



MEETING MINUTES

Illinois High-Speed Rail Commission
Meeting | September 23, 2024

Location:

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:

Monday, September 23, 2024

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Attendance:

Commission Member Attendees:

**Asterisk indicates attendance in-person*

- Tim Butler – Illinois Railroad Association*
- Senator Don DeWitte – Senate*
- Michael Paul Dunn Jr. – Region I Planning Council*
- Robert Guy, III – SMART-TD*
- Richard Harnish – High Speed Rail Alliance*
- Jason Osborn – Illinois Department of Transportation*
- Cassaundra 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*

Commission Members Not in Attendance:

- Erin Aleman – Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- James Derwinski – Commuter Rail Board
- Karl P. Gnadt – Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District
- Raymond Lai – McLean County Regional Planning Commission
- Representative Martin J. Moylan – House

- Bogdan Vitas Jr. – Illinois Municipal League
- James Wild – East-West Gateway Council of Governments

Non-Commission Member Attendees:

- Holly Bieneman – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Jeremy LaMarche – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Tim McMahon – 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
- Nafeel Farooqui – Quandel Consultants*
- Julia Hiatt – Quandel Consultants*
- Charles Hoppesch – Quandel Consultants*
- Melanie Johnson – Quandel Consultants*
- Charles Quandel – Quandel Consultants*
- Janet Henderson – Images*
- Wendy Abrams – Morreale Communications
- Berenice Alvarez – Morreale Communications*
- Diane Bustamante – Morreale Communications*
- Mary McIlvain – Morreale Communications*
- David Kralik – Metra*
- Rhett Russell – WSP
- Julie Reschke – Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- Roger Huff*
- Alan Mammoser
- David Phillips
- Peter Williams

OVERVIEW OF MEETING

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Vice Chairman Tim Butler began the meeting at 10:30 a.m. The meeting proceeded with a roll call of Commission members. Eight Commission members were present in person at either the Chicago or Springfield Illinois Department of Transportation offices, and two were present in the virtual meeting room. A quorum was not immediately confirmed but was confirmed shortly after with the addition of two more Commissioners arriving in person. The final roll call for the meeting had 10 Commissioners present in person and two present virtually.

II. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT UPDATE

Melanie Johnson, Charles Quandel, Julia Hiatt, Nafeel Farooqui, Charles Hoppesch from Quandel Consultants, and Janet Henderson from Images introduced themselves. Ms. Johnson led the technical assistance support update, which included the project timeline, alternatives analysis, market analysis, stakeholder engagement, technical advisory committee, and draft annual report.

Project Timeline

The market analysis, route options analysis, draft stakeholder engagement plan has begun along with project branding.

Alternative Analysis Update

Currently, route alignments are being developed within highway means and a constraint review of the median. This will include I-57, I-55, and I-72. Train performance calculations will be made for several segments (including travel time).

Environmental constraints, including hazardous waste sites, wetlands/protected waters, Illinois protected areas, prime and unique farmland, and critical habitats, will be considered.

Senator DeWitte asked how much of it is the current rail right of way.

Ms. Johnson stated that although it is not highlighted on the presentation slide, there is a rail right of way into protected areas.

Senator DeWitte asked if the selected right of ways that are being looked at are already being used as other rail and would it require separate easements to be used by IDOT for high-speed rail purposes.

Ms. Johnson stated there would be discussions with existing railroad and freight ownership.

Market Analysis

Market analysis will help identify intermediary cities with the greatest potential demand for route selection.

Rhett Russell from WSP provided an overview of the initial market analysis and the methodology.

Replica data (mobile location data that provides travel patterns based on cellphones and GPS) was used, which includes data from the Fall of 2023 and looks at County passenger trips. The trips included trips to/from Cook County to counties with/near potential stations, which were broken down into categories, including work trips, trips to the airport, and other trips. The data shows a demand for St. Louis and surrounding counties of the Illinois border. Mr. Russell noted that demand data on the intermediate city pairs will be added in the next phase.

A question was asked about how much of the data is influenced by direct interstate connections.

Mr. Russell stated that the data represents all demands regardless of how they got to their destination. However, accessibility to interstate travel may affect their choice of travel, so direct demand could be impacted, as could city pairs. The data does not look at how they got there, just the demand.

A question was asked about how that is being considered when someone is going to Champaign, spending the night, and ending up in St. Louis.

Mr. Russell noted that the trip pattern is looked at daily.

Senator DeWitte asked if the data changes to Chicago rather than to O'Hare or University Park, what effect that has on potential trip data.

Mr. Russell stated that the data is all for Cook County, and if it is just for Chicago, it could have an impact.

It was also noted that the data was captured at the county level.

David Kralik from Metra stated that the lines shown on the map do not indicate potential route corridors; the shading is based on county flows.

Commissioner Dunn asked why Rockford was not shaded.

Mr. Russell stated that only city pairs to St. Louis were looked at, but Rockford can be added.

Commissioner Osborn noted that it would be interesting to see the analysis from every county.

Mr. Russell noted that it can be added.

Commissioner Osborn noted intercity busing is to be looked at by the Commission.

Ms. Johnson noted that the spine is being evaluated, but the data is available.

Commissioner Vercruysse asked if the spine represents East St. Louis.

Ms. Johnson confirmed that St. Louis and crossings are looked at.

Mr. Russell noted that the data is broken down into categories such as work, leaving the region by airport, and other. Leaving the region can include work trips and destination travel. The data shows work trips from Cook County to selected Counties.

Commissioner Dunn stated that it would be helpful information for the Region One Planning Council and that Rockford could be added.

Commissioner Sriraj wrote in the chat, "Are you also taking a look at the IDOT Statewide Demand Model outputs? It might give you a better understanding of trips leaving the region/coming into the region than just depending on the airport trips."

Mr. Russell confirmed that the demand model data and the dataset from the meeting will provide insights and will be used for future modeling as it could impact the potential choice of route.

Commissioner Sriraj wrote in the chat, "I think it makes sense to keep the cities (pairs) that have a robust demand potential even if they are not on the corridor. It helps identify other route segments for the future and also feeder systems that can be included in the current analysis."

Stakeholder Engagement

Janet Henderson from Images provided an update on current stakeholder engagement work, which includes developing a logo and branding, developing a study website, creating stakeholder lists, and drafting a Stakeholder Engagement Plan that is under review.

A question was asked if branding guidelines are developed. Ms. Henderson confirmed that a branding document will be distributed.

An initial Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be established to review study deliverables. TAC members will provide expertise and will include the Illinois Department of Transportation—Office of Intermodal Project Implementation, Office of Planning and Programming, Highways,

and Environmental. The Illinois Commerce Commission, Metra, and Bi-State Development (Metro Link) may also be included. Future TACs may include public engagement, stations, and governance.

A question was asked if representatives from Amtrak should be added to the initial TAC.

Ms. Johnson stated that initial discussions with the freight railroads were needed. If route alignments are looked at in existing rights of way, they can be engaged.

Ms. Johnson stated that Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are needed participants in stakeholder engagement.

Ms. Johnson stated that there first needs to be discussions with freight on right of way.

Commissioner Rouse asked what the timeline was for future TACs.

Ms. Johnson stated that planning for the first public meeting will begin in the coming months, which future TACs could be developed at that point.

Commissioner Rouse asked if the public meeting was a 2024 activity.

Ms. Johnson said if it is, it will be in late 2024; otherwise, it will likely be in early 2025. For the technical TAC, quarterly workshops may be developed to discuss methodology and other TACs could be held during public engagement pushes. Ms. Johnson clarified that the technical TAC is specific to the feasibility study, and if the Commission wants to have separate committees, they can.

Next steps

The next steps include continuing to develop route alignments, calculating train performance for several segments, refining the initial market analysis to include demand between each county pair, reviewing the statewide travel demand model and comparing it to the initial market analysis, developing a stakeholder engagement plan and project website, and inviting potential TAC members.

III. MINUTES APPROVAL

The August 26, 2024, Commission meeting minutes were supplied with the agenda prior to the meeting. Vice Chairman Butler 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 meetings was made. The minutes were approved and passed with no objections.

IV. REVIEW AND VOTE ON UPDATED COMMISSION BY-LAWS

The proposed by-law changes (Section 3-12, Section 5-1, Section 6-5) were supplied with the agenda prior to the meeting. Vice Chairman Butler asked the Commission if there were any changes to the proposed by-laws. With no requested changes, there was a motion to approve updating the by-laws. The by-laws were approved and passed with no objections. The amended by-laws will allow Commissioners to attend a meeting remotely by video or audio conference if a majority of a quorum of the members of the Commission are physically present.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

The meeting was open to public comment.

Alan Mammoser asked why the University Park destination and not downtown Chicago and O'Hare and does it affect the modeling.

Ms. Johnson stated that downtown Chicago to downtown St. Louis is being examined. The major spine, which connects suburban Chicago and suburban St. Louis, is being initially examined. Also being examined is connecting to Chicago, which is an alternative analysis as there are different options for getting to Chicago. Ms. Johnson stated that the spine is being examined first to narrow down the alternatives to Chicago.

David Phillips asked Mr. Russell to clarify his explanation of "leaving Chicago" regarding airport travel. Is it people coming from Chicago airports or downstate airports?

Mr. Russell answered that it was people leaving the region from an airport. More datasets, such as airport flows (from and to the airport), will be collected to address potential demand.

Ms. Johnson clarified that passenger trips from Cook County were shown at the meeting.

VI. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

VII. ACTION ITEMS

Vice Chairman Butler noted that at the next meeting, there will be an agenda item to review the legislation as proposed by Commissioner Harnish at the August Commission meeting.

The Commissioner's availability will be gathered to draft the 2025 Commission meeting schedule.