



Meeting Minutes

October 27, 2011

Cottage Grove City Hall

4:00 p.m.

Members Present:

Joe Harris, Dakota County
Autumn Lehrke, Washington County
Janice Rettman, Ramsey County
John Hunziker, St Paul Park
Jen Peterson, City of Cottage Grove
Barb Hollenbeck, City of Hastings
Jim Keller, Denmark Township
Steve Gallagher, City of Newport

Others Present:

Andy Gitzlaff, Washington County Regional Railroad Authority
Josh Olson, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority
Adele Hall, Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority
Joe Morneau, Dakota County
Betsy Leach, District 1 Council – St Paul
Cole Hiniker, Metropolitan Council
Charlene Zimmer, Metropolitan Council (Zan Associates)
John M Burbank, City of Cottage Grove
Tom Dobbs, Hay Dobbs

Ex-Officio Members Present:

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

Chair Harris called the meeting to order at 4:02pm.

Agenda Item #1 Consent Items

- a. **Minutes of the August 25, 2011 Meeting**
- b. **Checks and Claims**

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

Agenda Item #2 Station Area Planning (SAP) Update- WCRRA

a. **Resolution Approving and Adopting SAP Final Report**

Mr. Gitzlaff indicated that at the July meeting we reviewed the Station Area Planning Study Draft Report and it was approved for public review and comment. This allowed the cities and public along the corridor to provide feedback to be incorporated in the plan. He noted they have been busy attending meetings and giving updates. Official action has been received from the City of Newport, Cottage Grove and the City of Hastings. The City of St Paul has the approval of the Station Area Planning Study on their Consent Agenda for their November 2, 2011 City Council meeting. The resolutions of approval are included in the packets, in addition to comment letters from Canadian Pacific Railway and the District 1 Community Council. He noted that the content and conclusions within the Station Area Planning Study were not changed. The changes made were grammatical error corrections and added pictures to provide more visual appeal. This version is the final draft for approval today.

Commission Member Lehrke stated that she supported this final draft due to the multi-modal nature of the plan. She noted that if it is determined through the advanced alternatives analysis that BRT is a better option, the plans will also support bus rapid transit.

Commission Member Rettman indicated she felt an addition to the last “whereas” in the resolution should be made to include the railroads in the continuation of our work.

WHEREAS, the Red Rock Corridor Commission will continue to work with local communities and railroads to collaboratively plan for future transit improvements in the Red Rock Corridor and the surrounding land uses within the station areas.

Commission Member Rettman motioned to approve and adopt Resolution 2011-03; The Red Rock Corridor Station Area Planning Final Report with the addition on the last whereas to include working with the railroads. The motion was seconded by Commission Member Gallagher and passed unanimously.

Agenda Item #3 Regional Transitway Guidelines Presentation- Met Council

Cole Hiniker with the Metropolitan Council and Charleen Zimmer from the project consultant team provided a power point presentation on the need for regional transitway guidelines.

Mr. Hiniker indicated that about two years ago the Metropolitan Council decided to develop guidelines that relate to the implementation of transitway projects in this region. This was necessary due to the growing transitway system with multiple agencies involved, and the addition of Northstar and Hiawatha lines as well as the progression of our first BRT line. The main question focused on how we can best implement transitways in a consistent fashion that elevates the general understanding of all the partners involved about what goes into transitway planning.

He specified that the guidelines developed are technical guidelines based on best practice from around this region and throughout the country. They focused on four modes from the transportation policy plan including light rail, commuter rail, highway BRT and arterial BRT. This will be an important tool for the planners and staff on these projects. This advisory board was made up of elected and appointed officials from CTIB, TAB, Met Council, and MnDOT.

Currently, he noted, they are in the outreach stage of the guideline process. This includes attending council and commission meetings, as well as outreach to all groups that may have an interest on this topic. Public input, both positive and critical, is being accepted through November 18, 2011. Commission Member Rettman inquired about the length of the full guideline report. He indicated that it is 70 pages and available online or through his office.

He continued to explain that the purpose of the service operations committee is to establish the minimum expectation as to how transitways will operate in the region and make sure the expectations are aligned with the demand both now and into the future. This then promotes brand identity and customer understanding of transit through consistent service design.

They began this process by defining the service operations guidelines. This includes the service and network design for each mode. Commuter rail and light rail are straight forward, with trains operating on tracks. For BRT there are mixes of operations, like express and local bus services operating in the same corridor, so we would document the best service coordination between the different modes of transportation. Service scheduling focuses on the minimum frequencies by mode, day and time of day. For example, the report specifically indicates that commuter rail should have at least five trips in the peak period. This minimum level of demand of five trips is necessary to warrant the large investment in commuter rail. Additionally, the travel time relative to other modes should be considered. An example would be Highway BRT is no more than 35% slower than a car. Performance measurements within the guidelines focus on productivity thresholds and loading standards. These are ways to measure whether the service is being effective or to determine if they need to add or reduce the level of service. Market areas are also used in matching the density of employment and population to the appropriate service level.

Station spacing guidelines include criteria on how to look at appropriate areas for transit stations, as well as the access needed to support the station. Guidance is provided for market analysis and using the regional travel forecasting to help in the placement of the stations. Minimum projected daily boardings by mode are provided. She provided an example that commuter rail boardings should be at a level of 200 people. She indicated that it provided details in regard to site location, and specifically the principals that are guiding the Corridors of Opportunity in the region which is closely related to the Federal HUD Livability issues and how these principals need to be integrated into planning and designing stations. Additionally, the Guidance details the average and minimum station spacing by mode. Specifically, she noted that commuter rail suggested a minimum of five miles between stations and an average of seven miles per station.

Ms. Zimmer indicated that station and support facility guidelines are built around having attractive, functional, cost effective and regionally consistent station design. Many detailed support documents are provided in the report for the technical staff that would be completing the station and runningway design. She continued to explain that the report also provided guidance for accessibility as well as station sizing. Ms. Zimmer also described local betterments, which are enhancements beyond the basic elements that are needed to provide the functional requirements of stations. These betterments may require a local funding commitment as well as coordination and discussions on a case-by-case basis with the funding partners involved. Ms. Zimmer noted that the report included some pretty detailed supporting documentation on runningway guidelines for those in the design phase. The runningway is specifically defined as the rail or the physical transitway which the train or bus is running on.

Mr. Hiniker continued to review the power point presentation focusing on vehicle guidance purpose which primarily applies to highway BRT and arterial BRT station to station vehicles, but does apply to all transitway vehicle types. Consideration is given on how to size a vehicle to match demand as well as how to make a bus more attractive on the inside and on the outside to make sure these vehicles stand out in the region. The guidelines also relate to commuter rail and LRT in that we need to be assured that they remain compatible with the current infrastructure. Additionally, the report focuses on the fare collection systems. Currently, he noted that we have a one fare system for the whole region. This is a

very advantageous position to be in. It provides efficiency and effectiveness while meeting fiduciary and regulatory requirements. Although LRT & commuter rail have a newer system, for BRT it has not been determined which system would be most effective. These guidelines lay out a process for evaluating the various factors that go into that decision making. He continued to provide information on the technology and customer information guidelines. The guidelines recognize that they need to evaluate new technology and how it may help the system address needs, but not to introduce new technology when it has not been proven or tested on a widespread basis. The guidance does provide some minimum expectations on existing technologies such as GPSs on buses, which helps to provide better information and service to the customer. Finally, he indicated that identity and branding is becoming more complex as more lines are added to the region. As the Central Corridor is being constructed, the Met Council decided to change the LRT system and the highway BRT system to a color branded scheme of line. Hiawatha is now the blue line and Central Corridor is the green line. Discussions on branding commuter rail has come up, yet it is recognized that this mode doesn't fit in the same color branding scheme since it doesn't provide the same all-day service function as other modes. They recognize that the name should be chosen by the local community so that it fits the community identity for commuter rail.

Ms. Zimmer continued the presentation discussing project leadership and oversight guidelines purpose. This is necessary because there are so many partner agencies involved in planning, design and even in the operation of transit service and facilities, that it is important to lay out guidance on how to coordinate the phases of development. It is important that all parties involved understand their roles and responsibilities, especially the lead agency. She specified that the guidelines state that the transitway needs to be in the approved regional transitway plan (Met Council) before any work is complete in that corridor.

There are three areas where Met Council needs to stay involved in all transit way projects: operator selection, transit service planning, and maintaining the regional travel forecasting model. Finally, she indicated that there is guidance for what needs to happen if there is deviation from the guidelines. These guidelines are best practices, not requirements and they understand that each corridor has unique aspects of their planning. It is recommended that there is consultation with the funding partners when things are outside the guidance. In addition to the regional guidelines document, there are also some technical user guidelines as well as the station and support facilities, running ways, and ridership forecasting model. She reminded Commission Members that all documents are available on the website.

Ms. Zimmer indicated that they welcome all comments on these documents. Please see the Met Council website where you can provide written, verbal, email or faxed comments. They also referenced the list of all committee participants of the study.

Commission Member Lehrke questioned the specific threshold for highway BRT daily boards as well as for station spacing distance for highway BRT. Mr. Hiniker indicated that the threshold of Highway BRT daily boardings is 100 per day and two miles distance for station spacing on highway BRT.

Commission Member Rettman questioned the multi-modal functions within this report. Ms. Zimmer referenced the Station Design section of the guidelines which gives specific details relating to the multi-modal accessibility. Additionally, within the guidance of Station Location it references the need to connect with the local bus routes, as well as it being part of the criteria on determining a stations location. In the runningway guidelines, it references how to deal with pedestrian and bike crossings in a safe manner. The Guidance is very strong in its encouragement of multi-modal access at each station. Ms. Zimmer indicated that the Guidelines are written in a general nature, but the finer details are in the technical reporting guidelines.

Also, Commission Member Rettman questioned the coordination of the different modes of transportation coming together at the transit station. Mr. Zimmer noted that in the Service Operations area of the report, it concentrates on the coordination with the local transit connections. He indicated local connection routes are important yet they did not want to write guidelines for the entire transit system. They stressed the importance of making sure that the connections are achievable and convenient for the customer.

Commission Member Peterson questioned the expected commuter rail trips per peak period. Mr. Hiniker indicated that it was five trips.

Agenda Item #4 Draft 2012 Workplan and Budget - WCRRA

Mr. Gitzlaff indicated that the budget and work plan is included in the packets in a draft format and is up for discussion tonight. At the next meeting a supermajority in attendance is needed to be able to approve the budget for next year. He noted the changes in items number five and six. The East Metro Railroad Capacity Analysis Study results will be out in early 2012 and these results will help inform future decisions about the Red Rock Corridor. Additionally, he noted that item number six, Additional Studies, is an item that has remained on the back of our work plan for the last few years and staff is requested that we take a closer look at what it really means for the next step for the RRCC. He indicated that there remains about \$1.4 million in Federal Funds, but this funding requires a 20% match of the overall project cost. There is a potential to use these funds for an advanced alternatives analysis study. This analysis could be simply re-looking at the numbers from 2007, or it could be going back and doing an extended alternatives analysis and environmental impact statement. He suggested that staff could frame out some options and at the next meeting, present them for the Commission to consider.

Commission Member Rettman agreed that this would be a good opportunity to look into considering applying for these funds and specifically which direction we are headed in the upcoming months. Commission Member Lehrke agreed with Commission Member Rettman, and believed that this next analysis should be a data driven project using the available census data to help us make a decision that is right for the RRCC progression.

Mr. Gitzlaff continued to present the proposed budget. He noted a correction on page 3 in the last column should read Contribution or Dues not Fund Balance. He indicated that the budget is still at \$70,000, and although it is not official yet, it is expected to have about a \$48,000 carry-over from this year. This will reduce the amount due to \$21,402. The breakdown per county is referenced in the budget data provided in the packet. He briefly

reviewed the details of the budget and noted that these numbers could be refined if the work plan is adjusted.

Commission Member Lehrke questioned \$4,000 allocation for training. Mr. Gitzlaff noted that this has not been used in the past, but it would be used for training sessions within the state that the commissioners were interested in attending. Commission Member Peterson questioned, if we decided to go forward with an advanced alternative analysis, how long it would take if we secured Federal Funding. Mr. Gitzlaff indicated that it would not be started until the middle of next year. Commission Member Peterson inquired, how long until results from the study would be received. He noted that it would depend on the scope of the project. A full scope project, like a full alternative analysis, could take eighteen months to two years. But a smaller scope updated feasibility study may be only six months to one year. If it is done through the federal new starts process where the FTA is reviewing the documents as the process moves forward, it could add considerable time to the process.

Mr. Gitzlaff reminded Commission Members that the whole process is about specific timing of decisions and what this commission chooses to make a priority and focus on moving forward. Mr. Gitzlaff indicated staff would bring back some options for the Commission to consider at their next meeting. Commission Chair Harris confirmed that, at the next meeting, the final budget will be set with the work plan.

Agenda Item #5 Newport Transit Station Update – WCRRA

Mr. Gitzlaff indicated that the Washington County Regional Rail Authority is going forward with the design phase of the transit facility. State bonds as well as a federal appropriation are secured for the construction phase. They are looking to select a design consultant by the end of the year and then able to start construction sometime in 2012 or 2013.

Agenda Item #6 Legislative Update - RCRRA

a. State – No update given.

b. Federal

Mr. Olson informed the Commission that last week the Senate voted to advance a package for three appropriation bills for fiscal year 2012 including a bill for the department of transportation. This is an effort to avoid another government shutdown. This is similar to the continuing resolution and all indications are that it will pass. Within the resolution, there is \$10.6 Billion for FTA and \$100 Million for high-speed and intercity passenger rail. These numbers are different than the House side, so some resolution will need to be made. In reference to the Federal Authorization bill, both sides are in different places, but they are moving forward to come to an agreement. This is a positive sign as that was not occurring previously. On November 9, 2012, the Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee will be preparing a bi-partisan bill that will authorize federal aid to highway programs at current levels plus inflation for the next two years. The discussion is now focused on where the money will come from for this bill. Mr. Olson encouraged Commission Members to review these details included in their packets. Finally, he indicated that the President's Jobs Bill included some infrastructure spending for immediate investments in transportation, as well as the creation of an infrastructure bank.

Agenda Item #7 Other

a. Next Meeting- November 17, 2010

Discussion continued on date of the next meeting. It was determined to keep the meeting on November 17, 2010.

Commission Member Peterson noted that she arrived late today after the approval of the Station Area Planning Study, and wanted to indicate her support of final report.

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

The Commission adjourned at 5:20 p.m.