

Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership Meeting

April 7, 2011

Hermantown Public Safety Building
5111 Maple Grove Road
Hermantown, MN

Members Present

John Welle
Ron Johnson
Bob Manzoline
Doug Grindall
Wade Pavleck
Ron Chicka
Wayne Olson
Jason Hollinday
Bill Parish
Cindy Voigt
Jim Rohweder
Denny Johnson
Jack Larson
Paul Bergman
Jesse Story
Mike Forsman
Jim Foldesi
David Salo
Walter Leu
Steve Kniefel
Jim Heilig
Pete Eakman
Kevin Adee
Robert Herling
Donald Niemi
Earl Elde
Dave Danz
Catherine McLynn
Al Goodman

Ex Officio Member

Mike Robinson

Others Present

Bryan Anderson
James Gittemeier
Don Mohawk
John Minor
Rex Bordson
Gus Peterson
Scott Johnson

Representing

Aitkin County
Duluth Seaway Port Authority
Regional Rail Authority
Koochiching County
Koochiching County
MIC
Carlton County
Fond du Lac Reservation
Cook County
City of Duluth
MIC
Mn/DOT
Rural Transit
Lake County
Cities > 5,000
St. Louis County
St. Louis County
Cities > 5,000
Mn/DOT
St. Louis County
Duluth Transit Authority
Pine County
Koochiching County
MIC
Aitkin County
MIC
Grand Portage
Itasca County
Lake County

Mn/DOT

Representing

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

Welcome/Introductions

Chairman John Welle called the meeting to order at 10:04 AM. Welcome and introductions were made. John also recognized new ATP members Donald Niemi (Aitkin County Commissioner – replaces Paul Bailey), Kevin Adee (Koochiching County Commissioner – replaces Chuck Lepper), Dave Danz (Grand Portage – replaces Bill Vogel) and Bill Parish (alternate for David Betts).

Minutes of the November 4, 2010 Meeting**ACTION ITEM:**

Motion by Doug Grindall, seconded by Wayne Olson to approve the minutes. Motion passed.

2011 Program Status

Walter Leu reviewed the FY 2011 local program (handout) totaling approximately \$31 million (\$21 million in federal funding).

There was discussion about SP 036-090-001 (bike trail along TH 11) being transferred to the National Park Service.

SP 069-090-021 (Mesaba Trail from Bearhead State Park to Tower) is to be moved to FY2012 to allow more time to complete construction plans.

Walt explained SP 069-613-032 (Midway Rd reconditioning) is awaiting STIP amendment and transferred \$1,218,000 federal funds from SP 118-198-003 (Anderson Rd project). The Anderson Road project will now use local funds. This action was recommended by the ATP Steering Committee.

Enhancement funding from SP 036-596-002 (Little Fork streetscape project) will be used for the Helmet Hero program to fill gaps in funding for the years 2011-2015.

Walt reminded the group that the safe routes to school projects (SRTS) do not need to meet the April 15th ATIP deadline.

Gus reviewed the MN/DOT FY 2011 program (handout). Projects highlighted in green are either let, completed or under construction. The I-35 sign project in Carlton County and the cable median barrier project near Midway Road highlighted in yellow were deferred a couple of years due to planned highway construction on I-35. An unbonded concrete overlay is scheduled between Hinckley and Mahtowa at a cost of approximately \$30 million and the Mn/DOT - DNR Baptism Rest Area project will be let in May.

Gus discussed the 2011 I-35 construction maps/program (handouts) which includes \$34M in carryover projects and \$58M in new projects. Gus urged the membership to look at the web site <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/duluthmegaproject> set up to keep the public up to date on I-35 construction progress.

MN/DOT continues to invest heavily on Interstate 35 and ten projects on I-35 will be under construction this year between Duluth and White Bear Lake.

FY 2015 Federal Aid Project Recommendations

Gus reviewed the FY 2015 Federal Aid Candidate Project list, giving each project representative a chance to describe their project. Jack Larson from Arrowhead Transit said they have the required local match funding for 6 buses which is critical as they have recently added service in Pine County using existing buses. Gus mentioned that the TH18 and TH 65 mill & overlay projects will include segments in District 3, as it is important to not have needed pavement improvements stop at the county line. District one is the lead district on these resurfacing projects. Gus said that the MN/DOT TH 23 bridge projects in Carlton County are long over do. These three bridges will alleviate heavy truck traffic from traveling on local county roads.

Cindy Voigt said the City of Duluth is also using DNR Legacy Grant funds to help fund the Cross City Trail. Joe McKinnon said the TH 11 project from Loman to Pelland will provide 6 foot shoulders and a 10 ton road and will complete the reconditioning/reconstruction of TH 11 between Baudette and Pelland. Doug Grindall said the trail project near Ranier will be advanced and tied to a 2014 project. Al Goodman said the CSAH 61 mill and overlay project from Two Harbors to Knife River will also be advanced and tied to another project.

2012-2015 ATIP

Denny reviewed the FY 2011-2015 Federal Aid Spending Summary (handout). In looking at the Target Federal Formula Dollars, the proposed 2012-2015 program is close to the target of \$40M/Year, showing the proposed program is reasonable.

Denny also said that future federal funding is uncertain until Congress passes a final 2011 appropriations bill and a 2012-2017 reauthorization bill. President Obama proposed a 2012-2017 reauthorization bill for \$556 billion, but does not mention where the money will come from. The current gas tax revenues would be approximately \$230 billion for the six years.

Denny briefly reviewed the draft FY 2012-2015 ATIP (handout) and asked members to review the ATIP and let Gus know of any errors or omissions in less than a week. Some Mn/DOT projects in the 2012-2015 ATIP are subject to change if the MN/DOT Better Roads Program is approved.

Walt commented to the group that local agencies need to understand that local agency funding must balance with projects in the ATIP or local agencies risk losing federal funding.

Denny discussed the 2012-2015 STIP Federal Funding Guidance (handout). With the risk and uncertainty of future federal funds, the ATPs are requested to identify 20% of their FY 2012 projects as contingent should actual appropriations to Minnesota decline. That contingent amount is approximately \$8M for the NE MN ATP. The ATP steering committee identified two contingency projects, funding for 10 DTA buses and the TH 169 Pokegama Ave project in Grand Rapids. There was some discussion from members

about the possibility of these projects not being funded. Walt explained that the last four years there has been contingency plans and they have never had to be enacted. The projects that are deferred are not removed from the program.

ACTION ITEM:

Motion by Al Goodman, seconded by Walter Leu to approve the 2012-2015 ATIP subject to possible changes related to the MN/DOT Better Roads program. Motion passed.

MN/DOT Better Roads Program

Denny discussed a draft proposal from MN/DOT called Better Roads for Minnesota. This program is not a long term fix but would improve pavement conditions in the 2012 to 2015 timeframe. Funding for this program would come from a variety of sources, including federal funds, state funds and uncommitted Chapter 152 bond funds. The proposal currently being discussed would be in two phases (phase 2 being dependent on future decisions related to funding of the St. Croix River Bridge). Phase 1 of the program may move forward with projects funded in 2012 and 2013. If money becomes available from the St. Croix River Bridge Project, the Better Roads Program may be funded through FY 2015. Design work has started on some projects so that we are ready to let contracts if funding becomes available. There was discussion on how to help this process along, such as letter writing or calling legislators. Mike Robinson said that the process is internal to MN/DOT and that effort could be counterproductive. MN/DOT district one will have projects ready if the better roads program moves forward.

County Board Meetings

Denny said the March County Board meetings were postponed until the better roads program is decided. If the better roads program moves forward, there is also the chance of back filling for projects in the current draft 2012-2015 ATIP. There are a lot of unknowns at this time and the group agreed to take a wait and see approach.

Other Business

Mileage Based User Fee Policy Study (MBUF)

Denny discussed a MN/DOT Mileage Based User Fee (MBUF) policy study on options to increase transportation funding in the future (handout). Due to an increase in fuel efficient vehicles and people driving less there is a funding gap that the present gas tax cannot cover. There was a lengthy discussion on how to implement the program. There was strong opposition to the use of GPS in vehicles as this would be too much “BIG BROTHER” feeling with the government knowing where the public was driving.

As part of the MBUF Policy Study, community discussions will take place in five Greater Minnesota regional centers: Bemidji, Duluth, Rochester, St Cloud, and Willmar. Duluth’s meeting will be May 4th and will be by invitation only. Attendees will be comprised of local elected officials, transportation officials, private-sector and nonprofit leaders.

Minnesota GO 50 year transportation system vision

Denny introduced the group to a new Transportation System 50 Year Vision program called Minnesota GO (handout). The work on the program will shape the statewide multimodal system and plans for the next generation. There is a 29 member steering committee representing other public agencies and community organizations that will review public comments, advisory group discussions, and quality of life research. Denny encouraged the group to participate. For more information go to www.minnesotago.org.

Mn/DOT District 1 Retirements

Walter Leu talked about the future MN/DOT retirees in June (Gus Peterson, Denny Johnson and Mike Robinson). Walt thanked them for their combined 123 years of dedicated service and described what the world was like when they started their careers.

ACTION ITEM:

Motion by Walter Leu, seconded by the entire ATP group to wish Gus, Denny, and Mike a long and healthy retirement. Motion passed with a unanimous standing ovation!

Chairman John Welle also thanked Gus, Denny, and Mike for their service and that they will be truly missed.

Mike Robinson thanked Gus and Denny for making ATP District One what it is today, one of the best ATP's in the state.

Mike Robinson made a closing comment related to the TZD (towards zero deaths) workshop on June 15th and encouraged the county engineers and other interested ATP members to attend the workshop. Details about the workshop will be coming out soon. Mike also said the annual statewide TZD Conference will be held in Duluth at the DECC on November 16th and 17th.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the ATP will be on November 3, 2011 at a location to be determined.

Adjourn

A Motion to adjourn was made by Cindy Voigt and seconded by Mike Forsman.

Meeting adjourned 11:50 a.m.