

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 #7 March 3, 2011

The seventh meeting of the Eastern Bypass Study Community Advisory Group (CAG) was held at the Countryside Banquet Facility, in Washington, on Thursday, March 3, 2011, 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.)
- Ken Hemstreet (H.W. Lochner, Inc.)
- Joe Schirripa (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.)
- Julie Schmidt (TERRA Engineering, Ltd.)

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

Welcome and Combined Meeting Objectives

Jeff Schlotter opened the meeting by welcoming the CAG members and introducing two new CAG members, one representing the Village of Germantown Hills and the other representing Woodford County, who were replacing their previous representatives. Jeff then explained that the IDOT Study Team determined that there was too much material to present and discuss in one CAG meeting, and so the overall agenda was going to be spread over two closely-spaced meetings. He announced that the overall objective of these two meetings is to reduce the number of corridors under consideration for the study.

Review of Study Status and Activities

Jeff then presented a review of the study status, including a description of the main activities that have been undertaken since the previous CAG meeting.

He began with a reminder that most highway projects are developed in three phases and that the Eastern Bypass Study is currently in Phase I, which is the Planning Studies and Conceptual Design phase. Jeff further explained that for this project Phase I has been divided into a corridor study and an alignments study, and that we're currently in the corridor study. He reiterated that the overall objective of the corridor study is to select the best corridor or corridors to provide the basis for developing alignments.

Next, Jeff gave a brief description of the work accomplished at each of the previous six CAG meetings, followed by a description of the extensive amount of work the IDOT Study Team has accomplished in the time since the previous CAG meeting was held. He explained that this work is documented in a series of four reports, which were distributed to each CAG member in their agenda packages prior to this meeting. These documents include the following: Corridor Development To Date; Purpose and Need Analysis and Conclusions; Corridor Impact Analysis Report; and, Initial Corridor Screening Report.

Jeff then described the major steps remaining in the corridor study, including an initial reduction in the number of corridors under consideration, presenting that information at a public meeting, and then further reductions in corridors to reach a preferred corridor or combination of corridors, based on refined data analysis. At that point, a public hearing will be held and study documentation completed. Jeff stated that the Study Team expects there will be two or three more CAG meetings required in the corridor study after March 22, and that it is possible the majority of the study could be completed by the end of 2011.

Finally, this agenda item was concluded with a description of the specific objectives that remained to be accomplished at tonight's meeting, namely: to explain the contents of the four study documents mentioned earlier.

Introduction of Corridors and Representative Bands

Jeff began by reviewing the Corridor Development To Date report, which documents the modifications made to the corridors since the CAG's work on them at CAG Meeting No. 6. Jeff reviewed the consensus points the CAG agreed to regarding: 1) eliminating the terminus points that were deemed infeasible at the Interstate 74/155 interchange and the north end of the corridors; and 2) minor changes to the overall shape of the corridors to avoid certain sensitive areas and to add in areas for greater flexibility in determining refined corridor locations.

Jeff pointed out a corridor link that was added by the IDOT Study Team. It runs along Schuck Road, in the southern portion of the study area. This link was added to allow more combinations of corridors to be considered.

The twenty corridors originally suggested by the CAG have been re-drawn into fourteen corridors that still capture the essence of the original twenty. Jeff outlined the naming convention of the fourteen corridors, showing how they were grouped into “families” based on where they began at Interstate 74. The corridors were each assigned a letter (P for Pleasant Hill Road; T for Tennessee Avenue; M for Main Street; D for Dee-Mack Road) and numbered sequentially (1-14) west to east.

Jeff then explained that with the corridors in place the next step was to determine representative bands for each corridor. These bands would approximate the right-of-way width of a limited-access facility and include probable interchange shapes and locations. These bands would be used to determine representative benefits and impacts for each corridor. Jeff stressed that these bands are not considered official study alignments. Jeff then opened the floor for questions regarding the corridor development report.

Rudy Habben noted that the areas between Washington and Metamora would fit additional alignments. Jeff noted that the representative bands are not considered to be alignments, but instead serve as a representation that indicates the viability of each corridor and provides a way for the Study Team, the CAG, and the public to compare representative benefits and impacts between corridors. Once a preferred corridor or corridors is selected, several different band locations (alignments) can be developed.

Carey French asked if topography was considered when drafting the representative bands. Jeff said that topography was factored in when the bands were drawn but stressed that the bands do not reflect a full engineering analysis. Jeff said that the bands did take into account several basic engineering factors to make sure each corridor is viable, and that a detailed matrix of benefits and impacts for each corridor will be discussed later.

With no further questions, Jeff moved on to the Purpose and Need Analysis and Screening.

Results of Purpose and Need Analysis and Screening

Jeff began his review of the Purpose and Need Analysis and Screening document by re-stating the adopted purpose and need statement that was developed with the CAG’s assistance earlier in the study: The purpose of the proposed project is to provide a transportation facility that will enhance the north-south mobility between Illinois Route 6 in Peoria County and I-74 in Tazewell County and provide transportation infrastructure support for planned land uses and economic development in the Tri-County area. The need for the proposed action is based on a combination of factors related to: improving local and regional mobility; supporting land use plans and economic development plans in the Tri-County area; improving travel flow; and, improving multi-modal connections. Jeff explained that with these items in place, the next step was for the IDOT Study Team to develop

methods for measuring how well each of the fourteen corridors would meet these needs so that the corridors could be compared.

Next, Jeff explained that the findings of the Study Team's screening processes are shown in a matrix in the document, stating that the matrix is color-coded to help provide a quick visual reference for viewing the magnitude of benefit for each category and corridors. Jeff stressed that these colors provide a general guide, and that the precise screening data included in each cell must also be considered when reading the matrix.

Jeff then explained the screening processes used for each need category, starting with "improving local and regional mobility." To measure improvements to mobility, the Study Team used an aggregate of changes in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and vehicle hours traveled (VHT) across the network to see how each corridor would affect travel flows in the model year (2045) compared to the no-build condition. To perform these calculations, the Study Team identified traffic analysis zones (TAZs) to represent numerous trip origins and destinations throughout the study area. Using these identified locations, the Study Team used the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission's traffic model to calculate travel information. In all, over 22,000 calculations were performed as part of this screening process, calculating VMTs and VHTs for every link combination in the network. These calculations were aggregated into one statistic for each category to determine how well each corridor could meet this need. Jeff stated that all the corridors were shown to improve mobility because all the corridors would reduce average trip times.

Jeff then described the "supporting land use and economic development plans" portion of the document, describing the Study Team's basic defined measure regarding how well the Eastern Bypass would conform to the planning objectives currently in place in the study area. Each community's comprehensive plans were reviewed. GIS was then used to prepare a map showing each community's incorporated boundaries and each community's planning jurisdiction boundary. To determine how well each corridor would support land use plans in the area, the representative bands were analyzed to determine what proportion of each band was in what the Study Team considered to be the "optimal growth area," while negatively scoring corridor proportions that either interfered with incorporated residential areas or would promote noncontiguous development far from incorporated areas. Proportions were used instead of mileage to account for the differing total lengths of the corridors. Jeff stated that each corridor was found to harmonize with local land use plans to some degree.

Regarding the economic development measure, Jeff explained that the Economic Development Council for Central Illinois (EDC) agreed to review each of the fourteen corridors and apply their own methodology to rate each corridor. The EDC used a 1 to 5 scale to rate how well each corridor would satisfy the objectives of the area's economic development plans. Jeff explained that their results are what is shown in the Purpose and Need document's matrix and that each corridor was found to accommodate economic development to some degree.

Jeff then discussed the measures used by the Study Team to evaluate improved travel flow, explaining that this screening was based on levels of congestion in the study area, as expressed by the volume-to-capacity (v/c) ratios on select area roadway segments. Each corridor was shown to reduce congestion levels on the system relative to the no-build model.

Jeff then explained that the final screening process -- improving multimodal connections -- was a two-part screening, one for multimodal connections and the other for non-motorized transportation. The first screening process identified probable freight origins and destinations for multimodal connections, including grain elevators, barge terminals, rail yards, etc. Then, logical links between those points (transfers from a grain elevator to railroads, for example) were determined. The Study Team identified 82 such links between these freight locations and, as done for the VHT and VMT screening, an aggregation of the average trip time required between the points on a no-build model was used as a benchmark to compare each corridor. Jeff explained that each corridor satisfied this screening process because all corridors saved time.

The second screening process for improving multimodal connections concerned non-motorized uses of transportation, focusing on bicycle users. Jeff explained that the analysis was based on the assumption that a separate multi-use trail parallel to the Bypass would be included as part of the project. To determine how well each corridor would improve the ability to choose non-motorized travel, a process similar to the land use screening process was used, focusing on the proportion of each corridor within an optimal area. To determine this optimal area, the Study Team used a maximum feasible one-way trip length of no more than five miles. This distance was based on an average 15 mph bike speed for 20 minutes. The Study Team then identified probable bicycle origins and destinations, including schools, parks, dense residential clusters, dense commercial clusters, large-scale employers, and CityLink bus stops (CityLink buses are equipped with onboard bike racks for commuters to bring their bikes with them on the bus). Any representative bands that ran within one mile of any of these identified origins or destinations were considered to enhance the opportunities for non-motorized access. The proportions of corridors within these one-mile zones constitute the data shown in the report's matrix, with higher proportions being more advantageous. It was concluded that each of the corridors would improve the ability to choose non-motorized travel because of the inclusion of a parallel multi-use trail as part of the project.

Jeff then opened the floor to questions regarding the any of the purpose and need analyses and conclusions.

Randall Jacobs asked if the CAG would have to give equal weight to each screening measure when analyzing the corridors. Jeff said, first, that the Study Team made the decision to not try to assign weights to the categories, instead relying on discussions with the CAG and between CAG members to arrive, by consensus, at a decision about what is more or less important. Given this, each CAG member is free to decide which factors are more or less important.

Another CAG member asked why the bicycle screening resulted with nearly two-thirds of the fourteen corridors scoring in the “red” category. Jeff said that the divisions between the red, yellow, and green categories was conducted by taking the range of values from the fourteen corridors and splitting them into thirds, and that this method does not necessarily result in an even distribution of red, yellow, and green cells. Jeff also reiterated that all of the corridors showed an improvement or a benefit. The red, yellow, and green designation was just a way to quickly identify the ones that showed more benefit than others.

Terry Quinn was surprised at how small the time savings were as part of the mobility screening. Study Team member Ken Hemstreet responded that the statistics shown in the matrix represent trips on all local highways, not just a select few. For instance, if the furthest west corridor was being modeled, a Deer Creek to Metamora trip would still be included in the statistics, even though no time savings would be realized for this trip.

Doug Damery asked if, for instance, 3.3 minutes saved was a significant figure. Study Team member Joe Schirripa responded that the 3.3 minutes saved in this example must be compared to the total time of 27 minutes, which equates to a 12 percent difference and a typical result for this kind of project. Joe said that the traffic model also includes the “LEAM” modeling process conducted at the University of Illinois, which takes into account future development based on the road’s location – development that would not be included in the no-build model.

A CAG member asked if the traffic model included links across the Illinois River or if it was just for the portion of the study area east of the River. Other CAG members asked about specific individual trips. Bill Royer said that some members were concerned about personal trips whereas IDOT’s model aggregates everyone’s trips. Mike Godar said the most important link would be the savings in time from Metamora to Route 91. Jeff said that, while individual links could be more directly impacted by the Eastern Bypass, the process requires us to look at mobility in the region as a whole, not just for select links. Choosing select links could skew the data.

Carey French asked if more detailed calculations would be run once the corridors have been narrowed down. IDOT Study Team Leader Mike Lewis said that the team could calculate region-wide information on the corridors, but it may not be particularly useful. Carey French suggested showing detailed information on select links when presenting the traffic data to the public. Doug Damery suggested that since north-south mobility is a stated goal of the project, using north-south links would be most helpful.

Mike Godar asked what the traffic “network” being referred to encompassed. Jeff said that, in this case, the network consisted of the 28 TAZs presented earlier and the links between those TAZs, based on information from the Tri-County traffic model. Other CAG members expressed interest in reviewing more detailed information regarding how the traffic model worked and to see the data from Tri-County.

In response to this series of questions about travel times and the meaning of the network, the IDOT Study Team agreed to provide more details on these items at the next CAG meeting.

Jeff then continued the presentation by discussing the Corridor Impact Analysis Report.

Results of Engineering and Environmental Data Analysis

Jeff explained that the categories presented in the report represent the corridors' potential impacts and include both engineering and environmental/community factors. Jeff noted that the environmental factors take into account the valued community resources identified by the CAG members earlier in the study.

Jeff noted that the first categories listed in the report's matrix are engineering measures such as cost of construction, areas of steep terrain, number of interchanges, etc. The second group of categories are environmental and community impact categories such as wetlands, stream crossings, acres of agricultural impacts, floodplains, relocations, historic sites, etc. Jeff explained that the matrix shows the approximate impact each corridor's representative band would have on each of the categories. Jeff then opened the floor for questions regarding this report.

John Anderson asked if the cost of the Illinois River bridge was included in the construction total, since it was listed as a separate line item. Jeff said that the bridge cost was included in the total construction costs for the corridors.

Mike Godar asked if the construction included right-of-way (ROW) acquisitions and wetland mitigations. Study Team member Ken Hemstreet said that these costs were not included and that only an estimate of construction costs was calculated. Mike Godar followed up by asking when the CAG would be able to see more detailed ROW information and more detailed environmental mitigation costs. Jeff responded by saying that those kinds of costs are typically not determined at this stage of a corridor study and that level of fine-tuning will not occur until after the initial reduction in the number of corridors is made. Jeff stressed that at this point it is more important that corridors that provide the greatest benefit with the least impact be identified.

Randall Jacobs said that while the residential impacts shown are those the State would need to acquire because they are in the "footprint" of the roadway, residential impacts are not limited to just properties in the footprint. Randy said it may be more useful to provide the CAG with information regarding how many residences are within a certain proximity of each corridor to better understand residential impacts on a larger scale. Jeff said that the Study Team could provide the CAG with information regarding how many residential impacts there would be within a certain distance of each representative band, but we would need to determine an appropriate distance.

Randall added that, as a representative of citizen property impacts, there was a certain inequity in the fact that people who have their homes taken for the roadway receive compensation from the

State, while those who would end up being adjacent to the highway may experience a loss in property value but receive no compensation. Paul Corcoran suggested using a model similar to a noise study, with closer properties showing higher impacts than properties further away. Jeff said that most of these questions will be studied during the alignments phase, when community impact and secondary impact assessments are conducted, as required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Terry Quinn expressed concern that a “hold on and do it later” approach may result in eliminating viable corridors in this stage of the process before moving onto the alignments phase. Jeff explained that at this point in studies of this nature, the level of detail is general. There is, however, usually enough detail to make some decisions between corridors.

Ken Klotz said that to get from fourteen corridors to only a handful, the CAG would need some more detail on buffer areas and economic development information. Ken Mauer asked if future residential areas are taken into account. Jeff responded that future land uses, including residential areas, will be part of the analysis.

Bill Dietrich said that proximity to a highway is not always a negative issue – his home is within one-third of a mile of Interstate 74 with only farmland between the house and the Interstate, but traffic is hardly noticeable.

Doug Damery asked about the matrix category regarding “conservation/parkland without the Illinois River.” Jeff clarified that the Illinois River itself is considered a conservation area and wetland area, and that it was not included in the totals to provide a better picture of the total non-river impacts.

Steve Jaeger asked about the community cohesion/division category, noting that there is only one occurrence throughout the entire study area, in corridor P4. Jeff said that in drawing the representative bands the Study Team took great care to avoid splitting established communities or residential developments. He stated there is an area near Sunnyland, along Illinois Route 8, that “threads the needle” between two such developments and, therefore, may result in the perception of a “barrier effect” between them. Steve asked if construction of a noise abatement barrier would mitigate that effect; Jeff responded that even with noise walls, the highway itself could be perceived as imposing a “psychological” barrier, which is why this one instance was included on the matrix.

Group Exercise on Corridors to Keep and Drop

Jeff then moved on to the last of the four documents to be reviewed, the Initial Corridors Screening Report. Jeff explained that this document combines matrices for both benefits (Purpose and Need) and impacts (Corridor Analysis) and that this matrix will be a key tool for use at the next CAG meeting, when the CAG members will discuss and decide which corridors to recommend for dropping from the study.

Jeff explained that the matrix aligns the corridors between the benefits section and the impacts section, for easy comparison. Jeff further explained that the matrix is color-coded with the same red/yellow/green color scheme that was used in the Purpose and Need document’s matrix.

Jeff also explained that the range of variation between each corridor for each benefit and impact category was calculated and that those with a high degree of variation were grouped at the top of the matrix, and those that varied little were grouped at the bottom. This arrangement makes it easier for the reviewer to focus on the categories that have the widest range of difference.

In summary, Jeff stressed that the combined matrix is simply a way to organize the data and it is up to each CAG member to make their own determination about which of the categories are most important to them.

Jeff then asked for questions or comments.

Steve Jaeger asked how the Study Team was planning to improve the matrix for the next meeting, as it would be simple to look at whichever corridor had the fewest red cells and just go with that. Jeff said that we can't just look at the color codes – we also need to keep in mind the actual data as well because the color codes may not include a wide variety of values. Jeff reiterated that the color codes are only meant to be a general visual guide, for orientation.

Pete Fenner noted that the analyses were performed along the entire length of each corridor and asked if it would be possible to analyze only portions of each corridor, such as only the Illinois River bridge and only a new interchange on Interstate 74 east of Morton, to see if there are better alternatives to meet the purpose and need of the project at a lower cost. Jeff clarified that the study's stated purpose is to connect Interstate 74 with Illinois Route 6. Smaller studies within the study area could be done, but the Phase I process requires that the ultimate proposed project be analyzed. Pete asked if the CAG could be given information on the benefits of making only local improvements and network updates. Jeff said that kind of information would be included as part of the "no-build" analysis, which is conducted later in the study process; at this stage, IDOT's objective is to find the best corridor or combination of corridor locations.

Terry Quinn noted that corridor T-7 has the fewest red cells in the matrix, but would not serve communities east of Washington as well as others might. Jeff said that while that is true, the Study Team purposely did not weight the categories, so that the CAG could decide, through discussion and consensus, which categories should be more important than others. Carey French suggested that removing the color coding from the matrix might make it easier for some CAG members to use the data.

Caroline Schertz noticed that the chart in the packet received by the CAG was not the same as the chart shown in the PowerPoint presentation. Jeff apologized for the confusion, explaining that he had inadvertently inserted an older version of the chart into the presentation. He explained that the version of the matrix contained in the CAG members' agenda packages is the current version. Caroline also pointed out that a line in the matrix was duplicated. Jeff acknowledged the error and said that a corrected matrix would be distributed to the group.

Jeff Dunnan noted that Corridor T-7 will need discussion. Corridor M-10 has fewer relocations, with 17 shown, so there may be other things to look at, not just the number of green and yellow categories. Jeff noted that this is the discussion that will happen at the next CAG meeting, on March 22.

At this point in the meeting, the Study Team's facilitators, Dennis Jennings and Judy Weddle, led the CAG in a focused conversation about the materials presented throughout this meeting. Judy said that she's aware that the Study Team gave the CAG a large amount of data. She then asked the CAG members to take a few minutes to discuss with one another their impressions of what they heard over the course of the meeting. After several minutes of discussion between pairs of CAG members, Judy called the room back to order and asked what insights had been uncovered.

In response, Ken Klotz asked if the Study Team could assess the impact on residences and businesses near, but not within, the representative bands to help determine local impacts of each corridor.

Caroline Schertz asked to see what specific wetlands and conservation/park areas would be impacted by each corridor's band.

Randall Jacobs asked if the CAG could be provided with the names of businesses to be relocated in each corridor's band.

In response to these requests, Jeff said that the Study Team will review each request.

Steve Jaeger said that at the next CAG meeting the CAG will be responsible for keeping and dropping corridors but at the end of the day, IDOT still has the ultimate decision-making authority and will do what they want to do. Jeff responded by explaining that at the next CAG meeting, the CAG members will work in table groups, and IDOT will also be included as a table group. Recommendations for keeping and dropping will use a reporting format such that IDOT's comments and concerns will be interspersed with the CAG's. Jeff clarified that while it's true that the CAG's role in the project is advisory and that IDOT has the responsibility of making final study decisions, IDOT is hoping that the process will allow the CAG to reach consensus on the corridor and that the final corridor will reflect the CAG's interests.

Mike Godar said he has concerns that the screening results regarding consistency with community land use and economic plans are based on subjective opinions. He wants to know who the Economic Development Council interviewed from each community as part of their analysis of the corridors. Jeff said that the land use screening and the economic development screening were two different screening processes: the land use screening used GIS analysis and was conducted by the IDOT Study Team; the economic development screening was done by the Economic Development Council. Jeff further explained that the EDC has been preparing an economic development plan for the Tri-County region and that they used their expertise as the region's professional economic

development planners to make their recommendations. Terry Quinn expressed concern regarding a lack of transparency regarding the EDC's methods.

A CAG member asked if there could be additional interchanges added to Interstate 74 that would also assist with economic development in the study area, away from specific corridors. Mike Lewis noted that some corridors did include other interchanges along Interstate 74. Mike said that, because the Eastern Bypass would be designed at or near Interstate standards, the termini at Illinois Route 6 and Interstate 74 would each be developed as a "systems interchange" – meaning it would include freeway-to-freeway connections only. Along Interstate 74, this means that areas close to the systems interchange would not have direct access to the Eastern Bypass, so the Study Team added an interchange along Interstate 74 nearby to ensure access.

Greg Larson added that, as part of federal requirements, the corridor must be looked at in terms of "logical termini"; that is, the facility must be designed with logical connection points at each end. In this case, Interstate 74 and Illinois Route 6 were designated as the logical termini. Otherwise, if a highway is proposed in a piecemeal fashion, it would be more difficult to determine the location of the new facility in the future and the total impacts of the full improvement would not be assessed.

Ken Klotz said that one of the criteria used in the screening process was consistency and support of EDC plans and asked if there would be an estimated dollar impact for cities near each corridor and if the Study Team would consider how that would impact each community. Jeff said that that type of information would be calculated once the study advanced to the NEPA process (the alignment study phase), but at this point in the study it is premature to go to that level of detail.

The CAG agreed that it would be helpful to start the next meeting with a brief presentation regarding how the traffic model works. Jeff invited the CAG to share with the Study Team the individual origin-destination links they would like to see presented for each corridor in terms of time and distance savings.

At that point, Mike Lewis and Scott Presslak distributed a document to the CAG containing some additional traffic information. The document showed maps with estimated future traffic volumes for each of the fourteen corridors under consideration. This information was provided to the CAG as supplemental data, as the CAG members consider which corridors to keep and which to drop.

The meeting was then called to a close, at approximately 9:10 p.m.