



Grand Gateway

Community Advisory Group Meeting #3 Summary

December 7, 2021 – 10:00 a.m.
Virtual Meeting held via Zoom

Project Team Members:

Name	Company
Mark Reznicek	ESI Consultants, Ltd.
Joe Chiczewski	ESI Consultants, Ltd.
Jim Riemer	Governmental Consulting Solutions
Zach Einert	Knight E/A, Inc
Scott Brejcha	Knight E/A, Inc.
Stephanie Abezetian	Knight E/A, Inc.
Clay Shipley	Knight E/A, Inc.
Bill Eldringhoff	Knight E/A, Inc.
Tammy Wierciak	Metro Strategies Group
Elli Cosky	Metro Strategies Group
Seema Wadia	Metro Strategies Group
Kristen Robinson	Metro Strategies Group

Community Advisory Group Members:

Name	Agency
Dan Sabatka	Canadian Pacific Railway
Tom Murtha	Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
Cecilia Diaz	Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways
Sam Wright	Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways
Arielle Giordano	Canadian Pacific Railway
Matthew Miller	Canadian Pacific Railway
Broc Leder	Village of River Grove
David Kralik	Metra
Glen Peters	Metra
Al Bakotic	Metra
Tim Pitzen	Metra
Adam Eichenberger	PACE
Tom Robbins	PACE



Chief Frank Fagiano	Village of Elmwood Park
Angelo “Skip” Saviano (President)	Village of Elmwood Park
Paul Volpe	Village of Elmwood Park
Kim Parrilli	Village of Elmwood Park
Ted Gruber	Village of Elmwood Park
Chief Michael Terzo	Village of Elmwood Park Fire Prevention
Mayor Barrett Pedersen	Village of Franklin Park
Peter Harmet	Elmwood Park Engineer Consultant - CBBEL
Orion Galey	Elmwood Park Engineer Consultant - CBBEL

Presentation Overview:

Tammy Wierciak with Metro Strategies Group began the meeting by welcoming CAG members to the third meeting and outlining the CAG’s role to advise on project direction, needs and details. CAG members are critical to the feedback process as the study unfolds and this was noted during the opening remarks. Ms. Wierciak noted the meeting was begin recorded for documentation purposes and requested attendees mute themselves and turn off videos for the presentation portion of the meeting.

Next, Ms. Wierciak reviewed the agenda for the meeting which included introductions, a study recap, a project overview, the alternative analysis discussion followed by breakout sessions. The breakout sessions would be followed by a review of next steps and any final questions to be addressed.

Ms. Wierciak introduced the Village of Elmwood Park attendees which included President Angelo “Skip” Saviano, Kim Parrilli, Paul Volpe, Chief Terzo, Chief Fagiano, and Ted Gruber.

President Angelo “Skip” Saviano thanked everyone for joining the meeting and participating on the project. President Saviano thanked the Illinois Commerce Commission’s recent approval of an additional \$3.1 million for Phase I Engineering.

Ms. Wierciak thanked the CAG members for their involvement. She noted the CAG includes representatives from local agencies and municipalities, chambers of commerce, local institutions, park and environmental organizations, and transit agencies.

The goals of the CAG were outlined, most notably to provide input and advice to the Village of Elmwood Park and its study team with the goal of building overall consensus as the project progresses. This includes providing structured input and advice from the community at large, helping ensure that the best alternative is identified, and generating interest and knowledge among the general public about the Grand Gateway Grade Separation project.

Ms. Wierciak provided a brief recap of the first CAG meeting which was held on July 23, 2020 and stated the primary reason for the project is safety. The project is a collaboration between the Village of Elmwood Park, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways (CCDOH) and Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). This project will improve safety, regional



mobility and allow room for redevelopment in many communities (not just Elmwood Park). Concerns shared by stakeholders during the first CAG meeting included safety at the existing crossing, emergency response challenges, pedestrian safety and traffic delays, among others.

Ms. Wierciak then provided an overview of the second CAG meeting, held on February 18, 2021. During the virtual meeting, the Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study Process was discussed. The Problem Statement and Purpose and Need were finalized. Ms. Wierciak read these statements to remind attendees of the focus of this project. Criteria for the Alternative Analysis were also reviewed and received feedback.

Following the second CAG meeting, the project held its first Public Information Meeting. On April 21, 2021, 100 participants participated in the event. Key topics included the project overview, PEL Study, the Draft Problem Statement as well as the Draft Purpose and Need Statement. Six breakout rooms allowed participant discussion, and a question-and-answer session concluded the first Public Information Meeting.

Scott Brejcha with Knight E/A Inc. presented the project area map. The study within Elmwood Park extends from 78th Court to 75th Court along West Grand Avenue; a length of approximately 0.5 miles. The project location, West Grand Avenue at the METRA/Canadian Pacific Railroad crossing, is located 0.6 miles west of IL Route 43 (N. Harlem Avenue).

Ms. Wierciak shared the Phase I study timeline. The study is approximately halfway through, with a second Public Information Meeting slated for early 2022. The CAG will reconvene for its fourth CAG meeting in the spring. Once a preferred alternative has been determined, a public hearing would be scheduled in the summer of 2022 so that the team can make any final changes before submitting for design approval – anticipated to occur in early 2023. The project is currently within the PEL phase which will be followed by Phase I, a Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Study.

Mr. Brejcha then discussed the alternatives analysis. An Alternative Evaluation Report was submitted to IDOT on October 15, 2021. This report summarized six alternatives that were developed along with the impacts associated with each alternative. All of the six alternatives propose a grade separation to eliminate future train-on-vehicle collisions as well as increase mobility due to the elimination of the at grade railroad crossing. Each Alternative is designed in accordance with Design Criteria and Policy in accordance with IDOT's Bureau of Design and Environment Manual (BDE). Additionally, a sidewalk is provided on the north side of Grand Avenue and a shared use path is provided on the south side of Grand Avenue in accordance with IDOT's Complete Streets Guidelines. In addition to the six alternatives that were prepared, the no build was considered. The no build alternative accounts for what would occur if no proposed improvements or grade separations were constructed in the study area. Mr. Brejcha noted that while the no build alternative would result in no impacts to adjacent properties, roads, or railroads; it does not alleviate any traffic congestion or improve safety or mobility in the study area. Each alternative was then reviewed.

The first alternative design concept, Grand Avenue over railroad, was presented to the CAG by Zach Einert from Knight E/A, Inc. This alternative would maintain the existing railroad profile and raise Grand Avenue approximately 30 feet over the three existing railroad tracks. As a result, 76th Avenue would also be raised approximately 17 feet to meet the proposed elevated Grand Avenue profile. The cross section of this concept includes a 12' flush median, 2-12' travel lanes for each direction of traffic, a 7' sidewalk on south side of the road along with a 10' wide shared-use path on the North. Under Grand Avenue, a 3-sided concrete railroad tunnel would be constructed. The structure is about 675' long with a width of approximately 50' to accommodate all 3 railroad tracks. It was noted that there will not be a permanent track (Metra/CP) or a temporary Shoofly Track.



Some issues with this alternative include a loss of access to various sideroads and commercial businesses along Grand Avenue. This includes 77th Court, 78th Avenue, and the rear access for the Elmwood Park Public Library and fire department. The spur off 76th Avenue that connects this roadway with back streets north of the Culver's would also need to be removed. The Pace Bus stop and Metra station pick-up and drop off turnaround would also lose its access off of Grand Avenue. Additionally, the Generations at Elmwood Park retirement homes would lose its access off of Grand and would need to be acquired. In total, 11 commercial businesses and 2 residential complexes along Grand Avenue would be displaced by this design. Last, various on street parking spaces will be impacted along with some commercial parking spaces behind the library and fire station. A total of 47 spaces are estimated to be impacted.

Mark Reznicek with ESI Consultants, Ltd. reviewed the second alternative, Grand Avenue under the railroad. For this alternative, Grand Avenue would be reconstructed from 79th Avenue to 75th Court and lowered by 35 feet under the tracks. 76th Avenue would also be lowered 5 feet at Grand Avenue. Metra operations will be impacted during construction. Travel lanes would be 12-feet, and a 7-foot sidewalk along the south side of Grand Avenue and 10-foot shared use path along north Grand Avenue would be constructed. This alternative would include a permanent track (Metra/CP) of 6,300 and a temporary Shoofly Track of 7,200.

Issues and impacts for alternative 2 include a loss of access to sideroads and commercial businesses along Grand Avenue including 77th Court and the rear access for the Elmwood Park Public Library and fire department. The spur off 76th Avenue connecting to the back streets north of the Culver's would be removed. The Pace Bus stop and Metra station pick-up and drop off turnaround would also lose its access off of Grand Avenue. In total, 4 commercial businesses and 2 residential properties along Grand Avenue would be displaced. Both on-street parking spaces and commercial parking spaces behind the library and fire station are anticipated to be impacted by the grade separation. A total of 29 spaces are estimated to be impacted. The Elmwood Park Metra Station will be relocated on Grand Avenue.

Alternative 3, a combination of lowering Grand Avenue and raising the railroad, was presented by Mr. Einert. This alternative would be a combination of lowering Grand Avenue approximately 13 feet from its current condition and raising the railroad approximately 13 feet above its current profile. This results in a 14'-9" vertical clearance between Grand Avenue and the railroad overpass. The profile at 76th Avenue would not require adjustments for Alternative 3 since the grade separation can be achieved before the intersection. Similar to the other alternatives, the cross section of this roadway includes a 12-foot median, 2-12 foot travel lanes for each direction of traffic and the 7-foot sidewalk on the south side and 10-foot shared use path on the north side. The bridge structure for this alternative would be comprised of two different sections, both utilizing a pier built within the median of Grand Avenue. The westbound section would be constructed with a span-width of approximately 45 feet and a length of 450 feet. The eastbound section would be constructed with a span-width of approximately 40 feet and a length of 500 feet. The need for these two sections is due to the extreme skew of the railroad crossing over Grand Avenue. Metra operations would be impacted since all three tracks require reconstruction. Two temporary tracks constructed on each side of the railroad in conjunction with the existing tracks would be utilized for maintaining through-traffic during the various stages of construction. The Elmwood Park Metra station along Marwood Avenue would be reconstructed to meet the proposed railroad profile raise. The railroad profile will be constructed with a 0% slope through the entire limits of the reconstructed Metra Platform. A temporary station would be constructed to allow for limited operations throughout the construction process. Two other railroad crossings would be impacted along Grand Avenue due to the railroad profile raise. Maintaining this flat profile through the limits of the Metra station would require both a 7-foot raise to the crossing at 75th Avenue and minor profile adjustments to the 73rd Avenue crossing. The 7-foot railroad profile raise at the 75th crossing would also require the roadway intersection at 75th and Grand to be raised as well to



meet the railroads profile. There would be a permanent track, Metra/CP, of 16,260, and a temporary Shoofly Track of 18,840.

Mr. Einert outlined some issues associated with alternative 3. Access to 77th Court would be cut off from Grand Avenue along with the rear access to the public library and fire station. In total, 1 residential complex (the 3-story condo adjacent to the library) and three other commercial businesses would be displaced with this design. Along with that, the Metra station pick up and drop off turnaround would have its access impacted temporarily removed during construction. Access would be restored once construction is complete. Also, on street parking and some commercial parking would be impacted as well (in total, an estimated 19 spaces).

Alternative 4 was also presented by Mr. Einert. Alternative 4 maintains the existing profile for Grand Avenue and would raise the railroad approximately 20 feet above its current condition. This will result in a 14'-9" vertical clearance between Grand Avenue and the railroad overpass. The profile at 76th Avenue would not require adjustments for Alternative 4 since there would be no change to the Grand Avenue profile. The cross section of this roadway matches the first three alternative profiles. As in alternative 3, the bridge structure for this alternative would be comprised of two different sections, both utilizing a pier built within the median of Grand Avenue as shown in the slide. Metra operations would be impacted and similar to alternative 3, temporary tracks would need to be utilized to maintain through traffic through the construction stages. The Elmwood Park Metra station along Marwood Avenue would be reconstructed to meet the proposed railroad profile raise and would maintain a flat profile through the entire limits of the reconstructed Metra Platform. A temporary station would be constructed to allow for limited operations throughout the construction process. Maintaining a flat profile for the railroad through the limits of the Metra station would raise the railroad crossing at 75th Avenue approximately 14 feet which would result in the need for another grade separation for this crossing. As a result of this added grade separation at 75th Avenue, the intersection of Grand and 75th would need to be lowered to achieve the grade separation clearance. We could anticipate major impacts to Metra and freight operations for the railroad and extensive traffic delays due to the need for multiple grade-separation and intersection construction. Minor profile adjustments to the 73rd crossing are also required. There will be a permanent track, Metra/CP, of 18,260, and a temporary Shoofly Track of 12,170.

Mr. Einert stated that alternative 4 results in 1 residential displacement; a 3-story condo building and no other commercial displacements. No sideroads or municipal buildings would have their access cut off from grand since the profile is not manipulated. However, the lowering of the 75th and Grand Avenue Intersection would involve temporary access impacts to the buildings surrounding the intersection. Lastly, an estimated 19 parking spaced would be impacted by this design.

Alternative 5, railroad under Grand Avenue, was presented by Mr. Reznicek. Alternative 5 maintains the existing profile for Grand Avenue and lowers the railroad approximately 30 feet below its current condition to provide the required 23-foot vertical clearance between Grand Avenue and the railroad underpass. The profile at 76th Avenue does not need to be adjusted for Alternative 5 since there is no change to the Grand Avenue profile. The cross section matches the previous alternatives. The bridge structure is comprised of a single section, supporting Grand Avenue. The bridge is 704 feet long and 60 feet wide. Metra operations are impacted since all three tracks require reconstruction. Two temporary tracks are anticipated on each side of the existing railroad. Additionally, the individual existing tracks can be utilized for maintaining through traffic during the various stages of construction. The Elmwood Park Metra station along Marwood Avenue would need to be reconstructed below the exiting grade to meet the lowered railroad. The existing railroad profile is at a small rising grade. This impacts the length of railroad required to reach the existing elevation of the profile. The railroad meets back at an unknown location approximately 3,300 feet east of Harlem Avenue. The length of railroad reconstruction is likely to require grade separations at the railroad crossings at 75th Avenue, 73rd



Avenue and Harlem Avenue. The project team anticipates major impacts to Metra and Freight operations for the railroad and longer traffic delays. Alternative 5 indicates there will be a Permanent Track, Metra/CP, of 20,850, and a temporary Shoofly Track of 24,000.

Mr. Reznicek noted that alternative 5 results in 19 residential displacements and 18 commercial displacements. The Pace Bus stop and Metra station pick-up and drop off turnaround would also lose its access off Grand Avenue. The total length of railroad that needs to be reconstructed at a lower grade would extend beyond Harlem Avenue.

Mr. Reznicek proceeded to discuss the last alternative. Alternative 6 is a combination of raising Grand Avenue approximately 19 feet from its current condition and lowering the railroad approximately 11 feet above its current profile. This results in a 23-foot minimum vertical clearance between Grand Avenue and the railroad underpass. The profile at 76th Avenue needs to be raised approximately 10 feet to meet the new grand avenue profile grades. The bridge structure is constructed with a single span, the width is approximately 55 feet and a length of 701 feet. Metra operations will be impacted as all three tracks require reconstruction. Two temporary tracks constructed on each side of the railroad in conjunction with the existing tracks can be utilized for maintaining through traffic during the various stages of construction. The Elmwood Park Metra station along Marwood Avenue is to be reconstructed to meet the lowered railroad profile. A temporary station can be constructed to allow for limited operations throughout the construction process. Two other railroad crossings will be impacted along grand avenue due to the railroad profile change. Maintaining a flat profile through the limits of the Metra station will likely require an additional grade separation at 75th Avenue and minor profile adjustments to the 73rd Avenue. Additional grade improvements and reconstruction at the intersection of Grand Avenue and 75th Avenue will be required to accommodate the required grade changes along the railroad. Alternative 6 will have a permanent track, Metra/CP, of 7,650, and a temporary Shoofly Track of 10,800.

Alternative 6 results in 2 residential displacements and 3 commercial displacements. Side streets and access to businesses along Grand Avenue, including 77th Court and the rear access for the Elmwood Park Public Library and fire department, will be removed due to the need for retaining walls. The spur off 76th Avenue that connects 76th Avenue with back streets north of the culver's would also need to be removed. Additionally, the lowering of the 75th and Grand Avenue intersection would involve temporary access disruptions to the buildings surrounding the intersection. The Pace Bus stop and Metra station pick-up and drop off turnaround would lose its access off Grand Avenue. An estimated 19 parking spaced would be impacted.

Mr. Brejcha presented an alternatives comparison slide that summarized the construction cost and significant impacts associated with each of the six alternatives. Mr. Brejcha also reviewed the criteria for alternatives analysis, the purpose and need statement as well as the screening process. Based on this foundation, Mr. Brejcha discussed the preliminary survey results.

He reviewed the evaluation criteria items that would be applied to each alternative, dependent upon weight of importance. The survey allows CAG members to give feedback on the importance of weight, between 1 and 5, that each evaluation criterion may hold in context with the potential scope of the improvement. Mr. Brejcha encouraged all CAG members to complete the survey by December 10, 2021. After the weight of importance is finalized for each criteria item, the project team will provide a measure of impact that will either be measured qualitatively or quantitatively - the highest number being the least impactful and most beneficial and the lowest number being the most impactful and least beneficial. This information will ultimately help to rank the



alternatives from a potential preferred alternative (highest score) to what may be considered the least preferred alternative (lowest score) based on the evaluation criteria.

Ms. Wierciak invited CAG attendees to join four breakout rooms to discuss the alternatives and evaluation matrix.

CAG Break Out Group Summaries:

Feedback below highlights collective ideas from each group during the workshop session.

Group 1:

Scott Brejcha, Knight; Tammy Wierciak, Metro Strategies Group; David Kralik, Metra; Arielle Giordano, Canadian Pacific Railway; Chief Terzo, Elmwood Park

- Representatives from the Village of Elmwood Park stated they thought the criteria was appropriate. The Village pointed out that cost is a major concern and agreed that it should be included in the evaluation criteria.
- The main points discussed were construction costs, the displacements and community cohesion.
- Metra suggested that additional coordination is needed as the project moves forward to ensure any alternative does not limit future service plans and provides flexibility for future service expansion.
- The station relocation may need additional coordination regarding relocation and design. Metra mentioned that there may be opportunities for innovation and creativity for station location and design.
- Additional safety needs, light of sight/visibility need to be considered as the project moves forward.
- The Fire Chief noted safety, and had concerns with the railroad being below Grand Avenue for safety reasons. This may increase the difficulty with potential rescues.
- Canadian Pacific Railway noted that the Grand Avenue under the railroad would be their preferred alternative.
- Metra also asked about the Shoofly and how many tracks would be maintained during construction. Mr. Brejcha responded that the intent is to maintain all the tracks but that additional design will be needed.

Group 2:

Stephanie Abezetian, Knight; Tom Murtha, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning; Al Bakotic, Metra; Tom Robbins, Pace; Mayor Barrett Pederson Village of Franklin Park; Chief Frank Fagiano, Elmwood Park Police Department; Elli Cosky, Metro Strategies Group

- Pace Bus indicated that his main concern is the 319 and 307 bus routes. The 307 route makes a right on the Parkway and goes by the Village. Pace will bring their Planner and Engineer once the alternative is finalized.
- Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning suggested an additional criterion – total benefit for vehicle delay for all crossings. He also suggested that improvements take into consideration compatible future projects.
- Pace Bus noted that the point of conflict could be eliminated at Harlem Avenue, and this was not accounted for in the evaluation criteria.
- It was suggested to reduce travel lanes to 10', rather than the proposed 11' to reduce impacts.
- Metra asked about freight traffic impact. This needs to be coordinated with Metra.



- Elmwood Park Police Department asked about walkability and community cohesion, specifically with the high school students and day care facility.
- Canadian Pacific Railway was curious about freight train speeds with a 1% grade.

Group 3:

Mark Reznicek, ESI; Broc Leder, Village of River Grove; Cecilia Diaz, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways; Dan Sabatka, Canadian Pacific Railway; Matthew Miller, Canadian Pacific Railway; Tom Pitzen, Metra; Seema Wadia, Metro Strategies Group

- Cook County Highway and Canadian Pacific Railway noted various impacts, including the 1% grade.
- It was noted that users access the Metra station by all modes – walking, driving and bus.
- Participants discussed drainage needs and were curious about costs (pump stations for undergrade alternatives) and how snow and snow removal would be addressed.
- Discussion included the importance of balancing the needs of all groups; pedestrian, bicyclists, operations, autos and businesses as necessary while minimizing impacts to all groups.
- It was important to understand if any of the alternatives affect the community's robustness. There is a lot of pedestrian activity and need to be mindful of ADA compliance as well as bus movements through the corridor.
- Metra noted that the different design concepts are going to create challenges and they must be ADA compliant. For Shooflys, they are going to need temporary platforms.
- For any rail under grade options, there will need to be access for emergency vehicles and first responders and emergency response plans including access for cranes/wreck removal equipment.

Group 4:

Clay Shipley, Knight; Adam Eichenberger, Pace; Joe Chiczewski, ESI; Zach Einert, Knight;; Jim Riemer, Governmental Consulting Solutions; Glen Peters, Metra; Bill Eldrindhoff, Knight; Kristin Robinson, Metro Strategies Group

- Pace noted that bus routes 319 and 307 pass through this area.
- The survey was discussed and the project team needs feedback. Please take the survey by December 10th.
- The project schedule is on the website, please double-check. Our public information meeting will be in early 2022. More information and dates will be forthcoming.

CAG members reconvened after the breakout groups and provided a summary of each breakout session to the overall group. Ms. Wierciak informed CAG members of the next step in the outreach plan to engage the general public through a virtual public information meeting, which is scheduled for early 2022. All attendees will be notified once the date is finalized. The public will be able to comment on the alternatives and the criteria for evaluation. General comments and concerns are also welcome at that time.

Closing out the presentation, Ms. Wierciak opened the meeting for discussion with the project team and Village members standing by to address comments. All CAG 2 materials as well as CAG 3 meeting materials will be posted to the project website. CMAP noted that Harlem Avenue, Thatcher Avenue, Des Plaines River Road and 25th Avenue are all additional crossings that have plans for grade separation studies. Whatever alternative comes of out this study should not preclude separations at these locations.



Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways stated that the discussions were helpful. They would like to see ongoing conversations.

Mr. Shipley then thanked everyone for their participation, reminded CAG members about the survey and to use the project team email for communications.