



## SPRINGFIELD RAILROAD CORRIDOR STUDY COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING SUMMARY FEBRUARY 18, 2010, 5:30 – 8:30 P.M.

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### **Overview**

The first meeting of the Springfield Railroad Corridor Study Community Advisory Group (CAG) was held at 5:30 pm on Thursday, February 18, 2010 at The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce. Fifteen participants and six members of the study team attended the three-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.

Rebecca Bennett, of Vector Communications Corporation, opened the meeting by reviewing the meeting format and the contents of the CAG information binder. Jimmie Austin, of Hanson Professional Services, followed 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 CAG. A list of meeting participants is presented below.

### **Advisory Group Members:**

Jamie Adaire	Bunn Park Neighborhood Association
Mark Anderson	Near South Neighborhood Association
Ruth Knight-Anderson	Near South Neighborhood Association
Steve Combs	Enos Park Neighborhood Association
Bill Donels	Springfield Bicycle Club
Pat Grady	Springfield South Corridor Neighborhood Association
Margaret Griffin	C. Lee Carey Neighborhood Association
Darryl Harris (on behalf of Angela Harris)	Pioneer Park Neighborhood Association
Michelle Higginbotham	Grassroots Coalition for Consolidation
Leroy Jordan	Randall Court Neighborhood Association
Archie Lawrence	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
Aaron McEvoy	Grand Central Neighborhood Association
Denis Myles	Community Member
Polly Paskin	Harvard Park Neighborhood Association
Nicholas J. Stojakovich	Hope in Action – Springfield

### **Study Team Members:**

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

### ***Corridor Study's Technical Program***

After learning about CAG 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, CAG members offered both questions and comments. Where appropriate, study team members provided answers and feedback. The exchanges are summarized on the following pages.

<b>CAG Member Question/Comment</b>	<b>Study Team Response</b>
1. You mentioned that the railroads do not have to accept your recommendation. You also said that they were somewhat on board as long as they get what they want. What do they want?	We are working with the railroads to keep them informed about our process and findings. We cannot force them to take any action they find unacceptable. We have asked them to share with us their needs and desires and are trying to accommodate as much as possible.
2. It should be noted that it's a shame that the railroads are that powerful that they are above the law, something needs to be done regarding that.	We understand your frustration. However, our approach to the railroads has to focus on cooperation.
3. Will we be able to get your presentation in an 8x11 format?	We will place a PDF version of tonight's presentation on the study's website. You can download it to your computer or print it out. We'll also place a copy of tonight's meeting summary on the web site.
4. How does environmental justice fit into this study?	Environmental justice issues will be considered as part of the study's socio-economic analysis. The term refers to the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race or income in the development and implementation of environmental policies and projects. This is an important part of our study.

<b>CAG Member Question/Comment</b>	<b>Study Team Response</b>
5. I am looking at your slides. Where's the one for the Ash Street crossing of Canadian National's trains?	We don't have a slide for that crossing. We didn't gather data on all at-grade crossings.
6. So you didn't look at any crossings along 19 <sup>th</sup> Street?	We looked at the crossing at 19 <sup>th</sup> Street and Adams. For our initial data gathering, we focused only on a select number of crossings. As the study moves forward, we will collect data on all at grade crossings.
7. When the train hits Ash street, it is moving faster than when it moves across Adams.	As you can tell, we still have a lot more data to collect. This type of information is important. We're going to work with the railroads, and the Regional Planning Commission on our data gathering and traffic modeling to ensure that our findings are more comprehensive.
8. On 19 <sup>th</sup> and Adams, there is not a large traffic issue. There is virtually nothing there, but the workout facility and the public aid office. If you go to 19 <sup>th</sup> and South Grand, there are large traffic volumes. The same is true at 19 <sup>th</sup> and Ash. You can't compare the two equally. I think the comparison should be done. You're not comparing apples to apples.	We'll be sure to assess all at grade crossings so that our findings are accurate.
9. Is the volume of east/west traffic on Ash greater than on Adams?	This is part of what we will learn as the study moves forward. We'll determine how each at-grade crossing is impacted by the trains.
10. I want to go beyond noting it and formally request that this data gathering along 19 <sup>th</sup> Street gets done.	Your request will be honored as our traffic analyses move from their preliminary stage into a more comprehensive data gathering stage.
11. If you're basing all your information on missing Ash Street and Laurel on 19 <sup>th</sup> Street, then your whole picture is flawed. My request is that you do it right.	You are right. Our initial assessments were just to help us learn existing conditions at select locations. We will be more thorough and exhaustive as the study progresses.
12. Do the trains go faster at 19 <sup>th</sup> and Ash than they do at Adams? Ash is busy, but the trains shouldn't be going that fast.	The trains have various speeds that they travel as they move through town. However, they do have speed limits that they cannot exceed.

<b>CAG Member Question/Comment</b>	<b>Study Team Response</b>
13. I was intrigued that you would have people counting trains with modern technology. Can't we have video recordings of the trains?	The manual method of data collection was the most cost-effective approach for preliminary data gathering. We have, however, requested train schedules from the railroads, but they are subject to change.
14. When you are looking at data, how do you count the train that comes down let's say Ash street and then backs up and returns? Is this all one train?	It is one train, but the delay time doesn't change. We count from when the arm goes down until it comes back up.
15. When the trains come down 10 <sup>th</sup> Street they switch, and can spend up to 10-15 minutes there.	If the arm is down that length of time, then we count it as delay time.
16. I would like to know if the study addresses the possibility of moving the trains from 19 <sup>th</sup> Street and actually eliminating the track all together. If we can reduce the rail traffic in the area, it would benefit the community.	Consolidation is an alternative. It would mean relocating the trains to another corridor. There are about 73 at-grade crossings. They are dangerous and the railroads dislike them because of safety concerns. If we can offer them alternatives that eliminate some of these crossings, they would be interested. Consolidation is one such alternative.
17. What about moving the trains completely out of the city? This was discussed years ago.	This too is an option that the study will consider.
18. I'm glad you're considering these alternatives, because to date, 19 <sup>th</sup> Street hasn't been taken seriously.	The 19 <sup>th</sup> Street corridor is an important part of the study.

### ***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, CAG members put forth comments and questions, which she and other members of the study team addressed. The exchanges are summarized on the following pages.

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
1. What time is the April 20 <sup>th</sup> meeting?	The open house will be held from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. People can come anytime during this three hour period to review the information boards; speak with study team staff; and give their input.
2. Would you suggest we wait until after the 20 <sup>th</sup> to have neighborhood meetings?	Please do not wait. We want to drive people to the April 20 <sup>th</sup> open house and sharing at your neighborhood meetings is one way to get the word out.
3. On or about Jan 28 <sup>th</sup> , it was announced that Illinois had been awarded \$1.2 billion for High Speed Rail (HSR). I believe the article ended that Senator Durbin was on record for supporting relocation of HSR passenger service to the 10 <sup>th</sup> Street corridor.  * Several CAG members agreed that this statement was true.	I’m not sure about the article, but this may be the case.
4. Would it be possible for members of this advisory group to meet with decision-makers like Senator Durbin?	It is possible, we can ask. We cannot, however, make any guarantees as we have no control over the Senator’s schedule.
5. You talked about internal stakeholder representatives. I am curious, will we have any contact with the FRA (Federal Railroad Administration)?	We don’t know. Right now we are still trying to set up a meeting with the agency so that the study can remain on schedule. FRA representatives are invited to serve on the study’s technical committee and may also attend the public open houses. This would provide an opportunity for interaction.
6. Do we need to understand the FRA process? Will FRA officials be making decisions completely apart from what we’re doing here?	In our experience on other projects, FRA officials are very interested in the public’s input and often attend public meetings. They consider the public’s priorities and preferences when reviewing the study’s recommendations.

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
7. Does the FRA report to the Secretary of Transportation – Ray LaHood?	Yes, the FRA is an operating mode of the federal Department of Transportation.
8. You talked about the stakeholder interviews. What are they? How did you select interviewees? What were your criteria?	We received an initial list of names from our steering committee, the Chamber of Commerce and Hanson. We needed to speak with people who represented a variety of interests and viewpoints to help us gain an initial understanding of community issues. We spoke with community, business, political and medical stakeholders. However, the interviews were not a substitute for more extensive community outreach. They were just a beginning.
9. I just want to say, for the record, that your steering committee is made up of people who have already made up their minds. I want to know if the stakeholder interviewees represented equally people east and west of 10 <sup>th</sup> Street.	We can provide you with the list of people that we interviewed. We did not, however, characterize our interviewees in the manner that you described. We spoke with people who represented different types of interests, which included some East Springfield stakeholders.
10. My concern is that the people on the steering committee have already made up their minds about the 10 <sup>th</sup> Street corridor.	We did not develop the steering committee. It represents the interests of the entities that are conducting and financing the study. You are right, however, that the City and County have publicly declared their corridor preferences.
11. But the study is of a bi-partisan nature? The money may have come to the City and the County, but the federal dollars are my tax dollars. We want something fair and in my mind, the deck is already stacked.	We understand your concerns. Our work is to thoroughly assess all the feasible and prudent alternatives for handling increased rail traffic. Even though people's preferences have been made public, our study will be data driven.
12. For the stakeholder interviews, you need a balance of people from east and west.	*At this time, a list of the stakeholders who were interviewed was given to this attendee.
13. What does it mean, for the City and County to be directing the study?	The City and County are the study's clients. They received money from the federal government via IDOT to finance the study. They are responsible for ensuring that we deliver a comprehensive study.

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
<p>14. The City and County do not seem fair and impartial. How can we trust that the study will be?</p>	<p>We just ask that you continue to participate in the process. This is one way to help ensure fairness and transparency. We have been very clear with the City and County that although they have made their preferences public, our recommendation will be guided largely by environmental and engineering data. We know that we are conducting this study in a charged context where lots of people have strong preferences. We will consider the multiple perspectives that people have along with the findings from the technical analyses.</p>
<p>15. I think that we just need to keep reiterating that everything doesn't seem fair.</p>	<p>We will do our best throughout this process to address your and others' concerns about fairness.</p>
<p>16. The problem that you have is a historical problem, the result of a deep-seeded mistrust. The main reason why the NAACP got into this is because of these historical problems. The mayor said, even before High Speed Rail, that he wanted to move the trains to 10<sup>th</sup> Street, without demonstrating any regard for the people who live there. The line that separates Springfield is that line, black on one side, and white on the other. We want to make sure that the minority community doesn't get something shoved unfairly down its throat. We think Hanson was chosen because of its earlier study recommending 10<sup>th</sup> Street consolidation. I would have preferred to see a firm from out of town, without the political ties that Hanson has. How impartial can you be? Especially since Senator Durbin is involved with this, is it truly going to be a study that is conducted fairly and considers everyone's concerns? From the <i>State Journal Register</i> on down, it seems like everyone's primary concern is for the people along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.</p>	<p>We know that there are lots of historical issues, broken promises and divisions that plague our city. But this study is an opportunity to do things differently. This new Environmental Impact Study (EIS) will, by law, bring a degree of rigor, objectivity and transparency to our analyses that was missing in the past. And although we are only required to have one public hearing to obtain community input, we have developed a comprehensive public involvement program to get as many people engaged in the study process as possible. For the interest of this study and the city's relations, we have opted to be more, rather than less inclusive. We hope that our work leads to improvements in community relations. This is why we are meeting with you and are working to keep everyone informed. We do know, however, that no matter our recommendation, not everyone will be pleased. Yet, we will still work hard to maintain an open and inclusive study process.</p>

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
<p>17. I worry too about whether or not the outcome of this study is just a foregone conclusion. Maybe it is. But, one of the things I want to do and hope we can do as a community is put some faith in the study and see what the facts tell us. I do hope that no matter what happens, that our participation as neighborhood and community groups will give us a say about what's best for our city. I am tired of the divisions about who benefits from these major decisions and who doesn't. The other thing I am nervous about is that the amount of money made available for High Speed Rail is not enough to mitigate its negative impacts. I'm also concerned about having much more freight move through our city.</p>	<p>Team members listened.</p>
<p>18. I too share some of your concerns, particularly the one about there not being enough money. In the agreement that launched this study, it says that IDOT and others – perhaps some private interests – agree to make a total of \$4 million available to complete the EIS. Do you know of any private dollars being put into this study?</p>	<p>To my knowledge, there have been no private dollars obtained or used to finance this study.</p>
<p>19. I just want to say that I agree with what has been said and that the walls that have been built in our community can come down. That being said, there is a long history of previous studies being done from the 1920s and more recently recommendations from R/UDAT (Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team). What has come of these studies? Are they just sitting on a shelf collecting dust and how do we know that this study will be any different? Hopefully, this study will lead to a final decision being made so that we can move on and deal with other issues in our community.</p>	<p>We know that there is a bit of redundancy here, but nothing can happen or be constructed without there first being a study completed. While we cannot change history, our goal is that this study signals a departure from the way things were done in the past. This EIS is the highest level of study that can be done and no earlier study approaches its level of rigor and expansiveness. This is the kind of study that must be completed in order for us to secure the funding needed to bring about the change you desire.</p>



CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
<p>20. Randall Court is going to help make sure that the public involvement part of this study is successful. You should not, however, rely on the established media to get the word out in a true and accurate fashion. They have a poor track record in this community. You will probably get more people of color listening to Decatur news outlets instead of Channel 20.</p>	<p>Thank you for agreeing to help us get the word out and for sharing your media insights. We will definitely be sure to reach out to all types of media, but we won't depend on these outlets to help us connect with the public. We'll mail newsletters and updates to those living along the corridors. We'll create church bulletin inserts and post door hangars. We'll send out email blasts and engage in a host of other activities to generate public interest.</p>
<p>21. Some of us remember when Senator Durbin was just a Representative and we expect him to be as true and open today as when he first ran for office. I am also upset because in the paper yesterday it said that Enos Park had a federal grant to study how its neighborhood would develop. This is dividing and conquering all over again.</p>	<p>Team members listened.</p>
<p>22. I'd like to address the issue of foregone conclusions. When we first heard about the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street corridor possibly getting up to 40 trains a day and started protesting, we heard from IDOT and railroad officials that it was a done deal. But we didn't believe in foregone conclusions and decided that we would protest, rally and do whatever was necessary to get our voices and concerns heard. This study is another opportunity for us to have a say in the decisions that affect us.</p>	<p>We agree.</p>
<p>23. I attended a meeting at the state capitol with senators and representatives who said that there would be two tracks running down 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, that UP was going to put in a second track, and that the money had already been allocated for the second track. The people in Enos Park think they won, but they haven't. Just because you got \$150,000 for a study of Enos Park, doesn't mean you won.</p>	<p>Team members listened.</p>

<b>CAG Member Question/Comment</b>	<b>Study Team Response</b>
24. Will consolidation on 10 <sup>th</sup> Street involve four tracks?	That's a possibility.
25. The steering committee –better save a little money to take the egg off its face. This is not a done deal.	Team members listened.
26. To be accurate, the Enos Park grant is not a federal grant. It is a TIF (Tax Increment Financing) grant. TIF money is generated by the property taxes of those living in the Enos Park community	Team members listened.
27. That makes it worse.	Team members listened.
28. The funds of the TIF district are generated by the homes in that district and have to be spent in that district. Now, the east side has its own TIF district and there will be a point in time, hopefully, when those funds can be used for neighborhood planning and development.	Team members listened.
29. The TIF district in East Springfield focuses on Cook Street and it's more commercial than residential.	Team members listened.
30. You need to advertise that fact that consolidation along 10 <sup>th</sup> Street will require four tracks. Your study description makes no mention of this. Will it be posted online?	The study description will be posted online for people to see, download or print.
31. You mention the number of tracks that will be needed on 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street and should do the same for 10 <sup>th</sup> Street. I don't care if you say that it could take three or four tracks. You should revise your study description.	We will modify the study description to include the number of tracks that will be required for consolidation along 10 <sup>th</sup> Street.
32. What Enos Park won was the opportunity for an EIS and for us to have input in this process. Our concern was that IDOT was ramming this thing down our throats using an old study and we just wanted a fair study where we could have some input. When it comes down to a final decision, we will support whatever the recommendation is.	Team members listened.

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
33. The steering committee doesn't control the EIS or it's outcome.	That is correct. We are conducting the study under strict federal guidelines and it has to follow specific protocols. These guidelines and the work that is done to meet them will determine the study's outcomes.
34. The upcoming open house will give us an opportunity to give our input. After that, we'll have other chances to provide feedback and try to come to consensus before a recommendation goes to the federal government. The steering committee doesn't control our input.	Team members listened.
35. The problem with that perspective is that we don't live in a closed environment where politicians' words don't mean anything. We have asked all along for the City and County to conduct a study. If they hadn't voiced their preferences, we could believe that the study would be conducted fairly. I understand the guidelines we are working under, but when the second ranked most powerful senator in the nation says 10 <sup>th</sup> Street, how could we not believe that the decision has already been made?	Team members listened.
36. My concern is that money is being put into High Speed Rail that won't be used instead of into the improvement of the state's whole rail infrastructure, which is in dire need. UP is looking for federal dollars and we have an opportunity to give our input to the federal government, bypassing local politics. Let's make use of this and not quibble about our history.	Team members listened.
37. Wherever the money came from to do the study, we have this opportunity. Let's use it; keep the process open; and maybe we'll be able to impact the outcome.	We agree.

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
<p>38. This has been very helpful, listening to you. The question I want to ask is, are we going to roll up our sleeves and work together? Is it worth our time and effort? I do care. I want to listen and I want to learn. If we can come together and seek the common good, it may be a win/win for all of us. The 19<sup>th</sup> Street tracks go right past your home. Consolidation might be a win/win. Hanson's not going to put its professional credibility on the line to doctor a document. And, Vector is here to help make this process transparent. If we go in prejudging it, we might as well not even come to these meetings.</p>	<p>Team members listened.</p>
<p>39. You ask me why I am here. I believe in due process. We are here to make certain that our voices are heard. We are doing something that did not get done in the past. No one asked the east side what we cared about before. Instead, they told us what they were going to do. That's the reason I am so adamant about making certain that we are represented. I am going to ensure that Black people in this City understand what is going to happen to them and what it will mean. I am here to see that the process is fair. It has not been fair. The process has not been fair. I think that Enos Park needs to know this. They tied themselves up with the medical district. The medical district came out and said, once again at the behest of the politicians, that more trains would affect their equipment. The vibrations would be detrimental. This is a bogus argument. What about 10<sup>th</sup> Street? You have St. John's Hospital, won't it be affected. It is important that we are here to give our input. If I thought it was a done deal, no, I would not be here. I am trying to take everyone at their word, but I am also considering who set up this project. The City should have run the study first and then made an announcement. I want to make certain the process is fair. When we talk about history, we are not talking about 100 years ago, we are talking about yesterday. This community is not fair. It is not fair to low income people and it is not fair to minorities.</p>	<p>Team members listened.</p>

***Next Steps***

The next CAG meeting will be held on Thursday, April 15, 2010 from 5:30 pm until 7:30 pm. More details about this meeting and its location will be provided closer to the meeting date.