



**BEST: Michigan Avenue Project – November 18 Joint Committees Meeting Notes**

<b>Subject</b>	BEST: Michigan Avenue—Joint Policy and Technical Committees
<b>Date</b>	Wednesday, November 18, 2015
<b>Time</b>	2:00 PM to 3:30 PM
<b>Location</b>	City of Dearborn Council Chambers, 16901 Michigan Avenue, Dearborn, MI
<b>Attendees</b>	Project Team and members of the BEST: Michigan Avenue Policy and Technical Committees (listed at end of notes)

**Agenda**

1. Welcome and Introductions, Ben Stupka, RTA:
  - a. All participants introduced themselves.
  - b. A rider survey will be implemented in the next month. Results will be available in early 2016.
2. Project Update, Jeromie Winsor, AECOM:
  - a. Mr. Winsor introduced the agenda and provided an update on the BEST: Michigan Avenue transit study. He directed participants to copies of the afternoon’s presentation.
  - b. Study Status: The Tier 2 Evaluation will be complete near the end of the calendar year. This will result in one or two alternatives for detailed Tier 3 evaluation.
  - c. Project Committee Roles: Mr. Winsor reviewed roles of the Policy and Technical Committees. The Technical Committee will meet monthly, and the Policy Committee will meet at least quarterly. The BEST: Michigan Avenue Technical Committee meets on the second Wednesday of each month, at the same time and location.
3. Recap from Last Meetings, Jeromie Winsor, AECOM. Meeting notes are available on the project website at <http://www.rtamichigan.org/best-projects/michigan-avenue/committees/>
  - a. Recap from August 12, 2015 Joint Committee Meeting. Discussion points included:
    - Summer public engagement activities
    - Revised Purpose & Need document
    - Project Goals
    - Updated Universe of Alternatives
    - Tier 1 Evaluation Criteria



- b. Recap from October 14, 2015 Technical Committee Meeting. Discussion points included:
    - Phase Two Community Outreach
    - Tier 1 Evaluation Results
    - Tier 2 Detailed Definition of Alternatives process
    - Tier 2 Detailed Evaluation of Alternatives process
    - Review of Methodology Memos
  4. Public / Stakeholder Involvement Activities, Caitlin Malloy-Marcon, LSL Planning:
    - a. Overview of Phase 2 Public Meetings: these meetings featured large roll-out maps of the draft Tier 2 alternatives. Much of the discussion focused on station locations and alignment variations; this feedback was included in the Tier 2 Detailed Definition of Alternatives.
    - b. Pop-Up events: questionnaires have been distributed in some hotel lobbies regarding airport travel and local circulation. Other pop-up events have been held on college campuses, at grocery stores, and in downtown Detroit office building lobbies.
    - c. Additional Phase 2 activities: targeted stakeholder briefings have been conducted since early November and will continue through the end of the year. Getting into existing meeting agendas has been proven effective.
  5. Final Tier 1 Report, Jeromie Winsor, AECOM:
    - a. The finalized Tier 1 report has been posted to the project website at <http://www.rtamichigan.org/best-projects/michigan-avenue/documents/>. Regional transit services recommended for Tier 2 evaluation were Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), "Premium" BRT, and Commuter / Regional Rail. Other transit modes and services may still be evaluated as compliments to the primary regional services.
    - b. Discussion regarding the Tier 1 Conclusions:
- Q: In the Tier 1 evaluation matrix, Commuter / Regional Rail was marked as not performing well for economic development potential. It received passing marks in all other evaluation categories. Why is this?
- A: Commuter / Regional Rail offers a more limited span of service, less frequent service, fewer stations, and more limited access to central communities when compared to other transit modes. For these reasons, its impact throughout the corridor was expected to be reduced compared to other transit modes. However, this finding for the Tier 1 evaluation will be revisited for the Tier 2 evaluation. The Tier 1 evaluation is complete and fresh evaluation criteria are in development for the Tier 2 evaluation. Some committee members felt that Commuter/Regional Rail should have received a Pass in the economic development potential criteria.



Comments: Commuter / Regional Rail has a track record for development around its stations, and the development impact per station tends to be greater than the impact around individual BRT stations. Many committee members agreed with theme of these comments.

Comment: The potential exists for short segments of other modes, such as streetcar, as local collector / distributors. Please reflect this comment in the meeting notes, and in subsequent evaluations add a similar asterisk to the one shown for express bus in the Tier 1 evaluation: “\*May be re-introduced to complement Tier 2 alternatives, depending on the results of the Tier 2 evaluation.”

6. Review of Draft Detailed Definition of Alternatives Report, Jeromie Winsor, AECOM:

- a. The Draft Detailed Definition of Alternatives document (for the Tier 2 evaluation) is posted to the study website at <http://www.rtamichigan.org/best-projects/michigan-avenue/documents/>. The study team subsequently emailed the deadline for review and comment submission on the Tier 2 Detailed Definition of Alternatives report (December 4, 2015) to committee members.
- b. Discussion regarding the Draft Detailed Definition of Alternatives document:

Q: What is the difference between Commuter Rail and Regional Rail?

A: Commuter Rail in this case is the demonstration project under evaluation by MDOT and SEMCOG. With Regional Rail, the project team is exploring opportunities for additional station, Park & Ride, more frequent service, and other added elements.

Q: The Tier 2 definition of alternatives shows two alternate rail service branches in Detroit: on to New Center along the existing Amtrak route, and a branch to Corktown. Would the project select one branch or the other for implementation?

A: Yes, if Commuter / Regional Rail is recommended for implementation, it is likely that one of these branches would be selected for near term service.

Q: Might the locally preferred alternative include a blending of the Tier 2 alternatives, such as rail plus BRT?

A: Yes.

Q: Why does the Regional Rail alternative show a limit of 8 round trips (plus intercity trains) rather than the previously discussed 15 round trips (plus intercity trains)?

A: The capital investment required for 8 round trips is similar to the investment required for the Commuter Rail demonstration project. 15 round trips would require additional capital investments, such as additional double tracking and more train equipment. 8 round trips seemed like a reasonable capital investment limit for startup service.

Q: What evaluation criteria will be used for recommending Detroit rail station locations?

A: Draft evaluation criteria will be shared soon.



Comment: Request to review the capital requirements for higher levels of Regional Rail service, including the 15 round trips. Would be helpful to more clearly show the difference between regional stations and intercity stations on the maps.

Q: Will the Committees have an opportunity to review the technical background information that the Project Team has based its assumptions on? Please reflect in the meeting notes that this is requested. What will the local multi-modal impacts be? How is the regional travel demand model coded to reflect ridership potential? Concerns about differences between the SEMCOG and WATS models. This information is important for gathering the support of elected officials.

A: Technical memos were drafted by the consultants working on MDOT's intercity rail project. The RTA has requested permission to share these with the Committee and we are awaiting response from MDOT.

Comment: Please release these memos and make them available for public review.

Comment: Canadian National Railroad (CN) wants to perform its own capacity analysis for the intercity and Commuter / Regional Rail corridor. SEMCOG says this analysis can be shared once it is complete.

Q: Why is 9:00 PM the assumed latest train for Regional Rail? This limited schedule makes rail less useful. A midnight final train would be welcome.

Q: Regarding the transportation demand model: would a sensitivity test be possible? And can the alternatives be tweaked where the analysis shows this will be helpful?

A: Yes, some revisions will be possible after initial sensitivity testing. More detailed analysis will be performed during Tier 3 for the final alternatives.

Q: The Detailed Definition report indicates a connection between in Ann Arbor between the Ann Arbor Railroad (along which the proposed WALLY service would operate) and the MDOT intercity railroad. What is this connection?

A: MDOT is exploring a non-revenue service connection for commuter trains to be able to transition between the tracks during non-peak hour times. Continuous commuter rail service between the two railroads would be complicated. A separate study explored opportunity for Ann Arbor – Detroit commuter rail to reach an Owosso maintenance facility with non-revenue service.

Q: With BRT, it appears that a variety of service options will be explored, some of which do not extend along the full corridor. Is this correct?

A: Yes.

Q: Any consideration of connections south of the corridor, such as to the new Ford Tech Center and Oakwood Hospital in southern Dearborn?

A: It appears difficult to route the main BRT corridor along Oakwood, but this can be explored. Feeder services are explored in the Detailed Definition of Alternatives.

C: Recent studies have concluded that Washtenaw Avenue and its continuations in downtown Ann Arbor streets carry too many vehicles to allow a single lane general travel lane in each direction. Will the Project Team incorporate these analyses? Why is additional traffic analysis required?



A: The point is well taken previous analysis and will continue to be considered. The Project Team seeks uniform technical analysis along whole corridor.

Q: The Detailed Definition of Alternatives does not yet show a hybrid alternative including both rail and BRT. It seems that BRT can function as a local region distributor where it connects to Regional Rail. When might we see a hybrid alternative?

A: It is likely that a hybrid alternative will be recommended for Tier 3 analysis.

7. Overview of Tier 2 Methodology Memoranda, Julia Suprock, AECOM

a. Ms. Suprock described the memoranda that are still in development for the Tier 2 evaluation. These include:

- Service Plan
- Capital Cost
- Operations & Maintenance Cost
- Ridership

b. Discussion:

Q: What rolling stock would be used for Commuter / Regional Rail?

A: The existing rolling stock, refurbished through MDOT agreements, would be used for the startup. The cars would be leased and overhauled as needed toward the end of 20-year life of the project.

8. Review of Draft Tier 2 Detailed Evaluation Criteria, Julia Suprock, AECOM:

a. These criteria are still in development. Likely criteria include:

- Ridership (by alternative, by station)
- Capital costs
- Operating and maintenance costs
- Travel time
- Cost effectiveness
- Right-of-way impacts (acquisition)
- Parking and traffic impacts
- Community support
- Station area population and employment densities
- Equitable access to the transit investment



- Development potential
- Bicycle and pedestrian mobility impacts
- Environmental impacts and benefits
- Safety impacts
- Cultural and historic impacts
- Connectivity to the transit network
- Connectivity to the regional network

b. Discussion regarding the Tier 2 Evaluation Criteria:

Q: Will both existing and future land use be considered in the evaluation?

A: FTA requires that the regional model including a 2040 scenario. So both existing and future anticipated land use are included in the evaluation. Criteria such as development potential will reflect local consideration. MAP21 included an allowance for considering endured demand around stations. No FTA points were added for this. A new transportation reauthorization package may change the FTA criteria. The Project Team recommends prioritizing station locations with high potential for both ridership and redevelopment. The model will consider conditions well beyond the one-mile demographic analysis area used during the Tier 1 evaluation.

Comment: Regarding changing sprawl and land use patterns: the Detroit Transportation Corporation (DTC) People Mover Transit Oriented Development (TOD) model considers development.

Q: Will ridership be estimated using the SEMCOG or WATS model?

A: The SEMCOG model will be used. WATS modelers will be included in model development.

Comment: The two models are night and day different. The model requires good data that can be approved by FTA. Census data is not best. Please consider other options.

A: SEMCOG is satisfied with the Project Team approach. The WATS model question will be revisited.

Q: How does the corridor segmentation for BRT alternatives work?

A: General boundaries are used so that running way configurations can vary per segment. Once each segment is analyzed for transportation potential and cost, then alternatives that don't make sense can be screened out.

Q: Is it assumed that existing transit services and networks will be modified?

A: The Detailed Definition of Alternatives report assumes that, as a rule, local services will not be eliminated. Some services may be reduced. Other services would be added to link with the project. The Service Plan a net of assumed added & subtracted services.



Q: What is the Tier 2 output?

A: At the end, two or so alternatives will be refined. These could include a hybrid alternative with BRT and Commuter / Regional Rail.

Q: Any thoughts of going west of Ann Arbor? The shown alternatives only extend into one-third of Washtenaw County.

A: From the beginning, the project's defined corridor has been Ann Arbor to Detroit. The RTA Master Plan may consider points further to the west.

Q: How will long term vs. shorter term opportunities be considered in the evaluation?

A: The RTA Master Plan determines the time table for projects. Some elements may be included in a longer-term vision. The goal of this project is to recommend an alternative that is implementable in the near term.

Q: What strategy for the ballot initiative?

A: Lots of outreach will occur prior to a funding vote in November 2016. Regional funding calculations will be announced in the first quarter of 2016. These numbers will shape the planning.

#### 9. Next Meetings / Next Steps

- a. Phase 3 outreach meetings are expected to take place in February / late winter.
- b. Next Technical Committee meeting: Wednesday, December 9, 2015, 2:00 – 3:30 PM, Dearborn Council Chambers
- c. Next Combined Committee meeting: Wednesday, February 10, 2016, 2:00 – 3:30 PM, Dearborn Council Chambers

Adjourned at 3:30.

Policy Committee attendees (in order of sign-in sheet):

- John O'Reilly, City of Dearborn
- Dan Paletko, City of Dearborn Heights
- Cynthia Glass, Henry Ford College
- George Anton Moroz, The Henry Ford
- Jeannie Fields, City of Inkster



Technical Committee Meeting Attendees (in order of sign-in sheet):

- Michael Benham, AAATA
- Eli Cooper, City of Ann Arbor
- Barry Murray, City of Dearborn
- Bonnie Wessler, City of Ypsilanti
- Dara O'Byrne, Detroit Future City
- Cornelius Henry, DTC
- Ryan Epstein, M-1 Rail
- Kari Martin, MDOT
- Jim Schultz, MDOT
- Rita Screws, MDOT
- Richard Murphy, Michigan Municipal League
- Prashanth Gururaja, RTA CAC
- Alex Bourgeau, SEMCOG
- Deanna Donahoo, SEMCOG
- Andy Thorner, SMART
- Lisa Solomon, University of Michigan
- Nick Sapkiewicz, WATS
- John Paul Minear, WCAA

Project Team Attendees:

- Michael Ford, RTA
- Ben Stupka, RTA
- Jeromie Winsor, AECOM
- Julia Suprock, AECOM
- Peter Voorhees, AECOM
- Caitlin Malloy-Marcon, LSL Planning
- Christina Lovio-George, Lovio George