



Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 15, 2012

1:30 - 3:00 pm

St. Louis Park City Hall

Meeting Attendees

Steering Committee Members & Alternates

Gail Dorfman, Hennepin County Member

Peter McLaughlin, Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) Member

Kathy Nelson, City of Eden Prairie Member

Mary Brindle, City of Edina Alternate

Terry Schneider, City of Minnetonka Alternate

Anne Mavity, City of St. Louis Park Member

Dick Miller, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Member

Jeff Casale, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Alternate

Caren Dewar, Urban Land Institute-Minnesota Member

Other Attendees

Katie Walker (Hennepin County), Adele Hall (Hennepin County), Kerri Pearce Ruch (Hennepin County), Meg McMonigal (City of St. Louis Park), Mark Fuhrmann (Metro Transit), Kersten Elverum (City of Hopkins), Janet Jeremiah (City of Eden Prairie), Nancy Tyra-Lukens (SouthWest Transit), Matt Fytek (SouthWest Transit), Barry Schade (Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association), Karen Lyons (Metropolitan Council), Larry Blackstad (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District), Kathie Doty (KLD Consulting), Kevin Locke (City of St. Louis Park), Julie Wischnack (City of Minnetonka), Jeff Peltola (West Lake Station Area), Nadine Fogarty (Strategic Economics), Jay Demma (Stantec), Art Higinbotham (Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association), Jackie Cherryhomes (Royalston Businesses), Martin Green (City of St. Louis Park), Paul Mogish (City of Minneapolis)

I. Welcome & Introductions

Chair Gail Dorfman (Hennepin County Member) opened the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Chair Dorfman noted that Southwest advocates testified at the legislature on Monday and Wednesday this week. Business and chamber representatives have been positive and strong; reception by the legislators was mixed and there were some questions.

II. February 16, 2012, Meeting Minutes

Chair Gail Dorfman (Hennepin County Member) asked for review and action on the minutes from the February 16, 2012, Steering Committee meeting.

Anne Mavity (St. Louis Park Member) moved to approve the minutes; Mary Brindle (Edina Alternate) seconded this motion, and the minutes were approved on a voice vote.

III. New Member Nomination: SouthWest Transit

SouthWest Transit was nominated for membership on the Steering Committee by Edne Prairie Councilmember Kathy Nelson. Matt Fyten, planner at SouthWest Transit, presented SouthWest Transit's case:

"The SouthWest Transit Commission would like to express its keen interest in being appointed a member of the Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee. As the current fixed route transit service provider for the City of Eden Prairie (as well as Chanhassen and Chaska), SouthWest Transit is in a unique position to provide expertise and insight to the Community Works Steering Committee in several areas. For instance, SWT has been serving the City of Eden Prairie and the surrounding communities for over 25 years, which has given us a great understanding of the travel and commute patterns of the communities we serve. Additionally, SWT has a strong record of successfully implementing Transit Oriented Developments in suburban areas. Surely TODs are going to be a point of discussion for the Community Works Steering Committee, and SWT will certainly bring a lot of knowledge and expertise to the table during those discussions.

Ultimately, we believe it is in the best interest of the SW LRT project that SWT be a part of the Community Works Steering Committee. Having SouthWest Transit at the table will not only ensure that the connectivity enhancements that the SW LRT is bringing into our communities are maximized to their fullest potential, but also ensure that bus and rail operations are interacting in a fashion that will best serve LRT riders, as well as residents of Eden Prairie and its surrounding communities. For example, SouthWest Transit will be the one of the primary ways that Chanhassen and Chaska residents connect with the SW LRT. Also, SWT will surely play an integral role in connecting LRT riders to employers and retail businesses throughout Eden Prairie, Chanhassen, and Chaska.

The bottom line is that rail operations alone will not maximize connectivity throughout a community. Connecting bus service with rail has to play a role. And that is why SouthWest Transit is requesting to be member of the Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee.

Finally, the Committee should be aware that the SouthWest Transit Commission at its March 1st meeting nominated Chair Tyra-Lukens to serve on the Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee should SouthWest Transit be fortunate enough to be appointed."

Ms. Tyra-Lukens commented that there is a need for SouthWest Transit to be represented on the Steering Committee and added that she has a strong background in Southwest LRT.

[Kathy Nelson \(Eden Prairie Member\) moved to seat SouthWest Transit on the Steering Committee; Anne Mavity \(St. Louis Park Member\) seconded the motion, and the motion was approved on a voice vote.](#)

IV. Southwest Development Assessment

Nadine Fogarty, Strategic Economics, and Jay Demma, Stantec, presented on the Southwest Development Assessment Report funded with Living Cities dollars and completed earlier in 2012. The Development Assessment Report is a key piece of the Corridor Investment Framework and will be used in the Transitional Station Area Action Plans. Ms. Fogarty began by noting that the purpose of the report is to provide a sense of corridor development timing, scale, location of future development, and how transit will affect the market. The report is very comprehensive and is intended to be a tool that provides background information and a way to think about development corridor-wide. It is not site-specific or intended to supersede local plans, but will be a strong resource. The methodology used was to first analyze regional and corridor level market dynamics, consider walksheds at stations, and use results of local developer interviews on their impressions of the corridor over time. A summary of the interviews is included in the appendix of the report.

Ms. Fogarty stated that overall, corridor demographics support transit oriented development (TOD). Several other studies have analyzed the demographics that prefer to locate along transit lines, and, relative to Hennepin County, the Southwest Corridor is home to an above average number of echo boomers and generation y-ers, both populations that prefer TOD. Baby boomers and empty nesters also prefer TOD. The employment trends in the Southwest Corridor are also supportive of TOD; growth is happening in industries that prefer to locate near transit. Corridors with strong employment concentrations are more likely to have stronger development impacts and more opportunity to take advantage of transit. The Southwest suburbs also have a stronger housing market than the regional average. Ms. Fogarty noted that as part of the analysis, they projected demand for TOD over 20 years and estimate 3,200 to 3,900 new housing units and 19,400 to 22,700 new jobs in the localized areas adjacent to the stations, not in the broader corridor. The study did not include development potential in downtown Minneapolis. Anne Mavity (St. Louis Park Member) commented that the projections seem low; the number of housing units coming into St. Louis Park this year are greater than the projection. Ms. Fogarty responded that the apartment market is booming right now, so it's possible that the projections could be underestimating, but we cannot use this year to project over the longer term. Kathy Nelson (Eden Prairie Member) added that planned housing in Eden Prairie will be built within five minutes of the stations and projections are for 10,000. Ms. Fogarty acknowledges that the projected number might be low but it is still useful to check the plans for housing growth over the entire corridor. The numbers are calculated by using the regional projections, applying the kind of households that want to locate around transit, then taking a percentage of that for Southwest. Caren Dewar (ULLMN Member) asked if the analysis accounted for land supply along the corridor, or just demand. Ms. Fogarty answered that the study focused only on demand; there is a question of how much regional growth will come to the Southwest corridor. Ms. Dewar noted that the actions that the corridor cities take together will make a big difference in housing absorption. Nancy Tyra-Lukens (SouthWest Transit Member) asked what PDR stands for. Ms. Fogarty responded that it stands for production, distribution, and repair, an industry grouping. There is a national trend of decline in that sector and it is likely to continue, so the major redevelopment opportunities are there. Don Samuels (Minneapolis Member) asked if the study will be a live document that will be updated periodically. Ms. Fogarty responded that there are no plans to do that now, but there might be value in that.

Jay Demma, Stantec, talked about the transition from industrial to commercial and residential uses in the corridor. There is a legacy of industrial uses whose phasing out will allow for accommodation of future growth. Mr. Demma and Ms. Fogarty worked with city staff to look at places where redevelopment will happen in the station areas and considered everything from parcels ready to redevelop, to ones that had not been considered yet but are under-used and represent an opportunity. Stantec mapped out these sites and determined that there is more than one in each station area. According to Mr. Demma, TOD is predicated on walkability, so they mapped out a ten-minute walk from each of the proposed stations, taking into account the natural and man-made barriers. These walksheds make it easier to see where key investments could be made that would open up new employment or residential areas to the stations. Mr. Demma stated that, because people are walking around the stations, it will be important to create a sense of place there. Chair Dorfman noted the walksheds are fairly small at some of the stations. Ms. Fogarty commented on the importance of access by bus. Mr. Samuels asked if the walkshed expands and shrinks with weather. Mr. Demma responded that weather will probably affect people's willingness to walk. The weather here makes maintenance and sense of place very important for walking conditions. Chair Dorfman asked how many of these pedestrian and environment improvements are part of the LRT project. Katie Walker, Hennepin County, noted that in the LRT conceptual engineering drawings there are some roadways and access points that are paid for by the LRT project; this will likely evolve through Preliminary Engineering (PE). The Transitional Station Area Action Planning effort will look at the improvements that are needed and wanted in the station areas that will prepare the sites for development. Chair Dorfman noted that throughout the course of planning we are likely to come up with a number of access projects that will not be able to be added to the cost of the LRT project and we will need to figure out different

ways to do those projects. Ms. Mavity asked for a reminder on the timeline of PE. Mark Fuhrmann, Metro Transit, responded that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be published in the summer, PE will start a bit before that and Community Works will be happening concurrently. This will all be happening in 2012, and then in 2013 the project will seek municipal and county consent. Mr. Fuhrmann indicated that they don't have specific dates or months yet, but offered that work in the last half of 2012 and 2013 will be intense. Chair Dorfman asked how cities should work best with the project office; for example, St. Louis Park is currently doing planning work around Beltline. When should this conversation start? Mr. Fuhrmann responded that discussions can be initiated now. Ms. Nelson noted that the Technology Drive businesses are very concerned about the LRT, especially the ones that are growing, so the faster we can make connections, the better it will be for how LRT interacts with the businesses. Peter McLaughlin (HCRRA Member) suggested that the Southwest Project Office should send a note to cities and other agencies to let them know that they should be meeting with project office staff on these issues. Mr. Fuhrmann agreed; project technical staff has been meeting with city staff, but another round of meetings should occur.

Mr. Demma continued to discuss TOD potential in the corridor. Along the Minneapolis segment of the corridor there is a lot of complexity. West Lake is most TOD-ready, but the land is also very expensive, which will make it difficult to redevelop. The middle segment in Hopkins and St. Louis Park is strongest for short-term redevelopment; properties are older and the urban fabric supports smaller, infill development. The southern segment in Minnetonka and Eden Prairie is more mid-to long-term for TOD; development currently occurring is likely more highway-oriented and not TOD, and there are many economically viable properties still not ready for redevelopment. Ms. Dewar noted that data in the report could be useful for promoting the project. Karen Lyons, Metropolitan Council, offered that, within ½ mile of Hiawatha, Central, and Southwest there are 400,000 jobs, which is over a quarter of the region's jobs. Chair Dorfman asked when, if a city identifies an opportunity within a station area, such as B'Nai Emet Synagogue in St. Louis Park, and they want to take advantage it, we will have the tools to make that happen. Ms. Walker responded that this will be a focus of the Transitional Station Area Action Plans, and the Community Works staff plan to consider development tools and a strategic acquisition plan to further this, as well.

V. Development Authority Survey

Caren Dewar (ULI-MN Member) presented to the committee on the recent findings of the Development Authority Survey (the development authority information was assembled by Cathy Bennett, ULI-MN, with the help of city staff, and funded by ULI-MN), noting that if a business investment partnership is formed, they could help bring in the private sector. Assembly, clean up, utilities, and financing are all difficult right now. Apartments are springing up because the interest rates are low. The development community has less of an ability to take on risk and is looking for cities that have 'set the table'. There is much commonality with the cities and county with their development tools. All have an Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) or an Economic Development Authority (EDA), the cities all use Ehlers as their financial consultant, they also have some commonality with their legal counsel. Chair Dorfman (Hennepin County Member) noted that definitions of each of the powers should be included. Peter McLaughlin (HCRRA Member) asked if there is any analysis of powers that are missing. Ms. Dewar said no. Julie Wischnack, City of Minnetonka, added that cities' reluctance to embrace certain powers may come across in the document. The end goal is to have a way to cooperate if cities need or want to, for example in development across city lines, or possibly establishing a development financing tool. Chair Dorfman asked if the committee might be revisiting the question of a joint powers agreement. Ms. Wischnack responded that it is possible, but it's too soon to say what the outcomes will be. Legal counsel and Ehlers will be involved, too. Mr. McLaughlin added that another model is to create a financing mechanism with some power and present it as an option for various developers. Ms. Dewar agreed that that is the better model, but we might need a project to show the need for the mechanism. Jeff Casale (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District alternate) noted that watershed districts have these tools, as well, but use them with differing levels of expertise and experience. Anne Mavity (St. Louis Park Member) asked if one of these tools could be corridor-focused tax increment financing (TIF). Ms. Dewar noted that this doesn't require legislative

authority, but major cooperation between cities. Don Samuels (Minneapolis Member) mentioned that he is concerned about the distribution of affordable housing. How would we monitor that if there was a wave of immigration, for example? Can we build in language of cooperation so that we have a healthy distribution of affordable housing? Chair Dorfman asked how much of this this driven by the cities' comprehensive plans. Janet Jeremiah, Eden Prairie, responded that the Metropolitan Council sets out housing goals and cities use those in their comprehensive plan, but comprehensive plans are looking at the entire city and not the corridor and we might need guiding principles for use of tools in the corridor. TIF requirements are limited by statute. Dick Miller (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Member) noted that the county has done a superb job of pre-funding transit and watershed acquisitions. Kathy Nelson (Eden Prairie Member) noted that the overlap of city interests might need a service district, which could be useful for smoothing over differences. Regarding affordable housing, there are two kinds—cheap housing at cheap prices and good housing at cheap prices; we need to get a notion of what kind we're talking about. Projects can be defined by this and will determine what we get. Chair Dorfman noted the number of affordable housing types and the importance of providing housing choices for people who need lower-cost housing, especially along a transit corridor. Mary Brindle (Edina Alternate) added that the City of Edina, with help of Hennepin County, has a land trust where the house is sold and the property is on a 99-year lease. That's one affordability tool, to not to have the property sold with the house. Edina is just starting to use Planned Unit Developments (PUD). If the other cities use PUD, we could do a transit oriented PUD where everyone has a stake in the accessibility of the stations, which could be a solution for zoning. Chair Dorfman noted that two land trusts cover parts of Hennepin County and all of the corridor cities.

VI. Southwest TOD Guidelines & Housing Strategy Update

Katie Walker, Hennepin County, presented on two items from the February meeting that were sent to the Technical Implementation Committee (TIC) for further discussion and recommendation.

TOD Guidelines: the TIC recommends that TOD guidelines be tailored for the Southwest Corridor, and that they be an outcome of the Transitional Station Area Action Plans.

Housing strategy: Hennepin County submitted an application to Metropolitan Council for \$25,000 on behalf of Southwest LRT Community Works for the first phase of the housing strategy. This is the application that the Steering Committee supported at the February meeting. The letter of support was submitted with the application. A housing strategy subcommittee is planning to meet and bring the recommended strategy back to the Steering Committee in May.

Caren Dewar (ULI-Minnesota Member) reminded committee members of the "What's Next" workshop on April 10. A flyer was emailed to the committee.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm. The next Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, April 19, at 1:30 pm at the St. Louis Park City Hall.