



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, August 18, 2010, 7:00 PM

Meeting Location	Hermantown Public Safety Building Training Center, Hermantown, MN	
Meeting Chair(s)	Nick Baker, WI Co-chair	
Note Taker	Rondi Watson	
Members Present	Broc Allen	Douglas County Suburban Townships
	Keith Allen	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	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
	Jim Paine	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
Members Absent	Tony Cuneo*	Duluth City Council
	Kerry Gauthier	Duluth City Council
	Kevin Norbie*	City of Superior – Citizen Rep
	Steve O’Neil	St. Louis County Board
	* Excused	
Others Present	James Gittemeier	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Robert Herling	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Tim Hohn	ARDC / MIC Intern
	Sheldon Johnson	NWRPC / MIC Deputy Director
	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. Sheldon Johnson introduced new Douglas County Board member Keith Allen, appointed to replace Mike Coyle. Chair Baker asked if there were any changes to the agenda. None were put forward.

2. Committee Business

7/21/10 Meeting Summary

Chair Baker asked if there were any changes to the summary from the last meeting (annual joint meeting with the TAC and MIC). Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve.

Motion Warren Bender/Earl Elde moved to approve the 7/21/10 meeting summary as
Discussion presented. There was no discussion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.
& Vote

3. Draft 2011-2014 Superior Area Transportation Improvement Program

Sheldon Johnson presented information about the draft 2011-2014 Superior Area Transportation Improvement Program. Eight projects were submitted, including four highway projects totaling \$13.7 million (federal) and four rail projects totaling \$200,000 (federal) and \$400,000 (state) as well as transit investments with federal funding levels in the range of \$418,000-\$457,000.

He gave details about the four highway projects:

USH 2/Belknap Street from Hill Ave to East 2nd Street (2011)

Replace the existing pavement, sidewalks and street lighting. Repair the existing storm sewer system and construct new sidewalk in the NW quadrant of the Belknap and 2nd Street intersection.

Blatnik Bridge (2012)

Painting of the trusses and deck sealing. This is a border bridge – MnDOT is the lead agency. Costs are shared 50/50 with MnDOT.

Bong Bridge (2014)

Replace existing pavement, pavement marking and permanent sign replacement. Concrete deck overlay, abutments surface repair and re-spraying of the slope paving.

North 28th Street from Hill Ave to Bardon Ave (2011-Phase 1)

Phase 1 would be a full reconstruction of North 28th Street with grading, new pavement section, etc., from Hill Avenue to approximately 1320 feet east.

Sheldon added that upon approval, the draft TIP will be released for a 30-day public comment period, which will run from August 19 through September 17. The final TIP will be presented for approval at the October MIC meetings.

Motion Ed Anderson/Warren Bender moved to approve draft Superior Area TIP for
Discussion release for public comment as presented. Baker asked if there was no discussion
& Vote and the motion was approved unanimously.

4. Long Range Transportation Plan Projects Interactive Mapping (list link)

Robert Herling presented the interactive map of the long-range transportation projects that he developed as part of the MIC's Long Range Transportation Plan, "Directions 2035." He demonstrated how to use this tool to obtain information about the specific projects listed in the LRTP.

He added that the MIC's GIS Specialist, Kody Thurnau, will continue to develop it in association with the Duluth and Superior TIPs so the interface between the projects in the LRTP and those in the Transportation Improvement Programs is improved. He also plans to add functionality to the interactive map to allow queries.

5. Kirkus Street Land Use Plan

James Gittemeier introduced the area for the Kirkus Street Land Use Plan. This planning process is an implementation of Proctor's Comprehensive Plan, which calls for identifying future land uses in this area that is transitional between residential, commercial and public uses. He added that after this plan is adopted, zoning codes will be updated based on its recommendations.

He noted that the Plan's task force includes representatives from the school district and many other stakeholders in the area. They are collecting background information, including an examination of Proctor's housing and retail trends, to devise a future land use strategy for the mostly undeveloped southern portion of Proctor.

They are particularly interested in anticipating the City's future housing needs, based on the city's demographics, which include working adults (baby boomers) and young families. Their analysis shows they will need to better accommodate an aging population (i.e., with no-maintenance, single-level dwellings). The retail market analysis shows a need for additional uses; however, new ventures will need to be multi-purpose to succeed (e.g., groceries along with another retail outlet, instead of a stand-alone grocery store).

James closed by mentioning that public outreach will begin in September, with a focus on developing the vision for the area.

6. Developing Transportation Measures for the Duluth-Superior Area

Robert Herling reported that MIC staff had attended the 2010 Minnesota MPO Conference in Fargo, ND last month and were alerted to the increasing attention being given to performance measures in transportation planning. The National Surface Transportation Policy Commission's report to Congress strongly recommended that data-driven decisions need to be made. It is anticipated that both states and local governments will be affected by the direction of the next transportation bill, which will likely require that all units of government establish transportation plans with specific performance standards, measure their progress annually in meeting these standards; and periodically adjust their plans as necessary to achieve specific objectives.

Implications for the MIC include: more accountability; need to demonstrate prudent investments; need to align LRTPs and TIPs with strategic direction; and an emphasis on cooperation and consensus building.

He noted that even though it will be four years until next LRTP update is due, by starting now there is time for research and development by potentially collecting 3 years of data. It also allows time to develop SMART objectives, per FHWA guidelines:

Specific – sufficient to guide approaches

Measurable – quantitative

Agreeable – consensus among partners

Realistic – can be accomplished

Time-bound – identified timeframe

The FHWA is encouraging MPOs to start early and to start small, by identifying one or two key performance measures for each transportation objective. He added that the MIC's recently adopted LRTP, "Directions 2035," sets forth 29 objectives relevant to the Duluth-Superior area, and noted that he hopes to work closely with TAC and MIC members in developing related performance measures in the coming year that are both useful and appropriate in further advancing the various transportation objectives of the area.

7. Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Update

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

Bike-Ped Advisory Committee (BPAC)

He reported that MIC staff is implementing a new more interactive communication strategy for the BPAC. The BPAC will be the MIC's first committee where online social media outreach techniques will be undertaken. The idea is to get discussions and information out there among each other and to get it out to a larger audience.

Superior Bike Routes

The Bicycle Compatibility Index (BCI) model has been run for the proposed bike routes in Superior. MIC staff will be presenting the BCI model results, and next steps including forming a steering committee to move this project forward.

Bike Signage Inventory

The MIC's summer intern, Tim Hohn, has completed a complete inventory of all the existing (and missing) bike signage, including geographic coordinates utilizing GPS, as well as noting signage type and wayfinding arrow and text information specific to each sign location. Jim Foldesi described this as a maintenance issue, and that he would be interested in having this information. James responded that he would report this info to all affected jurisdictions for follow up.

Connecting Duluth Bike Route Assessment

An intensive data collection effort has been completed. He introduced Codie Leseman, intern for Fit City Duluth, who explained that one of their primary goals is to make it safer to bike in Duluth. They held six public meetings with about 120 participants, total, and administered surveys to collect information about preferred routes, bike rack locations, and recreational trail locations. The final assessment document will present a series of draft maps illustrating the information they

collected, including routes cyclists currently use versus those routes cyclists would prefer to use. The goal of the assessment is to serve as a reference tool for planners, engineers, and other groups working to improve Duluth's bike route system. One clear message was that Woodland Avenue and 4th Street East were the roadways of most concern for cyclists. The final report will include a lot of interesting ideas and relevant data.

8. Project Updates

I-35 Congestion Mitigation Ridership Study

Robert Herling reported that the MIC is awaiting word from MnDOT's Office of Transit as to whether the DTA will be receiving funding designated for studying the effectiveness of transit mitigation during major construction projects. The DTA has applied for this funding in hopes of being able to gather additional information about the effectiveness of its increased service along Grand Ave. during the 2010-2011 I-35 "Mega Project." The MIC's role would likely be to gather survey data about who is using the bus service, whether it is serving mostly local residents or if it is taking people off the highway during construction.

ARDC Regional Comprehensive Plan for Sustainability/Livability Project

ARDC is seeking to form a consortium that will apply for the federally-funded Sustainable Communities Planning Grant (SCPG). Based on the grant's guidance, ARDC proposes that the SCPG application cover the entire seven-county Arrowhead Region and at a minimum, the Arrowhead Sustainability Consortium will include the Metropolitan Interstate Council, the City of Duluth, St. Louis County, at least one regional Foundation, at least one Tribe, Iron Range Resources, and the Northeast Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnership. The amount requested is to be \$1,000,000. To get to the match needed, each partner (including the MIC) would be asked to provide \$10,000 of commitment which can be in-kind (staff time).

Potentially, this ARDC grant would direct funds our way to go toward MIC projects currently in the mix that adhere to the criteria of the grant – to promote alternative transportation modes and project work regarding infill and Brownfield development in the MIC area jurisdictions. Also, this amount of time commitment would be spread out over the course of three years. After consultation with the MIC Board Chairs, I sent a letter of support on behalf of the MIC for inclusion in the application materials, due August 23rd to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Earl Elde noted that Midway Road is experiencing a lot of extra traffic due to highway construction; main concern is with excessive speeds. Wayne Boucher noted that the extra use of the Midway Road is calling out its design defects. It's the one area of Hermantown that needs some help right now.

9. Roundtable Discussion of Local Transportation Issues

Noting the short length of the meeting, Chair Baker invited discussion on local transportation issues.

Tony Cuneo expressed that neighborhood residents are expressing uncertainty about having the one-way streets repaved this summer; concerns about speeds.

Kody Leseman suggested that one possible solution for cycling on 2nd Street might be to restrict parking to one side of the street, by dedicating the upper shoulder as a bike lane.

Melanie Hendrickson added that 60th Avenue East is really congested, it's really difficult to get onto Superior Street especially on the weekends.

Dave Montgomery noted that as the Lakewalk is being extended east (Phase 4), there are some challenging yet interesting design considerations for crossing Highway 61 at the Lester River bridge as you approach Brighton Beach; technical issues present some opportunities, though, for accommodating bicycles and pedestrians. This area also needs consideration as a "gateway" to Duluth and into a residential area.

Keith Allen asked about next year's I-35 construction. James Gittemeier reported that at Tuesday's TAC meeting, MnDOT's Denny Johnson had reported that the I-35 "mega project" is going better than expected; traffic moving along reasonably well. They've been modifying their traffic controls as the season has progressed. Main problems/complaints have been with limited access points rather than traffic congestion and flow. The main frustration has been with the other local projects happening simultaneously. Next year should be better in this regard. At the end of this construction season, the highway will be back to 4 lanes. Next year, northbound lanes from Central Avenue to Garfield will be the focus.

10. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Baker adjourned the meeting at 8:14 pm.