



Grand Gateway

Community Advisory Group Meeting #1 Summary

July 23, 2020; 10:00 a.m.
Virtual Meeting held via Zoom

Project Team Members:

Name	Company
Mark Reznicek	ESI Consultants, Ltd.
Joe Chiczewski	ESI Consultants, Ltd.
Scott Brejcha	Knight E/A
Mandi Jennings	Metro Strategies Inc.
Abby Monroe	Metro Strategies Inc.
Michael Schuch	Metro Strategies Inc.

Community Advisory Group Members:

Name	Agency
Leonard Cannata	West Central Municipal Conference/North Central Council of Mayors
Brian Carlson	Illinois Department of Transportation
Cecilia Diaz	Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways
Frank Fagiano	Village of Elmwood Park
Michael Horsting	Regional Transportation Authority
Andy Insera	Canadian Pacific Railway
Jennifer "Sis" Killen	Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways
David Kralik	Metra
Anna Kutryn	Illinois Department of Transportation
Brock Leder	Village of River Grove
Stanley Milewski	Illinois Commerce Commission
Nate Morriss	Metra
Chris Murauski	Illinois Commerce Commission
Tom Murtha	Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
Barrett Pedersen (Mayor)	Village of Franklin Park
Tim Pitzen	Metra
Andy Rabadi	Illinois Department of Transportation
William Raffensperger	Illinois Department of Transportation



Katelyn Renteria	Metra
Angelo "Skip" Saviano (Mayor)	Village of Elmwood Park
Claire Serdiuk	Regional Transportation Authority
Michael Terzo	Village of Elmwood Park
John "Tex" Mick	Baxter Woodman on behalf of Village of Franklin Park
Paul Volpe	Village of Elmwood Park
Sam Wright	Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways

Presentation Overview:

Mandi Jennings with Metro Strategies Inc. began the meeting with introductions of the Elmwood Park Mayor Angelo "Skip" Saviano. Mayor Saviano thanked everyone for joining the meeting and participating on this project. Mayor Saviano gave a brief background of the project, noting that there have been multiple accidents at this crossing (2nd worst crossing in the state). Mayor Saviano stated that safety is the reason this project is of the utmost importance. He thanked the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways (CCDOH) and Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) for their collaboration on the project (funding, etc.). He ensured that this is a project that will improve safety, regional mobility and allow room for redevelopment in many communities (not just Elmwood Park).

Ms. Jennings announced the organizations who were invited to participate and those who have confirmed their participation in the Community Advisory Group (CAG). Ms. Jennings encouraged CAG members to provide feedback and ask questions throughout the presentation and instructed attendees to send their questions into the project team through the chat function.

Scott Brejcha with Knight E/A discussed CAG goals and guidelines. The goal is for the stakeholders to provide feedback and advice to the project team about local concerns, safety, land use, etc. The project team wants to find the best alternative identified at the end of project, which will include stakeholders' input. Mr. Brejcha noted that the end goal of the project is to reach a consensus on an alternative.

Mr. Brejcha provided a project overview addressing the project history, study area (including study limits and perimeters), potential alternatives, project objectives, project benefits and proposed project limits. Mark Reznicek with ESI Consultants, Ltd. provided information on the crash data at the crossing. Mr. Reznicek said the crash data included statistics from 2014 - 2018 that were provided by IDOT. The most common type of accident in this area is a rear end accident, followed by a turning accident.

Mr. Brejcha briefly discussed a few examples of potential alternatives the project team was going to explore, but noted that no alternatives are confirmed as of now. The project team is still initiating this project and have not yet begun evaluating any alternatives. Mr. Brejcha said that other alternatives are likely to be analyzed as well in the future. The objective is to get to a preferred alternative which will improve safety, travel efficiency and rail and road improvements in the study area. This grade separation will allow for quicker emergency response times, improve all modes of transportation mobility, reduce congestion and delay and reduce train/vehicle conflict.

Ms. Jennings discussed the project timeline for public engagement and project development. She noted that there will be two public meetings and one public hearing for the project. Attendees were assured that public



notifications will be provided for all meetings and that there will be a project website that contains project information and all study materials.

Abby Monroe with Metro Strategies, Inc. informed all CAG members that receiving feedback is vital to the project. She walked the attendees through how to interact on the call, including asking questions via the chat and raise hand functions. Ms. Monroe encouraged participants to provide feedback to the project team. She asked the following questions to engage the CAG members: What transportation issues along Grand Avenue are you hopeful this project will address?; What design opportunities or constraints should the project team consider as alternatives are developed?; What is important to know about working with the community in this project area? At this time, the floor opened to CAG participants for group feedback, questions and comments.

CAG Feedback:

- Metra; Tim Pitzen stated that the project will be good if we could create a grade separation at the crossing, thus improving safety. Mr. Pitzen stated an overall support of the project, followed by a comment from Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways' Jennifer "Sis" Killen offering their support. Mr. Pitzen and Ms. Killen noted that safety is always at the forefront, adding that freight mobility will also be improved by changes to this crossing.
- IDOT; Brian Carlson expressed IDOT's support of the project. IDOT and Elmwood Park share jurisdiction in this area and IDOT has partnered with the Village in the engineering studies in an effort to improve the safety at this intersection.
- Mayor of Franklin Park, Barrett Pedersen stated that moving commerce and industry across the region is important. Mayor Pedersen hopes the project proceeds smoothly.
- CMAP; Tom Murtha said the project should look to reduce delay for people crossing the tracks. Motorists, trucks, pedestrians and cyclists currently face long delays. This crossing is one of 47 crossing locations prioritized by CMAP and other public agencies which studied our 1600+ at-grade crossings in the region.
- Village of Elmwood Park; Chief Frank Fagiano stated he was first on the scene of the 2005 train crash. Mr. Fagiano noted that he stations two police officers on each side of tracks, resulting in the need for more officers on hand to fulfill other police duties. Multiple cars get stuck every day on opposite sides of the track. If another car moves behind them, the front car gets stuck as gates come down. NTSB has stated that the only way to improve safety here is to improve the grade.
- RTA; Michael Horsting agreed with the safety concerns and improving the pedestrian environment. This project has potential to increase the use of Metra and other transit modes since they will then be safer. He supports anything that improves safety, thus improving the use of public transit.
- Mr. Murtha said this crossing is along a line that sees many delays at many crossings (25th Street to Harlem Avenue). He asked the study team to consider a separation at Harlem Avenue, River Road, Thatcher Avenue, etc. He noted that the whole line has issues with delays and trains blocking the crossing.
- Mayor Pedersen suggested having a design opportunity that has a wide enough path underneath the underpass for bicycles and pedestrians.
- Mr. Pitzen stated that bringing Grand Avenue down under the railroad may be better than raising the railroad line. In coordination with Canadian Pacific, the grade should be kept around 1%.
- CCDOTH; Sam Wright asked the team to consider access for pedestrian traffic to cross north and south at Grand Avenue, with possibly a more formal crossing when considering overpass and underpass options.
- CCDOTH; Cecilia Diaz asked that communication continue as the project moves forward.



- Mayor Pedersen said properties for the Franklin Park underpass were obtained via eminent domain , although only a portion of said properties was used. Mayor Pederson recommended at the end, the project team should have an idea regarding what they want to do with these properties so they are not just a tax-generating property. The Village is still determining what to do with these properties.
- Mr. Murtha said CMAP is working on rail transit, while improving safety (train collision) and improving reliability for transit users and motorists is important.
- Baxter Woodman; John “Tex” Mick asked Ms. Monroe or Mr. Brejcha to provide an example of a purpose and need statement. Ms. Monroe stated that the project team will send out more information with the presentation summary.
- IDOT; Andy Rabadi questioned if Canadian Pacific owned the right-of-way and Metra operates and maintains the corridor. However, Mr. Kralik noted that Canadian Pacific controls the railroad, but Metra owns the right-of-way.
- IDOT; Anna Kutryn asked if there was ever talk about providing additional tracks along the corridor by the railroads. Mr. Brejcha said he is not aware of any plans.
- Ms. Kutryn said 76th Avenue is close to the crossing. Ms. Kutryn asked what the grade separation options are that will maintain access to this spot.
- Metra; Mr. Kralik said Metra riders come from both sides of Grand Avenue, so creating connectivity access to the station at the north and the south is important.
- Mayor Angelo “Skip” Saviano said that working with the community in this project area, it is important to know that Village of Elmwood Park is all supportive of this project. For this to move forward, this project will need a lot of local support from both a safety and commerce perspective.
- Mr. Wright noted that providing pedestrian traffic the ability to get from one side of the tracks to the other is important for Metra commuters. Being able to make their train is important.
- Mayor Pedersen addressed the turning radius for emergency vehicles. He wanted to make sure there is an adequate turning radius to be able to get to underpass.
- Mr. Pitzen said that if alternatives include an underpass, sustainability issues (flooding, etc.) needs to be kept in mind (as issues have occurred before).
- IDOT; William Raffensperger recommended that the group google ASHTOW practitioner handbook regarding guidance of the project purpose and need statement. Metro Strategies, Inc. to include this in presentation summary.

Closing out the presentation, Ms. Jennings noted that the project will be using an environmental linkage process during the Phase I Study, as advised by IDOT. Ms. Monroe then provided the project email address to send in any questions that participants may have after the meeting. The Village of Elmwood Park then thanked everyone for participating and closed out the meeting.