



Annual Joint Meeting of the
Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council
and the Transportation Advisory Committee

MEETING SUMMARY

Wed, August 15, 2007, 7:00 PM

Meeting Location	Proctor Community Center	
Meeting Chair	Russ Stover, Minnesota Co-Chair	
Note Taker	Rondi Watson	
Members Present	Broc Allen	Douglas Co. Suburban Townships
	Ed Anderson	City of Superior
	Nick Baker, WI Co-Chair	Douglas County
	David Brenna	City of Proctor
	Mike Coyle	Douglas County
	Earl Elde, Secretary	St. Louis Co. Suburban Townships
	Garry Krause	City of Duluth
	Keith MacDonald	City of Hermantown
	Kay McKenzie	Douglas County
	Dean Miller	Douglas County
	Steve O'Neil	St. Louis County
	Andy Peterson	City of Duluth
	Tari Rayala	Duluth Transit Authority
Members Absent	David (Mike) Bilden*	City of Superior Citizen Rep
	Nick Milroy*	City of Superior
	Cindy Moe*	St. Louis Co. Suburban Twps
	Kevin Norbie*	City of Superior
	* Excused	
Others Present	Holly Butcher	ARDC / MIC Senior Planner
	John Chell	ARDC / Executive Director
	Ron Chicka	ARDC / MIC Director
	John Foschi	TAC / City of Proctor
	Chuck Froseth	TAC / City of Duluth Planning Dept.
	James Gittemeier	ARDC / MIC Planner
	Robert Herling	ARDC / MIC Associate Planner
	Dennis Jensen	TAC / Duluth Transit Authority
	Denny Johnson	TAC / MnDOT Duluth District One
	Sheldon Johnson	NWRPC / MIC Deputy Director
	Andy McDonald	ARDC / MIC Principal Planner
	Heather Rand	TAC / MN DEED Office
	Dena Ryan	WisDOT - Superior
	Cindy Voigt	City of Duluth /Engineering Dept.
	Rondi Watson	ARDC / MIC Division Secretary
	Rob West	APEX

1. Introductions and Agenda Review

Minnesota Co-Chair Russ Stover called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and all meeting attendees introduced themselves. No changes were put forward to the agenda. James Gittemeier announced that agenda item 4, the Proctor Master Trail Plan, would be presented this month as a discussion rather than a voting item.

Motion and Discussion Ed Anderson, with a second from Andy Peterson, moved to approve the meeting summary from the June 20, 2007 meeting with no corrections or changes. There was no discussion and the motion was approved unanimously.

2. APEX Presentation

Ron Chicka introduced Rob West, CEO of the Area Partnership for Economic Expansion (APEX) based in Duluth, who described APEX as a private, nonprofit, business and economic development organization, whose mission is to utilize private-sector leadership and resources to create business opportunities within Northeast Minnesota and Northwest Wisconsin. Their strategy is to focus their efforts on a combination of attracting, retaining and expanding strategically targeted businesses. He added that 75% to 80% of their resources are devoted to growing high-potential businesses already in the region. Their overall goal is to strengthen the regional economy through the creation of sustainable wealth and quality jobs.

He touched upon the advantages this region has to offer employers, including lower transportation costs and the existence of an international seaport and airport; the availability of suppliers to large manufacturing; a great education base; outstanding health care and great quality of life overall.

He stated that after 3 years of operation, APEX has been involved with 57 businesses and currently has as many of 1,300 jobs currently in play. Wages positively impacted by APEX and its partners equal \$42 million in the last 36 months and wages pending in new deals could equal \$54 million. Although he could not give specifics, he described some of these potential businesses more generally, including a large metal fabrication company and a wind energy fabrication plant; a bio-fuels plant; two wood products companies; a titanium mining operation as well as manufacturing ventures for a range of products including fishing equipment, tungsten/nano technology, wind turbines, tar sands and molecular sensing devices.

He also touched upon some of the challenges facing this region including the need for diversification and workforce development – with an estimated 75,000 retiring “boomers” within next several years. He also discussed the need for succession planning for some 5,000 small businesses at risk in this area; political vision and

leadership within the city and region; changing perceptions of “us vs. us” and provincialism; and the “brain drain” of the college graduates who leave this area.

The discussion that followed the presentation addressed the misperception that going to college is the only way to make a good living—that we need to present the trades, vocational schools as viable educational and career options.

West also discussed that although we can tout the low (less than a 3 percent) turnover rate for our major employers—what that reflects is a lack of opportunities.

In regard to transportation needs and deficiencies, West reported that he hears a lot about rail monopolies and issues with getting large load permits; also the growing problem of the high turnover in the trucking industry.

3. 2008-2011 Draft Wisconsin TIP

Sheldon Johnson presented the draft Superior Urbanized Area Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). He reviewed the five projects new to this calendar year. They include construction projects on North 12th Street from Grand Avenue to Catlin Avenue and two Tower Avenue side streets, Blatnik Bridge maintenance, rail highway crossing safety projects, and placeholders for additional rail safety projects when and if identified (TIP amendments would not be needed to add those projects).

He closed by requesting motion to release the draft plan for the required 30-day public comment period.

Motion and Discussion Nick Baker, with a second from Mike Coyle, moved to release the draft Superior Urbanized Area TIP for the required 30-day public comment period 2008-2011 Duluth TIP as presented. There was no discussion and the motion was passed unanimously.

4. Proctor Master Trail Plan

James Gittemeier announced that instead of presenting the final plan for approval at today’s meeting, he would first be presenting it to the Comprehensive Planning and Planning and Zoning committees as well as to the Proctor City Council for their input. He planned to present it to the TAC and MIC next month for final approval. He noted that idea for this plan came out of the Proctor Comprehensive Plan to create a non-motorized transportation network and its purpose is to improve both local and regional connectivity. He then presented an overview of the trail routes. The largest component of the plan (i.e., highest priority and highest cost at an estimated \$3 million for a 3-mile stretch) is the creation of the “Proctor Spur”, a paved railway connection from the Munger Trailhead on 75th Avenue West to the Proctor Community Center. The trail would follow along 75th Ave West and then

along the Cloquet Waterline Easement up the hill to Boundary Avenue. The most difficult portion is the I-35 crossing segment where it is proposed that the trail will cross I-35 and run through open land and eventually connect to the Proctor Community Center parkland. He noted that a planned snowmobile trail will closely follow this same trail alignment, so work will need to be coordinated with the snowmobile association and the Minnesota DNR, which also has some potential funding to build this segment. Biggest obstacle overall will be the railroads.

Potential funding sources for constructing the trail include federal Transportation Enhancement, Safe Routes to School, and recreation and trail funds; Minnesota DNR; and health initiatives funds.

5. Endion Land Use and Transportation Plan

Holly Butcher reported that the fourth steering committee meeting was held on July 30th at which the consultants from URS presented key transportation modeling findings. They used assumptions from the Plaza/Armory development plan which recommends some street closures, parking changes and additional residential development. Six scenarios were modeled for level of service (LOS) issues; results were generally good throughout study area. Two intersections have congestion and signal timing issues.

She also reported that there are two planned public meetings scheduled on September 12 and 17 to review the plan and take public input, particularly in regard to converting streets from one-way to two-way functioning. The meeting on the 17th is conceptualized as a community wide visioning session to determine the future look and functioning of London Road between 10th and 26th Avenues East. She added that our GIS Specialist, Andrea Grygo Diamond, was developing various visualization techniques to help present some of these ideas.

The final steering committee meeting would be held at end of September, after which the plan would be completed and presented for approval by the TAC and MIC. She added that she had presented information about this plan just the night before to the Duluth Planning Commission.

6. NW Superior Traffic Circulation Plan

Robert Herling reported that the City of Superior had sent future development scenarios to URS Consulting as a base for traffic modeling for the northwest Superior area. He added that MIC staff had conducted turning movement and truck counts as further inputs to the model.

He noted that URS had not yet completed the trip generation and traffic forecasting, so he would not be able to report on their results at tonight's meeting as planned.

The next step in this planning process, after the modeling results are received, will

be to meet with steering committee members from WisDOT, City of Superior and MIC staff to review the results of the modeling and to identify stakeholder input methods.

7. Duluth Heights Traffic Calming Update

Andy McDonald reported that MIC staff, working with the City of Duluth Engineering Department, had conducted traffic counts in the same locations that were counted prior to the Duluth Heights Traffic Circulation Study. The purpose of these counts was to monitor the effectiveness of the half closure that was installed in May 2007 on Eklund Avenue at the intersection of Swan Lake Road.

He reported that the results were significant. Eklund Avenue, the main cut-through route to the mall, experienced a 41% drop in traffic after the half closure was implemented and a 35% decrease on Swan Lake Road north of the half closure.

He noted that the counts also showed that traffic increased by 21% on Maple Grove Road east of Eklund Avenue. However, when the 2007 count was compared with the earlier ADT numbers, the increase amounts to only 4%. Given that this count location is not along the primary cut through route, the increase could likely be attributed to changes in travel patterns for residents of the study area. Another area that saw an increase was Ideal Street west of Arlington Avenue. The base count from 2005 was 240 vehicles and the 2007 count was 360 vehicles for an increase of 50%. He noted, however, that this is still a relatively low traffic volume.

He stressed that the half closure is a temporary solution but so far it appears to be working. He gave credit to the City for implementing these solutions. He added that MIC staff was also working on a survey to send to neighborhood residents to gather their input regarding the half closure.

Nick Baker applauded staff for following this plan through to implementation.

8. Project Updates

Traffic Systems Management (TSM) Status Report

Robert Herling reported that the analysis phase of the TSM study is now complete. The results are being compiled into two separate documents, one for MN locations and another for WI locations. As drafts are finalized, they will be distributed to the engineers and planners of each jurisdiction. The MIC staff will then arrange a meeting with the jurisdictions to discuss possible TSM solutions for the locations identified in the reports.

Oversize Load Route

Andy McDonald reported that MIC staff met with Duluth Seaway Port Authority, MnDOT and local economic development officials to view a proposal by Suncor

(Canadian oil company) representatives involved in further developing the Oil Sands in northern Alberta to establish an oversize truck route from the port terminal area to the Minnesota border near Manitoba. Suncor is considering shipping components of oil sands processing equipment to Duluth by water and assembling the large modules in this area before transporting them by highway to Alberta. A follow-up meeting was also held with St. Louis County Public Works to view the same proposal. Suncor has been working with MnDOT permitting staff in St. Paul for the past year to identify the potential route. All bridges, power lines and other obstructions have been measured and surveyed along the potential route.

On-Street Bike Routes

James Gittemeier reported that this project is out for bid. A sign installation contractor will be chosen in the next month by the City of Duluth. MIC staff will be working with Duluth and the selected contractor on any last minute adjustments and/or changes. The signs are scheduled to be installed in September.

DTA Route Analysis—City of Superior

Holly Butcher reported that future efforts with this study will include analyzing summer DTA ridership counts, identifying a future transit service model for Superior, examining the need for a more substantial transit hub for Superior, and meeting with key city staff.

9. Announcements

Meeting Mailings and Website Updates

Rondi Watson announced that the multiple meeting memos have been reformatted to a single document, and in an effort to use less paper and save on mailing costs, we hope to be able to distribute meeting materials by email instead of regular mail to a majority of committee members. She is also creating new meeting related content on the MIC website, ww.dsmic.org, and she will be sending links to the MIC and TAC meetings page as well as attaching documents for review.

Upcoming speakers

Ron Chicka announced that speakers will include the plant manager from Murphy Oil in Superior, and Andy Lisak to talk about economic development in Superior.

10. Adjournment

With no further agenda items or announcements, Chair Stover adjourned the meeting at 8:50 p.m.