



SPRINGFIELD RAILROAD CORRIDOR STUDY BUSINESS ADVISORY GROUP MEETING SUMMARY FEBRUARY 18, 2010, 9:30 – 11:30 AM

Overview

The first meeting of the Springfield Railroad Corridor Study Business Advisory Group (BAG) was held at 9:30 am on Thursday, February 18, 2010 at The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce. Ten participants and six members of the study team attended the two-hour meeting, which served as the official launch of the study's public involvement program. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Acquaint advisory group members with the study team;
- Explain the study's purpose, activities and timeline;
- Describe the study's public involvement program;
- Review the roles and responsibilities of advisory group members; and
- Discuss the study's upcoming community outreach activities.

Jimmie Austin, of Hanson Professional Services, opened the meeting with an introduction of the study team and a brief description of team members' responsibilities. He then invited meeting attendees to state their organizational affiliations and share their reasons for joining the BAG. A list of meeting participants is presented below.

Advisory Group Members:

Mark Bate (Nudo Products, Inc.)	Rick Nevel
Victoria Clemons (Downtown Springfield, Inc.)	Gary Plummer (Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce)
Tom Gihl (Illinois National Bank)	Dan Sale (Capital Area Association of Realtors)
Mike Houston (Town & Country Bank)	Kenley Wade (Wade Consulting Services)
Geoff Isringhausen (Isringhausen Imports)	
Dick Madden (Horace Mann)	

Study Team Members:

Jimmie Austin (Hanson)	Laurna Godwin (Vector)	Leann Smart (Vector)
Rebecca Bennett (Vector)	Kevin Seals (Hanson)	Atia Thurman (Vector)

Corridor Study's Technical Program

After learning about BAG members' participation interests and desires, Kevin Seals, the study's environmental and public engagement lead, gave a 25-minute presentation on the study's technical components. Copies of his PowerPoint presentation were provided to attendees, but presentation highlights included:

- An introduction to the study team and the project's key decision-makers;
- A review of the study's history, purpose and need;
- An explanation of the study's deliverables, main components, process and timeline;
- A discussion of the study team's current technical activities;
- A look at existing (2010) and projected (2020) rail traffic in Springfield; and
- An exploration of the study's next steps.

In response to Mr. Seals' presentation, BAG members offered both questions and comments. Where appropriate, study team members provided answers and feedback. The exchanges are summarized on the following pages.

BAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
1. You did a study in 2003 and it looked at three corridors and made a recommendation for 10th Street. Doing an Environmental Impact Study (EIS), are you focusing on 10 th Street, 3 rd Street, and 19 th Street?	Yes we are. For an EIS, we have to look at all feasible and prudent alternatives. This study is beginning with a clean slate. With modern engineering there are multiple feasible alternatives, including options like tunneling the railroad tracks underground to moving the railroads completely out of Springfield. We will look at all of the options and either include them or eliminate them based upon cost, environmental impact, and other factors.
2. Does this mean you will come up with a single recommendation?	This study will recommend one preferred alternative to the railroads and Federal Railroad Administration.
3. If the railroad companies do not accept this alternative, does that mean they won't receive any federal funding?	The railroads make decisions and changes as they need, but this could affect their access to federal funding.
4. Are there any restrictions on the companies if they decide to increase traffic without any upgrades?	Increasing traffic usually involves an assessment of safety considerations. The companies are very concerned with safety and dislike at-grade crossings because of the safety risks and dangers. They would likely put in place additional safety measures.
5. So, funding would give us some leverage to keep the railroads from just adding 30-40 trains down 3 rd Street?	Yes it would. The promise of funding is likely to make the railroads more cooperative.
6. Of the high level milestones, which is most at risk for being delayed, which is the most critical?	Dealing with the federal agencies is likely to take the most amount of time. We have a lot of experience with environmental impact studies and are prequalified with the state to prepare a document of this level. We feel we could produce a draft EIS in 16 months. However, we don't have any control over the federal agency's review and approval of the EIS once we submit it.
7. Would the dual tracks you talk about run from Chicago to St. Louis or just through our corridor? Would they accommodate passenger or freight traffic or both?	The dual tracks would just be for the Union Pacific (UP) line from St. Louis to Chicago. With High Speed Rail (HSR) funding, trains must be able to travel from Chicago to St. Louis in four hours. One track is not enough to handle HSR and freight. Train volume would be doubled, so you need at least two lines.

BAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
8. Will the railroads be doubling freight traffic, independent of passenger traffic?	Yes they will. In fact, the freight traffic on the UP line will likely more than double.
9. UP is not in the passenger rail business, is there profit for them?	Increasing freight traffic presents UP with an opportunity for growth.
10. How does the 2003-2005 study differ from the current study?	The earlier study was a feasibility study and was not guided by federal policy. The new railroad corridor study is a formal EIS. This study is guided by federal regulation and requires that we look at all feasible and prudent alternatives for accommodating increased rail traffic through Springfield. The feasibility study only looked at whether consolidation was feasible. It explored if we could consolidate the three existing rail lines and if so, what the impacts would be. Based on rail traffic at the time, we recommended consolidating on 10 th Street. Conditions have since changed. We are now talking about doubling train traffic in ten years, so we have to widen our view in the new study. This study will also have an open and transparent process for involving the public and soliciting public input.
11. You've got a lot of quantitative data. What role will qualitative data play in the selection of a preferred alternative?	We will create a complex matrix that considers all types of data. Federal law gives some factors more weight than others and dictates that some impacts have to be avoided, minimized or mitigated. Wetland protection is one such factor. Ultimately, however, we are trying to determine what is best for the human environment. This means that we have to consider other factors like cost. It would not be prudent to select an alternative whose cost was too high. Also, the public's preferences are valued more in current studies than they were 10 or more years ago. We hope to select an alternative that will accommodate increasing rail traffic; respond to public input; and be best for Springfield.

BAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
<p>12. Beyond protecting wetlands and wildlife, how important is it to protect people, residential areas, and the quality of life?</p>	<p>Protecting people and neighborhoods is very important to the study team. These considerations make up the socio-economic part of the study. Unfortunately, the human environment doesn't have the same types of federal protections that the natural environment does. This is at times confusing and difficult to understand. However, we will do our best to take all of these issues into consideration, with your help.</p>
<p>13. We define the community more broadly than your study area. We have villages in this county that will be impacted, e.g. Legacy Pointe (a mixed use development planned about a mile south of the study area). Will your team take input from these parties, even though they are outside the study area?</p>	<p>Anyone who may have a potential interest in the study can get involved. We are focusing on groups within the study area, but our process is open to anyone who has a stake in the project. We may hear from groups from all around the county and state.</p>
<p>14. You mentioned meeting with UP. What has the company's reaction been to what is being proposed on 10th Street?</p>	<p>UP has been receptive. We initially thought that the company was set on 3rd Street, largely because of scheduling and federal funding. It didn't have time to look at other corridors and perform the necessary studies. However, UP officials indicated that they would consider moving to a corridor with more room because of the advantages of having more right-of-way. However, they could make their operations work on 3rd Street.</p>
<p>15. What do vibration studies consist of and how big of an area do they cover?</p>	<p>The study's vibration and noise assessments will cover about a 500-foot radius around the tracks. The company we use will place seismometers and noise monitors at different locations (i.e., hospitals and historical structures, in residential areas) and produce actual seismographs and decibel levels. The monitors will run 24 hours at a time. We will also conduct noise simulations at the April open house so the public can experience the different noise volumes.</p>
<p>16. Do you have a working hypothesis on the alternatives or are you waiting for the study to lead you in that direction?</p>	<p>Right now we are gathering data and public input regarding the study. We will soon be looking at all feasible and prudent alternatives that satisfy the study's purpose and need. We will weigh all alternatives against this purpose.</p>

BAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
17. How are you working with Sen. Durbin and his staff to keep them informed of what you are doing? Is he really a key player?	Mr. Bill Houlihan, from Senator Durbin's office, represents the senator on the study's steering committee and is an ex-officio member of the Public Officials Advisory Group. The steering committee meets with members of the study team monthly as well as other times as needed. Senator Durbin is very much aware of what we are doing and is very important to the process.

Corridor Study's Public Engagement Program

Rebecca Bennett, of Vector Communications, facilitated the portion of the presentation on the study's public engagement program. As the manager of public engagement, she covered the following topics:

- Vector's public engagement principles;
- The study's public engagement goals and target audiences;
- Internal and external stakeholder relations;
- Community and media relations;
- Advisory groups' roles, responsibilities and structure;
- Outreach activities in March and April; and
- How to contact the study team.

Following Ms. Bennett's presentation, BAG members put forth comments and questions, which she and other members of the study team addressed. The exchanges are summarized on the following pages.

BAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
1. Have you already set the dates for all the advisory group meetings?	We have not yet scheduled all the advisory group meetings, but your next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 15, 2010.
2. You said that these are open meetings, where everything is recorded and going on the web site.	You are correct. Our advisory group meetings are open to the public and we will put copies of the meetings' presentations and discussion summaries on the study's web site. This helps to reinforce the transparent nature of our process.

BAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
3. The government announced the allocation of funds for HSR, giving Illinois more than \$1 billion. What does this mean for us?	This allocation affects our study. Illinois applied for \$4 billion out of \$8 billion available nationally. We received \$1.2 billion for HSR. If we received less than \$1 billion, this study could not have moved forward. However, this funding is not enough to construct double tracks on the UP line (3 rd Street) from Chicago to St. Louis, which are necessary to achieve desired HSR speeds. UP is now in the process of evaluating what can be accomplished with the funding that is available.
4. Is it a done deal? They are going to build HSR from Chicago to St. Louis?	HSR is not necessarily a done deal. As with all government projects, anything is possible and there are no guarantees.
5. Is there a timeline for HSR?	The original timeline was two years if the state received all the funding it requested.
6. Where is the money for HSR going?	Where the money is going is still being determined. However, the memorandum signed between IDOT and Springfield/Sangamon County prohibits any work from being done in the city until our study is complete.
7. Senator Durbin is our key in securing the funding. We'll need him in the long run!	We agree.

Next Steps

The next BAG meeting will be held on Thursday, April 15, 2010 from 9:30 am until 11:30 am at The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce. More details about this meeting will be provided closer to the meeting date.