



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, October 21 , 2009, 7:00 PM

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

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

In Andy Peterson's absence, Wisconsin Co-chair Nick Baker called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and meeting attendees introduced themselves. He called for changes to the agenda. Ron Chicka requested that a voting item be added to consider Amendment #5 to the 2009-2012 Superior Area TIP.

Motion Discussion & Vote Ed Anderson/Warren Bender moved to amend the agenda. There was no discussion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

2. Nominating Committee for 2010 MIC Officers

Chair Baker announced that volunteers were being sought for the nominating committee for 2010 officer elections. Steve O'Neil and Warren Bender offered to serve by polling members from Minnesota and Wisconsin, respectively, to determine nominees for 2010 co-chairs. They will put forward their nominations at the December meeting.

3. Meeting Summary of September 16, 2009

No changes were suggested to the summary from the 9/16/09 meeting of the MIC Policy Board. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve.

Motion Broc Allen/Warren Bender moved to approve the 9/16/09 meeting summary as
Discussion presented. There was no discussion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.
& Vote

4. Amendment #5 to the 2009-2012 Superior Metro TIP

James Gittemeier began by announcing that the NE MN ATP and MnDOT District One have decided that Duluth-area jurisdictions within the ATP will not be receiving projects for 2014, due to the amount of Duluth-area funding received through special ARRA projects awarded in 2009. This means that the TIP application process will still move ahead as usual; we have just been put on notice that we shouldn't expect any of our projects to be funded at the ATP level. He commented that MIC staff was taken by surprise at their assessment that stimulus-funded projects were to be counted in the ATP's equity equation.

He then presented Amendment #5 to add two new projects to the 2009-2012 Superior Urbanized Area TIP. The first project is for funding to be used by WisDOT to assist in the study of rail corridor alternatives in Wisconsin for potential use by NLX. Ron added that a meeting regarding the EIS for the proposed Northern Lights Express may be held at WITC just prior to the MIC meeting on December 9. The second project is for funding to be used to assist in traffic modeling the intersection and surrounding area for the USH 53, North 3rd Street, I535 and STH 35 Interchange Study. He closed by requesting approval of MIC Resolution 09-15 approving Amendment #5 to the 2009-2012 Superior Urbanized Area TIP, as presented.

Motion Kevin Norbie/Warren Bender moved to approve Amendment #5 to 2009 – 2012
Discussion Superior Metro TIP as presented. There was no further discussion and the motion
& Vote was approved unanimously.

Motion Ed Anderson, with a second from Kevin Norbie, made a motion to have the MIC,
Discussion as the Duluth-Superior MPO, formally support the Northern Lights Express
& Vote passenger rail line (NLX) and forward a Resolution to our congressional representatives. *There was some discussion about whether we should lobby for stops in Superior and/or Duluth. Ron noted that at a recent public meeting in regard to the Duluth Depot, it was indicated that Superior would be included in the final route. Steve O'Neil pointed out that the point is to get the train to the Twin Ports and not to be perceived as infighting—we're competing against a lot of other cities nation-wide so it would be best to*

present a united front. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

5. 2010-2013 Superior Area TIP – Final

Ron Chicka presented the final 2010-2013 Superior Area Transportation Improvement Program for approval, noting that Sheldon Johnson had presented the list of roadway, rail and transit projects to be included in the TIP at last month's meeting. He added that an administrative addition had been made since it was released as a draft—a project to reconstruct USH 53 from Belknap Street to the Blatnik Bridge, even though it will not get underway until 2014/2015 is being included in the project lists so as to assign it a project number for purposes of preliminary engineering. He closed by requesting approval of the final document.

Motion Ed Anderson/Earl Elde moved to approve the final 2010-2013 Superior Area
Discussion Transportation Improvement Program as presented. There was no further
& Vote discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

6. 2035 MIC-Area Long Range Transportation Plan – Update and Progress Report

Ron reported that we are still awaiting a determination from the FHWA about the date our updated Long Range Transportation Plan is actually due. The issue of timing is critical because the MIC must have a current, approved LRTP in place in order to expend any federal TIP funds. MIC staff had originally targeted the October MIC Board meeting as the release date for the draft 2035 update of the LRTP. This would have commenced the federally required 45-day public review period. Various pieces of work involved in drafting the plan, however, have been delayed, and based on the guidance we receive from FHWA and MnDOT, we may need to call a special Policy Board meeting to re-adopt our current (2030) Long Range Plan if we can't finalize our 2035 update by then.

James Gittemeier then reported on public outreach efforts that have been conducted to date, in conformance with regulations from federal SAFETEA-LU transportation legislation, to include new partners at the state & local levels in the transportation planning process, representing interests including health, sustainability, livable communities, homeless and aging populations, bicyclists, and climate change.

Ongoing efforts included consultations with Blueprint to End Poverty group, Fit City Duluth Active Living Committee and the DTA Policy Board. Additionally, recent meetings had been held to present the LRTP and gain input from other groups, including:

Wheels on Trails: their main comments focused on Universal Design – accessible transportation; involving groups working on resolving issues for the disabled population “up front” in the planning process and track statistics on numbers of people with mobility issues

Townships: their main comments focused on coordinating preservation & maintenance of roadway projects (striping) across township boundaries.

WLSSD: their main comments focused on data exchanges needed to possibly revise urban service boundary; interest in being included in the upcoming Kirkus Street Land Use Study in

Proctor, and in receiving regular updates regarding the Munger Trail.

City of Superior: their main comments focused on the bike and pedestrian network, including bike signage issues at the Bong Bridge, as well as the request to receive regular updates on the Bong and Blatnik Bridge work.

Hermantown: their main comments focused on extending the Proctor Connector trail into Hermantown; future transit service, and implementing a Complete Street process for Ugstad Road.

St. Louis County Health Department: their main comments focused on partnering to implement the State Health Improvement Program (SHIP), hiring an Active Living Coordinator to focus on policy systems & environmental change, and on implementing the Safe and Walkable Hillside project in the City of Duluth.

Duluth School District: their main comments focused on continuing to work with the District on existing & future SRTS grants.

Lincoln Park: their main comments focused on connecting the neighborhood, including the new Middle School, expanded high school, Heritage Center and Munger Trail.

Central Hillside: their main comments focused on the issue of getting up and down the hill, improving sidewalk conditions and lighting issues, transit service issues – limited service to the mall area and the issue of snow removal on sidewalks.

DTA: their main comments focused on continuing with the Superior route analysis; developing designated bus lanes and express bus service; studying a rail passenger rail service; examining a region-wide transit service; and being involved with the DTA Board Working Session regarding bus and bike lane issues.

He closed by noting that future consultations will target the Greater Downtown Council and the Canal Park business district, Community Action Duluth, Duluth and Superior Parks departments, the colleges and universities; and historic preservation and environmental groups.

7. 2010-2011 MIC Work Program and Budget

Ron Chicka presented the final 2010 – 2011 MIC Unified Transportation Work Program and Budget for review and approval.

He stated that he was confident regarding all funding sources for 2010 at this time, adding that the 2010 funds are sufficient to handle the projects discussed here with the staffing as it exists now. If at some point in 2010 we are able to amend the budget to either add projects and/or staff we will do so. This, however, can only happen after we have further progress in the area of potential match dollars; one option might be to secure additional matching funds from outside ARDC and NWRPC on a continuing basis that will allow the MIC to leverage further federal funds.

The proposed Short Range element of the UPWP has been altered slightly to incorporate three “stand-alone” projects (Proctor – Kirkus Street, Duluth – Central Entrance, Superior – Blatnik

Bridge) plus the modal components of freight, transit, harbor, and bike and pedestrian initiatives. These modal elements include many sub-issues that are either small projects or implementation efforts. He added that the Freight Study is getting attention nation-wide, he and Andy have been invited to present this plan at two conferences later this month.

The Long Range component is still substantial in amount since we will be working to make the document a website. Staff time and possible software purchases will make this activity nearly like creating the original document itself. 2010 is rounded out with the usual TIP and MIC administration activities.

The work program activities and budget for 2011 is very much a draft or “illustrative” look into the future; funding and projects are quite likely to change between now and this time next year when 2011 budgets come forward for final approval. We include it in the UPWP for purposes of meeting federal and state requirements for the Consolidated Planning Grant process. He added that no entities are signing contracts for 2011 at this time and there is nothing binding on any organization’s part with respect to the 2011 numbers shown here. ARDC and NWRPC only sign annual contracts for funding the MIC. The MIC is approving a UPWP for 2 years, but the contracts are on an annual basis.

He closed by requesting approval of the final document.

Motion Broc Allen/Warren Bender moved to approve the final 2010 – 2011 MIC Unified
Discussion Transportation Work Program and Budget and authorize ARDC to enter into
& Vote contracts as presented. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

8. Munger Trail Extension Update

James Gittemeier reported that the City of Duluth has hired SEH to assist the city with the preliminary engineering of the Munger Trail from its current terminus at 75th Ave West to the Lakewalk. This engineering work will determine final alignment, right-of-way needed, environmental impacts and cost for the entire trail extension length. In addition, SEH will undertake the final engineering on the part of the trail that is set to be constructed in the next few years.

They have come up with three route alternatives, and will be working with the railroads, MnDOT and various property owners, issues with rights-of-way, cost to acquire the land, and issues with limited space around the highway and rail yards and terrain.

Every segment has unique challenges and potentially high costs to construct. The study currently underway will determine those alignment and costs.

9. Harbor Planning (HTAC) Update

Andy McDonald gave a recap of the special HTAC meeting that had taken place earlier in the day. Col. John Droulet, high in the chain of command for this district, was in town from Detroit just this morning for a special HTAC meeting today to formalize the new agreement between the Corps, the Port Authority and the Cities of Duluth and Superior to update the harbor’s Dredge Materials Management Plan (DMMP). It has been estimated that this

agreement could save five to six years in finalizing a new DMMP, a normally lengthy and expensive process.

He also reviewed the new HTAC initiative to renew the 1999 Harbor Partnering Agreement. The intent is to build on existing partnerships and implement current initiatives such as the conversion of Erie Pier from a storage facility for dredge materials to a processing and re-use facility, a project that could have significant impact on these facilities nation-wide.

Nick Baker commented that the tone and function of the HTAC has really taken off in a positive direction.

10. Bike/Ped Advisory Committee Update

James Gittemeier reported that he is working to organize a new Advisory Committee to the MIC to advocate for Bicycle and Pedestrian issues (acronym BPAC). This committee is envisioned as a forum for discussing bicycle and pedestrian issues, as well as a proactive information gathering and solution identification body. The committee will formally advise the MIC Policy Board and consist of bicycle and pedestrian stakeholders who represent all facets of these modes (elderly, low-income, transit riders, recreational cyclists, commuter cyclists, etc.) This committee will assist the MIC with updating the 1994 Bikeways Plan, the Bike Map, and assist organizations and agencies working on similar issues.

He added that one issue raised by the TAC at its meeting the previous day was the question of the reporting structure for the new advisory committee—their preference would be that the BPAC be structured as a subcommittee to the TAC, which in turn takes its recommendations into consideration as it advises the MIC. Another option is for the BPAC to report directly to the MIC, as a parallel advisory group along with the TAC and HTAC. That issue is ultimately one for the Policy Board to decide.

He closed by noting that the Complete Streets policy report, devised by the MnDOT study committee on this issue, is now available for public comment.

11. Project Updates

Kirkus Street Corridor Study

James Gittemeier reported that staff has begun work on this project and had met with City of Proctor officials to further define the study and clarify the MIC's role in this study. The study's objective is to identify land use and transportation corridor standards for Kirkus Street prior to the completion of the new road. The one-mile long new roadway is set to be constructed in 2010 in a relatively undeveloped section of Proctor. MIC staff is putting together a scope of work for this study.

MnDOT Complete Streets Advisory Committee

James Gittemeier reported that a draft version of the Complete Streets Report was discussed at the Complete Streets Advisory Committee in September. This meeting, which was the last meeting for the committee, discussed changes to the Draft Report, including the importance of combining the design manuals for roadways. Other items discussed were the need for better coordination and need for more flexibility in roadway design, so agencies can truly build

roadways within their context. It was noted again, that complete streets is not a prescriptive approach, but a policy directing the focus of the design should be on each project and segment of roadway. A revised draft Report will be sent to the Minnesota Commissioner of Transportation, who will finalize the Report and present it to the State Legislature.

Conference Updates

Andy McDonald reported that MIC Staff will be attending two conferences in October to present the Northern Minnesota / Northwest Wisconsin Freight Plan. The Wisconsin MPO/RPC/DOT Annual Planning Conference was held on October 5-6 in Spring Green, Wisconsin. The 2009 Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) Annual Conference will be held on October 28-30 in Savannah, Georgia. These will be excellent opportunities for the MIC to showcase the cooperative effort with our partners that resulted in the Freight Plan.

Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan - Open House

Ron Chicka reported that an open house was held on October 15th at the Duluth Depot as a second and final opportunity to provide input into this MNDOT initiative. The plan is to set guidance for rail investments and allow Minnesota to be eligible for federal funding. Public input plus a series of stakeholder committee meetings have aided in drafting the plan that will be overviewed at this Open House. The plan includes many items including a vision for the effective use of the state's rail network for moving goods and people. The final plan will be presented to the Minnesota legislature by year's end.

12. Adjournment

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