

Metropolitan Council

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

**Meeting of the Southwest Corridor Management Committee
May 1, 2013**

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Susan Haigh called the May 1, 2013 meeting of the Southwest Corridor Management Committee to order at 10:04am at the St. Louis Park City Hall.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Susan Haigh presented the April 3, 2013, Southwest Corridor Management Committee meeting minutes for approval. The motion for approval was granted.

3. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Chair Haigh gave a Legislative Update. The Senate Transportation Committee passed a transportation bill that includes a recommended ½ cent sales tax dedicated for transit, along with a wholesale sales tax on fuels. The House Transportation bill is a maintenance-type bill for transit, with no proposed sales tax. The senate bill goes to the Taxes Committee on May 2, 2013. The Governor remains supportive and committed to the ½ cent sales tax for transit, which he also included in his proposed budget. We have three weeks remaining until the end of this session. When we can see the targets set for the budget, then the Taxes Committee will get a better sense of how this proposal plays into it. It is a really important part of the overall budget target, as it raises revenue in this biennium and fixes revenue into the future biennium.

Council Member Jim Brimeyer asked if one of the bills restored operational funding for operation of Metro Transit. Chair Haigh said the house bill restores some of the operational funding, but not all, as it falls about \$18 million short. Mr. Peter Wagenius indicated a concern was raised about having a sales tax for transit, but not a gas tax for the roads. He said that folks in the metro area would have no incentive in the future to support transportation packages that include gas taxes and that seems pretty unreasonable from our perspective. If you look at the transitways map, all the purple lines are Bus Rapid Transit lines, which cannot be built without both transit and road funding streams. The metro area people are still going to be at the table pushing for a comprehensive transportation package. Mayor Terry Schneider said Governor Dayton's rationale for refusing to support a gas tax increase was that it was not a comprehensive package. If it was a bigger increase with a broader defined package, Governor Dayton said he will support it in the future. Chair Haigh said Governor

Dayton has a deep interest in seeing more investment in roads, but felt a small proposal that is not comprehensive enough is not going to fill expectations. There is so much need for investment in roads in the metro area and supporting and investing in transit is only one part of the package. Mayor James Hovland indicated if the rural areas do not get a gas tax increase, they will not let us tax ourselves for the sales tax. If they cannot have theirs, we cannot have ours.

4. FTA 2014 NEW STARTS ANNUAL REPORT

Mr. Mark Fuhrmann presented the FTA 2014 New Starts Annual Report. Approximately one month ago, FTA released their annual New Starts report. Mr. Fuhrmann presented a U.S. map showing Project Development and Engineering project locations. The President is proposing to take \$151 million of past project commitment that are no longer needed and carrying them forward to help fund additional projects in 2014. The President identified three projects: one in Vancouver, WA and two in Los Angeles, CA, that will be ready for Full Funding Grant Agreements (FFGA) later in 2013. We are forecasting FFGA commitments for SWLRT, in late federal 2015-early federal 2016.

5. SWLRT PE TECHNICAL ISSUES

Mr. Jim Alexander presented a map of the PE Technical Issues and gave an overview of each of the technical issues as listed below.

a. TECHNICAL ISSUE #23 – OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE FACILITY (OMF)

Mr. Jim Alexander indicated SWLRT does need an OMF, as identified in the DEIS and there were some sites that were recommended through that process. The SWLRT OMF will be needed for cleaning and light maintenance of the trains, as well as internal storage of the trains. Commissioner Peter McLaughlin asked what the average salary will be at the OMF. Mr. Brian Lamb indicated approximately \$50,000 for operators and \$60,000 for maintenance mechanics, not including the benefits package. The Hiawatha OMF is approximately 15 acres and the Green Line (Central Corridor) OMF is about 8 acres. The Green Line project staff worked extensively with the City of St. Paul on what the OMF would look like. We need to maximize efficiencies on the SWLRT OMF to provide two loop tracks for turning the trains around. Also, the trains would be stored inside.

As part of the OMF site selection process, we reviewed the DEIS and public comments about the four sites that were recommended, including a request to review the entire alignment for additional potential sites. Comments were submitted on the OMF locations from Eden Prairie and one from Minneapolis. We developed initial site selection criteria to identify additional potential OMF sites. The criteria include: a site size of 10 to 15 acres, compatible with adjacent land use, good roadway access to the site, efficient LRT train movement to and from the site, and a site that is flat and rectangular. We identified 18 candidate sites by using the initial criteria and presented it to the advisory committees: TPAC, BAC, CAC, and SWCMC. Mayor Hovland asked who selected the 18 sites. Mr. Alexander indicated as part of the scope of work, the PEC West Team - lead by AECOM and PEC East Team – lead by Kimley-Horn used the site selection criteria and looked at the whole alignment to identify the 18 potential sites. These 18 sites were then unveiled to the cities through TPAC to seek input on those sites. Mayor Hovland asked as you work with communities to narrow the prospects, do you need to do a Supplemental DEIS to cover the potential sites that are new to the process? Mr. Alexander indicated if it is not one of the 4 sites recommended in the DEIS or one that was not looked at through the DEIS, then we would need to have a conversation with the FTA to understand what the requirements are and how we need to approach that.

Mayor Hovland asked if SPO/the Council can override a city's zoning authority if they do not want an OMF in their city or at a location that the city does not want it at? Mr. Alexander said we would have to consult with our legal folks. However, we want to work with that local jurisdiction to identify a site that

is suitable for our use and does not go against the city's policy for what is planned around that particular area.

Mr. Alexander presented the 13 non-weighted OMF evaluation criteria used to identify the 18 sites. The cities have an interest in economic development and we are looking at both positive and negative impacts. The cities provided feedback by DEIS comments, letters, and verbally regarding the OMF potential sites. SPO developed an expanded list of criteria and narrowed the candidate list to 7 sites. These 7 sites were presented to TPAC on April 11, 2013 and we met one-on-one with the cities to discuss the evaluations. Minnetonka and Hopkins requested we look at 2 additional sites and we have looked at those. Mr. Alexander presented the top 9 sites and also showed the corresponding aerial maps of these sites.

Mayor Hovland asked if there is a municipal consent issue. Mr. Fuhrmann said the statute for municipal consent does not call out OMF for light rail. We believe our commitment to the host cities and county is that municipal consent will be sought and hopefully secured by one of five cities in Hennepin County for the OMF. Mayor Hovland asked if eminent domain is an issue. Mr. Fuhrmann said the Council has that authority and we are hesitant to apply it, but have exercised it at Central Corridor. None of the five cities have provisions for an OMF and we will work with the host city to make those adjustments to allow for that special exception use in the zoning code.

Key themes from the BAC and CAC comments on the OMF were: general acceptance of candidate sites, generally interested in moving forward with the OMF process, sites 12 and 13 are near environmental justice communities, and neighborhood impact concerns. We will be holding 3 OMF open houses in May to get public input. We want to narrow down to a handful of sites, and then down to 2 or 3 sites that will be brought to the advisory committees for input in June and the SWCMC in July. Based on the advisory committees input, we recommend bringing the final site selection to the SWCMC in August. The next steps would be to seek approval from Met Council's Transportation Committee and Council in August, submit municipal consent plans to cities and county in Q3 2013, cities and county hold municipal consent public hearings in Q4 2013, and cities and county grant municipal consent approval by the end of Q4 2013.

Mayor Schneider said SPO should have worked with the cities at the beginning to create their top 5 list, develop the criteria, apply the ratings, and then have the PECs do their evaluation. Mayor Schneider has asked that SPO pause and takes a step back to work as a partner with the cities in finding a solution. Chair Haigh asked what the process will be for narrowing down the 9 sites. Mr. Alexander said the evaluation criteria will be used to narrow down the site selection. We are listening if cities are telling us to consider other site options, such as the 9a and 11a sites that Minnetonka and Hopkins asked us to look at. We also asked all city staff to provide us with their input by May 3, 2013. Council Member Cheryl Youakim said having the cities involved earlier on in the process may have saved SPO some headaches. We are aware how the open house process works and people assume the decision is made by the time you bring them the pictures or maps. As Hopkins is the smallest city on the alignment, has the smallest population size, is the smallest geographically, and has the smallest tax base, we have said we have 2 additional sites to look at. However, there are 2 sites for us that are absolutely not acceptable and to go out to the public with those 2 sites at an open house is a very bad idea. Mr. Fuhrmann noted that the FTA, our project partner, reminds us monthly how critically important it is for the public outreach and public engagement. We want to be sure that we continue that public engagement and bring these option sites, as a dialog with the community. The FTA knows that we have invited the public to come and comment, which helps inform our process of narrowing down to the 2 to 3 sites. Mr. Alexander indicated SPO is working on some 3-D images and that the cities and staff will get to view the materials prior to the open houses.

b. TECHNICAL ISSUE #6 – OPUS STATION

Mr. Jim Alexander presented an aerial map of Opus Station.

c. TECHNICAL ISSUE #7 – OPUS HILL

Mr. Jim Alexander presented an aerial map of Opus Hill. Opus Hill is located near Claremont Apartments with 318 units, American Medical Systems, and Real-time Properties.

d. TECHNICAL ISSUE #8 – SHADY OAK STATION

Mr. Jim Alexander presented an aerial map of Shady Oak Station.

e. TECHNICAL ISSUE #10 – DOWNTOWN HOPKINS STATION

Mr. Jim Alexander presented an aerial map of the Downtown Hopkins Station.

f. TECHNICAL ISSUE #14 – WOODDALE STATION

Mr. Jim Alexander presented an aerial map of Wooddale Station.

Technical Issues 6, 7, 8, 10, and 14, are being presented to the advisory committees. We will continue with outreach to the site property owners, continue discussions with city staff, and hold open houses in June and July.

6. COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH UPDATE

Mr. Will Roach gave a report on the April 24, 2013 BAC meeting. Mr. Louis Smith of Smith Partners presented on the SWLRT Investment Partnership. Ms. Cathy Bennett of ULI MN presented the demographics and impacts as it relates to the SWLRT housing inventory. The technical issues were presented by Mr. Alexander and the discussions revolved around the OMF, Opus Hill, and Stations. We are in the process of finalizing our success factors for those who are interested in seeing that. We will be having a Joint BAC/CAC meeting on June 6.

Ms. Sam O’Connell gave a report on the April 25, 2013 CAC meeting. Ms. Kerri Pearce Ruch of Hennepin County provided an overview of the SWLRT housing inventory. The technical issues were also presented by Mr. Alexander and the discussions revolved around the OMF, Opus Hill, and Stations. For the technical issues discussions, members broke out into groups where maps were provided and they wrote their thoughts down on paper.

The BAC and CAC comments were similar with connections into the neighborhoods and trail access. The outreach coordinators are out sharing project information at community and neighboring events.

Chair Haigh asked to add Park and Ride, parking strategies, shared development, and how the cities and SPO are thinking about that, to be added as a future meeting topic. Our next regular scheduled meeting is on June 5, 2013 and we will also have an additional meeting on June 12, 2013 to go over the re-location/co-location issue in St. Louis Park.

The meeting adjourned at 11:39am.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynne Hahne, Recording Secretary