

Eastern Bypass Study Community Advisory Group

Eastern Bypass Study

From Interstate 74 to Illinois Route 6
Peoria, Tazewell and Woodford Counties
Job No. P-94-021-07; Catalog No. 033514-00P

MEETING SUMMARY

Community Advisory Group Meeting #10

March 22, 2012

The tenth meeting of the Eastern Bypass Study Community Advisory Group (CAG) was held at the Countryside Banquet Facility, in Washington, on Thursday, March 22, 2012, at 6:00 P.M.

Representing IDOT's Study Team for the Eastern Bypass Project were the following individuals:

- Mike Lewis (IDOT)
- Tom Lacy (IDOT)
- Greg Larson (IDOT)
- Brittany McGinn (IDOT)
- Jeff Schlotter (H.W. Lochner, Inc.)
- Dave Shannon (H.W. Lochner, Inc.)
- George Ghareeb (TERRA Engineering, Ltd.)
- Scott Presslak (TERRA Engineering, Ltd.)
- Lynn Moe (TERRA Engineering, Ltd.)
- Dennis Jennings (Technology of Participation)
- Judy Weddle (Technology of Participation)

Guest in attendance:

- Tom Lerczak (Illinois Department of Natural Resources--Illinois Nature Preserves Commission)

Presented below is a summary of the meeting, organized by the agenda items.

I. WELCOME AND MEETING OBJECTIVES

Jeff Schlotter opened the meeting just after 6:00 PM with the announcement of two new CAG members — Tom Stewart, from the Village of Bay View Gardens, and Clark Hopkins, from the Village of Germantown Hills — and the introduction of Tom Lerczak, from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), who was attending the meeting to contribute his knowledge regarding the Spring Creek Preserve area. Mr. Schlotter also re-introduced the members of the IDOT Study Team who

were in attendance. He then acknowledged that several members of the general public were in attendance and briefly reminded everyone that the public's role at CAG meetings is as observers, not participants.

Mr. Schlotter then outlined the agenda for the meeting, stating that the main objectives are to provide an update on the study activities since the previous CAG meeting and to continue the process of selecting one preferred corridor, or a combination of corridors, for the study.

II. UPDATE ON STUDY ACTIVITIES

Mr. Schlotter began this agenda item with a reminder about the work done at the last round of CAG meetings. He mentioned that last spring three CAG meetings and one CAG open house were held in quick succession. He further explained that during those meetings, discussions ranged from how twenty corridors were reduced to fourteen, how the representative bands were developed and how they function, how the benefits and impacts data had been prepared for the bands, and how the CAG worked during the previous two meetings to narrow down the fourteen corridors to six corridors for further analysis.

During this discussion, Mr. Schlotter refer to a handout showing the "sticky wall results" from the previous series of meetings, as well as a map showing the six remaining corridors.

Mr. Schlotter then briefly summarized the results of the September 2011 public meeting. He stated that the main purposes were to provide general information about the study and its progress, to present the recommended corridors and the process used to select them, and to receive comments on them. He then reminded the CAG members about the reasons why IDOT seeks comments from the public, stating that such comments help IDOT ensure that all potentially significant benefits or impacts have been considered. He emphasized that this is important because those who live and work in the area may have knowledge that was unavailable to the Study Team or that may have been inadvertently overlooked during data collection and analyses activities.

Mr. Schlotter also reminded the group that comments generated from public meetings do not constitute a survey, a vote, or a poll, and that the results are not a statistically valid sample of community views. He further stated that the nature or the content of the comments are more important than the number of times any one comment is mentioned.

Turning to the results from the public meeting, Mr. Schlotter explained that no new information or suggestions were generated that would significantly change the conclusions that the CAG and Study Team had reached regarding corridors to drop or keep. He stated that, as a result of the meeting, the six corridors the CAG all agreed to keep are now officially the ones for further discussion, and the eight corridors the CAG recommended dropping are now officially dropped.

Next, Mr. Schlotter explained that the Study Team had been very busy since the beginning of 2012 meeting with various local governments and agencies, seeking input on the six corridors under consideration. In addition to the input received at the meetings, IDOT received six written resolutions or recommendations, including:

- Heart of Illinois Group Sierra Club (Opposed to Corridors P4 and T7)
- Village of Mackinaw (Prefers Corridors T6 or T7)
- Tazewell County (Prefers Corridors P2, T6, or M10)
- City of Washington (Prefers Corridor T6)
- Village of Morton (Prefers Corridor T6)
- Washington Township (Prefers Corridor T6)

Mr. Schlotter concluded this agenda item with a graphic showing the steps of the Corridor and Alignment Studies, indicating that the study was approaching the end of the Corridor Study phase. He also noted that the Study Team would be working closely with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to ensure a smooth transition to the Alignment Study because with the FHWA's involvement, the Study would be subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

III. PRESENTATION OF ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC ANALYSIS

Mr. Schlotter then turned to the next agenda item, focusing on the additional traffic analyses that had been done for the study. He explained that the purpose was to take a closer look at the effect the six corridors could have on future traffic congestion at the study area's main "choke points," and to see which corridors would provide the greatest level of congestion relief.

He explained that the method used was to first review the area's official traffic model (from the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission) to determine the roadway segments and intersections predicted to be most congested in the future *without* the proposed Bypass; then, to compare this "no-build" congestion with the levels of congestion predicted at these same locations *with* each of the six corridors factored in.

He then presented a map showing the segments and intersections that were compared, and presented information about how the differences were calculated. In particular, he explained how volume-to-capacity ratios were used.

Mr. Schlotter concluded this portion of the agenda by explaining that while most of the corridors would improve the levels of congestion, no one corridor stood out as being significantly more beneficial than the others. Given this, Mr. Schlotter explained that the Study Team did not feel it was necessary to update the benefits portion of the benefits-impacts evaluation matrix.

IV. EXPLANATION OF MAPPING AND BAND REFINEMENT

Turning to the next agenda item, Mr. Schlotter explained that in the time since the September 2011 public meeting the Study Team had made some refinements to the representative bands and to the geographic information systems (GIS) base mapping.

Regarding the base mapping, Mr. Schlotter stated that the Study Team took a closer look at, and verified, the land uses at several locations, including:

- Farmdale Reservoir Recreational Area
- Village of Morton wastewater treatment area
- Sunnyland area
- Centennial Drive area
- Spring Creek Preserve area
- area around P4/T7 interchange at IL 116
- area around IL 26 interchange location
- area around IL 6 and IL 29 interchange location
- area around D13 interchange at IL 116

Regarding the bands, he explained that the Study Team made slight modifications at certain interchange locations to more accurately reflect potential impacts. These locations included:

- IL 6 and IL 29 interchange location
- IL 26 interchange location
- area around D13 interchange at IL 116
- P4 interchange at IL 8/Washington Road

Mr. Schlotter stated that these new layouts required minor adjustments to the impact matrix, and that the new matrix was distributed at tonight's meeting. Mr. Schlotter emphasized that the impact data does not include detailed analysis of access control impacts, and that buffer areas around the bands provide a reasonable estimate of such impacts at the corridor stage of a project.

V. IDOT'S RECOMMENDATION FOR NEXT DROPPED CORRIDOR(S)

Mr. Schlotter briefly reviewed the summary from the "sticky wall" exercise performed by the CAG at CAG Meetings 8 and 9. Pete Fenner (Peoria Audubon Society) pointed out that at CAG Meeting 9, Corridor P4 had only two "Keep" cards before one of the tables changed their "Drop" to a "Keep," indicating that support for this corridor was already fairly weak.

Steve Jaeger (Heart of Illinois Regional Port District) asked what the funding situation of the project was, considering the project was funded through the Corridor Stage but not through the Alignments Stage. Mr. Schlotter said there would be a brief discussion on project funding towards the end of the meeting and asked if the question could be held until that time. Mr. Schlotter did note, however, that details still need to be worked out with FHWA coordination, but there will still be a way to keep the Study going without losing momentum.

Next, the CAG members discussed Corridors P4 and T7. Mr. Schlotter presented some information about the two corridors, including a brief review of Corridor P4's "keep" cards from the sticky wall exercise, and a close-up "mini analysis" of several sensitive areas within Corridor P4. These areas included the Farmdale Reservoir, the Sunnyland area, Centennial Drive land uses, and the Spring Creek Preserve. Mr. Lerczak, from IDNR, also provided some information regarding the Spring Creek property, clarifying that the Fondulac Park District was pursuing a Land and Water Reserve designation for the property. He also clarified that, while important, the designation of "land and water reserve" does not provide as much protection as a Nature Preserve designation would.

Mr. Schlotter told the CAG that, given these constraints in Corridor P4, and considering the relative lack of significant impacts in the similar Corridor T7, the Study Team was recommending dropping Corridor P4 from further consideration. Steve Van Winkle (City of Peoria) then asked if it was possible for the CAG to drop Corridor T7 as well. Mr. Schlotter responded that while possible, at the current time the Study Team wished to focus on a discussion of Corridor P4.

Karl Bryning (Property Impacts) noted that Corridors P4 and T7 were both listed as the least expensive corridors in the impacts matrix and asked if that cost estimate included the bridge over the Illinois River. Mr. Schlotter clarified that the cost did include the Illinois River crossing, but that it did not include the cost of right-of-way acquisition.

A member of the public asked if there were any noise analyses performed on these corridors. Mr. Schlotter said the noise analyses were currently being conducted by the Study Team.

Mr. Schlotter then asked the CAG to discuss Corridor P4 with other members seated at their tables to see if a general agreement would emerge about dropping this corridor.

After the CAG discussed the corridor at their individual tables, the larger group reconvened. Dennis Jennings began a facilitated discussion with the CAG, first reminding the group of the agreed upon definition of "consensus":

Consensus is defined as a majority of the stakeholders in agreement, with the minority agreeing that their input was duly considered.

With the above definition in mind, IDOT (or its Study Team representatives) will clearly indicate when consensus is being sought on a specific conclusion and will inquire if formal consensus, as defined above, has been reached before taking further action. If it becomes clear that the Group is at an impasse, then the Study Team's facilitators will work with the Group to more clearly identify the nature of the impasse. Should consensus prove unachievable, IDOT may elect to make a final decision on the matter, once it is clear that all views have been discussed and documented.

Mr. Jennings then asked the CAG members to share what they felt were advantages of Corridor P4.

Mr. Bryning said that Corridor P4 had the lowest construction costs of any corridor, costing \$47 million less than Corridor T7 and \$124 million less than the most expensive corridor being considered.

Paul Corcoran (Property Impacts) said that Corridor P4 would carry the most vehicles south of U.S. Route 24, which he felt was a positive, comparing the roadway to a business, with highway users being compared to "customers." Mr. Schlotter noted that while the corridor did perform well with traffic benefits, the CAG should keep in mind whether those benefits would be worth the significant impacts associated with this corridor.

Mr. Jennings felt that most in the Group were in agreement to drop Corridor P4. Mr. Schlotter clarified that the Study Team wanted to ensure that minority opinions and views were heard, recorded, and considered.

Jim Dunnan (Controlled Growth) wanted to comment on Corridor T7 as well, adding that it was not equitable to only discuss the challenges and impacts of Corridor P4 without presenting the challenges and impacts of Corridor T7. Mr. Schlotter said that of the six corridors remaining, they logically fall into three pairs, with each pair offering variations on a more basic route location. He further explained that the idea behind reviewing the corridors in pairs was to ensure that a corridor in each pair was still being considered in the next round of screening.

Mr. Fenner noted that the CAG had basically reached consensus at the previous CAG meeting to drop Corridor P4, with only a few CAG members in opposition to dropping that corridor. Another CAG member added that there was also not much enthusiasm for Corridor T7. Mr. Van Winkle noted that the process will narrow down and eventually eliminate Corridor T7, even if it's not liked for now. Mr. Schlotter said that Corridors P4 and T7 were being presented together only as an organizational method and that there is no one set way to carry out the process.

A CAG member said that presenting information only about Corridor P4 may skew the CAG's choices and suggested having a discussion on how to group the corridors to frame the discussion. Some CAG members may want to drop both Corridors P4 and T7, whereas others may want to keep both of the corridors. The CAG member compared a process similar to the recent high school basketball tournament, in which "brackets" were used to determine the best team.

Mr. Schlotter suggested that the CAG consider comparing Corridor P4 to all the other corridors rather than just comparing P4 to Corridor T7.

Greg Sinn (Tazewell County Board) asked if eliminating Corridor P4 would serve as a de facto endorsement of Corridor T7. Mr. Schlotter said that the Study Team felt that Corridor T7 was a better corridor than Corridor P4, but Corridor T7 also had some significant impacts as well. Mike Lewis said that IDOT wants to make sure that similar corridors are being compared to each other to make sure the best corridors are moving forward.

Mr. Fenner noted that both Corridors P4 and T7 had similar impacts to the Spring Creek property and suggested dropping both corridors, especially while Mr. Lerczak from IDNR was available at the meeting.

Another CAG member suggested dropping Corridor P4 and immediately move forward with comparing Corridor T7 to other corridors.

Richard Cridlebaugh (East Peoria Planning Commission) suggested comparing both remaining P corridors, P2 and P4, together rather than P4 and T7. Mr. Schlotter noted that P4 and T7 were more similar than P2 and P4, considering their shared corridor north of Illinois Route 116. Mr. Schlotter added that the Study Team realizes that Corridor T7 would also affect the Spring Creek area, but

that the Team wanted to suggest keeping one corridor west of Germantown Hills under consideration, at least for one more round.

Norman Durflinger (Village of Morton) said that he did not like either corridor and numerous CAG members supported this sentiment. Mr. Durflinger noted that the proposed meeting structure of comparing P4 with T7, then comparing Corridors M10 and D13 to each other, may result in the CAG leaving an undesirable Corridor T7 in consideration while dropping a more desirable eastern corridor like D13. Mr. Durflinger suggested dropping Corridor P4 and comparing Corridor T7 with either Corridors P2 and T6 or Corridors M10 and D13 in an effort to still keep the best options on the table. Mr. Lewis said that it may make more sense to compare Corridor T7 to T6 because the corridors are largely similar except in terms of whether they are east or west of Germantown Hills.

Mike Godar (Economic Impacts) noted that Corridor D13 was also not popular, and by dropping Corridors P4 and D13, the remaining corridors could be simply compared by their routing differences: notably, east or west of Washington and east or west of Germantown Hills. Mr. Godar said he personally recommended Corridors T6, T7, and M10. Mr. Schlotter said that the process may not be that simple, and that the data would have to be closely reviewed before making those kinds of decisions.

Carey French (Caterpillar, Inc.) suggested looking at the corridors one at a time rather than presenting them in pairs. Another CAG member suggested dropping Corridor P4 now because it seemed the group was ready to decide. Ms. French suggested dropping Corridor P4 and comparing Corridor T7 with the next pair to be considered, Corridors M10 and D13.

Mr. Sinn asked why detailed “mini analyses” were not conducted for Corridor D13, similar to the mini-analyses conducted on Corridor P4. Mr. Schlotter said that Corridor D13 didn’t have localized, densely developed areas of impact like Corridor P4 does and added that the Study Team was prepared to recommend dropping Corridor D13 in favor of Corridor M10.

A CAG member asked about the relationship between the data presented in the impacts matrix and the CAG’s opinions on what corridors to keep and drop. Mr. Schlotter said that while quantitative data would be essential to the decision making process, it is likely that at some point the process will come down to values – for instance, how to choose which is more important between agricultural impacts with residential impacts. In other words, while objective data is essential, there is no formula for quantitatively deriving the “best” choice.

Bill Dietrich (Agriculture) said that he felt the most important consideration was traffic volumes, and he doesn’t feel like the eastern corridors carry enough traffic to justify the cost of the project. Mr. Schlotter said that traffic considerations were important, but it is also important to look at land use, economic development considerations, and other benefits the Bypass could bring. Mr. Schlotter also reminded the CAG that the study was not at the “build/no-build” decision yet, and the alignment study will provide a more detailed analysis of benefits and impacts of the Eastern Bypass, including more refined cost estimates.

Dr. Dunnan recommended merging the Corridor M10 representative band with the bands from Corridors T6 and T7 south of Washington. Dr. Dunnan said that Corridors T6 and T7 would have adverse effects on the City of Washington and Washington's school districts.

Paul Kinsinger (Cycling-Rec.-Alt. Modes) said that he felt a corridor east of Washington would not necessarily divide the community, but the Washington area would be missing out on using the multi-use trail to be included in the Bypass design. A corridor west of Washington would encourage tourism in the area and better connect bicycle trails throughout Tazewell and Woodford Counties. Dr. Kinsinger said that he felt his role on the CAG was to advocate for a corridor west of Washington to link those trails, and that because there's "nothing east but cornfields," an eastern corridor would not have the same benefits to cyclists.

Mr. Godar said that Washington deserves having corridors both east and west of town be studied in detail because some corridors would split portions of the community in two. Mr. Schlotter said that it may be helpful for the IDOT Study Team and the CAG to discuss in more detail the concern that corridors may "split" communities, noting that some of these concerns may be alleviated, once the location of overpasses is determined.

Mr. Schlotter added that the CAG's comments were all good and may require further analysis of the corridors and the process by the Study Team.

Jim Gee (City of Washington) asked how IDOT would be weighing the recommendations of the various municipalities and agencies. Mr. Lewis said that these recommendations were "another piece of the puzzle" IDOT uses when considering corridors, emphasizing that those recommendations do not necessarily outweigh decisions made by the CAG. Mr. Lewis said the recommendations help gauge the values of the communities and agencies and help identify area of agreement between municipalities. Mr. Lewis added that the early responses have tended to favor Corridor T6.

Mr. Godar reminded the CAG to also consider the responses to each corridor from the public meeting, noting that the two eastern corridors (M10 and D13) were the only two to receive more positive comments than negative comments.

Mr. Schlotter said that the CAG appeared to be at an impasse on how to process the remaining corridors and asked if there was any additional corridor-level data that could be provided to help make decisions. He added that it is possible that the point has been reached where additional corridor-level data may not make a difference in choosing, and that what was actually, in effect, being discussed was the value that each CAG member was placing on each category of resource. Mr. Schlotter said IDOT wants to hear, record, and understand the values of the CAG, and take all views into consideration as part of the final preferred corridor decision. Mr. Schlotter reminded the CAG that it is IDOT's role to make the final decision, once all views from the CAG are discussed and documented, and local government and resource agencies have been consulted.

Turning back to the question of how to compare corridors, a CAG member suggested comparing Corridors P2, T6, and T7 all together, and avoid making a decision regarding a preferred corridor either east or west of Washington until the end of the decision making process.

Mr. Godar asked the CAG members if they could reach consensus on dropping both P4 and T7 because of their equal effect on the Spring Creek Preserve area.

Mr. Schlotter noted that the CAG had not officially come to consensus on dropping Corridor P4, and asked the CAG members if they could agree to call for consensus on this point. The CAG agreed and quickly came to consensus on dropping Corridor P4 from consideration. Judy Weddle also asked the CAG if they felt that the minority viewpoint had been duly considered, and again the CAG members agreed.

Mr. Lewis then asked for the CAG's input on how to process the remaining five corridors for the following meeting. Kevin Arvin (Commute/Road Network) suggested that a ranking be done of the five corridors, prior to the next meeting. Another CAG member said that there are really only three decisions to make: whether the corridor runs east or west of Germantown Hills; whether the corridor runs east or west of Washington; and where the corridor ties into Interstate 74.

Anna Staab (Community Impacts) said that she was disappointed that the CAG could only drop one corridor at the meeting, adding that going forward, the best corridor will emerge, regardless of the procedure used to get to that point.

Mr. Gee suggested the CAG stay an extra hour and get down to three corridors before leaving the meeting. Many CAG members reacted negatively to the suggestion to extend the meeting.

Mr. Schlotter asked if there was enough information available for the CAG to come to consensus on dropping Corridor T7 and asked for additional input on Corridor T7.

Mr. Dietrich said that Corridor T7 was the only other high-volume route remaining in consideration, and remained a true north-south highway. Mr. Dietrich also said that Corridor T7 still has many of the benefits of Corridor P4 with fewer impacts.

Mr. Bryning said that Corridor T7 was the cheapest corridor being considered, now that Corridor P4 had been dropped. Corridor T7 cost \$11 million less than the next least-expensive corridor and \$77 million less than the most expensive corridor. Mr. Dietrich added that it was important for the CAG to be mindful of how much taxpayer dollars would be needed for the Bypass and that the CAG had a responsibility to make sure those dollars were spent efficiently.

Dr. Dunnan said that compared to Corridor T6, Corridor T7 does not divide Washington with as many adverse impacts.

Mr. Gee asked if the Study Team had received recommendations or input from Metamora or Germantown Hills yet. Mr. Lewis said they had not and noted that the representatives from both communities were not at the meeting.

Mr. Jennings asked the CAG for a visual representation, based on a show of hands, of how many CAG members were in favor of dropping Corridor T7, upon which it appeared there was a clear majority in favor. Mr. Schlotter emphasized that the Study Team wants to ensure that the minority views were identified, heard and considered, and that the minority opinion isn't overlooked.

Mr. Schlotter then reaffirmed that CAG members felt consensus had been reached on dropping Corridor T7 from consideration. Mr. Jennings acknowledged that the CAG had reached consensus on dropping the corridor and noted that it was agreed that the minority views had been heard and considered.

At that point it was agreed that there was not enough time at the meeting to continue with the corridor dropping exercise, and Mr. Schlotter then turned to the final agenda item.

VI. SUMMARY OF REMAINING CORRIDORS AND NEXT STEPS

Mr. Schlotter said that the next CAG meeting should go faster and more smoothly because there would likely be less material to cover. Ms. Weddle said that the Study Team wants to give CAG members an opportunity at the next meeting to express to their fellow members their views and feelings about why various resources are especially important to them. Ms. Weddle noted that the table groupings at tonight's meeting were based on individuals with similar interests, and the Study Team would like the CAG to discuss amongst themselves the values their interest group feels particularly strong about, adding that hearing these values can change the way CAG members listen and how they understand each other.

Mr. Schlotter said the Study Team would be coordinating more extensively with the Federal Highway Administration prior to the next CAG meeting (which would likely be in May or June). Mr. Schlotter said the team would be coordinating with FHWA on options to help keep the study moving forward and sustaining momentum in light of the funding issues not being resolved for the alignment stage.

Mr. Schlotter closed the official CAG meeting just after 9:00 PM, inviting the CAG members to remain at the meeting to listen to comments that members of the public who were in attendance might like to make.

At that point, the official meeting was adjourned.