



TAC Agenda Topics and Project Updates

August 20, 2024 Meeting

Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council Meeting Summary

* = Approval Item

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



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Meeting Summary

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 6.18.24*

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

Motion Discussion and Vote	Maren Webb / Jim Foldesi moved to approve the 6.18.24 meeting summary. There was no further discussion; the motion was approved unanimously.
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- **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:

Blatnik Update and Bridge Traffic Mitigation Modeling – Hope all can attend our September meetings; we’ll be having a presentation from the DOT as to status of the Blatnik, plus a more extensive discussion as to traffic mitigations efforts being planned for when there is only the Bong Bridge to move between the cities. Meetings are being conducted to put forward potential flow options/restrictions. Key will, obviously, be Belknap on the Superior side. The MIC will also document the traffic issue within the context of the Long Range Plan being modeled by our consultant, AECOM.

Bong Bridge Public Meeting – Sent last week, and just prior to the MIC Board meeting on the 21st, Wis DOT will be holding an information meeting from 5 to 7 pm at the Superior Library to detail maintenance work to be performed on the bridge next construction season – 2025. Some of the work here is being done knowing that the Bong will see an inordinate volume of traffic once the Blatnik closes in a few years. The major impact will be that traffic will be funneled down to one lane in either direction. At some stage, the ramps on the Mn side will be closed for repairs as well.

MIC Mid-Year State/Federal Review – On August 8th, we conducted our annual State and Federal review of all operations of the MIC. We go over various administrative items including financial and other reporting requirements via both states. One document we will be looking to update next year is our Memo of Understanding (MOU) that lays out the working arrangements between the MIC, the DOT and the DTA (our two main funding partners). We also reviewed the contents of the Work Program, status of each TIP and where the MTP is at in its approval stages. All items checked out and we are in good standing with the oversight agencies.

Duluth – Central Entrance Review – At the end of the month, I’ve arranged to meet with the MIC Board Councilors on the Duluth side, along with the Duluth Mayor’s representative on the MIC Board to discuss the upcoming public review meetings on possible design of the reconstructed Central Entrance corridor – now slated for either 2028 or 2029. All should recall the extensive work that the MIC conducted that led to the current design initiative underway with MnDOT. Most important for



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upcoming decisions on design will be some level of adherence to the City's Small Area Plan established for the corridor and how well some chosen design fits the objectives of said City plan. Before the year is out, I'll re-present the MICs Plan on the roadway to refresh everybody as to what we stated. I should point out that, at some point in the future, the MIC Board will very likely be asked to approve added federal funds for the project targeted for actual construction. Public input meetings will be held in September at some point. We will pass along that information as soon as we are aware of it.

Northern Lights Express – After talking with County Commissioner (and MIC Board member) Annie Harla, I've been invited to attend meetings of the NLX/Depot committee. City, County and St. Louis Co. Regional Rail staff convene to discuss upcoming steps in the NLX project, including possible transportation issues and changes that may occur surrounding the Depot. Will report back to the MIC as needed.

RAISE Grant – Rice Lake Road Corridor Project - St. Louis County Public Works was awarded a \$25 million Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant for the Rice Lake Road Corridor Project. At the TAC and MIC meetings last December, Vic Lund presented information about the project and we subsequently provided a letter of support for the County's grant application. The project will improve safety and traffic flow along this critical freight and passenger transportation route and will also provide regional economic development and community benefits.

Title VI and Language Access Plans – Following up on the request made at our May meeting – if you haven't done so already, please respond to the short survey we sent to determine the demographic composition of our Board and Committee members. This is so we can assess, in accordance with our Title VI and Language Access plans, who's involved in our discussions about transportation issues and planning projects as advisory committee members.

Letter(s) of Support:

- **St Louis County** – Federal Rail Administration grant program to explore the feasibility of grade separation at two locations along Midway Road (CSAH 13) immediately south of USH 2 (Adolph) and diagonal crossing at St Louis River Road. Each is exposed to approximately 30 trains per day. Delays to freight traffic along this key corridor for goods movement is becoming a concern.

3. 2024-2027 SUPERIOR AREA TIP AMENDMENT #16*

Sheldon Johnson presented the following amendment to the 2024-2027 Superior Area TIP for recommendation to the MIC Policy Board:

TIP AMENDMENT #16

A TIP amendment has been requested by WisDOT for preliminary engineering scheduled to begin in 2024 for work associated with a 90-bridge deck sealing project covering the NW Region of WisDOT with a total cost of \$35,000. The funding below is for PE work associated with the two bridges in the MIC area.



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2024 Transportation Improvements Projects (Roadway)

Jurisdiction and Project Number	Project Description		Estimated Costs & Funding Sources Thousands			
			Federal	State	Local	Total
WisDOT 113-24-027	USH 53 Multiple Bridge Structures B-16-0012&16-0024 (0.0 miles)	PE ROW CONST	.60	.15		.75
Amended to TIP in August 2024	Bridge Preventative Maintenance NHPP 1190-03-07	TOTAL	.60	.15		.75

Questions regarding this project should be directed to Sheldon Johnson at 715-635-2197 or by email at sjohnson@nwrpc.com.

Motion Discussion and Vote	Todd Janigo / Skip Williams moved to recommend the 2024-2027 Superior Area TIP Amendment #16 to the Policy Board for approval. There was no further discussion; the motion was approved unanimously.
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4. FINAL 2025-2028 DULUTH AREA TIP*

Prescott Morrill presented the Final 2025-2028 Duluth Area TIP for recommendation to the MIC Policy Board, which included the following special projects:

- RAISE Grant 2025 Reconstruction of W Superior St from Carlton St to W Michigan St (Point of Rocks/M&H Gas Station)
- RAISE Grant Rice Lake Rd Corridor: reconstruction of a portion of Rice Lake Rd, Martin Rd and West Calvary Rd, improve key intersections, construction of a new city street, and construction of a new multi-use path for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) W Superior Street Reconstruction in 2025, Campus Connector Trail, Segment 4 in 2026 and placeholders for project solicitation in 2027 and 2028.
- National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) construction of one charging stations located at the Circle K Store at 9314 W Skyline, Proctor, MN 55810

Questions regarding the Duluth Area TIP should be directed to Prescott Morrill at 218-529-7556 or by email at pmorrill@ardc.org.

Motion Discussion and Vote	Skip Williams / Todd Janigo moved to recommend the 2025-2028 Duluth Area TIP to the Policy Board for approval. There was no further discussion; the motion was approved unanimously.
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5. DRAFT 2025-2026 MIC WORK PROGRAM DISCUSSION

Ron Chicka presented an overview of the Draft 2025-2026 MIC Work Program, which included the addition of a new short-term project involving the Safe Streets For All grant funding that the MIC was awarded late last year. This award includes \$250,000 in federal grant funds, along with a \$62,500 local match which will be covered by a state grant awarded by the State of Minnesota. We will build on the MIC-area safety analysis work conducted by AECOM which will be completed in 2024. The focus of this work will be public engagement, political buy-in and encouraging a community-wide safety culture. An RFP will be posted in early 2025 for a consultant to lead this work.

Other areas of focus in the Work Program include tasks in partnering with the DTA, including participation on an advisory committee for a Bus Rapid Transit facility study, as well as an assessment of bus stops and shelters in relation to pedestrian connectivity and accessibility. In addition, a TOD, or Transit Oriented Development, will assess the impact of various land uses on transit utilization.

Additionally, further Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) work in 2025 will continue with the integration of the new, performance-based approach to the TIP and other MIC planning processes, that are a direct outcome of the MTP work in 2023 and 2024.

Ongoing work that will continue to occur in 2025 include Bicycle and Pedestrian planning, Roadway, Harbor and Freight planning, as well as ongoing administrative tasks. A draft of the 2025-2026 Work Plan & Budget will be presented in September for review and comment, with a final to be presented at the October Board meeting. Once approved, it will be forwarded to MnDOT, WisDOT, FHWA and FTA for final approval.

6. LONG RANGE MTP 2050 PROJECT UPDATE

Mike Wenholz presented an update to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) process that has been ongoing in 2023-2024. Official review was held in early August that included representative jurisdictional partners and oversight personnel. Input was given for revisions that were needed, but not significant to warrant a new Public Comment Period.

Open houses were held in August in both Duluth and Superior locations. While minimally attended, good discussions were held and feedback consistent with the goals and objectives of the plan were received by community members. The Public Comment Period Continues through September 06, 2024. Final revisions to occur in September, addressing any comments received, and a request for approval of the final MTP will be on the October agenda.

7. ROUND TABLE

- Todd Janigo stated that BNSF and the City of Superior are partnering to look at a viaduct at 28th and Tower Avenue to alleviate the dangerous crossing over the rail yard. A consultant



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is working to source a grant for the possible funding of this project for the City of Superior.

- Chris Beldon asked if a viaduct was still feasible for Winter Street. No was the response.
- Jeff Abboud introduced Mae Sommerfeld, a full-time planner for WisDOT, Northwest Region, who has filled the vacancy left by Dena Ryan. Mae will be working with the MPO's in the region and will eventually be the representative member on the TAC, BPAC and HTAC committees for the Northwest Region.
- Also mentioned, Craig Thompson, Wisconsin Transportation Secretary is leaving his position. His replacement will be Kristina Boardman, who is currently the Deputy Secretary.

8. PROJECT UPDATES

- **City of Duluth West Superior Street Traffic Re-routing**

The City of Duluth, towards their efforts to reconstruct West Superior Street, is considering routing options for a 3-phased detour plan for all modes of traffic. These detours are currently planned for construction during the following three years:

- 2026/Phase 1: Point of Rocks to 18th Ave W
- 2027/Phase 2: 18th Ave W to 24th Ave W
- 2028/Phase 3: 24th Ave W to Carlton St

- **2027 & 2028 MN Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) Funds**

MnDOT is still reviewing their CRP solicitation schedule, and the main points are as follows:

1. MnDOT is working to align CRP grants', PROTECT grants', and Transportation Alternatives (TA) grants' timelines.
2. In this next round, likely this Fall, CRP and PROTECT grants will be soliciting for FY27, 28, and 29.
3. The CRP funding will follow similar processes for eligibility as the previous two years (FY25, and 26).
4. PROTECT grants are intended to have a more streamlined solicitation process, through the ATP. This will be guided by the Resilience Improvement Plan.
5. Additional information on these programs and schedules will be available in early September, 2024, with time for questions and feedback in October, 2024.

9. ADJOURN: With no further agenda items, discussions or announcements, Director Ron Chicka adjourned the meeting at 2:58 pm.