

MINNESOTA VALLEY TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Discussion with Dakota County

January 5, 2015 – 3:00 p.m.

Burnsville Bus Garage

**Board Members Present:**

Clint Hooppaw, Apple Valley  
Bill Droste, Rosemount  
Jon Ulrich, Scott County  
Michael McGuire, Prior Lake

**Others Present:**

Nancy Schouweiler, Dakota County Commissioner  
Liz Workman, Dakota County Commissioner  
Steve Mielke, Dakota County  
Mark Krebsbach, Dakota County  
Kristine Elwood, Dakota County  
Beverley Miller, MVTA  
Robin Selvig, MVTA  
Jane Kansier, MVTA

- I. The meeting began about 3:08 p.m. with Facilitator Steve Mielke, Dakota County Director of Physical Development, providing background to the discussion. The focus of the meeting was to discuss issues and gather information prior to the Jan. 13, 2015 meeting of the Dakota County Physical Development Committee where there will be a discussion regarding the County's membership in MVTA.
- II. Members of the Dakota County Board (Nancy Schouweiler and Liz Workman) along with Facilitator Mielke stated that there is agreement that the MVTA is a leader in bus service and provides an important service in Dakota County. There was a review of Dakota County's evolving role on the MVTA Board, culminating with both Dakota and Scott Counties becoming full parties in 2012.
- III. There was then discussion about the County's Transit Goals and Activities and the County's evolving role in transportation. Commissioner Schouweiler spoke about how things changed when the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) was founded and how the County began to assume a more global role in transit. County Board members stated the County's role is to "facilitate" transit and to "advocate for" transit, but not to be an operator or provider of transit. There was also discussion of the perception of a conflict of interest given the County's role on CTIB (which approves transitway operating funding agreements) the County's role as a "provider" by serving on the MVTA Board.
- IV. Commissioner Schouweiler also spoke about communications "not flowing from MVTA to CTIB staff and therefore CTIB had to change their way of doing business in regard to the METRO Red Line. MVTA Chair Clint Hooppaw stated that he questioned the accuracy of the data flowing to CTIB (specifically ridership reporting was an issue), and there was further discussion about how the data flows from MVTA to the Met Council to CTIB and MVTA did not have a place at the table. MVTA staff now attends CTIB meetings to answer questions, but the data has still been delayed in getting from the Met Council staff to CTIB. Beverley Miller noted that MVTA has all the data, and if CTIB has questions, we are not aware of them.
- V. Steve Mielke commented that currently, Dakota County does not see itself as a "provider" of services, but has a "different" relationship with MVTA than it has with other vendors in the County by serving on the MVTA Board. MVTA Vice Chair Jon Ulrich commented that the County is not a "provider" but is simply a member of a Board that supports transit. MVTA and its operator is the "provider." Liz Workman said that since the forming of CTIB, the County is taking on the role of "advocacy" and "check-signer" by serving on both CTIB and being a party to the MVTA Board. Beverley Miller reminded those present that MVTA grants are funneled through the Metropolitan Council and the MVTA does not have the authority to seek grant funding from CTIB.
- VI. As part of the discussion regarding concerns and issues identified by both the MVTA and Dakota County, Jon Ulrich remarked that the County's role is to serve its residents to the best of its

ability. He said that the Metropolitan Council has disadvantaged the suburban areas in its Transportation Policy Plan and five counties are “locking arms” to pressure the Council to help the County’s to provide the best service possible to their residents. He indicated the system would not be as strong if Dakota County were to leave.

VII. Beverley Miller questions what the County wants its role to be and where it wants to go. She said the County wants to “facilitate” transit, but it is not a funder of the service. Mark Krebsbach stated that the County’s role is to work with all County transit providers, but serving on the Board of one agency could create biases.

VIII. There was discussion about the METRO Red Line and the processes that were followed resulting in the state’s first BRT. Most of the last several years, the MVTA was focused on Red Line and BRT issues and Jon Ulrich said that Scott County was alongside Dakota County lobbying in Washington, DC. Ulrich also stated that he sees Scott and Dakota Counties as side-by-side partners, and MVTA is just another partner. He said he is “shocked” that Dakota County sees the MVTA as “just another vendor.” Ulrich and Hooppaw both commented that nothing really changed in the County’s role on the MVTA Board before and after the JPA language clean-up in 2012.

IX. Mielke asked for the MVTA to list its concerns – what gains are there by Dakota County being a member of the MVTA and what losses are seen by the County pulling out of the MVTA. Jon Ulrich said that “working together” is always a stronger approach than tackling projects on one’s own. “I just think it’s important to be here,” he said. “Collaboration is an important part of a unified front.”

- Losses:      Loss of Partnership/ United Front
- Loss of Collaboration
- Lack of membership may affect future initiatives including service

X. The discussion then turned to what a future relationship might look like. It was noted that meetings are open to the public, so staff can always attend. The issue of an “ex-officio” membership was raised and MVTA Board members agreed that it was better than no participation, but not ideal. Given that the MVTA is an elected Board, it was also questioned as to how participation would flow if Dakota County attended as an “ex-officio” member and commitment/participation of “ex-officio” members in general was raised as an issue.

XI. Beverley Miller raised governance concerns if Dakota County were to be an “ex-officio” member and reminded the group that the MVTA is not a “contract for service” type of organization. This was discussed with the merge of Prior Lake and Shakopee becoming members of MVTA and not a contractor reporting to another Governing Board such as a City Council. Steve Mielke noted that the Request for Board Action (RBA) will be completed by Friday, Jan. 9 and while staff is not offering a recommendation, the RBA will include a draft resolution for withdrawal from the MVTA.

XII. The meeting ended at 4:30 p.m.

Approved by: 

Date: 1/28/15