



Agenda

Gateway Corridor Commission

May 12, 2011 - 3:30 PM

Woodbury City Hall, Birch Room
8301 Valley Creek Road
Woodbury, MN 55125

<u>Item</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Action Requested</u>
1. Introductions		
2. Approval of Agenda		Approval
3. Summary April 14, 2011 Meeting*		Approval
4. Consent Items		Approval
a. Checks and Claims*		
5. Gateway Corridor AA Update*		
a. AA FAQ	Washington County	Information
b. Update on Study and Approval of Alternatives	Stephanie Eiler, CH2M Hill	Approval
6. Insurance Renewal*	Washington County	Approval
7. Communications	Washington County	Information
a. Outreach Activities*		
b. Google Analytics Update*		
8. Legislative Update	Ramsey County	Information
a. State		
b. Federal*		
9. Other	Washington County	Information
a. Meeting Dates Summary*		
10. Adjourn		

*Attachments

Gateway Corridor Commission
April 14, 2011
Woodbury City Hall, Birch Room

Members	Agency	Present
Rafael Ortega	Ramsey County	x
Lisa Weik	Washington County	x
Kathy Lantry	St Paul	
Will Rossbach	Maplewood	x
Paul Reinke	Oakdale	x
Mary Giuliani Stephens	Woodbury	x
Dean Johnston	Lake Elmo	x
Dan Kylo	West Lakeland	x
Randy Nelson	Afton	x
Brian Zeller	Lakeland	
Victoria Reinhardt, Alternate	Ramsey County	
Gary Kriesel, Alternate	Washington County	
Paul Rebholz, Alternate	Woodbury	
Brett Emmons, Alternate	Lake Elmo	
Dave Schultz, Alternate	West Lakeland	
Pat Snyder, Alternate	Afton	
Peg Larson, Alternate	Lakeland	

Ex-Officio Members	Agency	Present
Greg Watson	Woodbury Chamber of Commerce	x
Mike Amundson	Baytown Township	
Doug Stang	3M	
Richard McNamara	Oakdale Business and Professional Association	
Tim Ramberg	St. Croix County	
Zach Schwartz	St Paul Chamber of Commerce	x

Others	Agency
Ted Schoenecker	Washington County
Mike Rogers	Ramsey County RRA
David Jessup	City of Woodbury
Josh Straka	Congresswoman McCollum's Office
Dave Schultz	West Lakeland Township
Mary Richardson	CTIB Administrator
Stephen Ebner	West Lakeland Township
Josh Collins	Ramsey County
Clint Gridley	City of Woodbury
Shelly Schafer	Senator Al Franken's Office
Rachel Horn	Congresswoman Bachmann's Office
Tim Mayasich	RCRRA

Due to lack of quorum, the meeting began with agenda item #5 at 3:35 p.m.

Agenda Item #5. Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) Presentation

Mary Richardson from CTIB distributed copies of her PowerPoint Presentation to everyone present. She gave an overview of who CTIB is and their purpose.

The Gateway Corridor Commission was called to order at 3:59 p.m. by Chair Weik.

Agenda Item #1. Introductions

Introductions were omitted due to the rearrangement of the agenda.

Agenda Item #2. Approval of Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda. Motion made by Ortega to approve agenda. Seconded by Johnston. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Agenda Item #3. Summary March 10, 2011 Meeting

No changes were made to the March 10, 2011 meeting summary. Motion by Johnston to approve the meeting summary. Seconded by Nelson. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Agenda Item #4. Consent Items

- a. Checks and claims: Motion by Johnston to approve the consent items. Seconded by Reinke. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Agenda Item #6. Gateway Corridor AA Update

Item 6a. AA FAQ: Schoenecker said we are revamping the web site to have targeted specific questions and answers about the Alternative Analysis. The web site will still highlight who the Commission is and activities of the Commission, but will also address the AA in greater detail.

Item 6b. Additional (Eighth) Alternative: Schoenecker said prior to public meetings, the Commission approved going forward with seven alternatives. Since holding open houses and having discussions with other agencies, there is a proposed eighth alternative being the inclusion of a managed lane built from St. Paul east to Hudson. The suggestion has gone through both the PAC and the TAC, and both groups have made recommendations to add that alternative. The consultant scope of work includes the analysis of only 7 alternatives. Therefore, the eighth alternative would require an amendment to the contract, including scope of work and costs. The consultant said the costs associated with adding an eighth alternative would be approximately \$100,000. Adding another alternative hits on 10 of the 17 scope of work tasks required for the study. The budget for the study is \$1.4 million with a \$50,000 contingency. The Commission could use the contingency dollars and ask Ramsey County, Washington County, and the Met Council to fund the other \$50,000. Another option could be to retain the contingency and ask those three funding partners to fully participate in the full amount of the added scope of work. Ortega asked how much money is in contingencies. Weik said there is \$50,000 in the study budget and \$10,000 in our administrative budget. Ortega said it is important that we maintain our contingencies and suggested getting the money from the funding partners. Schoenecker said we would ask 40% from the two counties and 20% from the Met Council. Weik agreed that is a good suggestion. Rossbach asked how this came about. Weik said some is state driven and was addressed in the PAC meeting. Schoenecker said it has originated from two places: one is through discussion with

the PAC, specifically from the City of Minneapolis, and secondly, from the region itself. Met Council and Mn/DOT are looking at these lanes in greater detail and are looking at adding one between the two downtowns. Weik said the timing might not line up, it's unknown, but it is good news that the east metro is getting recognition. Ortega said the AA is a very important building block for everything we do in the future and managed lanes are a viable option. We should have included managed lanes in this initial step as a part of the foundation. It would be more expensive and difficult to go back and get the information. Weik concurred. Rossbach asked if individual cars would pay part of the lane cost. Schoenecker said a single vehicle driver can pay to utilize that lane. Rossbach agreed that it should be part of the study, but doesn't see it as a good multimodal solution. Schoenecker said we can finalize the funding pieces at the May meeting.

Agenda Item #7. Resolution of Support – St. Croix River Bridge Crossing

A draft resolution was included in the packet. Rossbach said he is failing to see the connection between the task of what we're doing and us supporting the bridge. Weik said it's a regional view and there is impact on both projects. As time goes on, I-94 will reach capacity sooner if we don't build a new bridge, causing more congestion on our corridor. Rossbach said passing a resolution has no bearing or effect on the Alternative Analysis that we're proceeding with; a bridge will not be built during the timeframe that this Commission is meeting or doing our analysis. Weik said it would have a great impact on this corridor if the Stillwater Bridge is shut down. It also speaks a lot to the local projects and supporting our congressional representatives and elected officials. Rossbach said he doesn't support a mega bridge; spreading out the population runs counter to people who support multimodal transportation. It runs against the general thought that we want to supply mass transit; therefore, working against our own effort. Giuliani Stephens agreed that there isn't a benefit for this Board to get into the size, design, and location but we can support the general concept of a new St. Croix River crossing. Nelson said it affects the numbers and could affect what mode of transit we may choose. By supporting it we can help move the next group forward in getting a bridge built. Weik asked if anyone thought it would be detrimental to this Commission to pass a resolution of support. Rachel Horn, from Congresswoman Bachmann's office, said Congresswoman Bachmann doesn't make requests for transportation unless there is local support. Having a resolution on file is helpful to them. Shelly Schafer, from Senator Franken's office, said they are currently in a fact-finding mode and haven't taken a position yet. Weik said, from a regional perspective, the two projects do impact each other on some level; therefore, it would be beneficial to have a resolution of support. Johnston said the resolution is tailored to be sensitive to have minimum impact on our mission.

Motion by Johnston to approve the resolution. Seconded by Reinke. Ortega, Weik, Reinke, Giuliani-Stephens, Johnston, Kylo, and Nelson in favor. Rossbach opposed. **Approved.** Motion carried.

Agenda Item #8. Communications

Item 8a. Social Media: Schoenecker reviewed the presentation provided in the packet including current outreach, what social media is, and a detail of Tunheim's scope of work for a Facebook page. He said the keys are creating the page and then maintaining it. Kylo asked what Tunheim bills hourly. Schoenecker said it depends on who does the work. Nelson asked if the \$8,000 would come from the Gateway Commission operating contingency. Weik said yes, but it isn't a lump sum contract, adding that she is hesitant about spending \$8,000 of the \$10,000 contingency in March. Ortega asked what the time frame is for the \$8,000. Schoenecker said it expires at the end of 2011. Ortega asked if there is any way we see a cost benefit. Schwartz suggested a more important question to consider is what role

does creating this page and paying for this administration have for the Gateway Corridor Commission and the Alternative Analysis. We use social media at the Chamber and it is valuable, but you first have to understand what value it brings to what you are trying to accomplish. Weik said that Bob Hughes, a representative that comes to the PAC meetings, is very articulate and very passionate about getting this out to the college community. We are in a public comment period, so this really isn't to advertise or promote the Gateway, and we could create a false impact about timing with a Facebook page. We could do radio ads to target the college students, and Hughes thought that was a good idea. Weik said maybe a year from now would be better when we have the information from the AA study. She said she is willing to do additional outreach activities to area clubs and chambers. Weik also wants people to think about the fact that Facebook is not a permanent entity; is there a risk in spending public money with someone that has no obligation to us. Giuliani Stephens said she is a huge proponent of social media, but agreed that we might want to think about what's the best timing. Nelson commented that the suggestion came from a WI partner, and we should discuss getting some funding from them. Weik said they don't have the opportunity to contribute at this time. Ortega asked where the conversation with Hughes was left. Weik said he said he would be fine with waiting a year. Ortega said we want to make sure we keep passionate folks like him engaged. Nelson agreed, but we need to partner with the dollars when we are crossing the river. Ortega said keeping people engaged is more important than the dollar. Weik commented that Hughes said he will start getting items from the Gateway web site and put them on his Facebook page.

Item 8b. Google Analytics Update: Schoenecker highlighted that when the open houses occurred there was a big spike. The spike correlates to us getting information out there about the open houses. Many of the hits came from press release links. This shows that when we put the resources out there, it is effective in reaching the people.

Agenda Item #9. Legislative Update

Item 9a. State: Rogers said the House and Senate have both passed transportation bills as part of the larger overall budget. The House bill is much more of a cut to transit than the Senate bill; the Senate is \$40 million in cuts and the House is \$120 million in cuts. The House bill tries to backfill some of that money by taking CTIB money, and the Senate does not have a CTIB provision. Impacts would be significant; changes in transit if these cuts go through could include raised bus fares and significant route cuts. Giuliani Stephens said GEARS sent a letter to Representative Beard today in strong opposition of eliminating those funds.

Item 9b. Federal: Rogers said there was an agreement for \$38 billion in cuts to prevent the government shut down. It is being voted on later today and tomorrow and would fund the government through September 30th, the end of the fiscal year 2011. There were significant cuts to high speed rail and transit. On the transit side, we don't expect those cuts to hurt the Central Corridor or the Union Depot. There will be a challenge on the Federal side to keep the transportation funding up and discussions on how to maintain and increase revenue. Ortega asked where Amtrak is in all this. Rogers said they did receive a cut; however, they are funded through PRIIA. Ortega commented that the six-year bill is not all about rail, but also includes highways and roads.

Agenda Item #10. Other

Item 10a. Meeting Summary: Schoenecker said the information included in the packet is to highlight activities so the Commission is aware of other meetings: TAC and PAC. He also provided a summary

sheet of outreach events, past and future, to keep entities along the Corridor engaged. Weik said the presentations have generated a lot of interest; she has had comments that the bus ridership numbers aren't very high and people wonder if there are transit interests out there. She pointed out that the Met Council doesn't offer robust bus service out here, and all day bus service would incorporate higher numbers. Schoenecker said it's good to get out to these groups; they are the groups that may not necessarily go to a web site or come to an open house, but will attend as part of the Lion's Club, etc.

Item 10b. Bus Tour Update: Schoenecker said we are proposing to look at a tour of other Corridors and also van type tour of our Corridor. We would also create a tour map to go on your own time if you're unable to attend the van tour.

Item 10c. Commission Meeting Time: Members agreed to keep the meeting time of 3:30 to 5:00.

Agenda Item #11. Adjourn

Johnston moved to adjourn. Seconded by Giuliani Stephens. **Approved.** Motion carried. Weik called the meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.



Agenda Item #4

DATE: May 6, 2011
TO: Gateway Corridor Commission
FROM: Staff
RE: Checks and Claims

Included below is a summary of the invoices that have been received since the previous meeting:

Gateway Corridor Commission – Advocacy Materials

<u>Date(s)</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Amount</u>
5/2/11	Gateway Brochure	Handouts	\$187.47

Communications Contract (Tunheim Partners)

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Amount</u>
NA	

Alternatives Analysis Contract (CH2M Hill)

<u>Date(s)</u>	<u>Amount</u>
January 29, 2011 – February 25, 2011	\$25,242.48
February 26, 2011 – March 25, 2011	<u>\$48,258.82</u>
Total	\$73,501.30

Detailed invoices can be made available upon request.

Action Requested: Approval of Claims and Checks



Agenda Item #5

DATE: May 6, 2011
TO: Gateway Corridor Commission
FROM: Staff
RE: Gateway Corridor Alternatives Analysis Update

Agenda Item 5a. Gateway Corridor Frequently Asked Questions

The Frequently Asked Questions have been updated on the Commission's website and can be found at <http://www.thegatewaycorridor.com/html/faq-gateway-corridor.php>.

Action Requested: Information

Agenda Item 5b. AA Update and Approval of Alternatives

Stephanie Eiler, project manager for CH2M Hill, will give an update on the status of the Alternatives Analysis.

At its last meeting in April, the Commission discussed the addition of an eighth alternative to the Alternatives Analysis. As a recap, the approved scope of work from CH2M Hill identified up to seven (7) different alternatives would be analyzed. Their proposal and cost estimates were based on this identified number. If an eighth alternative were added to the alternatives to carry forward, CH2M Hill would be performing work outside of their approved scope of work. CH2M Hill has provided a scope of work and cost estimate of \$99,917 for this added alternative.

In the discussion at last month's meeting, the Commission was in favor of asking the funding partners, Ramsey and Washington County Regional Railroad Authorities and the Met Council, to provide the funding for this additional work and not utilize the project contingency funds.

Action Requested: Approval of the Resolution to include an eighth alternative in the Alternatives Analysis scope of work for an amount not to exceed \$99,917 pending approval of the funding from the Metropolitan Council, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority and the Washington County Regional Railroad Authority.



Agenda Item #6

DATE: May 6, 2011
TO: Gateway Corridor Commission
FROM: Staff
RE: Insurance Procurement

The Gateway Corridor Commission Joint Powers Agreement allows for the purchase of insurance coverage by the Commission as it deems necessary. Similar Joint Powers Boards have purchased general liability insurance.

The approved 2011 Work Plan and Budget includes an item for the procurement of insurance. In 2010, the Commission purchased insurance from the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT) for \$1,120 per year.

LMCIT provided a cost of \$1,099 for providing insurance for 2001.

Action Requested: Approval to procure insurance from LMCIT as the insurance provider for the Commission for an amount of \$1,099.



Agenda Item #7a

DATE: May 6, 2011
TO: Gateway Corridor Commission
FROM: Staff
RE: Gateway Corridor Outreach Activities

As part of the Communications Contract, Tunheim Partners has been assisting in arranging outreach meetings to stakeholders along the corridor. These stakeholders range from local community city councils, council districts, business chambers, individual businesses, community groups and others.

Included below is a summary the Commission's outreach activities.

Stakeholder	Status
Lake Elmo Rotary Club	Presentation – March 16
St Paul District Council 1	Annual Meeting Booth – March 28
Woodbury LIONS Club	Presentation – April 5
Woodbury Chamber of Commerce	Presentation – April 6
Rasmussen College	Presentation – May 2
River Falls Rotary Club	Presentation – May 3
Metro State University	Presentation – May 4
St Paul Chamber – Transportation Committee	Scheduled – May 19
UW River Falls	Requested meeting – Fall 2011
Oakdale Business and Professional Assn	Contact has been made
Hartford Financial	Contact has been made
3M	Requested meeting – targeting mid-May
Woodwinds	Contact has been made
Imation	Contact has been made
Target.com	Contact has been made
Dayton's Bluff Area Business Association	Contact has been made
East Side Area Business Association	Contact has been made
St Paul District Council 1	Meeting scheduled – May 23
St Paul District Council 4	Meeting scheduled – May 16
St Paul District Council 5	Meeting scheduled – June 7

Action Requested: Information

MEMORANDUM

To: Gateway Corridor Commission
From: Tunheim Partners
Date: April 14, 2011
Re: Gateway Corridor Website March Analytics

The attached document outlines all important statistical information regarding the Gateway Corridor's website from the period of March 1-31, 2011. Below is a guide for understanding the numbers and percentages:

- Visits:** This is the total number of unique visitors to the website. Over the past month, there were 559 visitors to the Gateway Corridor website. This number decreased significantly compared to last month, which had 2,058 visitors to the website. While the decrease seems drastic, it is due in large part to the large amount of traffic regarding the announcement of the seven proposed transit routes last month. Average monthly visits continue to increase since the website launched, averaging approximately 510 visitors.
- Pageviews:** This is the total number of pages that were viewed by visitors. In other words, each visitor will view anywhere from 1-5 pages during a visit. Over the past month, there were 1,607 pageviews on the Gateway Corridor website. This number of pageviews is significantly less compared to February's pageviews at 6,430. However, similar to monthly visits, February's pageviews were contingent upon the release of the seven proposed transit options.
- Pages/Visit:** This means that the average person visited 2.87 of the pages within the Gateway Corridor website. The average for pages visited remains above three pageviews.
- Percent Bounce Rate:** The bounce rate represents the number of people who visit the Gateway Corridor website, view one page (generally the homepage) and leave the site completely. March's bounce rate was 31.31 percent. A bounce rate of less than 50 percent is desired, and at 31.31 percent, it is still ideal.
- Avg. Time on Site:** The average person spent nearly two and a half minutes (2:23) on www.thegatewaycorridor.com in March. Typically, the average person spends approximately one minute on a new website. March's number shows visitors continue to spend time reading content, exploring the website, and learning more about the Gateway Corridor.
- Percent New Visits:** The percentage of new visits in March for the Gateway Corridor website was 61.36 percent. While this number decreased when compared to February's 78.62 percent, it remains steady since the Gateway Corridor's site-launch eight months ago. Averages overall for percent of new visits remain between 68-70 percent.

Traffic Sources Overview:

Search Engines, Referring Sites, and Direct Traffic make up the three descriptors and determine the source of where the visitor found the Gateway Corridor website link. Search engine tools are how 35.24 percent of March visitors found the Gateway Corridor website – this number results from people purposefully searching for the website, and most importantly, finding it. This number also increased compared to February’s 13.9 percent.

Referring sites, which in the past have made up the majority of website traffic, resulted in 35.24 percent. This number decreased compared to February’s 59.82 percent. These are people who clicked a referral link (from an email, press release, etc.). February’s high number could be attributed to the Seven Proposed Transit Options release, which directed web traffic with a referral link. Finally, direct traffic made up 29.52 percent, an increase compared to last month’s 26.29 percent. Direct traffic represents the number of people who typed the link into their web browser.

Referring Sites:

The following sites have contributed to the most referring links that successfully directed traffic to the Gateway Corridor website in March:

- Hudson Star Observer – 38 visits (article, Commission presents possibilities for rapid transit)
- East Side Review News – 12 visits
- City of Oakdale – 11 visits
- Washington County – 10 visits
- Star Tribune – 10 visits

The March numbers for referring sites were largely the result of earned media placement and social networking. Placements in the *Hudson Star Observer*, regarding an early-March open house and possibilities for rapid transit helped drive traffic to the website in March.

Content Overview:

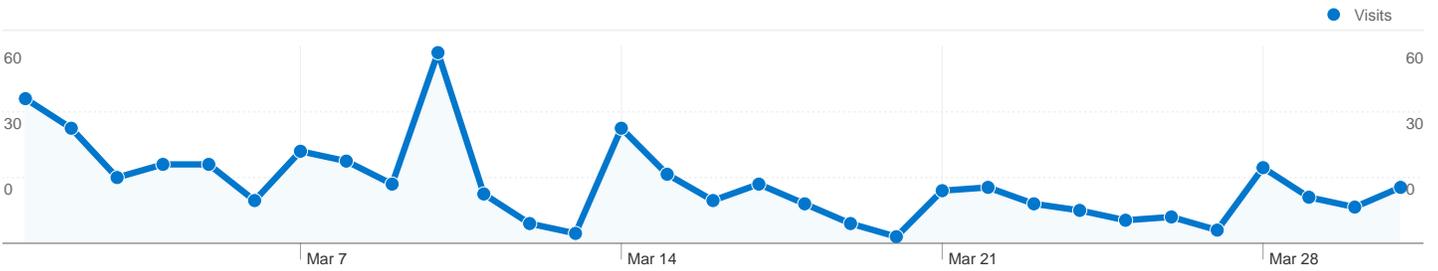
This section of the Google Analytics shows which pages within the Gateway Corridor website visitors go to most often. The following numbers show how many visitors clicked each page in March:

- Homepage- 546 (33.98 percent)
- Transit study page- 462 (28.75 percent)
- About the Gateway Corridor page- 141 (8.77 percent)
- Commission Members page- 104 (6.47 percent)
- Recent News page- 88 (5.48 percent)

E-mail Sign-ups:

The Gateway Corridor gained an additional 12 newsletter recipients in March. A total of 219 subscribed contacts have signed-up for the newsletter.

Please let us know if you have any questions regarding the Gateway Corridor website, or any of the Google analytic terms.



Site Usage

559 Visits

31.31% Bounce Rate

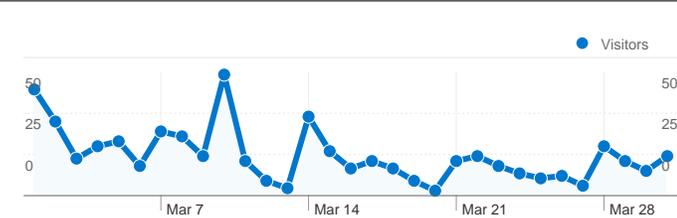
1,607 Pageviews

00:02:23 Avg. Time on Site

2.87 Pages/Visit

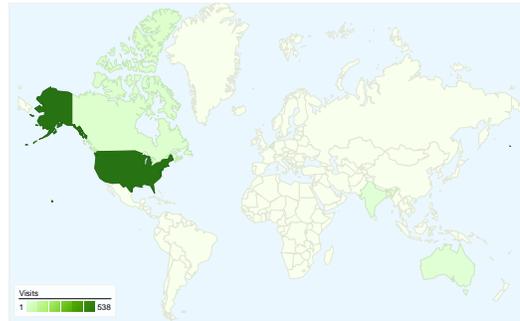
61.36% % New Visits

Visitors Overview



Visitors
416

Map Overlay



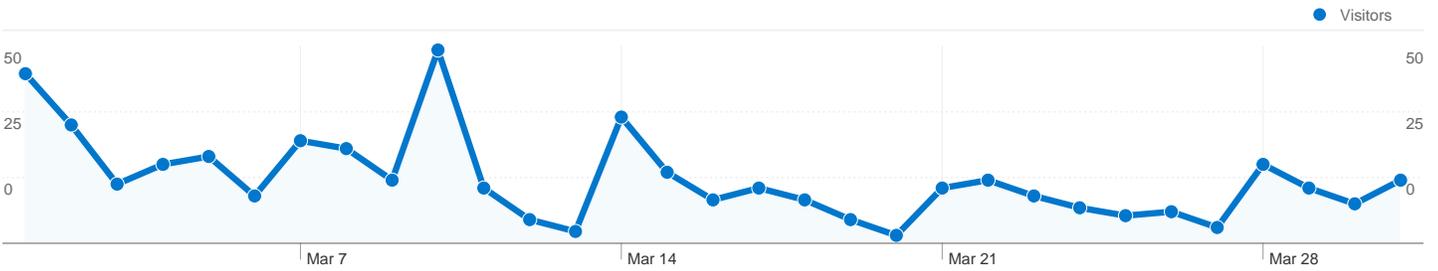
Traffic Sources Overview



- **Referring Sites**
197.00 (35.24%)
- **Search Engines**
197.00 (35.24%)
- **Direct Traffic**
165.00 (29.52%)

Content Overview

Pages	Pageviews	% Pageviews
/	546	33.98%
/html/transit-study-gateway-	462	28.75%
/html/about-gateway-	141	8.77%
/html/commission-	104	6.47%
/html/recent-news.php	88	5.48%



416 people visited this site

559 Visits

416 Absolute Unique Visitors

1,607 Pageviews

2.87 Average Pageviews

00:02:23 Time on Site

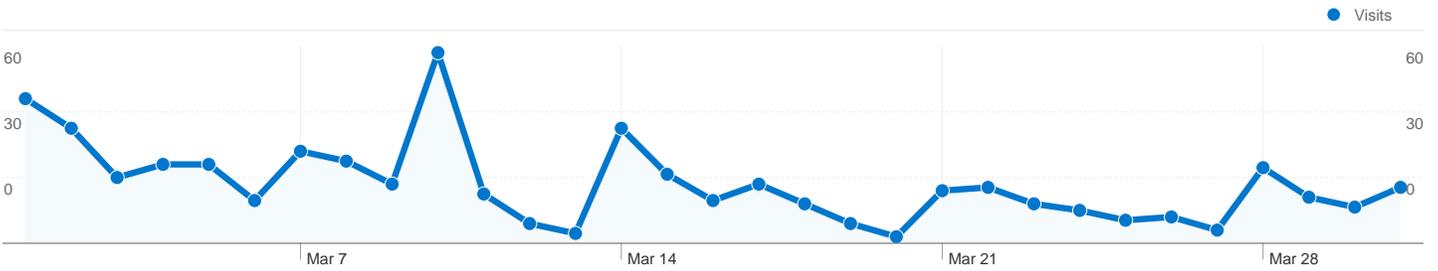
31.31% Bounce Rate

61.36% New Visits

Technical Profile

Browser	Visits	% visits
Internet Explorer	318	56.89%
Firefox	126	22.54%
Safari	53	9.48%
Chrome	52	9.30%
IE with Chrome Frame	3	0.54%

Connection Speed	Visits	% visits
Unknown	559	100.00%



All traffic sources sent a total of 559 visits

 29.52% Direct Traffic

 35.24% Referring Sites

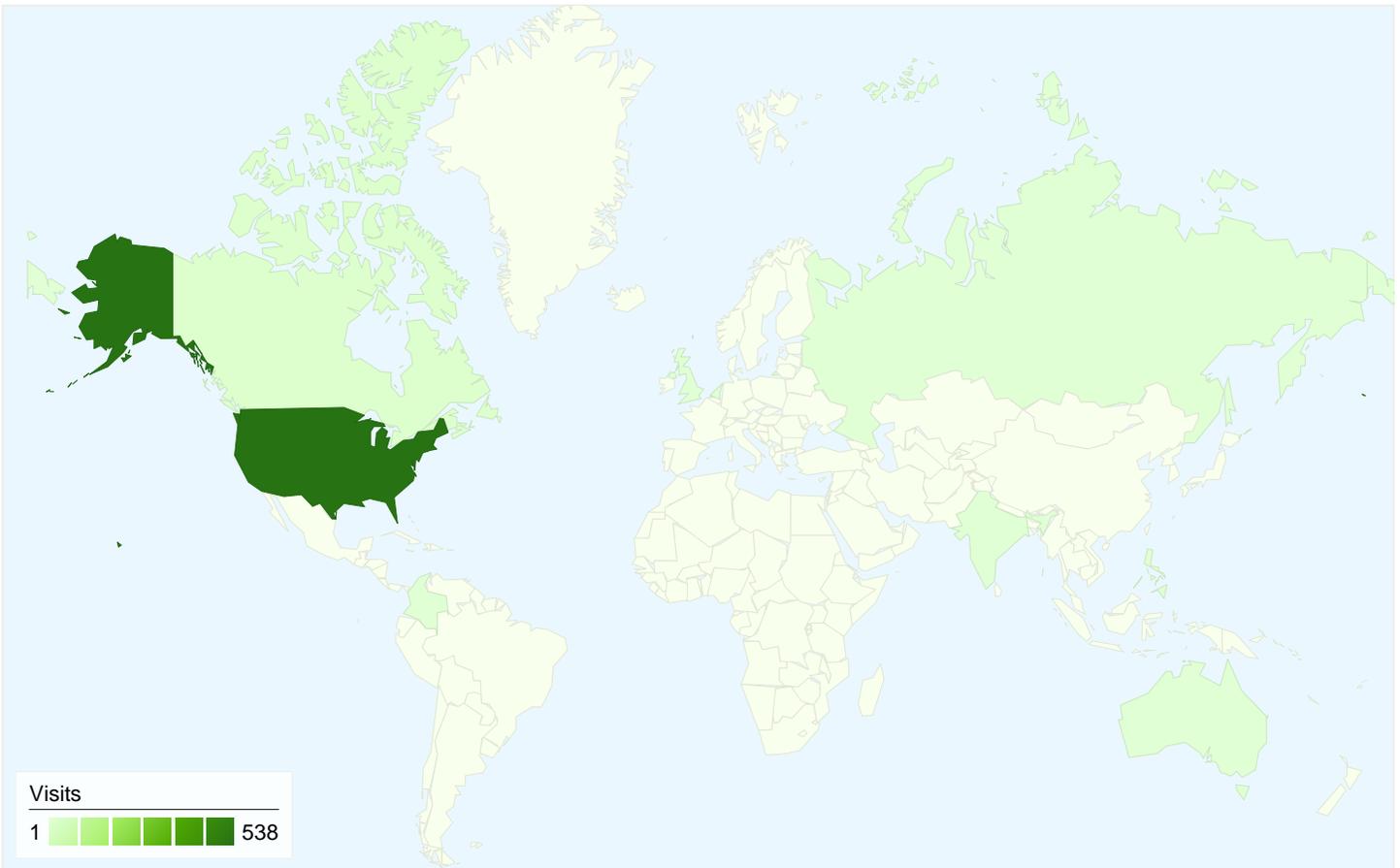
 35.24% Search Engines



- **Referring Sites**
197.00 (35.24%)
- **Search Engines**
197.00 (35.24%)
- **Direct Traffic**
165.00 (29.52%)

Top Traffic Sources

Sources	Visits	% visits	Keywords	Visits	% visits
(direct) ((none))	165	29.52%	gateway corridor	52	26.40%
google (organic)	160	28.62%	the gateway corridor	21	10.66%
hudsonstarobserver.com	38	6.80%	gateway corridor mn	15	7.61%
bing (organic)	31	5.55%	gateway corridor commission	12	6.09%
facebook.com (referral)	16	2.86%	thegatewaycorridor.com	7	3.55%

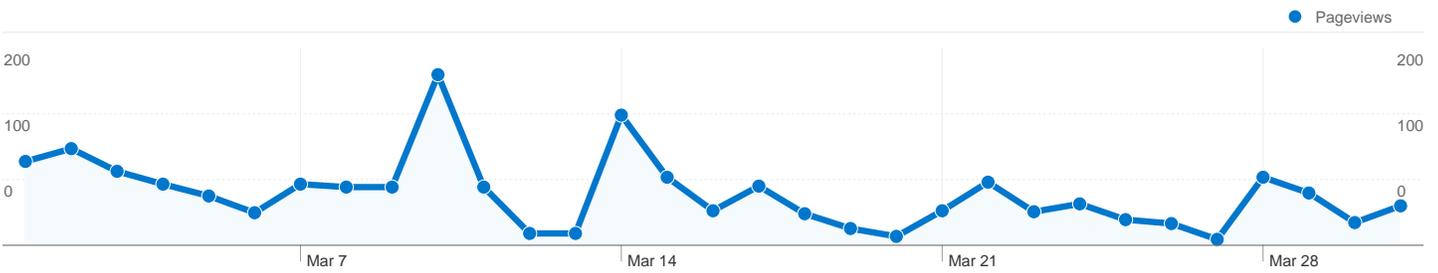


559 visits came from 10 countries/territories

Site Usage

Country/Territory	Visits	Pages/Visit	Avg. Time on Site	% New Visits	Bounce Rate
Visits 559 % of Site Total: 100.00%	Pages/Visit 2.87 Site Avg: 2.87 (0.00%)	Avg. Time on Site 00:02:23 Site Avg: 00:02:23 (0.00%)	% New Visits 61.36% Site Avg: 61.36% (0.00%)	Bounce Rate 31.31% Site Avg: 31.31% (0.00%)	
United States	538	2.89	00:02:26	61.52%	31.04%
Canada	12	2.75	00:01:06	25.00%	25.00%
India	2	1.50	00:01:40	100.00%	50.00%
Hong Kong	1	3.00	00:00:49	100.00%	0.00%
Netherlands	1	2.00	00:00:23	100.00%	0.00%
United Kingdom	1	1.00	00:00:00	100.00%	100.00%
Australia	1	1.00	00:00:00	100.00%	100.00%
Colombia	1	5.00	00:04:41	100.00%	0.00%
Russia	1	1.00	00:00:00	100.00%	100.00%

Philippines	1	1.00	00:00:00	100.00%	100.00%
					1 - 10 of 10



Pages on this site were viewed a total of 1,607 times

1,607 Pageviews

1,221 Unique Views

31.31% Bounce Rate

Top Content

Pages	Pageviews	% Pageviews
/	546	33.98%
/html/transit-study-gateway-corridor.php	462	28.75%
/html/about-gateway-corridor.php	141	8.77%
/html/commission-members.php	104	6.47%
/html/recent-news.php	88	5.48%



Agenda Item #8b

DATE: May 6, 2011
TO: Gateway Corridor Commission
FROM: Staff
RE: Federal Update

Include below is the latest federal update from Lockridge Grindal Nauen.

Action Requested: Information

Federal Update – Week of May 2nd, 2011

CONGRESS IN ACTION

Congress returned from its recess this week, looking ahead at the need to raise the nation's statutory debt limit within the next two months and associated efforts to cut spending or establish new budgetary controls. Meanwhile, the Senate's bipartisan "Gang of Six" Senators will get the chance to again meet face-to-face this week, as they seek agreement on a comprehensive debt reduction plan based on the framework of President Obama's fiscal commission. Members of the group were in contact by telephone during the two-week recess and reportedly are still wrangling over several issues. The most divisive is the extent to which revenues should be increased to help reduce future deficits, and whether changes should be made to Social Security to ensure the program's long-term solvency.

Debt Limit

Participants in Thursday's White House meeting to discuss options to reduce the debt and deficit said they got off to a good start, with some expressing optimism an agreement will be reached. Vice President Joseph Biden acknowledged a bipartisan agreement on deficit reduction will be needed in order to raise the nation's \$14.3 trillion statutory debt limit. Thursday's meeting, the first for the working group, was devoted to outlining the various positions of the participants to "make sure each of understand where the other guy's coming from," Biden said. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) after the meeting said there was "general agreement that things have got to change," and that spending cuts and other budgetary reforms are necessary. The working group will meet again next Tuesday, when they expect to begin negotiating in earnest.

Sources indicate that Republicans appear ready to back off their demands for major changes to entitlements as a condition for raising the debt limit. House Ways and Means Chairman Dave Camp (R-MI), said he still believed that a controversial GOP proposal to revamp Medicare was a good idea, but conceded that Democrats would not accept it. The major divide in the talks will be whether tax increases are part of the solution in reducing future deficits, with Speaker Boehner yesterday saying



“nothing is off the table, except raising taxes.” Boehner also said Republicans won’t increase the debt limit unless it is accompanied by “trillions” of dollars in spending cuts. Republicans continued to call for the administration to submit the President’s new fiscal “framework” as a detailed proposal that could be scored.

Fiscal Year 2012 Budget

Senate Republicans continue to pressure Senate Budget Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND) regarding his plans for a fiscal 2012 budget resolution. Republican Members of the Budget Committee again called for a chance to review the budget draft in advance, saying it should be posted online today if Conrad plans to have the markup Monday. Conrad earlier this week indicated that he may hold a markup next week, and had told top Budget Republican Jeff Sessions (R-AL) that it could be as early as Monday. No markup has yet been scheduled, however.

In a letter to Conrad, committee Republicans expressed disappointment that Conrad hadn’t responded to an earlier request for 72 hours to review the budget before any markup. Republicans also expressed concern that Conrad may not allow committee staff to answer questions at the markup, so that members and observers can better understand the nature and background of the proposal and the baseline it adopts.

Meanwhile, Senator Patrick Toomey (R-PA) announced that he will introduce his own budget next week, which he would then have the ability to call up on the Senate floor for a vote. Under Senate rules, if the Budget Committee fails to report a budget resolution by April 1, as is the case this year, any Senator can introduce a budget resolution that is immediately placed on the Senate calendar and is then eligible to be called up for floor action through a motion to proceed. That motion to proceed is “non-debatable,” which means it could not be filibustered and must be voted on. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has said he intends to have the Senate vote on the House-approved Republican budget, while Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) responded that he will force a vote on Obama’s fiscal 2012 proposal.

Disaster Supplementals

With natural disasters in the nation continuing along at a steady clip, the most recent being the tornadoes that ravaged the Southeast, the administration is being watched to see whether it will need to request any supplemental funding to help respond. The White House this week says it has no plans to ask for any supplemental money, with the Federal Emergency Management Agency saying it still has \$2.8 billion in its Disaster Relief Fund. But appropriators are preparing just in case, with House Appropriations Chairman Harold Rogers (R-KY) saying that his committee has done some “preliminary work” in case the administration does have to make an emergency request.

Senate GOP Unveils Job Creation Proposal

Senate Republicans on Tuesday introduced a comprehensive “jobs plan” they say they will promote as part of the larger debate over the debt limit and budget priorities.

The new plan focuses on seven “core areas” they say will help to generate economic growth in the nation and create jobs, and includes mostly traditional GOP policy proposals. Specifically, it calls for reducing government regulation, overhauling the tax code to reduce rates and simplify it, ratifying free-trade agreements to expand U.S. exports, consolidating federal worker retraining programs, providing



for greater domestic production of oil and gas and other sources of energy, repealing and replacing President Obama's health care overhaul law, and cutting spending to reduce debt and deficits. "It's a pretty simple concept," said Ohio's Rob Portman, who spearheaded development of the GOP package. "It is that we need to spur economic growth and create more jobs by increasing private investment, increasing the certainty in our economy, and making our economy more competitive."

STAFF UPDATES

Anne Marie Malecha

Anne Marie Malecha has been hired as communications director for Rep. Robert B. Aderholt (R-AL). Malecha was press secretary for **Congressman Erik Paulsen (R-MN)**. She has also served as a legislative assistant for Congressman Ted Poe (R-TX) and Congressman **Jim Ramstad (R-MN)**.

Hannah Katch

Hannah recently joined Senator **Al Franken's (D-MN)** office as the Health Legislative Assistant. Previously Hannah was the Health Policy Advisor/WREI Fellow, for Senator Franken. She also was a Research Assistant at the Department of Health Policy, Center for Health Care Quality.

MINNESOTA DELEGATION NOTES

Senator Al Franken (D-MN) co-sponsored S.884, "*The Domestic Energy Promotion Act of 2011*" on Wednesday. The bill seeks to end ethanol subsidies by 2016, and has the backing of a coalition of ethanol industry groups. To read a news story, click [here](#).

Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) released a statement after the Department of Interior (DOI) officially announced a proposal to delist the Great Lakes gray wolf from the Endangered Species Act list in Minnesota and the western Great Lakes states. To read a press release, click [here](#).

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN04) commended Department of the Interior Secretary Ken Salazar for his advocacy on the potential National Museum of the American Latino, which would be part of the Smithsonian Institution. Secretary Salazar said he would urge Congress to approve this museum to honor Latinos' culture, art, and history. To read a press release, click [here](#).

Congressman Keith Ellison (D-MN05) and members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC) sent a letter to President Obama to push for a sizeable reduction in U.S. troops in Afghanistan following the recent death of Osama bin Laden. To read the entire letter, click [here](#).

Congresswoman Michele Bachmann (MN-06) testified before the House Natural Resources' Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Land on behalf of her sponsored bill, H.R. 850, to facilitate construction of a new crossing over the St. Croix River at Oak Park Heights, Minnesota and St. Joseph, Wisconsin. To read a press release, click [here](#).



Agenda Item #9a

DATE: May 6, 2011
TO: Gateway Corridor Commission
FROM: Staff
RE: Summary of Meetings

Included below is a summary of the Commission and AA Study meetings through June.

Month	Meeting	Date
February	Gateway Commission	February 10
	AA TAC	February 16
	AA Open House – Union Depot	February 23
	AA Open House – Woodbury City Hall	February 24
March	AA Open House – Eau Claire	March 1
	AA Open House - Hudson	March 2
	Gateway Commission	March 10
	AA TAC	March 23
April	AA TAC	April 13
	Gateway Commission	April 14
May	AA TAC	May 11
	Gateway Commission	May 12
	AA PAC	May 25
June	AA TAC (Combine with PAC Meeting)	
	Gateway Commission	June 9
	AA PAC / TAC Joint Meeting	June 29 (note change in date)

Action Requested: Information