

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 #8

March 22, 2011

The eighth meeting of the Eastern Bypass Study Community Advisory Group (CAG) was held at the Countryside Banquet Facility, in Washington, on Tuesday, March 22, 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)
- Maureen Addis (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.)
- Jamil Bou-Saab (TERRA Engineering, Ltd.)
- Julie Schmidt (TERRA Engineering, Ltd.)
- Chris Hutchinson (TERRA Engineering, Ltd.)

Also present for the first hour of the meeting was Kurt Bialobreski, of Hanson Professional Services, Inc. (representing the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission).

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

Welcome and Meeting Objectives

Jeff Schlotter opened the meeting by welcoming everyone back and explaining the objectives for the meeting, namely, to review the activities of the previous meeting, to respond to questions raised at the previous meeting, and to begin the process of eliminating the least desirable corridors.

Review of Previous Meeting

Jeff briefly reviewed the activities carried out at the previous meeting, which consisted of an explanation of, and discussions about, four documents prepared by the IDOT Study Team documenting the analysis conducted throughout 2010. These documents include: Corridor Development to Date; Purpose and Need Analysis and Conclusions; Corridor Impact Analysis Report; and, the Initial Corridors Screening Report.

Jeff then introduced Joe Schirripa, who is the Study Team's traffic modeling engineer.

Presentation on Traffic Modeling and Follow Up to Questions

Joe delivered a brief presentation explaining basic information about how the traffic modeling is conducted and how the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission's traffic model was used to provide data for the Eastern Bypass Study's Purpose and Need analyses. He explained how Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs) were used to predict where traffic would go with each of the Bypass alternatives in place, as well as with a no-build scenario. He noted that the savings in time in the Study's matrices may look small, but this is because the savings is taken and averaged over the whole region. Some trips would see greater savings than others. For instance, with the various corridors, a trip from Germantown Hills to Mossville would save from about 30% to 48% on the travel time. A trip from Morton to the Shoppes at Grand Prairie Mall, however, would not see as much savings.

To give the CAG members an idea of what time savings might be realized with each of the corridors, the IDOT Study Team prepared a document that gave examples of estimated travel times between various points and estimated traffic volumes across the area's bridges. (This document, "Selected Travel Time and Traffic Volume Comparisons," was distributed to the CAG members at the meeting's break.)

Joe then opened the floor for questions.

Randall Jacobs asked what the travel times are for other O-D pairs. He said he is trying to get a handle on the costs and what the benefits are. Joe responded that the Selected Travel Time and Traffic Volume Comparisons document that will be handed out has 8 or 9 more example origin-destination pairs that may help answer his questions. If there are other specific trips the CAG is interested in beyond those in the document, the Study Team could look into those as well.

Rudy Habben asked if the traffic model just looks at traffic in the study area and not through trips, too. Joe responded that the model takes into account both internal and external (through) trips.

CAG member Doug Huser asked which roadways were included in the traffic model. Joe responded that state, county, and most township roads were included, but not smaller local roads. Kurt Bialobreski explained that if a road carried more than 50 cars a day, it was in the traffic model. Mr. Huser also asked how roads that intersected the Bypass were handled by the model. Kurt responded by saying that unless an interchange was proposed, roads were assumed to cross the Bypass with an overpass or an underpass. Mr. Huser questioned the accuracy of a model

constructed in this way, with respect to travel times, considering that not every intersecting road would have an overpass or underpass constructed and many would dead-end at the Bypass. Mr. Huser also said that many of these roads may only carry 50 or less vehicles a day.

In response to Mr. Huser's comments, some CAG members expressed skepticism at dropping corridors from further consideration without knowing how many local roads would be severed as a result of the highway.

Jeff responded by saying that while disruptions to small local roads are indeed an important factor to consider, the project's scope is still that of a corridor study. The representative bands used are simply hypothetical alignments within a larger corridor, and the actual alignments may end up being different than the representative bands. Once corridors are narrowed down, further study will be conducted and representative bands may change, but doing those sorts of analyses now, with so many corridors still under consideration, would be inefficient. [It should be further noted that the local roads that would dead-end at the Bypass would carry very few vehicles per day, so their effect on the overall travel times in the area is negligible.]

CAG member Karl Bryning noted that dividing local roads would also have an impact on residents as well, if bus routes and school districts were split by the Bypass.

Jeff responded by saying that during the project's alignment study, not only will school bus routes be examined, but emergency services as well. During the corridor study, it is understood that appropriate measures to avoid the barrier effect will be developed in the next phase.

At this point, Jeff turned to a discussion of the supplemental study data prepared by the Study Team.

Explanation of Supplemental Study Data

Based on inquiries from the CAG, the Study Team conducted a brief analysis, using GIS, to determine the number of residences and businesses within a quarter-mile of each representative band. A short document explaining this analysis and presenting the resulting data was sent to the CAG members in their agenda packets. This document was titled "Potential Proximity Effects." Jeff explained the information contained in the document, noting the report shows the number of residential, commercial/industrial, institutional, and historic properties within a quarter mile of the representative bands. He pointed out that the second page sorts the data. Color coding was used for residential since this is generally perceived as a negative effect. No color coding was used for the other categories, however, because close proximity to a highway can be seen as a positive or a negative effect, depending on the situation.

CAG member Steve Van Winkle asked if the quarter mile measurement is from the corridor or from the band. Jeff answered that the measurement is from the representative band.

CAG member Randall Jacobs asked for further detail regarding which specific businesses would be affected in each corridor band, saying he would like more than just the numbers listed in the matrix. Jeff said that the Study Team could spend the time required to identify those businesses but that

doing so at this point in the study would provide more detail than is necessary to select corridors, which are, by definition, broad areas.

CAG member Karl Bryning asked if there was any way the CAG could receive data about residences and businesses affected not just by the representative bands but all residences and businesses in each corridor. Jeff responded by saying that to do so would require a substantial amount of time and effort, and it's unclear how useful that information would be, considering that the representative bands are a small fraction of the width of an entire corridor and, therefore, would miss most of the homes in the corridor. In other words, the final alignment would be located so as to avoid many of the valued resources within the corridor, including residential areas.

Jeff then briefly discussed another document included in the CAG's agenda package mailing. He explained that the "Benefits and Impacts Data in Bar Chart Form" document was developed by the Study Team in response to some of the CAG members asking for a way to compare the data more graphically. He pointed out that on each page of the report a category from the matrices is depicted. The top bar chart shows the data organized by the corridor names. The bottom chart shows the data organized from low to high benefit or impact.

The Group then took a short break. After the break, Jeff briefly reviewed the Initial Corridors Screening Matrix, which could be a useful tool for the CAG members when discussing the pros and cons of each of the corridors. The Study Team's facilitators, Dennis Jennings and Judy Weddle, then took the floor to conduct a group exercise on identifying which corridors to drop from or keep in the Study.

Group Exercise on Corridors to Drop and Keep

Dennis began by recapping the CAG's ground rules and going over the agreed-upon definition of consensus.

Dennis then asked for the CAG members to discuss at their tables each corridor's benefits and impacts and agree on which corridors should be dropped from further consideration in the study. (Note: CAG members were evenly distributed throughout eight tables with a range of interest groups at each table. IDOT constituted a ninth table in the group, making their recommendations along with the CAG members' recommendations.) He noted that we were not targeting a particular number of corridors to get down to. IDOT, he said, would be listening to the CAG's recommendations and would be sharing as well. First, the table discussions would center around corridors to drop. Then, there would be discussions on those to keep.

In addition to copies of the screening matrix and various background data, each table was given pink sheets of paper on which to indicate corridors that table would like to see removed from consideration. Dennis asked for the tables to write on the cards reasons why they'd like to see the corridors they selected to be dropped.

At the front of the room was a "sticky wall" organized into a grid, with the fourteen corridors listed across the top and the nine table group numbers listed down the side. As tables completed their

discussions, they were invited to come up to the sticky wall and place their “drop” cards on the wall in the appropriate place on the grid.

After one-half hour of discussion at the tables, Dennis and Judy led a reporting session during which each table gave their reasoning for dropping the corridors indicated on their respective pink cards.

One corridor, Corridor P-1, received drop cards from all nine tables, and the CAG quickly reached consensus on dropping this corridor. Corridor T-5 received eight drop cards. After a brief discussion with the table that did not put a drop card up for T-5, consensus was reached on dropping Corridor T-5, as well.

Dennis then invited the CAG to resume their previous discussions and to also consider corridors they would especially like to keep. Green sheets of paper were distributed on which to indicate these “keep” corridors.

As before, each table discussed the benefits and impacts of the corridors and then attached additional cards to the sticky wall grid. After this second round, the CAG came to consensus on dropping an additional corridor, Corridor D-14. Overall, the CAG presented 29 “keep” cards and 78 “drop” cards to the front sticky wall, with 19 “cells” on the sticky wall grid remaining empty, with no cards, pink or green.

Due to time constraints, the exercise ended after this second round, with the study team agreeing to continue the exercise at the next CAG meeting to see if consensus could be reached on dropping any additional corridors from consideration, prior to the study moving on to a general public meeting.

Discussion and Next Steps

Before the meeting adjourned, Jeff asked if there was any additional data the Study Team could provide the CAG, prior to the next meeting, to assist in the corridor screening process.

In response, Karl Bryning re-stated his request that the total number of residences in each corridor be calculated. Doug Huser requested the number of roads that may be dead-ended due to the highway be identified. William Belshaw asked for total costs for each corridor band.

In response to this last comment, Jeff said that while cost is important, it is more important to remember that the purpose at the present time is to select a corridor based on benefits and impacts for the study area and not necessarily just the cheapest alternative. It was also noted that the overall estimated costs for each of the corridors is included in the Corridor Impact Analysis Report given to the CAG members prior to the March 3 CAG meeting. Information in that document, as well as any other information covered in the study thus far, is meant to be considered by the CAG as needed in their deliberations.

Mike Godar then requested that the benefits and impacts matrix to be packaged in such a way to rank the corridors from 1 to 14 based on each category. Doug Damery suggested being careful with such a ranking because there may not be a lot of difference between each rank within a category and/or the impacts may not be evenly distributed in a category.

The meeting ended about 9:20 p.m., with the understanding that the next CAG meeting will include a continuation of the corridor screening exercise.