

MINUTES

COMMUTER RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY TASK FORCE

DECEMBER 20, 2005

IN ATTENDANCE:

TASK FORCE MEMBER AGENCIES

Aroma Park – no attendee
 Bourbonnais – Frank Koehler
 Bradley – Kimberly Dickens
 Illinois Department of Transportation – Sharon Durbin
 Kankakee – Tim Schmidt
 Kankakee County – Karl Kruse/Kelly McLaren/Sam Nicholos
 Manteno – Jeff Jarvis/Paul Nicholson/Craig Blanchette
 Monee – Henry May
 Peotone – no attendee
 Will County – Colin Duesing

OTHERS PRESENT

Mike Van Mill and Mike Lammey, Kankakee County; Mary Baskerville, Daily Journal; Laura McElroy, Herald; Rob Hoffmann, METRO; Johnathon Eltrevoug, WKAN; and Mark Grimsley, WONU.

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

County Board Chairman Kruse welcomed the group to Kankakee County, stated that the Commuter Rail project had generated a great deal of public interest, and thanked the members of the Commuter Rail Task Force for their work on the project. Chairman Nicholos called the meeting to order at 2:33 P.M, and had everyone introduce themselves. Chairman Nicholos welcomed new attendees Ms. Dickens from Bradley and Mr. Blanchette from Manteno, and thanked Mr. Nicholson for his efforts on the Task Force.

MINUTES

Mr. Duesing moved that the Minutes of the October 18, 2005 meeting be approved, and Mr. Schmidt seconded. Unanimous vote.

SOUTHEAST STUDY

Mr. Lammey stated that Mr. Heinrich was not able to be at the meeting, but had stated that the Southeast Study continues with Metra continuing its alternatives analysis. The report further stated that the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association is

moving forward with the financing study, looking at possible alternatives for funding the construction of potential Metra stations.

PHASE II APPLICATION

Chairman Nicholos stated that the grant application was delivered to IDOT on Thursday, December 15. Mr. Lammey stated that he had met with Randy Blankenhorn, Les Nunes, and Sharon Durbin of IDOT's Office of Planning and Programming and thanked Ms. Durbin for preparing the staff so well. He stated that Mr. Blankenhorn had requested that the following items be added to this project's Scope of Work:

- An additional section to highlight revenue projections,
- A section to deal with institutional issues for communities outside the Metra and RTA service areas,
- A section dealing with funding formulae for local cost sharing of capital and operating costs,
- A timeline for the study, and
- A public education/outreach campaign, to include a website to gather citizen input during and after the study.

Ms. Durbin stated that the public outreach campaign was an eligible cost under the funding requested. Mr. Lammey stated that IDOT will be making some phone calls to various agencies internal and external to IDOT to determine whether the study will be funded, and that those calls would include both Metra and the RTA.

In response to a question by Mr. Koehler, Mr. Lammey stated that he had been in contact with staff from Metra, who had advised him that the importance of the University Park Line's extension had been increased after funding had been placed in the federal transportation bill for the extension to the new airport.

In response to a question from Mr. May, Mr. Lammey stated that the level of contact with the Canadian National Railroad had also improved, with both the Montreal and Homewood offices. Mr. Lammey stated that Mr. Arkin from CN's Homewood office was willing to have his name and office phone number placed in the RFP or RFQ for consultants to contact him.

Mr. May stated that there might be an issue of the track rules that the CN operations might follow, whether they would be Canadian rules or American. He stated that his experience had led him to want to question this issue, in particular.

Mr. Schmidt asked about the time it would take to learn of IDOT's decision to fund the project or not, and Ms. Durbin stated that IDOT would have a decision by early May or sooner. Mr. Lammey stated that the time it would take to get a contract approved through Kankakee County would make a project start date of April-May optimistic.

Chairman Nicholos thanked Ms. Durbin for her efforts in the Phase II Study application phase, and stated that the timing to interview and select a consultant was the next topic for consideration for the Task Force. Mr. Lammey stated that the RFP or RFQ would be

issued to the 14 remaining consultant firms on December 30, and that the submissions would be required by January 23, 2006. He stated that staff would spend about ten days reviewing the submissions, and checking references, and that staff would have a recommendation for a short list for interviews by January 31.

Mr. Lammey asked that the Task Force reserve February 21 as a day for interviews. He stated that if four firms were to be interviewed, the intent was to do two interviews in the morning, break for lunch, and do two interviews in the afternoon. If three firms were to be interviewed, all could be done in the afternoon. Mr. Schmidt asked if the Task Force could meet an hour previous to the interviews, so that the areas for questions could be discussed. Chairman Nicholas stated that this was a good idea.

Mr. Lammey stated that a staff recommendation would be prepared after the interview session, and that the Task Force would meet on March 7 to select a consultant. The Task Force agreed on this date for an additional meeting.

METRO UNIVERSITY PARK COMMUTER BUS SERVICE

Chairman Nicholas asked Mr. Hoffmann from METRO to report on the service to University Park. Mr. Hoffmann stated that the service began on October 31, and had been expanded on December 5. He stated that ridership had been climbing steadily, and that 398 rides had been provided in November, and 415 rides had been provided in the first three weeks of December.

Mr. Hoffmann stated that he received phone calls each day asking about the service, and that marketing the service has proved to be an interesting exercise. Mr. Lammey stated that 100 potential riders had surfaced in the first three days of advertising the potential service in the local papers, and that potential riders still do not know of the service. Mr. Hoffmann stated that the latest marketing effort he is attempting will be billboards along Illinois Route 50, and that he welcomed any other ideas to get the word out about the service.

Mr. Schmidt stated that his organization had faced similar marketing issues, and that he finally was able to have fliers distributed with Aqua bills. Mr. Koehler stated that METRO could seek a partnership with either EDA or the Convention and Visitors Bureau to provide signage at Metra's Randolph Street Terminal which might be a way to reach the potential riders. Mr. Hoffmann stated that he would explore those options.

Mr. Van Mill asked Mr. Lammey to explain why the METRO service to University Park was important for the Commuter Rail Task Force. Mr. Lammey replied that Mr. Abraham from IDOT had stated during the Phase I study that any efforts on the part of the local officials to provide service that approximated the desired commuter rail extension would not only show the potential demand, but would also show the intent and level of effort of the local area toward the realization of the potential service.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Nicholas stated that the next meeting would be the consultant interviews on February 21, 2006, and that notices of the time of that meeting would be sent out as soon as possible.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Koehler moved adjournment, and Mr. Schmidt seconded. Chairman Nicholas adjourned the meeting at 3:15 P.M.