

Wisconsin High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail
Focus Group Meeting #1
4:30pm – 6:30pm

Madison Corridor Management Plan
September 8, 2010

Focus Group Members Present: Arthur Thexton, Scott Thornton, Dan Melton, Joe Clausius, Patrick McDonnell, Lindsey Lee, Dace Zeps, Mike Shivers, Peng Her, Jeff Fitzgerald, Tom Cranley, Mike Wolf, Chris Petykowski, Scott Langer, Tony Fernandez, Bridget Maniaci (pending city confirmation)

Focus Group Members Absent: Satya Rhodes-Conway, Marsha Rummel, Robbie Webber, Joe Campana, Kathy Soukup, Adam Prell, Jeff Mintzloff, Ben Meighan

Focus Group Member Stand-in: Patrick Soukup attended for Kathy Soukup

WisDOT Staff Present: Paul Trombino, LeAnna Wall, Carrie Cooper, Kjirstin Roberts

WisDOT Staff Absent: John Oimoen, Donna Brown, Mark Morrison

Consultant Staff Present: Caron Kloser, Randy Henke, Greg Grissom, Carolyn Seboe, Chuck Wade, Manfred Enburg, June Coleman, Jeff Francis

Welcome:

Paul Trombino of WisDOT opened the meeting at 4:40pm by welcoming everyone to the first of four working meetings. He acknowledged their busy schedules and the state's appreciation for their participation identifying important community issues.

LeAnna Wall of WisDOT also thanked the group for their work and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

The focus group is comprised of about two dozen individuals, including city officials, neighborhood representatives, and small business owners.

Overview:

Project details include the overview of the corridor with six daily round trips between Madison-Milwaukee-Chicago slated to begin in 2013. The Madison station is located downtown at the Wisconsin Department of Administration Building, 101 E. Wilson Street. Train speeds will be approximately 90 mph as they approach town, slowing to 45 mph.

The design schedule requires final plans be ready by April 1st, 2011. Construction for land bridges in Jefferson County will begin in November 2010.

With safety a top priority for the Department of Transportation (WisDOT), local communities, the Office of Commissioner of Railroads (OCR), and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), two diagnostic teams have been formed:

- One for Crossings/Warning Devices
- One for Fencing Locations

The results/recommendations of each diagnostic team will be forwarded in a petition to the OCR, the office responsible for approving all crossing devices and fencing locations.

The Focus Group will need to provide input on corridor crossings and fencing for the Madison Corridor to the diagnostic team by December 2010. The schedule is very tight.

Corridor Management Plan (CMP) Process:

Focus is on aesthetic treatments and maintenance issues. Three primary elements are:

- Roadway grade crossings
- Bike and pedestrian crossings
- Fencing and maintenance

The Focus Group will meet over four sessions, with the issues and recommendations discussed by the group compiled in a final Corridor Management Plan document by April 2011. In addition to this evening's meeting, a meeting will be held in October, November, and one in late February/early March 2011. In December 2010 a Public Information Meeting will be held to present the group's work, planned recommendations, and to receive feedback from the community.

Roles & Expectations:

The Focus Group is non-voting, advisory group providing recommendations primarily on safety issues that will be forwarded to the OCR. Each member is a liaison to the community and should share materials and discussions with the community.

Please be sure names, email addresses, telephone numbers are correct as stated in the CMP packet each person has in front of them. Use the sheets provided on each table to note any corrections.

These meetings are open working meetings. The general public is welcome to observe the focus group meetings.

Crossing Treatments:

HNTB consultant Randy Henke talked about crossing treatments, stressing that the crossing treatments are dictated by standards issued by the FRA and the OCR. There are specific sight distance calculations that must be used for pedestrians and for automobiles

at every crossing. Rules for calculating sight distance at crossings are formula based and do not allow for deviations.

Fencing recommendations from the community and the Diagnostic Team will be coordinated. The Milwaukee to Chicago Hiawatha Corridor, currently running, is considered a good test case when examining fencing recommendations.

The Diagnostic Team is currently collecting and examining data. Information from tonight's meeting will be forwarded to the Diagnostic Team. All of the Diagnostic Team's findings to date will be discussed at the next Focus Group meeting.

The next meeting will be the week of October 18, 2010. Group discussion indicates the best time to meet is at 5:00pm, either on Wednesday, October 20th or Thursday, October 21st. A notice will go out to the group with the set date, time, and location.

Vision Exercise:

A packet of materials is set before each member of the group. Inside the packet are a set of 11x17 maps detailing a breakdown of the corridor. Project managers have walked and driven the corridor several times and the maps are highlights of that, noting key crossings, buildings, paths, etc. The last page is a worksheet for identifying community issues. Please review the maps and indicate anything that is missing, important to take note of, and critical crossings. These worksheets will be collected, combined, and forwarded to the Diagnostic Team.

As discussion about the maps progressed at each table, Randy Henke answered questions about the tracks, platform, and design process. He noted everything will be designed ADA compliant, trains will run on a single track, and that passenger trains have priority over freight but currently there is plenty of capacity for both.

In addition, questions about bike path integrity and train speeds arose and were answered:

- If the bike path is currently there, it will be kept although a few need to be examined for connectivity issues.
- East of the Interstate train speeds are 90mph; as they approach Junction A (Goodman Community Center) speeds reduce to between 20-40mph at a curve just before the Terrace and entrance to the Madison station. Eventually that speed will be about 30mph.
- At a minimum, there will be gates at every crossing; depending on the crossing, there may be anywhere from one to four gates.
- FRA pushes very hard to close crossings for safety.
- The design will make every crossing compatible for a whistle free zone. The Department cannot apply for whistle free zone status; the community must do that every three years. WisDOT's goal is to have every crossing meet whistle free zone criteria now; as zone elements change in the future the community is responsible for applying/renewing whistle free zone status.

- If a road crossing is closed to vehicular traffic, it may be closed to bike/pedestrian traffic as well.

Top Issues (Flipchart exercise):

Individuals were encouraged to present one top issue or concern to the rest of the group. Those issues included:

- Minimize impacts to adjacent parks
- Maintain the integrity of the Capital City Bike Trail
- Make every effort not to close *any* streets at all; find other ways with tunnels, underpasses, etc.
- Keep or relocate the community garden on St. Paul; also this area has the highest per capita concentration of children in the city – they walk and/or bike to get to the Goodman Center, as well as cross the tracks to get to school. Fencing is really important.
- Keep pedestrian and bike traffic open along the Yahara River Parkway; the national historic parkway is currently being restored with plans for a pedestrian path on the eastern side of the river.
- Avoid dividing the Atwood neighborhood into two communities with the tracks as the divider; many residents are fearful that this neighborhood will become two separate neighborhoods.
- Critical that certain streets remain open because of connectivity issues; there is a major school walking route on Lapham; don't move bike paths.
- Important to keep bike paths and pedestrian paths open.
- Secure quiet zones for the long term.
- Maintaining the integrity of the Yahara Parkway is paramount
- Bike paths should be underpasses
- Area of the Isthmus cannot have street closings; it is a non-starter due to connectivity issues in the area
- speed of trains in the downtown area and the safety at crossings is number one concern for Hawthorne area

All the issues will be collected and tabulated.

Open House:

The final activity for the evening involved the examination of oversized map displays of corridor segments. The set of eleven maps illustrates rail corridor areas of detail highlighting crossings and areas of track. Staff was stationed at each map to answer questions. Participants were encouraged to use post-it notes at each display to write comments, questions, and concerns and stick it directly on the area of the map it addressed. These post-it note comments will be tabulated and forwarded to the Diagnostic Team.

The meeting concluded at 6:30pm.

Comments Sheet:
(One sheet submitted)

- A single map showing the entire route of the Madison area high speed route
- Street crossing devices – what kind – the same at all crossings

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