



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council
Transportation Advisory Committee
MEETING SUMMARY
Tuesday, January 19, 2010, 1:30 PM

Meeting Location	WITC Conference Center, Superior, WI	
Meeting Chair	Dena Young	
Note Taker(s)	Rondi Watson	
Members Present	Chuck Froseth	City of Duluth Community Development Dept
	Paul Halvorson	Douglas County
	Bryn Jacobson	Bike/Pedestrian Rep
	Dennis Jensen	Duluth Transit Authority
	Denny Johnson	Mn/DOT District 1
	Cari Pedersen	City of Duluth Engineering
	Heather Rand	Mn DEED
	Jim Rohweder	City of Proctor
	David Salo	City of Hermantown
	Cindy Voigt	City of Duluth Engineering
	Dena Young	WisDOT NW Region
Members Absent	Brian Boder	St. Louis County Engineering
	Jim Foldesi	St. Louis County Engineering
	Jeff Goetzman	City of Superior
	Walter Leu	Mn/DOT District 1
	Cindy Petkac	City of Duluth Planning Dept
	Brian Ryks	Duluth Airport Authority
	Jason Serck	City of Superior
	Jim Sharrow	Duluth Seaway Port Authority
Others Present	Lisa Austin	MnDOT Office of Transit
	Ron Chicka	ARDC / MIC Director
	James Gittemeier	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Robert Herling	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Heidi Jaros	Community Action Duluth
	John Judd	City of Duluth Planning Department
	Susan Koschak	Mn/DOT State Non-Motorized Transportation Advisory Committee
	Codie Leseman	Fit City Duluth
	Mimi Stender	Fit City Duluth
	Kody Thurnau	ARDC / MIC GIS Specialist
	Rondi Watson	ARDC / MIC Planning Assistant

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

TAC Chair Dena Young called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. and meeting attendees introduced themselves.

Chair Young asked for any changes or corrections to the agenda. Ron Chicka requested that a voting item be added to consider an amendment to the Superior Area TIP.

2. A. Meeting Summary of December 8, 2009

Chair Young asked for any changes or corrections to the previous month's meeting summary. Hearing none, she asked for a motion to approve.

Motion and Discussion Paul Halvorson, with a second from Denny Johnson, moved to approve the 12/08/10 meeting summary as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

B. 2010 TAC Officer Election

Ron Chicka announced that the election of 2010 Chair and Vice-Chair would be delayed until the February meeting because both Jim Foldesi and Jason Serck were unable to attend today's meeting. We will formalize the nominations of both officers by a vote at the start of next month's meeting.

C. MIC and TAC Member Survey

Ron Chicka reviewed the results of the survey of TAC and MIC members evaluating the work of staff and meeting effectiveness. He responded specifically to a few points:

A couple of comments suggested that staff was perhaps too redundant in the agenda items presented. Ron explained that our practice is to err on the side of repeating information in order to keep all members up to speed. Furthermore, the Long Range Plan and the TIP, as the two primary products of this and every MPO, require ongoing updates and review by the Policy Board, so it is likely that these topics will show up regularly on meeting agendas.

In regard to comments about the degree of communication between the TAC and the Policy Board, he noted that staff will be making a point of soliciting TAC input for each topic presented, to bring forward to the MIC at its meeting the next day. He added that TAC members were also encouraged to attend MIC meetings if there is a particular point they'd like to make and explain directly to the Board.

Denny Johnson commented that the important thing, in regard to draft reports, is that they go to the TAC and MIC at pretty much the same time. If the TAC has significant comments, ones that would change the content or the final recommendations, they would like to see this input incorporated before the plan is presented to the Policy Board for approval.

To this end, it was suggested as one option that the TAC meetings be scheduled a week or two ahead prior to the MIC meeting (instead of the day before), or, alternatively, the draft reports

could be presented to the TAC for input the month before they go before the Board. Ron agreed that staff could look at incorporating these suggestions as plans are nearing completion.

D. Federal Transportation Bill / Policy Update

Ron Chicka reported that prior to adjourning for the holidays, Congress and the President passed the Surface Transportation Extension Act of 2009 that extended many different transportation programs to September 30, 2010. Jim Oberstar agreed to this extension in exchange for a "Jobs Bill – ARRA II" that passed the House and now moves to the Senate for final consideration. It is a \$150 billion jobs creation package that includes \$40 billion for infrastructure improvements. This may mean a whole new round of "shovel-ready" projects being put forth nationwide with the stipulation that they be let within 90 days, an unusually short turnaround time. MnDOT has alerted the MIC and the ATP (the 8-county Northeast MN Area Transportation Partnership) to be ready in short order to amend the Duluth area TIP and the statewide STIP should this legislation occur.

Denny commented that this year they are calling for even a faster turnaround time, from approval to contracts being awarded within 90 days, or by May. MnDOT is reviewing all its projects from the point of view of "shovel readiness" and per federal guidelines. Roadway, transit and enhancements projects are all in the mix.

3. Guest Speakers: Integrating Bicycle & Pedestrian Initiatives in Statewide Planning

Lisa Austin, Mn/DOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Planner, presented an overview of current bike and pedestrian initiatives happening around the state. She began by noting that MnDOT's current Strategic Plan incorporates an awareness of all modes of transportation, which in turn has had a direct impact on the bike and ped planning efforts underway.

She noted that lots of influences are coming together right now which are reshaping MnDOT's plans and programs. Environmental and "green" approaches to transportation, as well as the call in the metro area to ease congestion and reduce commute times, were reflected in MnDOT's renewed emphasis on rail and waterborne transport, as well as non-motorized transportation.

She added that health concerns are putting transportation into the spotlight as never before. The Minnesota Dept of Health has convened an active living advisory group, and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Minnesota is also a major player, with high visibility campaigns underway, with funding secured from the tobacco settlements. United Health has undertaken an innovative concept of "blue zones" to encourage active living, with an awareness of transportation policy and design.

Other significant influences, nationwide, include ADA compliance, context-sensitive solutions training and the Complete Streets movement. Within past month alone, two states (CA & PA) have had legal settlements upwards of \$2 billion related to ADA compliance.

Personal financial concerns are also driving a renewed interest in non-motorized options. On the community level, roadway designs that accommodate multiple modes and user needs are

having measurable beneficial economic impacts, in terms of tourism revenues, property values, and “quality of life” impacts.

Their office conducts a lot of education and outreach to raise public awareness about safety and the benefits of multimodal transportation options. Another important function is to build relationships within local communities and encourage public involvement in developing transportation solutions, and to this end, his staff participates in numerous Bike / Ped Advisory committees statewide. She stressed that BPACs are not a new concept—many of them have been around for many years, some since the 70s and 80s.

She noted that the MnDOT advisory committee began its life as the statewide bicycle advisory committee—but its mission and scope has now expanded to support and advocate for multiple populations who utilize non-motorized modes, such as the disabled, elderly, and children. She added that they are a leader recognized nationwide for their degree of coordination with stakeholder groups.

Susan Koschak, the District One representative and current chair of the Mn/DOT State Non-Motorized Transportation Advisory Committee (SNTC), presented additional information about the structure and role of the committee. She explained that the mission of the group is to promote, individually and collectively, non-motorized transportation. The SNTC was originally created by legislation and has evolved into a very diverse group with a statewide, (i.e., non-metro-centric) focus.

She noted that as a MnDOT committee, they are about transportation, for example, not about recreational trails. Its subcommittees intentionally augment areas of focus in MnDOT:

Facilities and Wayshowing—Goal: bicyclists can navigate anywhere in Minnesota. She added that they also have an intentional focus on measuring, counting something that can be reported back, to measure that it has an impact, such as how many miles have been and are now mapped, or how many bike racks existed and now exist in particular areas.

Safety and Education—Goal: fewer crashes and injuries for cyclists and pedestrians.

All Users—Goal: transportation throughout the state is inclusive of all users.

She added that the selection process to participate on the SNTC has become pretty competitive. There has been lots of interest, and the membership process includes applications, interviews, recommendation, approval. Members have 3-year terms, maximum 2 consecutive terms. They meet 5 times/year.

Another important role for committee members is that they are educated on a number of topics— they have a guest speaker at almost meeting— and then go out into the community. The members report to all kinds of different groups in all kinds of places.

Denny Johnson commented that Complete Streets is oft en construed as “all modes for all roads.” Lisa agreed that this is an important educational piece that is needed, that’s where context comes in.

4. Establishment of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Dena opened by noting that this agenda item is not actually an approval item for the TAC; only the MIC can establish its own advisory committees.

James Gittemeier reviewed the reasons why he is putting forward a recommendation that the MIC create a new advisory committee. The last (SAFETEA-LU) transportation bill specifically emphasizes a balance of transportation choices, due to issues related to health, the environment, energy, financial considerations and population demographics. On the basis of demographics alone, an auto-oriented, auto-dependent system excludes about one third of the population. He noted that the upcoming reauthorization is likely to continue this approach with a new emphasis on "livability"

On a local level, he noted that there have also been recent, high-profile issues that have brought these considerations to the fore, such as the cyclists who were ticketed while riding on 4th Street. He added that the BPAC would also complement the many local initiatives which are now underway, which include Duluth Complete Streets, Superior Bike Routes, Safe & Walkable Hillside (SHIP); Douglas County CHIP; and Fit City Duluth.

The BPAC's role would be to advise the MIC Policy Board and would consist of bicycle and pedestrian stakeholders who represent all facets of these modes. It is envisioned that this committee will also serve as a community forum for discussing local bicycle and pedestrian issues that arise, as well as a proactive information gathering and solution identification body.

At this point, he is planning for the BPAC to meet quarterly, beginning in February 2010. February would be the kick-off meeting; in May, their task would be to define the mission and identify specific work tasks; in August they would establish priorities and in November the group would define its goals for the next year.

Potential tasks for the BPAC and its working groups would be Bike to Work Day; and update of the MIC Area Bike Plan and of the 2003 MIC Area Bike Map; data collection (bike and ped counts) relating to the need for bike and ped facilities in the MIC area; and Safe Routes to School implementation activities.

One issue that needs to be decided by the MIC Board is the way the new advisory committee will be structured. He presented three options, based on the models used by other MPOs, as well as feedback received at the previous MIC meeting. **Option A** would be to set it up as a third advisory committee to the MIC Policy Board, along with the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Harbor Technical Advisory Committee (HTAC). **Option B** would be to structure it as an advisory committee to the TAC, which would in turn consider the BPAC's recommendations before passing them along to the MIC. **Option C** would be a "hybrid" structure in which the BPAC and the TAC would work together to reach consensus on recommendations, which they would then jointly forward to the MIC.

James noted that the MIC will ultimately vote to determine the structure of the BPAC, and he closed by asking for TAC comments to forward to the MIC at its meeting the next evening.

Bryn Jacobson noted that about 15 years ago, the metropolitan bike plan addressed specific

projects for implementation in the Duluth-Superior area.

Dena asked who it is that he has in mind to participate on this committee. James replied that he is tentatively planning to follow the state BPAC structure; but specifics will be determined at the first meeting in February.

The question was asked, why not call it a non-motorized committee, as the state does? Lisa commented that sometimes that designation raises more questions than it answers, the latter name is less clear than a straightforward "Bike/Ped" reference. Susan noted, however, that it has been helpful to emphasize the "transportation" mission to keep the committee work on track.

Cari Pedersen stated that she would prefer a transportation focus for this committee, so that BPAC recommendations would "feed down" to the next (TAC) level, which would feed down to the MIC.

Cindy Voigt agreed, stating that she would strongly prefer the Option B (with the BPAC reporting to the TAC).

5. Readoption of the 2030 MIC Area Long Range Transportation Plan

Robert Herling announced that, as reported at last month's meetings of the TAC and MIC, staff is recommending Readoption of the current (2030) Long Range Transportation Plan.

He explained that doing so will ensure that an active plan remains in place as staff continues working to complete the updated (2035) LRTP. He noted that the 2035 update, originally slated for completion by December 2009, had been delayed by staff turnover and the extra time needed to refine the traffic model and revise our method of projecting expenditures and revenues. He added that although many pieces of the update are already in place, the entire draft document must be ready to present for public review and board approval.

He reported that after consulting with FHWA, MnDOT and WisDOT, it was determined that the main consideration, in readopting the 2030 plan, is to show that its assumptions and goals still apply to the MIC planning area. Their concern has to do with possible increased demand on our transportation system. He reviewed the Readoption materials prepared for those agencies, which document that our most recent demographic and traffic modeling analysis shows just the opposite, that population (and associated traffic demands) is not significantly expanding in the Duluth-Superior area and therefore will not render the existing LRTP obsolete.

He added that notice of the required public comment period had been made, via the MIC website and the Duluth News Tribune.

Motion and Discussion Cari Pederson/Heather Rand moved to approve Re-adoption of the 2030 MIC Long Range Transportation Plan. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

6. 2014 Duluth Area TIP Project Applications

James Gittemeier presented information about the process for selecting projects for federal FY 2014 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funding in the Duluth Urbanized Area.

This year, it is being recommended that the usual scoring and prioritization process will not be conducted. He explained that there were just two applications submitted this year for roadway projects, both of which are led by Mn/DOT. Since Mn/DOT's top priority, the Bong Bridge repair project, is being closely coordinated with WisDOT, it was agreed that there is not a need to go through the formal scoring process that usually takes place at the TAC meeting in February. MIC staff will go over the details of the projects, as usual, at the February meetings and the TAC and MIC will be asked to approve the project list, as it is currently prioritized, to submit to the NE MN ATP process for funding consideration.

The three project applications are summarized below, in their suggested priority order. The complete applications are available to view on the MIC website, at www.dsmic.org/duluthtip.

Jurisdiction	Project Info	Federal \$	State/Local \$	Total \$
MN/DOT	Hwy 2 Bong Bridge Repairs – painting, deck overly & joint repair.	\$10,700,000	\$2,700,000	\$13,400,000
MN/DOT	I-35 Repavement – From Carlton/St. Louis County line to Boundary Ave.	\$5,300,000	\$700,000	\$6,000,000
DTA	Regular Route Bus Replacement – purchase 10 buses, five of which will be hybrids.	\$4,656,000	\$1,164,000	\$5,616,000

Denny commented that there are various options still in play for the I-35 project, based on TIGER grant application and possible “Stimulus II” program, etc. If either of those funding sources pans out, it would not be a 2014 project.

He also explained that there are only two MIC area TIP applications for 2014 because there were a number of ARRA-funded projects in the MIC-area, and because the ATP is seeking equity among all the jurisdictions in the NE MN ATP, it was less likely that MIC area projects would be favorably received for 2014 TIP funding.

7. Roundtable Discussion of Local Projects

Dennis Jensen reported that planning for the intermodal facility is moving forward; they have a conceptual design, will be moving it forward to preliminary design. He plans to present more detailed information to the TAC and MIC next month.

8. Project Updates

Blatnik Bridge Base Study

Robert Herling reported that WisDOT staff and URS transportation model consultants, together with MIC staff, recently met to get this project back underway. For most of 2009, it was delayed as the DOT worked to secure funding for modeling work to examine the network deficiencies of such a closure and identify road and intersection problem spots that may need mitigation while the Bong Bridge is closed. Further, our modeling will examine possible modifications to the Blatnik base in Superior for the long term. These would include new ramps, feasibility of a roundabout or some combination of altered accesses that would provide a safer driving situation for all. With the results of this work (completion set for June of 2010) the MIC will then continue on with our land use plan for the Blatnik bridge area.

East Second Street Study

Robert Herling reported that he has resumed working on the East 2nd Street study in Superior. Some of the existing data have been updated, and information related to pedestrian crossings has been added. Staff will be developing a set of draft recommendations and presenting them to the study committee in the coming months.

Duluth's Green Jobs Initiative

Ron Chicka reported that MIC staff has been participating in this effort along with many other community leaders. Green jobs are defined as "jobs relating to, or involving actions for protecting the natural environment that have career growth potential and a living wage." In addition to a Steering Committee, there are 5 work groups organized – built environment, energy production, food system, resource protection, and transportation. Ron is participating on the transportation work group and I am on the resource protection. The project mission is "to bring together community sectors to develop a strategic framework consisting of individual green job development action plans." The work groups have met twice so far and are in the process of developing action plans.

City of Duluth Complete Streets Task Force

James Gittemeier reported that the Duluth Complete Streets Task Force will be hosting an all-day workshop focused on Complete Streets on Tuesday, January 26, 2010. The workshop will be facilitated by John LaPlante, whose experience includes 30 years in transportation engineering for the City of Chicago, and will consist of a morning (general overview) and afternoon session (technical discussion). MIC and TAC members will receive registration information from the City of Duluth and are invited and encouraged to attend this free and informative educational opportunity.

9. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Young adjourned the meeting at 2:48 pm.