



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council
 TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY
Tuesday, March 18, 2008, 1:30 PM

Meeting Location	WITC Conference Center, Superior, WI	
Meeting Chair	Denny Johnson	
Note Taker	Holly Butcher	
Members Present	Jim Foldesi	St. Louis County
	Jeff Goetzman	City of Superior
	Dennis Jensen	Duluth Transit Authority
	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
	David Salo	City of Hermantown
	Jason Serck	City of Superior
	Cindy Voigt*	City of Duluth
Members Absent	Jim Benning	City of Duluth
	Chuck Froseth	City of Duluth
	Paul Halverson	Douglas County
	Bryn Jacobson	Bike/Pedestrian Rep
	Brian Ryks	Duluth Airport Authority
	Jim Sharrow	Duluth Seaway Port Authority
Others Present	Brian Boder*	St. Louis County
	Holly Butcher	ARDC / MIC Senior Planner
	Todd Campbell	MnDOT District One (Guest Speaker)
	Andy McDonald	ARDC / MIC Principal Planner
	James Gittemeier	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Robert Herling	ARDC / MIC Associate Planner
	Scott Sannes	SEH (Guest Speaker)
	Lora Skarman	ARDC / MIC Intern
	* Alternate	

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

TAC Chair Denny Johnson called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. and meeting attendees introduced themselves. No changes to the agenda were put forward.

2. Committee Business – Meeting Summary of February 19, 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 Jason Serck/Cari Pedersen moved to approve the meeting summary from the February 19, 2008 meeting. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

3. MnDOT's London Road Project Update

Todd Campbell, Project Manager from MnDOT District One, introduced Scott Sannes from SEH and they gave an overview of the MnDOT project to address congestion on London Road between 26th and 66th Avenues East. This is a process they have been facilitating for the past two years. Stakeholder outreach included open houses for citizens, a phone survey of 300 people in the area, a website to provide information on the project, and a steering committee. There is now one solution moving forward and MnDOT expects a final report in May.

Todd showed the four alternatives that were presented for public discussion at the start of the process. Scott added that initially, all four alternatives were on the table, but the expressway alternative was removed early on—although there continues to be some public support for it—because it is considered by MnDOT to be far out of scale with the size of the traffic problem. Additionally, despite some vocal support for the idea, MnDOT cannot divert truck traffic out of the corridor. Some residents and steering committee members could not understand why bypasses were not the solution—SEH had to educate and deal with perceptions.

In general, the traffic problem is relatively minor and occurs primarily on Fridays and Sundays and during peak commuting times during the week. Solutions are focused on smaller, livability-based changes (traffic calming, including raised medians and crosswalks) for the long term.

Short Term Solutions

- Getting cars down to a 30mph speed entering the London Road corridor from I-35 is critical. Vehicles are entering London Road from I-35 at 40+ mph which is too fast. Therefore the curve at 26th Avenue East, currently a free right onto London Road, will be rebuilt to a sharper turn to slow speeds. The slowed curve will demonstrate to drivers that there is now a change in land use context and that they are no longer driving on an expressway.
- The segment from 26th to 40th Avenues East to be restriped from three lanes to four and lane widths narrowed from 12' to 11'
- Southbound 40th Avenue East will add a right turn-only lane. Backups occur now because the signal triggers a red light for drivers on London Road every time a driver pulls up to turn right from 40th Avenue onto London Road. However, to add the turn lane, two homes at that intersection would have to be acquired.

Long Term Solutions

- Context-sensitive entry features would be placed on both the east and west ends of the corridor, such as vertical monuments welcoming traffic to London Road and signaling a shift to a neighborhood land use.
- Recommendations also call for center medians, which were removed from the Glensheen area from 26th to 32nd Avenue East, but reintroduced farther east.

- Glensheen will only allow a ¾-turning movement, left turn will not be allowed onto westbound London Road, drivers will have to loop back.
- Roundabouts are recommended to facilitate safety and traffic flow at 40th Avenue East and at the point where London Road intersects with Scenic Highway 61.
- Temporary parking restrictions will be introduced east of 40th Avenue East—different a.m. and p.m. restrictions.
- Safety issues to be addressed include softening the curve at 43rd Avenue East, adding a pedestrian island at 45th Avenue East (easy to do because the intersection T's), and adding small raised median islands throughout corridor from 40th to 60th Avenues East.
- Near the EPA lab at 60th Avenue East, dynamic speed signs will be installed to display the 30 mph speed limit and travel speed of vehicles coming into the corridor from the east Highway 61 Expressway.
- A roundabout will be also added on the Highway 61 Expressway near Superior Street— sending the message to drivers that they are entering a different land use context and to slow down.

Unresolved Issues

- Implications of the Red Plan proposed by Johnson Controls and the Duluth Public School District have Ordean Middle School converting into a high school, which will have significant impacts to 40th Avenue East and London Road. Numerous students will access Ordean from the north; many will come down Hawthorne and will use Superior Street in front of Congdon Elementary.
- Some of the public feels that the current three-lane configuration is fine as is.

Todd mentioned that the short term solutions for the project had a price tag of \$1.5 million and this funding could be fit into programming within 3-5 years, while the longer term fixes are estimated at \$5 million and MnDOT District One does not have a way to fund them now or in the near future.

Questions/Comments

- Jim Foldesi asked about forewarning devices for westbound traffic entering the corridor from Expressway Highway 61 where a roundabout is proposed at the curve near Superior Street.
- Cindy Voigt thanked Scott and Todd for their work on the project which often included handling a hostile audience.
- Denny Johnson commented that this is good plan that includes lower-cost solutions as the answer. He added that there is no longer excess cash for communities to “build their way out of congestion.”

Todd closed by noting that the final plan indicates proposed solutions that will cost less than the original MnDOT set aside. He added that they will next take this plan to the city council.

4. Northwest Superior Traffic Circulation Study—Final

Robert Herling reported that the study had been finalized and is available to view on the MIC website (www.dsmic.org/nws). He reminded the board members that the study set out mainly to answer the question of whether an additional off-ramp and/or a bypass route would be

warranted with future traffic increases, once lands in NW Superior were fully developed. Results from the small-area traffic model show that the projected traffic increases do not warrant either of these expensive capital improvements. The study, therefore, recommends a series of lower-cost solutions to address potential issues relating to future traffic increases. These recommendations were derived with feedback from the study's steering committee, and a number of them are recommendations that come from prior transportation studies done in Superior. In general, the recommendations call for:

- Improved truck route signage
- An access management plan for the area
- Improved signal timing and coordination at intersections in the study area
- Median treatments for Belknap Street

Although the traffic modeling did not support the need for an off-ramp or bypass connection, Robert emphasized that the traffic-model was limited in scope, and did not account for potentially significant developments occurring in other parts of the city. Thus, the study also recommends that both the off-ramp and bypass connection continue to be examined in future studies, and be measured for their merits beyond solely maintaining capacity.

Robert also mentioned that the information gathered and analyses conducted for this study will be carried forward to support upcoming studies, such as the East 2nd Street Access Management Plan and the Blatnik / Hwy53 intersection study. He closed by requesting approval of the final plan.

Motion and Discussion Jason Serck/Dena Ryan moved to approve the final Northwest Superior Traffic Circulation Study as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

5. UMD-CSS Transportation Assessment

Andy McDonald began by reviewing the background data collection for this study. He noted the new UMD Master Plan calling for a main campus entrance off of Woodland Avenue. He also showed the CSS master plan as it relates to Kenwood Avenue. He displayed the Steering Committee membership for the study and noted the involvement of two city councilors that would be critical for plan implementation. Andy noted that Survey Monkey would be a web-based tool to survey university students, faculty and staff regarding their travel to and from the UMD campus. A matrix of travel would also be generated from this survey showing peak use travel times. The campus population will be examined in terms of where students are living, and a crash analysis of key intersections and street segments within the campus area will also be conducted. Sidewalk snow removal will also be reviewed, the study will address related issues such as--is it occurring; does the ordinance need more teeth; and which routes are most critical to be cleared.

Public meetings are scheduled for April 2nd at 7 p.m. at UMD's Kirby Ballroom and on April 29th at 7 p.m. at Mitchell Auditorium at CSS to present the intent of the study and to gain public input. This was the same strategy used for the Duluth Heights Connector.

6. Bike Planning Update

James Gittemeier began by reporting that Phase 2 bike signage (for Duluth, St. Louis County and Proctor) will be implemented this spring. He is still addressing elements of Phase 1 and additional signs will be added to the network to improve it. On-street bike route signage for Superior will be the Phase 3 project, MIC staff is forming a Steering Committee and will continue to use the bicycle compatibility index (BCI) as a tool to analyze routes.

He also announced that Friday, May 16th is Bike to Work Day. This year the event will be held at the Minnesota Power Plaza. Partners include the YMCA, the DTA, the Duluth Trails Alliance, Fit City Duluth, the GDC, and local bike shops.

He reported that the KCCI bike racks project is underway – their goal is to install artist-designed bike racks downtown. They are looking to target 5-10 locations (including Lake Superior Place, US Bank, Depot, Library, Dewitt Seitz, Ordean Building, Lakewalk, and other Canal Park locations). The bike racks will be functional pieces of art. The Duluth Art Institute will be heavily involved in this project. The KCCI pathways group received \$15,000 to implement this project. Parking meters can also be jointly used as bike racks, James showed pictures of these types of meters (single or double bike racks exist as options). Next steps will include meeting with businesses.

He closed by reporting that the Duluth Area Trails Alliance (DATA) is forming an advocacy group focused on improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in Duluth. Their strategic planning begins this spring.

7. HTAC / Harbor Planning Update

Andy McDonald presented an overview of the March 5th meeting of the Harbor Technical Advisory Committee (HTAC). Topics included a report by the US Coast Guard Captain of the Port, new ballast water regulations proposed by the MPCA, a ballast water management workshop summary, Duluth Seaway Port Authority initiatives, and the Spirit Lake Marina development proposal.

Port Commander Gary Croot gave an overview of current Coast Guard operations, including the new TWIC (Transportation Worker Identification Credential) cards. A TWIC card will be required of anyone requiring unescorted entry to secure port facilities and he reported that initial enrollment process is going well. Andy noted that Coast Guard leadership rotates every three years so it's key to include the Port Commander's presentation each year to the HTAC. Kevin Wirth, commander of the USCG Cutter Alder, reported on 2008 ice breaking efforts. Harbor ice conditions were described as very dynamic as the ice was very thick this year – 18 to 36 inches. The lift bridge is closed until March 22nd.

Mary Jean Fenske, Program Coordinator at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency in St. Paul, spoke about the new ballast water regulations being developed for the state of Minnesota. A court ruling from California is spurring new actions to regulate ships which dump ballast in U.S. waters. The agency will require permits by Sept. 30 for all vessels with ballast tanks that enter the Minnesota waters of Lake Superior. The regulations will require

ships to treat their ballast water to destroy nearly all living organisms before the tanks are emptied. A public comment period will open in June. Discussion at the HTAC centered on the need for uniform federal regulations instead of a state-by-state approach to ballast water management.

Dale Bergeron, Maritime Extension Educator for the Minnesota Sea Grant program, reported on a Ballast Water and Invasive Species workshop he facilitated at a recent Coast Guard conference in Cleveland. The focus was not on developing regulations to be implemented at a future date, but on answering the question "what can we do *now* to slow the spread of invasives and the VHS fish virus?" With over 40 participants representing a broad range of agencies, the workshop provided an opportunity to dialog and build relationships that will lead to a better understanding of vessel operations and determine best practices for Great Lakes vessels.

Jim Sharrow provided an update on recent Duluth-Seaway Port Authority initiatives. Tonnages across the Great Lakes have been decreasing but Duluth's have been increasing--wheat and coal shipments set records in 2007. Bottom line, the Duluth Port has weathered economic downturn and expects continued growth in 2008.

Finally, Brian Bocht from Bocht Engineering, the group looking at redeveloping the Spirit Lake Marina, reviewed their proposal to convert a dilapidated marina in the Riverside neighborhood into condos and an RV park, to include 45 lots with water, sewer and road improvements. Although the Duluth City Council has initially approved this project, one significant complication is that the ends of the piers are actually located in Wisconsin waters and Wisconsin's public trust doctrine is more stringent than Minnesota's.

8. Roundtable Discussion

City of Duluth

- Cindy Voigt talked about the Miller Hill area Kohl's project. The city drafted a new ordinance so that businesses can have altered land use setbacks in relation to the project. All previous bids had to be rejected and on June 6th the project will be re-let and re-opened for a new round of bids.
- The Aerial Lift Bridge will re-open for use on March 23rd and the re-painting went well.
- Lakewalk Phase II from 36th to 42nd Ave E will have a meeting tonight facilitated by SEH Inc. Phase II plans are due April 15th and there will be a bid letting in July. The city plans to have it built yet this year. The Phase I Lakewalk extension bridge is in.

Mn/DOT

- Dennis Jensen asked about future I-35 construction and Denny Johnson mentioned it's a \$27 million repaving/rehabilitation project.

9. Project Updates

Proctor Comprehensive Plan

James Gittemeier reported that on February 26th Jesse Schaumberg of Mn Sea Grant conducted a natural resource-based visioning session with the Proctor Comprehensive Planning Group. Later that evening, MIC staff conducted a Kirkus Street property owners meeting in an effort to gather input about future land use development once the corridor is created. During March MIC staff plans to outreach to several standing Proctor committees including the Proctor Economic Development Authority, Tourism Committee, and others to gain an understanding of future community goals in these topic areas. In April, MIC staff plans to hold a community visioning session for Proctor residents.

Blueprint to End Poverty

Holly Butcher reported that the MIC's collaboration on this project with Community Action Duluth is an implementation element of the MIC's 2006 Human Services Transportation Plan. MIC staff continues to be a stakeholder at the table discussing potential community solutions to improving transportation for low-income residents in accessing jobs. Solutions proposed from this effort will hopefully move forward for grant funding through MnDOT's Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedoms (NF) funding categories.

Sky Harbor Airport Technical Committee

Andy McDonald reported that MIC staff has been asked to participate on this technical committee. The Duluth Airport Authority has hired SEH as the lead consultant to develop a solution to the issue of the old growth forest growing into the safety zone at the south end of the Sky Harbor Airport runway. A Scoping Study will outline potential alternatives and examine each in detail. This technical committee will work concurrently with a public advisory committee. The study is scheduled to conclude in February 2009.

10. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 2:43 p.m.