
*Transportation Advisory Board
Of the Metropolitan Council*

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, January 7, 2015
9:00 A.M.**

Members Present: Andrew Witter, Lyndon Robjert, Brian Sorenson, Tom Johnson, Tim Mayasich, Lisa Freese, Jan Lucke, Elaine Koutsoukos, Mark Filipi, Michael Larson, Adam Harrington, Pat Bursaw, Bridget Rief, Jane Kansier, Dave Christianson, Danny McCullough, Jean Keely, Steve Albrecht, Paul Oehme, Michael Thompson, Duane Schwartz, Kim Lindquist, Bruce Loney, Jenifer Hager, Paul Kurtz, Michelle Beaulieu (Members Excused: Jack Byers, Steve Bot)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:04 a.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

Tim Mayasich moved and Mark Filipi seconded. No discussion. Motion passed.

3. Approval of March Minutes

The December 3, 2014 meeting minutes were approved as written. Tim Mayasich moved and Pat Bursaw seconded. No discussion. Motion passed.

4. TAB Report

Elaine Koutsoukos reported on TAB's December 19 meeting:

Reports:

TAB Chair: Bill Hargis recognized outgoing TAB members, Paul Krause for 20 years of service and Steve Gallagher for 7 years of service. Pat Bursaw was recognized for her 3 years of service as TAC Chair. Elaine Koutsoukos provided an update of the Regional Solicitation applications – 121 applications were received, staff is conducting a qualifying review of the applications, and the first meetings of the Scoring Committees were held.

Met Council: Adam Duininck reported that Met Council will be posting applications for TAB members soon.

TAC: TAC Chair Bursaw reported on the December 3 TAC meeting. Two action items were forwarded to TAB and are on the agenda. Steve Albrecht of Burnsville has been selected at the new TAC Chair. Two information items were presented at TAC and are also on the TAB agenda: Federal Funding Reallocation Policy Workgroup Update and MnDOT State Aid Report.

Action Items:

- TAB Bylaws revisions approved

- MAC CIP approved
- 2015-2018 TIP Amendment for 5307 funds for Metro Transit: C Line Design and Engineering approved
- 2040 Transportation Policy Plan – recommended support of the TPP and recommended TAB comments be forwarded to the Transportation Committee and the Council
- TAB Chair recommendation to the Council – TAB forwarded the names of Randy Maluchnik and Robert Lilligren as recommendations for TAB Chair

Information Items:

- Federal Funding Reallocation Policy Update – Pat Bursaw, MnDOT
- MnDOT State Aid Report – Dan Erickson, MnDOT
- Federal Funding Projects Withdrawn – Joe Barbeau, MTS

5. Committee Reports

A. Executive Committee (Steve Albrecht, Chair)

Steve Albrecht thanked Karl Keel for his work as Funding & Programming chair, and thanked Pat Bursaw for her leadership of TAC for the last three years. The new Executive Committee for TAC includes Paul Oehme as Vice Chair, Tim Mayasich as Funding & Programming chair, and Lisa Freese as Planning chair.

B. Funding and Programming Committee (Presented by Joe Barbeau in lieu of Karl Keel)

2015-01: TIP Public Involvement Policy

Joe Barbeau presented this item. There have been inconsistencies in the public comment period for TIP amendments, which has led to this action item. Pat Bursaw stated that MnDOT is looking at this at a STIP level as well, and that this recommendation for the TIP would be in line with what they are looking at for the STIP. Tim Mayasich moved and Pat Bursaw seconded. Motion passed.

2015-02: Anoka County CSAH 24 Funding Increase

Joe Barbeau presented this item. This is to reflect an increase in the project cost that is being covered entirely with local dollars; the project itself is not changing. Pat Bursaw thanked Anoka for advancing this project in this way; this method is a key to delivering a successful program. Dave Christianson moved and Pat Bursaw seconded. Motion passed.

2015-04: Withdrawal and Reallocation of CMAQ Funds

Joe Barbeau presented this item. Charles Carlson then explained the requested use for the rejected funds. Joe Barbeau mentioned that from a staff perspective, these CMAQ Transit dollars could only be used on the 2016 East 7th project. Lyndon Robjert asked if the Penn Avenue project had gone through the Regional Solicitation. Adam Harrington responded that it has not, but is very similar in scope and is good for the region.

Pat Bursaw mentioned that the Federal Funding Reallocation Work Group has been dealing with these issues. Funding & Programming has addressed the portion of these funds in this Action Transmittal. Ideally, the \$12 million in 2016 would be added to the next pot of projects if project delivery is possible in 2016. Penn Avenue could be funded through the next pot of funds, but not this one.

Dave Christianson moved and Tom Johnson seconded. Motion passed with one vote against.

C. Planning Committee (Lisa Freese, Chair)

Lisa Freese stated that the Planning committee will meet next in February and will spend this year being involved in the MTS work program items.

6. Special Agenda Items

Rail Safety Report (Dave Christianson, MnDOT)

Dave Christianson delivered the results of recent work in the area of rail safety, which included several pieces of information about the volume of rail traffic coming out of the Bakken formation in Montana and North Dakota.

Since the technological improvement in fracking technology, the Bakken formation is currently the #3 producing region in the country and could soon be #2. There are 18 rail loading facilities in North Dakota and Montana for oil, and each of those produce 10 trains a day. The proposed Sandpiper pipeline would only carry 4 trains worth of oil per day. 20 wells are created every day in Bakken. It takes three years to build a pipeline, and Minnesota has now slowed the Sandpiper process by a year further. There are 110 cars on a train, each of which carries 78,500 barrels, and there are 42 gallons in a barrel. Once you drill a well, you cannot stop it from producing until it runs dry.

Minnesota has the 8th largest rail network in the country. 80% of all freight is moved by truck. Since the rail deregulation in the 1980s, track miles have reduced by 50%, and for the first time nearly all of them are profitable. Rail lines are public infrastructure but privately owned. Railroads follow “common carrier” status, meaning they must transport what is brought to them. Crude oil carries other chemicals besides what we consider gasoline for automobiles – it also carries butane, which is highly volatile. The tank cars we have today were designed in the 1960s, which have pressure relief valves that would not function in case of a fire. A new North Dakota law is requiring the pre-processing of crude oil to remove these other, more volatile chemicals before transporting.

Land use, planning, traffic, and safety standards all apply based on the state that they are located in. MnDOT has jurisdiction over all railroad crossings in Minnesota. 50% of all crashes are where a car crashes into a train (not the other way around). In the past 18 months there have been 10 major oil train events. If there is an oil train accident, the only option is to evacuate the area and let the fire burn itself out. The state is empowered to inspect track and make grade crossings safer. The legislature recently provided \$2 million to improve safety on rail crossings. An average improvement costs \$250,000, so nine projects were identified for these funds (none of which are very large projects).

MnDOT has identified 15 grade separations that are needed statewide, including Prairie Island, Como Avenue, and four in Moorhead. They have also identified high-risk populations that would need to be evacuated in case of a major event, statewide.

Bridget Rief asked about processing the crude at the wells. Dave Christianson responded that natural gas is currently being separated on site but 30% of it is being burned into the atmosphere. Collection and processing of these other components is expensive, and still requires transportation infrastructure (usually by truck to the rail loading facilities). The Gulf Coast is the biggest location for processing. Some refineries are expanding (Great Falls, MT and Superior, WI) but will only take a 10-15% dent in production.

Lisa Freese asked about any data available for silica sand. Dave Christianson responded that safety for those materials is less of an issue. The railcars are covered and sealed, and the sand itself is not volatile. There are two trains a day to North Dakota with the sand for fracking. There is one Ethanol train from 18 plants per day (about 30-70 cars). Ammonia and chlorine are equivalent to only a couple of cars per day. There are 150 trains in Minnesota each day; 25 are oil-related.

Brian Sorenson asked about funding options for the 15 grade separation projects, and the likelihood of asking the railroads to pay for them. Dave Christianson responded that the governor would like to charge the railroads (and even the oil companies), but it would be very challenging to do so. By law, the railroads only benefit from the tracks to the tune of 5-10%, so that is the established threshold for their contribution to infrastructure investments. The governor would like to ask for 25-50% of the cost. Railroads also have low property tax rates, and in some small Minnesota towns those taxes make up a high percentage of all revenues. And if they were to be taxed more, would the benefit go to the small town, the state, or other agencies? Lyndon Robjent asked about federal funding, and Dave Christianson responding that there is very little available, and what does come in it distributed across the state.

Bruce Loney asked about national rail trends. Dave Christianson responded that there was a 2% increase in rail traffic in Minnesota and nationwide, even during the worst of the recession. The Mesabi range is at 110% of capacity, and we have experienced two strong harvests, which contribute to strong rail demand.

Lyndon Robjent asked about the amount of oil traveling by truck. Dave Christianson responded that it is next to none, except for the local collection activities.

7. Agency Reports

Adam Harrington informed the group that during these cold days Metro Transit works with local police and other agencies to support shelter services as needed. The bus waiting shelters themselves are in the process of being improved, thanks to a federal Ladders of Opportunity grant. The Green Line is operating at about 40,000 rides per day, and the schedule timing has improved thanks to the work of St. Paul. The Service Improvement Program (SIP) public comment process concluded in November, and the draft SIP is being revised now, taking into consideration the comments received. There were 176 respondents and 560 comments. The Regional SIP will be adopted this summer.

Tom Johnson announced that he is retiring and Hennepin County will be appointing a new representative to this committee. The TAC thanked him for his service.

Bridget Rief announced that MAC will be hosting Hockey Day in Minnesota on Saturday, January 17 at St. Paul's Hollman Field. Two high school games will be played, followed by a Gopher game and a Wild game on the tarmac. The primary runway will remain in operation.

Jan Lucke requested a Regional Solicitation update. Elaine Koutsoukos responded that the qualifying projects are going to Funding & Programming next week. Scoring meetings are underway. All applications are online. The initial TAB presentation will be in March. Michael Thompson requested more time to review roadway applications. Elaine Koutsoukos responded that there was extra time built into the schedule, so this may be possible.

8. Other Business and Adjournment

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 10:39AM.

Prepared by:

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