



# MEETING DOCUMENTATION

**Date:** December 13, 2005

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

**Location:** Walsh Room – Des Moines Botanical Center

**Subject:** SE Connector Project Advisory Committee Meeting #2

**Project:**

- P1a: SEC SW 2<sup>nd</sup> to SE 6<sup>th</sup>
- P1b: SEC SE 6<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>
- 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
Shawn Foutch	Kirkham Michael
Mark Pierson	Wilbur Smith Associates
Steve Wells	Wilbur Smith Associates
Ben Goldsworthy	Wilbur Smith Associates
Jake Potter	Jane Mobley Associates
Ryan Snelson	Jane Mobley Associates
Patt Dunn	RDG
Nadine Hogate	Neighborhood Representative
Lorne Wazny	Iowa Department of Transportation
Kerty Levy	Downtown Community Alliance
Tom Kane	Des Moines Area MPO
Michael Dees	Kemin Industries
Dean Dunt	Mid American Energy Co.
Jason Schwenneker	Countrywide Grain
Patrick Halsted	Union Pacific Railroad
Tony DeAngelo	SOHO Development
Greg Jones	Dunbar/Jones
Duane Van Hemert	Des Moines Public Schools
Scott Cahill	Principal Financial Group / Riverwalk
Dean Ibsen	Iowa Dept. of Administrative Services
Bill Stowe	Wastewater Reclamation Authority

## Discussion/Meeting Goals:

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss various bridge concepts for the Des Moines River crossing, and for the PAC to gain a greater understanding of the purpose and need / EIS process through a screening criteria group exercise.

## Committee Meeting Convenes

Shawn Foutch welcomed attendees and provided an overview of the agenda.

### *Bridge Design Discussion*

The first portion of the meeting was devoted to discussing bridge concepts for the new Des Moines River Crossing. Shawn Foutch led the discussion of bridge concepts. The study team is scheduled to present a recommended bridge concept to the City Council in late January. Shawn asked the PAC for their input and a consensus on recommending a design concept to the City Council. PAC members were encouraged to discuss what they did or did not like about each concept. The study team's presentation to the City Council will incorporate PAC feedback and preferences. This information will be influential in the City Council providing a directive as to the type of bridge to construct.

Shawn began the discussion by reviewing the bridge design process and activities to date. During the preliminary design process, the study team needs to make decisions on a variety of issues including budget, function, constraints, as well as defining a bridge type, size and location. The study team has preliminary findings for several of these issues. For instance, the budget for bridge construction stands at approximately \$7 million. Likewise there are preliminary recommendations regarding the size, location and function of the bridge. Preliminary findings indicate that a new bridge would be approximately 750 feet long and 80 feet wide. It would carry at least four lanes of traffic in addition to bike lanes, with multi-purpose trails along the outside edges. The bridge would be designed so that additional lanes of traffic could be added in the future if warranted.

Shawn then stated that the primary unresolved issue was what type of bridge to design. The study team is considering three bridge concepts—a “basic”, “enhanced” and “signature” bridge. He then presented the PAC with details and 3D simulations for each of the three bridge design concepts:

- Basic – Six spans of concrete or steel, approximately \$6-7 million.
- Enhanced – Seven to eight spans with similar arches to the Court Avenue Bridge, approximately \$7-8 million.
- Signature – Five spans using tied arch or cable-stayed similar to George Washington Carver Bridge with piers in water, approximately \$11-12 million.

(Please refer to the attached handout for presentation slides)

Shawn concluded his presentation by noting that the City Council will be presented with the same level of detail and perspective for each bridge design concept. He then asked PAC members for their impressions and opinions. Comments and suggestions included the following:

- PAC members requested that future versions of the simulations include the views from the perspective of drivers crossing the bridge.
- The majority of the PAC believed the basic concept was inferior to the enhanced and signature bridge concepts, especially considering the level of upgrades to newly constructed bridges in the surrounding area.
- One PAC member favored some type of signature structure at this location. However, he was not necessarily sold on the existing signature design concept as it was presented. He cautioned the PAC that this was an opportunity to create something unique for Des Moines and to not think too conservatively.
- The question was posed if it was possible to lower the cost of the signature bridge in order to bring the total cost in line with what the City has budgeted. The study team responded that there was some contingency built in to the overall price tag of the signature bridge and some value engineering could be conducted, however, these elements would only provide a small savings.
- Other PAC members were concerned about losing out on other components (ped/bike connections) if cost cutting measures were necessary to fund a signature bridge within the existing budget.
- There was also a concern about delaying the overall project if more funds were allocated to the construction of the bridge.
- Some members believed that a signature bridge would detract from the existing views of the capitol and downtown, as well as views up and down the river.
- Many PAC members discussed the upstream and downstream view and believed the enhanced option was the best fit and presented the least visual obstructions.
- Other PAC members supported constructing an enhanced bridge because its cost was within the amount budgeted by the City.
- Pedestrian and bicycle movements were also discussed. Shawn Foutch stated that accommodations would be studied thoroughly and designed and constructed to AASHTO standards, as well as being ADA compliant.
- Jeb Brewer stated that the enhanced bridge concept presented the greatest hydraulic risk. However, study team analysis to date indicates that the hydraulic effects should be within the standards required by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Also, there would be greater budget flexibility and less potential schedule impacts with either the basic or enhanced design concepts

### ***Purpose and Need / EIS Discussion***

The second half of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of the early stages of the SE Connector EIS process.

Steve Wells discussed the role of a project Purpose and Need Statement in the EIS decision-making process (see attached handout). The purpose and need defines problems and issues, identifies screening criteria and guides the development and assessment of alternatives. Steve provided several examples of key issues and needs that SE Connector improvements should address including: system connectivity, improved capacity, improved access for emergency services, improve access to opportunity, system safety, economic development and goods movement.

Steve also outlined the process for screening alternatives. In general, as the number of alternatives under consideration decreases, those remaining are developed in more detail and the screening process becomes more stringent. The process eventually results in the selection of a preferred

alternative. Potential screening criteria usually fall in one or more categories related to engineering, transportation, natural environment and social environment.

Following Steve's introduction to project purpose and need and screening criteria, the remainder of the time was devoted to a small group discussion. PAC members were divided into three groups and were asked to identify the criteria they thought were most important and to apply those criteria in identifying potential corridors. To demonstrate the vast number of potential corridors to consider, each group was provided with a map that broke the study area into three sections. Each section had as few as six, and as many as 23 potential segments that could be grouped to form a corridor that connected Phase I of the SE Connector with the U.S. 65 Bypass. After the small group exercise, participants took turns describing the issues, criteria and corridors identified by their respective groups. The following is a summary of that discussion:

- Group A – This group identified neighborhood cohesion, opportunities for redevelopment, improved access and system connectivity as key issues to consider when developing alternatives. The potential impact of any corridor on the Chesterfield neighborhood was a specific concern. Some PAC members had perceived that the SE Connector would function as a limited access expressway that would divide existing neighborhoods. The study team suggested that an enhanced roadway could become a neighborhood amenity that could provide better, safer connections.
- Group B – This group defined economic development, connectivity, neighborhood cohesion and access as key criteria. This Group agreed that the Chesterfield neighborhood could be positively impacted if a potential SE Connector route passed through the neighborhood using existing city-owned right of way and provided better access and redevelopment opportunities.
- Group C – The primary concerns of the group was utilizing the existing interchange at Vandalia Road, promoting alternatives that improved redevelopment options (such as Agrimergent), and providing improved accessibility for goods movements. Alternatives to the north were less desirable as those would not improve the viability of the Agrimergent development.

Each of the three groups used 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Scott Avenue and the existing Vandalia Road interchange as the end points for any potential corridor. Also, each group thought Vandalia Road would function better as a secondary arterial rather than as part of a new corridor. Other issues regarding potential corridors included:

- The groups discussed corridors that would pass to the north or south of Chesterfield.
- One corridor discussed would utilize abandoned rail right of way already owned by the City that would pass through Chesterfield.
- Avoid corridors located away from the proposed Agrimergent Technology Park as this might impede redevelopment efforts.
- Promote corridors that improved the efficiency of moving heavy trucks in and out of the corridor, especially as it relates to truck movements to and from Kemin, WRA, and Cargill.
- Avoid excessive negative impacts to the existing Chesterfield neighborhood.
- Emphasize neighborhood cohesion by designing corridors that provided improved access and amenities for bicyclists, pedestrians and transit.

## Summary and Critique of Meeting

Shawn Foutch initiated closing remarks by summarizing what he believed he had heard from the PAC in regards to a bridge concept recommendation. The group agreed that they supported the enhanced bridge design for the new river crossing. However, the fact that this crossing is an important feature of the new corridor should not be overlooked.

The next PAC meeting was scheduled for April 4, 2006 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. By then the study team is expected to have identified three to four alternatives for the EIS and developed them with refined design details.

The meeting concluded at approximately 6:10 p.m.

### **Please Note:**

Since the PAC meeting, there has been continued discussion regarding the bridge design concepts. A subsequent meeting is being scheduled for early January to discuss additional bridge concepts that could be considered. An invitation for this meeting will be sent to the PAC.

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