



Meeting Minutes

April 29, 2010
Cottage Grove City Hall, Council Chambers
7516 80th Street South
Cottage Grove
3:30 p.m.

Members Present:

Myra Peterson, Washington County
Joe Harris, Dakota County
Janice Rettman, Ramsey County
Barb Hollenbeck, City of Hastings
Jim Keller, Denmark Township
Jen Peterson, City of Cottage Grove
John Hunziker, St Paul Park
Corbin Hopkins, City of Newport
Cam Gordon, City of Minneapolis

Staff:

Josh Olson, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority
Andy Gitzlaff, Washington County Regional Railroad Authority
Ken Bjornstad, Goodhue County

Additional Attendees:

Allen Lovejoy, St. Paul
Linda Jungwirth, Assistant to Commissioner Rettman
Michelle Dibble, Transit for Livable Communities

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Marc Mogan, Prairie Island Indian Community

Chair Peterson called the meeting to order at 3:39 p.m.

Agenda Item #1 Consent Items

- a. Minutes of the February 25, 2010 Meeting
- b. Checks and Claims

Commission Member Hunziker moved the approval of the Consent Items. Commission Member Rettman recommended a correction in the minutes from February 25, 2010 on Page Two, Agenda Item #3 the correct spelling for Betsy Leach's last name, Leach. The motion was seconded by Commission Member Hopkins and passed unanimously.

Agenda Item #2 CAC Appointments – WCRRA

Commission Chair Peterson indicated that Emily White would like to be a member of the Citizen Advisory Committee, and she has also volunteered to attend the State Fair this year.

Commission Member Hopkins agreed that Emily is a great addition and highly recommended approval. Mr. Gitzlaff indicated there are two more appointments to the at large positions which will fill the four at large position openings. These two new members are: Jeff Holtz who is a current St Paul resident and Cottage Grove native, and Clarence Soleim Jr. who goes by Skip, is a Denmark Township resident and a Hastings downtown property owner as well as a former council member. Commission Member Hopkins motioned to approve the three appointments to the CAC. The motion was seconded by Commission Member Hunziker and passed unanimously.

Agenda Item #3 Union Depot Project Update – Mortenson Construction

Josh Olson provided an update on The Union Depot construction. He indicated the Ramsey County Railroad Authority was pleased with the team they have assembled. Mortenson Construction will be leading the team; URS is the rail transit team lead and HGA Architects will be completing the architecture and historic preservation components of the project. The project is currently on time and on budget, and in some cases ahead of schedule. The Rail Authority is excited to unveil the design of the Union Depot to the Red Rock Corridor Commission at the next meeting.

Agenda Item #4 Minnesota High Speed Rail Advocacy Update – On Board Midwest

Dennis Egan from On Board Midwest provided a presentation on the High Speed Rail project. The St Paul Chamber of Commerce has spearheaded this effort and On Board Midwest is working with the Chamber of Commerce and the business communities along the river route in order to build the On Board Midwest coalition along the river route. This does include the Wisconsin side of the river to ensure that high speed rail comes from Chicago, into La Crosse, up the river, and into the Twin Cities.

He indicated that On Board Midwest is a coalition of people, businesses, elected officials, and organization's that support the High Speed Rail line project along the river route. On Board Midwest is working with Mn/DOT in developing their state rail plan. Friends of On Board Midwest include; various non profits, foundations and various port authorities. The Minnesota Port Associations have endorsed the river route as the preferred route as Minnesota moves forward with high speed rail. Other groups that are supportive of high speed rail are convention and visitor groups as well as a variety of colleges. Additionally, Wisconsin is a friend of On Board Midwest, including the Hudson-River Falls Coalition, who also would like a commuter route to go from St Paul to Eau Claire, realizing a high speed route will not stop in Hudson or River Falls. On Board is also meeting with The Empire Builder Coalition from La Crosse, Wisconsin. By Wisconsin and Minnesota working collaboratively to ensure the success of high speed rail, it will make it easier to get Federal delegate support.

Mr. Egan also indicated that they are using social media sources like Facebook, Twitter, and Email. This has created a news source. By utilizing the social media they have become a news source for local media to learn what is happening, and helping to publicize the development of the rail. They are able to create their own press conferences, by using their own cameras and bringing the people together and do not have to rely on the media to arrive. OnBoard Midwest is also able to support and be a collaborative partner with the rail commissions and Mn/DOT.

Mr. Egan discussed the videos that he will be presenting today. On Board has completed five videos and will present two of them today. One takes place in Lake City and the other in Red Wing. These videos have been put on websites and places like YouTube and have received positive responses. Four DVD's are complete, as well as one for the Empire Line in La Crosse Wisconsin and they are currently working on one for Hastings to St Paul.

Agenda Item #5 Station Planning Study Update – Hay Dobbs

Tom Dobbs presented an update on station planning, to bring the Commission up to speed on what's been accomplished in the last month. He indicated that a variety of analysis tasks are underway in the four communities within the Red Rock Corridor, Lower Afton(St Paul), Newport, Cottage Grove and Hastings.

Station Area Analysis underway:

- Traffic Analysis
- Rail Analysis
- Parking Needs/Projections,
- Regional and Local Market Conditions
- Environmental Analysis
- Land Use
- Parks and Trails
- Natural Features
- Specific Station Attributes

Mr. Dobbs presented an Analysis Diagrammatic Summary of the Four Stations. In regards to the Lower Afton Station, he advised that the key consideration is fitting in the park-and-ride facility both short-term and long-term as well as the rail platform, and safe access to and from the station. Additionally, there is a large railroad yard to the area to the north of the station. Placing the platform there and allowing these activities to continue can be a challenge in the design. Commission Chair Peterson noted that that current park-and-ride is at capacity almost every day.

Mr. Dobbs continued by presenting the analysis for the Newport Station. He indicated that the challenge at this location is to get people to the platform. The access to the platform needs to occur in the far eastern and northern side of the tracks with some sort of elevated stair tower walkway going up and over the tracks. Access to the station is provided by Maxwell Avenue and Glen Road from the Frontage Road on the south. The main consideration at the Newport Station is how to thoughtfully create change in the area to provide the opportunity to connect to the platform, allow for the park and ride facilities and see this as an opportunity for re-development within the City of Newport. He also referred to the visioning session that occurred the night before and indicated that some interesting ideas came out of the session. Commission Member Gordon

questioned where the actual platform will be. Mr. Dobbs indicated the approximate location and that it would be a 600-foot-long platform that would accommodate the train set used, but would allow for expansion over time. Commission Chair Peterson asked if the platform would accommodate more than three cars, Mr. Dobbs indicated it would.

In reference to the Cottage Grove analysis, Mr. Dobbs informed the Commission that they are wrestling with the selection of a station area. They are still analyzing the Hamlet Park Station to the north and the Langdon Station to the south. The challenge is to analyze the long-term development opportunity and how does this fit in the overall city comprehensive plan as well as site amenities and access that would increase ridership. He indicated that they have been working with Metro Transit and the City of Cottage Grove to analyze these sites and make a thoughtful decision. He continued to present a diagrammatic summary of the Hamlet Park location. He stated that the Hamlet Park location is a current park and ride facility today that is sandwiched between the frontage road, West Point Douglas Road, and the railroad tracks. In regard to start-up costs and access, this location has existing ridership today and familiarity of location which is a benefit. The downside is it bisects the site, and we are not looking at crossing the tracks. The focus is the northwest and southeast section of the current park-and-ride. There is sufficient land to do some development there, with it likely to surround the existing parking. The challenge is what to do when the parking demand increases and the parking needs to be expanded by going up. The issue is how that will then affect the development surrounding the parking structure.

The Langdon Village Station has been identified by the City of Cottage Grove in their comprehensive plan as the desired station location. Mr. Dobbs presented the diagrammatic summary indicating the focus of two areas that could be used as the platform, a long linear piece and the area west-southwest of the public works facility. He referenced a benefit of this location is that there is a lot of developable land over the long-term; yet a challenge for this could be the multiple owners of the land. The area toward the east-southeast is owned by 3M and a meeting is scheduled next week with them to discuss their intentions with this area. Additionally, there is a similar issue here with crossing of the tracks, so all development will occur between West Point Douglas Road and the platform. The County has proposed extending County Road 19, which will provide better access. The current park-and-ride at Hamlet Park does have an issue with accessing the parking area via the frontage roads. Entry can be made from the far ends of the frontage road, and the entry from the north provides a circle going underneath and over the tracks, and there are times when the train can be stopped on the tracks and prevents entry to the frontage road. This is an issue in design that is being taken into consideration.

The Hastings Station challenge is to provide a park-and-ride adjacent to the platform and weave it carefully into the historic downtown area. The area to the east end of downtown remains undeveloped and owned by the city. The challenge becomes how to provide more than just a parking facility and weave it into the existing scale and character of the historic downtown.

Mr. Dobbs informed the Commission Members that the first of the visioning sessions occurred this week in Hastings and Newport. The main questions to be asked are: What uses and amenities are fitting for the station areas in each community? What are the

uses of the public space, both short-term and long-term? Should we allow for a variety of scale, streetscape parking amenities, sustainability and landscape? This is the first step in the public outreach process.

The schedule for the Public Process is as follows:

Focus Group Discussions, CAC, PMT are ongoing with chamber members and property owners.

Visioning Session #1 (Spring 2010) – Big picture concepts and guiding principles

Visioning session #2 (Late Summer 2010) Refined, parcel specific land use concepts

Public Meeting #1 (Fall 2010)

Public Meeting #2 – Open House (early 2011)

Stakeholder input:

- Site Information

- Existing Development Proposals

- Potential Development Idea

- Additional Observations

Commission Member Hopkins indicated that he attended the first Visioning Session the night before in Newport. It started at 6:00 P.M. and did not end until 8:45 P.M. It was a very productive meeting with many ideas of development with a lot of different approaches.

Commission Member Hollenbeck indicated that the Hastings meeting, earlier in the week, was a success also. A lot of ideas were presented and all stakeholders and city staff were on the same page as to their vision for the depot area.

Agenda Item #6 Legislative Update - WCRRA

a. State

Commission Chair Peterson recognized the efforts of Senator Katie Sieben for her work on the Hastings bus bill. Commission Chair Peterson invited Senator Sieben to provide the Commission with the legislative update at the state level. Senator Sieben indicated that the Transportation Omnibus bill did pass the Senate this past week, but there was a last minute effort to take out the Hastings Bridge Project. Thankfully, that effort failed and the Hastings Bridge Project is still included in the senate version of the bill. Senator Sieben requested that the Red Rock Corridor Commission send letters of support to the conferees and the MN House of Representative members along the Red Rock Corridor. Commission Member Hunziker made a motion to have the Commission send letter of support to all conferees; it was seconded by Commission Member Gordon and passed unanimously.

b. Federal

Mr. Gitzlaff presented the Federal update. He referenced that the Senate has now released their transportation appropriations request for fiscal year 2011. He reminded the Commission Members that Washington County had submitted a request on behalf of the Red Rock Corridor Commission for bus service and capital improvements to park-and-rides along the corridor to McCollum, Franken and Klobuchar. So far, Klobuchar has put in a request for \$500,000 and Franken has put in a request for \$1,000,000 for bus service and park-and-ride construction. Mr. Gitzlaff also referred Commission Members to review the distributed listing of all the rail and highway projects in the metro and the amount of investment requested by the Minnesota Delegation. He highlighted one area which is in the southwest transportation corridor of Cottage Grove and an appropriations request has been put in near the proposed Langdon Station area. This could have an impact on the development around the proposed station site. Commission Chair Peterson proposed that the Red Rock Corridor Commission send a thank you to both Senator Klobuchar and Franken.

Agenda Item #7 Chapter 152 Solicitation Update – WCRRA

Andy Gitzlaff provided an update on Chapter 152 Solicitation. In the 2008 Legislature Session there were \$58 million in trunk highway bonds allocated towards transit improvements, the goal of the program is to provide highway transit advantages and capital improvements that will support and encourage transit use in the trunk highway cores. These funds may be used for capital improvements such as additional lanes for buses and park- and-ride improvements. It is strictly for use in construction costs and not planning and development. Much of these funds have been allocated to other projects, but there is a remaining \$20 million left over in trunk highway funds. Mn/DOT has put together a grant solicitation process to distribute the remaining funds in the form of grant requests with a six million dollar cap per project. There are two grant requests submitted along the Red Rock Corridor, the first is from Washington County for \$1.5 million for the park-and-ride in Newport at the Knox building site. Washington County currently has a purchase agreement to acquire this property. The second request is from the City of Hastings for \$640,000 for the construction of a park-and-ride in the city of Hastings. Both of these requests were discussed at the last Red Rock Corridor meeting, and a motion was made to send letters of support for these projects. Mr. Gitzlaff indicated that nine grant applications were received totaling \$24 million. Commission Members are encouraged to refer to the memo in regard to the qualifying process and main scoring criteria in the grant selection process. He anticipates that by the end of April there should be a recommendation made and a full decision by June.

Agenda Item #8 Commission Advocacy and Conference Attendance - WCRRA

Mr. Gitzlaff reminded the Commission Members that the work plan and budget for the Red Rock Corridor Commission does include \$25,000 for Commission Members' training, national conferences and advocacy trips. RRCC has had a lot of new members over the years and it would be beneficial for Commission Members to attend some upcoming conferences. The staff has identified The Railvolution Conference in Portland, Oregon this October 19-21 as a good conference that focuses on transit land use connection. The average breakdown of costs for this conference is included in the memo. An additional

advocacy trip to consider would be to Washington, D.C. later this year. Mr. Gitzlaff refers to the memo again for the estimated costs involved with this event. The merits of these opportunities are up for discussion today. Discussion could include, who should attend and which costs should be incurred by the Commission. The Commission's budget does allow for reimbursement for airfare, lodging, registration fees and meals, yet there are no real policies in place as to what is an allowable expense.

Discussion continued with Commission Chair Peterson inquiring if any members would like to attend the conference in Oregon. Commission Member Hopkins expressed interest. Commission Chair Peterson refers to the upcoming Transportation Alliance Conference in Washington, DC. She indicated that many Washington County members are attending. Commission Chair Peterson reminds all board members to look at their schedules for the upcoming Transportation Alliance Conference, a two-day conference in Washington, DC. Mr. Gitzlaff clarifies that the Board would look at the other groups going out to conferences and would get Red Rock Board Members involved with them. In regard to the Railvolution Conference, this item will be brought up for discussion at a future meeting.

Agenda Item #9 Other

a. National Train Day May 8th – WCRRA

Mr. Gitzlaff informs the Commission Members of Amtrak's upcoming third-annual National Train Day, commemorating the history of rail travel. There are many family friendly events all over the country including some in the Twin Cities Area. The Amtrak Midway Station will have exhibits depicting the past, present and future of the railroad. The Red Rock Corridor Commission was invited to have a booth there, and the station planning consultant team is putting together boards and displays, but volunteers will be needed to staff the booth. Please contact Mr. Gitzlaff to set up the schedule for the booth. Commission Chair Peterson questions if there is anyone from the high speed rail coalition going to be at train day. Mr. Olson from Ramsey County indicated that Ramsey County is having a small booth set up with handouts that include some high speed rail information. Commission Member Rettman inquires if it is possible for On Board Midwest to have a visual DVD presentation. Mr. Egan indicated he is meeting with Ramsey County tomorrow and starting on Monday will be participating in a five day blog.

b. Northstar Ridership Update

Commission Chair Peterson referred all members to their packets with the document including the average ridership of the Northstar Line. The Twins opening at Target Field had 500 riders for the first game and 2,055 riders for the third game. She referenced the increasing ridership numbers since January 2010. Northstars ridership numbers will have an impact on our projected ridership numbers.

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

The Commission adjourned at 4:55 p.m.