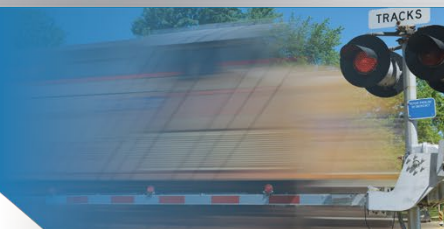




MEETING MINUTES

High-Speed Rail Commission
Meeting | March 10, 2025



Location:

IDOT Headquarters, 2300 S. Dirksen Parkway, 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, March 10, 2025

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Attendance:

Commission Member Attendees:

**Asterisk indicates attendance in-person*

- Tim Butler – Illinois Railroad Association*
- James Derwinski – Commuter Rail Board*
- Karl P. Gnadt – 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*
- Cassaundra Rouse – Illinois State Highway Toll Authority
- Bria Scudder – State of Illinois*
- Brian Shanahan – Transportation Communications Union*
- P.S. Sriraj – University of Illinois Chicago
- Brian Vercruysse – Illinois Commerce Commission*
- Bogdan Vitas Jr. – Illinois Municipal League
- James Wild – East-West Gateway Council of Governments

Commission Members Not in Attendance:

- Erin Aleman – Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- Senator Don DeWitte – Senate
- Michael Paul Dunn Jr. – Region I Planning Council

- Representative Martin J. Moylan – House
- Senator Steve Stadelman – Senate

Non-Commission Member Attendees:

- Carrie Cooper – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Tim McMahon – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Elliot Ramos – Illinois Department of Transportation*
- Shoun Reese – Illinois Department of Transportation
- DeAnna Smith – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Michael Vanderhoof – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Janel Veile – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Julie Reshke – Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- David Kralik – Metra
- Chad Edison – California State Transportation Agency
- Melanie Johnson – Quandel Consultants
- Julia Hiatt – Quandel Consultants*
- Charles Hoppesch – Quandel Consultants*
- Charles Quandel – Quandel Consultants*
- Peter Williams - Quandel Consultants
- Victoria Fullbright – Images, Inc.
- Janet Henderson – Images, Inc.*
- Berenice Alvarez – Morreale Communications
- Diane Bustamante – Morreale Communications*
- Mary McIlvain – Morreale Communications*
- Ray Campbell
- Roger Huff
- David Phillips
- Gary Prophet
- Alan Mammoser
- Call in User

OVERVIEW OF MEETING

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Commission Chairman Jim Derwinski began the meeting at 10:30 a.m. The meeting proceeded with the roll call of Commission members. A quorum was met with eight Commission members present in person at either the Chicago or Springfield Illinois Department of Transportation offices. In addition to in-person attendees, four Commissioners were present in the virtual meeting room. Two additional Commissioners arrived during the meeting making for 10 in person attending Commissioners.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The February 10, 2025, Commission meeting minutes were supplied with the agenda prior to the meeting. 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. CALSTA PRESENTATION, Q&A

Chad Edison, Chief Deputy Secretary for Transit and Rail at the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), gave a presentation on the role of high-speed rail in a statewide rail network.

Mr. Edison stated that the 2018 State Rail Plan was released again in 2024 and lays out the vision for what California plans to do between now and 2025, including efforts to enhance rail and transit modes. The State Rail Plan laid the foundation for the integration of services and ticketing and highlighted the importance of connecting markets that are poorly connected today. The principles focus on an integrated statewide network, coordinated schedules, and a customer-first approach. Mr. Edison noted that key transfer hubs, seamless transfers between services, and the quality of connections all have an impact on ridership.

Mr. Edison noted that the State Rail Plan sets the vision for the Corridor Identification and Development (CID) Program corridors, which provide an additional layer of structure to the state's rail corridor development process, prepare projects to qualify for future federal funding and remain within the broader network concepts of the rail vision.

Mr. Edison presented key lessons learned on the integrated rail network related to operating costs, ridership, trade-offs, performance and implementation.

California has committed to high-speed rail through various gubernatorial administrations. In addition, the California Integrated Travel Project is a statewide initiative aimed at unifying transit and rail to make travel simpler and more cost-effective

Commissioner Vitas asked who is leading the effort to integrate all of the systems and whether there is legislation in California that may have passed, directing them to participate in the statewide effort as opposed to just local transportation.

Mr. Edison noted that a large part of it is led by the Department of Transportation, but there are interregional agencies involved. There is structure provided around the interregional system that incentivizes and encourages participation. In addition, the state has a funding program that supports rail and transit capital investments. When you integrate with a rail system and add riders, your project gets credited with more ridership, passenger miles, and greenhouse gas reductions, which helps make the project better qualified for investments.

Commissioner Rouse asked who is leading the integrated mid-payment solution effort and how it is organized. Mr. Edison stated that it is being led by the Department of Transportation and CalSTA. A key aspect of the approach is that it is built upon an open-source system, allowing users to use different parts of the system without needing to use others. The development is done at the state level, with contracts through the Department of General Services, where agencies in the state can make a few modifications, but the system is ready for use, allowing for procurements and working with several vendors.

Chairman Derwinski asked how much of the network is mixed-use. Mr. Edison stated that most of the network in the state is mixed-use. It's a multi-pronged approach, with investments aimed at placing trains side by side so that they can both be successful and reliable, while minimizing interference with each other.

Chairman Derwinski asked how they work with power suppliers on the grid to ensure usable infrastructure. Mr. Edison noted that it is a long-term issue to continue working through, and they are continuing to work with utilities on the most active projects, including building out more renewable power and battery storage. Over time, as more projects enter the pipeline and electrification progresses, this issue will need to be addressed at a broader scale and statewide.

Chairman Derwinski asked about the relationship between Brightline West and CalSTA. Mr. Edison provided an overview of the basic relationship: CalSTA has a lease with Brightline, and there is some interaction regarding their plans, along with a process for construction.

Chairman Derwinski asked how the number of stops was determined. Mr. Edison noted that a timetable is planned in advance, based on where infrastructure is needed, rather than on a specific travel time goal, and how to balance the infrastructure and timetable.

Chairman Derwinski asked if it would be possible to be sent the state organizational chart, not name-specific, to see how it is set up. Mr. Edison said he could share and send copies of what is publicly available.

Commissioner Harnish asked what the process was for getting to a reasonable timetable, considering all of the agencies involved. Mr. Edison stated that the 2050 timetable allows for revisions and has less precision due to ongoing planning and project development. The local agency involvement in the timetable is limited at the moment.

A question was raised about potentially relieving the pressure on the grid with hydrogen fuel cell trains. Mr. Edison noted that there are investments in hydrogen fuel cell trains, but they are probably not a solution for very high speeds due to fuel limitations and range concerns. However, they are envisioned for lower-density services.

A question was raised about the challenges or benefits of having many agencies involved. Mr. Edison stated that CalSTA is the oversight agency, and part of its role is to ensure the work is linked between both transportation departments and agencies. CalTrans is more of an operational entity, while the High-Speed Rail Authority is more of a project delivery organization. There is a lot of coordination that happens, but it involves distinct agencies with distinct focuses, including construction, project delivery, operations, and management.

IV. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT UPDATE

Charles Hoppesch from Quandel Consultants provided an update on the technical assistance support work, including the project timeline, alternatives analysis, intermediate station planning, market analysis, and outreach/engagement next steps.

Project Timeline

The project team is currently analyzing service options and working toward the virtual public meeting.

Alternatives Analysis

Quandel Consultants met with St. Louis Metro to discuss the project, including St. Louis Transit's planned expansion and its role as a critical link to future service and ridership. The next step is to engage local stakeholders.

Commissioner Wild asked who the team would be meeting with locally and expressed interest in coordinating together before engaging local stakeholders in St. Louis are contacted. Mr. Hoppesch responded that they were hoping to reach out to the mayor's offices, including East St. Louis, and that outreach would span the entire route.

Mr. Hoppesch also provided an overview of the route evaluation, including the elimination of infeasible routes, reducing the number of segments from 33 to 25. He discussed evaluating construction and operational issues.

Commissioner Lai asked if both existing and future wind turbines are being considered. Mr. Hoppesch responded that there is a database of existing wind turbines. To address future turbines, it's helpful to stay close to existing transportation corridors, as they are already built with the necessary clearances.

Melanie Johnson with Quandel Consultants responded that counties and cities along the route will be engaged, with continued dialogue.

Commissioner Vercruysse asked if the route analysis includes considerations for agricultural communities. Mr. Hoppesch agreed that preservation is critical.

Intermediate Station Planning

Mr. Hoppesch provided the benefits and challenges of building in developed and underdeveloped areas.

As part of the benefits of developed areas, Chairman Derwinski noted that existing infrastructure is already in place, including electrical, communications, and parking.

Charles Quandel from Quandel Consultants emphasized that these questions are meant to prompt discussion on whether we are entering the downtown area and to assess the associated benefits and challenges.

Charles Quandel from Quandel Consultants emphasized that these questions are to prompt if we are going into the downtown area and what the benefits and challenges are.

Commissioner Osborn highlighted the regulatory benefits, including ordinances, as well as infrastructure such as police, fire, and regulatory planning.

As part of the challenges in developed areas, Chairman Derwinski emphasized that safety around the railroad is reduced in dense urban areas.

A point was made that having good transit access in an urban center does not automatically imply that traffic will worsen, as it could be mitigated by the transit access.

Commissioner Vercruysse asked how benefits and challenges are assessed through existing stations in the analysis. Mr. Hoppesch stated that this will be revealed through the state of preference survey.

Commissioner Vercruysse stated that aside from the connections, there is an existing station, and he asked how these elements are integrated when looking at an intermediate station plan. Mr. Hoppesch explained that there are different connection possibilities, and it's about finding links and determining how to connect them.

Mr. Quandel stressed that meeting with stakeholders and communities will provide insight into the process, as well as the Commissioners' thoughts.

A point was made regarding the challenges in underdeveloped areas, particularly considering farmland and agriculture.

Commissioner Harnish provided examples of smaller stations around the world in terms of station planning.

Commissioner Osborn suggested looking at different modes of infrastructure and agreed with the need to consider farmland.

A question was asked how decisions will be made based on the benefits and challenges tradeoff. Mr. Hoppesch emphasized that the approach is to provide information on different possibilities, based on the benefits and challenges, to inform decisions.

Mr. Hoppesch asked for the Commission's input on the station planning locations for the five cities.

Chairman Derwinski emphasized the importance of engaging and partnering with the municipalities.

Commissioner Vitas recommended engaging with the city managers, as they play a critical role in the discussion. Commissioner Vitas also asked if stakeholder names could be provided.

Commissioner Sriraj stated that connectivity to these locations will play a large role in the station planning. He cautioned that the questions in the stated preference survey reflect the various connectivity options being considered. Mr. Hoppesch noted that the questions are still being developed and will be shared with the Commission. The survey information is scheduled for April, so it will be finalized towards the end of March.

Ms. Johnson clarified that the stated preference survey, conducted by the ridership consultant, will be used to gather information on travel mode choices. Specific groups and users of the system will be questioned.

It was suggested engaging with county boards in addition to the mayor's office and city administration.

Commissioner Vitas requested more details on Quandel's work. Ms. Johnson clarified that, as a technical consultant, they are gathering information and documentation to create a matrix of different possibilities and tradeoffs to present to the Commission.

Commissioner Harnish emphasized that station planning needs to be done with careful consideration and that the options should be presented clearly.

Market Analysis

The project team is in the process of requesting access to administer the stated preference survey at locations such as O'Hare Airport, rest stops, universities, and on-board Amtrak trains.

Outreach & Engagement Next Steps

Janet Henderson from Images, Inc. noted that the project team will be reaching out to local elected officials ahead of the first virtual public meeting to ensure they are notified and finalizing

materials for review. Ms. Henderson noted that the Public Involvement Technical Advisory Committee will meet again before the virtual public meeting.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

The meeting was open to public comment.

David Phillips stated that he was surprised there wasn't further comment from the Commissioners on the station planning discussion, particularly regarding Champaign. He mentioned that he can't imagine a feasible station in the Champaign area without it being located at the existing station. Similarly, in Springfield, a new station is being constructed that will have the capacity to accommodate high-speed rail, while freight operations would need to be relocated to the CN line. However, the new station would be able to handle the high-speed rail.

VI. ADJOURN

Chairman Derwinski called for a motion to adjourn. A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

VII. ACTION ITEMS

The Commission will coordinate with Chad Edison to share and send copies of CalSTA organizational chart that is publicly available, as requested by Chairman Derwinski.

Quandel Consultants will provide the Commission with the names of stakeholders, including city administration, they will engage with, as requested by Commissioners Vitas and Wild. Quandel Consultants will also provide the state of preference survey questions as requested by Commissioner Sriraj.