



# MEETING MINUTES

High-Speed Rail Commission  
Meeting | May 19, 2025

## Location:

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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:

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Monday, May 19, 2025

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

## Attendance:

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### Commission Member Attendees:

*\*Asterisk indicates attendance in-person*

- Tim Butler – Illinois Railroad Association\*
- 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
- Brian Vercruysse – Illinois Commerce Commission\*
- Bogdan Vitas Jr. – Illinois Municipal League

### Commission Members Not in Attendance:

- Erin Aleman – Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- James Derwinski – Commuter Rail Board
- Senator Don DeWitte – Senate
- Michael Paul Dunn Jr. – Region I Planning Council
- Karl P. Gnadt – Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District
- Representative Martin J. Moylan – House

- Senator Steve Stadelman – Senate
- James Wild – East-West Gateway Council of Governments

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

- Carrie Cooper – 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
- David Kralik – Metra\*
- Melanie Johnson – Quandel Consultants\*
- Julia Hiatt – Quandel Consultants\*
- Charles Hoppesch – Quandel Consultants\*
- Charles Quandel – Quandel Consultants\*
- Janet Henderson – Images, Inc.\*
- Virginie Amerlynck – WSP USA
- Rhett Fussell – WSP USA
- Berenice Alvarez – Morreale Communications\*
- Diane Bustamante – Morreale Communications\*
- Mary McIlvain – Morreale Communications\*
- Lonnie Schultz – Ardmore Roderick
- Christopher Ott – High Speed Rail Alliance
- Christopher Kopp – HNTB\*
- George Kandathil – Kane County Division of Transportation
- Roger Huff\*
- Peter Williams
- Jonathon Garcia
- Nick

## **OVERVIEW OF MEETING**

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

Vice Chairman Tim Butler began the meeting at 10:30 a.m. The meeting proceeded with a roll call of Commissioners. Although quorum was not immediately met at the start of the meeting, quorum was met shortly after with eight Commission members present in-person at either the Chicago or Springfield Illinois Department of Transportation offices and three Commissioners present in the virtual meeting room. Following roll call, Vice Chairman Butler noted that Commission members will need to complete the required compliance training, and more information will be sent out to Commissioners with this information.

## II. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT UPDATE

Quandel Consultants provided an update on the project timeline, alternatives analysis, market analysis, and outreach and engagement.

### Project Timeline

Melanie Johnson with Quandel Consultants provided an update that the virtual public meeting event was extended by request and that they are now moving into the service options analysis.

### Alternatives Analysis

Charles Hoppesch with Quandel Consultants provided an overview of estimated travel times, noting that the estimates are based on assumptions that could change as the project progresses. These assumptions are developed using industry-standard software and consider factors such as electric train propulsion, modern equipment and dedicated track.

Mr. Hoppesch also presented an overview of train performance, highlighting speed differences between electric trains and other types.

Commissioner Rouse asked if the graph being shown was based on dedicated track. Mr. Hoppesch clarified that it was not and that the line shown shares track with freight trains.

Commissioner Rouse asked whether the lack of dedicated track would impact what Amtrak is likely able to do. Mr. Hoppesch responded that performance is more limited by locomotive technology and the amount of cars trailing.

Mr. Hoppesch provided an overview of the right-of-way types being considered, including interstate median, interstate adjacent, county roads and greenfield. Following the median types, he shared examples of estimated travel times for routes using interstate medians, interstate adjacent, and county roads—each showing similar run times assuming it's running the maximum speed.

He also presented a table of preliminary run times with factors such as right-of-way types, station locations and equipment types. He noted that different downtown station options will be developed in coordination with city leadership and ongoing discussions with stakeholders.

Mr. Quandel noted that a platform transfer at University Park is being considered. He emphasized that the table assumes high-speed service into Chicago to estimate ridership. They are also looking at ridership potential for cross-platform transfers and coordination with Metra on the Metra Electric line into downtown Chicago.

Mr. Hoppesch noted there was a meeting with Vice Chairman Butler to discuss engagement approaches for working with railroads and are beginning to schedule those meetings.

Commissioner Rouse asked what engagement strategies were discussed. Mr. Hoppesch responded that the focus was primarily on timing and stressed the importance of early engagement.

The Project Delivery Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is tentatively scheduled to meet in June to review route options, planning assumptions and the benefit trade-offs.

## Market Analysis

Rhett Fussell with WSP provided a progress update on the survey design and survey administration.

The draft questionnaire and survey testing have been completed. Regarding survey administration, access was denied at O'Hare, Midway and St. Louis airports. However, a permit was submitted to Amtrak and approved, and approval was also obtained for highway rest stops.

For the self-administered surveys, an e-panel was setup and completed. The toll authority plans to send surveys to toll users, and coordination is ongoing with the University of Illinois.

A question was asked whether this included only the University of Illinois or other universities as well. Mr. Fussell noted that it currently includes only the University of Illinois but will be deployed across three different campuses and are trying to coordinate with other universities. Mr. Hoppesch added that they have not been able to establish contact with Illinois State University.

Commissioner Lai confirmed that he could share a contact from Illinois State University. He also asked whether Greyhound stations and stops were being considered. Mr. Fussell responded that this could be discussed internally.

Mr. Quandel noted one possible reason for airports to decline is that the study may be viewed as promoting a competitive mode of transportation thus potentially impacting airport revenue.

The Commission discussed drafting a letter to formally request cooperation from the airports and emphasize the importance of the survey.

Commissioner Rouse asked whether background information had been provided to the airports highlighting previous experience conducting surveys at other airports as well as additional context to the survey. Mr. Hoppesch emphasized that while the Chicago Department of Aviation was supportive, the final decision was with different decision-makers including legal departments.

Commissioner Vercruyse asked if the response from the airports had been received in writing. Mr. Hoppesch noted that an email had been sent, but no formal legal letter was obtained.

After discussion, the Commission was in support of drafting a letter to the airports requesting cooperation. A letter will be drafted by Quandel Consultants, circulated to the Commission for review and then sent to the airports.

Commissioner Rouse asked when the final decision email was sent. Mr. Hoppesch noted it was sent approximately 30 to 40 days ago.

## Outreach & Engagement

Janet Henderson from Images provided an update on the public event, noting that it has been extended. Meeting materials will be housed on the study website.

Commissioner Rouse asked if there was a target number of respondents. Ms. Henderson noted that there was no specific target, but the amount of responses has exceeded expectations.

Ms. Henderson highlighted outreach and advertising, which included billboards, press releases, media coverage, and third-party outreach through social media and newsletters. She also

provided an update on event progress, including traffic sources, site sessions, page views, and average time spent on the website- noting that the majority of site sessions were made through mobile devices.

A question was asked regarding whether the site sessions represented unique visitors. Ms. Henderson confirmed that approximately 99% were unique visitors.

More than 6,000 surveys were completed for the public interest survey. Among the 60 comments received, the majority were supportive while concerns were focused on cost and efficiency.

A question was asked about the survey's ability to filter out duplicate responses. Ms. Henderson noted that it would be done manually, so the number of completed surveys is not final yet.

Commissioner Lai asked whether the number of Spanish language responses was surprising. Ms. Henderson noted that traditionally there tends to be lower survey participation among this group.

Next steps include responding to all comments after the survey closes at the end of May, preparing a summary of the public event, and producing a report on the survey results. A meeting with the Public Involvement TAC is planned for late July in preparation for the next virtual event in mid-September.

A question was asked about the level of detail that would be included in the report. Ms. Henderson responded that the report would include a breakdown of the results for each survey question.

### **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The April 14, 2025, 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 meeting was made. The minutes were approved and passed with no objections.

Following the approval of the meeting minutes, Commissioner Harnish and Commissioner Shanahan shared insights from the high-speed rail conference in Washington including noting questions raised about how the current public transit crisis may affect high-speed rail and emphasizing the importance of public education on high-speed rails.

### **IV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

The meeting was open to public comment, during which two comments were made.

George Kandathil with the Kane County Division of Transportation asked if the presentation slides would be made available and whether the feeder routes connecting to the main routes would go through Kane County.

Vice Chairman Butler confirmed that the presentation would be posted on the Commission's website following the meeting. He also referenced the feeder routes identified in the legislation.

Nick, a resident of Champaign, thanked the Commission for their work and expressed excitement for high-speed rail and an interconnected transportation network. He emphasized the importance of considering universities when considering potential ridership. Specifically, he

emphasized that a train serving the Champaign-Urbana area should take into account the number of university students who regularly use public transit.

#### **V. ADJOURN**

Vice Chairman Butler called for a motion to adjourn. A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

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

Quandel Consultants will draft a letter requesting cooperation from the airports on behalf of the Commission, circulate it to the Commission for review, and then send it to the airports.