



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council
Transportation Advisory Committee
MEETING SUMMARY
Tuesday, October 14, 2008, 1:30 PM

Meeting Location	Hermantown Public Safety Facility Training Center, Hermantown, MN	
Meeting Chair	Denny Johnson	
Note Taker	Rondi Watson	
Members Present	Brian Boder	St. Louis County
	Jeff Goetzman	City of Superior
	Paul Halverson	Douglas County
	Denny Johnson	Mn/DOT District 1
	Cari Pedersen	City of Duluth
	Heather Rand	Mn DEED
	David Salo	City of Hermantown
	Jim Rohweder	City of Proctor
	Dena Young	WisDOT NW Region
	Cindy Voigt*	City of Duluth
Members Absent	Jim Benning	City of Duluth
	Chuck Froseth	City of Duluth
	Bryn Jacobson	Bike/Pedestrian Rep
	Dennis Jensen	Duluth Transit Authority
	Walter Leu	Mn/DOT District 1
	Jason Serck	City of Superior
	Jim Sharrow	Duluth Seaway Port Authority
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 Planner
	Sheldon Johnson	ARDC / MIC Associate Planner
	Pam Kramer	Executive Director, Duluth LISC
	Andy McDonald	ARDC / MIC Principal Planner
	Rondi Watson	ARDC / MIC Secretary
	* Alternate	

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

TAC Chair Denny Johnson called the meeting to order at 1:37 p.m. and meeting attendees introduced themselves. Ron recognized Susan Thompson, who will be retiring soon from the Duluth Airport, for her longtime participation on the TAC.

No changes to the agenda were put forward.

2. Committee Business – Meeting Summary of September 2, 2008

Motion and Discussion Jim Rohweder/Heather Rand moved to approve the meeting summary from the September 2, 2008 meeting. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

3. Amendment #7 to 2008-2011 Superior Metro Transportation Improvement Program

Sheldon Johnson presented an amendment to add a project for inclusion in the current (2008-2011) Superior Urbanized Area TIP. Amendment #7 adds a right-of-way acquisition to the Belknap Street Extension project from USH 53/2 intersection westerly 0.7 miles, already approved in the 2008-2011 Superior Urbanized Area TIP, at a cost of \$250,000, all state-funded.

Motion and Discussion Jeff Goetzman/Dena Ryan moved to approve Amendment #7 to the 2008-2011 Superior TIP. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

4. Final 2009-2012 Superior Metro Transportation Improvement Program

Sheldon Johnson distributed copies of the final Superior Urbanized Area Transportation Improvement Program for 2009-2012 and reviewed the projects on a year-by-year basis. Eleven major projects covering multiple modes are being proposed for funding in the upcoming 4-year period. The only comment during the 30-day comment period was a procedural clarification from the local WisDOT office. He closed by requesting approval of the final document.

Motion and Discussion Paul Halvorson/Jim Rohweder moved to approve the final 2009-2010 Superior Metro Transportation Improvement Program as presented. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

5. Superior – Blatnik Traffic Study – Scope of Work

Robert Herling presented the scope of work for the upcoming Superior-Blatnik Bridge Traffic Study. He explained that the intent of the study is to examine capacity and design issues related to the I-535/US 53 interchange as it currently exists. The work will involve safety and efficiency assessments, and will model the potential effects of different traffic scenarios on a number of roads in north Superior. He added that traffic modeling would be a very large component of this study, and we are working with consultant.

He noted that last year's Traffic Safety Management (TSM) study revealed safety concerns related to the sudden decrease in speed from 55 mph on the bridge to 30 mph at the base when it becomes Hammond Avenue, compounded by cross traffic trying to shoot the gap at base of the bridge. All modes and linkages will be examined.

He added that WisDOT had requested that we also model the impact of a closure of the Bong/Hwy 2 bridge in the summer of 2014 for work planned for the bridge. The ADT of 16,900 is anticipated to be routed to the Blatnik. The final study will include a technical report of modeling results. He closed by requesting approval of the Scope

Motion and Discussion Jim Rohweder/Dena Young moved to approve the Scope of Work as presented. *Denny Johnson commented that Blatnik is scheduled to close in 2012 for maintenance work (TIP project), and they, too, will need to determine how and where to reroute traffic. Hopefully the results of this study can be applied to the MnDOT project as well. Ron Chicka responded that we will include Mn/DOT in future project discussions.* There was no further discussion and the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

6. 2009-2010 MIC Work Program and Budget

Ron Chicka opened a discussion about projects to be programmed for 2009 and 2010 in the draft work program. He noted that each year can accommodate a few discretionary planning projects, and they have been incorporated (based on the poll of MIC and TAC members). He added that the budget has not yet been finalized, but added that all funds are still in place (from 2008-2009 work program), and priorities have yet to be determined for projects to be programmed. The numbers will be presented in final version to be presented at the December meetings.

He noted that some of the projects programmed for 2009 (determined last year with the approval of the 2008-2009 Work Program) have or will begin by the end of this year, including the UMD/CSS study, and the East 2nd Street Plan, Blatnik Bridge Study, and bike route planning in Superior.

Other projects to begin in 2009 and extend into 2010 include a Superior Urban Area Growth Impact Study, similar to the one conducted for Duluth to determine potential growth patterns into the townships and a study of Central Entrance, building off of the existing Miller Hill Study to examine land uses and improve safety along the corridor between MnDOT and Cub Foods. He also presented some proposed project options for 2010, including a new roundabout site study and a Kirkus Street plan examining land use, zoning, and pre-streetscaping for the City of Proctor before development gets going along that new street. He noted that “small improvements” were likely to be a common theme to aid traffic movements in the future, as opposed to recommendations for new construction.

Several other planning efforts would be included under the Plan Implementation section, an element of the work program that has been increasing in recent years in an effort to follow up on the implementation of recommendations from our prior planning efforts.

Transit planning is another standing element – may include an update to the 1998 “Transit Vision” long range plan for the entire MIC planning area, and the Long Range Planning element will take up a lot of our time this year, with the federal requirement to update the MIC’s current LRTP through 2035. Rural transit, pedestrian and bike planning issues also possibly to be addressed in the LRTP update. Freight planning, too, is slated to take more prominence with the MnDOT-driven Northern MN/Northwestern WI Regional Freight Plan.

He emphasized again that the timing of all projects can be juggled a bit based on needs and jurisdictional priorities. He closed by requesting approval of the draft plan, adding that he would be taking comments and presenting the final version at the December meetings.

Motion and Discussion Denny Johnson/Dena Young moved to approve the draft 2009-2010 MIC Work Program and Budget as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

7. Guest speaker

Pam Kramer, Executive Director of Duluth Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), presented information about the organization's mission and recent local initiatives which have called attention to transportation issues. LISC works primarily with Duluth's older, core neighborhoods with the goal of fostering safe, livable and healthy environments.

A current 3-year effort, called "Creating Neighborhoods That Work," is a 24 member collaborative of nonprofit, community, and government agencies working to revitalize five core neighborhoods (East Hillside, Central Hillside, Lincoln Park, West Duluth and Morgan Park). Pam stated that during the community input process, there has been an increasing emphasis in each of these neighborhoods on the importance of transportation-related issues, not only for access to jobs but to the quality of life in these areas and throughout the city.

She went on to present the issues specific to each of the neighborhoods: East Hillside residents support the conversion of streets from one-way to two-way, although she described the opponents of this change as a vocal minority. They also called out traffic calming, a transit transfer station and bike-and pedestrian-friendly modifications along 6th Avenue East as prominent interests. Central Hillside residents are interested in improved street lighting, better on-street parking for residents, and Safe Routes improvements to Nettleton school. Lincoln Park is interested in street repair, lighting and general streetscaping enhancements, and improved sidewalk connectivity near major pedestrian routes, including to and around the new Heritage Sports Center. West Duluth, with SVCNDA leading the planning effort, is particularly interested in bike and pedestrian safety in the area around Grand Avenue and 75th Avenue West, along with improved connectivity to the river and the Munger Trail, and improved wayfinding signage. Morgan Park called out bus shelters, trail connectivity, and an interest in the long-term possibility of light rail service.

Pam closed by expressing an interest in networking with MIC staff and TAC members. LISC has an 11-member core group that meets monthly and would be interested in talking directly to MIC staff and TAC members about specific issues (examples: one-way to two-way street conversions, SRTS initiatives, bike lanes). Holly Butcher noted that the existence of organized neighborhood groups like the ones that LISC has organized is very valuable as a public process to gather direct neighborhood and community input.

Cindy Voigt, from Duluth Engineering department, expressed concern that the neighborhood transportation interests may be desirable but not necessarily possible, a case of unrealistic expectations vs. limited resources. Pam responded that their job is to narrow down the wish lists to focus on the possible. She reiterated her invitation to meet directly with their groups to hear their concerns and, in turn, present information from the City's perspective. Ron Chicka stated that the MIC would be interested in serving as an educational resource, also noted that many of our planning recommendations are in synch with the community interests as presented today.

8. UMD/CSS Study

Andy noted that last year's work on this project called attention to problems with snow removal as an impediment to pedestrian movements to and from campus; he reviewed the current Duluth ordinance, basically enforcement is inconsistent and complaint-driven. He also compared ordinances from ten other comparable size cities with colleges--other cities including Marquette, MI and Missoula, MT, generally spend more money on snow removal and have stricter enforcement.

He also reported on recent bike ride that advisory committee members took with Steve Clark, a bike facility design consultant from the Twin Cities, within the UMD study area. The purpose was to identify opportunities for improved bike facilities, including best locations for bike lanes; bike markings to identify the shared use of lanes, and the possible reconfiguration of existing driving and parking lanes to accommodate bikes and bike lanes.

Dave Salo commented that corridor design decisions for the Woodland Avenue redesign project would be finalized by the end of this month. He suggested that MIC staff meet with City of Duluth Engineering staff in the next couple of weeks at the latest. Andy commented that UMD input would be critical. He added that he would address this issue at next week's study committee meeting.

9. Proctor Comprehensive Plan

James gave an overview of the recent efforts in the city of Proctor's Comprehensive Planning process. He noted that factors driving the update are Proctor's aging population and an increasing interest in sustainability.

The recent community survey yielded five major themes --business development, in particular of a grocery store; improved bus service; development of bike routes and trails; road and sidewalk improvements; and retaining youth population. Another meeting, with Kirkus Street property owners, yielded similar themes. He added that he had visited 7th grade health classes as part of their class project devoted to the year-long assignment entitled "What can you do to make Proctor a greener community?"

All survey efforts emphasized the theme of sustainability, and there are many opportunities to implement this, such as "green" buildings and infrastructure, and this plan will set the stage for a new community direction.

Next steps include another meeting with the Comprehensive Plan group with a focus on sustainability; the work schedule will result in final plan by March 2009.

10. Downtown Modal Study

Holly presented results from 185 recent intercept surveys conducted by consultants in late August; which showed that most visitors both drive and walk to get around the Canal Park and downtown areas, and that improved wayfinding for all modes is needed. Because increasing the roadway capacity is not an option, the solution is to develop more alternatives to car travel, such as a circulator bus between Canal Park and downtown, widening sidewalks on bridges over I-35 and adding a sidewalk on the west side of the 5th Avenue West bridge.

Next step will be to hold a steering committee solution identification meeting. They have a very short time frame, with a draft plan due by mid-November and a final plan by January at the latest, to have recommendations in place that the City can put forward as legislative priorities for the next Congress.

11. Harbor Planning / Harbor Technical Advisory Committee (HTAC) Update

Andy McDonald presented an overview of the most recent HTAC meeting held at the MPCA on September 3rd. Topics included presentations on the recent NERR designation of the St. Louis Estuary site; GMRI Research Affiliate Projects funded for FY 2008; the visit to the Duluth port by the Great Lakes Maritime Academy ship; an overview of the upcoming Northern MN/Northwestern WI Freight study; a presentation about the Railmate bi-modal system, a new technology that facilitates rail to truck transport and may offer cost savings to the Army Corps as it looks to convert Erie Pier to a Processing and Re-use Facility.

He added that a contingent of top staff from MnDOT's central office, including Commissioner Tom Sorel, visited the Duluth Seaway Port Authority earlier this month to tour facilities, learn about bulk materials operations and get an in depth look at local port operations & issues.

12. Roundtable Discussion

No announcements were made or topics put forward for discussion.

13. Project Updates

East Second Street Study

Robert Herling reported that the steering committee for this study met in July 2008 for a briefing on study tasks already accomplished and the resulting findings. With input from this committee, a public participation strategy was developed which included engaging the local media and advertising the opportunity for people to get information and provide comments via the MIC website. An article in the Superior Telegram on August 28 provided a good overview of the project goals and generated a number of responses to the MIC website. Presently, MIC staff is gathering speed counts along the E 2nd Street corridor which it will analyze and share the results in the next steering committee meeting tentatively scheduled for January 2009.

Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 Update

Robert Herling reported that MIC staff is presently gathering building permit information dating back to 2003, the year that work on the last Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update began. This information will be used to update the MIC's traffic demand model to generate traffic forecasts to be used in assessing the area's long range transportation objectives and needs. As this information becomes processed, the MIC will be bringing it to area jurisdictions for verification and input before moving forward with updating the model.

SRTS Applications for Duluth and Proctor

Holly Butcher reported that several SRTS meetings have been scheduled for the month of October. The Duluth Public School District will discuss implementation of existing grants in addition to discussing school projects for the 2009 grant solicitation. In Proctor, MIC is

assessing transportation patterns and issues around Bay View Elementary and Proctor Middle Schools. An assessment with county and city engineers will be conducted with Proctor School District staff on October 9th to result in five SRTS applications. Significantly, Duluth school district has changed its bike policy to allow biking to school, the SRTS applications will now include request for funding bike racks.

Northern Minnesota/NW Wisconsin Freight Study

Ron Chicka reported that last month the first meeting of the project steering committee met to discuss the entire work scope and key issues that should be under analysis for the plan. Members of the steering committee include both MNDOT and WISDOT staff, DNR staff from both states, university level partners, St Louis and Douglas County staff and Port Authority staff. In mid-October a consultant will be hired to assist with this project. They also began to look at data needs and mapping needs toward the task of dividing up tasks between agencies.

Transportation Research Board Presentations

Robert Herling, MIC Planner, and Andrea Grygo Diamond, the MIC's GIS Specialist, presented papers on crash analysis and visualization, respectively, at the Transportation Research Board (TRB) 11th Annual Tools of the Trade Conference in Portland, Oregon. Both papers showcase the MIC's unique, innovative work in these areas. Andrea's presentation "Demystifying Visualization: How to use visualization in your community" was selected as one of the five "Best Papers" and will be presented at the national TRB meeting in January in Washington DC.

14. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 3:30 pm.