

MINUTES

COMMUTER RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY TASK FORCE

MAY 17, 2005

IN ATTENDANCE:

TASK FORCE MEMBER AGENCIES

Aroma Park – Mike Grimsley

Bourbonnais – Frank Koehler

Bradley – Mayor Kent

Illinois Department of Transportation – Chuck Abraham, Chuck Kadlec, Sharon Durbin

Kankakee – Tim Schmidt

Kankakee County – Sam Nicholos, Kelly McLaren

Manteno – Mayor Nugent, Jeff Jarvis, Paul Nicholson

Monee – Mike Grubermann

Peotone – George Gray

Will County – Colin Duesing

OTHERS PRESENT

Stan James, Mike Lammey and Dave Bergdahl, Kankakee County; Ron Shimizu, PB; Dennis Gary, Earth Tech; Nancy Arndt, EDA; Lee Provost, Daily Journal; and Laura McElroy, Herald.

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Koehler welcomed the group to the Village of Bourbonnais, and Chairman Nicholos called the meeting to order at 2:35 P.M. Chairman Nicholos welcomed Mayors Kent and Nugent to the Task Force, and had everyone introduce themselves.

MINUTES

Mr. Jarvis moved that the Minutes of the February 15, 2004 meeting be approved, and Mr. Schmidt seconded. Unanimous vote.

SOUTH EAST SERVICE

Mr. Lammey reported that Mr. Gebhardt, who usually gives a progress report on the Southeast Service, had left the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association. He stated that no replacement had been appointed and that no report would be given at this time.

DISTRIBUTION OF FINAL REPORT

Mr. Lammey stated that each of the member agencies of the Task Force would receive three copies of the Final Report, and that all persons and agencies that are on the Task Force mailing list will receive a copy of the Final Report. He stated that the Final Report has been posted on the Kankakee County website. He further stated that anyone wishing a CD format of the Final Report should make him aware of that fact after the meeting.

RESOLUTIONS OF SUPPORT

Mr. Lammey referred to Appendix 11 of the Final Report for a listing of Resolutions that had been received from member agencies and placed into the Final Report. These included:

- Resolution from the Village of Monee
- Resolution from the Village of Manteno
- Resolution from the County of Will
- Resolution from the Village of Peotone
- Resolution from the City of Kankakee
- Resolution from the Village of Bourbonnais
- Resolution from the County of Kankakee
- Letter of Support from the River Valley METRO Mass Transit District

Chairman Nicholos thanked all of the Task Force members for their participation in the project and for the resolutions.

NEXT ACTIONS

Chairman Nicholos stated that there had been some question about the next step in the process of studies, and in an attempt to resolve that question, Kankakee County and Will County personnel had met with personnel from the Illinois Department of Transportation Office of Planning and Programming. He stated that the personnel from IDOT that were at the meeting were Randy Blankenhorn and Sharon Durbin.

Mr. Lammey stated that personnel from Kankakee County, Will County and the IDOT Office of Planning and Programming had previously met with officials of the Federal Transit Administration to obtain advice on the next step in the process and had received conflicting advice.

Ms. Durbin stated that the opinion of the Office of Planning and Programming was that a Phase II study should be performed, to further specify ridership information, to refine the cost estimates, and to perform the line simulation. Chairman Nicholos stated that Mr. Blankenhorn had stated that Metra should be brought into the Phase II study in some way, and that he would assist in that coordination.

Chairman Nicholos stated that the process recommended by Mr. Blankenhorn was to pursue funding for a Phase II study through the Office of Planning and Programming, and to pursue an Alternatives Analysis study after the completion of the Phase II study. Mr. Lammey stated that most Alternatives Analysis studies are funded at least partially through the FTA, and Metra, and that these funding sources needed to be brought into the

process during the Phase II study. Chairman Nicholos stated that a joint application with Will County was being considered, or at least an application with an Intergovernmental Agreement between Kankakee County and Will County.

The Task Force had a number of questions about the relative costs of Phase II studies, and how many of these studies had been completed or were ongoing in the general Chicago area at present. Mr. Gary and Mr. Shimizu related their current experiences with both Phase II studies and with Alternatives Analysis studies.

Mr. Gary and Mr. Shimizu stated that general costs for a Phase II study were in the range of \$200,000 to \$250,000, and that general costs for an Alternatives Analysis were between \$800,000 to \$1,000,000. They further stated that the Alternatives Analysis had as a requirement a Local Preferred Alternative that had been adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Mr. Gary and Mr. Shimizu stated that portions of the Phase II studies, specifically the ridership simulation and the line capacity analysis, were often subcontracted to other agencies, among them the Chicago Area Transportation Study, and the individual railroads. They stated that the Alternative Analysis rules are very proscriptive, and that the FTA weeds out projects based on their limited funding.

Ms. Durbin confirmed that the funding split on funds approved for Phase II studies through their office would be at minimum a 20% match for local areas, with IDOT funding up to 80%. She stated that Mr. Blankenhorn would view a local contribution greater than the 20% as an indication of how serious the local area was about the project. She stated that Mr. Blankenhorn has been concerned in the past about projects moving slowly enough to make sure that local stakeholders and local legislators were in support of the project.

Chairman Nicholos stated that Mr. Blankenhorn recommended that the IDOT office that funded the Phase I study (Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation) needed to remain involved in the study as a transportation resource.

Mr. Koehler stated his concern about a firm funding plan being included with the studies as soon as possible. Mr. Gary stated that assured local funding support will be necessary after the Alternatives Analysis phase to be able to move to the Preliminary Engineering phase.

Chairman Nicholos stated that the intent of the study process from the beginning was to be ready for the next federal transportation bill with this project, and that the timeline seemed to be in place to be ready when that would occur. He stated that local and federal legislators had been apprised of the study.

Mr. Schmidt asked if there was a cycle of timing for funding requests through the Office of Planning and Programming, and Ms. Durbin stated that there was not. Mr. Schmidt asked Mr. Abraham if his office had funded Phase II applications, and he stated that his office did not have sufficient funding to accommodate a Phase II application.

Mr. Lammey stated that Mr. Blankenhorn had given a reference for a recent Phase II study, and that this reference would be contacted as soon as possible for information, and for a Scope of Services for a Phase II study.

Mr. Schmidt asked the timetable for the preparation of a Phase II study grant application, and Chairman Nicholas stated that the hope was to have the application ready for review by the Task Force at an August 16 meeting.

PRESS QUESTIONS

Mr. Provost asked the cost estimate for a Phase II study, and Mr. Lammey stated that he had been informed that \$250,000 was a ballpark estimate. Mr. Provost asked for a time frame for the Phase II process, and Mr. Lammey stated that an 18 to 24 month time period had been mentioned.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Nicholas stated that the next meeting would be on August 16, 2005, at 2:30 P.M. The meeting location was to be announced.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Koehler moved adjournment, and Mr. Grimsley seconded. Unanimous vote. Chairman Nicholas adjourned the meeting at 3:22 P.M.