



## Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

### MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, December 10, 2008, 7:00 PM

|                  |                                      |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Meeting Location | WITC Conference Center, Superior, WI |
| Meeting Chair    | Nick Baker, Wisconsin Co-Chair       |
| Note Taker       | Rondi Watson, MIC Staff              |

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|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| MIC Members Present | Broc Allen          | Douglas County Suburban Townships |
|                     | Ed Anderson         | City of Superior                  |
|                     | Nick Baker          | Douglas County                    |
|                     | Warren Bender       | City of Superior                  |
|                     | David Brenna        | City of Proctor                   |
|                     | Mike Coyle          | Douglas County                    |
|                     | Earl Elde           | St. Louis County Townships        |
|                     | Jay Fosle           | City of Duluth                    |
|                     | Melanie Hendrickson | DTA Board                         |
|                     | Garry Krause        | City of Duluth                    |
|                     | Keith MacDonald     | City of Hermantown                |
|                     | Kevin Norbie        | City of Superior Citizen Rep      |
|                     | Steve O'Neil        | St. Louis County                  |
|                     | Andy Peterson       | City of Duluth Citizen Rep        |
| MIC Members Absent  | Steve Baker*        | Douglas County                    |
|                     | Kay McKenzie*       | Douglas County                    |
|                     | Cindy Moe*          | St. Louis County Townships        |
|                     | Dan Olson*          | City of Superior                  |
| Others Present      | Holly Butcher       | ARDC / MIC Senior Planner         |
|                     | Ron Chicka          | ARDC / MIC Director               |
|                     | James Gittemeier    | ARDC / MIC Planner                |
|                     | Robert Herling      | ARDC / MIC Planner                |
|                     | Sheldon Johnson     | NWRPC / MIC Deputy Director       |
|                     | Andy McDonald       | ARDC / MIC Principal Planner      |
|                     | Shelley Nelson      | Superior Telegram                 |
|                     | Rondi Watson        | ARDC / MIC Secretary              |
|                     | * Excused           |                                   |

#### 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. Nick acknowledged Dave Brenna's and Keith MacDonald's service to the MIC – since neither ran for re-election in their jurisdictions, this will be their last meeting.

Ron Chicka requested a change to the agenda to include a new voting item, Amendment #1 to the 2009-2012 Duluth Area TIP, recently requested by MnDOT and the DTA..

**Motion and Discussion** Broc Allen / Ed Anderson moved to include the agenda item as requested. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

## 2. Committee Business – 2009 Meetings Schedule

Rondi Watson distributed a calendar showing the dates and locations of next year’s MIC meetings and requested that members place these dates on their 2009 schedules. The meeting schedule is also available to view online, at [www.dsmic.org](http://www.dsmic.org).

### Committee Business – Meeting Summary of October 15, 2008

**Motion and Discussion** Andy Peterson / Garry Krause moved to approve the meeting summaries from the October 15, 2008 meeting. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

### Committee Business – 2009 Chair Election

Keith MacDonald and Kevin Norbie, serving as the nominating committee, reported that they had polled members from their respective states about officers for 2009 and received unanimous agreement about their nominations for 2009 MIC Officers. Keith nominated Andy Peterson to continue to serve as Minnesota Co-chair, and Earl Elde for MIC Secretary as well as MIC Representative to the ARDC Board and Commission. Kevin nominated Nick Baker to continue to serve as the Wisconsin Co-chair.

**Motion and Discussion** Ed Anderson / Garry Krause moved to accept the slate of candidates as put forward by the Nominating Committee. *Ron stated that all candidates had expressed their willingness to continue to serve as elected officers for 2009.* There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

## 3. Amendment #1 to the 2009-2012 Duluth Metro Transportation Improvement Program

James Gittemeier presented an amendment to add a project for inclusion in the current (2009-2012) Duluth Urbanized Area TIP, to provide DTA transit service to the Cirrus facility. In December, the Duluth Transit Authority received Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Small Urban funding for FY 2009, which helps cover the operating cost of providing transit service to the Airpark employment area adjacent to the Duluth International Airport. He explained that the federally funded JARC program was set up to provide funding to transit agencies in order to provide “reverse commute” transit service to the job centers located outside the central business districts.

He added that since the JARC funds were not approved prior to adoption of the FY 2009 – 2012 Duluth Metro TIP and therefore requires an amendment. This project is exempt from air quality review. Funding Amounts include \$187,973 (federal) and \$187,973 (local) for a total of \$375,946.

**Motion and Discussion** Warren Bender/Mike Coyle moved to approve Amendment #1 to the 2009-2012 Duluth TIP as presented. *Ed Anderson commented that although Cirrus was currently experiencing worker layoffs, which might in turn affect ridership, this route to the airpark*

*area is still worthwhile.* There was no further discussion and the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

#### 4. 2009-2010 MIC Work Program and Budget

Ron Chicka presented the final 2009-2010 Work Program and Budget for approval. He began by discussing the short range projects already underway in 2008 which will continue into 2009—the UMD/CSS Transportation Study, the East 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Access Management Plan and the Blatnik Bridge Study.

He noted, in reference to the latter study, that WisDOT had rescinded its request that we model the impact of a closure of the Bong/Hwy 2 bridge in the summer of 2014 for planned re-decking work. The Blatnik Study was to include a technical report of those modeling results, but they pulled \$50k for that component.

Other programmed projects for 2009 include a Kirkus Street Corridor Plan examining land use, zoning, and pre-streetscaping for the City of Proctor before full-scale development gets going along that new street, as well as a growth impact study for the greater Superior urban area. The Long Range Planning element will also take up a lot of staff time this year, with the federal requirement to update the MIC's current LRTP through 2035; rural transit, pedestrian and bike planning issues are likely to be addressed in the LRTP update. He added that our involvement in the Regional Freight Plan will be a large undertaking and is a major reason why the budget is substantially larger in 2009 than the present year.

For 2010, a corridor study will get underway to examine issues and solutions for Central Entrance between Mesaba Avenue and Anderson Road, as well as a Roundabout Site Feasibility Study to determine which intersections within the MIC planning area are best suited for a roundabout configuration. He noted that "small improvements" were likely to be a common theme to aid traffic movements in the future, as opposed to recommendations for new construction.

Ongoing planning functions will also include the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), harbor (HTAC) planning, bike route planning, and plan implementation with a focus in 2009 on rail plans that are underway by both the DTA and St. Louis County.

Ron noted that funding for the coming year is covered, though he is still attempting to involve the Wisconsin DOT to assist in matching federal dollars, therefore putting less strain on the ARDC local match. He emphasized that the timing of all projects can be juggled a bit based on needs and jurisdictional priorities. He closed by requesting approval of the final Work Program and Budget for 2009-2010.

**Motion and Discussion** Ed Anderson/Kevin Norbie moved to approve the final 2009-2010 MIC Work Program and Budget as presented. *Discussion centered on planning for passenger rail on the Superior side. Ed Anderson noted that they are talking to the city planner because at this point, it's unclear where the tracks would even run. Nick Baker noted that BN rail models call out the problems with slow rail speed. If a fast trip is the goal, then the train*

*should stop in Gary-New Duluth, not Superior. Ed responded that the City Council is looking to the rail depot as a hub for economic development, and would oppose it if Superior is not in the mix. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved by unanimous vote.*

#### **5. Northern MN/Northwest WI Regional Freight Study**

Andy McDonald reported that the consultant team hired for this project is led by Wilbur Smith Associates, which brings a great deal of experience in this type of planning effort. The study steering committee includes both MnDOT and WisDOT staff, DNR staff from both states, university level partners, St Louis and Douglas County staff and Port Authority staff.

The steering committee met on November 12 to discuss each participant's role in the initial data collection phase of this study. The MIC will be responsible for gathering much of the freight-related data for the Wisconsin portion of the study area. They also discussed some of the stakeholder input strategies, including forming a technical advisory committee, posting web-based surveys, and conducting primary business interviews with six "Tier One" companies in the region. He added that several Duluth and Superior area businesses will be tapped to give their input as well.

In addition, a public meeting (a regional freight forum) is scheduled to be held at Mn/DOT on February 25. TAC and MIC members will be invited to attend.

#### **6. Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Project Applications**

Holly presented information about the five applications that were submitted to MnDOT on behalf of the Proctor and Duluth School Districts for the final round of SRTS funding. She stressed the all-staff effort required to pull off these applications; as well as the inter-jurisdictional cooperation and collaboration needed to gather data. Robert Herling and Rondi Watson authored two of the applications, and St. Louis county conducted a speed study on very short notice for the Jedlicka Middle School project.

In Proctor, MIC staff reviewed transportation patterns and issues around Bay View Elementary and Proctor Middle Schools. An assessment with county and city engineers was conducted with Proctor School District staff in October.

She added that the Duluth School District's "Red Plan" has changed many of the original recommendations and required that MIC staff newly assess some of the school sites (Lester Park, Grant Elementary) to be able to submit the grant applications. In meetings with the Duluth Public School District, they also discussed the implementation of existing grants and she noted that it was encouraging to see that the Safe Routes grants were functioning the way they were intended, by spurring citizen participation to champion SRTS goals. Fit City Duluth worked actively with the Duluth school district to lift its ban on biking to school, and significantly, that policy was changed to allow biking to school. The group will be also conduct a bike rack inventory and is looking at other ways to promote biking to school. The SRTS applications now included requests for funding bike racks.

She closed by noting that this is the last grant cycle for SRTS funding from the current federal transportation bill, and because the program is by now well known as a funding source, it will likely be a more competitive process than in the past. Awards will be announced in 8-10 months. Ron added that he is hopeful that at least one or two of our project applications will be funded.

#### **7. Long Range Transportation Plan Update 2035**

Robert Herling reported that the MIC will begin the process of updating the Goals & Objectives for the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) 2035. He added that as with previous updates, the involvement of the TAC and MIC members will be integral in helping to define these. Public input will also be sought, and the MIC will be advertising, via the local media, a web page specific to the LRTP 2035. This web page will include a meeting calendar, a brief survey, and the opportunity for people to comment. Regular newsletters and public meetings are also planned. It is hoped that together these tools will help us shape the goals and objectives that will form the foundation of the plan.

Noting that they are often used interchangeably, he spent a little time clarifying the distinction between a goal (a broad statement) and an objective (a single, specific, measurable implementation step). It is hoped that this process will result in jurisdictional project lists that better reflect the identified goals and objectives, and standards by which to assess proposed projects.

#### **8. Proctor Comprehensive Plan**

James Gittemeier reported that a community-wide “Roundhouse Meeting” was held on November 13 to review the goals of the plan and give the public another opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the ways the City should focus its resources. The meeting was very well attended, and included presentations by several seventh-graders who are participating in a year-long class project focused on how to make Proctor a more sustainable community. Their proposed projects needed to be able to pay for themselves within five years and had to explain what sustainability principles are addressed. The students’ ideas included community composting, sustainable housing, a community garden, wind turbines at the Spirit Mountain ski area to supply power for outdoor lighting and chalet; and an indoor sports complex (an idea that’s been around for awhile, a need to provide a community facility for after-school youth activities).

The presentation on housing spurred a broader discussion reflecting participants’ interest in developing more varied housing stock, i.e., providing alternatives to today’s limited choices of single family housing vs. senior apartments. They also looked at the need to revise zoning codes to allow mixed uses. Discussion also centered on another widely held goal of establishing a grocery store in the city, by taking a closer look at what type of grocery store they could realistically attract. Other topics of discussion included ways to enhance transit amenities and expand bus service, as well as an interest in infrastructure that prevents water from going down the hill (I&I issues).

James closed by noting that the planning process will conclude with a draft plan for review in January. The plan will then move through the City of Proctor approval process in February, with the final Comp Plan before the MIC in March.

## 9. Harbor Planning / Harbor Technical Advisory Committee (HTAC) Update

Andy McDonald presented an overview of the most recent HTAC meeting, held at the WITC Conference Center on December 3rd. The agenda included a presentation about a new project, funded by NOAA and conducted jointly by the Minnesota and Wisconsin Sea Grant programs, to study and educate communities about the impacts of climate change on the Great Lakes ports, harbors and marinas. The agenda also included presentations about the Erie Pier Process Re-use Facility Cost and Market Analysis Research conducted by researchers in the business school at UMD; a recent tour of Baltic seaports, sponsored by the Great Lakes Maritime Research Institute; the Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP) Update; and a report of the recent Great Lakes Commission Annual Meeting.

Andy expanded on the DMMP Update, noting that this time around, the process is dramatically improved—the Update is conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers and identifies approved projects to utilize dredged material from the Duluth-Superior harbor for the next twenty years. By involving the HTAC upfront, it will be much less expensive for the Corps, and likely to have much better local buy-in, by focusing their efforts on projects that have been closely reviewed and identified by harbor stakeholders.

## 10. Project Updates

### Duluth Area TIP Applications

James Gittemeier reported that in October, MIC staff met with each Duluth-area jurisdiction that is eligible for federal transportation funding to review projects in the current TIP and to discuss regional needs identified in the Long Range Transportation Plan. Project applications for 2013 federal funding were sent out to the jurisdictions on November 10 and the project solicitation period runs to December 19<sup>th</sup>, when applications are due.

### Superior-Pedestrian Committee

Ron Chicka reported on his participation in the new Pedestrian Safety Committee for the City of Superior, which is facilitating a process to review policies and projects throughout the community, taking into account the various planning efforts conducted by the MIC toward this issue. MIC products to aid this effort include data and recommendations from the 2005 Superior Safes Routes to School plan and the 1999 Metropolitan Pedestrian Plan and the Superior Sidewalk Inventory. Committee participants include City Planning and Engineering staff, as well as representatives from the Police department, School District and City Council. The MIC has made connections with Wisconsin Walks ([www.wisconsinwalks.org](http://www.wisconsinwalks.org)) to come to the city and help guide their initiatives. This committee is an important first step toward the City putting together the resources to determine priorities for pedestrian and some improved bike movement within Superior.

### Twin Cities to Twin Ports Rail Coalition

Ron Chicka reported that this initiative recently received two different funding boosts to continue planning efforts to establish passenger rail service between Duluth – Superior and the Twin Cities. A \$1.1 million matching grant was awarded by the Federal Railroad Administration to complete the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS), the next major step in the re-establishment of this line. Also, St Louis County has allocated funds to undertake a study of

expansion potential of the Duluth Depot as it relates to the potential new rail service. The MIC has been asked to review project applicants along with sitting on the study steering committee.

**East Second Street Study**

Robert Herling reported that in October, speed counts were conducted at several locations along East 2nd Street in Superior. Preliminary analysis has been done on these data, and will be presented to the study's steering committee in January 2009, to develop recommended improvements for the corridor.

**11. Adjournment**

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Baker adjourned the meeting at 8:36 pm.