

From: Lindy Crawford
Sent: Tuesday, February 15, 2022 1:45 PM
To: Dan Jones
Subject: RE: Purple Line Resolution
Attachments: Purple Line_LC2.docx

Hi Dan,

Attached is the document with complete answers. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you,



Lindy Crawford
City Manager

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From: Dan Jones <ward3@██████████>
Sent: Saturday, February 12, 2022 7:46 PM
To: Lindy Crawford <LCRAWFORD@██████████>
Subject: Purple Line Resolution

Lindy,

Please see attached for my comments regarding the Resolution opposing the Purple Line. I've tried to organize my thoughts and arguments as best I can in a short time today. I'm looking for supportive arguments against the resolution and most likely will be providing this to Anne Kane, Ellen Hiniker - if that's OK with you, please advise on this. I do not want you put in an awkward position but we need all the help we can get.

- Text in red I need staff information.
- Text in blue are my comments in response to either a resolution point or Anti Rush Line Coalition" misinformation.
- The three paragraphs at the end is my additional comments and closing points.

Thanks for any help you can provide. To be honest I don't believe it will help but I can do my best at asking all the questions to point out their answers do not add up. I hope I'm wrong. Except for ridership numbers all the resolution points are anecdotal and with out support - yet, ironically, that's what they are asking for with the ridership numbers. That in the end they are afraid of change, the unknown, and, in my opinion - "those people". I'm not going down without a fight and if I can shame them common sense I will do so.

Dan

Dan Jones
White Bear Lake City Council - Ward 3

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[ward3@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:ward3@[REDACTED])

[REDACTED]

Resolution Points of Contention:

Whereas 6

“The few votes the City Council have taken on the Project have narrowly passed on a 3/2 vote.” There has never been a supporting or dissenting vote from the White Bear Lake City Council on the BRT, despite over 20 years of planning, conversation and adding to the City Comp Plan.

Q: Was this in the 2030 Comp Plan?

Yes, Commuter Rail/LRT was identified as part of the program for the Transportation Plan in the 2030 Comp Plan including a bullet point that specifies: Cooperate with the Metropolitan Council and other jurisdictional agencies to facilitate the construction of the Rush Line and adjust local bus routes as may be appropriate. (ongoing) We also had a map in the 2030 Plan that showed the Rush Line and future transit station.

Q: What was the Council vote to approve the 2040 Comp Plan?

The vote was taken on June 8, 2021 and was approved unanimously, no opposed (5-0).

Whereas 7

(f) The processed highway changes to accommodate the BRT will unnecessarily interfere with local businesses, including reduced customer access from the highway and relocation of a business sign.

This language point is flawed and the example business has its sign on city property not to mention a high number of parking spots.

(d) The City Council has received a large number of comments and letters expressing concerns from residents and business owners regarding the negative impacts the BRT will have on the City. Among the most often repeated concerns are the impacts the bus traffic generated by the project will have on the character of the City’s cherished downtown and the direct negative effects the Project will have on local businesses;

It is my opinion that a large number of “comments and letters expressing concerns” was generated with inaccurate information propagated by the No Rush Line BRT coalition.

1. On the homepage of the Coalition’s website they state the project will be “unsafe”.

-What exactly will be unsafe in the City of White Bear Lake?

2. “Until the Environmental Report came just this last May 2021, no one really knew exactly where this route went.”

This is really stretching the information. The Purple Line has been in planning stage for well over 20 years – the truth is people don’t pay attention or haven’t cared?

3. Bruce Vento Trail - All points below are misleading to create a sense of loss

- The No Rush Line logo displays “Save the Bruce Vento Trail”: Is the BRT stopping the Bruce Vento Trail?*

Tim David confirmed to LC that the trail would be happening, it would just be realigned. Susan Vento requested the group stop saying the trail would be stopped.

- “Eliminating major portions of the Bruce Vento Trail in St. Paul and Maplewood” Not having the BRT through the City could impact the route and at best the trail connection will be delayed. These statements lead residents to believe the trail will have gaps in it because of the BRT.*

4. Website states that 48 parking spaces will be removed from downtown.

Where? Is this information based on original terminus location at Clark & 2nd?

- Marina Triangle Area*

7 Stalls - Kowalski's parking lot (all located within existing transportation easement)

5 Stalls – Lakeside Shops parking lot

- Washington Avenue Area

6 Stalls – Beartown parking lot (a portion of the stalls are located within the road rights-of-way)

10 Stalls – Washington Avenue on street parking

- 28 total stalls lost, 18 in parking lots and 10 on street stalls

5. “More traffic congestion at intersections in Vadnais Heights, Gem Lake”

Five vehicles an hour? What about the growth of Hugo and White Bear Township to the north of downtown affecting Hwy 61 traffic counts? Will a anti-growth coalition be formed to fight the growth to the north? Northern growth is, by far, the single largest factor that will generate congestion – not five electric buses per hour.

6. “Keep Downtown Quiet & Welcoming” quote from coalition website

Exactly how will White Bear Lake be less welcoming without public transportation?

Exactly how will White Bear Lake be less quiet?

7. “Avoid massive traffic on Hwy 61” quote from coalition website

Exactly is five buses an hour ‘massive’?

8. “Damage to the charm and small-town feel of Downtown White Bear Lake” quote from coalition website. Where? What? North of White Bear Ave & Hwy 61 intersection there will only be bus platforms and the terminus – all of which could be removed in a weekend. Do the 200 semi-trucks a day going through ruin the small-town feel?

Staff cannot prove that semi-trucks going through WBL ruin the small-town feel. In my opinion, this is a subjective opinion. One could argue that if some believe we currently have a small-town feel then no, the trucks have not ruined such feeling.

9. “Hurt Local Business” quote from coalition website

How and why? Specifically please.

There are countless studies that show public transportation helps business. In sales and employment.

(e) The proposed 89 buses per day entering the downtown area of the City will negatively impacting the quaint, quiet and walkable nature of the area. Downtown White Bear Lake is a tourist destination, and the City Council agrees with the business owners that the dramatic increase in bus traffic will change the nature of the downtown area;

1. 2019 data from MN Dot shows that approximately 34,000 vehicles pass the intersection of Hwy 61 & Cty 96. Assuming that 90% of that traffic occurs from 6 am – 9 pm (15 hours) that equals about 2,000 cars per hour. Adding 89 buses/per day from 6 am to midnight equals five buses per hour.

Questions & Comments:

- What will five electric buses per hour add to congestion?
- Currently how many school buses many semi-tractors use Hwy 61 per day?
I-694 to Hoffman Road: 24,000 to 30,500 (ADT) and 122 to 910 (Heavy Commercial ADT – trucks and busses)
Hoffman Road to 12th Street: 26,000 to 34,000 (ADT) and 210 to 430 (Heavy Commercial ADT – truck and busses)
- How many more school buses will use Hwy 61 per day with the new combined high school?

With the new north high school, there is a projected increase in daily traffic from 2200 to 4100 trips, which is both students and busses. Overall bus traffic won't change much but there will be an increased movement from the school north to Hugo where the new bus garage will be located.

- (Why wasn't an anti-new high school building coalition formed?)
- Doesn't a lot of noise already exist?
Coming from someone who works on Hwy 61 and sees the traffic, yes, there is a lot of noise already. Are the proposed busses projected to be noisy?
- The City has Railroad Park, one our premier parks, with a fountain and a band shell literally abutting the Hwy 61 curb.
 - Will five electric buses per hour effect the "quiet & welcoming" nature of this park?
 - Will Market Fest be able to continue with all the added noise and congestion?
 - Point: There are seven (7) restaurants that have chosen to have patios that literally face Hwy 61: Cabin 61, Alley Cat's, Don Julio's, Leann Chin, Ingredients, Manitou Grill, and Pezzo. All less than 200' away and most are less 100' feet away. (That's about the average lot size for a home in the City.) Did they think the existing noise was too much to make that investment?

2. Exactly how will the quaintness and quiet negatively impacted. (Speculation and should be removed.)

3. Exactly how will five buses an hour negatively impact the walkable nature of the area? (Speculation and should be removed.)

Note – without there will be no improved intersections unless the City wants to fund at 100% This statement is a fact.

4. Exactly how will the nature of the downtown are be changed? (Speculation and should be removed.)

5. Exactly how will the 'nature of the downtown area' change in relation to the business owners? (Speculation and should be removed.)

(g) Ridership to and from the City will support extension of the BRT Route to White Bear Lake. The coronavirus pandemic will have lasting effects on where people work and reduce the to travel to a central office to work. This change in work life will dramatically reduce ridership to number much lower than projected, which the City believes were already set at an aspirational, rather than a realistic, level. The Minnesota Legislature has recognized the likely impact of the pandemic on public transportation ridership and has ordered a study of the issue to inform future policy decisions;

1. The coronavirus pandemic isn't real...so how can this effect the where people work?

2. "This change in work life will dramatically reduce ridership..." This point is pure speculation at this time and should be removed.

3. State Study Coming – with 50% state funding needed my assumption is that the ridership numbers would have to meet standards before approving funds.

4. The Federal Government will have to accept and measure the ridership numbers before approving funding for the project.

5. Certainly ridership is down.

- Yes, as a result of COVID (but that's not real anyways so I can't figure out why the numbers are down).
- Is this permanent? No one can be for sure.
- **But – how people view traditional automotive transportation is changing and has been for the last decade. Do we have any information on this?**

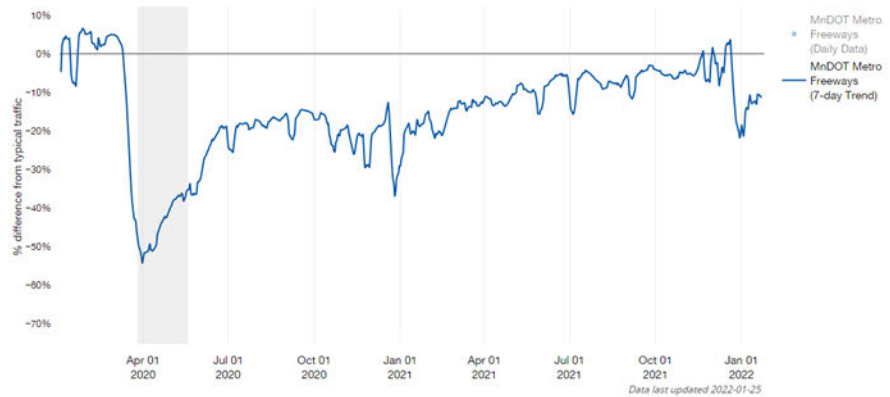
Metropolitan transit ridership is down over half from 2019 to 2020 and a slight additional decline in 2021 in the 6% range.

Metro freeway traffic trends, overall free traffic is nearing pre-pandemic levels (1). Overall vehicle miles traveled (VMT) has flattened in the metro area since the early 2000's (2).

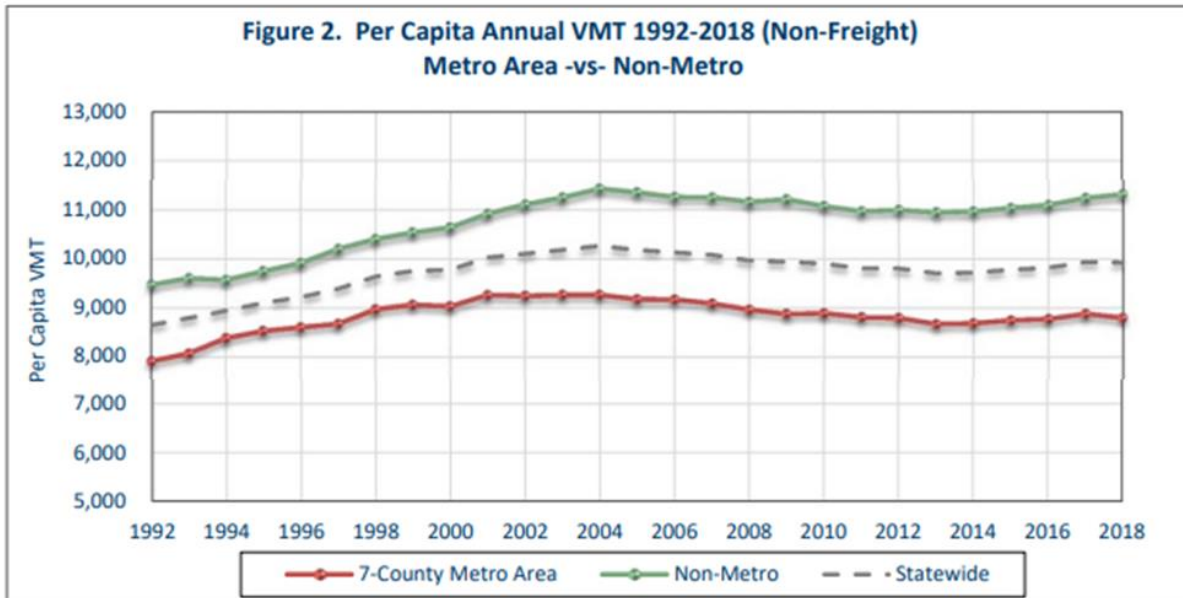
(1)

Traffic on the Twin Cities freeway system is nearing typical levels

This plot shows the daily relative decrease in freeway travel over time across the Twin Cities metropolitan region after March 1. Points that fall below the zero-line represent decreases in travel relative to typical travel on that day of the year and day of the week. Typical travel is estimated using a statistical analysis of traffic volumes from 2018, 2019, and 2020 prior to March 1. Click and drag your mouse to zoom in on a particular section of the plot.



(2)



Source: Minnesota State Demographic Center;
MnDOT, Office of Transportation System Management

(h) The City is aware the Met Council rerouted the Gold Line BRT to avoid the City of Lake Elmo...
Apple and orange.

The City of White Bear Lake is three times the population of Lake Elmo.

The original 2.5 to 3 mile route through Lake Elmo is very low in population density and limited amounts of commercial development. White Bear Lake has population density and is commercially developed along the Hwy 61 corridor.

Historically Lake Elmo has fought to maintain low density and a rural sense of community, much like the City of Grant

The City needs a Reliable & Timely Public Transportation

Since the removal of the streetcar system in the 1950s the Northeast corridor has never had a reliable and timely (multiple stops per hour) public transportation option. Bus service has been intermittent at best that has mostly accounted for working "8-5" and many times requires a vehicle to get to the bus stop i.e. Maplewood Mall, 35E & Hwy 96 etc.

Irony

Stating that money will be saved if the project is stopped is very naïve. We all know the Federal Government has basically already "spent" the money. We all know this. I find it ironic that you can use saving money by not building the BRT and at the same time ask for State funding assistance for the Public Safety Building. Please tell me the difference.

Closing

What if the City rejected the Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad in 1868?

What if in the 1890s Village of White Bear Lake rejected the Streetcar line? (Would White Bear Lake be Minnesota's first resort town?)

What if the Village of White Bear Lake had rejected the route of High US Highway 61 in 1921?

What if the City would have rejected 35E and 694 in 1970?

Maybe the ridership in the City of White Bear Lake is not there today. But what about the future? Back in the 1860's it was expensive to take the train. In the 1920s it was expensive to own a car and the network of roads was almost non-existent. In the 1970s no one ever thought there would be traffic jams on 694 & 35E or any need to 'unweave the weave'.

[Agencies plan for the future, not today or the past.](#)

The real question that needs to be asked is; What are the long term effect of not having the BRT come through White Bear Lake? Sadly there isn't a snappy, 'one-sentence', social media answer.

[Cities have regretted rejecting transportation projects 10+ years later. Lean on the work session staff report implications/ramifications if the project does not come to WBL. They are factual and are significant.](#)

The City, and the entire Northeast Corridor, could be cut off from future housing and commercial development opportunities. The Northeast Corridor already is at a major disadvantage compared to the other three quadrants in jobs, businesses and population.

[From Anne Kane, 2/10: I ran into Kevin Watson at L&B over lunch and he mentioned that HB Fuller is contemplating doubling the size of their Vadnais Heights HQ campus and adding 200+ jobs. It would be great for the broader area and generate good revenues for the School District. In discussions, they noted the lack of public transit options for their growing staff at the campus \(NW quadrant of 61/694 - which would be served by the Buerkle Road station\). Kevin expressed concerns if the Purple Line stops short of the 694.](#)

A little history. For over many, many millennia population center locations have been based off accessibility to transportation. Rivers, seaports, and mountain bypasses have become roads, canals, railroads, highways and freeways. The connections to the outside world via commerce is what makes a community healthy and moving forward.

Pick any city or community that was thriving because of the river traffic and then came the railroad but no through their town. Or if the railroad did come to their town the freeway didn't. What happens to these towns? These former commercial centers?

For example, take a look at Mora which is located between Princeton & Pine City/Rush City. Princeton has Hwy 169 and thrives with commercial activity. Pine City/Rush City have I-35 and rail. Mora doesn't have either one and is in constant competition with those communities to attract businesses. My point being that businesses have and will continue to locate precisely where transportation is. (I realize that is outside of the metro area, but if we are going to develop in a way that is short-sided (my personal opinion), might as well look at out-state communities.)

My question is how can five buses an hour "ruin" White Bear Lake? How can five small platforms along Hwy 61 and a small terminus area west of Hwy 61 "ruin" our city. Say it's a bloated boondoggle, but what are the risk factors of having the BRT come into the City of White Bear Lake. Frankly, I'm just not seeing the issue. What I'm seeing is the gain outweighs the pain. The areas of concern listed in the resolution simply do not add up to take the drastic step of cutting White Bear Lake off from the BRT, which will only benefit the surrounding areas. Again, the math just isn't adding up. We are not mentioning an increase in crime or the additional cost of police?

If the issues is cost – this isn't our responsibility to pay. (If you're answer is all tax dollars come from "all tax payers" then we need to rescind our request for funding of the Public Safety Building – you can't have it both ways.)