

MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-FIRST MEETING

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

DATE: June 23, 2008
TIME: 8:00 a.m.
PLACE: Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
Commissioner’s Conference Room
W239 N1812 Rockwood Drive
Waukesha, WI
(Teleconference Meeting)

Board Members

Karl Ostby, Chairman Kenosha County Representative
Len Brandrup City of Kenosha Representative
David Eberle Racine County Representative
Joseph “Jody” Karls City of Racine Representative
Sharon Robinson City of Milwaukee Representative
Julia Taylor Governor’s Representative from City of Milwaukee

Board Members Excused

George A. Torres Milwaukee County Representative

Staff Members

Philip C. Evenson Executive Director, SEWRPC
Kenneth R. Yunker Deputy Director, SEWRPC

Consultant Team (Transit Advocacy and Communications)

Lori Richards

Guests

Larry Sandler Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel
Karen Schmiechen Planner, Wisconsin Department of
Transportation, Southeast Region
Albert Stanek Chief, Intercity Planning,
Division of Transportation Investment Management,
Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Barbara Ulichny (representing Robert Mariano) Roundy’s Supermarkets

ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Ostby called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and asked the Board members in attendance to identify themselves. Mr. Evenson noted that Mr. Torres would not be present for the meeting due to a prior commitment. The presence of a quorum was confirmed. The other individuals who had dialed-in to the conference call, or who were present in the Commission offices, also identified themselves to the Board members.

CONSIDERATION OF SCOPE OF WORK AND RTA FUNDING FOR PHASE II OF THE MILWAUKEE TRANSIT FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE STUDY BEING CONDUCTED BY THE WISCONSIN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE AND REASON FOUNDATION AND SPONSORED BY THE METROPOLITAN MILWAUKEE ASSOCIATION OF COMMERCE

Chairman Ostby asked each Board member to share their thoughts on the proposed scope of work (see attachment 1) and RTA funding for Phase II of the transit study being conducted by the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute (WPRI) and Reason Foundation. Board members had the following comments:

1. Mr. Brandrup stated that he believed Phase II of the study would duplicate much of the work that had already been completed for the RTA by the Commission staff, by Michael Ley of Virchow, Krause & Company, and by Earth Tech, Inc. under the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) commuter rail study. He cited point by point where the duplication would occur including: documentation of the current financial problems faced by the Milwaukee County Transit System; identification of the economic impacts and return on investment of public transit; the operational issues associated with the proposed KRM commuter rail service; the analysis of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) versus commuter rail service in the KRM corridor; and research on potential sources of dedicated funding.
2. Mr. Eberle shared Mr. Brandrup's concerns over Phase II duplicating work already completed. He also indicated that he had some concerns about the information provided by Mr. Rubin on the potential development impacts of the KRM commuter rail project. However, he noted that there could be some benefit to having the Reason Foundation review those findings in light of questions raised by State Representative Robin Voss.
3. Mr. Karls agreed with Mr. Brandrup with the exception of the work elements in Phase II dealing with regional governance where he believed it could be helpful to have additional study to provide to the RTA another viewpoint on the issues.
4. Ms. Robinson indicated that she was not overly concerned with the duplicative work that would be done under Phase II, as she believed it would indicate that the Board was trying to be objective. She agreed with Mr. Karls that another look at the regional governance issues would be useful.
5. Ms. Taylor noted that the RTA had used its current information base when it made its legislative proposals to the Governor and Wisconsin Legislature for the 2007-2009 State budget but the RTA could not convince legislators to approve the legislation with that information. She believed that Phase II of the study could be viewed as an audit of the RTA work to date that would validate the Board's findings and provide additional information that could help gain the support of State legislators. On regional governance, she believed there was a need to look at how the other counties and transit operators in the Region could be brought into an RTA.
6. Chairman Ostby indicated that there was no question in his mind that much of the Phase II work would be duplicative, but he agreed with Ms. Taylor that it could serve as an audit of the RTA work and validate its findings. He asked who would contract for the study if a decision was made to go ahead with it. Mr. Evenson stated that the Commission would contract with the WPRI to conduct Phase II on the RTA's behalf.

7. Mr. Brandrup stated that he was uncomfortable with specific work items identified in the proposed scope of work that would identify the economic impacts of public transit, operational issues for the RTA and the KRM commuter rail project, financing options, and review the findings of recent planning work for the KRM commuter rail project. He noted that the information for the KRM project had been developed by Earth Tech, Inc., the KRM study consultant, and had passed an extensive review by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Mr. Brandrup indicated that his primary concern was that the review of the KRM study findings by the Reason Foundation could adversely affect the planning work for the KRM project that still needed to be completed. He questioned whether Mr. Rubin had the appropriate credentials to analyze the KRM study findings.

8. Ms. Taylor stated that she was looking at the Phase II study in terms of the political environment in the Legislature where the RTA failed in its first attempt to get approval of needed legislation. She suggested that the Phase II study could provide different information that would be useful for the next attempt. She also believed that more work was needed on identifying the appropriate organizational structure and funding for the Region's public transit services, and that the Phase II study could provide this.
9. Mr. Stanek noted that the expansion of the RTA from three to seven counties as proposed for study under Phase II would go beyond the RTA's original charge in the State authorizing statute. He suggested there could be a credibility gap if revenues from the car rental fees generated in the three RTA counties were used to fund analysis of a broader RTA as proposed under Phase II. In response to a question from Chairman Ostby, Ms. Taylor stated that she was unsure if the Milwaukee 7 group would be able to fund Phase II if the RTA declined. Mr. Evenson suggested that if it were to proceed with funding the study, the Board consider requesting a change to the scope of work to eliminate any work believed not to be related to its legislative charge, and also to reduce the time required for completion of Phase II.

Mr. Brandrup moved for approval of the scope of work for Phase II of the transit study with changes to eliminate work that has already been completed or was not consistent with the State legislation that created the RTA, and with a reduction in the cost to the RTA attendant to the reduced work scope. The changes to the draft scope of work that were part of the motion included: on page 1, eliminate all of Component B and Item Nos. 1c and 1d under Component C; on page 2, eliminate Item Nos. 1d and 2d under the first Component D and eliminate "BRT" in Item "a" under the second Component D; and on page 3, eliminate all of Component E. Mr. Brandrup's motion did not receive a second. Noting that the Board could not act on the motion without a second, Chairman Ostby asked for an alternative motion from the Board. No alternative motion was offered.

CONFIRMATION OF NEXT MEETING DATE AND PLACE

Chairman Ostby stated the next meeting for the RTA would be scheduled for 8:00 a.m. on July 21, 2008 at the Kenosha Municipal Transit Garage. The meeting agenda would include a presentation on the Milwaukee Downtown Connector Study and review of revisions to the draft of Section II of the RTA report. In response to a question from Mr. Eberle, Mr. Evenson stated that funding recommendations would not be a discussion topic until the August or September Board meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m. on a motion by Mr. Karls, seconded by Mr. Eberle, and carried unanimously by the Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth R. Yunker
Recording Secretary

PCE/KRY/AAB/ab/mlh
07/10/08
Doc # 138254 v2: Board Minutes for 6/23/08 complete

Attachment 1

Milwaukee Transit Study

Phase II

In Phase I, a preliminary set of data was assembled that led to the identification of the key issues to be analyzed in Phase II. Based on these findings, and using input from SEWRPC, the RTA, and other sources Phase II of the study will include the following components:

A. The Status of Transit in the Milwaukee Region

Present financial and ridership data and trends for MCTS. This will include presenting historical and projected summary estimates of route miles, passengers, operating efficiencies, etc. This analysis will also address the financial soundness of the region's transit systems. Much of this information was summarized in the 5-16 presentation to the RTA.

B. Economic Impacts of Transit Options

1. Analyze the major trip purposes – work/school vs. discretionary, relying primarily on existing transit operator/planning agency surveys
2. Using surveys of employers, analyze the impact of more or less bus service on businesses
3. Analyze the impact of transit on the economy of the area, including employment, tax collections, local spending, and land use.
4. Analyze the impact of operating bus service on a non-regional basis.

C. Regional Governance Issues

1. Evaluate optional geographic coverage of regional transit body
 - a. Milwaukee County only
 - b. Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha Counties
 - c. Seven-county region
 - d. Optional plan to phase-in additional counties beyond Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha.
2. Evaluate the pros and cons of elected vs. appointed RTA members.
3. Examine relationship between RTA and other governmental bodies
 - a. Counties and Cities
 - b. State government, particularly WisDOT
 - c. Federal government
 - d. SEWERPC

- e. Metra
- f. Outline options used elsewhere to mitigate the predominance of a single government in the governance of RTA's.
- g. Present alternative methods to allocate governance board members geographically and for the selection/appointment of members to governing board

D. Operational Issues

- 1. Alternative models for transit operations
 - a. Retain existing transit operating entities
 - b. RTA contract existing transit entities
 - c. Transfer certain or all existing transit operations to the RTA
 - d. Operating responsibility for KRM corridor transit
 - RTA operate directly
 - RTA contract for commuter rail service
- 2. Alternative roles for RTA – examine the advantages and disadvantages of each
 - a. Regional transit planning
 - b. Collection and disbursement of tax/grant revenues
 - c. Operations of a bus system or systems
 - d. Operation of commuter rail/BRT in KRM Corridor
 - e. Other guideway transit options (“generic” RTA role *only*, not including technical studies of specific corridor)
 - f. Manage/oversee capital projects
 - g. Fund other transit operating entities and transit/transportation capital projects
 - h. Contracting for transit service operation

D. Finance and Revenue Options

- a. Identify range of added funding required for fiscal stability
 - Bus system subsidies
 - Commuter rail/BRT
 - Other
- b. Tax options
 - Sales tax
 - Ad Valorum
 - Vehicle registration/wheel tax
 - Other tax sources
 - Tax levy by geographic area (should the tax rate vary by political jurisdiction and, if so, how is rate established?)
- c. User fees – fares
- d. State funding

- e. Federal funding
 - c. Options to address subarea equity and the impact on overall funding stability
 - d. Taxes – Limited term or evergreen?
- E. Commuter Rail/BRT in KRM Corridor
- 1. Review and evaluate commuter rail/BRT plan ridership projections, cost estimates and plans
 - 2. Evaluate the impact of commuter rail on the regional economy
 - 3. Analyze alternatives for funding commuter rail
- F. Schedule – A draft Phase II report will be delivered by September 30.