

ROBBINSDALE CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL WORK SESSION MINUTES

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Web-Ex Meeting

1. The work session was called to order by Mayor Pro Tem Kline at 6:30 p.m.
2. Councilmembers Present: Kline, Webb, Selman, Backen, Mayor Blonigan
3. Staff Present: Marcia Glick, City Manager; Richard McCoy, Public Works Director; Rick Pearson, Community Development Coordinator.
4. Others Present:
Metro BlueLine LRT Community Advisory Commissioners: Gene Montenez, Jason Greenberg
Metro BlueLine LRT Business Advisory Commission Representative: Mike Opat for North Memorial

UPDATE AND DISCUSSION: Proposed Route for Relocated METRO BlueLine LRT Extension on County Road 81 alignment

5. Glick noted that with BNSF alignment being taken off the table, the only right-of-way (r-o-w) wide enough through Robbinsdale that is close enough to the original plan, so eligible for NewStarts work, is County Road 81. Everyone is encouraged to put feedback into the survey and comments at www.bluelineext.org. In the discussion of the Minneapolis analysis, the project staff indicated that a 75 foot r-o-w was minimum. In Robbinsdale, the project team is looking at 28 foot wide tracks and 11 foot wide driving lanes (current lanes 12-14 feet). In some places, there isn't sufficient room including turn lanes. Recapping information from the Issues Identification Team (IIT) meeting held that morning – identified potential areas of tight points/areas of concern:
 - 35th Avenue turn lanes into Hy-Vee/North Memorial Specialty were identified as critical
 - 36th Avenue noted new agreements and easements in place between Parker Station Flats and Hennepin County for improvements to the existing storm water pond
 - Lack of r-o-w between Birdtown Flats and Lakeview Terrace Park/regional bikeway access road
 - Question on west-side frontage road – does it need to be two-way (staff noted that prior to reduction of lanes there needs to be a study of the maximum development potential for properties between Birdtown Flats to 39th to assure adequate access is available for the future)
 - 40th – Town Center retaining wall/underground parking access is tight to r-o-w. If Town Center not redeveloped, r-o-w shift to east into Robin Center site would be needed to allow for a station. Access to Town Center/US Bank currently needed. Access to Robin Center by gas station would likely need to close.
 - 41st Ave is heaviest pedestrian crossing between 40th/41st/42nd
 - McDonald's property owns up to r-o-w and has easement access from CR81 – likely needs to stay open.
 - Possible elimination of north bound right turn lane and one left turn lane at 42nd.

- Possible closing of south bound turn lane for boat launch regional trailhead
 - Staff was not provided detail on TH 100 intersection or points north.
6. Glick recapped that the at-grade center running LRT proposed is in the very preliminary concept.
 7. McCoy confirmed that there is significant City infrastructure including the Joint Water Commission watermain at 42nd and that gravity systems (sanitary and storm sewer) cannot be significantly lowered. This includes the main sanitary sewer lanes for Robbinsdale and points west at 40th and 42nd.
 8. Opat shared that North Memorial would prefer a station near the main hospital (Lowry) vs the 35th Ave location. North is performing a workforce survey to determine potential utilization of LRT.
 9. Backen pointed out there were no details on the Abbott Avenue impacts.
 10. Selman expressed frustration that Robbinsdale was only provided with one option. He shared that in previous discussions of the LRT alignment there was a required consideration of ridership, cost and speed; this resulted in eliminating a slower route through North Minneapolis. He noted that the staff presentation did not include consideration of where the 400 stall parking ramp would be located and if Town Center redevelopment was for the purpose of a LRT parking ramp it wouldn't match his hopes for the location. He noted concern about shot spotter hot spot data in the route of the proposed line through Minneapolis. Bottineau Boulevard has recently been nicely landscaped vs. the wires and aesthetics of light rail. He preferred to see the route go through Brooklyn Boulevard or Douglas Drive vs. cutting through the middle of Robbinsdale.
 11. Greenberg noted the perception that Robbinsdale would not support the project and that it was important to get actual feedback from the community to find out what the community thinks. Needs more than a handful of scheduled meetings. Need to hear from more people.
 12. Glick noted that a study should look at how Robin Center/Town Center could be redeveloped as a result of lightrail and assure that decisions made on turning movements should consider the needs for future likely higher density projects. If the community supports the LRT; how with this redevelopment make the community better.
 13. Kline noted that the location on 81 is not ideal compared to BNSF. He doesn't want the community to lose the opportunity for connection to airport, Mall of America, jobs, etc. Lots of families have no vehicles. He is concerned about the narrowing of the roadway. CR81 is already a barrier and didn't think LRT would be an impact in that regard. He noted the at-grade/blind crossings near the capital are dangerous at slow speeds in St Paul; concern about higher speeds on CR81.
 14. Backen expressed concern that there isn't room for what's proposed in the r-o-w; doesn't think eliminating turn lanes to get room is ideal. The previous proposal would have "the best stop on the blueline" and he's concerned about the impact to the downtown character with what's proposed.
 15. Opat noted that the proposed route through Robbinsdale has great impacts compared to the ideal design of the prior alignment. Need to make sure it doesn't result in a city where no one can move around with 70 times an hour where traffic is stopped.

16. There was discussion of the history of alignment alternatives including a 60 month exploration of using Penn Ave as the connection from 55 to Broadway; a concept cutting across from Railroad to Broadway at 34th. Other discussion included a brief discussion of trying to get from 36th to 42nd next to the rail r-o-w or alternate alignments as well as options for tunnels or elevated sections.
17. Glick noted alternatives to width include stacking rail/traffic, redeveloping properties at pinch points. The elevation change between West Broadway and parking lot at City Hall (and water table) has to be considered.
18. Selman added history that the route through Robbinsdale was initially BRT but upgraded to LRT with the success of Hiawatha. The area studied multiple potential routes and impacts based on the best ability to get federal funding and impacts of having to buy up one side of the street trying to get through narrow r-o-w in Minneapolis. Ultimately the extra space available in the rail corridor seemed to make the most sense.
19. Webb confirmed that at this point the railroad alignment is not available.
20. Opat confirmed that after the uprising against an idea to turn oil trains onto the track through Robbinsdale, cooperation with BNSF ended.
21. Blonigan provided more history including that at one point there were to be three Robbinsdale stations. He would like to see federal and state advocacy to revisit the rail alignment utilizing pressure as part of negotiations on something the railroad wanted in another part of the company. He noted the amount of time that could be saved building now vs. in the future with inflation, perhaps there could be a spur line tie in to a connection through Minneapolis. He questioned if the extra cost of property acquisitions in narrow areas in Minneapolis as well as the higher costs in delay were considered.
22. Montanez shared concern regarding safety and impacts to Robbinsdale. Doesn't think a tunnel would work. Supports trying federal tools to get the project restarted.
23. Selman supported asking for a meeting with the Federal representatives.
24. Blonigan noted he has contact information with Federal staff. He doesn't want this to be viewed as competing with North Minneapolis – thinks that with time savings there could be money for the original line and funds for an additional connection.
25. Kline supported the letter while also indicating the need to respond to the current proposal for using CR81.
26. There was a discussion of concern for riders going through an area with higher crime.
27. Webb objected to how the message of crime in Minneapolis was communicated.
28. Montanez responded with his experience with racism growing up in California. He agreed that Webb's concerns were valid.
29. Backen noted he has taken a bus route through Minneapolis for years and has no concern for rider safety on this route.
30. Glick confirmed that in the past, the route through Minneapolis was found not to fit. What has changed? There has been redevelopment, a tornado, civil unrest which removed buildings and maybe it will work now on Broadway. Lowry was redeveloped by Hennepin Community Works and its now wider.
31. Webb noted that when others didn't object when concerns about crime in Minneapolis, she felt that white silence meant agreement.

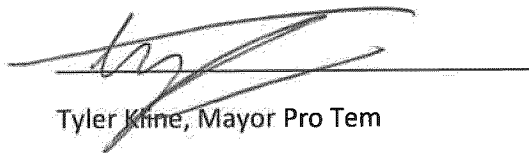
32. Blonigan acknowledged concern of equation between the community living in the area and crime in the area. He was not concerned about the safety in the corridor.
33. Opat confirmed that the lack of r-o-w stopped the previous exploration of the route through Minneapolis, there was room for the train, but not for parking. Current exploration of route from Target Field seems to follow the highway to get north to Broadway/Lowry. North Memorial looks in favor of helping to get employees to North Memorial from the south. He noted that a lot of the leadership has changed in Minneapolis and they were not familiar with the earlier study decisions. The concept now is to assure that those with homes and businesses impacted by construction would be compensated via anti-displacement efforts.
34. Greenberg shared his efforts to reach out to a variety of social media groups to try to drive people to the surveys. There are people excited about the opportunity as well as those with concerns. He noted that he plans to attend community meetings being held by Phillippe Cunningham to hear the feedback from Minneapolis residents. He emphasized the need to educate people about the proposal and encourage people to provide all of their feedback.
35. Glick confirmed that the meeting is being recorded and the plan to post the meeting for the public to view. She pointed out that the potential pinch points discussed, possible loss of turn lanes or access and need to develop adjacent sites were not certain. This is not a final route.
36. Participants agreed that while discussion included some difficult moments, it should be posted on the CCX site. Glick noted it wouldn't be in normal council meeting section because it is in a different electronic format.

ADJOURNMENT

37. Mayor Pro Tem Kline adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.



Marcia Glick, Recorder



Tyler Kline, Mayor Pro Tem