



MEETING NOTES

Project: East Side Highway Environmental Assessment
Subject: Community Working Group Meeting #2
Date: December 7, 2010, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Location: McLean County Government Center

Project Team Attendees: Jerry Payonk (CDI), Al Staron (CDI), Joyce Tanzosh (CDI), John Lazzara (HDR), Janice Reid (HDR), Linda Huff (Huff & Huff), Gene Brown (Town of Normal)

Main topics discussed at the meeting are as follows:

1. Introduction (Jerry Payonk)

- a. New members not in attendance at Community Working Group (CWG) #1 were introduced. The interest areas represented by the new members include local business and schools.
- b. A summary of topics discussed at CWG#1 was presented.
- c. The CWG ground rules were distributed. The CWG members reviewed the ground rules and signed their initials on a master list indicating that they agree to abide by the rules.

2. Project History (Jerry Payonk)

A series of slides summarizing the history of the East Side Highway (ESH) were presented. Previous studies highlighted included the Long Range Transportation Plan 2035 (McLean County Regional Planning Commission, 2007), the 2002 Feasibility Study, and the 2009 Corridor Report.

The objectives of the studies and the differences among the studies were described. The previous studies form the framework for the EA, and work from the previous studies will be incorporated into the EA process. Specifically, stakeholder and Community Advisory Group (CAG) input obtained during the Corridor Study will be incorporated, refined, and re-evaluated in the EA process, including work to develop the Problem Statement, the Purpose & Need (P&N); the alternative evaluation criteria, and the corridors developed by the CAG.

3. EA Process (Jerry Payonk)

A series of slides illustrating the major milestones of the EA process were presented. The milestones included the Problem Statement, Purpose & Need, Define and Analyze Alternatives, Preferred Alternative, and Federal Approval (Finding of No Significant Impact – FONSI). A graphic showing the EA timeline was presented and discussed.

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4. Origin-Destination (O-D) Survey (Jerry Payonk)

A series of slides summarizing the O-D Survey were presented. The survey was conducted by project team personnel between October 27 and November 4, 2010. Over 20,000 survey cards were distributed at 19 intersections in the Bloomington-Normal area. Approximately 30% of the survey cards were returned, which is an excellent response rate. The preliminary summary of responses to the questions on the survey cards was discussed. The responses will be incorporated into the Travel Demand Model used to estimate future traffic patterns.

5. Purpose & Need (P&N) (Jerry Payonk)

A series of slides describing the P&N development were presented. The Problem Statement and engineering analyses form the basis of the P&N. A Problem Statement was previously developed during the Corridor Study. A Community Context Survey was distributed to stakeholders at a Public Information Meeting (PIM) during the Corridor Study. Input received from the survey in addition to stakeholder input was used to develop the Problem Statement in 2007.

Engineering analyses used in the P&N development include population and employment growth forecasts and traffic data analysis. Future and forecasted (year 2035) population and employment for the Bloomington-Normal area developed during the Corridor Study were presented. The sources of information used were also presented. The project team is currently updating the forecasts using the most recent data available. The project team will present the updated forecasts to the CWG and incorporate the data into the P&N when available. An overview of traffic data analysis concepts, including Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) and volume to capacity ratio (v/c) were discussed.

The preliminary Purpose and Need (P&N) was presented, and the next steps in the P&N development were discussed. The P&N is currently being revised based upon comments from FHWA and updated forecast data. The revised P&N will be available for public review at a PIM scheduled for January 13, 2011. Comments received from the public will be incorporated into the P&N as appropriate. The updated P&N will then be presented to the resource agencies at the February 2011 NEPA/404 merger meeting. The project team will seek concurrence from the agencies on the P&N at that time.

A summary of discussion points raised by the CWG members following the presentation of the P&N presentation is as follows:

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- A CWG member requested that when the updated forecasted (year 2035) population and employment information is finalized, the project team present the information on a graph alongside the numbers forecasted during the Corridor Study, in order to compare the forecasts develop during the Corridor Study and the EA. The project team agreed to present this information at a future CWG meeting.
- A CWG member asked why the 2035 employment forecast for McLean County is relatively high compared to the 2035 forecast for Bloomington-Normal. The project team will discuss this with the socio-economic consultants who prepared the forecasts, the al Chalabi Group, and discuss at the next CWG meeting.
- A CWG member asked if the “Bloomington-Normal area” as discussed in the P&N represents the same geographic area as the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The project team will define these terms at the next CWG meeting.
- A CWG member suggested that an aspect of sustainability should be incorporated into the P&N. The project team indicated that sustainability is not addressed specifically in the preliminary P&N but the suggestion will be taken into consideration.
- The level of detail of the “needs” identified in the P&N was discussed. The P&N identifies transportation needs, but does not identify solutions. At the beginning stages of the alternative development process, the alternatives, or “solutions” to the P&N are general. Specific details associated with the alternatives, including number of lanes and alternative modes of transportation, for example, will be developed later in the EA process.
- The roadway footprint was discussed. A preliminary width of 200 feet for the roadway is assumed. The width can be widened to accommodate other modes of transportation as necessary.
- A CWG member who represents agricultural interests stated that the Bloomington-Normal area is home to some of the most productive farmland in the world, which should be taken into consideration when developing the ESH, and when planning for new growth. Agricultural impacts (prime and important farmland acres impacted, severances, and access) will be evaluated during the EA. The CWG members agreed that is important to consider and balance resource impacts when planning the ESH.

6. Alignment Brainstorming - Develop Preliminary Corridors

The four steps in the Define and Analyze Alternatives process (Develop Preliminary Corridors, Screen & Consolidate Corridors, Perform Macro Analysis, and Develop Preliminary Alignments) were discussed. Five 48” x

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36" aerial photographs showing the project study area were distributed. The CWG members were invited to brainstorm corridors locations in small groups and draw preliminary corridors on the aerials. The CWG members were instructed that for this exercise there were no constraints on corridor location. The evaluation criteria will be discussed in detail at a future CWG meeting and will include adherence to the P&N, engineering feasibility, and social/environmental resource impact minimization.

Exhibits available for reference included an aerial showing the corridors evaluated during the Corridor Study, year 2005 traffic volumes, and forecasted year 2035 traffic volumes (the 2035 forecasts were developed during the Corridor Study and are currently being updated as part of the EA). Members of the project team were available to answer questions. The exercise lasted approximately 30 minutes.

7. Next Steps (Jerry Payonk)

Alternative development will continue at the next CWG meeting, to be held in January 2011. The CWG members were invited to attend the PIM on January 13, 2011.