



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, December 9, 2009, 7:00 PM

Meeting Location	Superior Middle School, Superior, WI	
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
	Melanie Hendrickson	Duluth Transit Authority
	Garry Krause	Duluth City Council
	Dan Olson	Superior Common Council
	Jim Paine	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	Andy Peterson	City of Duluth – Citizen Rep
Members Absent	Wayne Boucher*	City of Hermantown
	Troy Foucault*	City of Proctor
	Cindy Moe*	St. Louis County Suburban Townships
	Kevin Norbie*	City of Superior – Citizen Rep
	Kay McKenzie*	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	Steve O'Neil*	St. Louis County Board
	* Excused	
Others Present	Ron Chicka	ARDC / MIC Director
	James Gittemeier	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Robert Herling	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Daniel Krom	MnDOT-Passenger Rail Director
	Bob Manzoline	St Louis & Lake County Regional Rail Authority
	Kody Thurnau	ARDC / MIC GIS Specialist
	Rondi Watson	ARDC / MIC Planning Assistant

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

Wisconsin Co-chair Nick Baker called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. and meeting attendees introduced themselves. Ron announced that last agenda item (HTAC Update) would be moved to the January meeting to allow a little more time for the guest speakers and discussion of the NLX Resolution.

Ron Chicka noted that this would be the last meeting for two members, Garry Krause and Andy Peterson. He thanked them for their participation for the past several years with the MIC, with a special mention to Andy for serving as MN chair for the past two years as well.

2. Committee Business

A. October 21, 2009 Meeting Summary

No changes were suggested to the summary from the 10/21/09 meeting of the MIC Policy Board. Hearing none, Chair Baker asked for a motion to approve.

Motion Peterson/Bender moved to approve the 10/21/09 meeting summary as presented.
Discussion There was no discussion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.
& Vote

B. 2010 MIC Officer Election

Ron Chicka explained that Steve O'Neil was unable to attend tonight's meeting due to illness, but that he wished to forward the nomination of Earl Elde for MIC Secretary as well as MIC Representative to the ARDC Board and Commission.

Ron explained that due to several pending appointments for members on the Minnesota side, he wished to postpone the election of MIC Co-chairs until the January meeting.

Motion Ed Anderson/Jim Paine moved to appoint Earl Elde as MIC Secretary and MIC
Discussion delegate to the ARDC Board. There was no discussion and the motion passed by
& Vote unanimous vote.

C. 2010 MIC Meetings Calendar

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 2010 schedules. The meeting schedule is also available to view online, at www.dsmic.org.

3. MnDOT Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan / Northern Lights Express Project Update

Ron Chicka explained that scheduled guest speaker Dan Krom, MnDOT Passenger Rail Director, was prevented by the inclement weather from traveling to Superior to present the MnDOT Statewide Rail Plan. However, representatives from the Minneapolis-Duluth/Superior Passenger Rail Alliance Bob Manzoline, Ken Buehler and John Ongaro were here tonight, following the public meeting about the state plan.

Bob Manzoline explained that the Northern Lights Express (NLX) Alliance, a joint powers board composed of officials from counties along the proposed route, is facilitating planning support for the NLX to provide high speed passenger rail through a 155-mile corridor between the Twin Cities and the Twin Ports. It was awarded a \$1.1 million Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) grant last year, as well as some state funding and financial support from Alliance members, and they have to date completed an initial feasibility study, and an environmental review and preliminary engineering to determine costs are underway. Once completed in 2010, the Alliance plans to seek Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) approval of the project and the federal funding share, which could be up to 80 percent of the construction cost.

The ultimate goal is to take advantage of \$8 billion in ARRA rail funding, although the process has become extremely competitive. John Ongaro noted that \$110 billion in applications have been submitted for high speed rail projects from 42 states. He remains optimistic, however, because the project planning is well underway, and a huge opportunity exists with Congressmen Oberstar and Obey.

Ken Buehler commented that this is a unique opportunity for the Northland to connect to cutting-edge 21st century technology which can be described as a transformational new dimension to our transportation system. He added that in the past, Duluth and Superior definitely wanted, and has benefited from, connectivity to new modes of transportation when the St. Lawrence seaway was built, and later when highway 35 was extended.

The current NLX timetable calls for final engineering and design work to take place in 2011 with construction starting in 2012 and passenger service scheduled to begin in 2013 or 2014. Under the proposal, the line would share the downtown Minneapolis station with Northstar Commuter Rail. Target Field, the new home of the Minnesota Twins, is the projected final stop in Minneapolis, with connecting light-rail routes to the MSP airport and the Mall of America, as well as future light-rail routes to St. Paul and Anoka.

One issue that has arisen is that MnDOT, in its new Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan, has come up with a cost estimate of close to \$1 billion for the NLX project, a figure with which the Alliance does not agree. They estimate the cost at about \$600 million (up from an estimate made two years ago of roughly \$450 million).

NLX proponents are concerned that the state rail plan uses an apples-to-oranges comparison, particularly in regard to the projected capital expense. For example, the MnDOT estimate includes double-tracking the entire route, while the NLX group believes that double-tracking will only be necessary between Coon Rapids and Sandstone. MnDOT's estimate includes the purchase of eight new trainsets (engine and passenger cars) a day, while NLX is certain it can operate with only four train sets a day. The state plan also looks at this line as if all bridges and rail crossings to be replaced, at a cost of \$100 million dollars, which is inaccurate given the actual condition of the existing facilities.

Manzoline also questioned the state plan's projected ridership numbers, in which enrollment at Duluth-Superior area colleges are projected to decrease by 28% per year, and further assumes the train will run only one day during the weekend. NLX sees both of these as faulty assumptions.

He added that NLX proponents have submitted these and other comments and hope to see them incorporated into the final state rail plan. He stressed that this project will continue to move forward, separate from the state rail plan, in meeting the qualifications and guidelines necessary to demonstrate its feasibility.

Jay Fosle questioned the projected ridership numbers, saying the projected 1 million people doesn't seem to be supported by current tax receipts for this area. He also noted that Amtrak service has already been tried between the Cities and Duluth and it was discontinued. Ken Buehler responded that ridership at that time was actually increasing at that point in time but

it was a problem with the state subsidy amount, due to the mandated 403b arrangement with Amtrak.

4. Resolution of Support for the Northern Lights Express Passenger Rail Line

Ron Chicka explained that he was following up on the motion that was made at the October meeting of the MIC Board, to adopt a Resolution of Support for the NLX project to forward to the NLX Alliance Board and to key government officials at the local, state and federal levels.

Ron commented that the Resolution was general in nature and simply supports the reintroduction of the rail service to the Twin Ports.

Motion Garry Krause, with a second from Jay Fosle, moved that the motion be tabled
Discussion until Dan Krom can be rescheduled to talk to the MIC about state rail plan and
& **Vote** its cost assumptions.

Ed Anderson commented that we've discussed this enough already, and this is a logical follow-up to the Board support for the initial feasibility study. Andy Peterson commented that the legislative schedule in regard to this issue does not permit a two to three month delay

There was no further discussion and the motion failed 3-9 (Coyle, Fosle, Krause in favor / Allen, Anderson, Baker, Bender, Elde, Hendrickson, Olson, Paine, Peterson opposed).

Ed Anderson, with a second from Jim Paine moved to adopt a Resolution of Support for the NLX project as presented.

Jay Fosle expressed concern that the language also suggests that we are also supporting the cost of the project, which is very high from a taxpayer perspective.

There was no further discussion and the motion carried 9-3 (Allen, Anderson, Baker, Bender, Elde, Hendrickson, Olson, Paine, Peterson in favor / Coyle, Fosle, Krause opposed).

5. Amendment #1 to the 2010-2013 Duluth Urbanized Area TIP

James Gittemeier presented an amendment to the 2010-2013 Duluth Urbanized Area TIP to add a Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) project for the Duluth Transit Authority (DTA). The project will provide additional operating funds for transit service to the non-traditional employment centers outside of the central business district, via Route #18 to MN Power and United Health along Rice Lake Road and Route #20 to Cirrus and Airpark. Funding total is \$392,000 (\$187,000 federal, \$205,000 local).

He added that DTA General Manager Dennis Jensen had commented at the previous day's TAC meeting that these are examples of additional service routes the DTA is currently exploring; the #18 route will serve students along Rice Lake Road as well as Cirrus employees, and the park and ride lot in Hermantown provides the bulk of the ridership for Route #20.

Motion Garry Krause/Mike Coyle moved to approve Amendment #1 to 2010 – 2013 Duluth
Discussion Area TIP as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved
& Vote unanimously.

6. Amendment #1 to the 2010-2013 Superior Urbanized Area TIP

James Gittemeier presented an amendment to the 2010-2013 Superior Urbanized Area TIP to add two additional projects not included in the original project list for 2010. The first is a painting project for the Bong Bridge in the City of Superior, at a cost of \$200,000 (federal) and the second project is for upgrading permanent signage on the Wisconsin side of the Blatnik Bridge, a work activity associated with a current project (number 113-08-014) relating to investigation and replacement of cables begun in 2009 and carried over to 2010. Total cost of this project is \$170,000 (\$153,000 federal and \$17,000 state).

He added that WisDOT Planner Dena Young had said at the previous day's TAC meeting that the bridge painting project is being moved up to 2010 to accommodate and coordinate with construction and north lane closure of the upcoming MnDOT I-35 reconstruction project.

Motion Garry Krause/Ed Anderson moved to approve Amendment #1 to 2010 – 2013
Discussion Superior Area TIP as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was
& Vote approved unanimously.

7. Readoption of the 2030 MIC Area Long Range Transportation Plan

Robert Herling reported that MIC staff is proposing that the MIC readopt its existing (2030) LRTP. Doing so will ensure that an active plan remains in place as staff continues working to complete the updated (2035) LRTP. He explained that staff has been unable to meet the October 19th target date for release of the draft LRTP 2035 due to a variety of circumstances. Delays were caused by unanticipated staff reductions (one planner left our staff and has not been replaced, and it took several months to replace our GIS person); also there were problems with needing to refine the traffic model as put forward by the consultant. Also, the new emphasis on fiscally-constrained project lists required more work with jurisdictions to figure out a new method of projecting expenditures and revenues. He added that although many pieces of the update are already in place, the entire draft document must be ready to present for public review and board approval.

He reported that after consulting with FHWA, MnDOT and WisDOT, it was determined that the main consideration before moving forward with readopting the 2030 plan is whether its assumptions and goals still apply to the MIC planning area. Their concern has to do with possible increased demand on our transportation system—but Robert noted that our most recent demographic and traffic modeling analysis shows just the opposite, that population (and associated traffic demands) is not significantly expanding and therefore will not render the existing LRTP obsolete.

Re-adopting the existing plan, which is due to expire at the end of January 2010, will keep the MIC in compliance with federal regulations and allow us to continue to amend project items in

the TIP if needed.

He added that the process for readopting the current plan requires a public notice period before the actual action to readopt at the January 20, 2010 MIC meeting. He closed by requesting approval of the public comment period for the Readoption of the 2030 MIC Long Range Transportation Plan.

Motion Garry Krause/Earl Elde moved to approve the required public notice for the
Discussion Readoption of the 2030 MIC Long Range Transportation Plan

& Vote *Dan Olson commented that from the perspective of the construction trade, the ARRA funding has simply moved long term projects forward, a lot of projects have been crammed into two years, and asked if this has something to do with the need to readopt? Robert responded no, that this is purely a technicality to give us more time to develop the new plan.*

There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

8. Kirkus Street Land Use Plan – Scope of Work

James Gittemeier presented the Scope of Work for the upcoming Kirkus Street Land Use Plan. The new, one-mile long, federally-funded roadway is set to be constructed in 2010 in a relatively undeveloped section of Proctor. The study's objective is to identify land use and transportation corridor standards for Kirkus Street prior to the completion of the new road.

He added that this plan will also provide a guide for the city regarding the future land uses for the undeveloped lands, as well as a template to identify where key local and regional transportation connections should be made.

MIC staff has met with City of Proctor officials to further define the study and clarify the MIC's role in this study. They will be working from the Comp Plan's future land use map, and will be involving residents, school district, and other stakeholders to determine and update future land uses. WLSSD has also requested that they be involved to consider the possible extension its service boundaries; there are also natural resources to be assessed and considered. Next steps will be to convene a Task Force and to hold an initial "visioning" meeting with adjoining property owners. They also plan to hire a consultant to conduct a market analysis and to look at design principles and guidelines. The City will update its subdivision codes per the recommendations of this plan

He closed by requesting approval of the Scope of Work.

Motion Andy Peterson/Warren Bender moved to approve the Scope of Work for the Kirkus
Discussion Street Land Use Plan as presented.

& Vote *Earl Elde asked why the new road won't align with the Ugstad Road when it crosses the line between Proctor and Midway Township, this doesn't make sense for a new road that is being constructed. James responded that this had been discussed but that the problem was that a property owner would need to be bought out, so the alignment is*

designed to go around that property line.

There was no further discussion and the motion was passed on a vote of 11-1 (Allen, Anderson, Baker, Bender, Coyle, Fosle, Hendrickson, Krause, Olson, Paine, Peterson in favor / Elde opposed).

9. Project Updates

2011-2014 Duluth Area TIP Project Solicitation

James Gittemeier reported that applications for 2014 federal transportation funding for projects on the Duluth side of the MIC area due Friday, December 18, 2009 by 5pm. MIC staff will distribute the projects applications and supporting material at the January meetings, with a scoring and ranking session in February.

City of Duluth Complete Streets Task Force

James Gittemeier reported that two MIC staff members had been invited to join the Mayor's Task Force on Complete Streets. The Task Force's mission is to develop a comprehensive streets policy that addresses design and usability of streets for bicyclists, walkers, bus riders, motorists, and wheelchair users. It will look at internal City policies and processes to implement Complete Streets within Duluth. The Task Force is on a tight timeline and is charged with wrapping up its work in 3-4 months.

Significantly, in preparation for an anticipated Complete Streets policy, the City will be hosting a Complete Streets workshop on Wed, January 20th, with a more technical emphasis. This training session will be led by James LaPlante, traffic engineer for the City of Chicago for 30 years and has addressed many real-world traffic issues. He is also involved in the development of the ITE/green book standards. MIC and TAC members will be contacted when registration materials are available, and are invited and encouraged to attend.

Duluth, Proctor and Superior SRTS Projects Update

James Gittemeier and Ron Chicka reported that Duluth SRTS projects are moving forward. A meeting with the City of Duluth, the Duluth School District and the MIC on November 10 took place to discuss the latest plans for Congdon and Lester Park Elementary schools and prioritize the SRTS improvements for both schools. The Lincoln Park SRTS infrastructure project will no longer take place, since the school is set to close. However, the non-infrastructure grant will still be used at Lincoln Park Elementary School.

The Proctor SRTS project grant is for non-infrastructure activities, including bicycling and pedestrian education. Over the past month, MIC staff assisted the Proctor School District with moving forward with implementing this project. The District is in the process of putting together the necessary project memo to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian education into their curriculum.

Ron added that Superior SRTS project design for South Tower Avenue is still being worked on by the City's consultant. A solution to the facility improvement along Tower is undecided at this point. A note from the City stated that they are looking into conducting a traffic count at

Tower and 58th next spring to determine if warrants are met; this intersection has not previously met warrants for a new traffic signal, but the City will examine it again during the school season/golf season. He added that this is definitely a hot political issue for that council district, but WisDOT is very definite on the point that it needs to meet warrants.

NADO Award for Northern MN/Northwestern WI Freight Plan

Andy McDonald reported that ARDC and the MIC have been awarded a 2009 *Excellence in Regional Transportation Award* from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for the Northern Minnesota/ Northwest Wisconsin Freight Plan. NADO is a Washington, DC-based association that promotes programs and policies to strengthen local governments, communities and economies through regional cooperation, program delivery and comprehensive strategies. Award winners received national recognition for noteworthy projects and practices in planning, program delivery and special initiatives at the 2009 National Rural Transportation Peer Learning Conference, October 28 – 30 in Savannah, Georgia. Ron added that MnDOT is looking to roll it out, present it to targeted groups to build support for implementation, will likely lead to additional work items for MIC staff in 2010.

10. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Baker adjourned the meeting at 8:51 pm.