



SPRINGFIELD RAILROAD CORRIDOR STUDY BUSINESS ADVISORY GROUP MEETING SUMMARY APRIL 15, 2010, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Overview

The second meeting of the Springfield Railroad Corridor Study Business Advisory Group (BAG) was held at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, April 15, 2010 at The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce. Seven committee members and seven members of the study team attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Review traffic study findings to date;
- Explore corridor redevelopment concepts;
- Provide an update on the study's environmental activities; and
- Discuss the public involvement program and upcoming public open house.

Advisory Group Members Present:

Erich J. Bloxdorf	Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce
Mark Doran (on behalf of Mark Bate)	Nudo, Inc.
Victoria Clemons	Downtown Springfield, Inc.
Tom Gihl	Illinois National Bank
Mike Houston	Town & Country Bank
Gary Plummer	Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce
Mike Zahn	Basic Crafts Council of Mid-Central Illinois

Study Team Members Present:

Jimmie Austin (Hanson)	Jonathan Martin (RDG)	Leann Smart (Vector)
Rebeccah Bennett (Vector)	Julie Rutledge (Hanson)	Atia Thurman (Vector)
Gary Lozano (RDG)	Kevin Seals (Hanson)	

Traffic Delay Studies

Julie Rutledge, of Hanson's engineering team, gave a 15-minute presentation on the study's traffic delay studies. The presentation included:

- Vehicle traffic per railroad;
- Current and projected traffic delays at rail crossings;
- Three traffic delay scenarios; and
- Potential safety impacts, particularly expected crash frequency.

In response to this portion of the presentation, BAG members asked two questions. These questions and the study team's responses are outlined in the following chart.

BAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
1. Explain to me why consolidation wouldn't have a more dramatic decrease on crashes? It seems like that would be one of the selling points for consolidating.	These scenarios do not show a change in at-grade crossings. Later in the study you will see scenarios that include grade separations, which will significantly impact traffic safety and projected incidences of crashes.
2. I would make the assumption that you would use the same formula to come up with these estimates in other cities or communities. Is this a national standard? Is this approach the same nationwide?	As far as delays are concerned, there are many ways to model it. We used two different ones. We came up with an Excel sheet that calculated delays in vehicle minutes. The second method used is the Transmodeler, which does account for queuing factors and traffic interaction. This modeling is widely accepted.

Corridor Redevelopment Concepts

Jonathan Martin and Gary Lozano, both of RDG, introduced themselves to the committee for the first time. RDG is the member of the study team that is responsible for preparing corridor redevelopment analyses. Key points of their presentation included:

- RDG's role in identifying potential redevelopment opportunities;
- A comprehensive review of recent planning initiatives and documents being used in their analyses; and
- A general overview of corridor reuse opportunities.

Following the presentation, BAG members put forth comments and questions, which Mr. Lozano and other members of the study team addressed. The exchanges are summarized below:

BAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
1. I want to complement you, this is excellent. This is a great refresher on everything we've got. I wonder whether or not you have talked about the potential relocation of the Norfolk Southern yard and if that has redevelopment opportunities.	That will come up later as we get into the alternatives analysis portion of the study.

BAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
2. Some of those plans that you have are ten years old, is that pretty standard or will that be an issue?	Hopefully the city's strategic plan is being updated soon, and the comprehensive plan is about 10 years old and will be due soon as well.
3. Are these documents being updated now?	Yes, the Regional Planning Commission is updating the comprehensive plan.
4. I can understand the trails using abandoned railroad tracks, but if you don't have abandoned railroad tracks, how do you go about getting trails?	Without the corridors, you are forced to work with on-street trails and lanes. There is limited ability to do that. The downside to on-street trails is that recreational users, families and children, will not use on-street trails. The value of trails in abandoned corridors is that the new green space will help to expand the types and numbers of people who will use them.
5. I am making an assumption, but is dealing with abandoned railroad track cheaper than developing on-street trails?	Not necessarily. It is not as cheap as striping on streets.

Environmental Activities Update

Kevin Seals, the study's environmental and public engagement lead, presented an update on the team's environmental studies to date. Kevin's presentation highlighted the following:

- Status of the team's coordination with the FRA (Federal Railroad Administration);
- Noise and vibration monitoring that has taken place thus far;
- Historic structure surveys; and
- Endangered and threatened species surveys.

BAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
1. Is this in the scope of this project? (This question was asked in response to Kevin's comment that Senator Durbin would like to see this project have a positive economic impact and create jobs.)	The study's purpose is to address increasing rail traffic in Springfield.

BAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
2. Is there any economic development portion of the EIS?	As part of our assessment of community impacts, we will look at the economic costs and likely impacts associated with each feasible alternative. We may identify some economic development opportunities that arise in relation to the various alternatives.
3. If you are thinking about removing railroad tracks, this is a long-term project. The economic impact will change over time – say in 10 years.	You are correct.
4. Are they measuring the vibration and noise on 19 th Street?	Yes, they did take some measurements along 19 th Street, but they concentrated on the 3 rd and 10 th Street corridors.
5. At what point will the delay with the FRA have a serious impact on the project?	If one of the coordinating agencies, such as the U.S. Wildlife Service, wants us to conduct a specific study that is a seasonal study, we could miss an opportunity to do it this spring or summer. This could cost us an entire year in the schedule. We are considering whether we should go ahead and conduct some of these studies in anticipation of FRA involvement.

Public Involvement Program Update & Open House Overview

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:

- Outreach and engagement activities conducted to date;
- Communication and outreach vehicles; and
- A review of the open house content and process.

BAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
1. Does Enos Park show up yet? (In response to the community presentation schedule)	We met with Enos Park earlier on, in February. We have also been in contact with the organization's leaders concerning the open house. They are working with several other neighborhood associations to distribute door hangers to homes within one-block of the 3 rd Street tracks.

BAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
2. Has there been direct contact from residents in the railroad corridors? Are they calling you?	We have not received calls. However, we have done community presentations, and the street teams we are using are going door to door to pass out information about the upcoming open house.
3. I've heard you speak about transparency; will you take the public comments that you get and put that on the web site?	Yes. For instance, right now you can view the comments and questions made during the first advisory group meetings on the website. As we have done with the advisory groups, we will publicly post the open house comments.
4. Are you posting the comments you get from the neighborhood group presentations?	No, we keep a broad summary of those meetings for our learning, but we are guests at those meetings and do not keep a record of what transpires. We also want to encourage people to submit their comments in their own words, and so we invite them to email us, call us, mail us and come out to the open house.
5. Are these the same processes you use for other projects; are you doing anything different here?	We are using engagement tools that have proven effective in contentious situations. Our engagement program does go above and beyond your basic involvement program due to the nature of this study.
6. It certainly feels like everyone is going the extra mile here to make sure that there is not one comment missed or not recorded and that everyone has a chance to have their say.	Team members listened.
7. We know the contentious nature of this. It just seems like at some point in this advisory board process, there is some benefit in hearing the other point of view. Unless we go to the other advisory board meetings, it seems like we are having this discussion in a bit of vacuum.	You can see what is occurring at other meetings by visiting the web site and reading, the summaries of the other meetings online. You can also attend those meetings, they are open to everyone.
8. It may be advantageous to have a meeting with representatives of all the neighborhood groups and communities.	Our Community Advisory Group does include the presidents of the neighborhood associations and key community organizations.

Conclusion

The BAG meeting concluded at approximately 11:15 am. The study team thanked the members for their time and reminded them of the open house planned for April 20, 2010.