

METRO Purple Line BRT Corridor Management Committee
Notes for the January 10, 2024 Meeting
Held Virtual through Webex

MEMBERS PRESENT: Vice Chair Victoria Reinhardt, Chai Lee, Mai Chong Xiong, Nikki Villavicencio, Laurie Malone, Ianni Houmas, Bill Walsh, Nick Thompson, Khani Sahebjam, Gail Cederberg, Brad Larsen, Jennifer Lor

MEMBERS ABSENT: Chair Zelle, Nelsie Yang, Peter Lindstrom, Len Cacioppo, Lilly Melander, Lesley Kandaras, Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Scott McCune, Luke Schlegel

GUESTS/OTHERS PRESENT: Craig Lamothe, Stephen Smith, Sarah Pflaum, Liz Jones, Liz Sund, Mike Rogers, Nat Gorham, Jason Tintes

1. WELCOME (CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL)

Vice Chair Reinhardt called the meeting of the METRO Purple Line BRT Corridor Management Committee (CMC) to order at 1:05 PM on January 10, 2024. Vice Chair Reinhardt 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. Two new MnDOT representatives were introduced, Khani Sahebjam, Metro District Engineer and Brad Larsen, Metro District Planning, Program Management and Transit Director (acting).

2. Community & Business Advisory Committee Report

Ianni Houmas summarized the highlights from the December 6, 2023, Community and Business Advisory Committee (CBAC) meeting. There are six new members representing the White Bear Ave Corridor. Topics discussed were Larpenteur station moving to Idaho, lane configurations, and traffic impacts. Concerns about semi-exclusive lanes, cut-through traffic going into neighborhoods with lane reductions, changes to driveway access north of Larpenteur, and business concerns about traffic pattern changes. How will the Purple Line ridership compare to the existing bus Route 54.

3. Recent and Upcoming Outreach & Engagement Activities

Liz Jones, Community Outreach and Engagement Lead, summarized the 2023 Activities Report and the project's recent and upcoming outreach and engagement activities in the corridor communities. We held corridor walk events and received feedback. We continue to do pop-ups, community events, and stakeholder meetings. She presented the upcoming RMS Phase II potential property impacts engagement process and the upcoming RMS Phase II formal public comment periods in March-April and July-August 2024. The first being an effort to solicit feedback and preference on all the layout options for White Bear Avenue.

Commissioner Reinhardt expressed gratitude for the engagement.

4. Larpenteur Ave Station Location Update (CMC ACTION)

Sara Pflaum, Engineering and Design Manager, and Liz Jones, Community Outreach and Engagement Lead, walked through the technical evaluation and public feedback associated with the proposed station location change.

Most station locations are current Route 54 stops with roughly half-mile spacing, providing 5-minute walk access coverage throughout most of the corridor. Larpenteur Ave Station is currently on the border of St. Paul and Maplewood. The existing Route 54 stops at this location. As we started engagement, we began hearing from people that we may want to shift the station closer to the existing Iowa Hi-Rise and planned GloryVille development to serve the community better. We compared the area impacts.

Liz talked about engagement with Iowa Hi-Rise and GloryVille development, and we received support to move the station closer. GloryVille is interested in incorporating the local route stop into its development if desired by Metro Transit.

Councilmember Lee asked if the current owner of GloryVille has plans. Sara said it's a good site for redevelopment in the future.

Commissioner Reinhardt asked for a motion that the Corridor Management Committee (CMC) concurred with project staff recommendation to shift the Larpenteur Ave Station to Idaho Ave for purposes of further technical evaluation and community engagement.

Motion carried on the following roll call vote:

Aye: Victoria Reinhardt, Chai Lee, Mai Chong Xiong, Jennifer Lor, Nikki Villavicencio, Bill Walsh, Laurie Malone, Ianni Houmas, Nick Thompson, Khani Sahebjam

Comments from Microsoft Teams Chat:

Councilmember Villavicencio asked when outreach was done at the Iowa Hi-Rise. Liz Jones responded they did engagement in October and November and received great feedback. Ianni mentioned he was there with Colin in September for an event. Nikki asked what the main reason for the Larpenteur to Idaho shift was. Craig explained we received feedback from multiple stakeholders. Our technical analysis identified critical mass at the transit stop, and Iowa Hi-Rise has a high ridership. Construction for the Gloryville development may begin in 2025.

Councilmember Lee said the Hi-Rise is at the edge of St. Paul and has many elderly/mobility-challenged, immigrants/refugees, and low-income folks who depend on transit. Ianni Houmas commented that older adults from the Hi-Rise would like it closer to them than this current move.

Councilmember Villavicencio said she mentioned multiple times she wanted to go with to the Hi-Rise building. She said there wasn't enough time to object, and virtual meetings call for roll call voting for any vote. Liz Jones apologized that we missed including her at the Iowa Hi Rise events and will follow up with her to ensure it doesn't happen again.

Councilmember Villavicencio asked if our motion should be a roll call vote. Commissioner Reinhardt agreed and took the vote.

5. North End District (Segment 5) Routing & Station Options Update

Sara Pflaum, Engineering and Design Manager, and Liz Jones, Community Outreach and Engagement Lead, provided an update on roadway and transit design options and station locations to serve Maplewood's North End District. Hazelwood/St. John's Blvd Station with Co. Rd. D Layover and Turnaround and MMTC Terminus with local route connection are the two options advancing forward for more in-depth study. Sara presented drawings of existing conditions, cross-sections, and plan view options. Three configuration options we are looking at are mixed traffic, side running transit lanes, and side running dedicated guideway.

During the meeting with St. John's leadership staff, they indicated 30-minute service and a quick and reliable local connection between the hospital and Century College would be sufficient to satisfy their stated needs. The survey revealed that there is minimal transit use, few use transit as the primary commute mode, and there are few transit options or rapid transit options to reduce commute times.

Commissioner Reinhardt said it's difficult to answer survey questions if people haven't had transit options.

Commissioner Xiong asked if the survey was from staff only or clients/patients. Craig said we sent the survey to about 2800 employees based on the hospital campus.

6. Route Modification Study Tier 2 Evaluation Overview

Stephen Smith, Deputy Project Manager, provided an overview of the evaluation criteria used to narrow down to 4 options and roll plots developed for each option. We plan to present the technical analysis to the public for feedback and comments in March and April. We will bring the information we receive to the CMC in the coming months. Criteria measures will be distinguished between differentiators and non-differentiators. We are evaluating at a segment level and corridor level. Each criteria theme is measured equally, and we may need to consider additional measures to differentiate between options.

7. Conceptual Engineering Layouts & Visualizations

Sara Pflaum presented various layout and visualization options for Maryland Avenue, White Bear Avenue South, and White Bear Avenue North. She discussed the different layout choices, which include semi-exclusive, side-running transit lanes throughout, semi-exclusive, side-running, and center dedicated transit lanes, a 3-lane roadway with one transit lane and center dedicated transit lanes, and a 3-lane roadway with one transit lane and semi-exclusive, side-running transit lanes.

Comments from Microsoft Teams Chat:

Ianni Houmas asked about the design. What would prevent either side-by-side or both in center lanes as dedicated BRT from allowing cross-traffic access at lighted intersections? I'm referring to WBA South.

Mai Chong Xiong: Do you mean White Bear north/south of Larpenteur? Liz Jones said White Bear Ave North and South refer to the north and south of Larpenteur.

Mai Chong Xiong: It's also important to consider the timing of traffic lights and where we can use ped-led lighting. Sara Pflaum responded absolutely. We will go through some of that at a high level as we continue to design and then go into more detail after we select a route.

8. Next Steps

Craig Lamothe, Project Manager, presented a 2-month adjustment to the RMS Phase II schedule. He also previewed the CMC meetings from February to September 2024. Next meeting will likely be in March with a focus on differentiating technical evaluation results. Then we plan to return in May with a preferred concept recommendation for consideration.

9. Other Items

No other items.

10. Adjourn

Vice Chair Reinhardt adjourned the meeting at 2:30 PM.

Meeting Materials Provided:

Meeting Agenda, January 10, 2024

CMC PowerPoint Presentation,

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Sund, Purple Line Administrative Lead