



METRO Blue Line Extension

Community and Business Working Group (CBWG)

Meeting Summary

Date & Time	March 4, 2026	6:00 – 8:00 PM
Location	North Loop Garage, Training Room A 104-VC	
Working Group Members	Matt Bruns, Jeff Guertin, Damian Palacios, Ricardo Perez, Ken Rodgers, Tina Russell, Robert Russell, Donna Sanders, Logan Schrader, Joe Sears, Logan Schrader	
City Staff	Madel Mouta, Shanna Woods	
Project Staff	Nkongo Cigolo, Anna Beth Gunderson, Joleen Ketterling, Ryan Kronzer, Pa Nhue Vue, Amáda Márquez Simula, Kaja Vang	

1. Welcome & Introductions

Nkongo Cigolo, Manager of Public Involvement, Blue Line Extension (BLE) project began the meeting at 6:05 pm. Mr. Cigolo shared the Community and Business Working Group (CBWG) was formed as a result of the participants wanting to continue to be involved and provide feedback to the BLE project after sunseting of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) and Community Advisory Committee (CAC).

Mr. Cigolo began the meeting with a brief history of the BLE project stating that the original alignment had been approved and advanced into design but due to challenges with the freight company who owned the corridor, the project office was unable to advance with that route. The BLE project was “resuscitated” in August of 2020 and new alignment routes were investigated. The Corridor Management Committee (CMC) approved the recommended route as it is today going through North Minneapolis, Crystal, Robbinsdale, and Brooklyn Park. The Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) was completed in the summer of 2024 which is a key component to the process. In the summer of 2025, the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS) was concluded. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) signed an Amended Record of Decision (AROD) for the BLE project in August 2025, concluding the supplemental environmental review process and authorizing the project to move into final design and construction. The BLE project is now advancing into 90% design.

Each member of the Working Group introduced themselves and mentioned one thing they are excited about with the project:

- Anna Beth Gunderson, Station and Facilities Design Lead for the BLE Project Office is excited about enhancing community accessibility by providing equitable transportation.
- Damian Palacios, Board Member at Northside Residents Redevelopment Council

(NRRC) North Minneapolis, is excited that the light rail will provide more access to the area.

- Joe Sears, Planning Commission for the city of Crystal, is familiar and supportive of the light rail having worked on the light rail that extended to the Mall of America.
- Jeff Guertin, City of Brooklyn Park, is excited about the opportunity to be involved in the project and is interested to learn how it works.
- Ricardo Perez, Blue Line Coalition and Chair of Anti-Displacement Community Prosperity Program Board (ACPP) is excited for the opportunities this project can bring in the form of investments for current residents and businesses.
- Madel Mouta, Senior City Planner for the City of Minneapolis is excited to see sustainable growth that the light rail will bring.
- Robert Russell, Sanctuary Covenant Church, is excited to see the density that will come with light rail transit.
- Shanna Woods, Brooklyn Park Community Engagement Specialist, is excited about the equity and access along with environmental considerations such as climate.
- Ken Rodgers retired a year ago as an ADA Coordinator for the Department of Transportation is excited about looking at station design and ensuring ways for people to get on and off the platform in a safe manner.
- Logan Schrader, Cleveland Neighborhood Association of Minneapolis is excited to utilize the light rail transit.
- Matt Bruns, North Loop Neighborhood Association Planning and Zoning Committee is excited to continue to be able to advocate for the community and neighborhood needs.
- Donna Sanders, City of Minneapolis, West Broadway Business Coalition, is hopeful that the light rail transit brings wealth and health to the area and doesn't cause too much displacement.
- Tina Russell, North Side Community, is excited to be a part of this working group.
- Amáda Márquez Simula, Outreach Coordinator BLE Project for the cities of Crystal and Robbinsdale is excited about the connective nature of the project and the forward thinking.
- Pa Nhue Vue, Outreach Coordinator BLE Project is excited about the ability to connect communities and businesses.
- Joleen Ketterling, Administrative Support BLE Project is excited for the possibility of bringing community members and businesses along the alignment together.
- Kaja Vang, Outreach Coordinator for BLE Project for the city of Minneapolis is excited for the chance to provide a solution for community and business members and help them understand the current mitigation measures that can be put in place.
- Ryan Kronzer, Design Lead for the BLE Project is excited about the cultural placekeeping themes and how they will be translated into the designs of the light rail transit stations.
- Nkongo Cigolo, Manager of Public Involvement BLE Project indicated this is the third light rail project he has been involved with and he is excited to strengthen our transportation system and provide more needed connections.

Mr. Cigolo reviewed potential areas of discussion for the group such as supporting station area planning for Minneapolis, environmental mitigation efforts, cultural placekeeping, construction communications, construction planning, transportation accessibility, and

business and community relations.

Mr. Rodgers asked if the restrictions for cultural placekeeping had been relaxed for the BLE project and indicated that cultural placekeeping was very limited on the Central Corridor project with what could be done on each station to identify its own unique area. Ms. Gunderson replied that cultural placekeeping is still very restricted, but the project team has some wonderful opportunities and ideas which she will cover in the presentation.

Mr. Cigolo asked if there were suggested changes to the charter. If not, the charter will be finalized and posted on the website. Mr. Perez asked if the CBWG would have seats at the CMC since the BAC and CAC had active representation. Mr. Cigolo replied that the original charter for the BAC and CAC allowed for representation on the CMC, but the CBWG does not. Discussions will be recorded and sent to the CMC along with meeting materials via email. If any questions from CMC members arise, these would be brought back to the CBWG. Mr. Cigolo added that a Teams channel is being developed for the interactive ability to communicate regularly as a group. Mr. Perez asked if the CBWG would be able to review any plans or materials that would become public. Mr. Cigolo replied yes. Mr. Cigolo requested that any final thoughts about the charter be emailed to the BLE project team.

2. Outreach Plan

Pa Nhue Vue provided a brief overview of the outreach plan for 2026. The purpose of the plan is to foster meaningful and transparent communication with communities impacted by the proposed transit extension, ensure that all stakeholders and community members are informed, involved, and engaged and gather valuable feedback, address concerns, and build consensus around the project.

The engagement topics for this year include environmental mitigation, design advancement, the right of way process, construction preparedness, general project information and Minneapolis station area planning. Ms. Vue indicated the engagement activities for 2026 include cultural placekeeping and station design development, quarterly meetings, and open houses to provide general project updates, advanced design coordination with key property owners and business outreach.

Mr. Perez stated historically there has been a budget for engagement activities within the communities (referring to the engagement cohort) and asked what type of plan is in place for 2026. Mr. Cigolo replied that the engagement cohort was sponsored through Hennepin County and a couple of organizations have signed up for the 2026 engagement cohort program. Mr. Cigolo stated the cohort engagement plan is continuing to be developed and he is working with the cohort leaders regarding the effort to increase engagement throughout the communities.

Mr. Perez asked what was known about the Minneapolis station area planning. Madel Mouta, Senior City Planner for the City of Minneapolis stated a grant was received for this and an RFP will be submitted by the city of Minneapolis for a consultant to develop the plans.

3. Community Update

Mr. Cigolo inquired about community conversations happening or feedback the group would like to provide the project team.

1. What have you been hearing from the community?

- Mr. Palacios indicated community members are asking what help there will be for businesses on the north side and what displacement measures will be instituted?
- Mr. Bruns stated the North Loop has concerns about construction and if it will disrupt traffic and accessibility in the neighborhood. There is also concern that traffic calming measures and pedestrian improvements have been waiting for years which results in frustration with the project and the timelines.
- Mr. Rodgers has heard questions about how well the stations along the BLE will integrate with additional bus traffic, becoming feeders or helping people extend into the community in an effective way to take advantage of people exiting and entering onto the light rail.
- Ms. Sanders indicated there is displacement fear and a fear that on-street parking will be removed. There is also a concern about adequate parking for businesses at Penn Avenue and West Broadway.

Mr. Cigolo stated that this feedback will be compiled and future discussions regarding these issues will occur with this group.

2. Are there project-related topics you'd like more information on?

- Mr. Cigolo shared that today's focus is on station design and accessibility.
- Other future topics will include environmental mitigation implementation, business support, workforce development, construction preparedness and advanced design discussions.
- Mr. Cigolo shared the next meeting will be a tour of the Green Line Extension to see the work that has been put in place.
- Mr. Rodgers indicated the concerns shared about business displacement, lack of parking, and access are the same concerns heard when constructing the Central Corridor. During that project, the outreach team and public engagement teams worked hand in hand with each business to address the concerns and mitigate. Many individual mini projects were developed to address the major concerns and it made a difference. Mr. Rodgers suggested that when the group tours the Green Line that we invite businesses that experienced displacement during construction and have them share their story about how their concerns were dealt with. This would be a way to learn from the past.
- Mr. Perez expressed his agreement with this and suggested including an example of a successful development project or any other type of development along the Green Line to better understand the opportunities that could be realized.

Mr. Cigolo requested that any additional project-related ideas be forwarded to the BLE project team.

4. Project Update

Mr. Cigolo shared information on the timeline to construction. Several questions were asked by the working group members.

- Mr. Bruns asked when construction will start. Ms. Gunderson replied the project is

anticipating the contract to be awarded to the contractor in 2027. Ms. Gunderson and Mr. Kronzer added there will be separate traffic improvements and roadway work starting in the North Loop beginning in 2027. Currently, construction for the BLE project is anticipated to begin in 2028.

- Mr. Palacios asked for clarification on the funding regarding anti-displacement and who community members could contact. Mr. Perez responded the ACP board was established in 2024 and has been working to build the board from the ground up. Mr. Perez shared there is not another board like it in the nation so there are complexities to work through. On October 21, 2025, the board made funding decisions and most of the money went to the North Minneapolis area. Currently there are three projects being funded and the contracts are continuing to be finalized. Hennepin County is the administrator of the funds, but the board has authority to deliver the money. The way to connect to the board is through YourBlueLine.org. Mr. Perez indicated the board is currently looking for new board members and encouraged the working group to contact him if they knew of anyone interested. Mr. Perez added that the project did announce \$10 M for anti-displacement upon completion of the SFEIS (\$5 M for community investment fund (housing impacts) and \$5 M for small business support).
- Ms. Sanders asked Mr. Perez who was invited to apply during the first round of funding. Mr. Perez shared that the pilot was not invite only. There were multiple opportunities where the board invited community members to come in and identify organizations and projects. These were vetted by the board. All decisions made were based on the report that was created and recommendations by the electives. There is a legislative report on the board's activities in 2025 and this is public. Mr. Perez indicated he would send to Mr. Cigolo so it could be included in the packet if requested.
- Mr. Cigolo stated the project-related funds listed are tied to the FTA process and once funding is secured from the FTA, the project will be able to tap into those funds.
- Mr. Ricardo inquired when we will know if the FTA will fund the project or not. Mr. Cigolo replied this is currently being worked through.
- Mr. Ricardo asked for clarification on what Section 106 was. Mr. Kronzer replied that Section 106 is about impacts to historic properties and stated the environmental documentation has reviewed all existing and potential historic properties to avoid impacts.
- Mr. Guertin stated there are deferred maintenance projects pending based on this project going forward and asked if there was a plan to get some of these projects un-deferred if FTA funding is not secured within six months. Mr. Kronzer replied that if these projects are city-led or county-led projects, the BLE project team has no control over that. The BLE project team knows about these projects if they intersect with the BLE project, but otherwise are not aware of them.
- Ms. Woods asked for clarification regarding the anti-displacement funds and whether they would be released upon receipt of full funding grant agreement (FFGA) from the FTA. Mr. Cigolo responded yes.

Nkongo provided a quick summary to the group on engagement metrics and continued outreach efforts.

5. Design Update / 90% Design

Ms. Gunderson provided an overview of the design itself and the differences in the three major

milestones of 30%, 60%, 90% design. With each milestone the designs advance. Ms. Gunderson shared that 90% design is anticipated to be complete in the spring of 2026.

Ms. Gunderson described this project has two main station designs, the center platform and the side platform. Each center platform on the alignment is the same which is ten out of the thirteen stations. The typical center platform access is where pedestrians use a crosswalk to the center and take a 90-degree turn to get on to the platform. There are guardrails to protect pedestrians on walkways between the tracks. A push button is available to signal traffic to stop.

Mr. Russell asked if this type of station design was similar to any of the Green Line Stations and whether the Z-shaped crosswalk was safer. Mr. Kronzer explained that with the Z-shaped crosswalk, the pedestrian physically turns and faces the direction of the train and then turns again to cross the tracks. This brings awareness to people, especially those that don't use light rail often, so it is safer. Prospect Park Station on the Green Line is a similar platform. Ms. Gunderson added that the Z-shaped crosswalk is a design standard.

Mr. Rodgers mentioned there is a Z-shaped crosswalk on the Green Line that is rudimentary and requires a lot of basic intuition, but a lot was learned by implementing this structure. Mr. Rodgers added the Z-shaped crosswalks on the BLE will be much safer because they include guardrails that do not allow people to venture off the Z-path.

Mr. Guertin asked if the sidewalks were part of the station design. Ms. Gunderson replied that all sidewalk configuration is part of the project scope.

Ms. Gunderson provided information on a few of the unique station access conditions such as the Plymouth Avenue Station. This is unique because it is centered between two major, signalized intersections without a mid-block crossing. Each station has a sloped walk up to platform level and concrete knee walls with railing and handrail that takes pedestrians up the 14". Once on the platform, there are card readers. Directly straight ahead under the first canopy is the ticket vending machine. Behind that are the wind screens. There are four seats under each canopy. At the far end of the first canopy will be the standard Metro Transit Information kiosk. There will be heaters, lights, and cameras on the underside of each canopy. Outside of the first canopy, there will be a trash receptacle. The platform is symmetrical, so it is a mirror image on both sides of the platform. Station markers are analog and will be designed through the cultural placekeeping process.

Ms. Woods asked if there was any way to possibly expand the number of seats. Ms. Gunderson indicated there are 12 seats total on each center platform and additional space left for wheelchairs. Ms. Gunderson indicated there are more seats on these platforms than the Central Corridor Stations.

Mr. Bruns stated more trashcans would be encouraged and especially toward the end of the station. Ms. Gunderson replied this was good feedback. A question was asked if there would be recycling bins. Ms. Gunderson indicated only trash receptacles will be available on the platform but both recycling and trash will be available off the platform.

Mr. Guertin asked a question about how fast snow gets removed. Mr. Kronzer replied that Metro Transit maintains the track crossings and it happens relatively quickly. Mr. Guertin

replied that the stations would also need fast maintenance.

Ms. Gunderson provided information on side platforms and that they are split on either side of the track with one side being north bound and the other side being south bound often due to sight constraints. On the BLE alignment, split platforms are only used on three stations. There are six canopies: three on each side platform.

Ms. Gunderson explained that the Lowry Avenue Station has the most unique access because of the bridge situation, and it doesn't have any signalized intersections. The BLE project team is working with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to activate this space. At the southern end of the Lowry Station there will be a shortened version of Z-crossing. At the north end, due to the bridge structure, there will be a sloped walkway that is turned 90 degrees with an additional platform access point that has two steps. There will be drop off spaces on Theodore Wirth Parkway and bus stops nearby.

Mr. Guertin asked what an OSC pole and Vehicle Clearance Envelope were. Ms. Gunderson explained the OSC is the Overhead Catenary System which carries the large wires that power the trains, and the vehicle clearance envelope is the clearance space required around the tracks to ensure the train does not conflict with any obstacles.

Mr. Perez asked about bicycles or scooters at the stations. Ms. Gunderson replied that the Lowry Avenue Station would be a Metro Transit bike and ride. The BLE project team is working with Metro Transit to determine what bike facilities are needed at each station.

6. Cultural Placekeeping Feedback

Ms. Gunderson provided a brief background on cultural placekeeping which was a recommendation from the Coordinated Action Plan for Anti-displacement to keep the rich culture of the corridor in place and enhance it so it can thrive. Ms. Gunderson stated cultural placekeeping is included in the project design. There are two major phases. In Phase 1, the Cultural Placekeeping Working Group was established by public survey which was sent out asking for community members to sign up. Members of the project team, community, and local artists came together to define guiding themes for each station. Phase 1 was completed in November 2025. In Phase 2, the project team is reviewing the guiding themes and soliciting feedback from further outreach and all of you. There are printed feedback forms in the back of the room and an online survey open through the end of March where the BLE project team encourages feedback. Phase 2 is at the beginning stages. The design team is looking at opportunities consistent with each station and determining how this information will be incorporated to ensure we are reflecting the communities and cultures. Outreach will be ongoing to continue to refine this process and the designs.

Mr. Palacios shared that community members feel somewhat confused, they like the cultural placekeeping aspect but they worry they won't be able to financially keep up. Once the project gets built, a lot of people fear impact on property taxes, businesses may not make it, and some fear they will not feel part of the community. How do we reach out to them in a way that they feel they won't be left behind. Ms. Gunderson replied that cultural placekeeping is only one small piece. ACPP will be very instrumental in other pieces of cultural placekeeping along with additional anti-displacement funds which will become available as the project progresses. There is also the workforce development program

written into the RFP to the contractor requiring a certain level of hiring from the communities that are impacted. Ms. Vang added it is hard to conceptualize what information is being shared and what the impact will look like. Ms. Vang indicated this is an important reason why outreach coordinators exist so they can help make information accessible to the community members, help them visualize what can be worked on, and assist with connecting them to the project leaders.

Mr. Palacios shared he has not heard a lot of communication about positive opportunities with the light rail or enough about connecting and he would love to hear more communication that addresses these concerns. Mr. Palacios added if communities can feel more connected to the solutions the light rail will offer them, they may feel more invested in the future and success of the project.

Ms. Woods stated she would like to be able to explain to community members which bus lines will connect at the BLE stations and how close they are to apartments as this would help people understand the implementation.

Mr. Perez stated community members can be co-creators when talking about housing. Community members can start explaining what other investments are needed such as grocery stores, etc.

Mr. Guertin inquired about the group where outreach occurred within the community and wondered if it would happen in 2026. Mr. Cigolo answered that the group Mr. Guertin was speaking of was called the Dream Team which consisted of a group of community-based organizations helping the project with engagement and discussing how everyone would be impacted. Mr. Guertin stated there was important information that came out of this group and wondered if this information was memorialized and shared with the community. Ms. Gunderson replied that this work is iterative in nature and information is being shared with the communities often. Ms. Vang shared there is a literacy gap that makes it challenging to build trust within the communities and make information more accessible, so community members feel they are being treated seriously.

Ms. Gunderson provided a summary of the guiding themes chosen for the stations and encouraged everyone to fill out a survey either online or hard copy. The BLE project team will use this information when advancing design with such things as the station markers, decorative panels on railings, decorative banners on light poles, wind screens, and vinyl wraps on utility cabinets.

Mr. Russell asked if cultural placekeeping is unique to BLE. Ms. Gunderson replied that the process for cultural placekeeping is unique. The BLE project team has been interactive with the community and realizes it is all about community feedback. The Green Line Extension and Central Corridor have wonderful examples of cultural placekeeping.

Mr. Russell asked if the themes are what will be directly applied to the stations or if they will be the “vibe of the station”. Ms. Gunderson replied that these themes will be “guides” for design of the stations including the feedback. These guiding themes are something for the design team to come back to and make sure we are being true to the initial community work. Ms. Gunderson added that to Mr. Rodger’s original question regarding funding, cultural

placekeeping is restricted by federal grants. Hennepin County paid the artists for the guided themes outside of project funding. Ms. Gunderson stated that many of the members on the architecture team identify as artists and are deeply committed to this work.

Mr. Bruns asked if the designs in the concrete would be considered art. Ms. Gunderson indicated it would not be considered art if it were not designed by an artist. The BLE project wants the design elements to stand the test of time. During initial consideration, concrete has a lifecycle, which can have a shortened service life, so this wasn't a priority element for the project team. The goal is to make the stations themselves unique and uniquely a part of their communities.

7. Open Discussion

No further discussion or questions were asked as most conversation happened during review of the slides. Mr. Cigolo indicated the next meeting will be in May and include a tour. A Teams channel will be shared with the working group to continue conversations.

Meeting concluded at 8:06 pm.

Recording Secretary: Joleen Ketterling