

**Rush Line Corridor Task Force Meeting  
May 21, 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, City of Wyoming
Renae Fry, Columbus	Diane Miller, Harris
Susan Young, Forest Lake	Doug Carlson, Pine County
Will Roszbach, Maplewood	Ben Montzka, Chisago County
Bryan Belisle, White Bear Lake	Bob Kermes, White Bear Township

**Others:**

Mike Rogers, Ramsey Co. RRA	Julie Dresel, North Branch
Dan Meyers, URS	Mike Robinson, Chisago County
April Manlapaz, URS	Charles Carlson, Mn/DOT, Engineering
Fred Gates, for Congressman Mc Cullen	Linda Jungwirth, Ramsey County
Ann Pung- Terwedo, Washington Co. RRA	Bruce Drejer, Met Council Transit Services
Kate Garwood, Anoka County	Joesph Scala, Hennepin County

**1. Call to Order and Introductions**

Chair Reinhardt called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. The group members introduced themselves. Welcome Councilmember Bob Kermes, White Bear Township.

**2. Summary of March 19, 2009 Meeting**

Motion by Councilmember Nanko-Yeager to approve the meeting summary of March 19, 2009. Seconded by Mayor Miller, All in favor. **Approved**

**3. Legislative Update**

Mr. Rogers updated the Task Force on the major omnibus Transportation Finance Bill at the State Legislature. The bill reestablished a passenger rail office within Mn/DOT and provided funding for the office. Additional funding for passenger rail is provided through \$26 million in state bonding. State bond funds were also provided to Twin Cities transit corridors, including Rush Line. The amount of the bonding is \$21,000,000, with the Central Corridor receiving \$8,000,000 out of the total. Remaining bond funds will be awarded to individual corridors based on need.

Chair Reinhardt stated that once the Governor signs the bill, the bonds will be reissued and they will be unallocated. The Rush Line Task Force thanked all the legislators and various individuals who worked on this bill.

Mr. Rogers reviewed memos dated April 14, 2009 and May 20, 2009 from LGN. These memos provided a federal legislative update including fiscal year 2009 funding awarded to the Northstar, Central, Southwest, Red Rock, Cedar Avenue, and Northern Lights Express Corridors.

Commissioner Hegberg asked about the Riverview Corridor status. It was noted that Congresswoman McCollum has advocated for the Corridor and has a \$1 million fiscal year 2010 request in for the Corridor.

#### **4. Rush Line Corridor Insurance**

Mr. Rogers reviewed the Memo dated May 13, 2009 for Insurance Coverage for the Rush line Task Force (Joint Powers Board). Commissioner Sivarajah made a motion to continue the insurance coverage with the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust and that the statutory tort limits not be waived. Seconded by Councilmember Belisle. All in Favor, **Approved**.

#### **5. Alternatives Analysis URS**

Mr. Meyers, URS introduced himself and reviewed the Alternatives Analysis (AA) Study. He discussed the evaluation criteria used in the AA, the alternatives analyzed (No Build, Transportation System Management, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Light Rail Transit (LRT), and Commuter Rail), the study's preliminary recommendations and the upcoming Open Houses.

Mr. Meyers discussed the AA's progress including the scope, purpose and need, definition of the alternatives, ridership, operating costs, capital costs, and environmental community analysis, all of which were reviewed by the Study Team. The evaluation criteria included transportation and mobility, economic opportunity and investment, communities and environment and public involvement.

The preliminary recommendations for alternatives to advance into the additional analysis of an Advanced Alternatives Analysis were BRT on I-35E to Hugo/Columbus/Forest Lake and LRT on the Ramsey County RRA right-of-way to White Bear Lake. The Task Force was given a summary of the ridership, capital costs, operating costs and cost per new rider. Additionally the analysis recommended that commuter rail be removed from further study, transit service to the northern two-thirds of the corridor should be deferred until population and employment growth justified extensions further north. However, preservation of the Corridor was important as it would reduce the future cost of extensions allowing them to proceed sooner. Finally, the BRT alternatives on the Ramsey County RRA ROW should also be removed from further analysis as they did not show a significant benefit over the BRT alternatives on I-35E.

The next step in the study process is the Advanced Alternatives Analysis. The Task Force discussed the location of the open houses to be held in May/June 2009 on the Alternative Analysis results and preliminary recommendations.

Councilmember Fry asked about how the Rush Line Corridor compared to the Northern Lights Express (NLX) Corridor and Rochester. Chair Reinhardt stated that Rush Line is starting with short term goals while maintaining a long-term vision of transit throughout the entire 80 mile Corridor. Both NLX and Rochester are discussing passenger rail, not commuter rail, and because of this their corridors have different criteria they must meet to judge their viability. Commissioner Sivarajah noted that the southern portion of the NLX Corridor, from Cambridge south to Minneapolis, could also function more like a commuter rail corridor though the rest of the line is passenger rail.

Mr. Meyers offered insight into how the Rush Line LRT option compared to other LRT corridors in the country. He noted that it was very similar to the LRT line under construction in Norfolk, VA. Discussion ensued around the need to continue working with all options including commuter rail and with Congressman Oberstar. It was noted that extension of the Corridor would be added 5-10 miles at a time as warranted. Commissioner Montzka asked about the difference between light rail tracks and freight rail tracks. Mr. Meyers responded that they both can operate on the same gauge of tracks, but that light rail tracks were not of the weight required to handle a freight train. Essentially, freight trains were too heavy to operate on light rail tracks.

Discussion moved on to Congressman Oberstar's support for the Corridor and in particular commuter rail. It was noted that commuter rail would not meet current federal criteria for cost effectiveness limiting the availability of federal funds to cover 50% of its cost. Chair Reinhardt clarified that all the options and their costs will be presented at the open houses.

The Task Force concluded their discussion on the alternatives by agreeing that there was congressional support for the corridor. They also felt that focusing on a step by step approach would work best. This could include implementing transit along the southern portion of the corridor prior to extending it north as demand warranted. The Task Force asked that 'defer' be used when talking about the northern portion of the Corridor so that it was understood it would be a later phase of the project and not dropped all together. Additionally, a request was made to identify future phasing of the line.

Councilmember Janssen provided an update to the Task Force on the decay of the Pine City rail road bridge. This bridge is owned by BNSF and is currently crumbling into the Snake River. Discussion ensued on the bridge and the role of the Task Force. Since the bridge is still owned by BNSF the Task Force felt the best option was for Councilmember Janssen to talk to BNSF, Mn/DOT, and the St. Croix Valley Railroad to get it fixed.

#### **5. Rush Line Alternative Analysis Open Houses**

Mr. Rogers reviewed the following dates for the open houses on the Rush Line Alternative Analysis study recommendations. They are:

June 9, 2009: North Branch  
June 17, 2009: Hugo  
June 24, 2009: White Bear Lake

A motion to approve the open house locations and dates was made by Commissioner Montzka. Seconded by Councilmember Furman. **Approved.**

#### **6. Rush Line Commuter Coach Update**

Chair Reinhardt discussed the Route 288 to Minneapolis and the St. Paul demonstration service. She noted that there is only one year of funding committed to the St. Paul service and if it does not meet the expectations, the Task Force would not want to continue to fund it. Councilmember Fry asked about the proposal and the consideration of service from White Bear Lake. She expressed concern regarding the lack of an exit at County Road J. There was discussion regarding the service, its stops, and minimizing travel time. Councilmember Young added that there is an ability to try the service at the beginning and adjust the service as needed.

Commissioner Sivarajah reiterated her position that there should be a commitment beyond one year for the service. Chair Reinhardt stated that staff is working to release the RFP in June with bus service beginning in September.

#### **7. Other**

Since there was no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

**Attachment to minutes: Power point presentation on the Rush Line Corridor Alternative Analysis**