



Meeting Notes

Southwest Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)

January 21, 2009, 8:00 to 9:30 AM

St. Louis Park City Hall

PAC Members and Alternates

Gail Dorfman	Hennepin County, PAC Chair	Member
Jan Callison	Hennepin County Commissioner	Member
Sue Sanger	City of St. Louis Park	Alternate
Jim Brimeyer	St. Louis Park	Member
Jim Benshoof	Eden Prairie Chamber	Member
Amy Vennewitz	Met. Council	Alternate
Jean White	Edina	Member
LuAnn Toliver	Minnetonka	Alternate
Dan Duffy	Twin West Chamber	Member
George Puzak	Cedar Lake Park Association	Alternate
John DeWitt	Midtown Community Works Partnership	Alternate
Kim Malrick for Ralph Remington	City of Minneapolis	Member
Kathy Nelson	City of Eden Prairie	Member
Travis Bunch	Minneapolis Regional Chamber	Alternate
Bob Corrick	Midtown Community Works Partnership	Member
Bruce Rowan	City of Hopkins	Member
Brian Lamb	Metro Transit	Member

Southwest Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Members & Agency Staff

Katie Walker	Hennepin County Study Manager
Steven Hay	City of 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
Mona Elabbady	HDR Engineering
Alec Nord	HDR Engineering





Other Attendees Art Higinbotham (Cedar Isles Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA)), Kerri Pearce-Ruch (Hennepin County), Dave Nuckols (Hennepin County), Ellen Hacker (Hennepin County), Eric Lind (Kenwood Isles Area Association), Julie Wischnack (City of Minnetonka), Elise Durbin (City of Minnetonka), Gary Aiken (Twin West Chamber of Commerce), Steven Hay (City of Minneapolis)

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Gail Dorfman opened the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves. Luann Toliver (Minnetonka Alternate) made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 10, 2008 PAC meeting, Dan Duffy (Twin West Chamber Member) seconded. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

II. DEIS Scoping (Deviation in Agenda Order)

Katie Walker, Hennepin County Study Manager, acknowledged requests for website posting of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) schedule and Scoping Summary Report. The Southwest website will be updated with these items. Ms. Walker then presented a report on the scoping process, including the scoping comment period that was open from September 8, 2008 through November 7, 2008. The scoping process began with publication of notices in the EQB Monitor, Federal Register, and Finance & Commerce. A total of 342 comments were received during the scoping comment period by email, mail, phone, and at three scoping meetings. Comments were noted and categorized for response during the DEIS. Chair Dorfman asked if responses were sent to those who commented. Ms. Walker replied that a response is planned after the Scoping Summary Report is approved by the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) board. The Report lists all comments, as well as the scoping booklets published in English, Spanish, Hmong, and Somali.

Chair Dorfman asked if there was anything in the comments that was outside of the scope of the DEIS. Ms. Walker answered that there were only a few comments that addressed issues outside of the scope of the DEIS. Chair Dorfman also asked how the comments from St. Louis Park residents regarding freight rail issues will be handled. Ms. Walker said that the comments were recorded with a notation that the freight rail relocation issues is outside the scope of the DEIS and that Hennepin County is conducting a separate study on the freight rail. The results will be shared with the SW PAC.

Ms. Walker introduced Mona Elabbady, HDR Engineering, to present the two new alternatives proposed during scoping (Alternative 3E and Subalternative 3C, 11th/12th St). Jim Brimeyer (St. Louis Park Member) asked how these new alternatives were evaluated. Ms. Walker replied that they must pass a test of reasonableness; they must be practical and feasible, serve not just the proposer, be of sound engineering, and be consistent with the Southwest Transitway purpose and need statement. For purposes of this analysis, four criteria used for evaluation First, the alternative must be consistent with regional and local plans such as the Metropolitan Council Transportation Policy Plan, the Hennepin County Transportation Plan, and Access Minneapolis. Second, the alternative must be based on sound engineering. Third, the alternative must perform as well or better than alternatives identified through the Alternatives Analysis (LRT 1A, 3A, and 3C). Finally, the alternative must be consistent with the stated purpose and need for the project. Action on the two new alternatives does not affect the three alternatives that came out of the Alternatives Analysis, LRT 1A, 3A, and 3C, which must be included in the DEIS.



Ms. Elabbady described alternative LRT 3E as proposed by Mr. Art Higinbotham on behalf of the Cedar Isles Dean Neighborhood Association. LRT 3E is identical to the LRT 3 alignment until it reaches the West Lake Street Station which would be replaced by a station at Dean Parkway. Proceeding along the Midtown Corridor, the alignment would be grade separated at Irving and Humboldt Avenues, then turn north into a tunnel under Park Avenue until it emerges between 25th and 26th Streets. A center platform station is planned between 26th and 27th Streets, and a split platform station is planned at Franklin Avenue. The track would begin elevating at 15th Street. Ms. Elabbady indicated that HDR was asked to evaluate the 10th Street segment of the route as an elevated, at-grade, and subway alignment. HDR staff found that if the alignment ran at grade, capacity for traffic on 10th Street would be lost, which was deemed to be an unacceptable situation. Alternatively, if the train were to travel below grade in a tunnel, capital costs would multiply by a factor of two to three. This was also considered unacceptable, leaving an elevated track as the only option in this part of the alignment. On the planned spur along Park Avenue north to the Metrodome, the track would come back to grade between 8th and 9th Streets. A "half grand junction" would be needed to allow for Southwest trains to interline with Hiawatha trains and construction would require Hiawatha service to be re-routed for at least one construction season. The 10th Street elevated line would bisect three skyways. There are three options for these skyways: first, eliminate the skyways; second, reconstruct the skyways on a higher level; or third, construct the LRT over the skyways. Skyways are approximately 12 feet above street level; LRT tracks need to be 24 feet in elevation. Travis Bunch (acting Minneapolis Regional Chamber Member) asked if the skyways are privately owned. Ms. Elabbady replied that the St. Thomas skyway is owned by the school, but she does not know who owns the other two.

A station is planned at Hennepin Ave, and the train would proceed over I-394 on a new structure and touch down on the east side of 7th Street, near the Hennepin Energy Resource Center.

The LRT 3E alternative would use an A/B train system which calls for half of the trains to proceed along 10th Street to the intermodal station, and the other half of the trains to proceed north along Park Avenue to the Metrodome Station. This operating scheme reduces frequencies downtown to 15 minute headways.

Ms. Elabbady reviewed the LRT 3E alternative's inconsistency with local plans. Both Park and Portland Avenues, a one-way pair, are A-minor relievers to I-35W. Adding LRT to Park Avenue reduces service and balance on both avenues, which is not consistent with the Access Minneapolis plan. Furthermore, the transit service in this corridor is quite frequent. HDR found that the LRT 3E route creates traffic conflict, would require the acquisition of approximately 40 parcels of land, and increases the travel time to 5th and Nicollet from 31 minutes to 42 minutes.

Ms. Elabbady continued that with the LRT 3E alternative, ridership on Southwest would be 13% less than other alternatives and the impact on Hiawatha would be a decrease of ridership of 25% by 2030. In comparison with other alternatives, LRT 3E would not increase mobility, would increase travel time, reduce ridership, reduce roadway capacity, and increase capital and operating costs.

Ms. Elabbady reported that the SW Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met last Thursday and unanimously agreed not to add the LRT 3E alternative because it does not meet the purpose and need for the project, is not consistent with local and regional plans, and is not superior to the alternatives already included in the DEIS.



After Ms. Elabbady completed her presentation, Mr. Higinbotham stated that CIDNA would like to withdraw the LRT 3E alternative from consideration. Chair Dorfman responded that the meeting minutes would reflect the offer of withdrawal, but that for process reasons the Southwest PAC would still vote on the inclusion/exclusion of the LRT 3E Alternative.

Ms. Elabbady presented the LRT 3C sub-alternative on 11th/12th Streets (referred to as 11th/12th Streets), submitted by Minneapolis Councilmember Ralph Remington. This alternative is the same as the LRT 3C until it reaches 12th Street in Minneapolis, though Councilmember Remington requested that Blaisdell and First Avenues also be considered. On First Avenue, the LRT would proceed from the Midtown Corridor in a shallow tunnel under First Avenue. The train would emerge from a tunnel just before Franklin Avenue, where a station is planned. Several parcels are identified that would need to be acquired, and the First Avenue bridge over I-94 would need to be widened. On Blaisdell/LaSalle, the train would pass under the Loring Greenway. Preliminary investigation shows that there is sufficient clearance for the train. Regardless of the northbound avenue used, the train would proceed across downtown on a one way pair on 11th. (eastbound) and 12th (westbound) Streets. The Hennepin Avenue Station would be between Hennepin and Hawthorne Avenues on 11th Street, and Hennepin Avenue and Harmon Place on 12th Street. There would be a loss of one lane of traffic on each street, and the turn radius on to 11th Street would require a piece of Peavy Plaza.

Kathy Nelson (Eden Prairie Member) asked why both directions of track cannot be laid on 12th Street. Ms. Elabbady answered that splitting the tracks minimizes the impacts to traffic flow.

Amy Vennewitz (Metropolitan Council Alternate) asked that Ms. Elabbady review some of the open air stations and traffic issues that were reviewed at that meeting. Ms. Elabbady answered that in order to fit LRT tracks and stations on First Avenue, through traffic on First would be interrupted. In order to avoid closing the street, right of way must be acquired or subway stations must be placed entirely underground. On both First and Blaisdell Avenues there are a lot of driveways, which would complicate operations. Metro Transit would need to decide how the train would operate in relation to the driveways, said Ms. Walker. New structures would be needed over I-394. The alternative's interference with 12th Street at I-394 is not in agreement with the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Policy Plan, and there are biking, parking, traffic, and access conflicts with the Access Minneapolis plan.

Engineering issues include traffic impacts on Blaisdell and First Avenues, new structures needed on I-394, right of way impacts, bridge reconstruction over I-94, and the turn radius intersecting part of Peavy Plaza. Performance issues include a travel time 3-4 minutes longer and a capital cost of \$71 million more than LRT 3C. This is because the route is longer and requires an additional bridge. The alternative would improve mobility through interlining with Hiawatha and Central, and is consistent with the purpose and need statement for the project.

Jim Brimeyer (St. Louis Park Member) asked if the ridership on the 11th/12th Street alternative was assumed to be the same as the LRT 3C alternative. Ms. Walker answered that more analysis was required. The Southwest TAC recommended looking at the version of this alternative that uses Nicollet Avenue, with the expectation that the tunnel might not run under Nicollet, but depending on the location of utilities and building foundations, in the vicinity of Nicollet.

Kim Malrick (for Ralph Remington), said that Mr. Remington would be comfortable with eliminating Blaisdell Avenue from consideration, but would prefer that First Avenue be considered in the DEIS. The



open air stations will stop through traffic and that would be a problem when Nicollet Avenue is opened up south of 28th Street. Chair Dorfman asked Ms. Walker if there was some flexibility around First and Nicollet Avenues. Ms. Walker answered that considering Nicollet means that the tunnel could be anywhere between Blaisdell and First Avenues.

Bob Corrick (Midtown Community Works Partnership Member) asked if it was suggested to include Blaisdell or not. Kathy Nelson (Eden Prairie Member) stated that it makes sense to broadly define and allow for flexibility in defining the alternative. Ms. Walker stated that from a technical perspective Blaisdell and First Avenues are problematic north of Franklin Avenue. Nicollet is wider and would be work better. Jim Benshoof (Eden Prairie Chamber Member) commented that investigating this alternative on Blaisdell and First Avenues north of Franklin Avenue is not a prudent use of time. Ms. Malrick advocated for studying all of First Avenue, stating that the right of way to move the train from First to Nicollet Avenue is at the meter farm owned by the City of Minneapolis.

Jim Brimeyer (St. Louis Park Member) moved to include the LRT 3C, 11th/12th Street Sub-Alternative in the DEIS, excluding the segment of Blaisdell Avenue north of Franklin Avenue. Bob Corrick (Midtown Community Works Partnership) seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

Ms. Walker stated that the Scoping Summary Report would be amended to show today's PAC decision to exclude LRT 3E and include LRT 3C, 11th/12th Street Sub-Alternative (excluding Blaisdell Avenue north of Franklin Avenue) for study in the DEIS.

Jim Brimeyer (St. Louis Park Member) moved to accept the Scoping Summary Report. Jim Benshoof (Eden Prairie Chamber Member) seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

The Scoping Summary Report will come before the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) on Tuesday, January 27th.

III. Legislative Update (Deviation in Agenda Order)

Originally the HCRRA intended to request \$10 million in bonding from the state legislature for Southwest. Upon recommendation from the Counties Transit Improvement Board, the request has been scaled back to \$5 million. A draft resolution was discussed, and Chair Dorfman proposed some editorial amendments to the draft.

Dan Duffy (Twin West Chamber Member) moved to accept the amended resolution.

Kathy Nelson (Eden Prairie Member) seconded the motion. The motion carried on a voice vote with Amy Vennewitz (Metropolitan Council Alternate) abstaining.

IV. Next Meeting

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Dorfman at 9:45 am. The Southwest PAC will meet next on February 11th at 8 am in the St. Louis Park City Hall.