

## **Minutes of the Transportation Committee**

The Transportation Committee of the McLean County Board met on Tuesday, January 10, 2006 at 8:00 a.m. in Room 404 of the Government Center, 115 E. Washington Street, Bloomington, Illinois.

Members Present: Chairman Bass, Members Dean, O'Connor, Cavallini, Hoselton, and Baggett

Members Absent: None

Other Members Present: None

Staff Members Present: Mr. John Zeunik, County Administrator; Mr. Terry Lindberg, Assistant County Administrator; Ms. Christine Northcutt, Recording Secretary, County Administrator's Office

Department Heads Present: Mr. Jack Mitchell, County Engineer, Mr. Eric Schmitt, Assistant County Engineer; Mr. Phil Dick, Director, Building and Zoning

Others Present: Mr. Brian Hug, Assistant State's Attorney; Ms. Christine Brauer, Member, Regional Planning Commission; Ms. Jennifer Sicks, Transportation Planner, Regional Planning Commission

Chairman Bass called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

Chairman Bass stated that the first item for action is the approval of the minutes from the December 6, 2005 meeting. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

Motion by Hoselton/Cavallini to approve the minutes from the December 6, 2005 Transportation Committee Meeting. Motion carried.

Chairman Bass informed the Committee that the next item on the agenda is the payment of the December, 2005 bills. Chairman Bass stated that he has a letter from Ms. Jackie Dozier, County Auditor, recommending payment of the bills. He asked if there were any questions from the Committee.

Motion by Hoselton/Dean to recommend approval of the bills for December, 2005 as submitted by the County Auditor. Motion carried.

Chairman Bass stated that due to the interest from the members of the public, he would like to rearrange the items in the agenda. Chairman Bass informed the Committee that Item B, "A Resolution for Amending the Comprehensive Plan for the East Side Highway", has been removed from the agenda and that the Committee will not consider that item. The next item for consideration will be Item C, "An Intergovernmental Agreement between the County of McLean, The City of Bloomington and the Town of Normal". This item refers to the proposed east side highway. Chairman Bass asked Mr. Mitchell to present a brief history on this item.

Mr. Mitchell informed the Committee that in July, 2002, Bernadin Lockmiller, a consulting group from Indianapolis, was retained to complete a feasibility study for an east side highway. There were six alternative alignments that were studied. The study pinpointed a 1½ mile corridor just east of Towanda-Barnes linking Interstate 55 and Interstate 74. At that time, the Transportation Committee voted to recommend approval of the east side corridor recommendation and the Committee's recommendation was approved by the County Board. However, the City of Bloomington did not approve the placement of the corridor. So the plan just died on the vine at that time.

\*\*Ms. O'Connor joins the meeting at 8:10 a.m.

Mr. Mitchell stated that in 2004, the Town of Normal, the City of Bloomington and the County jointly adopted a Resolution to further study the east and south side. The Highway Department then applied for a \$10 million federal grant to fund an additional study through Phase I. The grant was approved, but only \$800,000.00 was appropriated and the County was expected to make a 20% match. Mr. Mitchell stated that he spoke with officials at IDOT and they agreed that \$1 million was enough to have an alignment study completed. Mr. Mitchell noted that the County has also requested \$150,000.00 from IDOT in the form of an Illinois Tomorrow Grant. The City of Bloomington has included the proposed east side corridor in their Comprehensive Plan. It is very similar to the alternative that was recommended by the consultants. The only difference being the corridor's width was narrowed from 1½ miles to 2500 feet. A week ago the Engineering Staff from Bloomington, Normal, and the County began working on a Request For Proposal for consultants to complete an alignment study so that the study could begin as soon as the funds are released. Mr. Mitchell stated that even though the \$800,000.00 has been earmarked for the use of this purpose, the State of Illinois still has control of those funds. The County will not receive those funds until IDOT has released them. IDOT has used the term "Appropriation Authority". What that means is in order for IDOT to spend the federal funding, they must first appropriate it through the legislature. Then they must appropriate the local share that is repaid to IDOT. Mr. Mitchell added that because the Highway Department is being switched from the IDOT District 3 office to the IDOT District 5 office there may be an additional delay.

Mr. Mitchell stated that he is aware that there is concern that there will not be public meetings. Mr. Mitchell assured the Committee that there will probably be two or three public meetings. They will not take place until a consulting firm is hired and the alignment study begins. They will take place as a part of the study. Mr. Mitchell stated that an alignment study will consider the entire east and south side. The study will consider the other proposed corridors and the current proposed corridor. One of the consultants first concerns will be to avoid any area that has an environmental issue and they will try to avoid as many homes as possible. The study will also determine the approximate right-of-way that will be needed. The assumption is that 300 feet of right-of-way will provide a divided, limited access facility. Mr. Dean asked if this will be a highway that is similar in size to other highways in the area. Mr. Mitchell responded that it would be very similar to other highways in the area. It would be built according to federal standards due to the fact that it would be funded with a federal grant.

Mr. Mitchell advised the Committee that he has passed out a revised Intergovernmental Agreement this morning. Mr. Mitchell stated that the main revision in the Agreement is that the three local governments share the cost of the proposed study equally to match the local portion of the funds needed for the study. Additionally, there is a call to implement a moratorium on new construction, but the moratorium is limited time-wise as compared to the first Intergovernmental Agreement.

Mr. Mitchell stated that the reason that this proposed highway is important is because we need to plan ahead for the future. As traffic increases on the east side over the next 20 years, this new highway will alleviate major traffic problems on Veteran's Parkway and other roads on the east and south side of McLean County. The City of Bloomington has already approved subdivisions east of Towanda-Barnes Road. It is imperative to move on this item before there is any major development within this corridor.

Mr. Mitchell handed out the Executive Summary of the East Side Study completed by Bernadin Lockmiller in 2002. Chairman Bass asked the Committee if they had any comments or questions for Mr. Mitchell or for any other staff member.

Mr. Cavallini stated that he remembered the Transportation Committee discussing and approving this item several years ago, only to have the City of Bloomington refuse to approve it. This item was also discussed in the Land Use and Development Committee this month and was postponed. Therefore, he is very reluctant to approve this item until there are more public hearings. Chairman Bass stated that the Land Use and Development Committee also requested that Mr. Zeunik try to schedule a joint meeting between the three local governments and their Boards to discuss this matter. Chairman Bass asked Mr. Zeunik if would attempt to schedule the meeting between the three local governments. Mr. Zeunik responded that he would be happy to work on scheduling a meeting for the Committee.

Mr. Hoselton stated that the City of Bloomington has acted in an uncooperative manner on this item in the past and he does not intend to act on this matter until he can meet with the City of Bloomington and the Town of Normal to see what is their consensus.

Mr. Dean asked if a new study would look at all six proposed alternatives, because it appears that the three governments seem to be focused on the corridor. Mr. Mitchell responded that the corridor located on the map is the primary focus, but one of the requirements for completing an alignment study is that they review all alternatives.

Ms. O'Connor asked if the alignment on the map is the City of Bloomington's preferred alignment. Mr. Mitchell responded that this is the alignment that Bloomington has approved in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Ms. O'Connor asked if this is the alignment that the Highway Department prefers. Mr. Mitchell responded that this is his preference and it is very nearly the same alignment that was recommended from the previous study.

Ms. O'Connor asked how far east does the moratorium extend. Mr. Hug stated that it only applies to the area within the half-mile corridor. Ms. O'Connor asked what happens if the new study shows that the corridor should be placed farther east. Mr. Mitchell responded that we will not know where the consultants will want to place the corridor until a new study is completed. Ms. O'Connor stated that it seems that we will be locked into using the preferred alignment.

Chairman Bass stated that he shares the Committee's frustration on this matter. He asked Mr. Phil Dick, Director, Building and Zoning if he had any comments to make to the Committee. Mr. Dick stated that it is important that if an east side facility is going to be built, an area should be reserved. Currently the only major roads on the east side are Towanda-Barnes Road and Veteran's Parkway (Old Route 66), but those roads could not function as this new proposed facility would function.

Chairman Bass asked if there were any other questions or comments. Hearing none, he suggested that it might be best to table this item for the time being.

Motion by Hoselton/Cavallini to table an Intergovernmental Agreement between the County of McLean, the City of Bloomington and the Town of Normal until the next meeting of the Transportation Committee. Motion carried.

Chairman Bass stated that the Committee can return to the regular agenda. Mr. Larry Reeser from Heyworth, a member of the audience, asked if he could speak. Chairman Bass replied that he could make a brief statement. Mr. Reeser stated that he appreciates that the Committee wants input from the Community. He noted that he recently read that the Village of Downs received a grant to build an interchange near I-74. How many interchanges do we need near I-74 and I-55? If the County really wants to be good stewards of the land, then they would not approve the construction of highways such as the one proposed. Mr. Reeser also noted that he has a 95 acre farm that would be totally engulfed by the proposed highway. Chairman Bass thanked Mr. Reeser and asked Mr. Mitchell to respond. Mr. Mitchell stated that the alignment study will help to pinpoint how much, if any of his farm would be affected by the proposed highway. Secondly, Downs applied for a grant to complete a planning study for traffic in the Downs area and near the I-74 Interchange. To this date, Downs has not communicated

with the County as to the findings and recommendations in their study.

Chairman Bass stated that the next item is the letting results from a January 4, 2006 letting for County and Township projects. Chairman Bass asked if there were any questions. Mr. Hoselton asked why one of the bids that was accepted for work on the Anchor Road is for \$8,700.00 and the other two bids are for \$6,250.00. Mr. Mitchell explained that all of the bids for those groups are for materials at the pit or the quarry. The Highway Department recommends awards of all bids that are within 10% of the estimate. The low bids are determined by \$.15 per ton-mile of hauling. When the mileage for each of the Townships is figured, it is multiplied by \$.15 and the bid price is added, and that results a net number. The net number determines the low bidder for each Township. If that company has material then that is where the Township will go. If that company doesn't have material then the Township will go to the second lowest bidder, and so forth. Mr. Hoselton thanked Mr. Mitchell for explaining the process.

Motion by Hoselton/Cavallini to recommend approval of the Letting Results from the January 4, 2006 Letting for County and Township Projects. Motion carried.

Chairman Bass stated that the next item for action is an Engineering Services Agreement for work on the Ellsworth Road. Mr. Mitchell stated that there are two box culverts just north of Ellsworth on Ellsworth Road that are old culverts that are in bad shape. The roads are handling the current traffic. However, Horizon Wind Energy is currently beginning to upgrade the Roads that will be affected by the building of the Windfarm. When the County and Horizon Wind Energy met they agreed that rather than having Horizon shoring these culverts, they would give the County the funds that they would have used to shore these culverts, and the County will put those funds toward replacing these two culverts. Mr. Mitchell stated that the two culverts are in poor shape and would need to be replaced soon anyway. In order for Horizon to be able to utilize these culverts, they would need to be replaced by April 15, 2006. Therefore, the survey and design has already been started by Rice, Berry and Associates. Mr. Mitchell informed the Committee that shoring the two culverts would cost \$99,000.00. To construct two new culverts is \$180,000.00 per culvert. Horizon is paying for about 25% of the new structure. When the Windfarm construction is completed, the County will still have an 80,000 lb. road available to the public.

Motion by Hoselton/Dean to recommend approval of an Engineering Services Agreement for work on Sec. 06-00134-05-BR and Sec. 06-00134-06-BR on County Highway 17. Motion carried.

The next item is an Emergency Appropriation Ordinance for County Highway Fund 0120. Mr. Mitchell explained that the Highway Department is requesting to amend their 2005 budget to add \$130,000.00 to the right-of-way line item in County Highway Fund 0120. The reason for this change is because Dr. Frank Koe is developing a Subdivision on Towanda-Barnes Road. CornBelt needs to put a power line loop from Ft. Jesse to Raab Road to supply power up and down the road. If the County does not purchase the right-of-way from Mr. Weber now, then in the future, when Towanda-Barnes Road is widened, the County will have to pay for the right-of-way and also pay CornBelt to move the power lines. Cornbelt estimates that the cost to move the power lines now would be from \$120,000.00 - \$130,000.00 per pole. Mr. Mitchell stated that the County has offered Mr. Weber several options, none of which he was interested in. The only option left was to purchase the right-of-way and that will cost approximately \$130,000.00.

Mr. Dean asked how much is this land per acre. Mr. Mitchell replied that it is approximately \$42,000.00 acre. Mr. Hoselton stated that this purchase sets a precedent for all of the farmers who own land throughout the mile north of Towanda-Barnes up to Northtown Road.

Mr. Cavallini stated that this does seem like an exorbitant purchase, but there doesn't seem to be any other alternative.

Mr. Dean noted that he thought that price was fairly expensive. Mr. Mitchell responded that he was not extremely pleased with the transaction, but felt it would save the County money in the long run.

Motion by Dean/Cavallini to recommend approval  
of an Emergency Appropriation for County Highway  
Fund 120, Right-of-way, \$130,000.00.

Mr. Hoselton asked Mr. Mitchell if this would be a good time to speak to farm owners north of Mr. Weber's property about the possible purchase of right-of-way. Mr. Mitchell stated that he is willing to have a conversation with those property owners.

Motion carried

Chairman Bass stated that the next item on the agenda is the project summary. Mr. Mitchell stated that he has included a project summary for Stringtown Road East and West, Stanford Road, Ireland Grove Road and Oakland Avenue because final payment has been made for all of these projects.

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Mr. Mitchell stated that he also included information on Premier Fabrication, which Mr. Hoselton asked about at the last Transportation Committee Meeting. Mr. Mitchell advised the Committee that Premier Fabrication used to be "The Farm Shop" in Congerville. Mr. Mitchell explained that the Highway Department takes quotes for steel from them and other companies.

Chairman Bass asked if there were any other comments or questions from the Committee. Hearing none, he suggested that he would like to postpone the Committee's field trip to the Lexington and Towanda Interchanges until the next meeting, due to the fact that several of the Committee Members are ill. Chairman Bass suggested that the Committee meet at the Highway Department on Tuesday, February 7<sup>th</sup> and take the tour immediately following the meeting. The Committee agreed.

Chairman Bass asked if there were any further comments or questions. Hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 9:34 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Northcutt  
Recording Secretary