

FHWA/IDOT Coordination Meeting
Caton Farm/Bruce Road Corridor
From US Route 30 to Illinois Route 7
January 9, 2007
00-00074-20-ES

This meeting was a continuation of the Concurrent Point #2 meeting conducted November 14, 2006 at IDOT District 1 offices and the subsequent follow-up meeting conducted December 5, 2006 at U.S. FWS office in Barrington. The objective of this meeting was to achieve consensus on the alternatives to be dropped from further consideration and the alternatives to be carried forward for detailed analyses.

The primary concern of the U.S. FWS is to carry forward feasible and reasonable alternatives that minimize potential impacts to the Hines Emerald Dragonfly (HED), a federally listed species. The actual impact evaluation will require additional HED studies. As a result, U.S. FWS also participated in this meeting.

As a result of U.S. FWS suggestions at the two previous meetings, the consultant team provided additional analysis of alignments further south of the HED published critical habitat areas than those recommended at the November meeting. These two alignments were the:

- Caton Farm-Oak 2 (CFO-2) alignment - a variation of the original Caton Farm Oak alignment that swings further south on the west bank of the Des Plaines River Valley near the EJ&E RR track before crossing the river, and the
- Caton Farm-Rosalind (CFR) alignment - a hybrid alignment of the Caton Farm alignments and the Theodore Rosalind alignment that avoids the socio-economic impacts associated with a roadway improvement along Theodore. This alignment represents the further south of the two alignments.

The consultant team presented exhibits illustrating the plan and profile for these alignments' river crossing area. Considerations influencing the design included limiting the curvature in the bridge sections due to problems with superelevation transitions on bridges and other construction problems associated with curvature and long span structures. Since piers cannot be placed in the channel, the crossing of the Ship Canal requires a single span structure approximately 360' to 380' long, depending upon the alignment. Other spans could be shorter, but still must span roads, railroads and the I&M Canal without obstruction.

After the December 5 meeting, additional field reconnaissance of the areas affected by these new alignments was conducted by ISGS, U.S. FWS, and the consultant. These studies indicated that there were wetlands along the CFR alignment along the west bank of the river, but that they were degraded. Also, while seeps were present, they appeared not to be suitable habitat for the HED.

The consultant presented a comparison of the alignments previously discussed versus the two mentioned above. The CFR alignment has the largest Section 4(f) impacts as it crosses through a park (A. F. Hill Park) along Rosalind, directly impacting approximately 4.5 out of a total 20 acres of this recreational facility operated by the Lockport Township Park District. Also, based upon year 2000 census data this alignment has major potential for Environmental Justice issues; it abuts an area with high minority, low-income and disabled populations.

Based on a preliminary cost analysis, the cost of a bridge structure spanning the Des Plaines River Valley (approximately IL Route 53 to IL Route 171) for the CFR alternative would be approximately \$30 million more than the CFB or CFO alternatives. The CFR alignment is also operationally inferior. Due to the bluff, a connector road would be necessary to provide an intersection with IL 171. Since the CFR alignment shifts the furthest south, compared to other alignments there would be adverse travel time, and increased fuel consumption with associated increased emissions (air quality) to drive between the termini of the project. The CFR alignment also has potential special waste issues associated with a capped landfill.

In impacts and cost, the CFO-2 alignment is essentially identical to the other CFO alignment under consideration.

U.S. FWS indicated that they would concur with dropping CFR from further consideration. They have discussed this with U.S. EPA, U.S. ACOE, and IDNR, who all agree to the dropping of the CFR alignment and the carrying forward of the CFO-2 alignment. U.S. FWS did indicate that additional HED studies in the river valley will still be needed for all alignments being carried forward. To cover potential foraging areas, these studies should proceed as far south as the CFR alignment. It was agreed that other than the additional HED studies, the project environmental survey area does not need to be extended south of the CFO-2 impact area. The request for the additional HED study area will be submitted to cover the Des Plaines River Valley southward to the confluence of the Des Plaines River and the Sanitary and Ship Canal.

The County desires to proceed with a public information meeting to advise the public on which alignments have been dropped and which are proceeding. Since the public will not be directly concerned with the differences between the CFO and CFO-2 alignments as there are not direct public impacts, it will not be necessary to show the variations, just a band for the crossing. After consulting with Transportation Corridor Committee for this project, the County will proceed to a public information meeting.

This marks the closure of Concurrent Point #2. Chapter 3 of the EA being developed will need to document the inclusion of CFO-2 and the dropping of CFR. The EA will also include the additional studies for the CFO-2 alignment in Chapter 4. No resubmittal of Chapter 3 is required at this time.