



**SPRINGFIELD RAILROAD CORRIDOR STUDY
COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING SUMMARY
APRIL 15, 2010, 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM**

Overview

The second meeting of the Springfield Railroad Corridor Study Community Advisory Group (CAG) was held at 5:30 pm on Thursday, April 15, 2010 at Calvary Baptist Church. Eleven committee members and seven study team members 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:

Jen Aholt	Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association
Ruth Knight-Anderson	Near South Neighborhood Association
Steve Combs	Enos Park Neighborhood Improvement Association
Bill Donels	Springfield Bicycle Club
Pat Grady	Springfield South Corridor Neighborhood Association
Margret Griffin	C. Lee Carey Neighborhood Association
Leroy Jordan	Randall Court Neighborhood Association
Aaron McEvoy	Grand Central Neighborhood Association
Polly Poskin	Harvard Park Neighborhood Association
Scott Saunders	
Nicholas J. Stojakovich	Hope in Action – Springfield

Study Team Members Present:

Jimmie Austin (Hanson)	Jonathan Martin (RDG)	Leann Smart (Vector)
Rebecca 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, including expected crash frequency.

In response to this portion of the presentation, CAG members offered several questions and comments. These remarks, and the study team's responses, are summarized in the table on the following page.

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
1. Are you using current data in your traffic delay analyses?	Yes. We are using current data and comparing it with future projections.
2. Are you looking at delays along the 19 th Street corridor? This was something that came up at the other meeting and I just want to be clear.	<p>We are looking at delays along 19th Street. It is important to note, however, that there is much more vehicle traffic that crosses the 3rd Street corridor – more than any other corridor. So, eliminating traffic along 3rd Street would have a significant impact on reducing vehicle delays.</p> <p>There are at least two alternatives we are committed to looking at – double tracking the 3rd Street corridor and combining the 3rd Street corridor rail traffic with that of 10th Street.</p>
3. Has any thought been given to how much traffic would be alleviated if the 19 th Street rail tracks were eliminated and made into a roadway?	This is not an option that we have evaluated. We could include this as part of the study.
4. When I look at double tracking 3 rd Street and combining all traffic onto 10 th Street, there is still a lot of traffic delay. Is this because your model does not consider the construction of additional underpasses?	You are correct. The findings you are reviewing do not include additional grade separations.
5. Is there any data on crashes with cars and trains?	The map we showed does illustrate car and train crashes.

Corridor Redevelopment Concepts

Jonathan Martin introduced himself and Gary Lozano, both of RDG. 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 study; and
- A general overview of corridor reuse opportunities.

Following the presentation, CAG members put forth comments and questions, which Mr. Lozano and other members of the study team addressed. The exchanges are summarized in the tables on the following pages.

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
1. The Eastside Neighborhood Development Plan was never executed.	Team members listened.
2. Are you aware that that is the second R/UDAT study? The first was done in the 70s and was totally ignored.	No, I didn't know this. However, portions of the latest plan have been implemented.
3. Do any of the documents or plans have a transportation plan to connect all modes of transportation – including trains, buses, taxis, cars, bicycles, and pedestrians?	Some of the documents do look at connecting the different transportation modes, but they do not focus on bicycle and pedestrian traffic.
4. I find it interesting that you should be talking about this. The Obama Administration's Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood, is coming under some fire for elevating the significance of bicycle and pedestrian travel.	You are correct.
5. There was another plan done in Sangamon County and that one includes trail linkages. Also the city has formed a bicycle council.	It's good to hear this. I'll have to learn more.
6. You went through a great amount of material. Thank you for doing this – consolidating the findings and showing the linkages. You have mentioned before that we are behind the times in terms of trails, looking at all the plans you studied. Our elected officials haven't reacted to the various plans in ways that would really build some momentum. Would you say that this is typical?	<p>In my 33 years of planning, I've learned that all communities have challenges in implementing their plans. Communities of this size, if they've done a good job of charting a path, are usually pretty serious about getting their plans done.</p> <p>A good plan gives the city a strategy. It recognizes that there are limited funds and looks at how you can best use public money to leverage private sector investment. These investments can come from a variety of sources, including homeowners, developers and others.</p>
7. Our elected officials have been very neglectful of the planning processes done in Springfield. Like I pointed out, the R/UDAT plan done in 1974 was totally ignored.	Team members listened.

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
<p>8. The plan you keep showing about South Grand, that plan started in 1998, and every time there is a map or conversation, they bring up that part of South Grand. It's only about three buildings. It took them from 1999 to 2007 to do one building. My opinion is that we are wasting money and wasting time. The millions of dollars we spend to do surveys and bring in people, that is money that could be spent on getting the job done. We have plans and maps, but it's all sitting on the shelf. When you come back in 2020, it will still be sitting on the shelf.</p>	<p>Team members listened.</p>
<p>9. It is true that our city officials need to be proactive, rather than reactive. For example, in Bloomington, they are building a transportation center that will bring all their transportation modes to one place – but they were aggressive about getting funding. One of the things we need to focus on is how we can share – how can we unite for the common good. That has been difficult because of the political dynamics that exist. These are realities and hurdles. The future of this city is at stake.</p>	<p>Team members listened.</p>
<p>10. I have to tell you how refreshing it was to have a conversation about the railroad study without it being about the railroads. I appreciate the notion of creating opportunities to connect us – maybe we are a north-south city with our corridors. We have to have some east-west connections or looping going on. I can envision the day that we as residents, and even tourists, visit our capital to see other historic sites and walk back and forth east and west. I appreciate this means of coming together. The other thing about the looping, I was thinking of San Antonio, they have the advantage of the river, but when they created the River Walk, it changed things. And, creating something that is in itself an amenity should be retained in our plans. It will help to better connect us.</p>	<p>Our task is to look at the possibilities that may arise from the region's efforts to better manage rail traffic. These possibilities are about more than railroads, they're about better connectivity, opportunities for development and many other things.</p>

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
<p>11. Has there been any discussion with any officials about how much money, federal money, will be available? We are talking about reconfiguring the city.</p>	<p>We are not at that stage yet. As we start developing and analyzing alternatives, we will show the costs of the alternatives. We have not gone forward to see how this will be funded, however we do think there will be funds available every year. This is the first step in that process. The EIS will allow the city to start applying for funds as it becomes available. It will probably be a segmented project done in stages.</p>
<p>12. I want to get back to talking about the 19th Street corridor and a roadway there. Bike trails are great for a city, but from 11th street to Dirksen Parkway, there are 20 blocks, and there is not a single direct route from the north side to the south side of the city. I just think that one of the keys to economic development for this side is to have an east/west road. There is no direct way to go from Sangamon to Stanford.</p>	<p>We can certainly take look at that.</p>
<p>13. Recently, there was some money set aside, \$1.2 million, for demolishing 25 homes and building new homes.</p>	<p>Our project is not focused on housing, but it could certainly look at that. Have they picked a target area?</p>
<p>14. The Eastside, from South Grand to Stanton. This money was approved in January.</p>	<p>We will look into that information.</p>
<p>15. This speaks to a problem we have here in Springfield. Communities will try and get something started, but projects don't get enough support. Your idea, of presenting a comprehensive plan, is the only hope that something in Springfield will get done.</p>	<p>Team members listened.</p>

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
16. You said you're not going to focus on zoning issues?	We are not charged to create a comprehensive plan for the city, but to look at ideas for development and possible redevelopment opportunities. We'll talk about what you need to make it work.
17. Obviously, your focus is on the three rail corridors, they're central. One problem I see is that there is urban sprawl; we go west and west. Are you charged with focusing on these areas and how we can revitalize and come up with ordinances that strengthen and support development along these corridors?	We will make specific recommendations on reuse of the corridor properties and adjacent properties. You have some plans that look at revitalization – it looks at how to revitalize the core of the city. We won't do a critique of suburban growth. We are preparing this EIS, a federal document, and the reason we have to go through this process is so the city will be in a position to apply for funding. Bringing on RDG is not a part of the EIS process, but we felt strongly that it is important for this process. This is a great opportunity to work through some of these issues, and present redevelopment ideas to the city.
18. So, RDG is not being paid by the \$4 million?	Yes, they are part of the study team. We brought them on because we thought this was an important component to begin to look at.
19. You're going to look at all feasible options. I thought you were just looking at 3 rd Street, 10 th Street, and 19 th Street. Are you seriously going to look at re-routing out of Springfield?	Yes we are. At a minimum, we said we would look at double-tracking 3 rd Street and consolidating rail traffic on 10 th Street. However, as part of this study, we have to look at all reasonable options that meet the purpose and need for the study.
20. Will you then report back to this advisory group?	Yes. We are early into the study, but we will have several meetings with the advisory groups over the 16-months of the study. We are meeting with you now because we have some new data and because of the open house next week. The next meeting we have will probably be later in the summer. Once we have developed alternatives, you will all be involved in the process. We hope that by being involved in the process, you will better understand how we arrive at our final recommendation.

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
21. We will get notes from this meeting like we did before? I want to say this. At the last meeting, I said that I wanted you to look at the multimodal transportation hub and I didn't see it in the notes.	We try our best to capture the conversation at these meetings, but it's not a transcript. We will look into that.
22. Have you looked at the plan that will cause the least confusion for people going back and forth to work - because the trains now are a problem for getting to work across Jefferson?	We are gathering information to look at traffic patterns, emergency vehicles access, and school bus routes. This information will help inform our recommendations concerning separated grade crossings.

Environmental Activities Update

Kevin Seals, the study's environmental and public engagement lead, presented an update of the team's environmental studies. 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 survey activities; and
- Endangered and threatened species surveys.

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
1. I live right next to the tracks and they still blow their horns.	They have to blow their horns within a quarter mile of a crossing; it's the law.
2. They blow because they are trying to wake up the engineer on the train up ahead.	Team members listened.
3. I saw two falcons around Easter.	That's surprising, (later dismissed as likely to be hawks).
4. Do you live near the Adams sanctuary? That's why.	Team members listened.
5. I think I saw the kind of snake you mentioned not that long ago. Are they orange?	Yes, their bellies are orange (in reference to the Kirtland's snake).
6. Yes, just this Saturday, cleaning up the alley, we lifted up a big piece of plywood and there she was with her babies. Well, show me a photo, I could be wrong.	It's just that I've talked with people who study these snakes and have never actually seen one. They live underground, in burrows for most of the year and surface in the spring to mate. I'd like to go with you to where you saw the snake.

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
7. How big do they get?	They grow to about 2 feet. I'll also send you a photo and you can tell us if that is what you saw.
8. So you said they have recorded vibrations that are current. Are they speculating on what vibrations will be like with the increased rail traffic?	Yes, they will take the current data and put it into a model to project what the noise and vibration will be in 2020.
9. Houses and neighborhoods will be a part of this?	Yes, absolutely. They left monitors out for 24-hour periods in various locations up and down the corridors. The 3 rd , 10 th , and 19 th street corridors were covered.
10. How significant is a vibration with regard to the distance from a house?	What makes a difference is the soil type. The tighter the soil is, the greater the vibration.
11. If we are aware of a historical site, can we call someone to see if it has been included?	Absolutely. You can call the project hotline and we'll look into that.
12. If the eastern leg of the 19 th Street tracks were eliminated, where would the trains go?	We'd have to move them to another route.
13. What happens to the I&M corridor in this study?	I&M is satisfied with where they are and are not interested in moving. We just want to reiterate that whatever we come up with, if the railroads don't agree with it, then we can't make them move. Our ace in the hole is reducing at-grade crossings for them.
14. I've heard rumors about 3 rd Street and 10 th Street, but not about 19 th Street.	We have involved Canadian National. We met with them at their offices and they came to the technical committee meeting. It's not usual to get all the railroads together, but they want to see what the possibilities are with this study.
15. How much time do you have to make the decision?	We are working within a 16-month time period.
16. This is the amount of time it takes to develop a draft?	Yes. To get to the final EIS and a Record of Decision will take about two-years.

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 process and content.

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
1. The earned media, did you contact those people, or did they come to you?	They came to us, but we did send them open house notices and press advisories. Channel 20 will be at the open house. My sense is that a number of media outlets will be present on Tuesday at the open house.
2. I have a two-block area that backs to the railroad track, and I know those people will be asking what is going to happen to their homes.	We will have a land acquisition expert at the open house to answer questions, but we will not have any alternatives. We do not have these developed yet and there won't be anything to show homes that may be part of land acquisition yet.
3. You refereed to two groups, the technical committee and the study team?	The study team is us. The technical committee consists of the engineering staff of the railroads and the technical members of our study team. The steering committee is made up of representatives from the city, county, and Senator Durbin's office.
4. And the public officials group?	Their meeting is tomorrow.
5. At what point will we be able to view maps of the various alternatives that indicate how much right-of-way will be needed?	We will be spending the summer working on this, and we will likely have alternatives in the early fall. At this point, we will host another public meeting and share our findings with the community.
6. So how late into the summer are you scheduling community presentations? I thought you had a deadline for April 20?	If you want us to come, we'll come. We are not limited. We wanted to do as many before April 20th to inform people of the open house.
7. Will you post who attends tomorrow?	Yes, we will. We posted summaries of each of the previous meetings and that includes attendance.

CAG Member Question/Comment	Study Team Response
8. Is there a report available for people who are home bound? Do you plan to use Access 4 Channel at all as a source of information?	That is a good point. I think we can do that. The public access channel and the city cable channel are run by the city and are willing to work with us. We can see if we can put the video up on that. They also offered to host an interview of the study team.

Conclusion

The CAG meeting concluded at approximately 7:50 pm. The study team thanked the members for their time and distributed materials that announced the open house, such a door hangers, flyers, and newsletters, to any members who wanted to pass them along.