



**Rockford Area Transportation Study
Metropolitan Planning Organization**

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of Transportation, District 2

Meeting Minutes – RATS Technical Committee

Meeting Date: February 21, 2002 – Loves Park City Hall

Members Present: David Nord, Village of Cherry Valley; Denny Hendricks, RMTD, Rich Lundin, Boone County Highway Department; Boyd Lawrence, Winnebago County Planning; David Noel, Loves Park Planning; Mary Allen Verdun, IDOT District 2; Carlos Molina, Winnebago County Highway Department; Elizabeth Kinsinger, Rockford Community Development Department; Steve Ernst, City of Rockford and Robert Martin, Loves Park Public Works.

Others Present: Bob Soltau, Illinois Department of Transportation (Springfield); Gary McIntyre, RATS staff; Russ Petrotte, RATS staff.

1. CALL TO ORDER / APPROVAL OF MINUTES: At 10:10 A.M. with a quorum present, Steve Ernst called the meeting to order. Carlos Molina moved to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2001, Technical Committee meeting. The motion was seconded by David Noel and approved unanimously without corrections.

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.

Bob Soltau reported that the third round of Illinois Tomorrow applications are due at the end of June. He also reported that the STP-Urban funds allocated to RATS for this year have been released. The amount allocated is \$1,617,885. Last year we were allocated \$1,490,091. This is the funding source currently being used to construct the Springfield/Harrison Connection and slated for the future Harrison Avenue rehab/reconstruction.

3. FY 2002 TIP (HIGHWAY ELEMENT) AMENDMENT: Gary McIntyre called attention to the draft of proposed Resolution 2002-1 that was included in the last mailout. He explained that IDOT has requested that two projects be added to the FY 2002 Transportation Improvement Program. The first project, 2-02-3, is for the construction of a new intersection including

new traffic signals and turning lanes at the intersection of Preston Street and the Harrison Avenue Extension. This intersection is being broken out of the Springfield/Harrison Connection project for bidding purposes. The project will cost \$350,000 and will be funded with \$280,000 in STP-U funds and \$70,000 in local funds provided by Winnebago County. Mr. McIntyre noted that the total cost of the Springfield/Harrison Connection project is not anticipated to increase because of this. The second project, 2-03-4, is the resurfacing of Latham/Ralston Road between IL-251 and IL-2. This 1.9 mile project will cost \$450,000 and will be funded with \$360,000 of STP-R funds and \$90,000 in local funds provided by Winnebago County. Both projects will be constructed in FY 2002.

Elizabeth Kinsinger moved to recommend Policy Committee approval of Resolution 2002-1. The motion was seconded by Rich Lundin. No objections were stated and the motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. McIntyre also noted that the three IL-70 projects previously approved and listed in Table 24 of the TIP (Projects 1-98-6a, 1-98-6b, and 1-96-6c) are each being split into two projects. The total funding for the projects will not change, but they are being split for the purpose of more efficient bid letting and will be differentiated in the Table with the phases "section 1" and "section 2" for each of the three. No amendment to the TIP is needed for this, but the Table is being republished to show the splits.

4. FY 2002 TIP (TRANSIT ELEMENT) AMENDMENT: Russ Petrotte called attention to the draft of resolution 2002-2 that was included with the last mailout. The proposal will amend the FY 2002 Transit TIP to add two projects and expand a third project, all on behalf of RMTD. First, RMTD has applied for Federal "Access to Jobs" funds in the amount of \$197,718 for the purpose of adding fixed-route and paratransit service on Sundays on an experimental basis. If approved, these funds would be matched with \$197,719 in State funds and the total project cost would be \$395,437. The proposal would provide new service to a

traditionally under-served portion of the population at critical times when, presently, no service exists. This would provide

Second, RMTD has been awarded \$750,000 in discretionary funds from the Federal 5309 source for the purpose of assessing the feasibility and, if feasible, developing an east-side transfer center. RMTD feels this satellite transfer center is needed to compliment proposed changes in their route structure designed to accommodate changes in the spatial distribution of the general population, transit dependent persons and transit dependent activities. RMTD will also investigate opportunities for transfers with intercity buses as part of the new transfer center. Senator Durbin and Mayor Scott aided in securing the funding. RMTD will be asking IDOT to provide \$187,500 in matching funds.

Third, RMTD has determined it necessary to add another \$200,000 to the cost of the previously approved administrative office expansion project. Federal 5307 funds will be applied for 80% of the total. The other 20% will be requested from IDOT. The funding is available. The cost increase is the result of new evaluations performed by RMTD's newly employed Construction Manager.

A motion was made by Bob Martin to recommend approval of Resolution 2002-2. The motion was seconded by Denny Hendricks and approved unanimously.

5. RATS UWP AMENDMENT: Russ Petrotte discussed proposed Resolution 2002-3 that was mailed to the Committee in the last mailout. The substance of the resolution was discussed at the last Tech meeting. Amendment of the UWP is needed to further authorize the use of recent Illinois Tomorrow awards for the Rockford Railroad Consolidation Study and the Roscoe-Rockton Transit Study. The Lead Agency for the Railroad Study will be the Rockford Public Works Department. Roscoe will be the Lead Agency for the Transit Study. This study is primarily under the jurisdiction of SLATS but is being included in the RATS UWP because of the services of the Rockford Mass Transit District and RATS are likely to be needed. It was suggested that RATS staff contact Dave Lutyens (Missman /Stanley), the City Engineer for Roscoe and Rockton for the purpose of assuring coordination.

A motion was made by Mary Allen Verdun to recommend Policy Committee approval of Resolution 2002-3. The motion was seconded by David Noel and approved unanimously.

6. DISCUSSION ON REAUTHORIZATION OF FEDERAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BILL: Bob Soltau gave a brief presentation on some of the issues that are being considered in conjunction with the upcoming reauthorization of the Federal surface transportation bill. The current law, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), is scheduled to expire in October of 2003. At a recent briefing

access to employment opportunities and other needed services.

he attended, 11 topics were presented that are likely to have influence as the next bill is drafted.

1. Lessons from TEA-21 and ISTEA. Drastic shifts from the areas of emphasis in the TEA-21 and the previous bill, ISTEA, are not likely. The requirements and products of those bills have been largely positive.

2. Revenue Aligned Budget Authority. Recent overspending of funds from the Highway Trust fund are likely to prompt more frugal funding in the new bill. A more equitable balance of funding to the States will be considered.

3. The mobility of funding (i.e., the ability of States and other recipients to move funding between categories) within the ISTEA and TEA-21 was popular. This may be increased.

4. Funding related to security issues (in response to the war on terrorism) is likely to be considered. This may dovetail into further emphasis on emergency management and congestion management.

5. Continued emphasis on planning, "smart growth," and economic development is likely.

6. Increase emphasis or reemphasis of Innovative financing, including encouragement of public and private partnerships is being discussed.

7. Air quality concerns will be reemphasized.

8. Data gathering is a concern, especially data that accurately documents the condition of the highway system.

9. Environmental streamlining (i.e., the concept of encouraging a better integration of the planning process and the project selection/approval process with the process that determines and assures that various environmental concerns are being addressed) will be revisited again.

10. Freight movement and intermodal considerations will be considered more intently.

11. Rural transportation needs and the appropriation / distribution of STP-Rural funds may become an issue.

Mr. Soltau said he would try to keep the Committee informed as these and related topics develop further over the coming months.

Steve Ernst emphasized the need for the new transportation bill to consider the issue of the equitable distribution of federal transportation revenues among the States. Noting that Illinois had become a strong "donor State" (got less money back in grants than it had paid to the Federal coffers in taxes) under TEA-21, he expressed hope that this imbalance would be corrected in the new bill.

Steve Ernst also reported that he had attended a recent (IDOT-organized) MPO Directors meeting. The meeting considered many of the above mentioned issues and he summarized some of the concerns that were discussed. He said the MPO Directors are going to meet again in mid-March and at that time members have been asked to return and formulate a list of common issues (and, possibly, disagreements) to be forwarded to the Feds – to be used as the Feds consider the new transportation bill.

Another issue discussed at the Directors meeting was the distribution of STP-Urban funds within the State. Mr. Ernst said he will be asking the State to develop a more rigorous explanation of the rationale for the distribution of these funds.

Mr. Ernst stated that some of the issues that IDOT brought to the table at the Directors meeting included:

1. The full use of the Highway Trust Fund revenues.
2. The need to increase Illinois' share of funding.
3. The growing need for special funding for the reconstruction of the interstate system.
4. More emphasis on the distribution of transit funds in accordance with demonstrated need.
5. The need to simplify the planning and environmental regulations.

Bob Soltau noted the growing importance of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO). Because AMPO can serve as an agent that will help keep the MPOs informed and will also provide a unified voice to announce the views of the MPOs, IDOT has decided to encourage all MPOs to participate in AMPO. Therefore, IDOT has decided to pay the membership dues of all Illinois MPOs this year. Next year's dues should be included as an eligible expenditure in the Unified Planning Work Program.

7. RATS UWP FOR FY 2003: Steve Ernst, Russ Petrotte and Gary McIntyre discussed the timetable for the development of the FY 2003 Unified Work Program. As in previous years, IDOT has asked that the draft program be submitted to them by no later than the end of March. The deadline for the final document is late May or early June, the sooner the better. At present, the only major special study for which funding has been requested is the proposed followup work on the Riverside / Alpine / Forest Hills Congestion Management Study. The County has asked that roughly \$24,000 in Federal funds be reserved for this work. RATS staff asked that officials from Loves Park and the County convene on this matter and verify the scope of work and exact funding needs for the work.

Russ Petrotte said that he, Gary McIntyre and Bob Soltau had recently met with officials from Boone County for the

Staff asked all present to consider their respective transportation planning needs for FY 2003. Staff will be contacting them to obtain further input as the FY 2003 UWP is drafted.

Staff stated that the Federal funding assistance (for planning) marks have been issued by IDOT for FY 2003. RATS has been allocated \$286,371 in FHWA PL funds and \$98,401 in FTA-5303 funds. This is a 5% increase over the FY 2002 allocation. Staff distributed a table showing the recent history of funding allocations. The table is summarized below. Note that these are Federal amounts that must be matched with a minimum of 20% local funds or in-kind contributions.

Recent History of Federal Transportation Allocations to the RA			
Fiscal Year	FHWA-PL	FTA-5303	
1997	\$221,410	\$67,000	
1998	\$236,284	\$57,419	
1999	\$243,835	\$57,419	
2000	\$275,563	\$62,839	
2001	\$277,774	\$71,068	
2002	\$282,442	\$84,007	
2003	\$286,371	\$98,401	

Discussion ensued on the status of the upcoming determination of urbanized area boundaries. Supposedly, the US Census Bureau is still planning to release the final urbanized area criteria sometime in March and develop new urbanized area designations based on this criteria.

Russ Petrotte said that, since the last Tech meeting, he had the opportunity to go over the proposed criteria and make an attempt at applying them to the Rockford area. He said a significant change from the criteria used with the 1990 Census is that incorporated area is not automatically included in an urbanized area. Population density is now the governing factor and even though an area may be incorporated (or even intensely developed, as with industrial or commercial areas), if the population density does not meet minimum threshold levels, those areas may not be included in the urbanized area. Because of this change, staff's previous suggestions that Belvidere would become part of the Rockford urbanized area may not materialize. He explained that the criteria are rather complex in that they allow some "hopping" or "jumping" over less populated areas as long as the overall density meets certain densities. He said it would be best to wait for the official Census Bureau determinations rather than speculate further.

purpose of explaining the above and other matters related to the possible Policy Committee membership application by

Belvidere and/or Boone County. Rich Lundin was at that meeting. Mr. Petrotte said the Boone/Belvidere officials seem genuinely interested in Policy Committee membership but are still weighing issues involving funding allocations, the balance of authority on the Policy Committee, and the pros and cons of membership.

8.1 PROGRESS REPORT ON SPRINGFIELD / HARRISON:

Carlos Molina said the project remains on schedule with full opening of the roadway likely some time in the Fall of this year. He said the roadbed subsidence problem has not yet been resolved and is still under investigation. He reiterated information about the Preston Street intersection and the State Street intersection.

8.2 WEST STATE STREET CORRIDOR STUDY:

Steve Ernst said the study is still on schedule. He said the third public meeting will be held tonight for the purpose of discussing and refining the consultants findings and proposals. After that, a focus group will meet to further refine the design report. Staff is considering a detailed report to the RATS Technical Committee at the March meeting and a similar report to the RATS Policy Committee at their April meeting.

8.3 WINNEBAGO COUNTY SMART GROWTH STUDY:

Carlos Molina reported that a Steering Committee has been formed and an educational conference on Smart Growth is tentatively scheduled for sometime in April. The consultants selected for the study are Teska & Associates and the Metropolitan Planning Council (a not-for-profit entity originally established to promote Smart Growth in the Chicago area).

8.4 ROCKFORD AREA RAILROAD CONSOLIDATION

STUDY: Steve Ernst said the City has received responses to their RFP for the study. In the next few weeks, the City will be refining the scope of the study and seeking IDOT approval on the scope and consultant selection.

8.5 ROSCOE/ROCKTON TRANSIT STUDY: As noted previously, staff will be contacting Village officials regarding the direction, progress and coordination of this study.

8.6 WinGIS: Steve Ernst reported that the compilation work on the digital aerial photography is progressing on schedule.

RATS is participating in funding part of this work and the first billing has been submitted to IDOT for reimbursement. Significant progress has also been made on the selection of a vendor for the area-wide communication network that will provide public access to WinGIS. Insight Communications has recently made an offer that is very attractive and considerably less expensive than previous offers put forth.

8.7 RATS / SLATS MODELING STUDY: Gary McIntyre reported that the model calibration process is proceeding as expected. He said that, overall, the study is slightly behind

schedule and he is requesting an extension of the IDOT grant for the study.

9. COMMUNICATIONS: Bob Martin reported that the Riverside Bridge improvement project is proceeding on schedule but that the engineers have revised the cost estimates upward. Additional Federal bridge funds will be applied for the project. He is still hoping for a bid letting sometime this Spring.

10.1 OTHER BUSINESS – LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN MAP:

Steve Ernst noted that the RATS Long-Range Transportation Plan and map needs to be amended to reflect the changes the City of Rockford is going to make in conjunction with Charles Street and other roadways related to the Swedish American Hospital expansion effort.

10.2 OTHER BUSINESS – METRA RAIL EXTENSION

FEASIBILITY STUDY: Steve Ernst distributed copies of a resolution recently approved by the Boone County Board supporting the continued study of the feasibility of commuter rail service between Boone County / Belvidere and the Chicago area. He suggested that a similar resolution be developed by RATS. The Committee directed Staff to present this suggestion to the Policy Committee and, with their concurrence, prepare a draft of such a resolution for review at the March meetings.

10.3 OTHER BUSINESS – FREIGHT MOVEMENT:

The Committee briefly discussed the growing problem of oversize / overweight freight movements through the urban area. All concurred that efforts need to be reinvigorated to keep these interstate movements on the interstate system.

10.4 OTHER BUSINESS – FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM:

Mary Allen Verdun reiterated the upcoming need to update the functional classification system in response to changes in the urbanized area delineation and other IDOT/Federal rule changes.

11. ADJOURNMENT: With no further business to conduct, Mary Allen Verdun moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Bob Martin and approved unanimously at 11:55 A.M.