

Southwestern IL Connector Task Force Meeting Minutes
May 10, 2019
World Shooting and Recreational Complex, Sparta, IL

Good Morning and welcome to our May 10th meeting of the Southwestern IL Connector Task Force. The following members were in attendance:

Dr. Marc Kiehna, Randolph County Commissioner
Ed Weilbacher, KRPD
Michael McConachie, Randolph County Farm Bureau
Bob Davenport, Realty Central, Inc.
Senator Paul Schimpf
Will Stephens, Mayor of Murphysboro
Karen Stallman, SIU Carbondale
Carrie Nelsen, IDOT

Also, in Attendance:

Chris Martin, Randolph County Economic Development Director
Eddie Koch, Monroe County Economic Development Director
Tim Lowry, Mayor of Red Bud
Joe Hackler, Randolph County Director of Land/Resource Management
Dan Zobel, Reporter, County Journal
Pete Spittler, Reporter, DuQuoin Call
Kathy Wills, Office of Senator Paul Schimpf
Jesse Johnson, Office of Senator Paul Schimpf
Cari Nichols, Office of Senator Schimpf and Representative Bryant

Seeing that a quorum of the Task Force was in attendance, Chairman Kiehna started the meeting.

Chairman Kiehna asked for the members to approve the minutes of our previous meeting held on April 12, 2019.

Will Stephens moved to accept the minutes of the April 12, 2019 meeting with Ed Weilbacher seconding. All in Favor, Approved.

Comments were made on collecting Letters of Support.

The task force received a letter from John Dunn, Chancellor of SIUC. Chairman Kiehna read the letter to the group.

The Task Force continued its discussion about the route for the connector. Each member received a copy of the proposed route. Dr. Kiehna asked for comments about the route.

Eddie Koch of Monroe County spoke about forwarding a map to the Southwest Freightway Group which could in the future look at jobs.

Will Stephens commented on the route. He believes we have a good expression as a group and that he is excited about the proposed route. It's a work in progress.

Bob Davenport asked about community meetings and the impact of the proposed route. Carrie Nelsen spoke to the Phase I process and answered questions about the Pinckneyville area and the public meetings held because of an earmark. Ed Weilbacher gave his thoughts about earmarks coming back and the need for special funds for a system expansion.

Michael McConachie commented on the letter read at the beginning of the meeting from Chancellor Dunn of SIUC. The letter referenced the four-lane road going up to Pinckneyville and north to the Nashville area where 127 connects with Interstate 64. Carrie Nelsen commented about logical termini and the changes that have occurred since the last study was commissioned. She mentioned Washington Counties lack of involvement in the study from Murphysboro to Pinckneyville. She commented that they were happy with their access to interstate 64 at Nashville and did not want another 4-lane road in the county.

Mayor Lowery commented on growth issues that could happen if a four-lane road comes into Red Bud.

Senator Schimpf asked the question if the task force would be committed to a route. The Senator asked are we able to piggy-back on environmental studies that have already been done. Carrie said we cannot use the prior studies because they expire.

Chairman Kiehna asked the task force if they are ready to commit to the route. Ed Weilbacher talked about the ground swell of support already behind the proposed route.

The task force discussed the proposed connector route and started using the term Focused Study Area as a description

A Four Lane Rural Expressway was described with the example of route 13 between Marion and Harrisburg. It is a Rural Four Lane Expressway with access control, a 65 miles per hour speed limit and private farm entrances.

The group voted to call the connector route a Focus Study Area. Ed Weilbacher made a motion and Will Stephens seconded. All in favor.

The group began the process of establishing the Focus and Need for the Rural Four Lane Expressway.

The following were suggested by the members of the task force:

PURPOSE AND NEED:

I. SAFETY-TRAFFIC- Clear Hazards-Look at Current Crashes -Highway Conducive to Farm Equipment-Safety and Challenges

II. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT-Maximizing Potential-- i.e. Entities- SIU, Port District, WSRC, Freight, Enterprise Zone {review aps}, Jobs

III. HEALTHCARE-Access to Trauma Center-Travel for Dialysis-OB-Basic Needs

IV. CONGESTION-EFFICIENCY

V. ACCESS TO RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

VI, SCHOOL DISTRICTS-BUSES

VII, SERVE NATIONAL GUARD TRAINING SITE

VIII. JOB CREATION

IX. EXISTING ROADWAY DEFICIENCIES-LIST PROBLEMS

X. MULTI-MODAL-Road, Rail, River, Bike, Air, pedestrian

XI. REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

XII. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT-Enhance Community

XIII. INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY

XIV. EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES-Real Estate, Access to Airports

XV. ALTERNATIVE TO ROUTE 3-Flooding-economic impact assessment= value* indirect value

XVI. CIVIC PRIDE AMONG COMMUNITITES

XVII. TRAVEL TIME STUDY

After a short break, the group began to talk about Build Grants and how it might work for us. Carrie Nelsen talked about the notice of funding opportunities or NOFO that has been made available to the State of Illinois. This federal funding has been designated at 50% for rural areas.

She spoke about how we might obtain the grant and that the worst thing about the funding is that it must be spent by 2026. It is a very competitive project. Only about 5% of the applicants get funded.

Carrie talked about what makes a good application. She spoke about the individual components including the importance of a strong benefit-cost analysis. One of the biggest challenges is to convince IDOT to participate in the project. She said it would take at least 5 or 6 weeks to get an application together and the deadline is July 15, 2019. We will need to talk with Mike Bost and work to get him on board with supporting a Build Grant application.

The task force put a writing group together with Chris Martin, Ed Weilbacher, Will Stephens, and Marc Kiehna with Carrie Nelsen. To begin the writing of the build grant.

There was no public comment.

Senator Schimpf spoke about proposed legislation, passing a budget and a possible infrastructure bill. Latest proposal is an increase in the motor fuel tax. He spoke to the proposals being floated. The Senator stated that he did not know if there would be an infrastructure bill.

Carrie Nelsen suggested we come up with a website for the connector project. We should have our own website.

Paul Schimpf made a motion and Bob Davenport seconded to adjourn the meeting. All in Favor.