
Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY

Tuesday, January 16, 2007 at 1:30 PM

WisDOT Northwest Region-Superior Office

1701 N 4th Street, Superior, WI

<u>Members Present/Representing</u>	<u>Members Absent/Representing</u>	<u>Others Present/Representing</u>
Jim Benning, <i>Chair</i> <i>City of Duluth</i>	Paul Halverson <i>Douglas County</i>	<i>MIC Staff:</i> Holly Butcher
Brian Boder* <i>St. Louis County</i>	Dennis Jensen / Jim Heilig* <i>Duluth Transit Authority</i>	Andrea Diamond
John Foschi <i>City of Proctor</i>	Walter Leu <i>Mn/DOT District 1</i>	James Gittemeier
Chuck Froseth, <i>City of Duluth</i>	Brian Ryks / Susan Thompson* <i>Duluth Airport Authority</i>	Robert Herling
Bryn Jacobson <i>Bike/Pedestrian Rep</i>	David Salo <i>City of Hermantown</i>	Andy McDonald
Denny Johnson, <i>Vice-Chair</i> <i>Mn/DOT District 1</i>	Jason Serck <i>City of Superior</i>	Rondi Watson
Cari Pedersen <i>City of Duluth</i>		<i>MnDOT</i> Todd Campbell
Heather Rand <i>Mn DEED</i>		<i>SEH Consulting</i> Scott Sannes
Dena Ryan <i>WisDOT NW Region</i>		<i>US Army Corps of Engineers</i> John Larson
Jim Sharrow <i>Duluth Seaway Port Authority</i>		<i>WisDOT</i> Jill Peterman
Cindy Voigt* <i>City of Duluth</i>		

* = alternate

1. Introductions/Agenda Review

MIC-TAC Chair Chuck Froseth called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. All meeting participants introduced themselves. No changes to the agenda were put forward.

2. Committee Business

Meeting summary for December 12, 2006

Chair Froseth called for amendments or corrections to the previous month's meeting summary. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve.

John Foschi/Jim Sharrow moved to approve the meeting summary from the December 12, 2006 meeting with no corrections or changes. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

2007 Officer Elections

Chair Froseth called for nominations for chair and vice-chair for 2007, and added that the new chair would preside over the rest of the meeting.

John Foschi/Dena Ryan made a motion to nominate Jim Benning as TAC chair and Denny Johnson as vice-chair for 2007. Both nominees indicated that they were willing to serve in this capacity. There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

3. London Road Project Update

Scott Sannes, Project Manager from the consulting firm SEH, introduced Todd Campbell, Project Manager from MnDOT, and explained that they both were involved in the London Road Study currently taking place in Duluth. He began by describing the goal of the project, which is to determine what changes should be made to London Road and Superior Street to relieve congestion from 26th Avenue East to 66th Avenue East. He described the 12-month public involvement process as “very active,” including monthly advisory committee meetings, three public open houses, three newsletters, a public survey and a study website.

He summarized the feedback from the phone survey and the public meetings as a general feeling that improvements should be made to deal with problems of congestion and speed. He stressed, however, that the main concern expressed was that the character of the road be preserved. In response to neighborhood concerns for the aesthetics of the roadway, they were developing Context-Sensitive Design options which reflect a sense of place, and a balance between all modes of travel.

He noted that one goal of this process is to educate the public. For example, recent analysis revealed that this stretch of London Road has very low crash rates and in fact can be described as very safe by this measure. Traffic is projected to grow by about 1-1/2 percent per year and contrary to popular belief, the great majority of the traffic is serving the local neighborhood, not passing through to the North Shore. He added that the congestion issue was mainly a perception because it's only a problem along this corridor for about 30 minutes each morning and afternoon. Potential solutions include the following options:

Alternative 1--An expressway that would follow the current rail bed. It would need to be raised over 40th Avenue East, resulting in a major 3-dimensional visual impact. He added that to vacate the active rail line (owned by Canadian Pacific) for use as a roadway would literally require an act of Congress.

Alternative 2- A system of one-way pairs, with two one-way lanes outbound on London road beginning at 40th East, and inbound traffic on Superior Street. This configuration was described as the most advantageous to pedestrians and bicyclists, and would not involve much reconstruction.

Alternative 3—A parkway design with travel lanes and a landscaped center median, would yield the greatest capacity benefit, but would have greatest construction and right-of-way costs, with very significant impacts to front yards along entire street

Alternative 4—Converting parking lanes to travel lanes during peak travel periods and making other spot improvements incrementally over 25 years. He described this as the lowest-cost option and would have the least impact overall.

He added that another possible roadway option, building a bypass through the northern townships, would only divert about 400 cars per day, an unacceptably low level of benefit given the high cost of constructing this option. Furthermore the bypass would not serve the through traffic that needs to access the highway to travel to Wisconsin, etc.

He also described another concern that continues to be expressed by one or two residents in particular is in regard to the risk posed by hazardous materials. The MnDOT office of Commercial Vehicle Enforcement and Hazardous Material Regulation will present information at the February Advisory Committee meeting supporting their belief that there is little to be concerned about, given that the main hazardous material being transported along this route is fuel being delivered to local gas stations.

Scott responded to questions by noting that construction and rights-of-way are the highest costs; in his opinion this road does not pose a significant traffic or safety problem to warrant an expensive solution. The freeway solution frankly is not proportional to the problem at hand. It does, however, have significant neighborhood support, and he added that they're spending a lot of time having to explain why it won't likely be included in the final recommended solution.

He closed by stating that the study committee was in the process of evaluating these solutions; noting that the final recommended solution must balance cost with impacts and benefits. Other considerations included roundabouts vs. signals; a possible frontage road connecting the Chateau and Lakeshore. Another public meeting would be held later this winter, with final recommendations to be released in late spring.

4. Erie Pier Management Plan Update

Andy McDonald introduced John Larson, Chief of Construction at the Army Corps of Engineers office in Duluth, who presented information about a new Management Plan being developed to shift the function of Erie Pier from a disposal facility to a recycling facility for dredged materials. He explained that the harbor needs to be dredged to 21- or 28-foot depths from its natural depth of about 8 feet and that this material is placed in the Erie Pier Confined Disposal Facility (CDF). Currently about 20 percent of these materials are recovered and sold by the Port Authority. This is becoming a time-critical issue because with its current level of functioning, a new CDF will be needed in a decade or so. He noted that a significant amount of taxpayer dollars would be saved by not needing to construct a new Confined Disposal Facility.

He added that the Corps is viewing the Erie Pier Management Plan as a pilot project with significant implications for CDFs across the Great Lakes system. Last year the Corps didn't dredge the Duluth-Superior harbor but rather used the funds to redesign Erie Pier with staging and washing areas.

One important function of the Management Plan, with its goal of creating a beneficial re-use center, will be to determine and develop markets for the materials, in particular the finer rather than the coarse materials, and preferably large-scale projects. He added that the finer materials will likely be sold very cheaply--the value is not how much it's sold for but rather in clearing out space. He is hoping that local jurisdictions will consider using these fine materials as unclassified materials—they will be looking closely at specifications, maybe asking them to review their standards as this material does have some structural

capabilities that need to be considered. Implementation of the plan will require both public education on this topic as well as outreach to local businesses and municipalities. Jim Sharrow noted that the idea is to develop a cooperative community solution to the problem of dredge materials storage and re-use.

Other key issues to be addressed will be testing materials for an extensive array of potential contaminants, and water management--because WLSSD can't handle all the water in extreme rain events, there needs need to be an approved on-site filtration system. Another significant and persistent problem is the eradication of the invasive species purple loosestrife. They are hoping to receive some support in addressing this issue from various projects underway at NRRI.

Andy McDonald reported that MIC staff will be presenting the document for approval by HTAC in early March and by the TAC and MIC later that month. We will also be seeking a Resolution of Support for this effort from the Policy Board.

5. Functional Classification Update

James Gittemeier reviewed the process for the functional classification update for the MIC area, which included verifying existing data and cleaning up discrepancies. He added that in December, a number of additional changes were made to the system at the request of Mn/DOT District One and St. Louis County. For the most part, the changes to the functional classification system were made in the surrounding townships, focused on county routes, anticipating that some will be changed to CSAHs. Frontage roads along I-35 were also included as local roads. He closed by presenting the updated functional classification map will be presented for approval

Chuck Froseth/Brian Boder moved to adopt the functional classification map for the MIC Planning Area as presented and submit to MnDOT Central Office and FHWA for review and approval. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

6. Endion Neighborhood Transportation & Land Use Plan – Scope of Work

Holly Butcher presented the Scope of Work for the upcoming Endion Transportation and Land Use Plan. The goal of this plan is “to identify solutions to improve safety, traffic flow, multi-modal options and access within [the study area] in an effort to support flexible land use reinvestment within the City of Duluth.” She added that MIC staff had met with City of Duluth Planning and Engineering staff in December to discuss key elements to be included in this planning effort.

She noted that the study area is very large, from 6th to 26th Avenues East. She noted that this study is timely given the high level of interest in potential development and redevelopment within the study area: St. Luke's is expanding its facilities and parking facilities; the Lakewalk Surgery Center is also expanding onto former Louis' Café site; the Plaza retail and Armory area is a very high-value property with potential for mixed use redevelopment. She noted that the next step would be to convene the first meeting of the study advisory committee, to include MIC staff, City Planning and Engineering staff, and a number of stakeholders from key businesses and ventures in the area. She closed by requesting approval of the Scope of Work.

Cari Pedersen/Chuck Froseth moved to adopt the Scope of Work for the Endion Transportation and Land Use Plan as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

7. FY 2011 Duluth Metro Area TIP Applications

James Gittemeier reported that the process of developing the Duluth Metropolitan 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program was underway. A total of 7 project applications were submitted to the MIC requesting federal transportation funding for FY2011.

He distributed copies of each project submittal, along with a list of the evaluation criteria and a point scoring system. He explained that these submittals will be prioritized at the February 20th TAC meeting at 1:30 p.m. at the Proctor Community Center. All voting TAC members, along with any MIC members who choose to participate, will be scoring projects using the evaluation criteria and 100-point scoring system approved by the MIC in May of 2002. The results of this prioritization meeting will then advance to the MIC Policy Board at their meeting on February 21st for discussion and final approval. Projects then move forward in the Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership process (ATP).

He added that he would give a more detailed description of each project at the February prioritization session and requested that TAC members review the project packet and complete a preliminary scoring for each prior to that meeting.

8. Public Involvement Plan

James Gittemeier announced that he had conducted the first of two public round-table discussion meetings on Tuesday, January 9th. Residents and elected officials were invited to attend, in order to gain their insight on how to have more meaningful public participation. The feedback he'd received from the first meeting strongly urged the MIC to become more visible—the Metropolitan Interstate Council is not a well-known entity to the general public. They suggested that MIC staff participate as guest speakers at township meetings, business associations, City & County Board meetings, neighborhood associations, and look for ways to be featured in articles in neighborhood papers such as the one for Duluth's East Hillside.

They also made some suggestions for facilitating these meetings: to clearly state the desired outcome, to start and finish on time, to advertise with well-designed flyers, to design slides and visual aids without too much text, and to provide refreshments. We were also advised to capture names and contact info for further outreach and to ask if participants want to be added to a contact list for future events/meetings.

Finally, suggestions were made about how to address the public comments that are received for any given plan—that comments and responses should be clearly summarized in the final version of the plan.

James concluded by announcing that the next round-table discussion would be held on Monday, January 29th at 7:00 p.m. at the WITC Conference Center. He added that significant ideas discussed at these two meetings will be incorporated into the Public Involvement Plan. A final version of the plan will be presented for approval in February.

9. Roundtable Discussion

Denny Johnson introduced two guests: Tim Mitchell from FHWA in St. Paul and Cindy Carlsson from MnDOT's central office. They thanked the TAC for allowing them to sit in on today's meeting, noting that they are actively working to become more familiar with MPO work around the state.

Denny added that all MnDOT Districts are being asked to update their 10-year plans, with a focus on infrastructure preservation projects. He added that non-infrastructure earmarks and improvement projects will likely be deferred to 2016 or later.

10. Project Updates

- **Duluth Safe Routes to School Funding Applications**--Holly Butcher reported that the first round of MnDOT's Safe Routes to School applications were due in July 2006 and that funding in the amount of \$30,000 had been awarded to Lincoln Park School in Duluth for their infrastructure and education project. MnDOT has since streamlined its process and the second round of applications are due January 31st. On behalf of Duluth Public Schools, she was now preparing infrastructure applications for Stowe, MacArthur, Congdon, Grant, and Lester Park elementary schools. The Duluth Safe Routes to School Steering Committee convened on December 20th and decided to also prepare a non-infrastructure grant application with the goal of improving bicycle and pedestrian education across all Duluth Public Schools.
- **Phase 2 On-street Bike Routes** --James Gittemeier reported that he, along with St. Louis County staff, continues to work on the finishing touches of the wayfinding signage portion of the project. He added that in the next month he will set up a project jurisdiction meeting to review the final routes, fine-tune the wayfinding signage, and discuss the next steps toward implementation, anticipated to occur this spring or summer.
- **Northwest Superior Traffic Circulation Study**--Robert Herling reported that preliminary data have been gathered regarding current land uses, traffic volumes, crash rates, roadway accesses and rail crossings. MIC staff is awaiting additional data from WisDOT and modeling results from URS. Once this information is received, Phase 1 of the study will be complete. Meanwhile, survey questions are being prepared and will be mailed to area stakeholders, as well as information providing details of the study. Completion of the study is scheduled for the summer of 2007.

11. Adjournment

Chair Benning adjourned the meeting at 3:16 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rondi Watson

MIC Division Secretary