



BEST: Michigan Avenue Project -- April 30, 2015 Joint Committee Meeting Notes

This initial and joint meeting of the project's Policy and Technical Committees served to introduce members to the study.

Subject	BEST: Michigan Avenue—Project Committee Kickoff
Date	Thursday, April 30, 2015
Time	1:30 PM to 3:00 PM
Location	Henry Ford Centennial Library, 16301 Michigan Avenue, Dearborn, MI
Attendees	Project Team and members of the BEST: Michigan Avenue Policy and Technical Committees

Agenda

1. Welcome to the meeting and Dearborn: Mayor John B. O'Reilly, Jr., City of Dearborn
 - a. Mayor O'Reilly provided a brief history of transit in Dearborn, dating back to when the Detroit Street Railway served the city and early SEMTA efforts to form a regional transit system. He drew on his experience with other regions and contrasted efforts to form a regional transit system. He drew on his experience with other regions and contrasted recent decades in Southeast Michigan and Los Angeles, providing the latter as a model example.
2. RTA Introduction: Tiffany Gunter, Deputy CEO, Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan (RTA)
 - a. Ms. Gunter explained that CEO Michael Ford was called to another commitment and apologized for not attending. She reflected on her first project as a SEMCOG planner: the transit Alternatives Analysis between Ann Arbor and Detroit. That study was influential in the creation of the RTA.
3. Project Overview: Dan Meyers, Project Manager, AECOM
 - a. Mr. Meyers introduced the Project Team and welcomed all meeting participants to introduce themselves and mention each participant's key interest. Themes emerging from these reflections included:
 - RTA's commitment to listen to all participant comments
 - Connections between Washtenaw and Wayne Counties
 - Desire to provide a transit connection between Ann Arbor and Detroit, which does not exist today; dismay that no alternative to automobile commuting between the two cities is available.
 - Enhanced transit service to and between Corridor universities and colleges
 - Direct airport transit service from throughout the region
 - Regional transit connections that are competitive with other travel methods
 - Cost-effective transit improvements



- Funding for a regional network
 - Regional service throughout the day and night
 - Economic development & attracting businesses to Corridor communities
 - Pedestrian and bicycle enhancements
 - Travel options, especially for non-drivers
 - A compelling case for transit improvements & how all benefit
 - High-quality, innovative transit delivered soon
 - A system that serves all customers and is not just oriented to customers for a certain geography or funding districts
 - A complete Master Plan for the region
- b. Proposed Committee meeting schedule:
- Technical Committee: Monthly, 2nd Wednesday, 2-3:30 PM, Dearborn Council Chambers (Next meeting on June 10, 2015)
 - Policy Committee: Quarterly, on the 2nd Wednesday to be held in conjunction with the Technical Committee meeting (Next meeting on August 12, 2015)
- c. Mr. Meyers described the study process, with a Locally Preferred Alternative selected in Spring 2016 and concluding with Environmental Screening in Summer 2016.
4. Community Engagement Plan: Brad Strader and Caitlin Malloy-Marcon, LSL
- a. Mr. Strader described three phases of community engagement:
- Phase One: Discovery & establishing Criteria (Spring 2015)
 - Phase Two: Definition of Alternatives & Initial Screening (Summer & Fall, 2015)
 - Phase Three: Locally Preferred Alternative (Spring 2016) and Next Steps
- b. Ms. Malloy-Marcon announced RTA Public Launch Events in the four counties:
- May 12, Lunchtime Rally, Campus Martius, downtown Detroit
 - All-Day Forums, with sessions 9:00-11:00 AM for Public Officials, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM for the business community, and open to the general public between 1:00 and 7:00 PM. These events include:
 1. May 18, Washtenaw County, Eastern Michigan University
 2. May 19, Wayne County, simultaneous events at the Wayne County Community College NW Campus (Detroit) and U-M Dearborn
 3. May 20, Macomb County, Macomb Center for the Performing Arts, Clinton Township
 4. May 21, Oakland County, Royal Oak Elks Club



5. "Rapid Transit 101," Julia Suprock, AECOM
 - a. Ms. Suprock provided a review of existing transit service in the corridor, including service area gaps. She then described three identified transit modes that will receive consideration for the study: Commuter Rail, Light Rail, and Bus Rapid Transit. Characteristics, common travel distances, and average capital costs were described. Ms. Suprock clarified that the preferred option(s) for BEST: Michigan Avenue may include multiple transit modes service the Corridor.
6. Introduction to the BEST: Michigan Avenue Corridor, Jeromie Winsor, AECOM
 - a. Mr. Winsor explained that the Study Corridor is roughly 40 miles long between the downtown areas of Detroit and Ann Arbor. The Study Corridor follows Michigan Avenue between Detroit and Ypsilanti, and Washtenaw Avenue between Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor. In addition, a branch of the Study Corridor extends from Michigan Avenue south to Detroit Wayne County Metropolitan Airport, following Merriman Road. The Study Area includes all areas within one mile of the Study Corridor and includes the MDOT Railroad between Ann Arbor and Detroit.
 - b. Mr. Winsor provided a brief overview of themes from previous transit planning studies in the Corridor. He also provided an overview of existing transportation and demographic conditions in the Study Area. These conditions include a 10-mile gap between existing transit services in Wayne and Washtenaw Counties.
 - c. Mr. Winsor provided an overview of themes raised at recent one-on-one meetings with stakeholders in the corridor. These included:
 - Need for improved airport transit connections ("that's what big cities have")
 - Transit seen as key for redevelopment in many corridor communities – developers and employers looking for transit access
 - Community plans along corridor expressed a desire to make Michigan Avenue more walkable and pedestrian-friendly – the current configuration not seen as a benefit for local economic development
 - Preferences expressed for rail service connecting from Washtenaw to Detroit
 - Any new service needs to be effective and cost-efficient
 - Need to evaluate and understand potential traffic impacts of rapid transit
 - Consider public safety on transit and at stops
 - Responding to demographic trends with aging populations, Millennials lack of interest in driving
7. Discussion of Corridor Priorities: Themes from this open discussion included:
 - a. How changing land use is anticipated to impact alternative transit improvements;
 - b. A need for regional consistency in transportation modeling and "outside the box" thinking to get an accurate demand model for transit;



- c. Consider including futurists in the transportation demand modeling development;
 - d. The importance of considering both residential and employment densities in the Corridor;
 - e. An interest in reviewing the criteria for selecting transit alternatives for the corridor;
 - f. A comparison of end-to-end travel demand compared to shorter segments where demand is high;
 - g. Connectivity between regional and feeder systems;
 - h. Public perception, and how success stories from other US regions can improve this;
 - i. Setbacks with commuter rail planning in the corridor, and how ongoing higher-speed intercity passenger rail investments along the MDOT Railroad can advance commuter rail;
8. Next Steps, Dan Meyers, AECOM
- a. Technical Committee meeting Wednesday, June 10 (second Wednesday), 2:00-3:30 PM, Dearborn City Council Chambers. Topics:
 - Public Input Received in May
 - Existing Conditions Summary
 - Purpose & Need Themes
 - b. Policy Committee meeting TBD in Summer 2015. Topics:
 - A review of project goals and initial alternatives