



**Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
Regional Transportation Advisory Committee**

April 5th – 1:30 p.m.

Hermantown Public Safety Building

Meeting Summary

Meeting Attendees

Ben VanTassel
Tom Peterson
Bob Manzoline
Wayne Olson
Jack Larson
Denny Johnson
Don Mohawk
Doug Grindall

Representing

ARDC
Mn/DNR
Reg. Rail Authority
Carlton County
Arrowhead Transit
Mn/DOT
Mn/DOT
Koochiching County

Meeting Attendees

John Welle
Al Goodman
Bill Bennett
Catherine McLynn
Ellen Pillsbury
Bryan Anderson
Andy Hubley
Ron Johnson

Representing

Aitkin County
Lake County
LHB
Itasca County
ARDC Staff
ARDC Staff
ARDC Staff
Port of Duluth

1. Welcome/Introductions

Steve Kniefel called the meeting to order at 1:35 PM. Chair Kniefel asked for introductions.

2. Committee Business

Kniefel noted that meeting summaries needed approval from January 4, 2007. *Ron Johnson motioned to approve the January 4, 2007 meeting summary. The motion was seconded by Tom Peterson.*

Catherine McLynn mentioned that the June RTAC meeting should take place in Grand Rapids and suggested that a tour of the Minnesota Steel and Mesabi energy project proposed locations would be of interest. RTAC members agreed and Doug Grindall mentioned that it would be nice to combine the ATP Steering Committee meeting with the RTAC meeting to save on travel. Bryan Anderson will work with Denny Johnson on setting up a location and date for the meeting.

3. Project Updates

ATP Enhancements

Anderson briefly went over the Enhancement projects that were recommended by the Area Transportation Partnership (ATP). Anderson noted that five projects were recommended for funding totaling \$1.35 million.

Grand Lake Township Roads Plan

Ben VanTassel detailed the progress on the Grand Lake Roads Plan. This two fold planning process includes creating an official township roads map by accurately using GPS to map all roads and their locations in the township. The second portion of the project is to develop recommendations based on community concerns on infrastructure

improvements, maintenance, right-of-way, and road disconnects. This document will be used to help guide and base decisions on.

VanTassel mentioned that the next steps to this project include; finalizing recommendations, continuing to gather public input, and present the draft plan to the town board.

International Falls Gateway Plan

VanTassel mentioned that the International Falls Gateway Corridor Task Force is making progress. The group has finished a physical review of the corridor and fully developed the list of issues to address. Now the group is reviewing a draft document, which lists recommendations. These recommendations include actions steps that will be recommended to the City of International Falls and Koochiching County. The most prevalent recommendation is a design project for the corridor.

If agreed upon by the Task Force, the design project will include hiring a landscape architect to develop design drawings for road design, building and signage designs, and also the development of a welcome area that will greatly enhance the Gateway Corridor. VanTassel noted that the design project would need more funding which is yet to be determined. The group is currently discussing the current recommendations, which will determine the next steps and future of the project.

4. RTAC In-Kind Grant Process

Anderson asked RTAC members for their input on how the RTAC grant process could be improved. Anderson noted that \$25,000 will be awarded this year through in-kind grants and the maximum request for funds is \$10,000 per project with a minimum request of \$5,000. Grindall mentioned that it would be nice to have a list of past projects on the mailing. Anderson will add a project list to go out with the mailing. McLynn mentioned that it would be nice for RTAC members to see the grant applications before the scopes of work are developed for the planning process. Anderson will email out the grant applications to RTAC members by May 25th.

5. Regional Trails Plan

Ellen Pillsbury gave an overview of the Regional Trails Plan. This plan is in the second phase and she is working on developing individual trail plans for International Falls, Hoyt Lakes, Esko, Hibbing, and Mountain Iron.

6. Other

Andy Hubley gave an overview of the road inventory project and mentioned that ARDC is currently working on the jurisdictional break down.

Ron Johnson motioned to adjourn at 2:32.

Bob Manzoline introduced the Tinklenberg Group who was hired to assess the rail potential for rail service between Duluth and the Twin Cities.

The Tinklenberg Group gave a powerpoint overview of the project and the many benefits of having rail connection between Duluth and the Twin Cities. According to data developed by AAA the average cost per mile to travel by car is \$0.55 per mile and the average cost to travel by rail is \$0.40 per mile. Some of the community benefits associated with this rail project include less energy consumption, less air pollution, development possibilities, and the use of existing infrastructure. The Tinklenberg Group noted that plans are already underway to get this plan moving. Expansion plans and improvements at the depot in Duluth are underway and have been appropriated in the state bonding bill. The start up time for this project once funded will be one to four years.

Ken Buhler gave an overview of the history of the existing rail line between Duluth and the Twin Cities and the Duluth Depot. Buhler mentioned that improvements are being made to turn the Depot into a working facility. The state bonding bill allocated \$1.3 million to make this investment in rail service. The capacity of the rail line that this passenger service would follow is 40-45 trains per day. Currently the line carries 12-15 trains and adding passenger service to Duluth would add four trains.

According to Tinklenberg the new MVST amendment would probably not be a source of funding to supplement the cost of this service.

7. Functional Classification

Kara Kent gave an overview of the functional classification project. See meeting handouts for Kent's overview.

Al Goodman motioned to approve the functional classification changes for minor collectors and above pending edits by county engineers. The motion was seconded by Wayne Olson. The motion carried.

8. Regional Bike Connection Overview

Ellen Pillsbury gave an overview of the Regional Bike Connection project. She noted that the purpose of the project is to guide the long-range transportation investments in the Arrowhead Region by recommending bicycling and pedestrian connections from communities and tourist facilities to the three major trails-the Willard Munger State Trail, the Gitchi-Gami State Trail, and the Mesabi Trail. Phase one included an inventory of the facilities and communities within a reasonable distance of the three major trails and the existing community connections to the respective trails. The final stage of phase one involved prioritizing community connections based on need, future usage, ease of implementation, and cost. This stage has begun and will continue through June 30, 2007.

9. Project Updates

Bryan Anderson gave an update on several ARDC projects. Anderson is working with the International Falls, Hibbing and Esko School Districts on submitting Safe Routes to School grant applications for the completion of safe routes to school plans. Grant applications are due January 31st. If funded, the planning would begin in September 2008.

Anderson also noted that 11 Enhancement applications have been received this year and the Enhancement Task Force will meet February 9th to review the projects and will make their recommendations to the ATP Steering Committee on March 5th.

Anderson mentioned that the Grand Lake Township Roads Plan has begun and a more detailed report will be given at the April RTAC meeting.

10. Next meeting date

The next RTAC meeting is scheduled for April 5th at 1:00 PM at the Hermantown Public Safety Building. The meeting will be held in conjunction with the ATP meeting.

Bruce Martinson motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Catherine McLynn. The motion carried.