

**NORTHEAST MINNESOTA ATP
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
MONDAY, MARCH 22, 2010
COMFORT SUITES
409 CANAL PARK DRIVE, DULUTH, MN**

Members Present

David Salo
Paul Bergman
Jesse Story
John Welle
Doug Grindall
Wayne Olson
Dave Christy
Walter Leu
Tom Pagel
Cindy Voight
Shae Kosmalski
Jim Foldesi
Mark LeBrun

Representing

Cities > 5000
Lake County
Cities > 5000
Aitkin County
Koochiching County
Carlton County
Itasca County
Mn/DOT
Cities > 5000
Duluth
Cook County
St. Louis County
Pine County

Others Present

Rondi Watson
Denny Johnson
John Minor
Rex Bordson
Al Goodman
James Gittemeier
Bryan Anderson
Gus Peterson

Representing

MIC
Mn/DOT
Mn/DOT
Mn/DOT
Lake County
MIC
ARDC
Mn/DOT

Call to Order

Chairman David Salo called the meeting to order and introductions were made.

Minutes of the January 25, 2010 Meeting

Action Item:

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

2010 Program Status

Walter Leu reviewed a detailed list of proposed local project STIP modifications that includes project deferrals, funding swaps and project backfills.

Highlights include:

- The 2010 Fond du Lac Trail Connection project to the Munger Trail is no longer viable due to trail alignment issues. The project's enhancement funding will be shifted to the Fond du Lac Trail Connection to Cloquet and the Carlton CR 7 intersection improvement projects in 2013.
- Move/backfill the Buchanan Town site enhancement project from 2011 to 2010.
- Swap the Seven Bridges paving project 2010 funds with local funds and shift portions of the enhancement funds to the Lakewalk Phase 4 and Phase 5 enhancement projects in 2012.
- Move/backfill the St. Louis County CSAH 87 RR crossing project from 2011 to 2010.
- Move the Mallet Steam Engine project from 2010 to 2011.
- Move/backfill the Clair Nelson ped/bike enhancement project from 2013 to 2010.
- Move the 2010 Cloquet Connection Phase 2 enhancement project out of the program.
- Move/backfill the Joshua Avenue preliminary engineering funding to 2010.
- Swap HPP and Enhancement funding on two 2010 Mesabi Trail projects and move the Bearhead to Tower Trail project from 2010 to 2011.
- Swap HPP and Enhancement funding on two 2010 DNR Gitchi Gami Trail projects and move the Cascade River Trail project to 2011.
- Move funding for the Glenwood Street project to 2010.

The above STIP modifications can be processed by administrative amendments. The remaining 2010 local projects will meet the plan turn in deadlines. The St. Louis County Arrowhead Road intersections project will have a Fall 2010 letting with most of the construction in 2011.

Gus Peterson then reviewed the 2010 Mn/DOT program. He noted that the majority of the program had already been let and only one project, an unbonded concrete overlay on I-35 was being moved into fiscal year 2011. Gus said an April 2, 2010 letting for the I-35 "Mega Project" in Duluth was planned and the results of that letting could impact Mn/DOT's program in the 2011 – 2014 timeframe. He said the ratio of Chapter 152 State bonds to regular federal and state matching funds had changed significantly since the project was first programmed. The estimated amount of bond funds has gone down and the estimated federal and state matching funds has gone up. This could require Mn/DOT to use more advance construction and its subsequent payback during the next several fiscal years. All remaining projects were on schedule to make fiscal year 2010 lettings.

Economic Stimulus 2 Projects

Denny said that the new jobs bill passed by Congress does not contain funding for additional transportation projects. He also noted that the Port , City of Duluth, and Mn/DOT were also unsuccessful in their TIGER grant application.

2014 Project Nominations

Bryan Anderson reviewed the six enhancement projects being recommended for funding. There are three trail projects, a trailhead project, a gateway corridor improvement and a bicycle safety education project. He said the \$1.6 million of federal funds requested is slightly higher than the \$1.5 million investment guideline for enhancements.

Denny then reviewed the 2014 project nominations. He noted that the amount of federal funding available for the ATP is down substantially in 2014 because of the BAP project payback due for the TH 53 Trinity Road project. He noted that Mn/DOT has only two federal projects in 2014. These projects are the Bong Bridge deck overlay project with Wisconsin and the Scanlon to Thompson Hill pavement repair project on I-35. The DTA and Arrowhead Transit both have fairly significant vehicle replacement requests that are consistent with replacement schedules. There is only one rail crossing safety project recommended, that being the Phase II project in Grand Rapids. All local road and bridge projects submitted, except for a City of Hibbing project which will receive special consideration in 2015, are being recommended for funding. Walt thanked all proposers for being cognizant of equity issues and not submitting a large number of projects.

Draft 2011 – 2014 ATIP

Gus then discussed the Draft 2011 – 2014 ATIP. He said the uncertainties surrounding the I-35 “Mega Project” make it impossible to have the Mn/DOT program ready to approve at this time. He expressed a high level of confidence that the local projects as shown are fiscally constrained and fundable. Shae Kosmalski said that a \$1 million dollar Cook County project in 2012 appears to be missing. Gus urged all project proposers to review the Draft ATIP and get any comments back by April 2, 2010. Gus will e-mail the updated draft 2011-2014 ATIP to the Steering Committee members just prior to the April 8th ATP meeting.

Gus, also reviewed the list of Illustrative Projects included in the 2010-2013 STIP and said that a few of the projects have had environmental review in the Mn/DOT Central Office. Local Steering Committee members felt that there was a great benefit to continue this project development process should additional funding become available. Walt said that FHWA staff have concerns about processing environmental documents and plans for projects that are not funded in the STIP. It is likely there will be new rules and the FHWA may not sign off on environmental documents until the projects are fully funded.

Action Item:

Motion by Mark LeBrun, seconded by John Welle, to approve the local projects in the draft 2011-2014 ATIP. Motion passed.

County Board Meetings

Meetings with the County Boards will take place in May. Bryan Anderson is in charge of scheduling. Paul Bergman said that May 18th would be a good date for the Lake County meeting and requested that Todd Campbell, Mn/DOT Project Manager, also attend the meeting to give an update on the TH 61, Split Rock River to Chapins Curve project.

Other Business

Mn/DOT Resident Construction Engineer, Pat Huston, provided the group with an overview of the I-35 project. He characterized the project as road and bridge rehabilitation between Thompson Hill and the Paper Mill (2010); road and bridge replacement/reconstruction between the Paper Mill and Garfield Avenue (2010/2011); and road rehabilitation/reconstruction from Mesaba Avenue to 26th Avenue East (2010). The estimated cost for the work is \$70 million.

Pat said it will be a two year project starting in early May with the most severe traffic related construction impacts occurring in 2010. The entire length of the corridor will be undergoing work during year one with traffic being diverted to opposite lanes at several times and locations. While work is being done on Thompson Hill, all commercial truck traffic will be detoured at the Midway Rd and rerouted via TH 194 and TH 53.

Pat said that Mn/DOT will be constantly updating their I-35 website to make travelers aware of the latest construction activities. He also said they will be using intelligent work zone technologies and press releases to make road users aware of travel times and alternative routes. The DTA will also be providing free express bus service into and out of the downtown area in the morning and evening respectively for people coming from the south.

David Salo brought up the fact that in addition to the I-35 project, there is a considerable amount of work on both Mn/DOT and local road projects occurring in the area this summer. Everyone agreed that it would be very desirable to have all of this construction information available at a central point so that motorists would not get forced from one work zone into another. Pat said he would bring that suggestion back to the I-35 project manager.

Al Goodman said that in the future it is important to maintain travel times on I-35 and TH 61 (London Road) through Duluth and that he has concerns related to the proposed construction of roundabouts at two intersections on TH 61 in Duluth. Denny said that the proposed roundabouts are not included in the District 1 fiscally constrained long range transportation plan. Lane configuration modifications on London Road between 26th and 60th Avenue East and reconstruction of the 40th Ave. East intersection with a new traffic signal system are included in the 2015 to 2019 time frame.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the ATP Steering Committee is scheduled for June 21, 2010. The full ATP meets on April 8, 2010.

Adjourn

Chairman Salo adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.