

Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)

Meeting Summary

Thursday, September 11, 2014

2:00 – 3:20 pm

Woodbury City Hall

PAC Member Attendees

Lisa Weik, Washington County
Mary Giuliani Stephens (Chair), City of Woodbury
Kathy Lantry, City of St. Paul
Harry Melander, Metropolitan Council
Mike Pearson, City of Lake Elmo
Tom Cook, Metropolitan State University
Doug Stang, 3M
Rafael Ortega, Ramsey County

Paul Sawyer, CAC Chair, St. Paul
Scott Beauchamp, St. Paul Chamber
Tim Herman, ESABA
Peter Wagenius, City of Minneapolis
Randy Nelson, City of Afton
Paul Reinke, City of Oakdale
Nora Slawik, City of Maplewood
Mike Ericson, City of Landfall

PAC Alternate Member Attendees

Arlene McCarthy, Metropolitan Council
Mike Reeves, City of Lake Elmo

Adam Josephson, MnDOT

Other Attendees

Jan Lucke, Washington County
Andy Gitzlaff, Washington County
Lyssa Leitner, Washington County
Brian Finley, Washington County
John Bradford, City of Woodbury
Nick Johnson, City of Lake Elmo
Mark Finken, City of St. Paul
Steven Elmer, Metropolitan Council
Kevin Roggenbuck, Ramsey County

Joe Scala, Hennepin County
Dave Schultz, West Lakeland Township
Jackie Cherryhomes, Wilson Ridge Apts.
Bob Tatreau, Woodbury Resident
John Kahl, Afton Resident
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 in the corridor planning phase, with the Alternatives Analysis (AA) Study finished and the Draft EIS started. The Scoping phase of the Draft EIS was complete when the Washington County Regional Railroad Authority (WCRRRA) took action on the Scoping Decision on August 12. The Scoping Decision is focused on the purpose of the project, the alternatives that should be studied as part of the Draft EIS, and the evaluation method for these

alternatives. The Scoping Decision Document is currently being finalized and will be distributed in late September, 2014.

- The LPA is one of the alternatives that will be studied in the Draft EIS and serves as an early indication of local preference among the alternatives studied in the Draft EIS. LPA adoption into the regional 2040 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) is a key step in pursuing federal funding and committing agencies to investing in planning. The Metropolitan Council governs the TPP adoption process. The draft 2040 TPP is currently out for public comment and the Gateway proposed LPA is included in the draft 2040 TPP on a contingent basis.
- The TAC recommended a proposed LPA in July 2014, the CAC provided input, and on July 24 the PAC and GCC identified a proposed LPA for comment at a PAC-sponsored public hearing on August 7. Today the PAC will consider the comments received and formalize the recommendation made in July. The corridor cities are currently in the process of holding workshops and scheduling action on the LPA, through municipal resolutions of support. These actions must be completed by October 7 for submission to the Metropolitan Council on October 8.
- The LPA informational handout distributed at the LPA public hearing is available online in Spanish and paper copies will be provided by request. If anyone has suggestions for translation of additional items or into other languages, please contact project staff.
- Cable access TV is filming today's meeting as part of a county-focused show hosted by Commissioner Weik with the Gateway Corridor project as a featured topic.

3. Public Comments – Chair Giuliani Stephens

- Bob Tatreau signed up to comment, but elected to pass.

4. Proposed Locally Preferred Alternative Activities – Jeanne Witzig, Kimley-Horn

- The proposed LPA was included in the draft 2040 TPP on a contingent basis which is currently out for public comment (comment period ends October 1, 2014).
- The LPA public hearing was held on August 7 and was well attended. Comments heard at the hearing and via email/letters focused on the importance of all day service, as well as parking, noise, and right-of-way issues specific to neighborhoods.
- The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) held their hearing on the LPA earlier this week (September 9, 2014). There have been many city work sessions over the past month. Staff has also provided an update to the Metropolitan Council (Transportation Committee on August 11, 2014) regarding the project.

5. Summary of Technical Information and Public Input Received on the LPA – Jeanne Witzig, Kimley-Horn

- To recap: the BRT alternatives have common alignments on the west side of I-694 with segments A, B, and C. East of I-694 there are variations: one segment to the

- south of I-94 (D1), one segment that stays north of I-94 (D2) and crosses south near Lake Elmo Avenue (E2), and one segment that stays north of I-94 to Manning Avenue (E3). All of these alternatives will be studied in the Draft EIS; the proposed LPA is A-B-C-D2-E2 and is included in the draft 2040 TPP.
- Access to jobs, possibility for developing transit supportive land uses, and potential traffic impacts at Radio Drive and Woodbury Drive were issues that received a lot of attention from the TAC, CAC, and PAC during the proposed LPA discussions. Access to jobs was deemed an especially important factor. The D1-E1 alignment has slightly more jobs today, but looking out to 2030, the numbers even out. Non-retail jobs are ideal for transit service.
 - Committee members emphasized the importance of regional transit service, as well. The Gateway project will function as part of the regional network with feeder bus connections. Park and ride users are primarily coming from the south side of I-94 today, per study conducted during the Alternative Analysis.
 - Travel time, ridership, and costs are similar among the alternatives, with variations in costs resulting from needed structures, most notably under the D1-E1 alignment option through Woodbury.
 - Intersection capacity studies have been updated: both Keats Avenue and Lake Elmo Avenue at Hudson Boulevard can accommodate BRT, with signalization proposed at both intersections. Lake Elmo Avenue/Settlers Ridge Parkway also has the capacity for BRT to operate on the roadway.
 - The following issues have been raised at recent workshops held in each of the corridor cities: regional system importance, station area planning and accessibility, minimizing right-of-way impacts, traffic and accessibility/new signals, flexibility in design, capital costs, and how ridership forecasts were developed and how they compare to other projects. Job accessibility also continues to come up, as well as safety at the stations, and optimal station design.

6. ACTION: PAC Action on the Gateway Corridor Locally Preferred Alternative

- Mike Pearson began the discussion by reminding fellow PAC members that he abstained from the last vote on the LPA resolution. Lake Elmo has now had an opportunity to look into the decision more, and has a new position to present.
- Paul Reinke asked for clarification on the travel time. Andy Gitzlaff responded that during the AA there were many alternatives, so the travel time was measured from a common point near the Oaks Business Park. This travel time was about 18 minutes. This is consistent with the travel times for the BRT alternatives, which are approximately 30 minutes from Union Depot to Manning Avenue.
- Andy Gitzlaff described the difference between the action that the PAC took on July 24 and the actions that each city is taking. The PAC resolution language is more general in order to capture the opinions of the PAC as a whole. The resolutions passed by each city have a place for listing and providing input on community-specific issues. City resolutions are due by October 8 to Metropolitan Council, in

- order to align with the end of the comment period on the TPP, which is October 1. The Gateway LPA is included in the draft 2040 TPP on a contingent basis that depends on these resolutions. Cities can submit their resolutions to county staff for compilation and submission to the Metropolitan Council as part of the Gateway Corridor LPA Summary Report. The Metropolitan Council will review these materials before adopting the 2040 TPP.
- Andy Gitzlaff reviewed the changes to the LPA resolution since the July 24 PAC meeting:
 - The second whereas clause was added to further define the project and clarify that it will complement existing service and not replace it.
 - The seventh whereas clause references the Scoping process and what will be studied in the Draft EIS.
 - The eighth whereas clause clarifies that while Gateway will be built as a dedicated BRT line, it does have the flexibility to avoid impacts at pinch points by operating in mixed traffic.
 - The 17th whereas clause refers to comments received at the August 7 public hearing and via email regarding the LPA.
 - The 18th whereas clause discusses station area planning. This clause was included here, as well as in each of the city resolutions.
 - The resolving clause includes a definition of the alignment so that people can understand the LPA route without a map.
 - There has been a lot of discussion with the corridor cities, as well as in the communities outside the corridor. It has repeatedly come up that Gateway can't be the only solution; feeder bus is very important. The number and locations of stations is also not finalized as a part of the LPA. This resolving clause addresses these topics, recognizing that there is additional work to be done.
 - Harry Melander asked for definition of the "general alignment" and how specific it is. Andy Gitzlaff referred to the map on the back page of the resolution, noting that the LPA definition includes the communities that the alignment will pass through, but no specifics on where it would be located within a specific right-of-way.
 - Arlene McCarthy noted that the contingent LPA is listed in the draft 2040 TPP. One contingency is that the highway right-of-way issues will be addressed in the Draft EIS. It does not have to be explicitly addressed in this resolution, but it's one of the terms of the agreement.
 - Mike Pearson commented that Lake Elmo is struggling with some of the language in the resolution, specifically the defined crossing at Lake Elmo Avenue and that E3 is not listed as an option.
 - Andy Gitzlaff noted that the LPA is planned to cross "approximately" at Lake Elmo Avenue, to show that there is some flux regarding where that crossing is built.
 - Mike Pearson commented that Lake Elmo is in favor of keeping the alignment north of I-94 for a station in Lake Elmo at Manning Avenue. Some of the work that's been done suggests that it is at least an equal if not better route.

- Andy Gitzlaff responded that from a technical perspective, many of the comparison categories are fairly equal across the alternatives. The decision is more about potential community support and economic development.
- Randy Nelson asked if E3 was a cheaper option because it does not need a new crossing of I-94.
- Andy Gitzlaff responded that the cost difference is minor and would not impact a potential New Starts rating; this is really a policy decision, not a technical decision. Mary Giuliani Stephens noted that there was consensus around A-B-C-D2-E2, and that it seems fair that each community has a station. With respect to the property in Woodbury, the owner/developer, Alan Dale, has been involved in the project, has worked with Metropolitan Council, and went on the Gateway trip to Los Angeles. Ms. Stephens stated that she is in support of the proposed LPA (A-B-C-D2-E2).
- Harry Melander added that this is why he asked how general the definition is. There have been a lot of changes to the alignments of the other transitway projects; is there some room for moving this alignment around somewhat?
- Jan Lucke responded that the threshold for the next phase is inclusion in the TPP, so the answer to that question rests with the Metropolitan Council.
- Arlene McCarthy confirmed that the Council needs the preferred alignment. A “bubble” approach at Lake Elmo Avenue is acceptable, but leaving options both north and south of I-94 is too general. Ms. McCarthy reminded the group that the Draft EIS will provide more information on each of the alternatives and questioned whether the group would rather wait for that information before making a decision. PAC members asked how the process had gone on other transitway projects.
- Jeanne Witzig noted that the Bottineau LRT project identified an LPA following the Scoping phase. The LPA along with several other alternatives were studied in the Draft EIS. Passage of the LPA took a bit longer with one community, but this was an amendment to the TPP, and not direct inclusion like the Gateway project is seeking.
- Andy Gitzlaff noted that if the project were to wait and do a TPP amendment, the LPA would be finalized about a year from now.
- Arlene McCarthy asked what delay an amendment would pose to the later phases of the project.
- Jeanne Witzig responded that entry into project development requires the completion of the AA through inclusion of the LPA in the TPP, as well as completion of the Draft EIS. It is helpful from a disclosure perspective to be able to identify the LPA in the Draft EIS, and identify the environmentally preferred alternative, as well.
- Mary Giuliani Stephens noted that the PAC and the GCC have expressed a preference for direct inclusion of the LPA in the 2040 TPP.
- Jan Lucke reminded the PAC that station locations have not been finalized. If Lake Elmo’s discomfort lies with station locations, there is flexibility on that. Ms. Lucke asked Mayor Pearson to elaborate on Lake Elmo’s reasons for supporting E3.
- Mike Pearson noted that Lake Elmo was recently pulled into the Gateway Corridor project and are trying to get up to speed. A station at Keats is a potential negative

for the City, as there is activity there that Gateway project may disturb. But a station near Manning Avenue is an opportunity because it's where the City wants business park development to occur. The City feels that a station location near Manning Avenue would garner more riders from the east. Additionally, the City feels that on the northern side there are just as many non-retail jobs, and the alignment is cheaper. Mary Giuliani Stephens stated that from the City of Woodbury's perspective the last whereas clause makes it clear that the station locations are not set. The City is supportive of one station in Woodbury near Manning Avenue. Alan Dale is supportive and would like to do a transit-oriented development in the Manning Avenue station area.

- Mike Pearson acknowledged Alan Dale's involvement, and stated that the Lake Elmo property owner's participation has not been solicited. The E3 alignment economics work, it's a quicker ride to the city, and will gain more riders.
- Randy Nelson noted that West Lakeland's plans aren't certain but they are thinking of developing along Manning Avenue. Afton intends to stay rural.
- Mike Pearson stated that Lake Elmo's ask is for a station to be considered near Manning Avenue north of I-94.
- Nora Slawik noted that the consideration is really the timing; there are other decisions reliant on the PAC action. Ms. Slawik inquired whether LPAs are ever changed.
- Arlene McCarthy responded that it's unusual for the LPA decision process and the TPP update to happen at the same time. Usually it's an amendment process which takes about five months. All of the previous transitway have been adopted this way. The PAC does not want to go through the amendment process, but if the project were to go that way, it would be taken up in early 2015. The Council could also amend an LPA, but there is no precedent for that in the region.
- Kathy Lantry noted that the PAC held a public hearing on the proposed LPA on August 7. If the LPA were changed today, the PAC would need to hold another public hearing, otherwise it is deceptive to the public. Ms. Lantry questioned whether there was a compromise that could be arrived upon.
- Tim Herman noted that the Draft EIS isn't just analyzing natural resources; it will also consider the broader picture and provide information on whether an alignment north or south of the highway makes sense.
- Jeanne Witzig responded that the Draft EIS will provide more detail in terms of technical information—wetlands, stormwater, noise, community, land use issues etc—but it's possible that there won't be a clear differentiator among the alternatives, so it would come back to a policy decision on the preferred alignment.
- Dave Schultz commented that there is no frontage road on the north side of I-94 in West Lakeland Township; that is private property. The Township is considering development in this area.
- Mike Pearson asked what happens if Lake Elmo votes no today. Mary Giuliani Stephens responded that the majority vote will carry.

- Arlene McCarthy added that the regional transitway guidelines outline the process that the project has followed to-date. Though every project does things a bit uniquely, it's generally thought that the PAC is advising the county.
- Kathy Lantry asked if there is a way to address Lake Elmo's concerns in the resolution.
- Mary Giuliani Stephens noted that Woodbury would have similar concerns with an E3 alignment, as it would not include a station in Woodbury.
- Mike Pearson reminded the PAC that Lake Elmo was brought in late to the process, but they don't need more time, from his perspective. Out of deference to the committee, though, perhaps it makes sense to revisit this issue in a couple of weeks.
- Jan Lucke noted that the City of Landfall is scheduled to vote before the PAC/GCC would reconvene. If Lake Elmo were to take action on a different alternative, we could postpone the decision and go with the TPP amendment process instead of the direct inclusion in the 2040 TPP. Ms. Lucke asked if the group was willing to brainstorm an option that recognizes that the stations are still in play.
- Lisa Weik offered another option of moving ahead with the LPA as proposed, studying the other alignments in the Draft EIS, and then amending the LPA later if there is any information that warrants that action. The goal is to be included in the 2040 TPP. We would also do more work on the station locations. Would this work for Lake Elmo?
- Mike Pearson responded that using Lake Elmo Avenue is not acceptable to the City. It's such a significant action that it bears fleshing out. Mr. Pearson moved to table the resolution for a one week period. Randy Nelson seconded the motion.
- Mary Giuliani Stephens excuses herself from the PAC meeting for another meeting. Kathy Lantry assumed the chair's role.
- Discussion:
 - Kathy Lantry questioned what could happen within one week that would satisfy the concerns of Lake Elmo and allow the project to move forward.
 - Andy Gitzlaff responded that staff would do what they could within the week, and perhaps the council meeting next week is an opportunity. The only risk would be that some communities are slated to act between now and then. Landfall is scheduled for Tuesday and St. Paul for Wednesday. Their actions could then be inconsistent with a possible PAC/GCC action.
 - Doug Stang noted that it would be helpful to have more information on the differentiators between the alternatives that was the foundation for that recommendation.
 - Andy Gitzlaff responded that staff would be happy to provide the information gathered, but would need more direction regarding the kind of additional information to pull in addition to the LPA background report that has already been prepared
 - Harry Melander noted that the PAC made a decision regarding a general alignment. Its significance is that it goes from the north side of I-94 to the south

side. If the PAC moves this forward today and the communities are unclear about what it represents, they won't take action on it.

- Andy Gitzlaff noted that what the Metropolitan Council is asking for is a locally supported alignment. If that's not possible right now, the project needs to take a step back so that eventually consensus can be reached.
- Nora Slawik noted that if the PAC proceeds with Lake Elmo's proposal, it will alienate Woodbury, so it doesn't solve that issue.
- John Bradford noted that in his previous position at the City of Hopkins he worked on Southwest LRT. There were many discussions after the LPA was decided. The LPA alignment is also fairly different than what will actually be implemented. It seems to be a mistake to get too into a data-driven decision when the data is not available to support it. Without the stations set, the discussion is getting ahead of itself. Excluding Woodbury might bring up issues on the Woodbury City Council.
- Mike Pearson commented that Lake Elmo was not readily accepted as a participant. The Council has met with the Economic Development Authority and property owners. For the development on Keats, Gateway is not a win. If Lake Elmo has to have a station on Keats, the benefit needs to be a station at Manning Avenue. The City doesn't want the station at Keats for the same reasons that Woodbury didn't want a station in the same area to the south.
- Andy Gitzlaff proposed broadening the E2 crossing description to approximately between Lake Elmo Avenue and Manning Avenue. This provides additional flexibility on station location on the northern side including a potential additional station near Manning Avenue in Lake Elmo before the alignment crosses south to Woodbury or shifting the Keats Avenue station in Lake Elmo further east, but also ensures that the alignment does come into Woodbury with a terminating station near Manning Avenue.
- Mike Reeves commented that the Lake Elmo City Council is not trying to exclude Woodbury. This decision is about ensuring the best economic development opportunities for the City; the City has issues with Keats, but there are opportunities at Manning Avenue or in the vicinity.
- Lisa Weik proposed that the gold bubble on the map be expanded, to indicate that the exact location of the crossing of I-94 is still to be determined. Perhaps there is a solution with a station closer to Manning in Lake Elmo. The corridor may have access to additional resources like East Metro Strong to help with delineating station and doing robust station area planning. Details like kiss and rides and park and rides are in the next phase of study. The goal today is to be in the 2040 TPP when it's adopted in December.
- Mike Pearson responded that the City doesn't want to preclude Woodbury from having a station, but this resolution doesn't work for Lake Elmo. The expanded bubble is a good idea, but how does it translate into the resolution? The Lake Elmo Avenue reference would need to be removed and E3 would need to be included.

- Andy Gitzlaff responded that the crossing bubble would be between Lake Elmo and Manning Avenue and the language would be changed accordingly.
- Mike Pearson stated that E3 must be included.
- John Bradford responded that Woodbury can't support an E3 alignment because it does not include a station in Woodbury. The D2-E2 alignment could include a crossing closer to Manning Avenue, but the E3 alignment does not include a crossing.
- Andy Gitzlaff noted that this solution left open the potential for all crossing locations and station locations considered within the E alignment.
- Mike Pearson stated that he is happy with this solution. The bubble will be shown on the map between Lake Elmo and Manning Avenues. The language will be changed to indicate that the crossing will be between **approximately Lake Elmo Avenue and Manning Avenue.**
- Mike Pearson rescinded the motion on the table.
- Rafael Ortega moved approval of the amended resolution. Paul Reinke seconded the motion. The resolution was approved on a voice vote. There was one nay vote from Randy Nelson.

7. Station Area Planning and Health Impact Assessment

- Due to time constraints, this item will be tabled until the next PAC meeting.

8. Upcoming LPA Activities

- These activities have been covered in previous agenda items.

The PAC adjourned at 4:05. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, November 13, at Woodbury City Hall.