



Meeting Notes

Southwest Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)
December 10, 2008, 8:00 to 9:30 AM
St. Louis Park City Hall

PAC Members and Alternates

Gail Dorfman	Hennepin County, PAC Chair	Member
Robert Lillgren	City of Minneapolis	Member
Ralph Remington	City of Minneapolis	Member
Sue Sanger	City of St. Louis Park	Alternate
Jim Brimeyer	City of St. Louis Park	Member
Amy Vennewitz	Metropolitan Council	Alternate
Jean White	City of Edina	Member
LuAnn Toliver	City of Minnetonka	Alternate
Cheryl Youakim	City of Hopkins	Alternate
Kathy Nelson	City of Eden Prairie	Member
Dan Duffy	Twin West Chamber	Member
Jim Benshoof	Eden Prairie Chamber	Member
Rich Forschler	Minneapolis Regional Chamber	Alternate
Brian Willette	Cedar Lake Park Association	Member
George Puzak	Cedar Lake Park Association	Alternate
John DeWitt	Midtown Community Works Partnership	Alternate
Mark Haggerty	Three Rivers Park District	Member

Agency Staff & Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Members

Katie Walker	Hennepin County Project Manager
Steven Hay	Minneapolis
Meg McMonigal	St. Louis Park
Steve Mahowald	Metro Transit
Randy Newton	Eden Prairie
Bob Vockrodt	Mn/DOT
Adele Hall	Hennepin County

Consultant Team

Kathie Doty	KLD Consulting
Oscar Gonzales	HDR Engineering

Other Attendees Art Higinbotham (Cedar Isles Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA)), Kim Malrick (City of Minneapolis), Blair Tremere (Hennepin County), Kerri Pearce-Ruch (Hennepin County), Jan Callison (Mayor of Minnetonka), Loren Gordon (City of Minnetonka), Ellen Hacker (Hennepin County), Jackie Cherryhomes (Cherryhomes-Tyler), Bryan Lake (Twin West Chamber), Peter Wagenius (Mayor Rybak's Office)





I. Welcome and Introduction

Chair Gail Dorfman opened the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves. She commented upon the excellent turnout at the three scoping meetings held in October. This will be an important year with much to get done if the project is to move into the Preliminary Engineering phase of work by early 2010.

II. DEIS Scoping Update

Southwest Project Manager Katie Walker reported that the Scoping meetings were attended by more than 300 community members and more than 50 people provided verbal comments at the meetings. In addition, nearly 500 email comments were submitted. Ms. Walker echoed Chair Dorfman's appraisal that these numbers indicated a successful effort to reach out to interested community members and to provide multiple opportunities for comment. Ms. Walker then updated the PAC on the processing of the comments collected during scoping. HDR Project Manager Oscar Gonzalez said they have found no comments out of the planned DEIS scope; comments fit within the formal categories dictated by the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Mr. Gonzalez passed out copies of three coded comment examples, as well as the Draft Outline of the Scoping Summary Report. He reported that two new alignments were submitted during the comment period and they will be included in the Report under section 4.2, "Alternatives".

Jim Brimeyer, (St. Louis Park Member) asked if Federal Transit Administration (FTA) was the audience for the Scoping Summary Report and if it makes conclusions or recommendations to the FTA. Mr. Gonzalez replied that yes, the FTA is the audience and yes, the Scoping Summary Report details the themes of the comments and the scope of the DEIS to the agency. The comments are coded by category; it does not matter how many comments were submitted on a given topic. Chair Dorfman commented that the three original alignments (LRT 1A, LRT 3A, and LRT 3C) will be included in the scope of the DEIS and the two new alignments (LRT 3E, LRT 3C - 11th/12th Street modification) will be screened during the scoping phase to determine whether they should be included in the DEIS analysis, or not.

Sue Sanger (St. Louis Park Alternate) asked how comments about associated issues will be addressed. Mr. Gonzalez answered that these are included in the Scoping Summary Report as "related issues".

III. DEIS Schedule

Chair Dorfman opened the conversation by asking what happens during the evaluation period from January through September of 2009. Ms. Walker answered that the alternatives that are included in the DEIS scope (LRT 1A, LRT 3A, LRT 3C and if added at the conclusion of scoping, LRT 3E and 11th/12th Street modification to 3C) will be evaluated during that time. In January, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will consider the consultant's work and recommendations on the inclusion or exclusion of the two new alignments in the scope of the DEIS.

Chair Dorfman explained that the 11th/12th Street alternative was submitted by Minneapolis Councilmember Remington on the last day of the scoping comment period, with support from Councilmember Lisa Goodman and Mayor RT Rybak. Mr. Remington and Ms. Walker updated the group on the alignment, which would follow the Midtown Corridor in Minneapolis and turn north into a cut and cover tunnel under First Avenue or Blaisdell Avenue to Franklin Avenue where it will run at grade until it



reaches 11th or 12th Street to go northwest, over 394 where it would use the same route as LRT A to the Intermodal station where it would interline with the Hiawatha LRT line.

Jim Brimeyer (St. Louis Park Member) asked Mr. Remington whether the city engineering department has reviewed the alignment, and whether it has support on the City Council. Mr. Remington replied that the alignment has not been brought before the Council yet but Councilmember Goodman as well as Mayor Rybak are supporters. This alignment was conceived to serve the mass of where people live in Minneapolis. Robert Lilligren (Minneapolis Member) noted that this alignment was posed by Mr. Remington, not by the City of Minneapolis, and that there are some issues with the alignment being in conflict with other city plans.

Jean White (Edina Member) asked Mr. Remington if this alignment will protect 'Eat Street'. Mr. Remington answered yes, and that this alignment might support reconnecting Nicollet Avenue over the Midtown Corridor. Chair Dorfman noted that the exact location of the cut and cover tunnel in the 3C alignment has not yet been specified. Ms. Walker reported that maps and written descriptions of the alignments were created and sent for review to Art Higinbotham, who submitted the LRT E Alignment, and Mr. Remington, who submitted the 11th/12th Street Alignment. Staff are working with the proposers to produce maps and descriptions of the 2 proposed alternative routes. Eden Prairie member Kathy Nelson asked if the proposed alternatives would add length to the routes; Mr. Gonzalez indicated that this was being studied.

Dan Duffy (Twin West Chamber Member) asked what would happen if other alignment proposals are submitted after the conclusion of the scoping period. Chair Dorfman replied that the scoping period was well advertised and there has been a lot of time for input in both the Alternatives Analysis study phase and the DEIS scoping period. It is time for the project to move forward with the understanding that all reasonable alignment alternatives have been identified and studied over time.

Jim Brimeyer (St. Louis Park member) commented that the 11th/12th Street option makes sense to him, but asked if the FTA would wonder why it had not been proposed until now. Mr. Remington stated that the scoping period was for exactly this purpose, and Chair Dorfman added that things have changed over the past couple of years. For example, we did not know about the Twins Ballpark, Access Minneapolis, or the plans for 2nd/Marquette, so looking at a new alignment is not unreasonable. Ms. Walker passed out an FTA handout describing the qualities of a reasonable alternative. Mr. Gonzalez said that his team is currently looking at summary level data on ridership, travel times, capital costs, and social costs of the alignments. The point is to narrow the focus and spend time and resources on the alignments that can result in a cost effective project.

Sue Sanger (St. Louis Park Alternate) asked about when ridership numbers would be recalculated. Ms. Walker answered that the cities have submitted their comprehensive plans to the Metropolitan Council; the Council will review new socioeconomic data by late January and this data will be used to calculate new ridership, a process that will take at least a month. The PAC will likely see the results of the ridership calculations at the March meeting. New ridership numbers will be calculated for alignments LRT 1A, LRT 3A, LRT 3C, and other alignments that may be added to the DEIS scope.

Jean White (Edina Member) asked if the FTA is updated regularly on the project. Ms. Walker answered in



the affirmative. The FTA is a critical project partner, and Ms. Walker has regular contact with FTA staff. They are very familiar with the project including the LRT 3E alignment, though not the 11th/12th Street as it was recently identified.

Jim Benshoof (Eden Prairie Chamber Member) asked about the possibility of replacing the LRT 3C alignment with the 11th/12th Street option, given all of the changes since the Alternatives Analysis. Ms. Walker answered that the 11th/12th Street alignment could be thought of as a “sub-alternative” of alignment LRT 3C. Once the Scoping Summary Report is complete, the next step is a process of whittling down of alternatives to develop a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA).

Robert Lilligren (Minneapolis Member) asked to discuss when the LPA is chosen. Chair Dorfman replied that the PAC can choose as soon as it feels it has enough information. Ms. Walker said she may request that the PAC meet monthly in early 2009, since there will be a lot of new information to consider. The plan is to first determine the number of alternatives, then screen using the new information: comprehensive plans, Metropolitan Council transportation policy plan, updated ridership and capital cost numbers, since the alignments were last considered in 2006.

The Scoping Summary Report will go to the SW Technical Advisor Committee (TAC) in January; the TAC will make a recommendation regarding the inclusion of the LRT 3E alternative and 11th/12th Street option, the PAC will review the TAC’s recommendation and then develop their own recommendation, also in January. Finally, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRRA) will vote to accept the Scoping Summary Report with its recommendations on January 27th. This sets the scope of work for the DEIS, then screening can proceed. Once the Scoping Summary Report is officially complete, the PAC can make a recommendation on the LPA at any time. Once the LPA is chosen, a more intensive environmental review process of that alignment can be undertaken.

Jim Benshoof (Eden Prairie Chamber Member) asked if the DEIS is influenced by the station area master planning work. Ms. Walker replied that station area master planning is looking at changes in land use around 12 stations in St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie. The consultant, Hay Dobbs, will complete the station area planning work before the completion of the DEIS. HDR and Hay Dobbs are in communication and meet monthly. Land use changes and especially access and circulation patterns are important to both studies and they are working together so that both the DEIS and the station area master plans complement each other.

Chair Dorfman asked what would happen if the chosen LPA has larger than anticipated costs as a result of environmental issues and needed mitigation. Mr. Gonzalez answered that the process and the work that his team is doing is to avoid this situation, and estimated project costs always include a significant contingency to allow for unknowns.

Meeting attendee Art Higinbotham questioned whether there are still plans for a Business Advisory Council (BAC) so that business and economic development concerns from along each of the alignments are represented. Chair Dorfman answered that the initial suggestion was that the Southwest Alliance would establish the BAC. However, the Southwest Alliance focus is to support the SW legislative agenda, and it was decided that organizing the BAC was not in their scope. Instead, a BAC will be structured much the way the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was developed. The Central



Corridor project also has a BAC, but that group was established later in the planning process to evaluate the effects of project construction, after the LPA was selected.

Sue Sanger (St. Louis Park Alternate) asked how the PAC might be informed about new regulations in the Obama administration. Ms. Walker responded that if the FTA issues a notice of new rules transit agencies will get to comment. Also, training sessions are usually offered on rule changes. Chair Dorfman noted that with the Counties Transit Improvement Board there is an opportunity to be proactive and secure more transit funding. Dan Duffy (Twin West Chamber Member) expressed a desire to be updated periodically and asked if there will be an increase in competition for federal dollars. Kathy Nelson (Eden Prairie Member) asked if getting commuters to jobs in the suburbs as well as the city will be a priority. Ralph Remington (Minneapolis Member) believes that the Obama Administration is planning to spend more money on infrastructure which will translate to more money for transit, even if there are more cities chasing those dollars. Mr. Duffy responded that we do not know how that money will be distributed. Mark Haggerty (Three Rivers Park District Member) said that we will need to be proactive in order to take advantage of opportunities that may arise. So far it looks like the funds will be distributed via state agencies, i.e. MnDOT. Convening a legislative committee might be in our interest.

Luann Toliver (Minnetonka Alternate) stressed the importance of the SW project staying on schedule, since choosing an alignment will affect economic development choices in the cities.

Robert Lilligren (Minneapolis Member) asked how the Southwest timeline stacks up to the other transitway projects in the region and commented that in the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) it seems like individual project schedules are driving priorities. Chair Dorfman reminded the PAC that they had passed a resolution to support the SW LRT project as the next in the local queue after the Central Corridor. Amy Vennewitz (Metropolitan Council Alternate) noted that the public comment period on the TPP just ended. There were several comments on transit from the east Metro area supporting other fixed guideway projects. In the text of the TPP, the development stage of each transitway is discussed; Southwest is considered ahead of Bottineau and its recognized mode is LRT, but on the map the fixed guideway projects are shown equally. There are no tiers in the TPP, though comprehensive plans that used the tier system are still viable. When an LPA is selected, the HCRRA will ask the Metropolitan Council to amend the TPP to show the chosen Southwest alignment.

Mr. Lilligren also asked how Metro Transit's budget shortfall impacts the Southwest and Central Corridor projects with regard to the FTA. Ms. Vennewitz replied that before last week's forecast there was a \$38 million shortfall, \$14 million of it is the state's share of operating costs for the Northstar Commuter Rail line. There will be an \$11 million shortfall between now and next July; the Metropolitan Council has not yet received a recommendation from the Governor on what to do. If this issue is not solved it will impact Northstar, Central, and then Southwest. The FTA is aware of actions to reduce service and they may reconsider funding our projects.

IV. Legislative Update

Chair Dorfman stated that, though it is not a bonding year, the HCRRA will be meeting with legislators to ask for state funding as indication of support for Southwest. Cheryl Youakim (Hopkins Alternate) recommended that Southwest submit a bill as early as possible in order to get it through committee.



SOUTHWEST
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V. Other Business

Meetings in 2009 will occur on the second Wednesday of each month (with the exception of the January meeting on the 21st to give time for the TAC to meet and review the Scoping Summary Report). The PAC will meet monthly during the first quarter of the year.

PAC members were encouraged to select alternates if one is not already in place, since the group will have several important action items in the new year.

Meeting adjourned by Chair Dorfman at 9:30 am. The Southwest PAC will meet next on January 21st at 8 am in the St. Louis Park City Hall.

