

MINUTES

COMMUTER RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY TASK FORCE

MAY 18, 2004

IN ATTENDANCE:

TASK FORCE MEMBER AGENCIES

Aroma Park – Mike Grimsley

Bourbonnais – no attendee

Bradley – Mayor Balthazor

Illinois Department of Transportation – Chuck Abraham, Chuck Kadlec

Kankakee – Tim Schmidt

Kankakee County – Sam Nicholos

Manteno – no attendee

Monee – no attendee

Peotone – no attendee

Will County – Colin Duesing

OTHERS PRESENT

Mike Van Mill, Mike Lammey, and Dave Bergdahl, Kankakee County; Jamy Lyne, Will County; Dennis Gary and Rich Juvinal, PB; Lee Provost, Daily Journal; and Laura McElroy, Herald.

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Duesing welcomed the group to Will County. Chairman Nicholos called the meeting to order at 2:06 P.M.

MINUTES

Mr. Grimsley moved that the Minutes of the March 16, 2004 meeting be approved, and Mr. Schmidt seconded. Unanimous vote.

CONSULTANT PRESENTATION – PROJECT OVERVIEW AND POTENTIAL STATION LOCATIONS

Mr. Gary gave a project overview that focused on the schedule and budget, status of the draft report, and general station requirements. He stated that the project was ahead of schedule and that the draft report will likely be available two months ahead of schedule in September. He stated that since census data needed to estimate ridership is not yet available, it will have to be dealt with.

Mr. Gary discussed typical yard and shop configurations, which will be used to estimate costs at a later time, and showed individual elements of the design features. He gave general rules for station design, which included the following:

- Metra prefers to have its stations at least two miles apart.
- Ridership usually drives each station's dimensions and amenities.
- Metra usually asks for 20 acres to allow for park-and-ride expansion (or 10 acres with parking deck).
- Metra will not allow new at-grade crossings, but will allow use of existing road-rail crossings. It also prefers underpasses to overpasses.
- Community acceptance is required for new station sites.
- And communities will need to secure funding for their own stations.

Mr. Gary presented a graphic representation of Metra station requirements that included the following elements: the depot, parking lots, platform length, underpasses with ramps, kiss-and-ride lanes, and bus drop-off points, with designs that vary by projected ridership. He further stated that the typical station sites shown are shown for feasibility study purposes and are not cast in stone.

Mr. Juvinall discussed the overall group of station sites for the six main communities, along with the South Suburban Airport, and went through each of the communities' potential sites and recommended sites.

Mr. Juvinall stated that two sites were considered in Monee, one in central Monee, and the second south of Industrial Drive. The recommended site was south of Industrial Drive, which had the following characteristics:

- 3.6 miles to the University Park Station,
- 20 acres of potential site space,
- Close to Monee,
- Good road access,
- Currently undeveloped,
- Pedestrian bridge or tunnel required, and
- Potential SSA rail transfer station.

Mr. Juvinall discussed the rail access situation for the South Suburban Airport (SSA), including the original route into the site shown in the 1998 High Speed Rail (HSR) study. He stated that Monee has informed the consultant that this alignment is no longer possible due to development in Monee. Mr. Juvinall stated that an alternate means of HSR access to the SSA could be gained just south of the proposed station in Monee (south of Industrial Drive, discussed above), and that the southern route from the SSA to the Canadian National (CN) tracks could remain that shown in the 1998 study. He further stated that the SSA West Route discussed in the 1998 HSR study was still viable, as well.

Mr. Juvinall stated that there were some potential options for commuter rail service to Kankakee to and through the airport, some along the proposed HSR routes, and one that would connect with the proposed Southeast Service (SES) at Balmoral Park. He stated

that Diesel Multiple Units (DMU) could connect on an east-west route through the SSA to the SES at Balmoral Park. This connection would provide access to LaSalle Street Station.

Mr. Juvinall stated that three sites were considered in Peotone, one at the northwest corner of Route 50 and Beecher Road, one between Crawford and Main Streets in central Peotone, and one at the southwest corner of Route 50 and Wilmington Road. The recommended site was the southwest corner of Route 50 and Wilmington Road, which had the following characteristics:

- 5.2 miles to the recommended Monee Station,
- 20 acres of potential site space,
- Close to Peotone,
- Good road access,
- Mostly undeveloped,
- Pedestrian access via railroad crossing, and
- Harlem Avenue railroad crossing improvement needed.

Mr. Juvinall stated that two sites were considered in Manteno, one at the northwest corner of Route 50 and 10000 N Road, and one at 7000 N Road. The recommended site was the northwest corner of Route 50 and 10000 N Road, which had the following characteristics:

- 4.2 miles to the recommended Peotone Station,
- 20 acres of potential site space,
- Close to Manteno,
- Good road access,
- Pedestrian access via railroad crossing, and
- Undeveloped.

Mr. Juvinall stated that three sites were considered in Bourbonnais, one at the southwest corner of Route 50 and 6000 N Road, one at the northwest corner of Route 50 and St. George Road, and one at Larry Power Road. The recommended site was the northwest corner of Route 50 and St. George Road, which had the following characteristics:

- 5.3 miles to the recommended Manteno Station,
- 20 acres of potential site space,
- Close to Bourbonnais,
- Good road access,
- Half undeveloped and half existing parking lot,
- Pedestrian access via railroad crossing, and
- Possible commute to local industry.

Mr. Juvinall stated that one site was considered in Bradley. The recommended site was both sides of the CN Railway between Goodwin Street and Brookmont Boulevard, which had the following characteristics:

- 3.8 miles to the recommended Bourbonnais Station,
- 20 acres of potential site space,
- Central to Bradley, Bourbonnais, and Kankakee,
- Partially developed,
- Pedestrian tunnel required,
- Proposed local improvements, and
- Possible HSR transfer station.

Mr. Juvinal stated that three sites were considered in Kankakee, one in the northwest quadrant of the Canadian National (CN)/Norfolk Southern (NS) junction, one at the existing train station downtown at Merchant Street, and one northwest of the I-57 Interchange (Exit 308) on Festival Drive at Stewart Drive. The recommended sites were the existing train station downtown at Merchant Street, and northwest of the I-57 Interchange (Exit 308) on Festival Drive at Stewart Drive.

The existing downtown station has the following characteristics:

- 1.3 miles to the recommended Bradley Station,
- 10 acres with the potential for a parking structure,
- Downtown Kankakee location,
- Good local road and highway access,
- Pedestrian access via railroad crossings, and
- A pending Multi-modal facility.

The Exit 308 Interchange site had the following characteristics:

- 3.2 miles to the existing train station downtown at Merchant Street,
- 20 acres of potential site space,
- Good access for communities south of Kankakee,
- Near SSA and Exit 308 Interchange,
- Undeveloped land,
- Pedestrian tunnel required, and
- A nearby rail storage yard site.

Mr. Duesing asked about the at-grade crossings and the responsibility for those costs.

Mr. Gary stated that those crossings would typically be railroad responsibility.

Mr. Duesing asked further about the pedestrian facilities across those at-grade crossings, and Mr. Gary stated that the current crossing's condition figures into the concept of financial responsibility.

Mr. Provost asked for an estimate on the number of spaces required and related cost of parking by acre. Mr. Gary stated that the design of individual lots would depend on so many factors that the question is very hard to answer.

Mr. Van Mill asked about related development around station parking lots, and how Metra would react to that development or potential development. Mr. Gary stated that transit-oriented development is an important factor in station siting and consideration.

Mr. Provost asked about a figure for station cost and related parking based on a standard site. Mr. Gary stated that the design of individual lots would depend on so many factors that the question is hard to answer.

Mr. Nicholos asked about the potential size and design of train stations, and the possible use of interior space for transit-oriented development facilities. Mr. Gary responded that ridership estimates for potential station site locations would drive the potential for transit-oriented development facilities at each station site. Mr. Gary stated that the North Central Service would be a good model for station design since it is the most recent addition to Metra service.

Mr. Lammey stated that this study's recent progress indicated that individuals who had some responsibility over the South Suburban Airport and high speed rail should be invited to attend future commuter rail meetings. To that end, Ms. Jamy Lyne of Will County and Mr. George Weber of IDOT's Bureau of Railroads have been invited to Task Force meetings.

Mr. Provost asked if the construction of individual stations was the responsibility of Metra or local communities. Mr. Gary stated that in the most recent example, the North Central Service, was the local community's responsibility, and that the final Feasibility Study will show the most recent example in writing.

Mr. Bergdahl stated that seven station sites have been identified, and asked how many of these would likely be built. Mr. Gary stated that it would depend on the communities, since they will have to determine whether they will still want a station and whether they will be able to secure financing.

Mr. Gary brought up the discussion of how far the potential line should be extended. He stated that the power method of pulling trains, the number of alternatives to be studied, and the logical end point for a Chicago terminus are still issues for discussion.

Mr. Gary introduced a matrix of possible discussion points. He stated that one of the first alternatives to be considered is extension of the Metra Electric Line to Monee, considered to be very feasible due to the potential yard location south of University Park. He stated that any extension of the electric infrastructure beyond the South Suburban Airport is extremely unlikely, due to the great expense of extending electric power facilities.

Mr. Gary stated that the next four potential end points for service would share diesel multiple units (DMU) for service, and would involve a transfer at University Park, or Monee if the electric service is extended. He stated that these alternatives also shared an end point of the Randolph Street Station in downtown Chicago. He stated that the potential end points for such service could be Peotone, Bourbonnais, Bradley, and Exit 308.

Mr. Gary stated that the next potential alternative would be dual mode power (diesel and electric combined) service from Bradley to Randolph Street Station. He stated that this would be a new concept for Metra, and that Metra would be resistant.

The next alternatives include diesel hauled coaches to the LaSalle Street Station, through connections with either the Rock Island District, or through the South Suburban Airport to connect with the proposed SES at Balmoral Park Station. The suggested end point for this service would be the potential Bradley Station. Mr. Schmidt asked why the potential end point for this service would not be in Kankakee, and Mr. Gary responded that this would be considered.

Mr. Gary revealed some of the criteria to be considered in the matrix, including the following:

- New stations,
- Travel time,
- Travel distance,
- New construction, and
- Design issues.

Mr. Van Mill asked if the extension of electric service to Peotone could be an option. Mr. Gary stated that this could be studied, but stated that Metra would be unlikely to extend to Peotone.

Mr. Gary stated that there are so many different possible projects currently up in the air that could benefit the extension of service into Kankakee County, and that the strategy now is to be ready to jump onto any of those bandwagons that might reach reality.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Nicholas stated that the next meeting would be on July 20, 2004, at the offices of Kankakee County. The Task Force decided to change the meeting time to 2:30 P.M., in an attempt to accommodate a conflict for Mr. Grubermann and Mr. Gray.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Schmidt moved adjournment, and Mr. Grimsley seconded. Unanimous vote. Chairman Nicholas adjourned the meeting at 3:42 P.M.