

MINUTES

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

PLANNING AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday, November 4, 2014

1:30 p.m.

SEWRPC Office Building
Commissioners' Conference Room
W239 N1812 Rockwood Drive
Waukesha, Wisconsin 53187-1607

Present:

Excused:

Commissioners:

Daniel S. Schmidt, Chairman
Daniel W. Stoffel, Vice-Chairman
Charles L. Colman
Brian R. Dranzik
William R. Drew
Robert W. Pitts
Nancy Russell
Linda J. Seemeyer
Peggy L. Shumway
Michael J. Skalitzky
David L. Stroik

José M. Delgado
David L. Eberle

Staff:

Kenneth R. Yunker	Executive Director
Michael G. Hahn	Deputy Director
Elizabeth A. Larsen	Assistant Director - Administration
Debra A. D'Amico	Executive Secretary

ROLL CALL

Chairman Schmidt called the Planning and Research Committee meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Roll call was taken and a quorum was declared present. Chairman Schmidt indicated for the record that Commissioners Delgado and Eberle had asked to be excused.

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 10, 2014 MEETING

Chairman Schmidt asked if there were any changes or additions to the September 10, 2014 meeting minutes.

On a motion by Mr. Stroik, seconded by Mr. Colman, and carried unanimously, the minutes of the September 10, 2014, Planning and Research Committee Meeting were approved as published.

UPDATE ON VISION 2050: FUTURE REGIONAL LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION SCENARIO PLANNING AND EVALUATION

PowerPoint presentation: “The VISION 2050 Scenarios”

Mr. Yunker introduced Mr. Kevin Muhs, a Commission staff member, who gave a presentation on “The VISION 2050 Scenarios” to the Committee. Mr. Yunker stated that Mr. Muhs was one of his students in the urban planning course he teaches at Marquette University. He further stated that after graduating from Marquette University with a degree in civil engineering, Mr. Muhs received a Master’s degree in Urban Planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Mr. Muhs then, through the use of a PowerPoint presentation, provided background on the VISION 2050 regional land use and transportation planning effort, providing context for the scenario planning effort recently completed, and described the five scenarios, and reviewed the scorecard used to summarize the evaluation of the scenarios. (PowerPoint presentation attached to Official Minutes)

Throughout the VISION 2050 presentation, the following questions and discussions occurred.

Mr. Colman asked whether the scenarios that propose locating job growth around fixed-guideway transit stations could empty some communities that would not have transit stations of their employment base, turning them into bedroom communities. Mr. Muhs responded that the scenarios would only propose allocation of some of the expected regional employment growth, and not the relocation of existing employment. Mr. Yunker stated that in the next step of the process which will evaluate in depth possible future alternative land use and transportation plans, Commission staff will evaluate the extent to which communities are balanced between jobs and housing. He noted that the Region currently has an average of 1.5 jobs per household, and that communities with jobs per household ratios between 1.3 and 1.7 would typically be considered to be balanced. Mr. Colman noted that through operating his business, he tried to keep jobs in Walworth County rather than seeing the jobs leave for the Milwaukee or Chicago areas.

Mr. Stoffel pointed out that Scenario E may include a shift in the location of commercial and industrial tax base. He suggested that this possible shift would need to be evaluated. Mr. Yunker responded that Commission staff will evaluate tax base impacts of all plan alternatives.

Ms. Russell noted that Walworth County has encouraged preservation of agriculture, and that property tax is based on use, rather than land value. This means that other property owners make up the difference. She suggested that it may be appropriate for State or Federal subsidies to assist communities in preserving agriculture. Mr. Yunker said that one of the VISION 2050 Guiding Statements is to preserve farmland. He added that an element of the VISION 2050 process will be to determine what measures may be needed to implement the recommended plan. He noted that in the early 1990’s, the Commission worked with an Advisory Committee to identify measures that the State could consider to promote implementation of the regional land use plan, including the preservation of prime agricultural lands.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Stroik relative to which scenarios would have low, average, or high growth, Mr. Muhs explained that these scenarios all have the same total regional growth, but that they vary by the density and location of growth within the Region. Mr. Yunker added that the maps of each

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scenario show where the growth will occur. Mr. Stroik then inquired if there is an evaluation of the extent to which the scenarios enhance the attractiveness of the Region. Mr. Muhs said that a number of criteria attempt to measure the quality of life under each scenario. Mr. Muhs added that when each alternative plan is evaluated, the factors that may make the Region more attractive for growth will be discussed.

Mr. Skalitzky asked a number of questions regarding the data obtained in the telephone survey. Mr. Yunker stated that there will be an Appendix in the VISION 2050 report which will show each question asked of the public, and the responses which were received in each County and the Region as a whole. He noted that participants in the survey were somewhat older than the average for the Region. He added that the appendix includes a discussion of any differences in responses from younger and older survey participants.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Stoffel, Mr. Yunker stated that some of the alternatives considered had been requested by members of the Advisory Committees or had been suggested at public meetings. He also noted that it is a Federal requirement to review and investigate effective ways to mitigate traffic congestion without increasing highway lane-miles. Mr. Yunker noted that Scenario A assumes a continuation of current trends in transportation investment.

In response to an inquiry by Ms. Seemeyer relative to there being no mention of a commuter rail line within Walworth County, Mr. Muhs stated that there is no longer a freight rail corridor from Milwaukee to Walworth County over which to provide commuter rail. He suggested that a bus-on-shoulder service could be an option to allow buses to avoid any congestion. A short discussion ensued about the history of the long proposed USH 12 freeway. Mr. Stroik inquired whether driving services such as Uber and Lyft have any impact on transit services. Mr. Muhs responded that these services are so new that it is too early to reach any short or long-term conclusions, but, these services do appear to be affecting taxi services at this time more than buses. Mr. Yunker further commented that these new driving services operate under a different model with variable pricing, whereas taxis have set pricing. He added that Uber and Lyft are also operating to an extent as jitneys, or shared-ride taxi services. Mr. Muhs noted that there may be implications for public transit, if these services scavenge ridership from buses.

In response to an inquiry from Ms. Russell relative to the need for more park and ride lots in Walworth County, Mr. Yunker stated that the Commission has annually monitored park-ride lot use and reports findings in the Annual Report. He stated that the regional transportation plan provides recommendations for the expansion of, and development of new, park-ride lots.

Mr. Stoffel asked for an explanation of the Scenario Scorecard. Mr. Yunker noted that the Scenario Scorecard was intended as an at-a-glance chart. The concept of this chart was to provide a quick impression of scorecard performance. He stated that the chart shows the best performing scenario as a filled in blue circle, and the worst performing scenario as an open white circle. He noted that this may overstate the differences between alternatives, but the actual numeric performance is also shown on the scorecard. Mr. Yunker added that Commission staff debated about how to appropriately compare the scenarios, and would use a different approach for the alternative plans.

Mr. Stoffel then cited the information shown on the Scenario Scorecard for greenhouse gases, asking why the largest decrease projected is only about 3 percent. Mr. Muhs stated that projected greenhouse gas emissions are based on the type of housing and the number of vehicle miles traveled in each scenario. Mr. Yunker added that much of the Region's housing stock in 2050 is already in place, and vehicle-miles of travel may only be expected to vary modestly between scenarios. He then said that historically, vehicle emission controls have been the most effective way to reduce air pollution. However, greenhouse gas emissions are dependent upon fuel consumption. Ms. Russell asked if the staff considered the possibility of alternative fuels for the vehicle fleet. Mr. Muhs said that the evaluation of the scenarios was completed using a United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) model which forecasts the future

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fleet fuel mix so that the comparison of air pollution was consistent between scenarios. Mr. Yunker added that the fuel economy projection assumes a different future mix of fuels than the current fuel mix.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Colman, Mr. Yunker explained that the development and evaluation of the scenarios is a preliminary conceptual step in the development and evaluation of plan alternatives.

Ms. Seemeyer inquired about how the Commission staff developed projections of ridership. Mr. Muhs stated that travel simulation models were applied to each alternative. Mr. Yunker noted that the Commission has developed, maintained, and refined travel models for decades. Mr. Stoffel said that the cost of fuel is something that has, and could change transit ridership in Washington County. Mr. Yunker noted the models were sensitive to the costs of motor fuel.

Mr. Drew inquired about how the higher transportation investment required under some of the scenarios would be funded. Mr. Yunker stated that this was discussed, but will be considered in depth later in the VISION 2050 process.

Mr. Skalitzky stated his concern about some of the scenarios which appear to focus on job growth in Milwaukee. Mr. Yunker stated that this concern was also stated at some of the public meetings.

Mr. Colman noted that many in the Region want to compare Southeastern Wisconsin to Chicago, but that is not reasonable given the differences between Southeastern Wisconsin and Northeastern Illinois, for example, the differences in population size and the extensive transit system in Chicago.

CORRESPONDENCE/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Schmidt asked Mr. Yunker if there was any correspondence or if there were any announcements.

Mr. Yunker said there was no correspondence and announced that the Commission on November 1st received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful (KGMB), a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote a clean, healthy, safe, and beautiful community. The Commission was recognized for its work and commitment to the preservation and protection of the Region's land, water, and air.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on a motion by Mr. Stroik, seconded by Mr. Skalitzky, and carried unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 3:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth R. Yunker
Deputy Secretary