

**WHITTIER ALLIANCE – Community Issues Committee – DRAFT MINUTES**

Monday March 9, 2009 6–8:30pm at Whittier International Elementary School

**Attendees**

Kris Anderson, Amanda Arnold (Mpls CPED), David Bagley, Steve Baldwin, Linda Bernin, Tom Bissen, Rae Buzzell, Mary Cable, Anthony Carchedi, Erica Christ, Wendy Darst, Mary Doffing, Andy Exley, Ethan Fawley, Mary Gazca, Chris Gottshall, Lt. David Hayhoe, Mary Hourigan, Laura Jean, Peter Jochimsen, Aaron Kocker, Jennifer Lawton, Peter Lawton, Eric Ley, Councilmember Robert Lilligren, Troy Linck, Larry Ludeman, Bruce Lundeen, Brooks Mahoney, Jeanine Marchessault, Jo Ann Musumeci, Alec More (HDR Engineering), Jeffrey Nelson, Bruce Pederson, Nancy Pederson, Christine Popowski, Nancy Railsback, Kim Bedell Rhodes, Pete Rhodes, Ralf Runquist, Vi Runquist, Lesley Schack, David Scroth, Shelly Sinas, Tom Sinas, Tod Skallerup, Scott Smith, Daphna Stromberg, Carrie Thompson, Andrew Tucker, Lisa Vecoli, John Wilson

**Staff** Marian Biehn, Karin Knudsen, Becky Neamy

**Call to Order** at 6:07pm by Erica Christ, Board chair, who noted the Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies. A motion to approve the agenda (with the addition of an announcement of the May Day Soiree) was carried, followed by introductions. Becky Neamy, the new Community Organizer for the Whittier Alliance was introduced. Attendees were given time to review the February minutes, and a **motion** to approve the February 9, 2009 CI minutes was **carried**.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS & COMMUNITY COMMENTS** The **WA Annual Meeting** will be April 2 from 6-8:30pm at Whittier Elementary School. There will be elections to the Board, an overview of the activities and finances of the WA, and the presentation of the 2008 Good Neighbor & Good Business Awards. There will also be a presentation on Whittier's NRP Phase 1 income and a proposal to reallocate the funds to Phase 2 for neighborhood review and vote. Prospective Board candidates are invited to a Board Happy Hour at the office, Tuesday March 17 at 5:30pm. The Phillips neighborhood is hosting a meeting about tax assessment and property taxes with city representative; contact Marian if there is interest in having one in Whittier. The **Traffic Congestion Task Force** will meet Thursday March 12 at 4pm at Park Square Condos. The task force will look at some options to alleviate traffic issues given by public works. Some of the options have included creating one-way streets, installing meters, and designating no parking for some streets/blocks.

**5<sup>th</sup> Precinct Report, Lt. Hayhoe:** For February year-to-date, Whittier is up in robberies (9, compared to 5 last year) and in aggravated assaults (6 to 2). Burglaries, thefts, and auto thefts are down slightly. Overall, reported crime is 3% from last year. Recent cases have included a robbery of person over the weekend at 2500 Blaisdell; 3 suspects have been arrested. There was an aggravated assault at 2800 Harriet in which a suspect was arrested. There has been an arrest for a robbery spree in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Precincts; officers are reviewing past robberies to see if they match the pattern. Theft from motor vehicles: please call 911 if the theft is in progress or if there is evidence present; otherwise, call 311. They cases will still be tracked and reviewed. There has been break-ins of laundry rooms; there is a flyer detailing prevention available. A rental property owner noted one of her tenants at 24<sup>th</sup> and First was robbed at gunpoint by 2 males. A resident who lives in the critical parking area near Pillsbury and Lake reported that some vehicles with permits have received traffic tickets by accident over the last few months. Residents questioned what issues are part of the 2009 Whittier policing plan and when the plan will be finalized; Hayhoe noted he met with Inspector Arneson last week.

**SOUTHWEST TRANSIT LIGHT RAIL LINE: PRESENTATION BY ALEC MORE (HDR ENGINEERING) & KATHIE DOTY**

**(SOUTHWEST TRANSITWAY)** Kathie and Alec overviewed the southwest light rail line process and the technical aspects of the alternative light rail transit line proposed by Cmr Remington. The scoping process for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was held September 08 to January 09. The scoping process was used assess the environmental impact of the proposed lines and understand the potential mitigation measures that would be necessary to implement the various LRT options. Cmr Remington submitted an alternative to the proposed 3C (Nicollet) alignment, using Blaisdell or 1<sup>st</sup> Avenues (through Whittier) rather than Nicollet Ave, and using 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> rather than Nicollet Mall in downtown/Steven's Square. The Southwest Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) recommended that Remington's alignment—termed the LRT 3C (11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup>) Sub-Alternative—be included in the transitway DEIS, along with the 3C Nicollet Mall Sub-Alternative, the 3A Kenilworth alignment and the 1A alignment. The 3C 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Sub-Alternative would follow the route of the 3C Nicollet Sub-Alt until it turns off the Midtown Greenway Corridor near Lake/Blaisdell. The LRT would then tunnel under Blaisdell or 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue instead of tunneling under Nicollet. The line would re-emerge near Franklin. Stops for the variations of this line would be near 28<sup>th</sup> and Franklin. Both of those stops were projected as open air stations; it now looks as if any stop near Nicollet and Lake would need to be underground. The PAC is currently refining the engineering plans and going into more detail for each alignment.

The Southwest Transitway project is in the process of applying the evaluation measures to the alternatives. The evaluation measures include looking at: what has changed since the end of 2006 (the original study of the alternatives); changes in city policy/comprehensive plans (policy changes will need to be reflected); changes in development/planned and ongoing projects (such as the HCMC clinic in Whittier); and any major plans/city projects (the Twins Stadium, the Basset Creek Development Project, etc). The committee will also update the information on the cost and ridership expectation, recalculate the cost-effectiveness index, and examine engineering issues, right of way considerations, and the need for residential and commercial relocation due to line placement. They also take into consideration ridership

projections, current transit service and level. During the first phase of the environmental work, the committee collected an inventory of the local historical and cultural properties, sites sensitive to noise and vibration, and parks, contaminated sites, wetlands and waterbodies. The intent is to catalogue and understand the local environmental issues for each specific line. The committee should name the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) in April or May; the rest of 2009 will be used to gather more specifics about the LPA and its particular community impact and potential cost. Comments from community members regarding historical or cultural issues, and the location of sensitive receptors (recording studios, labs, churches) along the new sub-alternative route are welcomed by the PAC. Alec noted the potential impacts listed in the Whittier Alliance "Impacts" statement (adopted May 2008) would all be considered in the scoping process.

**Attendee questions and comments:** the narrowness of First Avenue and Blaisdell and the lack of space for a rail line; First Avenue is in the Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District; the residential nature of the 2 streets: concern for the safety of children and potential hearing damage during construction; the impact on affordable housing units, the community, schools, churches, recording studios (one in-home at 2214 Blaisdell, one at 2543 Nicollet); reduced capacity on the residential roadways and the impact on traffic and parking due closure of streets for construction; impacts to livability: disruption to residents lives and properties; impact on rental property owners (high vacancy rate during construction); impact to property values and older homes (will they withstand the construction?); lack of commuter parking and ride/hide lots for LRT riders; an alignment with stops at the edges of the neighborhood doesn't serve its residents well; the southwest alignments serve suburban travelers rather than city mass transit riders needs; the awkwardness of the 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> route for bus transfers (where would that take place?). **Additional questions:** where will imminent domain concern the neighborhood?; what are the cost factors of the 3 proposed street uses?; where will the staging for the construction take place?; was the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue/along the freeway wall ever considered?.

**Comments expressing concern over the process:** the lack of information on the new sub-alternative (it is not easy to find on the Southwest Transitway website); that Whittier residents and the low-income neighborhood populations are underrepresented at transit meetings; that homeowners are under-represented at transit meetings because they often cannot attend; the lack of outreach to those who speak English as a second language (and the lack of materials in languages other than English). **Concerns about the Whittier Alliance LRT Task Force Resolution:** the official position of the WA (against the LRT 3C Nicollet alignment) better represents business owners in the neighborhood rather than homeowners; the position makes it appear that residents are wholly against light rail, when the discussions have been far more mixed (for example, at the initial LRT meeting in January 2008, the motion against the Nicollet Alignment carried 13-11); the motion from January 08 included a position against 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue as well as Nicollet, but the document adopted in May did not; the official position represents only a small portion of the neighborhood, rather than the diversity of voices, some of whom are in favor of light rail. Marian noted the LRT resolution came out of a vote at joint CI-BA meeting (January 2008), was worked on and revised by a business & resident task force, and was presented again at the May meeting when it was moved by the CI and later adopted by the Board.

**Responses from the presenters and CM Lilligren:** Neighborhoods along the proposed 3A alignment have taken positions against it, and some of the neighborhoods along the proposed 3C routes have taken positions against that route. The discussion in at least one neighborhood, Stevens Square, is so divided their neighborhood hasn't taken a position. Neighbors along the Kenilworth trail are very active in attending the PAC meetings; there is concern their viewpoint is being amplified. The reopening of Nicollet is in the city's comprehensive plan so it must be considered in any of the LRT decisions. The city is looking at all the situations that would justify eminent domain. Southwest Transitway will use census data to look at affordable housing units and try to identify sensitive populations so lower-income groups don't bear a disproportionate amount of burden. There are also city-adopted policies regarding the preservation of affordable housing. There have been positive impacts of the Hiawatha line, such as housing developments, environmental cleanup of sites along the route, and increased use of mass transit. The technical advisory committee voted not to pursue the 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Sub-Alternative, but the PAC acted to include the transitway in the DEIS. The 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Sub-Alternative is on the Southwest Transitway website and can be found in meeting minutes. Although the PAC is out of the Scoping Process, they will still take comments from citizens. Comments and feedback can be offered online. Lilligren noted there federal funding might commit resources to mass transit options like streetcar and rail and move projects forward more rapidly. The streetcar plan, which includes lines down the Midtown Greenway and Nicollet, is in the city's 5-year plan, and as those lines are cheaper and easier to build, there may be a push to build those projects rather than the more expensive and invasive light rail lines.

Tom Bissen **moved** that in addition to the adopted position of the WA against the 3C alignment using Nicollet, the WA does not support the 3C sub-alternative using Blaisdell or First Avenue, and it was **seconded**.

**Attendee comments:** the motion on Nicollet should be reconsidered if the committee was voting on the new alignment; the committee should take a position which of the 3C alignments the community prefers; if the neighborhood is against the 3C alignment, they should be against a proposal using Blaisdell/First to an even greater degree. Marian noted the position on Nicollet was already in place; the discussion should only address the new suggestions of First and

Blaisdell and the committee should provide a position on the new Sub-Alternative. Several comments were made reflecting the support of light rail and recognizing the value of having light rail in Whittier but, the speakers had read the Sub Alternative document and came to the conclusion that the 1<sup>st</sup> or Blaisdell lines were a bad plan.

Tom Bissen **moved** to call to question and end discussion on the motion: **Motion carried:** 31-7-2.

**CI Motion 1:** The Community Issues Committee moves, that in addition to the existing position of the Whittier Alliance in support of the Kenilworth Alignment (3A) and opposing the Nicollet Alignment (3C) (“*Whittier Alliance Light Rail Transit Task Force Resolution*” adopted May 2008), the Whittier Alliance does not support the LRT 3C (11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup>) Sub-Alternative. **Motion Carried:** 27-7-7.

Tom Sinas **moved** that the neighborhood clarify which of the proposed lines going through Whittier (the 3C Sub-Alternatives) the neighborhood would prefer, and it was seconded.

**Attendee comments and questions:** the view of the neighborhood is already clear; taking a position in favor of one option sends the wrong message to the city and gives them a reason to put LRT in Whittier; if light rail does go through the neighborhood, using a commercial street makes the most sense and offers the most benefit for the riders and for the Nicollet Ave businesses; there is no positive effect on Blaisdell/First but there is potential for Nicollet; the previous neighborhood discussions—and the adamant position against using Nicollet—encouraged the transit committee to look at the use of residential streets; a position can be taken later if the LPA is one of the 3C alternatives. Lilligren outlined the steps before the Southwest transit line route would be finalized, noting that there will be months and years of additional process after the selection of the LPA.

**CI Motion 2:** The Community Issues Committee moves to allow time for the neighborhood to clarify a preference among the proposed eastern alignments (the LRT 3C 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Sub-Alternative and the LRT 3C Nicollet Mall Sub-Alternative) in the advent that one of the proposed 3C alternatives should be chosen as the Locally Preferred Alternative by the Southwest Policy Advisory Committee. **Motion Failed:** 14-20-6.

**LYN-LAKE SMALL AREA PLAN: PRESENTATION BY AMANDA ARNOLD (CITY PLANNER FOR SOUTH MPLS)** The Lyn-Lake Small Area Plan has been drafted over the last 8 months, through meetings with city representatives, local business owners and residents, and area stakeholders. The plan includes an analysis of current conditions and recommendations for the area’s development, investment and improvement. During the 45 day public comment period, the draft SAP will be online, and will also be available at the WA office and some local libraries. The draft of the SAP is available for public comment until April 6, with a public hearing tentatively scheduled for April 20. The SAP will ultimately be adopted by the City as a supplement to the City’s comprehensive plan.

Amanda overviewed the document and the process for crafting it. The Lyn-Lake SAP advisory committee had 5 meetings over the last year, and 4 additional community meetings. The surrounding neighborhoods were represented (Whittier was represented by Larry Ludeman and Mark Trehus) as well as the area business associations. Some of the goals of the advisory committee: to define the study/plan boundaries; to study the other plans that concern the area (to build on already-adopted policies); to define the activity center boundaries; to determine the commercial and residential corridors; and, to create a land use plan to guide and determine future development. For example, the committee favored mixed-use development along the primarily commercial corridors of Lyndale and Lake flanked by residential intensity, with the highest residential density closest to the greenway. Lyn-Lake is a destination spot within the city, and the committee wanted to enhance that. Other considerations were: the historic uses of the area (and the potential/need for historic preservation recommendations); the results of a marketing study done as part of the plan; building height; current greenspace and greening opportunities; green building design; and, coordination with the Midtown Greenway and other transit decisions and opportunities. The committee also examined case studies for the future development of specific sites within the area (such as Rex Hardware or the city-owned parking lot behind the Jungle Theatre).

**Attendee questions and comments:** concern over the stress on high-density residential uses along the greenway, given the existing 100 year homes as well as the height of those buildings next to the below-street level; and, favorable comments over the push for mixed-use commercial development and the potential for future growth. Larry Ludeman, who represented Whittier, noted some of the positives for the neighborhood included the recognition of 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> on Lyndale as a residential zone, and the preservation of the Soo Line garden. He also noted that none of the zoning recommendations are part of the plan and that he does have some concern for how those changes will be followed up on by the city. Larry recommended that the plan be presented again at another CI meeting for more detailed discussion.

**OLD/NEW BUSINESS** (there was none offered). **Meeting adjourned** at 8:28pm. Minutes submitted by Karin Knudsen. Next meeting: Monday, April 13, 6pm at Whittier Elementary School.