



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council  
**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**Wednesday, October 17, 2007, 7:00 PM**

<b>Meeting Location</b>	Hermantown Public Safety Facility	
<b>Meeting Chair</b>	Nick Baker	
<b>Note Taker</b>	Rondi Watson	
<b>Members Present</b>	Broc Allen	Douglas Co. Suburban Twps
	Ed Anderson	City of Superior
	Nick Baker	Douglas County
	David Bilden	City of Superior Citizen Rep
	David Brenna	City of Proctor
	Mike Coyle	Douglas County
	Keith MacDonald	City of Hermantown
	Kay McKenzie	Douglas County
	Dean Miller	Douglas County
	Nick Milroy	City of Superior
	Cindy Moe	St. Louis Co. Suburban Twps
	Kevin Norbie	City of Superior
	Tari Rayala	Duluth Transit Authority
	Peg Sweeney	St. Louis County
<b>Members Absent</b>	Earl Elde*	St. Louis Co. Suburban Twps
	Garry Krause*	City of Duluth
	Andy Peterson*	City of Duluth Citizen Rep
	Russ Stover*	City of Duluth
	* Excused	
<b>Others Present</b>	Holly Butcher	ARDC / MIC Senior Planner
	Ron Chicka	ARDC / MIC Director
	Roberta Dwyer	MnDOT District One
	James Gittemeier	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Robert Herling	ARDC / MIC Associate Planner
	Denny Johnson	MnDOT District One
	Sheldon Johnson	NWRPC / MIC Deputy Director
	Andy McDonald	ARDC / MIC Principal Planner
	Shelley Nelson	Duluth News Tribune
	Lora Skarman	ARDC / MIC Intern
	Rondi Watson	ARDC / MIC Division Secretary

### 1. Introductions and Agenda Review

MIC Co-Chair Nick Baker called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and meeting attendees introduced themselves. No changes were put forward to the agenda.

## 2. Committee Business – Meeting Summary of September 19, 2007

Chair Baker called for amendments or corrections to the September 19, 2007 meeting summary. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve.

**Motion and Discussion** Kevin Norbie, with a second from Broc Allen, moved to approve the meeting summary from the September 19, 2007 meeting with no corrections or changes. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

## 3. Nominating Committee for 2008 MIC Officers

Keith McDonald and Dean Miller volunteered to serve as the nominating committee. They will poll members from Minnesota and Wisconsin, respectively, to determine nominees for 2008 co-chairs. They will put forward their nominations at the December meeting.

## 4. Economic Development in NW Wisconsin

Andy Lisak gave an overview of the Superior Development Association, one of the longest-standing nonprofit organizations of its kind after offering services to the community for 47 years. Its mission is to retain, expand and create new business and industry in Superior and Douglas County. He explained that they provide technical assistance for a wide variety of business needs including workforce development, financing, licensing and permitting issues and locating available sites and buildings.

160 businesses currently belong to the organization, with local partners including the City, County, Superior BID, Chamber of Commerce, UWS, WITC, and the Superior Business Center incubator. Regional partners include Northspan and the Northland Connection website—described it as a very significant tool—also Minnesota Power, the Duluth Seaway Port Authority, NWRPC and APEX.

He reviewed several recent business successes in which the Development Association played a role, including Cutler Magner (CLM), Amsoil, Superior Glass, the Sportsman's Connection, Genesis, SLM Superior-Lidgerwood-Mundy, StileChoice Doors, and Hallett Dock. He commented that there exists a new economic climate as compared to four or five years ago, with many new businesses arising out of previous failures.

## 5. 2008-2011 Duluth Metro TIP Amendments #1 – 4 \*

James Gittemeier reported that the cost of the multi-jurisdictional Miller Hill reconstruction project has increased significantly, by \$6.6 million (up from \$13 million when it was originally programmed in 2004 to \$22 million in 2008/2009).

The three jurisdictions (Duluth, St. Louis County & MnDOT) participating in this project met in September and agreed upon a managed advance construction solution in order to accommodate this substantial cost increase in the current TIP. In addition, a number of projects have either been moved back a year in the TIP or have moved out of the TIP all together. Three TIP amendments are being put forward to handle the separate jurisdictions.

MnDOT's project engineer, Roberta Dwyer, also spoke about the reconstruction project, noting that it will address this area's most pronounced traffic congestion and is also considered significant for the entire region. She added that it is based on 15 years of planning and that it includes no "extras" that can be cut, so adjustments need to be made in the way it is funded.

She also reported that work will begin on Mall Drive/Burning Tree Road as early as March 2008. Two businesses, the Spur Station and Country Kitchen restaurant, have been acquired and MnDOT has been working for more than five years with two other businesses that will be heavily impacted, Miller Hill Car Wash and the Maya Restaurant. She added that the latter two feel that the roadway reconfiguration will ultimately work to their advantage.

She added that she expects the project will still move forward to be let in January despite the state's emergency funding issues; \$60 million to be available – but the full \$195 million has yet to be worked out by the state legislature.

James closed by presenting a fourth TIP Amendment, reflecting an increase in Section 5307 funding for transit operations and transit capital from the Federal Transit Administration.

**Motion and Discussion** Peg Sweeney, with a second from Nick Milroy, moved to approve TIP Amendments 1-3 as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

Broc Allen, with a second from Dean Miller, moved to approve TIP Amendment 4 as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

## 6. Final 2008-2011 Superior Area Transportation Improvement Program

Sheldon Johnson presented the final Superior Urbanized Area Transportation Improvement Program for approval. The draft was presented in August, and no public comments were offered during the 30-day review period that began in early September. He noted that the document had been modified since it was presented in draft form to comply with some new SAFETEA-LU language. He also outlined some text changes in the project tables on pages 22 and 23. Additionally, at WisDOT's suggestion, two components were removed in the final version: the Transit section, which is not relevant to this TIP, and the copy of the MIC's Resolution in the Appendix, which duplicates the Self-Certification section. He added that much consultation had taken place with the Superior office, to match up project costs between WisDOT and those listed in the document and meet the goal of fiscal constraint.

**Motion and Discussion** Kevin Norbie, with a second from Ed Anderson, moved to approve the 2008-2011 Superior area TIP as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

## 7. 2008-2009 MIC Work Program and Budget - Final

Ron Chicka presented the 2008 – 2009 Work Program and Budget for approval. He reported that he had met with MnDOT and WisDOT to review all aspects of the draft version and their comments had been incorporated into the final document. He noted that three planning efforts

will start up by the end of this year—the Proctor Comprehensive Plan update, the UMD-CSS transportation assessment (to be combined with the Woodland Avenue corridor study), and the East 2nd access management plan in Superior. He also noted the inclusion of a large-scale freight study of NE Minnesota and NW Wisconsin likely to begin in 2008 and continue into 2009.

He remarked that the Grand Avenue project had been dropped out of the Work Program altogether, because it did not rank high in the state's estimation and was therefore hard to justify as a priority. He added that safety concerns about specific intersections along the corridor could still be analyzed from the perspective of the MIC's ongoing TSM work.

He also reviewed preliminary projects and budget numbers slated for 2009, noting that they will almost certainly change as priorities shift and special projects come forward. The survey of TAC and MIC members highlighted an interest in access management issues along Central Entrance, so that project was added for 2009. Funding was also included to purchase new aerial photos of the Minnesota MIC area (the current ones date back to 2002) and to pursue a roundabout demonstration project (as a consultant expenditure) by constructing a full-scale model of a roundabout for public education purposes, similar to one that was recently developed for Dakota County.

Finally, he noted that the Long Range Transportation Plan will need to be updated through 2035 by the end of 2009. He will be consulting with the DOT central offices about issues with utilizing demographic data from the 2000 census, and about augmenting the bike/ped and financial analysis sections. He closed by requesting approval of the final 2008 – 2009 Work Program and Budget.

**Motion and Discussion** Ed Anderson, with a second from Dean Miller, moved to approve the 2008-2009 MIC Work Program and Budget as presented. *During the discussion, Ed Anderson mentioned that streetscaping along Highway 2/53 needs some attention, as one of the main entrances to the City of Superior. He also noted that if the Murphy Oil expansion project is successful in moving forward, a related transportation study will need to take a higher priority, perhaps displacing one of the projects currently slated for 2008 or 2009. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.*

## 8. Endion Transportation and Land Use Plan

Holly Butcher reported that two public meetings had been held in September. The first meeting, on September 12, focused on the Endion one-way system and the proposed St. Luke's and Plaza-Armory developments. The second meeting, on September 17, examined land use and transportation opportunities and alternative scenarios along London Road from 10<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> Avenues East.

The feedback they received from businesses along the corridor is that pedestrian crossing is regarded as one of the biggest issues, along with the need to improve aesthetics and bike/pedestrian/transit amenities. Concerns were expressed about closing off streets per the armory plans as well as concerns about the City being able to maintain anything that is built.

Strong interest was also expressed in stormwater management, as the lake is directly adjacent to this corridor. New technologies could be part of the final recommendations.

Although a majority of meeting participants expressed an interest in seeing landscaped center medians, a 'vocal minority' of business owners opposed the idea. Holly noted that in other areas of the country, it works just fine—landscaped medians are not incompatible with the ability to access businesses. The idea is that landscaped medians would spur economic investment in the area by making it a more attractive destination district. She added that TAC members had noted that the data shows that center medians are also justified from a safety perspective.

The final steering committee meeting for this project will likely be held on October 22<sup>nd</sup> and study members will be asked to devise plan recommendations and implementation strategies. The consultants from URS will also review the modeling results.

## 9. DTA Route Analysis for the City of Superior

Robert Herling reported that the DTA provided the MIC with additional ridership counts for the #16 and #17 bus routes in Superior for the month of August. Comparison with counts gathered in February showed a decrease in ridership during weekdays, with increases noted on weekends.

Holly Butcher reported that the DTA had organized a meeting in early September with DTA staff, MIC staff and Superior Mayor David Ross, in response to a press feature contending that ridership is low in the City of Superior because the routes don't hit the right destinations at the right times of day. At this meeting, the Mayor proposed working with the DTA and the MIC to devise a pilot project to increase transit services in Superior, rather than simply seeking efficiencies and thereby decreasing the current level of service. This has caused the direction of the study to change. The new focus of the study is to determine what enhanced bus service should look like for Superior, which could include the development of a transit hub. The MIC will continue to meet monthly with the DTA and the City of Superior. Dennis Jensen will be contacting First Transit as consultants on the project to identify an appropriate service model for a pilot project.

During the discussion, Broc Allen suggested that providing transit service from bar destinations at late night hours, similar to other college towns, could fill a transportation need and provide a responsible service to the community.

## 10. Project Updates

### Transportation Systems Management (TSM)

Robert Herling reported that he has been discussing the final TSM documents to determine a process that is uniform between the MIC and the separate jurisdictions. One piece of feedback he received is that formal TAC and MIC approval of the documents would give more teeth to support funding requests for safety improvements that might arise from the recommendations. The reports will be presented for approval at the December TAC and MIC meetings and will

be available to view on the MIC website at: [www.dsmic.org/tsm](http://www.dsmic.org/tsm).

#### **Duluth Safe Routes to School Applications**

Holly Butcher reported that on September 20th MIC staff met with the Duluth Safe Routes to School Steering Committee to discuss the grant applications which are due November 16th. MIC staff will be developing these applications on behalf of the Duluth Public School District and will submit them by the deadline.

#### **Northwest Superior Traffic Circulation Plan**

Andy McDonald reported that URS recently completed trip generation rates for future anticipated development and traffic forecasts. A meeting has been scheduled with the study committee and our consultants from URS to review the traffic modeling results and to discuss the results of the business survey and public participation techniques. The project is anticipated to wrap up by December or January.

#### **Regional Freight Planning**

Andy McDonald reported that on September 19 & 20, he participated in freight planning training designed by the Federal Highway Administration and conducted by the National Highway Institute. The training highlighted the importance of freight networks as they relate to regional and local economies. This training was valuable as the MIC plans to undertake a regional freight study in 2008. He added that we need to communicate the significance of a freight study to all decision makers in our area.

#### **Bike Routes Phase 2 Implementation**

James Gittemeier reported that the implementation phase of the Bike Route Phase 2 project is beginning. Signage is scheduled to be installed over the next month by H&R Construction Company. A total of 508 signs are to be installed at 92 locations. MIC staff will be assisting with this process including the inspection of the signage once it is installed.

#### **2009-2012 MN TIP Jurisdictional Meetings**

James Gittemeier reported that in October, MIC staff will be meeting with each Duluth-area jurisdiction eligible for federal transportation funding (the Duluth Transit Authority, MnDOT, St. Louis County, the City of Duluth, and the City of Hermantown) to go over each agency's project(s) in the current TIP and to review regional needs identified in the Long Range Transportation Plan.

#### **AMPO Conference**

Ron Chicka reported that he had recently attended the National MPO conference in Little Rock that brought together Metropolitan Planning Organizations from around the country to exchange best practices and become informed on the latest federal transportation initiatives. He noted that Freight was a prominent theme—it is anticipated that the subject will be a significant component of the next federal transportation bill. He added that he has been assisting a technical committee of AMPO in delineating needs and priorities to potentially be addressed in the next federal bill.

## **11. Adjournment**

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Baker adjourned the meeting at 8:55 p.m.