

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 #5 May 7, 2009

The fifth meeting of the Eastern Bypass Study Community Advisory Group (CAG) was held at the Countryside Banquet Facility, in Washington, on Thursday, May 7, 2009 at 6:00 P.M.

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

- Eric Therkildsen (IDOT District Four Program Development Engineer)
- Tom Lacy (IDOT)
- Maureen Addis (IDOT)
- Paula Green (IDOT)
- Greg Larson (IDOT)
- Dave Zawada (H.W. Lochner, Inc.)
- Jeff Schlotter (H.W. Lochner, Inc.)
- Dennis Jennings (Technology of Participation (ToP) Network)
- Judy Weddle (Technology of Participation (ToP) Network)
- George Ghareeb (TERRA Engineering, Ltd.)
- Scott Presslak (TERRA Engineering, Ltd.)
- Sande Wilke (TERRA Engineering, Ltd.)

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

PART 1

Welcome, Study Status and Agenda Overview

Jeff Schlotter opened the meeting by stating that tonight's meeting would bring to a close the "groundwork" portion of the CAG's efforts and that the study process would now focus heavily on the corridor selection process. Jeff used the previously-introduced "funnel" diagram to show how the process is gradually going from general to specific, and that the next major study milestone would be a public meeting, tentatively scheduled for late July.

The floor was opened for comments on the Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP) update involving the CAG consensus process. With no additional comments, the CAG reached consensus on the update to the SIP. Jeff said that the updated SIP would be available on the Eastern Bypass Study's website, or in print for members who request a copy.

Jeff reminded CAG members of the ground rules they agreed to early in the study and that it's important that everyone stick to them, noting that some members had commented previously that others were straying from the rules (due to side conversations, etc.). Future meetings will have a larger printout of the ground rules on display as a reminder.

Jeff then asked if there were any comments about the prior meeting summary that was mailed to CAG members in the agenda package. The group had no questions about the summary notes themselves. Karl Bryning asked if there was a reason why some comments in the meeting summaries were attributed to individual speakers by name, while some were not. Jeff pointed out that as Study Team member Scott Presslak takes notes during the meetings, he cannot always discern each speaker by name, so the notes give attribution when possible. Jeff asked if anyone was uncomfortable with including their names in meeting summaries, to which there was no objections. Carey French recommended having CAG members state their names before making a comment to make attribution easier. Jeff said that, as long as there are no issues with the current system, that would not be necessary, but if individuals wanted to do so, they certainly may.

There being no other comments, Jeff began the next agenda item: wrapping up the problem statement draft exercise.

PART II

Conclusion of the Study's Problem Statement Exercise

Jeff began by reminding the Group that IDOT statewide policy calls for the development of a problem statement, and that it's important that the CAG get involved when it's a Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) project. The problem statement is intended to allow everyone to understand the full range of problems the project might solve and to steer the corridor drafting and selection processes. Jeff noted that some of the ideas generated at the last meeting did not quite fit into the problem statement definition, and that the Project Study Team (PST) revised the draft problem statement to accommodate for those ideas. Jeff also explained that some of the ideas generated at the prior meeting were outside of the project scope, while others reflected impacts the highway would have instead of existing or future problems in the area. In addition, at the last meeting one table recommended making the problem statement more neutral. Jeff stated that, while the intent for neutrality is appreciated, by definition the problem statement focuses on the negative in highlighting the current and foreseeable problems in the study area.

Judy Weddle then proceeded to recap the prior meeting's problem statement exercise, explaining that the PST had used the results of this exercise to update the draft statement.

Judy then read aloud the new draft statement, one line at a time. After the first line, “increased current and future transportation demands,” a question was raised asking how future transportation demands were projected. Jeff explained that future traffic demands were projected based on historic trends, land use patterns, and field data. Jeff said that projection methods are not perfect, but they’re the best tool we have to make the necessary predictions. The projections are tied to growth patterns given to the traffic engineers, and the projections are an “educated guess” about future conditions.

Another question was raised about whether the CAG would have the opportunity to challenge the statistics, noting that the forecasted traffic data from the 1993 study has largely not come to fruition. Jeff noted that the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission is completing their regional traffic study and that this data would be presented to the CAG and checked against the traffic model generated for the Eastern Bypass Study, with changes to the Eastern Bypass Study traffic model made as needed, so that we have the most valid model possible.

Jeff noted that endorsement of the problem statement does not mean that the problem statement cannot be reviewed and changed at a later time. The problem statement will become more precise in the alignment phase, as the study’s Purpose and Need Chapter (of the Environmental Impact Statement document) is prepared. Jeff noted that traffic data will be more detailed later in the study, once corridors and alignments are chosen, and that all data will be reviewed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) before it is considered final.

Judy then asked if there were any comments on the other parts of the problem statement. A comment was raised regarding using the word “limited” twice – “limited regional multimodal access, mobility, and travel efficiency” and “limited support for planned economic growth”. Jeff explained that by definition a problem statement is *descriptive*, not *prescriptive*. In other words, the use of the word “limited” is meant to describe an existing or predicted condition -- as opposed to prescribing what some future condition should be.

Randall Jacobs asked about the phrase “limited support for planned economic growth” and asked for additional clarification. Eric said that the phrase was based on comments from the prior meeting and that planned economic growth is limited, due to a lack of transportation facilities. Randall noted that it can be limited, but the new highway could also impede existing development by shifting it from one location to another. Eric clarified that such a result would be an impact generated by the highway (which would be analyzed later in the study process), but not an existing problem in the study area. A similar comment was made, namely, that the new roadway would help existing businesses but may not necessarily bring in new business, considering the Eastern Bypass would not necessarily serve through traffic, such as Interstate 74, as much as it would serve local traffic in the Peoria region. Eric said that IDOT is planning on contracting for an economic study to be done for the area in order to better assess the current economic status and needs of the community.

Steve Jaeger, representing the Port Authority, said that local truckers have adapted to the lack of an Eastern Bypass-type facility in the area, but would still welcome the new road as busy corridors funnel onto limited-access highways. Randall Jacobs said that the new roadway would make it easier to get from northern Peoria to Morton, but may not help local residents east of the river as much.

Anna Staab commented that the initial phrase of the statement, “increased current and future transportation demands,” could go either direction, ranging between existing problems on the one hand, and issues the highway may cause, on the other.

Caroline Schertz said that the problem statement seemed pretty clear and that some comments seemed “nitpicky.” Judy then asked if the CAG had enough information to endorse the problem statement as it is currently written, knowing that the statement can be changed and revised at a later time if conditions change or new information is brought to light. Karl Bryning said that the CAG has not been given information on whether these problems actually exist in the study area, wondering if the CAG has even reached consensus on whether there are indeed any problems in the study area that the Bypass would address. Jeff clarified that the statement was generated from talking about what members have heard from each other about problems in the area. The problems themselves would be analyzed in more detail later in the process. Jim Fyke pointed out that the problems listed came from the CAG’s prior work. Eric added that the problems were also based on prior studies, the various transportation symposiums that spurred the study, and other sources.

Jeff said that by reaching a consensus on the problem statement rather than calling for a vote, the process does not “drown out” the minority views. Karl said that he felt that there are other dissenting views among CAG members who are staying silent in fear of being “shouted out.” Jeff said that the best we can do is to ensure that everyone has a chance to have their opinion heard and considered, and he encouraged all members of the CAG to share their views if they have similar concerns.

Randall Jacobs noted that later in the process, with additional data, we can refine the problem statement as needed.

At this point, Judy asked for consensus on the draft problem statement. Pete Streid questioned the use of the word “increased” in the first phrase of the statement, but others said they were okay with the wording. Judy then stated that consensus was being sought now by the PST on the wording of the problem statement, noting that dissenting views were discussed and will be in the meeting summary. At that point, the Group agreed that consensus had been reached.

With the problem statement portion of the agenda concluded, Jeff introduced the corridor mapping exercise.

PART III

Initial Corridor Mapping Exercise

CAG members were assigned table seating arrangements based on interest groups. Based on the maps handed out at the last meeting and the homework assigned, CAG members were asked to begin brainstorming possible corridor locations in their table groups. Each table was asked to draw from one to three corridors and to select a spokesperson to describe their selected corridors to the full CAG at the end of the exercise.

Table groups were given time to discuss and draft their corridors, with members of the Project Study Team facilitating and answering questions as needed, and then draw their proposed corridors on clear acetate sheets to accommodate a process in which all tables' corridors could be photographed and electronically projected over a base map and compared.

Once the corridor drawings were collected and photographed, the full group was reassembled for each table to explain their drawing.

The first spokesperson was Paul Kinsinger, who discussed the corridor developed by the Environmental Interests table (Table 7). This table's corridor included a possible trail connection from an existing trail in Morton to the Rock Island Trail northwest of Peoria. The group took care to avoid existing wetlands south of Bayview Gardens. The corridor would improve bike access to the ICC area as well as potentially boost tourism through development of a more extensive trail network in the region.

Shelli McClellan was the spokesperson for the Property Impacts table (Table 5). This table's corridors were aligned along Dee-Mack Road, with one following the existing US 24/Washington Bypass corridor, then paralleling the IL 26 corridor to the Spring Bay area. Another corridor continued north along Dee-Mack Road, curving around Metamora to the north and east before heading west to the Spring Bay area. The inner corridor would run parallel to existing roads in order to have a minimal impact on local homes. The outer corridor would avoid new development between Germantown Hills and Metamora and minimize the possible division of the existing school districts. The corridors in the bluff areas were expected to follow existing terrain.

Scott Punke, of Eureka, was the spokesperson for the Smaller Communities table (Table 2). Their corridor also followed Dee-Mack Road, to avoid existing developments.

Scott Davis, of Pekin, spoke for the Larger Communities table (Table 1). Their corridor was very similar to that of Table 2's, except that their corridor hugged the eastern end of Washington a bit more closely.

Ken Maurer spoke for the Growth and Community Impacts table (Table 4). He explained that his table discussed going east of Metamora, similar to Table 5's, but instead chose to

keep their corridors within the boundaries of the study area. One of this table's corridors would connect directly to the I-74/155 interchange, but Ken noted that such an alignment would be difficult, due to existing development in the area. The table also was split on whether to draw an alignment west or east of Washington.

Carey French, of Caterpillar Inc., spoke for the Commuting, Road Network, and Alternative Modes of Transportation table (Table 8). One corridor presented by their table would start at the existing terminus of IL 6 at IL 29, cross the Illinois River, and continue south, west of Washington, and link with I-74 at the existing I-74/474 interchange. The other corridor would include an extension of IL 6 north to past Cedar Hills Drive, crossing the river north of all the Caterpillar properties in the Mossville area before heading east and following Dee-Mack Road to Interstate 74. Carey said that linking Caterpillar's Mossville plants to the proving grounds is important to the company, as is maintaining the privacy of Caterpillar's proving grounds. William Belshaw added that a corridor north of Cedar Hills would also improve accessibility to Chillicothe. Eric mentioned that while there are no immediate plans to extend IL 6 north of its current terminus, the IL 29 project will soon receive its official Record of Decision and that Phase II work (development of the project's final design plans) will begin shortly thereafter.

Pete Streid, representing the Agricultural Interests table (Table 3), presented his table's corridors, which he said were meant to be very similar to Corridors A and B from the previous (1990s) iteration of the Eastern Bypass study. He stated these corridors would likely have higher traffic volumes and would avoid more farmland than a corridor east of Washington. Paul Corcoran suggested adding an interchange on I-74 between Morton and Goodfield, at Tennessee Road and/or Dee-Mack Road, would improve accessibility to areas east of Washington, if a corridor west of Washington is chosen.

Ken Klotz spoke for the final table, Economic Impacts, (Table 6). Their table's corridor was similar to that of Tables 1 and 2, which proposed a corridor east of Washington but hugging the current extent of development in the area.

Jim Gee asked if the CAG would be receiving population projections. Jeff said that later in the process a more detailed analysis on trends in the area will be conducted and that the CAG will be presented with this work.

Jeff said that the Project Study Team will refine the corridors drafted at the meeting and present them at the Public Meeting. Eric reiterated that one of the objectives of the public meeting is to get public input on the draft corridors. Eric then asked if it could be concluded that the CAG has reached consensus on presenting the corridors they drew up at the public meeting, to which the Group responded with its acknowledgement. Jeff said that as part of its analysis, the Study Team will prepare a matrix to compare and contrast the various corridors.

Pete Streid asked if the CAG would be notified before the next Public Meeting. Another CAG member requested the drafted corridors be mailed or emailed to CAG members. Jeff

said that while the Study Team would not be sending out a normal agenda package right away (because there will not be another CAG meeting until after the public meeting is held), various materials from tonight's meeting will be distributed back to the CAG in the near future.

PART IV

Meeting Wrap-up and Discussion

To close the meeting, Dennis Jennings facilitated a discussion to reflect on the evening's meeting, reminding the CAG that they reached consensus on the consensus process, the problem statement, and their draft corridors. Dennis asked what members found helpful from the meeting. One member said the table groupings were beneficial, seating members with other members of similar interest groups. Karl Bryning said that he found the graphics and acetate overlays to be very helpful during the corridor drafting exercise. Ken Klotz said he appreciated the different points of view presented during the corridor presentations. Dick Cridlebaugh said he was impressed by people's ideas of trying earlier concepts with corridors.

Dennis asked what the group felt they had struggled with at the meeting. One member brought up that the first hour involved rehashing too much information. Shelli McClellan said the process needs to be less repetitive and that because of too much repetition, the CAG has lost time.

Dennis asked what accomplishments the group felt they had achieved. Shelli said the group drafted corridors on the maps. Randall Jacobs said reaching an agreement on the consensus process was an accomplishment. Carey French noted that during the corridor presentations, the comments were friendly and pleasant, even if conflicting.

Dennis asked the group what recommendations they would have for future meetings. Scott Sorrel said the CAG should be sure to stay on track. Shelli recommended coming to future meetings prepared, having already reviewed the agenda package and spend less time rehashing. Another member said the meetings should start promptly at 6:00 p.m.

A member asked if there was an IDOT contact person to talk to before the meetings if something needed to be added to the agenda or discussed before the meeting. Eric instructed CAG members to contact Mike Lewis at IDOT or to call IDOT at 671-3333.

Jeff then closed the meeting, at approximately 9:20 p.m.