



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

**MEETING SUMMARY**

**Wednesday, May 19, 2010, 7:00 PM**

<b>Meeting Location</b>	St. Louis County Historic Depot, Duluth, MN	
<b>Meeting Chair(s)</b>	Nick Baker, WI Co-chair	
<b>Note Taker</b>	Rondi Watson	
<b>Members Present</b>	Broc Allen	Douglas County Suburban Townships
	Nick Baker	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	Warren Bender	Superior Common Council
	Wayne Boucher	City of Hermantown
	Earl Elde	St. Louis County Suburban Townships
	Melanie Hendrickson	Duluth Transit Authority
	Denise McDonald	Superior Common Council
	Troy Foucault	City of Proctor
	Kay McKenzie	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	Cindy Moe	St. Louis County Suburban Townships
	David Montgomery	City of Duluth – Citizen Rep
	Dan Olson	Superior Common Council
	Steve O’Neil	St. Louis County Board
	Jim Paine	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
<b>Members Absent</b>	Tony Cuneo*	Duluth City Council
	Kerry Gauthier	Duluth City Council
	Kevin Norbie*	City of Superior – Citizen Rep
	Vacant	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	* Excused	
<b>Others Present</b>	Bill Bennett	
	Ron Chicka	ARDC / MIC Director
	James Gittemeier	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Robert Herling	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Tim Hohn	ARDC / MIC Intern
	Chuck Liddy	Miller Dunwiddie Architecture
	Paul May	Miller Dunwiddie Architecture
	Andy McDonald	ARDC / MIC Principal Planner
	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 7:01 p.m. All meeting attendees introduced themselves. Ron Chicka introduced new MIC member Denise McDonald, appointed to replace Ed Anderson as a representative of the Superior City Council.

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

## 2. Committee Business

### 4/21/10 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** Nick Baker/Troy Foucault moved to approve the 4/21/10 meeting summary as  
**Discussion** presented. There was no discussion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.  
**& Vote**

## 3. St. Louis County Union Depot Master Plan

Paul May, Chuck Liddy and Bill Bennett introduced themselves as members of the consulting team that developed the final master plan for Duluth's Union Depot, a year long process that the County initiated in anticipation of passenger rail service being reestablished between Duluth and the Twin Cities.

Bill Bennett gave some background on the project -- St. Louis County owns the Depot, which is classified as a national historic site and includes almost 10 acres. Establishment of the Northern Lights Express passenger rail service from the Twin Cities would potentially revive its function as the passenger rail terminal for the Duluth stop. The study included three components—a **Site Plan** for the Depot complex, which examines how to accommodate passenger rail facilities and operations within the St. Louis County Depot Complex; an **Area Master Plan**, to guide future land use and economic development surrounding the Depot Complex and an **Economic Analysis**, which outlines current and potential future market conditions and potential to capture economic growth afforded by new rail service and associated development. The planning process involved several meetings with many area stakeholders including current Depot tenants, the Greater Downtown Council and other groups, as well as two public meetings.

He reported that the bottom line result of the Site Plan is that it demonstrates that the Depot facility absolutely can be turned into a 21st century station and the Area Master Plan and Economic Analysis show great potential for commercial and residential development with potential to add to the area's tax base. He added that they thought it was important to include the historic public buildings and government center as part of the character of the "area of influence."

He stressed that this is a conceptual study with the goal of getting people on the same page—no engineering attached, with design specifics to be addressed at a later stage. He added that this project was all about evaluating connectivity—the DTA's proposed intermodal facility would work synergistically with the Depot project to create a multi-modal transportation hub. A key component of the site plan involves bike and pedestrian links that enhance the functionality of the site – many drawn from prior planning studies conducted by the MIC. They are also looking at how people can get to destinations within and outside the city.

Chuck Liddy added that Minnesota's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) dictates the way the site can be developed, based on original uses; they have defined these areas based on the original deed. One requirement was to maintain the original "butterfly" canopies – which definitely influenced the redesign. This is one reason they are planning to disconnect the Duluth playhouse facility from the Depot facility, creating an open plaza/public space. This will unlink the two facilities, so the Duluth Playhouse would no longer be under the County's jurisdiction. They want each separate building to be self-sufficient, with dedicated parking, etc. There are currently 12 tenants in this facility. The Master Plan incorporates several different self-sufficient phases of development.

Ron Chicka added that the MIC's recent Downtown Modal Connections Study contributed to the larger Depot plan, with recommendations including improvements to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue West connection to the Bayfront, as well as the Munger Trail extension.

Questions/Comments:

Ron Chicka asked what components might move forward, if any, whether or not the train service is established? *Basic recommendations could definitely include opening the main front door; renovating the historic facility, with a view toward the Bayfront; improving a connection under 5<sup>th</sup> avenue; additionally, separating the Depot and the Playhouse would have some advantages for each.*

Would Michigan Street remain a one-way? Wouldn't two-way make more sense if this is a prominent destination? *Has not really been studied – the multimodal facility might need more flexibility as well.*

How much state funding would be needed or sought? *Costs for the depot site itself approximately \$33 million. Not clear at this point; one possible source would be the new MN state legacy (arts/historical) grants 3/8 of 1% sales tax – up to \$750,000– other historical sources could be tapped or explored as well. Federal funds would likely be 80%. A concept study such as this, for less space and new uses, is definitely a process, complicated by not knowing if any of the funding will come through. Fortunately Congressman Oberstar has been very supportive of this entire initiative – the appeal to him is in the big picture. Commented also that it's unfortunate that Dave Obey will no longer be part of the process.*

Steve O'Neil commented that he got an earful from existing tenant; they will need to be accommodated.

Nick Baker commented that individual communities (such as Superior) will also need to develop plan and pay for their own depots, requiring substantial investments and a projected four year start up; noted that Douglas County has no plan at this point. Many other communities along the line are still interested in becoming connection points as well, both on the main line and as feeder lines, for example to Hibbing.

He added that in spite of Oberstar's support for this project; other deciding factors will be – how fast will the train go, and how much will gas cost? He is concerned that an average of 79 mph is not fast enough – trying to work out a deal with BNSF to reinforce the tracks to accommodate faster (90-100 mph) average speeds, which in turn adds to the cost.

Kay McKenzie commented that based on her conversations, Nick Milroy at the state legislature doesn't have this project on his radar screen and may need to be contacted on this topic.

#### 4. Draft 2011-2014 Duluth Area Transportation Improvement Program

James Gittemeier presented the draft 2011-2014 Duluth area TIP for review and urged jurisdictions to review their listed projects and report any corrections or changes to him ASAP.

He reviewed the listed federally funded transportation projects, to include: (see slide)

##### **Roadway Projects – 8.3 miles**

- 2011 - Anderson Rd
- 2013 - 10th Ave East
- 2013 - Martin Rd
- 2014 - I-35 county line to Boundary Ave
- 2014 - Hwy 2 Proctor to I-35

**Transit projects** to follow the normal acquisition schedule:

- 2011 – 3 STRIDE buses
- 2012 – 10 regular route buses
- 2013 – 6 STRIDE buses
- 2014 – 10 regular route buses

##### **Bridges**

- 2011 – I-35 at Midway Rd
- 2012 – Blatnik Bridge
- 2013 – TH 23 (Grand Ave)
- 2014 – Bong Bridge

**Bike/Ped** – James commented that there are more bike and ped projects programmed than ever – quite a lot of sidewalks to be built with SRTS funds, and 6.8 miles of trail to be constructed as well:

- 2011 – SRTS (Congdon, Lester Park & Stowe)
- 2011 – Cross City Trail Phase 1
- 2012 – Lakewalk Extension 4 & 5
- 2013 – Cross City Trail Phase 2
- 2014 – Cross City Trail Phase 3

He closed by requesting that the committee release the draft TIP for a 30-day public comment period, to run from May 20 to June 18. He added that air quality conformity will be conducted for all projects and that a public meeting is set for 5:30 pm on Wednesday, June 16 at the Hampton Inn in Canal Park. The final TIP will be presented for approval at the July MIC meetings.

**Motion Discussion & Vote** Steve O'Neil/Broc Allen moved to release the draft TIP as presented for a 30-day public comment period, effective May 20, 2010. There was no discussion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

## 5. Draft 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan

Robert Herling reported that a complete draft of the updated Duluth Superior Long Range Transportation Plan, "Directions 2035" is ready for review by the TAC and MIC boards. This is coming to the end of a 2-year development process – and at this point we have a limited amount of time for the internal (MIC, TAC and agency review). He described the next two weeks as the "last call" for comments, asked all TAC and MIC members to make this a priority.

He added that he and other MIC staff recently presented this plan to staff at MnDOT in St. Paul which he described as a good opportunity "for us to educate them" about our plan. The feedback received was generally positive, although they have yet to actually review the text.

He gave a bit of background on this two-year process: the current draft reflects an increased commitment and strategies to gain input from the public as well as a more action oriented emphasis on goals, objectives and strategies. The information has been reorganized and utilizes more visualization and fewer pages of text. Although the draft and the final plans will be delivered in a pdf format on the MIC website, MIC staff is ultimately aspiring to a dedicated website for the long range plan with improved interactive mapping capability. The key pieces of the plan are really the Goals and Objectives section as well as the jurisdictional project lists. The plan addresses all modes of transportation and also includes "for future study" projects.

He commented that our area has a very extensive system in place, with a lot of transportation infrastructure relative to the population, which means the future need for preservation is much more significant than projects to expand the system. Major identified concerns were aging infrastructure (maintenance/preservation) as well as safety needs– this prioritization process info was used especially when working with the jurisdictions to select projects for inclusion.

Demographically the trend for our area shows only modest population growth. While job growth is happening in the cities of Duluth and Superior, residential growth is spreading to outer areas. Traffic models depict a related increase in commuting times.

He added that an important requirement of this plan is that it needs to demonstrate financial capability--that we can show that the funding will actually be available for the planned projects. Several other project assessments are required as well—environmental impacts, etc.

He noted that this type of analysis, however, is much more complicated than it might appear because the cities, counties and DOTs don't use the same set of assumptions or timeframes. As one example, the projects and costs section strongly emphasizes transit projects – because the DTA has a lot more detail about its projected capital needs than do the individual jurisdictions.

He again stressed that the 12-day internal review process is now underway, and that we will need TAC member review and comment ASAP, in advance of the release of the draft plan that is scheduled to begin on June 1, 2010. The date of release will depend largely on feedback received from FHWA between now and then. The MIC staff requests that all TAC and MIC members take the opportunity to review the draft plan and provide input back to the staff before the June 1<sup>st</sup> date. He closed by requesting a motion to release the draft plan for the mandated 30-day public comment period, effective June 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Motion** Broc Allen/Warren Bender moved to release the draft for the 30-day public  
**Discussion** comment period from June 1 – June 30, 2010.

**& Vote**

*Kay McKenzie asked how often the plan is updated – will there be new census data to incorporate, in particular working from home projections and impacts on travel patterns. Since 2010 census data isn't available right now, it will be incorporated into the next update, which is required every 4 years. Earl Elde asked how much longer we will have extra Air Quality requirements. We were hoping they would end in 2014, but if AQ standards are tightened at the federal level, as anticipated, it will probably mean we will need to continue this analysis for our TIPs and LRTPs into the future...*

There was no discussion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

## 6. Harbor Planning Update

Andy McDonald reported that staff from the Detroit office of the Army Corps of Engineers has organized a meeting on May 12-13 at the Lake Superior Maritime Visitor Center on the topic of Duluth-Superior harbor dredged material management. They called in a lot of stakeholders, and covered a long list of Duluth-Superior harbor topics.

One message from the Corps was loud and clear: they will not be building new Confined Disposals Facilities or CDFs – that's what lent the sense of urgency to this topic. There is a need to dispose of 20 million yards of dredge materials from the harbor over the next 20 years. Erie Pier is part of the mix but unless they can get to the point of re-using it all, they will need other options as well, that is the point of the projects included in the Dredge Materials Management Plan (DMMP) that this meeting was called to address.

He added that it was unfortunate that the large nearby Duluth megaproject would not be utilizing available fill material from Erie Pier. The Port Authority reported that despite their efforts at communication, they were very disappointed to learn that MnDOT had explicitly excluded the use of Erie Pier materials in their contracts. As a result, a lot more truck transport will be required to haul in fill from outside this area, while the useable materials right alongside the project are going to be shipped to outlying areas.

The MPCA has a long history of data on the composition of the Erie Pier materials and testing procedures are defined for residential and commercial use. The coarse materials are safe; the only issues are copper and arsenic which is naturally occurring in the soils in this area. The biggest issue is basically a perception problem - this is a viable resource, we need to educate the public as well as the municipalities (county, city and state) that not only are these materials safe and readily available but also that this needs to happen for the bigger picture of dredge materials management.

However, there are many agencies with different processes and standards – and better coordination is needed. The goal now is to analyze the internal and inter-agency processes within MnDOT, the MPCA and the Army Corps to figure out how this opportunity was missed.

On a related note, Andy reviewed the efforts to update the Harbor Partnering Agreement to encourage communication and understanding among stakeholders. A working group of the HTAC has identified potential partners whose interest areas include dredge materials management; information exchange; maritime commerce; promoting mutual understanding of partners' objectives and constraints and encouraging timely problem solving. It is planned that this initiative will culminate with some type of event or signing ceremony later this year.

## 7. Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Update

James Gittemeier reported on the following two initiatives that are currently underway:

### **Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)**

The next BPAC meeting will be held in late May, including the new voting members of the committee. This first meeting with the voting members will include a background and overview of the BPAC's work as well as setting the direction of the BPAC for 2010.

### **Bike to Work Day**

MIC staff is coordinating Bike to Work Day events for 2010. A number of events are being planned this year, including a "Just Bike" event on May 20th at Bayfront Park during the American League of Bicyclists National Bike to Work Week. In addition, the MIC is coordinating a bike to work "Morning Commuter Break" event for Duluth and Superior. Each event will take place on Friday, June 11th from 6:30am to 8:30am. The Duluth event will take place at Minnesota Power Plaza at Lake Ave and Superior Street and the Superior event will take place at Belknap and Tower. At these events there will be bicycle commuter information, safety checks and refreshments.

## 8. Project Updates

### **Public Involvement / Social Media Consultant**

Rondi Watson reported that we are looking to expand our use of online interactive techniques to make our plans and programs more accessible to a wider audience in our public participation efforts. Several web-based resources (e.g., social networking tools such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter) appear to have the potential to complement our traditional public participation efforts (e.g., dsmic.org website, print ads, press releases, in-person public meetings, etc.).

However, before launching any new initiatives, we want to better understand what the full range of communications and social media options might be, and how to effectively shape and target our messages to improve the number and the quality of the responses we receive. Therefore, we have hired a social media and marketing consultant ([PureDriven](#) from Two Harbors, MN) to assist us in developing an overall communications plan to enhance our public participation efforts. MIC staff participated in the first of two strategic planning sessions on May 12, facilitated by Christopher Swanson and Patrick Garmoe of PureDriven. We will keep you apprised of our progress on this new initiative.

### **Connecting Duluth- Fit City Duluth**

James Gittemeier reported that over the last 3 weeks, six public meetings have been held in locations across the city to discuss bike routes. The meetings were put on by Fit City Duluth, the MIC, and the City of Duluth and sponsored by LISC. At these meetings the public was asked about what transportation routes they currently use to bicycle, which routes would they use if they were safer and to provide addition input on bicycle in Duluth. The data from these interactive work sessions will be compiled and put into a report. This report will be presented at a TAC and MIC meeting this summer, and will help guide the update of the bike route maps, as well as future bicycle initiatives, plans & studies.

### **TIGER II Grant Application**

Ron Chicka reported that a second phase of the TIGER Discretionary Grants "TIGER II" was recently announced by the USDOT. It is a \$600 million competitive grant process for surface transportation projects targeted for capital investments in highway or bridge projects, public transportation projects, passenger and freight rail projects, port and infrastructure investments and intermodal facilities. Final applications are due in August. In the last round of the TIGER grant process, MNDOT and the Port authority had put together a project involving improvements to I-35 and roadways and facilities the near the Port offices. All jurisdictions that may consider a project have been or are being alerted.

### **Blatnik and Bong Bridge Study**

Ron Chicka reported that the consultant team has been regularly meeting with DOT and MIC staff to provide an update of tasks conducted. A large- and small-scale model for traffic in the area has been assembled and run to determine impact on the network if the Bong has to be fully closed over the 2014 construction season. Specific intersections are under analysis to determine traffic needs under this scenario. If results are available by the TAC and MIC meeting dates, we will update the committees accordingly. A more detailed analysis will be presented to the Boards in the summer.

## **9. Adjournment**

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Baker adjourned the meeting at 8:16 pm.