



MEETING NOTES

Project: East Side Highway Environmental Assessment
Subject: Focused Working Group – Land Use and Access Management #3
Date: May 02, 2012, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Location: McLean County Government Building, Bloomington, IL

Minutes of this meeting were prepared by Antonio Acevedo of Clark Dietz, Inc. (CDI). Please inform him of corrections or modifications.

Project Team Attendees: Jerry Payonk (CDI), Antonio Acevedo (CDI), John Lazzara (HDR), Jamie Bents (Huff & Huff), Eric Schmitt (McLean County) and Gene Brown (Normal)

1. Introduction and Review

- Jerry Payonk began the meeting by presenting a map of the four remaining alignments and discussing a few geometric adjustments that had been made since the last Land Use and Access Management Focus Working Group (FWG) meeting.
 - A standard diamond interchange at General Electric (GE) Road was added for consideration at all four remaining alignments.
 - The BN3 alignment was shifted west back onto existing CR 2100E near Fort Jesse Road. The two residences in the NW quadrant of the Ft. Jesse/2100 intersection would have been impacted by the interchange regardless of the ESH alignment.
 - A standard trumpet interchange with no southern connection to CR 1750E was explored at I-74 to lessen the impacts to residents and farm parcels. The cloverleaf interchange at I-74 that was presented previously will still be studied along with the standard trumpet in the East Side Highway (ESH) Environmental Assessment (EA).
 - The project team discussed eliminating the interchange at Towanda Barnes Road near U.S. 150 with the Project Study Group (PSG), but the PSG decided to keep the interchange for further study. It was feared that the absence of an interchange at Towanda Barnes Road at that location would cause traffic to continue traveling south on Towanda Barnes Road and use the Downs interchange at I-74 rather than use the ESH.
 - The project team took a closer look at keeping the intersection of Airport Road and U.S. Route 66 intact. Although the intersection will

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remain, it will need to be shifted southwest to improve sight distance and avoid placing it directly underneath an elevated interchange ramp.

- Members of the FWG did not have any additional comments on the geometric adjustments. Jerry then mentioned that he will be presenting the remaining alignments to the north side neighborhoods in the coming weeks and that these residents will have an opportunity to comment as well.
- The project team is studying revisions to the northern alignments that would provide a Northtown Road alignment east of the ESH. The Northtown Road alignment would curve around the interchange and intersect Towanda-Barnes Road.
- Jerry also announced that the Sustainability FWG met on Monday, May 1st 2012 and had a few concerns about highly erodible soils south of Empire Street.

2. Review of Consensus Workshop: Agricultural Mobility

Jerry asked the FWG members to identify areas in the study area that affect agricultural mobility, or “pinch points.”

- One FWG member commented that if U.S. 150 remains a two lane road when it crosses over the ESH, it could cause safety issues when transporting agricultural vehicles and equipment. Jerry responded that U.S. 150 is planned to be widened. John Lazzara (HDR) added that the project team will also be looking at future traffic volumes on U.S. 150 to determine if any other measures need to be taken to accommodate the future increase in traffic volumes.
- Another FWG member commented that if the ESH replaces CR 2100E and if farm vehicles cannot use Towanda Barnes Road due to increased traffic volumes, the farmers will not have a primary north-south route to transport their vehicles and equipment because there are not many north-south roads in this area. If the ESH replaces a local street, farmers will need an alternate north-south route. This member also added that farmers have been using Towanda Barnes Road to move equipment for many years but most farmers do not enjoy using this road due to the increasing high speed of traffic and the presence of curbs.
- One FWG asked if any east-west roads will be cut off by the ESH. Jerry responded that no east-west roads will be cut off and they will either have access to the ESH via an interchange or will be able to cross over the ESH via a grade separation. Eric Schmitt noted that Northtown Road will be closed east of the ESH and rerouted to end at

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Towanda-Barnes Road, but that would be the only east-west road closure.

- One FWG member commented that most farm equipment requires an 18 foot vertical clearance for electrical lines and that they rarely travel faster than 25 mph. Other FWG members concurred.
- Another FWG member asked if the project team had an average width of farm vehicles. Jerry responded that the project team will be contacting John Deere to obtain this number.
- Another FWG member stated that he recently received safety research from Iowa State University regarding agricultural accidents, and he will forward to the team.
- One FWG member asked if the ESH could be an expressway rather than a freeway to allow for agricultural equipment. Jerry responded that due to the number of access points present on an expressway, the difference in speed of slow moving farm vehicles and fast moving passenger cars, and the high projected traffic volumes it is more desirable from a safety perspective to design the ESH as freeway.
- One FWG member mentioned that the cross section of US 51 is ideal for moving farm equipment because it has a 10' paved shoulder to accommodate most farm vehicles. He also mentioned that Towanda Barnes Road is not ideal because it only has an 8' shoulder with curbs that make it difficult to maneuver around. Another FWG member added that having a five lane cross section would be the best solution for accommodating farm vehicles on east-west crossroads.
- One FWG member commented that the CR 1750 bridge over I-74 has sight distance issues due to the steep vertical curve and that it can be dangerous for moving farm equipment since farmers cannot see cars on the other side of the bridge. Jerry responded that the project team could look into flattening the vertical curve of bridges and improving the sight distance.
- Another FWG member mentioned that agricultural access will be more of an issue on the south side of Bloomington-Normal rather than the north side because there is much more development taking place on the north side that is putting agricultural land out of commission. This member referred to a few agricultural parcels on the map that are currently being developed and are no longer used for agriculture. He stated that many of the existing township roads are narrow with poor sight distance.
- Another FWG member provided his own estimates about the number of farming operations, acres of crops, and truckload of crops could be affected by the closure of 1750N across I-74. He estimated that 24

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operators or landlords, over 3,000 acres, 96 truckloads of beans, and 300 truckloads of corn could be affected by the closure.

- Jerry asked the FWG members to mark the locations of all of the agricultural storage facilities on the map. The FWG members marked four locations: Holder, Randolph, Towanda and Hudson.

3. Review of Consensus Workshop: Emergency Response Access

Jerry asked the FWG members how emergency response access could be improved with the remaining ESH alignments and if eliminating the interchange at Fort Jesse Road would cause any issues.

- One FWG member responded that if the Fort Jesse Road interchange is eliminated it would have a negative effect on emergency response times. Since a fire station will be built in the vicinity of Raab Road and Towanda Barnes Road in the next 30 years (exact location to be determined), having an interchange at Fort Jesse Road would allow firefighters and other emergency response personnel to quickly access the ESH if an accident were to occur on the ESH. Another FWG member added that having access to the ESH at this location would be ideal for Bloomington and Normal Police as well. He mentioned that even if the ESH is owned by the State, municipal law enforcement agencies will still respond to accidents on the ESH.
- One FWG member also added that having median breaks on the ESH would be beneficial. John Lazzara responded that there will be median breaks every two miles, but that they could be closer if needed.

4. Review of Consensus Workshop: Residential Barriers

Jerry asked the FWG if there were any concerns that the ESH would create a residential barrier.

- One FWG member commented that the ESH would be a barrier if it cuts off east-west access. Jerry responded that no east-west roads will be cut off (other than the realignment of Northtown Road) and they will either have access to the ESH via an interchange or will be able to cross over the ESH via a grade separation. As long as one of these occurs, isolation of the eastern subdivisions would not occur.
- Another FWG member asked if it would be difficult to extend utilities east of the ESH once the road is built. Jerry responded that in the preliminary design of the ESH future utility expansions will be considered.

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- One FWG member mentioned that the ESH may be a barrier for pedestrians and bicyclists. Particularly, county roads 1500 and 1600 North have a lot of bicycle traffic. Jerry responded that the Alternate Modes FWG will be looking into ways to improve pedestrian and bicyclist access and that east-west crossroads will accommodate pedestrian and bicyclists where necessary. At their first meeting, the Alternate Modes FWG identified GE Road (1500 North) as a popular route for cyclists.

5. Review of Consensus Workshop: Noise

- One FWG member asked what would be done to mitigate properties affected by noise pollution. Jamie Bents (Huff & Huff) responded that traffic noise impacts are determined using the Federal Highway Administration traffic noise modeling software and Illinois DOT noise policies. The traffic noise model is developed using specific design information from the project, as well as existing and projected traffic volumes, existing and projected land uses, and existing noise levels as measured in the project area. The IDOT and FHWA noise policies indicate when a property has significant noise impacts, and also indicated when a noise barrier is feasible and reasonable to construct to abate noise impacts. The IDOT noise policy allows for these benefitted by a feasible and reasonable noise barrier to vote on if they approve of its construction.
- Another FWG member asked what the chances are of a noise mitigation procedure being recommended but not implemented. Jamie Bents responded that if a noise impact is identified and a barrier is found to be reasonable and feasible, those impacted by the noise would vote on the barrier. If the residents select the barrier is considered a mitigation measure and will be listed in the commitments section of the NEPA document, which means that it will be constructed as a project commitment.
- One FWG member asked how close a home would have to be to the ESH to be affected by noise. Jamie Bents responded that noise modeling will be done to determine what areas will be affected by noise and would require mitigation, but that most noise impacts occur within 500 – 1000' of the road.
- Another FWG member asked if the noise standards considered the type of pavement used as a way to mitigate noise. Jamie responded that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has done studies that show some pavement treatments can temporarily reduce noise, but that these pavement treatments are not considered permanent solutions for noise

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mitigation because the surface treatments typically wear away before the road is ready to be resurfaced.

6. Review of Consensus Workshop: West Side Business Impacts

- One FWG member commented that existing businesses on the west side of the Bloomington-Normal area, near the I-55/74 bypass, may be affected when new businesses start developing around the ESH.
- Another FWG member asked if the ESH traffic numbers showed the ESH being used for regional truck traffic. John Lazzara responded that the most recent traffic model did not show much regional truck traffic using the ESH. Instead, it showed the ESH being used more by local traffic. These models, however, will be updated for each specific remaining alternative.

7. Drainage

- One FWG member asked how drainage issues will be handled if the ESH changes drainage patterns, specifically for farmers. John Lazzara responded that hydraulic engineers will complete existing and proposed location drainage studies. He also mentioned that hydraulic surveys are currently being conducted on properties surrounding the ESH.

8. Review of Consensus Workshop: Safety

- One FWG member was concerned about the mix of users (pedestrians, bicyclists and cars) on the east-west crossroads and how the project team will ensure safety for all users. The ESH could cause local street traffic to redistribute, increasing traffic volumes on some local streets and increasing the potential for crashes and safety problems.
- Another FWG member was concerned that the Grove subdivision will only have one access point along Ireland Grove. Jerry said that the project team is aware of this and will be looking to develop another access point.

9. Review of Consensus Workshop: Planned Growth

- One FWG member commented that an ESH would create opportunities for better freight delivery to the airport, and that CIRA has stated that the ESH will improve freight delivery.
- One FWG member asked about other future planned and programmed infrastructure needs in the project area. Jerry indicated that Hamilton

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Road is an example of a recent planned project added to the ESH transportation model. Another member asked if Hershey Road would be extended to US 150; the project team and agency representatives present did not know of any current plans to construct this extension.

- Another FWG member asked how a north-south ESH will address traffic congestion on the east-west roads. Jerry responded that having another north-south road will help distribute the traffic since the major east-west roads will have access to the ESH.
- One FWG member asked if the project team considered staging the development of the ESH to be an expressway in the beginning and then converting it to a freeway once the traffic volumes warranted it. Jerry responded that the project team did consider this but that it would be difficult to negotiate with residences and businesses along the ESH knowing that that access would be taken away in the future.

10. Other

- Jerry announced that the next Land Use and Access Management FWG meeting would be in a few months in order to give the project team time to refine the alignments.
- Jerry also mentioned that another Community Working Group (CWG) meeting would likely be held sometime in the fall. A few FWG members asked if they could join the CWG even though they were not members previously. John Lazzara responded that the project team will look at the makeup of the CWG and see if more people can be added.
- An FWG member reiterated that the FWG liked the trumpet interchanges at I-74 better than the cloverleaf I-74 interchange option.