



**Meeting Summary**

\* = Approval Item

<b>1Note Taker(s)</b>	Tari Aanonsen, MIC Administrative/Finance Assistant	
<b>Members Present</b>		
	<b>Members Present</b>	
	Broc Allen	Douglas County Suburban Townships
	Ed Anderson	City of Superior – Citizen Rep
<b>WI Co-Chair</b>	Nick Baker	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	Jake Benson	City of Proctor - Alternate
<b>MN Co-Chair</b>	Wayne Boucher	City of Hermantown
	Mark Johnson	City of Superior
	Yauhen Karatai	City of Duluth – Citizen Representative
	John Lohse	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	Nick Ledin	Superior City Council
	Mike Mayou	Duluth City Council
	Sam Pomush	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	Bob Quade	City of Rice Lake
	Randy Skowlund	Douglas County Board of Supervisors
	Tom Szukis	DTA
	Jenny Van Sickle	Superior City Council
	Scott Welsh	Solway Township
<b>Members Absent</b>		* Excused Absence
	Annie Harala	St. Louis County
	Terese Tomanek*	Duluth City Council
	Chad Ward*	City of Proctor
<b>Others Present</b>		
	Ron Chicka	MIC Director
	Pat Huston	MnDOT District 1
	Daryl Johnson	Community Member of City of Rice Lake
	Sheldon Johnson	MIC Deputy Director, NWRPC
	Jeff Knudsen	SRF Consulting
	Prescott Morrill	MIC Planner
	Shelley Nelson	Superior Telegram
	David Sadowski	Swim Creative
	Richard Sarran	MIC Senior GIS Specialist
	Rondi Watson	MIC Senior Planner/Communications Specialist
	Mike Wenholz	MIC Principal Planner



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### 1. Introductions / Agenda Review

MIC Co-Chair, Nick Baker, called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm. A “roll Call” attendance was taken. When completed, Chair Baker moved on to item# 2 on the agenda.

### 2. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- Meeting Summary of 8.21.24\*

Chair Baker then asked if there were any questions or changes to the August meeting summary.

<b>Motion Discussion and Vote</b>	Sam Pomush / Jake Benson moved to approve the 8.21.24 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 as listed below:

**Central Entrance** - Ron will be presenting the MIC’s Central Entrance plan to the City Council in the next couple of months. MnDOT will be holding public meetings on the possible design of the reconstructed corridor, possibly in September or October. We will pass along the public meeting information as soon as we are made aware of it.

**Duluth Area I-35 Corridor Study** - The MIC has also been asked to talk with a West Duluth business group regarding the MIC’s I-35 Corridor Study and to give an update on how that plan is being used to inform the current and future needs of the corridor, and the impacts to West Duluth

**Reconnecting Communities National Summit** – Rondi Watson spoke of her recent attendance of the Reconnecting Communities National Summit that was held last week in St Paul. Communities who either received the grant or who had applied for (or are interested in applying) were invited to attend. The event is part of a national movement to restore and overcome the lasting damage to communities affected by the Federal Highway Act of 1956. Others from our area who attended were James Gittemeier with the City of Duluth, Andrea Krause of Zeitgeist, and MIC Policy Board member Yauhen Karatai.

**Long Range MTP 2050** –The MTP is near completion. The draft was distributed with the meeting materials and has been reviewed by our technical oversight. Ten to twelve comments have been received from the TAC. Nothing was substantial enough to warrant a new Public Comment Period. All comments have been addressed in the final document. Going forward, the MIC will be incorporating Performance-based Planning into many of our planning processes, which is a direct outcome of the work that was done in this Long Range MTP 2050.

### OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

Chair Baker then allowed for an opportunity for Public Comment. Hearing none, Chair Baker continued to item #3 on the agenda.



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### 3. BLATNIK BRIDGE & TRAFFIC MITIGATION

Pat Huston of MnDOT and Jeff Knudson of SRF Consulting presented information on the Blatnik Bridge Project and traffic mitigation measures that can be expected while the new bridge is under construction and the Blatnik is closed for four to five years.

The need for a bridge replacement is due to its “poor” condition rating and anticipated need for closure predicted to occur by 2030. The replacement of the Blatnik would return the facility to a “good” condition rating and would prevent service interruption in MnDOT’s Bridge Inventory.

MnDOT has determined that the existing alignment will be utilized in the new build, minimizing impacts to property and wetlands, allowing for the shortest construction time and increased safety by eliminating risk of construction alongside traveling vehicles. This also provides the lowest cost alternative for this project.

Designs include either the Tied Arch or the Cable Stay bridge type options. While one may cost more upfront to build, the other may make up for in more affordable long-term maintenance costs.

The current estimated cost of the project is around 1.8 billion dollars. Current funding commitments include \$400 million from WisDOT, \$400 million from MnDOT and \$1.06 billion in awarded federal funds. An Additional \$216 million in federal funds are being applied for through the 2024 Bridge Investment Program (BIP) grant. Awards have not yet been announced.

A multi-agency working group has been established to bring together state and federal agencies to participate in bi-monthly meetings to keep relevant parties up to date on the project as well as weigh in on issues as the project proceeds. A subcabinet has also been formed to include representatives from both states and includes multiple agencies that meet quarterly. This provides the leadership needed to review and address permit needs and other important issues that arise throughout the span of the project.

A “Design-Build” delivery method has been chosen for the bridge construction project, allowing for the efficient coordination between the design and construction teams and may result in lower cost growth over the course of the project.

2024 field investigations are currently underway, including a Pile Load Test program at six locations, shallow excavation of 22 select future proposed pier locations, the construction of a permanent access road on Connors Point, geotechnical borings and contaminated material borings: all to be completed by December of 2024. Footing designs will be “perched” when possible, to reduce interactions with contaminated soil and water.

MnDOT, with the aid of their consultants at SRF Consulting, have looked at traffic patterns using data from a 2017/2018 INRIX Data Study, as well as a 2018 WisDOT study that reviewed diversion impacts to the City of Superior during a full closure of the Blatnik Bridge. Data from the 2019 MIC Diversion Study confirmed several routes of interest, including Belknap, Winter, 21<sup>st</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> on the Wisconsin side and Haines, Highland, Grand and I-35 on the Minnesota side. Additional data



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from recent counts, streetlight data and data from the MIC Model are also informing traffic mitigation needs during the closure.

This data shows that roughly 10,000 vehicles have already diverted to the Bong Bridge during the construction of the Twin Ports Interchange Project. Because of this, Superior is already experiencing congestion in downtown corridors. Data also shows that the majority of vehicles traveling from one state to the other, are staying within the metropolitan areas.

While it is conceived that the Bong Bridge will be able to handle the anticipated additional remaining 20,000 vehicles, several improvements are planned to help the flow of traffic to move on and off the bridge and at predicted pinch points. Some of these improvements include:

- A routed detour utilizing US Hwy I-35 and US Hwy 2
- A truck route along Winter Street to avoid most of Belknap
- Extending east and westbound storage lanes along Belknap
- The Temporary elimination of left hand turns at Banks and Ogden from Belknap
- Optimize the Belknap signalized corridor and coordinate platoons
- Alternate Route signage and Local Traffic Only signage at US Hwy 2 near roundabout at Garfield and Belknap Avenues
- Encourage use of Susquehanna Avenue as Alternate Route
- Improved pavement markings, increased lighting, placement of "Your Speed" radar and "No Trucks" signs
- Removal of street parking near pedestrian crossings
- 4-way stop, compact roundabout or temporary traffic signal at 46<sup>th</sup> Ave & W 8<sup>th</sup> St
- Possible temporary traffic signals at 40<sup>th</sup> Ave and W 8<sup>th</sup> St
- At 46<sup>th</sup> Ave & W 1<sup>st</sup> St: improve pavement markings, increase lighting, possible permanent traffic signal installation with lane control signals; the same considerations at 46<sup>th</sup> and Grand Ave
- Monitoring of pinch points over the course of the construction project and then make any necessary adjustments

The timeline for the Blatnik Bridge replacement is as follows:

- Preliminary Design and Permitting in 2024-2025
- Procurement and Letting in late 2025-2026 (Active contract Summer of 2026)
- Final Design in 2027-2028
- Bridge is closed beginning sometime in 2027 and is closed for approximately four years during construction

Board members asked questions and offered suggestions throughout the presentation. MnDOT will hold an informational Blatnik Bridge Open House on October 15<sup>th</sup> for community outreach.



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### 4. DRAFT 2025-2026 MIC WORK PROGRAM

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.

Another notable addition to the Work Plan will involve performance-based planning in relation to the TIP and other MIC planning processes. This is an outcome from our recent Long-Range MTP 2050 work. A full draft of the MIC's 2025-2026 Work Program and Budget were included with the meeting materials for the September 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Questions regarding the Draft 2025-2026 MIC Work Program should be directed to Ron Chicka at 218-529-7506 or by email at [rchicka@ardc.org](mailto:rchicka@ardc.org).

### 5. DULUTH-SUPERIOR METROPOLITAN BIKEWAYS PLAN 2024

Prescott Morrill presented an update on the Metropolitan Bikeways Plan 2024, which is due for an update every five years or so. Goals and priorities of the plan were reviewed and discussed by the BPAC and its subcommittees. The following priorities are suggested to be incorporated:

- **Bike-ability/micromobility/accessibility:** a priority to ensure that all trips can be made by most modes
- **Year-round reliability**
- **Low-cost/high benefit projects** – latent demand (*"I would...but for..."*)
- **Sustainability** – carbon footprint of the transportation network – *mode shift > electrification*
- **"Primary Arterial Network"** – East/West & up-down the hill

New themes and topics for the plan include: all ages and abilities, everyday routine, short trips (first/last mile of DTA connections-identifying network gaps), route planning/decision making criteria, cost, public health and low-stress bikeway network.

Future schedule for this update includes a review of the plan by the Bike Subcommittee in October and review and recommendation by the BPAC in November. The plan will then go to draft reviews by the TAC and MIC Policy Board in October and December. The hope is to have the finalized plan on the January 2025 agenda for adoption by the Policy Board.

Questions relating to the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Bikeways Plan 2024 should be directed to Prescott Morrill at 218-529-7556 or by email at [pmorrill@ardc.org](mailto:pmorrill@ardc.org).



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### 6. ROUND TABLE

- Yauhen Karatai stated that he had a chance to meet with the mayor of Duluth to discuss MnDOT's Central Entrance reconstruction plans. A future meeting with Ron Chicka may be requested on this topic.
- Yauhen asked a question regarding projects that come up for review by the Policy Board and how Policy Board members can be assured that the projects are following the goals and objectives of the MIC's Long Range MTP. He also asked what tools are in place to ensure that each project adheres to the Plan. Ron stated that the Policy Board is the approving body, approving a concept, not the design. The approval that the Policy Board gives, enables the jurisdictions to receive funds for their transportation projects.
- Prescott Morrill offered in relation to Yauhen's question, that with the work of the recent Long Range MTP 2050, Performance-based Measures were going to be included in many of the MIC's processes going forward. These include tools for reviewing how each project plans to meet, or has met, the goals and objectives set forth in the MTP.

### 7. PROJECT UPDATES

- **There were no project updates to report for this meeting**
- **ADJOURN:** With no further agenda items, discussions or announcements, Chair Baker adjourned the meeting at 7:58 pm.