

METRO Purple Line BRT Corridor Management Committee
Notes for the September 5, 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, Erik Goebel, Gail Cederberg, Nikki Villavicencio, Gretchen Artig-Swomley

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

GUESTS/OTHERS PRESENT: Craig Lamothe, Stephen Smith, Colin Owens, Adam Harrington, Emma Lucken, Sara Pflaum, Nat Gorham, Liz Sund, Greg R

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 1:02 PM on September 5, 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 August 1, 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. Community & Business Advisory Committee Report

Ianni Houmas, Co-Chair of the Community and Business Advisory Committee (CBAC), provided an update from the August 23, 2024, CBAC meeting. He reported that the project staff provided CBAC members an update on the Arcade Street station and advancement of A2, Metro Transit's Network Now program and how that relates to the northern endpoints for Purple Line, the Northern Endpoint viability and a community outreach update and next steps.

Additional discussion included where park and rides were proposed and what safety and security measures would be implemented with the project. The desire for additional transit service in the White Bear Ave corridor was expressed.

3. Community Outreach & Engagement Update

Colin Owens, Community Outreach and Engagement, Metro Transit, provided an overview of the recent canvassing efforts. He shared the corridor comparison survey updates as of Sept. 4, 2024. They received 1,281 total responses. White Bear Ave Corridor was the preferred Purple Line Corridor with 74.5% and Bruce Vento Regional Trail with 25.5%.

Mr. Owens shared an update on the Hello Lamp Post campaign throughout the corridor. This two-way communication platform via signage and the user's cell phone has so far generated 123 conversations, 510 messages from respondents. 31% of the users were identified as BIPOC and 42% of the individuals using the tool use transit daily. Additionally, he shared recent and upcoming events.

Commissioner Xiong, Ramsey County, expressed gratitude for the engagement but is concerned that no Hmong or Somali was engaged in the survey. Colin responded, stating we collected demographic data for the survey. We had Hmong interpreters for some events and have engaged with Spanish and Hmong speaking individuals.

Councilmember Yang, St. Paul, expressed gratitude for all the engagement and appreciated the survey results and support for the line on White Bear Avenue, which is consistent with what she's been hearing.

4. Network Now

Adam Harrington, Director of Service Development at Metro Transit, presented Metro Transit's [Network Now](#) program, which is the Met Council's vision through 2027. This plan aims to improve the network of new and redesigned routes, make frequency and span improvements, prepare for METRO line investments, and grow micro transit zones. Additionally, Mr. Harrington also discussed the foundation for network modification, the Network Now principles, and the development timeline.

The presentation included a discussion of the Draft Concept Plan's features and results. The features include increasing ridership, improving service coverage and mobility by expanding bus routes and Metro micro service, and redesigning commuter services to meet the travel needs of our region now. The Draft Concept Plan results include implementing the METRO Network and maintaining the reliability of our scheduled service. He shared that we will expand the Metro micro service to Woodbury and Roseville in December 2024.

Mr. Harrington also mentioned the engagement process, which will involve an online comment form, multiple public meetings, and a public hearing on Oct. 29 for the public to provide their comments. Following the comment period, the team will revise the plan based on the feedback received and then seek approval from the Met Council in early 2025.

Commissioner Xiong expressed concerns about the lack of transit access and discontinued routes in a high-density area with low-income housing in an area south of Hwy 94. Mr. Harrington mentioned that they will be collecting comments and feedback and making adjustments to the draft concept plan.

Councilmember Villavicencio also mentioned she heard similar comments about the lack of transit in the McKnight Rd area. She expressed excitement about the micro zone and asked if there will be any connections from Maplewood to Roseville. Mr. Harrington confirmed this was part of the plan.

Councilmember Lee expressed interest in exploring the expansion of micro transit in the east metro area.

Ianni Houmas asked if representatives from the districts should attend the public meetings. Mr. Harrington clarified that these are public meetings and encouraged interested parties to attend.

5. Arcade St. Station Update & Next Steps

Emma Lucken, Station Area Planning Lead, provided an update on the Arcade St. Station and the next steps. She discussed the analysis process, conversations, and the conclusion that the staff is recommending moving forward with the existing Arcade Street Station (option A2.)

Ms. Lucken talked about the community goals, Purple Line goals, and station development goals. She shared that the project office had discussions with the owner of Seeger Square (Glimcher Group) and had engaged with two consulting firms to explore this area in terms of transit-oriented development potential and station location alternatives. The consultant considered three development scenarios and analyzed them under a range of market conditions.

During the conversations with the Glimcher Group revealed potential opportunities and challenges with the redevelopment of the privately held sites. This property is a well-functioning asset for the Glimcher Group, and they currently have no plans to sell the property. Additionally, they lack experience with mixed-use redevelopment and are unlikely to lead a TOD project at Arcade. The current value of owned parcels is significantly higher than the anticipated private return of redevelopment at the site. Redevelopment in the near term would require significant public agency intervention but could deliver significant value to the community, potential of 700-1,100 units of new housing. However, due to the property being fully leased, the politics of a public agency purchasing this site are challenging.

The next steps are to continue advancing the design and environmental review for Arcade St Station (option A2) as the best of the technical feasible and financially fundable options.

The Met Council (Metro Transit) is committed to working with the City of St. Paul, Ramsey County, and others to relocate the Arcade St. Station to the intersection of Neid and Arcade if and when Seeger Square is redeveloped and Neid Lane is extended through the site down to Phalen Blvd. The project team will continue outreach and engagement.

Councilmember Yang expressed gratitude for the engagement and outreach and emphasized the importance of transparency with the community. She requested a formal process to ensure the commitment is honored.

Commissioner Xiong inquired about documenting the Arcade St. Station commitment. Craig responded that the commitment could be documented later in the project development process as part of the development of interagency and 3rd party agreements needed for the project.

Ianni Houmas, CBAC member asked what the total cost was for the analysis. Ms. Lucken stated Metro Transit spent more than \$100,000.

6. Alternative Northern Endpoints/Extensions Update & Next Steps

Craig Lamothe, Project Manager at Metro Transit provided an update on the two alternative northern endpoints/extensions, Vadnais Heights and Century College. As part of BRT Route Modification Study Phase I, we initiated outreach and engagement regarding the two endpoints, but it was suspended in the Fall of 2022 because we discovered they were not viable for future federal funding. However, we recently discovered that both alternative endpoints would be viable for future federal funding under the proposed federal program policy guidance and would receive an overall medium rating. Both endpoints increase overall project ridership and serve more transit-reliant customers.

Mr. Lamothe also discussed the forecasted daily boardings by station (2045), expressing concerns over relatively low forecasted station platform usage for a few of the Alternative Northern Endpoints/Extensions stations. Between downtown St. Paul and Maplewood, there are no stations forecasted to have less than 50 boardings per day. Additionally, he provided information on the on-time capital costs for Maplewood, Vadnais Heights, and Century College. The cost would be \$55.8 million more to go to Vadnais Heights and \$42.8 million more to go to Century College. The annual operations and maintenance cost would be \$1 million to \$1.5 million more for Vadnais Heights and Century College.

Additionally, Mr. Lamothe presented the Network Now Draft Concept Plan related to the Northeast Metro and discussed the proposed changes to Routes 219, 223, 71, and the Metro Transit micro program. There are open questions and considerations for discussion beyond future federal funding eligibility. Our next steps are to delay CMC action on a fully revised Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) recommendation to December, further explore and answer open questions to inform decision-making, and continue engagement.

Ianni Houmas asked if we looked at which endpoint would be more viable to connect with the proposed Northern Lights Express project. Mr. Lamothe responded that we had not but would add the question to the list.

7. Next Steps

Stephen Smith, Deputy Project Manager, provided an update on the revised RMS Phase II schedule and a preview of upcoming Purple Line CMC meetings. CMC actions are anticipated in October and December.

8. Other Items

Chair Zelle expressed gratitude and stated there is more discussion and decisions to be made.

Ianni Houmas, CBAC shared WBABA is having an event on Sept 12 geared towards businesses.

9. Adjourn

Chair Zelle announced that the upcoming Purple Line CMC meeting is set for October 14, 2024, and concluded the meeting, adjourning it at 2:28 PM.

Meeting Materials Provided:



Purple Line

Meeting Agenda, September 5, 2024

CMC PowerPoint Presentation,

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Sund, Purple Line Administrative Lead