

**Rush Line Corridor Task Force Meeting  
January 21, 2010  
Meeting Summary**

**Members:**

Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey Co. RRA	Therese Fuhman, North Branch
Dennis Hegberg, Washington Co. RRA	Linda Nanko –Yeager, City of Wyoming
Rhonda Sivarajah, Anoka Co. RRA	Doug Carlson, Pine County
Diane Miller, Harris	Tom Weidt, Hugo
Renae Fry, Columbus	
Bill Blesener, Little Canada	
Bryan Belisle, White Bear lake	
Will Rossbach, Maplewood	

**Others:**

Mike Robinson, Chisago County Commissioner	Scott Thompson, Metro Transit
Mike Rogers, Ramsey Co. RRA	Bob Vockrodt, Mn/DOT
Ann Pung- Terwedo, Washington Co. RRA	Linda Jungwirth, Ass't to Ramsey Co. Commissioner Janice Rettman
Julie Dresel, North Branch	
Mary Karlsson , Metropolitan Council	
Joseph Scala, Hennepin County	

**1. Call to Order and Introductions**

Chair Reinhardt called the meeting to order at 3:32p.m. The group members introduced themselves.

**1. a. Agenda Approval**

Motion by Councilmember Weidt to approve the agenda with an amendment to Item #4 changing it from an information item to an approval item. Seconded by Councilmember Nanko-Yeager. All in Favor.  
**Approved**

**2. Election of Officers**

Motion by Commissioner Hegberg to nominate Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt as Chair. Seconded by Commissioner Sivarajah. All in Favor. **Approved**

Motion by Commissioner Sivarajah to nominate Commissioner Dennis Hegberg as Vice-Chair. Seconded by Councilmember Furman, All in Favor. **Approved**

**3. Summary of November 19, 2009 Meeting**

Motion by Commissioner Carlson to approve the meeting summary of November 19, 2009. Seconded by Councilmember Fuhman. All in favor. **Approved**

**4. 2010 Work Plan and Budget**

Mr. Rogers reviewed the general upcoming activities of the Rush Line Task Force as described in the work plan.

Commissioner Sivarajah discussed Anoka County’s funding share for the Forest Lake/St. Paul express bus service. She noted that the Task Force funding would cover 12 months and that the Metropolitan Council may not be able to take over the service once funding runs out even if the service met Metropolitan Council criteria.

Chair Reinhardt reiterated that the service needs to be successful in order for the service to continue.

Councilmember Fry added that Met Council funding consideration for the Rush Line service was one of the conditions that the City of Columbus added into the agreement that the city signed with the Council to

opt into the transit taxing district. *Note: the agreement states the following "The Council will assist in implementing a pilot project express bus service between Forest Lake, Columbus, and downtown St. Paul to be funded by the Counties and operated by the Rush Line Task Force. Council assistance may include administering the contract with the service provider chosen by the Rush Line Task Force."*

Mr. Rogers and Chair Reinhardt reviewed the ridership numbers for the St. Paul route that were completed as part of the Commuter Bus Feasibility Study. Commissioner Sivarajah added that Anoka County wants a stop in Anoka County at Columbus. She said the route should be evaluated throughout the 12 months at regular intervals such as 3, 6, and 9 months. This would give the Task Force an idea of how the route is fairing and if changes need to be made midway through the 12 month time frame. After 12 months, it would be up to the Met Council to determine if they are able to pick up funding for the route.

Commissioner Sivarajah asked that the following items be included to secure Anoka County funding for the bus service:

1. A stop at the Running Aces Park and Ride in Columbus.
2. Development of Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data on the Corridor to update ridership information, and collaboration with the Metropolitan Council to develop ridership levels to determine the success of the route for its evaluation in item #3.
3. Service Evaluation at 3, 6, and 9 months to determine how the route is doing and to make route adjustments if needed.
4. Execution of necessary agreements between the Task Force and the Metropolitan Council for service operation.

Motion by Commissioner Hegberg to approve the 2010 work plan and budget. Seconded by Councilmember Fry. Mayor Blesener inquired about how the funds were allocated for the Task Force. Mr. Rogers provided additional detail on the allocation of funding. All in favor. **Approved**

Mr. Rogers provided the following general timeline for the initiation of the commuter coach service if the processes occurred as planned.

- RFP completion: 3 weeks
- 3 week preparation of proposal
- 2-3 weeks before everything is in place
- Service start in April

Commissioner Sivarajah noted that Anoka County would be reviewing its funding commitment to the commuter coach service at its February 9, 2010 meeting.

Additional discussion ensued on the commuter coach service with Mayor Blesener asking about the numbers that would make this route successful. Councilmember Fry stated that the Route 288 (Forest Lake/Columbus to Minneapolis) numbers would be a good comparison. It currently carries 240 trips a day. Mr. Thompson, Metro Transit, informed the Task Force that service is not typically started just prior to or during the summer as this time of year shows a drop off in ridership of as much as 20%. The drop is due to summer vacations and school being out of session. Mr. Thompson added that a good time to start a new service is in September as people are getting back into their routines following summer. Councilmember Weidt asked how this would impact the demonstration project if it started in April and if additional funding would be available to get the route through the summer since it would be facing lower initial ridership than a route started in September. He added that with only 12 months of funding, this could negatively impact the competitiveness of the route when it was compared to peer services. Mr. Rogers stated that there was no local funding committed beyond what was needed to cover 12 months of operations. However, the federal funding available for the service is more than what is needed for 12 months and if matching funds from local or state sources were found, these funds would be available for use.

### **5. 2009 Accomplishments**

The Task Force reviewed the Draft Annual Report. Councilmember Nanko-Yeager stated that Gary Menne is no longer with us. Commissioner Sivarajah asked that the City of Columbus be added to the discussion on the Route 288 service on Page 3. Chair Reinhardt suggested that the photo on the cover of the report be changed to the Union Depot in St. Paul. Members agreed on the change and directed staff to incorporate it.

Chair Reinhardt updated the Task Force on a presentation that will be given on the status of the Rush Line Corridor to the Metropolitan Council Transportation Committee on February 20, 2010. *Note: the presentation was postponed to April 12, 2010.*

### **6. Legislative Update**

Mr. Rogers provide an update on the state legislative session noting that Governor Pawlenty submitted his bonding requests. Within those requests there was \$10 million for transit with \$7 million to the Southwest Corridor and \$3 million to Cedar Avenue. The House and Senate are currently developing their own bonding bills which are likely to include additional transit funding.

#### **Federal Update:**

Mr. Rogers directed the Task Force to the memo in their packet summarizing federal legislative activities. The House narrowly passed a \$154 billion dollar jobs bill paid in part by unspent money from last year's Wall Street Bailout. Funding in the measure would be split with roughly \$75 billion provided for efforts that proponents suggest will create jobs and help unemployed workers and \$48.3 billion would be set aside for infrastructure projects. That amount includes \$35 billion for highways and transit.

The debate over the timing of the passage of a six year transportation authorization bill continues. A 60 day extension of the bill was attached to the Defense appropriations bill that was passed by the House. There is an ongoing debate about when to pass the six year bill and how to fund it since the gas tax does not provide enough revenue to cover the funding outlined in the bills drafted to-date.

The Department of Transportation announced that the Cost-Effectiveness (CEI) for New Starts projects will no longer represent 50% of the project's overall score. It has been reduced to 20% to allow for livable communities and land use issues to carry more weight in the evaluation of projects. Prior to the change, the 50% weighting essentially resulted in the CEI being the pass/fail criteria for a project, instead of one of many criteria to determine the project's merit.

### **2010 Meeting Dates**

Mr. Rogers reviewed the 2010 Meeting Dates memo included in the agenda packet. Meetings will continue to be held at 3:30 p.m. at the White Bear Lake City Hall unless otherwise noted.

Since there was no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.