

# **RATS**

**Rockford Area Transportation Study**  
**Metropolitan Planning Organization**  
City of Rockford, Public Works Department  
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## **POLICY COMMITTEE**

*Mayor Lawrence J. Morrissey, City of Rockford*  
*Mayor Darryl F. Lindberg, City of Loves Park*  
*Mayor Frederic C. Brereton, City of Belvidere*  
*Acting Deputy Director Joseph Crowe, IDOT Dist 2*  
*Board Chairman Catherine H. Ward, Boone County*  
*President Linda M. Vaughn, Village of Machesney Park*  
*Board Chairman Scott H. Christiansen, Winnebago County*

## **ROCKFORD AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2008**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor Fred Brereton, City of Belvidere; Dan Jacobson, City of Loves Park; Catherine Ward, Boone County; Mayor Lawrence Morrissey, City of Rockford; Scott Christiansen, Winnebago County; Patrick Zuroske, City of Rockford; Joe Vanderwerff, Winnebago County Highway; (Note: President Linda Vaughn, joined the meeting later.)

**MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:** Chicago/Rockford International Airport; Village of Roscoe; FHWA; Village of Machesney Park; Village of Cherry Valley; Rock River Water Reclamation District; Growth Dimensions; Boone County Council on Aging.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Steve Ernst, RATS Study Director; Gary McIntyre, RATS staff; Jon Paul Dipla, RATS staff; Robert Soltau, Stateline Area Transportation Study

- 1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND REPRESENTATION:** Meeting was called to order by Mr. Brereton with a quorum present at 12:20 p.m.
- 2. RATS FY-2008 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) AMENDMENT-RATS Resolution 2008-3:**  
REASON FOR ACTION: IDOT District 2 and Winnebago County Highway Department have requested a TIP amendment for several projects.

**RATS TECHNICAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:** The RATS Technical Committee recommends the RATS Policy Committee adopt this resolution.

Motion to adopt by Winnebago County, seconded by Boone County. Motion carried.

- 3. RATS FY-2008 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) AMENDMENT-RATS Resolution 2008-4:**

REASON FOR ACTION: The Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD) has requested an amendment to the TIP for JARC(FTA 5316), New Freedom (FTA 5317), and Bus and Bus Related Facilities Allocations (FTA 5309), and Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (FTA 5310) funds.

RATS TECHNICAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: The RATS Technical Committee recommends the RATS Policy Committee to adopt resolution 2008-4.

Motion by Winnebago County, seconded by Boone County. Motion carried.

#### **4. RATS AND REGIONAL PLANNING - RATS RETREAT.**

Thursday, February 21, 2008: The afternoon retreat began with Fritz Jacobi giving a history of regional planning. He cited several agencies that looked at studies over the past 10 years or so, including the League of Women Voters, the Regional Initiative for Community Excellence (RICE) and the Council of 100. The top priorities from these studies were Transportation, Education and Regionalism. Mr. Jacobi presented the goals and initiatives of the Regional Vision for Community Excellence. He will e-mail the report to RATS members.

The group decided that the goal for the next two afternoon retreat sessions needs to be moving regionalism forward.

Review of New Federal Direction for Regional Planning: Steve Ernst, discussed his handout, bullet by bullet on the new Federal direction for regional planning. (copy attached) He questioned the Policy committee as to what can RATS do as a leader of the whole, that is not driven by each community as individuals and to prioritize what members want to see happen in our region.

Mr. Ernst also stressed that members should keep in mind that regional planning is a realization that you can't plan transportation without planning the environment, communities and economic development.

Members indicated that would like a list of federal requirements.

Mr. Ernst stated that we have received the planning marks for 2009, which is up 16% for funding from the State for a total of \$380,000.

Mr. John Lewis, reviewed the November 6, 2006 retreat information. (copy attached) Key issues from that retreat were: how to leverage our proximity to the Chicago metropolis; how to manage our regional assets better; and how to look after our local interests while making sure our shared regional interests are looked after as well.

The next items he covered were the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges which came out of the November, 2006 retreat.

It was suggested that members give Mr. Ernst input for what will be the RATS accomplishments by the end of 2009; to create a 2009 plan.

Next, six objective categories were discussed individually, asking the policy committee to pick one priority from each of the six categories.

- Land Use Planning, Balanced Growth: The priority from this was to “develop capacity to perform objective analysis of development projects (fiscal impact analysis).
  - create a blended plan along corridors where they come together (intersections)

- Begin creation of coordinated land use plan with recommendations for land use.
  - Coordinate the development for a plan that maximizes potential for regional growth and development.
  - Develop a comprehensive infrastructure plan between cities.
  - Develop capacity to do objective fiscal analysis of development projects.
- Long Range Transportation Plan (Ground): Recommend an MPO structure that positions the Policy Committee to advocate for the region on issues of transportation, land use and education. (Analyze the MPO position)
    - Become the voice of region for transportation, educational and informational advocacy.
    - Develop long range transportation plan for two county areas.
- Congestion Management & Operations: Some objectives in this category were:
    - Coordination of emergency responses.
    - Develop recommendations on traffic flow that would provide more consistent traffic flow.
- Public Participation and Social Justice: Investigate best practices and recommend strategies to collect information from the general public on transportation and land use issues. (Committee to concentrate on this item for the next year. Also, define the role of the MPO in delivery of human services.)
    - What is RATS role in this? Collect information from the public and convene to analyze and disseminate it.
- Regional Economic Development: Define the role of the MPO in the regional workforce development, but not duplicate economic development work.
    - RATS role: be impartial, a collector information and analysis for development.
    - Identify areas for economic development.
    - Define RATS role in working with economic development in regions interacting with organizations, etc.
- Open Space Preservation, Green Community Initiatives:
    - Take time to define the role of RATS in Green Development.
    - Recommendations on planting trees as areas develop – to create green projects.

### **Friday, February 22, 2008 Retreat**

Mr. Lewis recapped the objectives from Thursday's retreat. These objectives highlight the work that the Policy Committee and RATS members will focus on during the next year.

Mr. Steve Ernst then gave a PowerPoint presentation on the organizational structure of the RATS staff. Mr. Lewis also facilitated this portion of the retreat. Part of this presentation showed the proposed staffing levels with changes to RATS present staffing level. Also, there are proposed changes on where the offices will be to house the additional staff members. Policy members had many questions about the organizational chart and funding for additional staff and office space. The MPO as it is now does not meet Federal requirements. It needs a full time director and a larger staff. With these changes, the present MPO could be made into a true autonomous organization.

Funding opportunities were presented to the committee. Policy members were concerned on fiscal aspects of changing the MPO structure. Heavy discussion ensued on the funding for additional staff and offices. Mr. Ernst presented a spreadsheet on allocation of dollars to the Committee. With further discussion on funding, the members agreed that there is a need to move the present MPO up to meet the Federal guidelines.

It is critical that this be voted on at the March Policy Meeting. Funding would become available in July of 2008. Mr. Ernst will prepare comprehensive explanations for the Committee prior to the March Policy meeting.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Mr. Lewis stated his office would prepare notes from the two-day retreat for the members. These should be available within the next two weeks.