



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council
MEETING SUMMARY
Wednesday, January 16, 2008, 7:00 PM

Meeting Location	WITC Conference Room	
Meeting Chair	Nick Baker	
Note Taker	Rondi Watson	
Members Present	Broc Allen	Douglas County Suburban Townships
	Ed Anderson	City of Superior
	Nick Baker	Douglas County
	David Bilden	City of Superior Citizen Rep
	David Brenna	City of Proctor
	Earl Elde	St. Louis Co. Suburban Twps
	Garry Krause	City of Duluth
	Keith MacDonald	City of Hermantown
	Kay McKenzie	Douglas County
	Dean Miller	Douglas County
	Kevin Norbie	City of Superior
	Steve O'Neil	St. Louis County
	Andy Peterson	City of Duluth Citizen Rep
Members Absent	Mike Coyle*	Douglas County
	Jay Fosle*	City of Duluth
	Nick Milroy	City of Superior
	Cindy Moe*	St. Louis Co. Suburban Twps
	Tari Rayala*	Duluth Transit Authority
	* Excused	
Others Present	Holly Butcher	ARDC / MIC Senior Planner
	Ron Chicka	ARDC / MIC Director
	James Gittemeier	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Robert Herling	ARDC / MIC Associate Planner
	Sheldon Johnson	NWRPC / MIC Deputy Director
	Andy McDonald	ARDC / MIC Principal Planner
	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. He called for changes to the agenda. No changes were put forward.

2. Committee Business – Officer Elections

Ron Chicka reported that Keith MacDonald and Dean Miller, serving as the nominating committee, had polled members from their respective states about officers for 2008. Keith

MacDonald nominated Andy Peterson as new Minnesota Co-chair, and Dean Miller nominated Nick Baker to continue to serve as the Wisconsin Co-chair.

Motion and Discussion Kevin Norbie, with a second from Earl Elde, moved to adopt the slate of candidates as presented. *Garry Krause commented that although he respects Andy personally, he is concerned that Andy's blogs about local issues and politics (in his job as Director of Public Policy at the Duluth Chamber of Commerce) have at times offended the public and City Council members. He is concerned that having Andy serve as co-chair could negatively impact public perception of the MIC and hamper acceptance of its plans and recommendations. Nick Baker responded that the MIC is not supposed to be a political playing field, its mission is to provide guidance for development of the area-wide transportation network. Garry replied he was not bringing politics to the floor, just wanted to note that Andy's name may have a negative association that would not reflect well on the MIC. Kay McKenzie noted that based on another commission she sits on, some committee members wear two hats and their interests in one role can influence their decisions in the other. Kevin Norbie commented that there is no one on the board who doesn't essentially "serve two masters," and that he was not concerned with Andy's views outside the MIC. He added that he had worked with Andy who has advocated on behalf of the Air National Guard in Duluth and would support him based on his professionalism in that role. Ed Anderson noted that there is nothing in our bylaws that would prevent Andy's appointment as chair, and further, the MIC is a voluntary board — not a paid position with conflict of interest considerations. Broc Allen commented that he felt it was okay for a board member to have views on local issues that are publicly stated, no reason not to allow his election. Steve O'Neil stated that he respects Garry's right to express concern, in fact he doesn't always agree with everything Andy has to say, but on the MIC board Andy serves us well, does his homework, and so supports his nomination for co-chair. David Bilden stated that he would be concerned if we disallowed his election based on his personal views. Chair Baker asked if Garry had another nomination to put forward, he said he did not. Chair Baker called for any other nominations from the floor. Hearing none, he called for a vote. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved by a vote of twelve to one (Garry Krause dissenting).*

Meeting Summary of December 12, 2007

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

Motion and Discussion Kevin Norbie, with a second from Andy Peterson, moved to approve the meeting summary from the December 12, 2007 meeting with no corrections or changes. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

3. Proctor Comprehensive Plan — Scope of Work

James Gittemeier reported that MIC staff will be assisting the City of Proctor in the 5-year update of their Comprehensive Plan. As with the 1997 and 2002 updates, staff will again be

working with the Proctor Comp Plan advisory group, which is unique in that it's been active since the 1997 plan, to shepherd its development and implementation. Tasks will involve compiling the citizen survey, creating a Proctor Comp Plan webpage, reviewing the previous Comp Plan, updating land use and other geographic information, identifying recent trends and focus areas for this plan update and identifying a public involvement strategy. One focus area will be to identify future land uses of property along the Kirkus Street corridor, which is a new road scheduled for construction in 2009. They are also looking at a potential CN intermodal facility, Proctor Trail implementation, and future residential development.

Earl Elde commented that Midway Township is in the process of updating its plan and could have some mutual areas of interest. James stated that they would be consulting with Midway and coordinating if possible. Andy Peterson commented that the Port Authority should be consulted in regard to the CN yard; David Brenna commented that half the yard was recently sold to Dynamic Steel, how much land is now available is uncertain. James stated that he would follow up on this information. The plan is scheduled to be completed in October 2008. He closed by requesting approval of the Scope.

Motion and Discussion Dean Miller, with a second from David Brenna, moved to approve the Scope of Work for the Proctor Comprehensive Plan Update as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

4. UMD-CSS Transportation Assessment – Scope of Work

Andy McDonald reported that MIC staff had recently met with UMD and College of St. Scholastica staff to discuss details of the proposed study and incorporated their input into the Scope of Work for the upcoming study. He noted that the focus of this study is not on internal traffic flow as much as it is about external multimodal connections to and from the campus area. He added that the basis for this plan will include goals identified in Duluth's Comprehensive Plan and UMD's Master Facilities Plan.

Garry Krause commented that whatever happens with the Woodland Middle School would affect traffic flow in the future. Steve O'Neil concurred and added that Woodland Avenue is "miserable" and is one of the highest traffic routes in the city. Andy commented that the Woodland school site might present an opportunity for student housing, but noted that problems will arise if UMD chooses to extend the campus past the natural boundary of Woodland Avenue. He added that the MIC's planned Woodland Avenue Corridor study had been incorporated into Scope of Work for this study; an important goal is to deliver recommendations to the City of Duluth in time for corridor improvements scheduled for 2011.

Andy Peterson noted that traffic patterns could change if Lakeside is granted a liquor license. Andy McDonald replied that this and other issues could be addressed in the planning process. Ron Chicka commented that another significant aspect of this plan will be the process that gets UMD, CSS and the City in the same room together. Bob Bruce will serve on the study advisory committee. Andy closed by requesting approval of the scope of work.

Motion and Discussion Andy Peterson, with a second from Garry Krause, moved to approve the Scope of Work for the UMD-CSS Area Transportation Study as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

5. Endion Land Use and Transportation Plan

Holly Butcher gave an overview of this study, the purpose of which is to identify solutions to improve safety, traffic flow, multi-modal options and access on London Road (between 10th and 26th Avenues East) and adjacent connections into the Endion neighborhood. It will also project the cumulative transportation impacts from proposed land use changes such as the conceptual Armory/Plaza mixed use district and plans to develop the St. Luke's Hospital medical campus.

To determine this, small area transportation modeling services of URS Corporation were utilized. URS examined key transportation corridors and made a series of recommendations to the Steering Committee on November 19th regarding future street conversions to two-way, narrowing roadways and traffic signal modifications. Additionally, on December 20th, MIC staff facilitated a walking tour discussion of the St. Luke's Medical Campus along First Street that addressed current barriers to a two-way street design and considerations to accommodate medical facility needs in the future if the street orientation were to change. Staff from St. Luke's, SEH Inc., City of Duluth Engineering, and MIC staff participated.

She stated that pending a final technical report from the consultants, she hoped to put the final plan before the TAC and MIC for approval in February.

Garry Krause asked how traffic was able to be modeled without final site development plans. Holly explained that assumptions had been incorporated based on general concepts of commercial development, etc. Nick Baker commented that for implementation to be successful, the Advisory Committee for this study should be encouraged to stick together and plan to meet periodically in the future (similar to the Proctor Comp Plan committee).

6. Northwest Superior Traffic Study

Robert Herling reported that this study, initiated in November of 2006 to investigate the impact of increased industrial development in northwest Superior on traffic patterns, is now nearing completion.

The study specifically was intended to help determine whether or not an off-ramp connection between the Bong Bridge (US Hwy. 2) and Susquehanna Avenue would be needed to maintain good levels of service (LOS) under future travel demands. He reported that modeling results from URS Corporation indicated such a connection would not be needed based on LOS alone; nor is a proposed Winter Street connector—it would attract only 8% of newly generated trips

The results do, however, indicate that improvements at other locations throughout the area will be needed. Specifically, the geometry of several intersections needs to be-reconfigured; traffic signals need to be optimized and coordinated; stop signs or signals need to be added at certain intersections, and truck route signage needs to be added.

Ed Anderson commented that despite the modeling results, other considerations should be factored in to the final recommendations. He used as an example the heavy trucks that now travel through residential areas, it would be desirable from a safety perspective to get them traveling on other routes. Kevin Norbie questioned the impact that other future scenarios,

such as the possible expansion of the Murphy Oil refinery, or development of a passenger train depot might have on the Winter street area.

Ron Chicka answered that the latter scenarios could not be incorporated into the scope of work for what this study was intended to accomplish. What can be identified are point-specific areas and intersections to mitigate problems as they exist now. The MIC's planned regional freight study will answer the bigger questions about freight movements and traffic flows; some of the concerns expressed cannot be answered at this point.

Robert added that the final document will also contain a series of short, mid and long-term recommendations that are not contingent on the results from the model. They will address issues other than capacity or level of service (LOS), and will focus instead on traffic safety, access management, and infrastructure deficiencies.

He closed by noting that his next step will be to send a summary of survey results to the businesses originally contacted. MIC staff will also be meeting with WisDOT to review the model results and the final recommendations. He plans to bring the final document, which will list the recommended improvements, before the TAC and MIC for approval in February.

7. Duluth Heights Survey Results

Andy McDonald reported on the results from the survey, mailed in November to Duluth Heights residents, following up on opinions about the half-closure that was installed last spring. He noted that they got about the same response rate as with the original survey, about 32%.

Most notably, respondents were evenly split on whether they supported the half closure. 50% favored it, 50% opposed it. Therefore, it's up to the City to decide whether to keep it or take it down. City staff had been hoping to get a more definitive yes or no response from the neighborhood. MIC staff will meet with City of Duluth staff to review the results in detail and discuss the next steps in this process.

The construction of Joshua Avenue is still the preferred solution, but due to City finances that type of project has to be considered a long-term solution at best. Even so, a project to determine the alignment of a Joshua connector will begin this year.

Andy Peterson commented that the larger issue has to do with East Duluth's access to the mall area. Andy McDonald agreed, noting that when the Miller Hill Mall development was begun, the road system was not properly addressed at that time.

8. 2009-2012 Duluth Urbanized Area TIP Project Applications

James Gittemeier gave a brief overview of this year's TIP process, noting that there were only two project applications submitted for the 2012 federal funding, as follows:

DTA/Bus Purchase: 10 regular route buses (including 5 hybrid models). Total cost \$3,694,544 federal, \$0 state, \$923,636 local). He added that the high cost of the hybrid buses will be recouped by fuel savings over their service life; it is also hoped that by 2012 the prices may be lower than they are now down due to increasing demand for "greener"

transportation options.

MnDOT/Blatnik Bridge Preservation: Work includes painting and deck sealing. Project is split 50/50 with WISDOT. Total cost \$3,100,000 (\$2,790,000 federal, \$310,000 state, \$0 local).

He explained that normally the TAC and MIC would be asked to score the projects and rank them for submission to the ATP process, but since there are only 2 projects, (1 roadway, 1 transit), we will not be conducting project scoring this year. At next month's TAC and MIC meetings, they will simply prioritize each project as "1 of 1" to forward to the ATP.

He also reported that per the usual TIP process, over the next month, public involvement meetings will be held to review these projects and any public comments received will be brought forward at the MIC and TAC meetings. He added that the public meetings will also give an opportunity to provide information about the upcoming multi-year, multi-jurisdiction Miller Hill Reconstruction TIP project.

9. Announcements

Ron Chicka called attention to an article about recent recommendations by the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission, which proposes a substantial gas tax increase to pay for infrastructure; also a report was issued about cause of I-35 bridge collapse.

10. Project Updates

Sky Harbor Airport Technical Committee: Andy McDonald reported that MIC staff will be participating on this committee, which will examine the issue of accommodating the old growth forest that is located in the approach path of the runway at the Sky Harbor Airport on Park Point. The first committee meeting is Tuesday January 8th.

Blueprint to End Poverty: Holly Butcher and Robert Herling reported that Duluth's Blueprint to End Poverty initiative has a guiding coalition comprised of community leaders from business, faith, government, education and healthcare sectors, as well as interested citizens. Community Action Duluth is facilitating teams to implement the plan, one of which is the "Transportation Action Team." The MIC has been asked to participate on this team as an agency with community knowledge to help plan for transportation needs of low-income and working poor in the Duluth-Superior area.

Twin Cities – Twin Ports Passenger Rail Initiative: Ron Chicka followed up on last month's presentation by the lead consultants for the Twin Ports-Twin Cities Passenger Rail Initiative about findings to date of the study. The best scenario for the train resulting in a positive cost/benefit analysis indicates the train running at 100 mph with up to 8 trains daily operating somewhere along the line. Total cost would be \$362 million with the majority of the amount anticipated via a federal grant within the next round of the transportation bill due in 2009. An average fare from Duluth to the Twin Cities was estimated at \$36 (one-way). Of interest locally, is the concept of having a stop in Superior as well as Duluth. This would allow the City of Superior to potentially take advantage of site redevelopment for a station. The study is set to be finalized within the month at which time the next phase (Preliminary Environmental Impact Statement) is slated to begin.

Mn/DOT Statewide Transportation Plan: Ron Chicka reported that the Mn/DOT Statewide Transportation Plan Steering Committee will meet again this month to discuss and set policies for their 20-year plan. The committee had taken time off due to the DOT having to focus resource efforts on the I-35 bridge collapse. He is representing the state MPOs on the committee and is working with the other Minnesota MPOs to aligning our key issues for the upcoming DOT plan. This committee is set to meet throughout the rest of 2008 with a goal of finalizing a document by late fall. The plan is to be performance-based, focusing on ten points ranging from preservation of the existing system to protection of the environment. We will be discussing all funding sources, as well, that can meet the goals of the plan. With certain limitations on increased funding, it is likely that the plan will focus on smaller fixes to congestion relief in contrast to added capacity.

11. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Baker adjourned the meeting at 8:38 p.m.