



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

**May 30, 2013**

**Southwest Project Office**

**6465 Wayzata Blvd, Suite 500, St. Louis Park, MN 55426**

**6:00 PM – 8:30 PM**

CAC Members and Alternates: Ann Beuch, Art Higinbotham, Barry Schade, Bob Aderhold, Bob Tift, Catherine Lechelt, Derek Gunderson, Donald Eyberg, Jeanette Colby, John Erickson, Linnea Sodergren, Rolf Peterson, Tom Jenny, Vicki Moore, DJ Heinle, Kathryn Kottke, Kathy Cobb, Lisa Walker, Lisa Walker, Vida Ditter, Jennifer Munt

Agency Staff and Guests: Robin Kaufman, Sam O'Connell, Jim Alexander, Mark Fuhrmann, Chris Weyer, Dan Pfeiffer, Sophia Ginis, Daren Nyquist, Paul Danielson, Kim Proia, Laura Baenen, Katie Walker, Will Manchester, Brian Willette, Tania Mahtani, Seuth Saly, Sam Murphy, Kevin Locke, Michael Quadruzzi, Beth Elliott, Kerri Pearce Ruch

**1. Welcome, Introductions and Approval of the April 25, 2013 Meeting Minutes: Jeanette Colby, CAC Co-Chair**

Co-Chair Colby called the meeting to order at 6:05pm, introductions and approval of April 25<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes.

**2. Hennepin County Community Works Update-TSAAP Open House Summary: Katie Walker & Kerri Pearce Ruch, Hennepin County**

Katie Walker provided an update on the Transitional Station Area Action Planning (TSAAP) open houses. Conducted four open house/workshops with over 425 attendees. Overview of TSAAP process and facilitated discussion of station areas, identify current assets in the station areas and what residents would like to see. Key items identified included; bike and pedestrian connections, future development, neighborhood facilities, concerns with LRT- noise, vibration, safety, parking/park & rides, and station designs/amenities, and complete streets. Next steps are to share this information with the project office, go back out to the public in late summer/early fall with plans for connections, station areas and way finding signage.

**3. Technical Issues Discussion: Jim Alexander, SPO**

**a. Eden Prairie**

**i. Eden Prairie Alignment Adjustments**

Jim Alexander presented the Tier 2 analysis of the Eden Prairie Alignment Adjustments. During the DEIS process, Eden Prairie expressed the desire to locate a station close to the Eden Prairie town center. The other goal that the city has is to land a station west of Mitchell Road. We are evaluating a town center station on Singletree and to the north of Singletree, which is referred to as the comp plan alignment. We are also evaluating station options west of Mitchell Road. Eden Prairie is challenging to locate the LRT through because of variable grades, circuitous roadways, and bodies of water. We are presently evaluating 5 alignments, two of which would terminate at Southwest Transit Station.

- John Erickson- The length of the bridge
  - Jim Alexander- this information will be provided after the break.
- Vida Ditter- If you have ten feet of water down below so you have to go up, how many piles will you have to drop down in order to get rock solid for that bridge to remain stable?
  - Jim Alexander- just because ground water is present doesn't necessarily mean a pile foundation is required; it depends on how strong the soil is and that is something we are evaluating. We do know there are soft soils in this area. For example, when Technology Drive was built up to about 45 feet of soft soils were removed and replaced with competent soils to provide a stable roadbed.
- David Greene- What's the primary driver for grade separation?
  - Jim Alexander- at the intersection of Technology and Prairie Center Drive, it's a combination of impacts to vehicle traffic and impacts to trains moving through the intersection. Without LRT in 2030 our modeling tells us that there would be a level of service "E"; that would indicate that it's right at capacity. With the introduction of LRT at-grade the level of service would degrade. We also have our service time to be mindful of; an at-grade crossing at this intersection would have unacceptable delays for the LRT.
- David Greene- So is that primarily Technology or Prairie Center?
  - Jim Alexander- Yes.
- David Greene- What are the counts?
  - Jim Alexander- I do not have those counts available tonight, but we can certainly provide them if desired.
- Kathryn Kottke- I just have a question regarding a supplemental DEIS or another DEIS, do you need to do another DEIS and if not what prompts a new DEIS?
  - Jim Alexander- there wouldn't be another DEIS, the DEIS is already done We just hired a consult to assist us with the environmental process and to complete the FEIS, CH2M Hill. We continue to be in

discussions with FTA regarding the environmental process as we advance this project.

- Kathryn Kottke- So you don't know yet what you need to do?
  - Jim Alexander- We know that we need to complete an FEIS
- Jennifer Munt- Do you know how the different alignments would impact travel time?
  - Jim Alexander- That is one thing we will be looking at for all of the adjustments. We are also looking at ridership impacts. As we're looking at different design adjustments, we will be comparing the delta (change) compared to the LPA in time, costs, etc.
- Vida Ditter- With the changes that are happening in Eden Prairie, so many are at the request of Eden Prairie, is Eden Prairie going to assist in the extra cost associated with the studies you've done and the extra building you might have to do or is this going to be added to Southwest LRT costs?
  - Jim Alexander- similar to other technical issues along the entire alignment, we programmed to address the technical issues in Eden Prairie, based in part on the DEIS comments submitted by Eden Prairie. In terms of costs during construction, that is something that has to be discussed especially for items that might not be considered a project cost.
- Vida Ditter- I am wondering if the city is assisting with the studies or whether it is sitting on the project cost?
  - Jim Alexander- The city is assisting in the technical issue resolution process, we meet with them almost weekly to discuss technical aspects related to traffic, alignments, potential business impacts.
- Jeanette Colby- Eden Prairie's preferred station location for the town center is north of Singletree?
  - Jim Alexander- I would say it's been a mixture, there are pluses and minuses with each option. We continue to evaluate potential impacts with each in order to facilitate a decision.
- (?) - Through the TSAAP process it seems everyone wanted to go to the Eden Prairie mall and we never seem to have a station by the mall, what's the gig with that?
  - Jim Alexander- There are a couple things; we looked at an alignment along 78<sup>th</sup> but it was challenging with the grades and to get over or under Flying Cloud Drive to get to Singletree. We also had technical challenges with traffic due to on/off ramps at I-494.

## ii. 9-Mile Creek Crossing

Jim Alexander provided an overview of the 9-mile creek crossing at Flying Cloud Dr in Eden Prairie. We are looking to minimize cost and impacts. We are also looking to avoid impacts to the parking lot at the property south of the creek, which could require additional bridge structure. We also have to pay attention to the school,

which has busing operations to the facility via Flying Cloud Dr, and line of sight for the train operator and vehicle traffic along Flying Cloud Dr.

- Jennifer Munt- What building and who's parking are we talking about there?
  - Jim Alexander- This is an office building owned by Liberty.
- Jeanette Colby- Is it less expensive to do a bridge there than take the parking?
  - Jim Alexander- That is something we are assessing.
- John Erickson- What's the length of that bridge?
  - Jim Alexander- ballpark about 2000 feet

### iii. Golden Triangle Station

Jim Alexander provided an overview of the Golden Triangle Station. SPO is working to determine what level of parking is needed at the station. We are looking to move the platform to get closer to parking. We are estimating that parking demand in 2030 may have a demand of upwards of 360 spaces.

- Vida Ditter- Where in the scheme of things are the potential maintenance facility locations?
  - Jim Alexander- One is located north of this location, two sites on the west end. One west of Mitchell and one east of Mitchell.

### iv. Shady Oak Road Crossing

Eden Prairie has plans for work on Shady Oak Road at TH 212. United Health Group is developing their campus north of here at the City West Station location, and the planned work on Shady Oak Road is projected to begin next year. Under the LPA the LRT would go under Shady Oak Road. As we took a look at the city's road project and ground water conditions, we determined that combining the crossing of Shady Oak Road and TH 212 into one bridge structure may be a more viable approach.

### v. City West and TH 212 Crossing and TH 62 Flyover Bridge

The LPA City West station is well above the existing grade, when taking a look at this station we've determined we could be able to locate the station at grade. We are projecting a park and ride demand of about 190 spaces.

- Vida Ditter- on the image there is a large parking lot on the other side of TH 62, how do you get the riders to this station?
  - Jim Alexander- it is more likely that those potential riders would use the Opus Station located on the north side of TH 62 in the Opus development.

Under the LPA we would crossing TH 62 on bridge structure. The City of Minnetonka asked us to look at a tunnel, which we believe is feasible, especially if we were able to shutdown TH 62 for a construction season.

- (?) Any consideration in expanding TH 62 from two lanes in each direction to three lanes each way?
  - Jim Alexander- I know there's been some discussion particularly at the TH 62/ TH 212 merge point, however that would not be a part of our project.
- John Erickson- The length of this tunnel?
  - Jim Alexander- this will be provided after the break .

Jim Alexander provided lengths of the structures based on current design concepts- The Eden Prairie comp plan structure would be approximately 1500 feet, Singletree plan about 970 feet, 9-mile creek approximately 1600 feet, crossing over Shady Oak Road and TH 212 is approximately 2100 feet, the TH 62 bridge crossing is about 1150 and the short tunnel is about 750 feet.

## **b. Hopkins**

### **i. Excelsior Boulevard Crossing**

Jim Alexander provided an overview of the Excelsior Blvd crossing. At TH 169 we will start to co-locate with freight rail. Through our traffic analysis we've determined that a grade separated crossing is warranted here, similar to the LPA. This also provides an opportunity to move the LRT to the south side of the corridor with freight moved to the north of the LRT tracks. The bridge structure is a little less than 1600 feet with the largest span about 360 feet. The bike trail would follow what Three Rivers Park District staff determines to be the official route across Excelsior at the Depot and along the south edge of the Cargill campus.

### **ii. Blake Station**

Jim Alexander provided an overview of Blake Station and the three potential park and ride locations. Based on discussions with City staff, the station platform wants to be on the south side; in the LPA it would be on the north side of the corridor. One scenario has the park and ride to the north on the Hennepin County Regional Railroad property, which is currently occupied by 43 Hoops. On the south side, there are two sites, which could be combined with development. As we look at freight rail, LRT, and the trail we are looking to make a safe crossing at Blake. In all these scenarios we are looking at access from the park and ride to the station. Our 2030 projection is for about 430 spaces at this location. We are working with Metro Transit service development on bus connections.

- (Bob Aderhold) Do you know what type of development the city is contemplating for the site to the south of the station?
  - Ryan Kronzer- I don't know if it is landed on anything, but potentially mixed-use in that area
- David Greene- To the north, you have Knollwood mall and Target and to the south Blake school, it seems like an obvious candidate for a bus line, I don't see why there's not one on here?
  - Jim Alexander- At our open houses we will be showing where we contemplate bus routes in the vicinity of this station.
- Ann Beuch- 43 Hoops is a huge community asset and community members would prefer it to remain.

## **c. Minneapolis**

### **i. Penn Station**

Jim Alexander provided an overview of Penn Station; current design has the platform just east of the LPA location. We are looking at co-location & relocation for

all the stations affected by the freight issue, which will be discussed on June 6. The design includes an elevated walkway from Penn Avenue to the station that would include stairs and an elevator. The design would include connections to trails and trail realignment in the station area. Under a relocation scenario we are looking at an at-grade trail crossing at the east end of the station. Under co-location we are looking at a grade separated trail crossing over the freight rail and LRT.

- Vida Ditter- You're not re-building any of the trail?
  - Jim Alexander- the dark grey areas shown on the plans indicate where the trail would be rebuilt as we would need to realign the trail through the station area.
- Jeanette Colby- The access from the east would be from the trail system
  - Jim Alexander- we would re-establish the connection to the trail from Kenwood Boulevard.
- (?) If you were a bicyclist coming from the west you would need to come through the station platform area?
  - Jim Alexander- with the design for the relocation, yes
- (?) Seems to me that there is a danger of people taking a short cut by crossing the tracks?
  - Jim Alexander- we haven't got to that level of detail but on Central we installed a barrier to prevent people from crossing the tracks along University Avenue. We will be evaluating the need for fencing as the design is advanced.
- Vida Ditter- Is it possible to create multiple pedestrian bridges to access the various park areas here
  - Jim Alexander- It is possible, but the costs would increase.
- Jeanette Colby- Do you have a timeframe for developing costs?
  - Jim Alexander- we are targeting the July timeframe for cost analysis.
- Linnea Sodergren is this the only station that has to have an elevator?
  - Jim Alexander- no, actually we can step onto the next station, Van White and I can show you where another elevator is included in the design.

## ii. Van White Station

Jim Alexander provided an overview of the Van White Station. The station is underneath the Van White Bridge that is currently under construction. It would have a vertical connection to Van White Blvd, on the east side. We have been working particularly closely with TSAAP because of the development potential around this area so as to not preclude potential development.

- Art Higinbotham- Has the city negotiated a relocation spot for the concrete crushing that would be displaced by the station?
  - Beth Elliot- the city is working with Ryan Co extensively on the development of the area.
- Vicki Moore- The Van White Bridge is designed to be expanded to four lanes with the potential for a bike lane. This is a big accomplishment for the neighborhood.

### iii. Royalston Station/The Interchange Connection

Jim Alexander provided an overview of the Royalston station options and the Interchange connection. Under the LPA, the interchange project wasn't contemplated so the design was to go under 7<sup>th</sup> Street. With the Interchange project now being constructed we have the option to cross 7<sup>th</sup> Street either at-grade or on structure. Based on traffic analysis, at-grade would be too impactful. The city is interested in keep 5<sup>th</sup> Ave open. The design presented has the LRT crossing over 7<sup>th</sup> Street on a bridge and landing at-grade on Royalston Avenue at the station. We would run along the east side of Royalston with a single lane of traffic in both directions on the west side, maintaining access to the businesses. The next issue to overcome is how to extend the LRT down to the Bassett Creek Valley and cross the BNSF tracks, eventually landing on the south side of the freight tracks, under the LPA this was accomplished by two separate bridge structures; we are looking at combining this into one where the LRT would cross on the Glennwood bridge and then extend down to the valley on the south side of the BNSF tracks. The second option is to move the station to the south of the intersection of Royalston and Holden. The city requested to option looking to increase visibility of the station. At the city's request, we took a look at going up Border Ave, however, the right-of-way is narrower than Royalston and we would have a number of impacts to go on Border to Holden, primarily related to access impacts and limiting to a single vehicle lane.

- Art Higinbotham- While Twins ridership is not supposed to affect the ridership for LRT, which of these two stations is better to take the riders to the Twins games?
  - Jim Alexander- This is something we are evaluating. We are refreshing the ridership model to understand what the demand is at this station.
- Jeanette Colby- Who would this station serve beyond Twins events.
  - Jim Alexander- We have numerous bus lines in the area which would be served.
- Kathryn Kottke- Why is this a SWLRT cost and not under Bottineau LRT
  - Jim Alexander- we are only looking to do the work required for SWLRT, the design presented includes Bottineau LRT for presentation purposes only. We are designing SWLRT so as to not preclude future projects such as the Bottineau LRT.
- Kathryn Kottke- Could this station be let go and included with Bottineau?
  - Jim Alexander- no, the Bottineau line would not run on Royalston, but would head to the west on HWY 55.
- Art Higinbotham- Although Bottineau is a future project, wouldn't it be wise to have a connection to the Royalston Station for transferring?
  - Jim Alexander- the connection would be at the Interchange platform

### 4. Member and Committee Reports/Public Forum

None

### 5. Adjourn:

Jennifer Munt closed the meeting with a reminder that the committee meets on June 6<sup>th</sup> with the Business Advisory Committee to discuss the freight rail technical issue. SWLRT received 37 million this legislative session that allows the project to stay on schedule and will be seeking an addition 81 million from the State of Minnesota to complete the states commitment next legislative session.