

Recap of East Downtown Council's Business Forum
Thursday, March 19, 2015
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
1010 Metrodome Square, 1010 South 7th Street
Elliot Park Neighborhood of Minneapolis

- ***Welcome and Introductions***

EDC President Paul Mellblom introduced himself and welcomed the audience to the March 2015 business forum. He reminded those who are members they should have received the 8-question Membership Survey that EDC Executive Coordinator Christie Hantge sent out a couple weeks ago and urged them to submit feedback as it will help to guide the work the EDC provides on their behalf.

Paul then announced that the second public presentation on the Downtown East Commons will take place on Wednesday, April 8th, 6-7:30 p.m. at the Mill City Museum. Hargreaves Associates, the lead landscape architects, will be presenting design alternatives for public feedback and the EDC hopes to schedule a presentation later in the summer at an EDC business forum.

EDC Executive Director Dan Collison also welcomed the audience, thanked the EDC members for their support, and gave a special acknowledgement to the following platinum sponsors who help put the top over everything the EDC does:

- Allied Parking
- CenterPoint Energy
- Hennepin County Medical Center
- Kraus-Anderson
- Minnesota Vikings
- Mortenson Construction
- NRG Energy Center
- PadillaCRT
- Ryan Companies
- Valspar
- Wells Fargo

Dan then welcomed newest member Jeff Washburne from City of Lakes Community Land Trust (CLCLT) who was unable to attend the business forum. Dan explained that city and business leaders are estimating in about 10 years there will be 10,000 new residents living in East Downtown based on some of the growing trends in housing development and he is thrilled to have CLCLT be a part of the development conversations as it is about closing some of the gaps and working on affordability. For more information, visit <http://clclt.org/>.

Thereafter, the audience introduced themselves during which Chris Fleck announced that North Central University is in its 84th year of being active in downtown. The new NCAA-regulation soccer field is a community amenity owned by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and NCU stepped up to the plate to champion funding and oversee construction and will turn it back over to the MPRB when it is completed this spring. Currently, there are 44 pallets of sand and a rubber element being swept into the carpet itself to put a softer perimeter around the field to allow the artificial turf to stick up. On September 1, 2015 there will be a huge fanfare grand opening by the MPRB that NCU will be sponsoring. Several EDC members have already donated, e.g.: Aeon, Augustana Care, HCMC, and Thrivent. Of the \$1 million budget, there remains a gap of only \$100,000. Chris encouraged those interested in being a part of the campaign to contact him directly.

- ***CenterPoint Energy Construction Update***

Al Swintek, Manager of Minnesota Local Government Relations at CPE, gave an update on their 2015 natural gas transmission pipeline replacement project in downtown Minneapolis. It is an ongoing

process to keep the system upgraded safe and manageable. He began first by giving a brief history. The company was founded in 1870 as the Minneapolis Gas Light Company and was headquartered at 1240 West River Parkway in the Downtown East neighborhood where its Energy Home Service Plus remains today (<http://www.centerpointenergy.com/about/companyoverview/companyhistory/>).

Since inception, CPE has grown to serve 834,753 customers and 260 communities in Minnesota. They have over 1,300 employees, \$1.46 billion in infrastructure, and 13,614 miles of gas pipeline not counting the service lines that go to homes, businesses and meters. In Minneapolis they serve 184,685 customers and have over 800 employees and 914 miles of gas pipeline.

In approximately 3 weeks they will be moving their headquarters from LaSalle Plaza in downtown Minneapolis to the former Neiman Marcus building at 505 Nicollet Mall that they purchased and renovated to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver Certification. It will house 300 employees running their phone center for all of Minnesota as well as some corporate functions. What's exciting is they have struck a deal with Meet Minneapolis to have a 5,000 square foot visitor information center within the building at the corner of South 5th Street and Nicollet Mall right off the LRT that should open by Memorial Day. There's a possibility that the Downtown Minneapolis Transportation Management Organization (TMO) may be part of this operation as well but details are still being worked out.

Swintek then explained CPE's commitment to the community through its core values of safety, integrity, accountability, initiative and respect for customers, investors, employees and communities. He noted that the core value of safety is his focus today because that's what the pipeline replacement project is all about.

In order to feed all the lines, the Minnesota Belt Line system (shown as an orange line on the map) loops the entire metropolitan area of which the main artery goes through Minneapolis. Over the next 8 to 10 years they will be systematically replacing the entire loop with new materials and removing the bends to make it easier for them to conduct inspections.

Construction Manager Todd Nordgren, using a color-coded area map that can be found at CPE's website (<http://www.centerpointenergy.com/staticfiles/CNP/Common/SiteAssets/doc/Downtown%20Exhibit%202-26%20AEO.pdf>), briefed the audience on their schedule of activities affecting downtown. Approximately 1.4 miles of 20 inch steel transmission pipe will be replaced in the public right-of-way as indicated as follows:

- The areas in green will be under construction from mid March to May;
- The areas in blue will be under construction from May to June;
- The areas in red will be under construction from May to July; and
- The area in pink will be under construction from August to September.

They have been working with the City of Minneapolis, the developer of Mill City Quarter, Mill City Museum/Mill City Farmers Market and others to coordinate schedules, road closures and traffic rerouting.

In closing, Nordgren described the signage and information cards in construction areas and the newly launched website.

- ***The Convergence of Technology and Transportation in East Downtown***

Dan prefaced the introduction to the car sharing presenters by stating he has been personally interacting with this topic since moving downtown in 2009. Then when he was recently priced out of living downtown, he had to rethink his situation as his commute increased by 5 miles, and his family had recently gotten rid of their second car. How was he going to get to and from all his destinations? He

made a commitment to go for at least a year without getting a second car in order to do a serious comparison of the modes of transit, i.e., Metro Transit, ride share, and bicycling. Technology has changed the entire conversation and smartphones and apps enable us to find information quickly and converge the different modes of transportation. Then he introduced:

- *HOURLCAR*. Marketing Coordinator Scott Vargo, advised that they are a local nonprofit car sharing organization and all of the inventory (approximately 75 cars) is located in specific areas in Minneapolis and St. Paul with the largest concentration being in downtown Minneapolis and Uptown. Once you become a member, you may reserve a car anywhere from half an hour up to 3 months before you need it. In order to enter the car, you'll be given a key fob that will unlock the doors and once inside there'll be a key to start the ignition. You return the car from the same location you picked it up. They have just launched a new business rate plan at \$7.50 an hour with 100 miles; gas and insurance included. Along with the TMOs in Minneapolis and St. Paul, this is a way for employers to (1) streamline the HR side of things — no longer need to do mileage reimbursement or worry about insurance; (2) encourage employees to use for short trips during the day; and (3) have the benefit of a joint business and individual account. It is a great way to work all of these modes into each other. No single one will work a 100% of the time, but if you combine them and figure out how to use them you can save a lot of time, money and your health. Vargo then he asked the audience to go back to their organizations and start thinking about alternative modes of transportation. For more information, visit <http://www.hourcar.org/>.
- *Car2Go*. Location Manager Josh Johnson advised that they are the blue and white smart cars that we've likely seen downtown. They are what's called free floating or point-to-point car sharing where it's not dedicated to a station. They have an agreement with both Minneapolis and St. Paul to allow their cars to be parked on the street. You may park at a meter and they'll pay it for you so you needn't worry about feeding a meter, getting a ticket, or towed. They have 535 cars throughout the Twin Cities, 350 in Minneapolis and 185 in St. Paul that can float back and forth between the cities. There is a one-time registration fee then you pay as you go; no annual or recurring fees and no reservations required. They have applications for businesses as well, as an individual or as an organization for its employees. They also have prepaid minutes that can be purchased in bulk and distributed to employees. As was mentioned previously, you can save money by using them in combination with the various other modes of transportation. For more information, visit <http://minneapolis.car2go.com/>.
- *ZipCar*. Marketing Associate Molly Sands advised they are the world's leading car sharing service and just celebrated 15 years in the business that originated in Boston. Like HOURLCAR, their vehicles (hybrid Priuses, BMWs, Volkswagon Golfs) have a home location (e.g., in a ramp or on the street) and follow a roundtrip model. They are membership based and gas, insurance and 180 miles is included. They have a variety of university and business plans and subsidies by the Ford Motor Company. Rates range from \$9 per hour to \$74 a day and you can use your smartphone to make a reservation. When talking about neighborhoods and development and getting rid of parking congestion, it's going to be difficult to do with all the new development beyond the stadium because there's so many residential properties without enough parking that are being built. One of the biggest studies she appreciates was conducted by Susan Shaheen from the Transportation Sustainability Research Center at Berkeley that found that models such as ZipCar and HOURLCAR remove personally owned cars by 15 to 20 per car sharing vehicle put into a neighborhood and is a fine way to reduce some of these problems.

Dan advised that the EDC values the membership of its parking companies and they have been incredible contributors to the community. There is a dialectic going on here, e.g., HCMC is building a \$191 million clinic but they are a trauma one regional superstar and service the entire state so the idea of removing parking is not a good option because people come from everywhere. At the same time, one in two of all housing units being built are multifamily and a large amount of those are being put along transit hubs so

when it comes to the design of parking ramps, the needs of hospitals, businesses and their particular employees' needs, the EDC wants everyone to understand that if you have 20 people sharing a car will help those you have to have cars get around easier. Using all of the alternative transportation modes and the latest technology will help make it all work better.

Dan then introduced the featured speakers by providing a brief background on each:

- *Allan Klugman, Senior Professional Engineer for the City of Minneapolis Department of Public Works, Traffic and Parking Services Division (TPSD).* Using slides he briefed the audience on the following:
 - **Traffic signal system.** There are 800 signals in Minneapolis of which 200 are in downtown. On the one hand they are an old fashioned device — they go green, yellow, red and the walk sign comes up and doesn't last as long as you want — and on the other hand more and more technology is being added to the system every year that helps make them more reliable and efficient to operate for the vehicles, pedestrian and bicycles on the road. It also helps TPSD staff to do their job more effectively.

If you go to any intersection that has a traffic signal, at one of the four corners you'll see a metal cabinet that houses the electrical gear, i.e., the wires, connections and cables that make the signal operate. The most important part of the cabinet is the signal controller that is loaded with traffic programs or applications that monitor the intersection, put out the timing for different sites and work in concert with the central management system located just outside of downtown. All 800 of those cabinets talk back and forth with the central system and allow TPSD operators to keep their eyes on them simultaneously and manage them remotely. They also have special cameras at about 65 intersections and receive live video feeds from the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) and Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). This system is about 3 years old and by using these various forms of technology it keeps a better handle on the state of the system. When they set up timing patterns for signals they think about lots of things including morning and afternoon rush hours, special sports events, 10 Garth Brooks concerts, and where the other modes are coming from, e.g., the high volume of Metro Transit buses on Marquette and 2nd Avenues, and the LRT through downtown on 5th Street that is now even more challenging with the addition of the Green Line. The bar signal for the LRT is driven through their system and preferential timing is given to allow it to go station-to-station without stopping within a framework that keeps the grid flowing as much as possible.

Another piece of technology they have embraced are the small changeable message signs placed on the signal arms that are mostly seen on the MnDOT freeways (e.g., Crash Ahead, Right Lane Closed). They have 85 of them and are used for traffic control and wayfinding. About 15 years ago they transitioned to the international symbols for walk and don't walk and within the last couple years they transitioned to the countdown system, a convenience and big safety feature for pedestrians. Statistics indicate that going from a traditional walk/don't walk to a countdown timer, the number of crashes between vehicles and pedestrians goes down 25%. When you give people better information they make better and safer decisions and they are in the retrofitting process. For the sight impaired, it is difficult for them to find the push buttons for the walk signal so TPSD has embraced the audible pedestrian signal (APS) that communicates information about the walk/don't walk intervals at signalized intersections.

For the softer side of TPSD, it has recently entered into a partnership with the Minneapolis Arts Commission where they allow their traffic cabinets to be wrapped; they are now up to about 100. Klugman doesn't keep track of where they are but believes there is a few of them in Downtown East. It's a win-win program and they follow artistic guidelines. It makes their cabinets more attractive, helps to stop graffiti, and neighborhoods can put up an image symbolic of their area.

For more information about placing art on public property, visit <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/dca/WCMS1P-083277>.

- **Parking system.** TPSD is one of the bigger operators in Minneapolis. In the off-street parking world, they are one of many providers. In downtown there are approximately 77 garages and underground parking ramps of which TPSD operates about 17 with a couple located in Downtown East (i.e., Mill Quarter Municipal Parking Ramp, Riverfront Municipal Parking Ramp). In terms of technology, they are beginning to install electric vehicle charging stations to help encourage use of alternative fuel vehicles.

Regarding on-street parking, the old-fashioned parking meter is going high tech. About 5 years ago TPSD began getting rid of the regular meters and replaced them with a multi-space system where one pay station covers about 10 parking spaces. When TPSD began the replacement process it knew it wanted to reuse the post and to number the spaces and after coming up with a number of prototypes the guys in the meter shop came up with the triangular metal sleeves that fits over the existing posts.

Another piece of technology that is coming soon will allow you to pay via smartphone. TPSD is entering into final negotiations with a vendor that has the app so that instead of going to the pay station you can pay directly from your smartphone. This will be rolled out in late April/early May 2015.

- **Bike lane system.** Over the years TPSD has added many, many miles of bike lanes. There are now 118 miles of on-street bike lanes. This doesn't include the lanes in the park system; that's about another 100 miles. Not all bike lane systems are the same. There are traditional systems for low volume roads; buffered that puts a zone to the left to protect the cyclists from moving vehicles and a zone to the right to protect the cyclists from opening car doors; and protected with delineator sticks for another level of protection, safety and comfort. City Council has mandated TPSD put in 30 miles of protected bike lanes by 2020 and added \$700,000 to Public Work's budget for 2015 and 2016 toward that program.

Bike lanes have proven to be safe throughout the nation but the one spot that stays problematic is at intersections where sometimes vehicles turning right don't see approaching bicyclists. What they have found is if the conflict zone is better marked with a green skipped pattern leading into it and through the intersection it greatly reduces the risk of collision. This is fairly new for Minneapolis but studies have shown that in other cities throughout the country that have implemented this green skipped pattern have experienced a 40% decrease in bike and vehicle collisions. This is a major safety improvement for a modest amount of money.

A new technology, i.e., special bicycle signals, has been installed at about a half dozen intersections in Minneapolis, giving bicyclists their own right-of-way.

- **Changes coming to the transportation network.** Klugman explained the big-scale changes coming to downtown in the new few years:
 - **Access corridors.** On a color-coded map, the 4th Street ramp onto northbound 35W was shown in light blue; the off-bound ramp from I-94 going westbound onto 7th Street was shown in red; the downtown streetcar line was shown in yellow; the Southwest LRT (Blue Line extension to Eden Prairie) was shown in green; the Bottineau LRT heading out Highway 55 to the northwest was shown in blue; and the Orange Line for express buses from the southern suburbs was shown in orange.

- *Proposed projects.* Displaying a color-coded map, Klugman explained that this year by far has been the largest for construction, road improvements, and utility repairs in downtown and TPSD has designated an additional person to try and manage all of them without stepping on each other's toes.

In closing, Klugman advised he would forward to Dan a link to the information presented.

- *Dan McLaughlin, Executive Director, Downtown Minneapolis Transportation Management Organization (TMO), now known as Commuter Connections (<http://www.commuter-connection.org/>).* In policy circles, TMOs are known, but with the outreach they engage in they discovered people outside of policy circles do not know what TMOs are so they came up with Commuter Connections to better communicate what they do as staff.

The TMO was formed in 1991 as a public/private partnership between the City of Minneapolis and the business community to support travel demand management strategies, increase employer / employee participation in transportation solutions, and advance public policies and practices regarding transportation issues and solutions. Roads are only so big in downtown and there is an increased residential and working population so to the extent they can build a system that accommodates many modes of transportation as well as inspire and empower commuters to get the most out of their downtown commute there will be economic growth and prosperity.

McLaughlin described the TMO board that is comprised of some of EDC members, e.g., Allied Parking, CenterPoint Energy, HCMC, and Thrivent and then noted that if they have any issues coming up to speak with him about them as they serve in an advisory capacity to the City of Minneapolis.

TMOs exist because of the Clean Air Act and what the safe level of pollution is set by the Environmental Protection Agency. Those who are approaching the safe level limit are called into the maintenance area and those who exceed the limit go into the non-attainment area. Probably in September there will be new guidelines on chromium. Right now we are hitting those limits and when the EPA lowers the bar there is a chance they'll go out of compliance with the CAA. Then they'll go into non-attainment and instead of doing voluntarily outreach as they've been doing, they'll go into a legislative regulatory approach resulting in an increasing cost to business across a 13-county area of a couple hundred million dollars a year. To the extent that they work together to develop sustainable transportation choices, maybe those fees can be avoided.

To conduct Travel Demand Management (TDM) programs they are funded through Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and local partnerships (e.g., businesses, bike and car share businesses, Metro Transit, TPSD, carpooling) and try to arrive at local solutions.

In addition to CC, McLaughlin described the other regional TMOs: St. Paul Smart Trips; Anoka County Commute Solutions; 494 Commuter Solutions; and Metro Transit. Then he showed a map of the 7-county area with shading in blue of the extensive area covered by Metro Transit.

Regional TDM programs consist of: Switch My Trip; Bike Week / Bike to Work Day coming up in May; Rideshare to Work Month in October; and Commuter Choice Awards on April 8th.

Regarding technology, they started a program called ZAP Twin Cities that involved setting up a ring radio-frequency identification (RFID) readers around downtown Minneapolis, University of Minnesota campus and downtown St. Paul, and putting a tag on the wheel of a bike. When you ride by the RFID there's an audible beep and it picks up the trip and sends it to a database that tells you the days you've biked, number of miles, fuel saved, pounds of CO₂ reduced, and calories burned. Prizes are awarded for the number of times you've bike. The idea is educate and create a sustainable behavior change. They currently have about 2,000 members and last year they biked the equivalent

of about 23 times around downtown. He's talking about small successes stats. If you as an employer put in a bike room and you get three bikers that's not a big deal, but three at every employer the stats can add up. Quality Bicycle Products did a study with HealthPartners that revealed costs associated with doctor visits were substantially lower for people who biked to work. As a result QBP went to its healthcare providers and negotiated a lower cost overall on its insurance rates. Companies that are doing the same, e.g., Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis, are negotiating a lower insurance rate and CC is trying to work with employers/property owners to reward bicyclists (reference his Zap Green Zone by Property chart). For more information, visit <http://www.commuter-connection.org/zap/>.

Other TDM programs include Carpool Concierge and Commuter Connection Store. As an employer, if you're enrolled in all three programs, they can provide that feedback quarterly so you know what the impact is on your sustainability issues.

- ***Closing Announcement***

Dan announced that the next business forum will be EDC's annual meeting on Thursday, April 16th, 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at the Normandy Inn. The Theater of Public Policy will rift on himself, Paul, Christie and Steve Cramer of the MDC. They will give a review of the EDC strategic plan and the results of what has been done over the last year.

Then he thanked the audience for attending and wished them a great week.