

**Rush Line Corridor Task Force Meeting
September 23, 2009**

Meeting Summary

Members:

Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey Co. RRA	Linda Nanko-Yeager
Rhonda Sivarajah, Anoka County	Ben Montzka, Chisago County
Bill Blesener, Little Canada	
Renae Fry, Columbus	
Will Rossbach, Maplewood	
Therese Furman, North Branch	
Bryan Belisle, White Bear Lake	
Paul Janssen, Pine City	

Others:

Mike Rogers, Ramsey Co. RRA	Scott Thompson, Metro Transit
Dan Meyers, URS	Julie Dresel, North Branch
April Manlapaz, URS	Alec Marc, HDR
Ann Pung- Terwedo, Washington Co. RRA	Thomas Martini, Pine City Township
Gerry Weiss, Mn/DOT-Transit	Joeseeph Scala, Hennepin County
Mark Sather, White Bear Lake	
Mary Karlsson, Met Council	

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Reinhardt called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. Members of the Task Force and other attendees introduced themselves.

2. Summary of July 16, 2009 Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Montzka to approve the meeting summary of July 16, 2009, Seconded by Councilmember Nanko-Yeager. All Approved except for Rhonda Sivarajah who abstained because she was not in attendance at the last meeting.

3. Legislative Update

State

Chair Reinhardt provided an overview of the September 9th House Capital Investment Committee tour of Twin Cities transit projects. Members toured the Northstar Corridor including its stop in Big Lake. Other Corridors discussed on the tour included Hiawatha, Southwest, and Bottineau. The tour concluded at the Union Depot in St. Paul where she presented on the Rush Line Corridor. Additionally, presentations were given on the Union Depot, Red Rock, I-94 and High Speed Rail Corridors. In addition to herself, speakers included Representative Alice Hausman, Jim McDonough, Myra Peterson, Peter McLaughlin, and Dan Krom.

Councilmember Young asked if anyone questioned why we are looking at transit. Chair Rheinhardt stated that most of the legislators who attended see transit's value in creating jobs and economic development.

Mr. Rogers reported that Met Council is expanding the Mallwood Mall Transit Center's parking from 420 spaces to 840 spaces. To construct the parking ramp, the Council will utilize \$3.4 million from the 2009 bonding bill along with other funding sources to complete the approximately \$15 million project.

Federal

Mr. Rogers directed Task Force members to the federal update memo included in their agenda packet. He provided an overview on Federal Fiscal Year 2010 Appropriations including HR 3288 which includes the \$1.2 billion in new money for high-speed passenger rail grants and \$1.1 billion in new grants for projects of national or regional significance.

Mr. Rogers updated the Task Force on the coming expiration of the SAFETEA-LU, the existing six-year federal transportation bill. Congressman Oberstar, as Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, has insisted on streamlining the federal process for transportation projects as part of the next six-year transportation bill. In his bill, the Surface Transportation Act of 2009, the FTA is required to evaluate New Starts and Small Starts projects on several factors or potential benefits including: environmental, economic development, mobility increases, land use plans, cost, and ridership. Currently the FTA gives greater weight to cost and ridership which does not account for a holistic approach to corridor development. Changes to the weighting of the various criteria are intended to analyze corridors holistically rather than focus a corridor's justification on one or two criteria.

4. Alternative Analysis Final Report-URS

Ms. Manlapaz, URS, introduced herself and updated the Task Force on the Rush Line Corridor Alternatives Analysis Draft Final Report. She gave a recap of the June open houses, provided an overview of the comments received, and gave detail on the preferred alternatives that should move on to the Advanced Alternatives Analysis. These alternatives include:

- BRT 1B: via I-35E to Hugo/Columbus/Forest Lake
- Modified LRT 1B: via Ramsey County Regional Rail right-of-way to White Bear Lake.

Additionally, the evaluation recommends the elimination of all other transit alternatives, including commuter rail and deferring the extension of transitway service to the northerly two-thirds of the corridor until a ridership base is established. She then went on to describe the short, mid and long term goals for the Corridor. A main focus will be building ridership and supporting transportation, expanding park and ride services, preserving corridors and funding.

Councilmember Nanko-Yeager questioned the difference between 5,150 riders per day and 6,690 new transit riders in the corridor? Ms. Manlapaz noted that the riders number was for the transitway, and the new transit riders number was corridor wide and included the bus routes that served the transitway.

Discussion followed on the transitway's cost in comparison to highway improvements. Councilmember Young added that if more definitive numbers were available they would be helpful to have.

Commissioner Sivarajah asked what the Metro Transit's farebox recovery was. Mr. Thompson stated that the system average is 33%. Ms. Manlapaz stated that they could get information on fare box recoveries.

Ms. Manlapaz gave an overview of what the recommended Advanced Alternatives Analysis would include. Its major elements would be operating assumptions and ridership followed by public and

agency coordination, corridor preservation, phasing and implementation and long-term service expansion. The study will conclude with the identification of a Locally Preferred Alternative.

Mayor Blesener questioned if both recommended alternatives would move forward. Mr. Rogers indicated that they would along with the TSM alternative.

5. Rush Line Commuter Coach Update

Chair Reinhardt discussed the St. Paul demonstration service and provided the following outline for moving Commuter Coach service forward:

- Provide Met Council with \$418,922 in Rush Line FY 08 and 09 funds for construction in the Rush Line Corridor
- Utilize one grant agreement for the FY 08 and FY09 funds to avoid multiple small grant agreement amounts
- Met Council provides the Task Force with \$418,922 in operating contributions from 5307 federal funds to the Rush Line Commuter Coach
- Utilize any unspent 5307 funds from the first 12 months of service to offset costs for a second year of service (if demand warrants)

Motion by Councilmember Furman, Seconded by Councilmember Rossbach to:

- Approve the use of \$418,922 in Rush Line funds by Met Council for use on bus amenities along the Rush Line Corridor, provided that Met Council provides an operating contribution of \$418,922 to the Rush Line Commuter Coach Demonstration Project.
- Approve the use of the unspent Met Council operating contribution for use on a second year of service, contingent upon demand warranting its continuation.

All in Favor. Approved

7. Other

Mr. Rogers reviewed the rider alert flyer for the reduction in the Route 288 fare.

Mr. Rogers reported that the the Northstar Commuter Rail line will officially begin operations on November 16, 2009. There will be five inbound (Big Lake to Minneapolis) trips and one outbound (Minneapolis to Big Lake) trips in the morning and the reverse in the afternoon. There will also be three roundtrips each weekend day. Special event service will be provided, but the details are still being worked out.

Mr. Rogers provided information on the Railvolution Conference being held in Boston at the end of October. This conference focuses on land use and its interaction with transit. He noted attending the conference may be of interest to some Task Force members.

The next meeting will be November 19, 2009.

Since there was no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.