



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council
MEETING SUMMARY
Wednesday, December 14, 2011, 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Location	Douglas County Government Center Rm 270, Superior WI	
Meeting Chair(s)	Nick Baker, Wisconsin Co-Chair	
Note Taker	Laurel Davis	
Members Present	Broc Allen	Douglas County Suburban Townships
	Ed Anderson	City of Superior – Citizen Rep
	Nick Baker	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	Warren Bender	Superior Common Council
	Wayne Boucher	City of Hermantown
	David Brenna	City of Proctor
	Bob Browne	Superior Common Council
	Earl Elde	St. Louis County Suburban Townships
	Dan Hartman	Duluth City Council
	Melanie Hendrickson	Duluth Transit Authority
	Kay McKenzie	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	Dan Olson	Superior Common Council
	Steve O’Neil	St. Louis County Board
	Jim Paine	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
Members Absent	Keith Allen*	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	Tony Cuneo	Duluth City Council
	Cindy Moe*	St. Louis County Suburban Townships
	David Montgomery	City of Duluth – Citizen Rep
	* Excused	
Others Present	Jeff Abramson	Ayers Associates
	Ron Chicka	ARDC/MIC Director
	Laurie Davis	ARDC/MIC Administrative Assistant
	Robert Herling	ARDC/MIC Planner
	Sheldon Johnson	NWRPC
	Morrie Luke	WisDOT
	Andy McDonald	ARDC/MIC Principal Planner
	Tim Nimsgern	7 th District Wisconsin

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

Wisconsin Chair Nick Baker called the meeting to order at 7:04. All meeting attendees introduced

themselves.

2. Committee Business

October 19, 2011 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/Earl Elde moved to approve the 10-14-11 meeting summary as
Discussion presented. There was no discussion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.
& Vote

Nick Baker announced that work has been done to clarify the MIC's role with ARDC and he hopes that over the coming year improvements will be made that will allow the MIC to work better. He also mentioned that MIC members would be receiving an evaluation form for Ron Chicka and urged everyone to fill that out and return it.

Officers Election

Ron Chicka reported that Dave Montgomery had nominated Steve O'Neil and Earl Elde to retain their respective roles as Minnesota Co-Chair and MIC Representative to the ARDC Board. Warren Bender said they were putting Nick Baker forward to continue as Wisconsin Co-Chair

Motion Ed Anderson/Kay McKenzie moved to approve the committee chair appointments.
Discussion There was no discussion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.
& Vote

3. US 2/I-35 Bong Bridge Rehabilitation

Morrie Luke introduced the presentation on the rehabilitation of the Bong Bridge, stating that they generally expect to get about thirty years out of the decks of these bridges before they have to rehabilitate them, especially in our harsh environment, and that this is simply the next step in the lifecycle of the bridge.

Jeff Abramson of Ayers Associates then took over to run through the presentation as it was given at the public involvement meetings. He said that a lot of data gathering and traffic counts were done and they were now in the process of developing plans for the rehabilitation.

The US Highway 2 / Bong Bridge and approaches project begins at the intersection of USH 2 and Belknap in Superior and continues to Duluth terminating prior to the intersection of USH 2 and Michigan Street. Preliminary design is now underway with inter-agency coordination going into 2012 along with a public involvement component slated to conclude by the summer of next year. Construction is scheduled for 2014 and 2015 as the project would require phasing over the two year period to allow for limited traffic usage over the bridge during this time. The project includes mill and overlay of the deck, replacement of structural joints, painting of

Metropolitan Interstate Council
December 14, 2011 Meeting Summary

the truss, lighting upgrades and sidewalk maintenance.

Steve O'Neil asked if the sidewalk would be closed for a portion of the construction. Abramson said it would have to be as it was in need of significant repair itself. O'Neil then asked if they knew what the volume of use was, and Abramson replied that they didn't, but were going to need to find out so they can determine how to service those users.

Kay McKenzie asked if they would be putting more Wrong Way signs up, and Morrie Luke said there would be at least two.

Abramson went on to say that improvements to the intersection of Belknap Street with the bridge approaches will also be incorporated into the project with a potential new roadway connection that would extend to the north into the nearby industrial park. The specific traffic control device at this location is currently under review by the DOT and the City of Superior. Additionally, intersection modifications and signal installation at the south approach of the Blatnik Bridge will also be conducted as preparation for added diverted traffic is taken into account with this project.

Although the bulk of the project involves rehabilitation, there is one area where significant redesigning will occur. The intersection of USH 2 and Belknap is being studied to determine whether a signalized intersection or a roundabout would be the best solution there. Abramson said they compared factors such as cost and safety and they are recommending a roundabout at this time. Matt Dickenson of WisDOT pointed out that traffic coming off the bridge can be going very fast and if they encounter a green light, they tend to just continue on through at a high speed, but they are forced to slow down for the roundabout each time. He said safety was what really jumped out with this option. Morrie Luke also mentioned that roundabouts are easier and more cost effective to plow, and that the roundabout could be dressed up and make a gateway into Superior.

Ed Anderson asked if this roundabout would be better designed than the ones in Rice Lake, to which Luke replied that they would be, and that the ones in Rice Lake were not what you wanted to see. Anderson then asked if the roundabout would allow for pedestrians. Abramson said they not planning to put sidewalks there.

Kay McKenzie requested that lots of training videos and public education take place because there aren't any roundabouts in the city and people are not familiar with them. Luke stressed that they would, since this would actually be the first on the region and would require a big education push.

Jim Paine asked if a lot of roundabouts get approached by high speed highways. Abramson said that, yes, there are others they can draw information from.

Nick Baker asked about the turns for Pennsylvania, Missouri and Maryland Avenues because he had concerns about having three exits all in a row there and traffic slowing down for them, and wondered if some of them couldn't be blocked off. Luke said those fell outside the boundaries of the project and it would be up to the City of Superior to address that.

Broc Allen asked if the viaduct on Belknap would need work, and Luke replied that it was outside the boundaries of the project.

Metropolitan Interstate Council
December 14, 2011 Meeting Summary

Luke then discussed how by connecting North Garfield, the truck route is enhanced and showed how a roundabout would make access to that area very easy and smooth for the trucks, while still keeping them at reasonable speeds and safely controlling that traffic.

Ed Anderson commented that there has been a lot of discussion about getting the trucks off Winter. Chicka added that this does address many of the truck route issues that have been brought up and commended the DOT for looking at the roundabout option.

Broc Allen asked if you were forced to take a right on Garfield, where could you turn around. Like said going one block over to Maryland would do it.

Bob Browne asked if this would turn Maryland into a cut through route, and Luke said that it probably would. Chicka commented that it would only be for about a block. Luke also said that Garfield was a straight route, but people may be less inclined to go over one block.

Dan Olson asked if they had funding sources as part of the presentation. Abramson said he didn't have that information for this presentation, though he did mention that the Blatnik bridge prep project qualified for highway safety improvement funds.

Abramson stated that the Blatnik project looked at removing the onramp and adding a right turn lane, adding extra width, installing a signal light and adding dual left turns.

Broc Allen commented that it seemed to be a pretty wide right hand turn for trucks and asked if it would be right on red. Abramson explained that they run turning templates on all the designs to make sure trucks can fit. He also said that it would be a right on red, but that they still had to work out the signal timing.

Abramson went on to discuss the closing of the Bong bridge, stating that a study was done to compare a full closing to the proposed alternate half closing. With a full closure, they identified three intersections that would have significant issues handling the increased traffic, and there were railroad issues. Those intersections are N 3rd St & USH 53, USH 53 & E Street, Hammond Ave & N 5th St. When looking at keeping two lanes open in one direction, the issue of N 3rd St & USH 53 drops off the list entirely, the Blatnik prep project eases the strain on the other two, and the railroad issues become less significant. He also said that incident management was a factor and they felt that having two lanes open made more sense in terms of offloading construction materials, etc. They have spoken to contractors and it's extremely unlikely that the project could be completed in one year and it makes much more sense to plan for two.

Dan Olson asked if they were looking at night time construction, and Abramson said they were considering it, but weren't really at that point yet.

Nick Baker asked what was going to happen with the Hammond Ave & N 5th St intersection. Abramson said at this point they would wait to see what happened with that one and if the issues were significant they could close off some access with temporary measures, and that it was still being discussed. Broc Allen suggested they start with it that way and leave it that way. Ron Chicka commented that the city may have to decide what would happen there because there are businesses involved.

Abramson concluded by outlining what will need to happen next, which includes agency and environmental coordination that starts in December 2011, complete public involvement and the environmental document by July 2012, and finalize plans by April 2013.

Broc Allen commented that something would have to be figured out for pedestrian movement during the season the sidewalk is closed. Luke said they were looking at working something out with the DTA such as creating a shuttle bus. Allen asked if there had been any thought to redesigning the sidewalk, and Luke said that wasn't really possible.

4. 2012-2013 Work Program Final

The Work Program and Budget will be presented for approval at the December meeting. Upon approval, I would seek to get ARDC and NWRPC to agree to enter into contracts for 2012 to carry out the tasks described in the document. Since I mailed out the Work Plan a couple of weeks ago, I have received a couple of comments from TAC and MIC members and have incorporated those into the current version provided with this email. Please provide further comments to me at the meeting itself so that all additions are satisfied. At the meeting, I will provide a brief overview of the short range planning projects lined up for next year.

Ron Chicka presented the 2012-2013 Work Program, noting that the TAC had approved it, and primarily outlining the short range planning projects as follows:

- Duluth Safe Routes to School Site Assessment
- Lincoln Park Multimodal Transportation Assessment
- Superior Transportation Systems Management Study – North End
- Intersection Control Evaluation Planning Study for the Duluth Regional Area
- Duluth Cruise Ship Dock Facility Study
- Air Service and Air Cargo Leakage/Expansion Analysis

He stated that they hoped be kicking off the consultant led projects (the last three) early in 2012 and would most likely being doing them in a somewhat staggered fashion. He also said that the funding is there and these have all been approved by the state. Concerning 2013 short range projects, he noted that the state will also be doing an assessment of the Douglas County Road C truck route. He gave a very brief overview of the ongoing planning areas and long range planning. Of special note is an update to the Project Selection Criteria to reflect long range goals.

Motion Broc Allen/Dan Hartman moved to approve the 2012-2013 Work Program as
Discussion presented. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved
& Vote unanimously.

5. 2011-2014 Duluth Area TIP Amendments #9 & #10

Robert Herling presented two amendments MnDOT is adding for projects to the existing 2011-2014 TIP. The first (amendment #9) is a \$262,500 project to upgrade a number of accesses on STH 23 in Gary New Duluth up to ADA standards, which will include replacing various sidewalk segments in order to match grades.

The second project (amendment #10) involves the installation of various ITS signs on I-35 and STH 23 to provide motorists with travel time information through the upcoming interstate construction in 2012. The accessibility improvements will be funded 80% with federal TEA funds, while the ITS signage will be funded with 50% federal STP funds

Ed Anderson asked if the ITS signs would be temporary or a more permanent version. Herling replied that he thought they would be temporary. Anderson then expressed concern about the cost of temporary signage. Herling said he wasn't entirely sure where the cost lay, but assumed there was cost involved with programming them and setting them up, and offered to make some calls and find out the answer.

Motion Steve O'Neil/Broc Allen moved to approve the TIP amendments as presented.
Discussion There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.
& Vote

6. TSM Assessment of Superior Area Intersections (final)

Discussion that followed staff presentation of the 2011 Superior Transportation System Management (TSM) Assessment at the MIC's October meeting was tabled for further discussion. Staff will present further information and reconvene the conversation about recommendations for the intersection of Hammond Ave & N 5th St, as well as the intersections of Hammond Ave and Tower Ave with Winter Street.

Robert Herling presented the Superior Area TSM and opened up the topic for further discussion, particularly in regards to the intersection of Hammond Ave & 5th St which was tabled at the October meeting.

Dan Hartman asked what the response of the city council had been to these recommendations and Warren Bender replied that it had been very favorable.

Nick Baker asked Kay McKenzie if this was the area where she was concerned about lighting, and she said that is was, and was concerned about pedestrian accidents. She asked if there were any numbers on those. Herling replied that there may have been one, but if there had been multiples, he would have taken note of that. Dan Olson commented that he thought the convenience store lighting detracts from the street lighting.

Ron Chicka noted that in terms of any improvements to this intersection, there may have to be a certain amount of retraining of the public. You have a situation where it's safety vs. businesses when it comes to left turns, and it's a very touchy area.

Bob Browne commented that if people had easier access to the highway, they would use that rather than making the left turn down 5th Street, and if that exit were reconfigured it would ease the issue. Chicka replied that the long term plan was to look at just that, but for now these were the short term recommendations.

Herling asked if they would like to have a request for more lighting added to the TSM, and

Nick Baker said they would.

Chicka pointed out that there will be a new signal placed at the intersection on Hwy 2 which may limit the number of people using 5th Street.

Nick Baker clarified for the board that if approved, these recommendations were going to the city and the DOT.

Ed Anderson asked if there had been any discussion of putting signals in at this intersection. His big concern is people picking up speed to enter the bridge, while you have people coming off the bridge at high speed preparing to make that left turn, and feels a signal would control both these things. Nick Baker asked if this could be added to the list. Chicka replied that it had been looked at and the conclusion was that cueing from the lights would cause problems on the bridge, and there may have been an issue with emergency vehicles. Bob Browne pointed out you get cueing from the trains that backs all the way up the bridge, and Anderson agreed, saying the trains cause more problems than the lights would, and pointed out that lights would also alleviate business concerns because you wouldn't restrict access.

Broc Allen asked why not wait until 2014 when the bridge is closed to do some of these other things, and Nick Baker said we want these ideas out there for when that happens.

Chicka stated that we could look at the travel capacity of the southbound movement, and that we would report back with more information on the signal.

Motion Several motions were made to approve the TSM with the requested additions. A
Discussion verbal vote was taken, but not counted. It was not unanimous, but the motion was
& Vote approved by majority vote.

7. U.S. Senate's MAP-21 Proposed Transportation Bill – MIC Response (Resolution for Consideration)

For the meeting on Wednesday the 14th, I have drafted a resolution for your consideration that states the MIC Policy Board should retain its role as the transportation planning body for the Duluth – Superior metropolitan area and opposes the new population threshold as proposed by the U.S. Senate.

Ron Chicka presented the MIC response to the U.S. Senate's MAP-21 proposed transportation bill, saying that the federal bill is what makes us whole, and the MIC needs to take a stance to the U.S. Senate. He listed off several items of concern to small MPO's contained within the bill, which include several restrictions based on population size and specific instructions on dissolving smaller MPO's. Chicka said under this bill two-thirds of small MPO's would fade away. They would be phased into the state and then the state would have control over transportation decisions and their priorities are not often the local roads.

Ed Anderson commented that he felt there should be a statement that population alone shouldn't be the

only factor determining what tier an MPO belongs in, pointing out that the Duluth-Superior area has harbor, rail, cargo and several modes of transportation and those things need to be taken into consideration. Steve O'Neil agreed, stating that a good strategy would be to push how the MIC is unique and different. Chicka suggested sending a letter to that effect along with the signed resolution. Sheldon Johnson suggested instead that the resolution be sent as is, and then send a letter as a follow up.

Kay McKenzie asked how many MPO's are bi-state. Chicka said there were four along the MN-WI border, but he didn't know how many across the country.

Don Olson thought a cover letter should be included with the resolution stating that the MIC would be following up with another piece. Both Chicka and Nick Baker agreed with that.

Nick Baker then suggested contacting the mayors and asking them to pass similar resolutions supporting our cause, and Sheldon Johnson said the same could be done with the with NWRPC directors.

Motion Broc Allen/Earl Elde moved to approve the resolution as presented. There was no
Discussion further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.
& Vote

8. Duluth Sidewalk Study

Andy McDonald presented the inputs and initial results of the test runs of the Pedestrian Priority Modeling. This modeling process is designed to identify areas most important to sidewalks users. The model has three components – pedestrian generators, pedestrian attractors, and pedestrian detractors. We will discuss what data was used as inputs into the model, how that data was weighted and what the preliminary results look like.

McDonald explained the three components of the model, saying that pedestrian generators included such things as population density, income and employment density. Pedestrian attractors were things like schools, shopping centers, transit centers and parks. Pedestrian detractors included safety, railroads, freeways and speed of traffic.

All these things were given scores based on weighted multipliers and then plotted on a map. When the maps for each of the three components were overlaid, a composite model of the sidewalk system and its usability was created.

Dan Hartman asked if they rated improper use of sidewalk while doing the inventory. McDonald replied that they only recorded what the existing conditions were, but didn't get into recommending changes.

Hartman also asked if there was a consistent trend in the condition of the roads compared to the conditions of their sidewalks. McDonald explained that the inventory didn't look at the roads at all, only sidewalks.

Kay McKenzie asked if the land owners would be billed when it came to making sidewalk improvements.

McDonald said that was a fairly common way to pay for sidewalks, and Warren Bender pointed out that in Superior some of them were paid for with community development block grant money.

9. Central Entrance Corridor Study

MIC staff will be presenting some of the draft recommendations from the study. We will review the results of the pedestrian, bike and transit discussions from the October meetings. We will also show some of the access management recommendations which are very preliminary at this point

Andy McDonald presented some new recommendations to the Central Entrance Corridor Study. For the Anderson Road to Basswood Avenue segment, they are proposing a solid median the entire length with a right in/right out at Robin Avenue. The median would be 6', driving lanes would be 10' and 12', curb and gutter 2', grass boulevard 5', sidewalk 5'. The same style median with these dimensions is proposed from Basswood Avenue to Arlington Avenue. From Arlington Avenue to Blackman Avenue the median would be 12' with the same driving lanes, boulevard and sidewalks, with right in/right out and left turn only accesses along the length. One exception would be Myrtle Street where there would be no median due to its use as a backage road.

Dan Hartman asked if these plans showed any expansion, and McDonald replied that they don't, and they are not looking to buy any right of way at this time. Hartman asked how much right of way was not being used currently. McDonald replied nine feet, and added there's no sidewalk on the north side and we need one. McDonald pointed out that the city wants this to be a community place, and you can't do that if you have curbside sidewalks. He also noted the boulevards would be for snow storage. Hartman asked how these recommendations were going to be presented to the businesses, and McDonald said via public meetings, social media and potentially a mailing to the businesses.

Ron Chicka pointed out that a previous plan in 2002 had a median the whole way along and there weren't as many complaints as you might have thought. He also noted that traffic is generally so tight you can't turn anyway, and a natural median is being formed now. He further noted that Palm Street gives access to all those businesses. Chicka said these recommendations were trying to mirror the city's Small Area Plan, and McDonald agreed, stating they feel these would accomplish that goal.

Hartman then asked if a bike route was planned for Palm Street. McDonald said yes, that there was already one there and it would get more promotion.

David Brenna asked why not do the sidewalks Hollywood style so they can get plowed when the streets are plowed. McDonald said they aren't walkable and don't get used, to which Brenna replied that if the sidewalks don't get shoveled, they can't be used anyway. Kay McKenzie pointed out that sections of Tower and 28th have them and they don't actually get plowed that much.

10. Project Updates

2011-2014 Superior Area TIP Modification, Sheldon Johnson

An administrative amendment to the 2011-2014 Superior Urbanized Area TIP. The amendment is to project 113-08-03 that increases the amount of funds available for the project from \$890,000 to \$1,376,000. No action is required by the MIC.

I-35/DTA Traffic Mitigation Study, Robert Herling

The MIC assisted the DTA with processing survey responses from their effort to survey ridership of the West Mainline during the 2011 construction work on I-35. MIC staff developed a database for the survey responses, which have been transferred to researchers with the University of MN who are carrying out a larger study regarding the effectiveness of various transit strategies as congestion mitigation during large reconstruction projects.

Harbor Planning, Andy McDonald

The HTAC will be meeting on Wednesday December 7th at 9am at the Inn on Lake Superior in Duluth. Our scheduled agenda includes reports of the following projects and activities:

- Army Corps Detroit District Activities in the Duluth-Superior Harbor
- Remediation to Restoration at 21st and 40th Ave. West Project Areas
- Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)
- Erie Pier Dredge Materials: Follow Up from Letter to MPCA and MnDOT Commissioners

Bike/Ped Planning, James Gittemeier

BPAC completed the action planning process in November. The process was set up to understand the role of the committee and the next tasks to be undertaken in the next year. From this series of action planning meetings, the BPAC has decided to focus on expanding the membership, develop more communication opportunities and processes for the committee to be more active, offer committee training on bike and ped initiatives, Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School specifically, and develop outreach and education strategies for the community

Ed Anderson pointed out that our congressional representatives, such as Tim Olson and Mary Willette, have been coming to the HTAC meetings.

11. Adjournment

With no further committee business, Chair Baker asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:59.

Motion

Discussion & Vote

Broc Allen/Wayne Boucher moved to adjourn the meeting. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.