



**Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
Regional Transportation Advisory Committee
January 3, 2008**

Carlton County Transportation Building, Carlton, MN

Meeting Summary

<u>Meeting Attendees</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Meeting Attendees</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Tom Peterson	Mn/DNR	Mike Forsman	St. Louis County
Bob Manzoline	Reg. Rail Authority	Bruce Martinson	Cook County
Wayne Olson	Carlton County	Les Ollila	Mn/ DNR
Jack Larson	Arrowhead Transit	Walter Leu	MN/DOT
Denny Johnson	Mn/DOT	John Welle	Aitkin County
Don Mohawk	Mn/DOT	Bryan Anderson	ARDC Staff
Ron Johnson	Duluth Port Authority	Ben VanTassel	ARDC Staff
Ken Buehler	L.S. Railroad Museum		

1. Welcome/Introductions

Chair Tom Peterson called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m

Introductions were given.

2. Committee Business

Chair Peterson called for a motion to approve the June 28, 2007 Meeting Summary. *Jack Larson/ Ron Johnson made a motion to approve the June 28, 2007, Meeting Summary. Unanimous support; motion carried.*

Chair Peterson stated that the position of vice-chair was open and called for nominations. *Don Mohawk made a motion to nominate Mike Forsman to the position of Vice-Chair. Hearing no other nominations, Chair Peterson closed the nominations and Denny Johnson seconded the nomination. Doug Grindall made a motion to nominate Tom Peterson to the position of Vice-Chair. Unanimous support; motion carried.*

3. Update on Passenger Rail Service to Duluth

A presentation on the possible restoration of rail service from Minneapolis to Duluth was given. Bob Manzoline and Ken Buhler made the intercity passenger rail service presentation. Some of the important aspects of the preliminary report indicate that to make the service successful speed and flexibility are the most important elements. The report indicates optimum passenger loads and cost benefit ratio at eight trains a day operating at 110 mph. Ticket costs at 110 mph would be set at \$36. Currently the train tracks are owned by Burlington Northern (BN) Railway. Negotiations are currently underway to work with BN to allow passenger rail service on the tracks and possibly upgrading the tracks from a maximum speed of 79 mph to 110 mph. The capital cost in the upgrade is priced at \$344 million. If the tracks were upgraded to 110 mph the

run time between Duluth and Minneapolis would be 120 minutes. The upgrade would require quad gate railroad signals at 130 public crossings.

The plan outlines several options for train speed and track upgrades. Manzoline indicated that 110 mph would be an optimal speed. If the tracks were upgraded to 125 mph that costs increase to an unfeasible level because of the amount of improvements that would be required. At 125 mph each of the 130 public crossings would require grade separation.

Manzoline mentioned that the next steps in the plan are to reach an agreement with the railroad, hopefully within 6 months. Then a programmatic study which would evaluate engineering, environment, etc. would be completed. This study would take 18-24 months. Funding is currently being sought for this study and Manzoline is hopeful that rail service could begin as soon as 2012.

4. Project Updates

Bryan Anderson updated the RTAC on the transportation program at ARDC.

Grand Portage Trails Plan:

Anderson has been working with the Grand Portage Trails Committee since August 2007. The Trail Committee has selected an alignment for the trail system which will be constructed in two phases. Phase one will connect the Picnic Bay Estates neighborhood to the lodge/casino, trading post (store), marina, Heritage Center, Monument, and Tribal Council Offices. Phase one has an estimated cost of \$375,000 and is 1.3 miles in length. Phase two connects the Margarets Road neighborhood and the School to phase one. The length of phase two is 1.25 miles.

Grand Portage has applied to the NE ATP for Enhancement funding to construct phase one of the trail. ARDC will complete the trails plan by March 2008.

Bovey/Coleraine Trails Plan:

The Bovey/Coleraine Trails Plan is nearly complete. The Trails Committee has worked closely with Itasca County with the turn back of TH 169. TH 169 now bypasses Bovey and Itasca County is now required to maintain the old 169 though Bovey. Funding to reconstruct the old 169 has been given to Itasca County and this funding can be used to make pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements. This plan focused on several trail/sidewalk improvements that could be made to improve walking and bicycling conditions. The Trails Committee also recommended that a Safe Routes to School Coordinator be hired temporarily to encourage children to walk and bike to school. ARDC assisted the committee in submission of a grant application to the Safe Routes to School Program to hire a coordinator for one year to fill this role. The Bovey/Coleraine Trails Plan is expected to be complete by March 2008.

Bicycle Education:

ARDC secured Enhancements funding to teach third graders bicycle education and provide them with a bike helmet. ARDC has funding to teach 1100 students during the 2007/2008 school year. To date ARDC has educated 86 students in Hill City,

Tofte, and Grand Marais. The majority of the program will take place in the spring of 2008.

Area Transportation Partnership:

ARDC received 11 Enhancement applications for FY 2012 funding. Projects requests amount to \$4.3 million representing \$8.8 million in total project costs. The ATP has only \$1.5 million in funding available for Enhancement projects and Anderson noted that this will be a very competitive year for project applicants.

Safe Routes to School – Hill City:

ARDC completed the Hill City SRTS Plan in October 2007. Some of the recommendations included increasing the visibility of the crosswalk on TH 169, driver feedback signs to slow traffic, increasing the awareness of the school location, construction of a trail system through the ball fields to Roberts Street, and the need to place bike racks at the school. ARDC also assisted the Hill City School District in applying for SRTS funds to implement the trail system through the ball fields.

Safe Routes to School- Hibbing and International Falls:

ARDC has been awarded \$24,000 to complete SRTS plans for Hibbing and International Falls. Ellen Pillsbury has just begun the planning process at both schools and will give an update of the projects in April.

Safe Routes to School- Grant Applications:

ARDC has applied for SRTS funding to complete SRTS plans in Grand Marais, Mt. Iron, Esko, and Fond du Lac. These plans cost approximately \$13,000 and there is no local match required. Anderson will keep the RTAC updated on the status of these grant applications.

NSSD Council:

ARDC has been working with the North Shore Scenic Drive Council in transitioning the Council to a non-profit. ARDC has also worked to secure funding for several conceptual design projects along the Shore. The NSSD Council recently completed the Beaver Bay Trailhead engineering work and funding is currently being sought to construct the facility.

5. Future RTAC Meetings

Anderson asked RTAC members on what they would like to see on future meeting agendas. Walter Leu mentioned that once the function classification project is complete he'd like to see an overview of the project presented and a method developed to keep track of changes to the system. Denny Johnson mentioned that the state plan will be updated shortly and information regarding the plan will need to be shared at a meeting. Wayne Olson noted the counties are spending money on the approaches to deficient bridges and it would be nice to find out how others across the state are funding approaches to deficient bridges. It might also be nice to have a map of all the deficient bridges in the Arrowhead and the condition of the approaches to those bridges.

Anderson mentioned that the next RTAC meeting will be April 3, 2008 tentatively in Hermantown. The meeting will be held in conjunction with the ATP meeting.

Mike Forsman/Mohawk motioned to adjourn at 11:38.