

MINUTES

COMMUTER RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY TASK FORCE

MARCH 7, 2006

IN ATTENDANCE:

TASK FORCE MEMBER AGENCIES

Aroma Park – Mike Grimsley
Bourbonnais – Frank Koehler
Bradley – Mayor Kent
Illinois Department of Transportation – Sharon Durbin
Kankakee – Tim Schmidt
Kankakee County – Sam Nicholos
Manteno – Craig Blanchette
Monee – Henry May
Peotone – no attendee
Will County – Colin Duesing

OTHERS PRESENT

Stan James, Mike Lammey and Dave Bergdahl, Kankakee County; Alan Winn and Rich Juvinall, Parsons Binckerhoff; Laura McElroy, Herald; Mary Baskerville, Journal; Elizabeth Dunbar, Workforce Board, and Steve Ernst, City of Rockford

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Nicholos called the meeting to order at 2:32 P.M.

MINUTES

Mr. Koehler moved that the Minutes of the February 21, 2006 meeting be approved, and Mr. May seconded. Unanimous vote.

SES STUDY

Chairmen Nicholos stated that Mr. Heinrich has a meeting in Will County conflicting with this meeting.

CONSULTANT SELECTION

Mr. Koehler stated his belief that either consultant interviewed would be an excellent choice for the Phase II Study, and stated that the use of HNTB as a subconsultant of Earth Tech would give some continuity to local plans, as HNTB has been and is involved in current land use studies in the area. Mr. May, Mr. Grimsley, and Mr. Blanchette concurred that both consultants would be excellent.

Chairman Nicholas stated his belief that Parsons Brinckerhoff did a much better presentation on the public outreach portion of the study. He stated that he asked multiple questions of Earth Tech trying to obtain more details about their proposed work program on the public outreach piece of the study, and was disappointed in the answer. Mr. Schmidt stated that the use of the public outreach portion of the study as the key differential between the two consultants did not match his opinion of the importance of that study item.

Mr. Lammey stated that either consultant would do a fine job, but that Parsons Brinckerhoff did a much better job of addressing the public outreach element, and Mr. Duesing agreed. Ms. Durbin stated her belief that Metra would be very interested in the level of public support behind the project, and that this area needs to be an emphasis area. She stated that some of her staff time would be devoted to the study in this area.

Mr. Blanchette moved that the Task Force support the staff recommendation in favor of Parsons Brinckerhoff. Mr. Duesing seconded. Chairman Nicholas called for a roll call vote.

- Aroma Park – nay
- Bourbonnais – nay
- Kankakee – nay
- Kankakee County – yea
- Manteno – yea
- Monee – nay
- Will County – yea

The motion failed by a 4 to 3 vote.

Mr. Koehler moved that the Task Force retain Earth Tech to be the study consultant. Mr. May seconded the motion. Chairman Nicholas called for a roll call vote.

- Will County – nay
- Monee – yea
- Manteno – nay
- Kankakee County – nay
- Kankakee – nay
- Bourbonnais – yea
- Aroma Park – yea

The motion failed by a 4 to 3 vote.

Mr. Schmidt moved that both consultants be re-interviewed, with the understanding among the consultants that the public outreach component would be stressed. Mr. Duesing seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IDOT FUNDING

Ms. Durbin announced that IDOT has agreed to fund the Phase II Feasibility Study. She stated that the contract was being put together by IDOT staff, and would be ready for signing by Kankakee County in about four weeks. Mr. Schmidt asked about the time required to have Kankakee County under contract with the selected consultant, and Mr. Lammey stated that the request has already been filed with the State's Attorneys' Office. Chairman Nicholos assured the Task Force that the project would proceed as quickly as possible.

ROCKFORD EXPERIENCE

Mr. Lammey introduced Steve Ernst from the City of Rockford, and asked him to detail their experience in the extension of commuter rail issue. Mr. Ernst stated that the impetus for the study in Rockford came from Boone County, who changed the densities in their Land Use Plan to favor transit oriented development (TOD) in certain key corridors. He stated that 10 to 15 communities and Counties have become involved in their effort, through Resolutions of support. He stated that their study had both Senate and House support for the Phase I study, and for the current Alternatives Analysis study.

Mr. Ernst stated that there was an earmark in the new federal transportation bill for the Alternatives Analysis Study, and that the Federal Transit Administration has informed his study group that the AA Study will consider many alternatives other than commuter rail.

Mr. Ernst stated that Rockford has the same issues relating to Metra as does Kankakee County, in that Winnebago County is not a member of Metra. He stated that they believe they can get the taxpayer support necessary to obtain a sales tax increase, and that the increase they believe can be obtained will be enough to support their own operating group. Mr. Ernst stated that their group would be interested in a group of "ring around the collar" counties forming a new transit authority to run commuter rail.

Mr. Lammey thanked Mr. Ernst for the presentation on behalf of the Task Force.

NEXT MEETING

Acting Chairman Lammey stated that the next meeting would be on April 18, 2006.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Duesing moved adjournment, and Mayor Kent seconded. Acting Chairman Lammey adjourned the meeting at 3:56 P.M.