



**Southwest Light Rail Transitway (SWLRT)
Community Advisory Committee Meeting**

May 26, 2015

**Southwest Project Office
6465 Wayzata Blvd, Suite 500**

St. Louis Park, MN 55426

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Meeting Summary

CAC Members/Alternates: Council Member Jennifer Munt, Russ Adams, Amanda Kappes, Andrew Pieper, Brian Kirk, Craig Westgate, Doug Peterson, Ian Kees, Janet Weivoda, Jody Strokosch, Lee Munnich, Melissa Everett, Sana Elassar, Sara Maaske, Shirajoy Abry, Jeff Strate.

Agency Staff and Guests: Sam O’Connell, Craig Lamothe, Nani Jacobson, Jim Alexander, Kerri Pearce Ruch, Dan Pfeiffer, Sophia Ginis, Nkongo Cigolo, John Welbes.

1. Welcome and Review of Meeting Summary

Co-Chair Adams called meeting to order. Group introduced themselves. Meeting summary will be emailed out.

2. Commenting on the SDEIS

Nani Jacobson went over the process that led to the creation of the Supplement Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS). Covered purpose and need, alternatives considered, affected environments, impacts and mitigation, public agency coordination and the next steps and funding. Three study areas were identified in the process: Eden Prairie, alignment shifted to the south to collect additional riders and minimize impacts; Hopkins, the proposed Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) now located in Hopkins is a change from previously proposed locations in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS); St. Louis Park and Minneapolis segment, DEIS called for Bass Lake Spur freight rail relocation to MN&S corridor; the current proposal calls for light rail and freight rail co-location on the Bass Lake Spur corridor and LRT in a tunnel under a portion of the Kenilworth Corridor. The SDEIS published on May 22 and a forty-five day commenting period opened from May 22 to July 6. Information on how to comment available online and guide to DEIS distributed.

As requested by Janet Weivoda, the location of the electronic version of the SDEIS was provided and is included in the guide to the SDEIS.

Ms. Weivoda wondered whether moving the alignment south in Eden Prairie was cost savings related. City desired to have alignment close to business center and need to minimize impacts.

Doug Peterson wondered whether current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by partnering cities and Metropolitan council would need to be redone if major changes were made. Not all changes require municipal consent and where required as shown in presented materials, it would be necessary.

Craig Westgate wondered how comments would be addressed. Formal response to all comments will be addressed and included in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Comments could also be submitted in person as oral testimony at any of the three scheduled public hearings on June 16, June 17 and June 18.

Jeff Strate wondered what types of comments would receive great consideration. The best way to comment is to be substantive and to include suggestions. NEPA citizen's guide to commenting will be sent out to all members. [http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/nepapub/nepa_documents/RedDont/G-CEQ-CitizensGuide.pdf]

Co-Chair Adams wondered whether the format of the public hearing could be shared with the members. A panel format. The Metropolitan Council Chair listens to the comments, which are transcribed by a court reporter. Not a discussion type panel, just a listening panel.

Next steps in the NEPA process will be to prepare and publish the FEIS; the alternatives have been considered and then preferred alternative identified then mitigation is address in the FEIS. A Record of Decision (ROD) to be issued by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Adequacy Determination issued by local Minnesota Environmental Protection Agency (MEPA).

Ms. Weivoda asked how much engineering would be completed by the time the FEIS is published? Thirty percent design.

Environmental process schedule is included in the presentation.

3. Potential Cost Reduction Evaluation

Co-Chair Jennifer Munt called on Craig Lamothe, Project Director, to go over the potential cost reduction evaluation. Co-Chair Munt advised members that they would be able to provide their recommendations at the June 30 CAC meeting to be presented to the CMC for consideration before the CMC could weigh in on reduction cost packages on July 1.

Craig Lamothe mentioned that the comments received from project partners after the 341 million budget increase presentation was supportive of the LRT project and its advancement but recommended that the budget be kept at 1.653 Billion. Tasked the project office with developing a list of potential cost reductions, maintain project's New Starts competitiveness of medium-high overall rating, secure the full funding grant agreement by fourth quarter of 2016 and add operating cost as metric to the cost reduction matrix. A list of 500 million potential cuts was created in collaboration with staff from each city, the Hennepin County and the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board (MPRB) for an opportunity to compile various cost reduction package scenarios. A definition of the matrix terms was covered.

Jim Alexander, Director of Design and Engineering, walked the group over the various options as presented in the matrix.

Mr. Peterson wondered whether the Chair of the Metropolitan Council and the Governor would evaluate the potential alternatives and make a decision. The process includes presenting four items to the CMC, potential cost evaluation, transit option review, construction cost review and technical capacity review. Then the CMC would make recommendation to be submitted to the Metropolitan Council upon which the Metropolitan Council would make a decision.

Ian Kees wondered whether the CAC was going to be given any weight on the decision making process. CAC is an advisory committee and should make a recommendation to the CMC.

Ms. Weivoda and Mr. Strate wondered whether deferring a station as presented in the matrix could allow for contingency funds to be used later to build a station that had been deferred as a result of budget cuts. The FTA recently adopted MAP-21 transportation bill, which changed the rule governing contingency funds; deferred items can no longer be built using contingency funds. However, other unrelated federal funds may be available later.

Ms. Weivoda wondered whether the deletion of a station that causes a change in ridership would affect the project rating. Six factors are used by the FTA to rate light rail projects, ridership is one of them but not taken singly; takes into account the cost saving that produces a very insignificant impact on the overall project rating; more weight put on land use and economic development.

Andrew Pieper asked whether ridership model was computed yearly. It was clarified that ridership model forecasts daily ridership.

Mr. Peterson stated that deletion of stations in areas where a current MOU is in force would violate equity principles and the MOU. The list of potential cost reduction items was created in collaboration with project partners, including affected cities.

Members agreed that a follow-up meeting would be necessary to provide the group a chance to craft a recommendation after a list of transit packages has been presented to the CMC. An additional Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting has been scheduled for June 9, 2015, at 6 PM.

Lee Munnich stated that their neighborhood had already made their statement and sent it to elected officials.

Jody Strakosh wondered whether the cost increase was caused by soil contamination. Major cost increase due to soil structure and constructability as we are creating new Right of Way (ROW) and opposed to constructing in an existing public ROW.

Ms. Strakosh wondered whether the Kenilworth corridor added cost to the project with new discoveries like potential contamination areas? Some borings have already been done on the Hennepin County Regional Rail Road Authority (HCRRA) property, and the project is fairly aware of the underground condition. Additional work to identify contamination will be underway and any remedy would be funded by the contingency fund.

Mr. Strate wondered whether examining a different alignment was included as part of cost savings analyses. Cost reduction analyses examined the SDEIS alignment.

Mr. Peterson wondered whether the project has already reached its 30 percent engineering phase. The project is close to reaching 30 percent design.

Mr. Pieper wondered why potential cost reduction did not look at reducing or eliminating the Kenilworth landscaping when it looked at reducing art and landscaping in other parts of the alignment and he recommended that the project looked at that option as well.

Ms. Weivoda wondered whether any consideration of other sorts of services has been made to feed potential riders to the light rail stations? Southwest Transit has a very robust bus service that could make connections to the light rail.

Mr. Westgate wondered whether capacity could be added to a current OMF instead of building a new OMF. Real estate availability is the major challenge, currently no space at the existing OMF and there is a challenge of dispatching vehicles in the AM from a centralized location to meet the demand.

Mr. Kees wondered whether cost estimates could be sharpened in order to use the extra money to cover the budget increase. Cost estimates take into account various components and the contract would be awarded to the lowest bidder, any extras would be added to the contingency and be guided by MAP-21 regulation.

Mr. Peterson requested to have an electronic copy of each city's agreement with the Metropolitan Council. Copies will be provided.

Members requested to have a matrix of potential cuts that have impacts on safety. Scoping principles include safety and security.

4. Project Options Work Plan Deliverable Schedule

Craig Lamothe went over project options work plan.

5. Member and Committee Reports/Public Forum

Members would like to have an additional meeting on June 9 before CMC deliberation on potential cost reduction package.

6. Adjourn

Additional meeting scheduled for June 9 at 6 PM, regular meeting scheduled for June 30 at 6 PM.