

January 8, 2009
Carlton County Highway Department

Attendees:

Al Goodman	County Engineers (Lake County)
Wayne Olson	Carlton County
Bob Manzoline	St. Louis/Lake Co. Regional Rail Authority
Bruce Martinson	Cook County
Denny Johnson	Mn/DOT
Don Mohawk	Mn/DOT
Doug Grindall	Koochiching County
Jack Larson	Arrowhead Transit/Rural Transit
Mike Forsman	St. Louis County
Paul Bergman	Lake County
Ron Johnson	Duluth Seaway Port Authority
Shae Kosmalski	Cook County Engineers
Tom Peterson	DNR
Ben VanTassel	ARDC
Bryan Anderson	ARDC
Liz Sarabia	ARDC

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Mike Forsman, Chair and introductions were conducted.

2. Committee Business

Request to change the Freight Plan Update to come after the Safe Routes to Schools applications. No other changes to agenda or October meeting summary. Motion to accept agenda with change and summary by Bergman / Goodman, passed unanimously.

3. Regional Rail (Duluth to Minneapolis Rail Project)

Originally scheduled to be presented by Ken Buehler, Bob Manzoline started and completed the presentation. Mr. Manzoline provided an extensive report on activities to date. Identified in this first phase has been the time schedule between Duluth and Minneapolis (5 stops), a review of railroad alternatives, improvements and operations. Local communities along routes

have begun to look at improvements to their stops such as facilities for passengers, parking, etc.

The next phase will entail environmental studies, more details, impacts, improvements as well as double tracking. A project summary is attached as part of this record. Discussion followed which covered items such as high speed rail, the cooperation of the various entities in accomplishing this first phase and the future outlook, future funding.

4. Duluth Seaway Port Update

Ron Johnson provided the update on the seaway's activities. This year marks 50 years of the opening of the seaway. Ron noted that with the impact the seaway has had on the Great Lakes, it should be considered a regional asset. He reviewed port ownership and tonnage changes. Levels are close to 2007, the commodities have changed due to the change in demand, e.g. corn for ethanol.

He pointed out that there are 6 key issues for the port: 1) "Green marine" and the Great Lakes Initiative are an issue that has gotten a lot of attention recently. 2) The efficiency of water transport - the port is located for the best transportation of goods to areas in the Midwest. There is a need to use rail, not just for bringing in commodities, but moving them out. 3) Wood pellet demand in Europe, which has an incentive to move away from coal, and the efficiency of moving it from here in bulk. A terminal facility here would be good. 4) Looking at rail for containers, new ships to handle containers; looking at a rail partner. 5) With Essar coming into the area, the port is looking at how the slabs will be moved; it could be that Essar will want a terminal. 6) Tourism is starting to be a major activity on the lakes and many vessels would like longer stays but are hindered by a lack of a local customs station. Also there is the possibility of passenger service between Canada and the U.S.

Discussion followed which included the corrosion problem, using UWS Transportation program as a resource, and the role of the Authority as an independent entity.

5. Project Updates – Bryan Anderson

Aitkin Access

Aitkin would like access on the main thoroughfare (Hwy 169). Access review will be in October. The corridor review will be involving residents; business owners; DOT; City, County and State Patrol (law enforcement); engineers and city staff. They have come up with a list of concerns to be addressed by the group. Concerns are for pedestrian safety, possible stop lights,

traffic congestion at railroad intersections, speed limits and enforcement, other roads (47 & 12), access to hospital, possible frontage road along 169, bike and pedestrian traffic. The outcome of the plan work will be a look at the concerns and see if they can be resolved with zoning ordinances, DOT assistance, changes in the flow of traffic.

Squaw Lake Trails Plan

This is being handled by Kara Kent, ARDC, and would be separating pedestrians and bikes from vehicles; currently, there are no shoulders. The community is looking at frontage roads. The 1st committee meeting was last month and two more meetings are to be held. Expect to give full overview in April.

Ely Safe Routes to Schools

The community is very active and ARDC assisted with the application to the SRTS program. Have identified problem areas and applied for Federal funding. They would like to tie into the Mesabi Trail and they also need sidewalks. There are some crosswalks with no connections to sidewalks and lack pedestrian ramps. Applied for \$70,000 for improvements; working on application to hire SRTS coordinator which would be a year long program and would also work with the Vermilion law enforcement program. The local component worked with 150 comments (380 surveys sent home with K-8 students). Presently planning on having a public open house in February with the final plan completed in April; the close will be a bike education class.

Other Safe Routes To School

ARDC has assisted Chisholm, Virginia and Deer River with their SRTS applications.

Freight Study

Denny Johnson started with a recap of the purpose of the study, who it involves, the consultants, key issues. The steering committee has met twice, next meeting February 26. There are freight forums for stakeholders in an effort to gather input as well as surveys. Information is being gathered from a very broad base including private carriers and includes face to face interviews when possible. The interviews have been very good and very informative on both sides (MN and WI). Hope to wrap up by the end of the month. The study should be complete by the end of June. Website to visit is www.dot.state.mn.us/ofw/freightProj.html - Northern Minnesota and Northwestern Wisconsin Freight Plan or

www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/freightplan/. Discussion followed. It was requested that any invite lists should include county engineers.

6. Bylaws and Membership

Copies of the Bylaws were provided to each attendee along with the current membership status for RTAC members as of 12/17/2008. It was requested that members have appointment letters prepared to present to ARDC. These were requested to be sent within a month. A short explanation of why the county engineers also attend this meeting and a request for assistance in fulfilling current vacancies for RTAC and ATP followed.

7. County Projects

Each engineer presented a short overview of activities/projects in their county. Discussion followed that focused on the impact of the stimulus package that the Federal government is proposing.