



## Appendix – 1.4 KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

### Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan

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## Scott Dibble

### Loring's State Senator

November 11, 2010

*The following is a summary of an interview conducted by Peter Musty, CLPC Master Plan Consultant, attended by John Van Heel, Master Plan Steering Committee Member. The notes were reviewed and approved for accuracy by Senator Dibble on February 2, 2011.*

Senator Dibble was kind enough to meet with us on Veteran's Day. It was a pleasure to listen to him speak about a range of issues while sitting with him in a coffee shop in Uptown, close to his home. He was supplied a list of issues to touch on, including:

- Scott's Background
- Scott as Senator
- What do Senators do in general?
- What do Senators do for neighborhoods?
- What does Sen Dibble do vs other Senators?
- Senate Transportation Committee
- Streetcars
- LRT timelines
- Funneling more funds to urban districts
- DID Expansion to Freeway – legislation?
- Upgrading Old Buildings
- Downtown Bus Fare Expansion
- Jan 20th – Loring Multi-Modal Panel
- Thoughts about Loring's future (submitted in writing)

#### **Senator Dibble's Background**

Scott Dibble has been fighting for the Loring Neighborhood, and the people of Loring, since the 1990's. From civil rights to transportation, he has developed a passion about the role and importance of community organizing, moving from activism to city government to neighborhood leadership to state government.

Scott began gaining experience for leadership through his activism in Minneapolis involving GLBT human and civil rights movement. Involved in ‘..asking our country to deal better with the HIV crisis..’, this fight early in his adult life brought him in contact with issues of social & environmental justice, equity, and neighborhood quality of life. He has maintained his involvement ever since.

He began developing his passion for transportation during the fight against 35W expansion through South Minneapolis. He saw how little the community was consulted – that the benefits vs the impacts were not being adequately considered during the planning process.



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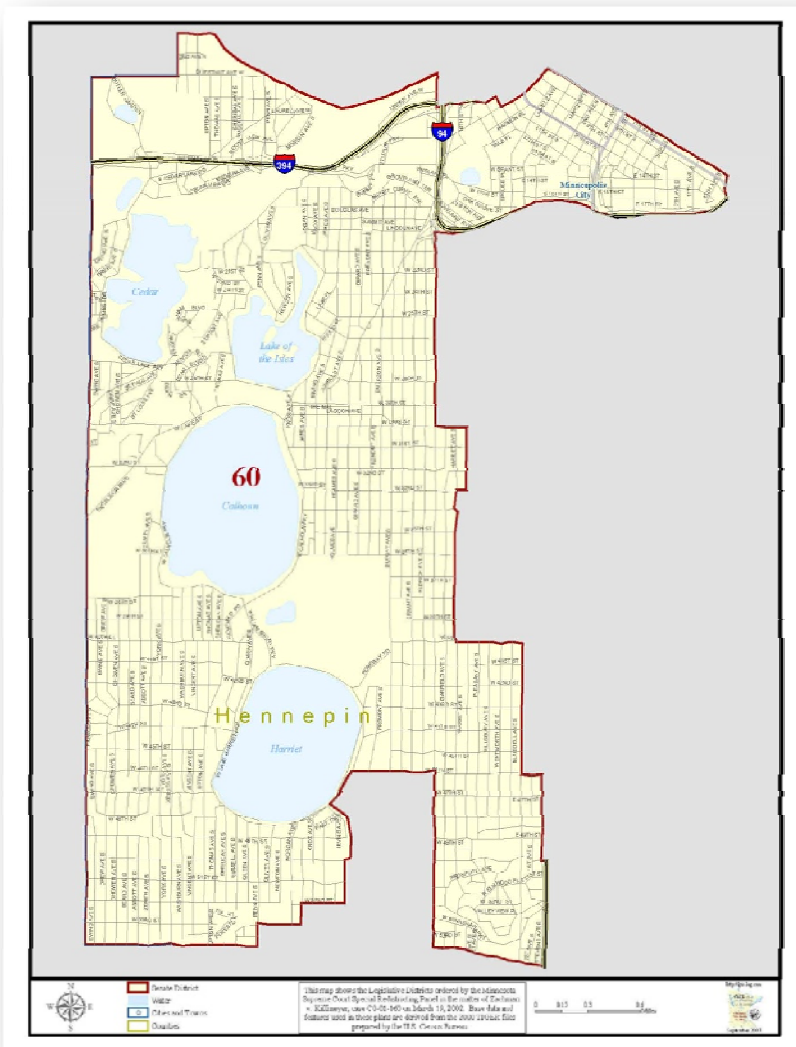
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#### Policy Aide to Dore Mead

Scott “learned a lot” as policy aide to Minneapolis Councilmember Dore Mead. They fought for better citizen participation, better urban form, transit, sustainability and more affordable housing in the region. Mead rose to Chair the City’s Transportation & Public Works Committee. Together they continued to represent citizens from a community organizing perspective.

Scott related this anecdote (not verbatim): “When we were asked about a livability issue (such as a controversial stop sign), we might ask the citizen to organize a meeting to discuss the issue with neighbors, to engage the issue wholistically, perhaps bring in an engineer to help with the problem solving. Those kinds of meetings taught everyone a lot – and some of them led to greater things. It was clearly more effective – and efficient - than simply answering “Okay, we’ll just go fix it for you”...”

Scott’s service during that time also included experience with housing, education, and health care issues, and greater experience in politics.



#### 1998-2002: Citizens for a Loring Park Community Coordinator, State Representative, then State Senator!

In the late nineties, Scott served briefly as CLPC Coordinator for about a year, until he successfully won a seat as State Representative for District 60B. In 2002 he became State Senator for District 60 (see map below.) after Allan Spear’s retirement.

Scott described that he is one of 67 Minnesota State Senators, one of 201 in the State Legislature (including Representatives). The Senate’s responsibilities are to establish the state budget, raise necessary resources to pay for state services, and establish laws. They also propose budgets and policy for state agencies and the delivery of public services.

Each Senator also has an area of focus, which manifests in the form of the Senate Committee structure. Past Committees included



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Housing / Economic Development & Taxes, Human Rights, Energy & Environment, Jobs, State Government / Veterans, and Transportation, for which he served as Transit Sub-Committee Chair.

Scott related that he has kept the same approach in many of these committees – promoting better methods of participation for citizens and the expansion of civil rights.

#### **Good Transportation can Expand the State Economy**

Scott described how transportation and transit issues go “...right to the heart of a society based on equality”. How do we provide basic services for those things we cannot do alone? From basic mobility to access to jobs, transportation includes many issues of basic social justice.

Scott discussed how transportation design can support land use patterns that are either exclusive or inclusive/wholistic. Transportation (& Land Use) issues also have implications for the environment, as the choices we make about our system can either support or deny water quality or sustainable consumption of energy.

The design of transportation facilities, if done well, can add to how livable our cities are, and can add to the life and vitality of the economy. Conversely, Scott related how bad, decayed or poor transportation can create ‘choke points’ in a vibrant state economy. Good transportation done well can expand our economy and corresponding opportunities.

On the ground of the Senate, Scott has kept focus on a couple things:

- 1) Paying attention to how people participate on transportation decisions.
- 2) Effective funding of a variety of transportation modes. Scott described that the **2008 Transportation Bill** (passed on override of veto), established a 1/4 cent sales tax to fund transitways. It was a “huge achievement”, although it still only raised one-third of what is needed. Scott pointed out that Minnesota has the sixth largest roadway system, but is only the 12<sup>th</sup> largest state.

#### **Helping Neighborhoods**

Scott explained that State Senators can help neighborhoods in several ways:

- Advocating for specific policies.
- Interacting with other levels of government & other jurisdictions to find out what they need and to help get things done for our shared constituents.
- Hearing citizens through informal discussions, acting as sounding board.

#### **Streetcars**

Analyzing where we are on the issue, he related that we are not at dawn, rather at mid-morning. There are still several fundamental things to find out about Streetcars, including

- A look at best practices.
- Who is going to own and operate? City? Council? Met Transit? Joint Powers?
- Who pays for ongoing operations of the streetcar?
- What is the fare box ratio?
- Are there models of public-private partnerships? Could there be a model where the risk is on the private entity, allowing them to realize some means of profit in return?
- How will streetcars fit into local & regional plans?
- How do those regional plans support local master plans?



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Scott pointed out that “...we don’t do transportation for transportation sake...”, but rather to serve communities.

Scott, a DFLer, mentioned that (given results of the recent elections) he is dubious of prospects for progress on advancing some transit issues in the next two years, however the prospects for funding the Streetcar study are good, especially in light of available federal resources.

#### **Southwest LRT 2014 Timeline “At Risk”**

Scott mentioned that the Southwest LRT line is in preliminary engineering, and that it will go forward and happen with minimal level of state support. However, to get to further stages the State has to show good faith to the federal government, including commitment to devote general fund or general obligation bonds to the project. “We need more dollars.” Scott mentioned ideas need to be considered such as an additional sales tax or a motor vehicle sales tax.

Senator Dibble feels the 2014 date of completion is now “optimistic”, unless there is more support from groups such as the TwinWest Chamber of Commerce (<http://www.twinwest.com/>) and local business leaders.

#### **Asked About Ways to Funnel Funds to Urban Districts...**

Senator Dibble considered some existing programs such as Enterprise Zones and Job –Z, but then made special mention of three initiatives Minneapolis neighborhoods might deserve the most focus:

- 1) State of Minnesota Reinvestment Fund
- 2) Regional Sustainability Plan – Met Council driven
- 3) US HUD-DOT-Office of Livability Grants

This program brings together funding for infrastructure and development (typically separate) for projects meeting sustainability and energy goals. LEED for Neighborhood Development criteria for Section I: Smart Location and Linkages will be included in the grant criteria. Scott believes every level of government from State to Region to County to Local – will be well served to get in line with these emerging Federal funding standards.

- 4) State of MN: TIF for Transit Oriented Development (authored by Senator Dibble)
- 5) State of MN: TIF for Transit Station Areas

#### **DID Expansion to Freeway?**

Scott thought this issue brings up a fundamental tension in Loring – the fact that it is part of downtown, yet it is its own. He asked rhetorically, how does it retain its fundamental character – while dealing with the ‘spill over’ of downtown (which is both good and bad)? ” That issue was a central one when he was at CLPC, and probably long before that. Scott has often thought about the answer to: “Why has Nicollet struggled so much?”

Senator Dibble said that he is positioned to look into – and could support an expansion of the DID to the Freeway. He wondered if the rest of DID would support it?

#### **When Asked About Downtown Bus Fare Expansion...**

“Lets get our oars in the water!”

#### **On Upgrades to Old Buildings...**

Scott wanted to set the record straight – saying it was a myth that the State is forcing building owners to upgrade old buildings – and offered to provide information if requested.