date when project staff get a better feel for total cost and local scope that may be included as part of the project.

- Two-lane or three-lane section on Hadley Avenue – city of Oakdale has indicated a potential desire to include some widening at local cost.
- Along 4th Street – center running vs. mixed traffic option.
- I-694 – option that replaces the 4th Street bridge or an option to keep it in place.

Sheet 15A – A number of modifications have been made in collaboration with the city of Oakdale. The city of Oakdale has worked with consultant Crandall Arambula to develop the Gold Line BRT Transit Oriented Development (BRTOD) plan that was adopted in April 2018 and is also being incorporated into the 2040 comprehensive plan. Crandall Arambula has a contract with Washington County that allows for BRTOD planning to develop the communities along the corridor and the Helmo station is an excellent of collaboration between the city and the early Gold Line planning efforts.

- Center Running Guideway (from west to east)
- Mixed Traffic across the bridge.
- Intersection to the east of I-694 – There will be a new traffic signal, where the transition from mixed traffic to center running orientation begins. If the 4th Street bridge is replaced, the project would be running in the center running orientation already and will continue to the east.
- Another new traffic signal continuing to the east – This will be the transition area from center running to the side running orientation. Traffic signal will be two-phased; green or red (when a bus is present) for eastbound 4th Street and no signalization for westbound 4th Street.
- Gold Line staff is looking for confirmation on the general location of the Helmo, Sunray and Woodbury park and rides today.
- New pedestrian connection from Hayward intersection (adjacent to 4th Street) to an existing 8-ft trail. This will be consistent with the guiding principles for pedestrian connections; within a half-mile of the station/park and ride or fill gaps in the existing system. This connection will provide access to and from the jobs that exist off Hayward.
- New pedestrian connection west of Helmo (from 4th Street to the station)
- New pedestrian connection east of Helmo (adjacent to the station)
- Hudson Road Realignment (Helmo and 2nd Street) - Mayor Paul Reinke asked what the difference is between the potential location shown today and the design presented at the August CMC meeting. Marc Briese explained that the Hudson realignment exhibits presented today do not show the BRTOD. The city of Oakdale’s TOD development will either occur first, and Gold Line construction

follows in 2022 and 2023 or Gold Line construction occurs first, and the development follows. Gold Line final plans will incorporate Oakdale's TOD planning.

- Mayor Reinke asked if the Hudson realignment is included in the Gold Line EA study. Marc Briese responded that the environmental study needed for the changes that will occur as part of the Oakdale TOD plan are not included in the Gold Line EA. Lyssa Leitner (Gold Line Deputy Project Manager) added that the design shown today does not preclude the TOD plans and the environmental study/review has already been completed by Oakdale for the TOD. The Gold Line environmental process does not include reconstruction or the physical improvements, because it's not part of the physical Gold Line project.
- New traffic signal at the Helmo and 2nd Street intersection – The transition from a side running to a center running orientation (Sheet 15A) is to the south of that location. Traffic signal will be two-phased; green or red (when a bus is present) for southbound traffic and no signalization for northbound traffic coming across the bridge.
- Gold Line outreach activities conducted in July 2018 - Residents to the north of 4th Street were happy with the alignment. The 1% design brought the transition from Helmo to 4th Street a little bit closer to Helmo, and farther to the west.

Sheet 15B – Similar to Sheet 15B, but it includes the 4th Street bridge replacement.

Sheet 16 – Transition to north (left side)

- New Helmo/Bielenberg Drive bridge will include two general purpose lanes, two BRT lanes and a pedestrian/bike connection.
- Hudson Road – The project will be squaring off the relatively tight curve from westbound to southbound on Bielenberg Drive. It will now be a controlled movement; two left-turn lanes are added at that intersection. Marc noted that the new traffic signals shown on Sheet 16 and 17 are consistent with the city of Woodbury's access management plan/guidelines.
- Tamarack (Split Station) – Traffic signal automatically turns green when a bus is present.
- Pedestrian connection on the east side of the bridge will continue down to Hudson Road (connection between Bielenberg Drive and Landau Drive)
- Pedestrian connection down to the station on the east side of Bielenberg Drive.
- Existing pedestrian connection (private trail network to the Old Hartford Building) on the west side of Bielenberg Drive is not shown.
- Public Outreach Feedback
 - Strong support for the inclusion of general purpose traffic across the bridge.
 - Concerns about the high number of signals. The Woodbury Issue Resolution Team (IRT) process will review whether all the signals currently shown are needed.
 - Strong support for all the proposed pedestrian connections.
 - Two Data Centers (Iron Gate) on the east side of Bielenberg Drive have a large amount of infrastructure (communications, fiber optics etc.) in place, and consume a lot of power. Iron Gate parties expressed concerns about construction and requested that the project minimize impacts to their communications and power. Commissioner Karwoski asked if there is a plan to ensure that the project is not going to affect their operations. It would be great to have assurance of a good plan in place prior to construction. Marc Briese responded that Gold Line and city of Woodbury staff met with Iron Gate Data Center staff a month ago. The project team came out of the meeting with valuable information on how data centers

work and how their needs can be incorporated into the project's construction plans. Security and visibility are very important to them. Iron Gate staff also provided the contact information for someone who has helped minimize impacts on other similar projects. The project team has a good plan moving forward to minimize those impacts.

Sheet 17 –

- Existing traffic signals will need to be reconstructed. There will be a new traffic signal constructed at Nature Path (first intersection south of Tamarack Road).
- New pedestrian connections on the west side of the station down to Nature Path.
- Public Outreach Feedback
 - Residents adjacent to Bielenberg expressed concerns about noise. Noise analysis will be included as part of the EA process. Increase in noise should be minimal (maximum of 12 buses per hour).
 - Strong support for avoiding impacts to the Tamarack Nature Preserve by going from center running configuration to a mixed traffic operation.

Commissioner Karwoski reported that he has heard concerns from residents in the Tamarack Nature Preserve area about potential impacts (pollution and narrow width of the road) Residents are expecting special care be taken and specific reporting done in this unique area. Marc Briese assured that the project is taking the approach of expressly avoiding impacts to the nature preserve.

Sheet 18 –

- New traffic signal at Bielenberg Drive and Guider Drive.
- Modifications since the April 2018 Baseline include a station at Woodbury Theater and in the EA studying a new terminus (end of the line) at the Woodbury/I-494 park and ride station location. The Benefits of the design change:
 - Better aligned with the city of Woodbury's long-term development/re-development plans and the highest and best use for the Woodbury Theater site.
 - Provides benefits to Metro Transit operations and Woodbury transit users.
 - Turnarounds for buses and layover facilities for drivers.
 - Potentially allows express buses to be consolidated in a future phase.
 - Potentially include a slip ramp from that park and ride location onto I-494. Gold Line staff recently started discussions with MnDOT, so there's no indication that this will be approved or disapproved yet.
 - Cost estimate is a cost savings or cost-neutral

Mayor Reinke asked if the potential park and ride station is included in the \$420 million capital cost and if it will be evaluated as part of the EA. Chris Beckwith (Gold Line Senior Project Manager) responded that a new station at the potential Woodbury I-494 Park and Ride location was not included in the \$420 million initially. This station is being evaluated as part of the EA scope now and it could be accommodated in the \$420 million because the cost estimate is less expensive than structured parking at Woodbury Theater. It's a win-win situation for the city of Woodbury and the project.

Mayor Reinke added that this is a significant change from the initial design and asked whose idea it was. It appears that things change without the broader body's input. Mayor Giuliani Stephens responded that the city of Woodbury worked with MnDOT, Met Council and the project team on how

best to utilize and make efficiencies within the route. Woodbury staff and the project team would be happy to discuss the decision/changes with any parties with questions.

Marc Briese added that a number of recommended design modifications have been made along the Gold Line corridor, to ensure that the overall project works better. The project team relies on the IRT, TAC, CBAC and CMC, Met Council and the Counties process to help build and modify the scope.

Commissioner Karwoski noted that he agrees that the park and ride change is a great idea and it saves money. Since there are benefits to Metro Transit operations, is there a way to justify an even greater cost savings if Metro Transit subsidizes the park and ride/ramp. The cost savings can then be put towards the possibility of reconstructing the 4th Street bridge. Chris Beckwith responded that the Gold Line project is not consolidating lots and construction the park and ride structure, it would be a future project led by Metro Transit. The site where the previous Gold Line park and ride structured parking was contemplated would now be a TOD site. Metro Transit experts in that area are working directly with the city of Woodbury on using that site for something that could potentially add riders to the Gold Line in the future.

Mayor Stan Suedkamp asked if this new proposed park and ride location is larger than what existed in the previous design. Have project staff reviewed the potential for added capacity for more parking as ridership increases in the future? Chris Beckwith responded that project staff believe that there is more capacity, but the current revised design for the new terminus has the same amount of parking as the previous design.

5. DISCUSSION OF MIXED TRAFFIC VS DEDICATED GUIDEWAY

a. Gold Line Constraints and Technical Recommendations

Chris Beckwith presented an outline of the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) and technical recommendations. Chris referred attendees to Presentation Slide 11 for a summary of where mixed traffic is proposed and why.

Mixed Traffic (LPA Recommendation with Constraints) – Kellogg Bridge - planned replacement of bridge is not part of Gold Line scope, Tanners Lake and Tamarack Nature Preserve. Mayor Reinke asked if Union Depot will be mixed traffic as well. Chris Beckwith responded that Downtown Saint Paul is a mix of mixed traffic and dedicated guideway. Downtown has 0.9 miles of bus-only lanes and 1.3 miles of mixed traffic (within the Riverview corridor).

Mixed Traffic (LPA Recommendation with Options) – 4th Street bridge replacement will be studied as part of the EA.

Mixed Traffic (Additional PD Technical Recommendation) –

- Hudson Road (between Etna and White Bear). CMC decision/recommendation today on mixed traffic vs. dedicated guideway. Community preference was mixed traffic
- Woodbury Theater area along Guider Drive (extend terminus to Woodbury Theater location).

b. National Comparison

Chris Beckwith introduced BRT Guideway expert; Edgar Torres (Kimley Horn, San Diego Office). Edgar brings a wealth of technical expertise from across the country and is an MIT-trained Civil and Transportation Engineer. The project team has valued his insights and perspective on best practices of other BRT projects nationally that can be applied to Gold Line.

Edgar provided an overview of BRT guideway and Bus Lane elements and how that applies to Gold line in the national conversation on BRT. The approach is to “Get them where you’ll need them and customers will appreciate them”. Transportation should be a solution for people to get from one point to another quickly and reliably.

- Perception of Quality
- Maximize Value on Corridor and for the customer - Being able to utilize locations where mixed flow of operations does not impact operations and where physical space is constrained.

Corridor Dedicated Runningway (Gold Line)

- 20.9 corridor lane miles. 4.8 miles of guideway. About 1 mile of bus lanes in Downtown Saint Paul and 5.2 miles of mixed flow throughout the corridor.
- Gold Line project is at 75% in Dedicated Runningway. FTA defines fixed guideway BRT as 50% or more. Gold Line is in the top four nation-wide. The top two projects were previous rail corridors, so they had set aside the Right-of-Way already. Gold Line as a new corridor is actually setting a high bar by being at 75%.
- BRT provides choices and opportunities for constituents. ½ mile of guideway can equal up to two BRT grade separations, and this can be valuable when it comes to travel time savings.

Mayor Giuliani Stephens asked that, since this is Minnesota and part of the benefits of transit is reliability, what studies are done and how are the impacts on travel times and reliability determined in a guideway that’s part dedicated and part mixed traffic? Edgar Torres responded that it depends on the condition of that road and how that condition changes. If traffic volumes are consistently low (less than 1000 vehicles a day), then there is generally less interference between traffic and the bus. Curbulization is also reviewed. If the shoulder/curb is not utilized by other functions, it improves the operation of the bus is not impeded.

Mayor Suedkamp asked if the buses will have computers that provide data to analyze the difference between traffic flows seasonally and ridership. Edgar responded that data is available via the Computer Aided Dispatch and Automatic Vehicle Location (CADAVL). Metro Transit policy is to determine performance management by route. Brian Lamb (General Manager, Metro Transit) agreed and noted that buses also have automatic passenger counters to track riders that get on and off at each location.

c. Hudson Road (Etna to White Bear) Design Options (Mixed Traffic/Dedicated Guideway)

Hally Turner (acting Gold Line Deputy Project Manager) explained the Hudson Road Exhibit handout (comparison of dedicated guideway mixed traffic)

- Perception of ROW impact - A number of the homes have no fences, but have mature trees which can create a perception of impacting lawns.
- Guideway is about ½ mile-long, about 200 cars a day and 30% are in the area between 9am and 6pm. Gold Line buses will not be competing with many vehicles on a daily basis.
- There is minimal travel time savings between mixed traffic and dedicated guideway.

Mixed Traffic Option - One lane of parking and 2 lanes of mixed traffic

This option would maintain traffic in both directions (buses and vehicles sharing the area). It allows the project to save a lane of parking (beneficial for delivery vehicles). It also allows for staying exclusively within the public ROW and avoid as many mature trees as possible. This option would include curb and gutter, which will potentially impact about 30 trees. No impact to noise wall and no impact to the

Hazelwood bridge. Less congestion (operational benefits) and opportunity to potentially minimize impacts historic properties. \$13 million+ cost savings and it would operate similar to dedicated guideway. CBAC had a strong preference for mixed traffic. Public outreach feedback also showed a preference for mixed traffic. There are about 30 homes in the area and about 15 people attended the neighborhood meeting.

Dedicated Guideway - No lane of parking, one lane of travel going westbound.

This option will require an access point at Grace Lutheran. Property impacts could be considered an “adverse effect” in the EA process, because Grace Lutheran is a designated historic property; the building is considered an excellent example of mid-century modern architecture. Stopped delivery vehicles could impede traffic/BRT operations, because there’s no parking lane. There’s more impact to noise walls and the Hazelwood bridge will need to be relocated, possibly to Kennard Street.

Further to the north, two-lane dedicated guideway would impact about 60 trees and more perceptions of impact to private property. Limited operational benefits and cost savings with this option.

Councilmember Jane Prince noted that Hally’s comments are consistent with what she heard from community members she spoke to. They were more concerned about the perception of impacts to the public ROW that they assume to be their yards. Councilmember Jane Prince appreciates that she (and staff) had the opportunity to meet with Commissioner McDonough (and staff) over the past month. She concluded that she is convinced that mixed traffic is appropriate at this location. Commissioner McDonough noted concurrence with the reasonings that mixed traffic is the appropriate option. Chair Tchourumoff also concurred. Mayor Suedkamp stated that there may be a need to assess what better connectivity in this location may mean in terms of increased traffic flow in the future (may draw 3rd Street traffic going into downtown). Hally Turner explained that the cul-de-sac (mixed traffic option) limits the ability for people to travel through this area. It operates primarily as an access road for homes located in this area. CBAC Co-chair Darrell Paulsen added that because of the cost savings and the perception of residents, he also thinks that mixed traffic is the best option at this point, and it is what the public wants.

6. CMC CONFIRMATION OF EA SCOPE

Chris Beckwith noted that Page 4A and 4B of the concept plans (EA scope) show the Mounds Boulevard vs. Maria Avenue Station options. The project is ready to recommend the Mounds option and checked with MnDOT to get their concurrence and MnDOT replied with a memo. Sheila Kauppi (MnDOT) noted that MnDOT’s main concern was I-94 impacts, but they have reviewed both options and concur with the Mounds Station.

Scope to be included in the EA analysis:

- Back of Union Depot Terminus and Downtown Routing/Loop - No decision needed at this time. Both will be studied in the EA Scope.
- White Bear Station (Hazel and Van Dyke Station Locations) - No decision needed at this time. Both will be studied in the EA Scope.
- Potential 4th Street Bridge Replacement - Will be studied, but not added to the Project Scope until CMC approval.
- Guider Drive (I-494 Park and Ride Terminus in Woodbury) - No decision needed at this time. Will be studied in the EA Scope.

Two EA Scope Decisions Needed Today:

- Mounds Boulevard Station Location (preferred option)

- Hudson Road Mixed Traffic (preferred option)

Motion: Chair Tchourumoff asked for a motion to adopt the Scope to be studied in the EA.

Motion By: Commissioner McDonough (as outlined)

Seconded By: Mayor Giuliani Stephens

Motion Carried.

7. NEXT STEPS/MEETING

The next scheduled CMC meeting is October 4, 2018

- Discussion of Downtown Routing

Fall/Winter CMC meeting(s):

- Review 15% design and Updated Cost Estimate late 2018/early2019. Cost savings/changes from the baseline will be quantified.

2019

- Review 30% Design and Updated Cost Estimate and Funding
- Confirm Final Project Scope (Late Summer)

Commissioner McDonough requested an updated cost estimate based on current changes/status. Chris Beckwith confirmed that costs are being developed and an update will be provided in November/December. Chair Tchourumoff asked if that would be a normal milestone to update the budget. Chris Beckwith responded that the cost estimate not typically officially updated at 15% for transit projects, however, the team has been keeping very close track of costs throughout the design development process and feels prepared to update the CMC soon. Chris confirmed that the team is currently also working on updated ridership analysis and the information will be provided to CMC this year as well.

8. ADJOURN

Chair Tchourumoff adjourned the meeting at 4:10 p.m.

Meeting Materials Provided:

Meeting Agenda, September 6, 2018

PowerPoint Presentation, September 6, 2018

EA Scope Concept Plans (Roll Plots), September 6, 2018

Hudson Road Exhibit - Dedicated and Mixed

Types of Guideway Exhibit

Respectfully Submitted,
Banke Oyewumi, Recording Secretary