



## MEETING NOTES

**Project:** East Side Highway Environmental Assessment  
**Subject:** Community Working Group Meeting #6  
**Date:** June 29, 2011, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.  
**Location:** McLean County Government Center

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**Project Team Attendees:** Jerry Payonk (CDI), Joyce Tanzosh (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.

### 2. Socio Economic Update (Jerry Payonk)

Jerry presented an updated of socio-economic data. The al Chalabi Group (ACG) continues to monitor other data sources, in addition to Woods & Poole data, to validate the ESH forecast. The Conference of Mayors was recently held in Baltimore. At the conference, new data from IHS Global Insight were presented which examined the ability of metro areas to return to pre-recession peak employment numbers. McLean County is one of two Illinois metro areas expected to return to peak employment by the first quarter of 2012; Springfield is the other metro area. The information is corroborated by Illinois unemployment rate data recently released. The unemployment rate in McLean County is low compared to other counties in Illinois.

During the presentation several questions were raised by the CWG members that are summarized below.

- A member asked if the new socio-economic data will influence the future (2035) population and employment forecast trend lines. Jerry stated that as new information becomes available, ACG will evaluate the data to make sure it corroborates the forecasts, and if it does not, ACG will adjust the population and employment forecasts accordingly. Updated socio-economic data from the State of Illinois are expected to be released soon. ACG will give an update on the socio-economic data at the next Pubic Information Meeting (PIM), tentatively scheduled for early August.
- A member commented that according to a recent article in the *Pantagraph*, the population center of Illinois has moved from

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Bloomington -Normal further north to Grundy County. Jerry responded that this does not mean that McLean County is not growing; rather it signifies that the Chicago collar counties are rapidly growing. Jerry will notify ACG of the information.

- A CWG member stated that the government agencies rejected the ESH years ago, and the project should have been stopped at that time.

### 3. Alternative Evaluation

#### a) Results of Initial Screening Evaluation (Janice Reid)

A 36" x 48" exhibit showing the alternative segments on an aerial base was displayed at each table for the members to refer to during the meeting. Environmental and cultural resources were displayed on the map. The Initial Screening Evaluation is the first step in the five-step alternative evaluation process. The 116 Build Alternatives developed by the Community Working Group (CWG) and PSG, in addition to the No Build Alternative, the Transportation System Management (TSM)/Transportation Demand Management (TDM), the transit alternative, and the east-west only alternative were included in the evaluation.

A PowerPoint presentation summarized the Initial Screening results. The three criteria used in the evaluation were:

1. Does the alternative directly impact State or Federally protected areas?
2. Does the alternative meet the horizontal and vertical clear zone requirements for the Central Illinois Regional Airport (CIRA)?
3. Does the alternative divide or isolate a neighborhood or community?

No State or Federally protected areas are present within the project area. All segments meet the CIRA clear zone requirements at this time. This analysis considered information on proposed additions identified in the 2009 CIRA Master Plan. Therefore, no segments were eliminated for criteria 1 and 2. In response to a CWG member's question, Janice stated that the potential future expansion of the CIRA was taken into consideration.

Three segments were eliminated per criteria 3. The segments, D5, D6, and D9, sever and/or create access disruptions to existing community areas near

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Downs. With the elimination of these segments, 36 alternatives which contain these three segments were eliminated, leaving 80 to be carried into the Purpose & Need Evaluation.

During the presentation several questions were raised by the CWG members, which are summarized below.

- A member asked Janice to define “neighborhood” and “community”. Janice read the definitions, and stated that the definitions are taken from Illinois Department of Transportation’s (IDOT) Community Impact Assessment Manual.
- The member asked if the project team also evaluates whether the alternatives divide families, as one of the current alternatives divides his home from his daughter’s home. Linda Huff (H&H) responded that the project team has to look at large socio economic groups first and consider the effects on a large or macro scale rather than focus on individual families.

### b) Results of Purpose & Need Evaluation (Janice Reid)

A PowerPoint presentation displayed the Purpose & Need Evaluation results. A handout was distributed to the CWG members that summarized the results of the P&N analysis in tabular form.

The 80 alternatives carried forward into the Purpose & Need Evaluation were assigned to five representative Travel Demand Model (TDM) options. The five models were developed to represent general travel movements within the project study area under different build scenarios. The Purpose & Need Evaluation criteria were then applied to each of the 5 options and all 80 alternatives.

The Purpose and Need criteria consisted of measures to evaluate how well each alternative met the stated needs of accommodating managed growth on the east side, improving mobility; and improving access, in comparison to the No Build scenario. Several maps and tables illustrating the results of the criteria were shown. Measures included changes in accessibility; square mileage between the alternative and the 2035 Land Use Plan; percent change in congested road segments; travel time savings; and percent change in area within five minutes of interstate access. A comprehensive table with the results of the screening was handed out.

Those alternatives that were least consistent with meeting the Purpose and Need of the project were recommended for elimination. Three segments,

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D7, D17, and D18, were eliminated in the Purpose & Need Evaluation. Eight alternatives containing these three segments were eliminated, leaving 72 to be carried into the Macro Analysis, in addition to the east-west only alternative.

At this point in the presentation, several issues and questions were raised by CWG members which are summarized below.

- A member stated that the ESH was originally intended to relieve highway congestion in Bloomington-Normal and that Lexington-Leroy would take traffic out of the community, and now it seems the purpose is to accommodate local traffic. Jerry responded that Lexington-Leroy is 5 miles east of the Bloomington-Normal 2035 Land Use Plan and that an alternative using this road would not meet the Purpose and Need of the project. He reiterated that one purpose of the ESH is to provide for growth on the east side of Bloomington Normal.
- In regards to the charts displaying the changes in accessibility for each option, a member voiced concern regarding future growth in the south east corner of Bloomington-Normal. The project team stated that the maps are illustrating where future growth is likely to occur based on the alternative location, and that does not mean that the project team views the growth as a positive factor. Options that result in growth within and in close proximity to the 2035 Land Use Plan are more consistent than options that lead to growth further east outside of the 2035 Land Use Plan.
- A member commented that the ESH is catering to outside developers and not the community. He added that further housing development is not being allowed along Fort Jesse Road east of Towanda Barnes Rd. and that because of this developers are going outside of town. Jerry stated that the ESH is being planned to accommodate future growth based on the 2035 Land Use Plan. The ESH project does not have any affiliation with the development occurring outside of the plan. Jerry stated that developing outside of the 2035 Land Use Plan is a County Board issue, and does not pertain to the ESH directly.
- The same CWG member commented that the process is catering to developers east of Bloomington-Normal near Lexington-Leroy Road. John Lazzara (HDR) responded that the graphs in question indicate what might happen if the ESH is built in a particular location, and do not mean that any of the options are necessarily “good”. He also reiterated that the ESH is being planned to support growth based on the 2035 Land Use Plan. John suggested that the

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CWG members concerns should be brought to the attention of the local planning agencies and that they are not associated with this project. If someone has concerns regarding with the land use plan there is a different process associated with the development of the land use plan, and it is outside of the purview of the ESH EA.

- A member, in regards to the graphs depicting the distance between each alternative and the Land Use Plan, commented that the space representing areas between the option and the limits of the Land Use Plan should also be shown on the east since there would likely be development on both sides of the alternative. Jerry agreed that development may occur on both sides of an alternative. The purpose of the map in question was to illustrate distance and area between the 2035 Land Use Plan limits and the alternative, not to show potential development.
- A member suggested that Bloomington and Normal should say “no” to proposed development unless the developers are willing to pay for all costs such as sewers and police. The project team stated that this is an issue to take up with local agencies.
- A member inquired if the project team was evaluating upkeep costs of the road (i.e., snow removal, police patrol) and if a cost-benefit analysis had been done. John stated that a cost-benefit analysis will be evaluated when the alternatives have been narrowed down. At this point in the process the federal government does not permit alternatives to be eliminated based on cost.
- A member inquired if the alternatives were eliminated during the P&N analysis based on mathematics. Janice commented that the P&N criteria rely upon metrics as previously described but also included qualitative analysis.

### c) Results of Macro Analysis Evaluation (Linda Huff)

The Macro Analysis quantifies the impacts of the alternative corridors on human and environmental resources. Impacts were measured within a 500 foot corridor for the 72 north-south build alternatives. A 200 foot corridor was used to access impacts for the east-west only alternative. The east-west alternative is a stand-alone alternative and is not associated with the east-west improvements that may be proposed as part of the 72 build alternatives, which will be evaluated later in the project process.

The project team identified three levels of impacts for environmental resources within the project corridors: environmental resources that do not exist within the alternative corridors, resources that are impacted equally or

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within the same general range, and resources that exist in varying degree within the alternative corridors. The latter condition was used to determine alternative elimination.

A table of impacts was displayed with the resources listed and the minimum impact value, maximum impact value, median, and mean (the values did not include the east-west only alternative).

Resources that were not impacted include floodways, biologically significant streams, Class I streams, historic sites, and cemeteries.

Resources that were impacted equally or within the same general range by all corridors, or where only preliminary data was available included streams, drinking water supplies – surface water, wetland areas, special waste sites, threatened & endangered species, commercial buildings, public facilities, public facilities with access change, utility crossings, noise receptors, high probability archaeological sites, additional farm impacts associated with farm severances, farm outbuildings, and otherwise affected farms, ROW acquisition and estimated percent change in total crashes. These resources were not used as eliminating criteria.

Resources that existed in varying degree considered as a basis for elimination were residential displacements, parklands, prime and important farmland, and floodplain.

The alternatives were eliminated through a process reviewing the differentiating resource criteria and assessing threshold levels of impacts. The purpose of this step was to minimize environmental impacts by eliminating those alternatives with the highest resource impacts. The elimination process that the project team proposed was displayed on an Excel spreadsheet.

The example illustrated alternative elimination resulting from two criteria: homes and prime and important farmland.

For each resource, a bar graph showing the impacts for each alternative was displayed. A preliminary threshold value used for elimination was identified, and the alternatives with impacts that met or exceeded the threshold value were eliminated. This elimination process was displayed both graphically and through bar charts.

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The screening process was initiated looking at residential impacts, which ranged from 4 to 54 impacts for the 72 corridors under consideration. A threshold value of 39 displacements was identified as an unacceptable level of impact. Thirteen alternatives with impacts of 39 or more displacements were eliminated. Of note, all alternatives containing segment BN1 (Towanda Barnes Road) and the east-west only alternative were eliminated through this step in the process. Also, because BN1 was the only segment that impacted parklands, all impacts to parklands were eliminated at this step.

The second criterion evaluated was prime and important farmland. The remaining alternatives impacted between 654 and 905 acres. The threshold value was identified as 800 acres. 31 alternatives requiring more than 800 acres of prime or important farmland were eliminated as they represented the highest level of impact.

After this elimination process, 28 alternatives remained. The alternatives included the middle segments of BN2, BN3, and BN4 with combinations at both the interchange locations for I-74 and I-55.

None of the 28 alternatives impact parkland. The floodplain impacts range from zero to 8 acres for the remaining alternatives. Although floodplain is federally protected, the project team stated that the alternatives impacting floodplain could be carried forward to the next level of analysis for further evaluation. The project team asked for the opinion of the CWG.

A CWG member stated that he is comfortable bringing in more alternatives to the Alignment Analysis rather than eliminating them now. The other members were in general concurrence.

Jerry stated that the project team presented the results of the Macro Analysis to the Project Study Group (PSG) and they recommended that Segment D1 be shifted to avoid an electrical substation. They also recommended that diagonal segments D8 and D16, and BN3 and T3 should be considered. Jerry asked if the CWG members had any comments or objections to the suggestions. The CWG members did not object.

### **4. Other**

A discussion among CWG members occurred after the presentation was complete. A CWG member stated that there is a great deal of anger at local government, but also apathy; voter turn-out is low. He urged everyone to go to

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their township and city council meetings to voice their concerns. A discussion of the annexation and governmental process between CWG members followed. A member commented that a landowner can protect farmland by registering it as permanent farmland; however that will lower the value of the land and will prevent the owner from selling it as anything but farmland.

A member stated that some stakeholders have been engaged in the ESH process and have been attending meetings since 2002 and are becoming frustrated. Several members stated that the current project team is doing a good job with the current study, and even if they disagree with the road being built, they have respect for the general process and project team.

A member commented that the community has to plan for 2035 otherwise the area will not be prepared if growth does occur as projected. Jerry added that the ESH may never be built if growth does not occur, but if it does and there is no plan, then many more homes and businesses may be affected.