

METRO Purple Line BRT Corridor Management Committee
Notes for the October 11, 2023 Meeting
Held Virtual through Webex

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Charles Zelle, Vice Chair Victoria Reinhardt, Chai Lee, Mai Chong Xiong, Nikki Villavicencio, Nick Thompson, Luke Schlegel, Bill Walsh, Ianni Houmas, Jennifer Lor, Laurie Malone

MEMBERS ABSENT: Nelsie Yang, Peter Lindstrom, Gail Cederberg, Len Cacioppo, Lilly Melander, Lesley Kandaras, Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Scott McCune, April Crockett, Darren Tobolt

GUESTS/OTHERS PRESENT: Craig Lamothe, Stephen Smith, Sarah Pflaum, Liz Jones, Liz Sund, Mike Rogers, Nat Gorham, Beth Bartz, Lisa Wall, Sam O'Connell

1. WELCOME (CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL)

Chair Zelle called the meeting of the METRO Purple Line BRT Corridor Management Committee (CMC) to order at 1:05 PM on October 11, 2023. Chair Zelle welcomed everyone and reviewed housekeeping rules for virtual meetings, and noted the Purple Line BRT website <https://www.metrotransit.org/purple-line-project> where the meeting agenda and presentation can be downloaded, and the recording of the meeting can be viewed.

2. Recent and Upcoming Outreach & Engagement Activities

Liz Jones provided an update on the recent and upcoming outreach and engagement activities. The team continues to engage and build awareness along the Maryland and White Bear Ave corridor. We will engage with Iowa Hi-Rise to understand their needs, transit use, and specific stakeholders throughout fall and winter. Liz provided an update on Community and Business Advisory Committee (CBAC) recruitment to represent Maryland and White Bear Ave corridor. We have recruited a few new members but are still looking for additional folks. We began Corridor Walking Tours along White Bear Ave and Maryland Ave, meeting with residents, business representatives, and interested parties to see what the corridor will look like and the development of our concept designs.

Councilmember Villavicencio suggested doing targeted outreach to specific groups and stakeholders, specifically communication with the disabled and senior community. She is happy to assist with this effort and be a bridge builder.

3. Route Modification Study Phase II Update. Most Promising Roadway & Transit Design Options

Beth Bartz, RMS Phase II Lead, started the presentation with the RMS Phase II schedule and where we are now. The focus of the presentation is the process of identifying and evaluating how to incorporate transit into the existing roadways. We identified four options that we are recommending being developed into full layouts for a detailed examination of how each of these options serve transit needs to address multimodal movements through and across the corridor and how each option will serve the community. Our next steps are Tier 2 Evaluation, select the preferred White Bear Ave concept, and then compare corridors.

At each of the stages, we are narrowing the range of options, developing a greater amount of engineering, and understanding more about the potential community benefits and impacts. We

received input from the Issue Resolution Teams (IRTs), Advisory Committees, SMT, and stakeholders, and gathered information from our engagement activities.

Beth talked about roadway characteristics on Maryland and White Bear Avenue. Some considerations and factors were the number of driveways that face Maryland and White Bear Ave, the volume of pedestrian crossings, the amount of traffic currently carried by the two roadways, the CIG Program, and right-of-way width and how concepts would affect property access. Another factor is public safety and concerns with pedestrian crossing and vehicular safety issues. We identified seven intersections above the expected crash rate.

Lisa Wall presented the concept options identified and evaluated guideway configurations including the center running options, dedicated side / reversible lane, and single transit lane / mixed traffic. She talked about the key factors and how they were applied to each cross-section to identify which alternatives would advance forward into Tier 2 analysis.

Based on the criteria, the guideway configurations of the reversible or bi-directional and mixed traffic alternatives are not advanced to Tier 1 Screening.

After defining the universe of options and the Tier 1 screening process, we determined the four alternatives with these six combinations to move forward for further study: semi-exclusive side running, semi-exclusive side running side running with median, exclusive center with median, exclusive center dedicated guideway-center, and 3-lane roadway with 1 transit lane.

On behalf of Councilmember Yang, Jennifer Lor asked why the 4-to-3 lane conversion is no longer an option. Craig Lamothe responded the project team is aware of the City of St. Paul's request for a 4-to-3 conversion on Maryland and White Bear Ave South. He said it's a variation of the mixed traffic option that was identified and screened out. It's contrary to the previous policy direction. Craig explained the key risks and outcomes of a 4-to-3 conversion. BRT project will not be eligible for federal transit funds if there isn't at least 50% fixed guideway end to end of the project, roadway reconstruction of a 4-to-3 conversion is not eligible for federal transit funds, and speed and reliability. We need to be consistent to meet the needs and purpose of the project and to bring pedestrian safety improvement with transit advantages.

Chair Zelle stated the 4-to-3 conversion jeopardizes federal funding and takes away transit advantage.

Commissioner Reinhardt stated Ramsey County does not support the 4-to-3 conversion and will not fund a mixed-traffic project. She said dedicated lanes would transform the roadways by maximizing the transit advantage, improving mobility, and enhancing safety in the corridor. She thinks there is a risk in studying it as a possible option because it's misleading to the public, expensive, and time-consuming. Ramsey County doesn't support the 4-to-3 conversion.

Jennifer Lor stated the City of St. Paul understands the 4-to-3 lane conversion would disqualify the project from federal transit funds. She said Councilmember Yang has drivability and safety concerns for vehicles (e.g., buses effect line of sight) and wants to hear what alternative investments would be made on White Bear Ave. It is not a safe road and has to do with drivability (e.g., potholes in every intersection). Councilmember Yang is interested in transparency of costs given the 3-lane is not an option and Ramsey County is not willing to invest. She asked if the project cost remains the same and what efforts are being made to keep the budget transparent so CMC can make an informed decision based on the transparency cost.

Chair Zelle appreciates the comments and said safety improvements should be part of the project. Commissioner Reinhardt agreed these are important questions and said a full road reconstruction would improve safety.

Commissioner Xiong said we know what a 4-to-3 conversion looks like on Maryland Ave. From 35E to Johnson Parkway is 3-lane traffic, and it doesn't resolve issues constituents have around safety crossing the street. Commissioner Xiong said she has some concerns about Maryland not having a median and asked what will deter the public from using those guideways.

Beth Bartz said a diamond symbol in the lane and treating it with different colors or types of asphalt to indicate the lane is not available. She also said this is a concern we will explore during the layout development process in Tier 2. Nick Thompson said we've been installing lanes like this on E Line and B Line, and we will have the experience and confidence to make it work.

Route Mod Study Phase II Update: Preferred Roadway and Transit Design Concept Roadmap.

Stephen Smith presented the RMS Phase II Project Schedule. We are moving to Tier 2 Evaluation and will focus on layout development and traffic analysis. At the next meeting, we will bring information related to performance and rating analysis on the four options. Stephen walked through the next steps for Tier 2 design concepts for fall and Winter 2023 and Q1 2024 and Tier 2 Evaluation Criteria.

Liz Jones talked about the next steps related to Tier 2 Community Outreach and Engagement. Oct–Dec 2023, we will continue to get feedback from the corridor walks, community groups, and individual stakeholders. In early 2024, we will continue to have community open houses, meet with community groups and individual stakeholders, and have workshops with Maplewood City Council and Saint Paul Planning Commission Transportation Committee.

4. Other Items/Around the Table

Chair Zelle asked if anyone had questions or comments.

Commissioner Xiong emphasizes current intersections that are not safe and higher crashes and recommends a partnership with law enforcement to help design stations to deter crime.

Chair Zelle, we know from our work our various safety initiatives bring more defensive and welcoming design. As we operate these transitways, we want to ensure a welcoming and safe environment for our customers.

Councilmember Villavicencio would like to see partnerships with law enforcement and other non-profit organizations in our communities so that we can do an intervention.

Chair Zelle mentioned we have initiated a transit intervention project with social services and multiple jurisdictions and will make sure Purple Line CMC is aware of some of these efforts as they build.

5. Next Steps

Chair Zelle expressed gratitude and stated the November CMC meeting may be canceled.

6. ADJOURN

Chair Zelle adjourned the meeting at 2:28 PM.

Meeting Materials Provided:

Meeting Agenda, October 11, 2023

CMC PowerPoint Presentation,

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Sund, Purple Line Administrative Lead