



TAC Agenda Topics and Project Updates

April 16, 2024 Meeting

Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council Meeting Summary

* = Approval Item

Note Taker(s)	Tari Aanonsen, MIC Administrative & Finance Assistant	
Members Present		
	Chris Belden	Duluth Transit Authority
	David Bolf	City of Hermantown
	Chris Carlson	City of Superior – Public Works
	Derek Fredrickson	MnDOT District 1
	Jim Foldesi	St Louis County
	James Gittemeier	City of Duluth
	Todd Janigo	City of Superior – Public Works
	Cari Pedersen	City of Duluth
	Jess Rich	City of Proctor
	Dena Ryan	WisDOT
	Cindy Voigt	City of Duluth Engineering
	Maren Webb	MnDOT Dist 1
	Tom Werner	Duluth Airport Authority
	Skip Williams	Active Transportation
Members Absent		* Excused Absence
	Kate Ferguson	Duluth Seaway Port Authority
	Jason Jackman*	Douglas County
	Chris Lee*	City of Duluth
	Karl Schuettler	Northspan Group
	Vacant	Mobility Challenged Community
Others Present		
	Ron Chicka	MIC Director
	Trish Crego	City of Hermantown
	Miles Hanson	City of Duluth, Americorps
	Duane Hill	MnDOT District One
	Sheldon Johnson	NWRPC –MIC Deputy Director
	Jim Meyer	AECOM (presenter)
	Jason Nordberg	FHWA-WI
	Alex Popp	City of Duluth
	Richard Sarran	MIC Senior GIS Specialist
	Erika Shepard	MnDOT Central Office
	Rondi Watson	MIC Senior Planner/Communications Specialist
	Mike Wenholz	MIC Principal Planner



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1. Introductions / Agenda Review

Ron Chicka, MIC Director, called the meeting to order at 1:37 pm. A "roll call" attendance was taken. When completed, Ron asked if there were any questions or other changes to the agenda. There were none.

2. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- Meeting Summaries of 3.19.24*

Ron then asked if there were any questions or changes to the March meeting summary.

Table with 2 columns: Motion Discussion and Vote, and text describing the approval of the meeting summary.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Chicka reported on several items of interest that were highlighted in the Director's Report in the agenda packet as well as some items listed below:

SS4A Planning Grant -- \$62,500 local match required from MIC-area jurisdictions - As described at last month's TAC and MIC meetings, we were awarded a federal Safe Streets for All (SS4A) planning grant in the amount of \$250,000 (plus a \$62,500 local match) – the largest FY23 award in Minnesota– to complete a Safety Action Plan to guide the implementation of a Safe System, multimodal approach to roadway safety. All cities, counties, and townships in the MIC area will be involved in (and will benefit from) this project.

The next step to getting it up and running as soon as possible is to determine the amount of each jurisdiction's contribution toward the required \$62,500 local match. We will be presenting options for allocating this amount (e.g., based on population size or number of roadway miles) at the next SS4A advisory committee on May 16. At that time we hope to reach a consensus about how the matching grant amount will be divided up, including specific dollar amounts to be forwarded along for inclusion in each jurisdiction's 2025 budget request.

I-35 and Federal Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant – With the City of Duluth receiving \$1.8M (total \$2.25M with match) a strategy meeting is being set between area partners to discuss next steps. The MICs recently finished plan set this in motion. We'll review some aspects of the document and consider additional planning work underway by the County, with respect to the Depot at 5th AW and NLX concepts, plus discuss where the DOT is at with their plans for the reconstruction/redesign for the 5th AW overpass (short term project for the DOT). All will need to be blended with this recent award for the City to develop long term plans for the Interstate in the downtown.



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Letter(s) of Support

National Sea Grant Program – Continuing the federal funding via the Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations Bill for work of both the MN and WI Sea Grants. Both are key participants in the function of the MICs Harbor TAC promoting and supporting the economic and environmental importance of the St. Louis River estuary.

3. LONG RANGE MTP 2050 – SUMMARY OF PROJECT LIST SCORING

Jim Meyer of AECOM gave an update on the Long Range MTP 2050 project list scoring. TAC members were given time to offer feedback and ask questions in a work session that directly preceded the TAC meeting. Jim Meyer and Mike Wenholz wrapped up that discussion by giving an overview of the MPT Project Final Review Questions in Step 3. Final review questions are due back from jurisdictions on Friday, April 19th. The draft Long Range MTP 2050 will be prepared by June 2024 and released for public comment in August. Final approval will be requested at the October MIC Policy Board meeting.

4. BETTER BUS BLUEPRINT UPDATE AND OTHER DTA INITIATIVES

Chris Belden, DTA's Director of Planning and Grants gave an update on the recent initiatives of the DTA. The presentation included a brief history of the DTA, along with current statistics that included: a fleet size of 87 buses, routes numbering 15 that run from 4:30 am to 12:00 am, operating 7 days a week, employing over 150 employees that are managed by ATE Management of Duluth and represented by the Teamsters General Local Union No. 346.

The DTA, which has a history of excellence as a top-ranking transit system, recently set out an initiative to improve upon their bus services in the Duluth-Superior area. The Better Bus Movement includes three important areas of focus titled: Better Bus Stops, Better Technology and Better Bus Blueprint. The titles are indicative of the improvements that were/are being made. The Better Bus Stops portion involves changes to signage, ADA accessibility, shelter and lighting improvements, totaling over \$2M. Better Technology involves a new Mobile App that allows for live bus tracking, as well as new fare boxes. With the Better Bus Blueprint, the DTA has started from scratch and redrawn their routes, creating a fresh, new bus network. This includes more frequent service, more weekend service and has taken the first steps in planning Bus Rapid Transit service with their two new Go Line bus routes. The DTA has seen increased ridership every month since launching the initiative six months ago.

Another new initiative of the DTA is the Duluth Public Schools Pilot Program, which provides free rides to any enrolled high school student and all District staff. After two months of running, this program has provided over 17,000 rides to students and staff.

A few challenges that the DTA is experiencing include increased usage of rideshare services, such as Uber and Lyft, 35% of the work force is working full time from home, local construction creating detours, an increase in the number of parking ramps, along with the availability and conditions of sidewalks and other accessibility issues, to name a few. One of the larger issues, however, is the



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labor shortage. The DTA is still in need of fifteen more drivers to be able to fully staff all their budgeted service routes.

Overall, the Better Bus Movement initiative has seen positive effects on the ridership of its transit service for the Duluth-Superior metropolitan area. The DTA looks to the future to continue to improve and provide quality transit service.

5. WEST SUPERIOR STREET RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

Alex Popp presented on the West Superior Street Reconstruction Project. Funding was awarded to the city of Duluth in 2022, in the amount of \$24,990,160, from the Rebuilding America Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant from FHWA and is administered by MnDOT. An additional amount of \$7,684,530 has been awarded through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Match Program grant from MnDOT. Due to the funding constraints of the award, this project is moving along quickly. The city is currently in the design phase through the end of 2024. Bidding will occur in January 2025 and construction will run from 2025-2028.

Public involvement to date has included four open house events. These events provided important feedback from folks who live, work and play in the neighborhood, which helped to drive the design of the corridor.

The 1.6 mile corridor of West Superior Street has been broken down into 4 character districts based upon the surrounding land use. The project will aim to create a cohesive design throughout the corridor, while providing key elements to each character district, based upon its individual needs. Some of the improvements include accessible bus stops, bike and pedestrian crossings, increased lighting, greenspace and a shared multi-use path. Connection to the Cross City Trail is also included in the project.

James Gittemeier wrapped up the presentation by summarizing that this project aims to be a mitigation to the long-standing negative impacts of regional infrastructure to this neighborhood. This corridor will be human centered, with trees, green infrastructure, and an active transportation corridor which helps to align the project to the spirit of the RAISE grant.

6. ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

- Cindy Voigt mentioned that she will have TIP amendments cued up for the May meeting.
- Dena Ryan mentioned that WisDOT will have five TIP amendments.
- Duane Hill stated that the bridge at 40th's Ave W is closed due to damage that was done to two support beams. It will be assessed for repair needs and closed for an undetermined amount of time.
- Duane Hill mentioned that the TPI public update will be held on April 29th and the Blatnik update on May 15th.



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7. PROJECT UPDATES

- **2024 Duluth Area Bikeway Plan Update**

The Bike Subcommittee has reviewed the first round of content updates to the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Bikeways Plan, last published in 2019. Work is ongoing to update the current plan, and the next round of draft updates are to be discussed and considered at the May BPAC meeting (5/2/2024).

8. ADJOURN: With no further agenda items, discussions or announcements, Director Ron Chicka adjourned the meeting at 3:15 pm.