



**Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee**

Meeting Notes

Wednesday, February 2, 2011

8:00-9:30 am

St. Louis Park City Hall

**Meeting Attendees**

Steering Committee Members & Alternates

Gail Dorfman	Hennepin County	Member
Jan Callison	Hennepin County	Member
Peter McLaughlin	HCRRA	Member
Anne Mavity	City of St. Louis Park	Member
Mary Brindle	City of Edina	Alternate
Terry Schneider	City of Minnetonka	Alternate
Betsy Hodges	City of Minneapolis	Alternate
Janet Jeremiah	City of Eden Prairie	Alternate
Jim Hovland	City of Edina	Member

Other Attendees

Phil Eckhart (Hennepin County), Katie Walker (Hennepin County), Patrick Connoy (Hennepin County), Adele Hall (Hennepin County), Carol Lezotte Anderson (Hennepin County), Katie Hatt (Hennepin County), Amanda Arnold (City of Minneapolis), Meg McMonigal (City of St. Louis Park), Karen Lyons (Metropolitan Council), Susan Hoyt (Metropolitan Council), Craig Lamothe (Metro Transit), Larry Blackstedt (Three Rivers Park District), Dick Miller (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District), Jeff Casale (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District), Kathie Doty (KLD Consulting), Paul Heuer (Bonestroo), Barry Warner (SRF), Caren Dewar (ULI Minnesota), Cathy Bennett (ULI Minnesota), Chuck Salter (Hennepin County), Kari Dziedzic (Hennepin County)

**I. Welcome & Introductions**

Chair Gail Dorfman (Hennepin County Member) opened the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

**II. November 3, 2010 Meeting Minutes**

Chair Dorfman asked for review and action on the minutes from the November 3, 2010 Steering Committee meeting. Jim Hovland (Edina Member) moved to approve the minutes; Jan Callison (Hennepin County) seconded this motion, and the minutes were approved on a voice vote.

**III. Updates**

**Living Cities and HUD Sustainable Communities**

Chair Dorfman provided an overview that the County and partners are attempting to weave together funding from a variety of sources to support the Southwest Community Works initiative. Phil Eckhart, Hennepin County, reported that the agreement with US Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for Sustainable Communities work had been executed, and the agreement

calls for a work plan to be developed within 60 days. A portion of the funding, \$750,000, has been designated for community engagement. Mary Kay Bailey, Living Cities Integration Initiative Project Manager at The Saint Paul Foundation, provided an update on Living Cities funding. Most funding will be in the form of loans and most will go toward projects along the Hiawatha and Central Corridor lines. The next step for Southwest is to develop an investment framework.

Mr. Eckhert continued that the Metropolitan Council is the lead for the Sustainable Communities grant and they are working with partners on a regional work plan. Susan Hoyt, Metropolitan Council staff, clarified that grant funds for community engagement are focused on under-served populations, and not intended for community engagement in general.

### **LRT Project and SW Corridor Management Committee**

Mark Fuhrmann, Metro Transit, reported that project staff are working with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to obtain their approval for the Southwest LRT project to enter the preliminary engineering (PE) project phase. The FTA has requested a pre-preliminary engineering risk assessment be prepared for all projects whose budgets exceed \$1 billion, which includes the Southwest LRT project. The FTA has been focusing their analysis on the proposed project schedule and project staff have been providing information to respond to their questions. The FTA will be back in the Twin Cities in a couple of weeks to conduct the risk assessment, and if all goes as hoped, approval to enter PE will occur in the second quarter of 2011. Anne Mavity (St. Louis Park Member) asked about the main issues in a risk assessment. Mr. Fuhrmann responded that the FTA cares about three things: project scope, schedule, and budget. Their inquiries to date have been about the Southwest LRT project schedule. Mr. Fuhrmann reported that the kick off meeting of the newly formed SW Corridor Management Committee occurred on December 9, 2010, and that monthly meetings have been scheduled.

Chair Dorfman reported that she had been in contact with the new Metropolitan Council Chair, Sue Haigh, and that she is on the nominating committee for the new Council. She indicated that the new Council is expected to be in place soon.

### **Legislative Update**

Katie Walker, Hennepin County, distributed a packet including a legislative handout that was prepared to communicate the SW project status and the project's focus on jobs and employment. It was mentioned that Senator Hann and Representative Beard have expressed concerns about the SW LRT project and have questioned whether the decision on the locally preferred alternative was hasty.

Ms. Walker summarized that the County's request in the State bonding bill is for \$5 million for the Southwest LRT project. Chair Dorfman noted that this request is not included in the Governor's budget as he has focused on 'shovel-ready' projects. Peter McLaughlin (Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority Member) expressed concern about the state of funding for transit projects, saying that we are back to the fundamentals – explaining the value to the region of a comprehensive transit system. He noted that the State saved \$100 million on the Hiawatha roadway project as a result of a scaling back that was possible due to the construction of the Hiawatha LRT project. On the national level, there are 100+ projects in the funding queue, and if a dozen of those projects pass by Southwest, we could be delayed by a decade. He emphasized that the locally preferred alternative was chosen because it cost \$600 - \$800 million less in capital costs than the next best alternative, and the operating costs were lower as well. He also commented that the comparison that is being heard between LRT projects and Northstar commuter rail are not fair. The modes of transit are very different, and commuter rail ridership in particular is more dependent upon economic conditions. Jim Hovland (Edina

Member) stated that he is a member of the US 169 Corridor Coalition and that this group is very supportive of transit. He suggested that we reach out to Scott County to garner more support for the Southwest LRT project.

#### **IV. Proposed Vision and Goals**

Chair Dorfman asked Jim Hovland (Edina Member) to report on the Visioning Session that occurred on December 10, 2010. Mayor Hovland summarized that the facilitator, Professor Barbara Crosby from the Humphrey Institute, helped the group 'back into' a vision. Chair Dorfman referred to a summary that was distributed summarizing the elements of a vision statement that came out of the visioning session. She expressed hope that a clear vision statement could be crafted and said that a proposed statement will be brought to the Steering Committee for action at the next meeting. Anne Mavity (St. Louis Park Member) thanked staff for the summary piece, and expressed her interest in ensuring that the vision statement incorporate elements from the planning grants that will be funding some of our work. Terry Schneider (Minnetonka Alternate) wanted language included that focuses on job creation and economic competitiveness. Peter McLaughlin (HCRRRA Member) supported that idea, saying that economic development occurs at the local level and economic competitiveness is more of a state concern. Mary Brindle (Edina Alternate) stated that she had met recently with Fortune 500 company representatives and that they said the most important factor impacting whether they could stay in Edina was transportation. Janet Jeremiah (Eden Prairie Alternate) offered that the vision work did a good job of helping us think forward, but that perhaps there is also a need to think about more immediate concerns such as maintaining business support with those businesses that may see the impacts of a SW LRT line as negative. Jan Callison (Hennepin County Member) agreed saying there is a difference between creating a vision for this project vs. gaining advocates for the project in the present. Chair Dorfman asked staff to look at re-framing the materials developed and adding prioritization. Revisions will be prepared for the next Steering Committee meeting.

#### **V. Workplan Overview**

Patrick Connoy, Hennepin County, presented on the 2011 – 2014 work plan. This plan includes a mix of planning work and implementation activities. Compared to other Hennepin County Community Works projects, this will move faster, be more complex, and include many more partners.

#### **VI. Other Business**

Chair Dorfman asked staff to articulate a sense of timing on grant work in relationship to the LRT project. Mary Kay Bailey, St. Paul Foundation, said that the Sustainable Communities grant would begin on April 1 and lasts for three years. The Living Cities work will also span three years. The Southwest LRT preliminary engineering work is expected to take two years.

Peter McLaughlin (HCRRRA Member) encouraged the group to think about engaging 'big-time players' as the County did with the Phillips and Midtown Greenway projects. Janet Jeremiah (Eden Prairie Alternate) said that the City staff have been reaching out to the businesses along the corridor and have held more than 40 meetings to date. She indicated that one challenge is to manage expectations and frustration with the seemingly slow pace of a project such as this one. Terry Schneider (Minnetonka Alternate) observed that, while there are several ways to reach out to businesses, it's important to recognize that there can be a difference between the way business thinks and the way government operates.

#### **VII. Adjournment**

Chair Dorfman indicated that staff would be checking on possible dates for the next meeting since the March 2 date will not work. She thanked the participants and adjourned the meeting.