

METRO Purple Line BRT Corridor Management Committee
Notes for the September 13, 2023 Meeting
Held Virtual through Webex

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Charles Zelle, Chai Lee, Gail Cederberg, Mai Chong Xiong, Nick Thompson, Luke Schlegel, Bill Walsh, Ianni Houmas, Len Cacioppo, Mike Barnes, Jennifer Lor, April Crockett

MEMBERS ABSENT: Vice Chair Victoria Reinhardt, Nelsie Yang, Laurie Malone, Nikki Villavicencio, Toni Carter, Lilly Melander, Lesley Kandaras, Eric Goebel, Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Scott McCune

GUESTS/OTHERS PRESENT: Craig Lamothe, Stephen Smith, Sarah Pflaum, Liz Jones, Liz Sund, Mike Rogers, Meghan Litsey, Winona Yang

1. WELCOME (CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL)

Council Member Lee called the meeting of the METRO Purple Line BRT Corridor Management Committee (CMC) to order at 1:06 PM on September 13, 2023. Council member Lee 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. He acknowledged this is Mike Barnes last CMC meeting.

2. Community & Business Advisory Committee (CBAC) Report

Liz Jones provided a summary from the September 11th CBAC meeting. They received good feedback on the proposed station locations. The top three prioritized station location preferences are White Bear Ave at Maryland Ave, Larpenteur Ave, and Maplewood Mall Transit Center. We have heard feedback and have had conversations with the public about the importance of selecting station locations or other areas wanting access and proximity to housing, affordable housing, jobs, accessible and safe, and stops near transit dependent populations. The Committee members brought up that there may be a new housing development on the former Hafner's site at 1570 White Bear Ave between Iowa Ave and Hoyt Ave that the team might want to consider when solidifying station platform locations.

3. Route Modification Study Phase II Update

Craig Lamothe talked about the demographics of Maryland and White Bear Avenue. The metrics indicate a strong likelihood of good transit use. He provided an update on the project schedule, and next month will be a preview of the most promising roadway and transit design options for Maryland to White Bear Ave as coming out of the Tier 1 screening process. We will evaluate the most promising concepts for the remainder of Fall and Winter and bring them back to the committee in March 2024.

Craig provided an update on the Project Development Phase Extension request. The PD Phase is scheduled to end on December 8, 2023, and with the changes to the project, we will not meet the requirements by December 8. We have had conversations with FTA staff regarding their expectations for a PD Phase Extension request and schedule. We are seeking a 22-month time extension to complete the PD phase requirements with the environmental review process driving the schedule.

Craig said we will seek concurrence on the general station locations to set support for upcoming technical evaluation and community engagement at the end of the presentation.

Councilmember Lee asked how difficult it is to get a PD extension from the FTA and have any of our other projects request a PD extension. Craig responded we have not asked for an extension for our projects, but the FTA has granted extensions over the years to other projects.

Community Outreach and Engagement on Potential Station Locations

Liz Jones provided an update on outreach, engagement, and feedback on 12 proposed station locations. Between May and August, staff conducted engagements with the public, business owners, and stakeholders to share information about the project, answer questions, and seek input regarding the station locations for RMS Phase II. They've reached approx. 800-900 people.

Commissioner Xiong asked if we started collecting the demographics of survey participants and if it reflects the demographics of the community right now. Liz said as we progress into the next phase, we will have more specific survey questions and will include optional demographic information for that effort.

Luke Schlegel asked as we move forward with the North endpoint, will we understand how Century College demand will be met, based on the station locations along White Bear Ave. Liz acknowledged there continues to be expressed interest in better transit service between the St. Paul's East Side and Century College. She noted that the RMS Phase II schedule includes time early next year to revisit whether or not a Purple Line extension to Century College via the White Bear Ave Corridor would be viable.

Staff Recommendation Station Locations

Sara Pflaum presented the 12 proposed station locations with more detailed information and key considerations of each station and why the team chose those locations. The team has looked at corridor walkability and showed the coverage of the stations. You can walk within 10 minutes to/from the stations.

Commissioner Xiong asked if a 10-minute walkshed is standard and if we would consider a 5-minute walkshed to stations. Sara responded it is standard for transit projects. We try to look at where there are gaps and potentially make improvements to get folks to stations. Craig stated we also look at low-stress and high-stress walks. The FTA recognizes and allows us to pay for pedestrian connection improvements. Commissioner Xiong asked if the team would consider the Iowa high-rise and future development for housing. Staff stated we will look further into it. Craig said the St. Paul Housing Authority controls the parcel and thinks it might be used for redevelopment and would help us answer questions if we understand what the development might be in the future.

Ianni Houmas supports Commissioner Xiong's statement on the Iowa high-rise and Hafner site, and the team might want to consider looking at getting closer or adding a stop.

CMC Concurrence: Station Locations

The Corridor Management Committee (CMC) concurred with project staff's recommendation to advance 12 proposed Purple Line bus rapid transit station locations for further technical evaluation and community engagement along the Maryland and White Bear avenues route.

Next Steps: Most Promising Design Options

Stephen provided an update on the RMS Phase II project schedule, five roadway segments, and roadway characteristics and highlighted the differences between Maryland Ave and White Bear Ave. We'll look at opportunities to create better connections and bridge gaps. Stephen walked through the guideway configurations and noted that staff will be bringing forward the 3-4 most promising design concepts for Maryland Ave and White Bear Ave in next month's meeting. Key themes shaping the selection are pedestrian crossing volumes, traffic volumes, operations and safety concerns, efficient operations of the Purple Line, and provisions for local bus operations.

4. Other Items/Around the Table

There were no other items.

5. Next Steps

Chair Zelle expressed gratitude and stated the next CMC meeting will be October 11, 2023. We will continue to move forward, stay connected, and provide updates. Monthly meetings are currently scheduled thru September 2024.

6. ADJOURN

Chair Zelle adjourned the meeting at 2:18 PM.

Meeting Materials Provided:

Meeting Agenda, September 13, 2023

CMC PowerPoint Presentation,

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Sund, Purple Line Administrative Lead