



**Preliminary Engineering/NEPA Analysis
for the
Dane County/Greater Madison Metropolitan Area**

For additional project information: www.transport2020.net

Minutes

TRANSPORT 2020 IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE (ITF) MEETING

Wednesday, December 20, 2006

4:45 p.m.

**Madison Municipal Building, Room 300
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard
Madison, WI**

-- **ROLL CALL**

ITF Members Present: Sandy Beaupre; LaMarr Billups; John DeLamater; Sup. Chuck Erickson; Steve Hiniker; Jesse Kaysen; Sup. Al Matano; Sup. Scott McDonell; LeAnna Wall (*for Joe Olson*); Dick Wagner.

ITF Members Absent: Jim Berkenstadt (*notified*); Kristine Euclide (*notified*); Ald. Ken Golden (*notified*).

TAC/Staff Present: Stephanie Hickman (Federal Highway Administration); Chuck Kamp (Madison Metro); Rob Kennedy (UW-Madison); Bob McDonald (Madison Area MPO); David Trowbridge (Madison Planning and Development; *Transport 2020 Project Manager*).

Others Present: Fred Bartol (Dane Alliance for Rail Transit); Margaret Bergamini (Associated Students of Madison); Susan DeVos (Madison Area Bus Advocates); Ann Gullickson (Madison Metro); Ken Kinney (HNTB); Caron Kloser (HNTB); Ken Lucht (Wisconsin and Southern Railroad); Kimon Prousaloglou (Cambridge Systematics); Charles Quandt (HNTB); Bob Schaefer; Royce Williams (ProRail); Bruce Wilson (Madison Area Bus Advocates).

1. REVIEW OF AGENDA

Sup. Scott McDonell welcomed Transport 2020 Implementation Task Force members to the meeting. He suggested re-ordering the engineering update to the beginning of the agenda. The Task Force agreed.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JULY 26, 2006 TASK FORCE MEETING

The Minutes for the 9-28-06 Transport 2020 Implementation Task Force meeting were unanimously approved, as submitted on a motion by Michael Blaska/Dick Wagner.

3. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no initial public comments. Bob Schaefer deferred his comments to the end of the meeting. At the end of the meeting Mr. Schaefer had the following comments:

1. Are cost/benefits generated over the lifetime of the project? For example, will the investment in only single track be short-lived if it turns out the double track will be needed in the future?
2. He will want to closely compare the ridership generated by the model with those numbers generated by AARF and will want an explanation for the differences that may arise.
3. With numerous stops, the trip length will increase, which may discourage ridership.
4. Will workers be available when commuter rail runs? There are shift workers that may never be able to use the service.

There were no other registrants for public comment on this agenda item.

4. ENGINEERING UPDATE

Ken Kinney opened the discussion with a reminder of the two key decisions resulting from the various 2020 tasks: to select a Locally Preferred Alternative and to submit a New Starts Application. The engineering tasks are important to determine impacts of the alternatives and costs, which is a key component in the cost evaluation in the New Starts application.

Charlie Quandel, engineering task leader, walked through plan sheets illustrating the conceptual level of engineering for Alternatives 2a, 3 and 5, focusing on locations for single and double tracks and station locations. He noted that WisDOT and Union Pacific Railroad own the right of way on which Wisconsin and Southern railroad currently operates freight operations. Double track would be installed for Alternatives 2a and 3 between the Shorewood and Union Corners stations. Single track would be sufficient to accommodate operations on the east and west legs of the alignments. Single track is proposed across University Avenue to minimize reconstruction costs, and at the Yahara River crossing to avoid constructing a new bridge for Alternatives 2a and 3. Alternative 5 will require three tracks within the rail corridor to accommodate electric powered commuter vehicles in each direction and freight trains. Of particular note, Alternative 5 would require substantial reconstruction where the tracks cross University Avenue and constructing a second bridge over the Yahara River.

Sup. McDonnell asked if the grades for the Doty Street alignment (Alternative 5) would cause problems for tracks transitioning onto Blair Street. Mr. Kinney said that would not be a problem.

Sup. McDonnell asked how many intersections would be closed versus gating. Mr. Quandel noted the engineering team assumed all crossings would be gated and all crossings would be at-grade. Several committee members discussed that some crossings were proposed for closure under the high speed rail study. Costs can be reduced if some crossings are closed, but noted this would need to be considered carefully on a case by case basis.

Ms. LeAnna Wall asked how long gates would be down at Stoughton Road. Mr. Quandel said that warning flashing start when the train is within 2,200 feet of the crossing. He estimated the gates would be down for approximately 30 to 40 seconds.

At the end of the presentation, Mr. Kinney noted that the infrastructure needs are developed from the initial operating plan. In January we will look at the range of costs and ridership. The initial cost/benefits of the alternatives are expected to be complete by the end of January.

5. MODELING UPDATE

Mr. Kimon Proussaloglou summarized that the market analysis and model development are complete and model validation is in its last phases. Prior to starting on detailed modeling, Mr. Proussaloglou said that FTA has a new requirement that project teams provide forecasting results from the Aggregate Rail Ridership Forecasting model. Mr. Proussaloglou stated that the AARF is intended to be a sketch planning tool to give FTA a “reality check” on numbers generated by the ridership model. The model is fairly simplified, relying on Census and rail data and experience from other New Starts projects. The AARF model best applies to large commuter rail projects in cities larger than Madison. The proposed Madison transit service is not a “typical” commuter rail service since there are more frequent stops over a relative short distance when compared to a typical commuter rail service. The FTA guidance on AARF notes that if there is no light rail service, then the ridership forecast is halved. The model is only sensitive to the total number of workers within a buffer area. The buffer area is further refined by income level of workers. The AARF model for Alternative 2a estimates ridership can range from 4,250 to 8,500 riders per day. The low end of the range assumes a typical commuter rail service, while the high assumes a typical light rail service.

Ms. Wall asked if a vehicle type makes a difference in the forecast. Mr. Kinney said it would not at this “sketch level” of analysis.

Mr. Proussaloglou emphasized that the proposed transit service is not a typical commuter rail situation and Mr. Kinney further noted that the proposed transit service is more like light rail service using a commuter rail vehicle. Mr. Proussaloglou will have more conversations with FTA regarding the special conditions of the service in Madison.

Ms. Sandy Beaupre asked if the calculation is used in the New Starts application. Mr. Proussaloglou said that it is not directly used; FTA would use it more as a “reasonableness” check on the ridership calculations generated by the model.

Mr. Dick Wagner asked if the AARF takes into consideration students and special events. The AARF only considers workers; the estimates derived from AARF are based on cities not necessarily similar to Madison.

Sup. McDonnell asked if FTA will allow for other elements outside the model. Mr. Kinney said typically FTA does not allow this, but we can discuss that with FTA. The next step is to ask FTA if we can use the light rail AARF, which would be a closer reflection of the service envisioned in Madison.

A question was asked if the project team runs the AARF model on each of the alternatives. Mr. Proussaloglou said that a representative alternative is selected, usually the one which is expected to have the greatest ridership. Mr. Kinney noted that Alternative 5 may perform well with ridership, but comes at a very high cost.

Another question raised was about the difference between light rail service and commuter rail service. The difference is primarily in service levels, vehicle type and station spacing. Mr. Kinney also said that the one typically sees little land use/economic development benefit with commuter rail service. You need a higher level of service to get this benefit. For the 2020 New Starts application, Mr. Kinney noted that financing and land use benefits will be important elements.

Mr. Proussaloglou concluded the presentation saying the next step will be discuss the nature of the service with FTA to allow the higher estimates associated with light rail service and to start applying the regional model in January.

6. LAND USE UPDATE

Mr. Kinney reviewed the land use update presented to the Transit Operations subcommittee, focusing on the New Starts evaluation criteria that were used in the land use and market assessments along the corridor. The evaluation criteria looks at policies to increase station/corridor development, plans for pedestrian facilities, concentration of growth in activity centers, planning and zoning policies for parking and development, TOD financial incentives and corridor economic development. In its assessment of land use in the corridor the project team reviewed existing land use and conditions, compared existing land use/zoning to planned future conditions and conducted a TOD policy analysis of current plans. The team then prepared an assessment matrix to compare key development areas along the alternative alignments. The final report on the land use assessment is expected to be completed by early February.

Mr. Wagner asked if the city will get credit for TOD work already started. Mr. Kinney said yes. Mr. Wagner further noted to the group that the Finance and Governance subcommittee is very active, meeting with legislative leadership as the committee develops its finance and governance plan.

7. IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE AND SUBCOMMITTEE SCHEDULE/NEXT STEPS

David Trowbridge summarized various Transport 2020 meetings currently scheduled:

- Transit Operations Subcommittee/TAC
- Tuesday, January 9, 5:00 p.m., Room 300 MMB
- Implementation Task Force
- Wednesday, January 31, 5:00 p.m., Room 260 MMB
- Finance and Governance Subcommittee/TAC
- To be scheduled

8. INFORMATION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS BY TASK FORCE MEMBERS

There were no announcements or information provided by Task Force members.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The Committee adjourned its meeting at 5:40 p.m.

These minutes represent the writer's interpretation of discussion and resolution of key points. Please contact Caron Kloser of HNTB (414/359-2300) to discuss questions, modifications or corrections.