

Metropolitan Council

City of St. Louis Park Chambers, 5005 Minnetonka Boulevard, St. Louis Park 55416

---

Meeting of the Southwest Corridor Management Committee  
February 6, 2013

Members Present	Jan Callison, Acting Chair	Brian Lamb	Cheryl Youakim
	Scott McBride	James Hovland	Lisa Weik
	Gail Dorfman	Peter Wagenius	Tom Harmening, Alt.
	Terry Schneider	Kathy Nelson, Alt.	
Members Absent	Susan Haigh, Chair	Peter McLaughlin	Keith Bogut
	Mayor Rybak	Jeff Jacobs	Bill James
	Nancy Tyra-Lukens	Jim Brimeyer	

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chair Jan Callison called the February 6, 2013 meeting of the Southwest Corridor Management Committee to order at 10:03am at the St. Louis Park City Hall.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Acting Chair Jan Callison presented the January 2, 2013, Southwest Corridor Management Committee meeting minutes for approval. The motion for approval was granted.

**3. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Mr. Pat Born gave a Legislative Update. The governor's budget proposal increases transit funding by a considerable amount. It would increase the existing transit tax by ¼ cent and this new tax would be applied to all seven metro counties. It would also increase the existing Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) tax by almost 50%. The total amount between the old tax of around \$100 million and the new tax given the broadened base of the governor's proposal, we end up with approximately an additional \$250 million a year starting in the second year biennium. The first year biennium is a partial year as the tax does not begin under the governor's proposal until January 1, 2014, along with a lag time on collections. The governor's proposal yields an additional \$348 million for transit in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2014-2015, with the first year of \$100 million and \$248 million the second year.

The proposal addresses a portion of the state's budget shortfall on several fronts.

- It funds the \$18 million obligation of the state's share of light rail operating costs with the current biennium. The state is responsible for 50% of these costs and has not had a specified revenue source to pay that. The governor's tax proposal would provide that revenue source.
- It funds the remaining state's share of the Southwest Light Rail Transit (SWLRT) capital costs of \$118 million. If the proposal is approved, the bonding bill would not need to include funds for the state's share of SWLRT.

- It relieves the general fund of certain one-time costs for a portion of the region's transit funding. Starting this year, our base general fund appropriations are in the range of \$65 million a year and this proposal reduces that by approximately \$48 million for a two-year period, and restored in the next biennium. The governor's proposal would provide a one-time relief of about \$48 million that is contributing to the overall budget solution for the state's general fund from the current base of \$130 million.
- It relieves the state's bonding share for future transitways, which is very appealing for the state's budget situation.

This proposal does stop one-time actions that have been taken over the last ten years. It is estimated that almost \$100 million has accumulated in one-time actions. The sales tax proposal creates a much more reliable and stable source of funding for the state's share of capital and operating, and builds out the transit system.

Current state operating funds represent about 61%, including the general fund and Met Council's share of the motor vehicle sales tax received, which is a little over \$200 million a year. Under the new proposal, the state funds are reduced to 37% as the general fund share is a percentage of the total.

Mr. Born presented a map of potential transitways that are being considered to give legislatures the big picture of what is possible. This proposal assumes 1.0% annual growth rate in the bus system. Commissioner Peter McLaughlin asked if the Gateway Corridor should go all the way to Minneapolis. Mr. Born indicated yes and the official boundary is starting in Minneapolis. Mr. Brian Lamb said the color code indicates a potential highway BRT Corridor. Whether it is exclusive or part of a larger joining system, is in some ways semantic and currently under review on how to provide a transit advantage from the eastern suburbs all the way to both downtown St. Paul and Minneapolis. Mr. Born presented a slide showing Mpls/St. Paul's .25 cents regional tax dedicated to transit and how it compares to other regions. Mr. Lamb will provide the latest National Transit Database (NTD) numbers to SWCMC to give a better interpretation to the total investment in transit.

Businesses are very active and supportive in expanding transit. A survey by the Chambers of Commerce indicated eight out of ten or 79% agreed that Minnesota would benefit from having an expanded and improved public transit system, such as rail and buses. Also, 65% of respondents statewide support metro sales tax increase to fund transit. The metro area transit faces serious challenges without the new revenue.

Mayor Terry Schneider asked if this addresses some structural funding issues that the state has not been able to do in the past. Mr. Born said the legislature and governor are looking for ways to finally resolve how they deal with this persistent budget deficit the state has been facing, for the last ten plus years. We have also not heard the last from the legislature about the need to fund highways. The governor's transportation finance advisory council made a compelling case statewide for funds to maintain highways across the state. Acting Chair Callison asked who has to vote the .25 cents in and who administers the expenditure of that extra revenue. Mr. Born stated the bill has not been introduced yet, so there is no definite answer at this time. Acting Chair Callison asked if the counties are expected to vote on the .25 cents. Mr. Born said the governor's proposal is a tax in the seven counties that would not have an optional vote on each of the seven counties. The revenues in this case need to fit with the budget relief, which this expects from the state's general fund, as well as meeting the state's operating and capital obligations for SWLRT and the other transitways. If left to the seven counties then there would be uncertainty of how much new tax there would be and for the proposal to fit together, the new tax needs to be certain in its amount. To make it certain, the legislature would need to either authorize the Council to do that or authorize the tax and have it be received and administered by the Council.

Commissioner Gail Dorfman asked, if this goes through, would five counties pay a ½ cent and Scott and Carver pay ¼ cent tax? Mr. Born said it may be inferred from the governor’s proposal and expects a fair amount of discussion by legislators about all of these issues mentioned today.

#### **4. PE TECHNICAL ISSUES / ISSUE RESOLUTION PROCESS**

Mr. Jim Alexander gave an overview of the PE Technical Issues / Issue Resolution Process. The engineering consultants are now onboard and working on how to tackle all the issues. There were just under 1,000 DEIS comments that we are processing. Mr. Alexander introduced Ryan Kronzer, design manager with 15 years architect and urban design experience. Mr. Kronzer will be working on the design, operations maintenance facility (OMF), park-n-rides, and streetscape. Tom Domres, engineering manager, has 15 years experience of consulting in primarily freight track design. Mr. Alexander displayed organization charts showing the SPO design and engineering team, the preliminary engineering consultant team – PEC West, and the preliminary engineering consultant team – PEC East.

Mr. Alexander presented a SWLRT PE Technical Issues map and indicated that all the DEIS comments will feed into this map. The map is a guiding path used to capture all the DEIS comments that we have received on the engineering side and we will use that to help inform our designs. We developed Issue Resolution Teams (IRTs) made up of stakeholders and have standing weekly meetings set up to help us through the process. As an example, the City of Minnetonka expressed a concern about how we will cross over trunk highway 62 that is in the current plan of the LPA and hopefully the preferred alignment. The city has expressed through the DEIS comment process that they would like SPO to look at going underneath highway 62 to see if that would reduce impacts. SPO will be looking at that while going through the PE process. On the east end, the City of Minneapolis made some comments in the Royalston area. There are a number of businesses that line both sides of Royalston and there is concern with access and how we are going to put LRT right down the middle of that roadway and maintain access for all the businesses. SPO will be taking a look at this as well.

Project elements that need to be defined and the locations determined are:

- LRT track and if it is going to be placed both horizontally and vertically
- The freight rail track for the alternative of whether it will be a co-location or re-location
- The stations and whether to have a center or side platform
- Park and ride locations and if joint development would be needed
- Roadway features such as turn lanes, lane widths, and traffic signals. When crossing Beltline, we will need to have a station in that area and to understand how the roadway will be configured.
- The operations maintenance facility (OMF) needs to be identified

These are some of the elements we are trying to accomplish with municipal consent. The 30% PE plan specification will come later in 2014.

We have developed an issue team for each of those geographic issues shown on the PE Technical Issues map. The teams are comprised of the SPO design, planning, environmental, and outreach folks, the PE consultants, and stakeholder staff. The first Issue Resolution Team (IRT) meeting was held February, 1, 2013, on the Eden Prairie issue. The freight rail issue will take place in approximately a week.

As we take an issue to the committees, for example the freight rail issue, we anticipate having IRT meetings where we would be bringing that issue up to the Technical Project Advisory Committee (TPAC) within the next couple of months, to get input on the design. TPAC is made up of cities, the county, MnDOT, and Three Rivers Park District. Once an issue has been vetted at the TPAC, the issue will be brought to the BAC, CAC, and SWCMC respectively, along with participation of public involvement on the bigger issues. Next week we are anticipating bringing some alternative alignments for the Eden Prairie issue #1 to TPAC, the joint BAC/CAC on

February 21 and the SWCMC next month. The freight rail issue will be the next issue to bring to these committees for input.

Commissioner Gail Dorfman asked what the approximate number of key issues are that would rise to the level of going through this process and needing an IRT to resolve. Mr. Alexander said there is an IRT set up for each of the 21 issues. For example, Minneapolis has a certain number of issues, so we will have that team meet on a regular basis to talk about one or all of those issues each week or every other week. These issues would then flow through to the committees mentioned. Acting Chair Callison asked when you bring an issue to these committees, are they voting or is it just to advise and get input. Mr. Alexander said as we move through this process, we are really looking for input primarily from the stakeholders at the IRT meetings, who will be affected by this, then from TPAC, BAC, CAC, and SWCMC. Once the footprint is defined, we will bring it to our Transportation Committee and the Met Council for their approval and signoff. We will also have the municipal consent process, so will be bringing that to all five cities and the plans we are looking to have done hopefully in the September timeframe with approvals happening toward the end of the year. Mr. Tom Harmening said for the SWCMC to be prepared to respond, he will need to check in with the St. Louis Park City Council periodically over the next few months, to give them some updates on how things are rolling out. How do you see that fitting in to the work you will be doing and would the community outreach coordinators attend meetings like that? Mr. Alexander indicated we would attend the City's Council meetings on an as needed basis and outreach will play a part in the bigger issues.

Mr. Alexander noted we are looking to resolve the three big key issues: OMF, freight rail, and the Eden Prairie alignment within the second to third quarter of 2013. The municipal consent plans would be submitted in the third quarter, with complete municipal consent approval in the fourth quarter of 2013. In the first quarter of 2014, we anticipate finalizing the 30% design plans and specs.

## **5. COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH UPDATE**

Ms. Sam O'Connell gave an update on Communications and Outreach. Ms. O'Connell presented a community outreach map that is divided into three geographic sections. She introduced three new community outreach coordinators who will outreach to communities, neighborhood groups, and businesses in their respective sections to engage these communities throughout this process. Daren Nyquist who will be working with the Eden Prairie area, Dan Pfeiffer covering the Minnetonka, Hopkins, and Edina areas, and Sophia Ginis taking on the St. Louis Park and Minneapolis area. The outreach coordinators will be meeting with city folks for meet and greets to share project information.

Mr. Will Roach gave an update on the BAC. At our January 9, 2013 meeting, we covered the 2013 look ahead to help develop a broader overview that the committee can undertake. Some other topics we discussed include Preliminary Engineering Consultant (PEC) Contract awards, Peer Review Consultant (PRC) Contract Request for Proposal (RFP), and the topics of interest survey. The topic that made first place in the survey results is station location/platform connections, second place was land use, and there was a tie for third place of business outreach, parking, station/platform designs, traffic impacts, lessons learned from Hiawatha and Central Corridor, PE, trails/parks/bike facility impacts, and transit-oriented development (TOD). We also have a subcommittee that is looking to get together to bring thoughts to the broader community. We changed the BAC meeting schedule to the last Wednesday of each month and our next meeting will be a joint meeting with the CAC on February 21, 2013.

Council Member Jennifer Munt gave an update on the CAC meeting that was held on January 10, 2013. The CAC shares the same issues and interests as the BAC; however the CAC has two additional issues: housing and environmental justice. The CAC had a long discussion about the DEIS process, with particular interest in how we are grouping the issues of concern and how the Met Council will respond to the issues that were raised. There are three hot button issues: Eden Prairie station, freight location, and OMF location. There was a desire in the community to be sure they have face time on an as needed basis on these three important issues. Some

discussion also took place on the rationale for splitting the alignment between the two PECs. We moved the CAC meeting schedule to the last Thursday of each month and our next meeting will be joined with the BAC on February 21, 2013.

Ms. O'Connell provided a list of outreach activities that have occurred in 2013 thus far, where SPO attended, participated, presented, and/or shared information. There were three events on January 29 that included a Shady Oak Road open house by the City of Eden Prairie, the Tonka Progressives event, and a Midtown Corridor Alternatives Analysis open house by Metro Transit. On February 5, a community gathering took place at Cedar Lake Parkway Crossing held by Public Works for Public Good and also the City of Minneapolis sponsored Creative CityMaking.

Acting Chair Callison said there is a list of all the SWCMC meetings in today's meeting packet and asked all the SWCMC members to be sure the meetings are on their calendars.

The meeting adjourned at 11:15am.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynne Hahne, Recording Secretary