

MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-FOURTH MEETING

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

DATE: October 23, 2008
TIME: 8:00 a.m.
PLACE: Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission
Waukesha 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
George A. Torres Milwaukee County Representative

Staff Members

Philip C. Evenson..... Executive Director, SEWRPC
Albert A. Beck Principal Planner, SEWRPC

Consultant Team (Transit Advocacy and Communications)

Lori Richards
Elizabeth Kelly

Guests

Peter Peyser..... Senior Principal, Blank Rome Government Relations LLC
Karen Schmiechen Planner, Wisconsin Department of
Transportation, Southeast Region
Jeff Stone Wisconsin State Representative
Kerry Thomas Communications Director, Transit Now

ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Ostby called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Roll call was taken, and the presence of a quorum was confirmed. As the meeting was being conducted through a teleconference call, the individuals present in the Commission offices, along with others who had dialed-in, identified themselves to the Board members.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Karls, seconded by Mr. Brandrup, and carried unanimously by the Board.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 7, 2008, MEETING

A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by Mr. Karls, seconded by Mr. Torres, and carried unanimously by the Board.

CORRESPONDENCE AND COMMENTS RECEIVED ON WEBSITE

Mr. Evenson directed the Board to the recent comments that had been received through the RTA website (see Attachment 1). A motion to receive and file the comments was made by Mr. Brandrup, seconded by Mr. Eberle, and carried unanimously by the Board.

REVIEW OF OUTREACH ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY MUELLER COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Richards briefed the Board on the preliminary findings of the telephone surveys of business and community leaders that had been conducted to date by Mueller Communications on key issues related to the work of the RTA. She stated that overall, those interviewed strongly supported moving funding for public transit from the property tax to a sales tax, and identified the proposed Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) commuter rail service and express bus service in Milwaukee as projects they would most like to see implemented. She noted that responses from within Racine County indicated a preference for a combination of fees and taxes to fund transit.

Mr. Torres commented that the survey results reflected only the responses of 35 businesses and civic leaders, and cautioned the Board on reading too much into the findings to date.

Noting that the survey instrument asked respondents to rate a series of problems or issues, Ms. Robinson inquired as to where respondents had rated crime as a challenge to their organization. Ms. Richards stated that crime had been rated last. Chairman Ostby noted that it was managers who had rated crime low and that employees might give a different ranking to crime.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PROPOSED TRANSIT PUBLIC INFORMATION WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

Ms. Richards reviewed the proposed work plan and budget memorandum with the Board (see Attachment 2). She stated that it was important the correct information was presented to the public on the options for public transit and commuter rail in the three RTA counties and that news coverage alone was not going to ensure that the public would be adequately informed. The proposed work plan included both traditional outreach efforts to get its message across and also nontraditional efforts.

To facilitate discussion of the proposal, Mr. Brandrup moved to approve the proposed work plan and budget. Ms Taylor seconded the motion. Board members had the following comments during the discussion on the motion:

1. Mr. Torres indicated that he was concerned that the work plan called for the RTA to take on too much of an advocacy role to promote its recommendations. He believed such a role would go against the legislative charge to the Board and, consequently, he would not support the work plan.
2. In response to a question from Chairman Ostby, Representative Stone stated that he did not believe the RTA would be outside the scope of its legislative charge if it were directed at informing and educating the public as to the Board's recommendations. Mr. Evenson stated

his belief that the RTA enabling legislation did not prohibit the kinds of efforts identified in the proposed work plan. He noted that such efforts were not made for the previous seven-county RTA for southeastern Wisconsin and that the RTA was subsequently disbanded. Mr. Karls stated that he had recently reviewed the RTA enabling legislation and also saw no issues with the Board educating and informing the public about its work.

3. Ms. Taylor stated that she was pleased with what was proposed in the work plan. She noted that more education of the public on the RTA issues was needed and that it would help with consideration of RTA legislation in the January session of the State Legislature. She stated that the Board needed to move forward and take a position on public transit funding, or the Region would fall further behind.
4. In response to a question from Mr. Karls on the usefulness of doing public opinion surveys just before the November 4, 2008, elections, Ms. Richards stated that surveys would be done only after the elections. In response to a question from Mr. Brandrup, she stated that the survey would have a statistically valid sample size.
5. Ms. Robinson remarked that six votes in favor of the RTA recommendations were needed for passage by the Board. She asked if Mr. Mueller or Chairman Ostby intended to poll or consult with the appointing authorities on their positions regarding the RTA recommendations. Chairman Ostby responded that he believed much of that work had been done by Mueller Communications in the past few weeks. He noted that the Board may end up submitting a report without the six-vote supermajority, but he hoped that the majority of Board members would support the recommendations.

Chairman Ostby called for a vote on Mr. Brandrup's motion. The motion passed on a vote of six in favor and one opposed, with Mr. Torres voting no.

UPDATE ON THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL RTA STUDY COMMITTEE

Chairman Ostby Asked Mr. Brandrup to provide an update on the work of the Legislative Council RTA Study Committee. Mr. Brandrup stated that at its October meeting, the Committee reviewed material on legislative requirements for the creation of an RTA and on major transit improvement projects proposed in the Milwaukee and Madison areas. He also noted that the presentation on the economic benefits of public transit made by Scott Bernstein of the Center for Neighborhood Technology was very good and that Board members should take the time to review it on the website for the RTA Study Committee (<http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lc/committees/study/2008/RTA/index.htm>). He indicated that the Committee was starting the process of drafting RTA legislation and was beginning with the legislation prepared by the Wisconsin Alliance of Cities in early 2008. He stated that he expected there would be considerable discussion and debate on the specific provisions in the bill, but that he believed the bill would ultimately reflect many of the concerns expressed by the RTA in southeastern Wisconsin. In response to a question from Representative Stone, he stated that he was optimistic that the Committee could produce a bill, and that input from this RTA would be considered by the Committee.

REMARKS AND QUESTIONS ON THE IMPACTS OF RTA'S ON PUBLIC TRANSIT IN OTHER METROPOLITAN AREAS – APPEARANCE BY PETER PEYSER

Peter Peyser from Blank Rome Government Relations provided the Board with an update on Federal legislative issues on transportation programs and on the FTA New Starts program. He stated that his organization had been working in Washington to help obtain funding for the KRM commuter rail project

and that sufficient Federal funds had been secured to pay for preliminary engineering when the FTA approves moving to that phase. His presentation included the following points:

1. Congress will need to reauthorize the Federal highway and transit programs in the near future, but work on the reauthorization legislation will likely not be done until 2010. A major issue to be resolved is that the revenues being generated for the Federal Highway Trust Fund are no longer sufficient to fully fund highway programs.
2. Congress will likely prepare a new economic stimulus bill next year. There is now a realization that federal spending on infrastructure projects will be important to the nation's economic recovery. There is a consensus among officials that a substantial part of the package should be to support highway and transit improvements.
3. The FTA New Starts Program will likely be reauthorized, but there is discussion on whether it should be changed or restructured. The program already has an extensive review process for proposed projects. A dedicated source of local funding for the project is recognized as being critical by the FTA in its review. The challenge for the KRM project is to present a very strong package that includes dedicated financial resources from local or regional sources.
4. There is strong competition for Federal New Starts funding. Federal review may be more favorable if you can demonstrate strong local and state support, both politically and financially. The KRM project will need to present a united front for the project to gain approval from the FTA.

In response to a question from Mr. Brandrup on how strict the FTA would be with respect to the local matching funds for the \$91.5 million in Federal funds that had been set aside for major transit improvements in central Milwaukee County, Mr. Peyser indicated that the funding sources for those local funds would need to be identified and in place before the \$91.5 million in Federal funds could be used.

CONSIDERATION OF NEXT MEETING DATE AND PLACE

Chairman Ostby stated that the Board should hold 8:00 a.m. November 10, 2008, open for its next meeting when it would review a draft of the RTA's final report to the Governor and Legislature. He requested that Mr. Torres reserve the Sijan conference room in the General Mitchell International Airport Terminal for the meeting if at all possible.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 a.m. on a motion by Mr. Karls, seconded by Mr. Torres, and carried unanimously by the Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Phillip C. Evenson
Recording Secretary

Attachment 1

COMMENTS SUBMITTED TO SEWRTA WEBSITE

Submitted: 10/13/2008 6:19:38 PM

Name: Tad Johnson

E-mail:

Organization:

PO Box/Street: 1420 N Marshall St. Apt 304

City: Milwaukee

State: WI

Zip: 53202

Phone:

Comments: Having lived in Minneapolis and Chicago, it is clear that Milwaukee is lagging behind its Midwest neighbors in terms of quality transportation options. We need to invest in the future of the Milwaukee metro region with new transportation infrastructure or we will see fewer and fewer bright young adults choosing Milwaukee as the place to launch a career. I want to see Milwaukee flourish but we can't afford to go another decade without real transit progress.

Submitted: 7/19/2008 12:02:31 PM

Name: George Papagiannes

E-mail:

Organization:

PO Box/Street:

City: Salem

State: WI

Zip: 53168-9477

Phone:

Comments: The North Shore Rail Line which connected Milwaukee to Chicago and all major cities in between, existed and functioned for decades to the benefit of both cities and their respective states. Without any consideration and plans for the future it was undermined by a certain reactionary and negligent political party along with pressure from their special interests and dismantled. This loss of this effective commuter service has left a major hole in both the state and interstate transportation system in both states and should be updated and be put back into service. Any new and updated public transportation plan would be welcome and necessary to relieve this country from the heavy burden placed on us by the Automobile and Oil companies and their political lobbies. I favor again establishing as quickly as possible new and fuel efficient rail and surface transportation for the citizens of south eastern Wisconsin and the rest of the state.

Submitted: 10/20/2008 2:23:28 PM

Name: Brian Wroblewski

E-mail:

Organization:

PO Box/Street: 208 E Reservoir Avenue

City: Milwaukee

State: WI

Zip: 53212

Phone:

Comments: I support Mayor Barrett's proposal for transit and have been a 32-year resident of both the City & County of Milwaukee.



Mueller Communications, Inc.

Public Affairs • Crisis & Corporate Communications • Business-to-Business Marketing

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 7, 2008

To: RTA Chairman Karl Ostby

From: H. Carl Mueller

Cc: Phil Evenson
Ken Yunker

Re: Public information recommendations

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To complete our initial assignment as an RTA, it is essential that we present the information and options for public transit and commuter rail to the public and interested and affected parties in the three counties. We cannot rely solely on news coverage to ensure that the public is adequately informed and to provide reaction and feedback to us. To accomplish the communications and public outreach responsibilities of this assignment, we are proposing the initiatives outlined in the next phases of our plan for your review and approval. We see these communications and public outreach efforts as essential to completing and submitting our report.

We also see the RTA exercising a leadership role in the ongoing public discussion of how best to serve the transit needs of the region going forward, and have described the ongoing communications and public outreach functions we believe the RTA will want to follow in the months ahead.

Your communications team proposes the following next phase strategies and tactics to help address the challenges listed above and continue to position the existing RTA as the group leading the charge to solve the regional transit funding challenges.

Objective I: Implement an expanded public information, community outreach and paid media program to build public awareness of the report to the Governor and Legislature that will help create greater public understanding of the transit challenges in Southeastern Wisconsin.

Tactics to execute this objective:

- Work with Public Policy Forum and others to conduct two public opinion polls that will work to accurately determine levels of public awareness and understanding, opinions and attitudes towards various transit issues and financing options to help guide our communications strategies after the November 4th election and after January 1, 2009;
 - Budget: \$35-\$45,000
 - Timeline: ASAP
- Conduct public outreach and informational efforts including speaking with local chambers of commerce, rotary groups and economic development groups, including the Public Policy Forum, UEDA, MMAC, RAMAC, KABA and others;
 - Budget: \$8,000
 - Timeline: implement ASAP with two key dates in mind: RTA report and the completion of the state budget
- Follow up with leadership of these groups individually to survey their opinions on the report and general transit ideas and ask them to join the business coalition efforts;
 - Budget: \$5,000
 - Timeline: implement ASAP with two key dates in mind: RTA report and the completion of the state budget
- Work with public policy groups studying the transit issue, including a lunch event with the Public Policy Forum and Wisconsin Policy Research Institute;
 - Budget: \$3,500
 - Timeline: tentatively scheduled for the week of November
- Educate young professionals in the three-county region through regular electronic news updates, blogs and other online resources and conduct outreach to those in the business community by placing informational articles and Opinion Editorials outlining the report and recommendations in statewide business and other publications.
 - Budget: \$30,000
- Meet with local elected officials (not considered lobbying under RTA statutory restrictions) and other interested parties to brief them on the RTA's recommendations to the Governor and Legislature.
 - Budget: \$14,000
 - To be placed between November 10 and December 31
- Produce and place paid media informational announcements in local media outlets in Kenosha, Racine and Milwaukee to inform the public and direct them to our other information sources.
 - Budget: \$36-46,000

Outreach recommendations/8

- Timeline: implement ASAP with two key dates in mind: RTA report and the completion of the state budget