



**Southwest Light Rail Transitway (SWLRT)  
Community Advisory Committee Meeting**

**April 25, 2013**

**Southwest Project Office**

**6465 Wayzata Blvd, Suite 500, St. Louis Park, MN 55426**

**6:00 PM – 8:30 PM**

CAC Members and Alternates: Asad Aliweyd, Kandi Arries, Ann Beuch, Jeanette Colby, John Erickson, Donald Eyberg, Matt Flory, Meg Forney, David Greene, Derek Gunderson, Tom Jenny, Maria Klein, Vicki Moore, Kelly Nelson, Rolf Peterson, Barry Schade, Neil Trembley, Jeff Ylinen, Kathy Cobb, Kathryn Kottke, Jami LaPray.

Agency Staff and Guests: Robin Kaufman, Sam O'Connell, Jim Alexander, Mark Fuhrmann, Chris Weyer, Dan Pfeiffer, Sophia Ginis, Daren Nyquist, Kim Proia, Paul Danielson, Katie Walker, Kerri Pearce Ruch, Michael Mergens, Julie Wischnack, Tania Mahtani, Nani Jacobson, Winston Wildebush, Kevin Locke, Traci Thomas.

**1. Welcome, Introductions and Approval of the March 28, 2013 Meeting Minutes: Jeanette Colby, CAC Co-Chair**

Jeanette Colby called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. CAC members approved the March 28<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes, followed by an introduction of attendees.

**2. Hennepin County Community Works Update-SWLRT Housing Inventory: Katie Walker & Kerri Pearce Ruch, Hennepin County**

Katie Walker provided an update on the Transitional Station Area Action Plan open houses, two of four have occurred in St. Louis Park and Hopkins. About 30 attendees at the St. Louis Park and about 150 attendees at the Hopkins & Minnetonka joint open house.

- Meg Forney: What is the difference between this station area planning and the work that occurred a few years ago? Katie Walker: some of the work is similar in identifying what is needed on opening day but the drive is to delve deeper. Also doing outreach to underrepresented communities within the station areas.
- David Greene: Do you have an idea of what the racial makeup of attendance was at the open houses? Katie Walker: At St. Louis Park it was not very diverse, there were only 30 people. At the Minnetonka-Hopkins there was some diversity, I believe it was well representative.

- Jami LaPray: Wondering if there is a plan for another open house in St. Louis Park, as the weather may have prevented people, especially the elderly, from attending? Katie Walker: We have posted the information on our website and are working with St. Louis Park staff on an online tool called Mind Mixer that will allow people to use online tools.
- Vicki Moore: How are you doing more outreach to underrepresented communities? Katie Walker: Some of the things we have done include meeting with some of the different neighborhood groups, we've also met with some of the community engagement grantees the groups that got HUD sustainable communities money to do more outreach within those communities and we've been letting them know about our meetings, asking them if there are other vehicles that would like to use to meet with us and spread the word and get info and feedback. We've also done some outreach with the Harrison neighborhood and continue to do that and the Blake Road community.
- Question: Is Mind Mixer available to the other cities? Katie Walker: Yes it is and I believe Minneapolis has already expressed interest.

Kerri Pearce Ruch provided an overview of the SWLRT Housing Inventory study to get baseline data for Hennepin County Community Works work. The strategy is consistent with the Corridors of Opportunity Affordable and Fair Housing Recommendations, that all corridors develop corridor wide goals and strategies that support a full range of housing. And the principles of the Community Works project for Southwest, which states that we should connect people to jobs, housing, shopping, and fun and positioning Southwest as a place for everyone to live. Our goal is to use this data to develop housing strategies along the corridor. The study looked at demographic data, employment data, and vacancy data. The report does not make recommendations, instead provides baseline data. The Housing Inventory looked at the whole corridor at ½ mile, 1 mile, and 2 mile radii from the stations. In Minneapolis, when you get 2 miles from some stations you get into an overlap with existing stations, so the study area focused in on the ¼ mile area in Minneapolis.

- David Greene: Commute and labor shed; can you explain what that is? Kerri Pearce Ruch: They're looking at where folks live, where they work, and where they commute to.
- David Greene: There is a missing piece, Harrison did a job skills inventory in the neighborhood to identify what skills people have and how would that match up to employers on the corridor. It's measuring more than where they currently work and looking at where they could work. Is anyone looking at that? Kerri Pearce Ruch: We've had some conversations with Harrison and are aware of their work. That's certainly something we can follow up on.
- Jeanette Colby: The Corridors of Opportunity program, is that a federal program? Kerri Pearce Ruch: Corridors of Opportunity is a collection of two programs; HUD Sustainable Communities grant is a partnership of HUD, EPA, and Department of Transportation which Met Council is the recipient and Southwest Corridor/Hennepin County is a sub-recipient and then there is also the Living Cities Initiative which is not so much grant funding but more a

series of tools and financing mechanisms and those two programs make up the Corridors of Opportunity program.

- John Erickson: What is the Housing Transportation Index? Kerri Pearce Ruch: That is a measure that has been developed to try to look at not just affordability of housing for folks but when you add in their transportation costs to their job what that looks like in their budget and to come up with a metric to measure.
  - Neil Trembley: Penn and Van White would have different demographics at 2 miles than at the ¼ mile radii. Kerri Pearce Ruch: In Minneapolis, they tried to tighten in where in the suburban areas they went out farther.
  - Neil Trembley: I would have issue with that, you might see a very different demographic at 1 or 2 miles in Minneapolis versus ¼ mile compared to in the suburbs where you may not see a significant difference at 2 miles.
  - Vicki Moore: How did you count small businesses, we have probably 150 small businesses between 394 and Glenwood which is probably comparable to Royalston? Kerri Pearce Ruch: For that I would have to look into the report.
  - David Greene: Are the commute and reverse commute numbers in the report? Kerri Pearce Ruch: yes
  - Kelley Nelson: Did you discount the rental units by station for Royalston station for those that could walk to Target Field station? Kerri Pearce Ruch: I do not know the answer to that question.
  - Barry Schade: When I look at the chart it doesn't appear that the four Minneapolis stations go to the 2-mile mark, the Minneapolis stations only go to 1 mile. Kerri Pearce Ruch: I think in Minneapolis the radius was ¼ mile, ½ mile, and 1 mile. The study worked with city of Minneapolis staff to find data that the city would find most useful for their planning.
  - Barry Schade: It seems that different metrics affects the key takeaways. Kerri Pearce Ruch: I think that when they looked at 2 mile in Minneapolis there was overlap with other station areas.
  - Vicki Moore: Not having the 2-mile area affects the options and outcomes.
  - Meg Forney: We were told we would be getting a walk shed for the area around each station. Katie Walker: We have been using the ten-minute walk shed, and you will see it on the graphics at the open houses and what is posted online.
  - David Greene: You could make unfortunate conclusions on Minneapolis based on this data. I would suggest taking a 2-mile radius on Hiawatha and identify what is not accessible.
  - Jeanette Colby: Kerri will you follow-up on the questions raised and 2 mile data in Minneapolis? Kerri Pearce Ruch: Yes I will follow up.

### **3. Technical Issues Discussion: Jim Alexander, SPO**

#### **a. Operations and Maintenance Facility**

Jim Alexander provided an overview of technical issue #23: Operations and Maintenance Facility. Four sites were included in DEIS, in response to DEIS comments we have looked globally on the corridor for site locations. The analysis started by identifying 18 candidate sites based on five criteria, further analysis based on thirteen criteria to narrow the list to 7

sites rated “excellent” or “very good”. The cities have identified two additional sites, which will go through analysis.

- Ann Beuch: Where does noise/vibration fall into the criteria? Jim Alexander: That would be an environmental impact.
- Jami LaPray: Have you done noise/vibration studies? Jim Alexander: We have not done any noise/vibration studies yet, that will occur when we identify the preferred site.

Jim Alexander walked through the sites included in the attendee packets.

- Site 3 & 4: located near HWY 212, Wallace Rd, and Mitchell Rd. Currently we are looking at adjustments to the alignment in Eden Prairie. Site 3 is the Eden Prairie maintenance facility, site 4 is part of the Eaton facility. Sites 3 & 4 rated “very good”
- Site 6: HWY 212, Mitchell Rd, Technology Drive. Undeveloped land near United Health Groups phase 1 facility, they have plans for phase 2 & 3. This would require the alignment down Technology. Rated “very good”.
- Site 8: Shady Oak Rd and Flying Cloud Dr. Current inactive farm and a distribution center. This site is only viable if the alignment bridges over Shady Oak Rd. Site rated “excellent”.
- Site 9: Shady Oak Rd and K-Tel Dr near Shady Oak Station. Rated “excellent”, the city has concerns with this site.
  - Linnea Sodergren: Is this one or two options? Jim Alexander: There is a roadway that goes through the site, and in considering the site, the roadway may need to be reconfigured.
- Site 12 & 13: Near Excelsior Blvd and Blake Rd. Sites in Hopkins and St. Louis Park. Cities concerned about proximity to residential, proximity to Hopkins Cold Storage site redevelopment, and Blake Station area. Rated “excellent”.
  - Matt Flory: What is the potential impact to Minnehaha Creek? Jim Alexander: There may be buffering needed if we were to land the OMF there.
  - Ann Beuch: Based on previous presentation, the Housing Inventory, Blake Road has the highest population and the densest population of all the stations, and it doesn’t seem to flow as well with this type of use and I’m wondering if those two pieces were looked at? Jim Alexander: The City of Hopkins has brought up that concern because of housing and what they see the area becoming once we have revenue service here.
  - David Greene: From an equity perspective this is the worst option you could have. I grew up blocks from here and the housing is primarily immigrant and communities of color and you are throwing down noise, vibration, industrial right next to those folks. My initial reaction is that ISHIAH would have a problem with it. Jim Alexander: That is in line with what the City of Hopkins has been telling us.
  - Kathryn Kottke: If there is a re-route, is this going to conflict with where the ramp starts for freight re-route? Jim Alexander: Under either re-locate or co-locate this site would not be affected.

- Jeanette Colby: Site #8, you would need a bridge rather than a tunnel? Jim Alexander: We are looking at either a tunnel or a bridge at Shady Oak, but we would need a bridge in order to get to site #8 because of the grades.
- Jeanette Colby: What is the difference in cost between a tunnel and a bridge? Jim Alexander: Preliminary estimate might be around 5 million more for a bridge because of the span and grades in the area.

Next steps for OMF, we will be presenting to Corridor Management Committee, outreach with property owners, working with cities. We are also looking at open houses on OMF. We will update the CAC with results of the open house next time.

- David Greene: Anyway those open house times can be shifted; people often work until 5 p.m.? Jim Alexander: Eden Prairie time set based on the previously scheduled open house, we may be able to adjust the St. Louis Park, Hopkins, and Minnetonka times as they are set.
- Jami LaPray: As the decision time nears, will we also be given the dates and times of the discussion that the Met Council is having about the issues so that we can hear what they say and how they make their decision? Jim Alexander: Yes.

#### **b. Opus Hill**

Jim Alexander gave an overview of the Opus Hill area, between Claremont Apartments and American Medical Systems. We have been working with the city to fit the alignment through the area. The city has concern with losing trees through this area. The alignment skirts along the hill and may require a realignment of Feltl Rd and Smetana Rd.

- John Erickson: What is the width of the track area? Jim Alexander: Generally 14 feet on centerline, about another 8 feet for the retaining structure. During construction we would need more to get the structure into place.
- Neil Trembley: Who owns and maintains the trails? Julie Wischnack (City of Minnetonka): The city does. There's six miles of trails in Opus area.
- Maria Klein: What besides the retaining walls will be done to protect wildlife? Jim Alexander: That will be an assessment during the environmental impact work.
- Linnea Sodergren: Why does Feltl Rd look so curvy? Jim Alexander: Because of the LRT crossing we need to reconfigure to a T-intersection.
- Jeanette Colby: Is there an obligation to replace trees? Jim Alexander: That is something we will be working with the city on it.

#### **c. Stations: Opus, Shady Oak, Downtown Hopkins, Wooddale**

- **Opus Station**

Jim Alexander provided an overview of the Opus Station. There is a desire for redevelopment in the future in the area and looking at access to the station. The area has numerous grade separated trails, the only at-grade trail crossing near the station and there is a desire to separate it by going underneath Bren Rd E. Bus pullout and connection to trail north of Bren Rd W. In looking at park & ride, we don't see a lot of demand, but there is desire for some.

Julie Wischnack, City of Minnetonka, commented the area was built in the 1970s as a low rise office park; the redevelopment potential is pretty realistic in the next five to ten years. Through TSAAP we've discussed future options whether office or residential.

- **Shady Oak Station**

Jim Alexander provided an overview of the Shady Oak Station. Potential for park & ride options include looking at surface or structured. There is a desire from the city to locate station platform closure to Excelsior Blvd. In addition, the project is looking at trail through station area, pedestrian access from Excelsior Blvd and 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The cities desire to extend 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue potentially all the way to K-Tel Dr. Cities identify area as ripe for redevelopment. Julie Wischnack: It's a difficult station to figure out what the right answer is, the opportunity for redevelopment that arises later versus building out a structure now.

- **Downtown Hopkins**

Jim Alexander provided an overview of the Downtown Hopkins Station. We've been working with the city and TSAAP process to develop where the platform should be, how people get in and out of the area, bus connections, trail connection, kiss & ride connection. City sees this as the prime connection to Downtown Hopkins.

- **Wooddale**

Jim Alexander provided an overview of the Wooddale Station. Two designs, co-location with freight and freight re-location. In the DEIS, freight in a co-locate was designed with freight to the south of LRT, however we are suggesting having the LRT on the south for all the stations east of the Excelsior Blvd crossing. City is interested in grade separating the trail underneath Wooddale.

- Jami LaPray: Won't there be the same sort of issues with freight at Beltline and Blake Station? Jim Alexander: Yes, Blake will have co-locate, Beltline could have co-locate or re-located freight. We are looking at designs for co-locate and re-locate until the decision on freight can be made.
- Kathryn Kottke: My understanding from the PMT meetings that we had with TC&W is that there would not be an absence of freight line that the freight line is still there, also with the highway 100 project there still showing that there's going to be a bridge with freight rail over highway 100. I don't understand how you're getting rid of it? Jim Alexander: I cannot speak to the PMT, I wasn't part of that process. There is a number of track storage footage out through the corridor, we are in the process doing an inventory and there is a desire from the city to relocate the storage track from this area.
- Jami LaPray: But that doesn't answer the question of the switching wye which would still have to have the track there for the switching wye unless this presupposes that there is also a southern arm to the interconnect for the re-route situation. Jim Alexander: These are very good questions and we will be talking about those I would suggest that maybe we can leave the freight rail specific discussion for another time because we do plan on

coming to this group with those designs for both co-locate and re-locate. It is going to be a challenge to talk to those without graphics.

- Jami LaPray: You just can't really comment on the one without track if you don't know, when you know the situation you can't comment without the other. Jim Alexander: We will have an opportunity to discuss these items with the freight rail discussion at the June 6 joint meeting.

Next steps; share with Corridor Management Committee, continued outreach to property owners and public open houses.

#### **4. Member and Committee Reports/Public Forum**

No comments were provided by the public. Sam O'Connell asked CAC members to reserve June 6 for a Joint Special Meeting with the BAC focusing on freight rail design issues.

5. **Adjourn:** Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.