

**Meeting of the Southwest Corridor Management Committee
February 20, 2014**

Members Present	Susan Haigh, Chair	Matt Look	Terry Schneider
	Brian Lamb	Gail Dorfman	Nancy Tyra-Lukens
	Cheryl Youakim	Betsy Hodges	Tom Harmening (Alt)
	Peter McLaughlin	Scott McBride	Jan Callison
	Bill James	James Hovland	
Members Absent	Jeff Jacobs	Keith Bogut	James Brimeyer

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Susan Haigh called the February 20, 2014 meeting of the Southwest Corridor Management Committee to order at 3:15 p.m. at St. Louis Park City Hall.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Haigh presented the February 5, 2014 Southwest Corridor Management Committee meeting minutes for approval. There were no comments or discussion on the minutes and the motion for approval was granted.

3. FEBRUARY TOWN HALL COMMUNITY MEETINGS UPDATE

Ms. Sam O’Connell provided an update on the recent Town Hall meetings. These meetings were an opportunity for attendees to ask questions and provide verbal testimony on the draft water resources and freight rail relocation studies. To date, there were 75 written comments received along with the oral comments at the meetings. At the meeting on February 10th in Minneapolis, there were approximately 125 in attendance. At the February 12th meeting in St. Louis Park, there were over 500 in attendance. Comments are continuing to be received via email, on the website, and by U.S. Mail. The deadline for receiving comments is March 3, 2014. Once comments are compiled, they will be posted on the project website.

4. PROJECT UPDATE

Water Resources Draft Report Discussion

Mr. Jim Alexander went over the independent consultant’s draft conclusions and recommendations on the Water Resources Draft Report. The consultant’s report, led by Ms. Della Young, found no fatal flaws with the shallow LRT tunnel design and suggested we continue to collect seasonal water level data. The report also suggests we complete a comprehensive capacity analysis for sanitary and storm sewer systems and design the underground infiltration chambers for the 100-year design storm event.

Mr. Alexander stated we will complete a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment, and revise the draft Water Monitoring Plan.

Barr Engineering was hired by the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to further review the option. Barr Engineering sent us a list of questions, which was received by SPO on Jan. 16, 2014. The issues and questions in the memo were responded to by SPO and sent to the City of Minneapolis and the Park Board on Feb. 14, 2014.

Mayor Terry Schneider asked if they were satisfied with the response sent back. Mr. Alexander stated that at this time no response was received back from them but we do know they have met to review our responses.

Mayor James Hovland asked if a longer than 100-year design for the storm sewers was considered, perhaps a 500-year design? Mr. Alexander stated that the 100-year design used by SPO is based on the Atlas 14 precipitation frequency, which assumes an increased level of rainfall. This is the current professional best practice for this type of engineering.

Mr. Bill James asked if the Phase II site assessment will cover the sampling and analyzing of groundwater? Mr. Alexander stated this is a separate activity. Phase II site assessment is to identify what we are up against when we look to acquire property. The water sampling is to get a baseline of the groundwater level and chemical makeup of the groundwater.

Freight Rail Relocation Report Discussion

Mr. Alexander went over the highlights from the independent consultant Mr. Jim Terry's draft report. A map was shown on the TranSystem's MN&S North concept. Four key areas that we have been looking at and getting feedback from at the town hall meetings include: Safety considerations, property impacts, cost, and operational considerations. Mr. Alexander went over each of the four.

Safety Considerations

Under safety considerations, a map was shown for the at-grade freight rail crossings. The existing and proposed at-grade freight rail crossings were shown. There are four existing at-grade crossings in the Kenilworth route, and six existing at-grade crossings in the MN&S North route. With the proposed TransSystem's design, they propose to eliminate four of the at-grade crossings in the MN& S North route.

Mayor Betsy Hodges asked which existing freight rail at-grade crossings are in Minneapolis and which are in St. Louis Park? Mr. Alexander stated that in Minneapolis it is at Cedar Lake Parkway and 21st St. In St. Louis Park the locations are at Wooddale and Beltline.

Mayor Hodges asked what is the total reduction in crossings with the MN&S North route? Mr. Alexander stated in St. Louis Park four at-grade crossings will be eliminated with the MN&S North route. The number of at-grade crossings will go down to two in St. Louis Park.

Mr. Alexander showed the chart with the existing at-grade freight rail crossing comparisons for both the Kenilworth route and the MN&S North route along with the proposed new number of crossings. Another chart was shown that included the average daily traffic (ADT) counts for these crossings. The numbers TransSystem's report used was data by gathering FRA and MnDOT historical data. We have used actual counts from 2013.

Chair Haigh asked if this number of crossings and ADTs are for the entire route? Mr. Alexander stated that the ADTs shown - 33,600 for the Kenilworth route are a combination of all four at-grade crossings and 15,000 for the MN&S North route are a combination of all existing at-grade crossings.

Mr. Alexander stated that currently, on average there is a daily count of 3 freight rail trains one way on the Kenilworth route and on average 5 daily one way trains on the MN&S North route.

Mr. Lamb asked if there was any change in traffic count for the other crossings that will no longer be available. Mr. Alexander stated that with the proposed TransSystem's proposal on the MN&S North option, with 4 less crossings, the existing traffic counts on these roadways would then need to be absorbed elsewhere. Traffic analysis would need to be done to better understand this change.

Property Impacts

Mr. Alexander went over the comparisons for properties requiring relocations for both the TransSystem's MN&S North route and the Kenilworth route. On the MN&S North route there would be 6 residential properties, 7 private businesses and 1 school that would require relocation. The Kenilworth route would not have any relocations needed. These figures do not include the southerly connection, which are common to both options. There are 5 full acquisitions in the southern connection that are not included in these numbers.

Commissioner Peter McLaughlin asked the status of the Xcel substation? Mr. Alexander stated that SPO staff have met with Xcel and Mr. Terry on this. The MN&S North option does clip a portion of the substation. Xcel will meet with their engineers to see what impacts this MN&S North option would have. We expect a response from Xcel on this by March 3, 2014.

Commissioner McLaughlin asked if it is a regulatory issue or physical movement of space. Mr. Alexander stated he believed it is more a physical movement. They need to look at the clearance and access impacts. At this time, we don't believe it is a regulatory issue.

Mayor Hodges asked if one of the schools is a charter school and if it is located in a residence. Mr. Tom Harmening responded yes, this charter school is located in a house.

Mayor Hodges asked the number of properties the project is taking overall? Mr. Alexander said he doesn't have this number with him but we can provide this.

Mayor Hodges asked that of the businesses being taken from the potential road closures, will they be relocated? Mr. Alexander stated that 6 are due to the track alignment and 1 is due to the roadway. TranSystems is suggesting if there is a new roadway, it would be west of the railway and affect some properties. We would need to work with the City to further discuss and evaluate this. .

Mayor Hodges asked how many properties will be taken with the Brunswick option? Mr. Alexander doesn't have this number but can provide it.

Bill James asked what the impacts are around the St. Louis Park High School with the MN&S North option. Mr. Alexander stated the impacts would be to a portion of the parking lot. No impacts to the school building itself. Mr. James asked how much of the parking lot would be affected? Mr. Alexander will validate the number and provide. Chair Haigh asked that the area be provided on a map showing the impacts from MN&S North option to the proximity to the school at the next CMC meeting along with verification from the items from the School Board letter.

Mayor Hovland asked the enrollment of the Metropolitan Open School that will be affected. Mr. Alexander stated the enrollment is 5 students, he did not know the number of staff.

Mayor Hovland said that in the Brunswick Central option, there are houses that will be within 50' of the rail. Are there numbers with the MN&S North option that show how many houses will be this close to the rail? Mr. Alexander stated that the presentation captures them.

Councilmember Cheryl Youakim asked if the Spanish Immersion School is outside of 150' of the rail? Mr. Alexander stated yes, the school is further than 150' from the rail.

Councilmember Youakim stated that Hopkins will be losing 5 businesses and approximately 350 jobs due to the location of the OMF in Hopkins.

Mayor Schneider asked for a graphic showing the proposed four road closures from the removal of the crossings from the MN&S North route. Mr. Alexander will provide this to CMC.

Commissioner McLaughlin asked if the availability of land to develop was given from either proposal and did either proposal provide a plan on the space for development? Mr. Alexander stated this has not been studied.

Commissioner McLaughlin asked if the switching wye will go away with this proposal. Mr. Alexander stated yes it is removed with this proposal and the TranSystem's cost does include the switching wye track removal. Commissioner McLaughlin asked if the switching wye can be removed without compromising the railroad. Mr. Alexander stated yes, but it does impact one business, which is a salt company that currently relies on deliveries from CP via the MN&S route (Robert B. Hill Company). Mr. Harmening stated the need for the switching wye goes away on both proposals because the interconnect is there.

Cost

Mr. Alexander went over the costs. The costs that TranSystem provided were based on 2013 dollars. The TranSystems' costs did not include right of way costs, escalation or some common elements. Mr. Alexander went over these additional common elements. There is also a Federal formula that needs to be used when applying contingency, consistent with cost estimating methodology used on the rest of the project.

Mayor Hodges asked if the necessary mitigations requested by St. Louis Park were included in the costs? Mr. Alexander stated the mitigations for St. Louis Park are not included in the common elements.

Mayor Hovland asked about the \$20 - \$25MM right of way number. How were the right of way parcels identified? Mr. Alexander stated the parcels were identified by impacts by the proposed design. The standard formula was used which was the same formula used elsewhere on the project. These are both partial and full acquisitions. Relocation fees are included in the full acquisitions where relocation will be required.

Mayor Hovland asked how many workers are in the 7 private businesses that will be affected. Mr. Harmening will get this number for CMC. Mr. Harmening stated that the STEP program is more than a food shelf; they help with emergencies related to transportation, housing and food. They have both full and part time employees, along with volunteers.

Commissioner McLaughlin asked if the right of way is part of the base budget or is there a special right of way budget to cover these costs. Mr. Alexander stated that the \$20 - 25M is additional, is it not accounted for previously and would be added to the existing budget.

Mayor Hovland asked the right of way standards used for ROW acquisitions. Is this federal or state law? Mr. Alexander said we go by state law for the acquisitions. MnDOT partners with us to help with the ROW acquisition process.

Mayor Hodges requested more information on the \$20 - \$25 ROW figures and requests how the right of way numbers are calculated. Contingency and YOE dollars are multipliers based on ROW, if the ROW numbers are too high, then the subsequent numbers would also be high. Mayor Schneider mentioned that the costs would all come down proportionally.

Mr. Alexander went over the unaccounted for costs in the TranSystem North MN&S concept. These missing elements were reviewed with Mr. Terry, who agrees with the additions. The additions include additional elements such as additional retaining walls, additional right of way, freight track removal, North Cedar Lake Trail Bridge, and Xcel work.

Commissioner McLaughlin asked if the North Cedar Lake Trail Bridge is in the project office's cost estimate? Mr. Alexander stated that TranSystems' MN&S North design and cost estimate does not include this. This feature is included in the SPO relocation designs. Mr. Alexander doesn't have the cost with him. Chair Haigh asked that at the next CMC meeting, staff provide a little more of the magnitude of the costs not now included.

Mayor Schneider asked if the additional design factors were added to this list by TC&W to get their approval. Mr. Alexander stated that the unaccounted elements were identified by staff and reviewed with Mr. Terry.

Mayor Hodges asked if the cost of the removal of TC&W tracks, which is included in the HCCRA agreement with TC&W, would not come out of the project costs? Ms. Debra Brisk stated that the agreement with HCCRA and TC&W does call for if there is removal of TC&W tracks, they will be given back to TC&W for them to reuse or salvage. The project would pay for the removal.

Mayor Hodges asked about the tracks near the North Cedar Lake Bridge, was this intended to avoid an at grade crossing? Mr. Alexander stated yes it was.

Mayor Hodges asked if the cost of grade separation in Minneapolis is being built in. Mr. Alexander stated that the trail crossing on the bridge structure east of the Beltline station and the one south of Penn station where freight and trail have grade separation are the two areas. Accommodating these grade separations is built into the costs on the Kenilworth option.

Mayor Hodges asked about the Xcel substation. Is this to be removed entirely? Mr. Alexander stated that similar to Brunswick West option, the MN&S North option would have a partial clip of the property. At this time, Xcel is evaluating potential impacts.

It was noted that Mr. Terry looked at design costs only. We also need to add costs in for the environmental work, construction management, and contingency, which is a formulated process by FTA. We also need to escalate the 2013 dollars to year of expenditure.

Mr. Alexander stated that the cost of project delay would mean that the original cost of \$1.553B would have a 3% escalation per year, which would add approximately \$45 - \$50M to the project.

Mr. Harmening commented and thanked the SPO for their report today. He stated his comments are that generally, freight rail, LRT and the trail will be at grade in St. Louis Park and Hopkins in both these scenarios. These will be going by homes and businesses in St. Louis Park. He stated they don't see the MN&S North plan as anything different than what's been originally planned in this area. Regarding safety, the CP Rail uses the MN&S with short trains. In terms of crossings, the TranSystem's plan suggests closing 4 streets, which sounds great, but two in particular are close to the high school and Highway 7 and will have major impacts to traffic and transportation safety in this area. In terms of proximity to homes and schools, there wasn't much context given to unit trains running within 75' of these schools. There are 1,450 kids and faculty in this school every day. There are 800 kids and staff in the Brunswick Central and the community center. In terms of property impacts, when the city commented in the past on the reroute, we provided a variety of examples of mitigation needed. Another 40 homes in our mind were listed that needed to be acquired because of the close proximity of these new trains. In terms of cost, there are unaccounted costs that need to be provided. It seems we are comparing an at grade option to a tunnel option which are two very different approaches. We would suggest the MN&S North option be compared to the Kenilworth at grade option, which is what we will have in St. Louis Park. He also said the cost estimate for the MN&S North route includes very little in mitigation costs. We need to understand the context of what it would cost to do this MN&S North option compared to other options; there would be 3,000 feet of new, highly visible freight rail bridges, retaining wall, closing streets, elevating tracks near homes, disruption to the high school. Looking at TranSystem route in St. Louis Park, the length increased by 7,000 feet. Trains will be in St. Louis Park for a much longer period of time that they are today. Minneapolis would have less traffic because it is removed in Kenilworth. For safety, the railroad has said the TranSystem North proposal is not safe.

Councilmember Youakim thanked the project office and stated they are in support of the project. She stated that Hopkins will have financial difficulties with the proposed OMF location in Hopkins. They are working through their issues that will need mitigation as they get ready for municipal consent. Hopkins is the smallest city on the line with the smallest tax base. She feels the reroute has unanswered questions. With the stacking and switching of trains in Hopkins, this would be in a location where redevelopment was desired by Hopkins. She requests clarification on operation of the TC&W trains in this area. Mr. Alexander stated TC&W would store trains in the Hopkins location. He will reach out to TC&W for more details. Chair Haigh mentioned TC&W may be at the next CMC meeting and can answer these questions.

Commissioner Matt Look suggested the cost differences be looked at further for the MN&S and Kenilworth corridor. Co-locating rail at grade with relocating the bike way; he would like to revisit this for the costs. For the OMF location, he suggested options be looked into for centrally locating the OMF so it can be used by multiple lines. We should try to keep the \$1.55B cost under control.

Commissioner McLaughlin reported that the CTIB on 2/19 unanimously approved a resolution for action that a decision be made by June 30, 2014 on the scope and budget of SWLRT. Further delay will not be accepted. He stated the need for the partners to move forward. Chair Haigh appreciates the support of CTIB and understands the urgency. There are two more CMC meetings scheduled before June 30, one on 3/12 and one on 4/2. After that a decision will be made at the 4/9 Council meeting. Following that there will be 75 days for the cities and Hennepin County to gain input and come back with municipal consent.

Mr. James stated he represents the citizens at large and the community at large really wants this project to move forward, and they want it done right.

Councilmember Youakim also stated that Hopkins is very excited about the project. She does just want an understanding how freight rail will impact their city.

Mayor Schneider said he is a strong supporter and wants to see it most cost effective as possible. He is comfortable relying on the project office staff to provide us the information needed. He would like to take the pros and cons back to the community for everyone to buy in to the project before they provide municipal consent.

Mayor Hovland would like to see a side by side comparison of the options. He also asked for the views of the pros and cons from both the project office and the city and county engineers. He would like to see something broader than what was presented today.

Mr. Harmening stated St. Louis Park continues to be a strong supporter of Southwest LRT and are behind the project, but he wants the facts closely examined on how we deal with freight rail.

Chair Haigh asked the CMC members to think of the criteria mentioned today, which includes safety considerations, property impacts, cost, operational considerations and the one Commissioner McLaughlin raised on development opportunities. She would like to see a matrix put together with the pros and cons of these.

Mayor Hodges said we are all LRT supporters but wants to have a message to convey to the non-LRT supporters. We as light rail supporters need to make the case and we need comparable facts on the relocation options. For being by schools and safety, in Minneapolis there are 4 plus schools as close or closer to rail lines as the proposed MN&S North option. The TC&W letter came out today with some concerns on the option. Mayor Hodges suggested if there isn't agreement with the railroad, we could also go to the Surface Transportation Board for assistance.

Mayor Hovland asked how much further engineering time is needed and what is the cost of it if. Mr. Alexander stated that approximately an additional 3 - 4 months of engineering time would be needed to advance the design of the MN&S North concept and bring it up to speed as the Kenilworth Corridor. Mr. Fuhrmann stated that an approximate cost for engineering for this is approximately \$1 million per month.

Chair Haigh mentioned that if members think of any other factors after tonight's meeting, to let us know and we will add them to the list.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dawn Hoffner, Recording Secretary