



Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee

Meeting Notes

September 8, 2010 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	Hennepin County	Member
Peter Bell	Metropolitan Council	Member
Don Samuels	City of Minneapolis	Member
Anne Mavity	City of St. Louis Park	Member
Mary Brindle	City of Edina	Alternate
Rick Brausen	City of Hopkins	Member
Terry Schneider	City of Minnetonka	Alternate
Kathy Nelson	City of Eden Prairie	Member
Janet Jeremiah	City of Eden Prairie	Alternate

Other Attendees

Phil Eckhert (Hennepin County), Katie Walker (Hennepin County), Patrick Connoy (Hennepin County), Adele Hall (Hennepin County), Carol Lezotte Anderson (Hennepin County), Kari Dzedzic (Hennepin County), Dave Nuckols (Hennepin County), Kerri Pearce Ruch (Hennepin County), Mark Fuhrmann (Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit), Karen Lyons, (Metropolitan Council), Susan Hoyt (Metropolitan Council), Craig Lamothe (Metro Transit), Tom Harming (City of St. Louis Park), Kevin Locke (City of St. Louis Park), Meg McMonigal (City of St. Louis Park), Julie Wischnack (City of Minnetonka), Larry Blackstedt (Three Rivers Park District), Jeff Casale (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District), Dick Miller (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District), Caren Dewar (ULI Minnesota), Cathy Bennett (ULI Minnesota), Hannah Berg (ULI Minnesota), John Shardlow (Bonestroo), Kathie Doty (KLD Consulting)

I. Welcome & Introductions

Commissioner Gail Dorfman (Hennepin County Member) opened the first meeting of the Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) Community Works Steering Committee, saying that this is an exciting moment in the progression of the Southwest LRT project. Commissioner Dorfman summarized the milestones that have brought the project to this point and provided an overview of the Southwest LRT Community Works initiative. Through a new model for building an LRT project, the Southwest Community Works project will enhance opportunities for transit-oriented development along the planned Southwest LRT line. The goal is to work ahead of the project and create a model for effective integration of the design and construction of an LRT line with promoting development in anticipation of the line.

Commissioner Jan Callison (Hennepin County Member) stated that we have a challenge – to see how smart we can be in capturing the potential for transit oriented development. We want to use this line to its fullest potential as both a transportation amenity and also a catalyst for community development. She welcomed the attendees, saying that she was happy to see such a great group assembled for this work.

Commissioner Dorfman asked Steering Committee members and meeting attendees to introduce



themselves. She indicated that it might make sense to add representatives from other sectors to the Steering Committee but that would be discussed and addressed at a later time. The task for this meeting is to set the stage for the Steering Committee and initiate their work.

II. Hennepin County Community Works

Commissioner Dorfman asked Patrick Connoy, Hennepin County Community Works Manager, to provide an overview of the Hennepin County Community Works program. Mr. Connoy reviewed examples of projects completed through this program, including the Midtown Corridor, the Humboldt Greenway, the Minnehaha-Hiawatha corridor, and 46th Street lighting project. Mr. Connoy indicated that, to date, all Hennepin County Community Works projects have been conducted in the City of Minneapolis, and that the Southwest LRT Community Works Project will be an exciting new challenge with six cities involved. Mayor Terry Schneider (Minnetonka Alternate) asked how project work will be staffed. Mr. Connoy responded that his staff is fairly small and that projects often bring in expertise and support from engineering, planning, and other consulting firms. Commissioner Dorfman added that all projects build upon existing city plans and engage city planning staff as well.

III. Southwest LRT Project Update

Katie Walker, Southwest LRT Project Manager, reviewed major project achievements. Significant progress has been made as evidenced by selection of a locally preferred alternative (LPA), submittal of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for their review, completion of an application to the FTA to enter Preliminary Engineering, and completion of station area planning for suburban stations. Ms. Walker indicated that the DEIS document will be published for public review in late October or early November, and after the public comment period, the DEIS work will be closed out. Adele Hall, Hennepin County Transit Planner, added that station area planning for Minneapolis stations is currently underway and should be complete by the end of 2010.

IV. Southwest LRT Community Works Project

Mark Fuhrmann, Metro Transit Director of New Starts Rail Projects, provided an historical perspective, saying that the Southwest LRT project is the fourth New Starts rail project in our region. Earlier projects focused on building lines and demonstrating ridership potential over land development. With the Southwest LRT project, a tremendous opportunity exists to change the way Metro Transit approaches a rail project. This will be reflected in the Southwest LRT Project Office, where Mr. Fuhrmann expects that planners will be more actively involved in the LRT design work and at earlier project stages. Phil Eckhert, Hennepin County Director of Housing, Community Works, and Transit, referenced a chart in the committee materials that shows a parallel structure for the LRT project office and the Community Works activities. He also reviewed a draft charter for the Steering Committee, saying that we would discuss this at greater length at a future meeting.

Councilmember Kathy Nelson (Eden Prairie Member) expressed concern about a piece that she felt was missing: how the LRT project would be integrated with the larger transit system. Mr. Fuhrmann responded that this was not mentioned because it is hard wired into their work. For every transitway project, Metro Transit conducts a sector study to determine the best ways to connect existing bus service with the new rail service. This happened for the Hiawatha project and is underway for the Central Corridor project. Commissioner Callison added that the Steering Committee might wish to add members to the committee or to subcommittees that may be created. Chair Peter Bell (Metropolitan Council



Member) spoke to the importance of integrating planning and project development work, and specifically talked about the role of the Corridor Management Committee (CMC) which is expected to be formed in late October or early November. Chair Bell outlined elements of the planned CMC including membership, the appointment process, meeting frequency, and scope of committee work. The CMC will be more than a listening group; they will influence the project as it progresses.

Chair Bell also reviewed the status of grants and funding opportunities that will potentially impact the Southwest LRT Community Works Project.

V. Near-Term Work Plan

Mr. Eckhert explained that, while the Steering Committee will be asked to provide input on a work plan, the County felt it was important to get some of the preliminary work underway. John Shardlow, Bonestroo, gave an update on the work that has begun with funding from the McKnight Foundation.

Commissioner Peter McLaughlin (Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority Member) reinforced that the Southwest LRT Community Works Project offers a great opportunity for our region. He feels that, with regard to fully capturing the potential from transit-oriented development, the region is catching up with regard to Hiawatha, just in time on Central Corridor, and getting out front on Southwest.

Councilmember Anne Mavity (St. Louis Park Member) expressed the need for effective communications and outreach. She related that she recently heard from a constituent about their concerns about whether their house would be taken as a result of plans to develop near a planned Southwest LRT station. She also expressed her interest in having Three Rivers Park District involved in some way, either on the Steering Committee or a subcommittee.

Commissioner Dorfman thanked the McKnight Foundation and ULI for supporting this effort by bringing in Ken Greenberg and other urban planning expertise. Mr. Shardlow offered information about the framework for Central Corridor, using a working group led by Commissioners McDonough and McLaughlin.

VI. Questions, Discussion, Next Steps

Commissioner Dorfman invited attendees to offer comments and suggestions for next steps. She indicated that the Steering Committee would be meeting monthly. Mr. Eckhert, Hennepin County Director of Housing, Community Works, and Transit, outlined practical items that would be covered at upcoming meetings: organization and leadership, membership, structure of a partnership agreement, how the committee will be staffed, communication protocols, and work plan and budget. Mayor Schneider weighed in on leadership, saying that it would be logical for Commissioner Dorfman to chair the committee and possibly have a city representative act as vice chair. Caren Dewar, Urban Land Institute (ULI), mentioned her work with the Hiawatha LRT line and stated that ULI was on contract to assist in bringing in resources to facilitate the Southwest LRT discussion. She related that two workshops were held last fall and that there is one more planned, possibly to be held on November 10. The plan at this point is to have a mobile workshop touring the Hiawatha line and a follow up workshop, possibly led by Ken Greenberg, Toronto, and Marilee Utter, Denver.



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Commissioner Callison asked Mr. Eckhert to send out his list of items for the next Steering Committee meeting to give everyone a chance to consider options. Councilmember Rick Brausen (Hopkins Member) offered his hope that cities will use this process to learn more about each others' interests and concerns.

There was some discussion about the best time for the monthly meeting, but nothing was finalized. Staff will explore possibilities and get back to committee members with a recommendation.

Commissioner Dorfman thanked the participants for their involvement, and adjourned the meeting at 9:40 am.

