



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council
Transportation Advisory Committee
MEETING SUMMARY
Tuesday, May 18, 2010, 1:30 PM

Meeting Location	WITC Conference Center, Superior, WI	
Meeting Chair	Jim Foldesi	
Note Taker(s)	Rondi Watson	
Members Present	Jim Foldesi	St. Louis County Engineering
	Bryn Jacobson	Bike/Pedestrian Rep
	Dennis Jensen	Duluth Transit Authority
	Alison Johnson	Duluth Airport Authority
	Denny Johnson	Mn/DOT District 1
	Cari Pedersen	City of Duluth Engineering
	Jim Rohweder	City of Proctor
	David Salo	City of Hermantown
	Dena Young	WisDOT NW Region
Members Absent	Brian Boder	St. Louis County Engineering
	Chuck Froseth	City of Duluth Community Development Dept
	Jeff Goetzman	City of Superior
	Paul Halvorson	Douglas County
	Walter Leu	Mn/DOT District 1
	Cindy Petkac	City of Duluth Planning Dept
	Heather Rand	Mn DEED
	Jason Serck	City of Superior
	Jim Sharrow	Duluth Seaway Port Authority
Cindy Voigt	City of Duluth Engineering	
Others Present	Ron Chicka	ARDC / MIC Director
	James Gittemeier	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Robert Herling	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Tim Hohn	ARDC / MIC Intern
	Darren Jablonsky	St. Louis County Planning, Research and GIS
	Andy McDonald	ARDC / MIC Principal Planner
	Kody Thurnau	ARDC / MIC GIS Specialist
	Rondi Watson	ARDC / MIC Planning Assistant

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

TAC Chair Jim Foldesi called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. All meeting attendees introduced themselves.

Chair Foldesi asked if there were any proposed changes to the agenda. None were requested.

2. Committee Business

Meeting Summary of April 20, 2010

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

Motion Denny Johnson/Jim Rohweder moved to approve the 4/20/10 meeting summary as
Discussion presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.
and Vote

3. St. Louis County Union Depot Master Plan

Darren Jablonsky, Manager of Planning, Research and GIS for St. Louis County, presented the final master plan for the Duluth Depot, a year long process that the County initiated in anticipation of the rail line service being reestablished to the Twin Cities. He noted that the consultant team included a group of specialty consultants in historic preservation.

St. Louis County owns the Depot, classified as a national historic site and almost 10 acres. Establishment of the Northern Lights Express passenger rail service from the Twin Cities would potentially revive its function as the passenger rail terminal for the Duluth stop. There are currently 12 tenants in this facility, including the Duluth Playhouse.

The overall planning project consists of three core pieces, a site plan to convert the Depot facility can be turned into a 21st century station, and an area master plan and an economic impact analysis which show great potential for commercial and residential development with potential to add to the area's tax base.

Guiding principles for the study stressed the integration of all elements of the current community, with historic preservation and sustainability as touchstones for any new additions. The process involved several meetings with many area stakeholders including current Depot tenants, the Greater Downtown Council and other groups, as well as two public meetings.

He stressed that this is a conceptual study with the goal of getting people on the same page—no engineering attached, with design specifics to be addressed at a later stage. He added that this project was all about evaluating connectivity—the DTA's proposed intermodal facility would work synergistically with the Depot project to create a multi-modal transportation hub. A key component of the site plan involves bike and pedestrian links that enhance the functionality of the site – many drawn from prior planning studies conducted by the MIC. They are also looking at how people can get to destinations within and outside the city.

He added that Minnesota's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) dictates the way the site can be developed, based on original uses; they have defined these areas based on the original deed. One requirement was to maintain the original "butterfly" canopies – which definitely influenced the redesign. This is one reason they are planning to disconnect the Duluth playhouse facility from the Depot facility, creating an open plaza/public space. This will unlink the two facilities, so the Duluth Playhouse would no longer be under the County's

jurisdiction. They want each separate building to be self-sufficient, with dedicated parking, etc.

Ron Chicka added that the MIC's recent Downtown Modal Connections Study contributed to the larger Depot plan, with recommendations including improvements to 5th Avenue West connection to the Bayfront, as well as the Munger Trail extension.

Ron asked what components might move forward, if any, whether or not the train service is established. Darren responded that the master plan incorporates several different self-sufficient phases of development; short-term changes could include opening the main front door and/or separating the Depot and the Playhouse facilities.

Jim Foldesi commented that the schematics appear to be quite high and large and asked if they had considered viewsheds. Darren responded that it was an important consideration and the viewsheds would not have too much of an impact, obviously. The highway is actually the highest feature.

Denny Johnson asked how this project would correspond with timing of the proposed DTA passenger terminal. Dennis Jensen responded that at a recent meeting with Jim Oberstar, they were assured that it's a viable project, but encouraged us to pare down the costs; it's now down to about \$40 million. They are currently conducting an environmental assessment, will then need to hold back for an assurance of some dedicated funding. He added that this proposal made the top 160 projects, but they will need to develop some type of local match on the order of 30% - also need to improve the ROI (Return on Investment) numbers. They have applications in for a couple of federal grants, including TIGER 2.

4. Draft 2011-2014 Duluth Area Transportation Improvement Program

James Gittemeier presented the draft 2011-2014 Duluth area TIP for review and urged jurisdictions to review their listed projects and report any corrections or changes to him ASAP. He reviewed the listed federally funded transportation projects, to include: (see slide)

Roadway Projects – 8.3 miles

- 2011 - Anderson Rd
- 2013 - 10th Ave East
- 2013 - Martin Rd
- 2014 - I-35 county line to Boundary Ave
- 2014 - Hwy 2 Proctor to I-35

Transit projects to follow the normal acquisition schedule:

- 2011 – 3 STRIDE buses
- 2012 – 10 regular route buses
- 2013 – 6 STRIDE buses
- 2014 – 10 regular route buses

Bridges

- 2011 – I-35 at Midway Rd
- 2012 – Blatnik Bridge

2013 – TH 23 (Grand Ave)

2014 – Bong Bridge

Bike/Ped – James commented that there are more bike and ped projects programmed than ever – quite a lot of sidewalks to be built with SRTS funds, and 6.8 miles of trail to be constructed as well:

2011 – SRTS (Congdon, Lester Park & Stowe)

2011 – Cross City Trail Phase 1

2012 – Lakewalk Extension 4 & 5

2013 – Cross City Trail Phase 2

2014 – Cross City Trail Phase 3

He closed by requesting that the committee release the draft TIP for a 30-day public comment period, to run from May 20 to June 18. He added that air quality conformity will be conducted for all projects and that a public meeting is set for 5:30 pm on Wednesday, June 16 at the Hampton Inn in Canal Park. The final TIP will be presented for approval at the July MIC meetings.

Motion Cari Pedersen/Denny Johnson moved to release the 2011-2014 Duluth Area TIP for
Discussion the mandated 30-day public comment period, effective May 20, 2010. There was
and Vote no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

5. Draft 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan

Robert Herling reported that a complete draft of the updated Duluth Superior Long Range Transportation Plan, “Directions 2035” is ready for review by the TAC and MIC boards. We are now coming to the end of a 2-year development process – and at this point we have a limited amount of time for the internal (MIC, TAC and agency review). Described the next two weeks as the “last call” for comments, asked all TAC and MIC members to make this a priority.

He added that they had presented this plan at MnDOT in St. Paul which he described as a new opportunity “for us to educate them” about our plan. The feedback received was generally positive, although they have yet to actually review the text.

He gave a bit of background on this two-year process: the current draft reflects an increased commitment and strategies to gain input from the public as well as a more action oriented emphasis on goals, objectives and strategies. The information has been reorganized and utilizes more visualization and fewer pages of text. Although the draft and the final plans will be accessible in a pdf format on the MIC website, we are ultimately aspiring to a dedicated website for the long range plan with improved interactive mapping capability. The key pieces of the plan are really the Goals and Objectives as well as the jurisdictional project lists. The plan addresses all modes of transportation and also includes “for future study” projects.

He commented that our area has a very extensive system in place, a lot of infrastructure relative to the population, which means the need for preservation is much more significant

than projects to expand the system. Major identified concerns were aging infrastructure (maintenance/preservation) as well as safety needs– this prioritization process info was used especially when working with the jurisdictions to select projects for inclusion.

Demographically the trend for our area shows only modest population growth. While job growth is happening in the cities of Duluth and Superior, residential growth is spreading to outer areas. Traffic models depict a related increase in commuting times.

He added that this plan needs to demonstrate financial capability--that we can reasonably assume that the funding will actually be available for the planned projects. Several other project assessments are required as well, environmental impacts, etc.

He noted that the data they were given by the various jurisdictions is really an apples-to-oranges type of comparison because cities, counties and the DOTs don't use the same set of assumptions or timeframes. As one example, the projects and costs section really emphasizes transit projects – because the DTA has a lot more detail about its projected capital needs than do the individual jurisdictions.

He again emphasized the 12-day internal review process where we will need TAC member review and comment ASAP. This will precede the release of the draft plan that is scheduled to begin on June 1, 2010. The date of release will depend largely on feedback received from FHWA between now and then. The MIC staff requests that all TAC and MIC members take the opportunity to review the draft plan and provide input back to the staff before the June 1st date. He closed by requesting a motion to release the draft plan for the mandated 30-day public comment period, effective June 1st.

Motion	Dennis Jensen/Dena Young moved to approve release for public comment. There
Discussion and Vote	was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

6. Harbor Planning Update

Andy McDonald reported that staff from the Detroit office of the Army Corps of Engineers has organized a meeting on May 12-13 at the Lake Superior Maritime Visitor Center on the topic of Duluth-Superior harbor dredged material management. They called in a lot of stakeholders, and covered a long list of Duluth-Superior harbor topics.

One message from the Corps was loud and clear: they will not be building new Confined Disposals Facilities or CDFs – that's what lent the sense of urgency to this topic. There is a need to dispose of 20 million yards of dredge materials from the harbor over the next 20 years. Erie Pier is part of the mix but unless they can get to the point of re-using it all, they will need other options as well, that is the point of the projects included in the Dredge Materials Management Plan (DMMP) that this meeting was called to address.

He added that it was unfortunate that the large nearby Duluth megaproject would not be utilizing available fill material from Erie Pier. The Port Authority reported that despite their efforts at communication, they were very disappointed to learn that MnDOT had explicitly

excluded the use of Erie Pier materials in their contracts. As a result, a lot more truck transport will be required to haul in fill from outside this area, while the useable materials right alongside the project are going to be shipped to outlying areas.

The MPCA has a long history of data on the composition of the Erie Pier materials and testing procedures are defined for residential and commercial use. The coarse materials are safe; the only issues are copper and arsenic which is naturally occurring in the soils in this area. The biggest issue is basically a perception problem - this is a viable resource, we need to educate the public as well as the municipalities (county, city and state) that not only are these materials safe and readily available but also that this needs to happen for the bigger picture of dredge materials management.

However, there are many agencies with different processes and standards – and better coordination is needed. The goal now is to analyze the internal and inter-agency processes within MnDOT, the MPCA and the Army Corps to figure out how this opportunity was missed.

On a related note, Andy McDonald reviewed the efforts currently underway to update the Harbor Partnering Agreement to encourage communication and understanding among stakeholders. A working group of the HTAC has identified potential partners whose interest areas include dredge materials management; information exchange; maritime commerce; promoting mutual understanding of partners’ objectives and constraints and encouraging timely problem solving. It is planned that this initiative will culminate with some type of event or signing ceremony later this year.

7. Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Update

James Gittemeier reported on the following two initiatives that are currently underway:

Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)

The next BPAC meeting will be held in late May, including the new voting members of the committee. This first meeting with the voting members will include a background and overview of the BPAC’s work as well as setting the direction of the BPAC for 2010.

Bike to Work Day

MIC staff is coordinating Bike to Work Day events for 2010. A number of events are being planned this year, including a “Just Bike” event on May 20th at Bayfront Park during the American League of Bicyclists National Bike to Work Week. The MIC is coordinating a bike to work “Morning Commuter Break” event on Friday, June 11th from 6:30am to 8:30am. The Duluth event will take place at Minnesota Power Plaza at Lake Ave and Superior Street and the Superior event will take place at Belknap and Tower. At these events there will be bicycle commuter information, safety checks and refreshments.

Dennis Jensen expressed concern about the intersection of Michigan and Superior street near M & H - as becoming downright hazardous for cyclists. Cari Pedersen described it as a real choke point, but since the trail alignment and related rights-of-way have yet to be negotiated, there is not an off-street option available.

8. Roundtable Discussion of Local Projects

I-35: Dennis commented that they are working with the city and the police department about signage, there needs to be specific wording regarding towing/no parking – overnight parkers are obstructing traffic. Express bus ridership – they're up about 1000 riders per week so far

9. Project Updates

Public Involvement / Social Media Consultant

Rondi Watson reported that we are looking to expand our use of online interactive techniques to make our plans and programs more accessible to a wider audience in our public participation efforts. Several web-based resources (e.g., social networking tools such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter) appear to have the potential to complement our traditional public participation efforts (e.g., dsmic.org website, print ads, press releases, in-person public meetings, etc.).

However, before launching any new initiatives, we want to better understand what the full range of communications and social media options might be, and how to effectively shape and target our messages to improve the number and the quality of the responses we receive. Therefore, we have hired a social media and marketing consultant ([PureDriven](#) from Two Harbors, MN) to assist us in developing an overall communications plan to enhance our public participation efforts. MIC staff participated in the first of two strategic planning sessions on May 12, facilitated by Christopher Swanson and Patrick Garmoe of PureDriven. We will keep you apprised of our progress on this new initiative.

Connecting Duluth- Fit City Duluth

James Gittemeier reported that over the last 3 weeks, six public meetings have been held in locations across the city to discuss bike routes. The meetings were put on by Fit City Duluth, the MIC, and the City of Duluth and sponsored by LISC. At these meetings the public was asked about what transportation routes they currently use to bicycle, which routes would they use if they were safer and to provide addition input on bicycle in Duluth. The data from these interactive work sessions will be compiled and put into a report. This report will be presented at a TAC and MIC meeting this summer, and will help guide the update of the bike route maps, as well as future bicycle initiatives, plans & studies.

TIGER II Grant Application

Ron Chicka reported that a second phase of the TIGER Discretionary Grants "TIGER II" was recently announced by the USDOT. It is a \$600 million competitive grant process for surface transportation projects targeted for capital investments in highway or bridge projects, public transportation projects, passenger and freight rail projects, port and infrastructure investments and intermodal facilities. Final applications are due in August. In the last round of the TIGER grant process, MNDOT and the Port authority had put together a project involving improvements to I-35 and roadways and facilities the near the Port offices. All jurisdictions that may consider a project have been or are being alerted.

Denny said projected awards are in the 8-10 million range, which is consistent with the lower amount of funding for the second round (\$35 million received in 1st round); categories: planning; rural; urbanized areas. Not sure yet of District one's role in the application process.

Blatnik and Bong Bridge Study

Ron Chicka reported that the consultant team has been regularly meeting with DOT and MIC staff to provide an update of tasks conducted. A large- and small-scale model for traffic in the area has been assembled and run to determine impact on the network if the Bong has to be fully closed over the 2014 construction season. Specific intersections are under analysis to determine traffic needs under this scenario. If results are available by the TAC and MIC meeting dates, we will update the committees accordingly. A more detailed analysis will be presented to the Boards in the summer.

Dena reported that they are looking to utilize ITS resources to alert the public about delays and alternate routes related to rail crossings

10. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Foldesi adjourned the meeting at 3:08 pm.