



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

August 25, 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 (co-chair), Russ Adams (co-chair), Shirajoy Abry, Asad Aliweyd, Kathryn Campbell, Melissa Everett, David Greene, Kevan Hanson, Mathews Hollinshead, Amanda Kappes, Lee Munnich, Doug Peterson, Denetrick Powers, Jody Strakosch, Jeff Strate, Charles Weber, Janet Weivoda, Craig.

Agency Staff and Guests: Abdifatah, Meg Beekman, Ann Beuch, Nkongo Cigolo, Sophia Ginis, Julian Greene, Julie Kline, James Mockovciak, Gretchen Nicholls, Sam O'Connell, Loren Olson, Dan Pfeiffer, Kerri Pearce Ruch, Tim Thompson.

1. Welcome and Review of Meeting Summary

Co-Chair Russ Adams called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM and asked members to review last meeting summary for changes. No changes to report.

2. SDEIS Comment Summary

Kelcie Campbell presented on the Supplemental Draft Environment Impact Statement (SDEIS) comment summary. A total of 205 comments received; forty-three people testified during the June 16, 17 and 18 public hearings and a total of 162 comments received via email, letter or comment card. Forty-three business organizations, 18 government agencies, and 144 individuals submitted comments. Five top topics were identified in the comments received: noise and vibration, NEPA process, general opposition to freight rail co-location, safety and security, and visual and aesthetics. All comments are posted online. Next steps would be to analyze comments and develop responses with environmental and engineering staff. Comments and responses will be included in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) appendix.

Co-Chair Adams asked for elaboration on the comments received and inquired whether there were comments on the NEPA process. Ms. Campbell responded there were comments on the NEPA general process.

Jody Strakosch inquired about the timing of the FEIS. Ms. Campbell responded the FEIS is scheduled to be published in the second quarter of 2016.

3. Project Update

Craig Lamothe thanked CAC members for the hard work that they had put into crafting a recommendation to the Corridor Management Committee (CMC); it changed the way people looked at things. The July 1 CMC recommendation to the Metropolitan Council was to end the alignment at Southwest Station, deleting Mitchell Station and deferring the Eden Prairie Town Center Station. New cost estimate of \$1.744 Billion and projected ridership of 34,000 daily riders by 2040. Project received financial commitments from county, cities and other project partners. Some cities committed cash to fill the local match gap.

David Green wondered whether the financial gap has been closed. Mr. Lamothe responded that 18.5 million dollar gap is yet to be filled by fourth quarter of this year and the second gap is the 10% state.

Jody Strakosch wondered whether the land donation from Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority was not originally included in the budget. Mr. Lamothe responded that the land donation was not included.

Mr. Lamothe went over the CMC scope and cost reductions: deleted Mitchell with associated park-and-ride, deferred Eden Prairie Town Center, decreased Beltline and Blake parking spaces and converted to surface lots, decrease Downtown Hopkins, Opus and Golden Triangle parking spaces. Increased Louisiana and Shady Oak parking spaces; no changes made at Southwest Station. Additional reductions in station furnishings by 50%, station art by 100%, landscaping by 75%, light rail vehicles by 5 vehicles, Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) storage space reduced to 30 light rail vehicles. Finance charge reduced; other modification to Shady Oak Station platform and track modifications, OMF and loop track modifications and value engineering. This allowed the project to save four property acquisitions in Hopkins. See at <http://metro council.org/getdoc/dee2ede8-1e38-48c3-9e08-cba4e40b6d8c/Presentation.aspx>.

Metropolitan Council action on July 8 passed resolution to build 14.5 miles of new track with 15 new stations with one deferred station and a projected 34,000 weekday rides in 2040.

In summary, the revised scope reduces cost by 250 million, retains 15 of 17 stations with intent to build Eden Prairie Town Center Station in the future, 94% ridership, 90% of the corridor length and 96% of jobs in the corridor served.

Janet Weivoda wondered how much parking space was reduced. Mr. Lamothe responded that a total of 2500 spaces planned for opening day, and about 1300 space reductions to date.

The project is looking at outside funding sources and other local and federal sources to add back some of the elements that have been cut.

Kevan Hanson inquired about the timing for building the deferred Eden Prairie Town Center Station. Mr. Lamothe responded that there was not definitive timeline, but the station would be built by 2040 as ridership at this station is counted for 2040.

Jody Strakosch wondered how the 25% landscaping was allocated. No reductions in the Minneapolis Kenilworth Corridor. Co-Chair Munt added that the area west of Lake to Penn should be seen as an overlay area.

Doug Peterson wondered who was taking care of the finance charge and why it was reduced. Mr. Lamothe explained that with the FTA 100 million disbursement cap, short term financing must occur. The 3% projected finance charge was reduced to 2% based on current available market information.

Kathryn Campbell wondered whether the project has considered local business partners to fund station art. Mr. Lamothe responded yes and added that there is a committee that is looking at doing less what was proposed for public art.

- **New Starts Application Submittal**

Mr. Lamothe reported that the New Starts application was submitted by August 3 deadline; staff put in approximately 2040 hours to prepare the document. The New Starts process measures a project in areas of mobility improvement, environmental benefits, congestion relief, cost effectiveness, transit supportive land use policies, economic development, and local financial commitment. Project is progressive on land use; as Mr. Lamothe mentioned, the project is job rich and sets good foundation for high rating while competing with other cities.

Janet Weivoda wondered what the current land use rating for the project was. Ms O'Connell responded medium-high.

Co-chair Munt asked Mr. Lamothe to explain what moved the project from a medium land use rating to a medium-high. Mr. Lamothe stated that a lot of work had been done by the county in zoning and rezoning, doing the work ahead of time so it combines economic and land development.

Ms. Campbell wondered what the chance was to not secure the 50% match from the FTA. Mr. Lamothe responded that the New Starts program has been run for three decades, and once the environmental process is complete and a record of decision issued, projects can expect to get federal dollars.

Lee Munnich wondered whether cost reductions had any impact of project rating. Mr. Lamothe responded yes; the operating cost is factored in the Cost Effectiveness Index (CEI). With the latest New Starts submittal to the FTA, the project is expected to maintain its medium-high rating.

- **Municipal Consent Schedule**

Ms. O'Connell reported that with the Metropolitan Council's approval of the scope and budget revisions, there is a need to go through municipal consent. The Metropolitan Council, Hennepin

County, and Hennepin Regional Railroad Authority will hold a joint public hearing on Thursday, August 27, 2015, at the Minneapolis Central Library. Cities along the alignment are planning to hold their public hearing during the month of September.

- **Next Steps: 6 Month Look Ahead**

Mr. Lamothe reported the project is scheduled to complete municipal approval process by October 11, 2015, develop Section 106 memorandum of agreement between third and fourth quarter of 2015, complete 60% design (Kenilworth landscape design concept and station design renderings) in fourth quarter of 2015, submit clean water act section 404 permit application to US Corps of Engineers in first quarter of 2016, complete 90% design in first quarter of 2016, submit state and local environmental permit applications in first quarter of 2016, and publish the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and issue Record of Decision (ROD) in second quarter of 2016. In quarter 2 of 2016 expected entry into engineering, receive full funding grant agreement in fourth quarter of 2016, heavy construction 2017 through 2019 and begin revenue service in 2020.

Mathews Hollinshead wondered whether the project was going to be affected by the prospect of renewing highway funds. Mr. Lamothe responded yes if the transportation bill is revised.

Jody Strakosch wondered whether construction would start from one point and move forward. Mr. Lamothe responded that construction will occur in various areas throughout the alignment.

Co-Chair Munt added that unlike the construction of the Blue Line (Hiawatha), the SWLRT will be a design and build project, which gives the owner more control.

Co-Chair Adams wondered whether the SWLRT would be acquiring property for staging. Mr. Lamothe responded that the project will not be acquiring property for staging but would be using the already planned right of way acquisition for staging.

David Green wondered what would happen to unused local dollars. Mr. Lamothe responded that some amount of money would back proportionally to contributors.

Ms. Campbell wondered whether project construction would be working with MnDOT to make sure that the work does not overlap. Mr. Lamothe reported that the project is coordinating with MnDOT, and in fact MnDOT staff is embedded in the project office.

Ms. Campbell wondered whether trails would be closed during construction. Mr. Lamothe responded that some sections will be closed and detoured like when tunneling in the Kenilworth Corridor.

Mr. Peterson wondered whether prior to closing and detouring the trail, the project would seek input from trail users. Mr. Lamothe responded yes and that the project will also be working the Park Board.

Co-Chair Munt added that Transit for Livable Communities had some ideas on how to work with bike detours.

Mr. Lamothe advised that the project will start putting procurement packages together at the end of the year.

Ms. O'Connell reported that the project is planning a contractor mixer in October; this will make sure that Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) mix with contractors and that the contractor is meeting DBE requirements. A one pager will be created to promote the event and will be shared with CAC members.

4. Southwest Corridor-wide Housing Strategy

Kerri Pearce Ruch went over the Southwest LRT Community works corridor-wide housing strategy. Ms. Ruch mentioned that in April 2015 she had given CAC members a detailed overview of the Southwest Corridor-wide Housing Strategy and now she will be gathering some information from CAC members. The project is currently through stakeholder outreach stage, the material will be presented to the SWLRT Business Advisory Committee on August 26, go through housing advocate roundtable in early September, City Council study session presentations in September and October, and Hopkins Housing meeting on September 9, 2015. A revised Corridor wide Housing Strategy will come back to the Steering Committee in November for committee action; City and partner action is expected in 2016 then implementation would follow.

Three questions were asked during the discussion session.

- What do you see as the most important housing needs in your community? Do you see those needs reflected in the Corridor-wide Housing Strategy?
 - Multi-family housing for families and unit size
 - Larger families/extended families
 - Reduce parking requirement for housing
 - Review what equity is/help build equity
 - Condo ownership-Downsizing opportunities
 - Rental is helpful for flexibility/post recession options
 - Rental variety is very low
 - Desire by City Council for more single-family housing
 - Young people prefer rental for a variety of reasons
 - Seniors downsizing.

- What do you see as the biggest barriers to a full range of housing choices in your community? Do you think that the implementation strategies included in the report will help reduce those barriers?
 - Preservation is very important
 - Section 8 is important-do more than monitor
 - What happens to people living in existing affordable housing that isn't preserved?
 - Zoning restrictions that prohibit 4-6 unit construction keeps out smaller developers.

- What is your feedback on the affordable housing targets included in the Strategy?
 - How do you bring new dollars to the table?
 - Public pension funds/labor trades
 - Mixed income including housing
 - Land acquisition
 - Talk about actual rents/marketable
 - Family size isn't representative
 - Balance of housing choices
 - Action to get cities to meet the need.

5. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 8:12 PM. Next meeting scheduled for September 29, 2015, at 6 PM.