

MINUTES
I-290/Eisenhower Citizens Committee
Oak Park Village Hall Council Chambers
June 3, 2003

Present: Lawrence Christmas, chair; members Karen Baldwin, Mark Johnson, Kevin Kell, Marion Kessy, Sandra Kupelian, Peter Morava, Phil Rock, and David Sokol

Also

Present: Joanne E. Trapani, president; Peter Dame, VMO Staff Liaison; Michelle Ryan, Principal Analyst, Regional Transportation Authority

Absent: Ron Burke, Collette Lueck and Nancy Rodriguez

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 David Sokol, the minutes of the April 8, 2003 were approved as recorded.

Chairperson Comments

Chair Christmas indicated that the committee would be hearing reports this evening on several meetings staff and members have attended. One item he wanted to share information about now was discussion he had with the director of Metropolis 2020, a civic organization that is pursuing changes in regional transportation planning. He talked with Metropolis 2020 about I-290 as an example of how the transportation planning was not right, and hoped this group will find our experience and undertaking to be of interest to them.

Business

Review RTA Draft Project Management Plan

Chair Christmas introduced Michelle D. Ryan, Principal Analyst, Corridor Planning Studies, Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), and asked that she present an overview of the draft Program Management Plan for the Cook-DuPage Multi-modal Corridor, which essentially extends along the I-290/I-88 roadways. Ms. Ryan summarized the Multi-Year Program Plan Diagram for the Cook-DuPage Corridor, beginning with Phase 1, Market Analysis. The RTA is about to start the market analysis which will provide information necessary to develop a purpose and need for corridor mobility improvements for successive phases of the study. Major traffic generators and times will be studied. She emphasized that the Program Management Plan will continue to be updated until it is completed. Our input on the draft plan is welcome.

Phase 2 of the Plan will outline various alternatives to be studied, followed by a shorter list of suitable alternatives. This short list of feasible options will be further defined under Phase 3 by mode, alignment and technology. Local municipalities will be responsible for planning, design and development of transit supportive policies for land use and local financing. Completion of this phase will reflect what our needs are regarding land use and development opportunities.

Ms. Ryan noted that there have already been some changes in corridor boundaries, and these boundaries will probably be changed again. Numerous municipalities are involved in the Cook-DuPage Corridor including 43 communities, all generating data and looking at traffic patterns. She will be working with the 3 Councils of Mayors involved, and will provide updates through community newsletters.

Chair Christmas inquired as to the length of each of the three phases; Ms. Ryan responded that each phase should take approximately one year, with some overlap. Their goal is to have this included in the 2030 RTP. In response to Chair Christmas's inquiry as to why the draft does not mention evaluation of environmental impacts, Ms. Ryan responded that the level of environmental study would be specific to each alternative. From the federal perspective, an EIS is not typically done until the preferred project is selected. Chair Christmas feels there should be some way to judge the environmental impact, i.e., mild or major, on the alternatives. Mr. Dame added that during the RTA study the most serious environmental issues could be identified for each and use that to help determine which alternative to select.

Chair Christmas questioned Ms. Ryan as to the RTA's satisfaction with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) commitment to this study. Ms. Ryan responded that the RTA is very much a partner with IDOT. As a partner, they do not meddle, and although they fund a certain portion, they do not serve as a dictating authority.

Chair Christmas questioned whether there would be a Corridor Planning Council with community representatives along the study route to help provide local input into the process. Ms. Ryan responded that one may be formed later in the year, but initially RTA would be working to put out information through the three councils of government in the study area. Chair Christmas feels the Village should be thinking about advocating a total corridor council. Mr. Sokol agreed, stating that this would be a good opportunity to be heard, and to find out if other communities have similar/different alternatives. Mr. Christmas asked that Mr. Dame formulate a draft. Mr. Kell inquired whether a consultant had been selected for the Market Analysis; Ms. Ryan responded that this is under discussion. Ms. Ryan urged us to keep in communication; she left the meeting at this time.

Activity Updates

2030 Regional Transportation Plan Comments and Process

Mr. Dame introduced a map received from CATS showing all the RTP proposed projects in the I-290/I-88 corridor, making it easier to see the project relationships. Some projects, to some degree, are overlapping and yet while disparate, there are connections between the projects. Mr. Dame stated that CATS appears to be considering our proposal for a Study Corridor for all the projects in the corridor, and that the exact language used would be of particular interest. Conformity analyses will be done on specific projects in June/July. Formal public hearings would occur in August. Mr. Dame stated the ultimate goal of CATS is to adopt the RTP by the end of October.

Review and Discuss Correspondence Received

Through the efforts of President Trapani and Trustee Diane Carpenter, the West Central Municipal Conference and the North Central Council of Mayors have written a letter to CATS RTP committee members supporting the specific study proposals and transit alternatives within the proposed 2030 Regional Transportation Plan, consistent with the Village's comments.

Mr. Dame further reported that three agencies have responded to the Village's February correspondence about integrating alternative analysis and the RTA's study into IDOT's Phase I study. The IDOT response indicates they have not changed their position that an EIS and a separate MIS is not required. IDOT also outlines the limited extent of engineering work done to date, and pledges to hold off until Spring 2004 for the RTA study.

A response was also received from the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority indicating their financial resources are concentrated on maintenance and rehabilitation of their existing system, expansion of I-88 sometime in 20 years, and pledging to work with the RTA as part of their study, within their legislative constraints.

Mr. Dame reported that the response from the RTA was positive in nature, and “says exactly what we want to hear.” Dame pointed out that the letter includes a more easily understood summary of the RTA effort, its costs and timeline, and a corridor map, than contained in the draft management plan.

Mr. Dame stated that IDOT’s response was not exactly what we wanted to hear, and says nothing different than what was told to us by the former IDOT administration. The Village’s legal/technical firm will prepare a response to this letter and Dame will circulate the draft.

Report and Discuss IDOT Meeting

President Trapani stated that she and Village staff and Chair Christmas had met with IDOT at IDOT’s request to review the current status of the Phase I study. During the meeting, IDOT began to discuss a draft Purpose and Needs Statement for highway expansion. She stated it was clear to her at this meeting that they still “had not gotten it,” with their focus from the District level of IDOT still being on HOV lanes. The Village made it clear that they felt a purpose and needs statement was best drafted after the results of the RTA’s market analysis were known and done in concert with the RTA. Mr. Dame noted that IDOT has only funding Phase I of the RTA’s study so far, and the concern of the Village is that IDOT will begin to pursue highway expansion without waiting until a preferred alternative(s) is selected as part of the RTA study, which is planned largely for Phases II and III of the RTA study. Discussion followed on IDOT, their responsibilities and position on transportation issues throughout the years with pros and cons heard from members.

Ms. Kupelian questioned what our position would be should IDOT not extend funding for further stages of the RTA study. Mr. Dame responded that it is up to us to keep the pressure on them; we must see that the alternatives are moving ahead and assessed in a fair manner. A discussion followed on the lack of funding available to a number of agencies. Mr. Sokol questioned whether Oak Park is alone in our stance on this project. Mr. Dame responded that we are definitely a leader of the work on promoting transit alternatives, as we have coordinated the recent passage of the resolution by the North Central and West Central Council of Mayors, but that the other communities are clearly supporting those efforts to date.

Report and Discuss Springfield Meetings and Senate Resolution 173

President Trapani reported on the recent trips to Washington D.C. and Springfield in which she personally conveyed Oak Park's concerns about the potential impact of IDOT's plans to extend the Eisenhower expressway. Chair Christmas and Village staff accompanied. While in Springfield, the delegation and Trustee Carpenter, in addition, had an opportunity to speak with Senator Don Harmon, Senator Kimberly Lightford and all Oak Park's state representatives encouraging them to support our views. During the visit to Springfield and Washington, the delegation met with the Governor's Office. Mr. Dame reported that an initial response of the Governor's Office about an EIS was that it was too costly. When asked for their rationale, they responded that they were willing to investigate and meet and discuss this and coordination issues with the RTA further. President Trapani stated the group also discussed capping, noting the success of capping in several different communities nationwide. Senator Lightford did introduce Resolution 173 in support of our efforts, and co-sponsored by Senator Harmon, which Dame noted fairly well represented the Village's position on I-290 matters at this point. Mr. Johnson noted he did not approve of the resolution, but Chair Christmas and Ms. Kupelian strongly supported it. President Trapani stated that IDOT definitely needs to reconstruct the expressway and no one is objecting to IDOT continuing work on that, but that our concern is that they pursue expansion without consideration of the RTA study and conducting EIS. Their job is to build highways, and we need to make sure they listen to the concerns of all. Chair Christmas noted the transportation plan process in Illinois involves a series of projects, by a series of agencies, all in competition for money, and not necessarily coordinated, which is why the Metropolis 2020 group has recommended consolidating transportation planning. Mr. Kessy cited an example in New York where no alternative plans were introduced to a highway expansion that was certainly not the best solution.

Report and Discuss Washington D.C. Meetings

President Trapani reported that while in Washington, the Oak Park contingency met with Senator Durbin and other members of the Illinois Congressional delegation. Senator Durbin's staff was familiar with most of the transit projects that the Village was supporting as alternatives to the highway expansion. They also met with staff from the Transportation Committee; it was noted that some staff members showed more interest than others. President Trapani feels we must continue to remind these people of our concerns.

Mr. Dame feels we must keep an eye on funding as IDOT could, but does not appear to have yet, seek to earmark funds for the I-290 HOV project. President

Trapani agreed, stating that all 50 states will be vying for a portion of the available funds. Mr. Dame feels a key to getting some funds for the cap project will be getting State support in writing, which the Governor's office has stated they are working on.

Cap the IKE RFP Update

Mr. Dame reported that responses have been received from the Village's Request for Proposals on capping the Eisenhower. As suggested when the full Committee and the Board review the Cap the IKE report earlier this year, the Cap the Ike Committee will help the Village now sort through these responses and from them, select three to five firms to be interviewed.

Public Comment

Fred Brandstrader questioned whether there are two "camps" in IDOT—planning and construction. Mr. Dame responded that implementation by district offices and statewide planning would be a more accurate description. Mr. Dame further confirmed that IDOT is aware of our capping plans, and that we have a confirmed grant from their planning department.

Proposed Next Meeting: August 5, 2003

Adjournment

There being no additional business, the meeting was adjourned until the next scheduled meeting on August 5, 2003.