

**APPROVED MINUTES - SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK
HELD ON MONDAY, JUNE 11TH, 2012 AT 7:00 P.M.
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF OAK PARK VILLAGE HALL**

I. CALL TO ORDER

President Pope called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Trustees Brewer, Hedges, Johnson, Lueck, Salzman and Tucker; President Pope
ABSENT: None

President Pope gave a brief history of the Eisenhower Expressway. He stated that tonight's presentation from the Illinois Department of Transportation will include various alternatives or options in terms of entrance ramps, exit ramps and access to the community, both in Oak Park and the surrounding areas.

V. REGULAR AGENDA

A. Presentation by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Concerning the Potential I-290 Harlem and Austin Interchange Configurations

Pete Harmet of IDOT presented their I-290 Environmental Impact Statement, focusing on the stretch between Mannheim and Cicero.

The overall framework for the planning process, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) considers transportation, social, economic and environmental factors as well as stakeholder input. He described the process to date, noting that they are currently in the alternative development and evaluation phase.

Mr. Harmet stated that this eight mile stretch of the Eisenhower has a higher crash rate than other urban expressways in the Chicago area and referred to the aging infrastructure and outdated design standards. He spoke about left-hand ramps, noting they coincide with high crash locations along the expressway. Nationally, there is a 49 percent higher crash rate with left-handed versus right-hand ramps, as they are inconsistent with typical lane usage. Metra, CTA and PACE also serve the study area with 60,400 work trips daily. Most of the pedestrian facilities that cross the Eisenhower don't meet current standards; the CTA Blue Line is in need of modernization as well.

Based on stakeholder input and technical analysis, the basic objectives are to improve local and regional travel, access to employment, safety, modal connections and facility condition and design. Ten combination mode alternatives were evaluated.

Ron Shimizur of the consulting firm Parsons Brinckerhoff presented the top five alternatives, ranked by their sum of need point average. Four out of the five alternatives recommended to be carried forward contain a mix of expressway modes ranging from general purpose to High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes and High Occupancy Toll (HOT)

lanes. Bryan Kapala, also of Parsons Brinckerhoff, noted that these concepts will be refined to address any of the various issues and concerns that are raised. He spoke about the two interchanges that interface with the community, Harlem Avenue and Austin Boulevard, noting that both are currently operating at a failing level of service. Mr. Kapala presented and described the modification concepts for these interchanges. He noted that they would like to narrow down the alternatives to more than one but less than five by the fall, host a public hearing in the spring of 2013 and finalize by spring 2014.

Trustee Lueck commented that the publicly posted material received in advance of this meeting was essentially a sketch of the various proposed interchange examples. It did not have the level of detail that was just presented; no one present has had an opportunity in advance of tonight's meeting to look at this material.

Trustee Salzman added that the people in attendance were present to discuss the entire vision of the corridor not just the two interchanges. It would be helpful if that could be placed in the wider context of what's being discussed with respect to the corridor. He asked if the focus of tonight's public comment was intended to be the interchanges or the entire concept.

President Pope stated that the four guiding elements that the Board has pursued for many years in terms of their interactions regarding the I-290 corridor have been to not expand the trench, a preference for rail as opposed to roadway in terms of Blue Line extension, to increase the physical linkages to reconnect the area north of the I-290 with the area south of the 290 and to keep the intersections in the middle of the corridor to minimize the impact on the adjacent neighborhoods.

Trustee Johnson expressed concern regarding the source of IDOT's data as well as the methodology of their analysis, adding that these conclusions don't meet those four guiding principles.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chris Donovan, 733 S. Elmwood. Mr. Donovan was in support of right-hand exit and entrance ramps, as well as widening of the Eisenhower, but doing so without intruding on the current trench.

Michael Caldwell, 704 . Oak Park Ave. Mr. Caldwell agreed that the four guiding elements indicated by President Pope are important to the Village. He stated that what everybody in attendance wants to know is how far, if at all, will this go beyond the current trench.

Tim Murphy, 1005 Wisconsin, representing Ferrara Pan Candy. Mr. Murphy stated that losing access to the CSX line will have significant impact on his company, regardless of Ferrara Pan being the sole user.

Sandy Lentz, 822 N. Humphrey, representing the Park District Greening Advisory Committee. Ms. Lentz stated that there is nothing that addresses the environmental

impacts in the IDOT Purpose and Needs Statement nor in any of the alternatives for the overall planning.

Joan Suchomer, 736 S. Taylor. Ms. Suchomer spoke in support of the four guiding elements as noted by President Pope.

Jenny Jocks Stelzer, 814 N. Humphrey. Ms. Jocks Stelzer noted that “potential” widening of the Eisenhower quickly becomes “inevitable” in the public’s mind when they are not fully informed. She stated that the solutions presented may help alleviate road congestion and some safety concerns but will negatively impact air quality.

Tom DeCoursey, 833 S. Scoville. Mr. DeCoursey was in favor of upgrading the public transportation system rather than widening the expressway.

David Manuele, 731 S. Euclid. Mr. Manuele stated that construction projects completed on the Eisenhower have failed to appreciably reduce congestion; perhaps such major funding should be reconsidered for public transportation, such as the extension of the Blue Line into the far west suburbs.

Rick Kuner, 728 S. Euclid. Mr. Kuner noted that all ten alternatives presented require an additional lane in each direction. He indicated that by law, IDOT must consider all prudent and feasible alternatives; he does not believe they have done that.

David Moehring, 847 S. Kenilworth. Mr. Moehring reiterated Mr. Kuner’s comments, adding that IDOT needs to identify ways to get more people to use mass transit. He also spoke in favor of incorporating tolls and against constructing sound walls.

Frank Stachyra, 922 Wenonah Ave. Mr. Stachyra discussed the noise level near his home, anticipating that it will become worse with the proposed raised elevation of the Harlem Avenue ramp and additional lane. He also expressed disappointment that IDOT was not thinking in terms of long-range plans to address global warming with more emphasis on mass transit.

Mike Johnson, 819 S. Maple. Mr. Johnson did not understand why the Environmental Impact Statement addressed nothing about the environment, adding that further environmental analysis needs to be made.

Jon Vollentine, 1020 S. Elmwood. Mr. Vollentine asked why IDOT personnel were surveying houses in his neighborhood if they are not planning on widening the expressway.

Jim Kelly, 1043 S. Harvey. Mr. Kelly has been watching IDOT try to build its way out of congestions since 1982. None of the designs took into consideration the residential buildings or people who live along the corridor. He expressed concern that none of the plans address anything that would encourage people to choose public transportation to help alleviate congestion.

Marty Tellalian, 7335 Jackson Blvd., Forest Park. Mr. Tellalian stated that it is unfortunate that projects such as these impact so many people but there has to be some compromise for the greater good.

Michael Caldwell, 704 . Oak Park Ave. Mr. Caldwell commented that the Environmental Impact Statement should look at is how this is going to affect the businesses and the community of Oak Park during the construction phase as well.

Ron Burke, 616 Wenonah, representing Riders for Better Transit. Mr. Burke spoke about an option called transportation demand management and the lack of political will to initiate it. He urged interested parties to visit his organization's website to support this.

President Pope asked why all five options being moved forward have the additional lane in each direction. Mr. Harmet stated that there are large safety and capacity problems on the Eisenhower that the transit and non-expressway options would not solve. Regarding environmental analysis, he explained that the National Environmental Policy Act requires that transportation needs be met first. Environmental concerns such as air and noise cannot be analyzed without first having a detailed design.

Mr. Harmet answered questions from the Board. The topics of discussion included the CSX line height requirement, bridge widening, sound impact, and improvement in travel time and mobility. Mr. Harmet clarified that the additional lanes would not require expanding the existing trench. He stressed that the expressway is near the end of its useful life; some type of construction is inevitable.

Trustee Lueck stated that the Village's goals are at odds with IDOT's first priority; that of improving local and regional travel. Oak Park's objective is to improve the quality of life in the community, including travel, but also by preserving historical features, improving green space, air quality and access to rapid transit. She added that they are more interested in having an urban transit based community than improving traffic on a highway for those who live in the far west suburbs. If IDOT is considering including these other items, none of it is offered in the data being presented for review.

Trustee Tucker asked if a Section 106 analysis would be done for Columbus Park, given its historical landmark status. Mr. Harmet replied that this would be part of the process.

Trustee Johnson commented that a potential 10 percent improvement in the basic roadways, aside from the high occupancy options, seemed like a very marginal increase as well as potentially short-term.

There was further discussion regarding left-lane exit ramps, alternate modes of transportation such as Metra, RTA and CTA, HOT and HOV lanes and pedestrian facilities.

President Pope stated that in terms of how this moves forward, there are technical criteria that need to be satisfied following the NEPA process. The final decision lies with the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration based on the input that comes through this process, both the technical analysis and public input.

President Pope stated that this project should not be thought of in terms of how only Oak Park is impacted but about the neighboring areas through this corridor as well. There is a strong alignment of interests in what Oak Park would like to see and what the

neighbors to the east and west would like to see regarding enhancing the quality of life for everyone through the corridor. He encouraged all to submit any additional comments to the Board.

VI. ADJOURN

It was moved and seconded to adjourn. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved. The meeting adjourned at 9:51 P.M. Monday, June 11, 2012.

SUBMITTED AND RECORDED IN THE OFFICE OF:

By: MaryAnn Schoenneman
Interim Deputy Village Clerk

Teresa Powell, Village Clerk