



West Broadway Transit Study Policy Advisory Committee – Special Meeting

June 2, 2015 3:00– 4:30 PM
Metro Transit
560 6th Ave N, Minneapolis, MN 55411
Heywood Office Chambers

PAC Member and Alternate Attendees

Chair Gary Cunningham, Metropolitan Council Member
Pat Backen, City of Robbinsdale Member
Larry Fonest, City of Golden Valley Member
Paula Pentel, West Broadway Business and Area Coalition Member
Linda Higgins, Hennepin County Commission Member
Raymond Dehn, MN House of Representatives

Don Samuels, Minneapolis Board of Education Member
Peter Wagenius, City of Minneapolis Alternate
Sean Broom, City of Minneapolis Alternate
Heidi Ritchie, City of Minneapolis Alternate
Joanie Clausen, City of Golden Valley Alternate
Alexis Pennie, CAC Co-Chair
Tina Sanz, Hennepin County Alternate

Other Attendees

Brent Rusco, Hennepin County
Cameron Bailey, Metro Transit
Kyle Burrows, Metro Transit
Charles Carlson, Metro Transit
Steve Hay, City of Minneapolis

Jim Voll, City of Minneapolis
Emily Goellner, City of Golden Valley
Mona Elabbady, SRF Consulting
Kristina Nesse, SRF Consulting

1. Introductions

- Councilmember Cunningham started the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

2. CAC Summary

- Alexis Pennie provided an overview of the second Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting held on May 18 at North Memorial Hospital. Topics covered at the meeting were similar to the May 8 PAC meeting, and included:
 - An overview of transit modes;
 - Alignment options and information about the screening of alternatives;
 - Planned community engagement activities throughout the summer; and
 - Small group discussions regarding priorities and what the CAC hopes to see moving forward



- The CAC small groups provided feedback and comments regarding the alignment options and screening of alternatives:
 - It is very important for the future transit service to extend to the Penn Avenue and West Broadway intersection;
 - There is limited opportunity for development along Golden Valley Road;
 - North Memorial Hospital is a good transit destination; however, it is a missed opportunity not to extend service to downtown Robbinsdale;
 - Future service should stay on commercial corridors;
 - Improvements are needed on bus service to Golden Valley;
 - BRT is less expensive than streetcar, and may have a better chance of receiving funding; and
 - While streetcar costs more, it may provide better economic development opportunities
- Most CAC members agreed with technical recommendation to retain the two alternatives: streetcar to North Memorial and BRT to Robbinsdale Transit Center.
- Most CAC members agreed that Golden Valley Road alternatives that did not serve the Penn and West Broadway intersection and should not be retained.
 - A few CAC members thought the McNair that while the alternative is challenging, it could be a third potential alternative
 - CAC members also noted that it may be wise to align service on CSAH 81 near Terrace Theater and old Rainbow Foods for economic development opportunities
- Heidi Ritchie asked why the CAC wanted to continue to look at the McNair alternative. Alexis Pennie stated that the CAC was interested in a third option.

3. Open House Summary

- Mona Elabbady provided an overview of and summary of comments from the Thursday, May 21 public open house. The event was hosted in conjunction with the YMCA family night at the North Community YMCA from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., which was an excellent opportunity to capture those already at the YMCA during the evening. The project team estimates that 50-60 people attended the open house. Approximate attendance was evenly split between youth and adults.
- Advertising for the open house included:
 - Metro Transit website and Metro Transit social media accounts;
 - Distribution of information to PAC/TAC/CAC members for posting and further distribution;
 - 500 Flyers distributed to businesses, organizations, churches, apartment buildings and other locations in the corridor; and
 - News release
- Activities at the open house included poster boards with project information; a Metro Transit bus, which provided attendees the opportunity to get on the bus and was a great avenue to encourage children and their parents to attend; project area maps; a spinwheel for Metro Transit “Free Ride” passes; and comment cards.
- Feedback about goals for the West Broadway corridor included:
 - Positive activity
 - Places to go



- Art and sculptures
 - Wider streets
 - Better restaurants/food
 - More facilities for children/teens
 - More opportunities for African-American small business owners
 - Unity and peace
- Feedback about the alignments included:
 - **Streetcar**
 - i. Should travel to further north in Robbinsdale, not just North Memorial Hospital
 - ii. Concerns about streetcar on Golden Valley Road (and potential redevelopment)
 - iii. Concerns about streetcar on McNair Avenue (residential street)
 - **BRT**
 - i. Should go to Robbinsdale
 - **General**
 - i. Both need connections to LRT and bus (regional system)
 - ii. East-west connections are needed on Northside, but there are greater service needs for north-south connections
 - iii. Good access, easy to use, reliable, and safe service are important regardless of mode
- Don Samuels asked if the feedback on the alignments was limited to the five alignments, or if this component of the open house was open-ended. Mona Elabbady responded that the majority of comments were regarding the alternatives on the maps, aside from comments about extending streetcar further north in Robbinsdale.
- Raymond Dehn observed that this project can be the catalyst needed in the West Broadway corridor.
- Paula Pentel shared that general feedback from outreach done by the West Broadway Business and Area Coalition is that there is an immediate need for more frequent service and fewer stops on the corridor.
- Don Samuels commented on the share of youth attendance at the open house, and noted that the project has the opportunity to do something very different to make the future transit service in the West Broadway corridor child-friendly in regard to safety, access, and amenities.
- Linda Higgins asked for clarification on the comment regarding the desire for wider streets. Mona Elabbady stated that the consultant team will follow up on the intent of this comment.

4. Discussion & Confirmation of Alternatives for Further Study

- Mona Elabbady provided a recap of the alignment options and alternatives discussed at the last PAC meeting, as well as an overview of recommended improvements to the local bus network:
 - Three streetcar alternatives:
 - i. North Memorial to Downtown Minneapolis
 - ii. Courage Kenney via McNair; this alternative connects to West Broadway Avenue at McNair and uses 2nd Street or Washington Avenue to connect to downtown Minneapolis



- iii. Courage Kenney via Golden Valley Road; this alternative connects to West Broadway Avenue at Golden Valley Road and uses 2nd Street or Washington Avenue to connect to downtown Minneapolis
- Two BRT Alternatives:
 - i. Robbinsdale Transit Station to Oakdale Ave to West Broadway Avenue; this alignment connects to downtown Minneapolis via 2nd Street or Washington Avenue
 - ii. Courage Kenney via Golden Valley Road to Knox Avenue to West Broadway Avenue; this alignment connects to downtown Minneapolis via 2nd Street or Washington Avenue
- Proposed Changes to Local Bus Network:
 - i. Route 14 currently has five different route patterns and overlap with other routes. There is a need to simplify the route, provide access to the west, and provide more transit service. Proposed changes include increasing trips by 24 per day and expanding the span of service by 90 minutes on the Douglas Drive branch, as well as increased trips by 25 per day and expanding the span by five hours on the Noble Avenue branch.
- Linda Higgins stated that she thought buses could not operate on Theodore Wirth Parkway. Paula Pentel noted that there are a few locations now, but the Minneapolis Park Board needs to provide permission to add to the existing service operating on the Parkway. Charles Carlson noted that the Park Board approval process includes a five person sub-board, with membership from the Park Board (2), Minneapolis City Council (2), and a jointly appointed position (1). This board is formed on an ad hoc basis to address with governance of bus operations on parkways, as detailed in a state statute.
- Raymond Dehn asked if alignment on Xerxes Avenue was considered. Charles Carlson noted that the intention of Route 7 is to provide connections to the future METRO Blue Line Golden Valley Road Station. Implementation these route changes will be concurrent with the Blue Line opening.
- Peter Wagenius noted that the proposed changes to the local bus network is a preview of potential bus changes. The final decisions regarding these routes are more closely tied to the Blue Line opening, not the West Broadway Transit Study, and will happen in approximately five years. For purposes of connections in this study, the proposed route changes are the changes that will be modeled in the ridership forecasting process.
- Chair Cunningham asked the project team to plan for additional meetings and/or engagement activities regarding the local bus network changes, given the level of interest.
- Linda Higgins commented that the proposed C Line BRT does not connect to the planned METRO Green Line Penn Avenue and Van White Stations. Chair Cunningham noted that he agrees that this is an issue and shared that he has been pushing for this connection.



- Mona Elabbady provided an overview of the McNair Avenue assessment, followed by the resulting technical recommendations to advance for further study:
 - Following the last PAC meeting, the project team took field measurements along the McNair Avenue alignment to better understand the feasibility of streetcar service. The existing curb width (19' to 23') was narrower than anticipated (20' to 25'). The narrow existing roadway width, need for roadway expansion to accommodate tracks and stations, tree loss, existing encroachments into the public right-of-way, and plans for McNair as a bicycle route as part of the Penn Avenue Community Works efforts all would make the implementation of streetcar challenging on this corridor.
 - The team also assessed streetcar options on alternate corridors in the vicinity of McNair Avenue. Many of the local street have similar characteristics of McNair and the assessment did not find any feasible alternatives.
 - **Preliminary Tech Recommendation:**
 - i. Advance Streetcar from downtown to North Memorial; and
 - ii. Advance Arterial BRT from downtown to Robbinsdale Station
 - Chair Cunningham commented that because required McNair Avenue construction would change the character of community, this alternative should not be advanced.
 - Sean Broom stated that Council Member Yang agrees that the McNair Ave alternative should not be advanced.
 - Peter Wagenius stated that the city of Minneapolis' desire to see the McNair Avenue alternative considered was out of dissatisfaction with Golden Valley Road option because it does not extend to the Penn Avenue/Broadway Avenue intersection, which was part of the original definition of the study. As such, Mayor Hodges agrees with the technical recommendations because both alternatives travel to or past the Penn Avenue/Broadway Avenue intersection.
 - Larry Fonnest noted that the city of Golden Valley realizes the difficulties of connecting the project into Golden Valley. The city is supportive of the direction of the technical recommendations, and looks forward to continue to work with group, even though alignments moving forward won't directly serve Golden Valley. The city is also supportive of the proposed bus network changes to support future METRO Blue Line service.
 - Joanie Clausen stated that she was appreciative that the project team spent the time to analyze the McNair streetcar alternative to ensure it wasn't a viable option. She also noted that she agrees that the project area and community need service improvements, even if it isn't streetcar and thanked the project team for considering the Golden Valley options to ensure the correct decisions were made.
 - Peter Wagenius stated that Mayor Hodges appreciates the city of Golden Valley, and noted that the city of Minneapolis is a committed ally in ensuring that bus connections work well with future METRO Blue Line.
 - Don Samuels stated that it was great to do our due diligence on the McNair alternative, and that he thought it was a worthwhile exercise. Don also shared history about the



- West Broadway corridor, and noted that we should locate the service where the action and energy are located in the project area, which is on West Broadway Avenue.
- Chair Cunningham asked the project team for a future update regarding improvements to bus shelters in North Minneapolis.
 - Paula Pentel noted that the West Broadway Area and Business Coalition, one of two self-managed Business Improvement Districts (BID), will be hanging ornamental signage in the corridor in the near future. The Coalition is also collaborating with the Met Council, and has placed the BID logo on bus shelters on West Broadway. The coalition is also now doing cleanup efforts in public spaces three times per week. Paula shared that the Coalition is in support of aligning whichever mode is selected fully on West Broadway Avenue, which is especially important for North Minneapolis travelers who want to travel north to future METRO Blue Line stations. Paula also stated that the Coalition doesn't feel third alternative needs to be studied.
 - Raymond Dehn asked why the recommended BRT alternative does not travel further into Robbinsdale. Raymond also asked if a streetcar alignment along CSAH 81 was considered. Mona Elabbady responded that extension of .5 mile to Robbinsdale Transit Center would impact capital costs, which are approximately \$50 to \$60 million per mile. Additionally, the city of Robbinsdale recently reconstructed the Oakdale Avenue intersection and assessed property owners for this project and associated buried utilities, and the city is not supportive of backtracking on this investment. In regard to streetcar on CSAH 81, this was also considered. The economic development team has helped guide the selection of alignments based on those with the strongest opportunity for economic development, in conjunction with capital costs. The preliminary economic development analysis shows that current alignments have more economic development opportunity than streetcar located on CSAH 81.
 - Pat Backen noted that extending streetcar to the Robbinsdale Transit Center would require streetcar to travel on Hubbard Avenue, and would have negative construction impacts to this residential street. Additionally, the city did not see a significant benefit to extend streetcar. Pat reiterated that residents are not supportive of tearing up new construction on Oakdale Avenue because they were each assessed \$5,000 to \$10,000.
 - Peter Wagenius commented that streetcar and BRT are not mutually exclusive, and the city of Minneapolis is looking to have this be part of the conversation in the project in the future, similar to the dual BRT/rail alternative for the Midtown Alternatives Analysis.
 - Linda Higgins asked if city would want BRT and streetcar operating on the same street. Peter Wagenius clarified that the non-mutually exclusive transit modes would run along the same or parallel corridors, and noted that BRT would provide longer-haul service with limited stop spacing and faster travel times, while streetcar would serve the role of local service.
 - Don Samuels asked if a dual streetcar/BRT service would be synchronized at the terminus of shorter service for ease of transfer. Charles Carlson responded that service would be scheduled to be compatible with each other, including the overlapping service from other service areas and connections to transitways.



- Alexis Pennie thanked the PAC for questions and clarifications and shared that two of the three small groups at the last CAC meeting stated they were interested in advancing a third alignment.
- Peter Wagenius motioned and Sean Broom seconded to accept technical recommendation and advance the two alternatives. The motion passed 11-1.

5. Next Meeting Date

- The next PAC meeting will be held on September 25 at the Minneapolis Public Schools Davis Center. Prior to the meeting, the project team will be developing data on capital and operating costs, ridership, and other evaluation factors to align with the project goals. The results of the technical analysis will be presented at the September 25 meeting.
- Following the September 25 PAC meeting, the project team will hold multiple community engagement events to share the technical analysis results. The December PAC meeting will wrap up the West Broadway Transit Study.
- Community engagement will be carried out throughout summer.
- Action Item: Charles will send chair and Paula about improvements to bus shelters in North Minneapolis.