



MEETING NOTES

Project: East Side Highway Environmental Assessment
Subject: Community Working Group Meeting #3
Date: January 25, 2011, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Location: McLean County Government Center

Project Team Attendees: Jerry Payonk (CDI), Joyce Tanzosh (CDI), John Lazzara (HDR), Linda Huff (Huff & Huff), Evan Markowitz (Huff & Huff), Eric Schmitt (McLean County)

Main topics discussed at the meeting are as follows:

1. Introduction (Jerry Payonk)

New members of the Community Working Group (CWG) were introduced. The interest areas represented by the new members include labor unions and archaeological interests.

2. Project Logo (Jerry Payonk)

The ESH project logo was displayed. Two winning students from Normal Community West High School were selected. The ideas from the two winning entries were combined to form the final project logo.

3. PIM#2 Summary (Jerry Payonk)

A series of slides were presented summarizing PIM#2, which was held on January 13, 2011, at the Normal Community High School. The purpose of the meeting was to present the Purpose & Need Statement (P&N). Approximately 50 members of the public were in attendance. Attendees were encouraged to comment on the P&N. All exhibits, handouts, and comment form presented at the meeting were also made available on the project website.

The preliminary results of the public comments received as of January 24, 2011, were presented. This included a graph summarizing the number of comments opposed, in support, and neutral with respect to the project. The most frequent reason given for not supporting the project was the validity of forecasted population and employment growth in the area. The official comment period ends January 27, 2010.

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4. P&N - Next Steps (Jerry Payonk)

A slide presenting the next steps in the development of the P&N was explained. Next steps include evaluating the public comments received from PIM#2. The project team will present the P&N at the NEPA/404 merger meeting on February 15, 2011. The presentation will include a summary of the public comments, and the actual comments will be available for the attendees to review. At the meeting, concurrence is sought from several Federal and State resource agencies.

Several questions concerning the P&N raised at the CWG#2 meeting held on December 7, 2010, were addressed. A summary of the issues follows:

- At CWG#2, a 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 “Bloomington-Normal area” in the P&N refers to the communities of Bloomington, Normal, Towanda, and Downs. The Bloomington-Normal MSA includes the entire area of McLean County.

- At CWG#2, a member asked why the 2035 employment forecast for McLean County is relatively high compared to the 2035 forecast for Bloomington-Normal.

The graph assumes that the corporate limits of Bloomington-Normal do not change between 2009 and 2035. Although it is likely that the corporate limits will expand in the future, assumptions cannot be made without supporting factual documentation. The projections are based on land use plans, historical trends, and 2009 data. The projections will be updated when 2010 census data becomes available in April 2011.

Several CWG members requested additional information regarding the future land use plan and what is driving the projected growth rate. The project team proposed to bring a member of the McLean County Regional Planning Commission (MCRCP) or a member of the project team whose expertise is socio-economic forecasting to the next CWG meeting to provide more information and to answer questions.

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- At CWG#2, a member suggested that an aspect of sustainability should be incorporated into the P&N.

Sustainability is not a purpose or a need of the ESH. Sustainability and incorporation of sustainable elements is a goal of the EA and will be included in the alternative analysis.

5. Engineering 101 (Jerry Payonk)

A series of slides describing engineering terminology and concepts considered in roadway design was presented. The factors included:

- facility type,
- access control,
- vertical alignment,
- horizontal alignment,
- sight distance,
- design speed,
- radius,
- capacity,
- interchange types,
- weaving,
- intersection, and
- channelization.

An engineering glossary handout summarizing the concepts was distributed to the CWG members.

Technical guidelines that engineers must adhere to were listed.

Volume to capacity (v/c) exhibits for Year 2005 and Year 2035 were on display. The Year 2035 exhibit is from the Corridor Study and will be updated with population and employment projections and traffic information, including data collected during the Origin-Destination Survey, when it becomes available. The exhibits show roadway segments with high v/c ratios (<1.2) in red, signifying that these segments are over capacity.

A summary of main discussion points following the presentation is as follows:

- Design speed is not the same as posted speed. Design speed depends on facility type. For instance, if a posted speed is 65 mph, the design speed may be as great as 75 mph to safely accommodate those who travel over the posted speed limit. For a full or partial access control

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roadway, the posted speed is typically 65 mph. An arterial road with more access points would be posted at a lower speed. The facility type of the ESH will be determined largely on traffic demand, which has not yet been determined.

- The v/c ratio is based on Annual Daily Traffic (ADT), not peak hours. The Year 2035 exhibit shows numerous road segments at or above capacity. The exhibits do not account for traffic reductions resulting from a proposed ESH. When planning the ESH, north-south and east-west roadway improvements will be considered. The ESH alternatives will be analyzed to determine impacts on traffic in the project study area. The ESH will not solve all traffic congestion issues in Bloomington-Normal.
- Public transit is considered when planning for the ESH. Alternatives modes of transportation will be evaluated in conjunction with an ESH roadway. Existing and planned public transit routes are included in the traffic model.

6. Environmental 101 (Linda Huff)

A series of slides presenting the environmental resources found within the project study area, and the laws and regulations associated with the resources was presented. The topics discussed included:

- NEPA regulations,
- water resources,
- wetlands,
- floodplains,
- threatened and endangered (T&E) species,
- agricultural land,
- section 4(f) resources (including parks and bike trails),
- historic sites,
- public facilities, schools, places of worship, and
- potential sustainable practices.

Social and environmental resources were evaluated at a macro level in the Corridor Study, but will be evaluated in much greater detail during the EA. The resource information used during the Corridor Study was obtained from GIS-level data, and was available in the public domain. Much of the resource information that will be used during the EA will be obtained from field studies conducted in 2011 by scientists and resource experts.

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Generally, the law and regulations state that impacts to natural and environmental resources should be avoided. If impacts cannot be avoided, they must be minimized and then mitigated for.

A summary of main discussion points following the presentation is as follows:

- Wetlands connected to waterways in addition to those not connected to waterways (isolated wetlands) are considered during the EA. Ideally mitigation for lost wetlands should occur in the same watershed. However, if there are no wetland banks or suitable mitigation sites available within the watershed, mitigation may occur in a different watershed.
- The Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) will identify T&E species, locally rare species, and Species of Concern during field visits to be completed in 2011. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) reviews historic records of T&E species identified in the area. A CWG member stated he has local expert findings pertaining to T&E species. The project team offered to forward the information to the INHS and IDNR.

A copy of the Environmental 101 presentation slides were distributed to CWG members.

7. Alignment Brainstorming – Continue to Develop and Refine Preliminary Corridors

The members split into two groups. A 36" x 48" aerial map showing the ESH project study area was distributed to each group. The maps included the preliminary corridors developed during CWG#2 as well as the location of human (e.g., schools) and environmental resources. The resource information is preliminary and will be updated as data collection continues and new information becomes available. The members were encouraged to refine the preliminary alternatives and develop new alternatives based on the engineering criteria and environmental information presented at the meeting and shown on the map.

8. Next Steps (Jerry Payonk)

Alternative development will continue at the next CWG meeting, to be held in March 2011. At the meeting, members will have the opportunity to continue to refine corridors. Additional alternatives developed by the project team and the alternatives developed during the Corridor Study will be presented for review. Corridor screening criteria will be presented for input.