



Rockford Area Transportation Study
Metropolitan Planning Organization

POLICY COMMITTEE

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of Transportation, District 2

Meeting Minutes – RATS Technical Committee

Meeting Date: September 23, 1999 – Loves Park City Hall

Members Present: Joe Vanderwerff, Winnebago County Highway Dept.; Russ Petrotte, RATS/Rockford Community Development; Steve Thompson, City of Loves Park; David Sliktas, Belvidere/Boone Regional Planning Commission; Michael Zonsius, Greater Rockford Airport Authority; Hong Liu, Rockford Public Works; Dennis Hendricks, Rockford Mass Transit; Rich Lundin, Boone County Highway Dept.; David Nord, Village of Cherry Valley; Chad Hunter, Village of Machesney Park; Bob Martin, Loves Park Transit System; David Noel, Winnebago County Planning Dept.

Others Present: Bob Soltau, Illinois Department of Transportation (Springfield); Gary McIntyre, RATS; Jeff Linkenheld, Arc Design Resources; Chris Terry, Rockford Register Star.

1. CALL TO ORDER / APPROVAL OF MINUTES: At 10:10 A.M., Russ Petrotte called the meeting to order. A motion to approve the minutes of the August 19, 1999 meeting was made by Hong Liu and seconded by Rich Lundin. The minutes were approved unanimously without corrections.

2. AGENCY REPORTS: Agencies present reported on the progress of their ongoing highway projects. Gary McIntyre reported on the progress of the IDOT projects. An updated TIP Status Report listing highway improvement projects is attached to these minutes reflecting the updated information. Mr. Martin commented that the intersection of Orth and Argyle Roads appears to have become a 4-way stop situation. Bob Soltau reminded the Committee that the IDOT Fall Planning Conference is scheduled for October 6th and

7th. Mr. Soltau also transmitted a letter from the Federal government indicating that the RATS TIP and the State TIP for FY 2000 had been approved.

3. RATS TIP – STP-U PROJECT SELECTION DISCUSSION: Gary McIntyre directed attention to the chart that was included in the last mailout listing STP-U Candidates: as of August 31, 1999. Seven projects are listed: two proposed by Winnebago County and the other five proposed by the City of Rockford.

Mr. McIntyre asked all of the proposers to supply additional information on the proposed projects. He said it is important to document that the projects meet the criteria as adopted by RATS in RATS Resolution 94-2. On the assumption that RATS intends to continue to use these funds for highway, as opposed to transit projects, he reviewed these criteria as listed for highway-related projects, as follows.

Highway-related projects should meet all of the following conditions to be considered eligible:

A. Have all preliminary engineering, engineering and ROW acquisition funded from local or State sources (note this criterion was waived for the Springfield project); and

B. Be of regional significance and of obvious benefit to more than one community participating in the RATS planning process (the communities are defined as the City of Rockford, the City of Loves Park, the Village of Machesney Park, the Village of Cherry Valley, the Village of New Millford, the unincorporated parts of Winnebago County within the officially defined Rockford Urbanized Area, and the incorporated or unincorporated

parts of Boone County within the officially defined Rockford Urbanized Area); and

C. Have one or more of the above-defined communities committed as a local project sponsor; and

D. Address some weakness in a major link (arterial level or higher, road or bridge) as identified on the RATS "Short-Range or Ultimate Functional Classification System" or correct for a missing link in said system (Weaknesses will be identified by the use of the computerized traffic simulation models and other accepted means. The rehabilitation of bridges on arterial or higher level roadways is considered eligible.); and

E. Be coordinated with other urban infrastructure improvements, such as public sewer and water, and development/redevelopment efforts (Projects which have the potential to greatly improve the economic development potential of lands within one or more of the defined communities should be given special consideration. The ability of a project to aid in implementing adopted development/redevelopment plans and/or land use plans of the communities is considered important.); and

F. Have potential to relieve traffic congestion and increase the efficiency of urban goods movement as well as the mobility of commuters; and

G. Have the potential to increase the efficiency of long-distance travel over the entire urbanized area (particular emphasis is placed on the "ring-road/beltway" linkages as defined in the RATS Transportation Plan); and

H. Complement one or more of the 15 factors listed in section 134(f)1-15 of the ISTEA (Abbreviated, the 15 factors are: [1] the preservation and efficient use of existing transportation facilities; [2] consistency with conservation programs, goals and objectives; [3] relieving and preventing traffic congestion; [4] consistency with development and land use plans; [5] consistency with transportation enhancement activities; [6] compatibility with other nonfederally-funded transportation projects; [7] enhance access to airports, intermodal facilities, freight distribution routes, parks and recreation areas, and military installations; [8] connectivity to roads outside the metro area; [9] assist in meeting the needs identified through the "management systems" of Section 303; [10] identify and preserve future ROW needs; [11] enhance efficient movement of freight; [12] encourage the use of life-cycle costs in project evaluations; [13] consider the overall social, economic, energy and environmental effects; [14] expand and enhance the extent and use of transit; and [15] capital investments that increase security

Mr. McIntyre also noted that in 2-3 years Congress will begin debating "TEA-21 Phase 2," or whatever it is they

in transit systems.). (Now reduced to 7 factors by TEA-21.)

Additional technical data will be used to further evaluate candidate projects where said projects appear to be equal under the criteria specified above.

Mr. McIntyre said that we need to document how the seven proposed projects meet the above criteria and we need to specify more about the scope of these projects so that we can formulate and present a recommendation to the Policy Committee. This information is also needed to substantiate (to the Feds) that we are following our adopted formal criteria.

Mr. Soltau noted that the issue of staging projects needs to be addressed so that money does not have to be banked for many years. Available funding, including match, will amount to roughly \$1.5-1.6 million per year.

Mr. Petrotte noted that the STP-U "Selection Process" as prescribed in Resolution 94-2, integrates the STP-U project selection with the TIP process. Also, it provides for an annual review of the selection process and the criteria themselves, in the event that conditions or priorities in the Urban Area change.

David Noel and Joe Vanderwerff suggested that a subcommittee be formed to deal with this issue. Mr. Noel noted that past projects were more visible projects because they involved new or significantly expanded roads. Current proposed projects are less dramatic. He also asked if consideration was being given to partially funding several of these projects and, if that was the case, how would the remainder of the project be completed.

Bob Martin asked if weighted or point system might be devised to rate the proposed projects. Gary McIntyre said the Quad Cities employed a very elaborate rating and evaluation system in the past but he was not sure if they still used it.

Mr. McIntyre asked if the structures on Harrison Avenue over the railroads would be part of the projects.

call the new transportation act. He said it is imperative that this area submit a number of projects for possible

earmark funding under that new law. Mr. Soltau supported this line of thought. He said there are often incidences where projects in other parts of the State get delayed and projects are needed to fill in or use the funds. Areas that have projects engineered and ready-to-go often benefit in these circumstances. Mr. Petrotte suggested that all these projects should be engineered and ready to go in case there are such unique funding opportunities. At a minimum, detailed planning or pre-engineering studies should be completed on all these projects so that we have good documentation to support our requests for special funds as part of the next transportation act.

Mr. Petrotte said that Rockford feels it is their turn to use the STP funds and that there has been an unwritten rule that the funds would be rotated. It has been a long time since Rockford has had a unique project of their own. Mr. Soltau concurred that typically most MPOs try to balance the use of the funds so that the major participants get fair shares. Mr. Vanderwerff also concurred that if that has been the practice, that the current discussions not imply that we intend to deviate too far from that practice.

Hong Liu said the City has issued an RFP for the Harrison Avenue Project and will have a good deal of information available on that proposal soon.

Mr. Petrotte suggested that Rockford, the Winnebago County, Loves Park and Machesney Park be appointed to serve on the selection subcommittee. He asked if there were any other volunteers. Michael Zonzius from the Airport Authority volunteered. Others could be added if there is interest.

Mr. Petrotte suggested that the first task of the subcommittee would be to review the Selection Process and Selection Criteria to determine if any changes should be recommended. Second, he reiterated Mr. McIntyre's requests that a more lengthy description of all the projects be developed. He suggested that at least a 4-5 page document be developed for each project. Third, he suggested that a December meeting be set and everybody plan on coming to that meeting with the materials requested.

Mr. Zonzius suggested that a more standardized list of information requests be developed for the project descriptions. Mr. Petrotte and Mr. McIntyre agreed to develop such an outline and deliver it to all the parties.

Mr. McIntyre reviewed the funding situation and it was determined that our funding balance, after fulfilling all obligations on the Springfield Project, could reach \$2 million by the appropriation date FY 2002. Therefore, if we don't want to let the money lie idle, it was reasoned that we should have a project ready for bid letting in the Spring of 2002.

Because potential projects can vary greatly in the length of their preparation time, it was determined that we should attempt to select and authorize the next project as soon as possible. That in mind, the Committee concurred to impose a deadline on itself to select the next STP-U project by next Spring. It was decided therefore to move the first subcommittee meeting date to an earlier date. November 17, 1999, at 10:00 A.M. in the Rockford City Hall was set as the tentative subcommittee meeting date.

4. RAT/SLAT STUDY: Gary McIntyre distributed a preliminary simplified budget for the three phases of the study so that each participating jurisdictions would know what and when they would be expected to pay. The currently proposed negotiated cost with the consultant is \$349,768. Mr. McIntyre distributed copies of the third draft of the proposed contract. He called attention to recent additions. There is some concern that the contract and proposed budget have very little slack or funds left in reserve in the event that some tasks take longer than expected. There is however, the real possibility that some tasks will take less time on the part of the consultant and that will allow more time to be spent in other areas. Mr. McIntyre said the contract is very close to being ready for presentation to the City Council for approval.

Mr. McIntyre asked how many people would be interested in training. WisDOT will be sending three people, IDOT – three, Boone County – one, RATS – one and Rockford PW – one. That totals to nine. He said he would plan for 12 in case other express interest in attending.

5. PROGRESS REPORTS ON SPECIAL PROJECTS:

- a. **The Springfield/Harrison Project.** Joe Vanderwerff said the County is close to 50% of the ROW acquisition. The design plans are at IDOT and under review.
- b. **IDOT's Enhancement Program.** Bob Soltau said he expects an announcement on Enhancement awards any day now but he has no preliminary indications as to whether the Rockford area will receive any funding. Mr. McIntyre said he is becoming concerned with what he should apply for in the next round.
- c. **WinGIS.** Mr. Petrotte said the Cooperative Agreement is under legal review. He said a revised budget has been developed. The original budget called for implementing WinGIS at a cost of \$5.7 million over a four-year period. The revised budget expands the implementation time to five years and reduces the initial four-year cost by over half a million. It is unlikely that we will be able to hire competent WinGIS staff in as timely a manner as suggested in the PlanGraphics report. The Rockford Mayor Office has also asked us to look at a six-year implementation plan. He said we are still shooting for implementation and densification of ground control beginning next Spring but the new orthophotography is unlikely to be done until the Spring of 2001.

An outstanding issue that is going to need more attention is the communication aspect. The PlanGraphics report identified options but did not make specific recommendations and the Subcommittee assigned that task has somewhat stagnated. Staff is considering that the funds remaining in the IDOT contract, dedicated to the WinGIS study, be redirected to hiring someone to research the communications issue. Another approach would be to ask Cablevision and/or ESRI to look into this.

Staff is planning another joint committee meeting in a week or two.

6. COMMUNICATIONS: Gary McIntyre distributed a copy of the RATS meeting schedule for calender year 2000. He also said that on Friday, October 15, 1999, a combination Technical and Policy Committee meeting is scheduled. A major part of this meeting will be to honor Bill Ost who is retiring.

Bob Soltau said Roger Rocke has been appointed as the new IDOT District Engineer for District 2.

7. OTHER BUSINESS: Mr. Petrotte said the final draft of the FY 2000 TIP has been published. It is available at the RATS offices in the CD Department. It will be mailed out with the next mailing but persons needing copies sooner can call RATS.

8. ADJOURNMENT: With no further business to conduct the meeting was adjourned at 11:35 P.M.