



## Meeting Notes

Southwest Community Advisory Committee (CAC)  
February 29, 2012, 6:00 to 7:30 PM  
Wolfe Lake Professional Center

### Meeting Attendees

#### CAC Members and Alternates

Jeanette Colby  
Bill James  
Dave Pelner  
Vicki Moore  
Rick Weiblen  
Vida Ditter  
Barry Schade

#### Southwest Staff & Consultant Team

Katie Walker (Hennepin County)  
Adele Hall (Hennepin County)  
Jim Alexander (Southwest Project Office)  
Kathie Doty (KLD Consulting)  
Ann Wolff (KLD Consulting)

#### Other Attendees

Ann Beuch (Blake Road Corridor Collaborative)

### **I. Transitional Station Area Action Plans (TSAAP)**

Katie Walker, Hennepin County, referred CAC members to the TSAAP scope handout. The purpose is to bridge the gap between the long-term vision and today to prepare for opening day of the LRT in the station areas, and to understand what infrastructure needs to be in place to facilitate access to the station as well as the development vision and getting some projects into the City and County capital improvement process so that they are coordinated. We have \$624,000 for the TSAAPs funded through the HUD Sustainable Communities grant and some FTA funds. We estimate that it will take about 12 months to complete and are looking for consultants with a broad range of expertise—urban design, LRT engineering, visualization, etc. The TSAAPs will be coincident with the Preliminary Engineering work. Jim Alexander, Metro Transit, is here; he will direct the design of the LRT project and manage the PE consultant. TSAAP and PE consultant will be different firms. Ms. Walker noted that the RFP asks proposers to respond to some goals for public outreach and engagement and are asking the consultant to propose a plan, including engaging the CAC.

CAC invitation letters were recently sent to cities to make (re)appointments (in Minneapolis Mayor Rybak is going to reappoint existing members). Hopkins, for example, will appoint new members because they have not had much participation. Another letter was sent to groups that are interested stakeholders. The group will be about 32 to 35 members. Vicki Moore asked how to appoint alternates. Ms. Walker recommended emailing the Mayor with a copy to staff. Mayor Rybak would likely make the appointment, but it would be appropriate for Ms. Moore to suggest someone. It is possible that the group will go to two hour meetings with the expanded group because of the volume of information. Frank Powell suggested a new member meeting, possibly "adopting a new member", and sending a packet of background material to help get new members up to speed.

Bill James introduced Dave Pelner from United Health Group, who has hosted several Southwest LRT legislative tours with briefings at the UHG facilities and talked about how LRT is good for their business and



employees. Next week there's a tour of Southwest for the media. The Chambers are hosting these forums that are very well attended—over 30 people at each one. Ms. Moore asked for a way to make CAC members aware of these events. An update every week or two was suggested.

Jeanette Colby asked if when meeting with legislators is there a focus on the request for this year, or is it also about the request for next year. Staff and lobbyists are focused on this year, but legislators are aware of the total request for \$125 million. The funds would be available to the project until the project through construction.

CAC members requested information on funding and on the 17 issue areas at their next meeting.

## **II. Community Works**

Katie Walker, Hennepin County, noted that the Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee will meet on March 15. The recent development assessment report will be presented at that meeting. The analysis looked at the Transit Oriented Development market in the corridor. Overall, the report is positive on the potential for TOD. The market in the corridor is fairly stable, a bit more expensive, and has made some of the transition from industrial to medical and educational. This is base work that we will use for the TSAAPs.

## **III. Open Forum**

Paul Nelson asked if the walkshed maps are available. They are part of the RFP and are available as part of the packet posted on the southwesttransitway.org website. There are two websites for the project now: swlrt.org has LRT information and southwesttransitway.org has Community Works and economic development information. Mr. Nelson asked if Southwest will have its own operations and maintenance facilities (OMF). Jim Alexander, Metro Transit, said yes, there is a planned OMF for Southwest. There are four sites under consideration and it is one of our tasks to figure out where it will be. Storage and light maintenance will occur at the facility. Each line has its own OMF so that the facilities are close to the lines and because in an urban environment it is difficult to find parcels that would fit an OMF for all lines. The Hiawatha facility is going to be expanded for Central but it is near capacity and Central will have its own OMF. There are three potential OMF sites near the Mitchell station in Eden Prairie, and one in Minneapolis near Metro Transit's Heywood facility.

Jeanette Colby asked for an update on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Katie Walker, Hennepin County, responded that Hennepin County and Metropolitan Council staff is still working with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on their review of the document; there is a lot to do to compile the data for the new alternatives in the document. The colocation alternative is almost defined, then we need to describe impacts of colocation, send to FTA for review, then publish the availability of the document, which is likely two to three months out. As it progresses we'll keep you up to date and we will have two or three weeks to give plenty of notice before the document is published. Rick Weiblen asked



how far Preliminary Engineering can proceed before the DEIS is published. Mr. Alexander reported that Metro Transit is hiring the PE consultant now, then will do two-three months of geotechnical work, after that it would be nice to have the DEIS complete.

Vida Ditter asked about the status of freight rail. Ms. Walker noted that we have four build alternatives in the DEIS document. For those four build alternatives, we assume that freight is relocated but originally that was not part of the document, so the DEIS has to be reflected to show the freight rail relocation. Now that freight is part of the LRT project we have to respond to the City of St. Louis Park's scoping comment to include a colocation alternative. So the DEIS has a fifth build alternative which is the colocation of freight and LRT in Kenilworth. The impacts will be published in the DEIS and all can comment. All alternatives are treated equally in the document. Kenilworth-Opus-Golden Triangle is still the locally preferred alternative. Mr. Alexander noted that the project will need to do engineering on both alternatives if the DEIS is not resolved before PE continues. Ms. Colby noted that the City of Minneapolis's endorsement of the LPA was on the condition of dealing with freight; and asked if FTA wants the project to engineer both options up to 30%. Mr. Alexander said yes, so that we can get an idea of the impacts of the freight, too. We will also undertake an FEIS to resolve the impacts. Ms. Ditter asked who decides whether freight rail stays in Minneapolis or goes to St. Louis Park. Mr. Alexander answered that Hennepin County and all five cities have to give consent, as well as the freight companies. Ms. Walker elaborated on the history of the freight rail relocation issue: the Midtown Corridor connection was severed because of the Hiawatha road project and Twin Cities and Western freight was relocated temporarily, for 4-6 years, through Kenilworth. The Environmental Remediation Fund legislation was passed at the state legislature for clean-up of the Golden Auto site, which would allow for freight relocation to the MN&S line. Bill James added that when the Environmental Assessment Worksheet for the freight rail relocation was published, St. Louis Park and the community group Safety in the Park appealed it. Then FTA said to join the projects and that the Southwest LRT environmental documents would include freight rail environmental impacts. St. Louis Park then withdrew its appeal, and MnDOT motioned to dismiss the EAW and there is no pending court action. Mr. Alexander noted that the decision on freight rail will be made through municipal consent and will be a discussion with all of the parties. Ms. Colby clarified that mitigation for freight rail is in the Southwest LRT DEIS and will come out of the LRT budget. Ms. Walker said yes, though no specifics are available yet. The City of St. Louis Park passed a resolution, posted on their website, which lists their desired mitigation. The EAW and a Findings of Fact document with additional information on the MN&S are also available online. The Hennepin County website has some background on freight and all of the alternatives considered, including colocation. The contents of the DEIS will likely be similar to the EAW.

The next meeting date will be confirmed as soon as possible.