

**MINUTES**  
I-290/Eisenhower Citizens Committee  
Oak Park Village Hall Council Chambers  
August 5, 2003

Present: Lawrence Christmas, chair; members Karen Baldwin, Kevin Kell, Marion Kessy, Collette Lueck, Peter Morava, Phil Rock

Also

Present: Peter Dame, VMO Staff Liaison

Absent: Ron Burke, Mark Johnson, Sandra Kupelian, and David Sokol

**Call to Order**

Chair Christmas called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and declared a quorum present.

**Approval of Minutes**

On a motion by Kevin Kell and seconded by Peter Morava, the minutes of the June 3, 2003 were approved as submitted.

**Chairperson Comments**

Chair Christmas reported on a WBEZ public radio program broadcast today in which there was a panel discussion on the failings of a regional planning process. The HOV project was mentioned as an example of the lack of multi-modal and proper land use planning. He stated that Metropolis 2020 may want to look at our situation. In reviewing the current draft of the 2030 RTP, he believes many thanks are owed to the work of President Trapani and our committee, as we have gone a long way on how the Regional Transportation Plan treats I-290 and the western corridor – even if they don't change it further based on any comments we recommend tonight.

Mr. Dame reported that NIPC and CATS will be holding public hearings to receive comments on the current draft of the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan. The August 28 hearing will be held in Oak Park at the Village's request. Chair Christmas encouraged members to attend and make any comments they may wish to make as residents of Oak Park.

Chair Christmas announced that member Nancy Rodriguez had submitted her resignation from the committee due to business/travel commitments. The committee will be looking for a replacement from the Oak Park/Eisenhower business district. Mr. Dame noted that his commitments with a new job have kept member Ron Burke from attending all the committee meetings; however, he still wishes to participate and will attend if he is able. He wishes to participate at least by email. Christmas indicated that he thinks this is okay even though Burke's position at Illinois EPA makes him subject to a potential conflict of interest from Illinois DOT. If he is not able to participate at all or if there becomes quorum problems, we should consider looking for a new member with air quality expertise. Dame indicated that Burke has said he would not be involved in any reviews regarding I-290 and that department rules do allow for participation in community affairs such as this. Dame has asked for Burke to confirm this understanding with his supervisor. Christmas indicated we would have to monitor the situation.

## **Business**

### **RTA Study Update**

A draft letter from the Village commenting on the Draft Program Management Plan for the Central Cook-DuPage Corridor Study was submitted to the committee for their review and comments. Mr. Dame summarized the contents, stating that the draft includes issues brought up at the last meeting, namely, the creation of a corridor counsel, and the need for environmental assessment of the options. In addition, on the advice of the outside technical assistance firm, the Village urges that objectives for federal regulations regarding a major investment study be included as an overt goal of the corridor study. Mr. Dame continued that the attorney continues to assert that an MIS is a requirement, although modified by the TEA-21 federal act to integrate the MIS with NEPA alternatives analysis. A standalone MIS may not be required, although the old MIS regulations were never repealed, the new regulations were never put in place that would provide guidance on how to appropriately integrate the NEPA and MIS alternatives analyses.

Chair Christmas asked members to forward any changes or additions in the document to Mr. Dame. Mr. Kell stated that he believes the letter would have a greater impact if it was more succinct, and that it appeared too legalistic. Chair Christmas suggested an Executive Summary might be helpful. Mr. Dame noted that he suggested adding a section about alternative analysis in Phase III of the study. Relying on existing agencies to provide the final alternatives may limit the choices to what the agency is willing to submit as a project. He feels it limits creativity. Christmas suggested asking them to respond as a potential concern.

Chair Christmas suggested that any threatening implications be toned down in the final document, and that the main points be summarized. Dame indicated that perhaps the legal footnotes could be addressed in an attached memorandum and would request that. In response to Mr. Kell's inquiry about the Committee's recommendation to establish a corridor council, Mr. Dame stated that with 40 communities involved, he did not get specific on the formation/activities of such a council, but made only a general suggestion. Dame indicated that he had conducted research on other corridor councils, but that none were identical to this corridor, although the Northwest Corridor study did allow the municipalities to select the locally preferred option, later endorsed by the RTA Board. Chair Christmas indicated that should such a corridor council not come to fruition, other means of communication would need to be developed. He concluded that members have two days to forward their suggested changes to Mr. Dame.

### Review and Discuss Draft Response to IDOT's May 15 Letter

Mr. Dame stated that the strategy of this letter to the Illinois Department of Transportation is to agree that the RTA should conduct a full multi-modal analysis to evaluate the mobility needs of the corridor, and to let the RTA have the authority to do this, including highway options. Dame states that he believes that IDOT feels the RTA market analysis will show that the I-290 HOV is needed regardless of whether any or all other potential transit options are done, and that they would use Phase I of the study to move forward with HOV lanes. Mr. Dame stated that IDOT truly believes that an HOV is the answer to congestion in the corridor, even though the options have not been examined. In our letter, we are trying to say that they can't possibly come to that conclusion until the end of Phase III of the RTA study and only if HOV is selected as the locally preferred alternative by communities in the corridor.

Chair Christmas suggested that Mr. Dame underline the key statements; he should also refer both the RTA and IDOT to correspondence to the other and include them as attachments. Chair Christmas again asked that any comments or changes in the document be forwarded to Mr. Dame.

### 2030 RTP Update

Chair Christmas acknowledged that this draft of the 2030 RTP is **A** big improvement from the original. The Committee then reviewed the draft letter to CATS, which would be the third letter sent to CATS on the RTP since last year. Mr. Dame said that the RTP document lists recommended capital projects in five implementation categories, and that the I-290 HOV project is listed in the "corridor" category for projects that need study and haven't had alternatives analyses. The draft CATS letter attempts to point out that the recommended

projects listed as corridors, such as the HOV, have not been reviewed yet. It is felt that IDOT will never remove entirely the reference to the HOV project during this RTP process with the IDOT and RTA studies underway, but that listing it as a corridor project gets the foot in the door for removal in later RTP updates upon completion of the RTA study. What we are suggesting further is the RTP make it clearer that the RTA study should review the various highway options and do a true multi-modal analysis that would form the basis for the actual improvements in the corridor, and that since the studies have not been completed, the I-290 HOV project and other corridor category projects should not be listed along with all of the other recommended projects with the same weight. Mr. Dame also noted that he does not believe the I-290 cap will be included as a separate capital project as it does not meet CATS definition of a line-haul project. No one had any substantive objections to the draft. Mr. Kell feels that the draft letter to CATS is repetitive, and that it could be cut down. Chair Christmas asked members to submit any changes or additions to Mr. Dame.

#### Cap the IKE Update

Mr. Dame announced that at last evening's Board of Trustee meeting, the Board authorized a contract with the URS Corporation to conduct the Cap the IKE study. This action will involve the creation of another citizen committee; staff will meet with the consultant on how this project will be carried out and hopefully be able to report in more detail about a study plan at the next meeting.

#### Federal Surface Transportation Legislation Update

Mr. Dame indicated that no legislative action has been taken to extend this legislation which will expire on September 30. A short term extension of existing law seems likely at this point, and a multi-year bill will be taken up next year. Phil Rock indicated that Rep. Lipinski believes that the stalemate regarding increasing funding for transportation could be addressed early next year.

#### **Public Comment**

Fred Brandstrader expressed his confidence in the consultant selected for the Cap the IKE study; he believes URS Corporation to be well qualified and he looks forward to the next 10 to 12 months.

Rick Kuner stated that he believes (1) the draft RTP mentions I-290 Expansion referencing cost which is a first, he believes, (2) that an EIS for I-290 HOV alternative is needed; and (3) light rail had been looked at by Metra in a report several years ago. Regarding the proposed corridor council, he cited two

examples, including the Route 53 Council that originally included 12 communities but that two eventually broke away and refused to participate.

**Proposed Next Meeting: October 7, 2003**

Agenda items for the October meeting include: Report on the final CATS RTP, Cap the IKE study outline report, and an overview of the Chicago freight rail plan and its potential implications for Oak Park.

**Adjournment**

There being no additional business, the meeting adjourned until the next scheduled meeting on October 7, 2003.