



## MEETING NOTES

**Project:** East Side Highway Environmental Assessment  
**Subject:** Focused Working Group – Alternative Modes Meeting #1  
**Date:** March 15, 2012, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.  
**Location:** Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts, Bloomington, IL

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Minutes of this meeting were prepared by Janice Reid of HDR. Please inform her of corrections or modifications.

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

### 1. Introduction

- Project Team members and attendees introduced themselves. Participants included: Christine Brown (resident); Laura Dick (SHOWBUS); Scott Douglas (resident); Jerry Erb (League of Illinois Bicyclists); Mike James (Village of Downs); Bob Williams (resident); Mercy Davison (Town of Normal).
- 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 bicycle and pedestrian modes
- Assembled for input to planning and design aspects of project as it relates to bicycling and walking
- Advises the PSG at key milestones, before the information is finalized

### 3. ESH Project Background

- Timeline and evaluation process described. Preferred alternative to be determined by end of 2012, for presentation at public meeting in early 2013.
- Four remaining alternatives described, along with proposed interchange locations.
- Possible addition of GE Road interchange described. Indicated that it still needs to be reviewed and approved by IDOT and FHWA.

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### **4. Complete Streets Policy**

- Complete Streets legislation requires that bicycle and pedestrian traveled ways be considered in the planning and development of facilities and be accommodated when roads are built or rebuilt with a balanced safety and convenience for all users.
- IDOT Policy states: “In or within one mile of an urban area, bicycle & pedestrian ways shall be established in conjunction with the construction, reconstruction, or other change of any State transportation facility except if it is for resurfacing only; if there are safety issues; excessive costs; or no need. Exceptions must be approved by Secretary of DOT”
- The IDOT Bureau of Design and Environment (BDE) Manual has a chapter specifically regarding Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations. This has been recently updated to reflect the Complete Streets policy. The chapter contains a bicycle needs assessment, which is based on land use, traffic volumes, origins and destinations.

### **5. Regional plans and policies**

- McLean County Comprehensive Plan Transportation Objectives
  - Encourage bicycling and walking
  - Implement on-street bicycle routes where possible
  - Provide for sidewalks, transit stops, bike racks, connections to regional trail system
  - Encourage transit use
  - Improve transit route coverage and schedule
  - Implement multi-modal improvements to support and complement planned areas of development.

### **6. East Side Highway Project Information**

- One goal is to improve access and mobility on the east side. Congestion can be reduced with roadway, transit, and bicycle/pedestrian improvements. Roadway improvements include the development of East Side Highway as an access controlled facility with interchanges.
- Typical Sections for Freeway and Arterial crossroads described. Non-motorized vehicles, including bicycles, are prohibited from using Freeways. However, adjacent, off road bicycle paths can be considered.

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### 7. Alternative Mode Considerations for ESH Project (focused questions)

- How will the ESH benefit and impact bicycle and pedestrian travel? (Positive and Negative)
- How will the ESH benefit and impact travel by transit? (Positive and Negative)
- What specific things do we need to consider as we are designing the freeway and crossroads?

#### Major Points of Group Discussion:

- Towanda Barnes Road, GE Road, Old Route 66, and Ireland Grove Road discussed as important for bicycling. Bicycle access on these roadways should be maintained and/or improved.
- The design of ESH should preserve enough ROW for an off-road bicycle path for the entire length.
- Better crossing signals for bicyclists are needed, especially at GE Road/Towanda Barnes Road; GE Road/Airport Road; and wherever schools and parks are located.
- The design of ESH should accommodate traditional bus, at least, and possibly bus rapid transit (BRT) in future.
- Need to accommodate mobility-impaired and elderly populations, especially near new Assisted Living Center on Towanda Barnes Road.

#### Items noted on “Sticky Notes” during discussion:

- Towanda-Barnes Road only other major north-south road on east side.
  - High traffic volume makes on-road bicycling difficult.
  - Per McLean County, there is sufficient ROW on west side of Towanda Barnes Road from Fort Jesse Road to IL 9 for future bikeway. Funding is an issue. Improvements would not necessarily be part of the East Side Highway project.
  - Towanda Barnes Road scheduled to be widened from Fort Jesse Road to Raab Road.
  - Difficult to get across Towanda Barnes Road, need better crossing signals for bicyclists and walkers.
- Airport Road – too narrow and difficult to get across, need better crossing signals for bikes and pedestrians.

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- East-west bicycling already difficult due to inability to cross Airport Road and Towanda Barnes Road. Eastside Highway would add another impediment.
- Preserve the ability to build a pathway along an East Side Highway facility at a later date.
- Old U.S. Route 66 trail is funded. It is important not to obstruct bicycle access to Old U.S. Route 66 via Airport road.
- Rumble strips in freeway shoulder are a negative for bicyclists. However, they are required by IDOT.
- General Electric Road is a popular bicycle route from Bloomington-Normal to East to Moraine View State Park.
  - There is reasonable traffic volume for bicyclists.
  - Crossing East Side Highway on GE Road is critical.
  - Need to accommodate bicyclists if interchange is developed. Concern that this could negatively impact this popular bicycle route.
  - Desire to improve intersection safety and crossing signals for bicyclists at General Electric Road and Towanda-Barnes Road.
- Ireland Grove Road could be considered for bicycle route due to nearby homes and schools and connection into Bloomington.
  - Could connect to paths planned for The Grove subdivision.
  - Ireland Grove Road will be widened to a five-lane cross section between Towanda Barnes Road and Kickapoo Creek.
- Better pedestrian crossings are needed (i.e. Eagle View subdivision to park located north of Fort Jesse Road). Need to consider special needs of children, especially in areas of schools and parks.
- Need to accommodate mobility-impaired in roadway improvements—especially in transition areas.
- Assisted living center under construction on Towanda Barnes Road, north of Raab Road. Need to consider special needs for elderly.
- Transit on ESH might be traditional bus to start, possibly have Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in future. Light Rail Transit (LRT) is probably not reasonable because higher densities are required.
- Rural freeway cross section provides for a wide median – could potentially add lanes in the future to accommodate future transit.

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### **8. Wrap Up and Next Meeting**

The Project Team will provide the IDOT BDE Manual chapter on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations to each FWG member via email. Members are asked to review the guidance, specifically as it relates to bicycle needs analysis.

The FWG agreed that the next meeting should take place after updated land use and traffic scenarios have been finalized. This likely will not be for a few more months. This information would then be used as input to help determine route or other recommendations for bicycling and walking that should be considered.