



Meeting Minutes
October 28th, 2021, 4:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

Commission Members	Agency	Present
Wayne Johnson	Washington County RRA	X
Jim McDonough	Ramsey County RRA	X
Dave Thiede	City of Cottage Grove	X
Jane Prince	City of St. Paul	X
Sandi Dingle	City of St. Paul Park	X
Mark Vaughan	City of Hastings	X
Marvin Taylor	City of Newport	X

Staff	Agency	Present
Joe Ayers-Johnson	Washington County RRA	X
Kurt Howard	Washington County RRA	X

Other Attendees	Agency	Present
Lonnie Garland	SWCTC	X
Caroline Ketcham	Ramsey County	X
Andy Gitzlaff	Ramsey County	X

Agenda Item #1: Introduction

Chair Wayne Johnson called the meeting to order and communicated that due to the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic the meeting is being held virtually.

Agenda Item #2: Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Jim McDonough made a motion to approve the agenda. Councilmember Jane Prince seconded. Roll call vote served as attendance as well. All commission members were present. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion Carried.

Agenda Item #3: Approval of April Minutes

Mayor Dingle made a motion to approve the minutes from the April meeting. Councilmember Vaughan seconded. Councilmember Prince was not present at the April meeting and abstained. All others were in favor. **Approved.** Motion Carried.

Agenda Item #4: 2022 Work Plan and Budget

Joe Ayers-Johnson, Washington County Planner and Red Rock Corridor Project Manager, presented on the 2022 Work Plan and Budget. This Work Plan and Budget is essentially the same as the work plans and budgets of the previous two years.

Commissioner Jim McDonough made a motion to approve the 2022 Work Plan and Budget. Mayor Dingle seconded. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion Carried.

Agenda Item #5: 2022 Proposed Meeting Schedule

Mr. Ayers-Johnson presented the 2022 Proposed Meeting Schedule. Mayor Dingle made a motion to approve the 2022 Proposed Meeting Schedule. Councilmember Thiede seconded.

Commissioner Johnson asked the bylaws required four meetings per year. Mr. Ayers-Johnson responded that the bylaws did not include such a requirement, and that the four meetings per year are structured around the official items that need to happen each year, including electing a chair and vice chair and passing a work plan and budget. Commissioner Johnson expressed an appreciation for the ability to conduct these meetings remotely.

Councilmember Vaughan asked if the bylaws allowed the commission to pause and come back when it needs to. Commissioner Johnson responded that not having these meetings would give the impression that this corridor is not being sought after, desired, or wanted. If the commission were to stop meeting, it would be noticed, and the commission's work would be taking a step backwards. Councilmember Vaughan wondered what the value of staff and commission member's time is for working on this project but noted that it would probably be difficult to restart such a commission and that he understood why it might make sense to continue to meet. Mr. Ayers-Johnson reiterated Commissioner Johnson's points on why it is important to keep the commission running. He noted that the current budget is quite lean, and that the political clout of the Red Rock Corridor would take a hit by disbanding. Commissioner Vaughan expressed that he felt the educational aspects of this meeting were also valuable for while the commission is in its holding pattern. Commissioner Johnson noted that continuing to meet would allow the commission to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. Councilmember Thiede wondered if there were other opportunities to provide some kind of transit, perhaps with autonomous vehicles.

All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion Carried.

Agenda Item #6: Presentation – COVID-19 Impacts on Travel Trends

Ashley Asmus, Data Scientist at the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Services Division, presented on COVID Impacts on Travel Trends. She was filling in for her colleague Jonathan Ehrlich. Ms. Asmus explained the data their team used from MnDOT traffic nodes and showed how travel trends changed since March 2020. She showed the commissioners how traffic changed by different times of day and by highway.

Commissioner Johnson asked how the trend of at-home workers going out in the middle of the day might be reflected in the data. Ms. Asmus agreed that this could explain why midday traffic is about the same as pre-covid levels. She also noted that the data is just for the freeway system, and some smaller trips and errands would not be captured by this since they are just on local roads.

Ms. Asmus showed that TH 61 traffic levels have been meeting or exceeding traffic the prior year since December 2020. Mayor Dingle noted that there has been just one express bus per day along TH 61 since the start of the COVID pandemic, which could explain high vehicle use. Since there is no longer a circulator bus going through St. Paul Park or the Newport Transit Station, folks that would usually not be counted as traffic since they were commuting by bus now must commute by car.

Ms. Asmus highlighted several ongoing studies: a MnDOT study of congestion, a Metropolitan Council Travel Behavior Inventory household travel survey, and Metropolitan Council analysis of telecommuting, which trended down substantially between June 2020 and May 2021.

Ms. Asmus shared transit data from Metro Transit that showed all ridership is down from pre-COVID, but that local bus rebounded the most, rail rebounded somewhat, and express buses really have not rebounded at all. Some of this reduced ridership has been due to service cuts, especially for express buses, and the bus driver shortage is also impacting these numbers. Bus Rapid Transit has been the most resilient of the route classes. The peak boarding times are now 7am and 3pm; this shift to an earlier peak afternoon time is likely driven by students.

Commissioner Johnson added that other Washington County Commissioners might like to see the BRT data Ashley Asmus shared, since it is relevant to the Gold Line and its potential resilience.

Ms. Asmus concluded by showing a cumulative graph of what percent of drivers account for what percent of vehicle miles traveled. Her graph showed that 15% of drivers account for 50% of the regional vehicle miles traveled. She suggested focusing sustainable travel efforts on these 15% of drivers.

No further questions or comments on this item.

Agenda Item #7: Communications Update

Mr. Ayers-Johnson presented a communications update and explained that communications predominantly take place on the Red Rock Corridor's Facebook page, which currently has 380 likes and 400 followers – a slight increase over the October meeting. Staff tries to post 1-2 times per week about transit-related news and other relevant topics.

No questions or comments on this item.

Agenda Item #8: Other

A. Commissioner Reports

Chair Johnson asked if any Commissioners have any Red Rock Corridor-related news to share.

No Commissioners had information to share.

B. Next Meeting

Chair Johnson announced that the next scheduled meeting is January 27, 2022, but only if there is something of value to share and provide.

Agenda Item #12: Adjourn

Commissioner McDonough made a motion to adjourn, Mayor Dingle seconded.

All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion Carried.