

METRO Purple Line BRT Corridor Management Committee
Notes for the April 6, 2023 Meeting
Held Virtual through Webex

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Charles Zelle, Vice Chair Victoria Reinhardt, Sue Vento, Eric Goebel, Scott McCune, Mai Chong Xiong, Nelsie Yang, Mike Barnes, Nikki Villavicencio, Len Cacioppo, Lilly Melander, Lesley Kandaras, Laurie Malone

MEMBERS ABSENT: Nick Thompson, Luke Schlegel, Ianni Houmas, Bill Walsh, Gretchen Artig-Swomley

GUESTS/OTHERS PRESENT: Mike Rogers, Sam O'Connell, Sara Pflaum, Craig Lamothe, Stephen Smith, Liz Jones, Liz Sund

1. WELCOME (CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL)

Chair Charlie Zelle called the meeting of the METRO Purple Line BRT Corridor Management Committee (CMC) to order at 1:00 PM on April 6, 2023. Chair Zelle welcomed everyone. Chair Zelle 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.

Roll call is taken and introductions made.

Review of 9/16/2022 Purple Line CMC Meeting summary notes. No comments and edits were raised.

2. NEW MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS

Vice Chair Reinhardt introduced new CMC members:

- Mai Chong Xiong, Ramsey County Commissioner
- Lilly Melander, Mahtomedi Council Member
- Laurie Malone, CBAC Co-Chair

3. Municipal Project Partner Engagement

Craig Lamothe provided an update on municipal project partner engagement. Vadnais Heights City Council passed a resolution on a three- to-one vote on Dec. 6, 2022. As a result of the action and new council members the project team met with the city council and conveyed that a federally eligible Vadnais Heights endpoint routing appears to be challenging. Network Now and future Purple Line connecting bus planning were identified as opportunities to potentially explore transit needs and service improvements in the city. Purple Line received some feedback from Mayor Krachmer; her perspective is it wouldn't be viewed as a success if the BRT doesn't go north of I-694.

Councilmember Goebel stated Vadnais Heights is interested in more transit options and welcomes the Purple Line. They would still like ongoing communication about the project. He said County Rd D is lower income, high density residential, and needs transit options. Chair Zelle acknowledged and appreciated his thoughts.

Craig provided an update on Maplewood City Council passed a resolution on Oct. 24, 2022. The City of Maplewood recommended the modification study that was underway the timeline be expanded to create an engagement plan to evaluate a broader set of options and routes that work for all. The outcome of the resolution lead to a city engagement process that included a task force and four workshops, survey, and an email. The purpose of the workshops was to give an opportunity for Met Council and Rush Line Coalition to make presentations to provide comment sessions.

Councilmember Villavicencio said a lot of engagement happened and needs to continue. She provided a summary of Maplewood's final report and read the recommendation.

Final Recommendation: The Purple Line Community Advisory Committee recommends that the Metropolitan Council perform a new route alternative analysis/study to focus on White Bear Avenue as an alternative route for the Purple Line; and any review and analysis must include robust public engagement with residents, community stakeholders, and staff from the Metropolitan Council, Ramsey County, and the City of Maplewood.

No questions were asked.

4. Ramsey County Letter to Maplewood

Commissioner Reinhardt provided an update on the Ramsey County letter to the City of Maplewood and provided an update on White Bear Ave as an alternative route. She expressed gratitude for the partnerships and community. Reinhardt stated she sat down with the Chair of Ramsey County Board, Trista MatasCastillo and Commissioner Ortega to discuss options and why White Bear Avenue wasn't an alternative. In the past, White Bear Ave and Hwy 61 were looked at, but the council and community had a different attitude and focused on vehicles and not different modes of transportation. Now everyone has come together to look at the alternative route for White Bear Ave and the endpoint.

Stephen Smith reviewed the Ramsey County letter, which states the direction to evaluate the new alignment along White Bear Ave, between Maryland Ave in St. Paul and Beam Ave. in Maplewood. Through the engagement process, there is support from Maplewood, the city council, and advisory committee members. Stephen provided additional information regarding the White Bear Avenue alternative alignment route. There is a lot to learn and see what federal viability looks like.

Stephen read the CMC statement of concurrence: White Bear Avenue Alternative. The goal is to position this new alternative to be compared to the BRT line/regional trail colocation alternative to inform a recommendation on the final alignment and northern terminus station for Purple Line.

Chair Zelle thanked Stephen and Commissioner Reinhardt. He expressed appreciation for Ramsey County leadership. Chair Zelle asked if there were any concerns or questions. There were no concerns or questions.

Councilmember Yang expressed support for the realignment of Purple Line onto White Bear Avenue. She's heard great things from her constituents. She raised awareness to prioritize the safety of pedestrians, bikers, and riders on White Bear Ave. She spoke to the St. Paul Public Works director and staff members at the county, and we need to continue the conversation about building safety on the streets. Commissioner Reinhardt noted that from the county and Purple Line Task Force perspective, electric buses are still important from an environmental standpoint. Chair Zelle moved forward with the statement of concurrence with exploring the alternative alignment.

5. BRT Route Modification Study (RMS) Phase 1 Update

Stephen Smith distinguished RMS Phase 1 from RMS Phase 2 and what was learned. He provided an update and reviewed the future transit map, Phase 1 endpoint, and routing options. Stephen said the project rating determines Federal Funding eligibility and talked about criteria for the project justification and local financial commitment; both must be medium or better to be federally viable. He presented the project justification from Fall 2022 for the three endpoints and said we were trying to focus on improving environmental benefits and cost effectiveness. The team did a great job helping with the environmental benefits and cost effectiveness. What we learned about the Federal Eligibility project summary in September was routing options 2C – via St. Johns Blvd/Beam Ave and 2D – via Beam Ave are projected to be eligible for future federal funding.

The RMS Phase 1 next steps are the Bruce Vento Regional Trail alignment (RMS Phase I) will be later compared to the White Bear Ave routing alternative (RMS Phase II), and Purple Line staff are determining appropriate stopping points to wrap up the current alignment for later comparison such as:

- Project data collections, i.e., soil borings, utility locates
- Record of decision on scope elements
- Environmental process
- Technical studies
- Scope, schedule, and budget
- 30% design / 60% design

6. BRT Route Modification Study (RMS) Phase 2 Next Steps

Craig Lamothe talked about the next steps for Phase II and stated we will continue to stay consistent with the project's purpose and needs. We'll come back to this group in June with more detailed information.

RMS Phase II next steps:

- Create RMS Phase 2 plan and schedule. This will be shared and vetted through project committees.
- Outreach and engagement throughout this process and during points of key decision-making.
- Evaluate performance and potential impacts to social, environmental, and economic development using similar evaluation metrics and methods that were used to evaluate end point alternatives in RMS Phase I.

7. Arcade Street Station Location Update and Recommendation

Sara Pflaum went over the three options evaluated at the Arcade Street Station locations she presented in September 2022.

- Option A: Station at Arcade/Neid intersection
- Option B: Station located along Phalen Blvd with a pedestrian walkway to Arcade/Neid intersection.
- Option C: Station located at Wells Street.

Sara reviewed the key takeaways from Arcade Street Station engagement and provided an Arcade Station evaluation summary. Most respondents are using Metro Transit at some frequency today. Of the three station location options, Option A with the pedestrian connection and Phalen Blvd shift is the most preferred by respondents. Overall, community members view accessibility as a top priority and want improvements to include convenient pedestrian access to the station. When we considered all the evaluation criteria, Options A and B all performed satisfactorily in all criteria. There are some safety concerns identified in Option B due to elevation differences between Phalen and Arcade, and Option C did not perform satisfactorily in support of local vision.

Sara read the CMC statement of concurrence: Preferred Arcade St Station Location. “The CMC concurs with project staff recommendations that the Purple Line BRT project use A2 Arcade St/Neid Ln as the preferred option and eliminate Arcade Alternative B & C (Stations along Phalen Blvd) from further consideration”.

Councilmember Yang expressed support for the recommendation and appreciation of the work and engagement. She said Option A2 is the preferred option for the community. Chair Zelle asked if there were any concerns or questions. There were no concerns or questions. Chair Zelle moved forward with the concurrence for this recommendation.

8. NEXT STEPS

Chair Zelle stated the next CMC meeting will be in June 2023. We will continue to move forward, stay connected, and provide updates. We'll go over the results of some of the technical evaluation of the new alternative and results of additional engagement. The Chair expressed gratitude for the partnership, support, and continue to make progress.

9. Other Items/Around the Table

Councilmember Vento expressed thanks for the partnerships, Commissioner Reinhardt, Ramsey County, and Metro Transit Staff. Commissioner Reinhardt thanked everyone and appreciated everyone working together.

10. ADJOURN

Chair Zelle adjourned the meeting at 2:21 PM.

Meeting Materials Provided:

Meeting Agenda, April 6, 2023

CMC PowerPoint Presentation, April 6, 2023

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Sund, Purple Line Administrative Lead