



U.S. HIGHWAY 14 CORRIDOR STUDY

NEW ULM TO NORTH MANKATO

PAC MEETING NOTES

September 23, 2004
2:00 to 4:00 PM

Attendees: Wayne Stevens – Brown County Engineer, Charles Guggisberg – Brown County Commissioner, Paul Engel – Nicollet County Commissioner, Mike Wagner – Nicollet County Engineer, Tina Rosenstein – Nicollet County Environmental Services Director, Dan Wietecha – Courtland/Nicollet City Administrator, Steve Koehler – New Ulm City Engineer, Florence Arbes – Courtland Township Supervisor, Wes Judkins – Region 9 Development Planner, Rebecca Arndt – Mn/DOT, Mary Dieken – Mn/DOT, Peter Harff – Mn/DOT, Howard Preston – CH2M Hill, Doug Abere – CH2M Hill, Jon Huseby – Bolton & Menk, Brett Benzkofer – Bolton & Menk

Item #1 – Introductions/Opening Remarks:

Discussion: The focus on the meeting will be the screening of alternatives. It was asked that BMI send out draft meeting minutes to the team with a due date for their response.

Action: BMI will send out draft minutes for review with a due date for revisions. BMI will mail PAC meeting minutes to all PAC members.

Item #2 – Project Overview and Current Work Highlights:

Discussion: A summary of the public involvement was given by reviewing Newsletter #2. It is a draft newsletter that is near final. The informal open houses were spread throughout the corridor and were well attended. These will be held again in early 2005. The interchange workshop and environmental workshop were held in July. The newsletter is designed with questions so the public can understand the project and process. A suggestion was made to put project contact information inside the newsletter. A question was asked about the cost estimate for the project. The planning cost estimate for construction is approximately \$100-120 million (2004 dollars). Another suggestion was to show project information such as the project segment lengths. In response to this discussion, the suggestion was made to have a board at the open house that lists project statistics such as cost, length and other useful information.

Mn/DOT and BMI gave an overview of the project and answered questions to the Nicollet County Board on September 15, 2004.

An engineering summary of the project was given. Mn/DOT and CH2M Hill have been refining the alignments in order to avoid or minimize impacts. It was explained that all the work that has been done to date has helped to identify the alternatives that are most consistent with project objectives and should be retained for further analysis versus those alternatives that should be dropped due to inconsistencies or level of impact.

A summary of the environmental review was given. A one page handout helped to explain the screening process. The project scoping was completed in 2003. The level of detail increases as the project progresses. Environmental features such as wetlands, forests, prairie and the WMA are shown on the aerial photo maps. The screening process has led to a decision to amend the 2003 Scoping Study. It was explained that as more detailed information is available, certain alternatives have been eliminated while others are retained for further study and an amendment to the Scoping Study is necessary if new alternatives are considered. The goal is to identify a preferred alternative, which is approximately one year away.

An overview was given of the Environmental Workshop held in July. The agencies talked about their resources and their concerns. The group took a tour of the project and then focused in on the alternatives. One of the main concerns was the Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The question was asked if the floodplains near New Ulm were discussed at the workshop. The floodplains were not discussed but the FHWA encouraged the study to include the bridge over the river at New Ulm.

Action: CH2M Hill will mail the newsletter next week and also place it on the web site. CH2M Hill / BMI will prepare a project information board for the open house.

Item #3 – Screening of Alternatives:

Discussion: An overview was given of the aerial photo maps showing the alternatives and discussed the screening. There was much comment at the open houses about the bypasses of both Nicollet and Courtland. The far north and near north bypasses of Courtland were dismissed and the middle north bypass was kept. The far south bypass of Nicollet was discussed and there was a request that it be kept for further study. The alternatives through Nicollet and Courtland on existing alignment were also dismissed. The alternative that follows existing alignment west of Courtland and then climbs the bluff was dismissed. Only the location of interchanges is shown because interchange design features are details that are not necessary to move forward with the evaluation of alternative alignments. The interchange concepts will be shown on the web site.

The question was asked if there were any concerns about the dropping of alternatives. The suggestion was made to keep the alignment above the high school and quarry, then go down the bluff to existing alignment just east of CR 37. Mn/DOT directed that this alignment be studied. Another suggestion was made that TH 111 and TH 99 at Nicollet be taken into consideration in order to get the truck traffic out of downtown Nicollet.

Action: CH2M Hill / BMI will include interchange options with PAC minutes.

Item #4 – Preview of Newsletter #2 and Public Information Meeting Material:

Discussion: The material used at the Public Information Meeting will be similar to today. This will be a mid-point check and will focus on the screening of alternatives. The Public Information Meeting will be held in the Courtland Community Center in conjunction with the Mn/DOT 20 year plan open house on October 13th from 4:00 to 7:00. See also Item #2 (above) regarding draft Newsletter #2.

Action: None

Item #5 – Next PAC Meeting:

Discussion: The next PAC meeting was scheduled to be January 27th, 2005, however, there is a conflict with the ATP-7 meeting that day. A new day for the PAC meeting will be determined.