



Meeting Minutes

Southwest Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)
July 23, 2008, 8:00 to 9:30 AM
St. Louis Park City Hall

PAC Members and Alternates

Comm. Gail Dorfman	Hennepin County, PAC Chair	Member
Comm. Linda Koblick	Hennepin County	Member
Jean White	Edina	Member
Jim Brimeyer	St. Louis Park	Member
LuAnn Toliver	Minnetonka	Alternate
Dan Duffy	Twin West Chamber	Member
Robert Lilligren	Minneapolis	Member
Arlene McCarthy	Metropolitan Council	Member
Brian Willette	Cedar Lake Park Association	Member
Janet Jeremiah	Eden Prairie	Alternate
Bruce Rowan	Hopkins	Member
George Puzak	Cedar Lake Park Association	Alternate
Kathy Nelson	Eden Prairie	Member
Nancy Tyra-Lukens	SouthWest Transit	Member
John Dewitt	Midtown Community Works Partnership	Alternate
Bob Corrick	Midtown Community Works Partnership	Member
Tony Wagner	City of Minnetonka	Member
Mark Haggerty	Three Rivers Park District	Member
Travis Bunch (for Keith Downey)	Minneapolis Regional Chamber	Member

Southwest Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Agency Staff

Katie Walker	SW TAC - Hennepin County Study Manager
Meg McMonigal	SW TAC - St. Louis Park
Elise Durbin	SW TAC - Minnetonka
Julie Wischnack	SW TAC - Minnetonka
Lisa Freese	SW TAC - Scott County
Adele Hall	Hennepin County
Ellen Hacker	Hennepin County Staff
Kim Malrick	Minneapolis City Council
Blair Tremere	Hennepin County

Consultant Team

Kathie Doty	KLD Consulting
Oscar Gonzales	HDR Engineering
Mona Elabbady	HDR Engineering
Debra Brisk	HDR Engineering

Other Attendees

Rep. Steve Simon, Rogers Adams (Minneapolis), Art Higinbotham (Cedar Isles Dean Neighborhood Association), Parker Trostel (CIDNA), Jeanette Colby (Kenwood), Sigrid Hutcheson (Cedar Lake Shores), Bill Bevan (Minneapolis), Mita Bell (Kenwood), Cheryl LaRue (CIDNA), Bruce Chamberlain (Bassett Creek Valley Redevelopment Oversight Committee), Thatcher Imboden (Ackerberg Group & Uptown Association).



I. Welcome and Introductions

Hennepin County Commissioner Gail Dorfman, Southwest Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) Chair, opened the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

II. Project Updates

Contracts

Katie Walker, Southwest Transitway Project Manager, updated the group on two contracts recently approved by the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA). The contract for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was awarded to HDR Engineering, Inc and the contract for the Station Area Master Planning in the suburban communities was awarded to Hay Dobbs. The DEIS is expected to be completed by the end of 2009 and the Station Area Master Planning is expected to be completed by the end of June 2009. Ms. Walker further clarified that the Station Area Master Planning covers the stations along the LRT 3 route in St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie. The process will address current and future land use, and access and circulation around the twelve suburban stations. Station Area Master Planning work will be rolled into the future New Starts Application. In Minneapolis the planning will occur after a preferred alternative is chosen. The purpose of the station area planning is to inform each city's land use plan, for inclusion in their comprehensive plan, thus it is much more effective for Minneapolis to do the planning after the alignment is chosen.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

Ms. Walker updated the group on recent activities of the Southwest Transitway Community Advisory Committee (CAC). On May 7, 2008, the CAC attended a tour of the Hiawatha LRT line hosted by Metro Transit staff, Mark Fuhrman and Sheri Gingrich. The group toured the Hiawatha LRT line with Mark and Sheri and were able to discuss with them one on one the operations of the line. The CAC debriefed on the Hiawatha tour at their July 9th meeting. The reaction to the line was extremely positive. Attendees stated that they were impressed by the smooth operations, the safety and security features, the number of people using the line and the various trips being made, and the design. Attendees also stated that Metro Transit staff appeared to be very willing to listen to their concerns and work with them.

Discussion

George Puzak, Cedar Lake Park Association Alternate, commented upon the lack of representation on the SW PAC from Uptown and Lyn-Lake business interests. Commissioner Dorfman clarified that she welcomes participation in SW PAC proceedings, and that she could understand a growing interest from business associations. Mr. Puzak made a motion to invite three business associations (LynLake, Uptown, and Whittier) to join the SW PAC, and this motion was seconded by Mark Haggerty, Three Rivers Park District Member. This motion was discussed at length. Members felt that other business associations should also be invited if the three listed by Mr. Puzak were invited to join. Others expressed concerns that adding all business associations/groups would cause the group to grow too large to effectively conduct their business and would create an imbalance between business and government agency representation on the SW PAC. Jim Brimeyer, St. Louis Park Member, suggested that businesses be involved in a separate group; after more discussion, the idea of forming a business advisory committee with a role similar to the SW Community Advisory Committee was proposed. Commissioner Linda Koblick, Hennepin County Vice Chair SW PAC, moved to table the motion under discussion, which was seconded by Mr. Brimeyer, and approved unanimously on a voice vote. Commissioner Dorfman and other SW PAC members reiterated the idea of forming a business advisory committee. Kathy Nelson, Eden Prairie Member, moved to ask the Southwest Alliance to take a lead role in the formation of a Business Advisory Committee, seconded by Tony Wagner, Minnetonka Member. This motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

III. 2030 Transportation Plan

Arlene McCarthy, Manager of Transportation Planning for the Metropolitan Council, updated

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the group on the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) status. The Metropolitan Council is required to update their long-range transportation policy plan every four years. Staff is currently working on an update for adoption by the Metropolitan Council in December 2008. The draft TPP will be released in September for public review and comment. The comment period will begin on September 15th and end November 6th.

Discussion

Commissioner Dorfman asked Ms. McCarthy to clarify the role of the Council as the Southwest project proceeds, and asked how Southwest staff and committee members can convince the Council that the Southwest project should be clearly designated as the next project in the local queue. Ms. McCarthy responded that once the HCRRA recommends a Southwest alignment there would be a formal amendment to the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) to include the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) into the TPP. The HCRRA's prioritization of the project and, especially, staying on schedule, will most improve Southwest's chances of being listed as a priority project. Mr. Puzak also asked how the Council will handle mitigation associated with the project. Ms. Walker clarified that during the DEIS the consultants will evaluate the proposed alternatives to determine first if there is a significant impact. If a significant impact is identified then the consultants will develop recommendations first to avoid the impact, then if avoidance is not possible to minimize the impact and then to mitigate the impact. During the DEIS options for mitigation will be identified, but determining which mitigation technique will be employed is done during the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), which follows the DEIS. Ms. Walker further explained that she has asked Mark Fuhrman, **Deputy General Manager Of Metro Transit and Central Corridor Project Director**, to attend an upcoming Southwest PAC meeting to discuss with the group in more detail the difference between mitigation and betterments. Mitigation is action that is taken to rectify a problem that cannot be avoided or minimized, and is caused by the project itself. Betterments are projects elements the community wants to undertake in association with the project and may or may not be considered part of the project by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

IV. Scoping Process

Ms. Walker provided the group with a presentation on how the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), administered by the EPA, and the News Starts Program administered by FTA overlap. Due to time constraints, this item was deferred to a special meeting of the Southwest PAC scheduled for August 20, 2008.

V. Other Business

CIDNA resident Art Higinbotham distributed copies of the alternative, called the 'E' Alignment that he intends to propose during scoping. Commissioner Dorfman suggested that the SW PAC set aside time at their next meeting to hear from Mr. Higinbotham about this proposed alignment.

After a comment from an audience member about needing information about the scoping process, Commissioner Dorfman clarified that meetings would be well publicized, and that there would be information about the routes studied over the past several years, and there would be opportunity for community members to make suggestions for other alternatives. Tony Wagner, Minnetonka Member, asked for a simple handout that would explain how citizens can get involved in the scoping process.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 AM.