

MINUTES

COMMUTER RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY TASK FORCE

JULY 20, 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, Amy Welk

Kankakee – Tim Schmidt

Kankakee County – Sam Nicholos, Pam Lee

Manteno – Jeff Jarvis, Paul Nicholson

Monee – Mike Grubermann

Peotone – George Gray

Will County – Colin Duesing

OTHERS PRESENT

Mike Lammey and Dave Bergdahl, Kankakee County; Ron Shimizu and Dean Englund, PB; Vice-Chairman Lee Provost, Daily Journal; and Laura McElroy, Herald.

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Nicholos welcomed the group to Kankakee County, and called the meeting to order at 2:33 P.M.

MINUTES

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

SOUTHEAST SERVICE

Mr. Duesing reported on the progress of the SouthEast Service study (to Balmoral Park), distributed a map of the study area (which is attached to these Minutes), and stated that the Socio-Economic Profiles of South Suburban Communities is available on a CD.

Mr. Lammey stated that Kankakee County would make copies available to each member agency, if requested.

Mr. Duesing stated that even though commuter rail does not currently serve the SouthEast Service corridor, 6% of the people living in the corridor use commuter rail. The study also found that demand for the SouthEast Service does not affect demand for a Metra Electric Line extension.

Mr. Grubermann stated that airport rail access from the SouthEast Service and the Electric Line extension was discussed at the IDOT-sponsored South Suburban Airport planning sessions. The extension of the Electric Line to Kankakee was also discussed at these meetings. He also stated that some riders will continue to use the Metra Electric Line if the SouthEast Service is extended, and vice versa, since the terminal at either LaSalle Street or Randolph Street would determine which rail line people would choose to ride.

CONSULTANT PRESENTATION – PROJECT OVERVIEW AND RIDERSHIP PROJECTIONS

Mr. Shimizu from Parsons Brinckerhoff provided an overview of the project. He stated that the project is ahead of schedule with 73% of available funding for the project spent. He also stated that ridership forecasts were based upon the same growth and development forecasts used in the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan from the Chicago Area Transportation Study Policy Board, and upon projections from the South Suburban Airport Environmental Impact Statement.

Mr. Shimizu further stated that the travel data is the most current available, coming from the 2000 Census Transportation Planning Package, Part 3 work flow data, released in May, 2004. He also stated that the result of the earlier Task Force meeting that discussed population projections had led PB to develop an enhanced (25% higher) population projection as well.

Mr. Englund from PB discussed the ridership forecast assumptions, which include the following:

- Communities on the proposed extension will send an increased proportion of riders that is comparable to communities with existing service, of their work trips to Chicago in the future.
- Train mode share will remain at its current level in the future, approximately 25%.
- Non-work travel is around 5% of total travel.
- Inbound non-CBD and reverse commute trips each comprise around 7% of total travel.

Mr. Englund discussed the ridership projections by each future station (Monee, Peotone, Manteno, St. George Road, Brookmont Boulevard in Bradley, Kankakee's existing Amtrak Station, and Exit 308 in southern Kankakee). He revealed a range in ridership for both the regular 2030 population projections and for the enhanced population projections.

Mr. Englund stated that the line as a whole could be expected to generate between 5,000 and 6,000 daily riders. Mr. Shimizu stated that Metra's North Central Service in 2002 generated 4,500 daily riders and that more refined ridership estimates would be generated as the feasibility study process progresses. Mr. Shimizu further stated that no ridership for the South Suburban Airport was factored into these estimates.

Mr. Provost asked for clarification that 5,000 daily riders actually meant 2,500 people using the service daily, and Mr. Shimizu concurred. Mr. Shimizu stated that the Metra Electric Line currently carries 40,000 riders per day, so this service would be a significant addition. Mr. Jarvis asked how many stations were on the Metra Electric Line, and an estimate was given of approximately 45 stations. (**Note:** There are currently 49 stations on this line. Thirty-four of these stations are on the Electric Main Line.) Mr. Jarvis stated that the ridership estimates per potential station were not low numbers compared to the Metra Electric Line averages. (**Note:** Metra's systemwide ridership average was 667 in 1999.).

The relative ridership projections between the St. George Station and the Bradley Station were raised because it was a function of the relative distance between stations, and the amount of undeveloped land around the St. George Station. Mr. Shimizu stated that the ridership estimates for the Exit 308 Station was given a much wider catchment area since it would be the new terminus.

Mr. Englund revealed ridership projections for a staged minimum operable segment (MOS), which was projected to end at the 10000 N Road Station in Manteno. He stated that the Manteno Station in that scenario would be a terminus, and thus would draw ridership from a much greater area. Mr. Shimizu stated that ridership on the line under this scenario would be in the 3,000 daily rider range.

Mr. Provost asked about the strength of the ridership estimates, and Mr. Shimizu stated that for the distance from downtown Chicago, these are good estimates. Mr. Abraham stated that it is so early in the process, and so many lines are under consideration that it is hard to give an answer to the question, but he thought that the ridership estimates looked pretty good.

Mr. Schmidt asked if the inclusion of potential South Suburban Airport data would make the case for the extension of the line even better. Mr. Shimizu stated that the airport ridership was deliberately excluded from this study. Mr. Grubermann stated that the record of decision was not due until December of 2005 at the soonest, and that it might be five to seven years after that before construction could begin, and perhaps two years after that before flight service could begin. Mr. Abraham stated that if the service is feasible at this early stage without factoring in airport ridership, the case for the line is made stronger at this point. Mr. Shimizu stated that it would make sense to serve the airport through this service and through the SouthEast service as well.

Mr. Lammey stated that it had been the strategy from the beginning to have the record of decision on the South Suburban Airport come during the Second Phase of the Feasibility Study process, so that potential ridership could be added into that study. Mr. Abraham stated that the Second Phase would look at the biggest obstacles raised during the First Phase in order to focus on and address those obstacles. Mr. Grimsley stated there is a competition for capital funding for service, and that as the process moves forward, those who are advantaged most should be identified, and to use that information as a plus for this study.

Mr. Grubermann stated that the capital costs of extending the University Park Line may be much less than the capital costs for the SouthEast Service extension, and this fact may benefit the service extension into Kankakee County.

Mr. Jarvis asked if factors such as the future price of gasoline have been discussed in the study, and Mr. Englund stated that these ridership estimates are based only on currently accepted growth assumptions and continuation of existing ridership trends. Mr. Jarvis stated that all of the external factors that might change mode split over time make the current ridership estimates seem conservative. Mr. Grubermann stated that these future factors should be footnoted in the report.

Mr. Bergdahl asked why the minimum operable segment did not include the St. George Station, which had the highest potential ridership of any station in Kankakee County. Mr. Englund and Mr. Shimizu stated that the goal of the minimum operable segment was to recognize the RTA institutional boundaries and to minimize the length of the extension outside those boundaries.

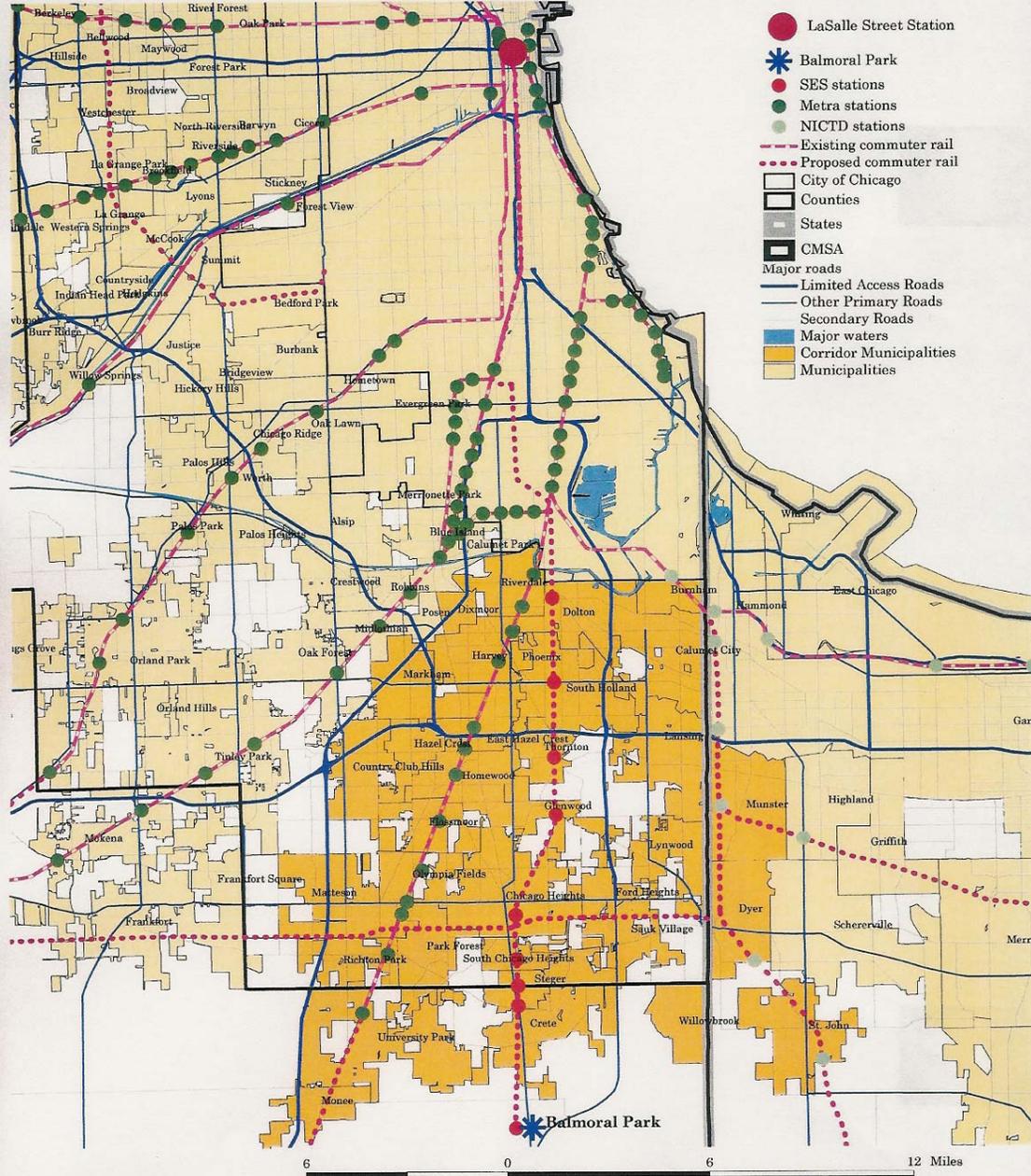
NEXT MEETING

Chairman Nicholos stated that the next meeting would be on September 21, 2004, at 2:30 P.M. Mr. Jarvis volunteered the Community Center in Manteno as the site of the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Schmidt moved adjournment, and Mayor Balthazor seconded. Unanimous vote. Chairman Nicholos adjourned the meeting at 3:26 P.M.

Exhibit I: Southeast Rail Study Existing and Proposed Commuter Rail - Study Corridor



Prepared by ACG: The al Chalabi Group Ltd.
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From a DRAFT Document

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