
**DULUTH-SUPERIOR
METROPOLITAN INTERSTATE COUNCIL**

**MEETING SUMMARY
Wednesday, February 21, 2007**

Proctor Community Center, 100 Pionk Road, Proctor, MN

Voting Members Present:

Broc Allen
Ed Anderson
Nick Baker, *Wisconsin Co-Chair*
David Bilden
Dave Brenna
Mike Coyle
Earl Elde, *Secretary*
Garry Krause
Keith MacDonald
Kay McKenzie
Cindy Moe
Steve O'Neil
Andy Peterson
Tari Rayala
Russ Stover, *Minnesota Co-Chair*

Voting Members Absent:

Esther Dalbec*
Nick Milroy*

* = Excused

Others Present:

Steve Anderson
Jim Benning
Ken Buehler
Holly Butcher
John Chell
Ron Chicka
James Gittemeier
Robert Herling
Sheldon Johnson
Stan Kaitfors
Andy McDonald
Cari Pedersen
Todd Pierson
Heather Rand
Dena Ryan
Peg Sweeney
Elwyn Tinklenberg
Rondi Watson

Representing:

Douglas County Suburban Townships
City of Superior
Douglas County
City of Superior Citizen Rep
City of Proctor
Douglas County
St. Louis County Suburban Townships
City of Duluth
City of Hermantown
Douglas County
St. Louis County Suburban Townships
St. Louis County
City of Duluth
Duluth Transit Authority
City of Duluth

Representing:

City of Superior
City of Superior

Representing:

City of Proctor
City of Duluth
Duluth Depot/ *Lake Superior Railroad Museum*
ARDC / MIC Staff
ARDC
ARDC / MIC Director
ARDC / MIC Staff
ARDC / MIC Associate Planner
NWRPC / MIC Deputy Director
Community Action Duluth
ARDC / MIC Staff
City of Duluth
MIC Intern
MN DEED
WisDOT
St. Louis County
Tinklenberg Group
ARDC / MIC Staff

1. Introductions/Agenda Review

MIC Co-chair Russ Stover called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. All meeting participants and guests introduced themselves. No changes to the agenda were put forward.

2. Committee Business

Meeting summary for January 17, 2007

Chair Stover called for amendments or corrections to the previous month's meeting summary. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve.

Nick Baker/Keith MacDonald moved to approve the meeting summary from the January 17, 2007 meeting with no corrections or changes. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

3. Passenger Rail Service between the Twin Cities and the Twin Ports

Elwyn Tinklenberg, project consultant and former Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation during the Ventura administration, gave a presentation to make the case for the renewal of passenger rail service between the Twin Cities (of Minneapolis and St. Paul) and the Twin Ports (of Duluth and Superior). He noted that scheduled passenger service to Duluth was discontinued in 1985, but added that the factors that would support a viable rail service have improved since then. He cited the high level of congestion on I-35, the casino in Hinkley that attracts five million people a year, and the prime tourist destinations that Duluth and the North Shore have become. Even more important is the technology that exists in the form of laptop computers and cell phones, that would allow travelers to work during the two-and-a-half-hour train trip from Duluth to downtown Minneapolis.

He noted that a study conducted six years ago found that if the travel speed can be sustained at 79-80 mph, rail service could compete effectively with the automobile with a level of ridership that would justify re-establishing the service, and that it could be done at a reasonable cost. The original study found it would take \$89 million to purchase a train and upgrade track to roughly parallel Interstate 35, which, for a 150-mile line, he described as a real bargain, along with significant environmental benefits for the kind of ridership that it could carry. As comparisons, he noted that the new Minneapolis Hiawatha light rail line cost more than \$800 million, and a proposed St. Paul-Minneapolis light rail line is estimated over \$1 billion. Each line is much shorter than the Duluth-to-Minneapolis rail.

He noted that the idea is gaining wide support along the proposed line. The St. Louis County Economic Development Committee approved a financial contribution to conduct a comprehensive feasibility study. Other partners include the St. Louis and Lake County Regional Railroad Authority, the city of Duluth, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and Anoka and Hennepin counties.

Importantly, forces are appearing to line up in Washington DC in support of this proposal as well. He noted that with U.S. Representative Jim Oberstar chairing the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Northeastern Minnesota is in a great position to make this project happen because he is from this congressional district. In addition, Congressman Dave Obey from Wisconsin chairs the House Appropriations

Committee. He added that federal money, along with a financial match from the state, would be key to the success of this project. Start-up costs would typically be shared 50 percent by the federal government, with a 50-percent local match. It's not known at this point whether the trains would be run by a private company or by Amtrak, but if it's Amtrak, the Federal Railroad Authority would pick up half of any necessary subsidy.

The \$350,000 study could get underway early next year and will take about eight months to complete. After that, it is hoped that rail service could begin in a matter of years.

4. Resolution of Support for Passenger Rail Study

Ron Chicka presented a Resolution for MIC Board approval supporting the feasibility study of passenger rail service between the Twin Cities and the Twin Ports. He added that the MIC might be able to contribute in some way to this study.

Ed Anderson/Broc Allen moved to approve the Resolution of Support as presented. Many favorable comments were made about the advantages to this region of such a rail connection. The motion was approved unanimously.

5. Amendment #2 to the 2007-2010 Duluth Metropolitan TIP

James Gittemeier reported that MIC staff had received a request to amend a High Priority Project (HPP) in the 2007-2010 Duluth Metro TIP. The proposed amendment would change the scope of the Air National Guard Base Improvement Project by splitting it into three phases and moves the funding for Phase 1 up from 2009 to 2007, in accordance with available HPP funding. Work in the first phase includes reconditioning Airport Road from Haines Road to Rice Lake Road and constructing turn lanes at the new base Entrance Road.

He added that the project was subject to air quality review and a positive air quality conformity determination had been made for the entire project in July 2006. No further air quality review is necessary at this time.

Nick Baker/Andy Peterson moved to amend the 2007-2010 Duluth Metropolitan TIP as presented. Gary Krause asked if any other projects would have to be delayed in order to move this one forward to 2007. James replied that because this was being funded by HPP project funds, the scheduling of the regular TIP projects would not be affected. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

6. Amendment #1 to the 2007-2010 Superior Metropolitan TIP

Sheldon Johnson reported that a new rail crossing improvement project, to add a signal & gates on 28th Street at Superior High School, needed to be amended into the 2007-2010 Superior Urbanized Area TIP.

He added that the other scheduled 2007 rail crossing projects, at 39th Ave East and East 8th Street and at 61st Street between Tower and Ogden, were funded at \$300,000. Of this amount \$200,000 will be transferred to the 28th Street project as noted above.

Nick Baker/Mike Coyle moved to amend the 2007-2010 Superior Metropolitan TIP as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

7. Public Involvement Plan– Final

James Gittemeier presented the final version of the MIC’s Public Involvement Plan for TAC approval. He noted that the process had begun in August 2006 to comply with new requirements set forth in the federal SAFETEA-LU transportation legislation. He reviewed the public input that was sought in the development of this plan, as well as a brief overview of the major components of the plan. He described the Plan as a guide for use primarily by MIC staff, adding that a significant addition to all MIC planning processes was to describe how we integrate public comments and our responses to them.

Nick Baker/Andy Peterson moved to approve the final MIC Public Involvement Plan as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

8. MIC Website Update

Rondi Watson gave an overview of the new MIC website, dsmic.org, which was launched earlier this month. She noted that the new website was a significant aspect of the MIC’s new Public Involvement strategy, since SAFETEA-LU specifically calls for MPOs to utilize their websites to present real-time information about plans and public meetings and as a way to gather public input before and during our planning processes.

She explained that the primary goals of the website re-design were to make it (1) easier to locate and (2) more user-friendly to navigate and to contact MIC staff for direct input. She noted that the re-designed site is patterned after news delivery websites—to place as many current topics as possible in front of the viewer on the initial page, including links to draft documents open for public review, current meeting agendas, previous meeting summaries, staff contact information and status reports on current planning efforts. A search feature is also featured prominently in the upper left corner. The updated site is also compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, to make it accessible for visually-impaired computer users. She added that planned improvements to the website include the addition of more visual elements, a comprehensive archive of past MIC plans and studies, and interactive GIS mapping functions. She noted that all MIC staff will be able to log on and update their own project web pages and that the entire staff is enthusiastic about contributing to an overall improved web presence. She closed by inviting committee members to log on to www.dsmic.org to view and forward comments.

9. FY 2011 Duluth Metropolitan Area TIP Project Prioritization

James Gittemeier explained that the scoring system had been revised for 2011 projects, so that transit and rail projects are ranked separately from roadway projects. He presented an overview of each of the candidate TIP projects for 2011 federal funding, which included six roadway projects, a single transit project, and a single rail project. He also reviewed the scores from the previous day’s prioritization session, noting that the TAC was forwarding a recommendation that the MIC adopt the project priority ranking as follows:

Rank	Roadway Projects	TAC Score
1	Duluth Heights Connector Preliminary Engineering - Design of new roadway (Joshua Avenue) from Maple Grove Rd to Arrowhead Rd	91.1

2	Glenwood Street – Reconstruction from 45th Avenue East to 52nd Avenue East	82.3
3	Maple Grove Road & Stebner Road – Installation of a traffic control signal	80.3
4	Rice Lake Road – Rehabilitation from Arrowhead Road to Martin Road	80.1
5	Rice Lake Road – Rehabilitation from Pecan to Arrowhead Road	78.1
6	Jean Duluth Road – Rehabilitation, including culvert repairs & turn lane additions, from Zimmerman Road to Normanna Road	76.1
Rank	Transit Project	TAC Score
1 (of 1)	Bus Replacement – DTA to replace 3 STRIDE Buses	n/a
Rank	Rail Project	TAC Score
1 (of 1)	Rail Crossing Signal – Installation of railroad crossing signals at Munger Shaw Road and U.S. Highway 2	n/a

Nick Baker/David Bilden made a motion that the 2011 MIC area TIP candidate projects be prioritized in order of the scores as recommended by the TAC, to be forwarded on to the ATP process. During the discussion, Andy Peterson questioned why the Glenwood improvement won't go all the way through to 60th Avenue East. Jim Benning, City Engineer and TAC Chair, responded that the state told them that the project would have a much better chance of being funded if the scope and cost of the project were reduced; therefore they chose the segment that has the higher ADT (5700 between 45th and 52nd Avenues East vs. 3700 between 52nd and 60th). Andy responded that he hoped the segment between 52nd and 60th could be put forward as a future TIP project. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

10. Project Updates and Informational Items

Safe Routes to School Implementation Efforts: Holly Butcher reported that on behalf of the Duluth Public Schools, she had prepared and submitted six Safe Routes to School applications to MnDOT. There were a total of five infrastructure project applications for Stowe, MacArthur, Congdon, Grant, and Lester Park elementary schools; and one district-wide non-infrastructure grant to integrate bicycle and pedestrian education into K-8 classrooms at all Duluth schools. Successful project applicants will be notified in the spring.

Additionally, MIC staff had met with the Superior School District, Police Department, and City staff to discuss elements to be included in a non-infrastructure grant application for the City of Superior, due to WisDOT by March 16.

Endion Neighborhood Transportation and Land Use Plan: Holly Butcher reported that the City of Duluth had recommended members for the Steering Committee for the Endion Neighborhood Transportation and Land Use Plan, to include representatives from area businesses, both hospitals and the Armory development, and MIC and City of Duluth staff members. She plans to convene the first meeting of the group later this month.

DTA Route Analysis for the City of Superior: Holly Butcher reported that MIC staff had met with DTA staff in early February to discuss conducting an analysis of DTA's route structure and service levels in Superior. MIC staff will be conducting passenger and non-rider surveys, reviewing ridership data, and examining alternative scenarios to efficiently serve the City of Superior.

Safety / Transportation System Management (TSM) Planning: Robert Herling reported that MIC staff met on February 2nd to begin the second phase of the 2006-07 TSM/Safety Planning effort, which involves a closer examination of the "High-Crash" locations that were identified in Phase 1. Staff will continue to study each of the locations on the list, identifying issues, identifying possible solutions and engaging local and state officials in developing TSM recommendations for each location. Brian Boder commented that St. Louis County would also like to have input into the analysis as the process continues.

Bike Route Planning: James Gittemeier reported that MIC staff met with the City of Duluth, St. Louis County and the City of Proctor to work on the final routes, fine-tune the wayfinding signage, and discuss the next steps toward implementation, anticipated to occur this spring or summer. The project memo, project plans, and the inter-jurisdictional agreement were also discussed.

HTAC Great Lakes Advocacy Subcommittee: Andy McDonald reported that Congressman Jim Oberstar was set to address the HTAC's Great Lakes Advocacy group and invited harbor stakeholders on Thursday, February 22nd at 11:30 am at the DECC Horizon Room.

11. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Stover adjourned the meeting at 8:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rondi Watson
MIC Division Secretary