



MEETING NOTES

Project: East Side Highway Environmental Assessment
Subject: Focused Working Group – Land Use and Access Management #2
Date: April 11, 2012, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Location: Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts, Bloomington, IL

Minutes of this meeting were prepared by Antonio Acevedo of Clark Dietz, Inc. Please inform him of corrections or modifications.

Project Team Attendees: Jerry Payonk (CDI), Antonio Acevedo (CDI), John Lazzara (HDR), Jamie Bents (Huff & Huff) and Eric Schmitt (McLean County)

1. Introduction and Review

- Jerry Payonk reviewed the consensus workshop that took place at FWG #1 on March 14th, 2012.
 - Ten categories were identified by the FWG to discuss in detail.
 - Of these ten, two were discarded (Noise and Watershed) since they will be addressed by the Sustainability FWGs.
- Jerry stated that those who submitted comments at the January public information meeting should receive responses to those comments this week.
- Jerry presented a map of the four remaining alternatives as shown at Public Information Meeting #4 and identified a few locations that have recently been modified due to alignment refinements and additional information:
 - The original BN3/Ireland Grove diamond interchange was changed to a partial cloverleaf and shifted further west to line up with the BN2/Ireland Grove. This adjustment moved the interchange farther west of the Grove subdivision than the previous alignment.
 - The project team is evaluating the impacts of shifting the BN3/Fort Jesse Rd. diamond interchange back on to CR 2000 E.
 - The project team is considering the possibility of adding a diamond interchange at General Electric (GE) Road.
 - The project team is including the planned extension of Hamilton Road into the ESH alignments. The City of Bloomington plans to eventually extend Hamilton Road east to Towanda Barnes road at the approximate location of the Cheney's Grove intersection.

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- In addition to the cloverleaf interchange at I-74, the project team is evaluating trumpet interchanges and analyzing the effects of shifting the interchange further east.
- The four remaining alignments were then broken down into five sections (T1, T2, BN2, BN3 and D2) to make it easier to discuss the categories identified in the consensus workshop.

2. Local Mobility Discussion

The first category discussed from the consensus workshop was local mobility. The FWG reviewed the remaining alternatives in detail, starting on the north side with sections T1 and T2, and moved south identifying specific issues pertaining to local mobility. Comments made by the group are as follows:

- Many FWG members expressed that access to Raab Road via Towanda Barnes Road and Airport Road must be maintained.
 - Normal Community High School and Eastview Christian Church are both located on Raab Road and generate a significant amount of traffic at certain times of the day. The high school generates traffic during its peak hours (before and after school), and the church generates traffic every day of the week, beyond the “typical” Sunday church peak hour.
 - Both T1 and T2 allow for current traffic operations along Raab Road to remain in place, but provide an additional route for travelers coming from the northwest to access Towanda Barnes Road via a partial cloverleaf interchange.
- Many FWG members expressed that the Airport Road and Route 66 connection should be maintained, and that Airport Road should be improved.
 - A new Normal fire station is being planned in the vicinity of Normal Community High School and EMS will need access to Route 66 and north of I-55. Keeping this intersection open will provide needed emergency response access.
 - Lake Bloomington traffic uses Airport Road from US 66, and so that intersection should remain open.
- Pipeline Road is programmed to become a 3-lane road from the existing 4-lane road from County Highway 12 to County Highway 63.

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This improvement is identified in the Planned and Programmed projects that are considered in developing the travel demand models.

- The grain terminal located in Towanda generates significant slow-moving truck traffic from all directions on Towanda Barnes Road, Northtown Road, Pipeline Road, and Route 66.
- Residents living in or near the Lamplighter subdivision use Northtown/Towanda Barnes/Raab Road to access Veterans Parkway. The T1 option would leave access to this route, but the T2 option would disrupt that route.
- One FWG member asked if the project team reviewed crash reports and citations, as well as traffic counts, to determine the number of accidents in the project area. Jerry responded that the project team obtains crash reports and uses them along with the Federal Highway Administration's Highway Safety Manual to perform a safety analysis, and that the team has already taken traffic counts in the project area. Citations are not obtained.
- One FWG member asked what the impact of the ESH would be to nearby local roads. Jerry responded that the project team will be studying the local road impacts due to the ESH and look at local road improvements that would be needed due to the ESH.
- One FWG member asked if businesses will be attracted to the ESH and as a result develop more land along Towanda Barnes Road that otherwise would not have been developed. Jerry responded that the ESH is being developed based on the future development planned in the 2035 land use plan. As development occurs, additional streets will be developed to provide access as needed. Urban sprawl and unplanned development will be looked at in the socio economic analysis for each alignment.
- One FWG member expressed that access to Towanda Barnes Road on the east from Northtown Road needs to be maintained.
 - There are a few subdivisions and a large cemetery off of Northtown Road east of Towanda Barnes Road that need this access point.
 - Currently, both the T1 and T2 configurations eliminate this access point.
- John Lazzara stated that access control in interchange areas will be studied in detail for each interchange in each project alignment. Per IDOT policy, there must be no access within 500' of the interchange ramps.
- One FWG member asked if Towanda Barnes Road will be widened to five lanes into Towanda. Eric Schmitt responded that the current plans

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are to widen Towanda Barnes Road from Fort Jesse Road to Raab Road. There are no plans to continue the widening into Towanda.

- Many FWG members shared their ideas on the proposed interchange at GE Road, as well as interchanges at Fort Jesse and IL 9. Jerry reminded the FWG that having an interchange at GE Road does not meet the minimum interchange spacing requirements (interchange ramps should be spaced a minimum of 1 mile apart) and would require the use of collector-distributor (c-d) roads or auxiliary lanes. If an interchange were not provided at any of these roads, a grade separation without ramps would be provided at a minimum. Relating to this, the following comments were made:
 - An interchange at GE Road would provide better access to businesses in Bloomington.
 - Without an interchange at GE Road, more traffic will be directed to the Fort Jesse interchange and may create congestion.
 - If the interchange is built at GE Road, the interchange at Fort Jesse must remain. The removal of interchange at Fort Jesse would have a negative impact on emergency response times. *Jerry then requested an emergency response time map from all FWG members representing emergency services.*
 - If c-d roads are used, drivers will have to exit mainline ESH either one mile or two miles in advance of their desired exit when using the distributor roads. Some FWG members did not like this idea and feared that it would be confusing to drivers. Some agreed that if proper signage was used this problem could be overcome.
 - One FWG member stated that IL 9 could have the highest traffic volumes of the GE/Fort Jesse/IL 9 group, and asked if the c-d roads would function properly with the majority of traffic driving through the first c-d road intersection with a local road to reach IL 9. A single lane c-d road does not allow for drivers to pass other slow-moving drivers. Some FWG members thought this may lead to congestion on the c-d road, and that an auxiliary lane may be better in this situation. Jerry stated that the project team will determine if c-d roads or auxiliary lanes would meet FHWA requirements for access spacing. Typically, the first access choice would be to have neither c-d roads nor auxiliary lanes. Then the second choice would typically be auxiliary lanes, with the third choice being c-d roads.
 - One member asked if express lanes could be used instead of c-d roads or auxiliary lanes. John Lazzara responded that there is not enough traffic volume to warrant the use of express lanes. These are typically found in major metropolitan areas.

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- One FWG member asked if frontage roads will be provided along the ESH to provide access to farm properties. Jerry stated that this issue will be studied in the EA; the ESH needs to maintain or provide access to parcels that currently have public road access.
- Oakland Street is not a through street, and ends at the airport. The FWG agreed that it was acceptable to close access to Oakland from the ESH; access to Oakland can be provided from Empire.
- All FWG members were in agreement that a grade separation at Bentown Road was sufficient.
- A few FWG members were concerned that the partial cloverleaf interchange at Ireland Grove Road limited access to the Grove subdivision. The current design eliminates one of the access points for the Grove subdivision and leaves only a single access point because access points cannot be located within 500' of an interchange ramp. It was expressed that EMS may have issues with this design. Jerry indicated that this will be further studied to look for opportunities for a second access point.
- Jerry asked the FWG if the interchange at Towanda Barnes Road on the south side was necessary considering there would be interchanges provided at Ireland Grove Road and US 150. Many FWG members stated that many drivers access I-74 by taking Towanda Barnes to US 150 through Downs, and many would continue to do so, particularly if there is not an interchange at Towanda Barnes Road. Jerry stated that the travel time for the ESH route would be less than the Towanda Barnes/US 150 route, and people will realize that over time. Some FWG members stated that more people would use the ESH for this purpose if the proposed ESH interchange at I-74 is shifted further east.
- Jerry asked the FWG if the ESH should continue south past I-74 and connect to CR 1750 E. A few FWG members commented that many people use CR 1750 E to cross I-74. Extending the ESH south of I-74 would eliminate the CR 1750 E bridge over I-74 and would cut off access for people living in subdivisions in Randolph Township south of I-74.
- One FWG member asked if the project team could bring back segment D4. Jerry responded that D4 was eliminated in the Macro Analysis due to the skew it created at Towanda Barnes Road and U.S. 150. However, the project team will look at other options on the south side such as D3, which was eliminated in the Macro Analysis for consolidation reasons. Jerry reminded the group that when an alignment is moved due to potential impacts, it could just move the impacts to another area and not eliminate the impacts.

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- One FWG member asked if there would be safety concerns for the high school students taking the ESH to school. The FWG didn't have concerns about this, and one FWG member said that the high school students now take Airport Road, and that Airport Road is dangerous in its current condition and should be improved.
- One FWG member asked about impacts to Duncan Manor and centennial farms from the ESH. Jerry stated that while the project team attempts to avoid impacts to centennial farms, a centennial farm designation does not provide Federal protection to properties. Duncan Manor is on the National Register of Historic Places and will not be impacted by the project. One FWG member stated that the ESH will increase the number of people viewing Duncan Manor, and could be beneficial for the area.
- One FWG member asked if the project team will consider land development not in the 2035 Land Use Plan that could occur as a result of the ESH. Jerry responded that the ESH was developed to support the 2035 land use plan. The project team cannot adjust the land use plan to meet the needs of the ESH. Eric Schmitt added that there are areas in the ESH area that are not planned for development because they have sewer issues that preclude development at this time.
- One FWG member asked if the No Build Alternative will be considered, because it was not discussed during the meeting. Jerry stated that the No Build Alternative does not meet the purpose and need of the project but will be considered, and perhaps selected if environmental impacts for the build alternatives are found to be of a magnitude where the No Build would be found more acceptable.

3. Farmland Operation Impacts Discussion

The second category discussed from the consensus workshop was farmland operations. Looking at the aerial map depicting the remaining alternatives again, the FWG started on the north side with sections T1 and T2 and moved south identifying specific issues pertaining to farmland operations.

- One FWG member identified a grain elevator east of the ESH and approximately one mile south of Empire St. that generates a significant amount of farm vehicle traffic in and out of the Bloomington-Normal area.
- One FWG member commented that many farm transport vehicles are currently wider than twelve feet and will need to be accommodated on east-west crossroads. Another FWG member stated that implements are now being designed to fold down to a 12' wide transport width.

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Curves in roadways, bridges, road signs, and mailboxes are obstructions for the currently wider implements.

- In reference to highway wind effects on pesticide application, Jamie Bents asked the FWG to identify how pesticide is currently applied. A few FWG members responded that not all farmers use the same equipment or methods, and that many hire contractors to spray their fields to avoid chemical exposure. One farmer stated he uses several ounces of pesticide to ten gallons of water per acre. FWG members stated that pesticide application can be done near wind turbines. The FWG stated that:
 - Most air application of pesticides are done with low pressure sprayers
 - Generally a 60 feet offset from all waterways is required for pesticide application, but FWG members stated that pesticides are typically applied right next to access control fences along existing roadways
 - Air application is the most expensive application method; therefore, most farmers use ground application methods
- A few FWG members commented that the size, shape, drainage, and slope of agricultural parcels have an impact on whether or not a parcel is farmable. For instance, triangular shaped parcels are much more difficult to farm. Additionally, drainage is affected when parcels are divided. When asked about the size of small parcels that are still farmable, one FWG member stated that the smallest parcel he farms is three acres; he has had to plant hay on that parcel due to its size. Another member stated his smallest parcel is 10.8 acres.
- One FWG member stated that keeping as many east-west bridges across the ESH open and adequate for farm vehicles will reduce adverse travel farmers experience when their farmed areas are divided.
- One FWG member stated that there would be some impacts from the ESH but that the greatest good for the greatest many is democracy.
- As homework for the next FWG meeting, Jerry asked the FWG to identify locations in the project area that are difficult for farm vehicles to navigate.

4. FWG Meeting #3

Jerry announced that the remaining six categories from the consensus workshop would be discussed at the next FWG meeting. The project team would also present more refined geometry that addresses the issues discussed at FWG Meeting #2.

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FWG Meeting #3 was tentatively scheduled for May 2nd, 2012 at 6pm at the Bloomington Center for Performing Arts.

5. Other Topics

Jerry mentioned that the next stage following Phase 1 engineering may include the development of a Corridor Protection Map. This map would identify the preferred corridor as protected land, would prevent any new development or enhancements from occurring. Corridor protection is a statutory provision only granted to the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). As of now, the ESH is under the jurisdiction of McLean County, which does not have the same authority as IDOT. IDOT could take jurisdiction of the ESH after Phase I is complete, or earlier.