

Meeting Minutes
Lake Street Design Project
Project Advisory Committee #2
April 21, 2016 | 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Members: Allison Sharkey – Lake Street Council, Chair
Bob Speeter – East Business Representative
Christina Le – West Business Representative
Connie Williams – East Business Representative
Crystal Windschitl – Phillips West Neighborhood Organization
John Berrigan – Lyndale Neighborhood Association
Tom Roberts – West Business Representative

Staff: Jim Grube – Hennepin County
Max Holdhusen – Metro Transit
Nathan Koster – City of Minneapolis
Andrew Carlson – City of Minneapolis
David Bauer – City of Minneapolis
Mike Kotila – S.E.H.
Bob Kost – S.E.H.
Charleen Zimmer – Zan Associates

Housekeeping –Chair

Allison Sharkey welcomed all meeting attendees and asked attendees to introduce themselves. She referenced the list of meetings in the PAC binder, noting that all meetings will be held from 10 a.m. to noon at the Colin Powell Center.

Allison asked if there were any revisions to the draft meeting notes distributed by email. It was agreed that it was not necessary to vote on the meeting notes – only an opportunity for revisions needed to be provided. There were no comments on the meeting notes so they were accepted as presented.

Update on I-35W Transit/Access Project

Jim Grube, Hennepin County, discussed the I-35W Transit/Access project handouts that were provided, and provided a brief summary of the open houses held on April 5 and April 19. About 100 people attended the two meetings. Many new people came who were just learning about the project, but there were also many for whom it was a refresher on the three projects being combined into one.

Jim noted that the comment period for submitting comments on the Environmental Assessment document closes on April 27. The 30-day comment period started on March 28 and will run through April 27. Following that, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will affirm that the document is adequate and will ultimately issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). There was a court reporter present during both meetings who took testimony from people who wanted to make comments on the record. The reporter also recorded all comments made during the public presentation

portion of the open house. Written comments were also received during both meetings. The comments and observations offered by the public were generally not unexpected and were all related to topics that we have discussed in the past. Crystal Windschitl attended the open house on April 19 and agreed that no new topics came up.

Jim reported that there are some important actions coming up in the month of May. On May 3, in the morning, the Minneapolis Transportation and Public Works Committee will hear and consider the three projects in one as well as the Lake Street footprint. In the afternoon of May 3, the Hennepin County Commissioners will hear about the same things. It is hoped that both bodies will pass the projects out to the full Council and County Board for final action later in May. We'll be really on the move after the middle of May, once these official actions have been taken.

Transportation funding continues to get a lot of discussion at the Legislature. There is continued conversation about the County and City's request for \$25 million (half the local share of \$50) for the project. Metro Transit also has a request for funding for the transit station at the Legislature. MnDOT has its money for the project. All agencies are supporting each other. By law, MnDOT has to deliver the Chapter 152 bridges project. Everybody realizes that for \$25 million the entire project (\$345 million) will come together.

Allison asked if there are particular legislators that need to be lobbied or members that live in their districts. Jim responded that the folks from the Minneapolis districts are solidly on board. The ones that live south of the river and in other parts of Minnesota are the ones that are having difficulty. Local legislators are solidly behind this project and are taking the leadership role on this at the Legislature.

Update on Design and Development

Mike Kotila, S.E.H., stated that the information on the layout provided in the PAC binder last month is still pretty much accurate. There are a few minor changes. West of the freeway between Blaisdell and 1st. Avenues, the right-of-way is 80' wide. Five traffic lanes and sidewalks are needed in this area and that takes all of the available right-of-way. As much space as possible has been allocated to sidewalks. Construction will only extend into the Blaisdell intersection rather than west of the intersection as previously shown. One area of concern is the Nicollet/Lake intersection. The design will need to fit both the existing driveway and the future Nicollet Avenue extension. Those details will need to be worked out during final design.

Nathan Koster stated that he is working with a CPED team for the K-Mart site, having discussions about how this intersection should be designed, streetscape design, assessments, etc. The CPED team is coordinating with the property owners and developers on the site.

Tom Robert asked if a westbound right turn lane going onto Nicollet Ave north is being considered as part of the K-Mart redevelopment. He thinks there will be a lot of traffic coming off the freeway wanting to go north on Nicollet. Nathan stated that the City is hard pressed to widen the intersection further given the impacts to pedestrians. Tom noted that this could be coordinated with the development to provide additional land area for a right turn lane. Mike reminded the PAC that operations at this intersection were studied in detail a couple years ago and that study concluded that a separate right turn lane is not needed at Nicollet, although what will actually happen on the site is not

known yet. Tom stated that his experience is that the city usually says to need more roadway capacity whenever there is a new development so he wants to make sure that this is considered.

Christina Le asked if a roundabout had ever been considered for this intersection. She stated that she thought this might have a smaller footprint than a standard intersection and would add landscaping in the middle of the intersection. She also thought it might be more pedestrian friendly. John Berrigan stated that there is very little green area at this intersection except the playground on the southwest corner and he would not want that area taken out by a roundabout. He noted that the landscaped area in the middle of a roundabout would not be space that could be used by people. Crystal stated that the Phillips Neighborhood would not support roundabouts on Lake Street because there are too many drivers who are unfamiliar with the area. Tom also felt there would not be enough room for a roundabout and that it would not be compatible with the planned trolley along Nicollet Avenue.

Jim Grube reminded the PAC that the traffic signals through this area will be interconnected to help move traffic through the area smoothly during peak periods. He acknowledged that traffic may go faster during non-peak periods but there has to be a balance of efficient traffic flow and local street access during the heavy traffic periods and signals help with that. He also noted that, in urban areas like Lake Street, right turn lanes are unlikely due to the cost of land and the longer walk distances for pedestrians crossing the street. Left turn lanes, however, are a very valuable commodity in an urban setting because left turns are a real conflict and cause many accidents if not separated from the through traffic.

Transit Stops and Parking

Mike Kotila described the existing and proposed bus stop locations, both local stops and proposed Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (ABRT) stops. Discussions are ongoing regarding how to combine (or not) local and ABRT stops. This does not affect the footprint on the west side. Jim Grube confirmed that there are no changes expected to the footprint on the west side. On the east side, there are two lanes of traffic in each direction and the plan currently shows bump-outs at all intersections. The City is initiating a parking demand study to assess the parking needs block by block in this location. This will inform decisions about bus stops and bump-outs. Crystal stated that the Phillips Neighborhood has been doing evening Lake Street walks with a group of people and the Police Department. She does not think these blocks are used as heavily as on other blocks for parking, even at Lake Plaza. Allison noted that there is a nightclub space in Lake Plaza that is currently closed.

Bob Speeter stated that there is discussion underway about adding a parking ramp to Lake Plaza, which would alleviate parking issues there. Jim Grube asked if the ramp would be sized for the site or oversized for the area. Bob stated that it would be sized for the site but they know others will park there. He stated that it would be appropriately priced so that people wouldn't use it for park and ride but that he didn't have any details on the size or pricing. John asked if the plan is to eliminate free parking in the area? Bob stated that the objective was just to provide enough parking for Lake Plaza. He stated that he couldn't speak to pricing at this time but they knew that park and ride parking had been a problem previously at the Somali Mall.

Allison asked if the coin parking meters would be replaced with the modern parking meters with the reconstruction project. Nathan will check on this and bring an answer back to the PAC.

Mike stated that Metro Transit is planning ARTB stops westbound at 5th and eastbound at 4th. Crystal responded that this is a horrible idea because the intersection of Lake and 5th is the highest crime location in West Phillips – probably the worst place to put a bus stop in the entire neighborhood. That’s why the neighborhood started the Lake Street walks. There are two empty lots behind the church, and the church is vacant. These lots used to be community gardens. Because they are in a trench and there is no visibility from the street, it has become a center for crime, particularly prostitution. The City has been trying to market the lots for 10 years. Crime has become much worse in the past two years because targeted enforcement elsewhere has pushed crime here. A bus stop at this location will make matters worse as well as encouraging transient people who hang out at bus stops. Andrew Carlson, City of Minneapolis, noted that one possible solution would be to light the shelters that they can be easily seen by patrols. Crystal noted that people don’t hang out in the shelters; they hang out in dark and hidden areas.

Max Holdhusen, Metro Transit, stated that ABRT stations will be different than regular bus stops. They will have cameras, lights, real time signage, ten-minute service frequencies, and ticket vending. The goal of this stop location is to connect to service on 4th Avenue. Snelling Avenue is a place where people can go to see these new stations. Andrew Carlson noted that it is not fair that we have to remove benches and other amenities in areas where there is high crime. Jim Grube noted that the 46th and Minnehaha stop is the closest area where there is a built BRT station. He stated that we are talking about the experience today but we also have to look out to what will be here about 2021 when the work is done. There is still work to be done on ART and we don’t know yet if that service will be fully ready to go at that time. Allison asked if there are shelters currently present at the 4th and 5th Avenue locations. Max responded that there are none due to limited space. Allison stated that shelters will have to be transparent and well lit. Max noted that the Lake Street Council is a partner on the Better Bus Shelters project along Lake Street and there will be ongoing community engagement to discuss things that can be done to improve the existing shelters along Lake Street.

Jim Grube noted that ABRT will stop in the right lane but that stop times will be very short. That keeps the service fast. He noted that the base and the conduit for electricity will likely be built for ABRT as part of this project but that the actual shelter might have to come in later. Mike stated that decisions on transit stop locations will be brought back to the PAC in June.

Streetscaping/Landscaping

Bob Kost provided handouts of renderings of the area under the freeway bridges. He noted that there were comments at the open houses and from other sources regarding lighting and aesthetic design under the bridges in the plaza area. He noted that there will be a combination of lighting (natural and artificial overhead and architectural lighting). There is a lot of design work yet to be done but the space needs to be illuminated to create a safe and comfortable space for people. Jim Grube noted that the renderings currently look pretty colorless. He noted that there is funding set aside for aesthetics, and that this will be part of the Transit/Access project discussion. He noted several locations where color might be added.

Bob Speeter expressed concern about graffiti and noted that the designers will need to be very attuned to this issue, considering surfaces that can be easily cleaned and re-colored because graffiti will happen here. He also expressed concern that the 5th precinct operates on the west side of the freeway, the 3rd precinct operates on the east side of the freeway, and Metro Transit will be responsible for underneath the bridge. Therefore, coordination is going to be very critical. He would like this to be addressed at a future meeting. He asked if there could be a substation underneath the bridge. Tom stated that there should be a fulltime person assigned to the transit station area. Max Holdhusen, Metro Transit, noted that Metro Transit has found that putting a bathroom for transit police in the station helps ensure that they actually go there – and a bathroom for them is planned at this location. Crystal noted that this is part of the operation and maintenance plan that she’s been talking about for years. Allison noted that part of what helps address graffiti is making the space a part of the community and owned by the community through color, aesthetics and public art, especially art created by local people. She noted that the PAC needs to continue to push the agencies to make sure that this happens. There is a lot of talent in the area and lot of ideas on how to make this a real gateway to our neighborhoods. Crystal stated that artwork could be designed through lighting – murals can’t be maintained but lighting could be.

Andrew Carlson, City of Minneapolis, noted that a service district is an option for making sure that this area is maintained. Tom Roberts stated that he did not think that maintenance of the area under the bridges and near the transit station should be the responsibility of the few number of property owners in the area. He stated that he had no problem with a service district in front of his property but it would be too expensive to include the freeway and transit station. Andrew agreed that this will need to be a partnership with the agencies. Andrew also noted that he was referring to routine maintenance and cleaning, not trade repairs. He believes it is worthy of discussion to continue that service through the area. John Berrigan also noted that pigeon and bird control will be needed because there is already a pigeon problem in the area.

Allison stated that every station on the Green Line has public art. She noted that it is not unreasonable for one of the highest used station (I-35W/Lake Street) should have public art. Jim Grube noted that the City made application for public art for this project and 40th St pedestrian bridge. The 40th St bridge was funded but not this project. The City can and will apply again. Jim stated that there will be a conversation about how we can use lighting for some level of art. This will be considered during the final design process for the Transit/Access project. Allison noted that it should not be responsibility of special service districts to replace or maintain art but a special service district might be responsible for things like trash collection. Jim stated that he will be speaking to the larger institutions about maintenance of the public areas and encouraging them to be champions for these public spaces.

Andrew Carlson, City of Minneapolis, commented that this is a substantial stretch of sidewalk underneath the highway that will be a potential magnet for criminal activity if it is not done right. Bob Speeter commented that there has to be a committed police presence. Andrew responded that we can’t expect that – it will have to be done through design. John noted that we have an opportunity to make this the ideal opportunity to get to downtown if we do it right.

Christina asked what type of space would be available under the bridge and whether there would be room for commercial options such as a coffee shop? This would make the space more livable and would encourage people to be there. She agreed that lighting and artwork is really needed. Crystal noted that

this has been discussed many times before and the group should focus on the specifics related to Lake Street. Allison stated that MnDOT is going to reconvene the Transit/Access PAC to address some of these issues. Jim Grube noted that this will happen after the Council and Board actions on Municipal Consent in May.

Mike Kotila, S.E.H., described a handout that was provided on pedestrian crossing distances because this was also a question that came up during the open houses. He noted that the crossing of Lake Street at Stevens is currently 64 feet; the future distance is 68 feet. We are getting more function but with only 4 additional feet. As a comparison, the Lake Street crossings at Hiawatha are 90-100 feet while the crossing at Hennepin and 25th is 65 feet.

Bob Kost, S.E.H., walked through a presentation about streetscape and landscape features. He handed out a questionnaire about preferences and asked the PAC members to complete the questionnaire and hand it in at the end of the meeting. *The results of the survey are attached at the end of the meeting notes.*

Crystal asked noted that the existing trash receptacles and some other elements are in very bad shape and need to be replaced. She asked who would pay for replacement if there's a special service district – who pays for replacement.

Bob Kost noted that the current plans call for streetscape treatments under the bridge that are very different than Lake Street on both sides of the bridge. Tom Roberts asked if the design would be the same on the east and the west sides of the freeway. John noted that work is already done west of Blaisdell, and Bob reminded the PAC that work has also been done east of 5th Avenue. Bob noted that standard streetscape items that are included in project cost include light fixtures, sidewalks, and trees. Nathan Koster, City of Minneapolis, confirmed that there is a new policy so street lighting is included in the project cost for a pedestrian corridor like Lake Street. That includes the teardrop fixtures that are on Lake Street today – this is a city cost not an assessment cost. There would be an assessment if the density of poles is increased beyond that allowed in the policy.

Tom Roberts commented that he was assured when Nicollet Ave was redone that no trees would be planted because he already had trees on his site, but trees were planted in the boulevard anyway. He said it “took act of God to get some of them removed” and now they are covered by ugly steel plates. Who coordinates this? Allison asked if we can coordinate so that trees are not placed in front of the doors to businesses? Bob Kost stated that these things can be coordinated but have to be done so on a case-by-case basis.

Bob showed some slides that provided some examples on how sidewalk scoring, trees, furniture, and lighting might work together. The panel sizes are larger in the ADA work zone, and smaller panels in furnishing zones. Street trees generally run about 30-40 feet on center. John noted that the drawings should show ramping in front of the building on the east and sides of the building on the west corner of Nicollet and Lake – it is ramped, not stepped.

Bob showed an example of the existing street light fixture – the teardrop type – with banner arms and a clamp-on feature for neighborhood identify (wave shape). Nathan stated that the teardrop light fixture a part of the city cost; banners are not a part of city cost and would need to be part of a special

assessment. Christina asked where the “international” banners are located. Bob stated that they are located between Nicollet and 5th Avenue.

Jim Grube noted that a standard transit shelter is a project cost; upgrades of shelters would be part of a special assessment.

Allison asked if the tree grates shown in the presentation are decorative? Bob responded that these are the standard city design and meet ADA requirements. While they are not a unique design requiring special assessment, they do have a decorative quality.

Max stated that ABRT shelters will be standard at the ABRT stops. Jim asked if benches are standard at these stops? Max responded that benches are provided at ABRT stations but not at other local bus stops. The benches will carry the ABRT brand and will be maintained by Metro Transit. The ABRT shelters will be lighted and heated. There will also be pylons that have real-time signs. The design shown in the presentation will be standard package of design elements – Metro Transit is branding the system, not the individual corridor or stop. The size of the shelter will be based on site constraints and projected ridership.

Allison noted that the new trash receptacle (shown in the presentation) is holding up much better than the old ones. Andrew Carlson noted that the City has a long history with these receptacles. The new ones are 12-gauge stainless steel and they are “built like a tank” – they literally are strong enough to stop a car. They are a tested urban receptacle that cost \$1200 each. They will be used in other areas along Lake Street. There is a lot of interest in co-located recycling options and they receptacles can be adapted for that purpose. Crystal asked about how the paint would wear. Andrew noted that the painted version was aluminum. These are steel and are not painted. Nathan noted that there are many lessons learned from previous projects and we will try not to repeat the mistakes.

Allison stated that bike racks are an opportunity to add life to the street through the use of interesting shapes. Nathan noted that this is definitely possible but those types of racks would be enhancements and would require a special assessment. Bob Kost noted that parking meters (multiple space) have the opportunity to have a loop added to the meter post – this increases the places where bike parking can be provided. John asked if there are opportunities in the project for a bike exchange station or a Nice Ride bike share? Bob responded that there might be opportunities under the bridge or on the Green Crescent plaza. John asked if businesses would have to pay for them? Nathan responded that they would need to be permitted by the city to use public space or a parking space, for example. The City would have to work with businesses on this.

Crystal asked who pays to fix sidewalks when they are damaged by tree roots since these problems have also been identified on their Lake Street walks. Tom noted that he was interested in trying to coordinate the design with what will be going on under the bridges.

Assessments

Nathan Koster, Minneapolis provided a high level summary of assessments. There will be a uniform assessment for this project. This assessment is determined by dividing the project by frontage and influence area. The square footage assessment is based on the frontage and influence area for each property. The uniform assessment is a given. There may be a special assessment for streetscaping.

Federal funding of \$678,400 will be provided for streetscaping/landscaping above that covered as part of the project cost. Federal funds may be used to cover 80% of the streetscaping/landscaping up to that cap. Hennepin County is kicking in 10%; and property owners need to cover 10% of the base special assessment. This equates to a total of \$848,000 for base landscaping. Anything in addition to that is 100% special assessment to the property owners. This assessment is for capital cost only. There are 14 block faces including the Kmart site and the city-owned site.

Andrew Carlson, City of Minneapolis, commented briefly on Special Service Districts. He noted that there are four existing service districts operating nearby: (1) LynLake west of Blaisdell, (2) Eat Street north along Nicollet, (3) Chicago-Lake, and (4) Bloomington-Lake. The City Council has said that this will not be a new district but, instead will be a district that merges with and is branded with an existing district. It could be part of Midtown District (combination of Chicago-Lake and Bloomington-Lake), part of Lyn-Lake District, or part of Nicollet Eat Street District. Services do not extend into this area right now. Going forward, there will be an effort to connect one-on-one with businesses to get folks grounded in state law and the possibilities. There are no funds for maintenance so the service district concept is very important. The city works with the service district to set a maintenance budget annually. Bike racks are a great opportunity to brand. Trash receptacles are not a good option for branding based on previous experience. At future meetings, Andrew will share what's happening in other areas along Lake Street. All service districts are governed by state statute and city code. It is important in selecting options to be respectful of the property owners because they pay for the cost and need to speak loudly about what they want done.

Next Steps

Jim Grube noted that the next PAC meeting is in June. He stated that he would like to have a public open house for the businesses in July. He would like some recommendations from this group in June prior to the July open house. Then the team will come back to the PAC in August with what was heard at the open house. He reminded people to fill out the "streetscape preferences form" now so that the team can start to price some things out for discussion in June.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on June 17, from 10 AM – 12 PM on the third floor of the Colin Powell Center, 2924 4th Street S, Minneapolis.