



MEETING MINUTES

High-Speed Rail Commission Meeting

November 19, 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:

Wednesday, November 19, 2025

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Attendance:

Commission Member Attendees:

**Asterisk indicates attendance in-person*

- Erin Aleman – Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning*
- Tim Butler – Illinois Railroad Association*
- 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
- Katrina Thompson – Village of Broadview
- Brian Vercruyse – Illinois Commerce Commission*
- James Wild – East-West Gateway Council of Governments

Commission Members Not in Attendance:

- Jim Derwinwki – Metra
- Senator Don DeWitte – Senate

- 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

Non-Commission Member Attendees:

- Carrie Cooper – Illinois Department of Transportation*
- Kaitlyn Mitchum – Illinois Department of Transportation
- Elliot Ramos – Illinois Department of Transportation*
- Shoun Reese – Illinois Department of Transportation
- DeAnna Smith – Illinois Department of Transportation*
- Julie Reschke – Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning*
- David Kralik – Metra*
- Julia Hiatt – Quandel Consultants*
- Melanie Johnson – Quandel Consultants*
- Ray Lang – Quandel Consultants*
- Peter Williams – Quandel Consultants*
- Janet Henderson – Images, Inc.*
- Victoria Fulbright – Images, Inc.
- Virginie Amerlynck – WSP USA
- Rhett Fussell – WSP USA
- Berenice Alvarez – Morreale Communications*
- Mary McIlvain – Morreale Communications*
- Penny Weaver – Morreale Communications*
- James Anderson
- Jonathan Garcia
- Roger Huff*
- Ari Levitan
- Dave Moses
- Neil Ormos
- David Phillips*
- Lonnie Schultz
- Charlie (last name not disclosed)
- Dave (last name not disclosed)
- George (last name not disclosed)

OVERVIEW OF MEETING

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Commission Vice Chairman Tim Butler began the meeting at 10:30 a.m. The meeting proceeded with a roll call of Commissioners. With thirteen Commission members present in person at either the Chicago or Springfield Illinois Department of Transportation offices, a quorum was confirmed. The meeting agenda focused on feasibility study progress, governance strategies, market analysis and outreach updates.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The July 14 and September 10, 2025, meeting minutes were approved.

III. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORT UPDATE

Quandel Consultants provided an update on the feasibility study, service and investment options, a summary of alternatives, market analysis and outreach and engagement.

Feasibility Study

Consultants reported completion of route development and service plans. Eight potential routes analyzed with planning-level cost estimates, O&M costs and ridership forecasting are underway. A matrix comparing alternatives will include ridership, capital costs and benefit-cost ratios.

Melanie Johnson of Quandel Consultants reported that three working group meetings with members of the commission were conducted this fall. The objective of the meetings was to "baseline" the study. The group discussed route development and how potentially feasible routes were developed. They did a deep dive into the routes. Using a mapping tool, the working group looked at all routes and their design. They also discussed service and investment options, how to develop the service plans, ridership forecasting and designed a summary of alternatives.

The working group completed the route development portion of the study and also developed the service plans, operations and maintenance cost development and route exhibits. Estimates will be available in early 2026. Ms. Johnson thanked Commissioner Rick Harnish for inviting them to present on the feasibility study at High-Speed Rail Alliance event. Ms. Johnson introduced Ray Lang who led the discussion of governance strategies.

Governance Strategies

Discussion led by Ray Lang on governance models: State Authority, Joint Powers Authority (JPA) and State-Owned Corporation (North Carolina model). Key considerations include regulatory compliance, liability, funding mechanisms and phased responsibilities. The technical advisory committee (TAC) meeting is planned for January to review pros and cons.

Mr. Lang presented a model in North Carolina. North Carolina created a private entity called the North Carolina Railroad Company during the mid 1800's. A private corporation owned by state; leases right-of-way to freight railroads. A for-profit model with additional revenue streams (real estate, services). They have a cooperative relationship together, a company in the state that implements and administers the grants. It has a board of directors; their board members are appointed by the governor of the state of North Carolina. It leases its right of way to a railroad; in this case it's Norfolk Southern.

Ray highlighted several key governance issues:

- Ownership of property and infrastructure.
- Implementation: planning, design, and construction.
- Operations: dispatching, supervision, and revenue management.

- Maintenance: tracks, signals, rolling stock, stations.
- Funding mechanisms and liability.
- Regulatory compliance (FRA, STB, state agencies).

Discussion Highlights

- A legal review is needed to see if Illinois can adopt an NC-style corporation.
- Governance may vary by project phase (planning vs. operations).
- Consider multimodal corridors (e.g., along interstates).
- Engage private stakeholders early (e.g., Farm Bureau).
- Public comments stressed transparency, competitive operators, and station planning.

Next steps include a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting in January to review pros/cons of governance models. Explore additional options. Address funding, legal constraints and project phases, and continued cost estimates and ridership forecasting. Schedule community updates, prepare annual report for the Governor by December 31.

Market Analysis

Rhett Fussell of WSP provided updates on ridership forecasting model development. Analysis includes diversion from other modes and induced demand. Outputs will rank routes by ridership, revenue and savings.

Outreach & Engagement

Janet Henderson of Images, Inc. reported on drafting an annual report summarizing 2025 activities and milestones. Next steps include finalizing the report, scheduling public involvement in technical working groups and planning the next virtual public meeting.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

The meeting was open to public comment, during which one member of the public.

- Roger Huff emphasized transparency in governance discussions, competitive service considerations and disclosure of TAC activities.
- David Phillips raised concerns about station location analysis and urged consideration of O'Hare connectivity.

V. ADJOURN

Vice-Chairman Butler called for a motion to adjourn. A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:13 p.m.

VI. ACTION ITEMS

The annual report will be submitted on behalf of the Commission and the governance TAC will meet in January.