



## MEETING NOTES

**Project:** East Side Highway Environmental Assessment  
**Subject:** Focus Working Group – Alternative Modes Meeting #3  
**Date:** February 7, 2013, 7:15 to 8:15 p.m.  
**Location:** McLean County Government Center

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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); John Lazzara (HDR); Jerry Payonk (CDI); Antonio Acevedo (CDI); Jamie Bents (Huff & Huff); Eric Schmitt (McLean County); Gene Brown (Town of Normal)

**Working Group Attendees:** Scott Douglas (Grove Homeowners Association); Julian Westerhout (Friends of the Trail/McLean County Wheelers); Michael Gorman (Bike BloNo); Christine Brown (resident); Mike McCurdy (Bike BloNo, Connect Transit Board); Caryn Davis (Bloomington Cycle & Fitness); Laura Dick (SHOWBUS)

### 1. Introduction

- Project Team members and attendees introduced themselves

### 2. Review of Previous FWG Meeting

Janice Reid reviewed changes and updates to the East Side Highway (ESH) bike trail design since the last Alternative Modes FWG meeting in November 2012:

- Project team looked into providing a trail connection over I-55 to link to northern neighborhoods and prevent I-55 from becoming a barrier to bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Project Study Group (PSG) proposed keeping the bike trail parallel to the ESH rather than along Towanda Barnes Road. Keeping the bike trail close to the ESH makes it easier to obtain the necessary right-of-way and include trail in the construction and cost of the ESH project. This design also fits with the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) Complete Streets policy and sustainable design practices.

### 3. I-55 Crossing

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Janice Reid presented two different design concepts for crossing over I-55 with the ESH bike trail. The first option is for the ESH alignments that connect to Northtown Road and the second is for the alignments that connect to Ziebarth Road.

- The Northtown Road design concept consists of a trail parallel to the ESH but located at the bottom of the roadway embankment. Once the trail reaches I-55 it routes toward the U.S. Route 66 and Airport Road intersection where it crosses the High Speed Rail (HSR) line at grade and connects to the proposed U.S. 66 bike trail. From this point the trail continues west along the U.S. 66 bike trail to a proposed pedestrian and bicycle bridge over I-55. The proposed bridge would then connect to a future (unplanned) trail north of I-55. Currently, it is undecided what agency would be responsible for funding and construction of the proposed bridge and corresponding trail connection north of I-55.
  - One FWG member expressed concern that the bridge over I-55 currently has nothing to connect to and may be seen as a “bridge to nowhere”. John Lazzara explained that the bridge could be cleared environmentally with the ESH project but would not be built unless there was a trail to connect to. Until a trail north of I-55 is constructed, the logical termini for the ESH bike trail would be at the U.S. 66 bike trail.
  - One FWG member asked if traffic will increase on U.S. Route 66 and if it will pose a threat to cyclists and pedestrians crossing at the Airport Rd./U.S. 66/HSR intersection. Janice explained that although traffic is expected to increase, there will be a new traffic signal at the US66/Airport Road intersection as part of the HSR project, as well as pedestrian RR gates at the at-grade HSR.

***Postscript:*** After considering the FWG’s comments, the PSG concluded at its meeting on 2/8/13 that the logical termini for the ESH bike trail should be at the U.S. 66 bike trail, and that a bicycle and pedestrian bridge over I-55 would not be included in the construction of the ESH project.

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- The Ziebarth Road design concept consists of a trail parallel to the ESH that follows one of the I-55/ESH interchange ramps on structure to get over the HSR and connect to the U.S. 66 bike trail.
  - One FWG member thought the pedestrian/interchange ramp bridge looked expensive and was concerned that less experienced riders and people with disabilities may be intimidated by the size and length of the bridge. Janice explained that the bridge would be ADA compliant, but agreed that it may be daunting to some users.
  - One FWG member proposed moving the bike path to Northtown Road (southeast of I-55) and connecting to Airport Road instead of following the interchange ramp. From there, it would cross the RR tracks at grade and connect to the US66 bike trail. Many cyclists would most likely use this path anyway instead of traveling along an interchange ramp. Janice said the project team would develop this design further.
  - One FWG member asked why there wasn't a bike path on the Towanda Barnes Road bridge at the ESH interchange, so that it could connect to Towanda. Janice said the project team would look into adding it.

#### **4. I-74 Crossing**

One FWG member asked if there would be a bicycle/pedestrian connection over I-74. Antonio Acevedo explained that CR 1750 currently crosses I-74 approximately ¼ mile west of the I-74/ESH interchange and that this bridge would remain open. CR 1750 connects to U.S. 150, which will have a bike path on the north side as part of the ESH project. CR 1750 also connects to one of Bloomington's proposed bike trails approximately ½ mile north of I-74.

#### **5. Proposed Overpasses and Underpasses**

- Janice presented the proposed locations for the bicycle/pedestrian overpasses and underpasses along the ESH. The FWG members had a few concerns:

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- The ESH project proposes a bicycle/pedestrian bridge between Fort Jesse and G.E. Roads. Janice said that one suggestion raised by the FWG at the November 2012 meeting was to include a bike path adjacent to ESH between Fort Jesse and G.E. Roads, and to allow for a connection of this path to this bridge. The Project Team developed this idea further, including switchback ramps and a passage for the trail under the ramps.
- Both the overpasses and underpasses would work for cyclists; however switchbacks for overpasses introduce 90 degree turns that can be difficult to negotiate with bicycles. It would be difficult for people with tandem bicycles or bicycles with child trailers.
- The underpasses would be useful as long as they are well lit. A dimly lit 300-400 foot long underpass may be a safety concern and some parents might not let their children use the underpasses if they are not properly lit. IDOT policy would require lights in all proposed ESH underpasses.
- Since both the underpasses and overpasses would be pedestrian friendly it is important to avoid abrupt curves that create sight distance issues for fast moving cyclists. IDOT design policy would ensure curves are designed for adequate sight distance.
- Janice explained that one of the proposed underpasses is located ¼ mile south of a proposed bike trail along Oakland Avenue and asked if the FWG members would use one route more than the other. Although one member currently uses Oakland Avenue, the FWG did not have a preference for either trail.
- Janice also asked the FWG if there were any concerns about crossing at interchange ramp intersections along the ESH. As long as the intersections are signalized and have pedestrian signals the FWG did not see any issues with this design.

## 6. Next Steps

- Project Team will consider the FWG members' comments and present them to the PSG at the Feb. 8, 2013 meeting.
- Project Team will look into routing ESH bike trail along Northtown Road for the alternatives that use the Ziebarth interchange location.

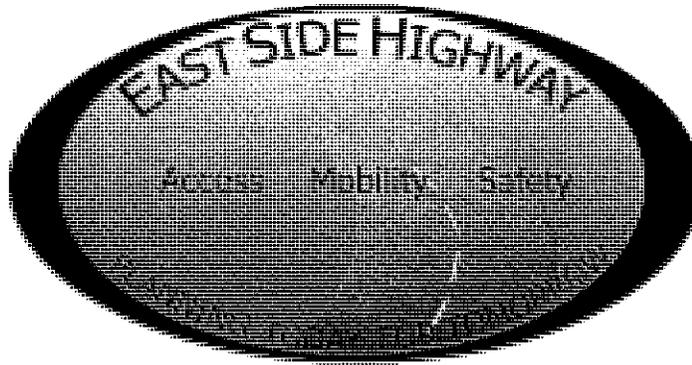
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- The FWG felt there was no need to have further meetings, unless there were major changes to the project. The Project Team thanked the FWG for all their efforts.



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Focus Working Group (FWG) – Alternative Modes

Meeting No. 3 Attendance

February 7, 2013 – 7:15 pm – 8:15 pm at the McLean County Govt. Center

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