
ANNUAL JOINT MEETING OF THE
DULUTH-SUPERIOR METROPOLITAN INTERSTATE COUNCIL
AND THE
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY
Wednesday, August 16, 2006

Proctor Community Center
100 Pionk Road, Proctor, MN

MIC Members Present

Broc Allen, Douglas Co Suburban Townships
Nick Baker, Douglas County
David Conley, Douglas County
Esther Dalbec, City of Superior
Earl Elde, St Louis Co Suburban Townships
Dick Kieren, City of Proctor
Garry Krause, City of Duluth
Keith MacDonald, City of Hermantown
Kay McKenzie, Douglas County
Nick Milroy, City of Superior
Isobel Rapaich, DTA Board
Russ Stover, City of Duluth

MIC Members Absent

Ed Anderson, City of Superior*
David Bilden, City of Superior*
Dean Miller, Douglas County*
Cindy Moe, St Louis Co Suburban Townships*
Andy Peterson, City of Duluth Citizen Rep*
Peg Sweeney, St. Louis County*

TAC Members Present

John Foschi, City of Proctor
Chuck Froseth, City of Duluth
Dennis Jensen, Duluth Transit Authority
Denny Johnson, MnDOT
Dick Larson, City of Duluth
Cindy Voigt, City of Duluth

Others Present

Ken Buehler, North Shore Scenic Railroad
Holly Butcher, MIC Staff
Ron Chicka, MIC Director
Andrea Diamond, MIC Staff
James Gittemeier, MIC Staff
Sheldon Johnson, NWRPC
Andy McDonald, MIC Staff
Rondi Watson, MIC Staff

1. Introductions/Agenda Review

Minnesota Co-Chair Russ Stover called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. and all meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. Northeast Minnesota Rail Initiatives

Guest speaker Ken Buehler, Executive Director of the Duluth Depot and the North Shore Scenic Railway, gave a presentation about the history of passenger rail service in Duluth and its potential for the future. Although passenger rail service was discontinued in 1985, there is renewed interest at the state level in reviving a route between the Twin Cities and Duluth, or at least in studying its

feasibility, to tie into a planned commuter rail route to the region just northwest of Minneapolis. He also noted the popularity of the new commuter rail line in Minneapolis and suggested that a long term transportation goal might be to establish local commuter rail service, utilizing the existing rail corridor.

3. 2007-2010 Draft Wisconsin TIP

Sheldon Johnson presented the draft version of the 2007-2010 Superior Metropolitan Area Transportation Improvement Program, and reviewed the projects designated to receive federal transportation funding for those four years. He requested the MIC approve the release of the draft document for the mandated 30-day comment period. He added that the final document would be put before the TAC and MIC for approval at the October meetings.

Nick Baker/Kay McKenzie moved to approve the Draft 2007-2010 Superior Metropolitan Area TIP. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

4. Duluth Heights Traffic Circulation Study – Final

Andy McDonald presented the final version of the Duluth Heights Traffic Circulation Study. He stressed that the final recommendations were the result of an extensive public input process, most significantly that a strong consensus exists to build a Duluth Heights connector roadway from the current Joshua Avenue up to Arrowhead Road. He stressed that although this is the preferred solution, it is also the most expensive, and funding to build a new road would not likely be available until 2011 at the earliest with extensive environmental and design review processes that must take place before construction could begin.

In the interim, the study is recommending that three temporary traffic calming structures (two half- and one full-closure) be put in place at strategic intersections to discourage cut-through traffic until the permanent solution—a new Joshua Avenue connector—can be built. He noted that the recommendations also stipulate that the effectiveness and impact of these devices be evaluated within 30-60 days after they are installed, and that traffic calming adjustments be made as needed. The recommendations also include modifications that could be made to improve traffic flows along the existing primary roadways around the study area, as another way to relieve the traffic pressure within the neighborhood.

Nick Baker/Nick Milroy moved to approve the final Duluth Heights Traffic Circulation Study. There was no further discussion and the motion was passed by unanimous vote of the MIC members present. TAC member Dennis Jensen cast an opposing vote, citing adverse impacts to the neighborhood residents from the interim traffic calming measures.

5. Public Involvement Plan Update –Scope of Work

James Gittemeier presented the Scope of Work to update the MIC's Public Involvement Plan. He explained that the goal is to update the 2002 version to reflect the new federal requirements in the federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU. The update will identify strategies to generate stakeholder input and integrate public comments, educate local jurisdictions about our planning processes, and refine our use of various media, particularly the use of web-based public outreach.

He reported that this month he has been reviewing public participation plans from other agencies

(Fargo-Moorhead Metro COG-MPO, Met Council-Twin Cities MPO, and Pima County-Arizona). He is working toward a draft version of the Public Involvement Plan to present at the October MIC and TAC meetings to mark the start of a 45-day public comment period. A final version of the plan will then be presented for approval at the January 2007 meetings. He closed by requesting approval of the Scope of Work.

Nick Baker/Chuck Froseth moved to approve the Scope of Work for the Update to the MIC's Public Involvement Plan. There was no further discussion and the motion was passed unanimously.

6. Human Services Transportation Plan

Holly Butcher presented an update about the status of the Human Services Transportation planning process, undertaken on a fast track this summer in response to a SAFETEA-LU requirement to develop a locally coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan through a process that includes representatives from public, private, non-profit transportation services, human services providers and the general public.

She reported that an initial Steering Committee Meeting was held in July to devise a workshop program and list of appropriate invitees to fully represent Duluth and Regional stakeholders for elderly, low income, and disabled groups. In early August, MPO and RDC staff attended the Douglas County Human Services Transportation workshop in Superior, WI to get a feel for the 'Framework for Action' facilitation process that Wisconsin was using.

MPO and RDC staff then hosted a workshop in Canal Park on August 14th to yield stakeholder input on transportation gaps in Duluth and the Arrowhead Region as they relate to elderly, low income, and the disabled community. MnDOT Central Office of Transit distributed the materials that MPO and RDC staff devised for this meeting to the rest of the state, since the Duluth/Arrowhead region was the first one to conduct this planning workshop in the state. Human Services Transportation Surveys were due on August 15th, and ARDC staff will be compiling this information in a database and results will be shared with the Steering Committee at the next meeting. The final plan is due October 1st, and the MIC-area portion of the plan will be included as a section in the plan being developed for the Arrowhead Region by ARDC's Regional Planning Division.

7. Phase 2 On-Street Bike Routes

James Gittemeier reported that MIC staff continues to work on the implementation of the Phase 2 On-Street Bike Route project with Duluth, Proctor, and St. Louis County staff. A steering committee meeting was held on August 1st to discuss the results of the Bicycle Compatibility Index (BCI) analysis and determine the final routes to be signed. The next step is to decide on the number, location, and information to be displayed on the wayfinding signage.

The result of the Phase 2 project will be a completely signed system throughout Duluth, Proctor, and the outer ring of MIC-area townships, tied into the existing Duluth and Hermantown system (Phase 1). The final phase, Phase 3, will focus on a designated and signed on-street bike route system in Superior, which will then complete the on-street bike route system for the entire MIC planning area.

8. Project Updates

TRB Conference

Holly Butcher reported that the Transportation Research Board (TRB) will be hosting its bi-annual Tools of the Trade Conference in Nashville, TN on September 13-15. The Superior and Duluth Safe Routes to School Plans will be presented at the "Livable Cities" session by Andy McDonald, who will attend and present at the conference in September during her leave of absence.

Minnesota MPO Directors Conference

Ron Chicka reported that Minnesota MPO Directors and DOT personnel met on August 9 – 11 in La Crosse, Wisconsin to hold a "best practices" forum. The conference annually brings together MPOs across the state to discuss innovative planning initiatives for all modes. This year's conference featured a seminar on "Safety Conscious Planning" by the Federal Highway Administration and Andy McDonald presented our work on Safe Routes to Schools within the Duluth-Superior metropolitan area.

Pro Walk/Pro Bike Conference

James Gittemeier reported that he would be attending the 14th International Conference on Walking & Bicycling, also known as Pro Walk/Pro Bike 2006, on September 5th – 8th in Madison, Wisconsin. The theme for the 2006 conference is "Making Connections". It is based on the recognition that success in bicycle and pedestrian work means getting people from diverse backgrounds to work together on a range of issues: completing street and expanding trail networks; changing land use regulations to foster shorter trips and better connected communities; promoting walking and biking in health, safety, and social justice arenas; and getting bicycle and pedestrian issues included in increasingly complex community plans.

Wisconsin DOT/MPO/RPC Planning Conference

Ron Chicka reported that the MIC, together with NWRPC, will host the annual Wisconsin DOT / MPO /RPC planning conference on September 25-26 at the Inn on Lake Superior in Canal Park, bringing together a statewide array of individuals within the transportation planning field. Among the number of featured presentations will be U.S Congressional Representatives David Obey (WI) and Jim Oberstar (MN) discussing the latest in federal transportation initiatives. We are also featuring an extended discussion on passenger and freight rail issues in the Duluth area and the Upper Midwest.

9. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Stover adjourned the meeting at 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rondi Watson

MIC Division Secretary