

Metropolitan Council

St. Louis Park Recreation Center, 3700 Monterrey Drive, St. Louis Park 55416

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Meeting of the Southwest Corridor Management Committee  
**September 4, 2013**

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

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Susan Haigh called the September 4, 2013 meeting of the Southwest Corridor Management Committee to order at 9:40am at the St. Louis Park Recreation Center

Chair Haigh thanked all those who are attending these meetings and have submitted comments. We continue to narrow the alternatives, so we can get to a final project scope and budget and we will have a couple more meetings for that discussion. This is an important project for your communities, the local neighborhoods, the region, and for jobs. This project will have 30,000 daily riders and provide access for people around the region to jobs and provide an opportunity to grow the system. It is really important to get this project right on all of the issues, whether it is mitigating impacts to neighboring homes and businesses, the environment, and design to provide growth and development.

Hennepin County has asked if we would do another analysis on freight rail in St. Louis Park and engage an expert to do that work. We are prepared to do that, however it will take another week or two to get that information.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

No Minutes to approve.

**3. SWCMC MEMBER DISCUSSION OF “BIG THREE” OPTIONS AND PROJECT BUDGET**

Mr. Jim Alexander gave an overview of the “Big Three” options: Eden Prairie Alignment, OMF, and Freight Rail.

- TI #1 – Eden Prairie Alignment: Mr. Alexander presented aerial maps for the three candidates still on the table.
  - Mitchell Station and Comp Plan Station via Technology Drive – cost: \$195-\$205 million
  - Mitchell Station and Singletree Station via Technology Drive – cost: \$195-\$205 million

- Mitchell Station and Singletree Station via Trunk Highway 212 Frontage – cost: \$195-\$205 million

Mr. Alexander presented strengths and weaknesses for each of the three options. Mr. Alexander said we are working with the watershed district and the city regarding possible impact concerns with Purgatory Creek's flood plain. Chair Haigh asked Mayor Nancy Tyra-Lukens to give the City of Eden Prairie's perspective on the three alternatives. Mayor Tyra-Lukens said of the three alternatives, the city definitely prefers the Comp Plan for many reasons. There are some difficulties with it but, we hope to address the project office regarding the fact that this goes very close to a Gateway City Plaza Park and also along a sensitive wetland area. The strengths of that alignment outweigh some of the challenges that we have ahead. We think the Singletree station location is problematic. While it might not have any greater construction impact than the other alternatives, certainly operationally there will be more disruption to traffic along that Singletree corridor, which is a heavily traveled corridor. Are we going to discuss today, whether the terminus would be all the way west of Mitchell Road or at City Center? Mr. Alexander said it was intended to show what is on the palette today. We will acknowledge there is an interest in possibly locating the station on the City Center (City Hall) site and we do believe there would be a cost savings to do that. However, we would need to go along the Technology Drive route to make that work. Mayor Tyra-Lukens said so mainly what we are discussing today is the alternatives through the Town Center area. Mr. Alexander said yes, we would like to have some discussions to really weigh the Comp Plan versus Singletree and really to validate the alignment we are looking to achieve. Mayor Terry Schneider indicated that he supports the Comp Plan alternative with addressing the issue of the location of the Mitchell station at the City Hall complex at a later time. Council Member Cheryl Youakim asked if option three, Mitchell Station and Singletree station via TH 212 frontage, assumes the OMF is in Hopkins? All of the three options would accommodate the OMF at either site 3/4 in Eden Prairie or 9A in Hopkins.

Chair Haigh said we heard from Mayor Tyra-Lukens and Mayor Schneider that they prefer the Comp Plan alignment and asked if any of the committee members did not support that. No members replied and Chair Haigh said she will take that as confirmation that there is support from the SWCMC for the Comp Plan alignment alternative number one. Chair Haigh said recognizing that SPO will continue to work with the watershed district regarding the impact on the wetland, as everyone is concerned about that. Mr. Alexander agreed that SPO will continue to do that. Mayor Schneider made a motion, that we approve the Comp Plan amendment. Mayor Tyra-Lukens second the motion. No members opposed. Council Member Jim Brimeyer did not vote.

- TI #23 – Operations and Maintenance Facility: Mr. Alexander presented aerial maps for the two candidates still on the table.
  - Site 3/4 – City Garage in Eden Prairie: Cost is \$95-\$100 million
  - Site 9A – K-Tel East in Hopkins: Cost is \$100-\$105 million

Mr. Alexander presented strengths and weaknesses for both options. Chair Haigh said the municipal consent process requires you to go back to your own city council to do a lengthy debate. I think that is good to get an inclination from people, but I do not want people to feel that somehow that binds them. Because, you have to go back and go through your own process and with that caveat if Mayor Tyra-Lukens would start with her comments.

Mayor Tyra-Lukens said the general feeling about OMF is that we do not particularly want it. One of the big problems, other than wetland concerns which are shared by both sites, is the issue of our public works facility which would be taken. There has been no adequate alternate site identified for our public works facility and one of the wonderful advantages we have with the current public works facility is that it is so centrally located within Eden Prairie that their day-to-day operations, were very central. If we

had to move that public works facility way south in Eden Prairie where there is land, we would have major time loss and major fuel consumption increases due to the relocation. In an effort to continue to be green, we would like to maintain that facility in a central location if possible.

Council Member Youakim said, like you said we would have to go back to the council and we share a lot of the same worries about the weakness of the wetlands. We also are the smallest city on the alignment, have the smallest population, and the smallest geographic layout of 2x2 square miles, so our land is really precious to us. We are fully built out and the biggest hit would be more to our tax base and our tax payers, not to mention the 250+ jobs that would be lost and the 6 buildings that would be taken and some are high-tech, high paying jobs and we really have to look at that. As the smallest city on the alignment, it does affect our house quicker than it will anybody else and because of that we really want the committee to look at the shared burden and the shared cost along the line and looking at that shared burden versus the benefits when we start making other decisions. If this were to happen, Hopkins would really, really need to look at how we can mitigate our tax base loss. Some of the things that have been talked of is betterments along the line, would really become a necessity for us to get out from under the rock. We are never going to be made whole.

We understand that and understand we have been working on this for decades. Hopkins wants this line as bad as everybody else on the line does and knows there will be benefits from it too, but we just cannot have burdens that so greatly outweigh the benefits. As we go along in that process, I hope you start to look at some of the betterments along the line like the park and ride OMF. Shady Oak Station right now is 500 surface lots and we keeping saying all along we need a structured ramp there. Currently the way it is drawn, Hopkins ends up with a platform and surface lots and very little room to recoup any dollars. More of the redevelopment potential is on the Minnetonka side that is now not part of that station. Also, the alignment south of the freight rail on Blake Road is a huge, huge way that we can recoup a little bit of what we would be losing as the smallest city on the alignment taking the biggest tax base hit and employment hit. One of the businesses that would go is a high-end air cleaning in hospitals and ventilation and those are technical jobs that are really needed.

Mayor Schneider said for long-term preservation, options, and potential, Hopkins seems the best overall. There are two key reasons: operational costs and we do not have the extra expense of relocation, as we would with Eden Prairie. I am respectful of the jobs and tax base. There are two betterments that should be on the table as part of the recommendation to go with Hopkins as the OMF facility. One is to restructure the eastern buildings either as a retrofit, remodel, or new building to be able to relocate better jobs within that park. You cannot save all the jobs, but can save the best jobs without having them move to Minnetonka or any place else. The second element is if we are going to provide meaningful tax base for Hopkins we need to bite the bullet and do a ramp structure on the surface parking lot. That is a critical ingredient in maintaining the ridership, traffic, development potential, and travel demand management potential for that site. I recommend the Hopkins location and trying to maintain the jobs, with the condition that we do a parking ramp on the north side of the station.

Chair Haigh said one of the things she heard in the discussion as a strength of the OMF location in Hopkins is it leaves open the possibility of cost savings if we get to that point to terminate the line at an earlier stage in Eden Prairie as a benefit, as well as the long term operation costs.

Council Member Youakim said she appreciates Mayor Schneider's comments about the businesses too. Not all of the businesses have been willing to come to the table, so that is going to be a hurdle and I do not know how you quantify that when it comes to doing a taking. One of the central east buildings is able to stay with very little impact, but there will be hopefully some room to redevelop around that. Council Member Youakim asked for a vote to be saved until she meets with her Council, as she is not comfortable doing any recommendation when the Met Council has not been able to sit down with all the

businesses yet. Mr. Fuhrmann said we will continue to have conversations about technical design and the ability to avoid the impact to the central building with the track placement. We are unable however, per federal regulation, to sit down with any of those impacted businesses in Hopkins or Eden Prairie to talk about real estate acquisition at this time. We are not able to do that until we conclude the environmental review process at the end of 2014.

Mayor Jim Hovland said I personally favor the Hopkins location, from a cost and cost savings standpoint over time, as well as its location has distinct benefits. I am sensitive to the impact on Hopkins, while they will have three stations in the smallest city on the line, which is a distinct benefit from an economic development standpoint, I am sensitive that there could be job losses. Mayor Schneider came up with an interesting notion with those eastern buildings. Mayor Hovland asked Council Member Youakim to go back to her Council and vet Mayor Schneider's idea, it would be helpful for you to come back and tell us if your City Council is inclined to accept that proposal. Council Member Youakim asked to wait with this issue until she can meet with her City Council. Chair Haigh said she is hearing strong support amongst the SWCMC for the Hopkins site. I understand that Hopkins continues to have some concerns and of course we are going to continue to work with the city about their concerns. We have to follow the rules we have for acquisition of property and we will do that. We can certainly delay this recommendation to give Council Member Youakim a chance to go back to her City Council to talk with them and bring it back for a final recommendation next week at the September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. Council Member Youakim said she appreciates that. Mayor Schneider said he would be willing to attend the Hopkins City Council meeting with Council Member Youakim, if that would be of any help.

- TI #21 – Freight Rail: Mr. Alexander presented a list of freight railroad historical actions/documents and they will be posted on the [www.swlrt.org](http://www.swlrt.org) website. Mr. Alexander presented maps and technical drawings for the three candidates still on the table.
  - Brunswick Central Freight Rail Relocation – cost: \$190-\$200 million  
Mr. Peter Wagenius said the railroads seem to be asking for betterments out of this project. They are asking not for what they need, but for everything they want. Chair Haigh noted that our intention as we do this additional study, is to take a serious look at this freight rail alternative and those issues as we have all the other issues to get it right. Keep in mind, freight rail has a different regulatory environment than other businesses and residences and that does provide them with additional powers than some other businesses have. That has been going on since the country was formed. Commissioner Peter McLaughlin asked what the incremental costs are of establishing this connection. Mr. Alexander said there are two costs associated with the Canadian Pacific (CP) swap. It will be about \$30 million for the swap and about \$30-35 million for the southerly connector and that includes right of way costs for acquisition of 5 parcels with businesses. Commissioner McLaughlin asked for under what co-location options are you still proposing elimination of the line? Mr. Alexander said that is what is on the board today. Commissioner McLaughlin asked for the train counts. Mr. Alexander said approximately 14 trains daily per week on average on the CP/Bass Lake Spur operated by TC&W and another 5 to 6 unit trains (BNSF or CP locomotive freight) operated by TC&W. Commissioner McLaughlin asked is there an option to do co-location and eliminate the \$65 million expenditure? Mr. Alexander said that is possible but would like to clarify that we need to understand if we need additional costs in there to handle the retaining structures if we keep all the storage in place to make sure we have enough room for trail and LRT, but essentially the CP swap and the southerly connection for a co-locate scenario is not a requirement. Commissioner Gail Dorfman asked Mr. Alexander to provide the following at the September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. What is the market like today? I believe there is one business, a salt business that occasionally gets shipments, so how often are they served. Also, what is the future market that CP envisions in terms of needing to go south, as I do not think they have done that for a number of years. Lastly, what are their

improvements along the line to the south that would have to be accomplished, to accommodate that speculative southern business. Mr. Bill James points out that the switching wye has been in St. Louis Park for many decades and it is a very troublesome operational area, specifically the noise it creates when used. They are banging multi-ton rail cars up and down that switching area at 10:00 and 11:00pm. It is a distinct quality of life impact to the community, it is a safety issue and anything that can be done with modern engineering and dollars to mitigate that area is a pure bonus for this program. Commissioner McLaughlin said the money should not come out of this project budget. How do you justify taking it out of this particular budget.

Commissioner Dorfman asked SPO to provide clarification at the next meeting. Right now freight trains on the MN&S and freight trains on the Kenilworth Corridor go 10 to 10.5 miles per hour. Whatever solution we come up with, we need to know how fast those trains are going to go. Are we really obligated to increase the speed to market for the freight trains in doing this and by doing so, what are the safety implications? My expectation is that the trains would still go the same speed whether they were going through St. Louis Park or through Minneapolis.

- Kenilworth Deep Bore LRT Tunnel – cost: \$320-\$330 million
- Kenilworth Shallow LRT Tunnel – cost: \$150-\$160 million

Mr. Alexander said for both the Shallow LRT Tunnel and Deep Bore LRT Tunnel through the corridor, we do not have any requirement to take homes in that stretch. There may be slivers of property, but no homes will be taken. Mr. Alexander said 21<sup>st</sup> Street Station would be eliminated under this option. Mr. Wagenius asked what the current limitation is on the length of trains and number of trains. Mr. Alexander said he will need to get that information from the railroads for both the deep bore and shallow tunnel options. Mr. Wagenius asked if trees will be replanted along the trail where it is feasible. Mr. Alexander said we are looking at all opportunities where we can re-vegetate this corridor.

Chair Haigh asked what the additional items are in the \$60-\$65 million for the freight rail common elements. Mr. Alexander said there is also bridge work that needs to be done for freight at Minnehaha Creek and Louisiana, TH 100, and freight features under either relocation or co-location.

Mr. Alexander presented strengths and weaknesses for each of the three options. Chair Haigh said we are waiting until we get the hydro study information for the tunnel options before identifying it as a strength or weakness.

Mayor Schneider asked Minneapolis and St. Louis Park if there is one of the options that they would be willing to eliminate. Mayor Schneider said his opinion is the Shallow tunnel is a viable option with the caveats that need to be refined and a yet to be determined less impactful freight relocation if it is available, is a viable option, but needs to be studied thoroughly. The current freight relocation impacts and costs have huge impacts and cost increases, compared to the Shallow tunnel.

Mayor Hovland said he has concerns about environmental issues and the costs with the Deep Bore tunnel and believes the costs might be beyond the reach of CTIB. On the reroute in St. Louis Park, I have some serious concerns with the dyke running from 11 to 23 feet, the machine shops, commercial businesses, and 30 plus houses that will be taken, and going through a playground. The long term impact on people, businesses, homeowners is too much to bear. My attention is reluctantly turned back to the Kenilworth Corridor.

Commissioner McLaughlin said they had a CTIB meeting about 2 weeks ago and there was a discussion and presentation from the project team, along with the options we have discussed here today. I think it is fair to report that there was a statement from each of the five counties indicating that the cost of the

Deep Bore Tunnel option was very troubling, as it would distort regional transit investment priority. There was a very strong sentiment expressed that, that was an unacceptable alternative.

Commissioner Jan Callison said she agrees and that Deep Bore Tunnel will kill the project. The project will not be viable if we try and manage with the cost of the Deep Bore Tunnel. I believe that is not an option and should not be on the table any longer. I think we should look at the Shallow Tunnel option and look at options in St. Louis Park and agrees with the reasons Mayor Hovland outline as to why the current alignment in St. Louis Park is not acceptable.

Commissioner Dorfman said she thinks the option on the table right now for St. Louis Park relocation does not work as it is not viable. The railroads are asking for a Cadillac that they would never build for themselves. I agree with Mr. Wagenius, there are still so many unanswered questions about the Shallow tunnel that need to be answered.

Mr. Wagenius said he discussed the Deep Bore Tunnel with Mayor R.T. Rybak and the Mayor expressed that he is willing to have the Deep Bore Tunnel taken off the table, as long as we were really subjecting the freight questions and the railroads to the same level of scrutiny that we have been bringing to the Shallow Tunnel. I think we made some progress in that direction and as a practical matter the Deep Bore Tunnel does not look like it is going anywhere. Mr. Alexander said we will validate the designs with TPCI. Mr. Wagenius said the relocation option that is on the table was described as unacceptable. We do not know that, we only know that the version stamped and approved by the railroads is unacceptable to them. That option is still on the table to be refined by the study as well as other freight options.

Commissioner McLaughlin made a motion to end consideration of Deep Bore Tunnel. Mayor Hovland second the motion. No member opposed. Council Member Brimeyer did not vote.

Commissioner McLaughlin asked for a budget goal to be established and he proposes \$1.5 billion. Chair Haigh said we will have a recommended project budget discussion at the next meeting.

Mayor Hovland made a motion to not recommend to the Met Council the Brunswick Central freight rail alignment as proposed. Chair Haigh said that is really a premature motion because we have not yet seen what the assessment is and we need to wait for that information. Chair Haigh respectfully requested that Mayor Hovland withdraw that motion. Mayor Hovland withdrew the motion.

#### **4. SEPTEMBER 11, 2013 SWCMC MEETING**

Chair Haigh proposes a change in the schedule, so we have time to hear from both the special hydrogeologist report from Wenck Associates working with the watershed district and to get the additional analysis by the outside consultant who will be looking at freight rail alignment in St. Louis Park. We need a meeting next week and one in the first week of October, contingent upon when we can get these reports back. Mayor Hovland requested to have the consultant look at all the alternative routes not just in St. Louis Park.

The revised SWCMC meeting schedule:

- September 11 – Technical information
- September 18 – Technical information
- October 2 – Action on project scope and budget

Met Council schedule:

- September 11 – Information item
- October 7 – Transportation Committee recommendation

- October 9 – Met Council approval

The meeting adjourned at 11:47am.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynne Hahne, Recording Secretary