

Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership Meeting

April 3, 2008

**Hermantown Public Safety Building
5111 Maple Grove Road
Hermantown, MN**

Members Present

Cindy Voigt
Chuck Lepper
Doug Grindall
Jason Fisher
John Suihkonen
John Welle
Galen Treit
Jim Foldesi
Steve Kniefel
Ron Johnson
Bill Vogel
Ron Chicka
Wade Pavleck
Bob Manzoline
Paul Bergman
Alan Goodman
Shae Kosmalski
Tom Peterson
Catherine McLynn
Mike Forsman
Walter Leu
Jim Prusak
Wayne Olson
David Salo
Denny Johnson
Alta McQuatters

Others Present

James Gittemeier
Ben VanTassel
Bryan Anderson
John Minor
Graig Gilbertson
Don Mohawk
Gus Peterson

Representing

City of Duluth
Koochiching County
Koochiching County
City of Chisholm
City of Hibbing
Aitkin County
Aitkin County
St. Louis County
St. Louis County
Ports
Grand Portage Band
MIC
Koochiching County
Rail Authorities
Lake County
Lake County
Cook County
Environmental
Itasca County
St. Louis County
Mn/DOT
City of Cloquet
Carlton County
City of Hermantown
Mn/DOT
Cook County

Representing

MIC
ARDC
ARDC
Mn/DOT
Mn/DOT
Mn/DOT
Mn/DOT

Welcome/Introductions

Chairman David Salo called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM and introductions were made.

Minutes of the November 1, 2007 Meeting.

Motion by Mike Forsman, second by Walter Leu to approve minutes. Motion passed.

2008 Program Status

Walter Leu reviewed the status of the FY 2008 local program. He explained how the HPP funding becomes available in 20% increments beginning in 2005. A number of the local HPP projects are now scheduled for 2009 when all of the federal funds are available. He noted the Miller Mall project was let last winter but all of the bids had to be rejected because of a conflicting city zoning ordinance requiring a setback for an environmental buffer. The project is now scheduled to be let on June 6, 2008, providing the zoning ordinance has been changed. Walt said several projects had already been completed or are under construction and that proposers had already received federal reimbursement.

Gus Peterson then reviewed the status of the Mn/DOT program for FY 2008. He noted that it had not changed from when the ATP met last November. Gus said several options for funding the Miller Mall project in 2009 are being discussed with the Mn/DOT Office of Investment Management. These include funding 2009 Early Let Late Award (ELLA) projects with 2008 dollars, or providing additional federal funding in 2009 as an equity adjustment for having moved the Mall project out of FY 2008. He noted that the vast majority of Mn/DOT's FY 2008 program was either completed or placed under contract last summer. The only significant project remaining to be let is a sign replacement project on I-35 in Pine County.

2012 Project Recommendations

Bryan Anderson, Denny Johnson, and Gus Peterson reviewed the 2012 project recommendations and actions taken by the ATP Steering Committee.

- ***Enhancements*** - Bryan Anderson reviewed the recommendations of the Enhancement Task Force. He noted that \$3.9 million in federal requests were received for 2012 funding. The task force is recommending five projects totaling \$1.9 million of federal funding. The projects include a streetscape project in Effie, a trail project on the Grand Portage Reservation, a section of the Gitch-

Gami trail near Beaver Bay, and two City of Duluth Lakewalk East extension projects.

- ***Steering Committee Actions*** - Gus Peterson reviewed actions taken by the Steering Committee that influence the number of new projects funded in FY 2012. One Lake County and one Cook County project were moved into FY 2012 from FY's 2010 and 2011 respectively. Both had significant increases in the amount of federal funds requested. The cost of a joint St. Louis County/City of Duluth project involving the intersections of the Rice Lake and Arrowhead Road also increased very significantly. As a result, neither Duluth nor St. Louis County submitted FY 2012 project candidates. Gus said that preserving the integrity of the FY 2008 to 2011 program was an important consideration.
- ***Road and Bridge Projects*** - Denny Johnson then reviewed the FY 2012 federal aid candidate projects. He noted that only two projects proposed, one by Aitkin County and one by Carlton County, were not being recommended for funding. In both cases, equity was the reason and likely both will make good candidates for FY 2013. The high cost of the DTA regular route buses was also discussed. Denny said the Office of Transit is studying transit vehicle replacement statewide and that perhaps other sources of funding for these high priced vehicles could be considered.
- ***Safety Projects*** - Denny also discussed the FY 2009/2010 Highway Safety Improvement Program/High Risk Rural Road (HSIP/HRRR) safety project solicitation. Local projects submitted by the ATP were evaluated by Mn/DOT's Office of Traffic, Security and Operations who made funding recommendations for FY's 2009 and 2010. Projects selected focused on wider pavement markings and intersection lighting. Mn/DOT is also going through the same process. FY 2009 will focus on turn lane improvements on the TH 61 expressway between Duluth and Two Harbors. FY 2010 is still under development but will likely focus on intersection lighting, wider pavement markings, and rumble stripes. Set-aside amounts for local road and Mn/DOT safety projects will be carried forward in FY's 2011 and 2012.

Review/Approve 2009 – 2012 ATIP

Denny reviewed a summary which compared the amount of federal funds in the Draft ATIP to the investment guidelines. He said the Steering Committee had approved the federal portion of the ATIP at their last meeting but deferred action on the state funded program. The new state transportation bill, HF 2800, recently enacted over the governor's veto, changes the way flex funds can be used. Beginning in 2010, these funds (which for our ATP amount to approximately \$3.7 million per/year) can no longer be used directly to fund projects on the trunk highway system. They must be used either for turnbacks or for safety improvements on the local road system. Denny noted that the bonding portion of HF 2800 may impact some of the federally

aided Mn/DOT projects in the draft program. He suggested to Chairman Salo that a motion to approve the funding shown for non Mn/DOT projects be entertained at this time due to the uncertainties associated with the Mn/DOT program.

There was a motion by Mike Forsman, second by Catherine McLynn, to approve the non Mn/DOT portion of the draft 2009-2012 ATIP.

Cindy Voigt asked if the ATP would still need to approve the Mn/DOT projects in the draft 2009-2012 ATIP and when action would be taken on the Mn/DOT projects. Denny said that the Steering Committee will meet on June 26, 2008 in conjunction with a Mn/DOT Outreach Meeting related to the update of the Statewide Transportation Plan. The ATP has previously delegated authority to the Steering Committee to approve the final ATIP at their June meetings each year.

The motion passed.

Other Business

A handout provided by the Transportation Alliance that summarizes HF 2800 was reviewed. It was noted that Mn/DOT still has a number of unanswered questions related to bonding and the implications to its near term program. Denny said that preservation of bridges and pavements were Mn/DOT's highest priorities followed by low cost safety and low cost mobility projects. Mike Forsman said that Margaret Donahoe is the new Executive Director of the Transportation Alliance following Rick Krueger's accepting a different position.

Denny said that Mn/DOT canceled all of the meetings with county boards that are normally held in March due to the uncertainties associated with HF 2800 and its impact on Mn/DOT's program. There was a discussion about whether the meetings should be rescheduled, and if so, when. Denny said that the fall of 2008 would be the earliest that new program related information would be available and that county board meetings would be held again in March 2009 on the draft 2010-2013 ATIP. Walter said that the county engineers should work with Mn/DOT and their boards to establish the interest for fall 2008 board meetings.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the ATP is scheduled for Thursday, November 6, 2008 at a location to be determined.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:15 A.M.