



**Rockford Area Transportation Study**  
**Metropolitan Planning Organization**

**POLICY COMMITTEE**

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of Transportation, District 2*

**Meeting Minutes – RATS Technical Committee**

**Meeting Date: May 18, 2000 – Loves Park City Hall**

**Members Present:** Jim Ryan, Rockford Public Works Department; Dan Jacobson, City of Loves Park; Mary Allen Verdun, IDOT District 2; David Noel, Winnebago County Planning; Denny Hendricks, Rockford Mass Transit District; David Nord, Village of Cherry Valley; Chad Atkinson, Village of Machesney Park.

**Others Present:** Bob Soltau, Illinois Department of Transportation (Springfield); Gary McIntyre, RATS staff; Russ Petrotte, RATS staff; Vance Hultgren, Illinois State Toll Highway Authority; Kirk Fauver, Federal Highway Administration; Charles Bloomingdale, Scott Township.

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** On behalf of Steve Ernst who could not be present, Jim Ryan called the meeting to order. By consensus, the Committee assigned chairmanship of the meeting to Mr. Ryan.

**2. DISCUSSION ON THE LONG-RANGE PLAN:** Mr. Ryan stated that the primary purpose of this special meeting was to discuss the Long-Range Transportation Plan, discuss comments on the Plan received thus far, and hear suggestions for changing the Plan.

The greater part of the meeting was devoted to discussing the comments contained in the July 5, 2000, letter from William Charles, Ltd. Mr. Petrotte led the discussion. All members of the Committee participated and the summary recommendations were discussed point-by-point. At the conclusion of the discussion staff was instructed to prepare a detailed response for inclusion as part of the final Plan and to submit a draft of the response to the Committee for further review. The main elements that appeared to be agreed upon by the Committee were as follows:

1. The suggestion that the IDOT funding levels should not be based on the average of the last six years was rejected for several reasons: the trends appear to be reasonable representations of total funding; while IDOT funding is declining slightly, State and Federal funding combined is increasing slightly; it is beyond the scope of the LRP to evaluate the equity of the mix of funding, this could be the subject of another study; and Federal law requires the development of a constrained plan can consideration of historic trends.
2. The suggestion that IDOT funding should reflect the IDOT 2000-2004 5-Year Plan appears to be a matter of confusion. The Plan does contain all the projects IDOT has programmed and more. Also, the funding forecast base years include the Year 2000 which is the highest year of IDOT contribution in the last decade.
3. The suggestion that infrastructure improvement necessary for industrial development should be at the public expense is worthwhile to consider. Some of this is already done. The problem is finding the funding. Other infrastructure improvement should also be considered; again the lack of a dedicated funding source is the problem. Also, it is very important to coordinate the timing of all the infrastructure improvement.
4. The suggestion that the economic and demographic impacts of alternative improvements should be studied and described is considered valid depending on the improvement and the situation.

Some projects deserve special consideration in this way, others have such obvious benefits that their study could be a waste of limited research dollars. RATS has to be careful when it comes to projects that are aimed at promoting economic growth. The “build it and they will come” approach is often not successful and not often supported by the taxpayer even when it appears to have a good chance of success. Also, planning agencies that succumb to

5. The Technical Committee somewhat supports the suggestion that infrastructure for industrial development be constructed at public expense but points out that there is currently no funding dedicated or consistently available for such purpose.

The suggestion will be posed to the RATS Policy Committee for their consideration. Ideally, local governments would also fund the construction of

6. Regarding the future economic / demographic impacts of alternative improvements identified in the plan, we are unsure of what specific alternative improvements this comment pertains to or what WCL is attempting to achieve. Any and all of the If the comment is aimed at stimulating greater transportation expenditure forecasts because of potential positive impacts of more elaborate projects, we have to respond that Federal regulations do not allow us this option within the 25-year framework of the main body of the Plan.

We can propose more elaborate projects if we define them as “illustrative projects” but we must single them out as projects for which additional funding will be needed (beyond the forecasted funding). In a slightly different way, we have included such projects by (1) placing them in a category that will be funded and constructed after Year 2025 (i.e. the Woodruff Expressway / Wallenberg Parkway Feasibility Study and the Guilford Road Crossover – see Map 15), and (2) citing them as projects to be studied or discussed more in the future (i.e., the Northwest ByPass and commuter rail).

With regard to the Wallenberg, the most recent “Wallenberg Parkway Feasibility Study, June 1996, does an excellent job of discussing many of the costs, benefits and impacts of this proposed facility but was less than conclusive. Moreover, the project was not extensively mentioned in the Plan because of the extremely high cost and unlikelihood of funding in the foreseeable future.

the approach can easily be barraged with requests well beyond their research capabilities. To a limited extent, RATS does this type of work. The economic analysis in conjunction with the last Woodruff/Wallenberg Study is one example. The periodic Title VI and Environmental Justice assessments to guard against discrimination is another example.

new collector roads in new residential subdivisions. This would reduce the numerous undesirable situations that occur as such roads are funded and constructed by the private sector. Again, however, the problem is finding a consistent funding source for this purpose.

proposed and alternative transportation projects mentioned in the plan are likely to have, to varying degrees, combinations of both negative and positive economic and demographic impacts.

In other words, high growth forecasts based on speculative aggressive economic development projects aren't allowed by the federal regulations.

It is also debatable whether the adverse impacts in adjacent Rockford neighborhoods can be adequately mitigated.

The Guilford Road Crossover has received little attention in recent years and was thought not to be important enough to belabor at this time.

The Northwest ByPass is mentioned a number of times but until the RATS/SLATS traffic simulation model is completed we cannot evaluate its potential traffic impact, let alone its demographic and economic impact.

Serious considerations regarding commuter rail have just recently surfaced. Serious feasibility, economic and demographic analysis is warranted and will be considered within the near future.

Generally speaking with regard to other projects in the Plan, to varying degrees, the analysis of demographic and economic impact is already a

part of the RATS Planning Process. The demographic impacts of projects are assessed in conjunction with Federal Title VI and proposed Environmental Justice requirements. In accordance with Title VI we must periodically examine our proposed and implemented improvements to determine if they are adversely impacting (or ignoring) the needs of minorities. Environmental Justice extends these considerations to low-income persons.

With respect to highway projects, these assessments are more subjective and anecdotal than quantitative. With regard to public transit projects, the assessments are both subjective and quantitative, in accordance with detailed Federal guidance. Copies of these assessments are available at the RATS offices. Further extensive The expected economic benefit of other major projects is so obvious that extensive economic analysis is not needed and would be a waste of research funds. Examples of such projects are the improvements to State Street east of Alpine Road, the construction of Perryville Road and the proposed construction of the Springfield/Harrison Connection. The latter project will provide access to large areas of land planned for industrial and commercial uses, complete a ring road that will improve access to all areas of west Rockford and stimulate the revitalization of Rockford's economically-depressed west side.

Currently, as part of the development of the RATS/ SLATS traffic simulation model, alternative land use and economic development scenarios are being developed. These scenarios will range from low-growth to high-growth options and will be tested against various roadway network configurations.

In conclusion, Federal law and concern for simple justice dictates that projects should be evaluated with respect to demographics to assure that minority groups and low-income groups are not being disproportionately adversely impacted or that the transportation needs of these groups are being disproportionately ignored. Where obviously needed, analysis of the cost and benefits to the area's economy should also be part of the process of setting priority to proposed transportation improvements. However, funding for research and study is limited. Consequently, it

demographic analysis is not recommended at this time because the primary source of data, the 1990 Census, is out-of-date. When Year 2000 Census data becomes available, within the next 12-24 months, demographic analysis will be renewed.

Economic impact analysis is complicated, expensive and often controversial because of the multitude of factors that must be considered, difficulties in forecasting, and differing values of community leaders and citizens. Major highway projects are subjected to more in-depth analysis than smaller improvements. But even where extensive, as noted with regard to the Wallenberg, the results are not always conclusive.

is recommended that the use of such funds should continue to be selectively applied to the evaluation of improvements that are controversial and/or complicated and where such analysis has a reasonable chance of resolving the controversy and aiding in the decision-making process.

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