



MEETING NOTES

Project: East Side Highway Environmental Assessment
Subject: Community Working Group Meeting #7
Date: December 1, 2011, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Location: McLean County Government Center

Project Team Attendees: Jerry Payonk (CDI), Antonio Acevedo (CDI), Janice Reid (HDR), John Lazzara (HDR), Linda Huff (H&H)

Main topics discussed at the meeting are as follows:

1. Introduction (Jerry Payonk)

An overview of topics to be discussed at the meeting was presented. Jerry also commented that population and employment statistics are reviewed on a regular basis and that the forecasts will be updated if there are substantial changes in the statistics.

2. Alignment Analysis (Jerry Payonk and Linda Huff)

Jerry presented the alignment analysis describing each step in the elimination process based upon constructability, engineering constraints, and residential impacts. This reduced the number of alignments from forty to six. Linda presented the sustainability criteria and elimination process from six to four alignments.

During the presentation there were several comments by the CWG members that are summarized below:

- One CWG member commented that wherever the road is built it will contribute to urban sprawl in the southeastern portion of Bloomington, which is currently being developed by private investors. One suggestion was to build an elevated roadway above Veteran's Parkway.
- One CWG member commented that alignments containing BN4 (121 and 122) were the best options and should not be eliminated. He believed that building the ESH further west (where BN2 and BN3 are located) will create a wall through the middle of the community and hinder development. He also stated that although BN4 is located east of BN2 and BN3, it still touches the 2035 Land Use Plan and leaves more room for development compared to the other options.

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- A few members disagreed with the request to continue to include BN4. One member stated that the land between BN4 and the 2035 Land Use Plan is to be “preserved” for farmland and that if BN4 is built it will become difficult to maintain this land as agricultural and prevent it from being developed. One member agreed that building the ESH further west will add more of a buffer to slow down urban sprawl, which is inevitable. Comments in favor of eliminating the eastern alignments also included issues such as the sustainability criteria, environmental resources, and watershed preservation. Another member added that BN4 looks more expensive due to its diagonal sections that sever farm tracts.
- A CWG member recommended weighting all of the impacts on a per mile basis. Since options that contain BN4 are longer than the others it will have more impacts, but it does not mean it is a worse option. Linda Huff indicated that the impacts could be looked at on a per mile basis, but that options with BN4 will most likely still have higher impacts and would be eliminated. This will be brought up at the next PSG meeting. While considering impacts on a per mile basis can be reviewed, federal and state environmental regulatory agencies consider total impacts to resources in their decision making process. The CWG member agreed that if options containing BN4 still have higher impacts then they should be eliminated.

3. Facility Type Discussion (Jerry Payonk)

Jerry discussed facility types and presented analysis for determination of specific facility. Jerry stated that an arterial facility for the ESH has been eliminated based upon issues of inefficient mobility and access when compared to a freeway or expressway. In comparing a freeway and an expressway, the freeway presents a safer operation, eliminating stop-controlled intersections and residential/agricultural access points that an expressway would contain. More analysis will be required to make the final decision.

During this portion of the presentation there were several comments by the CWG members that are summarized below:

- One CWG member commented that if the ESH will be a freeway and have restricted access then it should be located further east. A restricted access roadway in the BN2 or BN3 location will only create a wall that will hinder development beyond 2035.

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- One CWG member agreed that a freeway facility is the best option. He reasoned that an arterial facility on the east side of the community will only encourage big box stores to leave Veteran's Parkway and move to a new location along the new road. If this happened it could have a serious negative impact on the town of Bloomington.
- One CWG member commented that the freeway option is a good idea because it is better for economic development. Due to the easy access for semi-trailers at interchanges, a freeway will attract more manufacturing and industrial businesses that bring more jobs and money into the community.
- One CWG member commented that the ESH needs to have farm vehicle access. Currently Towanda-Barnes Road is the primary road for farm equipment. A freeway facility will only make it more difficult for farmers to access their land. He also mentioned that instead of a four-lane highway, the project team should be improving the two-lane roads throughout Bloomington-Normal.
- Once CWG member noted that a freeway would be more likely to encourage in-fill development and redevelopment within the planning boundary.
- One CWG member asked how the traffic numbers would be affected if the land use developed differently and expanded further east. John responded by saying that a change in land use could have an effect on traffic numbers but that the project team can only look at what is being planned for in the Land Use Plan. The Land Use Plan and traffic numbers are based upon detailed assessments of real values and patterns. It is not feasible to plan for every possible future scenario.

4. PIM #4 Format and Public Outreach (Jerry Payonk)

Jerry announced the tentative date for PIM #4 as January 12, 2011. He added that the format will be similar to previous public meetings and will begin with a presentation followed by an open house. A couple CWG members had the following comments:

- One CWG member asked if oral comments will be allowed. Jerry responded that no questions will be allowed during the presentation, but that people are welcomed to ask questions during the open house. The CWG member felt that the public's opinions will not be heard if they

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cannot ask questions during the presentation. He felt that the public comment forms did not allow the public to fully express their opinions.

- One CWG member mentioned that he has never seen an outpour of people at the public meetings that support the ESH project. He argued that he would accept the need for the project if he saw people that actually believed in the need for it.

Jerry also announced that the project team created a new Public Outreach Plan that involves reaching out to more organizations to gain a larger awareness of the ESH project. He encouraged the CWG members to spread the word to their constituents and that the project team will provide the CWG members with talking points.