



## Meeting Minutes

April 20th, 2022, 4:30 p.m.

St. Paul Park City Hall

Commission Members	Agency	Present
Wayne Johnson	Washington County RRA	X
Rafael Ortega	Ramsey County RRA	X
Tony Khambata	City of Cottage Grove	X
Jane Prince	City of St. Paul	
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
Jasmine Davidson	Washington County RRA	X

Other Attendees	Agency	Present
Lonnie Garland	SWCTC	X
Kathryn Hansen	Metro Transit	X
Kevin Roggenbuck	Ramsey County	X

### **Agenda Item #1: Introduction**

Chair Wayne Johnson called the meeting to order.

Roll call and introductions were held. Quorum was met.

### **Agenda Item #2: Election of Officers**

Mayor Sandi Dingle nominated Wayne Johnson for chair of the Red Rock Corridor Commission for the year of 2022. Councilmember Tony Khambata seconded. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion Carried.

Chair Johnson nominated Mayor Dingle for vice chair of the Red Rock Corridor Commission for the year of 2022. Councilmember Khambata seconded. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion Carried.

### **Agenda Item #3: Approval of Agenda**

Councilmember Khambata moved approval of the agenda. Vice Chair Dingle seconded. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion Carried.

### **Agenda Item #4: Approval of October 2021 Minutes**

Vice Chair Dingle made a motion to approve the October 2021 minutes. Councilmember Mark Vaughn seconded. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion Carried.

### **Agenda Item #5: Recognition of Outgoing Members**

Chair Johnson introduced a resolution to recognize outgoing members of the Red Rock Corridor Commission Ramsey County Commissioner Jim McDonough and Cottage Grove Councilmember Dave Thiede.

Councilmember Khambata made a motion to adopt the resolutions of recognition. Councilmember Taylor seconded. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion Carried.

Chair Johnson spoke to the importance of recognizing the time Commission Members take to participate in the Red Rock Corridor Commission.

### **Agenda Item #6: Red Rock Corridor Commission 2022 Insurance Renewal**

Red Rock Corridor Project Manager Joe Ayers-Johnson presented on the background and need for insurance renewal.

The Red Rock Corridor Commission holds insurance through the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust, which includes coverage for open meeting, municipal liability, auto liability, and first party cyber. While the Commission used to approve insurance renewal annually, the Commission approved a change in 2019 whereby staff could automatically renew insurance provided rates did not increase above 10%. The League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust previously included first party cyber insurance as part of the liability insurance premium; however, in 2022 it has added cyber as a separate line item adding \$194 dollars to the cost and raising the total premium from \$929 in 2021 to \$1,123 in 2022 – an increase of 21% thereby meeting the threshold for Commission approval. The liability insurance premium for 2022 is \$1,123 dollars, an increase over the previous year but well under the \$2,000 dollars budgeted for insurance in the approved 2022 Budget. The costs of insurance are covered by the Red Rock Corridor Commission fund balance (\$87,300).

Mr. Ayers-Johnson opened the floor for questions from the Commission.

Councilmember Khambata asked if the League of Minnesota Cities gave an explanation why cyber was removed from previous policy. Mr. Ayers-Johnson replied that it was his understanding that the League of Minnesota Cities had not provided additional explanation or rationale beyond that it was now including cyber as a separate line item. Chair Johnson suggested that, based on his history dealing with insurance with his company, once the insurer discovers more losses from one type of coverage they tend to not include it as part of the package and add it as an additional item. He added that his company saw a similar type of increase in cost of cyber insurance as well due to increase of hacking activities. Councilmember Khambata wanted to clarify that this increase was not the result of a claim or inappropriate actions by the Commission or staff. Mr. Ayers-Johnson confirmed that the increase was not the result of a claim or inappropriate action, but that the County insurance staff informed him that the League had changed policy to now include cyber only as a separate line item.

Councilmember Khambata asked if there was anything the County or the Commission could do that would lower costs, for example additional training. Mr. Ayers-Johnson responded that the County IT department is active in ongoing training and security efforts, and that that allows Commission staff to check a box that brings the premium down. However, that is the extent of his knowledge on the inner workings of the insurance premium.

Chair Johnson commented that he would like to have a better understanding of the need for cyber insurance for a body that does not have its own servers. Mr. Ayers-Johnson responded that the Commission does have a webpage, which could merit cyber security, and that he is not sure the Commission would be able to opt out of the cyber security. Chair Johnson indicated that he would like to know more about the options on the table for whether cyber security could be opted out of, and to better understand what the insurance is protecting. Mr. Ayers-Johnson responded that staff could look into those options and get a better explanation of the role of cyber security for the Commission, but that action would need to be taken within the next few weeks to renew or not to renew – with or without cyber – lest the insurance lapses at the end of next month. Councilmember Khambata commented that the premium seemed to be within the size and scope of the commission's purpose and within the budget parameters, and therefore that he didn't see a problem with approving the insurance. He added that the alternative to the insurers "line item" approach to cyber insurance is that they could have just kept it bundled with the other items and the premium for all went up. Additionally, he added that NOT having cyber insurance carried its own set of liabilities. However, he noted that he would like a better understanding of the nature of the price increase and to ensure the Commission and staff were doing everything they could to keep the price of the premium down. Chair Johnson agreed and suggested that due to the time sensitivity and the relatively low financial impact, that the insurance should be approved but to explore the nature of the cyber insurance in the future, whether the Commission would need to have it, and if there are steps the Commission or staff could take to lower the premiums. He noted that if the premiums went up this year, they would keep going up and that the Commission should have a good understanding of whether these premiums were in fact necessary. Mr. Ayers-Johnson responded that staff would make a note to connect with other County staff and the insurer to answer those questions for next time around.

Councilmember Khambata made a motion to approve the Red Rock Corridor Commission 2022 insurance renewal. Councilmember Taylor seconded.

Before the vote, Councilmember Vaughn asked a clarifying question about whether there would be a separate bill for the cyber insurance item. Mr. Ayers-Johnson responded that, while it was pulled out as a separate line item from the rest of the insurance items, it was still included in the package and reflected in the cost of the premiums before the Commission. Councilmember Vaughn commented that it was a relatively inexpensive cost, and that it makes sense to him to approve it in the interest of protecting the Commission and the communities it represents. Chair Johnson agreed that he thinks we should go forward with it but noted that sometimes there is “insurance creep”, and that the Commission should make sure the insurance is right-sized for the organization. Mr. Ayers-Johnson confirmed that that is something staff could work with other County staff and the insurer to better understand for next time around.

Discussion was ended, and a vote was taken. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion Carried.

#### **Agenda Item #7: Presentation - Red Rock Corridor Overview**

Mr. Ayers-Johnson, Washington County Planner and Red Rock Corridor Project Manager, provided an overview of the Red Rock Corridor for new commission members or members of the public. Mr. Ayers-Johnson described the geography of the corridor and named the partnering communities that participate in the Red Rock Corridor Commission. He introduced BRT as a transit mode and described its differences and similarities to other modes, and he gave a brief overview of the timeline for corridor planning. Mr. Ayers-Johnson introduced the Red Rock Corridor Implementation Plan (2017) and described the near-term and long-term recommendations that emerged in that plan, including the ongoing efforts to bring increased transit service to the corridor to demonstrate and grow ridership. Mr. Ayers-Johnson described the 2022 Work Plan adopted by the Red Rock Corridor Commission and the general activities that staff engages in to advance the corridor. The full presentation can be viewed on the Red Rock Corridor Commission playlist on the SWCTC’s YouTube channel, and more information on the Red Rock Corridor can be seen in the April RRCC meeting packet or on the Red Rock Corridor project webpage.

Following the presentation, Mr. Ayers-Johnson opened the floor to any questions.

Chair Johnson asked when the Commission was started. Mr. Ayers-Johnson commented that planning for the Red Rock Corridor goes back to the 1990s, and that there is an update to a Red Rock Corridor Commission Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) dated in 2004, so he thinks the Commission dates back to the late 1990s or early 2000s.

Vice Chair Dingle noted that the Cottage Grove Park and Ride currently has four westbound and four eastbound buses a day, and that that service has been renamed from Route 361 to Route 363 – which is potentially confusing with the Commission’s ask to Metro Transit to implement all-day, bidirectional service in the corridor, historically called Route 363. Mr. Ayers-Johnson agreed that that is confusing, and added that Metro Transit consolidated the Routes 361, 364, and 365 into this one, new Route 363. He noted that due to this renaming, the commission will henceforth be requesting an expansion to Route 363 instead of a new service. Vice Chair Dingle asked about the current ridership numbers for Route 363. Mr. Ayers-Johnson did not know the current ridership but offered to look into it if that was information the

Commission was interested in knowing. Vice Chair Dingle commented that some of the big companies in downtown Saint Paul are returning to work but doing so in a hybrid model that would likely have a large impact ridership in the corridor. She added that this had implications for ridership across the whole metro area and was curious to learn more about impacts and trends from the Metropolitan Council. Chair Johnson commented that if the goal was to get cars off the road, that goal was achieved, just by a different method.

Councilmember Vaughn announced that Regina Hospital in Hastings just merged with United Hospital in Saint Paul. He commented that Route 363 as originally conceived would stop in Cottage Grove, but that maybe this was an indication that that should be revisited as a connection between those hospital campuses could become increasingly important. He added that this could potentially be the nudge needed to get Dakota County back into the Red Rock Corridor Commission and add additional need to the request for service.

Councilmember Khambata asked if there were any projections available that describe COVID-19's impact on transit and how they might stabilize or return to normal. Kathryn Hansen, Senior Project Manager at Metro Transit's TOD Office, attending to present on Transit Oriented Development, offered to share what she's been hearing as a Metro Transit employee. She responded that Metro Transit staff recently were told that by 2026 the region should have a better idea of what the future of transit will be after the impacts of COVID-19 have normalized. They are starting to see an uptick in ridership again – primarily in local and high-frequency transit like Light Rail Transit (LRT) and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Commuter and express routes were the routes hit most severely. Councilmember Khambata added that the communities along the corridor are all seeing increased single family and multi-family development, and that by that 2026 benchmark there will be thousands of new residents in these collective communities traveling the corridor to industry centers like Saint Paul and Minneapolis which could help bring commuter ridership back. Specifically multi-family housing, which often have access to transit considered as part of the development process.

Chair Johnson commented that the METRO Gold Line would be coming online in 2025, and that the success of transit planning in the Red Rock Corridor would be closely tied to the success of the METRO Gold Line both as an example for the region and as a connecting service. With that type of timeline, he posited that it would be best to wait to do any type of test or demonstration service until 2026 when METRO Gold Line is operational, and the regional transit demand has rebounded. He added that it would not be a good idea to initiate a study before the numbers are the best possible to give that demonstration the best chance of success.

#### **Agenda Item #8: Presentation - Getting Ready for TOD**

Kathryn Hansen, Senior Project Manager at Metro Transit's Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Office presented to the Commission on TOD and best practices to ensure the success of transit in communities like those in the Red Rock Corridor. The presentation touched on TOD definitions, policy goals, community walkability, best practices, development trends, and what it looks like to be ready for transit and TOD. The full presentation can be viewed on the Red Rock Corridor Commission playlist on the SWCTC's YouTube channel, and the PDF of the presentation is included as an addendum to the minutes. Following the presentation, Ms. Hansen stood for questions from the Commission.

Chair Johnson commented that the METRO Gold Line has resulted in a significant boom in development, particularly multi-family development. This could support the idea that “if you build it, they will come.” He added that during the peer region visit to San Diego, an entire community was developed around a planned station for one of their BRT routes. He commented that this could lead to the conclusion that if you have the right message, the right place, and the right program, this can be a very powerful tool for development. However, he noted that that hasn’t necessarily been the case in Washington County, where two county transit facilities haven’t necessarily translated into a development boom or increased service. So he posited that it is a confusing and not always certain link between development and increased transit, or transit facilities and development. Ms. Hansen responded that it’s important to stay together as a corridor and work on these plans in lockstep, and encouraged everyone to be thinking creatively about how to encourage a transit state of mind for potential users to increase usage of what currently exists (e.g. financial incentives, employer incentives, development incentives like TIF and zoning). She encouraged commission members to think about how to telegraph this corridor’s brand as a future transit corridor. Chair Johnson added that this relates to the first-mile-last-mile conversation, and how there needs to be connections and industry around stations.

Councilmember Khambata recalled his time living in Chicago where taking the train was a first choice as it was the most convenient and quickest mode of travel. He suggested the economics of human behavior indicate that folks will use whatever is least painful or time-consuming to use. Things like parking/traffic/stress should be part of the selling of transit in a market like ours where driving is relatively easy and quick. Ms. Hansen added that even the cost of vehicle ownership and operation can factor in, as those costs add up significantly. She acknowledged that many don’t have a choice but to ride transit, but the goal is to also make it a competitive choice that people feel comfortable and want to make. Ms. Hansen added that the Red Rock Corridor is extension of the other transitways in development like the Green Line Extension, Blue Line Extension, Purple Line, and Gold Line, and that this corridor is in a que for future high-frequency transit.

Councilmember Taylor discussed the City of Newport’s TOD area that they have been working slowly on developing. He commented that the last time Newport had a major TOD planning initiative was when Red Rock was being considered as regional rail, and that those plans are now out of date. He asked whether there were resources for the City to tap into to do TOD planning revisions. Ms. Hansen responded that her office can be a resource for communities like Newport and to the region, and that would be something Metro Transit could work with the County on as well. Mayor Dingle added that another avenue would be to connect with the Met council sector representative, who could help communities make connections as well. Chair Johnson requested that staff connect with Newport on potential updates to TOD planning.

Chair Johnson commented that a game changer will be the decision to give buses their own lane as with the Gold Line and Purple Line or with Bus Only Shoulders. If transit can be competitive with time as well as cost, and if there are all day options, then people may feel more compelled to use transit over driving.

Ms. Hansen commented that investments in TOD are often good investments with or without transit, as it creates places with livability standards and walkability that are desirable and

embraced regardless. She added that those preparations could and should be made, as it would not be her fear that transit would never come to this corridor.

Councilmember Vaughn commented that the City of Hastings struggles financially to pay for baseline city services, that it's difficult to make the case to community members to put money into big regional approach, even though he believes in that regional approach. He appreciated that Ms. Hansen called Met Council a resource, but he thinks that should be more of a partnership than a resource as they need real leadership and investment from the Met Council in generating a regional approach that makes us competitive to other regions nationally. Councilmember Khambata agreed and noted that it's a hard sell to have community front the bill and have no guarantee that it will be a silver bullet or result in reliable transit service. Having Met Council at the table would go a long way to help get communities on board.

Chair Johnson added that an additional challenge is the lack of long term planning in anything, that people are more geared toward the day to day, the election cycle, and planning is disrupted by major societal events like the pandemic. He commented that there hasn't been a consensus or passion for transit planning at a local level. He suggested that this long-term planning needs to be led by Met Council and not for the Met Council to wait for the cities to lead, as the cities are more driven by these four-year cycles and don't have the ability to look long-term in the same way. Councilmember Vaughn agreed and indicated that the Met Council has a role to play leading these conversations locally.

Chair Johnson thanked Ms. Hansen for the presentation and discussion, and closed discussion on the item.

#### **Agenda Item #9: 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 392 likes and 414 followers – an uptick since the previous meeting. Staff tries to post 1-2 times per week about transit related news and other relevant topics. No press has been released about the Red Rock Corridor since the last commission meeting. Mr. Ayers-Johnson stood for questions.

No questions or comments on this item.

#### **Agenda Item #10: Other**

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

No additional reports were shared.

#### **Agenda Item #11: Adjourn**

Councilmember Khambata made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Vaughn seconded. All were in favor. **Approved.** Meeting was adjourned.