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IDOT Headquarters, 2300 S. Dirksen Parkway, Room 347, Springfield, IL 62764

IDOT Office of Intermodal Project Implementation, 69 W. Washington Street, Suite 2100,  
Chicago, IL 60602

Virtual Webex Webinar Meeting

## Meeting Date and Time:

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Thursday, May 30, 2024

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

## Attendance:

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### Commission Member Attendees:

*\*Asterisk indicates attendance in-person*

- Erin Aleman – Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning\*
- Tim Butler – Illinois Railroad Association\*
- James Derwinski – Commuter Rail Board\*
- Karl P. Gnad – Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District\*
- Robert Guy, III – SMART-TD\*
- Richard Harnish – High Speed Rail Alliance\*
- Raymond Lai – McLean County Regional Planning Commission\*
- Jason Osborn – Illinois Department of Transportation\*
- Cassandra Rouse – Illinois State Highway Toll Authority
- Bria Scudder – State of Illinois
- Brian Shanahan – Transportation Communications Union\*
- P.S. Sriraj – University of Illinois Chicago
- Senator Steve Stadelman – Senate
- Brian Vercruysse – Illinois Commerce Commission\*
- Bogdan Vitas Jr. – Illinois Municipal League
- James Wild – East-West Gateway Council of Governments

### **Commission Members Not in Attendance:**

- Michael Paul Dunn Jr. – Region I Planning Council
- Senator Don DeWitte – Senate
- Representative Martin J. Moylan – House

### **Non-Commission Member Attendees:**

- Holly Bieneman – Illinois Department of Transportation\*
- Jeremy LaMarche – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Hannah Martin – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Elliot Ramos – Illinois Department of Transportation\*
- DeAnna Smith – Illinois Department of Transportation\*
- Michael Vanderhoof – Illinois Department of Transportation\*
- Janel Veile – Illinois Department of Transportation\*
- Julia Hiatt – Quandel Consultants\*
- Charles Hoppesch – Quandel Consultants\*
- Melanie Johnson – Quandel Consultants\*
- Charles Quandel – Quandel Consultants\*
- Janet Henderson – Images\*
- Berenice Alvarez – Morreale Communications\*
- Diane Bustamante – Morreale Communications\*
- Mary McIlvain – Morreale Communications\*

## **OVERVIEW OF MEETING**

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### **I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Commission Chairman Jim Derwinski began the meeting at 10:30 a.m. The meeting proceeded with a roll call of Commission members. With 10 Commission members present in-person at either the Chicago or Springfield Illinois Department of Transportation offices and 6 present in the virtual meeting room, quorum was confirmed.

### **II. MINUTES APPROVAL**

The March 18, 2024 Commission meeting minutes were supplied on May 29, 2024. Chairman Derwinski asked the Commission if there were any requested changes to the minutes. With no requested changes, a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting was made. The minutes were approved and passed with no objections.

### **III. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT UPDATE**

Melanie Johnson from Quandel Consultants led the discussion on the technical assistance scope items.

The presentation began with an overview of stakeholder engagement activities related to the technical assistance scope.

Commissioner Harnish asked Ms. Johnson to, “Define governance.”

Ms. Johnson clarified that governance, in this case, is related to operations, maintenance and finance.

Commissioner Sriraj asked, "Are the activities staggered?"

Ms. Johnson stated that as the study progresses, there will be touchpoints with the activities occurring, which will be tied to specific scope items and deliverables. Quandel will work with IDOT on a schedule.

Commissioner Sriraj emphasized the importance of making a conservative effort to provide opportunities for engagement throughout the process.

Ms. Johnson stated that it's a key element, and there will be community events to reach people where they are.

Janet Henderson from Images provided an overview of stakeholder engagement continuously and at specific points in the process. She emphasized the importance of conducting public engagement early and frequently, beginning with creating a stakeholder plan that will guide timelines and establish the intended events. There will be a stakeholder survey to gather information from stakeholders throughout the state, in addition to public meetings. Furthermore, there will be a project website to manage comments and concerns. The consultants will work closely with third-party stakeholders, which include rail advocates, municipalities, and chambers of commerce.

Chairman Derwinski asked if the engagement activities would target the cities listed in the Act or beyond.

Ms. Henderson said it will be a mix to ensure stakeholders throughout the state are reached. Cities where potential station locations may be located and those listed in the legislation will be targeted through community events and incorporated into the process.

Disadvantaged communities will be reached through various formats, including on-the-ground outreach.

Chairman Derwinski asked if the schedule of engagement activities will be on the website.

Ms. Henderson stated that a high-level timeline will be posted on the website, and it will be broken down in detail in the stakeholder plan.

Commissioner Vitas asked if the Commission would review the plan before launching. He also asked about community outreach through social media and providing multilingual materials.

Ms. Henderson stated that third-party stakeholders will be sent social media posts and images for use. The website will have a translation option and translated materials will be provided. The stakeholder plan will be brought to the Commission for review and comment before it is finalized.

Ms. Johnson emphasized the importance of meeting people where they are, both physically and virtually.

Commissioner Osborn stated that current riders should also be considered.

The first task is drafting a purpose and need, which includes conducting market research to consider the existing and projected characteristics of the transportation market to be served. The purpose and need will serve as a foundation that will reflect the service's goals and objectives.

Commissioner Harnish stated, "You have to bring in riders from Detroit and Milwaukee, so how does that fit in?"

Ms. Johnson said there are travel demand models from the state that will be used as a base to pull travel volumes.

Along with stakeholder engagement, previous high-speed rail studies (many within Chicago) and reports from other entities that have studied passenger rail will be reviewed.

Commissioner Sriraj asked if studies from other states would also be reviewed or if they would only focus on Illinois. Commissioner Sriraj mentioned, for example, high-speed rail studies from California, Florida, and other states that have done feasibility studies.

Ms. Johnson said that studies from other states will be considered, especially from a capital cost perspective, but will be tailored to Illinois' corridors.

Commissioner Vercruyse asked how neighboring states working with the FRA play into it.

Ms. Johnson stated they know which corridors were selected for the FRA Corridor Program and can work with them.

Charles Quandel from Quandel Consultants emphasized that Quandel represents many of those corridors, and the data is readily available because Quandel is teaming up with WSP.

Commissioner Harnish asked what the Commission review and approval process would be.

Ms. Johnson stated that as a consultant to IDOT, Quandel will present and review deliverables first with IDOT and then send it to the Commission for review. However, a more detailed process can be developed.

Commissioner Harnish emphasized the importance of having an agreed-upon review process.

Ms. Johnson said that, in addition to tying in previous studies, feedback from the workshops conducted and the mission statement will be used and align with the Commission.

Chairman Derwinski agreed on having a set review process and discussed potentially developing subcommittees with technical experts and support.

Ms. Johnson mentioned having a fact-like entity of technical experts who would review the work.

The purpose and need will ultimately provide the method for identifying and evaluating alternatives (such as route, service, and investment). This method is both quantitative and qualitative and provides a comprehensive comparison.

Commissioner Aleman said it would be helpful to understand the steps in quarterly or monthly accomplishments.

Ms. Johnson stated that they are thinking about an 18-month schedule, give or take, but it may take longer if the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) is involved.

Michael Vanderhoof from IDOT informed the Commission that two prior to the meeting IDOT completed the proposal review and agreement of cost, and the contract execution is moving ahead. There is an option to execute an early action agreement, but it may take time to get the contract fully in place. He asked the Commission to be mindful as requests are made to Quandel.

An attendee asked if there are resources for an 18-month contract as opposed to a 12-month contract.

Mr. Vanderhoof stated that counting 18 months from today (May 30<sup>th</sup>) would not be fair to the consultant team. IDOT asked them to discuss logistics today to inform the Commission of the contract agreement.

Ms. Johnson said they would work on the monthly and quarterly goals once noticed to proceed.

An alternative analysis methodology will be created based on purpose and need. As part of this, metrics will be identified to assess options, design criteria will be prepared, and the physical routes of the proposed service will be identified. The route options considered include Greenfield, I-55, and I-55/I-57. In addition, an environmental screening will be conducted to understand the magnitude of potential impacts.

An attendee asked if the option of I-57 is the CN corridor or I-57 down interstate.

Ms. Johnson stated that it is the interstate right of way.

Once the routes are identified, service characteristics, which include speed, frequency, station options, terminal station analysis, and ridership demand, will be determined. Operating plans will be prepared to collect terrain, utilities, land use, and transportation network data from available sources. Station analysis plays a large part in identifying potential locations, metropolitan area terminal options, and multimodal connections. Ridership forecasting is developed for each combination route and service option.

Commissioner Harnish emphasized that agreement on the feeder system has yet to be reached, and it should be discussed at some point.

Ms. Johnson stated that the discussion could be a part of the purpose and need.

The next item discussed was identifying investment options, which include any rail element. From the investment analysis, conceptual engineering and schematics will follow.

Once the proposed investment locations are identified, a secondary environmental screening will be conducted to minimize environmental impacts.

The unit costs will be based on current intercity passenger rail construction and follow FRA's standard cost categories. This will provide a comparison of all the alternatives being considered.

Operating and maintenance estimate costs will be based on annual train miles, ridership, and train crew hours.

The summary of alternatives will summarize the characteristics of the route, service, and investment options in a matrix format.

Chairman Derwinski emphasized the importance of providing a safe rail and asked how rail elements, such as speed and grade crossings, will be incorporated into the analysis to ensure safety.

Ms. Johnson stated that regulations govern the safety and operations of railroads, which will be a part of the design criteria.

Chairman Derwinski asked how the underpass and crossing safety come into play with operating costs.

Ms. Johnson stated that this phase would be examined from a corridor level to understand the planning-level costs, and the next step could be to compare different methods (grade crossings vs. non-grading crossings).

Commission Osborn emphasized the importance of having the number of potential crossings available.

Ms. Johnson agreed that potential grade crossings will be identified once the alignment and concept plans are developed.

Mr. Quandel emphasized grade crossings and safety and said studies from other states would also be reviewed.

Chairman Derwinski discussed high-speed rail line cost issues in California. He asked if Quandel would look at how California estimated costs and where it went wrong.

Mr. Quandel echoed Chairman Derwinski's statement that California has lessons to be learned. A key component of looking at California is the schedules, which he stated are part of the Greenfield analysis.

Chairman Derwinski asked if Texas is also being considered in addition to California and Florida.

Mr. Quandel stated that WSP has worked in Texas. He emphasized that there are enough relationships from which to pull information.

Commissioner Gnad highlighted that safety is comfort, so when selecting a corridor, elements such as the degree of angle of turns and speed should be considered.

Ms. Johnson stated that operating safely and passenger comfort will be a criterion used.

Commissioner Aleman highlighted the importance of funding and finance options when discussing proposed capital costs.

Ms. Johnson stated it would be a key point to the governance piece.

Commission Osborn echoed the importance of financing operating costs and revenue streams.

Ms. Johnson assured the Commission that finance and economic impact will be identified as part of the Phase II elements.



Commissioner Sriraj asked how impacts such as social and economic can be approached when quantifying. He emphasized that data points needed may need to be collected now.

Ms. Johnson stated that it's referring to the return on investment which encompasses the entire breath of benefits (social, environmental, local, regional, state, national). It goes hand in hand with Phase II- financial and economic evaluation but the elements can start to be gathered.

Commissioner Harnish asked, "How does this set us up for Corridor ID?"

Ms. Johnson stated that the way this is outlined is followed by FRA's framework, and the tasks listed align accordingly.

Chairman Derwinski asked if Commissioner Harnish had any additional notes on the resources he provided to the Commission.

Commissioner Harnish emphasized that the Commission needs to address corridor issues related to the Chicago station location, feeder networks, and travel time. He highlighted that these are valuable decisions that the Commission needs to reach a consensus on.

Chairman Derwinski highlighted that it will be addressed when developing the purpose and need.

Commissioner Harnish expressed concern about the rail's placement. He expressed interest for it to be along the expressway rather than in the middle of the expressway.

Chairman Derwinski stated that it will depend on various factors, such as cost and availability. The 18-month timeline is a worry. Given that the submission deadline is approaching soon, an extension may be requested from the governor's office.

Chairman Derwinski expressed excitement to see the progress on the work ahead and thanked Quandel and IDOT.

#### **IV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Following the Technical Assistance Support update, the meeting was open to public comment. No public comments were made.

#### **V. ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

#### **VI. ACTION ITEMS**

No action items were identified.