

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

Metropolitan Council Building, 390 North Robert Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101

TAB POLICY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes: September 21, 2011
Metropolitan Council Chambers

Members Present: Russ Stark, Co-Chair, Randy Maluchnik, Co-Chair, Karl Drotning, Adam Duininck, Steve Gallagher, David Gepner, Ron Have, Tom Heffelfinger, Paul Krause, Scott McBride, Kenya McKnight, James Meyers, Lisa Peilen, Andrew Reinhardt, Sue Sanger, Will Rossbach, Bethany Tjornhom, Jon Ulrich, Dave Van Hattum, Andy Westerberg, Julia Whalen.

Guests and Staff: Brian Hanninen, Metropolitan Council
Connie Kozlak, Metropolitan Council
Wayne Norris, MnDOT
Brad Larsen, MnDOT
Elaine Koutsoukos, Metropolitan Council
Kevin Roggenbuck, TAB Coordinator

I. Call to Order.

Co Chair Stark called the meeting to order at 12:00 Noon.

II. Adoption of the Agenda.

Mr. Meyers moved, seconded by Ms. Peilen, to adopt the agenda. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

III. Approval of the Minutes from August 17, 2011.

Mr. Maluchnik moved, seconded by Mr. Rossbach, to approve the minutes from the August 17, 2011 TAB Policy Committee meeting. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

IV. Information Items and Action Transmittals.

a. Internal Audit on the Metropolitan Planning Process.

Mr. Hanninen presented this item to the committee via PowerPoint. Mr. Hanninen said the audit was done to answer the question whether the Met Council was meeting federal planning requirements and following past practices. The audit was done internally and the audit staff did not speak to outside parties.

Mr. Hanninen reviewed the observations from the audit. Although the audit found that the MPO process as established does comply with federal requirements, the TAB's role within the MPO process is not clear to stakeholders and the general public. Mr. Hanninen described the recommendations in the audit, focused on clarifying the role of the TAB and strengthening public outreach efforts. Mr. Stark said questions had been raised as to how make process that involve the TAB and met Council and others more consistent and transparent. Discussion followed.

Mr. Ulrich asked if the TAB membership, including the direct appointees by the Met Council, comply with federal guidelines. Mr. Hanninen replied that in total, the TAB membership does comply with federal guidelines and there is no guidance on the proportion of elected to non-elected members. The audit did not look into whether the Council's appointment of members to the TAB complies with federal guidelines.

Mr. Ulrich asked about the review cycle for federal certification of the MPO planning process. Ms. Kozlak said the federal planning certification is done on a four year cycle by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. The federal agencies provide an oral report to the Met Council followed by a written list of findings. Ms. Kozlak added that the Metropolitan Council

Mr. Heffelfinger suggested that the three recommendations speak to the same points but provide no direction. Mr. Hanninen said the recommendations are tied together about the audit does not offer ways to implement the recommendations. Mr. Heffelfinger requested the Met Council and TAB consider ways to implement the recommendations.

b. Transportation Planning Handbook.

Ms. Kozlak presented this item to the committee. Ms. Kozlak said the transportation planning Prospectus was last updated in 1996 after a number of regional agencies were merged. The Council was preparing another update in 2006 when the FHWA indicated that they only needed a signed memorandum of Understanding (MOU) describing the mutual responsibilities of the various regional agencies, so work on the Prospectus update was halted. The Met Council wants to continue the update for public information to help people understand the planning processes. Ms. Kozlak said staff will talk more with the TAB about what should go into the Handbook and to add diagrams and other graphics to showing the steps in the various processes.

Mr. Stark said the content of the Handbook depends on what we are asking people to be engaged in and public outreach could include other recommendations plus the Handbook on explaining the TAB's role. Ms. Kozlak said the met Council Communications staff could describe what they do for public outreach and the TAB could decide if that was adequate.

Mr. Van Hattum organizing the Handbook based on how agencies allocate transportation funding. Ms. Sanger said it is also important for the Handbook to identify the things the MPO does not do, such as filling potholes. Mr. Ulrich suggested the Handbook include a primer on road types and finding sources for transportation projects. Mr. Heffelfinger said the primary job of the Handbook should be to clarify the MPO processes. Ms. Kozlak suggested that this work should provide two documents – one for the general public plus one for practitioners in the MPO processes.

Mr. Stark said the Handbook would be part of the discussion at the next TAB Executive Committee meeting.

c. Interstate 35E Corridor.

Mr. Norris and Mr. Larsen presented this item to the committee via PowerPoint. Mr. Norris said the project limits are from just north of downtown St. Paul to Little Canada Road. Mr. Norris explained that the project includes replacing all deficient bridges reconstructing interchanges at Maryland Ave. and Cayuga Ave. on I35E. The total cost of the project is \$80 million.

Mr. Larsen described the MnPASS components of the project and asked the committee for feedback. Discussion followed.

Mr. Stark asked about the nature of the debate or the concerns expressed by the public about MnPASS. Mr. Larsen described three concerns. One concern is about equity; that people with lower incomes cannot afford to use them as much as people with higher incomes. Another concern is money. The question is should the money raised through the tolls be spent on improvements in the corridor or can they be spent anywhere. The third concern is about paying twice. Some users feel they have already paid for the road through state and federal gas taxes and other fees, and then are being asked to pay a toll.

Mr. Krause asked about the revenue generated by MnPASS now. Mr. Larsen said the average toll is about \$1.25 and the two MnPASS lanes break even on operating costs.

Ms. McKnight asked about Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) goals for the project. Mr. Norris described how MnDOT arranges or packages engineering and construction items when bidding them out to meet the Department's DBE goals. Mr. Norris also described MnDOT's outreach efforts to DBEs.

d. 2012 Unified Planning Work Program.

Ms. Koutsoukas presented this item to the committee via PowerPoint. Ms. Koutsoukos explained that the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) includes planning activities required by federal rules, that it identifies a budget to accomplish those tasks and that the region's transportation planning participants will be involved in performing the required tasks. Ms. Koutsoukas said the 2012 UPWP serves as the region's application for federal transportation planning funds.

Mr. Gallagher moved, seconded by Mr. Rossbach, to recommend that the TAB recommend adoption of the 2012 Unified Planning Work Program to the Metropolitan Council. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

V. Other Business.

Members did not raise any other business.

VI. Adjournment.

Mr. Stark adjourned the TAB Policy Committee meeting at 1:30 PM.

Minutes prepared by
Kevin Roggenbuck,
TAB Coordinator