



Minutes

TRANSPORT 2020 IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE (ITF) MEETING #5

Monday, July 26, 2004

6:30 pm

Madison Municipal Building, Room 260
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard
Madison, WI

-- ROLL CALL

ITF Members Present: Sandy Beaupre; John DeLamater; Lori Kay (*for LaMarr Billups*); Supv. Chuck Erickson; Ald. Ken Golden; Jesse Kaysen; Supv. Scott McDonell; George Nelson; Randy Romanski; Dick Wagner.

ITF Members Absent: Jim Berkenstadt (*notified*); Michael Blaska (*notified*); Kristine Euclide (*notified*); Ald. Warren Onken (*notified*); Rose Phetteplace (*notified*).

TAC/Staff Present: Jeanne Hoffman (Madison Mayor's Office); Rob Kennedy (UW-Madison); Bill Schaefer (Madison Area Metropolitan Planning Organization); David Trowbridge (Madison Planning and Development; *Project Administrator for Transport 2020*).

Others Present: Fred Bartol (Dane Alliance for Rail Transit); Mickey Beil (Dane County Executive's Office); Vikki Kratz (Isthmus); Ken Lucht (Wisconsin and Southern Railroad); Bob Schaefer; Will Warlick (East Isthmus Neighborhood Planning Council).

1. REVIEW OF AGENDA

Supv. Scott McDonell welcomed Transport 2020 Implementation Task Force members to Meeting #5. There were no suggested modifications to the meeting agenda.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM ITF MEETING #4 (MAY 24, 2004)

The Minutes for Meeting #4 of the Transport 2020 Implementation Task Force were unanimously approved, as submitted on a motion by George Nelson/Jesse Kaysen.

3. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no registrants for public comment.

4. **OVERVIEW OF RECENT LAND USE/TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY DANE COUNTY COMMUNITIES**

City of Fitchburg Mayor Tom Clauder and Mike Zimmerman (Economic Development Coordinator) provided an overview of some land use planning activities underway in their community. Mayor Clauder thanked the Task Force for the opportunity to speak, also noting that the Village of Oregon (and Mayor Gerry Luebke) was instrumental in getting this land use plan completed. He said that 8 months of intense meetings led to the development of this plan. He said that the railroad corridor in the area was purchased in 1997 and is an important component of the plan.

Mayor Clauder and Mike Zimmerman then showed some slides and described some of the detailed components of the land use plan, and the role that the railroad corridor plays in that plan. Clauder said that, at one time, double rail track existed in the corridor and provided high speed passenger rail service to Chicago was provided through that area.

(Note: A copy of Mayor Clauder's and Mr. Zimmerman's materials can be obtained by request)

Mike Zimmerman summarized some of the components of the planned "technology campus". He also said that he went back to 1995 with this project, when acquisition of the rail line was first being discussed. He acknowledged the work of WisDOT, the Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission, and the Village of Oregon in helping to facilitate this project. He added that this location is perfect for a business/industrial park, citing location, accessibility to USH 14 and the Beltline, topography and intergovernmental cooperation in the area. He also said that the land use plan was developed in a manner that capitalizes on the rail corridor asset as much as possible.

Supv. Scott McDonell asked about the condition of the rail corridor and what was planned to improve that. Zimmerman said that WSOR has a grant proposal to help upgrade the corridor for initial freight operation. John DeLamater asked whether or not Fitchburg had discussions with WSOR for future freight service in that area. Mayor Clauder said that the railroad was consulted at various points in the process and was very helpful.

Jesse Kaysen said that multi-modalism was referred to in the presentation, and asked what patterns of bus transit usage are seen in Fitchburg. Mike Zimmerman said that bus transit will be looked at more in the future, as development continues to grow. He noted that there have been requests recently to explore this in more detail. Zimmerman felt that the entire rail corridor, leading into Madison, could become a major health care/technology-oriented transit corridor in the future. George Nelson asked if Fitchburg wanted to start with buses. Zimmerman said that this could be looked at, and that some form of mass transit would be needed.

Supv. Scott McDonell asked if residents in Fitchburg were asking about commuter rail. Mayor Clauder said that traffic is a huge problem, according to the people he talks to. He said that although we do not experience Chicago-style congestion, people are concerned and are looking for options. Clauder added that roadway improvements are very expensive and that the entire transportation system needs to be considered. George Nelson agreed, noting that roadway capacity is limited and cannot not be the solution to our mobility problems in the long run.

Rob Kennedy asked if residents would support commuter rail in the area, and whether or not the development community would be supportive. Mike Zimmerman said there is support for this concept, adding that a tax increment financing (TIF) district was being considered, to help make improvements to infrastructure in the area. Mayor Tom Clauder also said that traffic impact fees were being considered for the area and that this may be a way to recover some of the costs.

Ald. Ken Golden asked that the Madison Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) be kept apprised of these planning activities, noting that this presentation would be very informative. The Task Force then thanked Mayor Clauder and Mr. Zimmerman for their presentation.

5. WISCONSIN AND SOUTHERN RAILROAD (WSOR) COMMUTER RAIL PILOT PROJECT: UPDATE ON STAFF REVIEW OF WSOR PROPOSAL

David Trowbridge reminded Task Force members that, at its 5-24-04 meeting, Transport 2020 agency staff were asked to meet and review the WSOR proposal. He said that staff were also asked to try to find ways to reduce the costs of the proposal, by reducing the level of service or cutting back on some of the infrastructure improvements. He recalled that the Task Force rationale was that a more scaled-down service (with less upgrades to infrastructure) could be sufficient for the initial start-up of service and that more extensive infrastructure upgrades (and increases in service) may be more appropriate at some point in the future. He thanked WSOR for their work on the proposal, noting that the initial concepts for service level, etc. were requested by the City of Madison and Dane County.

Trowbridge said that, in addition to that, staff were asked to determine whether or not local investment the pilot project could be used as a local match to future federal investment in Transport 2020, if this community is eventually successful in obtaining federal funds. He said that a staff team met for the first time on 7-7-04 and discussed some possible areas for cost reduction. At this time, he reported that agency staff are still collecting information to develop a revised cost estimate. He said that it is his hope to have a completed staff report ready for Task Force review prior to its 9-27-04 meeting.

Trowbridge then distributed a 3-page progress report showing some of the initial concepts discussed by Transport 2020 staff. He said that, in terms of reducing the level of service, the project could provide very basic commuter-oriented service during weekdays and on weekends and evenings provide service tailored to specific special events (i.e., not a regular service schedule). He pointed out that Madison Metro provided some refined cost estimates, that that this was included in the 7-26-04 Task Force meeting packet.

In terms of track upgrades, Trowbridge reported that staff are exploring the possibility of initially implementing minor track improvements, as opposed to upgrading the track to welded rail throughout. He said that WisDOT Bureau of Railroads and Harbors (BORH) staff are looking into some refined cost estimates for a scaled-down track improvement. He said that, given the need to provide for the highest degree of safety, staff believe WSOR's assumptions for necessary grade crossing signalization to be correct.

Trowbridge said that, in terms of fencing, the WSOR proposal included the installation of fencing along the entire corridor. Staff are currently exploring the possibility of installing fencing on only one side of the corridor in some places, or possibly not fencing any of the areas that are more rural in character. In terms of station areas, he said that the staff team are exploring the possibility of initially utilizing very basic platforms and shelters, similar to the amenities at most bus shelters. He said that this approach will likely reduce station/stop costs in the current proposal.

He pointed out that the rolling stock is the single most expensive capital requirement, noting that staff are exploring the possibility of using smaller train sets (with a reduced service level and vehicle capacity). He said that staff are also exploring the possibility of a lease arrangement, or a buy-back agreement (should the pilot project not perform adequately enough to warrant continued operation), and have made contacts with Bombardier and Colorado Railcar to discuss possibilities. Trowbridge also said that there may be the potential to locate a maintenance facility at the west side terminus of the operation, rather than at Johnson Street Yards, and that staff are also exploring the use of a more scaled-down building and perhaps the possibility of using less equipment. He said that these options may have the potential of reducing the cost of the maintenance facility.

In terms of using early investment as a local match, he said that staff have made several contacts at Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in this regard. He said that FTA have indicated that the federal New Starts process (i.e., Alternatives Analysis, PE/NEPA, Final Design, Full-Funding Grant Agreement, etc.) still needs to be fully completed, with all necessary approvals, and that there would be no guarantees that federal approvals will be viewed in higher standing with early investment. Trowbridge reported that FTA told him that the intent of this policy was generally intended to allow for early acquisition of real estate, vehicle procurement, and similar expenditures prior to all federal approvals,

and that using local investment in early operation of service (and obtaining this as local match) - while possible - is not a common practice. Trowbridge said that Transport 2020 would need to submit a formal request to FTA, indicating exactly what we planned to do, before they would be able to provide a clear answer to this question.

John DeLamater said that the frequency of service should be considered carefully, and that ridership will not be strong if the service level is infrequent. He also said that it may be possible to purchase smaller vehicle and have a better level of service, and that this could possibly reduce some costs.

George Nelson asked if the track upgrades would affect the allowable rail vehicles speeds in the corridor. Trowbridge responded that the recommended track upgrades (in the WSOR proposal) would allow the vehicles to travel somewhat faster through the corridor, but that the vehicles would likely not see a tremendous overall travel time difference.

George Nelson also recalled that a major cost component for rail projects in other communities is the acquisition of land, and that we have done a good job of preserving that land for future use. He said that this project needs to take credit for that work in some way. Dick Wagner agreed, noting that this value needs to be accounted for as this issue is discussed further.

Bob Schaefer wished to make some comments. He said that his reaction to the WSOR proposal is not gutsy, and that it is timid in its approach - just trying to get something minimal thorough. He felt that more frequency would be most cost effective, given the fact that the train driver would be paid either way (which is a big portion of the operating costs). He also said that some workers' shifts do not have the train as an option, with a reduced service level. Bob Schaefer felt that the Johnson Street Yards was a more central location for a maintenance facility. He felt that a more long-term investment approach was needed and if rail transportation is the best approach, the community should do it right. He added that fencing would not keep people out of the corridor, because they can get in at each street intersection. Bob Schaefer also felt that track upgrades are important and that safety should not be compromised.

6. UPDATE OF EFFORTS TO OBTAIN FEDERAL FUNDING FOR TRANSPORT 2020

Jeanne Hoffman (Mayor's Office, City of Madison) provided an update on the TEA-21 reauthorization process and the FFY 2005 appropriations process. She said that this update is based on recent conversations she had with the City's Washington D.C. lobbyist. She said that Transport 2020 is currently listed in the reauthorization bill, but that the U.S. Senate and House are trying to come up with an agreed-upon funding level for the bill. She felt that the likelihood that Transport 2020 stays listed in the bill is good, at this point. Hoffman also reported that the President is threatening a veto, but that there could be a compromise. She said that it is still possible to have a bill signed before the November elections.

As for the 2005 appropriations, the City of Madison and Dane County have both requested \$2 million federal funds (to match WisDOT's \$2 million). She reported that her sources tell her that no specific projects will be considered until some later time, and that the 2005 FFY will be fiscally tight. Hoffman also said that the City has recently made some requests of various organizations and entities, asking them to send letters of support for Transport 2020 to ranking members of Congress. She said that DMI and the UW have provided letters (and these have been included in your meeting packet). Hoffman asked Transport 2020 members to consider their organizations and a possible letter of support, given the fiscally tight nature of this year's appropriation.

Lori Kay asked whether or not Senators Kohl and Feingold were being contacted for help. Hoffman responded that both Senators were being contacted, although Sen. Feingold typically does not get involved in appropriations processes. Ald. Ken Golden asked that there be some specific information provided, clearly indicating what is being requested. Hoffman said that sample letters can be provided. Dick Wagner suggested that other Dane County communities be contacted for support as well.

Mickey Beil (Dane County Executive's Office) asked whether or not "unspent" appropriations would be lost. Randy Romanski said that, to his understanding, the unused funds in southeastern Wisconsin are safe, at this point.

Bob Schaefer wished to make some additional comments. He said that the full 4-line system needs to be considered, or it does not make sense to implement something less than that. He wants to make sure that we do not start something and not be able to follow through on the full system. He also felt that vehicle taxes and other taxes need to be looked at as a way of setting fares.

7. UPDATE OF SUBCOMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

- **FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE SUBCOMMITTEE**
- **TRANSIT OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE**

David Trowbridge reported that the Transit Operations Subcommittee met June 21st. He reminded Task Force members that one of the primary outputs of the Subcommittee would be a range of transit system options to be reviewed in the NEPA process. At its June meeting, officials from Milwaukee County Transit System presented a recommendation for a guided street tram in downtown Milwaukee. The Subcommittee agreed that this transit mode could potentially be reviewed as part of the NEPA process.

Trowbridge said that the Finance and Governance Subcommittee met June 28th. He reported that presentations were provided by WisDOT and Madison Metro staff, as background information. He said that some of the information covered included an overview of all public transit funding sources (federal, state and local) and a review of Seattle's transit systems and funding sources. He also said that the Subcommittee was provided an overview of Madison Metro's peer transit systems throughout the country (and how Madison compares to those places). Finally, John Etzler (Finance Manager for Madison Metro) presented some information from a recent report that quantified the benefits of public transit systems in Wisconsin. Trowbridge said that this information will be helpful as the Task Force begins discussing some strategies for financing Transport 2020.

Trowbridge also distributed a "task flowchart" at both subcommittee meetings, showing some of the work that was planned (for the subcommittees and the Task Force) over the next few months. He also reminded Task Force members that the minutes of both subcommittees are included in the Task Force packets, as a regular course of action.

8. IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE AND SUBCOMMITTEE SCHEDULE/NEXT STEPS

David Trowbridge noted the next three Transport 2020 meetings:

- **Transit Operations Subcommittee**
 - **Monday, August 23rd, 4:45 p.m., Room 260 Madison Municipal Building**
- **Finance and Governance Subcommittee**
 - **Monday, August 30th, 6:30 p.m., Room 300 Madison Municipal Building**
- **Implementation Task Force**
 - **Monday, September 27th, 6:30 p.m., Room 260 Madison Municipal Building**

David Trowbridge said that he planned to provide a complete staff report on the WSOR proposal to ITF members prior to the September 27th Task Force meeting.

9. INFORMATION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS BY TASK FORCE MEMBERS

There were no announcements or information provided by Task Force members.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The Committee adjourned its meeting at 7:45 p.m.