



Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee

Meeting Notes

Thursday, March 17, 2011

1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

St. Louis Park City Hall

Meeting Attendees

Steering Committee Members & Alternates

Gail Dorfman	Hennepin County	Member
Anne Mavity	City of St. Louis Park	Member
Mary Brindle	City of Edina	Alternate
Rick Brausen	City of Hopkins	Member
Janet Jeremiah	City of Eden Prairie	Alternate
Tony Wagner	City of Minnetonka	Member
Kathy Nelson	City of Eden Prairie	Member
Jim Hovland	City of Edina	Member

Other Attendees

Katie Walker (Hennepin County), Patrick Connoy (Hennepin County), Phil Eckhert (Hennepin County), Adele Hall (Hennepin County), Lisa Middag (Hennepin County), Mark Fuhrmann (Metro Transit), Carol Lezotte Anderson (Hennepin County), Kathie Doty (KLD Consulting), Dave Nuckols (Hennepin County), Chuck Salter (Hennepin County), Karin Berkholtz (City of Minneapolis), Sean Walther (City of St. Louis Park), Kersten Elverum (City of Hopkins), Karen Lyons (Metropolitan Council), Susan Hoyt (Metropolitan Council), Dick Miller (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District), Jeff Casale (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District), Caren Dewar (ULI Minnesota), Cathy Bennett (ULI Minnesota), Mona Elabbady (SRF Consulting), Tom Harmening (City of St. Louis Park), Vida Ditter (Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association/Bassett Creek ROC), Russ Adams (Alliance for Metropolitan Stability), Repa Mekha (Nexus Community Partners), Julie Wischnack (City of Minnetonka), Kevin Locke (City of St. Louis Park), Meg McMonigal (City of St. Louis Park), Kerri Pearce Ruch (Hennepin County), Adam Fulton (City of St. Louis Park)

I. Welcome & Introductions

Chair Gail Dorfman opened the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

II. February 2, 2011 Meeting Minutes

Chair Dorfman asked for review and action on the minutes from the February 2, 2011 Steering Committee meeting. Jim Hovland (Edina Member) moved to approve the minutes; Anne Mavity (St. Louis Park Member) seconded this motion, and the minutes were approved on a voice vote.

III. Updates

LRT Project & SW CMC

Mark Fuhrmann, Metro Transit Director of New Starts Rail Projects, reported that the Southwest Corridor Management Committee (CMC) met on March 2, and was chaired by Metropolitan Council Chair Sue Haigh. The next meeting, scheduled for March 30, will likely be cancelled.

Mr. Fuhrmann also reported on the effort to get approvals from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to release the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for public review and to enter into the next project phase, Preliminary Engineering. It is hoped that FTA approvals will be received in April or May. Chair Dorfman asked about when the Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) for the Central Corridor project is expected. Mr. Fuhrmann responded that they are half way through a 60-day congressional review period, and that they expect the FFGA in the latter part of April. Janet Jeremiah (Eden Prairie Alternate) asked about the technical review of the DEIS document, and Katie Walker, Hennepin County Southwest LRT Project Manager, indicated that there have been requests to convene the Southwest Technical Advisory Committee to review the DEIS, but that the DEIS is a federal document and cannot be released until the FTA permits release. When the document is released, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority will hold a public hearing. Ms. Jeremiah offered that there is a need for cooperation in getting out information about the DEIS, since the public may be confused about the review covering four route alternatives.

Federal & Legislative Update

Chair Dorfman reviewed handouts summarizing actions at the federal and state level. There have been a variety of bills introduced at the state level that are not supportive of transit. One would stop work on the Central Corridor LRT project, another would pause all rail transit planning, and another would divert CTIB sales tax revenues to pay for bus operations. Chair Dorfman distributed a piece that outlined key points in opposition to recently introduced bills. Kathy Nelson (Eden Prairie Member) asked for additional supporting materials that would list all bills and the authors of each.

Living Cities Grant

Caren Dewar, ULI Minnesota, reported that the grant had been signed and that people are looking to the Southwest project as a possible national model. Grant funds will not meet all needs, and in particular, there is a need for transition planning focusing on employment centers. Chair Dorfman asked if we could get information on other areas such as Denver to see if they had measurable results before and after transit oriented investments. Mary Brindle (Edina Alternate) offered that SW Metro Transit (express bus) had charted this territory for us, and suggested the Steering Committee hold a meeting at their site to learn more.

Introduce & Update on HUD Community Engagement Team

Susan Hoyt, Metropolitan Council, reported on work on the Sustainable Communities Corridors of Opportunity work. This group is working with three individuals who are experienced in working with under-represented communities: Repa Mekha, Russ Adams, and Margaret Kaplan. Mr. Mekha and Mr. Adams were present and provided information about their work. Their role is to find ways to reach out and connect with under-represented communities and to advise on the use of \$750,000 in grant funds that will be used to support community-based organizations. Mr. Adams stated that HUD is very specific about who they need to work with: communities of color, low income, disabled, and immigrant communities. They hope to work with these communities to model good public engagement practices.

Chair Dorfman indicated that the SW LRT project has focused on strong public involvement and offered to make available staff expertise and experience. She also suggested exploring issues like job creation and affordable housing. Janet Jeremiah (Eden Prairie Alternate) offered that businesses would likely be interested in supporting job creation activities. Anne Mavity (St. Louis Park Member) said that St. Louis Park has a great vision for public outreach and was supportive of increasing cooperation and building from existing expertise and best practices. Mr. Adams indicated that they have become aware of work being done with the Somali community in Eden Prairie and the Blake Road Collaborative in Hopkins.

Karen Berkholtz, Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development, worked with a subgroup to create a draft vision statement for the Southwest Community Works Partnership. She reviewed the draft and responded to comments. Chair Dorfman thanked the subgroup for their work and said that this draft vision statement would be taken up at the next Steering Committee meeting.

HUD Sustainable Communities Grant

Lisa Middag, Hennepin County, reported that Sustainable Communities is completing a work plan that will be submitted to HUD by the end of the month. The work plan includes visioning for the corridor, joint outreach and communications, and transitional station area planning. Anne Mavity (St. Louis Park Member) suggested that more of the HUD vision should be incorporated into the vision for the Southwest Community Works Partnership.

IV. Work plan

Patrick Connoy, Hennepin County, asked the Steering Committee to review and adopt the workplan set out for the HUD Sustainable Communities grant. This workplan will be submitted to the Metropolitan Council for review, then will be submitted to HUD. Jim Hovland (Edina Member) moved this action, and Tony Wagner (Minnetonka Member) seconded. The workplan was adopted on a voice vote.

V. Funding, Organization, and Timeline Diagrams

Phil Eckhert, Hennepin County, reviewed an organization chart showing how the LRT work will integrate with the Community Works initiative. He talked about adding positions to act as liaisons between the engineering and land use perspectives. He also talked about project schedule. Kathy Nelson (Eden Prairie Member) indicated that Eden Prairie businesses are very eager to know where the LRT alignment will end up as it could affect access to their businesses.

Jim Hovland (Edina Member) asked whether the FTA requires the State to provide some project funding. Mark Fuhrmann responded, no, the requirement is for local funding match. Mayor Hovland then asked about whether there is a backup plan if state funding is not forthcoming. Mr. Fuhrmann indicated that there is, but that we need to work through the legislative discussion underway. The Committee members were in agreement that messages need to be formulated and communicated to legislators showing support for the Southwest LRT project, and other transit funding.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.