



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council
 TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY
Tuesday, February 19, 2008, 1:30 PM

Meeting Location	Proctor Community Center	
Meeting Chair	Denny Johnson	
Note Taker	Rondi Watson	
Members Present	Chuck Froseth	City of Duluth
	Jeff Goetzman	City of Superior
	Dennis Jensen	Duluth Transit Authority
	Denny Johnson	Mn/DOT District 1
	Heather Rand	Mn DEED
	Dena Ryan	WisDOT NW Region
	Susan Thompson	Duluth Airport Authority
	Cindy Voigt*	City of Duluth
Members Absent	Jim Benning	City of Duluth
	Jim Foldesi	St. Louis County
	Paul Halverson	Douglas County
	Bryn Jacobson	Bike/Pedestrian Rep
	Walter Leu	Mn/DOT District 1
	Cari Pedersen	City of Duluth
	David Salo	City of Hermantown
	Jim Sharrow	Duluth Seaway Port Authority
	Jason Serck	City of Superior
	* Alternate	
Others Present	Holly Butcher	ARDC / MIC Senior Planner
	Ron Chicka	ARDC / MIC Director
	Andrea Grygo Diamond	ARDC / MIC GIS Specialist
	James Gittemeier	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Robert Herling	ARDC / MIC Associate Planner
	Rondi Watson	ARDC / MIC Division Secretary

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

TAC Chair Denny Johnson called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. and meeting attendees introduced themselves. No changes to the agenda were put forward.

2. Committee Business – Meeting Summary of January 15, 2008

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 Cindy Voigt/Heather Rand moved to approve the meeting summary from the January 15, 2008 meeting. *Denny noted that the optimal train speed, as shown in the passenger rail project update, should be corrected from 100 to 110 mph.* There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

3. 2008-2011 Duluth Metro TIP Amendment #8

James Gittemeier described the proposed 8th Amendment to the 2008-2011 Duluth Metro TIP. It advances the Duluth Heights Connector Preliminary Engineering Study into FY 2008 from 2011, in order for the City of Duluth to begin the preliminary engineering work. Cindy Voigt commented that \$250,000 is to be advanced to 2008 for this project and federal reimbursement will not be requested until its original programmed year of 2011. She added that RFPs for the project would be sent out in next couple of months, after receiving needed approvals within City administration.

Motion and Cindy Voigt/Heather Rand moved to approve the Amendment as presented.

Discussion There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

4. 2008-2011 Superior Metro TIP Amendment #4

Dena Ryan presented Amendment #4 to add a project for inclusion in the 2008-2011 Superior Urbanized Area TIP. This project will upgrade the existing USH 53 expressway between Solon Springs and Superior to freeway standards. Rights-of-way needed for future interchanges, over- and underpasses and local road alterations will be preserved to ensure that solutions to future and current mobility and safety concerns will be valid projects in the future.

Motion and Dena Ryan/Cindy Voigt moved to approve the Amendment as presented.

Discussion There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

5. 2009-2012 Duluth Metro TIP Project Application Prioritization

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), and **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 added that a public involvement outreach effort was conducted in accordance with TIP process requirements. On February 14, he set up an informational display in the Miller Hill Mall. No comments were received about the 2012 projects, but much interest was expressed in the information he presented about the upcoming multi-year, multi-jurisdiction Miller Hill area reconstruction TIP project.

He explained that normally the TAC and MIC would be asked to score the 2012 project applications and rank them for submission to the ATP process, but since there are only two projects, (1 roadway, 1 transit), there is no need to score them this year. He closed by requesting the ranking of each project as "1 of 1" to forward to the ATP.

Motion and Chuck Froseth/Heather Rand moved to approve the project ranking as

Discussion described. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

6. Northwest Superior Traffic Circulation Study

Robert Herling reviewed the results of the small-area traffic model. He explained that the study was primarily focused on determining whether truck traffic generated by future commercial development in northwest Superior would require construction of an off-ramp from US Highway 2 to Susquehanna Avenue or of a bypass route from US Highway 53 to Winter Street. The results of the model showed that neither an off-ramp nor a bypass route would be needed to maintain acceptable levels of capacity. However, two intersections on Belknap Street, at Tower Avenue and at Hammond Avenue, would be significantly affected. These locations will need upgraded traffic controls and better signal timing and coordination prior to full-scale development in northwest Superior.

He noted that the study will also include recommendations that are not contingent on the projected level of service (LOS) results from the model, but will instead focus on traffic safety, access management, and infrastructure deficiencies. These short-, mid-, and long-term recommendations include designating a bypass along Winter Street to reduce truck traffic along downtown streets; installing National Network Truck Route signs on Highway 2/53; developing an access management plan to better identify problematic segments; improving the turning radius at Belknap and Susquehanna to improve safety and efficiency—cited in user surveys as problematic; upgrading asphalt rail crossings (also called out in surveys); adjusting train detection/warning signals that cause unnecessary delays; and installing a center median on Belknap.

He added that he will be presenting this information to the Superior City Council. A draft will be presented to WisDOT for their input. The final plan will be presented for approval at the March TAC and MIC meetings.

7. Endion Land Use and Transportation Plan

Holly Butcher gave an overview of the technical results from the consultants who conducted traffic modeling for the study area. Several different scenarios were modeled at the request of the steering committee. The overall goal of the final recommendations will be to define a corridor vision for the London Road business district, a neighborhood vision for Endion and the East Hillside, and a redevelopment vision for the Armory/Plaza area and the St. Luke's campus.

The highest-priority recommendation is to narrow London Road from 10th to 26th Avenues East and create pedestrian and bicycling amenities and bioswale medians and boulevards for stormwater management.

The recommendation for the second priority, developing the Armory / Plaza Shopping Center area, is to keep 12th Avenue East open to through traffic (in response to a development proposal that would close it off). Instead, traffic calming would help manage it as a pedestrian / bike friendly area while maintaining street connectivity for all transportation modes.

The priority 3 recommendation is to restore a two-way connection along 6th Avenue East down to 2nd Street; and recommendations for priorities 4 through 7 would convert current one-way roadways to two-way along 1st, 2nd and 3rd Streets and 12th, 14th and 19th Avenues

East. The final plan will also include cost estimates (\$5 million for all) and a timeline for implementation (with the recommendations phased as short-, mid- and long-term).

Cindy Voigt commented that the City Engineering department has yet to review the recommendations; Holly responded that she would involve the entire steering committee in reviewing the draft plan. Denny Johnson questioned the amount of proposed diagonal parking around Plaza-Armory redevelopment project.

8. Proctor Comprehensive Plan Public Survey Results

James Gittemeier presented results from the resident survey that was conducted in fall 2007, noting that this is the fourth time such a survey has been conducted as part of the Comprehensive Planning process (also in 1974, 1996 and 2001). The overall response rate was 16%. A few significant differences were called out from the most recent (2001) survey – notably, that fewer people thought that Proctor has a clear vision for the future, alerting the advisory group that it needs to better advertise its ongoing Comprehensive Planning efforts and to reinvigorate the process. They will conduct a community visioning session this spring.

Preferred development options strongly favored new retail or commercial businesses. This year's comments also indicated a stronger interest in more alternative transportation options. Specific suggestions emphasized bike friendly roadways with on-street bike lanes and off-road bike trails. Trail systems were called out as a recreational need for which they would be willing to pay taxes. Interest was also expressed in expanded transit service to destinations including the Miller Hill Mall, local grocery stores and senior centers. These latter concerns are related to the aging population which needs to be addressed in this version of the Comp Plan.

Dennis Jensen commented that at present Proctor doesn't contribute anything to DTA operations – the city currently has a minimal route presence because it's a convenient turnaround spot. The DTA would need a financial contribution from Proctor to expand the routes and service times.

9. Roundtable Discussion

Chuck Froseth announced that Bob Bruce is retiring, a farewell gathering is to be held at 2pm on Thursday, February 28th at City Hall. Keith Hamre will serve as acting Planning Director.

Ron Chicka announced that he was working to get someone to replace John Foschi as Proctor's representative to the TAC. He also plans recognize John for his many years of service to the TAC, the NE MN ATP, etc.

10. Project Updates

HTAC Advocacy Coalition Oberstar Dinner

Ron Chicka reported that on January 25, 2008 the Great Lakes Port Advocacy Coalition organized a dinner at Northland Country Club with Congressman Jim Oberstar. Invited guests included Duluth-Superior port business owners and the mayors of Duluth and Superior. Program speakers included Ted Smith, Chair of the Great Lakes Ports Advocacy Coalition and Adolph Ojard, Executive Director of the Duluth Seaway Port Authority.

Congressman Oberstar spoke about the history and accomplishments of the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. In 2007, under his leadership, the committee signed 46 bills into law including the Water Resources and Development Act (WRDA). This bill will fund much needed maritime transportation infrastructure projects including a backlog of Great Lakes ports dredging projects and 100% federal funding of a new Soo Lock. Other topics that he touched on include the need for a national policy on ballast water and how short sea shipping could reduce congestion on our highways.

Blueprint to End Poverty

Holly Butcher reported that the MIC continues to be part of the "Transportation Action Team" for the Blueprint to End Poverty project to help plan for transportation needs of low-income and working poor in the Duluth-Superior area. MIC staff has been analyzing the "geography of the problem" by synthesizing jobs, daycare, housing, and transit availability data.

DTA Route Analysis-City of Superior

Holly Butcher reported that in January The DTA brought in a specialized transit consultant from First Transit, the DTA's management company, who analyzed the current routes in the City of Superior and came up with six different alternative service models. First Transit, MIC and DTA staff met with the mayor's office on January 16th to discuss these alternatives. Another meeting is expected during February or March to identify the future service model that the City of Superior prefers and to devise a strategic pilot project.

Minnesota Functional Classification Update

James Gittemeier reported that MIC staff received a functional classification map back from MnDOT Central Office in January for our review and comment. Staff has noted a number of errors on the map based on the information submitted a year ago. In order to verify the classifications on the MIC border, staff is waiting for the ARDC Regional Division to receive their functional classification map back from Central Office before completing the review and sending corrections to Central Office.

Mn/DOT Statewide Transportation Plan

Ron Chicka reported that he and Andy McDonald attended the first meeting of the Intrastate Connections subcommittee of the larger Mn/DOT State Plan Advisory Committee. The State Plan committee is examining the needs of the major arteries across Minnesota to determine how they will be incorporated and funded within the next overall state policy plan. The Intrastate Connections subcommittee will focus on transit, air and rail service policies within the plan and forward these recommendations to the larger committee for review and approval. The work of this group will be important to the Twin Ports area as freight commerce will be impacted by these policies and will set the foundation for our own area wide freight plan to begin later this year.

Heather Rand commented that she had gotten the impression from conversations with Port Authority staff that heavy haul routes had been "put on the shelf," a decision that would have negative effects on intermodal projects in and through this area. Denny Johnson responded that based on the current proposal for a heavy haul route from the Canadian border to the Duluth port, Mn/DOT staff have expressed reservations about potential negative impacts on state road users--the proposal would significantly delay travel by stopping traffic for 10 to 15

minutes between pullouts spaced every 6 to 8 miles along the route. However, discussions are continuing to determine alternative truck/trailer configurations that would potentially have less of an impact. Ron Chicka commented that he hadn't heard anything to suggest that a heavy haul route is off the table—in fact, the MIC is promoting this concept and the Mn/DOT Central Office is not averse to the idea; heavy haul options will be incorporated into the State Transportation Plan. Additionally, the MIC will focus on this issue when we undertake a regional freight study.

National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) Conference

Ron Chicka reported that earlier this month he and John Chell, ARDC Executive Director, traveled to Washington D.C. to attend the 2008 National Conference of Regional Councils. The conference featured many transportation themes with the upcoming federal transportation bill as a focal point. The next bill will likely be drastically different from the previous three—more programmatic; few or no earmarks; freight and passenger rail components; rural components. Funding will be the biggest factor as it is becoming apparent that the traditional means of financing will not be enough to meet the needs across the country. A gas tax increase is being considered along with an emphasis on user fees. Private sources will have to be tapped along with more user-based mechanisms such as tolls and congestion pricing. A series of legislative positions was developed by the NARC Board that will be forwarded to House and Senate members as they begin to craft the next transportation reauthorization bill. A number of small and larger MPOs were in attendance voicing issues key to their continuing success in the field. Most called for a balanced approach to resolve urban transportation needs by putting more emphasis on non-auto travel. He also spent time with Congressmen Obey and Oberstar informing them of current and upcoming projects conducted by the MIC staff for the Twin Ports area.

11. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 3:01 p.m.