



RTAC MEETING SUMMARY
June 25, 2013
Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board
Eveleth, MN

Attendees:

Cavour Johnson	Pedestrian/Bicycles
Cindy Voigt	City of Duluth
Dave Christy	Itasca County
Don Mohawk	Mn/DOT
Jack Larson	Arrowhead Transit/Rural Transit
Mark LeBrun	Pine County
Mike Tardy	Carlton County
Susan Michels	Carlton-Cook-Lake-St. Louis CHB
Walter Leu	Mn/DOT State Aid
Jon Mason	ARDC
Liz Sarabia	ARDC
Brian McLafferty	MN DOT CO
Katie Caskey	MN DOT CO
Chris Berrens	MN DOT CO

1. Welcome and Introductions

Call to order by Mark LeBrun, Chair at 10:10 AM. Introductions followed.

2. Committee Business

Call for approval of meeting summary from April 4, 2013. Motion to approve by Jack Larson/Walter Leu; passed unanimously.

Call for nominations for Vice Chair. Mike Tardy nominated Cindy Voigt, second by Jack Larson. Motion by Walter Leu/Dave Christy to elect Cindy Voigt as Vice Chair; passed unanimously.

3. Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Outreach

Staff from Minnesota Department of Transportation Central Office were present, Brian McLafferty, Katie Caskey, and Chris Berrens. There two points to their visit, one was to provide an overview of the MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives

Program, and the second was to gather input regarding the distribution of the funding.

Mr. McLafferty provided a condensed version of the presentation as many attendees were familiar with it from various other meetings held throughout the region. He reviewed the changes to transportation funding (Map-21 vs. SAFETEA-LU) and the impact it will have on local projects.

After his presentation, Katie Caskey and Chris Berrens started the conversation with an explanation about the Federal guidelines and their effect on state rollout. With the reduction from \$27.69 M past federal investment to MAP-21 distribution of \$15.04 M, they presented a hypothetical distribution of TAP funds. However, due to 2013 state legislation, MnDOT is now required to deliver as many or more transportation alternatives projects than previously within their assigned fiscal year. It is now the goal of these conversations to figure out how to reduce this “risk” and to identify the best method for distribution of funds.

Discussion began with slippage (risk), the number of projects completed and incomplete, the causes of slippage, and the completion of projects in the District One region. CO staff pointed out that the slippage needs to be clarified and addressed. The focus was then changed to the handout identifying statewide and regional strengths and weaknesses. A considerable question and answer period ensued that switched between the focus areas. Issues included moving funds from one fiscal year to another, flexibility within the program, commitment to long timeframes, “shelf-ready” projects, project sizes, state versus local knowledge base, creating a “one-size fits all” process, differences between ATPs, etc.

CO staff said they would take this conversation under consideration and encouraged further comments through their online form. To submit your comments online, go to www.dot.state.mn.us/map-21/tap.html.

4. Area Transportation Improvement Plan (ATIP) Update

Walter Leu reviewed the 2013 Local Projects which need to be moved from current fiscal year to the federal or state fiscal year 2014. There were 11 items in this category. Motion to approve the move of these items by Mike Tardy/Cindy Voigt; passed unanimously.

Also mentioned MnDOT recently released \$10 M for trunk highway projects to encumber for FY14 or 15, buying down ELA's 1st. These funds are not being handed out and there not be a MnDOT update. Notices will be emailed.

5. FY 2013 RTAC Final Planning Project Updates

Jon Mason provided the updates on the current RTAC planning projects. The Waters of the Dancing Sky Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan is nearing completion. Three RDC's have worked together to develop the CMP for this scenic byway which located along Trunk Highway 11 from Island View in Koochiching County to Hallock in Kittson County up to the North Dakota border. The CMP will be presented at public outreach meetings in July followed by final changes, if needed, before adoption by the Waters of the Dancing Sky Scenic Byway Council.

For the Economic Benefits of Transportation Project, ARDC staff investigated a broad range of programs as the basis for determining if there could be an evaluation of the relationship between economic benefits and transportation projects in the Arrowhead Region and how to develop that evaluation. After completing the initial analysis, it was determined that ARDC's Economic Development Division would be best suited to continue work on this project using economic funding. As this project will be focused on the relationship to transportation, the RTAC will be updated as the project progresses.

Originally defined as a county-by-county endeavor, the County Transit Service Planning project also looked for regional coordination opportunities. The assessment, which is nearly complete, will provide details regarding the routes and days of service that are available in the region. It also identified the special needs of county veterans. Jack Larson, Arrowhead Transit, added that they are working to get veterans to VA hospitals and clinic as well as other locations including Superior, WI. He also expressed that Veteran Services officers are very concerned with the issue of transporting veterans.

RTAC provided a local match to help secure the Northeast Minnesota Community Transformation grant which would support active living efforts in northeast Minnesota. A key project of the grant was the Healthy Northland website and interactive map. Additional projects included active community plans for the City of Cook and northeast Carlton County, and trail projects in International Falls, Mountain Iron and along the north shore of Lake Superior.

Some additional transportation projects that ARDC staff has been working on include:

- Helmet Hero Program – staff continue to teach this highly acclaimed program with ten SHIP communities scheduled this fall.
- Highway 210/Jay Cooke State Park Project – this project is just getting underway and will explore the future of the highway which was severely damaged with the 2012 flooding

- Western Iron Range Transportation Impact Study – information is being gathered about the impact of developing and expanding large industrial facilities in the area of Trunk Highway 169 (Cross Range Expressway) in Itasca County.
- The Gitchi Gami Trail has only 25 constructed miles of 86 miles originally envisioned in the 1999 plan. Staff is coordinating and facilitating a series of meetings to develop strategies and priorities in order to successfully complete the trail.

6. FY 2014 RTAC Planning Grant

Jon Mason reviewed the proposed FY 2014 RTAC Work Program. He began with the Safe Routes to School program which will be directed toward assisting five communities. RTAC funds will be used to finalize the budget needed to complete these projects scheduled to begin this fall.

There is the potential of providing assistance to two scenic byways councils, the North Shore Scenic Drive Council and the Superior National Forest Scenic Byway Council. This assistance would be in meeting and process facilitation, mapping, grant writing or other duties as identified.

In the summer of 2014, the International Falls Gateway Project will begin construction. During the time leading up to the start of the work, many steps need to be addressed for the implementation. Staff will provide assistance as needed to the City of International Falls, Koochiching County and the Gateway Corridor Task Force for this final stage.

The City of Orr has completed its downtown improvement design project and is ready to begin the implementation stage. Staff will provide assistance as the City's moves forward with the improvements.

The Regional Park and Ride Study will identify existing official park and ride locations as well as casual locations. The study will map and describe these locations, analyze the use of the facilities and provide this information to the region's transportation agencies.

Another project with a regional focus is the Regional Sidewalk Inventory Plan Scoping. This project will be a systematic approach to inventory sidewalks and prioritize critical connections in communities throughout the region. The project will include developing shapefiles with attributes tables to accelerate the inventory process and develop recommendations.

Motion to approve the FY 2014 Work Program by Walter Leu/Jack Larson; passed unanimously.

7. Other Business

Next meeting will be on a Wednesday or Thursday in early October, 1st or 2nd week. Details will be worked out by staff.

8. Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 12:15 PM.

.