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Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY

Tuesday, February 21, 2007 at 1:30 PM

Proctor Community Center  
100 Pionk Drive, Proctor, MN

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**Members Present/Representing**

Jim Benning, *Chair*  
*City of Duluth*  
Brian Boder\*  
*St. Louis County*  
Jim Foldesi  
*St. Louis County*  
Chuck Froseth  
*City of Duluth*  
Dennis Jensen  
*Duluth Transit Authority*  
Denny Johnson, *Vice-Chair*  
*Mn/DOT District 1*  
Lynn Lander  
*City of Hermantown*  
Walter Leu  
*Mn/DOT District 1*  
Cari Pedersen  
*City of Duluth*  
Cindy Voigt\*  
*City of Duluth*

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**Members Absent/Representing**

John Foschi\*  
*City of Proctor*  
Paul Halverson  
*Douglas County*  
Bryn Jacobson  
*Bike/Pedestrian Rep*  
Heather Rand  
*Mn DEED*  
Dena Ryan  
*WisDOT NW Region*  
Brian Ryks / Susan Thompson\*  
*Duluth Airport Authority*  
Jason Serck  
*City of Superior*  
Jim Sharrow  
*Duluth Seaway Port Authority*

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**Others Present/Representing**

Nick Baker, WI Co-Chair  
*MIC Policy Board*  
Holly Butcher  
Ron Chicka  
Andrea Diamond  
James Gittemeier  
Robert Herling  
Andy McDonald  
Sheldon Johnson  
Rondi Watson  
Todd Pierson  
*MIC Staff*

\* = alternate

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**1. Introductions/Agenda Review**

MIC-TAC Chair Jim Benning called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. All meeting participants introduced themselves. No changes to the agenda were put forward.

**2. Committee Business**

**Meeting summary for January 16, 2007**

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

*Chuck Froseth/Cari Pedersen moved to approve the meeting summary from the December 16, 2007 meeting with no corrections or changes. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.*

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### 3. DTA Site Plan Review Process

Dennis Jensen, General Manager for the Duluth Transit Authority, explained that the DTA Board requested that he look into options for better consideration of pedestrian and transit access in the process that reviews and approves site plans for new development.

He used the new Walgreens store at Joshua Avenue as an example. The way the facility has been designed and sited does not accommodate a bus stop—not enough curb space and traffic flow would be interrupted. He commented that Walgreens was not happy to learn that a bus could not stop at or near the new store, but this could have been planned for before store was built. He added that, similarly, when Maple Grove Road is reconstructed, it is not clear how bus service to Kmart and Target will be accommodated. Looking at the Target store in Superior, he noted that there is not enough room to maneuver in the parking lot, so the bus operates only along frontage road and because passengers must take carts quite a distance and across traffic to get to a bus stop.

He asked the planners and engineers on the TAC to consider multiple transportation modes—not just public transit but pedestrians, which is what bus riders are—in the early phases of planning and site design, especially for new commercial destinations. He added that the DTA would like to be consulted during the approvals process and that toward this end, the Duluth Planning Commission has added the DTA to its mailings, with priority to receive information about potential mall-area developments.

### 4. Amendment #2 to the 2007-2010 Duluth Metropolitan TIP

James Gittemeier reported that MIC staff had received a request to amend a High Priority Project (HPP) in the 2007-2010 Duluth Metro TIP. The proposed amendment would change the scope of the Air National Guard Base Improvement Project by splitting it into three phases and moves the funding for Phase 1 up from 2009 to 2007, in accordance with available HPP funding. Work in the first phase includes reconditioning Airport Road from Haines Road to Rice Lake Road and constructing turn lanes at the new base Entrance Road.

He added that the project was subject to air quality review and a positive air quality conformity determination had been made for the entire project in July 2006. No further air quality review is necessary at this time.

*Walter Leu/John Foschi moved to amend the 2007-2010 Duluth Metropolitan TIP as presented. During the discussion Walter Leu asked why the project was so inexpensive. James replied that the numbers used came directly from the draft project memo. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.*

### 5. Amendment #1 to the 2007-2010 Superior Metropolitan TIP

Sheldon Johnson reported that a new rail crossing improvement project, to add a signal & gates on 28th Street at Superior High School, needed to be amended into the 2007-2010 Superior Urbanized Area TIP.

He added that the other scheduled 2007 rail crossing projects, at 39th Ave East and East 8th Street and at 61st Street between Tower and Ogden, were funded at \$300,000. Of this amount \$200,000 will be transferred to the 28th Street project as noted above.

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*Chuck Froseth/Dennis Jensen moved to amend the 2007-2010 Superior Metropolitan TIP as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.*

#### **6. Public Involvement Plan– Final**

James Gittemeier presented the final version of the MIC's Public Involvement Plan for TAC approval. He noted that the process had begun in August 2006 to comply with new requirements set forth in the federal SAFETEA-LU transportation legislation. He reviewed the public input that was sought in the development of this plan, as well as a brief overview of the major components of the plan. He described the Plan as a guide for use primarily by MIC staff, adding that a significant addition to all MIC planning processes was to describe how we integrate public comments and our responses to them.

*Denny Johnson/ Chuck Froseth moved to approve the final MIC Public Involvement Plan as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.*

#### **7. MIC Website Update**

Rondi Watson gave an overview of the new MIC website, dsmic.org, which was launched earlier this month. She noted that the new website was a significant aspect of the MIC's new Public Involvement strategy, since SAFETEA-LU specifically calls for MPOs to utilize their websites to present real-time information about plans and public meetings and as a way to gather public input before and during our planning processes.

She explained that the primary goals of the website re-design were to make it (1) easier to locate and (2) more user-friendly to navigate and to contact MIC staff for direct input. She noted that the re-designed site is patterned after news delivery websites—to place as many current topics as possible in front of the viewer on the initial page, including links to draft documents open for public review, current meeting agendas, previous meeting summaries, staff contact information and status reports on current planning efforts. A search feature is also featured prominently in the upper left corner. The updated site is also compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, to make it accessible for visually-impaired computer users. She added that planned improvements to the website include the addition of more visual elements, a comprehensive archive of past MIC plans and studies, and interactive GIS mapping functions. She noted that all MIC staff will be able to log on and update their own project web pages and that the entire staff is enthusiastic about contributing to an overall improved web presence. She closed by inviting committee members to log on to [www.dsmic.org](http://www.dsmic.org) to view and forward comments.

#### **8. FY 2011 Duluth Metropolitan Area TIP Project Prioritization**

James Gittemeier explained that the scoring system had been revised for 2011 projects, so that transit and rail projects are ranked separately from roadway projects. He presented an overview of each of the candidate TIP projects for 2011 federal funding, which included six roadway projects, a single transit project, and a single rail project. He also reviewed the MIC staff scores and comments for each project. TAC members then scored the projects, using the evaluation criteria and 100-point scoring system adopted by the MIC in June 2002. The scores were then averaged (with the highest and lowest scores deleted), resulting

in a priority ranking as follows:

Rank	Roadway Projects	TAC Score
1	<b>Duluth Heights Connector Preliminary Engineering</b> - Design of new roadway (Joshua Avenue) from Maple Grove Road to Arrowhead Road	91.1
2	<b>Glenwood Street</b> – Reconstruction from 45th Avenue East to 52nd Avenue East	82.3
3	<b>Maple Grove Road &amp; Stebner Road</b> – Installation of a traffic control signal	80.3
4	<b>Rice Lake Road</b> – Rehabilitation from Arrowhead Road to Martin Road	80.1
5	<b>Rice Lake Road</b> – Rehabilitation from Pecan to Arrowhead Road	78.1
6	<b>Jean Duluth Road</b> – Rehabilitation, including culvert repairs & turn lane additions, from Zimmerman Road to Normanna Road	76.1
Rank	Transit Project	TAC Score
1 (of 1)	<b>Bus Replacement</b> – DTA to replace 3 STRIDE Buses	n/a
Rank	Rail Project	TAC Score
1 (of 1)	<b>Rail Crossing Signal</b> – Installation of railroad crossing signals at Munger Shaw Road and U.S. Highway 2	n/a

Cari Pedersen/Walter Leu *made a motion to recommend to the MIC Policy Board that the 2011 MIC area TIP candidate projects be prioritized in order of the scores, as shown, to be forwarded on to the ATP process.* During the discussion, Walter Leu noted that the project at Maple Grove and Stebner Roads would likely be eligible for the new category of Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funding. He added that a study would likely be required to determine the best intersection design and to review factors such as rights-of-way and environmental impacts. Ron Chicka noted that the MIC's current TSM data collection efforts might be applicable to such a study, as well as the possibility of modeling traffic at that intersection. MIC Chair Nick Baker asked why traffic pressures on Arrowhead Road were not being addressed by re-connecting Rice Lake Road on a continuous alignment instead of maintaining it as two separate segments. Jim Foldesi explained that this option had been considered but ruled out because of environmental impacts and high costs. Furthermore, a TIP project scheduled for 2010 was designed to address the traffic problems on Arrowhead by adding through- and turn lanes at both Rice Lake Road intersections. **There was no further discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.**

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## 9. Roundtable Discussion

Cindy Voigt noted that the Minnesota DNR will be doing a flyover for aerial photos of the state and is looking for partners (municipalities) to financially contribute to the project in exchange for current aerial coverage.

## 10. Project Updates and Informational Items

**Safe Routes to School Implementation Efforts:** Holly Butcher reported that on behalf of the Duluth Public Schools, she had prepared and submitted six Safe Routes to School applications to MnDOT. There were a total of five infrastructure project applications for Stowe, MacArthur, Congdon, Grant, and Lester Park elementary schools; and one district-wide non-infrastructure grant to integrate bicycle and pedestrian education into K-8 classrooms at all Duluth schools. Successful project applicants will be notified in the spring.

Additionally, MIC staff had met with the Superior School District, Police Department, and City staff to discuss elements to be included in a non-infrastructure grant application for the City of Superior, due to WisDOT by March 16.

**Endion Neighborhood Transportation and Land Use Plan:** Holly Butcher reported that the City of Duluth had recommended members for the Steering Committee for the Endion Neighborhood Transportation and Land Use Plan, to include representatives from area businesses, both hospitals and the Armory development, and MIC and City of Duluth staff members. She plans to convene the first meeting of the group later this month.

**DTA Route Analysis for the City of Superior:** Holly Butcher reported that MIC staff had met with DTA staff in early February to discuss conducting an analysis of DTA's route structure and service levels in Superior. MIC staff will be conducting passenger and non-rider surveys, reviewing ridership data, and examining alternative scenarios to efficiently serve the City of Superior.

**Safety / Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Planning:** Robert Herling reported that MIC staff met on February 2nd to begin the second phase of the 2006-07 TSM/Safety Planning effort, which involves a closer examination of the high-crash locations that were identified in Phase 1. Staff will continue to study each of the locations on the list, identifying issues, identifying possible solutions and engaging local and state officials in developing TSM recommendations for each location. Brian Boder commented that St. Louis County would also like to have input into the analysis as the process continues.

**Bike Route Planning:** James Gittemeier reported that MIC staff met with the City of Duluth, St. Louis County and the City of Proctor to work on the final routes, fine-tune the wayfinding signage, and discuss the next steps toward implementation, anticipated to occur this spring or summer. The project memo, project plans, and the inter-jurisdictional agreement were also discussed.

**HTAC Great Lakes Advocacy Subcommittee:** Andy McDonald reported that Congressman Jim Oberstar was set to address the HTAC's Great Lakes Advocacy group and invited harbor stakeholders on Thursday, February 22nd at 11:30 am at the DECC Horizon Room.

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## 11. Adjournment

Chair Benning adjourned the meeting at 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Rondi Watson*

MIC Division Secretary