



Southwest Light Rail (SWLRT) Business Advisory Committee Meeting
May 29, 2013
8:00 AM – 9:30 AM
Southwest Project Office
6465 Wayzata Blvd, St Louis Park, MN 55426

BAC Members and Alternates: Chair Will Roach, Brad Bakken, Curt Rahman, Daniel K. Duffy, Dave Pelner, Duane Peterson, Duane Spiegle, Marc Bogursky, Mark Gustafson, Michelle Swanson, Rick Weiblen, Scott Gill, Stephanie Peterson

Staff and other attendees: Robin Kaufman, Greg Hunt, Tania Mahtani, Katie Walker, Kerri Pearce Ruch, Mark Fuhrmann, Sam O'Connell, Jim Alexander, Ryan Kronzer, Daren Nyquist, Kim Proia, Paul Danielson

1. Welcome, Introductions and Approval of the April 24, 2013 Meeting Minutes, Co-Chair Announcement, Approval of BAC Charter

Chair Will Roach called the meeting to order at 8:04 AM. Chair Roach welcomed BAC members and guests and called for the approval of the April meeting minutes, Michelle Swanson moved and Dave Pelner seconded. Minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

Chair Roach announced the development of a BAC Co-Chair position that will be filled by current BAC member Dan Duffy. In order to accommodate this development, Chair Roach explained that the BAC charter had to be amended, replacing the word Vice Chair with Co-Chair. Brad Bakken moved to amend the charter and Duane Spiegle seconded. The amendment passed on a unanimous voice vote and Mr. Duffy was welcomed as Co-Chair.

2. Hennepin County Community Works Update

Katie Walker provided an update from the Transitional Station Area Action Plans (TSAAP) open houses conducted in the spring. Overall, 425 people attended the open houses, providing input on developments they would like to see around SWLRT stations. Going forward, Ms. Walker explained that a concept plan outlining each station area will be released in late summer or early fall.

3. Technical Issues Discussion

Jim Alexander led the group in a discussion regarding Technical Issues in Eden Prairie, Hopkins, and Minneapolis.

- Eden Prairie

- Alignment Adjustments – Mr. Alexander illustrated the alignment options currently being considered through the Town Center area of Eden Prairie. These routes will be studied over the next several months in terms of multiple variables and the results will be brought back to the BAC.

Several questions were asked about the soil conditions on Technology Drive and the impact of these conditions on the alignment. Mr. Alexander responded that the alignment on Technology is possible, but challenging and will most likely require soil replacement and deep piles.

A question was also asked about the reason for considering a park-and-ride west of Mitchell Road. Mr. Alexander responded that the City of Eden Prairie thought that a park-and-ride in this area would be successful and the project office is analyzing this possibility.

- 9-Mile Creek

Mr. Alexander discussed the new option for a 9-mile creek crossing that would divert from the LPA and create a structure over the creek and wetlands allowing for better track geometry.

- Golden Triangle

Mr. Alexander outlined several options for the location of the Golden Triangle station and adjacent park-and-ride facilities. There is an issue of soft soils in this area so the station will be located north of 70th Street. Mr. Alexander also explained that there is an estimated need for 350 park-and-ride spaces for this station by 2030. Several options are being considered that include both a surface lot and co-locating parking within a possible future development on a neighboring site.

- Shady Oak Crossing

Mr. Alexander explained that a tunnel under Shady Oak Road and TH 212 is becoming less likely due to the different construction schedules of SWLRT and Shady Oak Road improvements, as well as high water table concerns. These issues are making a fly over bridge a more viable option. Mr. Alexander outlined a possible design of this bridge across TH 212, which would be over 2,100 feet long.

- City West Station

Mr. Alexander outlined the layout for City West Station along with two options to cross TH 62 via bridge or tunnel. The station itself will be on the same elevation as the first floor of the new United Health Group buildings and include around 192 park-and-ride spaces.

In order to cross TH 62, Mr. Alexander talked about two possible options including a cut and cover tunnel or fly over bridge. At this point, Mr. Alexander explained that the project office is trying to understand what would happen to the road network for each option, as building a tunnel would require the closure of TH 62.

A question was asked about the difference in costs between a tunnel and bridge option. Mr. Alexander responded that the cost difference is not clear at this moment and hinges on what will be required to maintain traffic if TH 62 is closed. Dave Perner added that United Health Group supports the tunnel option and added that closing TH 62 would be a complex issue.

- Hopkins

- Excelsior Boulevard Crossing

Mr. Alexander reviewed a plan to shift freight rail to a south side running alignment down the Cedar Lake Trail corridor. This shift would happen after crossing Excelsior Boulevard in Hopkins. Mr. Alexander explained that this change would benefit the LRT and freight alignment as it enters Minneapolis. To accomplish this track change, a structure would have to be built. The project office has talked with Canadian Pacific and they feel that from a technical perspective, this option is viable. Mr. Alexander also said that the project office is communicating with MN DOT to understand the historic perspective and view shed impacts of building a structure in this intersection.

- Blake Station

Mr. Alexander discussed three possible park-and-ride options for Blake station. Overall, there are an estimated 450 spaces needed for this station. One option is to locate parking on a lot owned by Hennepin County, which is currently the site occupied by 44 Hoops. Another option is to locate a parking structure south of the station along Blake Road. This option is closer to the station platform and could be tied into a potential redevelopment option. The third option for this site is to locate parking on the parcel currently operated by Goodwill.

A question was asked about freight rail traffic along this corridor and if that freight traffic would affect pedestrian crossings from a park-and-ride located north of the station platform. Mr. Alexander

responded that there are approximately 2-3 trains per day. Pedestrian safety is a top priority in any circumstance and different options for at-grade crossings are currently being evaluated.

- Minneapolis

- Penn Station

Mr. Alexander reviewed two options for Penn Station under both a co-location and re-location scenario of freight rail. If co-location is chosen, Mr. Alexander explained that Penn Station would require a pedestrian bridge over the freight rail line, connecting the Cedar Lake Trail to the Kenilworth Trail. Under a re-location scenario, such a bridge would not be required and the two trails would meet just north east of the station platform.

Regardless of the freight rail scenario, Mr. Alexander explained that due to the geography of the area, Penn Station will require vertical circulation and a pedestrian bridge to allow access from Wayzata Boulevard.

A question was asked about the number of potential users of Penn Station. Since the station sits in a low lying area without any major road network for easy access, several BAC members wondered who would use this station. Mr. Alexander responded that the project office is updating ridership models to understand the demand for ridership along the corridor and added that the City of Minneapolis likes the location of Penn Station and sees it as a neighborhood station.

- Van White Station

Mr. Alexander reviewed the Van White Station and its connection to the new Van White Boulevard Bridge being constructed by the City of Minneapolis. The station will have a vertical pedestrian connection to the bridge and have bus connections to the north and south.

- Royalston Station

Mr. Alexander reviewed two options for the Royalston Station in downtown Minneapolis. One option places the station platform on Royalston Avenue and would allow for close access to bus routes on North 7th Street. Another option, put forth by the City of Minneapolis, would place the station on the corner of Royalston and Holden. This option would allow for greater visibility of the station.

A question was asked about the likelihood of riders heading to Target Field exiting at Royalston and walking the rest of the way. Mr. Alexander responded that pedestrian routes to major attractions are being evaluated. A key concern for SWLRT is allowing easy and safe access from the station platforms. In terms of access to bus connections, the project office is working with Metro Transit Operations to understand how buses will connect with SWLRT.

A question was asked if Royalston Station could be eliminated. Mr. Alexander responded that ridership models are being updated and those models will inform any decision. Mr. Alexander added that Royalston station offers access to major bust routes, as well as the Farmers Market, which are attractions for people. Several BAC members familiar with the area quickly discussed that the area is fairly easy to navigate and feel that new developments happening in the Royalston vicinity will attract new visitors.

- The Interchange Connection

Mr. Alexander ended his presentation by reviewing the Interchange Connection currently being constructed by Hennepin County. This project will serve as a multi-modal transit hub and is scheduled to open in 2014. The Interchange connection will be where SWLRT, Central Corridor, Hiawatha, and Bottineau will connect.

4. Member and Committee Reports/Public Forum

Chair Roach reported back to the BAC regarding a report from the Measuring Success Sub-Committee. He handed out a draft copy of the success metrics and asked for feedback from the group for the next BAC meeting.

Sam O'Connell reminded the BAC Committee that on June 6, there will be a joint BAC/CAC meeting. This meeting will be a technical workshop to discuss freight rail co-location and re-location. The meeting will be held at Benilde St. Margaret's from 6pm to 8:30pm.

5. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 9:35 AM. Next meeting is scheduled for June 26, 2013.