



MEETING DOCUMENTATION

Date: September 27, 2005

Time: 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Location: St. Etienne Conference Room, Armory Building

Subject: **SE Connector Project Advisory Committee Meeting #1**

Project:

- P1a: SEC SW 2nd to SE 6th
- P1b: SEC SE 6th to 15th
- P2: SEC EIS
- General

| Meeting Participants | Representing (Agency or Firm) |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Pam Cooksey | City of Des Moines |
| Jeb Brewer | City of Des Moines |
| Gary Fox | City of Des Moines |
| Darwin Larson | City of Des Moines |
| Matt Anderson | City of Des Moines |
| Rick Clark | City of Des Moines |
| Shawn Foutch | Kirkham Michael |
| Mark Pierson | Wilbur Smith Associates |
| Steve Wells | Wilbur Smith Associates |
| Jake Potter | Jane Mobley Associates |
| Ryan Snelson | Jane Mobley Associates |
| Patt Dunn | RDG |
| Nadine Hogate | Neighborhood Representative |
| Steve Helry (John Bergeson) | Iowa State Bank |
| Tim Leach (Kerty Levy) | Downtown Community Alliance |
| Bob Butin | Iowa Department of Transportation |
| Tom Kane | Des Moines Area MPO |
| Michael Dees | Kemin Industries |
| Greg Jones | Des Moines Planning & Zoning Commission |
| Duane Van Hemert | Des Moines Public Schools |
| Tom England | Mid American Energy Company |
| Brenda LaBlanc | Laurel Hill Neighborhood |
| Archie Brooks | City of Des Moines Councilman |
| Scott Cahill | Principal Financial Group / Riverwalk |
| Rita Conner | City of Pleasant Hill |
| Dean Ibsen | Iowa Dept. of Administrative Services |
| Bill Stowe | Wastewater Reclamation Authority |

Discussion/Meeting Goals:

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss and accept roles and responsibilities for the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and Project Team, understand the relationship between the overall project planning and design process and PAC input and to discuss key issues and concerns regarding the SE Connector Project.

COMMITTEE MEETING CONVENES

- Welcome and introduction conducted by Jeb Brewer, City Engineer, City of Des Moines
- Self-introductions took place by PAC members
- PAC meeting agenda reviewed by Jake Potter, Jane Mobley Associates

Purpose, Roles and Responsibilities

Jake Potter defined the PAC's function as an advisory group to assist the Project Team and City of Des Moines by providing meaningful input on matters of general interest to the community as they relate to the planning, design and construction of SE Connector improvements. City staff will attend and participate in all meetings, but they are not a member of the PAC.

The expectation is that all PAC members will:

- Attend all meetings and prepare appropriately
- Clearly articulate and reflect the interests they bring to the table
- Listen to other points of view and try to understand the interests of others
- Openly discuss issues with people who hold diverse views
- Actively generate and evaluate options, and
- Keep their agency or organization informed of the group's work

Project team representatives will distribute relevant materials, including meeting agendas, at least three working days in advance of meetings. Meetings will begin promptly and adjourn by the time specified on the agenda, and be facilitated by a member of the project team.

Project Background and Process

Background

Shawn Foutch reviewed the current proposed schedule for design and construction activities through 2012. He also referred to previous projects including the MLK Parkway EIS Study and the Southeast Diagonal Study and their relationship to the Southeast Connector.

It was stated that the SE Connector Project area consists of two phases. The SE Connector Phase I includes the area between SW 2nd Street to SE 15th Street. This phase will include the final design of roadway improvement between SW 2nd Street and SE 6th Street, including a new bridge over the Des Moines River. Also included is the final design and construction for roadway improvements between SE 6th Street and SE 15th Street. The Phase I improvements received prior environmental clearance as the selected alternative in the MLK Parkway EIS (1987).

The SE Connector Phase II includes the area between SE 15th Street to U.S. 65. This phase will include an Environmental Impact Statement, with design and construction from SE 15th Street to U.S. 65 dependent on funding. It was also stated that many environmental issues exist throughout the project area, but especially in the Phase II study area. Considering the environmental issues, there is a need to look at many alternatives. It was also stated that the timing of key decisions is crucial to the completion of the project.

Public Involvement components are included within each of these phases. Later stages of each phase, such as design, right of way acquisition and construction of any improvements approved during the Phase II EIS process will proceed as funding becomes available.

Steve Wells explains that there is a need to outline the project due to numerous elements such as an initial screening report, multiple environmental field representatives and identification of areas within the study area that present complex engineering challenges. He also mentioned an upcoming project open house that will take place on October 18 and the need to keep the public informed and involved.

Project Process – Phase I

With the aid of the presentation maps, Shawn Foutch explained specific factors related to the design and construction of the new arterial roadway and Des Moines River crossing. Issues and features of note to Phase I included:

- The proposed bridge concept will be approximately 700 ft. in length.
- Other factors related to the bridge concept include the existence of levees on each side of river, and a major utility project currently taking place as well as a bike path project.
- It has been proposed that the width of the roadway be four lanes between Allen Street and Raccoon Street—similar to that of MLK on the west side.
- Access to the proposed 4-lane arterial were mentioned with regard to population density and expected traffic flow as well as coordinated with land use.
- Sixth Street is shown as a major corridor while 4th Street and 9th Street serve as possible alternatives with the consideration towards providing space for utilities.
- The proposed Phase I corridor is estimated at approximately 150 feet wide.
- Shawn continued by mentioning that there are specific, existing constraints including Sam Cohen Park.

Shawn finished up details regarding Phase I by mentioning that the 14th Street viaduct represents the end of Phase I.

Project Process – Phase II

Steve Wells discussed the Phase II study area, noting potential issues and constraints along the alignment recommended by the 1999 SE Diagonal Study. Phase II would start at SE 15th Street. The SE Diagonal's recommended alignment closely follows Scott Avenue until reaching railroad crossings between SE 20th and 21st streets. This area is bordered by Kemin Industries on the south and City DPW property on the north. The issue at this point is how best to cross the railroad tracks, while minimizing impacts to Kemin's property.

Other issues related to the SE Diagonal's recommended alignment and the study area, include:

- There are also physical landmarks that create issues such as Dean's Lake.
- How best to minimize impacts to the Chesterfield neighborhood. This portion of the study area is highly residential. There is a significant Hispanic population within the Chesterfield neighborhood and it is important that everyone be notified of the project status.
- Properties purchased by the Wastewater Reclamation Authority provides a potential corridor south of the Chesterfield neighborhood
- Engineering issues become more complex near 30th Street. The Sunset Beach Pond and the salvage yard, active railroads, and industries such as CSI Pre-cast and Cargill create many potential constraints.
- Near the Vandalia Road/U.S. 65 interchange is another complicated area from an engineering and environmental perspective. Potential constraints in this area include Four Mile Creek, Hallet Materials' sand and gravel operations, active railroads, the Countrywide Grain Terminal and U.S. 65. Many issues will be addressed in determining the best alignment alternative for this portion of the study area.

Shawn Fouch added that the Phase II EIS is scheduled to be complete by 2008. Later design and construction would follow as funds become available.

Issues and Concerns

The following questions/concerns were discussed by the PAC:

Pleasant Hill corridor is greatly in need of improvements.

Bill Stowe asked Shawn Fouch where structures might be required in the corridor. Shawn replied that structures of some type would likely be needed at SE 14th/15th streets, at rail crossings near the Public Works facility and Kemin Industries, in the vicinity of 30th Street/Sunset Beach Pond, and at the eastern terminus of the study at Four Mile Creek Countrywide Grain Terminal and at 30th Street. There are very tight restraints in the area and the concerns of residential and business properties need to be known.

A committee member asked how many rail lines were located in the study corridor and how many would require some type of structure to cross them. Steve Wells replied that the exact number of crossings had not been determined yet, but that there were several, including those discussed earlier.

Greg Jones asked what the new bridge over the Des Moines River would look like. Other bridge related questions included:

- How elevated will the bridge be?
- What about more "signature bridges?"
- Does the Principal Plan (River Walk) say what kind of bridge is to be constructed?
- Is the "basket handle" appropriate? What about matching arches of old bridges?

Shawn Fouch indicated that the study team would develop two concepts: a standard crossing and an enhanced or "signature" type crossing. The concepts will be developed in the coming months and the PAC will have an opportunity to review and provide input. Two known constraints on the

bridge design are the number of piers needed and the span of the bridge itself. Phase I funding included a bridge similar to I-235 or what currently exists along the river. The MLK Parkway EIS depicted the bridge as a “simple crossing”

Scott Cahill noted two important issues to consider regarding the context of the area surrounding the crossing:

- Protecting the sight lines that currently exist.
- The use of the east and west sides of the bridge with regard to pedestrian usage.

The Principal Riverwalk had also identified potential new land uses in the vicinity of the bridges landing on the east side of the river. The potential developments including possibilities of an aquatic center, skate park on the east side of river as well as an amphitheatre or green space (park).

There is currently utility work taking place on the west side of river that is considered “minor upgrades.” The majority of the work is at Court Street and North.

Jake Potter asked if there were any specific needs of neighborhood leaders and what concerns they might have. Mark Pierson informed the committee of his role regarding public involvement, and stressed the need to hear from neighborhood groups such as Chesterfield and Laurel Hill. He specifically mentioned the following aspects of the Project Team’s open and transparent public involvement effort:

- Media Tour on Tuesday, September 27
- Future open houses/public meetings
- Project business cards, 1-800 number and P.O. Box
- Project Web site at www.seconnector.com
- Advisory committee meetings in conjunction with project milestones
- Distribution of newsletters, on-going media relations, door hangers

Nadine Hogate advised that there are many people that don’t have money to move even if with compensation.

A committee member asked what information was on the project home page. Jake Potter replied that included on the home page is information about the next public involvement meeting, frequently asked questions, project history and background, study area maps, etc.

Shawn Foutch added that the project team intends to continue discussions with developers, the general public and the committee in order to better identify all of the issues. Neighborhood charrettes could also be an important part of the process. The overall intent is to gather all of the ideas in order to promote input and then summarize and send to city council.

Bill Stowe indicated that any alternative would need to accommodate heavy truck traffic and that truck access to the wastewater treatment facility would be a necessary component.

The PAC then discussed issues related to truck traffic, rail lines and related issues, including:

- Currently there are frequent traffic stoppages and congestion due to rail activity.
- There could be a need for consolidating or reorienting rail lines in the area, especially near Scott Avenue and 20th Street.
- There could be Federal money available to help redesign rail lines.
- The study process will need to determine how active these rail lines are.
- Tom Kane mentioned that the MPO would be sponsoring an upcoming freight issues meeting.
- Michael Dees discussed how the various issues affect Kemin Industries.

Summary and Critique of Meeting

Jake Potter initiated closing remarks.

Shawn Foutch closed by indicating his intent to continue seeking input from multiple groups. He also mentioned that the City wants to know where we are headed regarding the bridge concept which could be presented by mid-December.

The next PAC meeting was set for December 13, 2005 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Jake Potter suggested committee members watch for media coverage of the project and to let project team know what they may hear from their constituents, customers or neighbors.

Shawn Foutch requested that people offer input on how this group can improve and better ways in which they can keep in touch.

The meeting concluded at approximately 5:50 p.m.

| Action Item | Responsibility | Deadline |
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Authored by: Ryan Snelson, Mark Pierson

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