



**Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee**

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 16, 2014

1:30 - 3:00 pm

St. Louis Park City Hall

**Meeting Attendees**

Steering Committee Members & Alternates

Chair Gail Dorfman, Hennepin County Member

Jan Callison, Hennepin County Member

Peter McLaughlin, Hennepin Regional RR Authority Member

Jason Gadd, City of Hopkins Member

Anne Mavity, St. Louis Park Member

Anita Tabb, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Member

Kathy Nelson, Eden Prairie Member

Jim Hovland, Edina Member

Jeff Casale, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Alternate

Dick Miller, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Member

Caren Dewar, Urban Land Institute–Mn Ex Officio

Other Attendees

Commissioner Linda Higgins (Hennepin County), Katie Walker (Hennepin County), Kerri Pearce Ruch (Hennepin County), Chuck Darnell (Hennepin County), GB Arrington (GB Place Making), Mark Fuhrmann (Metro Transit), Kathryn Hansen (SW Project Office), Julie Wischnack (Minnetonka), Meg McMonigal (St. Louis Park), Kersten Elverum (Hopkins), Janet Jeremiah (Eden Prairie), Beth Elliott (Minneapolis), Sean Walther (St. Louis Park), Larry Blackstad (Three Rivers Park District), James Wisker (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District), Kevin Locke (St. Louis Park), Emily Goellner (St. Louis Park), Ryan Kelly (St. Louis Park), Michael Ohama (Minneapolis), Vida Ditter (Minneapolis), Elizabeth Ryan (Family Housing Fund), Karen Lyons (Met Council), Lael Robertson (Mid-MN Legal Aid), Tim Thompson (Housing Preservation Projects), La Shella Sims (MICAH), Louis Smith (Smith Partners), John Doan (Hennepin County), Kathie Doty (KLD Consulting)

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Gail Dorfman convened the meeting and asked members and attendees to introduce themselves. She announced that the City of Minneapolis will be appointing new members to the Steering Committee, given changes that occurred after the November election. Chair Dorfman also provided updates: the County is in the process of creating a strategic land acquisition plan, working with the Twin Cities Community Land Bank. She also reviewed recent news regarding the Governor's proposed bonding bill, which does not include funding for the Southwest light rail project. She asked Mark Fuhrmann to comment on funding for Southwest. Mr. Fuhrmann reiterated that there is not funding for LRT in the Governor's proposal, but also noted that the Governor tasked the Metropolitan Council Chair Sue Haigh with identifying other sources of funding to cover the State's 10% share. Mr. Fuhrmann also provided an update on the status of three studies being conducted; draft reports will be available by early February. Town hall meetings were held last

week and there will be another round of public meetings in mid-February after the draft study results have been released. Finalized reports will go to the Southwest Corridor Management Committee in March, then to the Met Council.

Chair Dorfman asked for other announcements. Caren Dewar distributed a flyer for an upcoming ULI event.

## **II. Approval of December 2013 Minutes**

Chair Dorfman asked for a motion on the minutes from the December 19, 2013 Steering Committee meeting. The minutes were moved, seconded and passed on a voice vote.

## **III. Corridor Wide Housing Strategy**

Chair Dorfman introduced this discussion, saying that we have completed a Housing Inventory and are proceeding to the next step, which will be a Gaps Analysis. The Gaps Analysis will identify the housing needs for those who want to live along the SW corridor. A vendor to conduct this work will be selected soon. A key issue will be to preserve affordable housing that is presently available. Chair Dorfman asked Chuck Darnell to describe work underway to update affordable housing maps that have been created from the Housing Inventory. Maps will help developers determine housing needs in areas around stations.

Chair Dorfman introduced Mariia Zimmerman, who has been working with the cities, the county, and the Project Office to look at how we can tell our story about plans for preserving and creating more affordable housing in this corridor. Ms. Zimmerman stated that she's been looking at Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidance documents to determine how best to position this corridor to be competitive on this criteria for New Starts funding. There is a significant amount of 'naturally occurring affordable housing' in this corridor, but we will need to show how this will be preserved. Committee members asked Ms. Zimmerman questions about how results will be measured, and discussed ways to best represent our region's achievements. Ms. Zimmerman also presented information on economic development factors in relation to plans and policies, zoning, and actual development in place. She stated that we are very likely at a medium rating right now, and she talked about what actions might be taken to move the rating for this corridor from medium to a medium high rating. Her recommendations included demonstrating a comprehensive approach with plans and policies, adopting binding resolutions, addressing needs of both low and extremely low income households, and zoning for affordable housing. Ms. Zimmerman reviewed strengths and weaknesses of this corridor, saying that we should make sure to take credit for collaborative work including Corridors of Opportunity work, and other regional and state policies and programs. Members asked questions about Ms. Zimmerman's advice, and further discussed possible approaches to improve the corridor's ratings for New Starts funds. The timeline for submitting information to the FTA was reviewed: an update of information will be reported this spring, and the application for full funding will be submitted late spring or early summer, per Mark Fuhrmann.

Peter McLaughlin stated that we should make sure to mention our Environmental Response Fund, as well as the County's affordable housing program and efforts to support job creation. Kathy Nelson talked about a strip mall in Eden Prairie that may be taken for possible new housing development for larger families. Chair Dorfman thanked Ms. Zimmerman for her presentation, and asked Mark Fuhrmann about how the SPO is coordinating with its partners to incorporate the strengths that the county and the cities, et al, have to offer. Jan Callison asked about what statutory and ordinance changes are underway, and who is taking the lead on



those. Chair Dorfman responded that the city staff, working with the County, are working on this, and asked Katie Walker to elaborate. Ms. Walker responded that city staff have been working with Ms. Zimmerman and each city is developing its own action plans. Julie Wischnack talked about cities taking a range of steps, some simple, some more complex. Jan Callison asked for a list of steps being taken, and Chair Dorfman and other committee members agreed that a staff discussion leading to more specifics would be useful. Peter McLaughlin asked where actions to create jobs falls in the ‘telling our story’ effort. Ms. Zimmerman responded that this falls under economic development. GB Arrington offered that we should include our story that low income households in the Central Corridor will have greater access to jobs if the Southwest LRT line is built. Committee members offered other examples of how a SW LRT line will connect workers to jobs, and how transit is becoming a more significant factor for real estate professionals.

#### **IV. Southwest Corridor Investment Framework: Next Steps**

Chair Dorfman stated that the Southwest Investment Framework is now available on the website. Cities will be scheduling presentations to their councils in the coming months to start rolling out the recommendations in the Investment Framework.

#### **V. 2014 Southwest LRT Community Works Workplan**

Chair Dorfman asked Katie Walker to outline the 2014 workplan. Ms. Walker stated that one of the elements of the 2014 plan that came out of the station area planning work from GB Arrington is to look at a subset of the stations that have complicated issues and development pressure for the purpose of creating ‘master development strategies’. She asked Mr. Arrington to describe what is being recommended. Mr. Arrington presented on how to engage ‘many hands’ to develop one strategy for development. The missing piece of the puzzle in spite of many activities underway right now, according to Mr. Arrington, is an integrated, market-based development strategy that encompasses entire station areas. He stated that he is not recommending further planning, but rather moving toward implementable actions. He recommended focusing on five stations where we can deliver catalytic transit oriented development (TOD) demonstration projects and accelerate TOD implementation. The work would proceed over a 12-month period, and the stations being discussed are: West Lake, Beltline, Blake, Shady Oak, and the Eden Prairie Town Center stations. The idea would be to engage land owners, developers and community members in creating plans that are possible, plausible, and probable. Committee members asked questions about the elements of a master development strategy, and how the five stations were selected. Chair Dorfman emphasized that we should not be indicating that any development that is moving forward should wait until the comprehensive strategies have been created, and this may create some timing issues. Peter McLaughlin asked about the criteria for selecting the five stations. Mr. Arrington said that the five stations met the criteria of being ‘development-ready’ and where there is significant private sector development interest. Ms. Walker added that the list of proposed stations came out of discussions with city staff. She also said that not being on this list would not mean that there will not be investments made at those stations. An example is the Wooddale station where development is already occurring and creation of a master development strategy might actually have a negative effect on activities already underway. She said that there will be continued discussion about which stations to focus on.



Ann Mavity said that she appreciates this framework, finds this an exciting step, and feels that we are ready to move forward. In addition, bringing this to the Steering Committee adds accountability to this next phase.

Jan Callison, assuming chair responsibilities after the departure of Chair Dorfman, added an item to the agenda to ask the Steering Committee for input on a proposed County action to provide \$100,000 from the County's Southwest Community Works budget to fund ¾ of a Blake Road study. She indicated that the Blake Road area has a lot of potential and many interested parties working on changes. She asked for reactions or input regarding the proposed County action which is scheduled for the following Tuesday. Katie Walker described the project which is focused around reconstructing the existing roadway to better serve all modes of transportation, with focus on pedestrians and transit, and how changes in the roadway can promote future economic development. The funding would be used to create a conceptual improvement program for that roadway. Partners include Hopkins, St. Louis Park, Edina, Hennepin County, Minnehaha Watershed District, Three Rivers Park District, the SW Project Office, MnDOT, and others. Members discussed this proposal and offered comments. Jim Hovland questioned how this project was selected for funding over others, but also offered support for this particular project in an area with great potential for positive change. Kathy Nelson offered that if we support such projects, she wants to see energy efficiency to be included as a high priority. Acting Chair Callison responded that committee comments raise an issue regarding the role of the Steering Committee with regard to County funding. She stated that, given that this is a County project with County funding, the role of the Steering Committee is most appropriately advisory and not proscriptive. Kersten Elverum, Hopkins, and James Wisker, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, added information about the proposed project. Peter McLaughlin stated that he felt it was important to ensure that we establish an integrated approach while maintaining local control, per Mr. Arrington's recommendations. Acting Chair Callison concluded the discussion by saying that she was hearing general support for County funding, with caveats as offered by members.

## **VI. Adjournment**

Acting Chair Callison adjourned the meeting. The next meeting of the Steering Committee will be held on February 20, 2014.