



Southwest Light Rail Transitway (LRT) Community Advisory Committee Meeting
April 12, 2012, 6:00 PM
Park Place West, 6465 Wayzata Boulevard,
St. Louis Park, Minnesota

CAC Members: Jeannette Colby (Co-chair); Jennifer Munt (Co-chair), Kandi Arries, Mohamed Aden, Patrick Bernal, Ann Beuch, Mike Bohmbach, Tim Brausen, Steve Cramer, Don Eyberg, David Greene, Derek Gunderson, Art Higinbotham, Matt Flory, Meg Forney (alt), Matt Fyten, Venkat Jalasutram, Bill James, Tom Jenny, Claudia Johnston, Kim Kang, Maria Klein, Kathryn Kottke, Vicki Moore, B Aaron Parker, Anthony Pini, Elizabeth Ryan, Barry Schade, Neil Trembley, Travis Wuttke, Jeff Ylinen

Staff and others present: Jim Alexander, Laura Baenen, Robin Caufman, Kathy Doty, Mark Fuhrmann, Adele Hall, Susan Hoyt, Craig Lamothe, Paul Mogush, Paul Moline, Dave Nuckols, Kerri Pearce Ruch, Melanie Steinborn, Katie Walker, Chris Weyer.

1. Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 6 PM by Metropolitan Council Chair Haigh.

Chair Haigh welcomed the Advisory Committee members. She explained the importance of their work in the coming months and years in helping with this important the SW Light Rail Transit (LRT) project, which represents an estimated \$1.2 billion public investment. She explained that the SW LRT project is one of ten New Starts projects in the Country out of 100 projects waiting for this important Federal Transportation Advisory (FTA) designation for future federal funding. She said that the project was important for creating job opportunities and providing access to jobs throughout the region since it is part of a larger transitway system.

Chair Haigh introduced Co-Chair Jeannette Colby. Co – Chair Colby welcomed the committee members and thanked them for their willingness to participate in this work.

Committee members and members from the public and agency staff introduced themselves and described how they had been involved in the SW CAC in prior years or their particular interest in the SW LRT.

Co-Chair Jennifer Munt arrived. She thanked the Committee members. She explained that she is a member of the Metropolitan Council, lives near the Shady Oak Station and worked as the Communications and Outreach Coordinator for the Hiawatha LRT project.

2. Review of CAC Charter and Ground Rules Discussion

a. Charter

Co-Chair Munt referred the Committee to the SW CAC Charter. She explained that the SW CAC was originally established in 2007 and is now being expanded to provide broader community input into the SW LRT project as it goes through the preliminary engineering and Environmental Impact Statement process and Hennepin County's

Southwest LRT Community Works planning efforts to maximize and integrate land use and transportation, especially economic development, along the SW LRT.

Co-Chair Munt reviewed the seven (7) purpose statements in the Charter. She explained that the Committee would be provided an update on issues that may emerge in the next six months with a tentative time frame for when these may be addressed / discussed at the CAC meetings so that members could alert other interested persons to the topics and encourage them to be involved.

Kandis Arries asked when and how the freight rail issue would be integrated into the decision making since this is an issue that requires immediate attention from her perspective. Co-Chair Munt explained that the freight rail relocation and co-location discussion will be one of the issues that is considered and discussed by the CAC at a future meeting and CAC members will be alerted to when this is scheduled.

Neil Trembley asked how trails in the Cedar Lake area would be addressed under purpose # 5 regarding strategies to mitigate impacts from construction. Mark Fuhrmann, Program Director for Metro Transit's New Starts program, explained that the trail issues and impacts will be studied and addressed during the Preliminary Engineering (PE) process.

David Greene asked if purpose # 4, identifying environmental concerns and impacts related to construction and operation of the LRT would also include addressing environmental justice issues. Katie Walker, Hennepin County's Southwest LRT Community Works Project Director, explained that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will address environmental justice.

David Greene inquired why purpose #2, input on station location, design and construction to reflect the needs of the community was identified separately from purpose # 3, which asks the CAC to provide input on the station area vision and character for development from a community perspective. Co-Chair Munt (?) explained that the development around the station area is linked but separate from the station area layout and location.

David Greene asked if the CAC continued past the construction of the SW LRT to pay attention to operations and, if not, what organization will exist to watch the post construction and review and comment on the developments associated with the line. Co-Chair Colby explained that the Committee's scope goes through the project construction, but not beyond.

Co-Chair Munt said that the cities along the SW LRT Corridor have public processes in place for getting input on development associated with the LRT.

_____ asked how automobile traffic will be handled in this project. Co-Chair Colby suggested that traffic circulation be part of purpose #2 related to engineering and design.

Claudia Johnston- Madison inquired how the CAC will be involved in the development and station area planning activities since cities are already doing this work. She asked if information and input from the CAC can be passed onto the cities so time is not lost in communicating about these topics. Co-Chair Colby explained that the CAC does not have to provide detailed comments to the cities on specific station area plans.

Aaron Parker asked for a clarification on purposes # 2 and 3 related to station area location. He explained that he understood that both the number of stations and the location of stations was already determined and wondered what role the CAC might have in that discussion. Co-Chair Colby explained that during the PE process, which is very detailed, there may be a need or a benefit in moving or removing some of these stations. Mark Fuhrmann confirmed that the station number and location will be reviewed to be sure that the street connectivity serving the station makes sense. In addition, as PE gets deeper into the planning some modifications to stations may be required. The project wants to remain competitive in the New Starts program so project efficiency and cost must be considered in the PE stages.

Vicki Moore asked about purpose #3 and how the CAC would address the relationship between the transitway and the land use development since she understood that in this case transitway and land use development may be concurrent rather than sequential with the land use development following the build out of the transitway corridor. Katie Walker responded by saying that this project is trying to address some of the land use development opportunities in the PE stage. For example, the infrastructure required to support development at a particular location along the transitway will be considered in the PE stage and the CAC may be asked to comment about these opportunities. Co – Chair Munt gave the example of the Complete Streets approach to development being part of the planning process.

Vicki Moore said she understood this was going to be a development friendly approach.

Matt Flory inquired how CAC members can be assured of getting information to comply with purpose #7, which requires the CAC members to be an information resource and liaison to the greater corridor community. Co-Chair Munt said CAC members will be provided with materials that can be shared with community members.

Anthony Pini asked if there was any property acquisition done on the project. Mark Fuhrmann replied that no property acquisition had been done and that it was not permitted by the FTA until the Final EIS (FEIS) is completed.

Kandis Arries stated that the freight rail issue was of such importance that it required its own category in order for the project to go forward. Mark Fuhrmann said that the freight rail relocation or co-location alternatives will be addressed because the FTA made it explicitly clear when it gave approval for PE that two alternatives will be reviewed in the DEIS. The DEIS is anticipated to be published for comment later this summer.

Venkat Jalasutram asked if the CAC could have some background on the project since he was new to the CAC and also newly informed about the project. Co-Chair Munt explained that the CAC will be given information at the next meeting designed to get all CAC members informed about light rail whether they are new or returning appointees. She added that the CAC members were going to be given 17 issues to review that have already been identified to determine which ones the CAC wanted to discuss at future CAC meetings. Co-Chair Colby referred CAC members to the SW LRT web sites for Hennepin County's Southwest LRT Community Works and to the SW LRT web site being constructed by the SW LRT Project Office. She said the next meeting will provide an overview of the SW LRT and the Hennepin County Southwest LRT Community Works.

Steve Kramer inquired if the CAC will be getting information on lessons learned from Hiawatha and Central. Co-Chair Munt stated that this can be added to a future agenda.

David Greene asked if the CAC could review the DEIS on-line. Katie Walker explained that the DEIS is not currently available for public review but will be available sometime this summer after FTA has finished with its review and comments.

Neil Trembley asked how the CAC will consider and discuss any station re-location or elimination that may come up during PE. Mark Fuhrmann explained that these will come up in the context of keeping the project very competitive under the federal New Starts program so that the project can be favorably considered for federal funding. This requires maximizing travel time and minimizing costs of the \$1.2 billion project.

b. Ground Rules (*Revised from the Ground Rules for the SW Transitway CAC adopted for Hennepin County Southwest Community Works Process in 2007*).

Co- Chair Munt introduced the CAC Ground Rules.

Elizabeth Ryan asked for clarification about the expectations of staff that the Hennepin County's Southwest LRT Community Works staff as well as the Project Office staff should be included in the ground rules. Co-Chair Munt clarified that staff meant project office staff and Hennepin County's Southwest LRT Community Works staff.

Patrick Bernal asked if the agenda could be published in advance of the meeting at the same time as the meeting notice was published.

Co-Chair Munt asked for a show of hands of those supporting the ground rules and then proceeded with more input.

Art Higinbotham commented that he would like to see meetings go beyond the 1.5 hours in order to allow for more time for discussion among CAC members and public input. He explained that he appreciated the staff being willing to discuss issues that could not be addressed within the time frame of the meeting, but he preferred a longer meeting so that this information could be shared among CAC members. He also raised a concern about covering the costs of the freight rail issue and asked for reason for the delay in the DEIS. Co-Chair Munt responded that there will be times when staff doesn't have an answer at a meeting and will need to follow up later. In addition, it is important to respect the time committed by CAC members and members of the public in attendance.

Mark Fuhrmann concurred that at this point there is more that is not known about the project and process than is known because of the state of the work. PE is designed to answer many of these questions. He explained that the DEIS is not published yet because of the future complications in the analysis related to freight rail location now that this has been incorporated into the DEIS. The FTA is currently reviewing the re-crafted language. The \$1.2 billion dollar preliminary budget does not include the freight rail analysis. The budget will be adjusted as needed.

Co-Chair Munt asked if the CAC agreed to the Ground Rules if they were adjusted to

- 1) reference project staff, which includes SW Project Office and Hennepin County Southwest LRT Community Works, staff and
- 2) Add that CAC meeting agendas will be published in advance of the meeting.

Co-Chair Munt's request for a show of hands supporting these changes received consensus.

Co-Chair Munt also said that meeting minutes of the prior CAC meeting will be provided to the CAC members in advance of the meeting. However, these will not be publicly published until approved by the CAC.

3. **Corridor Management Committee Report**

Bill James, the representative from the SW CAC to the SW Corridor Management Committee (SW CMC) welcomed the expanded CAC members and provided an overview of the SW CMC for the CAC.

James described the CMC composition of seventeen (17) members comprised of cities along the corridor, Metro Transit, Met Council, 3 county commissioners, a CAC member (him) and a BAC member. Chair Haigh of the Metropolitan Council chairs the CMC. James said the meetings are open to the public and meet the first Wednesday of each month at 10 AM and have been held at the St. Louis Park City Hall.

James explained that SW LRT will be funded through the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority, the County Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), the state and federal governments. He stressed the importance of the state commitment to \$25 million in the State bonding bill this legislative session to support the project.

James said that there is an enormous effort to educate legislators on the business support for this project and the value of the SW LRT project for regional transitway access to approximately 270,000 jobs by 2030. Co-Chair Munt reiterated the importance of the SW LRT funding in the bonding bill.

4. **Hand out assignment**

Co-Chair Munt called CAC members' attention to the Comment Card in their information and asked them to complete the list with up to 10 issues for the CAC to consider discussing.

Co-Chair Munt also received consensus on making CAC members contact information available to staff and CAC members. CAC members not wanting to have this information available in this way should contact staff.

5. **Open Forum** (10 minutes for input from attendees)

Bill Neuendorf, Transit for Livable Communities (TLC), spoke to the urgency of contacting legislators regarding the \$25 million in the bonding bill for the SW LRT. He distributed a card with a web site for this purpose: www.southwestlirtnow.org.

Several CAC members requested a larger room be used for CAC meetings so that members of the public could attend and feel welcome. Co – Chair Munt said that a larger space will be located.

6. Co- Chairs Munt and Colby thanked the CAC, reminded the CAC about the May 10, 6 PM meeting where the agenda will include an overview of the SW LRT project and an overviews of Hennepin County' Southwest LRT Community Works program. The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM.