Orange Line Technical Advisory Group

Wednesday, June 10, 2010, 10am-11:30am

Attendees: Steve Hay, Minneapolis Public Works; Glenn Markegard, City of Bloomington Planning; Joe Scala, Hennepin County Public Works; Natalie Westberg, Metro Transit BRT; Christina Morrison, Metro Transit BRT; Charles Carlson; Metro Transit BRT; Kristine Elwood, Dakota County; Joe Morneau, Dakota County; Jim Harwood, Metro Transit Engineering; Maury Hooper, Hennepin County Public Works; Jeff Pearson, City of Richfield; Steve Albrecht, City of Burnsville; Jen Lehman, MVTA

Guests: Nacho Diaz, representing Kraus Anderson*;* Ken Vinje, Kraus Anderson; Will Matzek, Kimley Horn

Knox Avenue Layout

- Focusing on the alignment between American Blvd and 76th St
- Working with Kraus-Anderson and Kimley-Horn on their development plans
- Curved alignment could provide more continuous Southtown parcel
- The potential impacts here are different, want to carry both through NEPA for evaluation
- Other options that were considered: tunnel all the way through, at grade that dives into tunnel
    - Issues with the American Blvd intersection and with expenses, underground stations
- Held a design workshop with KA to continue refining the design - concerns about sight distances and to limit impacts to parcel
    - reduce the angle at which the lane enters 494, issues with 494 expansion joints
    - explore structured parking at proposed hotel development to help push footprint westward
- Kraus Anderson has shared concerns about ability to redevelop the land to the east of a direct alignment
- Staff met with Lupient as well —their priority is to keep Southtown Drive open, and to be compensated for any lost parking
- Intention is to have a dedicated guideway in the section that goes under 494, question about whether this should be used as a general purpose lane
    - City of Bloomington is doing some traffic modeling for general purpose traffic
- Stations will be similar to a large ABRT station, or similar to 66th St Station
- Is a general purpose lane feasible with a bowed alignment?
    - Something that is being considered
    - Waiting to look at traffic modeling, local interest in funding it, and physical footprint
- Bowed alignment shows a longer bicycle/pedestrian trail connection, which would extend around development, but could also have a staircase/ramp right at 494 to connect directly into Southtown

Burnsville Southern Terminus study

- Looking at question of Travelers Trail vs. Burnsville Transit Station for the Burnsville Southern Terminus. Working on trying to compare the feasibility from an operational, financial, engineering perspective
    - Developing minimal concepts for each sites for this comparison, and public outreach to engage riders via paper and online survey to gage their preference
    - By early July, complete interagency evaluation of sites
    - Hoping to wrap up decision this summer and develop a conceptual site plan to include in corridor engineering – begins in September
- Location for surveying both potential and existing transit riders? Want to have it completed by July stakeholder meeting so that it can play into that discussion
    - Do we want to involve riders now in these decisions or will it create more confusion and questions before plans are more solidified?
    - Survey focuses on what riders would prefer or look for in a Burnsville station, what are their priorities and what amenities do they seek (pedestrian access to Heart of the City and local businesses, ability to easily make connections with local routes)
    - Need to have outreach event at Burnsville Transit Station to reach existing riders
    - Not comfortable with having event at BTS – riders won't be provided with the same background information to understand the challenges of each site
    - Maybe just give a general look at two locations, very open ended, which do you prefer and why?
    - Could go through the survey as a committee in the June 24th meeting (and push the date even further out)
    - Metro Transit is going to pursue the online survey the week of June 22nd.
- Traveler's Trail concept, MVTA route integration in to the Orange Line route is critical to its success, need to think about how these connections would occur
    - Currently the northbound Nicollet route connections are not very safe or rider friendly
    - There have also been proposals for a pedestrian bridge across Highway 13
    - Would MVTA be open to re-evaluate their local routes if Travelers Trail is chosen? Yes, MVTA staff confirmed that that local routes would be evaluated.

Downtown options

- How does the Orange Line enter and exit downtown? Gap in the transit advantage between 11th St and about Lake St
- Southbound advantage became much less of a focus because of Transit Access Project design, more interested in northbound route to establish transit advantage
    - 10th St, off 5th, left into a contraflow lane. City is concerned about having a contraflow lane next to a protected bike lane, and the reduction in the sidewalk width (4' on each side)

- 9th St, one-way going west, a slight advantage for buses if passing is needed (no opposing traffic)
    - wider sidewalks on both sides
    - parking on the S side or N side, or some off-peak configuration
    - protected bikeway design
    - from a technical perspective might work better than 10th, elimination of parking is a political issue
- How would left turn from 5th to 9th work? Would also need to allow for a left for general purpose traffic.
- 12th St – two-way flyover into contraflow lane would establish both a north & southbound advantage
    - Really completes MARQ2 vision of a seamless transit advantage
    - Much higher cost, but would benefit all MARQ2 buses
    - Need to think about the dynamics of putting all buses on a contraflow lane, however this will help build the case for funding
    - Studying feasibility of footprint and access changes

NEPA

- January 2015: FTA determined that NEPA approach would be a Documented Categorical Exclusion
- Excludes the Lake St portion between I-94 and 42nd St, which is part of the Transit Access Project
- Lake St environmental process is moving forward but a little behind schedule, and it has to be published before the Orange Line CE is published
- Going to do DCE in house and then release RFP for Section 106 work

6 month look ahead

- Section 106 & DCE in progress
- Going to release Orange Line PD/Engineering contract soon
- Technical issue resolution: Burnsville terminus, Knox Ave layout, Downtown access
- Complete 2040 ridership forecasting
- Drafting project management plan
- New public outreach staff to focus on this project, he will help update and carry out public engagement plan
- Develop Municipal Consent Path
    - What is a meaningful way for local units to be involved in the design and development of this project? How do we coordinate construction and efforts? We will welcome any ideas on how to accomplish this
    - Trying to take make it valuable and accessible for public input
- Need to configure and finish financial plan for CTIB by September 1st

Around the Table

- Hennepin County has 66th St reconstruction project, delivering a construction plan for 2016, federally funded project planning to submit Jan 1st to MNDOT, draft should be available by Dec 1st
    - Big difference would be the introduction of a protected bike lane across the 66th St intersection
    - Want to coordinate this engineering with how the Orange Line stations will be constructed
- Want to continue discussing the extension of the Orange Line to Lakeville
- Had the FTA regional coordinator from Chicago in and she toured the Orange Line corridor and has a better understanding of the need for and nature of the Orange Line
- Public engagement idea: getting some sort of video or visual of the extend of the corridor and the nature and geography of the path, might help pave the way for clarity in what the project is
- Update on Lake St: a lot of focus in last few months on environmental process, MNDOT working with neighborhood groups, noise wall conversations and voting
- 35W construction: MNDOT phasing conversation is just now beginning, hopefully they can be present at the next meeting to update the TAC