

Meeting Notes: Station Area Working Group Summit

Date: 09/12/2023 6pm-8pm

Location: Arlington Hills Lutheran Church, Saint Paul, MN



Attendance

- 34 Station Area Working Group (SAWG) participants
- 9 staff (Ramsey County, Metro Transit, City of Saint Paul, Station Area Planning Consultant Team)

Agenda

- Welcome and introductions + Dinner
- Purple Line BRT Project Overview - Route and Station Design
- Purple Line BRT Station Area Planning Overview

- Station Area Working Group Roles
 - Hopes + Fears Activity
 - Goal Setting
 - Next Steps
-

Purpose/Topics

The purpose of this meeting was to introduce station area working group participants to the project team and each other, provide Purple Line BRT project and station area planning background, provide orientation to the station areas, and discuss hopes and fears that will inform future visioning discussions.

Discussion Summary

Public safety, safe pedestrian crossings, and lack of nutritional food access were the predominant themes heard in the kickoff meeting. There was concern expressed about public safety conditions related to public transit in particular, including increased houselessness, crime and drug use deterring people from using the service, as well as safety concerns while riding transit. Participants expressed a desire for maintaining accessibility to the current businesses during construction, preventing displacement of existing businesses, and increasing investment so that more options for small business ownership and leasing arise. Participants expressed the concern that businesses near stops may get vandalized or close. Ice and snow clearing in winter was a concern, especially for those with disabilities. Participants expressed a desire for more eyes and feet on the street.

During discussion, some station-specific concerns arose, such as residents in Mt. Airy and Valley Hi-Rise feeling isolated geographically, which they stated causes neighborhood safety issues such as dark, limited sight lines and secluded areas that attract unwanted behavior such as drug use. Additional station-specific facilitator notes and transcribed participants post-it notes are attached.

Key Themes from Five SAWG Small Group Discussions

Neighborhood Safety

- More lighting in neighborhoods
- More people and eyes on the street
- Prioritizing safety for everyone
- More police presence

Transit Safety

- Station Ambassadors
- Safe and clean buses and facilities
- Addressing crime and drug use

Access

- Accessibility for people with disabilities
- Bike and trail access
- Access to existing transit routes
- Direct and frequent service

Community Development

- More retail and shopping options
- Support existing businesses from displacement
- Access to healthy food and groceries
- Preserve existing neighborhood character of some stations

Environmental

- More trees
- Prevention of light pollution

Attachments

- Presentation slides
- Information on Metro Transit Safety and Security Action Plan and Commitment
- Station-specific small group discussion notes and transcribed participant post-it notes

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Compiled facilitator notes and transcribed comments from participant post-it notes.

10th Street

Hopes

Neighborhood Safety

- More lighting - see what's going on, how many ppl are at the corner
- More people, more eyes on the street/stop, feet on the ground, which will bring new life downtown

Community Development

- Nice place to look out when others are visiting DT, hosts lots of meetings for their company that bring in lots of visitorship
- Visitors will spend money DT
- Develop new businesses by Lunds for hotel guests, easy connection for those to go to CHS Field, Excel center
- Positive economic impact
- More jobs downtown, opportunities and more people working downtown
- Nice mini target-need more than a Lunds
- Look like NYC- when they ride the Subway, the stations are memorable- wants this station to be memorable
- Wants the area to be revamped, people to move back to the area (work/live)

Transit Safety

- Station ambassadors(x4)- go to stations to patrol, clean, hang out, no weapons on them, they would have quick access to police to call for help when needed
- Station ambassadors- offering info that is helpful and destination
- Ridership increase, been cold/clean, people want to take transit

Public Art

- Public Art- will make it more welcoming

Fears

Community_Development

- Negative impact on existing businesses
- Eyesore to look at

Neighborhood Safety

- Will become Seattle -not feel safe
- Loitering, arguments going on,
- Not lit enough
- 10th & Robert current safety concerns- won't use it
- Lots of drug dealing at station, needles, paraphernalia
- Many businesses are broken into, when they are next to the stations (i.e. Union Depot), insurance goes up

Transit Safety

- Lots of people hanging out at the stop, who are not there for transit, just to hang out
- Existing stations- not unkempt
- Use to walk from the Wells Fargo to Union station, doesn't anymore
- Safety is a top concerns- assaulted (2xs), 1x near the station stop
- With the line starting at Union Depot, there is lots of safety issues that impact the stop and the consecutive stops,

Access

- Lack of accessibility for disabled folks
- Hard for driver

Goals for SAWG participation

- What to know they are being listened too, with confirmation

Mt. Airy / 14th Street

Hopes

Access

- MTC provides shelters, benches from Mt. Airy to Downtown St. Paul
- Better bus stops
- Better shelters

Neighborhood Safety

- Better lighting (really dark) (x2)
- Different perspective, same goal (what is best for the neighborhood)
- Safety for everyone- seniors are included
- Valley- Hi-rise

Community Development

- Only Holiday gas station- more stores

Fears

Neighborhood Safety

- Safety
- Hideout for people to do drugs
- Unhoused people under Viaduct-University and I-35E
- Needles
- Capital 1st & winter- 2 building with sex offenders (sitting outside)
- Police patrolling
- People doing inappropriate things (substances)
- Safety- police does not respond/attend soon like they used to
- Police officer/cop
- Young people doing inappropriate things
- Safety

Access

- Bad quality streets
- Capital Rice street
- Western Ave
- Hamline/Lexington Dark narrow sidewalk
- Hard to walk on Jackson in the corner by Regions hospital

Goals for SAWG participation

- Gathering, listening, and taking notes, keep motivated to share
- Respected and heard

Meeting Comments

- Meeting Times: Monday/Tuesday, sometimes Thursdays- 1pm- October

Cayuga St. & Olive St.

Hopes

Community Development

- I like things the way they are, easier for me to remember
- More businesses here
- Different food choices from the area
- I would like to see the area built with more businesses - coffee shops, food and retail

Access

- Put other existing bus routes on the maps (used for the exercise)
- If we divert it is, it will still be a block near

Fears

Neighborhood Safety

- Through this area

Access

- Making it to Cayuga from Desoto/Minnehaha would be difficult to get to because of all the railroad. So maybe development at a bridge from Desoto to Phalen Blvd
- Icy hills in the winter, walkers won't go to stops up/down hill

Community Development

- The stop nearest to my job is next to a giant parking lot

Meeting Comments

- Upcoming Meetings: No Tuesdays/Thursdays
- Location - 6-8pm works better

Payne Avenue & Arcade Street

Hopes

Community Development

- Community Accelerator Business
- Business building

- Collaborates w/ Hmong Village businesses owners for planning
- Keep the Hmong villages thriving
- I want this development to help put the East side out of its commercial funk
- Involve businesses
- Build up existing business
- Redevelop – Seeger Square (+1 from another participant)
- Need grocery store/food access
- Don't displace mom and pop grocery stores.
- Access to grocery stores/ health foods
- Not metal, shiny bus stop design; prefer existing brick character that fits the neighborhood
- Beauty of Payne Avenue – Beautiful

Transit Safety

- Safety on bus and at bus stops

Neighborhood Safety

- Safety - good architectural design enhances safety, poor design and access control inhibits it
- Lots of foot traffic around the area
- Positive is that Phalen doesn't have residential homes
- Need more police/enforcement

Access

- Positive is having the bike trail along Phalen
- Keep the trail
- Get local busses to go with the BRT
- Support the existing system
- To use transit more and not need a car
- More frequency service
- More directed service to destinations
- Prefer walking

Environmental

- Trees at Phalen park
- Excited about electric buses

Fears

Neighborhood Safety

- Safety (x9)
- Increase in crime

- Cars going fast down Phalen Ave.
- Drug use/selling
- Need lighting (but manage light pollution)
- Don't want crime to get worse

Transit Safety

- People committing crime on the busses
- Noise, litter, bad behavior due to the busses
- Fears camera at every bus stop
- Need Cameras at shelters
- Need more Metro Transit police
- Poorly designed station will exacerbate safety issues
- People need to pay fares
- Need a plan for enforcing paying fares
- Bus – it's a great asset, bit not appreciated, not used
- The Metro Transit budget/engineering won't respond to community needs id-ed in SAP process
- Don't take transit anymore due to people on the bus doing drugs, smoking, drinking alcohol, vandalism

Access

- Inadequate bus service to the neighborhood will be continued
- Accessibility
- Arcade St station is not on the businesses street (too far)
- Community won't be heard about station placement at Neid Lane
- Losing other transportation space- ped/bike space
- Existing bus stops (especially ones with benches/shelters)
- Need access control
- Accessibility – for people using wheelchairs, crutches, boot
- Need places to put bikes
- Maintenance – need to maintain the existing system
- Need shelter from wind/rain
- Prefer Arcade Station being located on Arcade bridge over Phalen
- Congestion

Environmental

- Bad weather issues
- Light pollution (x2)

Community Development

- Aesthetics- Payne & Phalen is/had beautiful architecture. Modern lowest bidder glass and steel monstrosity would be bad.
- Aesthetics – Don't want glass/steel monstrosity
- Current residents being displaced by new development
- Current businesses being displaced or priced out
- Beautification efforts will get pricey over the needs of the community
- There won't be diversity of perspectives on the development around the BRT
- That people from the community get opportunities
- Fears business loss during construction
- Safety/Quality of life
- Get business input – What can we do together?
- Mental health issues

Meeting Comments

- Preferred days of week are Tues, Wed and Thurs;
- Preferred time is 6-8 pm
- Payne Phalen Community Council meets the 3rd and 4th Tuesday – avoid if possible

Cook Avenue

Hopes

Access

- Signs in multiple languages
- Safe crossing to Hmong Village
- Safe intersection at Johnson/Phalen/purple line
- Safe intersection across 7th st(@Atlantic)+ Phalen Blvd (also at Atlantic)
- Connection from Station + Johnson Pkwy for bikes and peds
- Multiple language on station and bus signage (including voice-over)
- That crossings on Phalen and Johnson area are safer from the PL development/designs.
- Several are regularly in the area and have seen near misses, especially in busy weekend times.

Community Development

- Possible relocation of the compost site - very convenient , but ripe for redevelopment
- Daylight Phalen Creek -integrating with the Purple Line project
- More residential development-Multi-family or single family homes
- More localized commercial buildings

- Clean community spaces
- Community is prioritized
- Youth and their needs are considered
- Outreach efforts so that lower income folks use it
- More subsidized housing
- That Hmong Village crossing to the station is extremely well planned, safe.
- The Hmong Village vendors/entrepreneurs are supported during construction for their sustainability.
- This isn't just development for power developers but that current neighbors have sustainability/development so they remain where they want to live and thrive.
- That more utilization of vacant plots/lots in the future is for affordable/sustainable housing for the community in this station and other station areas on the Eastside.
- Transparency by the leaders of the Purple Line.
- That Hmong Village vendors will be thriving sustainably during construction and when operations start. Can agency (MT, RC) be intentional on efforts/resources to reach HV vendors to make it so
- That development accrues to the existing communities living here, that they can stay, afford shelter, cost of living remains affordable. Less about the capital D development at the expense of locals.
- That funding/resources develop youth in the area, that can include spaces for youth to access and gather for their positive growth for themselves and the communities
- That transparency from PL project teams and agencies is steady, like in this kickoff and this station area working group effort. Also want transparency in land acquisition.
- That vacant lots and spaces can be used for affordable housing, multi-family homes, etc.

Neighborhood Safety

- Area is dark and currently people cross in multiple locations
- Good lighting for users and community.

Fears

Access

- Reconsider Cook Ave as a station location - it should be Phalen Blvd & Johnson pkwy

Neighborhood Safety

- Safety for all
- That above hopes aren't reached.
- Can safety and reduction of unhoused realities also be worked on by local service organizations getting funding resources? Bigger solution

Transit Safety

- Safety at stations, in bus. The concern is that today's safety issues (and the perceptions) remain when the PL operates.

Goals for SAWG participation

- The group felt that they will get what they can out of participation and tell us what they think freely, and sometimes they understand that not everything can be done from their ideas. They want to know we're listening and will consider their voices/feedback.
- Other bigger ideas/ask: Can more agencies be used for funding, development, consistent and proactive unhoused solutions. Federal, State, County, local, Foundations, NGO's.
- Question: Is PL in touch with Phalen Creed Daylighting efforts, are they connected in ways that give shared benefits?