

MINUTES

COMMUTER TRANSIT FEASIBILITY STUDY TASK FORCE

SEPTEMBER 16, 2008

IN ATTENDANCE:

TASK FORCE MEMBER AGENCIES

Aroma Park – no attendee
Bourbonnais – no attendee
Bradley – Mayor Kent
Illinois Department of Transportation – no attendee
Kankakee – no attendee
Kankakee County – Sam Nicholas
Manteno – no attendee
Monee – Henry May
Peotone – no attendee
Will County – no attendee

OTHERS PRESENT

Mike Lammey, Kankakee County; Dennis Gary and Gary Foyle, Earth Tech; Steve Ernst, Rockford, and Laura McElroy, Herald

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Nicholas called the meeting to order at 2:39 P.M.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

MINUTES

A quorum was not present.

PRESENTATION FROM CITY OF ROCKFORD

Chairman Nicholas introduced Mr. Ernst from the City of Rockford for a presentation on their effort on commuter transit. Mr. Ernst detailed the historical reasons for their interest in commuter transit, beginning with the inclusion of Boone County into the existing MPO of Rockford, and the fact that 28% of the residents of Boone County commuted in some way into the Chicago metropolitan area. He showed growth statistics that indicated a continuation of that trend, and that the City of Rockford believed that some reverse commute into Rockford would occur in future years.

Mr. Ernst discussed the initial feasibility that was conducted for the Rockford metropolitan area, and discussed how Rockford came to be awarded funding for an Alternatives Analysis study. He reviewed the study process and the conclusion that there was insufficient ridership generated by the study to qualify for FTA New Starts funding.

Mr. Ernst stated that the Rockford MPO had stopped New Starts process, but had not stopped the feasibility study. He stated that the level of public support for the study led them to continue the study outside the New Starts funding process.

Mr. Ernst stated that land use planning, in particular the willingness to plan for greater employment and residential densities around train station stops, was one of the most important aspects of their study. He stated that without the political will to develop that density, commuter rail service was not possible. He recounted the Boone County planning process that made the development of that density of employment and residential development around future train stations, and the impact that this decision has had on the study as a whole. Mayor Kent asked how that density can be developed, and Mr. Ernst stated that a commitment to this level of density as a criteria for station development in their study.

Mr. Ernst gave several examples of the development of densities around existing and new transit stations in the Metra service area, and also showed transit station development in those areas.

Mr. Ernst discussed modeling requirements in the Alternatives Analysis process, and the problems that Rockford has had with this issue. He stated that this was one of the chief difficulties they experienced in the study. Mr. Ernst stated that 20% of the projected year 2030 trips from the Rockford MPO area were projected to go to the vicinity of O'Hare, and that this number was in the range of 60,000 daily trips. He stated that transit could only get a portion of those trips.

Mr. Ernst stated that after the development of alternatives for service, and the development of both ridership and cost estimates for the service, none of the alternatives proposed were able to reach the Cost Effectiveness Index of \$24.99 per trip, which is the criterion for New Starts funding. He stated that the local preferred service alternative was just under \$60 per trip.

Mr. Ernst stated that Rockford is continuing their study for local use, and not pursuing the New Starts funding option. He stated that one of their biggest issues now is to determine how they want to govern their proposed service, and detailed some options. A number of questions were raised by Commuter Transit members about the options being discussed in Rockford. Mr. Ernst stated that their current preference is some form of cooperative venture with IDOT and Amtrak, with local governance being tested in a non-binding referendum being scheduled for April of next year.

PEOTONE SERVICE

Mr. Lammey stated that he had heard of no new talks on the possible Peotone service from Metra, and that everyone was waiting on possible capital bill issues from the State of Illinois.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Nicholas stated that the next meeting of the Task Force would be on December 16, 2008.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Nicholas adjourned the meeting at 3:35 P.M.