



BEST: Michigan Avenue Project – September 9, 2015 Technical Committees Meeting Notes -- DRAFT

Subject	BEST: Michigan Avenue – Technical Committee Notes – DRAFT
Date	Wednesday, September 9, 2015
Time	2:00 PM to 3:30 PM
Location	City of Dearborn Council Chambers, 16901 Michigan Avenue, Dearborn, MI
Attendees	Project Team and members of the BEST: Michigan Avenue Technical Committee

The BEST: Michigan Avenue Technical Committee meets on the second Wednesday of each month, at the same time and location.

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions, Ben Stupka, RTA:
 - a. Mr. Stupka provided a brief overview of ongoing RTA activities. He then invited attendees to introduce themselves.
2. Project Update, Dan Meyers, AECOM:
 - a. Mr. Meyers introduced the agenda and provided an update on the BEST: Michigan Avenue transit study. The finalized Purpose and Need document and associated comment disposition are posted to the study website at <http://www.rtamichigan.org/best-projects/michigan-avenue/documents/>. Further comments are still welcome. The Purpose and Need will be presented to the RTA Planning and Service Coordinating Committee and Board on September 9 and 10, respectively.
3. Recap from Last Meetings, Dan Meyers, AECOM:
 - a. Mr. Meyers directed participants to copies of the afternoon’s presentation. He reviewed roles of the Policy and Technical Committees and provided a recap of the August 12 combined Policy and Technical Committee meeting (meeting notes are available on the project website). The Technical Committee will meet monthly, and the Policy Committee will meet at least quarterly.
4. Public / Stakeholder Involvement Activities, Caitlin Malloy-Marcon, LSL Planning:
 - a. Ms. Malloy-Marcon introduced the schedule for October public open house events for the study. She also provided an overview of the format for the open house sessions. The dates, locations and times are:
 - Thursday, October 8th: Eastern Michigan University College of Business, Ypsilanti (4-7 PM)
 - Monday, October 12th: Wayne Historical Museum, Wayne (4-7 PM)
 - Tuesday, October 13th: Arab American National Museum, Dearborn (4-7 PM)



- Wednesday, October 14th: Gaelic League, Corktown, Detroit (4-7 PM)

b. Question/answer/comment session regarding the open house sessions:

Q: Might it be possible to add a session in Ann Arbor? The University of Michigan (U-M) is back in session and should be considered for outreach.

A: A Master Plan open house will be held in Ann Arbor, with participation by the BEST: Michigan Avenue study. Because of this, RTA requested that BEST: Michigan Avenue hold its event in Ypsilanti. Additional targeted outreach is under consideration in Ann Arbor and at U-M.

Comm: Desire expressed for an open house that is more accessible to Inkster residents.

A: Follow-up outreach (a “pop up” venue) within Inkster was suggested and welcome.

Q: What is the plan for university and college outreach throughout the corridor?

A: RTA has engaged with Wayne State University through a partnership with the Harriet Tubman Center. Pop-up events are in the planning stage for campuses and other activity centers (such as neighborhood grocery stores) in the corridor. Other specific recommendations are welcome.

c. Social media update: Response through MySidewalk has been acceptable and the team is considering how to increase site activity. The Project Team is also considering other social media opportunities. RTA has been directing attention to BEST: Michigan Avenue through its Facebook and Twitter updates.

5. Tier 1 Screening Results, Julia Suprock, AECOM:

a. Ms. Suprock offered a review of transit modes and services considered for the corridor (see presentation on the project website, slides 13-16). These modes include local bus, Commuter/Regional Rail, Highway Express Bus, Bus Rapid Transit (with “low” and “high” capital investments), streetcar, and Light Rail Transit.

b. Ms. Suprock referred to a handout with an evaluation matrix for the Tier 1 alternatives (see slide 17 of the presentation). One evaluation criterion, Economic Development, was held from the evaluation pending further coordination with the BEST: Gratiot Avenue study. Alternatives that did not pass two or more of the Tier 1 evaluation criteria were recommended for deferral as primary regional modes and services. Modes recommended for further consideration are Commuter/Regional Rail and Bus Rapid Transit.

c. Discussion regarding the Tier 1 evaluation:

Comm: Request that M1 Rail be presented as a local example of streetcar mode.

Q: If higher investment Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is not financially feasible throughout the corridor, might shorter segments of this mode be considered where demand is highest?

A: Yes.



Comm: One of the failing criteria for streetcar was ridership capacity. Several examples of streetcar use linked vehicles in trains to achieve the required capacity, while maintaining other characteristics of streetcar.

Q: Commuter/Regional Rail meets the demand for regional travel, so why did it fail the Regional Connectivity criterion? What is needed is regional travel services plus local access services. Commuter/Regional Rail alternatives would include connecting bus service to the airport, correct? And is regional Highway Express Bus deferred altogether?

A: Commuter/Regional Rail does not directly access the airport, which was one reason that it did not pass the Regional Connectivity criterion. The comments are noted; the intent of the criterion was to assess the degree to which each alternative connected to the larger transportation network (thereby supporting mobility throughout the region and beyond). The analysis of the criterion will be reframed to better reflect that. As part of the service planning that occurs during the next phase of the project (the detailed definition of alternatives), a variety of local circulation services may be considered in conjunction with the regional travel modes and services. And Highway Express Bus may also be included to supplement alternatives.

Q: Are the criteria equally weighted?

A: Yes, and the Tier 1 Evaluation report will explain why. This is a high-level, fatal flaw analysis.

Comm: High capacity transit is required in Ann Arbor to connect a regional rail station with major destinations. The Connector project (a proposed high capacity transit link between downtown Ann Arbor, U-M campuses, and northeastern Ann Arbor) should be evaluated as part of regional transit alternatives.

Comm: Highway Express Bus bypasses many communities and its deferral is welcome.

Q: Will an extension of Commuter/Regional Rail to Pontiac be considered?

A: Not as part of BEST: Michigan Avenue, but the BEST: Master Plan, MDOT and SEMCOG are exploring this connection.

Comm: The terminology BRT "Low" and "High" was used in the evaluation. Low sounds derogatory; suggest using other terminology in the next tiers.

Comm: Commuter Rail as presented by MDOT and SEMCOG does not include sufficient station parking and local transit circulation. These elements are required as part of a compelling local funding case. The commenter's recollection is that Metra commuter rail in greater Chicago offers roughly 500 parking spaces per station on high frequency routes and roughly 250 spaces per station on routes operating only during commute hours.

A: Station parking will be considered in subsequent evaluation tiers.

Q: Ann Arbor is a large travel market. Might there be room in the city for a Regional Rail station in addition to the Amtrak/Intercity/Regional Rail station?

A: This may be possible as rail service levels increase in the future.

Comm: The Arborland Shopping Center, on Washtenaw Avenue near US 23, is a former park and ride location for TheRide. An MDOT Access Management Corridor Study (pre-2010) shows a



parking structure for transit at the site. RTA is encouraged to give attention to that report. Park and ride facilities in Ann Arbor are heavily utilized.

6. Alternatives for Detailed Definition, Jeromie Winsor, AECOM:

a. Mr. Winsor presented the alternatives proposed for detailed definition and further evaluation. These are:

- The No Build alternative, including local bus services with no significant change to existing transit services and facilities in the corridor.
- Commuter / Regional Rail:
 - Commuter Rail (up to 5 daily round trips) using existing Amtrak stations and two additional stations in Ypsilanti and near Metro Airport.
 - Commuter Rail (up to 5 daily round trips) with Consideration of Additional Stations.
 - Regional Rail near term: up to 8 near-term regional round trip trains plus Amtrak intercity trains, with consideration of additional stations.
 - Regional Rail extended term: up to 15 regional round trip trains, plus up to 10 round trip Amtrak/Intercity trains, for up to 25 total round trip passenger trains in the corridor. Consideration of additional stations.
- Bus Rapid Transit:
 - Full Corridor in Mixed Traffic
 - Full Corridor with Dedicated Lanes

b. Discussion regarding the Alternatives for Detailed Definition:

Comm: An alternative blending Regional Rail with Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is compelling and preferred to alternatives requiring multiple transit transfers.

A: Once the noted alternatives are defined and evaluated, a hybrid alternative with multiple transit modes will likely be developed for further consideration.

Comm: BRT as a feeder service to Regional Rail is an interesting idea.

Comm: Regional Express Bus would be an attractive compliment to all of the alternatives.

c. BRT video simulation presentation: Dan Meyers, AECOM, presented an example of video animation that was prepared for a project in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.



7. Next Meeting/ Next Steps

- a. The Tier 1 Evaluation report will be circulated to Committee members in the coming days.
- b. The Tier 2 alternatives will be defined for presentation at the October Open Houses, with a Detailed Definition report to be drafted after these public outreach events.
- c. Development of Technical Methodology memoranda in the coming weeks
- d. Public Open Houses, October 8-14
- e. Next Technical Committee meeting: Wednesday, October 14, 2:00 – 3:30 PM, Dearborn Council Chambers
- f. Next Combined Committee meeting: Wednesday, November 17, 2:00 – 3:30 PM, Dearborn Council Chambers
- g. The Tier 2 Evaluation will be complete near the end of the calendar year.

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