

**Draft Meeting Notes
Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force**

MEETING DATE: 11/30/06

MEETING LOCATION: CMAP Offices

CALLED TO ORDER: 2:10 pm

ATTENDANCE:

(Task Force Members)

Tom Rickert (Chair), Kane County

Maryann Romanelli, Hinsdale Bicycle Task Force & Walk to School Day

Erin Willrett, Kendall-Kane Council of Mayors

Ed Barsotti, League of Illinois Bicyclists (via telephone)

Barbara Moore, Local communities (Village of Northfield)

Amy Malick, Chicago Transit Authority

Randy Neufeld, Chicagoland Bicycle Federation

Mark Minor, Metra

Keith Privett, Chicago Department of Transportation

Ben Helphand Center for Neighborhood Technology

Les Nunes, Illinois Department of Transportation (via telephone)

(Staff)

Tom Murtha, CMAP

John O'Neal, CMAP

Randy Blankenhorn, CMAP

(Others)

John LaPlante, TY Lin Intl.

Alan Mellis, Cook County Forest Preserve District

Tim Milam, IDOT, Statewide Planning (via telephone)

Megan Holt, Illinois Department of Transportation (via telephone)

Rosanne O'Laughlin, Edwards & Kelcey

Stacey Meekins, Edwards & Kelcey

Keith Holt, CBF

Lowell Nelson, Citizen (Park Ridge)

Matthew Griffin, Hinsdale Bicycle Task Force

Holly Ostdick, McHenry County Council of Mayors

Chalen Hunter, Northwest Municipal Conference

Patrick Foley, Victor's Crossing

Steve Laffey, Illinois Commerce Commission Railroad Safety Section

Matt Lawrie, Village of Mount Prospect

Doug Masters, Strand Associates

Greg Piland, FHWA-IL Division

Introductions: Attendees introduced themselves

Approval of the Minutes: A motion was made and seconded for approval of September 2006 meeting notes. The motion was unanimously approved.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Project Programming:

(a) Safe Routes to School

Megan Holt (Safe Routes to School Coordinator, IDOT Bureau of Design and Environment), on speakerphone, introduced and described the Safe Routes to School Program, referring to a handout she provided.

Ms. Holt started as the state coordinator of the SRTS program on September 1. The program currently has two (2) contracts out:

- 1) For the development of a website through which school travel plans and applications will be filled out, submitted, and processed. Ms. Holt stated that the application process will be entirely web-based, online, without any paper forms.
- 2) For statewide training, outreach and the program/content development for the Safe Routes website and the program application. This contract establishes a partnership between IDOT's SRTS Program and three non-profits, the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation, the League of Illinois Bicyclists, and the Center for Neighborhood Technology.

Ms. Holt stressed that communities need to establish working groups and local planning committees comprised of diverse stakeholders in order to fulfill application requirements, including the production of a School Travel Plan. She added that the program is a "reimbursement" program, i.e. the money must be fronted by the project sponsor, and that eligible applicants include all government entities and non-profit organizations.

Ms. Holt said SRTS projects can be either infrastructure construction projects or non-infrastructure projects – the latter being projects and programs for enforcement, education, encouragement and/or evaluation.

Ms. Holt emphasized that she believes the SRTS Program has amazing potential for helping to improve communities and accomplish goals related to safety, health, and quality of life.

Mr. Rickert asked how much funding was available through the SRTS program. Ms. Holt replied that a total of \$23.4M was apportioned for the state of Illinois through 2009. (\$1M in 2005, \$3.7M in 2006, \$4.9M in 2007, \$6.1M in 2008, and \$7.6M in 2009.) These funding numbers are based on Illinois' population of children in grades k-8, and are therefore subject to change based on updated data from the State Board of Education.

Mr. Rickert asked if the engineering on infrastructure projects must meet federal requirements, and Ms. Holt answered, "Yes."

Mr. Privett asked what information would be required on the application and as part of communities' School Travel Plans. Ms. Holt responded that the application would ask for statistics on the school district, its location, demographic characteristics, as well as information on existing barriers, problems, etc. She added that the application will include "check-boxes" asking whether, for example, bicycle parking is missing, or whether the surrounding area is lacking sidewalks, etc. She stated that the check-box format was designed to make the application relatively easy and quick to fill out, as well as easy to evaluate. The application, Ms. Holt, continued, after requiring applicants to identify their "problems", goes on to ask applicants to state their goals and strategies. Ms. Holt added that the application would require surveys to determine (and analyze) the travel mode of students. This may be accomplished by in-class counts in response to teachers' questions. However, Ms. Holt noted that states have not received guidance from the federal government on how exactly to conduct such surveys. Finally, Ms. Holt added that the application will require a GIS mapping element, in which communities can insert icons at locations where certain problems exist or improvements are planned/needed.

Mr. Rickert asked whether Ms. Holt and SRTS are actively working with other agencies and groups. Ms. Holt responded that the SRTS program is, as mentioned, working with CBF, LIB and CNT, and with various state and local agencies, including police, ISBE, and the Northeastern Illinois Safe Routes to School Task Force.

Mr. Murtha expressed concern that local communities are not aware of and adequately informed about the program and its timeframes/deadlines. Mr. Rickert agreed that time was short. Ms. Holt stated that while the program has not been fully rolled out yet, there should be enough time for communities to learn about, respond to and prepare program application materials. In response to Mr. Murtha's question, Ms. Holt stated that Travel Plans must be approved prior to application submission.

Mr. Murtha asked what the program's project selection process would entail, and whether northeastern Illinois, which has higher population and higher pedestrian risks, would receive, proportionally, more funding. Ms. Holt responded that there was not at present a pre-set geographic breakdown of the funding, but that she anticipates that the majority of applications would come from northeastern Illinois. She added that, in terms of infrastructure versus non-infrastructure projects, the federal government mandates that 70% of SRTS funding must be spent on infrastructure projects, 10% on non-infrastructure projects, and 20% is variable and at the discretion of state DOT's and program administrators.

Ms. Holt stated that they were currently working on a breakdown of the funding. She added that they want flexibility in order to match funding to problem areas. She stated that crash clustering will be a huge part of eligibility, but that it will not be the only criteria.

Mr. Murtha asked if application evaluation criteria are available now, or if such criteria will become available only when the application is officially issued. Ms. Holt responded, and a discussion regarding program transparency followed. Mr. Rickert stated that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force has in the past had concerns about just such issues in

connection with the selection of ITEP projects. Mr. Neufeld stated that IL state laws lay out criteria, which the SRTS application and the applicants' Travel Plans will speak to and reflect.

Mr. Piland asked Ms. Holt if she would talk briefly about the technical "Implementation Committee" which has been established and on which he sits. Ms. Holt stated that this committee is made up of state and federal agencies, including the ISBE, state police, the Secretary of State's Office, FHWA, IDOT, IDNR, and the State Public Health Department. Ms. Holt added that, as its name implied, the goal of this committee is to help implement the SRTS program and to be a sounding board for implementation issues and ideas.

Mr. Rickert asked Ms. Holt if she is available to help local planning groups, to which she replied "yes." Mr. Murtha stated that CMAP staff could help in disseminating information on the SRTS program to communities in northeastern Illinois. Ms. Holt replied they are currently working on publicity, and that they are striving for accuracy and consistency in all informational materials. She would however, she added, be grateful for any mailing lists CMAP might provide. She asked Mr. Murtha to contact her later as regards this.

(b) Rescissions

In response to questions raised in the last Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force meeting as regards the history and present policy of rescissions at IDOT, Mr. Nunes (on speakerphone) outlined this history and policy. In so doing, Mr. Nunes referred to a handout, which he made available to the Task Force members and meeting attendees. Mr. Nunes stated that there is likely to be another round of rescissions in March 2007. He stated that IDOT's policy is not to target local projects, programs that fund local projects tend to have large unobligated balances. Mr. Nunes added that as programs for local projects move to multi-year programming, this should take some pressure off of them – and add to the difficulties involved in making decisions as regards rescissions.

Regarding the table entitled "Illinois' History of Highway Rescissions" in Mr. Nunes's handout, questions were raised about Mr. Privett observed that including the original funding for the different programs would have been useful; Mr. Murtha suggested that the information from previous meetings already showed that the rescissions for CMAQ and ITEP were disproportionate, and we didn't need to re-establish that.

Mr. Barsotti (via speakerphone) asked Mr. Nunes if he knew what the future year looks like, in terms of the dollar amounts, as well as the distribution among programs, of the coming rescissions. Mr. Nunes said he did not at this point know much.

Mr. Barsotti expressed concern about what he sees as the very small window of opportunity for the public to respond to decisions about rescissions, and more generally to play any meaningful role in the decision-making process at all. Mr. Nunes responded that the state has only 14 days itself to respond to federal rescissions.

Mr. Neufeld stated that the state and IDOT could alleviate this problem by planning apportionments ahead of time.

(c) ITEP

Mr. Murtha discussed the possibility of improvements to the decision-making processes and procedures of the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP). Making reference to two handouts, which (1) outline the need for suballocations for northeastern Illinois, and (2) discussed potential programming principles and procedures. Mr. Murtha suggested the Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force refer this proposal to the CATS' Work Program Committee. He stressed that suballocation is a key priority. He noted that, since the ITEP program is substantially oriented toward bicycle and pedestrian projects, the Task Force was the right committee to initiate the proposal.

Mr. Rickert expressed concurrence with the both importance of suballocation and the need to for the Task Force to refer this proposal to the Work Program Committee.

Mr. Milam referred to eligibility criteria for TE funds, and after discussion, his concerns were addressed.

Mr. Blankenhorn, Executive Director of CMAP, introduced himself. He expressed CMAP's commitment to positive change and to improving the TE program and process. Mr. Blankenhorn stated that what he wanted to hear here today whether or not the Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force believed that suballocation to NE IL would in fact be such an improvement – in short, whether it would be a “better way of doing things.” Mr. Blankenhorn stated that IDOT in all probability will want the program to remain a state-wide program; therefore it was important, if we agree that suballocation is a better programming procedure, that we act together, in concert.

Mr. Milam (via speakerphone) stated that regardless of any changes to the TE program, the MPO will still need to be involved. He added that project readiness is a major issue which must be addressed.

Mr. Murtha stated that in order to make good decisions, we need a “mark” under and with which communities may prioritize projects, without fear of funding being withdrawn for projects not yet ready to go. He added that the lack of such a mark has in the past made participants leery of formally prioritizing projects.

Mr. Milam stated that a large part of this particular problem would be addressed by multi-year programming, which IDOT supports.

Mr. Privett stated that he was both desirous and would be very proud to be the person to formally make the motion that suballocation be forwarded to the Work Program Committee. He expressed his belief that suballocation would improve the efficiency of the TE program and the ability of local officials to make effective, rational decisions. Mr. Privett moved adoption of a motion to recommend a suballocation of Transportation Enhancement funds for northeastern Illinois, and referring the recommendation to the Work Program Committee. Ms. Moore seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Neufeld stated that suballocation was a *great* idea. He added that present episodic programming of ITEP projects would never result in the timely, efficient implementation

of projects. Mr. Neufeld added that in order to effectively plan, propose, and implement projects, local officials need program processes and funding procedures that they can rely on. He said suballocation was rational, fair, and would improve ITEP.

(d)CMAQ Program

Mr. Murtha reported that multi-year programming in CMAQ has been implemented and it represents a model of success and efficiency. Mr. Privett reminded the Task Force that a new call for projects was approaching, and that the deadline for applications would be February 2, 2007.

Mr. Murtha stated that agencies with construction programmed in the out years of the CMAQ program should at this point be moving forward expeditiously with engineering.

Subregional Bicycle Planning:

Mr. Murtha gave the Task Force a brief update on the status of the contracts for bikeways planning. CMAP has drafted agreements with six (6) Councils of Mayors. Two of these agreements have been executed. He mentioned that South Suburban Council was the first to sign their contract.

Regional Pedestrian Safety Initiative:

Mr. Murtha described the brochure advertising the Pedestrian Safety Initiative – Community Program, which CMAP produced and mailed to all municipalities in the region. He stated that T.Y. Lin is the lead consultant on the project, with CBF as sub-consultant. Mr. Murtha described the Initiative and its objectives. Mr. LaPlante asked how many responses we had received thus far. Mr. Murtha replied that so far we had only received a couple of “nibbles”. Mr. Privett stated that had not been clear on exactly what a community would be applying for, should they be interested in the program, and noted that the program is focused on planning. Mr. LaPlante, as project manager, stated that the consultants would sit down with the communities chosen and analyze their pedestrian safety situation, and then, together with communities, come up with effective solutions.

Ms. O’Laughlin asked if a serious crash problem would be the only criteria on which the choice of project communities would be based. Mr. Murtha replied that “No. Other factors would be considered, but that a history of crashes was a major criteria.” Mr. Privett asked what places would best be targeted by the program. Mr. Murtha replied that communities that haven’t yet developed a full program, but which had the resources and commitment of leadership to begin a ped safety program would be the best candidates.

Mr. LaPlante added that the Community Program was the first part of the consultants’ scope of work under the contract; the second was for research and recommendations on improvements to the Phase 1 engineering processes, which will lead to consideration of pedestrian safety in all roadway projects. He explained that right now such considerations are scattered in different agencies and departments and that he believes pedestrian safety would be better served by policy that unifies and synchronizes guidance on pedestrian safety considerations when roads are built or re-built. Mr. LaPlante added that the scoping process is another place where pedestrian concerns should be addressed.

Mr. Murtha reported that IDOT staff, with whom the planning consultants and CMAP staff must work, have been identified. He added that – in part through previous Walkable Communities Workshops and pedestrian safety workshops held in by FHWA – we know strategies that work. We must find ways to implement them on both the project and policy levels.

Palatine Willow Corridor Study:

Mr. Murtha reported that little progress has been made on this project since the last Task Force meeting. He added that at this point it is clear that we need to know more about railroad crossings in the area. Mr. Murtha stated that CMAP and partners are planning to go back and look in more detail at these crossings, for which community concern is both strong – and, incidentally, greatly appreciated by project team members.

Mr. Privett concurred with Mr. Murtha that small and subtle problems, which must be studied in detail, exist at crossings along the South Shore line. He mentioned that the functional, legible placement of signs has proved extremely challenging. He expressed gratitude for the resources of Operation Lifesaver when planning for safe rail crossings.

Other Business

Mr. Minor reported that Metra’s Bikes on Trains program had some encouraging numbers to report: in Sept. ’06, 1759 bikes were brought on board trains, a 10% increase over last year.

Next Meeting: Next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, January 18, at 2:00 pm.

Adjournment: 4:00 pm