



## METRO Blue Line Extension Business Advisory Committee (BAC) Meeting Minutes

Date & Time	February 4, 2025 8:00 – 9:30 AM
Location	Virtual via Microsoft Teams
Members	Ian Alexander, Dan Doerrer, Jason Schmidt, Donna Sanders, Jamar Smith, Jamez Staples, John Barobs, KR Brown, Sabrina Williams, John Hacker, Chris Webley
Guest Presenter Project Staff	Jason Schmidt, Rattana Sengsoulichanh Nick Thompson, Nick Landwer, Ryan Kronzer, Kelcie Young, Shahin Khazrajafari, Nkongo Cigolo, Kaja Vang, Joanna Ocasio-Maisonet, Jer Yang

### 1. Call to Order and Welcome (Co-Chairs)

Dan Doerrer, Business Advisory Committee (BAC) Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:02am

### 2. Approval of December 10, 2024, BLRT BAC Meeting Minutes

Co-Chair Doerrer, asked for a motion to approve the BAC minutes from the Dec 10, 2024 meeting.

Donna Sanders requested corrections to a couple of comments she made during the meeting. The corrections were made, followed by a motion from Jamez Staples, which was seconded by Donna Sanders. The minutes were officially approved with the corrections.

### 3. Station Area Planning – City of Minneapolis

Jason Schmidt, Senior Project Manager in the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) office with Metropolitan Council, provided an overview of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) TOD Pilot Program and Metro Transit TOD Impact.

Schmidt explained that the FTA TOD Pilot Program offers grant funding for comprehensive or site-specific planning in new fixed guideway projects. Since 2014, the FTA has awarded over 129 TOD grants to various transit agencies across the United States.

Schmidt reported that Metro Transit partnered with the City of Minneapolis to apply for the TOD Pilot Grant in 2024 and was awarded \$700,000. He noted that the grant will support

station area planning around six new stations for the Blue Line Extension (BLE) in Minneapolis and outlined the key components of the work plan. Schmidt added that Minneapolis will lead the effort with support from the Metropolitan Council.

Schmidt further explained the concept of TOD, emphasizing its focus on creating communities centered around public transit stations. He also outlined its benefits, including improved health and safety, increased economic development, environmental preservation, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and enhanced equity.

Schmidt reviewed several maps of the metro areas, highlighting the impact of TOD across the seven-county region. The maps showcased TOD growth trends over a five-year period (2019–2023), including data on multifamily housing developments, commercial projects, and affordable housing built near high-frequency transit corridors.

Rattana Sengsoulichanh, City Planner for Minneapolis, provided an update on Station Area Planning from the city's perspective. He explained that while station area planning is not a new concept, its purpose is to advance planning efforts and identify opportunities for community growth and economic development.

Sengsoulichanh explained that a central focus is the implementation work, which includes identifying existing assets, key target resources, and the timeline for realizing the benefits of this transit investment.

Sengsoulichanh delved into the \$700,000 planning grant from the FTA, explaining its importance in supporting the long-term vision for the next 5, 10, and 20 years after the BLE is built. He emphasized that a key focus is on implementation, particularly addressing concerns raised by the community, such as parking issues at Penn Avenue and West Broadway Avenue.

Sengsoulichanh sought feedback from the BAC members on the draft task areas, aiming to ensure the station area planning process is as inclusive as possible. The proposed task areas include:

1. Incorporating a community and expert engagement team as part of the consultant team.
2. Facilitating discussions and building consensus around the vision for various station areas.
3. Conducting market analysis and feasibility studies for housing and commercial developments.
4. Fostering conversations about economic development, particularly in the West Broadway Avenue Cultural District planning.
5. Developing a Multimodal Action Plan.
6. Addressing climate change and resiliency strategies.
7. Producing draft plans for public review.

Ian Alexander mentioned that he is preparing a document outlining his organization's plans for the 21st Avenue/West Broadway Avenue and Girard Avenue area near the James Avenue

Station. He asked Sengsoulichanh if he could share the city's policies and guidance. Sengsoulichanh responded that he would reach out to Alexander with the details.

Sengsoulichanh stated that the goal is to develop a station area plan that will be adopted by the city council. He emphasized the importance of collaboration between the city, project partners, and the community to achieve this, and outlined the implementation steps necessary to reach that goal.

Sengsoulichanh shared that Minneapolis will soon issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) and hire a consultant team with expertise in these areas. The team will partner with local organizations to help facilitate community engagement.

Sengsoulichanh reviewed the Minneapolis Station Area Planning timeline.

Co-Chair Doerrer emphasized the importance of bringing organizational leaders, property owners, and elected officials together in an informal setting, as it helps foster meaningful conversations.

#### **4. Environmental Update**

Kelcie Young, Metropolitan Council, provided an update, reporting that the Environmental team is continuing to develop the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS). Young noted several recent policy changes at the federal level, particularly related to Environmental Justice (EJ), and emphasized that the project is closely monitoring these changes with the FTA.

Young also provided context on Section 4(f), stating that it is progressing, and the SFEIS is on track for publication this summer.

#### **5. Design Update**

- **60% Design Plans**

Nick Landwer, Metropolitan Council, provided a design update, reporting that the Design and Engineering team is refining the 30% plan by incorporating graphics to improve navigation and is continuing work on finalizing the 60% design.

Landwer outlined the 60% design release timeline for each corridor city. The Brooklyn Park design plan is scheduled for release in May 2025, followed by Crystal in June. Robbinsdale and Lowry Avenue Station are expected in early July, with Minneapolis slated for late July to August 2025.

Landwer outlined the next steps, emphasizing the delivery of the 60% design plan to each corridor city. Corridor partners will have 45 days to review and provide feedback before the project advances to the 90% design phase in 2026.

- **Lowry Avenue Station Design**

Young reported that the BLE project is continuing to assess station designs to address concerns from project partners while also conducting outreach around the Lowry

Avenue Station.

Young stated that multiple workgroup sessions were held with corridor partners, including the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, North Memorial Hospital, the City of Minneapolis and Robbinsdale, Hennepin County, and Metro Transit. Through this collaborative effort, the team developed nine design options for the Lowry Avenue Station.

Young added that the BLE project also held two public open houses between December 2024 and January 2025.

Young provided a high-level summary of the feedback, noting that there was support for Option A (the Municipal Consent Option) and Option H.

Ryan Kronzer, Metropolitan Council, outlined the key objectives identified during the workgroup sessions, including enhancing transit connections for park visitors, improving transit access to the hospital, expanding transit services, and integrating the station into the park environment. Kronzer reviewed the nine options.

Jamez Staples expressed confusion regarding the images presented for the nine design options and requested street-level visuals for the Lowry Station design options. Mr. Kronzer responded that the project team can follow up to provide additional details.

Kronzer outlined the evaluation matrix, explaining that the design options are based on the Municipal Consent design option. He then reviewed both the Municipal Consent option and Option H, noting that Option H would potentially extend construction by another year and increase costs by \$30-50 million.

Young outlined the next steps, focusing on selecting the station option. Currently, the BLE project continues to gather input on the options. She added that further discussions will take place at the upcoming Corridor Management Committee (CMC) Meeting on February 13, 2025, and the Project Decision Board (PDB) Meeting on February 19, 2025, where the PDB Board is expected to make a recommendation on the Lowry Avenue Station design.

## **6. Schedule Update**

Landwer provided an update on the BLE project schedule, noting that the CMC will meet only five times this year to align with project milestones. He shared that the BLE project anticipates the SFEIS publication in July, along with the Record of Decision (ROD). Meanwhile, design work will continue with the 60% design development and review and roll into 90% design in the fall, and refining cost and ridership estimates. Landwer also highlighted that progress on Anti-Displacement efforts remains on track with the project schedule.

Staples asked if the increased cost estimates account for inflation, noting his experience with construction. Landwer responded that the cost estimates do reflect inflation.

**7. Discussion and Members Feedback (Co-Chairs)**

None

**8. Next Meeting: March 4, 2025**

**9. Adjourn**

Co-Chair Doerrler concluded the meeting and adjourned it at 9:22am

**Teams Chat:**

Sabrina Williams, Execell Academy (Unverified) Tuesday 8:50 AM

EW

This was a lot of good info, however, I am not clear on what your ask is: "How do we want to participate?" I didn't hear clear options or a clear ask. I heard what you would like to do. Are you asking people on this call to be on an advisory committee? Just not clear on the specific ask??

Jamar (Guest) (Unverified) Tuesday 8:55 AM

J

Unknown User 2/4/2025 8:50 AM  
This was a lot of good info, however, I am not clear on what your ask is: "How do we want to participate?" I didn't hear clear options or a...  
great questions.

Sengsoulichanh, Rattana (he/him/his) (External) Tuesday 9:01 AM

RS

Unknown User 2/4/2025 8:50 AM  
This was a lot of good info, however, I am not clear on what your ask is: "How do we want to participate?" I didn't hear clear options or a...

Thanks for the question. I would like to identify beyond the BAC space methods to engage with you all. This committee has a lot of knowledge and on the ground experience of issues that need to be addressed, and I want to be able to host spaces that you all would be interested in participating in. That can look like reoccurring workgroups on specific topics related to businesses/development.



Sabrina Williams, Execell Academy (Unverified) Tuesday 9:13 AM

EW

Sengsoulichanh, Rattana (he/him/his) 2/4/2025 9:01 AM  
Thanks for the question. I would like to identify beyond the BAC space methods to engage with you all. This committee has a lot of...

Thanks for your response. Still not clear on what you are actually asking, however, I will assume if you want our help in participating in work groups, or support in hosting spaces, getting our communities to attend, etc., you'll follow up with a memo including various options or a virtual meeting or communications to discuss more specifics, dates, times, etc. Thanks.



Recording Sectary: Jer Yang