

Metropolitan Council

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

Meeting of the Southwest Corridor Management Committee
September 5, 2012

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Jan Callison called the September 5, 2012 meeting of the Southwest Corridor Management Committee to order at 10:05am at the St. Louis Park City Hall.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Acting Chair Jan Callison presented the July 11, 2012, Southwest Corridor Management Committee meeting minutes for approval. The motion for approval was granted.

3. SWLRT DEIS PROCESS OVERVIEW AND OUTREACH

Katie Walker gave an overview on the DEIS process. Hennepin County, Met Council, and FTA Staff have been working on review of the DEIS document, before it goes out for public and agency review and comment. The revised DEIS was submitted to FTA back in April 2012.

Commissioner Gail Dorfman asked when the first DEIS document was originally submitted. Ms. Walker said it was approximately summer of 2010.

Based upon recent discussions with FTA staff, it is anticipated that on September 21, 2012, the FTA will deliver the DEIS to the U.S. EPA and the publication would then occur on September 28, 2012, through a notice to the Federal Register, which starts the clock for comments. The public comment period is expected to last 60 calendar days, with the expected end date of November 12, 2012.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) are required by federal and state laws. In the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), there are 3 phases: the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), which identifies potential impacts, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), where you talk about those impacts and how you will mitigate, and the Record of Decision (ROD), which finalizes the EIS. The purpose of the EIS is to conduct a full and open evaluation of environmental impacts and alternatives, and to inform decision-makers of those impacts and alternatives that could avoid impacts. The purpose of the DEIS is to:

- a) describe alternatives and their potential impacts
- b) identify potential mitigation options for those impacts that could minimize or mitigate them
- c) assess project costs and institutional issues associated with the alternatives
- d) provide information on transportation, community, and environmental impacts to assist decision-makers as the project moves forward
- e) encourage that both the agencies and public to review the document and comment on it

The DEIS comments are used during the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) process, as well as the Preliminary Engineering process that Mark Fuhrmann, Chris Weyer, and Jim Alexander will manage. The FTA will approve the DEIS for circulation and they will deliver it to the EPA. There are 12 chapters contained in the DEIS document.

Commissioner Dorfman asked if there is an executive summary. Ms. Walker said yes, there will be a booklet with an executive summary inside and a CD-ROM. Commissioner Dorfman asked if it will be relatively easy for people to find the area they are most interested in. Ms. Walker stated it is a series of PDF files that are searchable and will flag all paragraphs that have the word(s) you entered in the search field.

We have attended six committee meetings in preparation to roll out the approach for the DEIS Comment Period and to start informing agencies and the public, that the DEIS is on its way for people to read the document. The plan is to have three Public Hearings where people can give formal testimony that will be transcribed and become part of the public record.

Commissioner Dorfman asked, if somebody contacts one of the elected officials or staff to give verbal comments and we forward it, is that a legitimate way to comment? Ms. Walker said yes, you could forward it to swcorridor@co.hennepin.mn.us and it would be submitted as part of the formal record. Mayor Terry Schneider asked how the comments will be distinguished from the questions. Ms. Walker said the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) will collect both the comments and questions received and compile them into a database. They will then be turned over to Met Council/SPO and FTA to respond to the comments and questions through the PE process and FEIS process.

An official notice of availability for the DEIS will be published in the Federal Register, the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) Monitor, the Minneapolis Journal of Finance & Commerce and the Star Tribune to notify the public it is available for review. It will be posted on the Hennepin County website (www.co.hennepin.mn.us) and the Hennepin County Southwest website (www.southwesttransitwy.org). There will also be links from the SWLRT website (www.swlrt.org), as well as cities websites. A guide on how to review the DEIS and comment, will also be posted on the Hennepin County website. The Booklet and CD-ROM will be available in Hmong, Somali, and Spanish languages.

Mr. Bill James asked, in the chapter 11 Evaluation of Analysis, if you are going to document all the alternatives that were examined for the SWLRT line and all routes that were examined for analysis, is that correct? Ms. Walker said chapter 11 contains an evaluation of the five build alternatives. Mr. James asked if there is a section in that chapter that also discusses specifically the alternatives on freight rail location and is there a concentration of freight rail discussion in that chapter? Or, is the freight rail spread out throughout the entire document? Ms. Walker said there is discussion of freight rail throughout the document. Four of those build alternatives, LRT 1A, 3A (LPA), 3C-1 (Midtown/Nicollet alternatives), and 3C-2 (Midtown/Nicollet alternatives), include the assumption that the freight rail is relocated to the MN&S line. Within those four alternatives, there is discussion about the impacts. The fifth build alternative is labeled as LRT 3A-1 (co-location) to help the reader understand that is the co-location alternative. The fifth alternative assumes that freight rail remains in the Kenilworth corridor along with Southwest LRT, and the Kenilworth commuter bike trail. Chapter 11 is structured in a tabular format to give the reader a quick overview of what is contained in chapters 3-9.

A comment period of a minimum of 45 calendar days is required under NEPA/MEPA, but the HCRRA in consultation with FTA and Met Council has decided to extend the comment period to 60 days. The public and public agencies may submit their comments via testimony at the three planned public hearings, by submitting written comments via email (swcorridor@co.hennepin.mn.us) or U.S. mail, or complete a comment card. Staff is currently working on setting up those public hearing dates, times, and locations. Open Houses are planned to be held in conjunction with the public hearings to allow the public to learn more about the project and ask questions.

Acting Chair Callison asked if the SWCMC has any role at the public hearings. Ms. Walker said that currently under the state environmental process, the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority is the responsible governmental unit and is therefore responsible for holding the public meeting(s) to receive public comment on the DEIS. There is a requirement that a public meeting be held, to receive formal comment. Other policy makers are encouraged to either attend or get copies of the comments and transcripts to understand what those comments are and to move forward in its leadership role on the LRT project.

Commissioner Dorfman asked who owns the document. Ms Walker said we are doing a combined federal and state document, with the FTA as the lead federal agency, the HCRRA as the state RGU, and the Met Council as the local project sponsor as of September 2, 2012, when the project was approved by the FTA to enter Preliminary Engineering. Met Council will take the lead in responding to the comments received and will be the entity doing the FEIS and securing the ROD.

Nani Jacobson gave an overview of the Next Steps and FEIS. We will be transitioning the NEPA process from Hennepin County Rail Authority to the Met Council at the close of the public comment period. The FEIS elements are to provide responses to substantive comments received during the public period. It also develops measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse impacts of the project. Ms. Jacobson gave a tentative FEIS timeline of submitting FEIS to FTA for Legal Review in May 2014, to print and distribute FEIS in June 2014, a 30-day mandatory waiting period in June 2014 and to prepare the Record of Decision in August 2014. The FTA will review and provide comments, as well as submit the FEIS to the EPA.

Acting Chair Callison asked if the ROD is August 2014 and the construction is starting in 2014, will that work? Mr. Fuhrmann stated under current law, we are only able to start construction after the issuance of the ROD. The schedule is not refined yet, but the construction start date will be determined by the date and timing of the ROD. Commissioner Dorfman asked, in the event freight rail relocation is determined to move forward, would that have to wait until the ROD? Mr. Fuhrmann said FTA's practice is that any freight rail co-location/re-location would not be able to occur until the issuance of the ROD.

Acting Chair Callison asked if the FTA will be keeping with this schedule. Mr. Fuhrmann said we are committed to an aggressive schedule and will push hard to advance this project.

4. PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING SERVICES PROCUREMENT UPDATE

Jim Alexander gave an update on the Preliminary Engineering Services Procurement. We brought the Engineering Services Consultant Contract to the full Council on July 25, 2012 and they directed staff to cancel that procurement and begin multiple new procurements. The new RFP Contracts would develop the work plan and initiate Engineering and complete 30% Preliminary Engineering detail. Once 30% PE is done, we would go out on a separate procurement to enlist a consultant to finish the design, help complete the final design phase of the project, as well as design support during construction. For Quality Management, the Consultant would handle internal quality assurance/quality control, the MnDOT Bridge Engineer would provide review and oversight, the Council would manage the Southwest Project Office oversight, and an Independent Engineering firm, hired by the Council, would provide a Peer Review of the design work. The Independent Peer Review Consultant will be a separate team not involved in the other contracts. The area of work has been split into two

portions. The first is the Western portion that includes Eden Prairie, Minnetonka, and a short section of Hopkins around Shady Oak station. The second is the Eastern portion to include Hopkins, St. Louis Park, and Minneapolis.

Mr. Bill James asked how much mileage is contained in Eastern vs. Western. Mr. Alexander said he would get back to Mr. James with that information. Commissioner Dorfman asked, how broad of an area around the stations will the Peer Review cover? Mr. Alexander said we anticipate this Peer Review would be looking at the designs that are conducted by the PE Consultants as well as the final design work products.

We are on a very tight timeline to keep this project moving. RFP's were issued 8/17/12 and they are due 10/2/12. We intend to Award the Contract in December 2012 or January 2013.

5. COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH UPDATE

Sam O'Connell introduced Will Roach, who is serving as the BAC Acting Chair and gave a BAC Report. Mr. Roach states the Business Advisory Committee consists of 20+ members who represent small, medium, and large companies, as well as many of the Chamber organizations are involved. The goal is to drive meaningful involvement for the members. We had our kickoff meeting where both Chair Haigh and Commissioner Dorfman attended and share their insight and wisdom for the Southwest Corridor. We went through an overview of SWLRT, developing ground rules, the charter, and the committee communication. We talked through the DEIS process and general overview, as well as next steps and FEIS. Our monthly meetings are scheduled through 2013 and the next meeting is September 12th. We will also be taking a tour of Central Corridor to transcend what SWLRT will look like.

Ms. Jennifer Munt gave a CAC Report. Our last CAC meeting was held on August 9th, where we provided project updates, Ms. Walker provided the DEIS process, and results were provided from a survey. The top 3 things the survey revealed that people were concerned with are: Connectivity, Station Area Development, and Bus Connections to future LRT. We received an invitation from Safety in the Park to take a tour of the freight relocation. We provided the CAC members email addresses to Safety in the Park and they coordinated and conducted the tour. About 15 people attended the tour on August 30th. We also received an invitation from the Kenilworth Corridor to attend a tour on September 8th, where CAC Reps from the neighborhood will guide the tour. Our next meeting is September 13th, where we plan to give project updates, talk about the U of M Penn Station Capstone Project, review Station Profiles, talk about CAC Management, the Committee Reports, and Public Forum.

6. MAP-21 UPDATE

Mark Fuhrmann gave an update on MAP-21. The new federal surface transportation bill was signed into law about 2 months ago and there have been many people at the local and federal level trying to digest its multitude of pages. Mr. Fuhrmann highlighted some of the program changes, from the current SAFTEALU that has been in place since 2005, talk about modified/new provisions, and discuss the dollars. Today's focus will be on the Fixed Guideway changes, the New Starts component, and the TOD Planning Pilot grant program. The new MAP-21 law calls for a request of the Secretary of Transportation to enter project development. FTA has 45 days to respond and the project sponsor has 2 years to develop all the documentation, complete the NEPA process, then make our request to enter the Engineering/Design phase, and the final step of the full funding grant commitment. The Core Capacity provision is a new component in MAP-21. To qualify, projects need to expand in core capacity by 10% or greater by making infrastructure investments. TOD Planning Pilot is a newly added provision with funding of \$10 million that has been authorized for planning grants in local jurisdictions. Please visit the FTA website for more information on this topic at www.fta.dot.gov/map21.

Commissioner Dorfman said in addition to the TOD pilot there is also a pilot for expedited project delivery for projects that don't yet have full funding grant agreements. Is there any consideration of looking at that for SWLRT? Mr. Fuhrmann said to be qualified, we had to have the NEPA complete with the Record of Decision,

so we are not well positioned at this time. If the provision continues in 2014 when we get the Record of Decision, we would be better positioned to pursue that.

7. STATION PROFILES

Katie Walker gave an update on Station Profiles. Ms. Walker showed the Opus Station profile as an example and said the full package of all the station profiles are scheduled to be approved at the September 20, 2012 SWLRT Community Works Steering Committee Meeting. The intent is to work with the City partners to take the 17 stations along SWLRT and create a profile similar to the Opus Station example. The profiles will provide the reader with an overview of the station, what is the vision for the future, what are some key characteristics of the station area today and in the future, and what businesses are located there.

Mayor Tyra-Lukens said one thing she expected to see with the station profiles is a description of the impact of the station in that community area. Specifically, what is going to be the parking situation for this particular station? Is there discussion going on at a staff level with Southwest Transit staff and Eden Prairie staff that talks about where all the parking is going to go for some of these stations? Ms. Walker said we can identify which ones are planned for park-n-ride and also talk about the number that is projected to be needed. The TSAAP process will be looking at where park-n-rides will be planned and the sizing of those park-n-rides, as well as looking at and identifying alternate locations for park-n-rides. Mr. Craig Lamothe said the locations currently are what are contained in the DEIS, it is what came out of the AA process and with the LPA we have 15 of 17 stations that are stated to have park-n-rides of varying sizes, ranging from 20 spaces to hundreds of spaces for a total of 3,500 for the entire alignment. We'll be using that as a starting point as we enter Engineering with our consultants starting the beginning of the year. To be able to look at doing park-n-ride area analysis for each of the stations, there will likely be a consolidation or reduction of sites. So, we need to take a look at the next level. We don't know for a fact which stations will have park-n-rides, how big the park-n-rides will be, and whether they will be surfaced or structured. That is a discussion we will have next year as we have our designers onboard which will also involve Southwest Transit. SWCMC would like to revisit the TSAAP and Parking Analysis/Review to provide a refresher at a future meeting, when SPO has all the data.

8. CORRIDORS OF OPPORTUNITY GRANT RECIPIENT: BLAKE ROAD NEIGHBORHOOD DISCUSSION CIRCLES

Susan Hoyt gave an overview on COO grants. Ms. Hoyt states the purpose of the grant is to provide opportunities for unrepresented communities to participate in decisions and conversations about land use and transportation, and how they interface along 6 of our corridors. There were 10 grants awarded in October 2011 and another 13 are anticipated to be awarded in September by the policy board. Ms. Hoyt introduced Cathy Maes and Ann Beuch, who gave an overview on Blake Road. We sit on the border of St. Louis Park with over 2,000 households, 4,000 residents, and 42 languages in the Blake Road neighborhood with mostly rental property. Several key upcoming development projects that the Blake Road neighborhood includes are Southwest LRT Construction, Cottageville Park Expansion, & Cold Storage Site Redevelopment. The outreach activities consist of one-on-one small group meetings (met with 60 residents) and participating in planning for development projects. A tutor program was created to support resident led initiatives. The Blake Road neighborhood has coordinated community-building events and had a student from the Humphrey Institute work with Blake Road over the summer to look at the transportation needs and uses for the area. Some areas of concern for the Blake Road residents include affordability of housing and meeting transit needs. Moving forward, we will engage residents in current and future development projects, convene the resident advisory board, continue resident led initiatives, educate the residents on the DEIS process, and have open discussions on affordable housing.

The meeting adjourned at 11:34am.

Respectfully submitted, Lynne Hahne