

TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2012

**APPROVED MINUTES OF THE
DODGE COUNTY REGIONAL RAIL AUTHORITY
MEETING HELD**

**STATE OF MINNESOTA)
COUNTY OF DODGE)**

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
MANTORVILLE, MN**

2012-01 Meeting

The Dodge County Regional Rail Authority met in regular session January 24, 2012, in the Commissioner's Room at the Courthouse Annex, Mantorville, MN, at 7:00 p.m. CST. Chair David Erickson opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. CST.

Meeting Convened

The Chair acknowledged those present and established that there was a quorum:

Those Present

Members present: Jane Olive District #1
Lyle Tjosaas District #2
David Erickson District #3
Don Gray District #4
David Hanson District #5

Members absent: None

Also present: Jim Elmquist County Administrator

Commissioner David Erickson took nominations for the position of Chair of the Dodge County Regional Railroad Authority. Commissioner Tjosaas nominated Commissioner Gray. The Chair called three times for further nominations. Hearing none, the Chair closed nominations. Motion by Hanson seconded by Olive to cast a unanimous ballot for Don Gray as Chair of the Dodge County Regional Rail Authority for 2012. *Motion adopted unanimously.*

Commissioner Gray
Elected Chair for
2012

The meeting was turned over to the new Chair, Don Gray.

Meeting Turned
Over to New Chair

Commissioner Gray took nominations for the position of Vice Chair of the Dodge County Regional Railroad Authority. Commissioner Erickson nominated Commissioner Olive. Commissioner Gray called three times for further nominations. Hearing none, the Chair closed nominations. Motion by Tjosaas seconded by Hanson to cast a unanimous ballot for Jane Olive as Vice Chair of the Dodge County Regional Railroad Authority for 2012. *Motion adopted unanimously.*

Commissioner Olive
Elected Vice Chair
for 2012

Commissioner Gray took nominations for the position of Secretary/Treasurer of the Dodge County Regional Railroad Authority. Commissioner Olive nominated Commissioner Hanson. The Chair called three times for further nominations. Hearing none, the Chair closed nominations. Motion by Olive seconded by Erickson to cast a unanimous ballot for David Hanson as Secretary/Treasurer of the Dodge County Regional Railroad Authority for 2012. *Motion adopted unanimously.*

Commissioner
Hanson Elected
Secretary/
Treasurer for 2012

The Chair appointed County Administrator Jim Elmquist as the Clerk of the Dodge County Regional Railroad Authority.

Clerk Appointed

Motion by Erickson seconded by Olive to approve and adopt the agenda as presented. *Motion adopted unanimously.*

Agenda Approved

Olmsted County Board Chair of and Railroad Authority Ken Brown provided a railroad update. Mr. Brown discussed two projects: the Southern Rail Corridor and the High Speed Rail Project being pursued by Olmsted County.

Railroad Discussion

Southern Rail Corridor

The scope of the project would be to evaluate the capacity of rail through Rochester on the current and proposed routes identified in a study. One route explored would be the feasibility of a no build. Mr. Brown touched on their familiarity with the rail industry and the understanding that there is currently not big interest in coal in the western area states. The study is getting close to beginning and includes \$487,000 from the FRA and \$54,000 local money.

High Speed Rail

Mr. Brown reported that there was \$26,000,000 sought to conduct a study of which they have been pledged two million from the State with \$300,000 in local money to study high speed rail capacity at the 110 mile an hour or higher speed. Limited studies have been done and points to a need with the Mayo Clinic in the region and the amount of visitors they receive each year which is estimated to be over 2.5 million per year. A major issue to be explored is where the lines would be in respect to terminal locations which could include downtown or an airport location. There would likely be a Greenfield route explored and also a segment using right-of-way utilizing the Highway 52 corridor. This study would start in late March or April and would be point-to-point analysis.

Commissioner Hanson asked how the Dodge County Rail Authority would enter into this process and would there be a technical committee. Mr. Hanson also asked about the bonding money Olmsted requested from the State. Mr. Brown stated that it would be a transparent process and meetings would be public. People could contact the board or Chuck Michael, Olmsted's consultant to be a part of that process. Mr. Brown also stated that Olmsted was not on the governor's preference list for bonding projects. They will go back during the legislative session with a scaled back request.

Dave Christianson from MnDOT then presented to the board. He introduced Peter Dahlberg, Project Manager from the MnDOT that will be the individual working on the Southern Rail Corridor Project. Mr. Christianson discussed the Southern Rail Corridor and the High Speed Rail projects.

Mr. Christianson discussed the statement of work progress with the corridor, the soon to be released request for proposals on studying the corridor, and the process for inclusion of interested parties in participation of the study. Mr. Christianson reported the process for moving forward on the study is much like what Mr. Brown from Olmsted described where there will be a determination for if there is a need for service change, what the possible choices would include which would be either an alternative line(s) or a no build option, and a final outcome which would be valid for up to 15 years. A subsequent Environmental Impact Statement would then be conducted.

Railroad Discussion
- Continued

A technical advisory committee would be a part of the process and would include three MnDOT Representatives including Mr. Christianson, the Olmsted Engineer, and the Dodge County Engineer. The study would begin in April and will take twelve months to complete. It will be a consensus project with no voting responsibilities so the concepts accepted would be from the entire group.

Mr. Christianson also said the District 6 Regional Freight Study will also be taking place simultaneously which often identifies the regional transportation needs of the area.

Mr. Christianson said the Passenger Rail project is much more directed by Olmsted County but includes much the same process. Mr. Christianson commented that in order for passenger rail to work, it must capture 30 to 40% of the market to make it work, so basically, the project must define that it is warranted. Commissioner Hanson asked about the River Route being selected as a connection between Chicago to Minneapolis. Mr. Christianson said it was selected as the primary line for a Minneapolis to Chicago route because it would be primarily on the existing track that would be updated for high speed. Mr. Christianson also discussed the process of what occurs now that Wisconsin has pulled from the study on a multi-state line. He noted that Wisconsin would have to come back into the fold in the next year in order for the line to move forward.

Public comment was taken from the audience.

Kathy King from Citizens against the Rochester Bypass wanted to know if the previous studies be included. Mr. Christianson said yes.

Jim Checkel asked if Canadian Pacific would have to use the by-pass. Mr. Christianson said they could not be compelled to do so.

Mark Miedtke asked who directs the scope of work for the bypass? Mr. Christianson said the federal law directs the process and it must be inclusive of all alternatives.

John Meyer made a statement about concerns regarding the freight necessity. He said if a new line were made for this region, what standard will this identify in other regions who have a greater need for freight rail upgrades. He asked, what advantage do the counties have that passenger rail passes through? Mr. Christianson said it is economic impact of the state and region that is identified, not an individual county.

John Donovan asked who makes decisions to do the study? Mr. Christianson said the Statewide Rail Plan. Mr. Donovan also asked what percentage of visitors to Rochester come from Minneapolis. Mr. Christianson said the study will identify this.

Steve Smith from CARB said California and their passenger line was scheduled to cost 33 billion and ended up costing 98 billion and is still going up. Mr. Smith said that any study for passenger rail would show no benefit to a citizen of Dodge County. He asked the Board to be careful and that whatever they do, do not join a Joint Powers Board and give up their voting rights on a project. Mr. Smith said as for passenger rail, the surface transportation study from eleven years ago has elicited no changes and warrants no need for a new study.

Ken Folie asked about the number of visitors to Mayo per year that could be around 3 million a year as stated by Olmsted representatives.

Railroad Discussion
- Continued

Kathy King gave a brief history of the freight rail issues of the past and cautioned the Board in their future dealings with these studies.

Mark Moenning said there is no need for the Board to take a stance quickly on passenger rail determinations.

Richard Masching asked about the airport to airport connection and how that competes with the air-traffic market. Mr. Christianson said that passenger rail needs to fill a void and meet the market analysis to be warranted so it's not necessarily about competing with air-traffic; it's about meeting an economic need for a region.

Jim Checkel asked about the cost of grade separation and pillars needing to be installed to meet true passenger rail needs. Mr. Christianson said it would be determined further in the study but analysis from the study would have to point out the necessity for moving forward which includes cost analysis.

John Meyer said he didn't believe airlines would support passenger rail to the region.

Steve Smith asked about the standards needed for grade separation.

After no further public comment, Commissioner Gray thanked the speakers and the audience for their participation.

Motion by Hanson seconded by Olive to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 p.m. CDT.
Motion adopted unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned

ATTEST:

DON GRAY
CHAIR, REGIONAL RAIL AUTHORITY

JIM ELMQUIST
CLERK

DATED: