

DEPOT/NLX COMMITTEE MEETING

February 6, 2024

Location: County Commissioners Conference Room, St. Louis County Courthouse

Present: Commissioner Harala, Commissioner Boyle, Commissioner Nelson, Brian Fritsinger, Kevin Gray, BreAnn Graber, Mary Tennis, Darren Jablonski, Jim Foldesi, Brooke Wetmore (support), David Montgomery

Convened: The meeting convened at approximately 12:47PM

☐ **Approval of Agenda**

Boyle /Nelson moved to approve. The motion passed. (3-0)

☐ **Approval of January 23, 2024 NLX Depot Committee Minutes**

Boyle /Nelson moved to approve. The motion passed. (3-0)

☐ **City of Duluth Engagement**

David Montgomery, City Administrator for City of Duluth was present. Commissioner Nelson made a request to Montgomery to have Mayor Reinert appoint someone to fill the City of Duluth's seat on the NLX Alliance (a body made up of representatives along the proposed NLX line).

County representatives requested City of Duluth's close partnership on NLX Station planning at the Historic Depot and adjacent area master planning. The "close partnership" includes the presence of City of Duluth elected officials and staff on this committee. Reasons for their close partnership included Duluth Downtown Public Library planning, 5th Ave W reconstruction planning, impact on the Port, and shared downtown revitalization and economic development goals. Montgomery noted that the Mayor shares a commitment to utilizing the opportunity of NLX and terminal station development to create an "entryway to Duluth" and to ensure the "most positive impact on the community possible."

Commissioner Nelson stated that previously there had been concerns about identifying ongoing operational costs of the tracks, however, State Legislature made a commitment that the Railroad Tax will be used to fund these ongoing costs.

Commissioners requested a meeting with City of Duluth elected officials and Economic Development staff within the next two weeks.

☐ **Discussion Regarding Station Building Design Request For Proposal**

The Committee agreed that planning, including "refreshing" plans adopted in 2010 (City of Duluth, St. Louis County, et al.) and 2016 (MnDOT), was the next step. History was given that the 2010 plan offered (1) Site Plan, (2) Area Master Plan, and (3) Economic Analysis including forecasting of ridership. The 2016 plan included "bare bones" station planning including platform heights and other technical specifications. Community engagement must be a significant element of proposed planning efforts. Planning should also include interaction with activities/priorities within the Historic Depot.

□ Discussion Regarding Masterplan Request For Proposal

St. Louis County has previously committed \$350,000 for Area Master Planning efforts. Further clarification from the City of Duluth regarding financial commitment to Area Master Planning will be necessary.

□ Clarification of MNDOT versus St. Louis County station authority

MNDOT is the lead on the funding, route/track design, and station design. During previous conversations with the Commissioner of Transportation, Administrator Gray, and Director Foldesi, St. Louis County made the offer to manage station planning which MnDOT was receptive to. County Staff will follow up to confirm this and to discuss potential access to the federal funding award to MnDOT for planning efforts. The St. Louis/Lake County Rail Authority has been engaged with MnDOT up to this point and should be included in these conversations.

□ Station Building Construction Estimates

Deputy Administrator Fritsinger presented construction estimates as requested by the Committee. Assumptions included construction costs based on current industry estimates, the need for HVAC updates on existing structure, bike & pedestrian improvements, and parking ramp upgrades. Estimates came to roughly \$32 million.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:15pm