



Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 19, 2012

1:30 - 3:00 pm

St. Louis Park City Hall

Meeting Attendees

Steering Committee Members & Alternates

Chair Gail Dorfman, Hennepin County Member
Jan Callison, Hennepin County Member
Kathy Nelson, City of Eden Prairie Member
Molly Cummings, City of Hopkins Member
Tony Wagner, City of Minnetonka Member
Anne Mavity, City of St. Louis Park Member
Caren Dewar, ULI-MN Member
Jim Hovland, City of Edina Member
Jennifer Munt, Metropolitan Council Member

Other Attendees

Phil Eckhert (Hennepin County), Katie Walker (Hennepin County), Adele Hall (Hennepin County), Carol Lezotte Anderson (Hennepin County), Lisa Middag (Hennepin County), Mark Fuhrmann (Metro Transit), Chris Weyer (Metro Transit), Karin Berkholtz (Hennepin County), Amanda Arnold (City of Minneapolis), Jack Byers (City of Minneapolis), Jennifer Ringold (Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board), Karen Lyons (Metropolitan Council), Denise Engen (Metropolitan Council), Jeff Casale (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District), Kersten Elverum (City of Hopkins), Julie Wischnack (City of Minnetonka), Kevin Locke (City of St. Louis Park), Meg McMonigal (City of St. Louis Park), Tom Harmening (City of St. Louis Park), Jeff Benson (URS Corporation), Susan Hoyt (Metropolitan Council), Larry Blackstad (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District), Dick Miller (Minnehaha Creek Watershed District), Kathie Doty (KLD Consulting), Kerri Pearce Ruch (Hennepin County), Steve Hogan (City of Minneapolis), Janet Jeremiah (City of Eden Prairie), Chuck Salter (Hennepin County), Tim Bloundek (Braas Company), Ray Robbel (Braas Company)

I. Welcome & Introductions

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

II. November 17, 2011, Meeting Minutes

Chair Dorfman (Hennepin County Member) asked for review and action on the minutes from the November 17, 2011, Steering Committee meeting.

Kathy Nelson (Eden Prairie Member) moved to approve the minutes; Jan Callison (Hennepin County Member) seconded this motion, and the minutes were approved on a voice vote.

III. Annual Report

Chair Dorfman (Hennepin County) summarized the Southwest LRT Community Works Annual Report and asked Steering Committee members to contact Adele Hall, Hennepin County, with any changes to the report. The report will be finalized and posted on the website in two weeks. Chair Dorfman noted that Community Works will take off in 2012 with the Transitional Station Area Action Plans, catalytic infrastructure investments, public/private partnerships, and funding for projects with new and existing tools. The Community Advisory Committee will be expanded, and a new Business Advisory Council will be formed.

Phil Eckhert, Hennepin County, addressed the Steering Committee regarding Southwest LRT Community Works staff changes at Hennepin County. Katie Walker, Hennepin County staff, will manage the Southwest LRT Community Works effort for Hennepin County and will also act as the Assistant Project Director for Land Use & Community Works within the Southwest LRT Project Office. Mr. Eckhert noted that the staff reorganization corresponds well to the Southwest LRT cooperative agreement that Hennepin County holds with the Metropolitan Council.

IV. 2012 Workplans

Mark Fuhrmann, Metro Transit, addressed the Committee regarding the Southwest LRT project's 2012 workplan. Mr. Fuhrmann noted that when staff met with FTA Executive Director Matt Welbes in December he expected that the Federal Transit Administration would soon publish a notice of rulemaking regarding ranking and funding of New Starts projects, with a strong emphasis on land use and development. Mr. Fuhrmann noted that Community Works will serve the project well as it proceeds through Preliminary Engineering (PE), the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), and Final Design.

Mr. Fuhrmann moved on to his presentation, stating that engineering services proposals were received in December and staff plan to bring a recommendation to the Metropolitan Council in March. The engineering services contract was \$91 million for Central Corridor LRT; Mr. Fuhrmann expects that the contract for Southwest will be similar, probably a little bit more. The consultant will start survey and geotechnical data gathering when the ground thaws, and the Southwest project office will be set up this spring. Mr. Fuhrmann showed an organizational chart for the project office, noting that six of the seven assistant director positions have been filled and the seventh hiring is ongoing. The last level of the organizational chart shows 38 new full time positions; two Metropolitan Council Community Works positions will complement the Hennepin County staff Mr. Eckhert mentioned earlier.

The Southwest project office will be at 6465 Wayzata Blvd, Park Place West in St. Louis Park. Consultants and agency staff will work together in the same office, which will save the project about \$15 million over the course of the project because consultants will charge field rates instead of a higher office rate. The lease runs from March 2012-July 2019; staff will move into the offices in April. Chair Dorfman (Hennepin County Member) asked Mr. Fuhrmann to give a sense of the order of PE, if it is geographic, and at what point PE can inform station area plans. Mr. Fuhrmann responded that the consultants will work on all phases at once; there will not be a geographic order. He deferred to Katie Walker, Hennepin County, to address the intersection of PE and Station Area Planning.

Katie Walker, Hennepin County, presented the planned activities of Community Works and referred committee members to a handout. In the first quarter of 2012, Community Works is planning to release the Transitional Station Area Action Plans (TSAAP) Request for Proposals (RFP). The RFP will be released in late February, after the Metropolitan Council has finished the engineering services selection process. Once the TSAAP consultant is hired, the procurement for the FEIS will proceed so that conflicts of interest are avoided. Staff is planning a workshop for early spring on the technical components of LRT projects so that city and county planning and engineering staff are able to facilitate better input and participation in the design and engineering process.

In the second quarter, Community Works will address the issue of necessary development authorities and financing tools and identify a package of infrastructure projects that support LRT and transit oriented development (TOD). Tony Wagner (Minnetonka Member) asked if that level of infrastructure includes planning for Metro Transit feeder routes and commented that this planning seems necessary for TOD investment. Mr. Fuhrmann responded that Metro Transit usually analyzes the feeder bus network in two phases: first, with the application to PE—the current network—and second, with the Full Funding Grant Agreement the Metro Transit planners take a fresh look at how the market has adjusted and what the opportunities are to create a more robust network. A similar two-step approach is likely for Southwest. Kathy Nelson (Eden Prairie Member) commented that there will be more restructuring of routes along Southwest than Central because of the shifting need from express routes to feeder buses. It will be too late to start planning the network in the Full Funding Grant Agreement time period; it should be part of the station area planning or initial planning because the network affects how the station areas will be used. Mr. Fuhrmann agreed with Ms. Nelson's point noting that the bus network is part of the ridership forecast and will be part of the dialogue in the PE process. Mr. Wagner commented that connecting other redevelopment projects in our cities with the feeder bus network could help strengthen the project.

Ms. Walker continued her presentation, noting that quarters three and four will be devoted to workforce and business growth, as well as marketing to help spur TOD in the corridor. Metropolitan Council identified 17 core issues as needing attention in PE; the TSAAP consultant and PE consultant will communicate regarding land use plans and engineering, as well as some of the core pieces of LRT infrastructure that will be need to be sited before municipal consent. City and county staff and the TSAAP consultant will be considering what the siting of overhead catenary systems, park and rides, structures, the operations and maintenance facility, traction power sub stations, public art, bus facilities, and kiss and rides will mean for land use and development. Ms. Nelson asked when businesses that are concerned about LRT placement will be able to have their input about where the line will run. Mr. Fuhrmann responded that the engineering consultants will be doing survey work for the first couple months of their contract, but in the summer they will start meeting with stakeholders. Ms. Nelson asked if businesses will have input as infrastructure is sited, or if they will react to sitings. Mr. Fuhrmann responded that the engineering consultants will start by becoming familiar with the existing conceptual engineering drawings and making some small changes. After that the dialogue will start with stakeholders regarding siting facilities. Chair Dorfman asked if stakeholders will start to get an idea of the constraints and flexibility of the LRT project in time for the Business Advisory Council and the TSAAP process to have input. Ms. Nelson noted that there is a business expanding on-location in Eden Prairie who have been ready to talk about this for four months and would like a specific date on the calendar. Chair Dorfman noted that there will be a lot of private sector interest in the LRT and it is a good idea to have a marketing strategy and land bank. Jan Callison (Hennepin County Member) asked whether the routing and siting decisions will come before the Management Committee or the Steering Committee. Mr. Fuhrmann confirmed that LRT project modifications and design adjustments will come before the Management Committee. Once PE is started it will move very quickly. There will be ongoing conversation with the businesses and committees but we will need to be focused and expedite the process. Chair Dorfman noted that the onus is on Community Works if we want to drive development at these stations. We need to do our work sooner rather than later. Mr. Wagner noted that planning work needs to be done in quarters one and two. Mr. Fuhrmann added that when the LRT project is at 30% design complete a year from now there will be much less flexibility to change things. Chair Dorfman asked when the TSAAP consultant will be hired. Ms. Walker responded that it is planned for June, but staff is exploring options for shortening the procurement timeframe so that a consultant can start earlier. Staff is reviewing the RFP now to clarify priority items in the near term and incorporate a working relationship with the PE consultant. Chair Dorfman noted that some conceptual work has already been done at the stations and the cities have been working on these stations for a number of months. For example, St. Louis Park has work underway at Beltline. All of this work should complement and expedite the work of the TSAAP consultant.

Ms. Walker stated that quarter four will be devoted to updating the infrastructure inventory to add the TSAAP results and create a Corridor Investment Framework that looks much like the one done for Central Corridor. Ms. Nelson asked when the operations and maintenance facility (OMF) will be explored; this is a big issue for Eden Prairie and property owners. Mr. Fuhrmann answered that it will be addressed in the second half of 2012; the OMF is one of the 17 issue areas that need attention. Ms. Walker presented a final graphic that showed LRT engineering and Community Works coming together to inform each other and reach goals of enhanced mobility, economic development, leveraged resources, and great places. Chair Dorfman noted that the scope of activities should be translated into items for the monthly Steering Committee meetings to delineate when the Committee will be making decisions and considering aspects of the TSAAPs. Jim Hovland (Edina Member) commented that there is much to do in a very short time. Committee members need to be given a change and timeframe so that we can be as efficient and effective as possible. Anne Mavity (St. Louis Park Member) asked when the FTA rulemaking would take effect. Mr. Fuhrmann responded that as of December, FTA was confident that it was close to being released. After release there will be a 30-60 day comment period. Then it will be many months before they publish the new rules, perhaps by the end of 2012. Ms. Mavity responded that when the rules are proposed, we should use them as a guide. Mr. Fuhrmann agreed, noting that many of the proposed rules tend to be adopted.

V. Membership Nominations

Chair Dorfman (Hennepin County Member) noted that there are two applications for membership in the Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee before the Committee. The Committee will first consider the application of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD).

Tony Wagner (Minnetonka Member) moved that the MCWD become a member of the Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee.

Jim Hovland (Edina Member) seconded the motion.

Discussion: Jeff Casale, MCWD Board of Managers, introduced himself and stated that the integrated process of Southwest LRT Community Works would benefit from MCWD participation by integrating the environmental aspect, as well. When ground is being disturbed, the MCWD is always looking for opportunities to improve the creek. Rather than just being a regulatory partner, the MCWD like to be involved on the front end of planning. Jan Callison (Hennepin County Member) asked if Mr. Casale and Mr. Miller would be the member and alternate and if MCWD has any concerns about possible financial contributions. Mr. Casale replied that MCWD has been aware of the contribution possibility from the beginning. Anne Mavity (St. Louis Park Member) noted that the City of St. Louis Park is currently partnering with MCWD to re-meander the creek; we see right now how land use planning is integrated with creek planning. Kathy Nelson (Eden Prairie Member) asked if MCWD would represent other watershed districts beyond their purview. Chair Dorfman responded no, if other watersheds want to make the case for their membership and a member wants to sponsor, the committee will consider the application.

The motion was unanimously approved on a voice vote.

Chair Dorfman moved that the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) become a member of the Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee.

Ms. Mavity seconded the motion.

Discussion: Jennifer Ringold, MPRB staff, introduced herself and thanked the City of Minneapolis for nominating MPRB. Ms. Ringold noted that, if approved, John Erwin, President of the MPRB, will appoint the member to the Steering Committee. MPRB has a long standing interest in the Southwest LRT Project because of its land holdings and also because of quality of life issues.

Southwest LRT presents an opportunity to preserve natural space and bring livability and recreation to riders. Ms. Mavity asked if the trail through the Kenilworth corridor and along the Southwest LRT is owned by Three Rivers Park District. Ms. Ringold responded that MPRB is the funder for the Kenilworth trail on Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority land, the Southwest LRT trail (outside of Minneapolis) is maintained by the Three Rivers Park District on HCRRA property. Ms. Callison asked if MPRB has any concerns about possible financial contributions and why the MPRB application states that their assets are "TBD". Ms. Ringold responded that staff thought the asset was the member themselves and that MPRB's assets are listed in the rationale section. Regarding a financial contribution MPRB would probably need more info before they could answer. They will continue to make improvements to their land adjacent to the corridor, and Ms. Ringold noted that MPRB has entered into similar relationships, such as the Midtown Community Works project.

The motion was unanimously approved on a voice vote.

VI. Technical Implementation Committee (TIC) Update

The TIC update was deferred to a future meeting because of time constraints.

VII. Legislative updates

Chair Dorfman asked Steering Committee members to review the legislative materials provided by lobbyists, noting that it's not the fundamental purpose of Community Works to lobby, but we want to be advocates for the project and provide information for when we meet with legislators individually. Governor Dayton has included \$25 million in his bonding bill for Southwest LRT.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm. The next Southwest LRT Community Works Steering Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, February 16, at 1:30 pm at the St. Louis Park City Hall.