



Southwest Light Rail (SWLRT) Business Advisory Committee Meeting
April 24, 2013
8:00 AM – 9:30 AM
Southwest Project Office
6465 Wayzata Blvd, St Louis Park, MN 55426

BAC Members and Alternates: Chair Will Roach, Curt Rahman, Daniel K. Duffy, Dave Pelner, Michelle Swanson, Rick Weiblen, Stephanie Peterson, Pat MulQueeny

Staff and other attendees: Elise Durbin, Robin Caufman, Cathy Bennett, Greg Hunt, Louis Smith, Traci Thomas, Tom Radio, Tania Mahtani, Katie Walker, Kerri Pearce Ruch, Mark Fuhrmann, Sam O’Connell, Tats Tanaka, Jim Alexander, Ryan Kronzer, Daren Nyquist, Kim Proia, Paul Danielson

Welcome, Introductions and Approval of the March 27, 2013 Meeting Minutes

Chair Will Roach called the meeting to order at 8:04 AM. Chair Roach welcomed BAC members and guests and called for the approval of the March meeting minutes, minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

1. Southwest Corridor Investment Partnership Overview

Louis Smith of Smith Partners provided an overview of the work he is facilitating through the Southwest Corridor Investment Partnership (SCIP). Mr. Smith described the SCIP as a collaboration of the larger employers located along the Southwest LRT corridor to identify and support development projects. SCIP participants include employers like Target, Park Nicollet, Cargill, Supervalu, and Japs-Olson.

Mr. Smith characterized the broad SCIP goals as focused on finding common investments that partners could make to benefit each other and the surrounding community. These ideas include energy innovation and conservation opportunities, as well as assembling patient capital that could be used as gap financing.

Chair Roach asked Mr. Smith what the long and short-term priorities of the SCIP were. Mr. Smith answered that the priorities were still being developed, but outlined one of the SCIP’s priorities is to stretch boundaries and create a great place.

Dave Pelner commented that it would be beneficial for the BAC to maintain a working knowledge of the SCIP’s activities. Chair Roach asked if Mr. Smith was willing to conduct regular check-ins with the BAC, to which Mr. Smith replied that he would be happy to keep in touch.

2. Hennepin County Community Works Update – SWLRT Housing Inventory

Cathy Bennet of the Urban Land Institute of MN reviewed a recently completed housing inventory of the SWLRT corridor conducted by Maxfield Research Inc. The study reviewed the demographic, employment, education, and housing characteristics within a two-mile buffer of the SWLRT corridor. Ms. Bennet said that the study was the first step in Hennepin County’s Community Works overall SWLRT Corridor housing strategy.

Ms. Bennet covered the report’s major highlights which include the findings that the corridor has 15.5% of the of the metro area’s jobs within a 1-mile buffer. Ms. Bennet also described the corridor as younger, with smaller households that are on average well-educated. These demographic trends along with an ageing rental stock are making real estate development attractive prospects for the SWLRT Corridor.

A question was asked about how far people are willing to walk to a job from a station. Ms. Bennet answered that 1/4 mile is a good rule of thumb. People could be willing to walk further if barriers are removed and an area is pedestrian friendly. For bikers, 2-5 miles can be considered an appropriate assumption.

Pat Mulqueeny asked if there is a formalized plan to handle “last-mile” components to get people from the station to their final destination. Robin Cauffman answered this question by explaining a transit study is usually completed 2 years prior to new LRT service in order to understand what needs to happen with other transit services.

Ms. Bennet finished by saying the entire housing inventory report is available on the web at: www.southwesttransitway.org

3. Technical Issues Discussion

Jim Alexander led the group in a discussion about developments regarding Technical Issues #23, #6, #8, #7, #10, and #14

- **Technical Issue #23 – Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF)**

Mr. Alexander began his presentation by outlining the developments in analyzing potential OMF sites. After some analysis, 18 sites have been narrowed down to seven. Additionally, two new sites have been identified, which will be reviewed in the near future. Mr. Alexander stated that the decision process will last through summer and that open houses are scheduled in Eden Prairie on May 13 and St. Louis Park on May 15 to discuss OMF sites with the public.

A question was asked about concerns the cities have about an OMF being located close to a station. Mr. Alexander answered that tax base loss and loss of planned development are top of mind for cities.

Mr. Alexander was asked if an OMF had to be located at a mid-point on the line. He answered that while operations can be challenging with an OMF located near the end, it can still be a viable option if necessary.

- **Technical Issue #7 – Opus Hill**

Mr. Alexander discussed developments regarding Technical Issue #7, which focuses on the alignment through the Opus Business Park in Minnetonka. Mr. Alexander discussed a small adjustment to the north from the LPA alignment. This adjustment would more effectively deal with the topography in the area and create a more favorable track curvature.

- **Technical Issue #6 – Opus Station**

Mr. Alexander discussed Opus Station. Mr. Alexander reviewed current illustrations of grade separated trail crossings at Bren Road and the potential to develop a 92 space park and ride facility near the station.

- **Technical Issue #10 – Downtown Hopkins Station**

Mr. Alexander discussed the development of the Downtown Hopkins Station. A question was raised about the likelihood of Hopkins Honda moving to develop their property to take advantage of its location to LRT. City staff commented Hopkins Honda has not indicated they are interested in moving at this time.

4. Member and Committee Reports/Public Forum

Chair Roach reported back to the BAC regarding report from the Measuring Success Sub-Committee. This report will outline goals and metrics for the group to understand progress and will be discussed at an upcoming meeting.

Sam O’Connell announced that on June 6, there will be a joint BAC/CAC meeting. This meeting will be a technical workshop to discuss freight rail co-location or re-location. Location will be determined in the near future.

5. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 9:35 AM. Next meeting is scheduled for May 29, 2013.