

Metropolitan Council

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

Meeting of the Southwest Corridor Management Committee

August 14, 2013

Members Present	Susan Haigh, Chair	Jan Callison	James Hovland
	Brian Lamb	Nancy Tyra-Lukens	Terry Schneider
	Cheryl Youakim	Gail Dorfman	Peter Wagenius
	Peter McLaughlin	Jake Spano	
	Scott McBride	Jim Brimeyer	

Members Absent	Mayor Rybak	Bill James	Lisa Weik
	Keith Bogut	Jeff Jacobs	

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Susan Haigh called the August 14, 2013 meeting of the Southwest Corridor Management Committee to order at 12:34pm at the City of St. Louis Park Chambers.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

No minutes to approve.

3. RIDERSHIP UPDATE

Mr. Craig Lamothe gave an update on Ridership. The ridership refresh numbers are taking the LPA and refreshing it with the new population socio-economic data. It does not take into consideration the changes from the LPA such as number of stations, number of park and rides, and operating characteristics. We will have further information on those as we further refine the project. As the project is refined and a new project scope is landed upon, these numbers are likely to fluctuate between the 29,660 and 34,000-36,000 numbers. Ridership numbers are trending upward. The 2000-2010 census shows population has increased by 31% and employment rose by 4.1%. There was also a change between the former and current Comp Plans with a population increase of 41% and employment declined due to redistribution of jobs. Mayor Terry Schneider asked how these increases correlate to the other competing new starts projects. Mr. Lamothe said the comparison with other regions is difficult, as it depends on how those regions have grown between 2010 census and also not every region uses the same horizon year. We are currently using a 2030 horizon year, however we are currently at the Council going through Thrive 2040, which will ultimately end up resulting in 2040 being the new horizon year. Those forecasts are not likely to be available during the duration of this project.

Mr. Peter Wagenius said this is presuming the project is built as currently designed and does not take into account for example if a station were to go away. Mr. Lamothe said that is correct. Also, to Mr. Wagenius' question from the last meeting, a question about 21st under the 2 tunnel options proposed to be eliminated and how it might impact West Lake. West Lake is a little over 1 mile from that location, Penn station is a little closer at about ¾ of a mile from 21st street. One of the changes reflected in that 34,000-46,000 number, is consolidation of the park and rides. We worked with the City of Minneapolis for the 21st Street station to

eliminate the LPA proposed parking lot. All the ridership as part of that 34,000-36,000 number associated with 21st is essentially considered walk up. Metro Transit Bus Route 25 runs within about a block of the station, but it is less frequent than 30 minutes, so the model does not pick up any transfer activity between bus and rail.

Mayor Nancy Tyra-Lukens asked why the LPA Refresh has a number range, whereas the LPA has one number. Mr. Lamothe said one of the influences is run time, so we are couching it as we know run time is likely to be changing as a result of any of the options through Eden Prairie and some of the other design adjustments. The LPA assumed 33 minutes run time from Mitchell Road station to Target Field and that number is likely to change depending on what the project scope looks like. Mayor Hovland asked if Hiawatha is trending higher than what the projections were. Mr. Fuhrmann said we used the Hiawatha actuals to then inform the Green Line/Central Corridor forecast. Green line opening year, we would expect the number to be in the 32,000 range, which is a little higher than Hiawatha today. The 2030 forecast for Green Line East is 41,000.

4. RESPONSE TO 8/7 CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

Mr. Alexander gave an overview of the questions from the previous meeting. Responses to Mayor Rybak's letter include: the connection to future Midtown rail is if it is a street car/trolley. Metro Transit is currently in the Alternatives Analysis phase and looking at several alternatives. The 1,000 foot gap between the two shallow tunnels will be presented at the August 28th meeting. The city expressed concern about location of the bike trail during construction and long term. We are looking to get the bike trail back in place on top of the tunnel long term. The city has concerns with ground water, draw down, and long term impacts to the lakes and parkland. Our analysis shows no impact to both Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles. If we go forward with the shallow tunnel option, we would design the tunnel basically water tight. All tunnels need to have a backup system in case of seepage. If there is concrete in water on one side, there is eventually going to be some seepage coming through that wall, so we want to be able to account for that. We are working with the city to assess how to control that ground water. The seepage long term would be very minimal. The city is also looking for a guarantee that what is planned will be built.

Chair Haigh said when we get to a specific project, our intention is to go to the communities to gain the consensus of support for the project. If we do not build it like we say we are going to at that time, then we have to go back to the communities again to get support. Our intent is to certainly guarantee that what we plan is what we are going to build. Mr. Peter Wagenius asked if crash walls are in the process of being addressed and there is also an issue of co-existence of air vents on the shallow tunnel bicycle trail. Mr. Alexander said staff is working on those and intend to bring the information to the August 28th meeting.

Mr. Alexander presented a transitway map showing how the Midtown corridor project would potentially connect with LRT. The Midtown corridor is not part of the SWLRT project. Mr. Alexander presented some aerial maps of the proposed Midtown corridor. Mr. Wagenius asked why the deep tunnel cannot be located north of the bridge. Mr. Alexander said the pit that is required is about 77 feet in width and we feel there are going to be fairly wide walls to support the soil as we are going down about 55 feet below the ground surface. That pit is going to be fairly long and the floor is going to be about 400 feet and then we ramp up out of that. The pit is around 1,000 feet. Townhomes would have to be taken out just for the construction. You could put the pit north of the bridge and preserve West Lake Street bridge, but the pit will need to be extended far enough up to the parkway that properties will be impacted. We have been trying to preserve as much property as possible in the Kenilworth corridor. We will be presenting drawings of the tunnel pit and dimensions at the August 28th meeting.

5. LOCALLY REQUESTED BETTERMENTS / POTENTIAL SCOPE REDUCTIONS

Mr. Mark Fuhrmann said over the last 8-10 years, the FTA has become much more rigorous and aggressive in the way that locally requested betterments are managed. They put a risk management process in place that essentially says you have "x" amount of contingency when you start these projects and we expect that is going to be when construction begins around 20% and as you progress your construction through milestones

20%/50%/75%/90% and complete the FTA allows the project to draw from that contingency at a measured pace, so that we don't draw too much contingency too soon. The FTA will put something similar in place for SWLRT, with a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA). The betterments are not part of the base scope for the project and therefore not part of the cost estimates that we have shared with the SWCMC.

Over the course of project delivery ways to manage these betterments from the outset when we are doing the bid scopes and bid awards is if the locals can cobble together monies to commit to making the requested betterment happen, then it will be included in the bid and built with non project funds. That is the 100% guarantee that requested betterment will come to reality. There are other ways which are less of a guarantee. When we make those construction contract awards, perhaps we will have an underrun against budget. Another way to execute those is to have those on the list of requested betterments and say the bids came in as budgeted then we can begin as we make those bid awards we can begin drawing some of those requested betterments and fund them through project contingency.

Mr. Fuhrmann recommends as the project advances in final design, we create a subcommittee of TPAC to help create that final list of betterments that we will manage and prioritize with ranking order of contingency. Commissioner Gail Dorfman asked if a local funder is identified to advance the funds for a betterment, could the local funder be reimbursed later with contingency monies as they become available through project progression. Mr. Fuhrmann said that is a sub-option, however the timing is critical and we would have to talk that through to see what milestone that would fall under.

Mayor Nancy Tyra-Lukens said what do you think the policy would be if a city does not come up with the funds to do a betterment, but as part of the project they have taken an action that has reduced the cost of the project. In Eden Prairie for instance, we were able to get the land for City West station at no cost to the project, so will that be recognized as part of the betterments process. Mr. Fuhrmann said all the costs that we presented last week do not quantify that credit for the City West land donation, so that will end up being a policy discussion around the SWCMC table as to how we will want to treat that. Commissioner Jan Callison asked if the SWCMC group will be acting on this list of betterments and giving input. Mr. Alexander will be presenting a list of city staff driven locally requested betterments, however it is not a fixed list and will be getting feedback from the SWCMC.

Mr. Alexander presented a list of locally requested betterments along with corresponding aerial maps. All costs include contingencies and year of expenditure cost.

- TI #1 – To extend Main Street north to Technology Drive. The cost is \$2.5-\$3 million. Mayor Jim Hovland asked if Eden Prairie is prepared to make a request on this or are you waiting to see if we are under budget or some other way to get this advanced. Ms. Janet Jeremiah, Eden Prairie Community Development Director, said they have not had that discussion yet. In the city's capital improvement plan, there is an indication that the city might contribute up to 20% if certain economic development plans continue to be available. That presumes that 80% would be paid by private redevelopment and right now that does not look like it will happen at the Emerson/Rosemount site. They have invested substantially in that property. However, we do have a roadway easement under certain circumstances.
- TI #7 – To add a pedestrian/bike trail. The cost is to be determined and presented at the August 28th meeting. Ms. Julie Wischnack, Minnetonka Community Development Director, said there would be a variety of funders. This betterment would be to connect the area and Opus as well as a lot of housing in that north area of Shady Oak station.
- TI #8 – To extend 17th Street and change 500 surface spaces to 250 surface and 250 structured. The total cost is \$12-13.5 million. Ms. Kersten Elverum, Hopkins Director of Planning and Development, said we view this site as a joint development opportunity and more land has to be acquired. We see a lot of potential to "t" this site up in order for development to happen and we think it is important to get at least half of the parking structure in place.

- TI #10 – To enhance civic plaza at downtown station, add additional pedestrian enhancements, and add improvements to pedestrian crossing. The total cost is \$7-\$8.5 million. Ms. Elverum said the city feels the plaza improvements are critical, as this is a station with a lot of buses dropping off riders and a lot of bike users. We view it as a multimodal station with charm as it does connect to our unique downtown. We want to ensure there is safety for pedestrians crossing at Excelsior Ave. as well as handicap accessibility at 5th avenue.
- TI #11 – Add a regional trail bridge. The cost is \$5.5-6.5 million.
- TI #12 – Add site and access improvements and add a trail underpass. The total cost is \$16.5-\$18 million. Commissioner Peter McLaughlin asked if someone wanted to pursue a joint development opportunity, what is the timeline for showing up to sign a contract and make it work with the schedule for construction. Mr. Lamothe said if it is truly a joint development it would not be part of the project budget, so the costs would be there but one of the things that joint development under FTA rules does, is it allows us to generate a revenue stream ongoing to offset and pay for ongoing operating and maintenance of the line. So, someone interested in pursuing joint development would need to sign a contract by FFGA or ultimately next spring for FTA approval. However the private developer would need to be ready by this fall with their idea and concept in order to bring to the FTA.
- TI #13 – Remove entire switching wye. The cost is \$18-\$23 million. Council Member Jake Spano said Methodist Hospital is one of the largest employers on the line, moving the switching wye south provides opportunities for economic development, and the Meadow Brook area is a very transit focused community.
- TI #14 – To add a trail underpass. The cost is \$3-\$3.5 million.
- TI #16 – Add a grade separation and a trail overpass. The total cost is \$3.5-\$4 million.
- TI #17 – To add vertical circulation elevator/stairs and remove a bus turnaround and realign Chowen/Abbott. The total cost is \$7-\$8.5 million. Mr. Wagenius asked what the radius of the ridership modeling that SPO uses. Mr. Lamothe does not have the answer for how far out the walk shed is for each of these stations, but will provide that information at the August 28th meeting. Chair Haigh asked, so you have different travel time at each station based on the configuration of walking time to station. Mr. Lamothe said yes. Mr. Wagenius said their public works staff is saying we are using a unconstrained ridership model in this location and does not reflect the difference between a rider who lives a quarter mile northwest of the station verses someone who lives a quarter mile southeast of the station. Mr. Lamothe said we will need to bring that to the committee at the August 28th meeting. Mr. Wagenius asked how this ranks for ridership in terms of other stations. Mr. Lamothe said it is one of the top stations along with Beltline. Council Member Cheryl Youakim asked how the people in the northwest currently get to the bike trail and is there a connection there. This is just south of the bike trail, so could they use that connection instead of vertical connection. Mr. Alexander said from a safety perspective, folks should not be crossing the tracks. There are ways up through Cedar Lake Parkway and Kenilworth trail. Council Member Youakim asked if there is a potential of doing it at grade to make it a safer crossing. Mr. Alexander said we would have to get HCRRA involved, but the freights have indicated a strong desire not to have any new at grade freight crossings.

Mayor Hovland asked who decided these are betterments and not part of the project. Mr. Alexander said the discussion is open as to whether any betterments are part of the project or an enhancement, but keep in mind that we have a budget to adhere to. Commissioner Dorfman asked what the role of TSAAP is with this. Mr. Alexander said we are working with the TSAAP process to understand who is doing what and will continue those discussions.

Mr. Alexander presented potential Scope Reductions. These items are not necessarily endorsed by the project office. We have been asked to take a look at things out there along the project that could be taken out to reduce the overall costs.

- TI #1 – There are three options for reductions: truncate to Southwest station and build 675 LRT park and ride parking ramp for a cost reduction of \$70-\$75 million, truncate to Southwest station and build 900 LRT park and ride parking ramp for a cost reduction of \$50-\$55 million, or move Mitchell station to City Hall and assuming OMF in Hopkins for a cost reduction of \$10-\$15 million. Mayor Hovland asked Mayor Tyra-Lukens if the City of Eden Prairie has a preference. Mayor Tyra-Lukens indicated they are excited about the option of moving Mitchell station to City Hall.
- TI #13 – To use Oxford properties for Louisiana station park and ride in place of purchasing an easement on the Golden Auto parking lot site for a cost reduction of \$6-\$7 million.
- TI # 21 – To eliminate the Canadian Pacific right of way swap with co-location only for a reduction of \$60-\$65 million and eliminate the Northern segment of shallow tunnel for co-location only with a reduction of \$55-\$60 million. Mr. Wagenius said he appreciates that staff is providing options, as that is what they were asked to do. However, there could not be a more anxiety producing, trust damaging option to be put in front of folks when we are having a conversation about we will build what we say we are going to build. The community already feels like we are down that road of already looking at things that are not accordance with previous commitments, so please know how hard the presence of that makes moving forward on this project. It is not just the city council we have to get votes from, there is also the independent Park Board.

Council Member Spano asked what the individual costs are for the two freight reductions and if the switching wye would stay. Mr. Alexander said yes, the switching wye would stay and the freight costs are about a 50/50 split.

6. SCHEDULE UPDATE

Chair Haigh gave a schedule update. We will be presenting today at the Met Council and have the SWCMC meet again next week on August 28th and again on September 4th to make a recommendation. The recommendation will be presented to the Met Council on September 11th and a final decision at the end of September. Mayor Hovland asked if all of us are going to know what we need to know by the August 28th meeting. For instance, will we know the pros and cons of the deep bore tunnel, the cut and cover tunnel, of co-location in the Kenilworth corridor at grade, of LRT, recreational trail, and freight. These are all critical to making a good recommendation to the Met Council. Chair Haigh said there will be two full meetings for discussion on the pros and cons and then the recommendation. Mr. Wagenius said to Mayor Hovland that when you put the co-location at grade on the table and want the pros and cons of that, I want to make it perfectly clear from Mayor Rybak's standpoint. The con of that option is that there is no SWLRT project. Co-location at grade of everything is a violation of everything that has been promised to the community for 20 years, so let us continue to work on the other three options: deep tunnel, shallow tunnel, and freight rail relocation.

Chair Haigh said these are all really hard discussions for all of us and all the communities and this project is incredibly important to the entire region.

The meeting adjourned at 2:32pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynne Hahne, Recording Secretary