



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, March 18, 2009, 7:00 PM

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| Meeting Location | WITC Conference Center, 600 N. 21 st Street, Superior, WI | |
| Meeting Chair(s) | Nick Baker, WI Co-chair | |
| Note Taker | Rondi Watson | |
| Members Present | Broc Allen | Douglas County Suburban Townships |
| | Nick Baker | Douglas County Board of Supervisors |
| | Steve Baker | Douglas County Board of Supervisors |
| | Warren Bender | Superior Common Council |
| | Earl Elde | St. Louis County Suburban Townships |
| | Jay Fosle | Duluth City Council |
| | Kay McKenzie | Douglas County Board of Supervisors |
| | Dan Olson | Superior Common Council |
| | Steve O'Neil | St. Louis County Board |
| | Andy Peterson | City of Duluth – Citizen Rep |
| Members Absent | Ed Anderson | Superior Common Council |
| | Wayne Boucher | City of Hermantown |
| | Mike Coyle | Douglas County Board of Supervisors |
| | Troy Foucault | City of Proctor |
| | Melanie Hendrickson | Duluth Transit Authority |
| | Garry Krause | Duluth City Council |
| | Cindy Moe | St. Louis County Suburban Townships |
| | Kevin Norbie | City of Superior – Citizen Rep |
| Others Present | Ron Chicka | ARDC / MIC Director |
| | James Gittemeier | ARDC / MIC Planner |
| | Robert Herling | ARDC / MIC Planner |
| | Andy McDonald | ARDC / MIC Principal Planner |
| | Rondi Watson | ARDC / MIC Planning Assistant |

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

Wisconsin Co-chair Nick Baker called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. and meeting attendees introduced themselves. Nick Baker requested a change to the agenda, noting that a new voting item was requested for approval, Amendment 09-04 to add an additional stimulus-funded project to the 2009-2012 Duluth TIP. He added that the meeting would begin with non-voting agenda items as a quorum was not yet present for the approval items.

Motion and Discussion Broc Allen/Warren Bender moved to change the agenda as suggested. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

2. Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 – Objectives and Strategies Session

Robert Herling reviewed the FHWA's Seven Planning Factors (Economic Vitality; Safety and Security; Accessibility and Mobility; Environmental Protection and Enhancement; Integration and Connectivity; Efficient Management and Operations; Preservation of Existing Infrastructure) which provide the basic foundations for the MIC's long range transportation plan. During the February TAC and MIC meetings, participants ranked the priority of transportation objectives related to each of these seven broad goals. The responses that were gathered were used as the basis for a follow-up exercise, in which meeting participants were asked to break into groups and assist the MIC staff in brainstorming appropriate strategies the MIC could employ to meet the highest-ranked objectives. He clarified that what he was seeking are desired outcomes (e.g., build, provide, prevent, ensure) as well as specific actions that can or should be undertaken by MIC staff, TAC members and/or Policy Board members (e.g., research, study, analyze, facilitate, coordinate, prioritize, recommend, promote, apply for) to meet the stated objective.

He added that TAC and MIC members would have an additional opportunity to comment via a survey link he would be emailing later this week. He will report on the results of today's exercises at the April meetings. The topic for next month will be Transportation Needs and Constraints.

3. Meeting Summary of February 18, 2009

With a voting quorum now present, Chair Baker asked for any changes or corrections to the previous month's meeting summary. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve.

Motion and Discussion Andy Peterson/Warren Bender moved to approve the 2/18/09 meeting summary as presented. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

4. Northern MN/Northwestern WI Regional Freight Study

Andy McDonald reported that as part of the stakeholder input process for the Northern Minnesota/Northwest Wisconsin Freight Plan, the plan partners hosted a Freight Forum on Wednesday, February 25 from 8 a.m. to noon at the MnDOT District Office in Duluth. They were pleased with the turnout, with 31 participants representing a broad range of industries. The goal of this forum was to hear directly from stakeholders from different sectors of the area's economy including agricultural, energy, timber, forest products and mining, to better understand the demands from freight on the regional transportation infrastructure and to identify projects, programs and policies that can accommodate those demands.

The plan consultants began the meeting with an overview of the freight plan and area freight movement system components, a description of commodity flows, and a quick look at markets and trends. The key component of the forum consisted of breakout discussion groups to address port and rail issues, road infrastructure, and truck operations and policy. Participants also identified their highest-priority issues (which included roadway design improvements; truck routes/10-ton network deficiencies; of particular interest to the wood products industry; commodity corridors; rail/port service improvements; regulatory consistency; intermodal facilities; and connectivity). He

noted that the highest-ranked priorities involving new infrastructure were likely to be prohibitively expensive to be able to implement, however.

He added that the study is now more than halfway complete, next steps will be to further analyze regional economic and demographic, industry and transportation trends. Final goal is to develop recommendations for projects, program and/or policy changes to address this region's freight needs, including funding strategies and private sector partnerships.

He closed by noting that more information about the plan was available via the MnDOT website at www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/freightplan.

5. Complete Streets Workshop

James Gittemeier presented an overview of the Complete Streets workshop that was co-sponsored by the MIC and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Minnesota. National speakers Michael Ronkin and Dom Nozzi presented an interactive workshop on the topic of Complete Streets policy and implementation for the Duluth-Superior and greater Arrowhead region. A good mix of approximately 30 elected officials, policy makers, planners, engineers and city administrators attended this 1-day interactive workshop on March 12 at the Hermantown Public Safety Building.

Generally, Complete Streets strives to expand the predominantly vehicle-oriented approach to roadway design to provide a safe and accessible network of streets for all users of all abilities to move through and across them. A limited number of measures are generally applied to determine if a street is functioning properly (i.e., traffic efficiency and safety); the Complete Streets approach encourages a wider range of potential benefits (e.g., pedestrian and bike safety, increased perception of safety, improved aesthetics, increased property values, increased use by multiple modes, encouragement of a more active lifestyle).

An important feature of this approach is that there are not predetermined solutions for each and every street; features and solutions are necessarily context-sensitive (e.g., identifying who will be using it, key destinations and long-range goals and functions for any given roadway). Another important feature of the Complete Streets approach is re-allocating available resources (rights-of-way, funding) to incorporate these features.

Key to the development of Complete Streets is a 6-step process that focuses not just on the usual two steps (identifying deficiencies and specifying ways to address them); but includes an assessment of the land use and transportation contexts. Looking at roadways strictly in terms of their functional classification focuses on vehicular movements only; during the workshop participants were encouraged to reconsider the broader function of particular streets, for example workshop participants came up with new classifications such as Stop n' Shop roads, Buzz Through roads, Life Quality (i.e., residential) roads, and especially important in this area, Vista roads. Designing streets from this perspective necessarily calls out the features needed to support those users and desired functions.

Participants used the busy Central Entrance corridor as a local example to apply Complete Streets principles. Broader goals for this corridor were identified (safe for all users; crossable

and accessible to the adjacent high school and senior residence; access to local businesses; a throughway connecting the central city to the Miller Hill Mall area; a community gateway route). Participants then redesigned the roadway (which ranged from 80 to 86 feet of available right-of-way) to accommodate wider sidewalks, green boulevards, bus pull-out lanes as well as center medians to restrict the number of left turns which could be made. These designs were then compared to the identified goals and further modifications were made (such as calling out the available off-street bike trail which runs adjacent to the corridor).

Ronkin emphasized that the policy level is where and how these changes need to be made; implementation will follow if a local Complete Streets policy applies to all phases of all projects. Other key features of a successful Complete Streets policy include using the latest and best design standards; allowing flexibility in balancing user needs; specifying exceptions; and importantly, phrasing the policy with the word "shall" instead of "shall consider."

6. Harbor Planning / HTAC Update

Andy McDonald reported on the March 4th meeting of the Harbor Technical Advisory Committee at the EPA Lab Conference Center in Duluth. The agenda kicked off with the annual report from Commander Michael Lebsack of the US Coast Guard Duluth Marine Safety Unit (topics included the positive news that there was a very low number of environmental responses in 2008; a vintage vessel center of excellence will be newly established in this port; new national rules for medical screening, which means that it takes longer to renew mariner licenses).

Lisa Neitzel of the JPG Group gave an update of the St Louis River Interlake Duluth Tar Superfund Site cleanup. This very large and complex operation is moving forward according to schedule. She reviewed the construction and remediation work that was conducted in 2008, as well as the activities planned for the 2009 season. She also noted the extensive environmental monitoring for air and water quality as well as noise levels that has taken place throughout the process, along with live web reports for local residents. She added that more detailed information is available through the project website: www.slridt.com.

Jim Sharrow from the Duluth Seaway Port Authority gave a report on the recent Marine Community Day in Cleveland, Ohio, organized by the Lake Carriers' Association, The Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Maritime Administration. About 250 people gathered in Cleveland for the event on February 25-26. Mr. Madhu Vuppuluri, CEO of Essar American Steel, which is developing the slab steel plant on the iron range, gave the keynote address at the Admiral's Dinner which stressed the importance of Great Lakes shipping to their operations and industry.

Dale Bergeron from the Minnesota Sea Grant reported on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Great Lakes Shipping Stakeholder's Forum held in conjunction with the Marine Community Day event. The forum solicited feedback on NOAA's products and services supporting navigation, maritime safety and Great Lakes commerce. Additionally, the Duluth Seaway Port Authority co-hosted a visit for NOAA officials introducing them to the people and

issues associated with the Great Lakes shipping industry.

There was a final presentation about the new Tremie Diffuser technology, which has been utilized by Barr Engineering in the SLRIDT cleanup and also has the potential to remediate some of the “industrially influenced” areas of light contamination in shallow areas of the bay. The Tremie Diffuser is designed to evenly disperse a light slurry of fine-grained sediment on top of lightly contaminated material in stable backwater environments. A key benefit is that significant habitat improvements can be achieved by improving large areas with a small amount of cover. By enhancing the natural deposition of this material, the benthic community will mix and blend with little to no change in bathymetry. Jim Sharrow noted that another exciting prospect for this technology is that it could utilize large quantities of the fine materials from Erie Pier that have been the most problematic in terms of finding markets or other projects.

He closed by reporting that HTAC also made three changes to the HTAC Membership: the Minnesota and Wisconsin Sea Grant programs were changed from technical advisors to voting members and EPA Region 5, at their request was shifted from voting member to technical advisor status.

7. 2009-2012 Duluth Area TIP Amendment #3

Nick Baker reported that MnDOT had forwarded another federally-funded stimulus project to be amended into the Duluth area TIP for 2009 funding. This project is part of a statewide initiative to upgrade and landscape all state entry points. He explained that all state entrance points would be upgraded and landscaped. There are two entry points in the MIC area, on the Blatnik Bridge (I-535/ US Hwy 53) and on the Bong Bridge (US Hwy 2) from Superior. Total cost for the State Entry Signs Landscaping project is \$90,000 and is 100% federally funded.

He added that St. Louis County had an additional roadway project approved to receive stimulus funding (pavement reclamation on Rice Lake Road from Martin Road to Arrowhead Road). However, this project does not need to be formally amended into the TIP (it is listed instead as an Administrative Modification) because it is currently programmed in the 2009-2012 TIP and is being advanced to FY 2009 with no changes to project scope or cost.

Ron Chicka announced that the City of Superior will re-submit both projects for round 2 of WisDOT’s stimulus funding applications, due April 1st, no action is required at this time by the TAC or MIC.

Motion and Discussion Andy Peterson/Warren Bender moved to approve Amendment #3 to the FY 2009-2012 Duluth Metro Transportation Improvement Program to include the State Entry Signs Landscaping Project funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

8. Project Updates

DTA Inter-modal Facility

The DTA, together with the consulting firm, held an Open House last month taking comment on site options for the Multimodal Transportation Terminal. Seven initial sites have been narrowed to two, encompassing parcels along Michigan Street between 2nd Avenue West and 5th Avenue West, based on the ability of the surrounding road network to handle traffic into and out of a new passenger rail facility. After the Board has made the final site selection, they will be looking to put together a grant application. Ron commented that funding for this facility may come from the upcoming federal transportation reauthorization bill or possibly the Economic Stimulus bill, which allows more time for transit projects to be assembled.

WLSSD Comprehensive Wastewater Services Master Plan Work Group

WLSSD planning staff had asked MIC Principal Planner Andy McDonald to participate on their Comprehensive Plan Work Group. On Thursday March 5th, they reviewed the history of comprehensive planning at WLSSD, the status of recommendations from the 2003 plan, comments from jurisdictions within WLSSD's boundaries and discussed the proposed revisions to the Urban Services Boundary. All Work Group members have been asked to come to the next meeting prepared to talk about goals to be included in this plan.

2013 Duluth TIP Projects/ATP Update

The five MIC-area projects submitted for federal transportation funding for FY 2013 were prioritized at the February 17th TAC meeting. He noted that the MIC Policy Board changed the prioritized list of projects from the order recommended by the TAC, switching the 10th Avenue East reconstruction and the I-35 preservation project. The final order, as adopted by the MIC Policy Board was:

1. Duluth Heights Connector (Joshua Avenue)
2. 10th Ave East Reconstruction
3. I-35 Preservation
4. Martin Road Rehabilitation

He added that this project list has now been submitted to the Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership (NE MN ATP) for funding consideration. The ATP will consider this as they develop their list of projects to be funded for the region, based on the prioritized projects submitted by the other eight counties as well as funding constraints. This list will then move to the Minnesota Department of Transportation central office for their approval and inclusion in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (or STIP). We should know by early April what if any projects will be funded, adding that the Duluth Heights project is unlikely to be selected, due to its high cost.

9. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Baker adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm.