

ROBBINSDALE CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL LRT WORK SESSION MINUTES

Tuesday, September 21, 2021

6:00 p.m. Robbinsdale City Hall

1. The work session was called to order by Mayor Pro Tem Kline at 6:03 p.m.
2. Councilmembers Present: Kline, Webb, Selman (arrived 6:05), Backen, Mayor Blonigan
3. Staff Present: Marcia Glick, City Manager; Rick Pearson, Community Development Coordinator
4. Others Present: Metropolitan Council Chair Charles Zelle; Metropolitan Council Representative Robert Lilligren (arrived 6:13pm); Dan Solar, Hennepin County; Nick Landwer, Metro Transit; Jason Greenberg, CAC member for Robbinsdale; Sam O'Connell, Metro Transit.

REVIEW OF IMPACTS FOR CENTER RUNNING LRT AND POTENTIAL STATION LOCATIONS

5. Glick highlighted pinch points and impacts in Robbinsdale and concern that there hasn't been transparency with the public about impacts to businesses.
6. Mayor Blonigan asked why the BNSF option isn't being explored and expressed frustration that federal representatives had not responded to his letters. (Lilligren arrived 6:13pm)
7. Mayor Pro Tem Kline expressed shock that Member Lilligren could not find the City Hall of a city that he is supposed to represent. Member Lilligren claimed he could not find City Hall using his navigation device.
8. Mayor Blonigan noted accommodations made for communities in the southwest extension and expectation that cost should not be a factor for pedestrian connections for over/underpass across CR81. He noted the need for data on impact to crossing time with the extra crossing width and rail traffic. He noted with new federal funding for rail transportation there should be leverage for BNSF concession related to the Robbinsdale spur connection.
9. Member Webb expressed concern that the public doesn't know what stage the project is in. The process does not feel authentic and wanted clarifications on what stage the project was in and how much authority the Council has over the process. Member Webb stated the community deserves to know this information.
10. Member Selman expressed his previous strong support for the alignment and it is emotionally upsetting to be against the LRT in CR81. On a good day LRT tracks and wires are ugly. Construction on southwest is over budget and behind schedule. Robbinsdale business owners he has talked to indicated that they would relocate their businesses rather than stay

in Robbinsdale with construction disruption on 81 – based on the previous construction impacts when CR81 was reconstructed about 10 years ago. He stated that it is unacceptable to continue to waste taxpayer dollars. He will be proposing a resolution of non-support for this alignment.

11. Member Backen noted that there isn't enough room for the new infrastructure at 42nd and multiple other locations. He expressed concern that Robbinsdale's authentic downtown with independent, owner-occupied businesses would face disruption and economic hardship during construction, as CR81 will shift over and clog West Broadway. He noted that nothing has been shown to suggest that LRT will fit through the entire Robbinsdale section. He expressed concern for pedestrian safety. CR81 is currently 40mph, but drivers consistently go 45-50 mph. Lowering the speed to 35 with narrow lanes, will not necessarily slow down drivers. Pedestrians will be at risk trying to cross while cars race to beat the light.
12. In response to Member Backen's question, Chair Zelle shared that Met Council operates public transit including LRT, the County is the local funding partner, Met Council is the grantee partner for the federal funds.
13. Member Backen noted that all of the new development has been housing; 50% of the population are now renters and that will continue to grow with additional proposals for higher density housing on the horizon. He personally is not looking for additional redevelopment if it is only residential.
14. Member Kline spoke on behalf of residents who are renters. He noted that with his day job at the Capital he sees unsafe crossings with vehicle and pedestrian accidents- and that's going at 30 mph. He hasn't seen anything yet that addresses safety concerns.
15. Chair Zelle noted that he was mostly there to listen. Robbinsdale has a great community connection with local businesses that own their locations. It will be disruptive to bring a big project through the city. Details do matter. Livability matters. How does the project provide connections? How do you make it "life giving" vs. "life sucking." The Robbinsdale community is raising the right issues that need to be taken seriously. He has spoken with both Senator Smith and Senator Klobuchar and there isn't an option to bring BNSF back to the table. Connectivity for the community is important; BNSF isn't an alternative. Can we find ways to make this work?
16. Solar recapped – the status of the project. After multiple years the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) was explored on BNSF as LRT. The LPA is the transition from a Planning Project to a Transportation Project. With inability to move forward on BNSF, the Transportation Project is investigating the LPA on a route that doesn't include BNSF. Does a different route work for LRT. He noted that the change in alignment provides an opportunity to link to North Memorial Hospital.

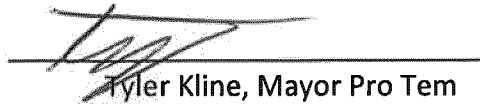
17. In response to a question on Municipal Consent – Chair Zelle indicated that the project would continue to move forward to address concerns until municipal consent is achieved. Sam O’Connell noted that Municipal Consent is a State requirement for transportation funding. Need to consolidate what the city wants from the project and need to address additional concerns. The County will need to decide whether to fund the project. Metropolitan Council will need to decide whether to move forward with the project.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Kline adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.



Marcia Glick, Recorder



Tyler Kline, Mayor Pro Tem