



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council  
**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**Wednesday, February 20, 2008, 7:00 PM**

|                         |                          |                               |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Meeting Location</b> | Proctor Community Center |                               |
| <b>Meeting Chair</b>    | Andy Peterson            |                               |
| <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 Brenna             | City of Proctor               |
|                         | Earl Elde                | St. Louis Co. Suburban Twps   |
|                         | Jay Fosle                | City of Duluth                |
|                         | Dean Miller              | Douglas County                |
|                         | Cindy Moe                | St. Louis Co. Suburban Twps   |
|                         | Peg Sweeney              | St. Louis County              |
|                         | Andy Peterson            | City of Duluth Citizen Rep    |
|                         | Tari Rayala              | Duluth Transit Authority      |
| <b>Members Absent</b>   | David Bilden             | City of Superior Citizen Rep  |
|                         | Mike Coyle               | Douglas County                |
|                         | Garry Krause             | City of Duluth                |
|                         | Keith MacDonald          | City of Hermantown            |
|                         | Kay McKenzie             | Douglas County                |
|                         | Nick Milroy              | City of Superior              |
|                         | Kevin Norbie             | City of Superior              |
|                         | * Excused                |                               |
| <b>Others Present</b>   | Holly Butcher            | ARDC / MIC Senior Planner     |
|                         | Ron Chicka               | ARDC / MIC Director           |
|                         | James Gittemeier         | ARDC / MIC Planner            |
|                         | Robert Herling           | ARDC / MIC Associate Planner  |
|                         | Rondi Watson             | ARDC / MIC Division Secretary |

### 1. Introductions and Agenda Review

MIC Co-chair Andy Peterson called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. and meeting attendees introduced themselves.

### 2. Committee Business – Meeting Summary of January 16, 2008

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

**Motion and Discussion** Nick Baker/Earl Elde moved to approve the meeting summary from the January 16, 2008 meeting. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

### 3. 2008-2011 Duluth Metro TIP Amendment #8

James Gittemeier described the proposed amendment to the 2008-2011 Duluth Metro TIP. It advances the Duluth Heights Connector Preliminary Engineering Study into FY 2008 from 2011, in order for the City of Duluth to begin the preliminary engineering work. \$250,000 is to be advanced to 2008 for this project and federal reimbursement will not be requested until its original programmed year of 2011. RFPs for the project are set to be sent out in next couple of months, after receiving needed approvals within City administration.

**Motion and Discussion** Nick Baker/Dean Miller moved to approve the amendment as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

### 4. 2008-2011 Superior Metro TIP Amendment #4

Ron Chicka presented Amendment #4 to add a project for inclusion in the 2008-2011 Superior Urbanized Area TIP. This project will upgrade the existing USH 53 expressway between Solon Springs and Superior to freeway standards. Rights-of-way needed for future interchanges, over- and underpasses and local road alterations will be preserved to ensure that solutions to future and current mobility and safety concerns will be valid projects in the future.

**Motion and Discussion** Peg Sweeney/Jay Fosle moved to approve the Amendment as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

### 5. 2009-2012 Duluth Metro TIP Project Application Prioritization

James Gittemeier began with the announcement that the Enhancements Task Force had recommended two Duluth-area projects (Lakewalk Extension Phases IV and V) for special Transportation Enhancements funding for FY2012. He added that although the committee also liked the third area project, for a Proctor trail connection to the Munger trail, they preferred to complete the Lakewalk first. They suggested that the project be resubmitted for funding in a later year.

For 2012 federal TIP funding, he reported that there were only 2 project applications submitted this year for the MIC area: **DTA/Bus Purchase** (10 regular route buses, 5 will be hybrid buses. Total cost \$3,694,544 federal, \$0 state, \$923,636 local) and **MnDOT/Blatnik Bridge Preservation** (work includes painting bridge steel 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 2012 project applications and rank them for submission to the NE MN ATP process, but since there are only two projects, (1 roadway, 1 transit), there is no need to score them this year.

He added that a public involvement outreach effort was conducted in accordance with TIP process requirements. On February 14, he set up an informational display in the Miller Hill Mall. No public comments were received about the 2012 projects, but much interest was expressed in the information he presented about the upcoming multi-year, multi-jurisdiction Miller Hill area reconstruction TIP project. He closed by requesting the ranking of each project as “1 of 1” to forward to the ATP.

**Motion and Discussion** Nick Baker/Earl Elde moved to approve the project ranking as described. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

## 6. Northwest Superior Traffic Circulation Study

Ron Chicka began by reporting that Robert Herling was presenting this same information tonight to the Superior City Council. He explained that the study was primarily focused on determining whether truck traffic generated by future commercial development in northwest Superior would require construction of an off-ramp from US Highway 2 to Susquehanna Avenue or of a bypass route from US Highway 53 to Winter Street.

The results of the consultant's small-area traffic model showed that neither an off-ramp nor a bypass route would be needed to maintain acceptable levels of capacity. However, two intersections on Belknap Street, at Tower Avenue and at Hammond Avenue, would be significantly affected. These locations will need upgraded traffic controls and better signal timing and coordination prior to full-scale development in northwest Superior.

He noted that the study will also include recommendations that are not contingent on the projected level of service (LOS) results from the model, but will instead focus on traffic safety, access management, and infrastructure deficiencies. These short-, mid-, and long-term recommendations include designating a bypass along Winter Street to reduce truck traffic along downtown streets; installing National Network Truck Route signs on Highway 2/53; developing an access management plan to better identify problematic segments; improving the turning radius at Belknap and Susquehanna to improve safety and efficiency—cited in user surveys as problematic; upgrading asphalt rail crossings (also called out in surveys); adjusting train detection/warning signals that cause unnecessary delays; and installing a center median on Belknap. He added that better data regarding truck movements is needed and would likely be addressed in the MIC's upcoming regional freight study.

He closed by reporting that a draft plan will be presented to WisDOT for their input and the final plan will be presented for approval at the March TAC and MIC meetings.

## 7. Endion Land Use and Transportation Plan

Holly Butcher gave an overview of the technical results from the consultants who conducted traffic modeling for the study area. Several different scenarios were modeled at the request of the steering committee. The overall goal of the final recommendations will be to define a corridor vision for the London Road business district, a neighborhood vision for Endion and the East Hillside, and a redevelopment vision for the Armory/Plaza area and the St. Luke's campus.

The highest-priority recommendation is to narrow London Road from 10th to 26th Avenues East and create pedestrian and bicycling amenities and bioswale medians and boulevards for stormwater management. The recommendation for the second priority, developing the Armory / Plaza Shopping Center area, is to keep 12th Avenue East open to through traffic (in response to a development proposal that would close it off). Instead, traffic calming would help manage it as a pedestrian / bike friendly area while maintaining street connectivity for all transportation modes. The priority 3 recommendation is to restore a two-way connection

along 6th Avenue East down to 2nd Street; and recommendations for priorities 4 through 7 would convert current one-way roadways to two-way along 1st, 2nd and 3rd Streets and 12th, 14th and 19th Avenues East. The final plan will also include cost estimates (\$5 million for all) and a timeline for implementation (with the recommendations phased as short-, mid- and long-term).

## 8. Proctor Comprehensive Plan Public Survey Results

James Gittemeier presented results from the resident survey that was conducted in fall 2007, noting that this is the fourth time such a survey has been conducted as part of the Comprehensive Planning process (also in 1974, 1996 and 2001). The overall response rate was 16%. A few significant differences were called out from the most recent (2001) survey – notably, that fewer people thought that Proctor has a clear vision for the future, alerting the advisory group that it needs to better advertise its ongoing Comprehensive Planning efforts and to reinvigorate the process. They will conduct a community visioning session this spring.

Preferred development options strongly favored new retail or commercial businesses. This year's comments also indicated a stronger interest in more alternative transportation options. Specific suggestions emphasized bike friendly roadways with on-street bike lanes and off-road bike trails. Trail systems were called out as a recreational need for which they would be willing to pay taxes. Interest was also expressed in expanded transit service to destinations including the Miller Hill Mall, local grocery stores and senior centers. These latter concerns are related to the aging population which needs to be addressed in this version of the Comp Plan.

## 9. Discussion/Announcements

Nick Baker reported on the meeting he attended of the now-official Minneapolis-Duluth/Superior Passenger Rail Alliance. Representatives from the counties along the proposed rail line met today in Hinckley. In addition to formalizing the group and electing Steve Raukar as chair, they approved \$108,000 for additional consulting studies and lobbying. One possible change being proposed to the Twin Cities to Twin ports route is to have the train stop directly at the Grand Casino in Hinckley – it is estimated that passenger numbers would significantly increase – enough to boost the train's operational surplus from \$2 million to \$12 million annually. Additionally, Zenith Research tested possible names for the train with focus groups and "Northern Lights Flyer" was recommended, although there will be a survey conducted via website to further determine public preference. Nick added that the potential for this line will hinge on its total travel time; it must be competitive with auto travel. Another unresolved issue pertains to the negotiations with the railroads, which owns the track. The next meeting of the Alliance is set for March 12. Nick is the sole representative for Douglas County and the City of Superior; he will be looking for an alternate from the City Council.

Broc asked about the SRTS projects which have been funded for schools slated for changes under the Duluth school district's "Red Plan"; Holly reported that she recently reconvened the study committee, and brought Johnson Controls, the school district's consultant, to the table as well; they are quite open to reviewing the site designs to include Safe Routes considerations.

## 10. Project Updates

### **HTAC Advocacy Coalition Oberstar Dinner**

Ron Chicka reported that on January 25, 2008 the Great Lakes Port Advocacy Coalition organized a dinner at Northland Country Club with Congressman Jim Oberstar. Invited guests included Duluth-Superior port business owners and the mayors of Duluth and Superior. Program speakers included Ted Smith, Chair of the Great Lakes Ports Advocacy Coalition, Adolph Ojard, Executive Director of the Duluth Seaway Port Authority. Congressman Oberstar spoke about the history and accomplishments of the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. In 2007, under his leadership, the committee signed 46 bills into law including the Water Resources and Development Act (WRDA). This bill will fund much needed maritime transportation infrastructure projects including a backlog of Great Lakes ports dredging projects and 100% federal funding of a new Soo Lock. Other topics that he touched on include the need for a national policy on ballast water and how short sea shipping could reduce congestion on our highways.

### **Blueprint to End Poverty**

Holly Butcher reported that the MIC continues to be part of the "Transportation Action Team" for the Blueprint to End Poverty project to help plan for transportation needs of low-income and working poor in the Duluth-Superior area. MIC staff has been analyzing the "geography of the problem" by synthesizing jobs, daycare, housing, and transit availability data.

### **DTA Route Analysis-City of Superior**

Holly Butcher reported that in January The DTA brought in a specialized transit consultant from First Transit, the DTA's management company, who analyzed the current routes in the City of Superior and came up with six different alternative service models. First Transit, MIC and DTA staff met with the mayor's office on January 16th to discuss these alternatives. Another meeting is expected during February or March to identify the future service model that the City of Superior prefers and to devise a strategic pilot project.

### **Minnesota Functional Classification Update**

James Gittemeier reported that MIC staff received a functional classification map back from MnDOT Central Office in January for our review and comment. Staff has noted a number of errors on the map based on the information submitted a year ago. In order to verify the classifications on the MIC border, staff is waiting for the ARDC Regional Division to receive their functional classification map back from Central Office before completing the review and sending corrections to Central Office.

### **Mn/DOT Statewide Transportation Plan**

Ron Chicka reported that he and Andy McDonald attended the first meeting of the Intrastate Connections subcommittee of the larger Mn/DOT State Plan Advisory Committee. The State Plan committee is examining the needs of the major arteries across Minnesota to determine how they will be incorporated and funded within the next overall state policy plan. The Intrastate Connections subcommittee will focus on transit, air and rail service policies within the plan and forward these recommendations to the larger committee for review and approval.

The work of this group will be important to the Twin Ports area as freight commerce will be impacted by these policies and will set the foundation for our own area wide freight plan to begin later this year.

**National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) Conference**

Ron Chicka reported that earlier this month he and John Chell, ARDC Executive Director, traveled to Washington D.C. to attend the 2008 National Conference of Regional Councils. The conference featured many transportation themes with the upcoming federal transportation bill as a focal point. The next bill will likely be drastically different from the previous three—more programmatic; few or no earmarks; freight and passenger rail components; rural components. Funding will be the biggest factor as it is becoming apparent that the traditional means of financing will not be enough to meet the needs across the country. A gas tax increase is being considered along with an emphasis on user fees. Private sources will have to be tapped along with more user-based mechanisms such as tolls and congestion pricing. A series of legislative positions was developed by the NARC Board that will be forwarded to House and Senate members as they begin to craft the next transportation reauthorization bill. A number of MPOs were in attendance voicing issues key to their continuing success in the field. Most called for a balanced approach to resolve urban transportation needs by putting more emphasis on non-auto travel. He also spent time with Congressmen Obey and Oberstar informing them of current and upcoming MIC projects for the Twin Ports area.

**11. Adjournment**

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Peterson adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.