

North Area Transportation Alliance Steering Committee

DRAFT

Summary Minutes

August 26, 2009

Mayor Hansen welcomed everyone to this first organizational meeting of the North Area Transportation Alliance and introductions followed.

Attending from member cities and businesses were: Brighton - Mayor Jan Pawlowski and Joe Smith; Broomfield – Kevin Standbridge; Commerce City - Mayor Paul Natale, Mayor Pro-tem Scott Jaquith, Tom Acre; Dacono – Bill Efting; Erie –Trustee Cheryl Hauger; Longmont – Mayor Roger Lange, Phil Greenwald; Northglenn – Mayor Kathy Novak; Thornton – Mayor Erik Hansen, Jack Ethredge, Gene Putman, Joyce Hunt; Westminster – Mayor Nancy McNally, Matt Lutkus; and Metro North Chamber of Commerce – Jonathan Perlmutter and Deb Obermeyer. NATA affiliate member -- RTD Board member Noel Busck, was also in attendance.

Organizational items.

- Chair and Vice-Chair. Mayor Erik Hansen and Councilmember Cheryl Hauger were elected Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively, by acclamation.
- Meetings. Regular meetings of the Steering Committee will be scheduled for the fourth Wednesday of odd-numbered months. If the fourth Wednesday is unavailable, the second Wednesday of the month will be scheduled. The meeting time will be set for 6PM to 8PM. A general membership meeting will be held the first quarter of 2010. It is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, January 27, 2010.
- Dues. Invoices for membership dues for 2009 have been sent out by the City of Thornton. Members are asked to remit payment for 2009 if their budget permits. Invoices for membership dues for 2010 will be sent out at the end of the year, payable in 2010. The members agreed that the dues were intended to be used to pay for costs related lobbying the federal delegation/agency administrators/etc., hire lobbyists and/or expert consultants. The dues were not intended to be used to pay for general administrative type costs which the members would likely share or provide in-kind.
- Members. Chair Hansen asked that members advise Joyce Hunt of any changes in the Representative/Alternates list as this information will be published. Deb Obermeyer indicated that she would be providing the name of the second business person representing the Metro North Chamber.

Technical Group Report. Gene Putman presented the recommendations of the twelve staff representatives who met August 18 to discuss the purpose of NATA, transportation needs, and recommended priorities. The Technical Group recommended the following purpose statement: “To promote and obtain improved transportation within the NATA area in the form of passenger rail, bus service, and highway improvements in the I-25 Corridor.” The Technical Group identified eleven transportation issues/needs and prioritized these into three tiers; with tier one being the most important for the entire area, as follows:

Tier One

- Completion of RTD's North Metro FasTracks Corridor in its entirety from Denver Union Station to 162nd Avenue by 2015.

Several members expressed great concern about RTD's 2009 Financial Plan which relies on future revenues that the DRCOG staff and consultants reviewing the plan had deemed to be "optimistic" for the second year in a row. While the DRCOG reports indicated that the cost estimates for FasTracks appear to be realistic, the revenues were not and the implication is that short of some miracle, there isn't enough money to build anything but the West Corridor, East Line to DIA, and the Denver Union Station/Maintenance Facilities. Even if the voters approved an additional 0.4% sales and use tax increase, there still is no assurance that there will be enough money to build FasTracks as promised because of the uncertainty of receiving \$1 billion in federal grants and the reliance on public/private contracts. The members also expressed concern that the public wasn't being told the truth about the real financial condition of FasTracks and the way this was going, a lot of people could be paying for a transit system they won't have access to for a long time. Noel Busck was asked what RTD was doing to address this and he indicated that RTD is revising the revenue estimates and is expected to present a 2010 Financial Plan in January. However, without a tax increase and the \$1 billion in federal grants included in a yet to be drafted transportation funding bill (2011), there's only enough money to do the West Corridor, East Line to DIA and the Denver Union Station/Mtc Facilities. The members discussed the possibility of bringing in an expert to look at the Financial Plan and various DRCOG consultant reports. The purpose would be to evaluate whether there is a fundamental flaw in the revenue assumptions; the impacts of relying on these revenue assumptions; and communicating those impacts in a manner that is easily understood by the public and businesses. The members asked that the financial people from the communities be pulled together to take a look at the Financial Plan and DRCOG reports, provide their observations and make a recommendation to the members regarding this approach.

- Widening of I-25 south of E-470 with Toll-Hot/Express Bus Lanes and general purpose lanes to US 36.

Gene indicated that the North I-25 EIS preferred alternative included express bus/HOV lanes from Fort Collins to the Denver Union Station and this EIS provides the necessary environmental clearance/study for the express/HOV lanes. The North I-25 EIS included environmental study to add one general purpose lane in both directions on I-25 from SH 14 south to E-470 but there has been NO environmental study to add one general purpose lane in both directions from E-470 south to US 36 ("gap"). CDOT currently has NO plans to study the gap. In addition, the DRCOG 2035 Financially Constrained Plan only shows adding the general purpose lane from US 36 to Thornton Parkway and the plan would have to be amended to extend the general purpose lanes to E-470. Mayor McNally made the point that without an environmental study, which usually takes about four years, any subsequent funding requests to make improvements would not be eligible for funding consideration. The members unanimously supported taking action now with the goal to get CDOT to put the environmental study for this gap area on their project list and obtain funding for this study. Contact will be made as soon as possible to set up a meeting between Chair Hansen and Russ George, Executive Director of CDOT (and any other members of NATA able to attend) to communicate the need for this project and desire to work together to get this accomplished. In addition, a letter will be prepared to Russ George from NATA outlining the issue and desire to work together to remedy this situation. The members asked that the Technical Group be pulled back together to draft the letter and actions that need to be taken to address the "gap". The members also indicated they wanted to endorse

the North I-25 Study to ensure that the Toll-Hot/Express Bus Lanes extend to the existing Toll-Hot/Express Bus Lanes and don't stop at E-470 and to support the commuter rail and bus service. They asked that formal action of endorsement be brought forward at the next meeting.

Tier Two

- Southwest Weld County needs to explore going to their voters and annexing into the Regional Transportation District
- Construct Northeast Rail Corridor – NexTracks right-of-way purchase with FasTracks
- Extend North Metro Line from 162nd Avenue north to the Erie/Dacono Interchange on RTD right-of-way
- Additional extension of North Metro from the Erie/Dacono Interchange north and west to Longmont, need new right-of-way.

Tier Three

- Bus service to DIA using I-25 and E-470.
- US 85 Highway improvements including some widening and interchanges.
- State Highway 7 improvements including widening.
- State Highway 52 improvements including widening.

The members unanimously agreed with the purpose statement developed by the Technical Group and that the Tier One priorities were the top two priorities of NATA. Among the items discussed was the need to maintain a focus on the group's top priorities. The members asked that the purpose statement and priorities list be formally adopted at the next meeting.

Action Items:

- Schedule meeting with Russ George, CDOT to discuss "gap"; need for the general purpose lanes to extend from E-470 to US 36 and need to fund an environmental study of the "gap"
- Draft letter to Russ George regarding "gap"
- Draft resolution for NATA supporting North I-25 EIS preferred alternative as it relates to commuter rail, bus service, HOV/Hot Lanes, and general purpose lanes to US 36
- Draft resolution adopting purpose statement and priorities developed by Technical Group
- Pull together financial group to review FasTracks Financial Plan and DRCOG Reports and make recommendation to NATA

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for the September 23 via conference call.

FUTURE MEETINGS:

November 25, 2009 (4th Wednesday – just before Thanksgiving)

January 27, 2010 (4th Wednesday – GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING)

March 24, 2010 (4th Wednesday)

May 26, 2010 (4th Wednesday)

July 28, 2010 (4th Wednesday)

September 22, 2010 (4th Wednesday)

November 24, 2010 (4th Wednesday)