
**DULUTH-SUPERIOR
METROPOLITAN INTERSTATE COUNCIL**

MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, April 18, 2007

Hermantown Training Facility

5111 Maple Grove Road, Hermantown, MN

Voting Members Present:

Broc Allen
Nick Baker, *Wisconsin Co-Chair*
David (Mike) Bilden
David Brenna
Mike Coyle
Earl Elde, *Secretary*
Garry Krause
Keith MacDonald
Kay McKenzie
Cindy Moe
Steve O'Neil
Tari Rayala

Representing:

Douglas County Suburban Townships
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
Duluth Transit Authority

Voting Members Absent:

Ed Anderson*
Esther Dalbec*
Dean Miller*
Nick Milroy
Andy Peterson

Representing:

City of Superior
City of Superior
Douglas County
City of Superior
City of Duluth

* = Excused

Others Present:

Holly Butcher
Ron Chicka
James Gittemeier
Robert Herling
Andy McDonald
Todd Pierson
Rondi Watson

Representing:

ARDC / MIC Staff
ARDC / MIC Director
ARDC / MIC Staff
ARDC / MIC Associate Planner
ARDC / MIC Staff
MIC Intern
ARDC / MIC Staff

1. Introductions/Agenda Review

Minnesota Co-Chair Russ Stover called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and all meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. Committee Business

Meeting summary of March 21, 2007

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

Krause/Elde moved to approve the meeting summary from the March 21, 2007 meeting with no corrections or changes. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

3. Understanding the Transportation Needs of All People in the Duluth Community

Guest speakers Stan Kaitfors, Director of Community Action Duluth and Therese Scherer from the United Way of Greater Duluth presented information about current efforts to reduce poverty and homelessness. A quick demographic overview reveals that in Duluth, 31.5% of the overall population, or almost one in three people who live here, are struggling to make ends meet. 15.5 % of residents, significantly higher than the national average, meet the federal definition of poverty and the other 16% are eligible for government assistance such as free or reduced lunch, energy assistance and other programs. Additionally, Duluth has a lower than average median wage at \$8.50/hour.

Therese explained that over the last year, the United Way has conducted a number of focus groups and a community survey to determine critical needs, defined as those issues or trends that emerge from all aspects of the data, with a goal of determining specific program initiatives to meet those needs. She noted that transportation was one of the top five critical needs for low to moderate income residents (along with living wage, education and skills, childcare, and having a home). Transportation was cited as the most frequent factor in problems with access to services, early childhood education, medical appointments and jobs.

In terms of addressing the transportation needs of low-income individuals in this community, it has been suggested that clients would benefit most from a subsidized monthly transit (DTA) buss pass. However, the DTA has several limitations including unique geographical challenges, route structures and timing of services that do not serve many individuals. The DTA did report, however, that some opportunities exist for of running demonstration routes (federal JARC funds) due to a higher than normal surplus of buses during weekdays.

Noting that we are a heavily car-oriented society, Stan discussed initiatives related to the barriers to car ownership. He noted that research links access to a vehicle to significant increases in employment, hours worked and earnings. Income increased by about \$220/mo; 19% more likely to have earned income. He gave an overview of programs in other parts of the country which provide revolving loans for car repairs and car purchases as one possible approach.

Therese noted that the recent Northeastern Minnesota Human Services Coordination Transit Plan developed by ARDC and the MIC was the first assessment of needs and resources to have been conducted in this area, which Stan characterized as a good **first step** in coordinating these needs. They both emphasized that Community Action Duluth and the United Way want to be part of creating a solution that brings existing and new resources together to fill this community's transportation demand – with a concentrated focus on the needs of low and

moderate-income people. They hoped to partner with the MIC as one resource in implementing a comprehensive transportation plan, to need to include multiple approaches such as transit, para-transit, individual vehicles, volunteer ride programs, employer-based transport, etc.

They closed with invitation to participate in the upcoming series of public forums on May 7, May 22 and June 13.

In the discussion that followed, Steve O'Neil commented that missing out on Head Start opportunities—in part due to transportation limitations-- has far-reaching and significant impacts. Broc Allen asked if a car-sharing option had been examined. Stan replied that the car share idea was just introduced last week at a meeting at the Chester Creek Café, but noted that the demographic profile for this transportation option is somewhat different than their target, consisting more of middle income, environmentally conscious people whose needs don't usually involve getting to work and basic services. In other words, the car share option doesn't quite work for day to day low-income workers' needs.

Mike Coyle suggested that churches and faith communities could be tapped for participation in some of the volunteer ride efforts; Therese agreed that churches were a natural match for ridesharing solutions.

Russ Stover commented that the rural poor have unique transportation needs as well.

Ron Chicka closed the discussion by thanking the presenters and noted that the MIC had completed a transit gap study a few years ago as a precursor to the Human Services Transportation Plan, adding that the data and recommendations could be made available to other agencies if they would be interested.

4. Amendment 3 to the 2007-2010 Duluth Metropolitan TIP

James Gittemeier reported that we had received a request by MnDOT to amend the 2007-2010 Duluth TIP to change the project scope of the Munger Trail Extension Project to allow for funds to be used for preliminary engineering activities in 2008. No funding changes

Baker/O'Neil moved to approve Amendment 3 to the 2007-2010 Duluth Metropolitan TIP as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

5. Amendment 4 to the 2007-2010 Duluth Metropolitan TIP

James Gittemeier presented a second amendment request by the Duluth Transit Authority (DTA). Section 5309 (Bus & Bus Facilities Program) grant funding was awarded for the Downtown Duluth Transit Facility Improvement Project and needs to be incorporated into the 2007 Duluth TIP

Baker/Allen moved to approve Amendment 4 to the 2007-2010 Duluth Metropolitan TIP as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

6. Administrative TIP Change

James Gittlemeier reported that the City of Hermantown was advancing the funding for the Arrowhead Road resurfacing project in the TIP from FY 2008 to FY 2007. However, because the city agrees to finance the total construction cost for the work until federal reimbursement is received in FY 2008, we are not required to make a formal TIP amendment, but rather an administrative change to the document.

7. Safe Routes to School Grant Awards

Holly Butcher began by announcing that in early April, we were notified that two of the five Safe Routes to School grant applications were successful. Duluth was awarded two grants for 2007, the first to implement safety improvements at Congdon Park Elementary School for the full funding amount of \$137,600. The second was to implement a district-wide non-infrastructure education grant for Duluth Public Schools to provide and integrate age-appropriate bicycle and pedestrian curriculum across the school district in the amount of \$50,000.

She added that in January, MIC staff had met with Superior School District, Police Department, and City staff to discuss elements a non-infrastructure Safe Routes to School grant application for the City of Superior. The MIC submitted a non-infrastructure grant to WisDOT on behalf of Superior Schools on March 16, and we expect to hear back sometime in May.

8. DTA Route Analysis—City of Superior

Robert Herling reported that the DTA asked the MIC to study and analyze current route structures in the City of Superior. MIC staff has begun this process by developing two surveys to be administered the week of April 16th: one for Superior route riders and the other for Superior route drivers.

He reviewed the Rider Survey, which aims to gather data about how well Superior riders' destinations are being met with current route structures and to compile their service suggestions. Especially interested in determining

Holly Butcher reviewed the Driver Survey, which aims to examine what causes drivers' delays on current routes and asks for their feedback on how to improve efficiencies.

9. Amendments to the MIC's 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan

Ron Chicka explained that explained that SAFETEA-LU federal transportation bill set forth several new initiatives. To become compliant, the MIC is required to augment specific components of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), last updated in the fall of 2005. He added that MIC staff will be meeting at the end of this week with representatives from MnDOT and FHWA to review our initial plans for meeting the requirements.

He noted that two of the requirements have recently been met with the completion of stand-alone plans, the Human Services Transit Plan and the updated Public Involvement Plan. He added that there are five other amendment components, broad initiatives and directives to better coordinate and consult with a broad range of agencies and jurisdictions. The specific

focus areas include:

Safety

Robert Herling reviewed the objective of this component, which is to ensure that safety is considered at all stages of the planning process for all modes, to be coordinated with state and local agencies.

Security

Andy McDonald reviewed the goals of Security component, which are to define the role of transportation planning in promoting security; to identify critical facilities and to insure consistency with other existing safety plans from City, County and State jurisdictions and agencies.

Economic Development

Andy McDonald reviewed the main goal of the Economic Development component, which is to consult with local agencies and groups to identify common goals and to integrate them into the transportation planning process.

Environmental

Holly Butcher reviewed the goal of the Environmental components, which are to beef up the inter-agency consultation process to ensure that environmental and Historic preservation issues are integrated with the MIC's plans and studies, to compare plans, maps, and goals to develop a baseline GIS inventory to underlay with future transportation projects;

Operations & Maintenance

Holly reviewed the goals for this component, which are to document financial plans and Capital Improvement Plans (CIPs) for maintaining infrastructure networks; to discuss congestion areas; and to determine what is being spent annually in this area towards preservation, operations and maintenance.

Ron closed by reporting that draft versions of the Amendments will be presented at the May TAC and MIC meetings for a 30-day comment period and the final Amendments will be presented for approval in June.

10. Northwest Superior Traffic Circulation Study

Robert Herling reviewed the responses that had been received from a survey mailed out to area business on March 24th. The goal of the survey was primarily to better determine the patterns of commercial truck traffic between the Bong and Blatnik bridges, in anticipation of commercial growth in the northwest corner of the city.

He reported that there had been 33 percent return rate of the surveys, with a good percentage of trucking firms represented. Notable was that there were twice as many trucks traveling over the Bong Bridge than crossing over the Blatnik (53 vs. 26 percent). Access to the Bong Bridge was in particular identified as problematic for respondents.

He added that MIC staff is awaiting the results from the traffic modeling that is being done by the URS consulting firm. The results of the modeling will provide forecasted traffic patterns as they relate to the future growth of industrial and manufacturing operations in northwest Superior.

Nick Baker commented that he was frustrated that the bridge design from the very beginning should have taken into account the need for the off and on-ramps into an industrial area. Access points have now been developed and will be difficult to solve.

11. Bike to Work Week

James Gittemeier reported that MIC staff, along with the DTA, YMCA, Greater Downtown Council, and local bicycle advocates, are collaborating to promote Bike to Work Day, scheduled this year for Friday, May 18th. Preliminary plans for the day include a morning event at the Duluth Civic Center in front of Duluth City Hall. Bicyclists will be encouraged to stop by for free t-shirts and refreshments. Ideas being discussed for the morning event include guest speakers to advocate for bicycling, a bicycle inspection station and tips on minor bicycle tune-ups, and possibly a DTA bike rack demonstration.

The next steps have to do with getting the word out; he requested that if anyone else would care to participate in planning the event, please contact him.

12. Project Updates

Endion Land Use and Transportation Assessment

Holly Butcher reported that the second meeting of the Endion Land Use and Transportation Steering Committee took place on Friday March 30th. URS Corporation attended the meeting to review elements of their traffic simulation modeling software (Synchro and SimTraffic) which will be used to cumulatively analyze traffic flow and various modeling scenarios that the steering committee chooses to examine.

2008-2011 Duluth Metropolitan Area TIP

James Gittemeier reported that the Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership (ATP) will be asked to approve the Draft Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Improvement Program (ATIP) at their regularly scheduled meeting, held on April 5, 2007, at the Hermantown Public Safety Building. Included in the 2008-2011 NE MN ATIP are the new projects for FY 2011 for the Duluth urbanized area. This month, he will be collecting project updates and financial data from due jurisdictions to include in the Draft Duluth Metro FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Regional Freight Initiative

Ron Chicka reported that he had met with staff from the Mn/DOT Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations to begin talks concerning a study centered on freight movements needs in the Arrowhead region. Also invited were representatives from the Duluth Port Authority, Wisconsin DOT, the UWS Transportation and Logistics Program, and ARDC. He noted that the central office staff of Mn/DOT had recently completed a similar undertaking recently in the Mankato district as a model for such a study, but that the scope of the study for this area would be significantly different due to the dynamics introduced by activities of the Duluth-Superior port. The project will likely be led via a private consultant with ARDC and MIC staff facilitating. Next steps include identifying other stakeholders and roles of each of the study partners. Brian Ryks noted that he had information about air freight carriers that could be relevant; Denny Johnson stated that he would be contacting him as one of the stakeholders as

the project progresses.

Western Plains MPO Conference

Holly Butcher reported that she and Robert Herling will be attending the 2007 Western Plains MPO Conference in Rapid City, South Dakota from April 23rd through April 26th. She will be giving a presentation on the Duluth and Superior Safe Routes to School Plans.

Duluth Airport BRAC Adjustment Planning Process

Ron Chicka reported that the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) adjustment planning process for the Duluth Airport is nearing a key stage in finalization. A local consultant, LHB Engineers and Architects, will be presenting their findings soon at a workshop for a group of local public and private entities, including the MIC. The workshop will involve a discussion of the new mission of the Air Guard Base and a plan for reuse of Air Guard and Airport properties.

Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Ron Chicka reported that he had just returned from a meeting of national MPOs to begin looking at policy and technical information in anticipation of the next federal transportation bill. The next bill will likely have a large freight component. Made the point that MIC activities

13. Announcements

Nick Baker reported that he would be representing Douglas County on an advisory group related to the establishment of passenger rail between the Twin Cities and the Twin Ports.

He added that Douglas County and the City of Superior had received funding to support their Comprehensive Planning report.

David Bilden commented that he would like to see more follow up on some of the topics that are put before the Board. For example, would like a report in a year or so about the status of the human services initiatives discussed at tonight's meeting.

14. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Stover adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rondi Watson
MIC Division Secretary