



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council
 TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY
Tuesday, July 17, 2007, 1:30 PM

Meeting Location	WITC Conference Center	
Meeting Chair	Denny Johnson	
Note Taker	Rondi Watson	
Members Present	Jim Benning	City of Duluth
	Jim Foldesi	St. Louis County
	John Foschi	City of Proctor
	Chuck Froseth	City of Duluth
	Denny Johnson	Mn/DOT District 1
	Walter Leu	Mn/DOT District 1
	Dena Ryan	WisDOT NW Region
	David Salo	City of Hermantown
	Cindy Voigt*	City of Duluth
	Dennis Jensen	Duluth Transit Authority
	Jason Serck	City of Superior
	Heather Rand	Mn DEED
Members Absent	Bryn Jacobson	Bike/Pedestrian Rep
	Paul Halverson	Douglas County
	Cari Pedersen	City of Duluth
	Jim Sharrow	Duluth Seaway Port Authority
	Brian Ryks	Duluth Airport Authority
	* Alternate	
Others Present	Holly Butcher	ARDC / MIC Senior Planner
	Ron Chicka	ARDC / MIC Director
	Andrea Diamond	ARDC / MIC GIS Specialist
	James Gittemeier	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Pat Heffernan	KCCI Pathways Group
	Robert Herling	ARDC / MIC Associate Planner
	Andy McDonald	ARDC / MIC Principal Planner
	Todd Pierson	ARDC / MIC Intern
	Rondi Watson	ARDC / MIC Division Secretary

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

TAC Vice-Chair Denny Johnson called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. and all meeting attendees introduced themselves. No changes were put forward to the agenda.

2. Committee Business – Meeting Summary of June 19, 2007

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

Motion and Discussion Jason Serck, with a second from Jim Foldesi, moved to approve the meeting summary from the June 19, 2007 meeting with no corrections or changes. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

3. Knight Creative Communities Initiative – Pathways Project

Ron Chicka introduced TAC member Heather Rand and Pat Heffernan, both of the Knight Creative Communities Initiative (KCCI) initiative. Heather explained that the KCCI is year-long, joint project of the Knight Foundation and the Duluth-Superior Area Community Foundation that aims to build a creative environment for economic growth.

The effort is based upon economist Richard Florida's research and writings, which identify the "four T's" of a healthy and successful community: Technology, Tolerance, Territory, and Talent. Heather and Pat are two of the 31 local volunteer "catalysts" working in Duluth to spark a community dialogue to develop a vision and accompanying set of strategies in each of these areas. Specifically, they have formed five working groups to implement different aspects of the "four T's" – which they call Art Works, Brain Gain, We Mean Green, Mix it Up, and Pathways.

Pat gave some more information about the Pathways initiative, which focuses on improving and promoting non-motorized transportation opportunities in the Twin Ports, particularly in regard to bicycling: implementing bike lanes, bike racks, and bike maps. Another goal is simply to raise awareness of biking as a mode of transport, ultimately to lead to active lifestyle changes.

The group plans a number of upcoming events, including a train /bike ride event between Two Harbors and Duluth, artist designed bike racks, and a community meeting to discuss bike issues.

He added that the development of dedicated bike lanes is a big issue for this group, this type of facility is notably absent when compared to other comparable communities. The Pathways group will be working to gain some momentum on this

issue, by garnering public support and working to develop priority routes and finding dollar sources to implement them. The group also hopes to get Resolutions of Support passed by the two cities and by the MIC.

In the discussion that followed: County Engineer Jim Foldesi commented that on-street bike routes have been studied extensively by the MIC and suggested the group doesn't have to recreate the wheel in this regard (Pat agreed). MIC Director Ron Chicka noted that he had recently met with another member of the Pathways group to describe our existing database of roadway information that quantifies how "bikeable" streets are—with many considerations beyond the shortest distance between two points. Another issue is connectivity to other routes, adding that the MIC and the Pathways group need to work closely with the jurisdictions (city-county-state-townships), as the implementing entities. He added that a few local roadways already include lanes which function as bike lanes even though they're not officially designated, such as Billings Drive in Superior.

City Planner Chuck Froseth commented that the Duluth school district actually prohibits kids from biking to school; MIC Planner Holly Butcher noted that Superior, with their recent SRTS grant, is actually making strides to promote it. MIC Planner Andy McDonald added that the MIC Policy Board, at its past two meetings, asked to find TIP projects that include bike elements.

City Engineer Cindy Voigt commented that from the engineering perspective, she does not favor a street configuration with shared parking and biking lanes, due to the needed standards for the width of the lane. Jim agreed, noting that there are also increased maintenance criteria to maintaining the painting. Hermantown Engineer Dave Salo commented that in Hermantown they've received complaints from some drivers about cyclists on the roads.

DTA General Manager Dennis Jensen commented that by his observation more people are already bicycle commuting—the number of bikes carried by DTA buses was about 10,000 last year and is on pace to exceed 12,000 this year. He suggested that there might be more support for off-street bike trails than on-street bike lanes, and that the group should perhaps view bike lanes as a second priority to the development of off-street routes such as the Munger Trail. Andy added that the Pathways group needs to actively advocate for the positive impacts (there are people who fear that they bring crime, garbage, etc.).

4. MnDOT Statewide Transportation Plan

Ron Chicka presented information about the current initiative underway to update Minnesota's statewide transportation plan. The current plan dates to 2003 and although an update is required every 6 years, SAFETEA-LU legislation introduced

new content and process provisions in order to maintain federal funding eligibility.

The updated plan will build on current performance-based planning efforts, “tweak” policy areas, incorporate recent plans and studies, and coordinate with the parallel District plans. It will also continue the “two scenario” approach (performance-based and fiscally-constrained) by setting target performance levels and by comparing investment priorities with available funding and identifying the resulting funding gaps or performance areas.

He explained that the four key policies setting direction for highway improvements are:

System Preservation - with the goal of maintaining pavement, bridges & other infrastructure that are already in good condition.

Statewide Mobility - between trade centers (IRC system); despite the efforts to make preservation a priority, the miles of roadways in poor condition is increasing for both principal and non-principal-arterials.

Metro/Trade Center Mobility - address congestion problems in the metro area and other major trade centers (Duluth, Rochester, St Cloud, etc).

Safety - the Toward Zero Deaths program is working, they have met the goal to reduce fatalities to 500 or fewer by 2008.

It is estimated that will take about \$37 billion to meet and maintain these targets over the 2008-2030 time period; however, it is also forecasted that we will only have about \$15 billion in available funds. System Preservation continues as MnDOT’s top priority, which would take 2/3 of all the funds (62%), leaving 15% for Safety, 18% for Trade Center Mobility, and 5% for IRC’s.

State revenue sources include the gas tax, tab fees, and Motor Vehicle Sales Tax. Since 2001 state revenues increased slightly but then dipped due to declining sales in vehicles and gasoline. In 2008, the new MVST funds for transportation, approved last fall, will begin to kick in, but if inflation continues as expected, they do not expect any real growth in state revenues. They are also assuming generally flat federal revenues.

The Plan update process is moving forward, they are currently conducting outreach; and a series of public involvement roundtables and hearing are scheduled from October 2007 through November 2008. Adoption of the new statewide plan is expected by January 2009.

Ron closed by noting that he is representing the MPOs on the Plan advisory committee. John Foschi asked if alternatives such as telecommuting would be considered as a way to reduce traffic impacts. Denny Johnson responded that

there's some data available, but it's not likely to be a large part of the plan.

Dennis Jensen noted that the focus is mainly on the highway system, and asked how transit figures in as part of the solution. Denny responded that the statewide transit plan is being updated concurrently.

5. Final 2008-2011 Duluth Metropolitan Area Transportation Improvement Program

James Gittemeier presented the final TIP for approval. He began by reviewing the three projects for which changes were put forward since the draft was released on May 17: Lester River Bridge Phase 2, moved from 2009 to 2010; Grand Avenue TH23 Bridge moved from 2011 to 2012; and the I-35 and 26th Ave. East intersection moved from 2011 to 2012.

He also reviewed the total funding included in this TIP (\$22 million in 2008, \$46 million in 2009, and then \$8 million in 2010 and 2011). He explained that 2008 and 2009 are unusually large project years, with funding for the Miller Hill reconstruction in 2008 and the I-35 reconditioning projects in 2009. It then goes down to a more normal funding level for last two years.

The draft Duluth area TIP was released for 30-day public comment period from May 17 – June 15. A public meeting was held on projects contained in the TIP on June 20 at the Hampton Inn in Canal Park. He also noted that this year the media really picked up on press releases, resulting in two DNT articles and two TV news interviews and four people attending the public meeting. He added that the plan will be available online at www.dsmic.org, the Duluth Public Library, or by request. He closed by requesting approval of the final document.

Motion and Dave Salo, with a second from John Foschi, moved to approve the

Discussion 2008-2011 Duluth TIP as presented.

There was no discussion and the motion was passed unanimously.

6. Endion Land Use and Transportation Plan

Holly Butcher presented information about the Endion Land Use and Transportation Plan. MIC staff conducted an on-foot land use assessment of the London Road study corridor (between 14th and 26th Avenues East) and analyzed data from the survey that was administered in early June to business owners. Significant themes that emerged were the total lack of connectivity to the Lakewalk connections that exists at 16th and 25th Avenue East--visibility really needs to be heightened; also several of the Avenues offer significant viewsheds which should be preserved; visually there is lots of asphalt and parking lots; new development is "suburban style" with no connections between the sidewalk and front entrances of businesses.

She noted how well the method of making in person contacts was in getting a high (83%) return rate on their business surveys. Two public meetings will be scheduled as part of the public involvement process for the Endion/East Hillside and London Road portions of the study. They will be held in August or September. GIS Specialist Andrea Grygo Diamond is working to develop visualization techniques to help better picture possible configurations and amenities such as center medians, narrower traffic lanes, bike lanes, etc.

Chuck Froseth commented that: form based zoning codes will be part of the solution to the new development issues. Cindy Voigt commented that sometimes steep grades prohibit the installation of sidewalks in certain areas.

7. MIC Work Program Projects Discussion

Ron Chicka discussed the MIC's current work program for the rest of the year. He noted that the District-wide Freight Study, which he presented at last month's meeting as something the MIC would manage, had been unexpectedly cut from the MnDOT budget for the current fiscal year. It is, however, a project that the MIC would like to see happen, there are many interested parties supporting this type of project. In next year's Work Program, he would like to include some preparatory work for when the full study can begin in 2009.

He also reported that there is interest expressed to conduct a development analysis on the former US Steel site in Morgan Park. The work would build upon tasks that we undertook within the Port Plan for Duluth, to be conducted along with the Duluth Seaway Port Authority and the Northspan Group, Inc. This project is likely to be added to the Work Program to examine access for all modes into the site and conduct a build-out analysis to determine needed traffic infrastructure.

He also reviewed three other studies slated to begin later this year, including the UMD Area Transportation/Woodland Avenue Corridor study, the Grand Avenue Access Management Plan (from the Zoo to I-35), and the East 2nd Access Management Plan in Superior.

He asked for input on these planned studies from committee members. Jason Serck commented that information from the East 2nd Street would be useful to the City of Superior, even if it could no longer be rolled into a larger regional freight study. Denny Johnson commented that although he thought that Grand Avenue (a segment of state highway 23) was worth taking a look at, the implementation of the recommendations to come out of such a study could not be assured – as reflected in Jim Hendrickson's earlier presentation, making improvements to this corridor is not a priority from the state funding perspective.

8. Arrive Minnesota Promotion and Website

Holly Butcher presented an update of the Arrive Minnesota project to promote multimodal transportation options across the state. She reported that a website is being rolled out to serve as a single point of reference for information about planning a trip using alternative transportation options. On Friday, June 29th, staff from MnDOT Central Office and UrbanTrans Consultants (Atlanta Office) flew into Duluth to discuss planning a transportation fare in Duluth to unveil this new website. Three events will be held across the state during September, including Duluth on Wednesday, September 19, 2007.

9. North 28th Street (Superior) Construction Update

Jason Serck presented an overview of the current construction work being done along North 28th Street in Superior. This project is the implementation of recommendations from a MIC plan conducted in 2003 plus an earlier one dating to the mid 1990s. The focus of the project is to slow traffic and improve pedestrian safety, to address the big issue of a parking lot located across the street from Superior High School, causing at least one injury each year. The school is adding and reconfiguring its parking lots to accommodate students and faculty; railroad crossing and driveways will be reconfigured and stormwater issues remedied. He added that this was a highly cooperative effort between WisDOT and the school district in terms of lining up funding and construction schedules. The construction began in June, to be completed in time for the start of the school year.

10. Project Updates

MIC Mid-Year Review

Ron Chicka reported that MIC staff will hold the annual meeting to review our planning initiatives and operations on July 18th, with representatives from both the Minnesota and Wisconsin DOTs, FHWA, FTA and the DTA.

Erie Pier / Dredged Material Management Plan

Andy McDonald reported that the MIC approved the final plan at its June meeting, along with a Resolution supporting the conversion of Erie Pier to a processing and reuse facility. The Board directed staff to send the Resolution with a cover letter to area jurisdictions and agencies responsible for road and other construction projects urging them to consider using the Erie Pier material as a fill or cover resource.

The next step in this process is to develop operational plans necessary to convert Erie Pier to a processing and reuse facility. UMD's Bureau of Business and Economic Research has proposed a study to determine some of the cost and market information, to be utilized in a targeted marketing plan for the Erie Pier material.

Proctor Master Trail Plan

James Gittemeier reported that MIC staff discussed the final details of the Trail Plan with the Proctor Comprehensive Plan Group at their June meeting. MIC and Proctor officials held a walk through of the proposed Proctor Spur (Munger Trail to Proctor connection) on July 12 with local officials. The final Trail Plan will be presented for approval at the August MIC and TAC meetings.

Duluth Heights Traffic Calming

Andy McDonald reported that a temporary half closure was installed at the intersection of Swan Lake Road and Eklund Avenue for the purpose of discouraging cut through traffic. They will also be placing tube counters in the same locations as the pre-study counts and traffic counts will be examined to determine the effectiveness of the half closure. A survey is also being prepared to send to study area residents to obtain their opinions.

DTA Superior Route Analysis

Holly Butcher reported that MIC staff met with DTA staff to discuss results and analysis thus far with the study. They determined future steps and further data collection items (reaching more Superior DTA drivers for feedback and taking additional on-off ridership counts during the summer months to verify or pinpoint any February cold weather anomalies). They also discussed a technical report to be developed by MIC staff for the DTA Board to approve in October.

11. Roundtable Discussion / Announcements

DTA

Dennis Jensen reported that the DTA had just reached an agreement with UWS to add them to their U-pass program.

Superior Harbor Assistance Program

Jason Serck announced that two grant applications were being submitted for state Harbor Assistance (HAP) funds for summer 2008, adding that one of the projects was a result of the corrosion issue. He added that they were hopeful that the projects might be funded, as the governor is proposing an increase in HAP funds to over \$12 million. The local matches would be provided by the sponsoring company.

12. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 3:10 p.m.