



Northeast Minnesota Area Transportation Partnership Meeting

April 14, 2021 @ 10:00 am
Zoom Video/Audio Conference

Summary

Members in attendance: Kevin Adee, Bryan Anderson, Ted Brokaw, Ron Chicka, Ben DeNucci, Jason DiPiazza, Kate Ferguson, Jim Foldesi, Krysten Foster, Rick Goutermont, Karin Grandia, Steve Hallan, Robert Hass, Duane Hill, Jason Holliday, Andy Hubley, Dan Larson, Jack Larson, Bob Manzoline, Susan Michels, John Mulder, Brian Napstad, Gary Peterson, Bob Svaleson, Jim Strezishar, Cindy Voigt, John Welle

Guests in attendance: Brian Bluhm, Todd Campbell, Jason Fisher, James Gittemeier, Russell Habermann, Scott Johnson, Michael Kalnbach, John Minor, Charlie Moore, Michelle Pierson

1. The Zoom conference line opened at 9:45 am to give participants time to get settled prior to the meeting start. Participants were encouraged to log or call into the meeting by 9:55 am. Russell Habermann, Senior Planner at ARDC Planning, greeted participants as they entered the meeting and gave a brief statement regarding processes and formats of the meeting, including procedures for voting.

Chair Duane Hill called the meeting to order at 10:03 am. Chair Hill welcomed attendees and later introduced new NEMNATP members Ted Brokaw (International Falls) and Bob Svaleson (Cook County).

Michelle Pierson, Planning Assistant at ARDC Planning, requested that attendees type their name and agency they represent, if any, in the chat box to serve as meeting attendance. Everyone in the meeting joined by computer; one participant experienced technical difficulties and later called in via telephone.

2. Approval of Meeting Summary - February 10, 2021

A motion to approve the October 14, 2020, meeting summary was made by Jack Larson/Karin Grandia. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Comments from Citizens Present

None brought forward.

4. Presentation: ARDC Trail Pavement Condition Data Project

Charlie Moore, ARDC Planning Senior GIS Specialist, presented several slides showcasing a project ARDC Planning worked on in summer 2020 to assess pavement conditions of trails constructed with use of funding from the Transportation Alternatives (TA) program. Using an electric-assist pedal bicycle, ARDC Planning's intern biked a constant 13 mph over several trail systems across the region. The bicycle is equipped with a 360-degree camera, a GoPro camera, and a cell phone with an app to monitor when the bicycle encounters bumps, dips, cracks, heaves, and the like. The GoPro camera is pointed to the ground at the rear of the bicycle and takes still photos once every three seconds. Those photos can be paired with data from the phone's accelerometer to evaluate problem points. The 360-degree photos help showcase the complete environment, with photos taken every three seconds as well. Moore went over several slides, showcased trails throughout the region, and displayed a Story Map developed for trails in the Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Zone. This project may help trail owners/managers evaluate pavement life and trail maintenance needs.

5. Addition to ATIP for 2022 - SP 031-603-018 (Pavement rehab of Itasca County Rd 3 from Hwy 169 to Mornes Rd, roundabout construction at 7th Ave)

Krysten Foster, MnDOT District One State-Aid Engineer, invited Karin Grandia, Itasca County Highway Engineer, to discuss an addition to the Area Transportation Improvement Program (ATIP) for 2022. This 3.6-mile project will include pavement rehabilitation, installation of ADA improvements that include compliant sidewalk, a change to the road width, changes to stormwater management, and the installation of a roundabout at 7th Avenue.

A motion to add project SP 031-603-018 Itasca Co Rd 3 project to the 2022 ATIP was made by Cindy Voigt/Steve Hallan. The motion carried unanimously.

6. FY 2025 Area Transportation Improvement Program (ATIP)

Bryan Anderson, MnDOT District One Planning Director, presented the FY 2025 targets and called special attention to two projects in the Duluth MPO region. A project in the City of Duluth in Canal Park was summarized by Cindy Voigt, City of Duluth Engineer; the project will include pavement rehabilitation on Lake Avenue, Buchanan, and Canal Park Drive. Jim Foldesi, St. Louis County Highway Engineer, later discussed a project in St. Louis County along Woodland Avenue in Duluth; the project will be advanced constructed in 2025 from Snively to Anoka and include pavement rehabilitation, curb and gutter work, the addition of pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and some changes to lanes/lane widths.

Anderson also noted that the FY 2025 targets are lower than in most years, with \$71M in the program as it stands currently. Targets are usually in the \$90M-\$100M range. Anderson noted that transit projects are not in the previously distributed materials, but they have since been added to the presented project sheets. Anderson went over maps showcasing projects in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025.

A motion to approve the draft FY 2022-2025 Area Transportation Improvement Program was made by Gary Peterson/Kevin Adee. The motion carried unanimously.

7. FY 2022 ARDC Regional Transportation Planning Workplan

Russell Habermann, ARDC Planning Senior Planner, noted ARDC Planning's partnership with MnDOT to facilitate and conduct planning efforts at local, regional, and statewide levels. Habermann presented a list of projects for FY 2022 workplan. Projects proposed included

scenic byway development and support, Gitchi-Gami State Trail development and support, continued administration of MnDOT's trail pedestrian/bicycle counting equipment program, and other transportation activities as identified throughout the year. ARDC Planning may also be assisting with community transportation planning processes in Aitkin and Cloquet. Other funding is being sought for this planning work, and if that other funding is not secured, this workplan could provide match funding for another funding source.

A motion to approve the FY 2022 ARDC Regional Transportation Planning Workplan was made by Jim Foldesi/Jason Hollinday. The motion carried unanimously.

8. Community Project Funding (Formerly Known as "Earmarks")

Jim Foldesi, St. Louis County Engineer, gave some background information about the introduction of Community Transportation Projects, which is a new name for a program once called "Earmarks".

It was suggested that the U. S. House is developing rules for funding these Community Transportation Projects, and each U. S. Representative could submit a maximum of 10 projects for funding consideration. It has been suggested that shovel-ready projects that are already in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) may garner higher support/scores on a project scoring rubric.

Members noted that Representative Pete Stauber's aides have been in communication at the county level to inquire about potential projects.

Depending upon guidance, this body may like to discuss what impact the future of Community Project Funding may have, with the goal to bring maximum federal funds to the region. There may be some desire to add "illustrative projects" into the STIP to permit projects to be recognized as important even if funds are not currently available for those projects.

Foldesi also noted that good communication between local communities and MnDOT will be vital. Duane Hill, MnDOT District One Engineer, noted that many things and deadlines appear to be changing with this funding source and that MnDOT is currently trying to work on guidance. Steve Hallan, Pine County Commissioner, noted that congressional aides have contacted the County seeking prioritized lists. Hill invited people with specific questions to contact him.

9. Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 Transportation Funding Distribution

Krysten Foster, MnDOT District One State-Aid Engineer, led a discussion about several recent bills that impact transportation funding connected with COVID-19 relief. Minnesota will be receiving \$142M in funds from the American Recovery Act, with a guideline that \$20M will need to be distributed in the Met Council region. Three scenarios have been entertained, and MnDOT is supporting a 50/50 funding split between Greater Minnesota counties/cities and the Metropolitan Council and a 50/50 MnDOT funding split between Greater Minnesota and the Twin Cities Metro area. Foster shared justifications for support of this model.

10. Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council Updates

Ron Chicka, DSMIC Director, gave updates on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process, noting projects in the MPO region will be up for approval in June. He also provided updates on several planning processes, including the Duluth-Superior Area Pedestrian Plan, harbor planning at Erie Pier, and upcoming design work along Central Entrance/194 in Duluth that will inform a 2026 project.

11. MnDOT Local Program Updates

Krysten Foster, MnDOT District One State-Aid Engineer, share materials and noted the local program projects were going smoothly. Jim Foldesi, St. Louis County Highway Engineer, noted that the St. Louis County Project did not note the project as an Advance Construction payback. Foster noted it would be reflected in the next draft of the STIP and noted the project had already been let.

12. MnDOT Program Updates

Bryan Anderson, MnDOT District One Planning Director, updated meeting attendees with statewide information about an expected Safe Routes to School infrastructure funding solicitation that will be paired with the Transportation Alternatives process in the fall; this opportunity is expected due to a \$3M appropriation in state bonds.

Anderson also noted that MnDOT Central Office will likely present on the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTP) and the State Highway Improvement Plan (MnSHIP) at the July meeting of NEMNATP. Stakeholders may see surveys and questions ahead of those presentations, and Anderson asked people to participate.

Anderson then shared potential impacts of possible transportation funding and the need to have some “on the shelf” projects ready to go. He noted that several projects have recently had some funding awarded, including a TH1/TH169 project in Tower, a TH53/TH37 project near the upcoming Rock Ridge School in Eveleth, and the 5th Avenue W Bridge over I-35 in Duluth.

Anderson also outlined several of MnDOT District One’s consulting requests, including facilitation of the NEMNATP by ARDC, engagement about the Cross Range Expressway, and an I-35 Corridor Study in the Duluth MPO area; these projects account for \$100,000. An additional \$150,000 is being sought for development of transportation plans in Cloquet and Aitkin. These projects will inform scheduled construction on TH 33 in Cloquet and TH 210/TH169 in Aitkin. Three more proposed projects include TH169/37th Street in Hibbing (a high-crash location), TH48 in Hinckley (0.4 miles with old signals and some congestion), and an ICE study is in Ely; MnDOT will find out if these projects receive funding next month.

13. Member Concerns/Future Agenda Topics

Holly Kostrzewski, Northeast Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) Coordinator, was not in attendance but provided information about the Northeast Minnesota TZD Regional Workshop on May 26. She also provided recent TZD statistics for 2020 and 2021 to date.

Duane Hill, MnDOT District One Engineer, shared updates from the Department of Public Safety/MN State Troopers; there has been a focus to increase enforcement on speed and impaired driving, giving 1,500 more tickets so far this year than last year.

Hill also gave an update about MnDOT’s Connected and Automated Vehicles (CAV) Challenge. A project in Grand Rapids has a recommendation for funding that would pilot automated transit, complementing existing transit services by Arrowhead Transit. Many partners are included in the development of the project, and significant local match has been offered. The project is currently in negotiations.

Gary Peterson, Carlton County Commissioner, asked about an update to the Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP). Krysten Foster, MnDOT District One State-Aid Engineer,

provided an update that 400 applications have been submitted and that the task force reviewing those projects will be contacting applicants with information about their projects by early June.

Andy Hubley, ARDC Planning Director, asked if MnDOT Aviation has received any new funds. Hill said he did not know but offered to find out.

John Welle, Aitkin County Highway Engineer, asked how the funding may be distributed from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act funds. Hill said he expected that the answer to this will be determined by the end of the Minnesota Legislative session.

A motion to adjourn was made by Steve Hallan/Kevin Adee at 11:42 am. The motion carried unanimously.

Bold print denotes need for action.