



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, March

March 17, 2010, 7:00 PM

Meeting Location	WITC Conference Center, 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
	Wayne Boucher	City of Hermantown
	Earl Elde	St. Louis County Suburban Townships
	Troy Foucault	City of Proctor
	Kerry Gauthier	Duluth City Council
	Kay McKenzie	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	Cindy Moe	St. Louis County Suburban Townships
	Steve O'Neil	St. Louis County Board
Members Absent	Mike Coyle	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	Tony Cuneo	Duluth City Council
	Melanie Hendrickson*	Duluth Transit Authority
	David Montgomery*	City of Duluth – Citizen Rep
	Kevin Norbie*	City of Superior – Citizen Rep
	Dan Olson*	Superior Common Council
	Jim Paine	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	* Excused	
Others Present	Rick Arnebeck	SRF Consulting
	Ron Chicka	ARDC / MIC Director
	James Gittemeier	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Robert Herling	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Tim Hohn	ARDC / MIC Intern
	Stephanie King	WisDOT-Superior
	Glenn Landis	WisDOT - where
	Andy McDonald	ARDC / MIC Principal Planner
	Sheldon Johnson	Duluth News-Tribune
	Jason Serck	City of Superior Planning and Port Director
	Kody Thurnau	ARDC / MIC GIS Specialist
	Rondi Watson	ARDC / MIC Planning Assistant
	Dena Young	WisDOT-Superior

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

Wisconsin Co-chair Nick Baker called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. All meeting attendees introduced themselves. Ron Chicka introduced GIS specialist Kody Thurnau, who replaced Andrea Grygo in October, and new intern Tim Hohn. He also thanked the several guest speakers from WisDOT for attending tonight's meeting.

Chair Baker asked if there were any changes to the agenda. None were put forward.

2. Committee Business

2/17/10 Meeting Summary

Chair Baker asked if there were any changes to the summary from the last meeting of the MIC Policy Board. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve.

Motion Warren Bender/Broc Allen moved to approve the 2/17/10 meeting summary as
Discussion presented. There was no discussion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.
& Vote

3. Tower Avenue Reconstruction Project in the City of Superior

Jason Serck, Planning and Port Director for the City of Superior, introduced Stephanie King, lead project manager for the WisDOT portion of the upcoming Tower Avenue reconstruction project.

Stephanie explained that the project extends one mile from Belknap Street to North 3rd Street. The project is needed to replace poor pavement and utilities including sanitary sewer and water lines, and provides an opportunity to improve speed control and add streetscaping enhancements along the corridor. Key goals are to enhance pedestrian and vehicle safety while aiding traffic mobility.

Jason noted that WisDOT began the planning process in 2007 and has worked in coordination with the City, the Business Improvement District (BID) design committee and the consultant (SAS) to incorporate community input within the context of a state trunk highway. A key concept is to balance the BID's interest in beautification of the downtown area with the needs of local businesses and truck traffic.

Jason added that although the project is 11 blocks in length, it actually involves 22 blocks including the side streets. Construction is slated for 2013, and it will be a tall order to complete it within one year. They have initiated talks with both MnDOT and WisDOT about the option of going into 2014 if necessary.

He added that the project has two separate sections with two separate design concepts. In the south section, from Belknap to the railroad tracks just past Winter Street, pedestrian safety improvements are of key importance due to the unusually high number of pedestrian accidents—this roadway segment was ranked in the top 5% in the state of Wisconsin. The road will be reduced from a 4-lane to a 2-lane configuration and safety and traffic calming solutions will include medians to serve as pedestrian refuge areas, designated left turn bays and curb

extensions. A 12-foot parking/bike lane will accommodate both uses on each side of the street. Jason added that they will need to look at bike route connectivity, possibly complicated by the nearby truck routes. Sidewalks will be reduced from 20 to 18 feet, while overall roadway to be widened to allow for the center pedestrian refuge. Narrower necks will reduce number of parking spots; net loss will be minimized by creating diagonal parking on the side streets.

He added that as the street is currently designed, there is no differentiation or “change of place” to distinguish this area. They have worked with consultants to help establish amenities and designs to this end – colored concrete, tree plantings, light fixtures, etc., with the big change in the median treatments. Ultimately it’s a very simple design however.

Also, this area is essentially Superior’s bus transfer station area, with lots of pedestrian movements. They will be meeting with Dennis Jensen to determine the DTA’s needs and recommendations.

One issue for this segment is the proposed left turn restriction at the intersection at 14th street – businesses, especially the bank, doesn’t like this; public comments may spur a design change, but they will likely first study turning movements at this intersection.

In the section north of the rail corridor, from 8th Street to 3rd Street, the businesses are more spread out and the roadway will be designed to accommodate the combined uses of industrial traffic, local business traffic and pedestrians, and STH 35 through traffic to the Blatnik bridge. This section will be configured with two lanes with a center turn lane to better accommodate the through traffic as well as the large turning movements of the industrial traffic. A raised safety median near the railway near 7th Street and curb extensions throughout the section will facilitate safer pedestrian crossings and overall traffic calming.

He closed by noting that they are anticipating big impacts on traffic movements all year. The plan currently is to close a couple of blocks at a time.

Nick Baker asked about the staging of the construction, specifically, why Tower Avenue isn’t being closed completely, instead of closing 2- or 3-block segments, when such extensive digging will be required to replace the sanitary and water lines. He suggested that side streets could be used as backage roads, and Banks Avenue as a one-way southbound. Stephanie replied that business owners are being warned to prepare for traffic blockages in order to get it done in one year.

Kay Mckenzie asked about the potential impacts of the planned Bong Bridge closure. Stephanie replied that they are absolutely aware of this potential conflict if the street isn’t completed in the timeframe as planned. They are discussing the possible use of financial incentives to move the project along. Jason noted that the bridge project is set for 2014, however, there may need to be some shifting of that project, perhaps if it were approached in two phase, the DOT could do the painting phase before redecking and that would give this project a little more breathing room. It’s currently under discussion with DOT and all parties.

Broc Allen suggested that commissioning artist-designed bike racks, and maybe benches as well, could contribute to a distinctive sense of place.

Ed Anderson asked that the City consider linking the Bong and Blatnik bridges via North 3rd Street instead of Winter Street, past Banks to Susquehanna. Jason noted that he had had this discussion with a freight person from Madison.

4. WisDOT Local Road & Bridge Program for 2011-2014

Dena Young introduced Glenn Landis from WisDOT's Superior office to discuss the state's Surface Transportation Program for urban and rural roads, which has been handed back from WisDOT's central office for local management.

He noted that for some time a management consultant had been brought in to manage the project development process and the local agreements for all districts. Effective with the start of the next budget cycle, the level of consultant involvement will be lessened in order to better manage costs and project development will move to the regional level. Glenn Landis will now be managing the local program fulltime and will no longer be involved in backbone (highway) routes.

Glenn noted that the process for the 2011-2014 TIP cycle has begun—the DOT is currently soliciting projects for all three programs (urban, county/rural and local bridge projects) and Douglas County and the City of Superior will receive application forms in a couple of weeks. He added that the normal odd-year cycle has been shifted by one year due to ARRA projects. New project submittals to be sought in two separate application cycles. In April there will be a statewide training session for highway commissioners about how projects will be developed. Projects will need to be submitted to his office by July, and by October/November the approved list of projects will come from Madison. Consultants used to write the municipal agreements, now Glenn will be issuing them all in November/December, which could get complicated with the holiday timetable.

One of the biggest changes in the process is that applications are now required to be submitted electronically with a WISLER map attached. Another significant change for City of Superior is that whereas in the past, the City submitted their projects directly to WisDOT; now WisDOT wants to see an official submittal from the MPO. Therefore the TAC and MIC will be asked to review and prioritize the proposed projects.

He noted that urban projects were budgeted for \$169.5 million in Chapter 20 funds in statewide budget. City of Superior should get a comparable allocation based on last year's numbers (\$714,000 for the biennium, likely to be within 10-20% of that amount).

5. Amendments #5 and 6 to the 2010-2013 Duluth Area TIP

James reported that it is necessary to consider two amendments adding transit projects from separate funding sources, as follows:

Amendment #5

The potential federal FY 2010 Jobs bill has moved along in Congress far enough to where the MIC can "reasonably expect" additional federal funds in this region. Therefore, the DTA has proposed 3 transit projects to be funded in FY 2010 through the Jobs bill.

Agency	Project	Federal	Local	Total
DTA	Bus Purchase (Sect. 5307) – 3 class 400 buses	\$204,000	0	\$204,000
DTA	Transit Capital (Sect. 5307)	\$1,500,000	0	\$1,500,000
DTA	Operations (Sect. 5307)	\$150,000	0	\$150,000

Amendment #6

The DTA received a FTA Section 5309 grant for additional funding for FY 2010 to add amenities to the downtown Duluth passenger center:

Agency	Project	Federal	Local	Total
DTA	Funding for downtown Duluth service improvements – traffic signal pre-emption hardware and software (Sect. 5309)	\$432,000	0	\$432,000

He explained they are looking at a signal pre-emption system for up to six intersections, similar to what’s now being used in St. Cloud. It enables drivers to “hold” green lights to accommodate busses so they don’t back up at selected intersections. This system could also be extended to emergency vehicle use. The funding covers hardware and software for buses, along with hardware for the signals.

Motion and Discussion Ed Anderson/Broc Allen moved to approve Amendments #5 & 6 to the Duluth TIP as presented. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

6. Proposed Changes to the TAC and MIC Bylaws

Ron Chicka presented some proposed changes to the current language in the TAC Bylaws, following up on the discussions at last month’s meeting.

He added that the basic idea was to identify the process by which significant changes to core elements (related to the TIP, Long Range Plan and annual Work Program), are to be handled for committee member consideration and public notification. Specifically, these items must be included on the agenda that is distributed one week in advance and may not be amended in as voting items after that date. He added that this could mean that if a time-sensitive amendment is needed between meetings, a special meeting may need to be called on short notice.

During the TAC meeting the day before, it was decided that the proposed language should be further revised to include a notification period in the event a special meeting is called. Specifically, agenda items need to be communicated to MIC staff at least eleven (11) days

before the date of the next regularly scheduled meeting, and at least five (5) days before the date of a special meeting.

The question was asked - why is so much lead time needed to submit agenda items? Ron responded that since the meeting materials need to be distributed seven days in advance (three days in advance for special meetings), the proposed timeframes for finalizing the agendas allow for two working days for staff to prepare and distribute the meeting materials.

Ron clarified that motions may still be put forward to modify meeting agendas—except to add approval (voting) items pertaining to the TIP, LRTP or annual work program—and assuming that a majority of those present agree to consider such business.

No vote was taken; instead the TAC bylaws language will be further revised according to the committee’s suggestions and presented at the April meeting for approval. A similar revision may be proposed for the MIC bylaws as well, along with a couple of other changes to reflect the new BPAC advisory committee and a few other minor updates.

7. 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan Update

Robert Herling reported that draft versions of the “Trends” chapter of the 2035 update of the Duluth-Superior Long Range Transportation Plan (Directions 2035) has been completed, as has the 2010-2035 list of improvement projects and the accompanying Financial Assessment. He added that these items had been posted on the MIC website for public comment and had also been emailed to members of the TAC and MIC for review.

He also reported that three new lists are being included as a way to maintain a constrained project list while still including them in the LRTP for future reference. He is proposing to add unconstrained lists, as identified by the jurisdictions and by MIC staff, of (1) unfunded projects; (2) projects for future study; and (3) potential HPP projects.

During the TAC meeting the day before, committee members requested that draft materials be made available to them (by email, as attachments) before those drafts are posted online for general public comment. Robert agreed in the future to contact TAC and MIC members in advance of public posting of draft chapters. He also emphasized that at this time, comments on the financial section are absolutely the highest priority and are needed within a week, or two at the most.

8. HTAC/Harbor Planning Update

Andy McDonald reported that the HTAC met on March 3rd at the WITC Conference Center. Agenda items included a report from the Captain of the Port – U.S. Coast Guard Duluth Marine Safety Unit; an update on activities related to Accelerated Freshwater Corrosion Study & Remediation of Steel Structures; an update of project submittals for the Great Lakes restoration Initiative; and a report on the Asian Gypsy Moth and Emerald Ash Borer for the Maritime Industry.

9. Project Updates

BPAC Update

James Gittemeier reported that MIC staff held an informational public meeting to get the word out about this new MIC committee. The attendees were asked to participate in one or all of 3 working groups: Membership & Bylaws, Bike to Work Day and Superior Bike Routes. MIC staff will be moving forward with them 3 working groups. At the May meeting, the voting members will officially approve the bylaws and setting of priorities for 2010. All meetings in 2010 will be held at 4pm at ARDC in the main floor conference room. The next meetings are set for: May, 5, August 4, and November 3, 2010.

Jobs Bill Update

Ron Chicka reported that the House and the Senate still continue to work toward a short term "Jobs Bill" as well as the larger federal reauthorization legislation to follow the expired SAFETEA-LU. The House has approved an amended job-creation bill that extends for 10-months (Dec 31) highway trust fund authorization. The bill is now returned to the Senate before going to full committee. Spending authorization was given another 1 month (March 28th) in order to keep projects moving and cease furloughs of the federal DOT. As of Friday, they are breaking the bill apart and passing pieces of it. Not confident that funding will be available for transportation projects. \$15 million but nothing for transportation, at this point. State DOTs are assuming that this funding will not be available, which will impact the projects we amended into the TIP in February...to be continued.

Green Jobs Update, Ron Chicka

Ron Chicka reported that he has been representing the MIC by working on the Transportation issue section that has focal points of the former US Steel plant as a new jobs center; the Bayfront plan and its potential as a jobs growth area; and DTA's possible plans to extend service hours. Together with Port Authority staff, an Action Plan was drafted that outlines the transportation infrastructure needs for the US Steel site that would make it more 'marketable' for Duluth. This is a long-term endeavor and one that will require many partners including local, state and federal levels of government. CN, the predominant landowner, would also be a key player in future redevelopment. Our Action Plan discusses the possibility of an Intermodal Center at this location moving goods between rail and truck modes. The most important objective to making this happen is to have the proper amenities in place such as adequate connections to I-35 and the ability for the main arterials to handle large or heavy loads as well as bridge clearance issues.

10. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Baker adjourned the meeting at 8:26 pm.