

## Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)

Meeting Summary  
Thursday, July 24, 2014  
2:00 – 3:20 pm  
Woodbury City Hall

### PAC Member Attendees

Harry Melander, Metropolitan Council  
Greg Watson, Woodbury Chamber  
Lisa Weik, Washington County  
Mary Giuliani Stephens (Chair), City of Woodbury  
Tom Cook, Metropolitan State University  
Scott McBride, MnDOT  
Doug Stang, 3M  
Dan Kyllo, West Lakeland

Rafael Ortega, Ramsey County  
Paul Sawyer, CAC Chair, St. Paul  
Scott Beauchamp, St. Paul Chamber  
Peter Wagenius, City of Minneapolis  
Richard Bend, City of Afton  
Paul Reinke, City of Oakdale  
Amy Williams, City of Lakeland  
Nora Slawik, City of Maplewood  
Mike Ericson, City of Landfall

### PAC Alternate Member Attendees

Arlene McCarthy, Metropolitan Council  
Linda Stanton, CAC Vice-Chair, Woodbury  
Mike Pearson, City of Lake Elmo  
Richard Bend, City of Afton  
Pat Bursaw, MnDOT  
Ellen Biales, City of St. Paul

### Other Attendees

Jan Lucke, Washington County  
Andy Gitzlaff, Washington County  
Lyssa Leitner, Washington County  
John Bradford, City of Woodbury  
Mark Finken, City of St. Paul  
Steven Elmer, Metropolitan Council  
Mike Rogers, Ramsey County  
Dave Schultz, West Lakeland Township

Bob Tatreau, Woodbury Resident  
Josh Straka, Office of U.S. Representative Betty McCollum  
Riham Feshir, Woodbury Bulletin  
Hillary Reeves, Transit for Livable Communities  
Jeanne Witzig, Kimley-Horn  
Beth Bartz, SRF Consulting Group  
Adele Hall, SRF Consulting Group

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

### 2. Review of the Gateway Corridor Process – *Beth Bartz, SRF*

- The Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) decision is an important decision in the development of the Gateway project. The project is still in the corridor planning phase, with the Alternatives Analysis (AA) finished and the Draft EIS started. The Scoping phase of the Draft EIS is nearly finished; when the Washington County Regional Railroad Authority (WCRRA) takes action on the Scoping Decision in early

August. Preparation of the Draft EIS will begin in earnest soon; publication is anticipated in about one year.

- The TAC and PAC recommended four BRT alternatives for study in the Draft EIS: A-B-C-D1-E1, A-B-C-D2-E1, A-B-C-D2-E2, and A-B-C-D2-E3. These BRT alternatives will be further refined to minimize impacts, enhance economic development potential, and reduce capital costs.
- Today the PAC will consider the proposed LPA. Selection of the LPA is a local decision on alignment and mode that is an early indicator of local preference. The LPA is the alignment that is the best with regard to local support, meeting the Purpose and Need for the project, and competing for federal funds. The LPA includes a general description of the route, an approximate number of stations (but not their specific locations), and the mode of transit. The LPA decision process is governed by the Metropolitan Council for eventual inclusion in the regional Transportation Policy Plan (TPP), and is a key step in the application for federal New Starts funding.
- The PAC will recommend a proposed LPA today for consideration and comment by the public at a hearing on Thursday, August 7, at 6 pm at the Conway Recreation Center in St. Paul. At the August or September PAC meeting, the PAC will consider the input heard at the hearing, and then will make a formal LPA recommendation to the Washington and Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authorities and the Metropolitan Council. The project will also ask each city and county through which the alignment passes to pass a resolution of support for the LPA. The project team will provide materials and support for this process.
- The proposed LPA process for Gateway is being synced up with the review process for Metropolitan Council's draft TPP. The intent is to include the Gateway LPA in the 2040 Draft TPP to receive comments on both at the same time, rather than doing an amendment after the TPP is adopted. This will save the project the time and effort associated with the approximately six-month TPP amendment process. After the PAC and GCC action today, the LPA will be included in the Draft TPP which will go out for a public review period in mid-August, including public meetings. The TPP will come back to the Metropolitan Council on October 14; in preparation for this meeting, all supporting resolutions from Gateway cities and counties are due to the Metropolitan Council on October 8.
- Cities are encouraged to schedule council workshops with city and project team staff as soon as possible. More information for the public regarding the LPA hearing will be available on the Gateway Corridor website next week.

### **3. Public Comments – Chair Giuliani Stephens**

- Hillary Reeves, Transit for Livable Communities, read a statement from Barb Thoman, Executive Director of TLC. The statement is attached to these minutes.

#### 4. Review of Supporting Technical Information for Proposed Locally Preferred Alternative Recommendation – Jeanne Witzig, Kimley-Horn

- Jeanne Witzig reviewed the four alternatives for LPA consideration. Each alternative is approximately 12 miles long and has 12 stations.
- Ridership: the BRT alternatives all have roughly the same ridership. Station-to-station is the low range of the ridership reflected in the figure. If express buses use the guideway, those riders are counted as well. That is the high range of the ridership. The ridership will probably fall between the two, but will not differ between alternatives.
- Travel time: the BRT alternatives also have very similar travel times. These travel times reflect stopping for about 20 seconds at each of the 12 stations along each route, and also incorporate traffic information to the extent it is available.
- Feeder routes: TAC and CAC members have asked for information on feeder buses, so this map was developed to show routes that would and would not most likely use the dedicated guideway. Gateway will be part of the larger transit system and this map and the ridership figures reflect that. The project team is working closely with Metro Transit to figure out optimal scenarios with the feeder and express routes.
- Traffic: the alternatives have different traffic impacts. The A-B-C-D1-E1 alternative has impacts at Radio Drive and Woodbury Drive because of the high volumes of traffic today and forecast. The recommended way to deal with these impacts would be grade separation, which is expensive. At 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Inwood Avenue mitigation would also be needed, but only at a traffic signal level. The area around Keats Avenue and Hudson Boulevard is likely to grow and a traffic signal will probably be needed at that location. Preliminary traffic analysis also indicates if the alignment were to use Lake Elmo Avenue/Settlers Ridge Parkway, it can accommodate BRT.
- Capital costs: the costs shown are for the D and E alignment combinations only; they do not include the cost of the A, B, and C segments. The ranges within the segments reflect some design options. There is a difference in capital costs among alternatives. The D2-E3 alignment is lowest cost because there are no structures to avoid traffic impacts or cross I-94. Capital cost estimates include the cost of the guideway, infrastructure, utility relocation, right of way, stations, and vehicles. There is a contingency built in because the project is in a very early phase of engineering. Contingency is also factored into the right-of-way estimates and all cost estimates are inflated to the mid-year of construction, estimated at 2020. The total cost for the various alternatives ranges from roughly \$450-\$485 million.
- Transit Oriented Development (TOD) potential and corridor activity sites: This criterion is about how the communities are developing and recognizes how important land use is to the success of the project. The real estate development analysis firm, HR&A, met with each community and many developers to understand the development conditions in the corridor and which areas are active.
- Corridor jobs: D1-E1 has more jobs currently than D2-E3 primarily because of the development in Woodbury. In the future the number of jobs level off between the

alternatives. D1-E1 has a higher level of retail jobs because of the retail base there today. In the future, the overall number of jobs and non-retail jobs is relatively similar. Mike Pearson asked for the study that is the source of the numbers. The project team will distribute HR&A's presentation with more background information.

- New Starts: even within its ranges, the project rates in the medium-low category for ridership. Relative to cost-effectiveness the project hovers between medium or medium-low. Of the six evaluating criteria Gateway needs an average medium rating. The environmental and VMT/congestion criteria will likely be medium ratings. This places much importance on the land use and development criteria which will be a focus with the corridor cities throughout the project.

## 5. Technical Advisory Committee Proposed Locally Preferred Alternative

**Recommendation to PAC/Gateway Corridor Commission – Jeanne Witzig, Kimley-Horn**

- The focus of the TAC discussion was on the A-B-C-D2-E2 and A-B-C-D2-E3 alternatives. Because of the traffic impacts on Radio and Woodbury Drives, D1 did not have strong support. West Lakeland Township and Afton members raise concerns about a future extension and how it would affect their future planning and development. Oakdale staff indicated preference for D2, Woodbury staff supported D2-E2, with the caveat that the E2 alignment be east of Gander Mountain to avoid traffic impacts on Woodbury Drive and Hudson Road. Lake Elmo staff supported D2-E2 but raised several concerns: keeping Lake Elmo Avenue without an interchange, avoiding new ongoing maintenance costs for the city, and need for resources to address land use planning challenges around the transit line. Scott McBride asked if the interchange at Lake Elmo Avenue has been discussed. Mike Pearson responded that it has not officially been discussed, but if it is a possibility, it would be concerning to Lake Elmo. John Bradford added that the City of Woodbury is not asking for an interchange at that location, though the city understands that the question is one of regional highway policy.
- The TAC reached consensus and recommended the A-B-C-D2-E2 alternative.
- Nora Slawik asked if the D2-E2 alternative is built, if people will end up backtracking to jobs in the western part of Woodbury. John Bradford responded that the western part of Woodbury is dominated by big-box retail and it would be difficult for people to reach many of the jobs even if there was a station nearby. This is why the bus circulator system is so important. Paul Reinke added that he struggles with the last mile issues, as well. The existing development is on the south side now, but in 2030 there will be at least as much development on the north side. It's important to make decisions for the long term 2030 perspective.
- Richard Bend noted that there isn't a great difference between alternatives on individual criteria but asked if the small differences between alternatives add up. For example, the E3 alternative has slightly higher ridership, slightly lower travel times, and slightly lower costs. Does this make a significant difference? Jeanne Witzig

responded that the TAC was focused on the concerns of each city. In Lake Elmo there were concerns from the land owner to the north along the E section between Lake Elmo Avenue and Manning Avenue. Conversely, on the south side of I-94 in the eastern section the land owner is very supportive of transit and TOD and incorporating it into the project. Looking at the differences cumulatively does not affect the federal ratings. The driving discussion at the committees has been community and land owner support. Beth Bartz added that unless an alternative has the support of all of the communities an alignment touches, the Metropolitan Council will not look favorably upon it. Also, at this point in the ridership forecasting, a difference of about 500 riders is in the noise of the data, so it is not significant.

**6. Community Advisory Committee Proposed LPA Input to PAC/Gateway Corridor Commission – Paul Sawyer, CAC Chair, St. Paul**

- The CAC met on Monday to discuss the LPA. Two or three members expressed that they do not want the project to be built, so their LPA preferences are based on the assumption that the project must be built. The group debated D2-E3, but in the end recommends D2-E2. The group discussed cost and travel time of crossing I-94, truck traffic in the area, and stressed the need for a circulator. Maplewood stressed that the bidirectional service was most important, and two members expressed a preference for terminating the line at I-494 on in the D1 area, with express buses extending further to the east.

**7. PAC Action on the Gateway Corridor Proposed LPA for Public Review / Inclusion in Draft 2030 Transportation Policy Plan – Beth Bartz, SRF Consulting**

- Beth Bartz reviewed the Draft PAC Resolution regarding the Proposed Gateway Corridor LPA.
- Amy Williams asked if the resolution should use the wording “eliminated”. Beth Bartz indicated since this was an action specific to the Scoping Decision, use of that word was appropriate at this point in the process.
- Beth indicated that the first five Whereas statements in the draft resolution focused on background information.
- Andy indicated that specific to the managed lane alternative, FTA has provided the green light for Washington County and other local agencies to work directly with FHWA.
- Andy mentioned that going forward one of the project risks is that it may take more time and resources than anticipated to work through issues such as the use of highway right-of-way. He stated that Washington County would be preparing a detailed risk assessment for their upcoming Gateway CTIB application. The risk assessment will be independently review and will be shared with the PAC upon completion.
- Scott McBride emphasized the importance of having resolutions of support as part of the decision making process (reference TAB).

- Harry Melander inquired if the resolution should specifically reference the importance of addressing I-94 right-of-way issues and the inherent risks going forward. After general discussion, the resolution was amended as follows  
“WHEREAS, the BRT alignment that advance into the Draft EIS will be further defined and evaluated to minimize impacts to surrounding properties, **including I-94, .....**”
- Scott McBride indicated that the appropriate level of information has been made available at the Scoping phase of the project. He emphasized the importance of transparency of impacts as the analysis advances in the Draft EIS.
- Request was made to also add in the final Be It Further Resolved ....forward to the **Gateway Corridor Commission....**
- Rafael Ortega motioned to approve the PAC resolution, as amended. Amy Williams provided the second.
- Lisa Weik requested that the LPA figure include city and county boundaries for reference.
- Peter Wagenius emphasized the importance of keeping the words “dedicated guideway” in the resolution.
- Arlene McCarthy requested that in future description of the LPA, road names be used to orient the reader.
- Resolution passed. Lake Elmo abstained from vote, requesting additional time to get up to speed on the project and talk with property owners. Afton voted against the resolution, indicating support for the Gateway project, but not the E2 alignment.

#### **8. Upcoming LPA & Coordination Activities – Andy Gitzlaff, Washington County**

- Upcoming LPA activities were reviewed, including the upcoming August 7 LPA public hearing.

The PAC adjourned at 3:40. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, August 14, at Woodbury City Hall.