

MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Blonigan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Parisian, Wagner, Murphy, Mayor Blonigan

Absent:

Staff: Tim Sandvik, City Manager; Chase Peterson-Etem, City Clerk

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE CITY COUNCIL ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Jerry Blem, 2605 Parkview Blvd., questioned the amount of public transportation that is being used, and stated buses could be used as an alternative to light rail. He also noted light rail tracks are permanent.

Karen Shull, 3939 Crystal Lake Blvd., noted a document from the Minneapolis Park Board to the Met Council stating they are concerned about a potential light rail station stop at the ground round area. The Document from the Minneapolis Park Board will be included as Attachment 1 for these minutes.

Jonathan Hansen, 3927 Noble Ave. N., noted he was pleased to see solar panels would be added to the water treatment plant. He stated his support for light rail and noted economic development and redevelopment happen around mass transit areas and increased transportation options are needed. He stated the potential benefits of light rail, including the opportunity for more affordable housing options and reduced environmental impacts. He stated he strongly supports the light rail project.

Jerry Blem, 2605 Parkview Blvd., noted his concern about crime with the light rail and stated he believes more officers would be needed.

Nancy Johnson, 4230 Abbott Ave. N., noted she believes the route of the blue line extension is wrong and was concerned that people would have to give up the extra lanes that support North Memorial's emergency vehicles. She noted she wouldn't use the light rail, and she is unsure if the ridership would meet the projected numbers. She also noted her concern for folks in North Minneapolis and the displacement that would happen with this route.

Mayor Blonigan opened a letter from Jerome Johnson and wanted to incorporate the letter into this portion of this meeting. This letter will be included as Attachment 2 for these minutes.

OATH OF OFFICE ADMINISTERED BY THE CITY CLERK TO WARD 2 COUNCIL MEMBER

A. Oath of Office for Jason Greenberg, Ward 2 Council Member

Mayor Blonigan invited Jason Greenberg to the Dais.

Mayor Blonigan administered the Oath.

APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 20, 2024 MEETING AGENDA

Peterson-Etem noted two updates to the agenda for tonight, including the voucher disbursement report for Other Business Item A as well as the addition of the memo and resolution for Consent Item F.

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Murphy to approve the August 20, 2024, meeting agenda. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

CONSENT AGENDA

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Parisian to approve the consent agenda.

A roll call was taken.

Ayes: Parisian, Wagner, Murphy, Greenberg, Blonigan.

Nays: None.

The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

- A. Approve City Council meeting minutes from June 18, 2024.
- B. Approval of Credit Card Charges and Payment
- C. Hennepin County Play Area Grant Application
- D. Approval of Licenses
- E. An Ordinance amending Section 310 of the Robbinsdale City Code related to the City Manager's Purchasing Authority
- F. Award Bid for City Hall Audio Visual Equipment and Broadcast Systems - City Project 100422
- G. Hy-Vee Event

PRESENTATIONS

- A. None

PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. Second reading of an ordinance amending the City Charter

Peterson-Etem provided a brief overview of this item and noted the Council previously approved the first reading of this ordinance on July 16, 2024. He stated this ordinance will amend various sections of the City Charter to include Sections, 2.07, 3.06, 5.13, and 5.15. He further noted changes have been made to Section 5.13 Recall after the first reading and that both the Charter Commission and City Council have had the opportunity to discuss these changes at prior meetings. Peterson-Etem asked the Council to hold the public hearing and approve the second reading of the ordinance.

Mayor Blonigan summarized the letter from City Attorney Tietjen, specifically the section related to malfeasance.

Mayor Blonigan opened the public hearing.

Jonathan Hansen, 3927 Noble Ave. N., stated he supports these amendments and is hopeful the Charter can be revised to be easier to read for most people.

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Greenberg to close the public hearing.

Member Wagner thanked the Charter Commission and staff for their time making these amendments.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Parisian to Approve Ordinance No. 24-08, Charter Amendment No. 42 "AN ORDINANCE AMENDING VARIOUS SECTIONS FO THE ROBBINSDALE CITY CHARTER TO INCLUDE SECTIONS 2.07, 3.06, 5.13, AND 5.15.

A roll call was taken.

Ayes: Parisian, Wagner, Murphy, Greenberg, Blonigan.

Nays: None.

The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

A. None

NEW BUSINESS

A. Authorize Contract for City Hall Solar Array

Sandvik provided an overview and noted sustainability is a priority and goal of the Council. He noted this is the second project related to solar arrays that the city is sending out for bid this year, per direction of the Council. He noted a committee of employees reviewed the 12 submissions that were received, and it was the consensus of the committee to choose TruNorth Solar, LLC of Arden Hills, MN. Sandvik stated 60% of the project costs will be covered by grant funding, 30% will be reimbursed by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and 10% of the project cost would be the obligation of the city. He noted the expected breakeven point is 1.8 years.

Member Parisian thanked the review committee and noted she is happy to support the project.

Mayor Blonigan highlighted that 90% of the project would be covered from sources other than city funds and is pleased with the quick payback period. He thanked the staff for their work and is grateful for the Inflation Reduction Act.

Member Greenberg asked if the 1.8 years on return is for the whole project or only the city's contribution. Sandvik confirmed it would only be for the city's portion.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Parisian to Authorize the City Manger to enter into a professional Services Contract with TruNorth Solar, LLC. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

B. Consider Consumption and Display Permit for 4124-4130 Lakeland

Sandvik provided an overview of the item and noted the city has not had a request for a Consumption and Display (CD) permit for some time. He stated this falls under the umbrella of liquor licensing and this license could essentially allow patrons to "bring their own beverage" into the establishment. He stated staff and the City Attorney feel the establishment does not fall within the parameters of state statute to qualify for a CD

permit. However, the MN Department of Public Safety's Alcohol and Gambling Enforcement (AGE) division interpreted the statute differently and would allow this applicant a permit, if all other qualifications are met. Sandvik noted the city would need to approve their application, so the Council does have authority.

Member Murphy asked what types of events would be happening in the space. Sandvik stated they would be open to smaller wedding receptions, birthday, or graduation-type events. He noted there is not a full-service kitchen in the space, which does limit catering options.

Member Murphy asked about liability and who would be responsible. Sandvik noted many liquor licenses require a separate policy for liquor liability. However, the state noted they do not require it for this permit.

Member Greenberg asked about underage consumption and liability. Sandvik noted that coverage is normally included in a liquor liability policy required by other license types and without liquor coverage there would be no reassurances.

Mayor Blonigan reiterated the Council can deny the license, but legal action would most likely be pursued by the applicant.

Member Wagner asked if this permit allows off-sale. Sandvik stated this explicitly prohibits the establishment from selling or providing alcohol. Member Wagner asked if a caterer could provide alcohol services. Sandvik noted yes, but they would need to have proper licensing to do so.

Sandvik shared that communication between the lessor and the city has improved since the previous tenant. He also shared that the City Code for this permit type mostly references state statute, but updates to the City Code could be looked at in the long term. Sandvik further explained there is no city fee associated with this type of permit, and that could also be looked at in the fee schedule.

Mayor Blonigan noted that staff worked with the City Attorney, the League of MN Cities, and neighboring communities, all of which interpreted the statute the same way. He noted he is inclined to agree with the city and mentioned staff should continue to work with the applicant.

Member Greenberg asked if the state could override the decision of the Council. Sandvik noted AGE would only allow approval if the City provided approval.

Member Greenberg asked about enforcement and what mechanisms are in place to ensure they are not selling. Sandvik stated if they were selling that would be a violation of a number of statute provisions and City Code, and they wouldn't have a proper license to do that. In terms of enforcement around safety and consumption, there would be limited enforcement options, especially if they are not required to hold liquor liability insurance.

Member Parisian asked about occupancy and what limitations exist. Sandvik noted occupancy use will need to be updated, as well as additional items, such as things like sprinkler systems.

Member Parisian mentioned Dakota County Parks allow folks to come in for an event and bring their own beverages, with limitations, and she is wondering if there are provisions that could allow them to do something like this. Sandvik noted Robbinsdale offers something similar for park rentals. He noted there is the potential to move forward with something if certain assurances can be made by the applicant.

Mayor Blonigan noted if the Council is leaning towards denial, he would prefer a resolution to be drafted outlining the reasoning.

Member Murphy stated he is apprehensive to approve at this point, given the lack of liability, and supports a denial resolution.

Sandvik stated the Council could table the item and direct staff to discuss it with the City Attorney, potentially draft a resolution, and/or reach out to the applicant to provide assurances.

Member Parisian asked about providing directions to update legislative priorities regarding this issue. Sandvik noted it could be added to the motion, but more discussion on legislative priorities would be coming up and could be added at that point too.

Member Wagner noted he was more inclined to deny the request rather than table it, but could go either way.

Mayor Blonigan MOVED, seconded by Murphy to table the item and directed staff to work with the City Attorney to create a resolution denying the license, incorporate needed changes into legislative priorities, and work with the applicant to see if they can provide assurances to the City Council.

A roll call was taken.

Ayes: Parisian, Wagner, Murphy, Greenberg, Blonigan.

Nays: None.

The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS

A. Voucher Requests Pending Approval for Disbursement

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Greenberg to Approve Voucher Requests Pending Approval For Disbursement. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Peterson-Emm thanked everyone who voted in the August Primary Election. He also thanked all the staff and election judges that make elections a smooth process in Robbinsdale.

Sandvik noted work on 41st Ave. will start in the next couple of weeks. He stated the Lakeview Terrance Park Farmers Market is winding down, so people should enjoy it while it's still in season. He mentioned the Light Rail Open House happening at Elim Church tomorrow night from 6 to 8 p.m. and encouraged folks to attend. He also noted an online survey is available for people to provide input on the light rail.

COUNCIL GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS

Member Parisian congratulated Member Greenberg and welcomed him to the Council. She also encouraged folks to attend the Open House at Elim Church tomorrow night.

Member Wagner congratulated Member Greenberg and welcomed people to attend the Open House tomorrow.

Member Murphy congratulated and welcomed Member Greenberg.

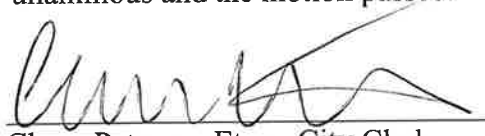
Member Greenberg thanked the staff for their work on the election and getting him prepared to be a Council member. He thanked those who voted for him and stated he is excited to represent Ward 2.

Mayor Blonigan congratulated the other candidates who participated in the primary. He stated he received a

letter from the League of MN Cities recommending our Legislators be recognized for their work and everything they do for us, and asked staff to include that in the next Council meeting. He also encouraged folks to visit the Robbinsdale Farmers Market and noted they have other items along with fresh produce.

ADJOURNMENT

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Greenberg to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Chase Peterson-Etem', written over a horizontal line.

Chase Peterson-Etem, City Clerk

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'William A. Blonigan', written over a horizontal line.

William A. Blonigan, Mayor



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August 12, 2024

METRO Blue Line Extension
Blue Line Extension Project Office
Park Place West Building, Suite 600
6465 Wayzata Boulevard
St. Louis Park, MN 55426

RE: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Comments on the Blue Line Extension
Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Project sponsor Metro Transit and lead federal agency The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have issued a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for the METRO Blue Line Light Rail Extension Project (Project). The project has been considered for some decades, with consistent and ongoing consultation and collaboration from local governments including the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB). The Project is currently envisioned to link downtown Minneapolis with northwestern suburbs via Washington Avenue and Broadway Avenue in north Minneapolis. This route passes near and through several park sites owned and operated by MPRB, and as such MPRB has a public responsibility to comment on the SDEIS. Such commentary is not the only opportunity for MPRB to formally affect the project, but it represents a key milestone in project planning and an important moment in park advocacy.

The purpose of the SDEIS, according to the document itself, is to “evaluate impacts from the modified alignment, in contrast to the 2016 Alignment and identify the potential for impacts to arise....” MPRB did comment on the previous alignment and also concurred with FTA’s finding under Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act of 1966 that there would be a *de minimis* impact on parkland, once mitigation efforts were taken into account. Though portions of the overall current alignment, approved by the Corridor Management Committee in 2022, are similar to that described in the 2016 environmental documents, the Minneapolis portion is fundamentally different. Therefore, MPRB must view this SDEIS as completely new and must comment accordingly.

Above all, MPRB strongly stresses that it wants to continue collaborating with the Project to ensure A) that Minneapolis residents, workers, and visitors are able to easily connect to parks via transit; and B) that transit improvements do not adversely impact the very park resources people have enjoyed for generations and which will be enjoyed for generations to come. MPRB’s mission strongly states that MPRB permanently preserves, protects, maintains, improves, and enhances its natural resources, parkland, and recreational opportunities for current and future generations of our region, including people, plants, and wildlife. This is the primary guidance MPRB will follow throughout this comment letter and the overall Project process.

Several strategies in Parks for All, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Comprehensive plan 2021-2036, recognize the importance of park-transit interconnections, including:

- Goal 4, Strategy 8: Create system-wide connections to and through parks for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders based on park plans and in collaboration with agency partners
- Goal 5, Strategy 3: Support year-round, multi-modal, vehicular, non-motorized, and shared mobility options that create safe recreation and commuter access to and through parks and the Grand Rounds, through infrastructure, filling trail gaps, traffic calming, maintenance, promotion, crash reduction, and education on trail protocols.

Several Parks for All strategies prioritize benefit to the recreating public and natural resources:

- Goal 2, Strategy 1: Prioritize preservation of historic, cultural, and scenic resources with protection of natural resources and contemporary recreational needs in park management, design, implementation, interpretation, and development decisions.
- Goal 3, Strategy 2: Care for existing historic and cultural resources, public art, and the memorial collection through planning, staffing, inventory, management, and conservation.

Guided by this policy direction, MPRB wishes to comment on the Project's SDEIS, with specific focus on the project's potential impact on parks, recreation, natural resources, and connections between these things and the people of the region. MPRB's comments are tabulated in three ways:

- This "**main letter**" offers a narrative response to the SDEIS, organized around four main THEMES:
 - A. FTA's Section 4(f) determination
 - B. Design of the Lowry Station area, which is planned to exist within MPRB parkland
 - C. Land ownership and jurisdiction
 - D. Pedestrian/bicycle access to parks around Broadway Avenue
- An attached "**comment tabulation**," which is a page-by-page list of comments on document topics of interest to MPRB. Some comments therein are linked to theme areas in the main letter, while others are not specifically discussed in the main letter but should nevertheless be considered important concerns to MPRB.
- **Board Resolution 2024-138**, approved on August 7, 2024, which takes a strong position on the at-grade crossing of light rail over the Minneapolis Grand Rounds.

Together, these three items are MPRB's official response to the Project's SDEIS.

Before discussing the four main themes, MPRB would like to briefly provide comment and/or context on several other overarching topics:

- The 4(f) park resource near the Lowry Station area is consistently misnamed in project documentation. Though there are two different parkway "segments" of the Grand Rounds Historic District in this area, the parkland itself is one single park called Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail. This is the nomenclature MPRB uses, and it follows the Metropolitan Council's naming of this part of the regional system.
- It appears there may be some inadvertent references to an elevated light rail bridge and/or station at the Lowry Station Area. MPRB's understanding is that the "flyover" option is no longer being considered, so these references should be removed from descriptions of the Build Option.
- There is little to no narrative about impacts to the urban forest. As steward of Minneapolis's public forest, MPRB would like to see more detailed information on street tree impacts and potential mitigations as the project progresses.

THEME A: FTA's Section 4(f) determination

With regard to Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail and the Grand Rounds Historic District, two 4(f) resources under MPRB's jurisdiction, the meaning of the 4(f) determination throughout the document is unclear, misleading, and includes multiple discrepancies. The Executive Summary, the entirety of Chapter 8, and portions of Appendix 8 say that a preliminary determination has been made. Table 8-1 notes that 4(f) "mitigation not required; impacts are *de minimis*." However, in Section 8.9 of Appendix 8 (not to be confused with Chapter 8), regarding both park resources it is said that "at this time FTA cannot make a preliminary determination...; additional coordination with the Official with Jurisdiction [MPRB] is necessary." These statements are in direct contradiction and should have been corrected prior to or immediately subsequent to the release of the SDEIS.

To get clarification, MPRB staff met with Project staff and were told that in fact NO determination has yet been made. FTA would like to stay on the pathway toward *de minimis*, but expects to work with MPRB further before that determination is made. MPRB staff shared that the SDEIS is confusing and at times inaccurate on this issue and requested that a clarification or addendum be immediately issued. Project staff have reported that FTA refuses to clarify the language in the SDEIS around 4(f). Project staff attempted to clarify this discrepancy when presenting before the Board of Commissioners on July 10, 2024. However, the fact remains that the SDEIS itself—on which this letter specifically comments—is contradictory and unclear.

MPRB is frustrated that this policy direction cannot be consistently explained in plain language, and would formally request again that FTA's and the Project's position on 4(f) be clarified as expediently as possible.

That said, if the language in Appendix 8, Section 8.9 is in fact correct, MPRB believes this is the appropriate approach. MPRB will need to better understand specific park impacts and proposed mitigations prior to considering concurrence with any 4(f) pathway. It is far too early to make a 4(f) determination now, with regard to effects on recreational, scenic, environmental, and historic aspects of the MPRB owned resources. We agree that a final determination can only happen through "additional coordination," which may also include design revisions (see THEME B), provision of additional and more detailed impact data, and comprehensive land ownership discussions (see THEME C).

THEME B: Design of the Lowry Station Area

The most significant impacts to parkland will take place within Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail, which is part of the National Register-eligible Grand Rounds and the Victory Memorial Parkway State Historic District. The interaction between the Lowry Station area and this critical park resource has been the subject of extensive design exploration and is admittedly a complicated, multi-level parkland and transportation amalgam. An early design for the station and track routing through this area featured a major flyover of the entire park area and an elevated station. This would have had significant impacts on park vegetation, would have added a major piece of transportation infrastructure to the park, and would have created a likely unsafe and undesirable elevated transit connection to the Grand Rounds. MPRB staff worked with Project staff to develop and review alternative designs, which led to the current Build Alternative.

MPRB appreciates the elimination of the flyover alternative from consideration, and acknowledges the work that Project and MPRB staff have expended on creating new designs for this complicated area. There are some significant positive attributes of the proposed design, many of which are described in the SDEIS:

- The location of the station at grade creates direct connections between light rail transit and the park system, something that is rare in Minneapolis but generally welcomed.
- The addition of the “slip ramp” from southbound Bottineau Blvd (County Road 81) to Lowry Avenue will likely reduce vehicle (and especially truck) traffic on Wirth Parkway, part of which is currently used as a county highway interchange.
- The design moves the intersection of Lowry Avenue and the Parkways out from under the Broadway bridges, increasing sight lines and safety for all park travel modes.
- The design preserves and potentially opens up the vista northward onto Victory Memorial Parkway, though additional analysis is requested on this topic (see comment #30 requesting an additional Key Viewpoint be examined).
- Because the current design proposes significant changes in the vicinity, this could be an opportunity to “right-size” roadways and other pavements, potentially eliminating unnecessary lanes, narrowing roadways, and returning more space to pervious surfaces such as green space and habitat areas.

However, one primary potential park impact that is not adequately documented in the SDEIS is the at-grade crossing of light rail over the Parkway and associated pedestrian and bicycle trails. According to Resolution 2024-138 (attached) MPRB believes this at-grade crossing to be “inimical to the recreational, parkland, park use, and historical and landscape value of MPRB’s property....” MPRB opposes the current plan and requests that the project office develop additional design alternatives to separate the light rail and parkway routes, along with further examination of impacts of all design options.

In order to better understand the impact on parks and the recreating public, MPRB requests the following, relative to the current data provided in the SDEIS:

- 1) More detailed information on the location of rail crossing gates and operation of intersections;
- 2) A detailed analysis of the frequency and duration of train crossings, taking into account the slowing of trains near the station, during all times of day, along with resultant traffic and access impacts to the Parkway, surrounding streets, and North Memorial Hospital;
- 3) A physical model of the station area, to facilitate understanding of the three-dimensional nature of the area and the interrelationships between modes;
- 4) Experiential digital fly-through videos for the vehicular and pedestrian/bicycle modes showing real-time impacts of waiting for trains at light rail crossings;
- 5) The amounts of impervious surfacing of each of the explored and analyzed design options, relative to existing conditions within the station area, with such analysis including all existing and proposed roadways, Parkways, trails, platforms, trackage, and light rail support infrastructure;
- 6) Historical safety and incident data from Minneapolis and other comparable cities addressing pedestrian and bicycle interaction at light rail crossings;
- 7) Additional design alternatives that seek to eliminate the at-grade crossing of the Parkway and associated trails, potentially including a light rail tunnel, a light rail trench, light rail tracks and station at the elevation of the Broadway Bridges, and Parkway and/or trail underpasses;
- 8) Full examination of items 1-5 as they relate to additional design options explored in item 7;
- 9) A clear description of maintenance responsibilities for and in the vicinity of the station, tracks, and other project elements that could exist on parkland, so that MPRB has a clearer picture of potential maintenance and operational impacts of the proposed designs; and

In essence, while MPRB appreciates the design advancement made to date, it feels that not enough data nor exploration is included in the SDEIS to accurately reflect potential park impacts, examine alternatives, and determine appropriate mitigation.

THEME C: Land Ownership and Jurisdiction

MPRB is a legacy land steward charged with acquiring, protecting, improving, and maintaining parkland for Minneapolis residents, workers, visitors, plants, and wildlife. The Project has affirmed that MPRB is the owner of lands and the Official with Jurisdiction (OWJ) over lands called Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail, through which the trails and parkway of the historic Grand Rounds travel. The Grand Rounds makes Minneapolis unique among American cities. Originally envisioned in the 1880s by landscape architect Horace W.S. Cleveland, the Grand Rounds has been largely implemented. The remaining gaps, on the upper Mississippi River and in northeast and southeast Minneapolis, are critical improvement areas for MPRB, with multiple projects underway. For the vast majority of its length, the Grand Rounds parkway and trail system exists on land owned and operated by MPRB, including in the area of greatest project impact: near the Lowry Station area.

Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway is subject to an easement “for highway purposes” conveyed by MPRB to the State of Minnesota in 1962, and later re-conveyed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation to Hennepin County. The easement encompasses not just portions of County Roads 81 (Broadway Avenue) and 153 (Lowry Avenue), but also a portion of Wirth Parkway necessary for vehicular interconnection between CR 81 and 153.

Two primary land ownership and jurisdiction issues exist in the Lowry Station area, neither of which are adequately addressed in the SDEIS.

First, according to the Memorandum dated July 4, 2024, and prepared by Patrick B. Steinhoff of Malkerson Gunn Martin, LLP, MPRB opposes the idea that the presence of an “easement for trunk highway purposes” allows the Project a fundamental right to build a light rail line across parkland. MPRB asserts that transit use of this corridor will require, per the Memorandum, “an amendment of the existing easement or condemnation of additional easement rights....” In light of these facts, MPRB requests:

- Any proposed project elements within the existing easement be considered transportation improvements on parkland, rather than a perspective like that on Page 48 of Appendix 8, which seems to suggest that improvements constructed within the easement will have no park impacts, which is incorrect because the underlying land is still parkland, whether encumbered or not.
- A commitment from the Project, potentially as mitigation, to reduce the size of the easement at the conclusion of the project, in recognition of different needs for the Country roadway system, thereby returning useable parkland to the public.

Second, MPRB is strongly opposed to relocating a portion of the Grand Rounds parkway off of MPRB-owned lands. Admittedly, as new park connections are being made elsewhere to fill historic gaps in the Grand Rounds system, MPRB is working with partners to both acquire land and make agreements to operate recreational facilities on the lands of other jurisdictions. MPRB also acknowledges that outside-the-box thinking here is important to arrive at the best possible design for the public, regardless of current land ownership. However, in this case, the parkway currently exists on MPRB fee title land and must continue to do so. MPRB therefore requests:

- The SDEIS should consistently discuss the impact of removing the Grand Rounds parkway from MPRB fee title lands, which can then open the doorway for specific mitigation efforts, should the current concept advance. This reality is mentioned on Page 69 of Appendix 8, but nowhere else in the document. The SDEIS needs to address Grand Rounds property jurisdiction as a project impact.
- A commitment from the Project to ensure any future Parkway corridor—consisting of pedestrian and bicycle trails, a vehicular parkway, and ample associated open space—can exist on MPRB fee title owned lands, whether or not encumbered by other easements. As is currently the case with Wirth/Victory,

MPRB is the underlying and primary fee title land owner, with other easements conferring rights atop that MPRB ownership. This must be the outcome of any new parkway corridor.

- A commitment from the project office that it will bear all costs and perform all due diligence to acquire base fee title property ownership to all new Parkway corridor parcels, and that it will transfer fee title ownership to MPRB as mitigation for any relocation of the Parkway off MPRB lands. MPRB understands that transportation easements of various types may still be necessary to allow county roads and the light rail corridor to exist, but the underlying fee title ownership should be MPRB's.

THEME D: Pedestrian/bicycle access to parks around West Broadway Avenue

MPRB appreciates the inclusion of parks along Broadway Avenue in the SDEIS, even though these parks will not be directly affected by the Project. MPRB does agree that "no use" is the correct determination for North Commons Park and Cottage Park (Table A8-1). Under the Project as currently described, Hall Park, located along the previously considered Lyndale Avenue routing, would also be determined as "no use." Connections between these parks and the neighborhoods both north and south of Broadway Avenue are, however, critical. MPRB strongly supports efforts by the Project and City of Minneapolis to ensure multiple pedestrian and bicycle crossings of the corridor and Broadway Avenue, specifically between the Penn and James Stations. MPRB also appreciates incorporation of MPRB's and the City's recommendations for implementation of a portion of the Northside Greenway alongside the James Avenue Station and extending toward North Commons Park.

These crossings and trail connections, however, are not adequately described nor supported in the SDEIS. Without them, several assertions about the enhancement and preservation of community connectivity are no longer accurate. Many residents living north of Broadway Avenue cross that street to access larger parks like North Commons and Willard and to utilize the YMCA, another important though private recreational amenity. North High School likewise lies south of Broadway Avenue and hosts a student body that walks and bikes from locations including neighborhoods to the north.

Currently, the Trust for Public Land's ParkScore metric for Minneapolis identifies a disparity between high- and low-wealth and between high- and low-BIPOC census tracts in the available acreage of park land in close proximity. According to these national metrics, north Minneapolis residents are just as likely to live within a 10-minute walk of a park, but within that 10-minute walk they have fewer acres on which to recreate. If the Project limits crossings of Broadway Avenue, thereby increasing walk times to the large park space at North Commons, this disparity will increase.

The location and number of light rail crossings are therefore specifically an Environmental Justice consideration. None of this information is included in the SDEIS. To acknowledge this reality, MPRB requests:

- A more robust narrative, possibly in Chapter 7: Environmental Justice, about the park acreage disparity identified by Trust for Public Land, with reference to the potential impacts of the Project if connections are not retained and improved.
- Specific verbal recognition of the multiple planned crossings of the corridor, appearing throughout the narrative, such as on Page 3-13 or in Table 3-8.
- Extension of the project limits along James and Knox Avenues southward to and including crossings of Golden Valley Road, to ensure direct connection to North Commons Park from the James Avenue Station and the proposed Knox crossing. MPRB is requesting inclusion of the Golden Valley Road intersections because Hennepin County is a light rail project partner, Golden Valley Road is a Hennepin County road, and discussion/negotiation now will be easier in the midst of this major project than a potentially three-agency agreement after the fact.

SUMMARY

MPRB appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Blue Line Extension SDEIS. We also appreciate the consistent and ongoing involvement of staff and commissioners in the project process. In this letter, MPRB is expressing some major concerns related to park impacts. Though not insurmountable, these issues—particularly the confusion and contradictions around 4(f)—create challenges in the project that go beyond technical decision-making and touch on the level of trust that is possible between MPRB and the Project.

Our most critical requests, therefore, relate to the project's impact on Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail. The first is for a commitment to explore alternative design options to the proposed at-grade crossing of the Parkway, and to evaluate these options with clear and consistent data. The second is for immediate and broad communication that a "preliminary 4(f) determination" of *de minimis* for MPRB park resources is NOT in fact what is being proposed at this time. With its entrenchment in certain barely intelligible policy language, FTA is creating extreme difficulty among Project and agency staff and elected officials. The discrepancies in the SDEIS leave us either confused or believing the worst—namely that FTA has already made its determination and this vagueness is a tactic to suppress comment. In confusion, we must protect ourselves against the worst. A clear and public statement of FTA's true 4(f) determination (or lack thereof) will be an important step forward in maintaining the trust needed to build this line.

Respectfully Submitted,
on behalf of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Commissioners



Margret Forney, President
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

#	Page	Section	Comment	Topic	Major Theme
1	ES-6	"What Alternatives..."	Include MPRB in the list of CMC members.	MPRB Inclusion	n/a
2	ES-10	Robbinsdale	Reference Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway in description of CR82/Lowry intersection.	MPRB Inclusion	n/a
3	ES-11	Map	Why is there a label referencing "elevated LRT"?	Clarification/Error/Omission	n/a
4	ES-13	Section 4(f)....	The meaning of the 4(f) determination throughout the document is unclear, misleading, and includes multiple discrepancies. The Executive Summary, the entirety of Chapter 8, and portions of Appendix 8 say that a preliminary determination has been made. Other statements in Appendix 8 say that no determination can yet be made because further coordination is necessary. These statements are in direct contradiction and should have been corrected prior to or immediately subsequent to the release of the SDEIS, as requested by MPRB staff. This frustrating and avoidable issue is discussed at length in the main letter.	4(f) Determination	A
5	ES-20	Section 4(f)/6(f)	The 4(f) issue is discussed further in the main letter.	4(f) Determination	A
6	ES-21	"How would adverse...."	Recommend including 4(f) mitigation as a general topic under the bulleted list.	Clarification/Error/Omission	n/a
7	1-4	1.2.2	Reference to "Victory Memorial Park" is incorrect. The official park name is "Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail. Could also be appropriate to reference the Grand Rounds here.	Park names	n/a
8	2-10	3rd paragraph	MPRB does not believe that the "interchange would remain functionally similar to existing conditions." The addition of the "slip ramp" could reduce traffic on Parkways, and this should be recognized as a benefit. The at-grade light rail crossing of the parkway and associated trails, however, could have negative impacts, which are not discussed here. The main letter discusses the Lowry station design in greater detail.	Lowry Station Area design	B
9	2-14	Table 2-3 Robbinsdale	Add elevated/flyover station to the list of alternatives not carried forward.	Clarification/Error/Omission	n/a
10	2-17	2.4.2.3	The build option for the Lowry station is not included here nor in the Minneapolis section, and should be.	Clarification/Error/Omission	n/a
11	2-18	Table 2-5	The list of "Build Alternative" bridges is confusing and may not be correct. Where does the modification/expansion of the Broadway Bridges appear?	Clarification/Error/Omission	n/a
12	2-19	Map	Why is there a label referencing "BLRT bridge and vertical circulation"?	Clarification/Error/Omission	n/a
13	2-20	Traction Power Substations	Some preliminary thinking suggests that a TPSS may be placed in the vicinity of the Grand Rounds at the Lowry Station. MPRB would strongly oppose placement of TPSS on park-owned property.	Utilities/Infrastructure	B
14	3-13	City of Minneapolis	The narrative here about the multi-use trails only suggests improvements in pedestrian comfort. However, the introduction of an at-grade light rail crossing will create an additional barrier than what exists today. This paragraph should recognize this potential impact alongside potential benefits. See main letter for additional information.	Lowry Station Area design	B
15	3-13	City of Minneapolis	The narrative does not reference any pedestrian crossings of light rail between Penn and James. These must be documented here, or the overall pedestrian environment and critical access to parks will be lessened from what it is today. See main letter for additional information.	Access to parks	D
16	3-14	Table 3-8	No reference to at-grade crossing creating a potential barrier. See main letter for additional information.	Lowry Station Area design	B
17	3-14	Table 3-8	No reference to north side greenway, nor of ped/bike crossings between Penn and James. See main letter for additional information.	Ped/Bike access	D
18	3-14	3.2.4	Without a better understanding of the impacts of a new at-grade light rail crossing, MPRB would not agree with the statements in this section. See main letter for additional information.	Lowry Station Area design	B
19	3-19	City of Minneapolis	Comments here echo those made for the pedestrian section. See main letter for additional information.	Lowry Station Area design	B
20	3-19	Table 3-10	No reference to at-grade crossing creating a potential barrier. See main letter for additional information.	Lowry Station Area design	B
21	3-19	Table 3-10	No reference to north side greenway, nor of ped/bike crossings between Penn and James. See main letter for additional information.	Ped/Bike access	D

Blue Line Extension
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#	Page	Section	Comment	Topic	Major Theme
22	3-19	3.3.4	Without a better understanding of the impacts of a new at-grade light rail crossing, MPRB would not agree with the statements in this section. See main letter for additional information.	Lowry Station Area design	B
23	3-24	City of Robbinsdale	This narrative should include more about the "slip ramp" and how that changes traffic movements in the station area, and potentially reduces traffic on MPRB Parkways. It should also discuss the at-grade light rail crossing and its impact on vehicular travel on the Parkway. See main letter for additional information.	Lowry Station Area design	B
24	4-1	Table 4-1	Would like to see the phrase "displacement and/or disconnection" included in line 2 column 3.	Clarification/Error/Omission	n/a
25	4-4	Table 4-3	MPRB's Parks for All Comprehensive Plan, though not strictly a land use plan, should be included here as a jurisdictional guiding document. There are several areas of guidance and alignment in Parks for All, which warrant a broader narrative included in Section 4.1.2.	MPRB Inclusion	n/a
26	4-7	4.2.1	Include MPRB's Parks for All, because we believe it was consulted. (If it was not consulted, please do so.)	MPRB Inclusion	n/a
27	4-17, 18	City of Robbinsdale, City of Minneapolis	These sections do not include any reference to the addition of a new at-grade crossing of the Parkway and Grand Rounds trails being a potential impact on community cohesion. See main letter for additional information.	Lowry Station Area design	B
28	4-22	Table 4-13	The suggestion that there are no Park and Recreational parcel impacts is functionally incorrect. Even if the highway easement can be used for transit purposes, a park agency is still the underlying land owner and that land would be impacted. Furthermore, additional acquisition may be necessary to create NEW parkland on which the Parkway will exist. We believe this chart needs to be modified to show some park and recreation data. See main letter for additional information.	Land ownership	C
29	4-31	4.4.4	It is critical, somewhere, to have a discussion about the implications of a Grand Rounds Parkway and trails existing off of MPRB land. Mitigation measures may need to include additional land acquisition to ensure the Grand Rounds continues to exist on land owned by MPRB. See main letter for additional information.	Land ownership	C
30	4-38	Table 4-17	MPRB would request analysis of visual impact associated with one additional KVP, facing north FROM the project area to Victory Memorial Parkway. Though not a view of the trackway and station themselves, this view is one that could be impacted by project activities, namely the re-routing of the Parkway. The southern entrance to Victory Memorial Parkway, part of the Grand Rounds and a designated State Historic District, is inarguably a key viewpoint in the region and should be examined for potential visual impact.	Lowry Station Area design	B
31	4-40	4.5.4.2	MPRB recommends inclusion of "construction sequencing and scheduling" as a potential mitigation option.	Clarification/Error/Omission	n/a
32	5-8, 9	Maps	The maps do not show the Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail area, where major utilities may exist	Clarification/Error/Omission	n/a
33	5-43	5.6 Noise	MPRB requests clarification on how parks are examined for noise impacts under FTA guidance. The Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail area is designed as a passive space for traveling and rest, unlike more active parks in the corridor.	Noise	n/a
34	5-59	Table 5-17	The rusty patched bumblebee (<i>Bombus affinis</i>) is a Federally endangered species that should have been considered within the study area. Interactive maps on the US Fish and Wildlife website show the bee's range overlapping the project area, especially within and near Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail. If there is some reason the bee has been excluded from analysis, that should be shared in the document.	Endangered species	n/a
35	5-66	Wildlife Habitat	Under several policy documents, MPRB is interested in increasing wildlife habitat within Minneapolis parks. If there are opportunities even beyond the Project's limits of disturbance to increase forest habitat for bats and/or prairie/grassland habitat for butterflies and bees, MPRB would be a willing partner in that effort.	Endangered species	n/a
36	6-22	2nd paragraph	MPRB agrees wholeheartedly with this statement. However, MPRB should be mentioned here, or at the very least the phrasing should be "...funding for acquisitions, Minneapolis and other communities...."	MPRB Inclusion	n/a

#	Page	Section	Comment	Topic	Major Theme
37	6-27	Parklands row, mitigation column	MPRB mostly agrees with this statement, but mitigation for parkland acreage impacts may be necessary under certain project design factors, such as a severing of connections to parks. In addition, assistance with acquisition of additional parkland would be an appropriate mitigation for past harms from the transportation system, especially in north Minneapolis and around the Lowry Station area, where land rights were taken for transportation purposes. The Project should strongly consider revising existing transportation easements as part of the project, and ensuring that the Parkway road itself can exist on MPRB owned land.	Land ownership	C
38	7-18	Figure 7-8	Many of the communities in north Minneapolis are disadvantaged in terms of park acreage available within a short walking distance. This should be recognized as an historic harm in some way on the map or in the narrative, even if this isn't specifically referenced in Justice40. See the main letter, topic D, for a discussion on park acreage disparity.	Park Acreage	n/a
39	7-41	7.4.2	Existing disparity in park acreage accessible to north side residents could be exacerbated if connections to parks near the project are severed by the light rail line. This is an environmental justice issue. See the main letter for further information.	Ped/Bike access	D
40	7-43	7.4.2.2	This section is another opportunity to discuss acreage disparity and critical connections to parks. See the main letter for further information.	Ped/Bike access	D
41	7-45	City of Minneapolis	Nowhere is there a discussion of the potential impact of an at-grade crossing of the Grand Rounds by a light rail line. No railroad crossings of the Grand Rounds exist today, and to propose the first within an EJ community must be examined for its potential impacts on community cohesion. See the main letter for further discussion.	Lowry Station Area design	B
42	7-45	City of Minneapolis	Because the proposed ped/bike crossings of Broadway Avenue between Penn and James are not listed nor discussed, there can be no assurance that the project will improve overall cohesion. See the main letter for further discussion.	Ped/Bike access	D
43	8-1	Table 8-1	MPRB requests further clarification on 4(f) determinations. To suggest here that mitigation is not required and that impacts are de minimis at this stage of project design is fundamentally inaccurate. See the main letter for further discussion.	4(f) Determination	A
44	8-2	Table 8-2	The official name for the park resource to be impacted by the Project is Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail. MPRB and the Metropolitan Council see parkland on both sides of Lowry Avenue as the same single park unit with this name. Though the segment south of Lowry (Wirth Parkway) and the segment north of Lowry (Victory Memorial Parkway) have very different characters and purposes, they should be collectively described with the accurate name.	Park names	n/a
45	8-2	Table 8-2	MPRB understands from discussion with project office staff that the FTA has not in fact yet made a de minimis determination for Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail and Grand Rounds Historic District. If true, an additional column should be added to this table. See main letter for further discussion.	4(f) Determination	A
46	8-4	Map	Change park name to Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail.	Park names	n/a
47	8-7	8.3	MPRB believes it is too early to assume there will be no direct use, versus de minimis use. See main letter for further discussion.	4(f) Determination	A
48	8-8, 9	Tables 8-3 and 8-4	Change park name to Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail.	Park names	n/a
49	9-18	Table 9-8	Regardless of determinations of use under 4(f) and Section 106, and regardless of existing easement rights, an MPRB construction permit will be required for work within parkland areas.	Clarification/Error/Omission	n/a
50	11-3	Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Vehicle Traffic	The description of the Build Alternative for these three factors does not accurately reflect the potential impacts of an at-grade light rail crossing of trails and the Grand Rounds Parkway near the Lowry station area. This analysis must be incorporated into the understanding of effects and benefits. See main letter for further discussion.	Lowry Station Area design	B

#	Page	Section	Comment	Topic	Major Theme
51	11-3	Pedestrian and Bicycle	The description of improvements with the Build Alternative is only true between Penn and James if adequate rail crossings are provided. This should be noted and affirmed in the narrative. See main letter for further discussion.	Ped/Bike access	D
52	App.8-1	8.1	This section references two properties where a "preliminary determination cannot be made without further coordination...." This is referring to Wirth/Victory and Grand Rounds Historic District, which creates extreme confusion because the entirety of Chapter 8 and portions of Appendix 8 say that a preliminary determination has been made. These statements are in direct contradiction and should have been corrected prior to or immediately subsequent to the release of the SDEIS. This frustrating and avoidable issue is discussed at length in the main letter.	4(f) Determination	A
53	App.8-2	Table A8-1	Change park name to Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail.	Park names	n/a
54	App.8-2,3	Table A8-1	Both Wirth/Victory Parkway and the Grand Rounds Historic District are noted as de minimis use, in contradiction to statements elsewhere in this document. Furthermore, MPRB strongly believes there has not yet been enough coordination to make a de minimis determination. See main letter for further discussion.	4(f) Determination	A
55	App.8-5	Map	Change park name to Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail.	Park names	n/a
56	App.8-20	Table row 3	Change park name to Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail. Under the location column, the description of the Wirth Parkway portion is not correct. The southern terminus of Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway is at Golden Valley Road. South of there, the park resource is called Theodore Wirth Regional Park and the parkway within in that area is not a separate park unit but a park road within Theodore Wirth Park.	Park names	n/a
57	App.8-48	8.7.1.10	Change park name to Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail. Park areas on either side of Lowry Avenue are not considered separate parks neither by MPRB nor by the Metropolitan Council under the Regional Parks Policy Plan. Portions of the property description will need to be rewritten to accurately describe these park resources and their boundaries.	Park names	n/a
58	App.8-48	"Potential Property Impacts"	MPRB is currently researching whether it believes Hennepin County and/or Metro Transit have the existing right to build light rail transit within a highway easement across a parkway. Until that question is resolved, the project office should consider park impacts within the entirety of MPRB-owned lands, regardless of the presence of the easement. See main letter for further discussion.	Land ownership	C
59	App.8-49	Map	The easement over parkland was taken as an easement for "trunk highway purposes." It may not actually be a general transportation easement. This map should refer to it by its established legal name and not use shorthand that could suggest an inaccuracy in land rights. See main letter for further discussion.	Land ownership	C
60	App.8-50	3rd paragraph	The statement that "parkways would generally be accessible to the public during construction" feels somewhat disingenuous. It is unlikely that modification and extension of highway bridges over the parkway, rail crossings of the parkway and trails, and construction of a station, with all the attendant equipment moving in the area, will allow passage through this construction site while active. MPRB would like a more honest understanding of park impacts during construction.	Clarification/Error/Omission	n/a
61	App.8-50	Coordination	It is important here to distinguish between ongoing staff coordination (and the design opinions and guidance of staff) and the elected MPRB Commissioners. The second sentence should be revised to read: "...has been discussed with MPRB staff and appears to be, in staff's perspective, a viable concept in comparison to other design options discussed. Further coordination with staff and review by the Board of Commissioners is necessary." See main letter for further discussion.	Lowry Station Area design	B
62	App.8-50	Coordination	This paragraph furthers confusion about the 4(f) determination by offering yet another description of the current reality. See main letter for further discussion.	4(f) Determination	A

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Approved by Board of Commissioners on XXXXX

	Page	Section	Comment	Topic	Major Theme
63	App.8-67, 68	8.7.2.6	MPRB appreciates the acknowledgement that a property transaction may be required to maintain MPRB ownership of parkways. In MPRB's perspective, this would be a functional requirement.	Land ownership	C
64	App.8-67, 68	8.7.2.6	This section does not discuss the impacts of the new at-grade light rail crossing of the Grand Rounds and its potential to sever that historic route for peds, bikes, and vehicles. The Grand Rounds Historic District is NRHP eligible because of its connectivity and completeness. Currently, no at-grade rail crossings exist. Further study is necessary to determine the level of impact, mitigation, or avoidance. See the main letter for further discussion.	Lowry Station Area design	B
65	App.8-78,79	8.9	The 2nd large bullet on page 78 and the 2nd large bullet on page 79 state that FTA cannot make a preliminary determination on two considered MPRB properties. This is a significant and confusing discrepancy within the document. See main letter for further discussion.	4(f) Determination	A

Offered by:
Seconded by:

Resolution 2024-138

RESOLUTION APPROVING A COMMENT LETTER ON THE SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (SDEIS) FOR THE BLUE LINE EXTENSION LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT PROJECT, WHICH MAY IMPACT PARKLAND IN NORTH MINNEAPOLIS, INCLUDING WIRTH/VICTORY MEMORIAL PARKWAY REGIONAL TRAIL AND NORTH COMMONS PARK

Whereas, The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) was created by the Minnesota Legislature in April 1883 and has the authority to manage and operate park facilities;

Whereas, The Metropolitan Council Blue Line Light Rail Extension Project (Project) was originally envisioned to travel on Olson Memorial Highway, then along railroad right-of-way through and adjacent to Theodore Wirth Regional Park intending to link downtown Minneapolis to the northwestern suburbs;

Whereas, Between 2020 and 2022, Metro Transit modified the Project route to travel through north Minneapolis on or near Broadway Avenue;

Whereas, MPRB operates and has jurisdiction over several park properties in north Minneapolis that are in close proximity to the currently proposed Project, including but not limited to Victory Memorial Parkway;

Whereas, Metro Transit has released a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for public comment, with the comment period closing on August 5, 2024;

Whereas, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has been given an extension on that comment period to September 12, 2021;

Whereas, The SDEIS outlines a wide variety of Project impacts of interest to MPRB, including impacts on walkways, park connectivity, green spaces and community connection;

Whereas the Metropolitan Council has proposed a Blue Line Extension along County Road 81(West Broadway/ Bottineau Boulevard) that would bring light rail to an at grade crossing at the intersection of Lowry Avenue and Theodore Wirth Parkway and Victory Memorial Drive;

Whereas, The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) for over 140 years has worked to create, maintain, acquire, develop, protect, fund and preserve the 55 mile Grand Round system of parks and parkways which encircles the city of Minneapolis by allowing a relatively unimpeded route throughout the system to the benefit of all of citizens, visitors and our environment;

Whereas, the introduction of at grade light rail crossing of a light rail system is unprecedented in the history of the Grand Rounds system and the MPRB has fought transportation projects which have sought to interpret the Grand Rounds system at Highway 55 (Hiawatha Avenue) and Minnehaha Parkway, Cedar lake Parkway and 27th Avenue, East River Road and Lake Street, and has always endeavored to preserve the integrity of the century old Grand Rounds system;

Whereas, requiring that the Grand Rounds system cross grade at the same level as Blue Line railroad tracks would interrupt the flow of the Grand Rounds in North Minneapolis, necessitate the placement of railroad crossing gates on the Grand Rounds at a point between two elevated highway bridge abutments, and require an additional traffic signal at Lowry avenue, and would reroute the current parkways in a significant way by creating an "S" curve rather than a gentle curve, and relocate the parkways off of MPRB property;

Whereas, the proposed BLE would also change the alignment of Victory Memorial Drive, a place designated as an historic district under the laws of Minnesota;

Whereas, the SDEIS did not study the traffic impacts and pedestrian safety impacts and

Whereas Victory Memorial Drive is on the state registry of historic places and commemorates the service of 468 members of Hennepin County who died in the service of their country during World War I is the largest geographic monument to world war in the country;

Whereas, The SDEIS also includes preliminary determination of impacts on park properties under Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act of 1966, and MPRB is the Official with Jurisdiction (OWJ) over some of the park properties identified in the SDEIS;

Whereas, the MPRB vehemently disagrees with the SDEIS's preliminary determinations on the impacts of park properties under Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act of 1966, the MPRB views the SDEIS to actually have extremely negative impacts on park properties and the opinion the MPRB legal counsel rebuts any legal conclusions that the Project Office has received regarding existing easements on this property and its ability to diminish the use of park property for transit use;

Whereas Section 4(f) aims to preserve the natural beauty of these properties and prevent their conversion to transportation use and the law states that the DOT cannot approve the use of Section 4(f) land unless there is no other practical alternative and all possible steps have been taken to minimize harm to the property

Whereas, A comment letter issued by MPRB through official Board action will serve both as guidance for Project staff regarding MPRB's position, and also as guidance for MPRB staff in advancing ongoing design and planning discussions; and

Whereas, This resolution is supported in Parks for All, the MPRB Comprehensive Plan 2021-2036, under Goal 2: "Steward a continuum of recreation and nature," Goal 3: "Provide core services with care," Goal 4: "Work from our strengths and determine our role in partnerships," and Goal 5: "Expand focus on health equity;"

Whereas the current BLE plan directly contradicts the priorities of MPRB's comprehensive plan under Goal 1, strategy's 8 and 13; Goal 2, Strategy 1; Goal 4, strategy 13 and Goal 5, strategy 1; especially concerning 'prioritizing youth and seniors' (G1, S8) and 'prioritizing preservation of historic resources' (G2, S1) and;

Whereas, A legal memorandum dated July 4, 2024, prepared by Patrick B. Steinhoff of Malkerson Gunn Martin, LLP, also referred to as The 'Malkerson Letter', confirms that MPRB has complete autonomy over its parkland and park uses;

Now Therefore be it RESOLVED, that the MPRB finds that any at grade crossing of light rail on the Grand Rounds and particularly at Victory Memorial Drive and Theodore Wirth Parkway to be inimical to the Resolution No. 2024-138

recreational, parkland, park use, and historical and landscape value of the MPRB’s property; and that MPRB opposes the proposed plan of the Blue Line Extension by the Metropolitan Council for the reasons stated above;

RESOLVED, that the MPRB requests that the BLE Project Office develop plans to separate the Blue Line to be at a different grade than the parkways so as to avoid negative impacts on parks and parkways;

RESOLVED that this resolution further serves as a communication to the City of Minneapolis the needs and direction of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board as they consider Municipal Consent for the citizens of Minneapolis;

RESOLVED, That the Board of Commissioners directs the President working with staff and legal counsel to revise the draft comment letter on the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for the Blue Line Extension Light Rail Transit Project consistent with this resolution, which would directly impact parkland in north Minneapolis, including Wirth/Victory Memorial Parkway Regional Trail and North Commons Park; and

RESOLVED, That the President of the Board and Secretary to the Board are authorized to take all necessary administrative actions to implement this resolution.

Adopted by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
In formal meeting assembled on August 7, 2024

Commissioner	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
Forney				
Abene				
Alper				
Menz				
Musich				
Olsen				
Rucker				
Shaffer				
Thompson				

Margret Forney, President

Jennifer B. Ringold, Secretary

Mayor Action:

☐ APPROVED

☐ VETOED

Jacob Frey, Mayor

Date

From: Jerome Johnson [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: SLR81 - Establish next steps - Muni Consent Draft
Date: August 17, 2024 at 8:20 AM
To: Kersten, Deb [REDACTED]
Cc: Karen Shull [REDACTED] Nancy Johnson [REDACTED] Eric Hillman [REDACTED]

Hi Everyone. Please circulate as needed. The following is basically a rewrite and clean-up of the muni concentration suggestions that appeared in the op-ed that ran in the Strib. It's offered up here to basically drive the outcome SLR-81 is seeking from all this - no rails on Broadway while offering a realistic and effective alternative - while working within the strict muni consent process and leaving the door open for acceptable compromise outcomes that, in turn, can win fence-sitting city council votes.

Item 1 below solves the immediate problem by eliminating a system that has no mobility upside but comes with all the social and physically disruptive downsides one can conjure up. Item 2 provides for alternatives that offer various degrees of disruption and peril but with considerable mobility upside for all users. It also buys time. Item 3 provides for a low-cost, immediate transit solution that also, down the line, will establish a solid, realistic, effective benchmark against which to evaluate items 2a, 2b and 2c.

Put another way, the community, come 2032, could be more than satisfied with the real-world Broadway BRT to the point where consideration of the high cost Item 2 options are dropped. Unless demographics and ridership estimates change dramatically, this is the outcome I would bet on. Others may see it differently, to where a higher capacity, higher speed option like 2a thru c is justified. If that is the case, I would bet on 2a first - it should be much cheaper and far less disruptive as time erodes the emotional issues with the freight railroad - then 2c as a riverside development gamble, and finally 2b, which would wreak construction havoc on West Broadway and dredge up all the bad memories of the SWLRT shallow tunnel fiasco.

(One "compromise" outcome I would be leery of would be if Minneapolis grants muni consent while Robbinsdale and/or Crystal do not. That could, if pushed forward, result in the BLE stub-ended somewhere in Minneapolis, say, at James and 21st, while future extensions from that point are studied, but with Items 2b and 2c taking precedence over 2a. The "interim" Broadway BRT between Brooklyn Park and downtown Minneapolis would still move forward. Should something like this happen, I suspect SLR-81 would prefer 2c, in which light rail would bypass downtown Robbinsdale by running along the I-94 ROW, but where arterial BRT over West Broadway would remain in place. Moreover, it probably wouldn't happen until well in to the 2030's.)

Anyway, a draft text of what a set of muni consent demands might be is as follows in italics:

1. *A permanent ban on the planning, engineering and implementation of all new on-street light rail projects through Crystal, Robbinsdale and Minneapolis, to include the proposed Blue Line Extension Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA).*

Seattle did this following numerous fatalities and crashes on its on-street light rail line serving the diverse South Seattle community. St. Paul's Green Line is also struggling with this issue after two recent fatalities. Does Met Council have to learn this the hard way too?

2. *A five to ten-year moratorium on progressing beyond the 30% planning/engineering level for new and existing light rail projects. This will allow for the preliminary scoping evaluation of candidate off-street alternatives to the BLE LPA, to include:*
 - a. *Revisiting the BNSF corridor alignment,*
 - b. *Tunneling under or bridging over the entire length of West Broadway between I-94 and Bass Lake Road*
 - c. *A new alignment along the I-94 right of way to 44th Street/Camden and then over the CP Rail and BNSF rights-of-way to Crystal and Brooklyn Park.*
3. *A faster, safer, sooner and cheaper \$100 to \$150 million "interim" Bus Rapid Transit system over the same on-street route as the LPA to be ready before 2027.*

This puts into place an efficient transit alternative several years sooner than the LPA that will continue to serve the community as effectively as the current C and D BRT lines should the options evaluated in Item 2 prove infeasible. And if 2a or 2c are implemented, a key portion of the Broadway BRT would remain intact to connect with and complement the higher speed, off-street LRT.

Regards - Jerry

From: Nancy Johnson [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: About the Blue Line extension...
Date: August 20, 2024 at 4:54 PM
To: Nancy Johnson [REDACTED]



Begin forwarded message:

From: Jerome Johnson [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: About the Blue Line extension...
Date: August 20, 2024 at 4:48:38 PM CDT

Hi Everyone from 105 degree Texas.

This today in MNPost, a piece on the details of Municipal Consent; what it can and cannot do in terms of impacting or even stopping projects. It is supposed to be restricted to engineering considerations and not, for example, on sweeping alternative technologies or even route changes that would include, say, BRT substituted for LRT or moving the route to a completely different right of way.

That's fine. But it still can be applied to the engineering shortcomings of, for example, operating over street medians that are inherently unsafe, which we can prove, and to operating conditions that would slow the performance of the system at hand to unacceptable levels that render it cost-ineffective. The safety argument fits how the route was moved off Lyndale and on to Washington Avenue, for example, making it fair game to insist that the tracks be moved off the street and street median through Robbinsdale and other areas of the Northside.

Met Council might insist that its only alternative, then, would be to study elevating the tracks over West Broadway or putting it below the street in a shallow tunnel. That is better than nothing because it would take years to get to 30% engineering and the cost would balloon to well over the \$3 billion contingency that was recently built into the project, making that project configuration a non-starter and calling back into play alternative routes that would include (a) the I-94 corridor and (b) back to the BNSF corridor.

And while it is not part of the formal process to substitute BRT for LRT over the entire same route, the ultra-low cost of BRT as an interim mobility solution while the more significant rail-based alternatives were studied to death puts it in the contingency envelope of the project, especially since much of that "interim" BRT infrastructure would survive whatever emerged down the line as the off-street light rail alternative.

As a tactical matter, I suspect the municipalities would prefer not to be told by an advocacy group like SLR-81 exactly how to make municipal consent denial pay off. But SLR-81 is well advised to stress the hard and damning performance and safety shortcomings of the on-street rail, followed by the many detailed issues of the sort Dave has highlighted in his analysis of the DEIS.

Again, insisting the BLE LPA be taken off the street median over its entire route thru Minneapolis, Robbinsdale and Crystal is as valid as insisting it be taken out of the Lyn-Park neighborhood. It is slow, crash-prone and disruptive. Plugging in an "interim" BRT solution is something one would think Met Council would offer up while timeout is called as the alternatives are vetted. No harm at all with SLR-81 suggesting that sort of thing can't figure that out for itself.

Anyway, hope this transmits. The BLE muni-consent piece just ran, so if this does not transmit, you should be able to google it up. Regards - Jerry

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This fall the Met Council **will ask cities whether they consent to the Blue Line Extension project** and they need to give a solid 'yes' or 'no' answer as no answer means approval. H. Jiahong Pan reports on **what municipal consent is, the Blue Line extension process and what cities can expect** in the coming months.

You can read their story [here](#).

Also in today's newsletter:

- With Walz on the campaign trail, who's running Minnesota? Peter Callaghan looks into how the governor's office is functioning with Walz's position now elevated to the national stage. ([read more](#))