



Meeting Minutes
October 26, 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
Lyssa Leitner	Washington County RRA	X

Other Attendees	Agency	Present
Kim Zlimen	MnDOT	X
Kevin Roggenbuck	Ramsey County	X
Will Schroeer	East Metro Strong	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: Approval of Agenda

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

Agenda Item #3: Approval of April 2022 Minutes

Councilmember Khambata made a motion to approve the minutes. Councilmember Vaughn seconded. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion Carried.

Agenda Item #4: Approval of 2023 Proposed Meeting Schedule

Vice Chair Dingle made a motion to approve the 2023 meeting schedule. Commissioner Ortega seconded. All were in favor. **Approved.** Motion Carried.

Agenda Item #5: Potential Update to the Red Rock Vision for 2023 Workplan

Red Rock Corridor Project Manager Joe Ayers-Johnson introduced Will Schroeer, Executive Director, East Metro Strong. He also discussed the purpose of Will's presentation which is to provide an overview of East Metro Strong and example work products that could be applicable to reestablish the vision for the Commission in the future.

Chair Johnson noted that Washington County has held two Board workshops related to the Newport and Forest Lake Transit Centers. Part of the conversation was to determine if the Red Rock Corridor Commission's vision remains the same now that service has been eliminated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Washington County is asking questions about long-term ownership of the station.

Will provided an overview of East Metro Strong and discussed recent changes related to transit. Those include increased car prices, transit market shifts due to COVID-19, and that existing transit does not effectively access jobs in this corridor. He provided details about a project in Dakota County that East Metro Strong lead in conjunction with the Dakota County Chamber of Commerce and other private businesses and discussed how BRT ridership has rebounded in the Twin Cities and new service types have been launched, like micro transit.

Chair Johnson asked about where the A Line and C Line go and stated he heard that inner city routes were doing better than suburban routes. Will provided information that all-day, frequent routes are rebounding but express bus (that provide service for 9-5 jobs in downtowns) are not rebounding.

Councilmember Khambata noted that many white collar jobs are now virtual and asked if Will is projecting the jobs go back to in-person. He also asked about the offset of traffic volumes for transit and if there was an offset of other things like wear and tear on roads. Will responded that nobody knows the future of jobs remaining virtual. He also stated that the question about transit benefits needs to go back to the Commission. It depends on what the Commission's goals are and then if a certain transit type does or does not meet those goals.

Vice Chair Dingle stated she was a previous express bus rider and has seen traffic pick up on the roads and on the bus. Gas prices and parking prices are bringing people back to transit. She thinks flexibility will remain for white collar jobs with virtual or hybrid options. That includes flexibility in hours too.

Councilmember Khambata asked if there have been successful public-private partnerships. Will responded that he has seen them but results vary based on project goals.

Chair Johnson stated that when he was on the Cottage Grove Council, one of the issues was attracting businesses and felt transit would hurt this because people wouldn't leave their jobs for lunch because they wouldn't have a car. He asked Councilmember Khambata what the goal is for Cottage Grove with transit in terms of more homes, workers, and or businesses.

Councilmember Khambata responded that Cottage Grove has attracted a lot of new businesses recently and in 2021 had the second highest growth of new housing units in the Twin Cities. There are also more apartments which means a wider range of labor force. The City is also piloting a transit circulator route that could be a proof of concept for first and last mile systems. The City is also focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion, making sure the City is not cutting out the people who need support. The industry is like a three-leg stool – housing, industry, and service. They have been heavy on housing, industry is picking up, and service is lagging. NorthPoint is projecting 1700-1900 living wage jobs. The City is on the way to hitting 40,000 people which is a key metric in attracting larger service industries.

Chair Johnson asked what the timeline was to achieve that. Councilmember Khambata replied that it is now.

Lyssa Leitner asked the Commission if they want to direct staff to develop a scope of work to work with East Metro Strong or another organization to reevaluate the vision for Red Rock.

Councilmember Vaughn stated that Hastings is at the end of the corridor and he knows it will take a long time. He does not want to give up on the vision but does agree we should think about different short term solutions. He does not want to only think about connecting to jobs and does not want to rely on the same old studies.

Chair Johnson stated that Gold Line will open in 2025 and will be a proof of concept. If people are riding that, Red Rock may make more sense.

Chair Johnson asked if they should dismantle the Commission. There is a perception that this line will never happen. Also asked if Red Rock Corridor exists without the Newport Transit Station. He stated that the Commission should wait until 2023 when there are new Commission members to determine what should happen.

Commissioner Ortega agreed that they should look at the vision and maybe ask if transit is the solution to the issues being discussed. If it isn't transit, what is it?

Vice Chair Dingle stated she has been riding the bus for 48 years. Much of that time was all-day service in St. Paul Park. Since there is a driver shortage, when will it make sense to use transit for school busing? She is a strong advocate for transit, including benefits for green house gases

and affordability. She does not want to stop pushing for Red Rock but understands it will take a lot of time.

Councilmember Khambata stated that planning for transit needs to be part of how we plan cities, like with the MUSA line and roads. Transit can be key to long-term economic growth like freeways were. Cottage Grove wouldn't have existed without TH61. We also need to look at ancillary benefits, is there cost capture, what are the impacts of not having transit. He would be strongly opposed to scrapping the Corridor vision but wants to move forward with data to determine if the current path is the right one.

Councilmember Taylor noted that Newport is the crossroads of this area. There is a lot of development just across their boarder in Woodbury. Transit could be part of long-term viability for their city.

Chair Johnson stated that the Newport Transit Station is not being used and maybe the Commission should only meet once a year, if at all, until the legislature provides funding for the 363 demonstration service.

Commissioner Ortega stated that no transit line has been built because of the legislature.

Will stated that it seems like many Commission members want to take this as an opportunity to lead and shape a new vision based on new realities. They must determine small, incremental steps to move forward.

Chair Johnson said if the state will not do anything, then it is up to the locals and asked if the cities are willing to contribute funds.

Councilmember Khambata suggested we prepare a plan to articulate what the next steps are. Commissioner Ortega agreed and said to start with the current plan but make sure we are not prescribing the outcome before investigating potential new solutions.

Joe Ayers-Johnson stated that staff will come to the first meeting in 2023 with a draft scope that outlines how to move the Commission through a visioning process.

Agenda Item #6: Communications Update

Mr. Ayers-Johnson presented a communications update by reviewing the information in the packet.

No questions or comments on this item.

Agenda Item #10: Other

Vice Chair Dingle thanked Chair Johnson and Councilmember Vaughn for their work throughout the years on the Commission.

No additional reports were shared.

Agenda Item #11: Adjourn

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