

METRO Purple Line BRT Corridor Management Committee
Notes for the October 14, 2024 Meeting
Held Virtual through Webex

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Charlie Zelle, Vice Chair Victoria Reinhardt, Chai Lee, Mai Chong Xiong, Nelsie Yang, Ianni Houmas, Lesley Kandaras, Nick Thompson, Gail Cederberg, Nikki Villavicencio, Gretchen Artig-Swomley; Khani Sahebjam, Kathleen Murphy, Molly McCartney, Erik Goebel

MEMBERS ABSENT: Laurie Malone, Len Cacioppo, Scott McCune, Luke Schlegel, Bill Walsh, Peter Lindstrom, Rebecca Cave, Steve Rogers, Lilly Melander, Kevin Edberg, Laurel Amlee, Winona Yang, Ploua Yang

GUESTS/OTHERS PRESENT: Craig Lamothe, Stephen Smith, Liz Jones, Sara Pflaum, Jennifer Jordan, Nat Gorham, Liz Sund, Greg Ricci

1. WELCOME (CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL)

Chair Zelle, Metropolitan Council called the meeting of the METRO Purple Line BRT Corridor Management Committee (CMC) to order at 8:33 AM on October 14, 2024. Chair Zelle welcomed everyone and reviewed housekeeping rules for virtual meetings; and noted the Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit (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.

Chair Zelle noted that the minutes from the September 5, 2024, CMC have been circulated. If there are any editing requests, please communicate them to Craig Lamothe, Project Manager, Metropolitan Council before they are finalized and posted on the project's website.

2. Upcoming Notable Project Milestones

Craig Lamothe, Purple Line Project Manager, provided an overview of three upcoming project milestones. The milestones include the completion of the Route Modification Study Phase II, the Project Development (PD) Phase Extension expiring on December 9th due to incomplete requirements and the need to temporarily withdraw from the federal program. Once the requirements are complete, we will seek re-entry. The project schedule is nearing the point of incurring another 1-year delay. Completing the remaining requirements by February 2025 is necessary to maintain the current path to the federal fiscal year 2028 Presidential budget request to Congress and spring 2028 construction start.

3. Community & Business Advisory Committee Report

Ianni Houmas, Co-Chair of the Community and Business Advisory Committee (CBAC), provided a summary from the October 11, 2024, CBAC meeting. He reported that the committee received letters of support for the project from State Representatives Fischer and Hemmingsen-Jaeger and St. Paul residents on the east side. All CBAC members in attendance expressed their

support for recommending to the Community Management Committee (CMC) that they “strongly” back the continued development of the Purple Line. Additional discussions included the federal eligibility of the northern endpoint options and the proposed Network Now routes and connections. Mr. Houmas also mentioned support from the Purple People.

4. 9/23 Maplewood City Council Meeting

Craig Lamothe, Purple Line Project Manager, provided a recap of the notable outcomes from the September 23, 2024, Maplewood City Council meeting.

Mr. Lamothe summarized the three resolutions passed by the City Council, along with the many letters of support received from various institutions, officials, and individuals. There was close coordination for RMS Phase II with Maplewood, which included six workshops and meetings with the City Council, written monthly project updates, biweekly meetings with city staff, and special topic discussions. Furthermore, Mr. Lamothe addressed the project costs, ridership, and vehicle volumes in a clear context, while also clarifying flexible public transportation options and alternatives.

Chair Zelle appreciated the clarification that micro zones are not independent transit service areas; rather, they are connected to METRO rail or bus lines and transit centers that offer frequent service. Mr. Zelle mentioned his experience with an autonomous vehicle.

Commissioner Reinhardt expressed gratitude for the accurate information provided, which assists in decision-making.

Councilmember Villavicencio appreciated the accurate facts presented and expressed support for the Purple Line. She pointed out that the east metro area has historically lacked transit options, and this project presents an opportunity to enhance the community.

Councilmember Yang appreciated the staff for their work and encouraged folks to take the opportunity to meet with Purple Line project team. She noted that the staff has gone above and beyond to provide data and respond to community questions. However, she expressed disappointment with the decision made by the Maplewood elected officials and thanked Maplewood Councilmembers Lee and Villavicencio for their support.

Commissioner Reinhardt reiterated her appreciation for the staff, emphasizing their responsiveness and commitment to listening to the community.

5. BRT Route Alignment Community Preference/Feedback and Recommendation

Stephen Smith, Purple Line Deputy Project Manager, provided a summary of the technical evaluation discussed with the public. This information included a comparison of corridors, trail co-location, roadway reconstruction, land use, economic development, community destinations, socioeconomic demographics and ridership, property impacts, and environmental factors.

The Bruce Vento Regional Trail corridor option offers faster travel times, fewer property impacts, and less affordable housing units. In contrast, the White Bear Avenue corridor option boasts more transit-supportive land uses, additional community destinations, but also results in greater property impacts. This option includes safety improvements to roadway and pedestrian

infrastructure with complete roadway reconstruction. Both corridor options qualify for federal funding.

Liz Jones, Community Outreach and Engagement Lead, provided an overview of the engagement efforts. She highlighted various outreach efforts, events attended by staff, and survey results. Ms. Jones said the outreach and engagement staff focused on asking the public if Purple Line should run along the BVT or on White Bear Avenue and asked about side versus center running in St. Paul. During this engagement period from July to August, nearly 3,000 people were reached. She noted that display boards were set up at various locations throughout both corridors, which helped establish a visible presence for the project in the community. Project information was also available through diverse and ethnic media ads. Additionally, staff engaged in canvassing efforts, visited 23 National Night Out events along the corridor, and distributed flyers and surveys. They also interacted with residents and spoke with individuals at bus stops in downtown St. Paul and Maplewood.

Craig Lamothe, Project Manager, continued to share the results and takeaways received during the summer outreach and engagement period. Nearly 1,400 responses were received, with 993 people indicating that they preferred the White Bear Avenue corridor, while 351 people preferred the BVT corridor. A high percentage of people preferred one corridor because they opposed the impact to the other corridor. Overall, there was strong support for Purple Line on White Bear Avenue and substantial engagement with the BIPOC community. However, a notable disparity existed for individuals who spoke languages other than English but did not read or write those languages, making it challenging for them to complete the surveys.

Commissioner Xiong appreciates the response regarding demographics and the reflection between folks who speak a language other than English. She inquired if any additional questions or concerns had been raised. Craig replied, mentioning that some property owners expressed concerns about the impact on their properties.

In the chat, Ms. Jones wrote what was presented reflects the main themes and comments. We will also send out a report on this effort, which will have more details.

Mr. Lamothe highlighted recent expressions of support for the continued advancement of the Purple Line and presented a potential committee action along with the supporting rationale.

Ianni Houmas mentioned that the Purple People, a community-based advocacy group, is engaging in outreach with businesses along the corridor and has noticed increased interest in a center-running alignment as opposed to a side-running one and will continue to do follow-up meetings. Mr. Lamothe expressed a willingness to meet with the Purple People and the community to provide additional details.

Mr. Lamothe read the staff recommendation for consideration, the action, and the rationale.

Chair Zelle read the following action: The Purple Line Project will no longer advance the route alignment for collocating the Purple Line BRT line with the Bruce Vento Regional Trail north of Maryland Avenue.

It was moved by Commissioner Reinhardt; seconded by Commissioner Xiong and Councilmember Yang. **Motion carried.**

Yay: Chair Charlie Zelle, Vice Chair Victoria Reinhardt, Chai Lee, Mai Chong Xiong, Nelsie Yang, Ianni Houmas, Lesley Kandaras, Nick Thompson, Gail Cederberg, Nikki Villavicencio, Gretchen Artig-Swomley; Khani Sahebjam, Kathleen Murphy, Molly McCartney, Erik Goebel

Nay: 0

6. Next Steps

Chair Zelle provided a preview of the upcoming Purple Line CMC meetings and stated they could be cancelled.

7. Other Items

Chair Zelle expressed gratitude to staff and encouraged everyone to stay connected and reach out with any questions.

8. Adjourn

Chair Zelle concluded the meeting, adjourning it at 9:55 AM.

Meeting Materials Provided:

Meeting Agenda, October 14, 2024

CMC PowerPoint Presentation

Additional Materials

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Sund, Purple Line Administrative Lead