



# METRO Blue Line Extension

## Community Advisory Committee (CAC) & Business Advisory Committee (BAC)

### Meeting Minutes

Date & Time	October 8, 2025 6:00 – 8:00 PM
Location	Virtual via Microsoft Teams
BAC/CAC Members, Project Staff	KB Brown, Mia Brown, Nkongo Cigolo, Andrew Gillett, Tim Gladhill, Jeff Guertin, Jonathan Hansen, Christopher Jao, Joleen Ketterling, Shahin Khazrajafari, Amada Marquez Simula, Kyle Mianulli, Heather Rand, Ken Rodgers, Donna Sanders, Menno Schukking, Jamez Staples, Alicia Vap, Pa Nhu Vue, Dr. Tara Watson, Michael Wnek, Shanna Woods, Kelcie Young
DREAM Team Members: Stan Alleyne, Brett Buckner	

#### **1. Call to Order and Welcome (Co-Chairs)**

Jonathan Hansen, Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm. Nkongo Cigolo, Blue Line Extension (BLE) project team took attendance. Mr. Cigolo mentioned the Corridor Management Committee (CMC) is scheduled for tomorrow at 1:30 pm and the topics today will be covered at that meeting. Mr. Cigolo indicated the cultural placekeeping meetings were kicked off this summer. The purpose of these meetings is to advance the anti-displacement recommendations and maintain the history and culture of the communities along the corridor in the design of the BLE project. A group of about 35 community members have joined the cultural placekeeping working group. More information will be provided during the engagement update.

#### **2. Approval of April Meeting Summaries**

Mr. Cigolo stated the meeting summaries were sent via email to each advisory committee. To ensure a quorum, Mr. Cigolo recommended the meeting summaries be reviewed and approved via email. Once approved, final versions will be posted to the website.

Jamez Staples asked a question in the chat about whether federal funding was at risk with this project. Alicia Vap, BLE project team, responded that the BLE project has not yet received federal funding for the project. The project's goal is to apply for federal funding in 2026. Meetings are still occurring with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the FTA's staff has not been directly impacted by the federal shutdown. Ms. Vap indicated the BLE project team will continue to monitor the situation.

#### **3. Environmental Mitigation Update**

Kelcie Young, BLE Environmental Team, stated the BLE project has achieved multiple milestones since the spring including the publishing of the Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement (SFEIS) in May. Ms. Young added there have been many conversations related to the development of the SFEIS in both committees but summarized that within the document, a range of social and environmental topic areas are studied. The SFEIS captures the final understanding of the project impacts and benefits and identifies mitigation. Ms. Young indicated the Amended Record of Decision (ROD) was received in August which concludes the Federal environmental review process. The FTA has now approved the mitigation strategies within the project to address impacts. Mitigation strategies within the project are funded as part of the project budget. Next steps include continuing to define mitigation implementation through outreach with project partners. Mitigation implementation will happen after funding is received.

Ms. Young provided a brief overview of the strategies identified in the Amended ROD which have been previously discussed with both committees. Two major programs highlighted today are the Community Investment Fund and the Business Support Program. Ms. Young shared that the goal for the Community Investment Fund is to invest in community organizations that are providing services or programs related to housing stability such as emergency rent assistance, home improvement, and items that help offset impacts to community members along the corridor. Business support through construction includes information sharing and planning and coordinating with businesses and customers. The Business Support Fund is a new program that would provide up to \$30k per business impacted by construction up to a program total of \$5M. The funds are intended for businesses directly adjacent to construction activities to help offset rent or mortgage payments. Criteria and an application process are currently being defined. Funding would be awarded during construction.

A website will be available for affected people and businesses with information about project construction including where people can get connected to information. There will also be two storefront locations where people can get connected to resources through the project and with project partners and where project related meetings will be held.

Ms. Young shared ongoing activities related to cultural placekeeping. Community members, city staff, design team, and project staff have been working through the process to demonstrate the cultural communities visually throughout the corridor by developing cultural themes, identifying design opportunities, and developing station renderings. Completed design recommendations should be available in November.

Co-Chair Hansen inquired why the federal funding had not been applied for yet and wondered if the environmental process had to be completed first. Ms. Young indicated that one of the requirements before applying for federal funding was an Amended ROD. Ms. Young added that the BLE project is working with the FTA to navigate through the steps to be able to apply for federal funding.

#### **4. Outreach Update**

Mr. Cigolo shared engagement metrics from August 2020 through September 2025. During this time, over 900 events have been attended with 46,000 points of contact with the public. Over 430,000 people have been reached on social media and 10 million reached through

newsletters and paid ads on community and cultural media. Approximately 7300 survey responses, written comments and comments on the interactive map have been received. Corridor postcards have been mailed to over 250,000 properties and over 40,000 emails and phone calls have been fielded. One on one coordination with directly impacted properties is underway.

Mr. Cigolo shared information about a new video blog hosted on the main webpage titled Making Tracks with Nkongo. To date, four episodes have been published. The first episode was an introduction explaining that the video log is sharing complex project information in simple terms for better understanding. Other video logs have included an interview with Ms. Young explaining how the environmental process works, the Assistant Director of Design, Ryan Kronzer, detailing what the design process entails and how community members can provide input and an interview with Matt Aguirre regarding the right of way process.

Mr. Cigolo shared that while there are engagement coordinators on the BLE project, the BLE project recognized the necessity to collaborate with other community-based organizations. Mr. Cigolo mentioned Stan Alleyne of Alleyne, Matlock, and Associates, Brett Buckner of OneMN.org, and Anika Robbins of Anika & Friends as well as other engagement cohorts who have been instrumental in the DREAM sessions. This engagement helps broaden the BLE outreach and allows local organizations to reach out to the communities they are already serving.

Mr. Cigolo introduced Stan Alleyne and Brett Buckner who are in attendance this evening. Mr. Alleyne provided a summary of the DREAM sessions. Mr. Alleyne indicated DREAM is a strategic visioning framework with guided facilitation intended to find out what people really want and what could happen from that. The DREAM process allows people to think differently and long-term about how this project could impact their neighborhoods. The process starts by teaming up with the project team to update the community on project progress, answer any questions, and provide information to get everyone up to speed. The second half of the session is a facilitated conversation where every aspect and every topic that can be imagined is discussed to help people dream and think about what the future could be.

Mr. Alleyne shared overall themes identified by the DREAM team including increased pedestrian safety improvements, no gentrification and protecting families living in the corridor, creating vibrancy for businesses, bringing growth and expansion, a desire for additional green spaces, family friendly, desire for affordable groceries and excitement around new opportunities and accessibility. In addition to engaging with community members, the DREAM team conducted two bus tours along the route where even more questions and engagement resulted.

Mr. Alleyne indicated there have been eight dream sessions with two in each city that will be impacted the most: Brooklyn Park, Crystal/Robbinsdale, Minneapolis, and the North Loop. A survey component included 400 survey responses where the top concern was safety and security. Many people have inquired about the cost and who is going to pay for it. Top aspirations include more activity for youth, entertainment districts, more services for seniors and differently abled, and increased regional connections and mobility. Mr. Alleyne shared that parts of these meetings were difficult at times, but it was amazing to see people start thinking about what their community could be.

A youth summit was conducted that focused on the youth who will be using the infrastructure. Approximately 38 youth participated on a Saturday morning and participated in a corridor bus tour, art activities, and podcast and video interviews. Mr. Alleyne stated it was one of the best sessions that was conducted. Mr. Alleyne shared that the young people know a lot more than we might think they do, have better questions than we think they do, and were very interested in what this could be.

A Regional DREAM Summit that brought all communities together was held on October 4 with good attendance. The DREAM team felt it was important to go from community to community and show the connectivity. A half day was spent at UROC in North Minneapolis updating people about the project, entertaining questions, and several experts were brought in to share expertise about how these types of projects have impacted communities and helped foster development. Community members and policy makers recapped feedback from the DREAM sessions with each city and discussed next steps. Mr. Alleyne indicated this was a very informative session and the police chief had an honest conversation about safety and security.

Mr. Cigolo provided information about a TOD investment catalyst tour that was conducted for the cities of Robbinsdale and Crystal looking at various developments that have already occurred along the Green Line Extension. Elected officials from St. Louis Park and staff from the economic development departments alongside the planning commissioners for Crystal and Robbinsdale talked about what it took for them to prepare for development in those corridors. The tour proceeded to Hopkins where the group also met elected officials from Hopkins and economic development staff. Mr. Cigolo added the BLE project would be happy to provide these types of tours if other communities or groups were interested.

An overview of upcoming engagement events was provided including cultural placekeeping meetings on October 22 and November 19, Spooktacular in Brooklyn Park on Oct 25, and Quarter 4 Community Update meeting with Crystal towards the end of November. Mr. Cigolo indicated the BLE project is working directly with property owners along the alignment and fielding questions as they come into the BLE project office.

## **5. Workforce Development Update**

Shahin Khazrajafari, BLE Project Team, provided a workforce development update and shared that the recommendations from the Anti-Displacement Work Group and the recommendations from the Coordinated Action Plan have led to the Workforce Development (WFD) Program. Long-term regional goals and more short-term project specific goals, led to partnerships between community organizations and agencies to start collecting data regarding employment needs of the project and other employers and training opportunities that exist along the corridor. The WFD group has started to identify solutions for reducing employment disparity within the region. The BLE project has been a catalyst and beneficiary of this effort in the establishment of a WFD program. The BLE project will be a conduit to jobs during construction as well as post-construction when the transit line becomes operational. The BLE project hopes to leverage a robust network and platform created by the workforce development partners to connect people to jobs and training opportunities.

The WFD Program will be a partnership with numerous groups including Hennepin County, Metropolitan Council, BLE, city of Minneapolis, city of Brooklyn Park, city of Crystal, city of Robbinsdale, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), ACPP and workforce service providers. Each of these partners all bring their own resources, services, and priorities.

As identified in the SFEIS, the BLE project has committed to implement a Project Workforce Development Program that includes local hiring preference requirements in construction contracts and potential workforce development opportunities such as trainings, mentorships, apprenticeships, scholarships, career fairs, and information sessions. Local workforce engagement will be a metric that is evaluated to get contractors to start thinking about workforce development early and as part of their proposal and package. Mr. Khazrajafari shared that lessons learned from past projects will be used to make improvements to the requirements in contracts and ensure the contractors are engaging with small businesses along the corridor.

The organization structure of the WFD Program is made up of the BLE project team, two committees, and service providers. The BLE Project Team will strategize and facilitate the WFD Program and plan development. A Steering Committee will be focused on policy and administrative leadership. A Technical Advisory Committee will be representative of coordination and delivery of WFD services and create a bridge between the workforce development partners and the agencies and communities. The service providers will deliver services in support of WFD to connect people to the right opportunities.

Mr. Khazrajafari stated the WFD Program is in the early stages. A team of experts was assembled earlier in 2025 to begin drafting a WFD plan. A need was identified to initiate the steering and advisory committees and the hope is to convene these committees this month and help finalize a WFD plan. Through 2026, action items will be implemented, the construction contract requirements drafted, and a focus will be on connecting people with jobs. In 2027, enforcement and monitoring of requirements would begin with a construction contract awarded in Q4.

Mr. Khazrajafari shared that with a robust WFD Program, a strong communication and marketing plan is necessary to ensure that resources and opportunities are made accessible and available to the right people. Awareness will be created so residents and partners know what programs and resources exist. Trust and transparency will be established with residents, service providers and employers by sharing updates consistently, openly and in accessible formats. Pathways will be provided from outreach to training to employment to connect people to the opportunities. Mr. Khazrajafari shared that success of the WFD program is only possible if the people and the entities that will benefit are engaged and aware of what is going on.

Michael Wnek asked a question in the chat on whether the trades are being targeted for WFD. Mr. Khazrajafari replied that in the early conversations there has been discussion about how this will have to be done in a phased approach. In construction, the needs from the project perspective and community perspective will need to be evaluated and resources and skillsets identified to support those needs. Beyond construction, what this might look like will also need to be determined. The key trades are being discussed and will be included in the plan.

KB Brown asked a question in the chat about how the Anti-Displacement Community Prosperity Program (ACPP) board is part of WFD. Mr. Khazrajafari responded that a request was sent to the ACPP board on 9/23 to participate in this effort as a part of the technical advisory committee with the goal being to bridge the ACPP and its connections from the community to the service providers, agencies, and the project team as the WFD work group identifies what is needed to support the community. KB Brown shared that there is a lack of awareness by the board about this involvement. Mr. Cigolo indicated the BLE project team is planning to come to an ACPP board to present on the WFD program as well.

Michael Wnek inquired how the limited rail contractor market in the Twin Cities plays into the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) goals for the project. Mr. Khazrajafari answered there are many other elements to a rail project that would require support such as system elements, concrete work, and all sorts of other components that the Twin Cities area could support through small businesses. In addition, having requirements for contractors to indicate how they plan to approach and partner with small businesses is partially trying to address this.

In a follow-up question, Michael Wnek asked if the Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit had done anything to facilitate the out-of-town DBEs. Mr. Khazrajafari indicated not yet on this project. The Metropolitan Council has done this on past projects and does plan to do for this project. Mixers will be facilitated so prospective prime contractors, subconsultants, and DBEs can network and connect. Updates will be provided on this as the project progresses.

Michael Wnek inquired how the project is planning to break up the construction contracts. Mr. Khazrajafari responded that quite a bit of time has been spent on contract procurement and packaging strategies through 2024 and 2025 to determine how to set up the contracts to increase the chances of success as well as competition. Lessons learned from the Central Corridor project, and other projects were evaluated to see what has worked and what could be done differently. Discussions have centered around having the civil track systems and stations be one package. The contracts will be put out as a best value and wouldn't go solely based on lowest bid but rather follow a set of criteria where the BLE project would score and measure each contractor's proposal. Mr. Khazrajafari added the technical proposal would also be weighed in the decision along with the price. Four or five different scenarios were evaluated for how to package the contracts and the project brought together construction experts from Hennepin County, Metropolitan Council, and MnDOT as well as consultants to evaluate what would work best based on several factors. Michael Wnek indicated going with best value is going to be a huge win.

Co-Chair Hansen indicated there are links in the chat to reference.

## **6. Discussion and Members Feedback**

Donna Sanders stated that the state legislature awarded \$10 M for anti-displacement efforts and Hennepin County was to hold the funds and disperse at the ACPP board's direction. She commented that since the money was awarded, Hennepin County has expanded its role into areas the legislation clearly left to the ACPP board. Several requirements have been added and the money was to be allocated by the ACPP board, but some members of the ACPP are feeling that Hennepin County has gone beyond being the fiscal agent, and Ms. Sanders asked how this happened. Mr. Cigolo addressed the question and replied that the ACPP board is an independent and community-led board advancing anti-displacement work as mandated by legislature. Their

work is independent of the project's scope. Mr. Cigolo added this would be a good question to address to the board chairs and Hennepin County.

Mr. Cigolo added that the BLE project has representation from Hennepin County but the individuals on this committee are not directly involved with the ACPP progress. KB Brown iterated his concerns about the ACPP. The ACPP is presenting tomorrow at CMC. Mr. Cigolo indicated he would connect Ms. Sanders with Hennepin County staff to share concerns raised. Mr. Cigolo added that another way to submit comments is to send the question via email to the BLE project team and it will be included in the packet that goes to the CMC.

Dr. Tara Watson asked about the ACPP funding process, expressed concern for the invitation only process, and who could access the funding. Mr. Brown stated the ACPP is an open meeting, and anyone can come. Mr. Cigolo reiterated that the concerns raised will be shared.

Mr. Cigolo stated that when the BAC and CAC committees were formed, the life of the committees was set to occur through the environmental review process. As Ms. Young mentioned in this presentation, the FTA issued the Amended ROD which concludes the environmental review process for the BLE project. Mr. Cigolo indicated 60% design has been published and the BLE project is working on 90% design by Q1 of 2026. Based on this, Mr. Cigolo asked the question to the committees about sunsetting the BAC and CAC and inquiring about potential future levels of engagement. Mr. Cigolo indicated past projects have created a construction information workgroup that lived through construction to share and communicate information with the communities and solicit feedback for the project and construction team to be implemented. Mr. Brown would like to ensure there continues to be community involvement. Dr. Watson expressed there are still many issues, and this is the only avenue to voice concerns. Mr. Cigolo appreciated the input.

Ken Rodgers replied that he has similar concerns of those already expressed for the CAC, and added that many recent meetings have been canceled, and other meetings have become more project updates and not as engaging. Mr. Rodgers added that on the Central Corridor LRT, the meetings continued. Mr. Brown responded that he has these same concerns for the BAC as well.

Mr. Cigolo responded that this feedback will go back to the BLE project team, and the discussion will be advanced via email. Mr. Cigolo added that the BLE project appreciates the committee member's participation and involvement on these committees.

Mr. Rodgers suggested that as the BLE project team has these conversations, the project team consider a different approach in engaging with the CAC. Future meetings should engage the committee members and provide an avenue for what the committee members can assist with and provide feedback on.

Mr. Cigolo suggested agenda topic #8 Recognition be tabled and have additional discussion occur prior to the project recognizing the members for their participation. Co-Chair Hansen asked for a motion to approve tabling item #8 on the agenda. Mr. Rodgers motioned to approve, and Mr. Brown seconded it. The motion was agreed unanimously and approved.

## **7. Adjourn**

Co-Chair Hansen concluded the meeting and adjourned it at 7:50 pm.

**Teams Chat:**

*Eva by Marblism: Hello! Just a reminder, I'm Eva by Marblism and I'm recording audio and transcriptions. To stop recording, ask the host to remove me from this meeting. If you do not consent to being recorded, please notify the host immediately. It's the host's responsibility to ensure all participants have given consent for the recording.*

*Shanna Woods: Good evening. Please pardon my tardy*

*Jamez Staples: Is there any federal funding at risk with this project?*

*Shanna Woods: Love the name 😊*

*Nkongo Cigolo:*

[METRO Blue Line Extension - Metropolitan Council](#)

*METRO Blue Line Extension - Metropolitan Council*

[Community Engagement - Metropolitan Council](#)

*Community Engagement - Metropolitan Council*

*Shanna Woods: The DREAM summit was great. BP appreciated being able to table and promote events and programs.*

*Amada Marquez Simula: Bus tour was energizing!*

*Michael Wnek: For Workforce Development, what trades are you targeting for this?*

*KB Brown: How is ACPP part of workforce programming?*

*Michael Wnek: How does the limited rail contractor market in the Twin Cities play into the DBE goals for the project?*

*Michael Wnek: How are you planning to break up the construction contracts (or how are you leaning)? More like original Green Line or more like GLE?*

*Nkongo Cigolo:*

[Construction Contract Procurement - Metropolitan Council](#)

*Construction Contract Procurement - Metropolitan Council*

*Tim Gladhill: For those that support the project, BAC & CAC can serve as important advocates to get through federal funding request.*

*Jeff Guertin: Totally agree with Ken. His historical perspective is spot on. As the project moves to 90% design many tough decisions get made. CAC's charter is clear, the purpose of this group is to communicate with the community. Besides, we work for free!*

*Recording Secretary: Joleen Ketterling*