



**Southwest Light Rail Transitway (SWLRT)
Business Advisory Committee Meeting
August 26, 2015
Southwest Project Office 6465 Wayzata Blvd, Suite 500
St. Louis Park, MN 55426
7:30 AM – 9:00 AM**

Meeting Summary

BAC Members/Alternates in attendance: Dan Duffy, Will Roach, Curt Rahman, Dave Pelner, Gary Orcutt, Rick Weiblen, Tony Barranco

Agency Staff and Guests: Joan Hollick, Nani Jacobson, Sam O’Connell, Sophia Ginis, James Mockovciak, Nkongo Cigolo, Dave Lindahl, Kerri Pearce Ruch

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by BAC co- Chair Will Roach. Mr. Roach welcomed the committee members. The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed with one objection: co-Chair Duffy’s first name was incorrectly listed as “Jim” instead of “Dan”. The notes were the accepted without objection.

2. SDEIS Overview

SDEIS – Nani Jacobson presented an overview of the SDEIS process. The comment period concluded on July 22nd. Ms. Jacobson discussed the sources and themes of the 205 comments received. A question was asked if the SPO responded to each comment? Ms. Jacobson replied that all substantive comments will be responded to in the Final EIS. A second question inquired whether or not the top five themes outlined in her presentation (Noise and vibration, the NEPA process, General opposition to freight rail co-location, Visual and Aesthetics, and Safety and Security) were representative of the concerns of the 43 businesses that filed comments? The answer was yes. Someone asked what happens after the FEIS is published? Ms. Jacobson explained that when the FTA issues the Record of Decision (ROD) it formalizes the project and the commitments outlined in the FEIS. Another question was asked about the timing of the project? She replied that the SPO is anticipating the ROD in Q2/2016. Another member asked for an update on the two lawsuits that have been filed? Ms. Jacobson explained that a ruling was issued on the Lakes and Parks Alliance lawsuit. A hearing date has been set for the lawsuit by the representative for the Claremont property, focusing on the NEPA process. That was expected in early October. The SPO is confident it has followed all federal and local protocols and will continue to do so until notified differently by any future court ruling.

3. BAC Commendation

Co-Chair Roach continued with comments on the project developments over the past two months during the re-scoping and budget discussions. He emphasized the accessibility of the Council chair and local commissioners to the business community, and the influential role and impact the BAC had in making scoping recommendations that were adopted by the CMC and MetCouncil.

4. Project Update

Joan Hollick and Sam O'Connell provided a Project Update. Ms. Hollick began with an overview of the New Starts Application Submittal. She provided an overview of the revised scope of the SWLRT and the reductions that were made, reiterating that the project remained competitive and provided value to our community. Continuing, Ms. Hollick described the recent New Starts Application submittal. A question was if the Park and Ride facilities that were scaled back were being engineered to build out at some time in the future. Ms. Hollick replied that the vertical sites are designed to rise. Others will not be designed to be further developed. She emphasized that planning for the future development of some sites was a priority for the design team.

5. Municipal Consent

Ms. O'Connell continued with a description of the Municipal Consent Schedule. After handing out the *Land Use and Economic Development 2015 New Starts Executive Summary*, Ms. O'Connell highlighted the high ratings the project received from the FTA for land use and responsible resource utilization. On existing land use the SWLRT received an average ranking of 'medium-high', and the Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies for TOD were ranked as 'high'. Ms. O'Connell acknowledged the good work of the committee, the cities and communities for their efforts in achieving these ratings. A question was asked about the location of the first Municipal Consent meeting? Ms. O'Connell stated it would be held at the Central Library, and that City hearings would be held in City Halls. Dates and times were listed on City WebPages. She added that there would be a 10 day period following the joint hearing for public comments. The question was asked if there was any risk of not getting municipal consent in a city? Ms. O'Connell replied that the risk was very small at this time because of the role and investments each city played in the re-scoping process this past summer.

6. Next Steps for the Project

Ms. Hollick and Ms. O'Connell continued with a presentation about what to expect over the next 6 months. They emphasized the importance of continuing to hear from the committee and its members on what to consider as the SPO plans for the upcoming construction phase. Ms. O'Connell expressed the SPO's desire to better understand what was critical for the business community in order to mitigate unnecessary, adverse impacts. The more SPO knows about the specific needs of different businesses, she emphasized, the more detailed the contractors spec's and processes will be. Ms. O'Connell announced a Construction Mixer, tentatively on October 21st in order to facilitate meetings between local contractors and Prime Contractors. She emphasized the hope that up to 90% of the workforce will be local. A question was asked if the SPO would work with MnDOT to avoid unnecessary traffic delays? The response was yes. A second question was asked about whether the construction process was linear – beginning from one side of the corridor and moving to the other side? The reply was that the project would be proceeding all along the corridor simultaneously. Another BAC member asked what acquisition process will be like? Ms. O'Connell explained that no property or construction would commence before receiving the ROD. However, plans were being

made now to engage in acquisitions immediately after the ROD is issued. She added that negotiations would probably start with the Railroads since they were the most complicated. There were already many activities underway to get railways comfortable with our design in order to be well positioned to make offers when the time comes. A question was asked whether there was still a funding gap for the project? Ms. Hollick responded that there was still an 18.5 million dollar gap. The largest hurdle was the 10 percent due from the State. The FTA requires that all local funding is in place before the ROD is assigned.

7. Hennepin County Corridor-Wide Housing Strategy

Representing Hennepin County, Kerri Pearce Ruch presented an overview of County Corridor-wide Housing Strategy. Her PowerPoint included the goals, membership, outreach meetings and 2015 strategy activities. A discussion followed. A question was asked about the identities of housing “advocates”? Ms. Pearce-Ruch listed the Housing Justice Project, lawyers, legal aid, Isaiah-a faith-based group, Russ Adams and the Alliance for Metro Stability. A second member asked to get a “sense” of what developers and funders are looking for? Ms. Pearce Ruch answered they were seeking clarity and consistency in municipal policies along the corridor. She asked the committee a follow-up question about whether or not their businesses ever discussed the housing needs of their employees? Members responded that there weren’t forward conversations about these issues. Most discussions pertained to amenable transportation options for employees. A member asked about the demographics of those riding the Green and Blue lines? Ms. Pearce Ruch mentioned the numbers of millennials and seniors looking for transportation, and those reverse commuting. Of these 55 % were women. She added that surveys suggested that a high percentage of people who use the LRT live less than a mile away from a Park and Ride, or station. Members stated the importance of LRT as a transit option for their employees. One member added the value of LRT to senior housing options. A short discussion ensued highlighting the importance of TOD around the stations, addressing a broad range of housing options. Ms. O’Connell suggested SPO bring an overview of the corridor investment strategies that focused on stations and what they’ll look like to the next meeting.

8. Meeting adjourned at 9:00AM