



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: October 29, 1998** **Loves Park City Hall**

Members Present: Stephen Kuhn, President, Machesney Park and Chairman of the Policy Committee; Darryl Lindberg, Mayor, Loves Park; Charles Box, Mayor, Rockford; Kristine Cohn, Chairman, Winnebago County Board; Bill Ost, District Engineer, IDOT District 2.

Others Present: Dan Jacobson, Loves Park Planning; Joe Vanderwerff, Winnebago County Highway Department; Bob Soltau IDOT Springfield; Laura Meehan, Matt Trowbridge, and Anne Brown all residents along Sage Drive; Larry Reed and Mary Allen Verdun, IDOT, Dixon; Bob Martin, Loves Park Transit; Wayne Dust, Rockford Planning Division; Joe Heck, Staline Area Transportation Study; Bill Bittner, Rockford Public Works Department; Ed Stirling, Natural Land Institute; and Russ Petrotte and Gary McIntyre, RATS staff.

1. CALL TO ORDER : With a quorum present, RATS Chairman Stephen Kuhn called the meeting to order at 1:36 PM.

2. COMMUNICATIONS: None.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Darryl Lindberg moved to approve the minutes of the August 6, 1998 meeting. The motion was seconded by Kristine Cohn and approved unanimously without correction or discussion.

4. RIVERSIDE / ALPINE / FOREST HILLS CMS: Joe Vanderwerff reported that the final report was submitted by the consultant. He said he is checking to see that all comments have been included and he hopes to seek RATS approval of the report at the next meeting.

Gary McIntyre presented information on the fire response situation relative to the recent proposal to install a cul-de-sac on Sage Drive as a means of removing through traffic. He referred the Committee to his memo on this subject dated October 14, 1998. He and Division Chief Lynn Pond investigated the proposal in the field. The fire department is opposed because it already considers this area a difficult response area. The closest fire station has 2-3 possible avenues to the Sage area but the secondary station (in the event the first is already out on call) considers only the Mulford/Riverside/Sage routing fast enough because of the extra distance they have to travel.

Mr. McIntyre said the most recent field counts documented 1,691 cars per day on Sage Drive. The RATS traffic simulation model forecasts traffic to increase to roughly 2,500 cars per day in the next 20 years, or around two percent per year. He said this is a reasonable amount of traffic on a collector and definitely lower than many collectors in the Rockford area. Based on the Fire Department's concerns and the forecasted traffic, he could not support the proposal to cul-de-sac Sage Drive.

Matt Trowbridge, resident at 3506 Sage Drive, spoke representing the citizens on Sage Drive. He said he doubted the accuracy of any traffic projection that included the addition of a new signal light at Sage and Riverside. He said the memo failed to consider other fire stations and other possible routes to Sage Drive. Mayor Box agreed that there are other possible routes, but the point is to get there as quickly and safely as possible. Other routings through the neighborhoods are slower. Mr. Trowbridge asked for actual numbers; i.e., travel times with fire trucks, to back up the Fire Department's preferred routings.

Laura Mehan asked if the use of removable barriers at the cul-de-sac was considered. Mr. McIntyre said that although such facilities have been installed in other areas of the City, the Fire Department consistently recommends against them. These barriers can be difficult to remove because of frozen conditions and snow plowed on them in the Winter.

Anne Brown cited an article on speed bumps in a recent Chicago Tribune. She feels the article supports the claim that speed bumps will not solve the problem and may create additional problems. Also, she said she resented the insinuation that the residents along Sage are being selfish, with respect to their concerns about traffic. She said that they are being selfish but it is their right and obligation to try to protect their property. Property values have been decreasing along Sage Drive in recent years. There are also the safety concerns. They are asking that Sage Drive not become a cut-through and they would not be good stewards for their families if they did not pose these concerns.

Chairman Kuhn stated the need to cover other items on the agenda and directed that further discussion on this matter could be continued after the meeting.

5. WINNEBAGO COUNTY NORTHEAST TRANSPORTATION STUDY: Joe Vanderwerff directed the Committee's attention to his October 21, 1998 memorandum (addressed to Gary McIntyre). He and RATS staff have been weighing the need for this transportation planning study for the past several weeks. The Highway Department is seeking professional advice and a tool by which they can plan for the future highway improvement needs in northeastern Winne-

bago County. He has received numerous calls, questions and complaints from officials and the general public regarding the need for new lanes, intersection improvements and traffic control devices. The situation is complex and the area is growing fast. A comprehensive study is needed to forecast traffic growth and distribution in the area. Mr. Vanderwerff said his initial proposal was limited to the area defined by the State Line, IL-2, the Boone/Winnebago County Line and IL-173. Support for the study was voiced by staff from the State Line Area Transportation Study, IDOT District 2 and the IDOT Bureau of Urban Programs. Subsequently, it was suggested that the study be expanded in two ways: first, the area's traffic simulation models should be expanded and combined to include all of Winnebago and Boone Counties and part of Rock County, Wisconsin; second, the actual traffic study should be expanded to include the major roadways in the Beloit area and Boone County that interact with the roadways in northeastern Winnebago County. Janesville and all of Rock County are also being considered.

It has been suggested that RATS and Rockford be assigned as lead agency for these reasons: they have more experience in leading consultant-assisted transportation studies; they have the computer hardware and software for modeling on board; they have experience in modeling; and most of the study will be inside Illinois and will involve large areas south of the SLATS territory. Both T-Model2 and TRANPLAN modeling software will be used. The general modeling work is likely to take approximately two years to complete. The traffic analysis specific to northeast Winnebago County will take another 6-12 months.

The RATS Technical Committee has recommended that the study be done as proposed. The estimated cost is between \$250,000 – \$400,000. As the lead agency / sponsor, the City of Rockford is being asked to initially fund the local share of the study (20 percent) but they will be reimbursed by the other local participants.

Mayor Lindberg suggested that the study be extended southward to Riverside Boulevard. Mr. Vanderwerff agreed.

Russ Petrotte stated that past practice for studies such as these is that the City of Rockford, as the lead agency for RATS, will actually be asked to front fund the entire cost of the study and to administer payments to the consultant. The City then bills the other study participants for reimbursement; in this case, 80 percent from IDOT and the remaining 20 percent from the other local participants. If this is acceptable to the City, it will be prearranged and formalized by interagency agreement.

There was discussion about RATS endorsement of the study. It was decided by consensus to lay the matter over until the next meeting when the County would return with a more precise statement of what the Policy Committee is being asked to address.

6 RATS UNIFIED WORK PROGRAM (UWP): Mr. Petrotte explained that when the UWP was prepared last Spring, we were working under expiring Federal legislation, the ISTEA. He distributed a table that illustrated the amount RATS was allocated for FY99 for planning under that legislation and also the additional funds we are now being allocated under the new legislation – the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21, for short). There is no increase in transit planning funds, but there is an increase in FHWA PL funds of \$97,128, bringing the total allocated to RATS to \$301,254. The table also shows: the total allocated to RATS last year (\$293,703); how those funds were suballocated among the local RATS participants last year; and how staff proposes to suballocate the funds among participants this year. The proposed allocations to County Highway, County Planning, Loves Park and Machesney Park are lower this year, (by \$4,200 each) and higher to Rockford CD (roughly \$19,000) and Rockford Public Works (roughly \$6,000). Presently, staff anticipates the bulk of the extra funding will be used for three purposes: (1) the comprehensive area-wide traffic counts scheduled to begin next Spring; (2) continued expansion and recalibration of the traffic simulation models; and (3) follow-up work on the regional GIS project (WinGIS).

Mr. Petrotte said he has already sent a letter to IDOT indicating that we intend to use these funds as described above. This letter was necessary to secure the funds. If the Committee prefers to use the funds for alternate planning tasks, that can be done. At their last meeting, the Technical Committee reviewed the proposed uses and concurred. However, since there

was no pressing need to act on the matter at this time, the Policy Committee laid the matter over until the next meeting to allow for more input.

7. RATS MPO / MASS TRANSIT AGREEMENT: Mr. Petrotte presented a draft of a proposed agreement between RATS and the area's three public transit operators: the Rockford Mass Transit District, the Loves Park Transit System and the Boone County Council on Ageing. The agreement states that the four entities will work cooperatively in the planning process – particularly the development and maintenance of the federally required documents – the Transportation Improvement Program, the Unified Work Program and the Long-Range Plan. He said the agreement is required by Federal law and it was brought to our attention at the last Federal Certification Review. The proposed agreement is modeled closely after a document the FTA supplied us from the MPO in the Miami Valley area.

Mr. Petrotte said he developed the agreement last Summer and circulated it among RMTD, LPTS, BCCA, IDOT-Public Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration. The only problems anyone had with the draft was the reference to the BCCA. Some feel it is more appropriate to have the Boone County Board sign the agreement rather than the Boone County Council on Ageing. The Boone County Board is the local sponsor of the transportation program there. He said the only difficulty he has with this is that RATS has very little direct contact with the Boone County Board on these matters even though they are the legally required authority behind Section 18 grants issued to BCCA; just as RATS has little direct contract with the Loves Park City Council, the authorizing agent for LPTS, and the Rockford City Council, the funding source for nearly a third of RMTD's operating budget. Therefore, Mr. Petrotte reworded the agreement to include both the authorizing agencies (the Boone County Board, the RMTD Board of Trustees and the Loves Park City Council) and the actual entities that act on behalf of those authorities (BCCA, RMTD and LPTS, respectively). He said he has not heard any objection to this rewording, but asked that the agreement be laid over to give the participating agencies more time to review it. The Committee concurred.

8. GREENWAY PLAN: Mr. McIntyre said that our current Long-Range Plan contains a series of maps that identify parks, forest preserves, schools, major facilities, private open space areas, environmentally sensitive areas, bikeways and pedestrian path facilities. These maps and inventories make us aware of potential conflicts between the above necessary features and the construction or improvement of roadways. He said RATS became involved with the development of the new Greenway Plan because "greenways" are, more often than not, environmentally sensitive areas. He called attention to copies of the Greenway Plan that had been included in the last mailout and stated that parts of this Plan should be incorporated into the RATS LRP. Staff will be developing appropriate documentation in the near future. Ed Stirling of the Natural Land Institute was introduced to further elaborate on the Greenway Plan.

Mr. Stirling explained that the extensive system of parks and preserves throughout Winnebago and Boone Counties provides excellent habitat for large numbers of wildlife species. However, one major problem is that, as isolated tracts, the wild creatures are somewhat trapped in these park facilities by urbanization and have difficulty in performing natural migrations that are essential to their survival. A major goal of the Greenway Planning effort, here and throughout the State, is to link wildlife habitats, particularly along stream corridors or natural wetland areas. A side benefit of Greenways is that public bikeways and pedestrian pathways can often coexist in them, thereby enhancing human recreational, educational and nature appreciation experiences. The planning effort was funded primarily by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and other local entities. The Greenway Plan, as proposed, has been well received by most of the governmental jurisdictions with land use-control authority in the area and has already been adopted by many as part of their land use or comprehensive plans. The Plan was taken to the County Fair, and there has been a great deal of additional public involvement in the process.

9.1 PROGRESS OF SPRINGFIELD / HARRISON EXTENSION: Joe Vanderwerff reported that the County has submitted the ROW Plans and the Design Plans to the State for their review. Last week, the County Board approved the professional staff for the ROW acquisition aspects. As soon as State concurs with the ROW Plans, acquisition will proceed. Charles

Box asked that (as soon as the Design and ROW Plans are approved) a meeting be arranged with all affected property owners, Linda McNeely (Rockford City Council) and appropriate County Board members so that these people can be fully informed. Kristine Cohn said the County has been anticipating and will be scheduling such a meeting. Mr. Vanderwerff said the ROW acquisition for the entire project will likely take about 18 months. The properties from Montague to Cunningham (south half of the project) will be acquired first (there are fewer properties because most of this is in agricultural use). The goal is to begin actual construction on that half by next October.

9.2 Regional GIS: Mr. Petrotte distributed five copies of the first draft of the **WinGIS Conceptual Design and Implementation Plan** as prepared by Plan-Graphics, Inc. He asked the Policy Committee members to make copies and distribute them to appropriate staff in their respective agencies. He said the report arrived last Friday and he had not had time to review it thoroughly. It proposes that the County serve as the hub of WinGIS and that the software be ArcVIEW and ArcINFO for GIS and Oracle as the database. They have included projected total hardware needs and a table that makes an initial proposal regarding the distribution of costs for shared GIS needs. Implementation is divided into two phases. The consultant will make a presentation soon. In the meantime, all participants are asked to critique the draft for errors and omissions.

9.3 TEA-21: Mr. Petrotte reported that he spent the last three days at a conference in Chicago, sponsored by the FTA and FHWA regarding the new Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). Other attendees from the Rockford area included Rick McVinnie and Dennis Hendricks (RMTD), and Wayne Dust and Barbara Richardson (Rockford CD Dept). He said TEA-21 is structured much like its predecessor, the ISTEA. Most of the funding sources, names and emphasis areas are the same. A great deal of time was spent addressing air quality and related transportation planning aspects which, fortunately, we do not have to meet because we are an "attainment" area. The standards for ozone and particulate matter are changing significantly, but hopefully we will retain attainment status. If our air quality declines and we become non-attainment, our planning requirements, roadway implementation procedures and land development procedures will have to change drastically.

He said a refreshing change compared to the introduction of the ISTEA was the openness of FTA/FHWA officials to comments regarding how aspects of the new legislation should be further structured and implemented.

Mr. Petrotte distributed the guidelines on one new program in TEA-21, the "Transportation and Community and System Preservation Program (TCSP). This program has a relatively small amount of funding, but we are being encouraged to apply. The program is aimed at previously unaddressed issues related to the complicated interactions of transportation and the other services and needs of the community as a whole. Grants can be applied to research, planning or implementation projects and they can be up to 100 percent, although projects with some amount of local participation will likely be favored. Also, federal officials are stressing implementation grants in the first year. The deadline to submit Letters of Intent is November 16, 1998. With this short time line, Mr. Petrotte asked permission to use his judgement in submitting requests. He said he would informally confer with area staff and officials regarding potential projects and that he would develop two or three that had the best chance of success based on the guidelines and the need to have most of the planning on the project already completed. He said the first project that comes to mind is the day care center proposal (by RMTD and area social service agencies) in the vicinity of the downtown bus transfer center. Another project might involve traffic calming needs throughout the community, and a third might involve regional government concerns. He stressed that the chances were slim, but again asked permission to make submissions. The Committee concurred.

Bob Soltau said IDOT is committed to working with local communities in qualifying for Federal grants. They will help out all they can. In addition to the program mentioned above, another program that may of interest to the Rockford area is the "corridor enhancement program." Guidance will be out on that soon. Also, he said it appears there may be as much as a 28 percent increase in STP-Urban funds for the

Chairman Kuhn said he had attended a meeting earlier in the day at the Rockford Airport regarding the intermodal transportation study for the region. He said the consultant stressed Rochelle's status as a rail hub, the region's status as a highway hub (with I-39, I-90, I-

Rockford area (this is the source we have been tapping for projects like the Springfield / Harrison Project.

In response to a question from Kristine Cohn, Mr Petrotte said staff is still debating whether we would have a better chance of success by submitting a single project or multiple projects.

10. OTHER BUSINESS: Gary McIntyre distributed a meeting schedule for next year (below). It is subject to change, particularly around holidays.

Technical Committee	Policy Committee
21-Jan-99	28-Jan-99
18-Feb-99	25-Feb-99
18-Mar-99	25-Mar-99
22-Apr-99	29-Apr-99
20-May-99	27-May-99
17-Jun-99	24-Jun-99
22-Jul-99	29-Jul-99
19-Aug-99	26-Aug-99
23-Sep-99	30-Sep-99
21-Oct-99	28-Oct-99
18-Nov-99	25-Nov-99
23-Dec-99	30-Dec-99

Technical Committee meetings are typically held in the Loves Park City Hall (100 Heart Boulevard) and start at 10:00 AM. Policy Committee meetings are rotated in alphabetical order among the Loves Park City Hall, the Machesney Park City Hall, the Rockford City Hall and the Winnebago County Administration Building. Meeting agendas, exact locations and times are usually decided upon during the week prior to the Technical Committee meetings; agendas, changes and / or cancellations are usually mailed out on the Friday before the Technical Committee meeting. Persons are asked to contact staff at 815-987-5638 for clarifications, requests to be placed on the mailing list, or requests for consideration as part of the meeting agenda. Again, the schedule is tentative and persons who have not received a specific meeting notice (agenda or cancellation notice) prior to the meeting date are advised to contact staff before traveling to a meeting site.

43 and I-88 in close proximity) and the potential of the Rockford Airport as an air hub. The Rockford area is well positioned as a distribution center. They also noted that Peoria is in the final stages of completing a study of an outer beltway. Related to the last state-

ment, Mr. Kuhn stressed the importance of the proposed Rockford Northwest ByPass, now under study by the Technical Committee, as an essential link in Rockford's part of the regional transportation system. He urged continued diligent work on that project.

Kristine Cohn asked the Committee to return briefly to the topic of the timing of the next Policy Committee meeting. In light of the need for timely action on the Northeast Transportation Study (agenda item 5) she asked the Committee to consider scheduling another meeting before the holidays. Mayor Box suggested a meeting on the Thursday before Thanksgiving. By consensus the Committee agreed that the next meeting would be held on November 19, 1998, at 1:30 PM.

11. ADJOURNMENT: A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Darryl Lindberg, seconded by Kristine Cohn and approved unanimously at 2:41 PM