

Minutes of Meeting

March 16, 2005

TO: Transportation Corridor Committee,
Caton Farm – Bruce Road Design Team

FROM: Laszlo Medgyesy, Alfred Benesch & Company

SUBJECT: Transportation Corridor Committee (TCC) Meeting

Sheldon Latz opened the meeting by introducing himself and had each person at the introduce themselves. Mr. Latz then turned the meeting over to Mark Bagherpour.

Mr. Bagherpour discussed actions taken on the project in the last two years. He noted that Civiltech provided traffic study results in February 2003. In keeping with the NEPA/404 Merger Process, a draft Purpose and Need statement was developed. In February 2004, members of the project team met with various State and Federal Regulatory agencies and Illinois Dept. of Transportation (IDOT). At this meeting, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stated that the Purpose and Need Statement needed to clarify the process for selecting the Des Plaines River Valley crossing location. The Purpose and Need statement was refined and approved at the Concurrence Point #1 Meeting on March 1, 2005.

Bob Andres explained the overall NEPA/404 Merger Process (see hand-out provided by Andres), and the three Concurrence Point steps involved in the process. Since the approval of the Purpose and Need statement constituted Concurrence Point #1, Mr. Andres presented an overview of the Purpose & Need Statement (see hand-out provided by Andres).

Mr. Bagherpour presented an overview of the environmental issues on the project. Portions of the Des Plaines River Valley are known habitats for the endangered Hines Emerald Dragonfly, and the Dragonfly habitat sites need to be identified before Concurrence Point #2 (“Alternatives to be Carried Forward”) can be reached. The Tollway has hired Dan Soluk from the University of South Dakota’s Biology Department to study the Dragonfly. Will County Dept. of Highways proposed a joint study. However, Will County’s Public Works Committee is considering pursuing the study independently of the Illinois Tollway study, which was initiated for the I-355 Extension Project. Mr. Bagherpour also mentioned that the threatened Indiana Bat is also a potential environmental issue. IDOT will conduct bat surveys in the area this Spring and Summer. Will County also needs to have a salt spray analysis performed. IDOT however, has yet to release its new model for estimating salt spray. The study will not proceed until the IDOT model is released.

Bob Andres presented the alignment options still under study for the project (see hand-outs). He noted that the aim of the alignment selection process is to reduce the number of alignments studied in detail. All of the selected alignments must meet Purpose and Need. Alignments must consider both environmental and socio-economic impacts. Bob discussed the alignment options considered to date and those the consulting team are recommending for further study (see attached exhibit). A discussion ensued concerning the need to keep unacceptable alignments in the study process, such as Options M and P which go through developed areas, and would require the displacement of many homes. The second concurrence point is Alternatives to be Carried Forward and is the point where the participating agencies (e.g., IDOT and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) agree on which alternatives merit detailed analysis. As such, until the second concurrence point is reached, all alternatives must officially remain under consideration with a recommendation on whether they should be carried forward. An alignment can be dropped once the participating Federal and State review agencies grant concurrence.

Bob Andres discussed the need for local agencies to preserve right-of-way in the study area for future roadway development. Right of way may be preserved either through outright purchases of land by municipalities, or through negotiating directly with developers to have right-of-way set aside. Although several alignments are under consideration, Andres stated that municipalities could guide the alignment selection process through their local development approval process. If municipalities selected a preferred alignment and then ensured that future developments anticipated and were compatible with that improvement option, they could ensure the preferred alignment would have fewer socio-economic impacts than other alignments which were not compatible with adjacent development. The proposed 114-acre Menard's development at the corner of Weber Road and Caton Farm Road was specifically discussed. It was agreed that a meeting should be arranged among Menard's, other property owners, Crest Hill and Will County Departments of Highway to ensure that right-of-way is preserved in this area.

Mr. Bagherpour noted that the U.S. House of Representatives passed a transportation bill. However, it contained only \$2 Million for the present project, whereas estimates for the total cost of the 13-mile corridor range from \$140 to \$200 Million. He said that Will County would hire someone for the Dragonfly study. Finally, he said he would keep members updated with project-related developments.