

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA PLAN COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: November 5, 2009

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Urbana City Building – City Council Chambers
400 South Vine Street
Urbana, IL 61801

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jane Burris, Andrew Fell, Tyler Fitch, Ben Grosser, Lew Hopkins, Marilyn Upah-Bant

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Dannie Otto, Michael Pollock, Bernadine Stake

STAFF PRESENT: Robert Myers, Planning Manager; Teri Andel, Planning Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT: David Monk, Susan Taylor

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Ben Grosser called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m., the roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

Mr. Hopkins made a motion to nominate Ben Grosser to serve as temporary Chairperson. Mr. Fitch seconded the motion. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Fitch moved to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2009 regular meeting as presented. Ms. Burris seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as presented by unanimous voice vote.

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- Planning Commissioner's Journal – Fall 2009

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

7. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Presentation by CUUATS staff on the draft Long Range Transportation Plan 2035

Robert Myers, Planning Manager, presented a brief introduction. Mr. Myers explained that the Federal Highway Administration requires that the plan be updated every five years in order for regional governments to receive federal funds for any projects that are considered long range investments that are large and have a regional impact and would need federal or state assistance to do. The last time it was updated was in 2004. He then introduced Eric Halvorsen, CUUATS staff representative.

Mr. Halvorsen began his presentation on the CUUATS Long Range Transportation Plan Update – Choices in 2035. He discussed the following:

- What is the Long Range Transportation Plan?
 - Evolves over the next 25 years
 - Encompasses Champaign, Urbana, Savoy, and Bondville urbanized area
- LRTP Planning Process
- What progress has been made since 2004?
 - 2009 Roadway and Transit Project Status Map
- Land Use and Development – 2035
 - Sustainable Development and Green Infrastructure
- Transportation System – 2035
 - Personal Vehicles
 - Vision Map for Roadways
 - Fiscally Constrained Projects
 - Bicycles/Pedestrians
 - Vision Map #2 – Bicycles/Pedestrians Map
 - Local Public Transit
 - Expand Transit Service Area and Frequency
 - Develop Seamless Network for Active Transportation
 - Reduce Greenhouse Gases
 - Park and Ride
 - Intercity Public Transit
 - Commercial Trucks

- Rail
- Air Travel
- Vision Map #3
- Goals & Objectives
 - Added “Measures of Effectiveness”
- Future Funding Projections
 - Federal Funding Projections
 - State Funding Projections
 - Local Funding Projections
 - Total Projected Local Funding 2010-2035
- Next Steps

Mr. Halvorsen stated that an electronic copy of the plan is available on the web sites of all the municipalities (Champaign, Urbana, and Savoy) and on the Mass-Transit District (MTD) and the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) websites. Paper copies of the plan are available at the City of Urbana’s Community Development Services Department, the Planning Department for the City of Champaign, the Municipal Center for Savoy, MTD, CCRPC and at the two public libraries in Champaign and Urbana.

Acting Chairperson Grosser asked Mr. Halvorsen to cite a specific web address since the meeting is being televised. Mr. Halvorsen stated that people interested in reviewing the plan can go to www.ccrpc.org.

Acting Chairperson Grosser opened the agenda item for public comments and questions.

David Monk, of 115 North Market Street in Champaign, stated that he likes the idea of the plan being regional. He expressed his concern about railroads. He stated that REACH [CREATE] is really getting to the point of deciding where to send their traffic and where the population base is. It is likely that the first leg will come through Champaign. He mentioned that 1/3 of all the freight in the United States goes through Chicago, which is the reason for the REACH ring around. It is happening with freight and passenger lines being parallel, not sharing the same rails. This program would also increase safety because it would be taking semi-trailers off the interstate.

What comes through Champaign? There is a rail that comes from Indianapolis which joins in Champaign and goes onto Bloomington. If REACH eventually hits Bloomington and Springfield, then there will be a route for not only passengers, but for freight as well.

He mentioned that Warren Buffet has bought the rest of the Burlington-Northern Railway. This will change railroading a lot. He also talked about coal traffic.

Mr. Monk stated that the lines have to be straight. Straightness means that the train can move at high speeds on regular tracks. They will need to provide an overpass every two miles, which will allow vehicular traffic to go over the railroad and keep traffic flowing. Champaign-Urbana has a tremendous right-of-way. We could bring recreational tourism in from surrounding towns. There are companies that still use the rail system such as Solo Cup, Humko, etc.

Lastly, he pointed out that there will be a Civil Engineering Railroad Seminar held and the topic will be on the REACH program. There will be a guest speaker from the Canadian National Railroad.

With no further public input, Acting Chair Grosser closed the public input portion and opened it up for Plan Commission comments and/or questions.

Mr. Fitch wondered if the cost estimates included maintenance that would ordinarily occur in addition to improvements or does it only include improvements. Mr. Halvorsen explained that the cost estimates include maintenance, operations and capital improvements.

Mr. Hopkins noticed that the Rail Map implies a route for high-speed rail. The details of the route, as drawn, seem implausible. Is there any significance to where the line is on the map? Mr. Halvorsen stated that the line would follow the most likely route that CCRPC staff has been informed about. They are still investigating whether the route would continue south from Illinois Terminal down to Effingham and then go west.

Mr. Hopkins asked if this would be high speed. Mr. Halvorsen said yes. Mr. Hopkins commented that the line is drawn with a right angle. High speed rails are not going to go in a right angle. Since the point of the angle is shown to be at the Illinois Terminal, it makes the whole thing seem incredibly controversial. He recommended that the maps be changed.

Mr. Hopkins stated that after reading the plan, he understands it to imply that we want to compete for high speed rail access. Mr. Myers noted that he attended a meeting with the High Speed Rail Association. At the meeting, it was mentioned that a high speed rail between Chicago and St. Louis by way of Springfield at 110 mph is pretty much a done deal. What the LRTP is talking about is truly high speed rail that would be 220 mph. There was some talk at the meeting about a high speed rail going from St. Louis to Chicago via Champaign and Effingham. The reason for this is because that route has an existing wide railroad right-of-way. Mr. Hopkins recommended that they take the line representing high speed rail off the map in the proposed LRTP. They could use a symbol similar to the bubble to state that we are tracking high speed rail.

Mr. Hopkins went on to talk about the Road Map. There was an example from southwest Champaign to Carle where vehicle miles might increase and time would decrease. This raises a fundamental problem pointing out the dilemma of vehicle miles versus time. When he looks at the map, graphically what he sees is a circumferential (ring road), because that is what is represented on the map. The example indicates that what we are doing is increasing the accessibility of locations on the circumferential. If a person uses the circumferential to come back into the City it means that the person arrived at some place on the circumferential before arriving back at the City. Mr. Hopkins said he takes from the maps that Carle Hospital would eventually move out of Urbana. He feels this is a problem. Mr. Halvorsen replied that if people are reading the LRTP this way then that is a problem as this is in no way part of the plan.

Mr. Hopkins wondered if there is some way to show that the plan is not dispersing business on the fringe by highlighting other kinds of investments, maintenance, signal timing, etc. that are not shown on the map. Mr. Halvorsen restated that the plan indicates we are making investments in roads like Curtis Road where there is already development, people who live in south or

southwest Champaign and want to access core of the city, then it may be easier and faster to get there by using a newly improved arterial road rather than taking the traditional route and hitting all the stop signs and signals.

Mr. Hopkins commented that this is why we have shopping centers and why the Christie Clinic and Carle Clinic bought land on the fringe to move out there. There is nothing wrong with the logic. In fact, he agrees with it, but the plan is inconsistent with what we are claiming to try to do. Actually the allocation of funds is not as inconsistent as the map makes it look. Mr. Halvorsen pointed out that one of the issues they have with the way the federal funding works is that it is typically allocated to these larger more expensive regional projects which tends to be on the outskirts. When they composed the vision maps they did not supersede local planning processes. They hoped the comprehensive plans and the corridor studies in the municipalities would hold true and curb some of Mr. Hopkins' concerns. Mr. Hopkins stated that one way of doing this would be to extend the radials rather than build the circumferential. They would still be in the fringe and would still be considered regional scale in terms of projects. On the map, there is very little of this.

Mr. Myers remarked that changing the color coding might help communicate better. Some of the green lines shown on the map are radial street projects that have already been completed. The red line represents the arterial streets, of which many already exist such as Windsor Road and Route 130. A newly extended arterial that is represented in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan is Olympian Drive. The Olympian Drive extension is reflected in both the existing 2004 LRTP and in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. In terms of future land use in those areas, obviously the City is going to follow the Comprehensive Plan.

We want future roadway improvements to be in sync with future land use designations. We do need these improvements for all different sources of transportation. One component of our regional transportation needs is arterial roads. Since this one component is the most expensive, we tend to look to the federal and state governments to help pay for those improvements. If the improvements are not shown in the LRTP, then the projects will not get funded by them.

Acting Chair Grosser noticed that the Stone Creek Subdivision was not included in the map of the Urbanized Boundary. He wondered why. Mr. Halvorsen responded that it could be that Stone Creek Subdivision in 2000 might not have had a high enough population or might not have been developed when the Census Bureau defined the urbanized area. Following Federal guidelines, they base it on a formula of population and density.

Mr. Halvorsen mentioned that the roadway map is the most up-to-date map that Champaign County Regional Planning Commission has in their GIS system. It is basically reflective of any new road that has been added this year. It may be a little misleading when looking at the new roadway map and then see the urbanized boundary area. They illustrated a larger outer boundary to highlight that there are new developments that are not currently incorporated in the LRTP.

Acting Chair Grosser commented that one of the bubbles mentions a possible interchange for Interstate 74 and northwest Champaign. Mr. Halvorsen replied that nothing specific is being proposed right now. The City of Champaign's Northwest Growth Area Plan suggested an interchange for this area. In order to get an interchange there, the City of Champaign would need to do an Interchange Justification Study and there is no funding at this time. The next big

interchange is slated to come in the Urbana location. Mr. Myers added that the Access Justification Study takes about five years.

Acting Chair Grosser inquired as to what the current status is for the I-74 interchange for East Urbana. Mr. Myers responded that the preference expressed by people in the Route 130 Plan was that the interchange would be located on Cottonwood Road or at 1800 East rather than at Route 130. Mr. Halvorsen added that in the recently passed state capital bill from 2010 to 2015, there was money allocated for this particular interchange study. The problem with a capital bill is that you never know if the money is coming or if the government will try to rescind the money at the last minute. Mr. Myers pointed out that Walmart and Menards representatives have indicated that their developments on Route 130 are not reliant on an I-74 interchange at Route 130 but would welcome the additional access if it would be located there.

Acting Chair Grosser wondered what is going on with the Florida Avenue extension to Route 130. Mr. Myers explained that there is a three-party agreement between the two property owners and the City of Urbana. He said he is not sure of the exact status; however, he would get that information for him.

Ms. Upah-Bant asked for more information about the high-capacity bus system. Would it cause spin-off development? Mr. Halvorsen stated that it is a purely transportation driven project. The projects include improving/reconstructing some of the roadways without adding lanes, adding on-street bike lanes, improving the sidewalks, build bus shelters on the routes and provide digital signs showing bus arrivals, etc. MTD partnered with the City of Champaign and with the City of Urbana, so it is really a three part grant through the Tiger Grant Stimulus Program. They call it the Core Area Mobility Project, because it is really the cores, the downtowns, and the core campus area. It is a way to link the two cities and the University as a whole and trying to do it through transit, bike and pedestrian modes instead of through automobiles.

Mr. Myers pointed out that this project has come about in the last year. It is not part of the City's Comprehensive Plan. MTD has an opportunity to increase frequency on their most popular routes. Also within the last year the TIGER Grant has been announced which is a specific pot of money of stimulus funds for large-scale transportation projects. The application has been submitted, and we should receive an answer in February of whether we have been approved. It would be used for improvements such as street reconstruction and bump outs and platforms where buses could load people.

Mr. Myers encouraged the Plan Commission members to read through the plan and provide any additional comments to CUUATS staff. All comments will be taken into consideration and be included in the Appendices. Mr. Grosser wondered if the minutes of this meeting would be included. Mr. Halvorsen said no, it does not include minutes. However, they do include agendas of each meeting they present at and plan to include the City Councils' and Board resolutions.

9. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none.

10. STAFF REPORT

Mr. Myers reported on the following:

APA Midwest Planning Conference – One of the fieldtrips had to do with the CREATE project discussed earlier this evening. He talked about how the freight traffic congestion in Chicago is impacting other cities in the region.

Green Corridors Project Public Workshop will be held on Saturday, November 7th at the Krannert Center from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm.

Sign Illumination Text Amendment was approved by the City Council. They also approved the Driveway Width Text Amendment and the Urbana-Champaign Sanitary District special use permit request.

Preference Requests for Paper or Electronic Copies of the Packets – We are looking for ways to move forward with electronic packets for those who prefer that format. Electronic format saves on the cost of paper and postage and provides a way to efficiently transmit the information.

11. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

12. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Myers, AICP
Secretary, Urbana Plan Commission