



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

June 30, 2015

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

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Meeting Summary

CAC Members/Alternates: Council Member Jennifer Munt (co-chair), Russ Adams (co-chair), Shirajoy Abry, Asad Aliweyd, Kathryn Campbell, Vida Ditter, Melissa Everett, David Greene, Amanda Kappes, Brian Kirk, Mathews Hollinshead, Amanda Kappes, Sara Maaske, Lee Munnich, Doug Peterson, Andrew Pieper, Hildy Shank, Jody Strakosch, Jeff Strate, Charles Weber, Janet Weivoda, Craig Westgate.

Agency Staff and Guests: Jim Alexander, Laura Baenen, Ann Beuch, Nkongo Cigolo, Sophia Ginis, Kathryn Hansen, Ryan Kronzer, James Mockovciak, Sam O'Connell, Loren Olson, Dan Pfeiffer, Kerri Pearce Ruch.

1. Welcome and Review of Meeting Summary

Co-Chair Munt called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM. Mathews Hollinshead stated that he had emailed changes to last meeting minutes. Minutes will be amended to reflect emailed changes. No other changes.

2. Summary of June 24 CMC Meeting (June 24 CMC Potential Cost Reduction Presentation)

Co-Chair Munt gave a quick summary of the June 24 Corridor Management Committee meeting. Eden Prairie Mayor Tyra-Lukens put forward two recommendations: 1. Make the southwest terminus of the alignment, the proposed Eden Prairie Town Center Station; this alternative would significantly affect ridership and permanently delete the Southwest and Mitchell stations, 2. End the alignment at the proposed Southwest Station and defer the proposed Eden Prairie Town Center Station; this alternative would maintain projected ridership and permanently delete the Mitchell Station; the proposed location of the Southwest Station already serves as a major transit hub and is more critical to low income transit dependent population. The City of Hopkins raised concerns regarding losing the park-and-ride and access to Excelsior Blvd; lack of this access could impede future development. Minneapolis Mayor Hodges wrote to oppose deferment or elimination of stations in Minneapolis.

Kathryn Campbell wondered whether ending the alignment at the proposed Southwest Station and deferring Eden Prairie Town Center Station would achieve the needed 290 million dollar worth of

cost reductions. Jim Alexander responded that project staff was still running the model, and the results of the analysis will soon be revealed.

Jody Strakosch wondered whether the projected ridership at the Eden Prairie Town Center Station could still be counted even though construction of the station has been deferred. Mr. Alexander responded that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) allows for deferred station ridership to be included in overall projected ridership. Co-Chair Munt added that deferred stations are to be built in the future but with alternative funding sources.

Sara Maaske wondered about the option to add the Mitchell Station back in the future. Mr. Alexander responded that if the Mitchell Station is deleted from the alignment, in order to add this station back in it would require filing a New Starts application.

David Greene wondered how much it would save to defer the Eden Prairie Town Center Station. Mr. Alexander replied that the model was still being analyzed, and the results are not yet ready.

Construction Cost Estimate Review

Mr. Alexander went over the construction cost estimate review [presentation](#). There are three cost cutting scenarios that the project office has focused its attention on after scenarios B (ending the alignment at the Golden Triangle Station, eliminating 3 of 5 stations in Eden Prairie) and D (ending the alignment at the Eden Prairie Town Center, eliminating potential for future development and deleting two stations, deferring one station and reducing most park and rides) had been thrown out of the equation by Corridor Management Committee members. In addition, as requested by Eden Prairie Mayor Tyra-Lukens, the project is examining the option to end the alignment at the Southwest Station, deleting Mitchell Station and deferring Eden Prairie Town Center Station.

Mr. Alexander advised that project staff had several discussions with project partners to look at the availability of outside funding sources. New cost reductions have been identified: finance charges brought to 2 percent from 3 percent. Additional design refinements to the OMF with savings yields between 6.5 and 7.5 million; reduce Light Rail Vehicles (LRV) fleet by 3 more vehicles, yielding another 15 million worth of savings.

Mr. Hollinshead wondered whether the reduction in the number of LRV would not jeopardize the proposed 10 minute headway. Jim responded it would not.

Janet Weivoda wondered what guarantee the project had to move forward now that the state funding had been cut. Co-Chair Munt responded that the State had canceled about 30 million dollars appropriation for the project; the cancellation sends a bad message to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). However, in order for the project to proceed while budget questions are being resolved, the Metropolitan Council borrowed 13 million from the 28 million motor vehicle sales tax reserve.

Craig Westgate wondered whether the project rating would be affected by the lack of state funding. Mr. Alexander stated that the rating would not be affected, but the FTA requires local contributions to match their 50 percent federal funding.

Asad Aliweyd mentioned that the Southwest Station, while being a major transit hub, had very little or no potential for housing development as the area is already saturated. Mr. Aliweyd stated that the Eden Prairie Town Center Station offered better housing development options for the community and urged that the Eden Prairie Center Station be maintained.

Alternative C or C prime stops 800 feet east of the Preliminary Engineering (PE) plans. We would have a full take of parcels but several properties would be left over. If there is no outside help, this alternative saves the needed 19 million.

Mr. Alexander stated that the Beltline trail that would go over the station would be built, and it would cost about 13 million to extend the trail over LRT. The Kenilworth Trail Bridge would not be constructed; Kenilworth Trail Bridge would cost about 13 million.

Ms. Strakosch wondered whether Penn would just be an at-grade crossing. Mr. Alexander responded that details were still being worked out.

Co-Chair Munt wondered whether it would be possible to keep the Penn Station and reach the 341 million cost reductions goal. Mr. Alexander responded that it could be achieved.

Mr. Alexander advised that the cost effectiveness index relies on ridership. At Louisiana some parcels that we would purchase and thinking of making some additional parking spots near Louisiana to help the ridership count.

Jeff Strate wondered whether the pedestrian Tunnel at Louisiana would be eliminated. Mr. Alexander responded that it would not be eliminated.

Mr. Peterson wondered whether the arms would be coming down for LRT and freight. Mr. Alexander responded that the gate-arms would serve both LRT and freight.

Ms. Strakosch wondered how many times the light rail would come through intersections. Mr. Alexander responded about 200 times per day.

Andrew pipers mentioned that there were three choices to be discussed and then members would trim down the funds that have to cut.

3. Potential Cost Reduction Discussion/Craft CAC Recommendation to CMC/Public Forum

Mr. Strate suggested the preamble mentioned that additional funding should be sought out and added that Eden Prairie was taking a huge cut.

David Greene suggested that members should craft a recommendations then the budget would have to be adjusted to meet the recommendation.

Lee wondered what the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) recommendation was. Co-Chair Munt responded that the BAC recommended that if anything had to be eliminated, there should be options to find alternative funding sources to add them up.

Andrews agreed that there should be a preamble that emphasizes how important the project is and added that should there be cuts, members would agree with where those cuts would occur.

Mr. Aliweyd stated that major cuts would have to be made and if anything should be cut, The Town Center Station should be exempted for future development.

Ms. Weivoda asked whether there was room for a higher budget. Mr. Alexander responded that there was room for higher budget, but the CEI still has to be met.

Lee Munnich stated that he was happy to have the Penn Station back in; added stations are the life of the alignment and anything that could be done so that as many of the stations could be completed is the best.

Shirajoy Abry asked who else would push back on the cost cutting reductions worth 341 million if the CAC does not. Co-Chair Adams stated that if there was a push back there would be pressure to find alternative funding sources.

Mr. Greene stated that the initial recommendation would be to include the Southwest Station then do what is necessary to include the Eden Prairie Town Center.

Mr. Strate stated that the independent review of the project office resulted in a five star rating, meaning that we are working with very smart people who know what they are doing. Why not get the 341 million to build the entire alignment and all of its components?

Ms. Weivoda stated that the Southwest Station was a critical station and a transit hub that is significant for ridership and there should be significant consideration of not cutting the Southwest Station.

Mr. Andrews mentioned that the farther we can get the tracks the better.

Mr. Westgate stated that the task of cutting 341 had to be achieved as there are other projects competing for federal funding.

Ms. Abry suggested that cost reductions should be termed in percentages.

Mr. Hollinshead suggested that the recommendation should show both the need of cutting the 341 million and also the option of finding additional funding to prevent from cutting the 341 million.

Mr. Peterson suggested that the hits that Minneapolis has taken and the suggestions that the Mayor Hodges had made should be included in the preamble. Sixteen members were not in favor and four members were in favor.

Ms. Maaske expressed concerns that the group was heading on an unproductive path when the members should really be discussing equity and how it would affect the riders and not the cities.

Mr. Peterson stated that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was signed with the City of Minneapolis should be honored and stated that honoring this MOU should be reflected in the preamble.

Mr. Aliweyd asked how the Minneapolis MOU was helpful to the CAC while they crafted their recommendation to the CMC. Mr. Peterson stated that he did not want for that aspect to be overlooked.

CAC Members crafted and agreed to the following recommendation:

The SWLRT Community Advisory Committee agreed on the following recommendation to be presented to the SWLRT Corridor Management Committee prior to their vote on SWLRT scope and budget scheduled for July 1, 2015:

- We urge leaders on the Corridor Management Committee, and eventually the Metropolitan Council, to consider adopting cuts that would total less than the \$341 million target. If we value this project as an economic and equitable development catalyst, as many of us do, then it is worth paying some of the extra cost that has recently been identified from the project budget itself. At some point the cuts being considered are more about addressing geographical balance and serving political sensibilities – we should not reduce the functionality of the line to concerns about broadly “sharing the pain” of service reductions. This corridor project is worth every dollar we invest in it if we apply an equity lens, and the return on that investment will drive economic growth and employment opportunities for many decades into the future – it’s worth the extra cost. *(Text from June 30, 2015 Southwest Equity Commitments table letter to SWLRT CMC)*

Vote: 17 for, 3 against

- Honor community MOUs/Agreements and recognize the sacrifices that have been made by cities and the sacrifices they are now being asked to make while making the line as beneficial as possible for people and the communities.

Vote: Unanimous

- Regarding, safety and accessibility:
 - Need to ensure that budget reductions don’t end up creating dangerous traffic patterns for cars, bikes, pedestrians, especially in the long run
 - Accessibility to work, housing, and recreation for all should be the reason for this project. Reductions in parking, stations, etc. should be done with caution as they impact ridership and overall benefit

Vote: Unanimous

- We urge that both Eden Prairie Town Center and Southwest Stations be built because the potential future affordable housing and job/business development at Eden Prairie Town Center. Southwest Station has strong bus connections that represent 12% of total ridership, which is the largest percentage of any station.

Vote: 16 for, 4 against

- Recognize that at least six stations; EPTC, SW, Blake, Penn, Van White, and 21st are critical for low wealth communities and communities of color.

Vote: Unanimous

- If stations are deferred, the first priority should be to add back deferred stations, as funding becomes available.

Vote: 17 for, 3 against

- The second priority is improving accessibility to stations

Vote: 17 for, 2 against, 1 Abstention

- Value and protect bicycle infrastructure

Vote: Unanimous

- We urge the Metropolitan Council to create and make public the plan to mitigate and lessen the impacts of cuts; and aggressively seek additional funding sources to mitigate the impacts of these cuts including but not limited to:

- Art/landscaping/beautification
- Mitigate the environmental impacts along the light rail line.
- Lost opportunities of Transit Oriented Development

Vote: Unanimous

4. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM. Next meeting scheduled for July 28, at 6 PM.