

RAMSEY COUNTY REGIONAL RAILROAD AUTHORITY

November 4, 2008

The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority met at 9:25 AM, Tuesday, November 4, 2008, in the Council Chambers, Third Floor Court House.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Jim McDonough
Commissioner Tony Bennett
Commissioner Toni Carter
Commissioner Rafael Ortega
Commissioner Jan Parker
Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt
Commissioner Janice Rettman

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Chair McDonough called the meeting to order at 9:25 AM

AGENDA

Commissioner Ortega moved approval of the Agenda of the November 4, 2008 Board Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Reinhardt. Roll Call: Ayes – Bennett, Carter, Ortega, Parker, Reinhardt, Rettman, McDonough – 7. Nays – 0. Motion accepted.

MINUTES

Commissioner Reinhardt moved approval of the Minutes from the October 21, 2008 Board Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Ortega. Roll Call: Ayes – Bennett, Carter, Ortega, Parker, Reinhardt, Rettman, McDonough – 7. Nays – 0. Motion accepted.

1. **Comments on the Metropolitan Council 2030 Transportation Policy Plan Update**

Chair McDonough began by saying that the Comments on the Metropolitan Council 2030 Transportation Policy Plan are due on November 6, 2008. He explained that this item was on the agenda of the last Regional Rail Authority (RRA) meeting and that RRA staff were asked to change certain parts of the proposed Comments in order to strengthen its tone. The staff were also asked to review the Comments from east metro partners including the City of St. Paul, Washington County, St. Paul Chamber and the County Transit Improvement Board.

Tim Mayasich, Director of the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority, began the presentation by highlighting the changes that were made to the Comments. He explained that they reinforced the point that there is a lack of transit funding in the East Metro. He said that Steve Morris, Transit Project Manager, would continue the summary of the Comments as he was the main author.

Steve Morris explained that the Comments began with a discussion on the recent transit improvements that have happened. The Comments also stressed that the Union Depot Purchase Agreement has been signed both by the County and the Postal Service and its importance as a multimodal transportation hub should be recognized in the plan.

Commissioner Parker mentioned that the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) has a category called "Transit Centers" and she asked if the Union Depot would be known as a "transit center".

Steve Morris replied that the Union Depot is not a transit center as defined in the plan. It is more than a transit center as it would provide connections to local transit services regional services, and intercity routes. He added that the TPP does not say much about intercity rail and that the Regional Rail's TPP Comments refer to this several times.

Chair McDonough commented that the Metropolitan Council has not looked at intermodal transportation hubs like the Union Depot and agreed that the Union Depot is very unique and bigger than just a transit center. He said the goal is to get the Met Council to recognize this in their planning.

Steve Morris continued on by indicating that between now and 2030, the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) plans to spend an additional two billion dollars on transit projects in the region. However, the plan continues to maintain the old goal of doubling ridership by 2030. It is felt that this new investment should be recognized by the plan through more aggressive transit goals for 2030.

Chair McDonough commented that the original goal for transit ridership was 2020 and agreed that the plan should be adjusted to reflect the new revenue that CTIB will provide.

Commissioner Parker suggested that the point on page two stating "This plan should set a more aggressive goal for transit ridership to reflect this new level of local investment" should be more specific.

Chair McDonough suggested adding that the aggressive goal should match or exceed the earlier goal of doubling ridership by 2020.

The Commissioners agreed with this language change.

Commissioner Rettman also suggested they attach the previously committed resolutions that detail Ramsey County's position on transit, specifically Park and Ride and buses, to the resolution for the Comments on Metropolitan Council 2030 Policy Plan.

Commissioner Bennett questioned how the Union Depot was referred to. He felt that calling it a "hub" was important as it showed how it will be a multi modal transfer point for the corridors that meet there, and not just a station along a corridor. He also felt that

there was a need to make the Comments broader by using 'transportation' instead of 'transit'. He said it is important to emphasize the project in its entirety.

Chair McDonough agreed that it was important to distinguish the Union Depot from a transit center. He commented that calling the Depot a hub seemed to define the Depot correctly in what it represents, but recommended calling it an "Intermodal Transit and Transportation Hub" when referencing it in the Comments.

The Commissioners agreed with this language change.

Steve Morris continued his summary of the Comments by stating that in Chapter 3 of the TPP, Regional Transportation Finance, the Plan projects an operating deficit from 2009-2011 for the existing transit system. Following 2011, the plan assumes a 3-5% increase in Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST) which would be adequate to support the existing system. He said this assumption is inconsistent and overly optimistic when compared to the actual MVST performance over the past several years. Additionally, the TPP projects that the Regional Transit Capital Bonding would increase 1% per year, which is not enough to grow the system.

Commissioner Rettman questioned the language in the Comments about Chapter 3 when it says, "The plan suggests that CTIB funding can be used for construction of park and ride lots...This statement is only true if the lot is part of a transitway", wondering if it abdicates the Met Council's responsibility to fund park and ride lots.

Chair McDonough responded that, as the Met Council and CTIB define transitways differently, it would help to clarify the statement in the Comments by adding "as defined by CTIB".

Commissioner Reinhardt suggested that the Comments state explicitly, "CTIB's funding cannot be used for construction of park and ride lots, except as defined by CTIB".

The Commissioners agreed with the change of language.

Steve Morris continued with the summary by pointing out a statement that was added to the Comments, in reference to Chapter 7 of the TPP - Transit, to make sure it was consistent with the Board's request. The added statement read, "Expanding bus transitway corridors should not occur if it comes at the expense of the local bus system". The Comments also include the RCRRA's support of the Plan's intention to involve populations who are typically underrepresented in transportation planning. The Comments state that the list of transitway corridors should include Red Rock, Rush Line, Robert Street, Northeast Diagonal and I-94. He also mentioned that the Plan formally recognizes that they will not build significant new highways to relieve congestion, that future highway projects will be focused on specific congestion points to solve problems but not new infrastructure projects. Steve Morris said this makes improving the transit system even more important.

Commissioner Rettman suggested they add to the part that says, “RCRRA supports the concept of improving bus service on arterial streets”, because the connectivity goes beyond arterial streets.

Chair McDonough commented that they could add “throughout the service area” to emphasize the point.

Commissioner Reinhardt suggested modifying this argument to clarify that service improvements are important.

The Commissioners agreed to the addition of language to emphasize the importance of providing connectivity throughout Ramsey County.

Steve Morris continued his summary by saying that Active Living Ramsey County (ALRC) reviewed the Plan and that the Comments of Chapter 9 are essentially ALRC’s comments of the walking and biking section of the Plan.

Commissioner Ortega wanted to know how often the Plan is updated.

Steve Morris responded that they have to update the Plan every four years but that another update would take place in two years.

Commissioner Carter suggested that RCRRA ask the Metropolitan Council for a response as to how the comments will be incorporated in the Plan update.

Commissioner Parker proposed that the Board include a cover letter with the Comments to state that the 2030 Plan is inadequate for the East Metro area and that RCRRA is giving some specific suggestions of what needs to be included or the Plan should not be approved.

Commissioner Ortega agreed that RCRRA should clearly state that it does not accept the plan due to the issues identified in the comments.

Commissioner Carter proposed that they begin the cover letter by stating their appreciation for the opportunity to comment on the Plan, explain that the Plan is unacceptable and are making suggestions which they believe would make the Plan acceptable. They should then specifically request a response that identifies the changes that are incorporated into the Plan.

Commissioner Rettman wanted to assure that their strategy with the Comments would be sufficient for Chair McDonough to present the Board’s position on the Plan to the Met Council at the public hearing.

Chair McDonough responded that a cover letter containing the Commissioners suggestions would be a perfect strategy to present their message.

Tim Mayasich and Steve Morris ran through the changes that will be made in the Comments, with the addition of a cover letter containing the language presented by the Board.

Commissioner Parker made a suggestion that the point about inadequate funding of the basic bus system be added to the cover letter.

Commissioner Bennett suggested that they copy the letter to the two chairs of the transportation committee of the legislature.

Commissioner Parker also suggested that they send copies of the Comments packet to all the members on CTIB.

Commissioner Parker moved approval of the addition of a cover letter and the amended Comments on the Metropolitan Council 2030 Transportation Policy Plan, seconded by Commissioner Ortega.

Roll Call: Ayes – Bennett, Carter, Ortega, Parker, Reinhardt, Rettman, McDonough – 6. Nays — 0. Motion accepted.

WHEREAS, The Metropolitan Council is required to update the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) for the region; and

WHEREAS, The Council is receiving public comments on the plan until November 6, 2008; and

WHEREAS, The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) has been working toward, and is committed to, improving transit options in Ramsey County and the rest of the East Metro area; Now, Therefore Be It

RESOLVED, That the RCRRA authorizes its Chair to forward the attached letter commenting on the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan.

Lastly, Tim Mayasich introduced Michael Rogers to the Board, who is the new Senior Transportation Planner of the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority. Michael Rogers was the Senior Transportation Planner for Washington County's Public Works and worked on the Red Rock and Rush Line Corridors. He also contributed to the preparation of the Comments that were presented the Board.

Meeting adjourned at 10:23 AM