

Minutes of the Twenty Eighth Meeting of the
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

DATE: July 30, 2013
TIME: 4:00 p.m.
PLACE: Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD)
General Commission Room
260 W. Seeboth Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Members Present

Adelene Greene..... Director of Workforce Development, Kenosha County
Chair
Ella Dunbar Program Services Manager, Social Development Commission, Milwaukee
Lynnette McNeely Legal Redress Chair, Waukesha County NAACP

Guests and Staff Present

Nancy M. Anderson..... Chief Community Assistance Planner, SEWRPC
Stephen P. Adams Public Involvement and Outreach Manager, SEWRPC
Christopher T. HiebertChief Transportation Engineer, SEWRPC
Dennis Grzezinski.....Midwest Environmental Advocates
Benjamin R. McKayPrincipal Planner, SEWRPC
Karyn Rotker..... ACLU of Wisconsin
Marcus Smith Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Martin Wall.....Citizen
Kenneth R. Yunker Executive Director, SEWRPC

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Greene called the meeting of the Environmental Justice Task Force to order at 4:17 p.m., welcoming those in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 16, 2013

Ms. Greene noted that not enough Task Force members were present at this time to constitute a quorum, although additional Task Force members may arrive later in the meeting. She suggested that this agenda item be moved to later in the meeting when a quorum of Task force members may be present for approval of the minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Greene asked if there were any public comments on the agenda or other Task Force business. There were none.

UPDATE ON THE REGIONAL HOUSING PLAN

Ms. Greene asked Ms. Anderson to provide the Task Force with an update on the regional housing plan. Ms. Anderson stated that the report has been printed and distributed since the Task Force last met in April. She also stated that a summary newsletter was produced and distributed with the report. She noted that a report and newsletter were sent to each county, city, village, and town in the Region with a cover letter requesting the governmental unit to consider endorsement of the plan, outlining the specific plan recommendations intended for the governmental unit, and offering a staff presentation. She noted that State and Federal agencies with an interest in housing in the Region were also provided with reports and summary newsletters. A number of presentations have been given and the response to the plan has generally been positive. She noted that a handout was provided to the members at the meeting that lists the governmental units that have received a presentation and/or endorsed the plan (see Attachment 1). She also noted that staff is preparing a document with the results of the job/housing balance analysis for each community with public sanitary sewer service. The document will be distributed to each sewer community. The following discussion points and comments were made during the regional housing plan update:

1. Ms. Greene asked about the timeframe for plan endorsement. Ms. Anderson responded that the timeframe depends on the particular community or county process. She noted that the plan commission or appropriate county board committee will typically review the plan and make a recommendation relative to adoption to the governing body. She noted that this process may continue into 2014 for some communities and counties.
2. Ms. Dunbar noted that the plan is long-range in nature. Mr. Yunker noted that the housing plan has a design year of 2035 and it is recommended that communities and counties incorporate the plan recommendations into their comprehensive plans, which they could be expected to update at least once every ten years. He stated that housing affordable to a community's workforce is important for economic development. There may be greater increases in jobs than labor force population in the Region over the next 20 to 25 years, so affordable workforce housing will increasingly be important to attract employers to a community and the Region. Mr. Yunker also noted that the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) has taken steps to implement the plan recommendation for a statewide job/housing balance analysis. He stated that staff will continue to give the Task Force updates on plan endorsements.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF THE EVALUATION OF THE IMPACTS OF THE YEAR 2035 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN ON MINORITY AND LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS

Ms. Greene asked Mr. Yunker to provide the Task Force with a review of the evaluation of the impacts of the year 2035 regional transportation plan on minority and low-income populations. Mr. Yunker stated that the year 2035 regional transportation plan completed in 2006 included an in-depth evaluation of the impacts of the plan recommendations on minorities and low-income populations, specifically assessing whether the minority and low-income populations within Southeastern Wisconsin would be expected to receive a disproportionate share of the estimated impacts, both costs and benefits, of the recommended regional transportation system plan for 2035. He noted that the evaluation is presented in Appendix H of the 2035 transportation plan. He added that Appendix H had been on the agenda of, and was distributed and discussed briefly by, the Task Force at two prior meetings. He also noted that a copy of Appendix H

and a summary PowerPoint handout were distributed to members for today's discussion (see Attachments 2 and 3).

Mr. Yunker stated that the intent of the review by the Task Force is to discuss the evaluation conducted for the 2035 plan and to identify any additional analyses, or refinement of prior analyses, which should be undertaken as part of the development of the year 2050 regional transportation plan over the next few years. He then reviewed each component of the evaluation using the PowerPoint handout, including characteristics including travel habits and patterns of minority and low-income populations, potential adverse impacts of plan recommendations on minority and low-income populations, and potential benefits of plan recommendations to minority and low-income populations. The following discussion points and comments were made during the review:

1. During the discussion of potential adverse impacts Ms. McNeely noted that freeway widenings could potentially result in a disproportionately adverse impact on minority populations, as some freeways were built in areas of minority populations. Ms. Dunbar noted that freeway construction bisected some neighborhoods with minority and low-income populations. She asked about public involvement and outreach during the development of the 2035 transportation plan. Mr. Yunker responded that SEWRPC has undertaken extensive public involvement activities in the past and will continue to work on improving and expanding public involvement and outreach.
2. Ms. McNeely stated that it seems Milwaukee County will be impacted by property acquisitions more than the other counties in the Region. Mr. Yunker responded that estimates prepared under the 2035 plan indicate that Milwaukee County would experience the most property acquisitions. He added the number of property acquisitions is a planning level estimate, and as freeway segments have undergone preliminary engineering by WisDOT, the number of acquisitions has been significantly reduced. Ms. McNeely asked if property owners are compensated. Mr. Yunker responded that State law requires property owners to be compensated for the value of their property and relocation expenses. Ms. McNeely stated that residents have historically had difficulty finding suitable housing when displaced. Mr. Yunker stated that the relocation/compensation program has improved significantly since the 1960's, during the original freeway construction. Ms. McNeely expressed concern that residents may have to relocate to more economically depressed areas.
3. During the discussion of potential benefits Ms. McNeely asked if the 2035 transportation plan recommends expansions to freeways for carpool or bus lanes. Mr. Yunker responded that the plan did not recommend dedicated carpool or bus lanes because it was expected that such lanes would require physical separation from the regular lanes as well as their own shoulder lanes, and as a result, would need significant additional right-of-way and property acquisition. Ms. McNeely noted concerns for pedestrian safety. Mr. Yunker noted that more vehicle travel on freeways results in less traffic on surface arterial streets and should increase pedestrian safety. Ms. McNeely expressed concern for pedestrians crossing freeway entrance points because of fast moving vehicles and suggested the 2050 transportation plan consider this concern.
4. Ms. Dunbar asked if the new management agreement for the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) will impact implementation of the recommended public transit element of the 2035 transportation plan. She noted that the former agreement was with a nonprofit management company and the new agreement is with a for profit company located in Texas. She asked if SEWRPC staff were part of the decision-making process in selecting the new firm. Mr. Yunker

responded that SEWRPC staff were not involved in the decision. Ms. McNeely asked if MCTS would be privately owned under the new agreement. Mr. Yunker stated that Milwaukee County is owner and sponsor of the transit system, noting that the County owns the capital, such as the buses and garage facilities, and determines the bus routes and level of service provided. He added that the management firm operates the transit system at service levels determined by the County. The employees of the transit system are employees of the management company under contract to the County, and will transition to the new company.

5. Ms. Dunbar noted that there is a high incarceration rate among the Region's minority population and asked if the public transit element of the 2035 transportation plan includes a route to the correctional facility located in the City of Franklin. Mr. Yunker responded the plan recommends the extension of transit service to the City of Franklin, including a route that would serve the correctional facility.
6. Ms. McNeely asked if wait times are included in the analyses that assess the quality of transit service measured by transit travel times. Mr. Yunker responded that wait times are included, both for the initial transit boarding and for each transfer that may be required. Ms. McNeely expressed concern that the change in management of MCTS would lead to reduced service levels and longer wait times. Mr. Yunker stated that the Milwaukee County Executive and County Board of Supervisors will still set the service levels that the management company must implement.
7. Ms. McNeely asked if the focus of the street and highway element of the 2035 transportation plan is freeways. Mr. Yunker responded that the street and highway element of the plan addresses both freeways and surface arterial streets and highways, which are streets with the primary function of carrying through traffic. He noted that together they represent about one-third of all streets and highways with respect to mileage, and carry about 90 percent of all street and highway traffic volume. He then listed examples of north-south surface arterials in Milwaukee County. Ms. McNeely asked if recommended expansion of arterial streets and highways is disproportionately located in areas with concentrations of minority populations. Mr. Yunker directed the Task Force's attention to Map H-9 on page 7a of the PowerPoint handout which overlaid the arterials with recommended capacity expansion over areas in the Region with concentrations of minority populations. He noted the map demonstrates that most of the recommended expansion is located outside of areas with concentrations of minority populations. Ms. McNeely stated that road resurfacing and reconstruction is needed in areas with concentrations of minority populations, particularly since many residents of these areas have lower-incomes and limited money for vehicle maintenance. Mr. Yunker stated that continued maintenance and reconstruction is recommended for all other arterials, and such arterials are also on the map.
8. Ms. Dunbar noted that there are several business parks with job opportunities in outlying counties of the Region that do not have transit service connecting to Milwaukee County residents. She stated that additional transit service and coordination between MCTS and other transit service providers is needed to increase access to jobs for Milwaukee residents. She also stated that expansion of service hours to serve second and third shift workers is needed. Mr. Yunker noted that public transit has been cut over the last decade as a result of a 10 to 15 percent State funding cut for public transit in Wisconsin in the 2011-2013 State budget, and in prior years State funding not keeping pace with inflation. In addition, the recent economic downturn caused reductions in jobs in outlying counties, declines in county to county ridership, and reductions in transit service.

He noted that an economic recovery may increase demand for labor force and interest in better transit service connections between counties. He also noted that an increase in transit funding would likely be necessary to increase transit service.

9. Ms. Dunbar stated that some Milwaukee County residents may not be aware of reverse commute transit services. Mr. Yunker noted that there is reverse commute transit service to Ozaukee and Waukesha Counties, and formerly to Washington County. He noted Milwaukee County has had a policy that service connecting Milwaukee County and outlying counties should be funded by the outlying county; however, in some cases, Milwaukee County has shared costs with other counties, municipalities, and employers. Ms. McNeely asked if there are any private employer funded transit services operating in the Region. Mr. Yunker responded that employer funded transit services are typically seasonal.
10. Ms. McNeely suggested that the evaluation of the 2050 transportation plan should continue to include analyses of potential adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations and identification of any disproportionate adverse impacts, and also include identification of measures to mitigate any disproportionate adverse impacts. Mr. Yunker stated that staff will consider this suggestion in the 2050 evaluation. Mr. Yunker noted that there is no action to be taken on the item and thanked the members for their comments and suggestions.
11. Ms. Greene noted that some members of the audience would like to comment on the discussion and suggested moving to agenda item No. 7.

FURTHER PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following public comments were made:

1. Mr. Grzezinski applauded SEWRPC for its work on the year 2035 regional transportation system plan and stated that he has several comments, including:
 - The transportation plan is sound; however it is not being implemented.
 - The impact of freeways on densely populated areas of the Region should be studied in addition to census blocks in the Region with concentrations of minority populations in the evaluation of the 2050 transportation plan. Areas that are less densely populated are impacted less by freeway expansion and areas that are more densely populated are impacted more by freeway expansion.
 - The recommended public transit element is designed to connect people to job locations and it is not being implemented. The Task Force and SEWRPC should be more vocal about the problems resulting from not implementing the plan.
 - Freeway expansions, such as the expansion of IH 94 between the Mitchell Interchange and the State line, do not benefit minority populations. Freeways do need to be maintained but expansions have limited value because they serve only to reduce drive times for commuters by a few minutes.
 - Congestion levels in Milwaukee are lower than most comparable cities.
 - Freeway expansion does not help people who do not have jobs. Plan recommendations that would provide transportation to jobs for people without access to personal vehicles are the key recommendations to implement.

2. Ms. Rotker stated that she has several comments, including:
 - Those without jobs in the Region are disproportionately in the minority population.
 - White non-Hispanic population should be included in all tables that show data by race/ethnicity for a basis of comparison.
 - Using percentages in the tables can be misleading because some areas of the Region have a very small minority population.
 - Census blocks can be very large in rural areas compared to those in urban areas. Distance, such as 100 or 500 feet, should be used as analysis areas instead of Census blocks.
 - The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have identified additional measures of possible adverse impacts on environmental justice populations that are not in the 2035 transportation plan evaluation.
 - Wisconsin has one of the highest percentages of African Americans living near freeways of any State in the Country.
 - Right-of-way acquisitions resulting from planned freeway widenings will result in a disproportionate loss of tax base to Milwaukee.
 - The 2050 plan should evaluate potential funding of the transit and arterial street and highway recommendations. The 2050 plan should also include an evaluation of the impact on minority and low-income populations, if elements of the plan—such as public transit—are not implemented.
 - SEWRPC staff should increase efforts to ensure quorums at Task Force meetings and fill vacancies.
 - The discussion today was very productive.

Mr. Yunker responded that page 592 in Appendix H notes the significant expansion of public transit that occurred between 1975 and 2000, and the significant decline in transit that has occurred since 2000. He noted the text specifically states that as minority and low-income populations disproportionately use and are dependent on public transit, these populations are disproportionately impacted by reductions in transit service.

3. Mr. Wall asked whether the State has considered the need for public transit and arterial street and highway funding. Mr. Yunker responded that the State Legislature established the Wisconsin Transportation Finance and Policy Commission (TFPC) as part of the 2011-2013 State budget to examine transportation finance issues. The Commission has comprehensively reviewed the State's transportation needs, projected costs, and funding. Mr. Yunker stated that SEWRPC gave testimony to the Commission in 2012 principally regarding the need for public transit in Southeastern Wisconsin, which is the element of the regional transportation plan that has been most significant in lagging in implementation due to declining State funding and a lack of local dedicated transit funding. He noted that the TFPC recommended restoring the 10 percent cut in State funding for public transit from the 2011-2013 budget and increasing State funding by about another 10 percent to account for funding that did not keep up with the rate of inflation in the 2000s. TFPC also recommended the State permit local governments to have a local source of dedicated public transit funding. Mr. Yunker noted that a referendum was passed in Milwaukee County in 2008 that favored creating a one cent sales tax increase to fund public transit, parks, emergency medical services, and property tax relief. He stated that the Wisconsin State Legislature and Governor acknowledged the recommendations of the TFPC, but determined to take no action in the 2013-2015 State budget.

4. Mr. Wall stated that the funding for expanding freeway capacity to reduce commute times by five minutes could potentially be used to improve public transit service. He stated that commuter buses do not serve reverse commuters in neighborhoods with concentrations of minority populations. He also noted that St. Michaels Hospital has closed and is still shown on several of the maps in Appendix H. Mr. Yunker noted that Appendix H was prepared in 2006. He also noted that action by the State legislature and Governor would be needed to shift funding from highways to transit.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Ms. Greene suggested moving the meeting time from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. to 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. The Task Force members in attendance agreed. Mr. Yunker stated that the next meeting date will likely be in late October or early November in keeping with the quarterly meeting schedule. He stated that staff will e-mail a list of possible dates to Task Force members. Future meetings will likely continue to be held at the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District offices.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Greene thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Benjamin R. McKay
Recording Secretary

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