



RTAC MEETING SUMMARY
April 8, 2010
Hermantown Public Safety Building

Attendees:

John Welle	Aitkin County
Tom Peterson	DNR
Doug Grindall	Koochiching County
Shae Kosmalski	Cook County
Wayne Olson	Carlton County
Walter Leu	Mn/DOT State Aid
Catherine McLynn	Itasca County
Jack Larson	Arrowhead Transit/Rural Transit
Don Mohawk	Mn/DOT
Denny Johnson	Mn/DOT
William Whiteman	Bois Forte Reservation Tribal Gov't.
Bill Bennett	Chambers (LHB)
Les Ollila	Mn DNR
Mike Forsman	St. Louis County
Paul Bergman	Lake County
Alan Goodman	Area County Engineers
Ron Johnson	Duluth Seaway Port Authority
Andy Hubley	ARDC
Josh Bergstad	ARDC
Ellen Pillsbury	ARDC
Liz Sarabia	ARDC

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Doug Grindall at 12:30 PM and introductions followed.

2. Committee Business

Motion to approval of agenda by Don Mohawk/Catherine McLynn; passed unanimously.

Motion to accept the summary of the January 25, 2010 meeting by John Welle/Les Ollila; passed unanimously.

3. Roberta Dwyer, Mn/DOT presentation on the I35 Mega Project

Ms. Dwyer reported that this is the largest Mn/DOT for this region and it is due in part to the age of the roadway. The interstate from Boundary Ave to Mesaba was built in the 1960s and the segment from Mesaba Ave to 26th Ave E was done in the 1990s.

Construction in 2010 is scheduled for pavement replacement near Hwy 2 and repairs on bridges from Cody Street to Central Ave; new access road at Recycle Way, work on the Can of Worms; pavement repair from 5th Ave W to 26th Ave E and from 46th Ave W to the Can of Worms, the London Road ramp; Paper Mill and Ore Dock bridge work; removal of unused rail bridges. Some areas will just be receiving new painting and added safety features while others areas will see complete renovation. Sections will have shoulders added, two areas will have bridges lowered slightly (4-10 ft), etc. The website will be kept up-to-date as they move through the project – just do a search for “I35 Mega Project.”

Funding for the project is from federal and state sources. Through the bidding process they were able to select a constructor that came in at \$66 million, considerably less than anticipated cost of \$81 million. It was a joint venture between a Wisconsin firm and a Minnesota firm.

Additionally, the impact on business prompted the preparation of a brochure for businesses and additional assistance can be found on the website. The redirecting of traffic through business districts may increase business.

The interstate will not be closed-instead lanes will be switched. Traffic will be diverted when the northbound lanes are closed to southbound lanes. A truck detour will be from Thompson Hill to Midway Road and Hwy 53. Mn/DOT is asking that locals use alternative routes and reduce interstate usage allowing for travelers and haulers to use the direct routes as they are not familiar with the alternatives.

Then in winter 2010-11, everything will be open again. In spring 2011 work will continue; however, there will be no truck detours and Garfield Ave. will be open. Some work will continue into 2012 as the 40th Ave W ramps will be closed for reconstruction.

Other work that will be starting is Moose Lake to Mahtowa after July 4th; the Blatnik and Bong bridges will be having cable inspections for several

weeks, 2nd St. in Duluth from 4th Ave E to 26th Ave E; the Lester River bridge, and the Mall area will be finishing up.

Mn/DOT suggests using scenic Hwy 23, and free express buses from Grand Ave at the Zoo and new park-and-ride lots will be using Grand Ave. parking lanes in the morning and afternoon. There will be service patrols, and tow trucks readily available to clear alternate routes, alternate routes map for travelers, and coordination with emergency services. Mn/DOT will have real time signage, email updates, advanced signage from the Twin Cities, and Mn 511 updated with current information. Mn/DOT is stressing that Duluth and the North Shore are still open.

Business assistance is available with an updated brochure in pdf, there is a link on the website for assistance. Expect that problem for business will be the reverse of decreasing, instead increasing, as travel increases in the business districts. There is a downloadable guide available at the website.

Project letting was April 2, 2010, approximate start will be May 3 and work to about October 15, 2010; expect to start April 4, 2011 for next phase.

It has been hard to determine the amount of truck traffic that will be detoured. Some truckers are aware of alternate routes already.

Lane closures are expected to begin about May 3rd with total diversion about May 17th.

Various agencies have been working to get tourists w/ RV's, etc. to check the website for alternate routes, time delays, etc.

Further delays on other parts of the highways will be linked to website.

Though there hasn't been any advertising dollars spent to promote that Duluth and the North Shore will be open, WCCO has been following the story.

4. State Health Improvement Program – Ellen Pillsbury

Ellen provided an update on activity in the region. Local SHIP coordinators have formed coalitions, making sure communities have opportunities, completed walkability audits and action plans are being finalized. ARDC is helping by being the go-to for coordination, studies, assistance with action plans and keeping coalitions moving, assistance with applications for projects. There will be complete street training in the fall in Grand Rapids; details are still being worked out.

5. Project Updates

Moose Lake Safe Routes to School – Ellen Pillsbury

This project has just begun and is being coordinated with SHIP. Moose Lake had asked for a SRTS plan and was approved to use RTAC funds to help with the community assessment. These RTAC funds were originally delegated to Cook County, but Cook County asked for a delay until sometime in the future. The assessment has already started, there will be a density map prepared, will be doing the parent/student survey and providing examples of low cost improvements.

Mountain Iron Trails – Josh Bergstad

Mountain Iron has a very large city area for a population of 3,000 with 5 different residential zones; additionally the city is split by Hwy 169. Having this spreading out of the city causes problems with connections, has led to few bike and pedestrian trails. The Mesabi Trail runs through the City and a trail plan is in place for 2-3 areas, but they require engineering. The Mountain Iron Trails has evolved into a SRTS and facilities plan for the area around the school.

There has been committee meeting to set the vision and goals for both plans. Next meeting will look at routes and recommendations and in June will be holding the public meetings. They would like to start in Fall 2010.

Currently the problem is the north/south route, shoulders, etc. and no kids walk or ride bikes to school, everyone is bused. There currently is no way to get kids to school safely. The committee is looking at possibly using old trails, areas further west that don't have connections, signage, etc, low cost changes.

Some discussion followed on Mountain Iron's uniqueness, but for some cities or areas SRTS coordinators have been used and are successful, walking school buses, etc and the overall future maybe "Safe Routes to Everywhere."

Big Falls Trails Plan – Andy Hubley

Transportation inventory is complete. Next will be recommendations followed by implementation assistance. May apply for ATP 2012.

FY 2014 Enhancement Projects – Andy Hubley

These were covered in the ATP meeting. It was noted that some of these projects started with RTAC and/or ARDC planning processes, including the International Falls Gateway and the Beaver Bay Trailhead.

6. RTAC In-kind Grant Program – Andy Hubley

FY 2011 RTAC solicitation for projects will be sent out shortly. ARDC is offering their services in-kind. Andy provided an overview of the types of projects, with a range of \$5,000 minimum and \$10,000 maximum and must have a 20% match.

The applications will be reviewed at the June meeting and the kickoff will be after July 1 for the next RTAC funding cycle. For further information contact Bryan Anderson.

Motion to approve process of sending applications, to continue the 80-20 split, applications would be due on May 14th and initial review before the June 24th meeting and final review at the June 24th meeting by Mike Forsman/Jack Larson.; passed unanimously.

7. Other Business

Suggestions for the June 24th meeting location:

Wolf Center or the Bear Center in Ely (Hwy 1)
Split Rock Lighthouse
Duluth projects such as the Lakewalk or Munger Tail

Shae Kosmalski/Bill Bennett motioned to adjourn the meeting at 1:30 PM, the motion passed unanimously.

Additional note: This was Les Ollila's and Shae Kosmalski's last meeting, as they are moving on to new adventures.