



West Broadway Transit Study Policy Advisory Committee

April 8, 2015 10:00 – 11:30 am
Davis Center, Minneapolis Public Schools
1250 West Broadway Avenue, Minneapolis
Room N1-051

PAC Member and Alternate Attendees

Chair Gary Cunningham, Metropolitan Council Member
Pat Backen, City of Robbinsdale Member
Blong Yang, City of Minneapolis Member
Peter Wagenius, City of Minneapolis Alternate

Larry Fonnest, City of Golden Valley Member
Joanie Clausen, City of Golden Valley Alternate
Tina Sanz for Linda Higgins, Hennepin County Member

Other Attendees

Shelley Miller, Metro Transit
Charles Carlson, Metro Transit
Michael Mechtenberg, Metro Transit
Brent Rusco, Hennepin County
Kelly Hoffman, Hennepin County
Karen Lyons, Metropolitan Council
Steve Hay, City of Minneapolis
Jim Voll, City of Minneapolis

Emily Goellner, City of Golden Valley
Mona Elabbady, SRF Consulting
Adele Hall, SRF Consulting
Tom Leighton, Tangible Consulting
James Garrett, 4RM+ULA Architects
Eric Rothman, HR&A Advisors
Kyle Vangel, HR&A Advisors
Erin Lonoff, HR&A Advisors

1. Introductions

- Councilmember Cunningham opened the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves and state their affiliation with and expectations for the project.

2. Committee Structure and PAC Roles and Responsibilities

- The Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) will make recommendations to the full Metropolitan Council. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), composed of engineers and planners, will advise the PAC on the technical aspects of the project. The Community Advisory Committee (CAC), composed of residents and members of the business community, will advise the PAC on community issues and perspectives. This is the usual way of organizing transit projects.
- PAC Members agreed that there will be issues that come before the group that they do not agree on, but that all will be respectful of each other's opinions. The PAC will need to make decisions at several points throughout the project. Chair Cunningham stated that he will try to reach consensus on issues, but votes may be needed. Once a decision is made, it is the decision



of the group. The group includes elected and appointed officials and all points of view are welcome.

- Charles Carlson informed the group that the project created an application process and sought applicants for the CAC. The applicants are a diverse set of residents and business members; the list of CAC members is on the “committees” handout. If PAC members have ideas for people who should be added to this group, please let staff know. In addition to the people listed, Reverend Howell and one or two youth from Juxtaposition Arts will be members. The CAC will select a representative of their group to sit on the PAC.

3. West Broadway Transit Study Overview

- The genesis of the West Broadway Transit Study was the Blue Line LRT Extension locally preferred alternative (LPA) decision. The LPA decision also led to the Penn Avenue Community Works Project led by Hennepin County, a Metropolitan Council investment in a transit-oriented development (TOD) project at Penn and West Broadway Avenues, and pursuit of arterial bus rapid transit (BRT) projects on Penn Avenue and on Emerson/Fremont Avenues. These projects will transform local bus service into high quality, high frequency transit service.
- The Route 14 serves the West Broadway corridor today and extends into south Minneapolis. On both its north and south ends the Route has several branches. It goes to a lot of places, which is helpful, but is also complex and confusing. The Route 14 carries approximately 3,200 riders a day; this is strong ridership for the level of service offered on the route. It operates at about 12.9 mph; half of the time that this bus is operating, it’s stopped, either at red lights or at bus stops.
- The transit study will begin engaging the community this month, and the project team is keeping equity at the forefront of the study. The team has begun considering potential alignments for arterial BRT and streetcar. Information on future ridership and other technical aspects of the project will be available at the following PAC meetings.
- PAC alternate Peter Wagenius noted that for the purpose of this study it is assumed that Penn Avenue and Emerson/Fremont arterial BRT, as well as Bottineau LRT, are implemented. The West Broadway Transit Study is not competing with these projects, rather it will complement them.

4. Purpose, Need, and Goals of the West Broadway Transit Project

- Mona Elabbady referred PAC members to the Purpose, Need, and Goals handout. This document outlines the issues that this project seeks to address. Staff has identified the purpose and need for the project and would like the PAC’s approval of the project goals. The project’s needs are as follows:
 - A need for economic and physical revitalization: the Metropolitan Council has committed to using equity as a lens for evaluating their projects and plans. The West Broadway study area is in an Area of Concentrated Poverty with a high percent of people of color.
 - A need to serve the high proportion of residents who rely on transit: the West Broadway study area has more than twice the rate of zero-car households in the region. Numbers



are higher along West Broadway and in downtown Robbinsdale, where there is a concentration of senior housing. The data do not reveal whether zero car households are by choice or by economic necessity.

- A need to serve a variety of transportation markets: the Route 14 serves markets other than commuters. It has strong ridership throughout the day; results of the Metropolitan Council Transit On-Board survey show that 60 percent of home-based work trips on the route are happening during off-peak periods. This is higher than the metro average.
- A need for facilities and amenities commensurate with demand: there are some high-boarding locations along the Route 14 where there is no shelter. Metro Transit has been working on this issue as part of separate project and has done research on the topic. In many places, the corridor doesn't have enough space to add a shelter without blocking the sidewalk completely. On the western end of West Broadway where the road was reconstructed this has been ameliorated, but the eastern end was not reconstructed. PAC member Blong Yang commented that a solution to the shelter issue needs to be worked out in the short term; it cannot wait.
- A need for predictable transit service: as noted previously, more than half of the time it's in operation, the Route 14 isn't moving. The route is also complex with several tails. PAC member Pat Backen noted that this is a critical issue, as is timing between east-west and north-south routes. If you miss a bus, you'll be waiting for a while; with the lack of amenities, this is problematic. PAC alternate Peter Wagenius commented that while the study is geared toward an LPA decision, the group also needs to look holistically at the challenges of reliable transit service. Metro passes make a big difference because people board quickly; when people pay with coins boarding is much slower. In addition to capital investments, also need to consider the benefits of higher Metropass use in north Minneapolis.
- A need to serve forecasted population and employment growth: much of the growth forecast for the corridor is in the North Loop, but there are still great opportunities for the entire corridor.
- Finally, a need for consistency with city and regional policies: cities' and regional policy call for accommodating growth along transit corridors.
- The goals of the project listed on the handout are consistent with each of the needs. PAC alternate Peter Wagenius made a motion to approve the listed goals; PAC member Pat Backen seconded the motion. Discussion:
 - PAC alternate Tina Sanz asked if Metro Transit intends to wait until the end of the West Broadway Transit Study to improve shelters on West Broadway. Charles Carlson confirmed that there is no intention to wait. A separately funded project is currently underway in north Minneapolis and on the east side of Saint Paul to address these issues. Metro Transit will make minor investment without completion of the study, but if road reconstruction is necessary, it will wait for completion of the study. Metro Transit is also working on a new design for a more slender shelter that could fit onto narrower sidewalks. Some of these shelters have already been installed in north Minneapolis.



- Hearing no further discussion on the goals, Chair Cunningham called for a vote. The purpose, need, and goals passed unanimously on a voice vote.

5. Community Engagement Overview

- James Garrett described the project team’s proposed approach to community engagement throughout the study. Outreach will be online, on street, and at face-to-face meetings. The team intends to engage youth, elderly, and transit riders in interactive ways to gather people’s experiences and share the motivation and information of the study with them. Engagement will be based on three actions/questions:
 - Asset mapping: asking about the destinations in the corridor and locations where people need to be.
 - Obstacles: asking what makes using transit to reach these destinations difficult; the intention is to have a dialogue that allows people to share their experience.
 - Best practices and experiences from other places: the team will share these and let people decide what could be a good fit for the corridor.
- There is a high percentage of young people in the West Broadway neighborhoods. The project team is working with some local leaders to deploy young people to do peer-on-peer engagement. For the on-street activities the project team will be working with Juxtaposition Arts and their “tactical urbanism” youth arts team.
- Techniques for engaging people will include: mini charrettes at events that will cover the three topics—asset mapping, obstacles, and best practices; six word stories at events and on social media; pop-up play areas; a project bus full of project info; informal on-street conversations at bus stops; and many neighborhood events throughout the spring and summer. The idea is to go to people where they are, instead of asking them to come to us at project meetings. Details regarding the Community Engagement approach are in the Community Engagement Plan, which will be provided to the PAC following the meeting.
- PAC member Larry Fonnest asked James to elaborate on the arts approach to working with young people. James responded that art removes barrier of engaging people, especially young people. It gets them in the door and then the team can talk with them about transit or other topics.
- PAC member Blong Yang asked if the project team is engaging the major employers in the area: Metro Transit, Minneapolis Public Schools, North Memorial Hospital, and others. The team plans to go to events that are sponsored by these organizations to meet with their employees, but will make an effort to further develop a strategy for reaching out to employers, as this is a key part of generating further economic development in the corridor, as well.

6. Economic Development Analysis Methodology

- Kyle Vangel noted that transit has economic development impacts for two reasons: it enhances people’s mobility, and it provides an amenity that supports places. The purpose of HR&A’s role in the West Broadway Transit Study is to provide economic development information for route and mode selection.



- There are three key pillars of economic development as it relates to this corridor: where do people live and work; how do specific alignments benefit those connections; and how do we bring economic development and transit-oriented development (TOD) to this corridor. As the team is evaluating the alternatives from an engineering perspective, HR&A will evaluate them from an economic development perspective. They will look at modes and how the project influences property values, wealth building in the corridor, the amount and pace of development, and the type of development and number of jobs associated with it. The methodology for the analysis involves interviewing local developers active in this and other corridors to generate a baseline scenario assuming no transit improvement, then evaluate transit improvement impacts and how they move the needle on quantitative and qualitative indicators.
- HR&A is a national real estate and economic development firm. They are headquartered in New York with offices in Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles. They have worked nationally on the intersection of transit and economic development. For example, they are currently working on the Arlington Streetcar project in the D.C. metro area, and on a BRT project in Connecticut. Locally, HR&A has worked with SRF on the Bottineau and Gateway Draft Environmental Impact Statements, as well as on Union Depot redevelopment. The firm also does projects that are not associated with transit. For example, the firm helped the developers of the High Line in New York City to work through the city process and come up with an adjacent land use pattern that facilitated growth around the line.

7. Discussion

- PAC alternate Joanie Clausen commented that she is unfamiliar with streetcars. Mona Elabbady responded that a modern streetcar looks similar to an LRT vehicle; there are tracks and overhead wires. The streetcar would operate in mixed traffic—stations are usually spaced more closely together, and are smaller than LRT stations. Streetcar operates a single vehicle, so the scale is smaller. At the next PAC meeting staff will do a BRT and streetcar 101 presentation.
- Kelly Hoffman asked if HR&A has an assumption regarding a mode that is more beneficial for economic development, and when they will examine comparable markets. Eric Rothman responded that there is some mode testing that needs to be done in terms of the transit service. The market is responsive to amenities and service. So there are some variables—what exactly enhanced bus or BRT includes matters. Rail improvements come with street improvements that come with a higher performance, but there hasn't been a lot of high quality BRT in the US to benchmark. Response also depends on the urban characteristics and on the role of the public sector. Transit demand alone doesn't create the market demand; it's just one piece. Considering economic development this early on in project development is positive, as are the TOD programs that Metropolitan Council and other partners have in place. Kyle Vangel added that the HR&A team will do a literature review of comparable corridors. They are considering the silver line BRT in Boston (the segment of the line that runs on-street through neighborhoods), an LRT line in Denver that operates in mixed traffic for a segment, and a bus route in Portland. The team will address the comparable corridors in May and June.



- PAC alternate Peter Wagenius noted that at the next meeting the group will get a feel for streetcar and all of the pieces that go into arterial BRT/bus enhancements, since BRT encompasses different levels of service all over the country. He noted that the Green Line is inspiring economic development. On the western end of the line near the U of M this development is 100 percent privately funded. Farther east, there's more likely to be a public subsidy to make the development happen. Peter emphasized that according to Mayor Hodges this does not make these projects failures. Since the West Broadway project will run through economically vibrant and challenged areas, we should be open to both types of development. The only outcome that is not acceptable is not getting the economic development. Eric Rothman noted that HR&A is considering development from a zone perspective because there are different climates throughout the corridor.
- PAC alternate Joanie Clausen asked if outcomes from the Bottineau station area planning will be considered. For example, the City may consider a possible roundabout at Golden Valley Road and Theodore Wirth Parkway. Shelley Miller responded yes, and the project will engage Golden Valley residents, too. It would be a big change for them. Some are not excited about LRT and this would be more change. Metro Transit staff is working with Golden Valley and Robbinsdale staff, as well as Blue Line Extension staff.
- PAC members, alternates, and staff are reminded that the West Broadway Corridor tour is on Friday. The group will meet at Heywood Garage and leave promptly at 1 p.m. Please see the meeting appointment for directions.