



MEETING NOTES

Project: East Side Highway (ESH) Environmental Assessment
Subject: Community Working Group Meeting #4
Date: March 10, 2011, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Location: McLean County Government Center

Project Team Attendees: Jerry Payonk (CDI), Stacie Dovalovsky (CDI), John Lazzara (HDR), Janice Reid (HDR), Margery al Chalabi (ACG), Suhail al Chalabi (ACG)

PSG Attendees: Eric Schmitt (McLean County), Dave Speicher (IDOT)

Main topics discussed at the meeting are as follows:

1. NEPA/404 Merger Meeting Summary (Jerry Payonk)

The Purpose and Need (P&N) was submitted to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and other resource agencies in January, 2011, and the meeting took place on February 15, 2011. Updated forecasts and public comments were presented. Concurrence on the P&N was received allowing the project team to move forward with the alternative analysis. Resource agencies include:

- *Federal Highway Administration*
- *United States Environmental Protection Agency*
- *United States Army Corps of Engineers*
- *United States Fish & Wildlife Service*
- *Illinois Environmental Protection Agency*
- *Illinois Department of Agriculture*
- *Illinois Department of Natural Resources*
- *Illinois Historic Preservation Agency*

2. Employment and Population Forecast Updates (Margery al Chalabi) A series of slides were presented covering the updated forecasts.

Population:

During the corridor study, McLean County was showing strong population growth in the future. The al Chalabi Group (ACG) is now examining how the U.S. economic changes over the past few years have affected McLean County, using national data and the recent 2010 census data. Results indicate that the County population is still growing at a healthy pace. Between 2000 and 2010, it

Meeting Notes

East Side Highway Environmental Assessment

CWG #4 – March 10, 2011

Page 2

had the 7th largest growth (volume) of all Illinois Counties. Growth in only 5 counties, in the Chicago Metro Area and Champaign, was larger.

The population growth rate from 1990-2000 was 16.5%. Growth between 2000 and 2010 was 12.7%, and is based on the most recent US Census (2010) numbers. Population growth is also based on natural growth (births and deaths) and net migration (domestic and international). McLean County appears to be well-balanced in this regard.

The preliminary updated 2035 population forecasts are somewhat lower than what was projected in the Corridor Study, although still showing steady growth. ACG is still working with the McLean County Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC) to finalize.

A comment was made that the MCRPC predicted a higher growth in their November 2009 estimate. ACG responded that that it was based on the Census' 2009 estimate, which was over-estimated.

The Transportation Analysis Zone (TAZ) maps for 1990-2000 show growth concentrated on the east side. This continues for the time period 2000-2010. In addition, there was also growth along major highways and at access locations, as well as growth west of town.

Employment:

A number of sources were used to forecast employment. ACG used information from Woods and Poole Economic, Inc (W&P). The State of Illinois and many metropolitan planning agencies, including MCRPC, have used W&P information since the mid 1980's as a starting point for developing local employment forecasts. W&P uses a uniform methodology to provide forecasts for all counties in the United States.

W&P highlighted communities in their 2011 report that were expected to have relatively rapid employment and population growth over the next three decades. Bloomington-Normal was specifically cited as being forecast to experience population and employment growth greater than the national average through 2040.

The forecasted employment growth for McLean County centers on four basic industries:

- Agriculture and Related (i.e. machinery, food processing)
- Auto manufacturing and related

Meeting Notes

East Side Highway Environmental Assessment

CWG #4 – March 10, 2011

Page 3

- Insurance
- Higher Education

W&P forecasts that the total growth in these basic industries between 2010 and 2040 will be 30% for McLean County, which is a higher forecasted employment growth than anticipated for the U.S. (21%), the Great Lakes area (14%), and Illinois (17%). For total jobs, the growth rate is forecast at 50% for McLean County, greater than the U.S. (42%), Great Lakes area (30%), and Illinois (32%). This is due in part to the diversification of jobs in McLean County.

The Related Agriculture, higher education, and insurance sectors are expected to grow. Auto manufacturing will likely remain stable.

ACG is using the W&P information as a base, with input from the MCRPC to refine. ACG's forecasts will be refined to the TAZ level. MCRPC will forward the projections to the townships, municipalities, and County for review.

The new forecasts are anticipated in April 2011, and new 2035 traffic forecasts would be generated in May 2011.

3. Alternatives Analysis-Evaluation Process (Jerry Payonk)

The EA Process is now in the "Define and Analyze Alternatives" Phase. This phase consists of developing preliminary alternatives, consolidating alternatives to study, and evaluation of the alternatives. The project team has drafted evaluation criteria which will be discussed with the PSG on March 11. The evaluation process includes an initial screening; a purpose and need screening; a macro level (500' corridor) analysis; an alignment (200') analysis; and finally, more detailed analysis in the EA itself. At each step, alternatives will be evaluated and screened to refine the number which the project team will continue to study.

The project team will be emailing the draft evaluation criteria to the CWG after it has been approved by the PSG, and another CWG meeting will be scheduled in late March/early April to discuss any comments and questions about the criteria.

4. Alternatives Analysis-Consolidation of Alternatives (John Lazzara)

John Lazzara led an exercise with the CWG members to consolidate the preliminary alternatives that have been developed thus far. It was emphasized

Meeting Notes

East Side Highway Environmental Assessment

CWG #4 – March 10, 2011

Page 4

that the project team did not want to eliminate any of the preliminary alternatives at this time; the goal was to consolidate alternatives previously identified that met the same intent as similar corridors, had the same termini, or were located in the same general area. Elimination would occur only after the evaluation criteria had been approved and the evaluation process begins. The project area was broken up into segments that looked at northern connections to I-55; middle corridors; and southern connections to I-74.

This consolidation exercise resulted in five corridors in the central/middle portion of the study area, four alternatives on the northern side of the study area connecting to I-55, and seven alternatives on the southern side of the study area connecting to I-74. Please refer to the last page of these minutes for a graphical representation of the results of the exercise.

A question was asked regarding east-west routes in the study area, and how they will be analyzed. At the previous CWG meeting, volume-to-capacity (v/c) ratios were discussed. The project team will determine v/c ratios for the 2035 no-build traffic model. This model will include all transportation improvements *except* an ESH. The team will then develop models for remaining ESH alternatives and compare the v/c ratios of these alternatives to that of the 2035 no-build. If the remaining alternatives have a higher v/c ratio than the 2035 no-build, this means that the ESH is contributing to greater traffic on the east-west routes. If this is the case, the study will identify recommendations to improve these east-west routes demonstrating an increased v/c ratio.

5. Other (All)

Handouts at the meeting included an EA Planning Packet; a perception/fact sheet with frequently asked questions (FAQs), and minutes from the CWG #3 meeting.

6. Next Steps (Jerry Payonk)

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Meeting Notes
East Side Highway Environmental Assessment
CWG #4 – March 10, 2011
Page 5

