



## Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2011

Cottage Grove City Hall

4:00 p.m.

Commission Members	Agency	Present
Joe Harris	Dakota County RRA	X
Autumn Lehrke	Washington County RRA	X
Janice Rettman	Ramsey County RRA	X
Mark Stenglein	Hennepin County RRA	
Barb Hollenbeck	City of Hastings	X
Jen Peterson	City of Cottage Grove	X
Myron Bailey	City of Cottage Grove	
John Hunziker,	City of St. Paul Park	X
Steve Gallagher	City of Newport	
Kathy Higgins	Denmark Township	
Jim Keller	Denmark Township	
Cam Gordon	City of Minneapolis	X
Lee Helgen	City of St. Paul	

Alternate Commission Member	Agency	Present
Liz Workman	Dakota County	X

Ex-Officio Members	Agency	
Ron Allen	Goodhue County	
Bob Kastner	City of Red Wing	
Marc Mogan	Prairie Island Indian Community	X
Ken Bjornstad	Goodhue County	X

Staff	Agency	Present
Andy Gitzlaff	Washington County RRA	X
Josh Olson	Ramsey County RRA	X
Sam O'Connell	Dakota County RRA	X
Adele Hall	Hennepin County RRA	X

Others	Agency

The meeting was video recorded and can be viewed online at:

[http://swctc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=2&clip\\_id=3425](http://swctc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=3425)

Vice-Chair Peterson called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

**Agenda Item #1: Consent Items**

**a. Minutes of the October 27, 2011 Meeting**

Motion made by Hunziker to approve the October 27, 2011 meeting minutes. Seconded by Lehrke. **All in favor.** Motion carried.

**b. Checks and Claims**

Motion made by Hunziker to approve the checks and claims. Seconded by Workman. Roll Call Vote: **Commissioner's Rettman, Lehrke, Hunziker, Peterson, Workman, and Hollenbeck in favor.** Motion carried.

**Agenda Item #2: 2012 Meeting Schedule - WCRRA**

Gitzlaff discussed the meeting schedule as outlined in the packet noting that none of the dates fall on holidays in 2012. He presented an alternative meeting location at the Washington County South Service Center in Cottage Grove. This location would provide the opportunity for a conference room-type atmosphere and more seating for staff and guests to be a part of the dialog and conversation.

Motion made by Lehrke to change the meeting location for 2012 to the Washington County South Service Center. Seconded by Workman.

Peterson stated concern with the meeting not being able to be videotaped at that location.

Lehrke commented that reporters and public can attend the meetings and we have a web site. It's important to get down and get to work; to have the ability to discuss things in a workshop-type setting verses a formal setting.

Workman concurred on the workshop-type setting but was concerned about losing visibility if the meetings are not taped and shown on Cable TV.

Vice-Chair Peterson clarified that Ms. Workman is the alternate appearing for Dakota County.

Rettman said video is pivotal; this corridor needs the synergy to fill in with the high-speed types of things and you get the attraction you need by having these meetings on video. Half of the people she represents do not use web sites and she questioned if we would be losing some of the people we can educate. We don't want the work to fall behind or go stagnant; we need to make sure we're making the right decision on what's giving us the best visibility and what's best for continuing the movement of Red Rock.

Hollenbeck said she would hate to lose the visibility that we've built up over the years. We have used the South Service Center for workshops and she questioned if it is possible to use both; have the regular meetings at Cottage Grove and use the South Service Center if we need to have a workshop-type arrangement. Some people tune in to watch these meetings and that link is their only connection on the progress of this corridor.

Peterson agreed stating the visibility on the cable network is important and also having the ability to watch it on the internet. You don't get everything you need to see or hear looking

over the minutes. She concurred that she does like the idea of having the regular meetings in Cottage Grove and possibly using the South Service Center for any major workshop-type meetings. She added that Cottage Grove will have a new City Hall by this time next year and could possibly have more space for workshops that would be video-taped.

**Vice –Chair Peterson called the role: Commissioner Lehrke in favor. Commissioner’s Rettman, Hunziker, Peterson, Workman, and Hollenbeck opposed.** Motion failed.

Gitzlaff said the Commission could use the South Service Center for workshops; however we wouldn’t be guaranteed availability. If needed, we could also arrange conference tables at this location as an alternative option.

Lehrke commented that most of the meetings include a lot of information items and asked if monthly meetings were necessary or if they could be bi-monthly. Hollenbeck said she thinks it’s a good idea to keep the schedule and cancel meetings if there are not enough agenda items to hold a meeting.

Motion made by Rettman to approve the proposed meeting schedule for 2012. Seconded by Hollenbeck. **All in favor.** Motion carried.

Motion by Hollenbeck to keep the meeting location at Cottage Grove City Hall. Seconded by Rettman. **Commissioner’s Rettman, Hunziker, Peterson, Workman, and Hollenbeck in favor. Commissioner Lehrke opposed.** Motion carried.

Rettman asked if the 2012 budget meeting would be happening today and stated concern about starting 2012 without a budget. Gitzlaff said it’s not on the agenda due to not having a super-majority. We could have a budget meeting in December, or we could wait until the January 2012 meeting to approve the budget. This would also allow new incoming members to approve the budget.

### **Agenda Item #3: Update on State Rail Planning Activities – Mn/DOT**

Peterson stated that Dan Krom, Mn/DOT Passenger Rail, was going to give a presentation today but is unable to attend. Gitzlaff said we had asked Krom to present an update on some of the studies going on and we will ask him to come back to our next meeting. One new announcement from the Mn/DOT is that they have scheduled two open houses to talk about the Twin Cities to Milwaukee High-Speed Rail EIS process. Mn/DOT has been working with FRA to reduce the number of corridors down from 36 to four alternatives. They have determined the best route to take forward is the River Route and they have approval from FRA for that recommendation. The findings will be presented at the open houses and additional input from the public will be sought. Mn/DOT is the lead for the study and they are trying to hold the open houses close to Wisconsin. The dates are Monday December 12<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the Stillwater Library, and Tuesday December 13<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the Winona County History Center. There will also be a webinar on Wednesday December 14<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. for people to call in.

Rettman said it might be wise for the Commission to weigh in for this Corridor and noted the comment period is from December 12 to January 12, 2012. We need to support this from several different places; from this Commission and also from the individual County Boards.

Rettman requested staff and the Commission Chair prepare and sign a letter in support of the River Route. Red Rock should go on record during the comment period, as a Corridor, supporting the River Route. Gitzlaff stated that would be consistent with the position we've taken in the past, and he could work with staff and the Chair to draft a letter in support of the River Corridor.

Motion by Rettman to send a letter of support for the River Route. Seconded by Hollenbeck. **Commissioner's Rettman, Hunziker, Peterson, Workman, and Hollenbeck in favor. Commissioner Lehrke opposed.** Motion carried.

**Agenda Item #4: Red Rock Corridor Status and Next Steps - WCRRA**

Sam O'Connell distributed and presented a PowerPoint Presentation on the Red Rock Corridor Status Update and Next Steps as outlined in the packet. Gitzlaff stated input received from Commission members on the presentation will be incorporated into the 2012 Work Plan and Budget.

O'Connell clarified that on Figure 3, Red Rock Corridor Implementation Plan, year 0 is the year 2007; the start of the short term is at the conclusion of the AA.

Lehrke asked, with regard to increase in service, how many busses have been added since 2007. O'Connell said the transit services haven't increased but we've seen increased ridership in the Corridor. Gas prices have also helped increase ridership. Lehrke asked what the ridership numbers from 2007 and from today are. O'Connell didn't have that information with her; however, she would be able to provide it to the Commission.

**Follow up item:** *As requested, here is a comparison of the express bus ridership along the Red Rock Corridor documented in the 2007 AA and 2011 ridership numbers from Metro Transit.*

Route	Route Details	Daily Ridership (2007): Source AA	Daily Ridership (2011) Source: Metro Transit	Percentage Change
361	CG - St Paul	250	270	8% Increase
364	SPP – Newport - St Paul	50	38	24 % Decrease
365	CG - Mlps	340	545	60% Increase
Total		640	853	33% Increase

Gitzlaff continued the presentation discussing the Next Steps; Intermediate Years 5 - 10.

**Note:** *Commissioner Cam Gordon arrived at 4:44 p.m.*

Peterson asked how often are the CAC meetings and where are they held. Gitzlaff said the CAC was formed as part of the station planning study and the last meeting was in June or

July of 2011. CAC members were asked to come to numerous presentations to Boards and Planning Commissions. Staff has talked about bringing the Committee back together but needs guidance from the Commission as to what the CAC should be doing. Lehrke asked what the format for joining the Committee is. Gitzlaff said the format for the station planning study was that each City appointed two Committee members; one to serve as business representative and one to serve as community representative. The Commission also appointed four members to serve at large. We set up a guide book for the Committee saying that their duties were for the duration of the project, but also said we'd like them to continue working and meeting at its conclusion. Over the months, there have been a number of people interested in joining the Committee, and the enrollment can be discussed in greater detail.

Rettman said we need to add these ideas now so they are in the tickler file. When looking at the 2012 'Build the Base' portion of the presentation, the advocacy items such as strengthen partnerships, empower the CAC, and support community are passive. We need to do something active. Building the rider base is still one of the issues we need to continue and needs to be added if we're going to create a Work Plan. Now that the River Route has been selected, we need to clearly know how we can build that ridership, whether with busses or other modes, to then create the momentum for Red Rock. We also need to know how we would interface with the freight and the rail capacity study.

Gitzlaff continued the presentation with the Intermediate Projects that include actual construction of Park-&-Rides. Rettman commented that the projects happening in years five and six are more immediate rather than intermediate and should be noted as such; the Park-&-Rides under construction, the ridership, and the high speed. This would help us make decisions on what our bigger steps are.

Peterson asked if, with regard to advocacy, we need something in there to strengthen partnerships with area legislators and key committee legislators.

Gitzlaff continued stating we are at a point of re-evaluating the Corridor. A lot has happened since 2007, including having data on the commuter rail line that is up and running (Northstar). At the direction of the Commission, staff has put together four distinct study options. Lehrke asked if this Corridor currently qualifies for Federal dollars or are the studies necessary in order to qualify. Gitzlaff said the Corridor is a Federally Designated Corridor under the last authorization bill, so we can go after any Federal funds that are available. There is a pot of money that is already designated for Red Rock and Rush Line; however, there isn't a current distribution plan put together for using those funds.

Rettman asked for clarification on the anticipated start date. Gitzlaff said it is the anticipated start date of getting the study together; it is tied back to our budget. Rettman asked if an EIS will eventually have to be done. Gitzlaff answered yes; it would make sense to tie in the environmental work with the AA rather than do them separately.

Gordon asked about the impact on the bluffs and if the assumption was that they needed a separate lane for BRT. Gitzlaff said the original AA looked at BRT assuming a new paved lane coming up towards St. Paul; however, it would be fair to say the AA didn't take BRT far enough to look at a full example compared to what's being studied in other areas of the region or what's part of Metro Transit's Guidelines. Gordon asked what the difference

between the current bus service and BRT is. Gitzlaff said we haven't looked in detail at what could be implemented in this Corridor with BRT. There are different models within the Met Council's guidelines; highway BRT is its own lane within a freeway, arterial BRT shares a lane with traffic, and another model (not in the guidelines) that is its own exclusive guideway. The point is that when going back to an AA and the Federal process, they are going to want you to look at everything. Gordon commented that getting BRT might be a way to building ridership and create confidence in the line; it could be a stepping stone towards a commuter rail line.

Lehrke commented that right now, express bus is just in the mornings and evenings for commuters, and BRT is more consistent running every 15 to 20 minutes. O'Connell said the Cedar BRT is an all day service and runs every 15 minutes during an 18-hour period. There are significant capital investments with BRT in gaining right-of-way. A key item is that there needs to be reliability. The bus needs to be able get through traffic, snow incidences, and accidents, and part of that is needing more facilities. Lehrke asked, with regard to the \$120 million investment, how long the Cedar Corridor is. O'Connell said the majority of the stage-one development is on CSAH 23 and includes station development in Eagan, Apple Valley, and Lakeville. About \$58 million was for roadway expansion of the bus shoulder lanes, as well as trail development, signage, and street-scaping. The road improvements were along three to four miles of CSAH 23, and the service area is from Lakeville to the Mall of America, about 16 miles.

Rettman asked how much of the study investment pays off in narrowing down the cost of the EIS and what is the reliability that it doesn't have to be redone. Gitzlaff said the idea is the more you can include up front in the expense of your project, the lower the cost would be in the long run. What makes the EIS expensive is the level of detail; the hopes are that you can identify things to be used before PE and also minimize risk. The environmental process is more prescribed in following Federal guidelines. Rettman asked if we do study Option B or C and update the AA, how much will that cut time or expenditure on the DEIS. Josh Olson said it is difficult to say what the actual cost savings would be. The most expensive piece of one of these processes is the data gathering and the engineering that's being required. If you can do that to a sufficient detail, that is a cost savings down the road; when you do the EIS, you're not employing someone to build this from scratch. Rettman asked about the return on the investment and if you do it now, would it need to be hired out again. Olson said if you follow the Federal process and guidelines on how you develop data, it will be a cost savings because it is less work that will have to be done later down the road. It is important to note that the Federal process can change and also that there is an expiration on environmental work.

Gitzlaff continued the presentation discussing Study Options B, C, and D.

**Note:** Commissioner Joe Harris arrived at 5:25 p.m.

**Note:** Commissioner Workman left the meeting at 5:28 p.m.

Lehrke asked if Option B reevaluates the modes for long-term or short-term. Gitzlaff said the main point of doing that study is getting updated data and facts to make more informed decisions for the Corridor going forward. Long-term, this plan, the modes being looked at, and examining BRT could be included as part of that scope. Lehrke asked if reexamining the modes would be included in the \$100-200K price. Gitzlaff said yes, but it wouldn't be a

study that the Met Council or Federal agencies would endorse as official; it would be more of a guiding document for the Commission based on new data that has changed. Lehrke asked if Option C would be just looking at BRT along this Corridor or if it would include updating data and ridership information. Gitzlaff said these options are a guide to what we could do, but we haven't scoped out each one and what's included; we could make each option be what we want to study.

Gordon asked if we get high-speed rail and also move in the direction of BRT, do we run the risk of derailing the commuter rail line. Lehrke commented that we currently don't have the numbers for commuter rail in this Corridor, and maybe the cost of BRT would be less than our share of the cost of the commuter rail. The goal is to provide transit service in some form to develop this Corridor; the best transit mode may be commuter rail, but we don't know that. Doing these studies wouldn't derail anything, but would make a better case for which mode would work best. Gordon commented that he believes rail is a better alternative. It would be more consistent and reliable long-term, and also inspire more investment and development into the future; however, it would be a waste of money if it didn't have the ridership.

Harris asked if there is a timetable on the high-speed rail. Gitzlaff said that the work being done by Mn/DOT over the past year was to get the alignment from a number of different routes down to one. That means that, from the Federal level, it's now recognized that the River Corridor will be the corridor for high-speed rail. It will be going into the environmental process, but funding has not been secured at this point. Rettman said the comment period on the announcement is through January 12, 2012, and there could be some timeline decisions beginning made in February or March.

Gordon asked what staff's recommendation is as it pertains to Study Options A-D. Gitzlaff said the Commission would continue the discussion into 2012, and when there is direction from the Commission to look at something in more detail, staff would present a scope of work. There is no decision making tonight; it's more to put us on a path with the budget.

Rettman commented that if the Commission wants to do Option B and access some of the 5339 funds, we need to move swiftly. Gitzlaff said those funds have been out there for a while, but there is pressure to use those funds for other projects. The other project that is eligible for those funds is Rush Line, which has overlapping Commission members from both Washington and Ramsey Counties. There is a partnership in the dialog to help distinguish which of those funds would go to each project.

Gordon suggested the Commission agree that Option A is something we shouldn't consider at this time.

Lehrke said the City of Cottage Grove did a letter of support on the Advance Alternative Analysis and asked which option they chose. Peterson said they supported the plan that Washington County had drafted. Gitzlaff clarified that Washington County has identified it as a Budget Work Plan that exists; however, there hasn't been a refinement yet as to what that scope of work is. Both Study Options A and B could fit under the definition of Advanced AA because we're doing Advanced AA work. Option A is the full scale work with the environmental association to get a project ready for a New Starts application, and Option B is to relook at the numbers to see what's there and look at the phased and long-term

options. Harris commented that he would hate to spend money on a study that is only recognized by the Commission and asked if the type of work done determines what might be recognized by certain authorities. Gitzlaff said there is a difference between recognized and officially endorsed. Entities will recognize that a study has been done; however, it wouldn't be eligible for New Starts funding unless it goes through the Federal process. Gordon asked why we would not want to stay the course at this time. Rettman said the numbers we have from 2007 have changed, and Option B or C gives the updated information that will be needed for the EIS or for Met Council if we go that far. It would also be nice to make use of some of the East Metro Capacity findings to generate some savings.

Lehrke commented there are four reasons why we don't want to stay the course: capital costs, operating costs, ridership thresholds, and trips per day. BRT gives more service at lower cost, and we want to make a data driven decision; it's worth spending \$50 – 100K if we can save millions. Rettman said she would like to see the pros and cons of the options. Given the recent announcement, it would be nice to see what we can tag along with on East Metro or a second Amtrak train.

O'Connell commented that staff has heard the Commissions questions and concerns, and we can detail these options more with the pros and cons to assist in your discussion in January.

#### **Agenda Item #5 Legislative Update - RCRRA**

##### **a. State**

Nothing was reported.

##### **b. Federal**

Olson said it is a quiet month in Washington on the transportation front. There have been lots of discussions on the Super Committee and we hope to see the results of that committee in the next week or so. The information you've received in the packet does identify some moving steps on the transportation front, and there is a glimmer of hope in both the House and Senate.

#### **Agenda Item #6 Other**

##### **a. Next Meeting- December 2011:**

Peterson said the next meeting is tentatively set for December 29<sup>th</sup>. Harris said it sounds like we can forgo the December meeting scheduled between the Christmas and New Year's holidays. We've already discussed agenda items for the January meeting.

Motion by Harris to cancel the December meeting. Seconded by Gordon. **Commissioner's Lehrke, Hunziker, Peterson, Harris, Gordon, and Hollenbeck in favor. Commissioner Rettman opposed.** Motion carried 6 – 1.

Next meeting is scheduled for January 26, 2012.

Peterson thanked outgoing members John Hunziker and Lee Helgen for their service to the Commission.

Motion by Lehrke to adjourn. Seconded by Harris. **All in favor.** Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.