METRO Blue Line Extension
Community and Business Working Group (CBWG)
Meeting Summary

Date & Time	May 6, 2026 6:00 – 8:00 PM
Location	North Loop Garage, Training Room A 104-VC / GLE Bus Tour
Working Group Members	Matt Bruns, Kathy Fraser, Tim Gladhill, Jonathan Hansen, Ken Rodgers, Logan Schrader, Michael Wnek
City & County Staff	Menno Schukking, Christopher Jao, Heather Rand, Clare Riley
Project Staff	Nkongo Cigolo, Anna Beth Gunderson, Joleen Ketterling, Ryan Kronzer, James Mockovciak, Pa Nhue Vue, Richard and Hassin from Metro Transit (Bus driver and assistant)

1. **Welcome & Introductions**
   Nkongo Cigolo, Manager of Public Involvement, Blue Line Extension (BLE) project began the tour at 6:10 pm. Mr. Cigolo welcomed attendees to the May Community and Business Working Group meeting and explained that the meeting would consist of a tour of the Green Line Extension (GLE) project. Project office staff and Metro Transit bus staff were introduced.

2. **Green Line Extension Background**
   The Senior Outreach Coordinator for the GLE, James Mockovciak, introduced himself and provided an overview of the GLE project. Mr. Mockovciak stated the GLE Project Office opened in 2012, and due to a variety of factors and project complexities, the opening of the GLE has been delayed several times and is now anticipated to open in 2027.

   Mr. Rodgers asked whether the GLE included any non-traditional platform stations. Mr. Mockovciak explained that approximately half of the extension is considered nontraditional because it was constructed alongside an existing railroad corridor, requiring extensive coordination with the railroad company. The remaining stations are more traditional in design, generally located adjacent to trail systems or streets.

   It was noted that:
   - Approximately 10 miles of light rail were built alongside the railroad corridor.
   - An additional 4.5 miles involved entirely new right-of-way construction.
   - Roughly 4 acres of wetlands were impacted during construction.

   A question was asked whether the GLE was similar to the Central Corridor. Mr. Mockovciak clarified that, unlike the Central Corridor, the GLE does not primarily operate within city

streets.

The question was asked as to why the GLE has taken so long to construct. Mr. Mockovciak explained that numerous variables contributed to delays, including:

- Construction of the Kenilworth Tunnel
- A one-mile protection wall adjacent to the railroad
- Project elements removed from and later restored to the budget, including Town Center Station
- Unforeseen construction and engineering conditions
- Scope additions made after bids were accepted

Mr. Mockovciak emphasized that each infrastructure project presents unique challenges and contingencies that become clearer once construction begins.

3. Tour Stops and Discussion

Royalston Station near the Farmers Market in Minneapolis
The first tour stop was The Royalston Station near the Farmers Market in Minneapolis, identified as a side-by-side platform station.

Mr. Hansen asked how vibration concerns are addressed during construction. Mr. Mockovciak described mitigation efforts implemented near the Golden Triangle Station, particularly due to proximity to Shop HQ, a business operating a 24/7 studio.

Mitigation strategies included:

- Conducting vibration studies
- Evaluating different hammer types for piling operations
- Installing a large green casing (Shrouder) around the hammer to reduce noise
- Scheduling piling activities between 2:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m.

Mr. Cigolo added that significant coordination occurs to mitigate noise and vibration impacts. Sensitive properties along the alignment are identified through the Supplemental Environmental Impact Study process, and site-specific mitigation measures are developed. During construction, if vibration monitors exceed threshold levels, construction activities are stopped until adjustments are made. Coordination among construction crews, the project office, and affected businesses is ongoing. Mr. Cigolo also noted that the BLE has been evaluating anticipated vibration and noise impacts for its own project development.

West Lake Street Station
The next stop was West Lake Street Station. Mr. Kronzer explained that this is a two-level station featuring:

- A center platform
- Two elevators
- Stair towers and stairs

The platform is located one story below West Lake Street. The stair towers contribute significantly to rider access and station usage. Mr. Kronzer indicated a redesigned roadway access was constructed because the original street alignment changed during project

development. The station is multimodal and includes connections to an arterial BRT line located near the elevators.

Mr. Rodgers asked whether the station included redundant elevators. Mr. Kronzer responded that there is one elevator on each side of the station, but no redundant elevator system. It was added that the BLE continues exploring multiple platform access options, including ramps and other accessible design features.

Mr. Mockovciak explained that freight rail tracks at this location were temporarily shifted during construction and later restored to their original alignment. Construction activities also included vibration and sediment monitoring.

Mr. Kronzer stated this station is projected to have the highest ridership along the extension, with nearly 2,000 daily riders anticipated.

Mr. Schukking asked about the trail reopening celebration. Mr. Mockovciak indicated there is a grand reopening celebration scheduled for Saturday, May 9, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Although trails reopened in December, organizers delayed the celebration until warmer weather.

Planned activities at various light rail stations include:

- Visual ribbon-cutting ceremony
- Face painting
- Children's games
- Bike shop participation
- Food trucks

Beltline Station

At the Beltline Station, Mr. Mockovciak highlighted substantial transit-oriented development occurring near the station area. A nearby development has 400 housing units under construction and another development approximately one-quarter mile away has already opened with 600 units.

Mr. Kronzer summarized key updates:

- A bike overpass was constructed due to a busy intersection and shallow water table conditions.
- Originally, the station design included a surface parking lot. However, the City of St. Louis Park requested a parking structure instead. The project contributed funding equivalent to the original parking lot cost, while the city secured additional grants. Mr. Kronzer noted that multiple government partners collaborated to make the revised parking solution possible.
- Construction involved significant sewer and storm sewer relocation work.
- Each station in St. Louis Park incorporates the city's branding color, blue, into station design features.
- The station area includes:
    - 150 affordable housing units
    - Mixed-use development
    - Market-rate housing

Mr. Rodgers requested additional details about wayfinding signage. Ms. Gunderson described two primary sign types:

1. Signs approximately 10–15 feet tall with metal framing used for local wayfinding
2. Larger 15–20-foot station marker signs visible from the highway also known as wickets

The GLE "wickets" are similar to what the BLE refers to as station markers.

Wooddale Avenue Station

At the Wooddale Avenue Station, Mr. Mockovciak explained that while existing properties existed on the south side of the station and future development is planned.

Additional improvements include:

- Relocation of the railroad bridge northward to create development opportunities
- Trail system connections passing underneath busy intersections

Louisiana Station

Mr. Mockovciak explained that the project purchased approximately seven miles of railroad-adjacent property in this area. Nearby land uses include commercial development, including the Loffler campus, which is exploring future parking lot redevelopment opportunities.

The station area required particularly complex construction because of the relocation of the railroad bridge, light rail alignment beneath the freight rail bridge and trail system connections.

Mr. Cigolo mentioned that Methodist Hospital is also located nearby and has expressed interest in building stronger pedestrian connections to Louisiana Station. Mr. Cigolo emphasized the extensive coordination required with Methodist Hospital during construction, especially because roadway closures were necessary in this area.

Blake Road Station

Mr. Mockovciak described significant transformation around Blake Road Station over the last eight years. The area previously consisted largely of strip malls and other older commercial properties owned by one family. After the properties were sold, substantial redevelopment occurred.

Mr. Kronzer provided additional station area details:

- Two remaining undeveloped sites
- Strong transit connection to Route 17
- Traditional station design
- Sidewalks and an 89-space parking lot on the west side
- Regional trail access north of the railroad tracks
- A nearby water treatment development located north of the station.

Excelsior Boulevard Bridge

The tour continued past the Excelsior Boulevard Bridge. Mr. Mockovciak explained that the structure is a cast-in-place concrete box girder bridge designed to allow the light rail alignment to switch sides relative to the railroad corridor.

Downtown Hopkins Station
The final stop along the tour was the Downtown Hopkins Station, which includes two grade crossings. Participants exited the bus to tour the station more closely and review accessibility and safety features firsthand.

Ms. Gunderson explained the ADA-accessible features incorporated into the station design, including:

- Tactile warning tiles
- Blinking lights and audible horns at crossings
- Gates at roadway crossings
- Railings and guided pathways
- Sloped walkways designed at less than a 5% grade
- Tactile edging on both sides of the platform
- Along the outside edge of the platform, yellow bollards of varying heights are designed to prevent riders from accidentally falling into the gap between the train cars.

Additional station features highlighted included:

- Wickets and future BLE cultural place keeping elements
- Real-time information screens
- Utility cabinets that will eventually feature decorative wrap designs
- Heaters integrated into canopies between wind screens
- Seating areas
- Lighting integrated into the canopies
- Emergency call buttons connected to police services
- Security cameras

Ms. Gunderson explained about a “Z crossing” where riders have to:

1. Turn 90 degrees
2. Encounter signals and tactile warnings surrounded by fencing
3. Turn another 90 degrees to the left
4. Then turn another 90 degrees to the right

This design intentionally slows riders down and encourages greater awareness before crossing the tracks.

Mr. Rodgers asked whether someone without a cane could follow the railings for guidance. The response was yes. Mr. Rodgers explained that hearing a train without knowing whether you are standing in a safe place can be extremely frightening.

ADA Simulation Exercise
An ADA exercise was simulated with participants. A train horn/sound was played, and participants navigated from the plaza area toward where the train would stop wearing sleep masks.

The simulation provided participants with a stronger understanding of the challenges faced by riders with visual impairments. Comments from participants included:

- It was difficult to walk in a straight line.
- The experience felt terrifying.

Mr. Rodgers explained that he always recommends people use the railings because these provide confirmation that an individual remains in a safe area. He noted that people often panic if they feel uncertain about their surroundings. He also emphasized that train operators need to remain highly aware of riders at all times.

Ms. Gunderson asked how visually impaired riders know they are boarding the correct train. Mr. Rodgers responded that blind riders often:

- Carefully plan trips ahead of time
- Review information online beforehand
- Request assistance when needed
- Ask questions while traveling

Mr. Rodgers added that riders need to know orientation details such as which side of the trail heads south and other location-specific information.

Mr. Hansen asked whether stamping directional indicators such as “N” and “S” into the concrete would be helpful. Mr. Rodgers responded that Braille information placed on the railings where riders first make contact would likely be more effective, as it would immediately confirm direction and orientation.

Mr. Rodgers indicated that this particular station would likely be difficult for a visually impaired person to navigate without prior orientation and shared that Metro Transit has an Orientation and Mobility Specialist on staff, Doug Cook, who can assist riders by providing station orientation and helping them develop a mental map of the environment before traveling independently.

Mr. Rodgers reminded the participants that maintaining safe pathways requires continued attention and awareness. He encouraged participants to speak up if they observe someone in a dangerous situation on a platform or crossing.

Mr. Rodgers also noted that the City of Minneapolis is actively working on improving pathway crossing safety, including exploring additional indicators to prevent pedestrians from unintentionally stepping into bike paths.

Mr. Hansen asked for additional context as to why nonstandard markings could be confusing. Mr. Rodgers explained that standardized accessibility indicators are critical because unfamiliar symbols or creative markings may not communicate meaningful information to visually impaired users. If new or creative features are introduced, significant education and outreach would be required to ensure people understand their meaning.

A question was asked whether different textures along pathways are problematic. Mr. Rodgers responded that accessibility needs vary depending on the disability.

Examples included:

- Rumble strips can create painful vibrations for wheelchair users or individuals with spinal injuries who require smoother surfaces.
- Cobblestone sidewalks can create unnecessary navigation difficulties and accessibility

challenges.

Mr. Rodgers emphasized the importance of balancing accessibility needs for multiple user groups while maintaining consistency, safety, and clarity in station and pathway design.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Cigolo thanked everyone for participating in the Community and Business Working Group tour and discussion. Attendees were encouraged to continue conversations and collaboration through the Teams Channel and to use the platform to communicate with other working group members regarding ongoing project updates, accessibility considerations, and future engagement opportunities.

The tour concluded at 8:30 pm.

Recording Secretary: Joleen Ketterling