



SCALE

Scott County Association For Leadership And Efficiency

Government Without Borders: Working Together to Strengthen Each Other
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On Friday, October 14, members and guests of the Scott County Association for Leadership and Efficiency (SCALE) gathered for a meeting that featured a rather comprehensive overview of transportation issues: funding streams, approval authorities, respective responsibilities, interested parties and groups, and an ever-important primer on the myriad acronyms that dot the topic.

Scott County Deputy Administrator Lezlie Vermillion, who has spent over 28 years in the transportation field, began her “transportation primer” presentation with a simple caveat: *this is complicated*. “However, almost everything we do – as public officials and as private citizens – involves transportation on some level, from making sure your kids make it to school safely to ensuring a viable farm-to-market system,” she noted. And transportation is becoming increasingly more critical for Scott County, she noted, because of “... several big things coming together, such as the Minnesota River Crossing Study [and its implications]; the planned I-35 bridge project, slated for 2020; and the draft Environmental Impact Statement for a new river crossing. All of these, regardless of where you are in this County, will have some impact on you and your residents.”

Savage Mayor Janet Williams, a longtime transportation and transit advocate, added, “While we tend to focus on moving people through our transportation system, we also need to consider the implications for moving goods as well. Transportation is a key economic development factor.” **Scott County Commissioner Jon Ulrich** echoed the mayor’s comments, noting that the 169 Corridor Coalition had met with a large employer in Le Sueur on the previous evening, who stressed how critical the corridor was to the success of their enterprise.

Vermillion then ran down an abbreviated list of the many partners and interested parties involved with the planning, design, and/or funding of transportation projects: the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which approves design, certifies the validity of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), ensures compliance with all relevant federal regulations and laws, and allocates federal funds; the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), which oversees highways, rural transit, high speed rail, and the airports, as well as produces the statewide transportation plan and serves as an approval/permitting authority; the Metropolitan Council, which – in conjunction with the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) – functions as the region’s MPO (and, as such, approves federal and state transportation funding decisions); local agencies – e.g., counties, cities, townships, and the schools; Metro Transit; the suburban opt-out transit providers; and “other” transit services operated through the Met Council and other agencies. Finally, Vermillion stated, there is the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), a relatively new funding partnership among the five metro counties who opted in to a 0.25 percent sales tax for transitway projects in the area.

“And if this wasn’t complicated enough,” Vermillion said, “actually following the funding streams is that much more complex.” For a more detailed overview of the transportation funding sources and distribution formulas, please see the entire “transportation primer” presentation at www.scaleinfo.org.

Prior Lake Mayor Mike Myser, this year’s SCALE chair, then introduced the day’s final agenda item: preliminary planning for SCALE’s 2012 year. Members were asked to suggest both agenda topics and potential legislative priorities for the upcoming year; any suggestions or recommendations can be sent to Lisa Kohner, Scott County Public Affairs Coordinator, at lkohner@co.scott.mn.us.

Please note – Due to the Veterans’ Day holiday on November 11, 2011, the next general SCALE meeting will be held on Friday, November 19.

“The mission of SCALE is to forge new and innovative ways in which government entities can collaborate to provide superior services while making the most of limited resources.”

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