



## Meeting Minutes

May 26, 2011

Cottage Grove City Hall

4:00 p.m.

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### Members Present:

Joe Harris, Dakota County  
Janice Rettman, Ramsey County  
Cam Gordon, Minneapolis  
Barb Hollenbeck, City of Hastings  
John Hunziker, St Paul Park  
Jim Keller, Denmark Township  
Steve Gallagher, City of Newport

### Others Present:

Josh Olson, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority  
Andy Gitzlaff, Washington County Regional Railroad Authority  
Sam O'Connell, Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority  
Jon Solberg, MN/DOT Metro District  
Betsy Leach, District 1 Community Council/RRSAP CAC  
Linda Jungwirth, Assistant to Commissioner Rettman  
Addi Hall for Katie Walker, Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority

### Ex-Officio Members Present:

Marc Mogan, Prairie Island Indian Community  
Ken Bjornstad, Goodhue County

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Chair Harris called the meeting to order at 4:06 pm.

Due to lack of a quorum the agenda started with item # 3

### Agenda Item #3 Station Area Planning Study Draft Report – WCRRA

Andy Gitzlaff indicated that they are now preparing the final draft document of the study. Originally, they had anticipated having this ready by now for review by the Commission, but they wanted to go through and incorporate the changes they have received from the Project Management Team and the Citizens Advisory Committee into the document. He provided a sample of the cover in an 11x17 format, but noted that the document will also be available in an 8 ½ x 11 format. It will be available to members to review in a few weeks. He indicated that this report will highlight the main summary of the study. This will include an overview of the corridor, the planning scope, the market assessment, the public involvement procedures as well as the overall vision for each station. Also included will be an implementation section which will detail the next step in the development of the Red Rock Corridor and the Station Areas.

Mr. Gitzlaff noted that they will email out the draft in the next two weeks to all Commission Members for review and comment. At the next meeting in June the Commission will be asked to approve the release of a draft for public review. This will not be a final draft, but a draft for the public to provide comments and that the City and County partners can endorse. This will go out for review in the summer, then in August or September there will be the final acceptance of the report by the Commission.

He also noted there was a summary of the last open house in the packet. Commission Member Rettman requested the email will be sent out in smaller documents. Commission Chair Harris confirmed that we do want comments from all the communities as well as the four member counties. Commission Member Rettman noted the good job Mr. Gitzlaff has done.

#### **Agenda Item #4 Union Depots Economic Analysis Presentation - RCRRA**

Josh Olson from the RCRRA presented the Union Depot Economic Analysis Presentation. He reviewed a PowerPoint presentation packet that was handed out. He recapped the Phase I Analysis which began in the spring of 2010. He noted the analysis is lead by HR&A Advisors who have a lot of experience working on multi-modal transportation systems. Mr. Olson indicated that the study objectives are to ensure the union depot becomes an inviting place as well as a revenue stream to support and sustain operations. They will be trying to maximize the economic benefits of the redevelopment of the downtown and across all transit corridors. He noted that The Depot will become a first stop for those people entering the region and will be experiencing Minnesota for the first time.

He continued to review exterior maps of the downtown and The Depot area. This area, in the downtown riverfront, comprises one third of the total riverfront area. He noted there is also a long-term redevelopment strategy for the entire riverfront as the majority is public owned, but the focus remains on the depot building first. The 185,000 square foot building does have challenges, specifically due to the small amount of retail space available. But, it also has opportunities due to its unique history. It remains a premier destination for both weddings and prom. He indicated that they do recognize these good things, while moving forward to a multi-modal transit station. He noted that ridership will evolve over time, and they are on track for the opening in 2012 with Amtrak, Greyhound, Jefferson Lines and Metro Transit. The next phase is scheduled for 2014 when the central corridor with LRT will arrive at The Depot. Phase III is expected in 2015–2030 with high speed rail, the Red Rock, Rush Line, Gateway, Riverview and Robert Street Corridors; as well as lines from Chicago, Duluth, Eau Claire, Rochester and Mankato. He also explained that their goal is to maximize not only the transportation pieces, but getting people interested in the long-term development of The Depot.

Mr. Olson continued to detail the findings of the Phase 1 Analysis. This included the growth of Lowertown as a retail and entertainment destination. The introduction of transit customers will create even more retail demand over time. Additionally, The Union Depot's size also creates tremendous opportunity over time. He presented a sample case study of the San Francisco Ferry Building. Although the San Francisco area is different in the weather, population and physical size, it does provide a lot of good examples of the transformation of an existing older building into a successful retail and regional transit destination.

He indicated that they learned some key lessons in the Phase 1 findings. This included that historic rehabilitation can be promoted for value and a mix of local uses can enhance the whole for the site and for the city. Additionally, programming will drive the civic vibrancy and retail demand. He also indicated that getting Phase 1 right is critical for the future phases, as well as the interim use and market flexibility. He presented the Three-Pronged Development Strategy which included the diverse local retail marketplace, frequent public programming and flexible event venue. He provided a conceptual building program drawing in the packet to review.

Mr. Olson then covered the Phase II Implement the Development Strategy, which included a detailed pro forma to know the cost of the operation of the facility as a baseline. This would additionally include the solicitation of the private sector section. He then reviewed the principles that are guiding the development of the Union Depot. These include making it transit complimentary; making it local; making it beautiful, and making it connected. Mr. Olson confirmed that the construction process is moving forward and they are on schedule for a 2012 opening. Commission Member Rettman noted that this is only the retail portion of the development, that there is also the residential part of the development and that no residents have been displaced due to the construction process.

**Quorum is reached at 4:30.**

**Agenda Item #1 Consent Items**

- a. Minutes of the March 31, 2011 Meeting**
- b. Checks and Claims**

Commission Member Hunziker moved the approval of the Consent Items. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Member Gallagher and passed unanimously.

Roll call

Commission Chair Harris	Yes
Commission Member Rettman	Yes
Commission Member Hollenbeck	Yes
Commission Member Keller	Yes
Commission Member Hunziker	Yes
Commission Member Gallagher	Yes

**Agenda Item #2 Citizens Advisory Committee Resolution of Thanks – WCRRA**

Commission Chair Harris referred Commission Members to the Resolution 2011-01 included in their packets. This is a resolution thanking the Red Rock Corridor Citizens Advisory Committee members for their volunteer service, hard work and dedication throughout the Station Area Planning Study. Mr. Gitzlaff recognized that Betsy Leach, representing the City of St Paul District 1 Council and a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee, is in attendance today. He then proceeded to read the full resolution. Commission Member Hunziker motioned the approval of the Resolution of Thanks to the CAC. The motion was seconded by Commission Member Hollenbeck and passed unanimously.

## **Agenda Item #5 Legislative Update - WCRRA**

### **a. State**

Andy Gitzlaff informed the Commission that the State Legislative Update provided in the packet is now out of date. He indicated that the omnibus bills that passed were then vetoed by the Governor. This included the transportation bill which had a lot of controversial elements including cuts to metro transit bus, and items that could affect CTIB, as well as inner city passenger rail-type funding. The process now is that a special session can be called by the Governor at his discretion. He noted that July 1, 2011 is the deadline to avoid a partial shutdown.

### **b. Federal**

Andy Gitzlaff indicated to the Commission members that since our last meeting in April, the 2011 budget did get finalized. Included in the packet is the summary of the 2011 budget. This includes some cuts that affect transit and passenger rail, like the Community Development Block Grants reductions and the Sustainable Communities Initiatives Program was cut by 33%, but the program still remains. Tiger grants were cut from their 2010 level to \$528 million. Additionally, the High Speed Rail Grants program was eliminated. He also noted some cuts were made to the highway general fund for 2010, and other highway projects remain at their current level. He indicated that the focus will now be on the 2012 budget which they will continue to monitor throughout the summer. He noted that the Country is approaching the 14.3 trillion dollar debt limit and this could lead to other cuts in order to raise the limit.

Finally, he provided an update on the reauthorization of the surface transportation bill. The latest information is that the Senate is thinking about doing a three year bill to keep funding transportation projects at the current level. From a planning or program perspective it would not be the preferred option. He noted that allowing six years to plan projects is more efficient for regional plans.

## **Agenda Item #6 Other**

### **a. Metro Transit Ridership Snapshot – WCRRA**

Mr. Gitzlaff indicated that the survey results from Metro Transit are in the packet. This was an on-board survey conducted with riders of the express bus, light rail and the Northstar Line. He indicated that the information is very good for identifying the demographics for the target market in planning for future transit. This will be a very good tool for Red Rock to use going forward with planning. He specifically reviewed some of the more interesting statistics included within the survey. Additionally, he noted that this morning while presenting to the Minneapolis Transportation Management Organization, an overview of the Red Rock Corridor Project, the Metro Transit representative noted that the Northstar ridership is up 6% from last year. The real importance of this increase is that the special event and weekend numbers remain high and the weekday trips have increased by 15% specifically. Commission Member Rettman questioned the destination zip codes on the bus ridership results. Mr. Olson noted that he did research these today and the main destination of these zip codes are the core of downtown St Paul, the north side of Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota, as well as the Uptown area of Minneapolis. Commission Chair Harris noted that it is nice to hear that the Northstar ridership is increasing, as the success of the Northstar Corridor will be a standard to base our future success as our corridors are similar.

Mr. Gitzlaff confirmed that the Met Council and Met Transit staff completed this survey. This data will help inform the regional model for ridership projections, which is what a corridor like the Red Rock will need to use in future planning.

**b. Passenger Rail Forum Update – WCRRA**

Mr. Gitzlaff attended the last Passenger Rail Forum meeting. The main goal at this meeting was to get a letter of support in the application for the two billion dollars in ARRA funds available. Minnesota did submit three applications including the Third Main for Burlington Northern, NLX project for PE work, as well as The Warner Avenue Bridge and Hoffman Yard. The NLX Project for PE was the only project to receive the funding for this project. He noted this is a good sign for the work that is being done collaboratively by MnDOT and being recognized at the Federal level.

Additionally at that meeting there was an update on the Minnesota Go program that is a fifty-year vision that MnDOT is creating for the next transportation policy plan that is being developed. Also discussed, was the high speed rail alignment from the Milwaukee to Minneapolis/ St Paul study. He indicated that there are four potential alignments that will be reviewed more closely. Mr. Gitzlaff indicated that he has asked Dan Krom, Director of the Office of Passenger Rail at Mn/DOT to give a presentation to review these routes at an upcoming meeting. Commission Member Rettman requested a map indicating these four routes to be sent prior to the meeting to review before the presentation. He also referred the Commission Members to the handout on high speed rail from the Midwest High Speed Rail Association. Their advocacy angle has changed over the past few years to 220 mph trains and very capital intensive plans. This is just a sample of information that is out there right now.

**c. Next Meeting- Thursday June 30, 2011**

Commission Chair Harris reminded the Commission Members of the importance of the next meeting on June 30th, as this will be the meeting we will review and approve the draft document for the Station Area Planning Study. The plan will then go out to the public for comments that could take a couple months; therefore we may not need a July meeting depending on other agenda items. Commission Member Rettman noted she cannot attend the July 28 meeting due to another commitment but will notify Mr. Gitzlaff prior to the meeting.

There being no further business Commission Member Hunziker moved a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Member Keller and passed unanimously.

The Commission adjourned at 5:00 p.m.