



## METRO Blue Line Extension Corridor Management Committee (CMC)

Date & Time	February 08, 2024      1:30 – 3:00 PM
Location	F.T. Heywood Chambers, 560 N 6th Ave, Minneapolis
Attendees	Charlie Zelle, Irene Fernando, Jeremiah Ellison, Aaron Wagner, Charles Rucker, Brett Buckner, Ricardo Perez, Karla Arredondo Payan, Therese Kiser, Jim Adams, Anjuli Cameron, Suzanne Sobotka, Khani Sahebjam, Richnetta Parker, Reva Chamblis, Earnest Morales III, Sophia Ginis
Project Staff	Nick Thompson, Shahin Khazrajafari, Cathy Gold, Jer Yang

### 1. Call to Order and Welcome

Chair Charlie Zelle, Metropolitan Council called the meeting to order at 1:33pm and extended a warm welcome to the members and members of the public.

Chair Zelle welcomed a couple new members to the Corridor Management Committee (CMC), introducing Rosyln Harmon, Mayor of Golden Valley, Charles Rucker, Commissioner, as the alternate for Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), and Khani Sahebjam, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT).

Chair Zelle allowed members to introduce themselves.

Chair Zelle reported that today's meeting materials are available on the Blue Line Extension (BLE) Project's website at [bluelineext.org](http://bluelineext.org). Chair Zelle added that members of the public are welcome to submit any comments to Nkongo Cigolo, Metropolitan Council.

Chair Zelle shared that today members will receive updates on METRO Transit safety and security initiatives.

### 2. Public Invitation

In the public comment session, various individuals expressed their comments in the following order: Matt Bruns, a member of the 918 Lofts; and Anndrea Young, a Community Organizer for Heritage Park Neighborhood. The entire video, capturing their remarks verbatim, is accessible on the project's [website](#).

### 3. Approval of December 14, 2023, BLE CMC Meeting Minutes

Chair Zelle called for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 14, 2023 CMC meeting. Jim Adams, Mayor of the City of Crystal, proposed the approval, and



Irene Fernando, Hennepin County Commissioner, seconded the motion. Meeting minutes were approved.

#### **4. Community and Business Advisory Committee Reports**

Brett Buckner, Community Advisory Committee (CAC) member, provided an update on the recent CAC meeting held on February 7, 2024, sharing that this was their first CAC meeting for the year, during which CAC members received an overview of ongoing projects updates from Deputy Project Director Shahin Khazrajafari, Hennepin County. Additionally, CAC members heard from Sophia Ginis, Metropolitan Council, who provided an overview of Network Now.

Mr. Buckner reported that CAC members found the information about Network Now valuable. In particular, how the micro transit pilot program connects communities in north Minneapolis and looking out to the future Blue Line Extension, were seen as positive steps towards ensuring connectivity, support, and community investment.

Mr. Buckner highlighted concerns voiced by CAC members regarding potential bills and the risk of displacement, particularly focusing on the impact on black and brown businesses along the corridor. Additionally, there were calls for a more in-depth discussion on access points and strategies to minimize adverse effects.

Council Member (CM) Jeremiah Ellison, City of Minneapolis updated on the ongoing Anti-Displacement efforts, emphasizing the inclusion of various policymakers in recent meetings. CM Ellison expressed that communities are acute to ensuring that Anti-Displacement efforts are aligned concurrent with the project schedule, providing effective strategies for those affected along the corridor.

CM Ellison acknowledged the community's concerns regarding the allocation of responsibilities for funds and grants related to Anti-Displacement as the project advances. Chair Zelle expressed gratitude to CM Ellison for his input and concurred that it's imperative to solidify Anti-Displacement processes moving forward.

#### **5. METRO Transit Safety and Security Initiatives**

Chief Ernest Morales III, METRO Transit Police Department (MTPD) provided insights into the progress of the METRO Transit safety and security initiative. Chief Morales initiated the discussion by outlining his vision for the MTPD, encapsulated in the mission statement, "Mission First, People Always." This mission statement forms a crucial part of fostering a robust organizational culture, placing emphasis on the welfare of MTPD officers and METRO Transit staff, outlining dedication to training and education, ensuring opportunities for professional growth, a commitment to communities, trust, integrity, and advancements in technology.

Chief Morales' Vision Plan can be found on today's CMC presentation packet, slide on [page-9](#).



Chief Morales delivered an update on the Safety and Security rating, revealing a significant 25% decrease in overall crime on transit infrastructure. He attributed these achievements to officers taking the initiative to make calls and restructuring their response approach to service calls. By being more visibly present on platforms, officers reduced customer Light Rail Transit (LRT) complaints by 44%.

Additionally, Chief Morales highlighted the rise in proactive policing, police call initiation, correlating with a decrease in dispatch calls for service for each quarter. Chief Morales provided an update on the ongoing challenges with staffing, mentioning that MTPD has recently released two recruitment videos – one targeting individuals within the state and another for those in surrounding states to generate interest among the younger population. He emphasized the need for support from community activists and policy makers to bolster the professionalism of Law Enforcement.

According to Chief Morales, the foundational aspect of public safety is security, with officers securing and supporting each other. However, this cannot be achieved without the collaboration of the public. While police officers are public servants dedicated to serving communities, Chief Morales expressed concerns about the prevailing negative perception of the profession, potentially discouraging young individuals from aspiring to be heroes in uniform. He urged for a shift in public perspective, emphasizing that MTPD officers are indeed heroes dedicated to public service.

Chief Morales conveyed that within the MTPD, there currently are 113 full-time officers out of 171 needed full-time officers, 33 part-time officers out of 80 needed part-time officers and 13 Community Service Officers (CSO) out of 70 needed CSO.

Chief Morales explained the initiation of the CSO program aimed at assisting young individuals without current college enrollment or law enforcement experience. This program allows them to work while earning up to 12+ college credits at no cost to them and with the potential for up to \$18,000 in tuition reimbursement.

Furthermore, Chief Morales announced the recent launch of two storytelling videos by MTPD. As of February 5, 2024, MTPD has also introduced three social media platforms to facilitate connection and engagement with the communities.

Ricardo Perez, Blue Line Coalition, expressed gratitude to Chief Morales for his presentation. Mr. Perez inquired about the free rides pilot program on routes 62 and 32, noting positive outcomes and seeking clarification on whether Metro Transit is considering a similar pilot for the Blue Line Extension.

Nick Thompson, Metropolitan Council clarified that the free ride pilot program originated from the legislation enacted in the summer of 2023. The program aims to undergo an 18-month study to assess its impact on ridership, safety, reliability, and



travel time. Mr. Thompson added that the study is still in progress, indicating an ongoing evaluation of the program's effectiveness.

Commissioner Fernando sought clarification regarding the data concerning police calls and inquired whether it aligns with the same data as customer complaints. Chief Morales clarified that while both sets of data correspond, they differ in their breakdown, with one focusing on 911 dispatch calls and the other on proactive policing efforts.

Expressing further interest, Commissioner Fernando requested detailed insights into how the data is defined to include specifics on fare enforcement, the definition of crime, and the various levels of calls, aiming for a comprehensive understanding of the metrics involved.

Council Member Reva Chamblis, Metropolitan Council, noted that security is also effective by perception. She highlighted the positive changes observed by customers in response to the policing activities and initiatives centered around the light rail and stations, signaling good progress. CM Chamblis stressed the need for a collaborative community effort to address and prevent crimes, highlighting the importance of forming partnerships with other police entities and communities as the MTPD implements its action plan.

Chief Morales mentioned initiating discussions with police departments along the BLE corridor is part of the ongoing action plan being rolled out by the MTPD.

## **6. Network Now Update**

Sopia Ginis, Metropolitan Council provided a comprehensive summary of Network Now, outlining that in 2022, METRO Transit recognized the evolving ridership landscape post-pandemic. Acknowledging that the previously developed Network Now in 2019 would no longer be applicable, Network Now 2022 underwent a recalibration to address Metro Transit's capacity to manage service reductions, workforce shortages, and the uncertain funding scenario expected in the 2023 legislative session.

Ms. Ginis conveyed that the Network Now initiatives focus on defining the desired structure of the METRO transit network system. This involves prioritizing its future evolution, encompassing ongoing METRO Projects like the Blue Line Extension (BLE). Network Now encompasses the introduction or redesign of routes, adjustments in frequency, expansion of service improvements, discontinuation of certain services, and the implementation of the METRO Lines.

Ms. Ginis provided insights into the inception of Network Now, detailing the initial stages that involved laying a foundation. The first step was engaging with stakeholders and customers, gathering feedback through surveys, intercept conversations, group



discussions, and individual meetings. The comprehensive planning initiated through these channels has contributed to the development of principles used to assess service changes and improvements in Network Now transit market areas.

Ms. Ginis highlighted the involvement of numerous municipalities in the program, emphasizing that the effectiveness of this transit program is closely tied to the land use planning in each city. Considering Network Now, it becomes important to reflect on the individual's experience within the transit system.

Ms. Ginis presented reports to the members regarding ridership trends in 2023, encompassing both overall transit and express bus routes. She highlighted an upward trend in ridership, noting consistent increases annually since the onset of the pandemic.

Commissioner Fernando inquired about the graph depicting ridership numbers, seeking clarification on whether they represent overtime or hourly figures. Ms. Ginis clarified that the data reflects hourly ridership numbers throughout the day.

CM Chamblis raised a question regarding whether the displayed ridership numbers would be incorporated into the BLE ridership forecast and inquired about the consistency of ridership increases. Ms. Ginis responded that she lacks specific information on the ridership study for BLE but highlighted that ridership potential is contingent on the type of ridership model the BLE adopts, particularly in terms of fast and frequent services.

Ms. Ginis proceeded to elaborate on the Network Now process, explaining that decisions are shaped by the foundation, development, and validation of plans with input from priorities and stakeholders. This approach aligns with five principles guiding Network Now: adapting services to changes in transit market and travel patterns, readiness for new Metro Transit and high-frequency routes, ensuring the reliability of scheduled services consistently over time, building on successful initiatives to increase ridership, and concentrating on access to opportunities while advancing equity and addressing regional disparities. Applying these principles to strategize for Network Now's overall execution, Ms. Ginis conveyed that the initiative is currently in the phase of assessing criteria and formulating a plan for the implementation of service adaptations.

Nick Thompson, Metropolitan Council, added that over the next three years Metro Transit will be adding more services and asked that policy makers help influence transit.

Mayor Adams raised a question about the criteria for service, pointing out that the City of Crystal currently lacks transit services and expressed interest in understanding its position on the priority list. He inquired about the potential inclusion of his city in the



transit network and sought information on the potential impact on Crystal and its communities. Mayor Adams expressed a desire to understand how to support the BLE when there are currently no transit options. In response, Ms. Ginis offered to establish a connection with the City of Crystal to collaborate to develop a plan. She mentioned that Network Now is actively working on bolstering micro-transit options to support upcoming transit projects that will be operational in the near future.

Mayor Adams recognized that Network Now relies on current ridership data, expressing concern about Crystal's absence from the ridership numbers due to the city's limited access to transit services. His primary worry is how Crystal can be included in the service plan given the absence of ridership data for the city.

Ms. Ginis replied, indicating that Network Now takes into account the vision of cities and incorporates it into resource considerations, while also promoting collaboration.

CM Chamblis, referencing the shared principles with a focus on growing ridership, suggested that there is potential for enhancement in access and opportunities. She encouraged Network Now to evaluate and consider areas such as Brooklyn Park and Crystal for possible improvements.

Karla Arredondo Payan, a member of the Blue Line Coalition, inquired about the feasibility of accessing a breakdown of the survey features in various languages, as highlighted in the presentation. This includes information on the locations where outreach engagements were conducted.

Ms. Ginis mentioned that during the analysis of the survey, responses were categorized and examined according to race and demographic factors.

## **7. 2024 Milestones**

Shahin Khazrajafari, Hennepin County, Deputy Project Director for the Blue Line Extension, presented an update on the 2024 schedule for the BLE project. He emphasized that it remains an exceptionally active year for the project and highlighted key topics for the upcoming CMC meetings. In March, the project plans to share preliminary cost information and post-Covid ridership data. Following this, in April and May, CMC members will have the opportunity to relay information from their respective communities. Mr. Khazrajafari also mentioned that the project aims to release the Supplement Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) in June and allow for public comment in June and July 2024.

Mr. Khazrajafari delivered a brief update on the design phase, mentioning that the project has reached the 30% design stage and is slated for a comprehensive review, encompassing an evaluation of the 30% cost estimate.



Mr. Khazrajafari discussed another upcoming milestone, which is to secure municipal consent in July-August 2024. Mr. Khazrajafari reported that Anti-Displacement continues with ongoing initiatives involving building on the Anti-Displacement framework, with the aim to share with CMC members in April 2024. Additionally, Mr. Khazrajafari reported on the various grant applications that the project has either submitted or plans to apply for.

Commissioner Fernando requested that, during the Municipal Consent CMC meeting, there be confirmation of the availability of all members to ensure their presence and participation in the voting process.

Mr. Perez sought clarification on the project's timeline regarding the mention of 30%, questioning whether it refers to 30% comments or 30% design, and inquired about the location of this information.

CM Chamblis sought clarification to indicate on the timeline 30% and 70% comment periods, and how each comment period has more leverage.

Mr. Khazrajafari clarified that it is indeed the 30% design stage, which will be up for internal and stakeholder reviews. He further explained that there will be an opportunity for comments during this phase, contributing to the project's advancement in the design beyond the initial 30%.

Cathy Gold, Hennepin County delivered a status report on the Anti-Displacement and shared that the Anti-Displacement Work Group (ADWG) has crafted a comprehensive Anti-Displacement policy agenda for the 2024 legislative session. The ADWG has initiated discussions related to available funding as the project progresses, strategically identifying opportunities. Ms. Gold shared that a meeting was conducted with corridor partners on January 25th, 2024, during which the ADWG focused on progressing the work plan to achieve desired outcomes.

**8. Next Meeting: March 14, 2024.**

**9. Adjourn**

Chair Zelle adjourned the meeting at 3:04pm