



**Rockford Area Transportation Study
Metropolitan Planning Organization**

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of Transportation, District 2

Meeting Minutes RATS Technical Committee

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

Members Present:

Chad Atkinson, Machesney Park Planning;
Steve Ernst, City of Rockford;
Boyd Lawrence, Winnebago County Planning;
Rich Lundin, Boone County Highway Department;
Robert Martin, Loves Park Public Works;
Carlos Molina, Winnebago County Highway Department;
Elizabeth Kinsinger, Rockford CD Department;
David Noel, Loves Park Planning;
David Nord, Village of Cherry Valley;
Mary Allen Verdun, IDOT District 2;
Michael Zonzius, Greater Rockford Airport Authority.

Others Present:

Janet Anderson, SLATS & Beloit;
Wendy Davenport, Center of Hope;
Carm Kilker, Center of Hope;
Gary McIntyre, RATS staff;
Russ Petrotte, RATS staff;
Jim Ryan, Rockford Public Works;
Bob Soltau, IDOT Springfield;
Bob Spenle, SLATS.

1. CALL TO ORDER / APPROVAL OF MINUTES: At 10:12 A.M. with a quorum present, Steve Ernst called the meeting to order. Carlos Molina moved to approve the minutes of the February 21, 2002, Technical Committee meeting. The motion was seconded by Mary Allen Verdun. A correction was noted with regard to the West State Street Corridor Study: the third public meeting was held on February 19, 2002, not scheduled for February 21st. As corrected, the minutes were 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.

Bob Soltau suggested that all third round applications for Illinois Tomorrow funds be submitted by the end of June. He also announced that Governor Ryan's "Balance Growth Conference" has been scheduled for September 17, 2002. The conference will be held at the Hotel Pere Marquette in Peoria, Illinois. The Annual IDOT Fall Planning Conference will be held on the same date at the same place and will extend into September 18, 2002.

Janet Anderson introduced Bob Spenle as the new SLATS MPO Coordinator. Mr. Spenle was formerly the director of the Beloit Mass Transit District.

Michael Zonzius said the Airport Authority is seeking funds from the State for the reconstruction and realignment of Belt Line Road, south of the Airport. The approximate cost of the project will be \$3.3 million and the road will be dedicated to Rockford for future maintenance after the project is completed. They are hoping to complete the project by the end of this construction season.

Elizabeth Kinsinger reported that the new Director of the Rockford Community Development Department, Jim Caruso, will be reporting for duty next week.

3. ENDORSEMENT OF COMMUTER RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY: Steve Ernst and Jim Ryan presented proposed RATS Resolution 2002-4. This resolution is intended to show RATS commitment toward the study of the feasibility of extending commuter rail service from Metra in the Chicago region, westward to the central/northern Illinois region – and providing service to communities in Boone, Kane, McHenry and Winnebago Counties.

Bob Martin and others noted that the fifth "Whereas" on the first page may be too limiting. The paragraph refers specifically to the Union Pacific line. Mr. Martin noted that

other nearby rail alignments should also be evaluated in addition to the Union Pacific line.

Mr. Ryan noted that the Union Pacific line was named because it comes closest to the majority of communities having significant populations and growth rates. He said other alignments can be considered but, in his opinion, the Union Pacific line appears to have the most potential.

After discussion, the Committee reached a consensus to remove the specific mention of the Union Pacific from the resolution but to retain the mention of the Metra/Milwaukee District West Line because this would be the most likely starting point and/or Metra line to be extended.

With that change noted, Bob Martin moved to recommend Policy Committee approval of Resolution 2002-4. The motion was seconded by Michael Zonzius and approved unanimously.

4. FY 2003 UNIFIED WORK PROGRAM: Russ Petrotte called attention to the March 21st draft of the proposed work program for RATS planning for FY 2003 (July 1, 2002 – June 30, 2003). The draft had been included in the last RATS mailout. He called attention to Chart D which shows the funding available for work in FY 2003. IDOT has allocated \$286,371 in PL funds and \$98,401 in 5303 funds for the regular RATS planning process. The Chart also notes several projects and funds that are being continued from FY 2002. He asked the Committee members to review Chart E which lists the major activities proposed for 2003. He asked that they inform him if other projects should be added.

Mr. Petrotte called attention to the Riverside/Alpine Congestion Management and Corridor Study. He said special funds have been allocated for follow-up work on this critical area (\$30,000 Federal, see Table 1). Efforts will be aimed at developing a better access plan for the northeast quadrant of Alpine and Riverside and at exploring the feasibility of a new collector-level roadway that would parallel Riverside, on the north side (Loves Park), between Alpine and Mulford Roads. An implementation and funding responsibility plan for all of the needed work on the Alpine/Riverside/Forest Hills intersection will also be sought as part of the study. Matching funds for the study will be shared by the City of Loves Park, Winnebago County and the City of Rockford.

Mr. Ernst asked that the Committee members carefully review the proposed Work Program draft and suggest changes in a timely manner. In accordance with the usual Work Program development process, staff will be developing and seeking approval of the final Work Program at the May RATS meetings. By consensus the Committee recommended forwarding the draft to IDOT for review.

7.3 WINNEBAGO COUNTY SMART GROWTH STUDY: Carlos Molina reported that the educational conference on

5. PARATRANSIT VEHICLE REQUEST: Russ Petrotte stated that the Center of Hope recently contacted him with a request that RATS endorse the Center's intent to apply for Federal 5310-funded paratransit vehicles. He said the Center provides special services to persons with disabilities throughout the Rockford area and is experiencing significant clientele growth. More important, transportation for clients, to and from the Center, is a growing need that the local public transportation provider, the Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD), is having great difficulty providing. Staff from RMTD and the Center have met and determined that the Center's transportation needs could be more cost-effectively met if the Center were awarded their own paratransit vehicles.

Carm Kilker and Wendy Davenport from the Center of Hope elaborated further on the services they provide and the transportation situation they are facing.

After a brief discussion, David Noel moved to recommend that the Center's request be included in the draft FY 2003 Transportation Improvement Program and that staff send a letter of endorsement regarding the Center's application for assistance. The motion was seconded by Mary Allen Verdun and approved unanimously.

6. FY 2003 TIP: Mr. Petrotte asked the Committee to begin seriously considering and developing their lists of proposed transportation improvement projects for next year, FY 2003 (July 1, 2002- June 30, 2003). He said staff would like to have a draft of the proposed TIP ready for the May meetings with possible adoption in June or July.

7. SPECIAL PROJECT PROGRESS REPORTS

7.1 SPRINGFIELD/HARRISON PROJECT: Carlos Molina reported that construction will begin soon on the second phase of this project. He said the pavement subsidence problem on a portion of the first phase has not been fully resolved. The opening of both phases will occur sometime in the Fall of this year.

7.2 WEST STATE STREET CORRIDOR STUDY: Jim Ryan reported that a community meeting was held on the preliminary results of the study on February 19th and that the plans being developed have been, thus far, well received by area residents, property owners and business owners. He expects the study to be completed by May. The Committee asked that he make a detailed presentation at the next meeting.

Smart Growth, the "Illinois Balance Growth Summit" has been scheduled for April 26, 2002. It will be held at the

Ramada Conference Center located at East State Street and Bell School Road in Rockford. The "Summit" will start at 8:30 AM and end shortly after 4:00 PM and will include a luncheon. The keynote speaker will be William H. Hudnut III, a Senior Fellow of the Urban Land Institute and author of "Cities on the Rebound." The conference fee will range from \$35, for early registrants, to \$50 for on-site registrants. Bob Soltau reported that the State has agreed to increase the grant amount for the Smart Growth Study by slightly over \$5,000 so that the "Balanced Growth Summit" could be broadened for a statewide audience.

7.4 ROCKFORD AREA RAILROAD CONSOLIDATION STUDY: Jim Ryan reported that study proposals have been submitted by three firms. Staff is in the process of reviewing and evaluating the proposals and consultant qualifications.

7.5 ROSCOE/ROCKTON TRANSIT STUDY: Janet Anderson and Bob Spenle reported that consultant selection process is underway.

7.6 WinGIS: Steve Ernst reported that a WinGIS Technical Committee meeting is scheduled for 1:30 this afternoon. He said the aerial photography consultants have, thus far, delivered products on two townships as part of the county-wide orthophotography project.

7.7 RATS / SLATS MODELING STUDY: Gary McIntyre reported that the Steering Committee for the study will meet at 1:30 this afternoon. He said the IDOT funding contract for the study is being extended. Recently, staff has obtained and inserted dwelling unit data from the 2000 Census. This data appears to be more accurate than the previously used dwelling unit data derived from area building permit tabulations.

7.8 RMTD ROUTE & SCHEDULE ANALYSIS: Russ Petrotte reported that RMTD has sent out RFPs for the study, both locally and nationally.

7.9 RMTD EAST SIDE TRANSFER CENTER STUDY: Mr. Petrotte said grant work is underway. The study itself is not likely to commence until much later in the year.

7.10 ARTERIAL MANAGEMENT GROUP: Steve Ernst said work is still underway on the I-90 alternative / emergency routing plan. Model jurisdictional agreements are being formulated.

8. COMMUNICATIONS: Steve Ernst said the final criteria for the delineation of urbanized areas has been issued by the US Census Bureau. The final criteria are not much different from proposals made last year. Significantly, the criteria differ from the criteria used in 1990 in that they do not automatically include unpopulated or low density incorporated areas or industrial areas. He said the Census Bureau made a distinct effort to select criteria that are based strictly on

population density and on databases that exist and are consistent nationwide. The urbanized area determinations are not likely to be published until late next month, at the earliest. Copies of the new criteria were handed out.

9.1 OTHER BUSINESS – Rich Lundin gave a brief report on the "Tollway Station Point" project being promoted by officials in the Belvidere area. The project seeks to promote a research park / industrial park at a location in the vicinity of Belvidere and the Tollway. This is in conjunction with the proposed Tollway interchange in the vicinity of Town Hall Road.

Russ Petrotte reminded the RATS Work Program participants that progress reports on all activities conducted between July 1, 2001 and December 31, 2001 are due. Reports are needed from Rockford Community Development, Loves Park Planning, Winnebago County Planning, and the Winnebago County Highway Department. Machesney Park Planning is the only agency that has submitted their report. Also, at the end of this month, reports from all the agencies will be due for the period between January 1, 2002 and March 31, 2002.

10. ADJOURNMENT: With no further business to conduct, Elizabeth Kinsinger moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Michael Zonzius and approved unanimously at 11:38 A.M.