



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council
 TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY
Tuesday, January 15, 2008, 1:30 PM

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|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Meeting Location | WisDOT Lake Superior Room | |
| Meeting Chair | Denny Johnson | |
| Note Taker | Rondi Watson | |
| Members Present | Brian Boder* | St Louis County |
| | John Foschi | City of Proctor |
| | Chuck Froseth | City of Duluth |
| | Paul Halverson | Douglas County |
| | Dennis Jensen | Duluth Transit Authority |
| | Bryn Jacobson | Bike/Pedestrian Rep |
| | Denny Johnson | Mn/DOT District 1 |
| | Walter Leu | Mn/DOT District 1 |
| | Cari Pedersen | City of Duluth |
| | Heather Rand | Mn DEED |
| | Dena Ryan | WisDOT NW Region |
| | Jason Serck | City of Superior |
| Members Absent | Jim Benning | City of Duluth |
| | Jeff Goetzman | City of Superior |
| | Brian Ryks | Duluth Airport Authority |
| | David Salo | City of Hermantown |
| | Jim Sharrow | Duluth Seaway Port Authority |
| | Cindy Voigt* | City of Duluth |
| | * Alternate | |
| Others Present | Holly Butcher | ARDC / MIC Senior Planner |
| | Ron Chicka | ARDC / MIC Director |
| | James Gittemeier | ARDC / MIC Planner |
| | Robert Herling | ARDC / MIC Associate Planner |
| | Sheldon Johnson | NWRPC / MIC Deputy Director |
| | Andy McDonald | ARDC / MIC Principal Planner |
| | Rondi Watson | ARDC / MIC Division Secretary |

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

TAC Vice-Chair Denny Johnson called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. and meeting attendees introduced themselves. No changes to the agenda were put forward.

2. Committee Business – 2008 Officer Elections

Chair Johnson called for nominations for chair and vice-chair for 2008.

Motion and Discussion Jason Serck / Chuck Froseth made a motion to nominate Denny Johnson as TAC chair and Dena Ryan as vice-chair for 2008. *Both nominees indicated that they were willing to serve in this capacity.* There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

3. Committee Business – Meeting Summary of December 11, 2007

Chair Johnson called for amendments or corrections to the previous month's meeting summary. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve.

Motion and Discussion Chuck Froseth/Jason Serck moved to approve the meeting summary from the December 11, 2007 meeting. *Cari Pedersen noted that the meeting location was incorrectly listed. Rondi indicated she would correct it to reflect WITC location.* There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

4. Proctor Comprehensive Plan – Scope of Work

James Gittemeier presented the scope of work for the planned update of Proctor's Comprehensive Plan. He explained that the City updates the plan every 5 years (last completed in 1997 and in 2002). As before, MIC staff will be working with the Proctor Comprehensive Plan Group in this effort. Tasks will involve compiling the citizen survey, creating a Proctor Comprehensive Plan web page, reviewing the previous Comprehensive Plan, updating land use and other geographic information, identifying recent trends and identifying a public involvement strategy. One focus area of this plan will be to determine the future land uses of property along the Kirkus Street corridor, which is a new road scheduled for construction in 2009. The plan is scheduled to be completed in October 2008. He closed by requesting approval of the Scope.

Motion and Discussion John Foschi, with a second from Heather Rand, moved to approve the Scope of Work for the Proctor Comprehensive Plan Update as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

5. UMD-CSS Transportation Assessment – Scope of Work

Andy McDonald presented the Scope of Work for a planned multi-modal transportation study for the UMD and College of St. Scholastica (CSS) campuses and surrounding neighborhoods. He noted that MIC staff recently met with UMD and CSS staff to discuss details of the proposed study and that feedback has been incorporated into the Scope.

He added that the Scope would also incorporate the Woodland Avenue study with a focus on that corridor. Woodland Avenue has the most potential issues, with a proposed new main campus entrance; the proposed closing of Woodland Middle School, a big possibility of conflicts arising if the campus is expanded past the natural boundary of Woodland Avenue. Also the Woodland School site might present a good opportunity for student housing but traffic and pedestrian movements would need to be accommodated. One goal of the Assessment is to get some recommendations to the City of Duluth in time for planned 2011 improvements to Woodland Avenue.

He added that another significant aspect of this plan will be the process that gets UMD, CSS and the City in the same room together. Bob Bruce will serve on the study advisory committee.

Bryn Jacobson expressed an interest in figuring out why more students don't bike to campus the way they do at the Twin Cities campuses. Andy responded that cyclists and pedestrians would be a major focus of this multi-modal study.

He estimated the time frame for completion of the study at 12-18 months; some challenges in the timing of data collection (surveys, snow removal, turning movements, etc.) might arise based on academic schedules.

Motion and Discussion Chuck Froseth, with a second from Cari Pedersen, moved to approve the Scope of Work for the UMD-CSS Area Transportation Study as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

6. Endion Land Use and Transportation Plan

Holly Butcher gave an overview of this study, the purpose of which is to identify solutions to improve safety, traffic flow, multi-modal options and access on London Road (between 10th and 26th Avenues East) and adjacent connections into the Endion neighborhood. It will also project the cumulative transportation impacts from proposed land use changes such as the conceptual Armory/Plaza mixed use district and St. Luke's Hospital's plans to develop the medical campus.

To determine this, small area transportation modeling services of URS Corporation were utilized. URS examined key transportation corridors and made a series of recommendations to the Steering Committee on November 19th regarding future street conversions to two-way, narrowing roadways and traffic signal modifications. Additionally, on December 20th, MIC staff facilitated a walking tour discussion of the St. Luke's Medical Campus along First Street that addressed current barriers to a two-way street design and considerations to accommodate medical facility needs in the future if the street orientation were to change. Staff from St. Luke's, SEH Inc., City of Duluth Engineering, and MIC staff participated.

She stated that pending a final technical report from the consultants, she hoped to put the final plan before the TAC and MIC for approval in February.

7. Northwest Superior Traffic Study

Robert Herling reported that this study is now nearing completion. Initiated in November of 2006, its purpose was to investigate the impact of increased industrial development in northwest Superior on traffic patterns.

The study specifically was intended to help determine whether or not an off-ramp connection between the Bong Bridge (US Hwy. 2) and Susquehanna Avenue would be needed to maintain good levels of service (LOS) under future travel demands. He reported that modeling results from URS Corporation indicated such a connection would not be needed based on LOS alone; nor is a proposed Winter Street connector—it would attract only 8% of newly generated trips.

The results do, however, indicate that improvements at other locations throughout the area will be needed. Specifically, the geometry of several intersections needs to be reconfigured; traffic signals need to be optimized and coordinated; stop signs or signals need to be added at certain intersections, and truck route signage needs to be added.

Robert added that the final document will also contain a series of short, mid and long-term recommendations that are not contingent on the results from the model. They will address issues other than capacity or level of service (LOS), and will focus instead on traffic safety, access management, and infrastructure deficiencies. MIC staff will also be meeting with WisDOT to review the model results and the final recommendations. He plans, at this point, to bring the final document forward to the TAC and MIC for approval in February.

Ron Chicka commented that some of the issues in this study area will come back into play when the MIC initiates a regional freight study.

8. Duluth Heights Survey Results

Andy McDonald reported on the results from the survey, mailed in November to Duluth Heights residents, following up on opinions about the half-closure that was installed last spring. He noted that they got about the same response rate as with the original survey, about 32%.

Most notably, respondents were evenly split on whether they supported the half closure. 50% favored it, 50% opposed it. Therefore, it's up to the City to decide whether to keep it or take it down, although they had been hoping to get a more definitive yes or no response from the neighborhood. MIC staff will meet with City of Duluth staff to review the survey results in detail and discuss the next steps in this process.

In the discussion that followed, it was noted that the construction of Joshua Avenue is still the preferred solution, but due to City finances that type of project has to be considered a long-term solution at best. Even so, a project to determine the alignment of a Joshua connector will begin this year. He added that MIC staff will meet with City of Duluth staff to review the results in detail and discuss the next steps in this process.

Dennis Jensen noted that many residents are asking why a "no left turn" sign isn't placed on Arrowhead Road to discourage the main source of cut-through traffic. Andy replied that St. Louis County had utilized quite a bit of State Aid funding to accommodate the turn, and therefore might be penalized for changing it back; also Brian Boder speculated that behaviors wouldn't change, drivers would continue to take that turn despite the signage.

9. 2009-2012 Duluth Urbanized Area TIP Project Applications

James Gittemeier reported that this year there were only 2 project applications submitted for the 2012 federal funding:

DTA/Bus Purchase: 10 regular route buses, 5 will be hybrid buses. Total cost \$3,694,544 federal, \$0 state, \$923,636 local)

MnDOT/Blatnik Bridge Preservation: work includes painting bridge steel and deck sealing.

Project is split 50/50 with WISDOT. Total cost \$3,100,000 (\$2,790,000 federal, \$310,000 state, \$0 local).

He explained that normally the TAC and MIC would be asked to score the projects and rank them for submission to the ATP process, but since there are only 2 projects, (1 roadway, 1 transit), we will not be conducting project scoring this year. At next month's TAC and MIC meetings, they will be asked to simply prioritize each project as "1 of 1" to forward to the ATP.

He also reported that per the usual TIP process, over the next month, public involvement meetings will be held to review these projects and any public comments received will be brought forward at the MIC and TAC meetings. He added that the public meetings also presented an opportunity to provide information about the upcoming multi-year, multi-jurisdiction Miller Hill Reconstruction TIP project.

Denny Johnson asked why five of the ten buses being requested were hybrid models, noting their high cost. Dennis Jensen responded that hybrids are being incorporated into the DTA fleet in accordance with current interest with "green" transportation options, and that increased demand will hopefully result in cost reductions in that technology in coming years.

10. Roundtable Discussion

Dennis Jensen announced that the DTA had met with MnDOT to review the upcoming mall area reconstruction project—they had input during the planning and design phase but wanted the project to accommodate a few more areas for bus pull-outs. They were pleased to note that the pedestrian infrastructure would also be significantly improved, many new sidewalks are planned, which in turn facilitates transit operations. Generally they have very few issues or concerns. He speculated that the construction phase will necessitate a change in DTA service in and around the mall area—they will likely need to add a mall-area circulator route in addition to the mall to downtown service. Cari Pedersen noted that project bidding opens next Friday—and everyone is hoping that the bids are favorable, cost-wise.

11. Project Updates

Sky Harbor Airport Technical Committee: Andy McDonald reported that MIC staff will be participating on this committee, which will examine the issue of accommodating the old growth forest that is located in the approach path of the runway at the Sky Harbor Airport on Park Point. The first committee meeting is Tuesday January 8th.

Blueprint to End Poverty: Holly Butcher and Robert Herling reported that Duluth's Blueprint to End Poverty initiative has a guiding coalition comprised of community leaders from business, faith, government, education and healthcare sectors, as well as interested citizens. Community Action Duluth is facilitating teams to implement the plan, one of which is the "Transportation Action Team." The MIC has been asked to participate on this team as an agency with community knowledge to help plan for transportation needs of low-income and working poor in the Duluth-Superior area.

Twin Cities – Twin Ports Passenger Rail Initiative: Ron Chicka followed up on last month's presentation by the lead consultants for the Twin Ports-Twin Cities Passenger Rail Initiative

about findings to date of the study. The best scenario for the train resulting in a positive cost/benefit analysis indicates the train running at 100 mph with up to 8 trains daily operating somewhere along the line. Total cost would be \$362 million with the majority of the amount anticipated via a federal grant within the next round of the transportation bill due in 2009. An average fare from Duluth to the Twin Cities was estimated at \$36 (one-way). Of interest locally, is the concept of having a stop in Superior as well as Duluth. This would allow the City of Superior to potentially take advantage of site redevelopment for a station. The study is set to be finalized within the month at which time the next phase (Preliminary Environmental Impact Statement) is slated to begin.

Mn/DOT Statewide Transportation Plan: Ron Chicka reported that the Mn/DOT Statewide Transportation Plan Steering Committee will meet again this month to discuss and set policies for their 20-year plan. The committee had taken time off due to the DOT having to focus resource efforts on the I-35 bridge collapse. He is representing the state MPOs on the committee and is working with the other Minnesota MPOs to aligning key issues for the upcoming DOT plan. This committee is set to meet throughout the rest of 2008 with a goal of finalizing a document by late fall. The plan is to be performance-based, focusing on ten points ranging from preservation of the existing system to protection of the environment. They will be discussing all funding sources, as well, that can meet the goals of the plan. With certain limitations on increased funding, it is likely that the plan will focus on smaller fixes to congestion relief in contrast to added capacity.

Denny Johnson added that the District's 10-year plan is also due to be updated. Bottom line: there are a lot more needs than there will be revenue to address. Focus will continue to be on system preservation.

12. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 2:35 p.m.