



**Rockford Area Transportation Study  
Metropolitan Planning Organization**

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of Transportation, District 2

## **Meeting Minutes – RATS Technical Committee**

**Meeting Date: April 19, 2001 – Loves Park City Hall**

**Members Present:** Robert Martin, Loves Park Transit/Public Works; Steve Thompson, Loves Park Planning; Mary Allen Verdun, IDOT District 2; Steve Ernst, Rockford Public Works Department; David Noel, Winnebago County Planning; Carlos Molina, Winnebago County Highway Department; Terry Houghton, Rockford Mass Transit District; Michael Zonsius, Greater Rockford Airport Authority.

**Others Present:** Boyd Lawrence, State Line Area Transportation Study; Bob Soltau, Illinois Department of Transportation (Springfield); Gary McIntyre, RATS staff; Russ Petrotte, RATS staff.

**1. CALL TO ORDER / APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** At 10:02 A.M. and with a quorum present, Steve Ernst called the meeting to order. Mary Allen Verdun moved to approve the minutes of the March 22, 2001, Technical Committee meeting. The motion was seconded by David Noel and approved unanimously.

**2. AGENCY REPORTS:** Agencies present reported on the progress of their ongoing highway projects. An updated TIP Status Report listing highway improvement projects was presented, discussed and updated at the meeting. An updated report will be included with these minutes.

**3. RATS UNIFIED WORK PROGRAM FOR FY 2002:** Russ Petrotte said no comments have been received or changes suggested regarding the March 15th draft of the proposed Unified Work Program for FY 2002. He asked the Committee to make a recommendation to the Policy Committee to approved the March 15th draft as the final Work Program for FY 2002. A motion to that effect was made by Mary Allen Verdun, seconded by Robert Martin and approved unanimously.

**4. RATS FY 2001 TIP AMENDMENT:** Gary McIntyre said the FY 2001 TIP needs to be amended to approve the use of new HBRRP funds for the needed repairs to the Riverside Bridge over the Rock River. Robert Martin said the repairs include the removal and replacement of pin and link connections, the repair of the expansion joints, modifications to the drainage structures, removal of the existing sidewalks (pedestrian needs will be service by the new pedestrian bridge), roadway widening, and new concrete parapets. The total cost will be \$610,000 with \$448,000 of that coming from the federal HBRRP source. Mr. McIntyre distributed a draft of Resolution 2001-8 that documents the above proposed work and amends the FY 2001 TIP

accordingly. A motion was made by David Noel to recommend Policy Committee approval of Resolution 2001-8. The motion was seconded by Terry Houghton and approved unanimously.

Mr. McIntyre also said that the City of Belvidere has indicated a need to advance a highway project from the 2nd Year Element (FY 2002) to the 1st Year Element (FY 2001) in the current adopted FY 2001 RATS TIP. This project is the resurfacing of State Street and Logan Street (project number 12-01-6). Following the guidelines in the RATS TIP for project advancement, Mr. McIntyre submitted a letter to IDOT regarding Belvidere's project, informed the RATS Technical Committee of this matter and will be informing the RATS Policy Committee at their May 10, 2001, meeting on this issue.

**5. THE CAMPAIGN TO BUILD ILLINOIS TRANSIT:** Steve Ernst recapped discussions from the last meeting regarding the Campaign to Build Illinois Transit. The privately-sponsored initiative is supporting a bill proposed by State Representative Doug Scott to authorize State expenditures of up to \$4.4 billion dollars to fund new and expanded transit services throughout the State of Illinois. General discussion of the topic was largely in favor of the proposal but with concern over where the funding would come from and whether funding the transit expansion would detract from other State and local funding needs. Staff was instructed to draft a supportive resolution for further discussion at the next meeting.

**6. RATS FY 2002 TIP DEVELOPMENT:** Gary McIntyre reminded the Committee members of the need to develop their respective lists of proposed highway improvement projects for FY 2002 through 2004. Russ Petrotte said he would contact Rick McVinnie regarding the proposed transit improvement projects. Steve Ernst said that staff will be working to develop the draft FY 2002 TIP for the May mail out and will be seeking approval of the draft at the June meetings and approval of the final at the July meetings. He asked everyone to concentrate on meeting these goals / deadlines.

**7.1 PROGRESS REPORT ON SPRINGFIELD / HARRISON:** Carlos Molina reported that construction of the first phase (south of Cunningham) is on schedule and the land acquisitions, relocation efforts and structure demolitions for the second phase (north of Cunningham) are proceeding steadily as anticipated.

**7.2 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE BOONE/WINNEBAGO/BELOIT MODELING STUDY:** Gary McIntyre reported that the modeling study is proceeding smoothly. He is continuing work on the land use forecasts. The Land Use Projection Subcommittee has met twice on this matter and will meet again next month. He said the County has been averaging 1,400 new dwelling units per year for the past 12 years and this rate will be used to forecast new dwelling units through the Year 2025. The goal for completing the forecasting process for both dwelling units and jobs is roughly a month.

**8. & 9. COMMUNICATIONS and OTHER BUSINESS:** Bob Soltau gave a report on the air quality situation in the region related to the new EPA 8-hour ozone emission standard. He said preliminary data from a monitoring station in Beloit is in violation of the new standard. In response to this, the Wisconsin EPA has suggested that (in addition to Rock County, Wisconsin) Winnebago County, Illinois should be studied as a non-conformity candidate. The Illinois EPA has not agreed with this because they do not believe the cause of the Rock County station is air-flow originating in Winnebago County. However, it appears the US EPA is leaning more toward the Wisconsin EPA point of view. On the other hand, the US EPA is in a state of flux over its guidance on the 8-hour ozone standard. The US Supreme Court recently ruled that the US EPA must rewrite the guidance for this standard, while finding the standard itself constitutional. It could easily take up to two years to get the new guidance rewritten and adopted. Further complicating the picture is the fact that emission reductions for some stationary sources of nitrous oxide are going to be imposed in the near future – this may have the effect of reducing ozone levels in our area. As a result, it is very difficult to say, at this time, whether Rock County is going to be in non-compliance with the air pollution standards.

Mr. Soltau stressed that becoming a non-attainment area is a possibility, but not necessarily probable, given the information we have now. He said there is at least a distinct possibility that this will not become an issue but that we should inform the Policy Committee so that they are not caught unaware in the event the worst, but least possible, outcome occurs.

Mr. Petrotte cautioned that the results of exceeding the standards and becoming classified as a non-attainment area can be quite burdensome to the planning process and expensive to the community as a whole. He suggested that we may want to be proactive in reaction to this situation. We might want to try to determine, on our own, if there is a special unique source to these ozone levels and, if so, attempt to remedy the situation before the new guidance is adopted. Also, with only one monitoring station taking readings, he was concerned that this represents a realistic statistical sample of the air ozone / air quality situation. With the delay caused by the guidance rewrite, we have some time to work with.

Mr. Soltau noted that it is not all negative. That if the area were to become non-conforming, additional planning funds would be made available and also funds for some of the pollution mitigation. He said the fact that we are developing an area-wide traffic simulation model will also help greatly in doing the additional planning work. If Winnebago County should be determined to be in non-compliance some point there would be a

year to prepare a compliance plan before the rules and regulations take effect.

Mr. Soltau reiterated that it may be some time before new guidance is promulgated. After a brief discussion, the Committee, by consensus, asked Mr. Soltau to make a brief presentation to the Policy Committee on this matter at their next meeting.

Steve Ernst informed the Committee about the Blackhawk Road and Development Drive Projects that the City and IDOT will be doing next year. Blackhawk Road will be improved from IL 251 to Falcon Road and Development Drive will be extended to Easy Street to 11<sup>th</sup> Street. These projects will greatly improve access to the airport and other industries in the vicinity and improve safety along this portion of the IL-251 corridor. This will be in next year's TIP.

Bob Soltau suggested that the next meeting of the Technical Committee be delayed, one week, until May 24, 2001. He noted that the Midwest Transportation Planning Conference is scheduled for May 16-18, 2001, in the Quad Cities. He also suggested that staff and some Committee members might want to attend this conference. Steve Ernst said that this topic would be discussed at the Policy Committee meeting along with a suggestion that they delay their regular May meeting until June.

Carlos Molina said the County has completed most of its work on the proposed Truck Route Map. Steve Ernst asked everyone to submit their final comments and the topic would be put on next month's agenda for possible action.

Mr. Molina asked if RATS could consider the topic of "Trail Blazing Signs." (These are signs that point the direction to various major facilities or other major roads.) Mr. Molina asked that a subcommittee be established for this purpose and one of the area to initially concentrate on would be directional sign leading to the Tollway and Interstate 39. David Noel recommended that the matter be referred to the Truck Route Subcommittee and the Committee, by consensus, concurred.

Mr. Ernst called attention to the document mailed out on the "overall planning process." He said this is a very informative document and recommended that all read it and encourage their Policy Members to read it. Along with this, there was discussion of the Intelligent Transportation System concepts and the federally-required planning that will need to be done in the next year or two on this topic. Mr. Soltau said IDOT is considering hiring a consultant to help MPOs develop some of the required documents and plans.

Russ Petrotte said the staff has been developing a RATS Web Site. The format he has laid out will include direct or hotlink access to all the major RATS documents, including meeting agendas, minutes, the TIP, LRP and other informational materials such as the Truck Route Map, the ADT map. Steve Ernst said there will also be hotlinks to all of the RATS member agencies plus other agencies or sites where transportation information is readily available. He asked if anyone had links or other information they want to see on the RATS site. There were no comments from the Committee.

Steve Thompson reported that the county-wide aerial photography was flown this month by the consultant.

**10. ADJOURNMENT:** With no further business to conduct, Mary Allen Verdun moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Carlos Molina and approved unanimously at 11:21 A.M.