



MEETING NOTES

Project: East Side Highway Environmental Assessment
Subject: Focused Working Group – Alternative Modes Meeting #2
Date: November 29, 2012, 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Location: McLean County Government Center

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

Project Team Attendees: Janice Reid (HDR), Janet Gonzalez (HDR), Antonio Acevedo (CDI), Eric Schmitt (McLean County)

Working Group Attendees: Scott Douglas (resident); Julian Westerhout (Bike BloNo); Michael Gorman (Bike BloNo); Mercy Davison (Town of Normal); Caryn Davis (Bloomington Cycles & Fitness)

1. Introduction

- Project Team members and attendees introduced themselves
- Agenda and ground rules were presented.

2. Purpose of Alternative Modes FWG

- Specific and structured form of an advisory group with specific interests and knowledge in transit, bicycle and pedestrian modes
- Assembled for input to planning and design aspects of project as it relates to transit, bicycling and walking
- Advises the PSG at key milestones, before the information is finalized
- For this meeting, the focus of the discussion was on bicycle and pedestrian planning. The Project Team has met separately with Connect Transit and ShowBus.

3. ESH Project Background

- Timeline and evaluation process described. Preferred ESH alternative to be determined in early 2013
- Reviewed ESH purpose statement
- Four remaining alternatives displayed along with 2035 Land Use Plan

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4. 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

- Presented list of goals from 2040 LRTP that reflect alternative modes:
 - Reduce modal conflicts
 - Broaden appeal of public transit
 - Reasonably accessible rural public transit
 - Planning for bicycles as transportation mode
 - Network that includes alternative modes
- Displayed map of Alternative Modes Plan from 2040 LRTP and from Normal Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

5. Review of Bicycle Planning Considerations from FWG #1

- Towanda Barnes Road, GE Road, Old Route 66, Ireland Grove Road and Airport Road are important to bicyclists
- ESH right-of-way should accommodate an off-road bicycle path for the entire length
- Improve crossing signals at GE Road/Towanda Barnes Road; GE Road/Airport Road; and wherever schools and parks are located
- Accommodate children, mobility-impaired and elderly populations (all users)
- Need to be able to safely cross new ESH
- Maintain bicycle access between Old U.S. Route 66 and Airport Road

6. Review of Project Study Group (PSG) Bicycle Planning Considerations and Preliminary Plan developed during Summer/Fall of 2012

- Provide for continuous north/south path through study area (Old 66 to US 150).
- Build connections to Constitution Trail
- Build connections to bicycle facilities already proposed by Bloomington and Normal
- Provide safe access over and under ESH in multiple locations
- Accommodate all path users

7. Average Daily Traffic (ADT) Maps

- Existing ADT and 2035 Build ADT maps were displayed and discussed

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- 2035 ADT numbers were used to show how the type and size of the bike paths were selected based on the IDOT Bureau of Design and Environment Manual. Most of the major roadways within the study area will have high ADTs, indicating the need for separated paths adjacent to the roadway.

8. Proposed Bike/Pedestrian Trail Map

- The path would begin in Towanda, follow Jefferson to Hely, then onto Towanda Barnes Road until it meets existing Constitution Trail. There the path would head east on GE Road to the ESH, and follow ESH south until Ireland Grove Road, with access opportunities at Empire Road. At Ireland Grove Road, the path would turn back west to Towanda Barnes Road, where it heads south until US150. The path would head west on US150 to coincide with roadway improvements that are required as part of ESH.
- ESH Trail crossings include GE Road, Empire Road, Ireland Grove Road, Towanda Barnes Road, and US 150. Additionally, a bicycle/pedestrian bridge would be constructed over ESH between Fort Jesse and GE Roads. A bicycle/pedestrian/drainage passage will be constructed between Oakland and Ireland Grove Road; and just north of the ESH/Towanda Barnes Road (south) interchange. The ESH will cross over the NS Railroad, and the bridge will be wide enough to accommodate a future trail along the railroad.

A map of the proposed ESH bike/pedestrian trails was displayed and the FWG members were asked to draw any suggested edits on the map. The FWG members commented on the following issues:

- Proposed trail along GE Road should continue further east and connect to Bloomington's proposed trail. The same GE Road trail should also continue north along ESH and connect to Bloomington's proposed trail near the Eagle View subdivision, and the proposed bike/ped bridge over ESH.
- If the proposed bike/pedestrian bridge over ESH is the responsibility of the City of Bloomington then it will never be built. Eric Schmitt (McLean County) added that the ESH project will account for the impacts of the bridge's right-of-way footprint. The cost of the bridge's construction needs to be discussed with IDOT.
- Ensure that the I-55 and I-74 ESH interchanges do not become a barrier to bicycle travel. Need to connect the areas north of I-55 and south of I-74 to the rest of the project area. Potential opportunity to use abandoned railroad

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on the southern end of the study area for a future trail and/or connection to the trail network. Need to ensure that ESH will not become a barrier for this future trail opportunity. Long Lane currently passes over I-74 just west of the proposed ESH interchange and will remain open with the construction of the ESH. A bike path along this road would allow bicyclists and pedestrians to cross over I-74.

- Avoid 90 degree turns and choke points when designing the bike/pedestrian trails to allow for free flow of bicycles.

9. Suggested Transit Expansion Areas

A map of the suggested transit expansion areas to coincide with the ESH was displayed and FWG members commented on the following issues:

- Park and rides are a good idea as long as they are located near bike/pedestrian trails and serve as trail heads.
- Connect Transit is currently proposing many potential route changes.

10. Next Steps

- Project Team will consider the FWG members' comments and present them to the PSG
- Project Team will develop ideas to cross I-55 and I-74, and to connect proposed GE Road Trail with ESH north of GE Road. These will be emailed to FWG members for review and comment.
- ESH newsletter will be sent out by the end of November 2012.
- FWG members can visit the project website at www.eastsidehighway.com to sign up for the newsletter.