

**Rush Line Corridor Task Force Meeting
 March 19, 2009
 Meeting Summary**

Members:

Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey Co. RRA	Therese Furman, North Branch
Dennis Hegberg, Washington Co. RRA	Paul Janssen, Pine City
Rhonda Sivarajah, Anoka Co. RRA	Linda Nanko –Yeager, Wyoming
Bryan Belisle, White Bear Lake	
Wayne Buisman, Harris	
Will Rossbach, Maplewood	

Others:

Mike Rogers, Ramsey Co. RRA	Julie Dresel, North Branch
Dan Meyers, URS	Bill Malin, Chisago County
April Manlapaz, URS	Charles Carlson, Metro Transit
Fred Gates, for Congressman McCollum	Gerry Weiss, Mn/DOT Transit
Ann Pung- Terwedo, Washington Co. RRA	Bruce Dreier, Met Council
Ron Beckstrom, Resident, Lindstrom	Joseph Scala, Hennepin County
Robert Vockrodt, Mn/DOT	

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Reinhardt called the meeting to order at 2:32 p.m.

2. Summary of January 15, 2009 Meeting

Motion was made by Commissioner Hegberg to approve the January 15, 2009 meeting summary. Council member Nanko-Yeager seconded. Council member Nanko-Yeager noted that her name was misspelled in the members attending section of the meeting summary and asked that it be corrected. All in favor. **Approved**

3. Legislative Update

a. State Update

Mr. Rogers updated the Task Force on legislative activities. He noted that there are both capital and operating requests being made by the Task Force. The Senate Bonding bill contains \$500,000 for capital projects along the Corridor, however, the House bonding bill contains no funding. Neither the Senate nor the House has operating funds in their respective bills. The Senate Bonding bill totals \$328 million which is significantly more than the \$120 million proposed by the Governor. The House's bill is expected to be higher than the Governor's request and lower than the Senate bill.

Chair Reinhardt noted that multiple Task Force members have provided testimony on the bills as they have worked their way through the various committees. Part of this testimony included working with Senators Olseen and Moua to combine their similar bonding bills into one bill for advancement through the Committee process.

b. Federal

Mr. Rogers directed the Task Force to the Federal Update memo included in their Agenda Packet. He highlighted that with the passage of the \$787.2 billion economic stimulus legislation in February that significant funding had become available for advancing rail transportation. The bill included \$1.5 billion for Amtrak and \$8 billion for High Speed Rail. Additionally, \$27.5 billion

was provided for highway construction and \$17.7 billion for transit. Most of the funding awarded in the bill will come through existing programs. This results in Minnesota receiving \$668 million out of the bill for its projects.

Mr. Rogers next discussed that the reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU, the six year transportation bill, is moving along and Chairman Oberstar desires that the bill be completed before the September 30, 2009 expiration of SAFETEA-LU.

Mr. Rogers went on to discuss federal appropriations in the FY2009 Omnibus Appropriations bill. Rush Line did not receive any additional funding, but would be receiving \$335,000 as part of SAFETEA-LU's passage. Projects receiving funds in FY2009 include Northstar, Central, Southwest, Cedar Avenue, and Red Rock Corridors. Mr. Gates from Congresswoman McCollum's office discussed upcoming FY 2010 requests and the impact of High Speed Rail on the Union Depot in St. Paul. He added that the federally designated route for High Speed Rail takes it from Chicago to St. Paul. Commissioner Sivarajah mentioned Anoka County's support of High Speed Rail and how the Northern Lights Express travels from Duluth to Minneapolis. Chair Reinhardt added that the Union Depot is ready for high speed rail and will provide connections to Rush Line, Central, Red Rock, and other transit corridors.

4. Alternative Analysis Update

Mr. Rogers gave a brief introduction to the Task Force. He noted that ridership and capital cost numbers had been prepared, but operating costs were still under development. Staff felt that it would be best to present these numbers to the Task Force at the same time so it would be at the May meeting when the Task Force would see the draft results of the Alternatives Analysis. In preparation for the May meeting, Mr. Meyers, URS, would be providing additional information on the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) involvement in transit projects. He began by discussing the history of the FTA's involvement in transit projects. He reviewed the characteristics of transit alternatives for New Starts, Small Starts, Very Small Starts programs and how these impacted proposed projects. The FTA has set important benchmarks for their projects including scope of work, ridership, cost and funding sources. The Rush Line Corridor AA has included the FTA approved Purpose and Need, along with the Definition of Alternatives, and draft Ridership, Operating and Capital Costs. All of which have been reviewed by the Study Team. The draft study recommendations will be presented in May and there will be open houses planned for mid-May/early summer. The project will be complete in mid-summer 2009.

The Task Force discussed the locations for the open houses to be held in May/June 2009. Will Rossbach stated that a location at the north end of the Corridor would be appropriate. Therese Furman added that North Branch might be a good location. It was discussed how all portions of the Corridor should be covered and that Open Houses in Forest Lake, Maplewood and North Branch would accomplish this. Chair Reinhardt stated that the open houses should be in June due to the Task Force's May meeting being on the 21st and Task Force members needing time to review the draft study recommendations.

5. Rush Line Corridor Capital Project funding

Mr. Rogers distributed a Capital Project Funding memo to the Task Force. He discussed with the Task Force multiple projects identified by staff that could utilize Rush Line Capital Funds. He next discussed available funding and its limitations, including its sunset dates. The project identified as best able to meet the funding limitations was the Maplewood Mall Park and Ride Expansion. This project would expand the existing park and ride through the addition of a parking structure. The Task Force was being asked to provide \$750,000 to complete engineering and design work for the project. The total project cost is estimated \$15-\$16 million.

If the Task Force chooses to fund the Maplewood Mall project there would not be enough funding available to do the Commuter Coach Demonstration project until Rush Lines \$335,000 FY2009 appropriation was received.

A motion was made by Councilmember Rossbach and seconded Commissioner Hegberg to provide the \$750,000 in Rush Line Capital Funds to the Maplewood Mall Park and Ride Expansion Project for the completion of engineering and design work. The motion was approved on a unanimous vote.

6. Rush Line Commuter Coach Update

Mr. Rogers updated the Task Force on the Rush Line Commuter Coach Demonstration Project. He distributed a memo that discussed the release of a Request for Proposals for the project and recent correspondence between the Met Council and the Task Force. He noted that due to the budget shortfall at Met Council, they have indicated that they are unlikely to be able to take over funding for the route, regardless of its success, after one year of service. This may result in the need for additional funding beyond the one year that corridor counties have committed to. Additionally, the Met Council has informed the Task Force that they will not be the contracting agency for the service, though they would be willing to contract with the Task Force for contract administration services.

Finally Mr. Rogers noted that after staff drove the route to determine travel times and mileage, it was apparent that a route change was needed. The route run was very bumpy and some of the turns would be difficult for buses. To address this problem the bus would no longer use CSAH 54 in Anoka or County Road 4A in Washington County. Instead buses would travel along Hwy 61 between Forest Lake and Hugo and then use CSAH 8 and Otter Lake Road to get to the White Bear Theatre Park and Ride. Mr. Rogers added that even with the route change travel times remained at approximately 1 hour.

7. Rush Line Corridor RFP Issuance

Mr. Rogers updated the Task Force on the Rush Line Commuter Coach Demonstration Project. He distributed a memo that discussed the release of a Request for Proposals for the project and recent correspondence between the Met Council and the Task Force. He noted that due to the budget shortfall at Met Council, they have indicated that they are unlikely to be able to take over funding for the route, regardless of its success, after one year of service. This may result in the need for additional funding beyond the one year that corridor counties have committed to. Additionally, the Met Council has informed the Task Force that they will not be the contracting agency for the service, though they would be willing to contract with the Task Force for contract administration services.

With the Met Council's decision not to be the contracting agency for the project, the project would be unable to continue unless the Task Force decided to be the contracting agency. Discussion ensued on the pros and cons of being the contracting agency. A specific point of discussion revolved around the length of the contract and how to account for only have funding for one year, but the potential to need funding for multiple years. A suggestion was made that the RFP be released with one year of service, but also options that could be executed for year two and three. This would allow for the additional cost to continue the service until Met Council would be able to pick it up to be known.

Motion by Councilmember Nanko-Yeager to approve the Task Force as the contracting agency for the Rush Line Commuter Coach Service, to develop and issue a request for proposals and to include within that RFP options for a second and a third year of service along with an option for the contractor to provide contract administration services. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rossbach and passed unanimously.

9. Other

Chair Reinhardt updated the Task Force on a forum hosted by the East Central Regional Development Commission in Cambridge. The forum was for Congressman Oberstar and a way to bring him up-to-date on issues impacting the ECRDC portion of his district. She was there to present on the Rush Line Corridor and what the Task Force has accomplished to date.

Since there was no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.