

MINUTES

COMMUTER RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY TASK FORCE

MARCH 16, 2004

IN ATTENDANCE:

TASK FORCE MEMBER AGENCIES

Aroma Park - Mike Grimsley
 Bourbonnais – Frank Koehler
 Bradley – no attendee
 Illinois Department of Transportation – Chuck Kadlec
 Kankakee – Tim Schmidt
 Kankakee County – Sam Nicholos
 Manteno – Jeff Jarvis
 Monee – no attendee
 Peotone – no attendee
 Will County – Colin Duesing

OTHERS PRESENT

Stan James, Dave Bergdahl, Mike Lammey, Delbert Skimerhorn, and Eric Sadler, Kankakee County; Ron Shimizu, Parsons Brinckerhoff; Lee Provost, Daily Journal; Laura McElroy, Herald; Mike Prior, River Valley *METRO* Mass Transit District; and Tom Palzer, Chicago Area Transportation Study.

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

Mr. Grimsley welcomed the group to the Village of Aroma Park. Chairman Nicholos called the meeting to order at 2:02 P.M., thanked everyone for attending, and asked for all in attendance to introduce themselves.

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Mr. Schmidt moved that the Minutes of the February 17, 2004 Meeting be approved, and Mr. Koehler seconded. Unanimous vote.

CONSULTANT PRESENTATION – PLANNING OVERVIEW

Mr. Shimizu from Parsons Brinckerhoff made a presentation on the planning aspects of the study (available upon request). Highlights of the presentation included:

- Planning Approach
 - Existing Conditions
 - Public transportation
 - Surrounding land use

- Environmental features adjacent to the right-of-way
- Future Conditions
 - Proposed public transportation improvements
 - Proposed roadway improvements
 - Proposed land use changes
- Stations and Parking
 - Potential stations
 - Station considerations
 - Station site location
- Ridership Approach
 - Population and Employment
 - Sketch Planning for Ridership
- Project Data Needs
- Questions and Answers

Mr. Koehler asked what the Metra format was for a new commuter rail station. Mr. Shimizu replied that there are “typical” layouts, and that he would send those to Mr. Lammey, who would have them distributed to the members of the Task Force.

Mr. Jarvis asked about the ownership of the local stations and parking lots, and Mr. Shimizu replied that they are usually under local ownership of some form. Mr. Koehler stated that a transit authority of some form could own and operate, much as is done in the communities presently on the south end of the University Park Metra line.

Mr. Jarvis asked about the 2030 population projections, asking if they were somewhat conservative. Mr. Shimizu replied that the projects are in agreement with those produced by NIPC and CATS at least for the Will County side. Mr. Jarvis asked what the rate of population growth of Will County has been, and Mr. Duesing replied that the projections are based on a 1% growth rate, but that Will County has been averaging a 4% growth rate for some ten years.

Chairman Nicholos stated that over 1300 parcels had been sold in Kankakee County in the past five years and that there had not been an aggressive marketing effort as there had been in Will County. Mr. Schmidt stated that employment growth in Will County would affect potential commuter trips from Kankakee County. A discussion on population projections followed. All agreed that the South Suburban Airport is the single most determining factor in population projections.

Mr. Provost asked for a clarification of the work trip data presented. Mr. Jarvis asked for comparative work trip data from the western suburbs to Chicago, and Mr. Shimizu stated that he would provide the data to Mr. Lammey.

Mr. Koehler suggested that commuter data from areas south of Kankakee County was available. Mr. Schmidt stated that he had been to the Iroquois County Board to seek support for the study, and was informed that a number of commuters travel from Watseka to University Park, and that the Board supported the study application. Mr. Koehler stated that access to the potential South Suburban Airport and reverse commuting were

things to be studied as well. Mr. Shimizu stated that there was potential ridership data from the South Suburban Airport study, and would use that data in this study.

Mr. Palzer stated that the extension of service south to the Exit 308 area should be explored, based on the amount of development occurring and slated to occur in that area. He also asked about the Comprehensive Plan for Kankakee County. Mr. Shimizu stated that the update of the Comprehensive Plan is starting at the same time as the Feasibility Study, so that references to the conclusions may not be possible. He stated that PB would use whatever information they could from the consultant working on the update to the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Schmidt stated that he went to a conference in Champaign to meet with an executive with the Canadian National, and was able to present some questions about the study through him to the Canadian National Railroad. The next day the CN made contact with PB to discuss some of the questions.

Mr. James asked about typical feeder bus service to a commuter rail station, and what radius could be expected with what ridership. Mr. Shimizu stated that there are typical distances matched with densities of neighborhoods. He stated that Pace has a model, but whether that model would apply to the southern end of the proposed extension is something that needed to be discussed.

Mr. Provost asked if there was a “magical” ridership projection that would justify the extension of service. Mr. Shimizu responded that there is no “magic” number, but that the ridership matched against cost, funding sources, and local support would be part of the final presentation.

Mr. Grimsley asked if Metra had any information on whether a person’s salary level is indicative of his or her likelihood to rider commuter rail. Mr. Shimizu stated that there was a great deal of information on this factor in the Chicago area. He stated that Metra gets a number of “choice” riders, those who have a choice between driving and riding the train. Mr. Grimsley stated that he would be interested in seeing that data, particularly as it relates to reverse commutes.

Chairman Nicholos expressed his thanks to Mr. Prior, who is leaving the area to begin employment in Wisconsin, and wished him good luck. Mr. Schmidt expressed his thanks to Mr. Palzer for attending the meeting, as well.

NEXT MEETING

Mr. Duesing volunteered Will County as the host of the next meeting, to be held at the Will County Highway Department. Chairman Nicholos thanked Will County, and stated that the next meeting was scheduled for May 18, 2004, at 2:00 P.M. Mr. Lammey stated that a map would be sent with the mailing. Mr. Koehler expressed his thanks to Mr. Grimsley for hosting the meeting today.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Grimsley moved adjournment, and Mr. Schmidt seconded. Chairman Nicholos adjourned the meeting at 2:52 P.M.