



**Rockford Area Transportation
Study
Metropolitan Planning Organization**

POLICY COMMITTEE

*Mayor Charles E. Box, City of Rockford
Mayor Darryl F. Lindberg, City of Loves Park
Board Chairman Kristine Cohn, Winnebago County
President Stephen Kuhn, Village of Machesney Park
District Engineer William D. Ost, Illinois Department of
Transportation, District 2*

Meeting Minutes -- RATS Policy Committee

Meeting Date: March 13, 1997-- Rockford City Hall

Members Present: Mayor Joseph E. Sinkiawic, City of Loves Park; Sam Schmitz representing Charles E. Box, City of Rockford; Board Chairman Kristine Cohn, Winnebago County; President Stephen Kuhn, Village of Machesney Park; Larry Reed representing District Engineer William Ost, Illinois Department of Transportation, District 2.

Others Present: David Dratnol, Winnebago County Highway; David Noel, Winnebago County Planning; Gary McIntyre, RATS; Russ Petrotte, RATS; Dave Sliktas, Belvidere/Boone County; Mike Slavney, Vanderwalle & Associates; Mary Allen Verdun, IDOT/Dixon, Bill Smith, IDOT/Springfield; Jon-Paul Kohler, FHWA/ Springfield; Dennis Damon, ComED; Scott Capovilla, Citizen; Steve Ernst, Rockford Public Works; Ginny Gregory, Rockford CD; Wayne Dust, Rockford CD; Stan Tunnel, Rockford DP; representatives from Channel 17-TV and Channel 23-TV; Scott Williams, Rockford Register Star.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Joseph Sinkiawic called roll and with full quorum called the meeting to order at approximately 1:35 PM.

2. COMMUNICATIONS: Letter from Bill Ost appointing Larry Reed as his representative for this meeting.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made by Larry Reed to approve the minutes of the October 24, 1996 Policy Committee meeting. The motion was seconded by Sam Schmitz and approved unanimously with no changes.

4. BOONE COUNTY STATE STREET STUDY: Representing the Belvidere/Boone County Regional Planning Commission, Mike Slavney from the consulting firm of Vanderwalle & Associates of Madison, Wisconsin gave a detailed presentation on the most recent draft proposal for a land use plan for the U.S. Business 20 Corridor in western Boone County. The study/plan is being referred to as the West Hills Neighborhood Plan and copies of the draft were distributed.

Mr Slavney recapped some of the major goals of the study: protecting the residential character of existing developments, protecting the water quality of Beaver Creek, incorporating adequate storm water management; preserving the highway corridor as a regional arterial by reinforcing and implementing the access control plan as proposed by IDOT. He said a unique aspect of this plan is that it is part of a cohesive effort by Belvidere, the County Conservation District and the Park and School districts in the area.

He said one goal of the plan focuses on making a break with the "big box" commercial development that is encroaching into this area from both the east and the west. In contrast, the plan includes neighborhood-oriented commercial.

Community and land owner surveys and a well-attended neighborhood workshop were part of the development of this plan.

He described the major physical features of the plan area. It calls for limited expansion of the Big Thunder commercial that is taking place adjacent to and just west of Belvidere, office park development as a transition from the "Big box" developments in Winnebago

County, and respect for the residential uses already developed in the area. The plan recommends continuation of the large-lot single family residential on open properties removed from Business 20 and higher density mixed residential on properties closer and adjacent to Business 20 (sewered with average density of six DUs/acre).

The plan recommends three elementary school sites and one high/middle school complex (all removed from Business 20 and connected to each other and the natural areas in the corridor by a parkway/pathway system. The parkway, referred to as the Kishwaukee Parkway, is planned as a collector, and proposed to extend between Shaw Road and Beloit Road. Beginning at Shaw (just north of Newburg), it would parallel the Kishwaukee River in a northeasterly alignment. It crosses Business 20 between Distillery and Beaver Valley Roads and then parallels Business 20 easterly until it intersects with Beloit Road. The parkway is considered vital to local traffic circulation, both east-west and north-south, and to school access. The crossing point at Business 20 is slightly different than the IDOT proposal. In many segments the parkway will have a pedestrian/bikeway component.

The neighborhood/market center is envisioned as a convenience shopping area consisting of smaller stores, a gas station and a grocery store. A conceptual drawing of this area was presented and discussed. A transit stop is also included.

In response to a question from Mayor Sinkiawic, Mr. Slavney said the school officials feel these schools are needed to accommodate the population growth expected in this immediate area (14,000 additional persons, projected). They feel the large school complex planned north of this study area is also needed.

Sam Schmitz stated that west of Shaw Road the City of Rockford and the Rock River Water Reclamation District have already invested over \$3 million in public sewer. He said planning that area for residential and office uses would be an under-utilization of the public investment. The City recognizes the need to buffer existing residences but strongly encourages the plan to show more intense commercial at the west end.

Mr. Slavney said the public workshop and community surveys encouraged residential development and avoidance of strip commercial.

Steve Kuhn said he is also concerned that the highest and best use of the land is not being promoted on many of the parcels abutting Business 20.

In the interior of the corridor, adjacent to Business 20 itself, most of the existing commercial in the interior of the corridor is recognized. There is a large tract designated for office development, and a Neighborhood Market Center of roughly 52 acres.

Larry Reed said he was pleased that the proposed plan, for the most part, corresponds with the IDOT access plan. He asked about bike/pedestrian crossings. Mike Slavney said underpasses (large box culverts) are being considered at two locations and an at-grade crossing is proposed at the point where the Kishwaukee Parkway will cross Business 20.

Wayne Dust asked how sanitary sewer was to be provided to this area. He expressed concern that the low densities proposed would not provide sufficient fees, revenues or profit margins to implement the sewer. Mr. Slavney said another consultant is analyzing the sewer situation. Mr Schmitz said the sewer and the other parts of the plan should go hand-in-hand.

Mr. Slavney said there appears to be a recognition in the community of the natural beauty of this area and the people want to see it developed as more of a livable area than a tax-resource area. He said he hasn't heard the numbers on sewer cost yet. He said there are some options to increase tax base potential -- such as changing the Office/Institutional area to a more intense commercial.

In response to a question from Kristine Cohn, Mr Slavney said the Plan is compatible with to the Greenway Plan now being developed and with the interests of the Boone County Conservation District.

Mr. Petrotte stated that part of the reason RATS became involved in the study and contributed \$20,000 to the effort was to encourage dialog and cooperation among the many jurisdictions involved with parts of this area. He asked that Mr. Slavney make another attempt to work with City of Rockford officials to see if a mutually acceptable compromise could be achieved, particularly with the properties at the far west end of the planning area where a sizable investment has already been made in public roadway and sewer facilities. Also, he asked that, before finalizing the plan, a thorough analysis of the sewer costs be taken into account.

Mr. Slavney noted his appreciation for the extensive RATS participation that went into this study.

5. RATS UWP FOR FY98:

Russ Petrotte discussed the UWP Progress Report, dated March 11, 1997, that he faxed to the Committee earlier in the week. (Additional copies were distributed because the bottom lines had faxed poorly.)

IDOT has allocated \$236,000 in PL funds and \$57,000 in FTA funds to RATS for FY98. This is slightly less than our final total allocation last year but should be sufficient because no major new consultant-assisted studies are proposed for FY98. Among the major work items proposed are: a comprehensive amendment to the bike/ pedestrian plan, an update of truck and hazardous cargo routes, continued model recalibration work, more extensive in-house work on the Boone County model, continued area-wide traffic accident analysis (this responsibility will be shifted to Rockford Public Works), completion of the roadway jurisdictional responsibility map, completion of the Riverside/ Alpine/Forest Hills study and other corridors studies.

He noted that the major revision, proposed last year, to the RATS cooperative agreement had been put on hold because of the apparent consensus of the Policy Committee that the addition of new members does not appear warranted at this time.

New proposed work includes the South Main study in the vicinity of the Klemm Forest Preserve. A citizen group is sponsoring a study of alternative in this area and they asked RATS to participate in the work. The proposed work program allocates \$5,000 in PL funds toward the effort (total costs are projected at \$12,000 to \$15,000). Larry Reed stated that State's planning work on is well along on this corridor.

The proposed work program will include reference to "operations and facilities planning" by RMTD and LPTS. This work will be conducted with FTA Section 9 capital funds and therefore must be noted in the UWP.

Also mentioned in the proposed UWP will be the Regional GIS effort recently initiated. Mr. Petrotte reported that the technical members of the Regional GIS Committee met earlier in the month. Officials from McClean County attended the meeting and reported on how they implemented a Regional GIS in that county. IDOT staff also attended the meeting and stated that they were contemplating providing funding assistance to study and implement a regional GIS in Winnebago County. However, IDOT said their participation had to be contingent on RATS taking a leadership role in the project. As a result, the GIS Technical Committee

Mr. Petrotte said he had presented much of this information at the last meeting. He noted that last year's program was ambitious. Many items could not be completed and would carry into FY98.

voted unanimously to recommend that they be reconstituted as a Subcommittee of the RATS Technical Committee. They also asked Mr. Petrotte to formally request funding from IDOT.

On the assumption that the RATS Policy Committee would approve, Mr. Petrotte said he submitted a formal request to IDOT for \$100,000 (separate from the funding already allocated as noted above) to be used toward the GIS effort. He has not received a response yet. Bill Smith from IDOT said that they would need Policy Committee concurrence before they could consider action.

Mr. Petrotte said a request had recently been forwarded to him from David Noel. The request asks that RATS look into the feasibility of a commuter rail line between Rockford and Rockton. This commuter could use the existing Canadian Pacific rail which is in good condition and greatly under-used at present. Mr. Petrotte said he called officials at IDOT and discussed the request. He said he received a positive response. They said the Canadian Pacific Railroad is often cooperative in such ventures. He said the IDOT official also encouraged a restudy of the commuter rail potential between Rockford and Chicago. The most recent study of the Chicago connection was by the Greater Rockford Airport and their study concentrated on high speed rail, linking their facility to O'Hare. More conventional rail might be more feasible, especially if it did not have to connect those exact two locations. The Policy Committee referred this request back to the Technical Committee for consideration. Larry Reed commented that this would be a long shot.

Sam Schmitz asked what was needed to move the GIS effort along. Mr. Petrotte said he had not prepared a formal resolution but that four issues need to be addressed by the Policy Committee: (1) bringing the Regional GIS effort under the wing of RATS, i.e., endorsing the GIS Committee as a subcommittee of RATS, (2) endorsing the request for special funding for this effort from IDOT, (3) seeking the service of a consultant to assess feasibility issues and provide advice, and (4) RATS continuing in a leadership role, at least to the point where the consultant's work gives us better direction.

Mr. Schmitz stated that RATS is the logical organization for this work at this time because the framework is already in place. Kris Cohn said she would be in favor of it. However, she asked how the Rock River Water Reclamation District and other agencies that are not now members of RATS could be involved and have a say. Mr. Petrotte said that these agencies could be appointed as members of the Subcommittee at the direction of the Technical or Policy Committee. Steve Kuhn concurred and spoke strongly in favor of pooling resources instead of each individual municipality attempting to establish a GIS. Mayor Sinkiawic added his support to RATS involvement in this area. Mr. Schmitz suggested that the Committee take some formal action so that things can proceed expeditiously. Chairman Sinkiawic, with the consensus of the Committee, gave the following directives: (1) RATS will establish the RATS GIS Subcommittee, (2) RATS endorses the application for funds, (3) staff is instructed to proceed toward obtaining consultant services and conducting a study, and (4) RATS will continue in this role until a more definitive course is provided as a result of further study.

Turning back to the UWP itself, Mr. Petrotte said he was in the process of preparing a complete draft of the UWP for submittal to IDOT. He said he would include all the work, as discussed, and would submit the draft to IDOT and the RATS Committees for further review.

Kris Cohn asked how the update of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Component mentioned on page one of the March 11th report relates to the bikeways resolution work that was discussed at the last Policy Committee meeting held in Machesney Park. Mr. Petrotte said the resolution discussed in Machesney Park stems from recent work by the Perryville Path Committee and the Interorganizational Council. They have suggested a number of embellishments to the RATS Bikeways plan and are encouraging local governments to reconfirm their commitment to bike and pedestrian facilities. He said staff and the Technical Committee are working on a report and resolution that summarizes their recommendations. He hopes to bring that work before the Policy Committee for action in the next month or two. In addition, however, staff and the Technical Committee see the need to conduct a much more comprehensive evaluation and update of the RATS bike and pedestrian plans. The latter work will take place in FY98 and will be part of the FY98 UWP.

6. FY97 & FY98 TIP ISSUES: Gary McIntyre discussed his January 14th memo of changes to Tables 17 and 20 of the FY97 TIP. Specifically, in

Table 17, project I-97-1 (Alpine Road at Harrison Avenue) has increased in cost from \$300,000 to \$725,000 because the costs of land acquisition have been added to the scope of the project. The funding sources will not change (STP-HES and State).

Project 4-94-E-1 needs to be added to the list in Table 20. This project was approved in the FY94 TIP and, because it was not completed, should have been relisted in Table 20 of the FY97 TIP, but was overlooked.

Mr. McIntyre announce that staff is working on the draft of the FY98 TIP and asked all participating agencies to supply RATS staff will a complete list of their proposed projects as soon as they can.

7. PROGRESS REPORTS ON CURRENT PROJECTS.

David Dratnol reported that a consultant has been selected for the Riverside/Alpine/Forest Hills congestion management study. Contract negotiation is underway. On the Springfield Avenue extension project, the County is still seeking approval on the design of the project. Larry Reed asked if the County has begun addressing the relocation aspects of the project because the process is lengthy. Mr. Dratnol said they were.

8. RATS Long-Range Transportation Plan. Gary McIntyre said that all there was to be reported on this proposed amendment had already been discussed under the UWP. Staff and the Technical Committee hope to have a report and proposed amendment before the Policy Committee at the next meeting.

9. OTHER BUSINESS: Gary McIntyre introduced Jon-Paul Kohler of Federal Highway Administration and noted that the significance of his presence today was the scheduling of the next federal certification review of RATS activities by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. These reviews are mandated by federal law every three years. Tentatively, the review is being scheduled sometime in the month of August.

7. ADJOURNMENT: Chairman Sinkiawic addressed the Committee and audience. He stated that this would be his last meeting due to his retirement. He expressed thanks to all for their cooperation and hard work over the years. He wished the Committee well in all future work.

Chris Kohn thanked Gary McIntyre for alerting her to the need to encourage the federal government to consider the I-90/IL-173 interchange as part of the next ISTEA reauthorization. She said she brought this to the attention of Congressman Manzullo. The Congressman also thought the issue to be timely and provided opportunity for testimony in Washington. Hopefully, the results will be positive. Steve Kuhn commented that the episode was a strong indication of the potential for cooperation and planning among the many units of government involved in the area.

Sam Schmitz expressed thanks to Mayor Sinkiawic on behalf of the City of Rockford, Mayor Box and the previous Mayor of Rockford, John McNamara. He thanked the Mayor for all his years of leadership on the Committee.

Larry Reed moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously at 2:20 PM.