

# ST. JOSEPH AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

## COORDINATING COMMITTEE

APRIL 12, 2007

A meeting of the Coordinating Committee for the St. Joseph Area Transportation Study was held at 12:00 noon in the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, City Hall, St. Joseph, Missouri, on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

### **Voting members present:**

Janice Hatcher, Chairperson	City of Savannah
Gary Roach, Vice-chairperson	City of St. Joseph
Billy Kretzer	City of Savannah
Mike Bozarth	City of St. Joseph
Bill Falkner	City of St. Joseph
Vince Capell	City of St. Joseph
Bud Crockett	Buchanan County
Dan Hausman	Buchanan County
Jerry Russell	Citizen Representative
Mary Montgomery	Country Club Village

### **Staff members present:**

Bruce Woody	City of St. Joseph
Andrew Clements	City of St. Joseph
Kelsy Marr	City of St. Joseph
Elaine Buckner	City of St. Joseph

### **Others present:**

Kenny Newville	Herzog Contracting
Tony McGaughy	MoDOT

**OPENING REPORTS** - Chairperson Janice Hatcher called the meeting to order. A quorum was present for roll call. **Ms. Montgomery moved to approve the minutes of the February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007 meeting. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

Opportunity for public comment. Mr. Newville said Herzog Contracting is in the process of constructing a rail car facility just outside the City limits along Easton Road. The operation will employ 35 people. To enhance the project they are asking permission to add a second track at Riverside Terrace and Easton Road and to re-align 2,800 sq. ft. of the intersection (Riverside and Easton Rd.) at the entrance to their new facility. The acute angle of the intersection is unsafe. Herzog proposes to pay for all reasonable construction costs (moving utilities, grading, asphalt and rock) if someone else would acquire right of way from a property owner who is opposed to Herzog's expansion. He did not believe curb and gutter would be necessary. The roadway expansion would be 10' wide at the widest point. Mr. Woody said the additional rail crossing is something the City would expect.

Mr. Clements stated that lining up both legs of the intersection to 90 degrees is advisable. An additional crossing is not a big issue. There needs to be an agreement between the owners of the road. The bigger issue is for the City Manager and City Council to decide on the potential use of the city's power of eminent domain to acquire the property. If the City wants to team up, they would want to have an appraisal done, make a good faith offer, and if things went south they would have to decide whether to take the next step. Mr. Newville said both of these properties are in the city. Herzog owns several miles of 100' right of way and 72 acres on the existing southeast corner and 12 acres on the northeast corner, all in the county.

Mr. Hausman said the county has been working with Herzog for a year on these properties. They are not asking for incentives. The rail crossing is most important to Herzog. Straightening the road is important to the citizens. Herzog wants to do the right thing for the community. Mr. Clements said representatives of the county, City and Herzog could meet to facilitate an agreement to move forward and work out the details of how it will be done.

Mr. Capell commented that, in the long term, the City will want to straighten out the road. Mr. Newville said that the Easton Road area is becoming industrial. Mr. Hausman said it will be a short time before the area will be annexed voluntarily. Mr. Woody explained that when the city looks at right of way, they look at what is necessary to do the road in its current condition. Mr. Newville said, at the most, it would require a 15' wide taking. Mr. Hausman stressed that the rail crossing is the most important issue at present and the County supports it. Mr. Falkner said the use of eminent domain will be a hard pill to swallow. Mr. Newville asked that the City at least make the offer to purchase. **Mr. Russell moved to accept Herzog's requests with the condition that the City Council goes through their approval process. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Update on Alabama/US-59 Intersection. Ms. Marr said a public informational meeting was held at Benton High School two weeks ago. Those present were told that a bridge would not be feasible because of the steep grade projected at roughly 6%. They were also informed of the MPO's position statement that supported the \$3 million currently available that should pay for intersection improvements now and work toward a bridge later. The public did not agree. They want to use the \$3 million towards a bridge and asked MoDOT to perform a bridge study and come up with feasible alternatives. This is underway now and will be ready around July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. McGaughy said MoDOT is examining three possible bridge locations. There are still concerns with steep grades.

Mr. Capell asked if there is a problem with the language in the appropriation bill if the money is used at another location to cross the tracks. He said one reason the MPO wanted to proceed with intersection improvements was the perceived language restriction in the appropriation, as well as the possibility of losing the \$3 million if it isn't spent timely. Knowing that the residents would like to use the entire \$3 million for a bridge match presents some practical problems.

Mr. Bozarth said Rep. Martin Rucker is making a request to the CIP Citizens Committee. Mr. McGaughy said MoDOT will support the MPO's position and develop scenarios with the data. Mr. Capell said \$7 million versus \$10 million is significant. The City could be looking for a decade for \$3 million.

Mr. Falkner asked if the railroad would contribute 5% if a crossing is removed. Mr. Roach thought the 5% is negotiable. He wants to focus on using the \$3 million.

Mr. McGaughy said he wasn't aware of a specific expiration date for using the \$3 million, however the longer it sets, the more potential. Mr. Clements said, generally speaking, when earmarks come along you have four years to make project obligations (federal approval of the design, right of way cleared, etc) from the date of the earmark. This would be four years, or 2009, whichever comes first. Options they are looking at will not come in under \$5 million, not counting right of way.

Mr. Capell said City staff will talk to their representatives in Washington, DC next week and tell them we don't have enough money for a full grade separation. The project is the #1 safety concern with the MPO and Port Authority. Mr. Capell said perhaps enough money can be secured from different places. Mr. Woody said the originally crafted MPO position policy was to proceed but that the intersection work can't compromise the bridge solution.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Amend Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) To Establish Downtown Quiet Zone. Mr. Capell reported that the study has been completed. The engineering firm estimated the cost at \$1 million, however the city does not have the money. He spoke with Andy Clements regarding whether the MPO could consider funding it, but the LRTP would have to be modified. He doesn't know the MPO's interest level. There are mixed feelings regarding whether this should happen. Some say quiet zones are ridiculous and some say they are imperative. People interested in promoting downtown say that it is necessary. His personal thought is the City Council has made downtown revitalization as one of their top goals. A downtown hotel claims they cannot use some of their rooms because of the noise. Also, there are some conceptual plans for a hotel near the riverfront. Train traffic will double with the new power generating plant. We need to find a funding source for \$1 million. Mr. Clements said eight crossings are involved. Mr. Bozarth said 52-55 BNSF trains pass through the City per day.

Mr. Clements said the MPO process could be to amend the LRTP and try to nail down impacts to residents and businesses; ask property owners whether whistles are a big deal or not; and wrap this up in a document that the MPO would review and approve. Next would be the public involvement process to amend the LRTP. Once it is in place, you could pursue it with the City of St. Joseph or Buchanan County. We are now gearing up to update the LRTP. As an alternative, we could consider that project as we update the LRTP in January. We could get documentation together in six months or consider it with all other projects in the new update.

Mr. Capell asked if there are any other quiet zones in Missouri. Mr. Clements reported only one in Chesterfield. Mr. Capell remarked that Olathe and Atchison, Kansas have quiet zones. Mr. Clements said Atchison's three crossings cost around \$70,000. Our MPO would need some

preliminary engineering to determine if \$1 million is a good number. In our case, it is just medians and access management.

Mr. Capell said 2010 is a long ways off. If we can get in the LRTP, then 80% of funds are eligible. Mr. Clements said there is no downside. The work will not be lost because you can plug it into the new plan. Mr. Bozarth and Mr. Roach stated they would like to see the project move forward.

Mr. Russell moved to amend the LRTP. Mr. Capell asked if the Committee wants to consider extending it beyond the south side. Mr. Bozarth suggested seeing how the financing works before including the whole city. Mr. Clements said decisions could be made in pieces. The Phase I which has been authorized could be started and then a bigger picture included in the 2010 plan. Mr. Bozarth said it is a safety issue as well.

FY 2008 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Ms. Marr said past meeting comments have been incorporated and the document is up for approval. Mr. Clements explained that under federal regs, MPO's must group a block of work for next year. Several items of work will start after July 1. The MPO is federally funded, so we are using some savings from previous years to do several things: one is to contract with TranSystems to help the City with the LRTP. Another is the 759 bridge. At different decision making points it will come back to this Board regarding the direction it should go. By July 1<sup>st</sup> the Committee will need to appoint members to the steering committee. Up to 12 people are needed to serve. They should be from different walks of life and from all corners of the metro area. MPO members are also eligible to serve. He asked that names be given to Ms. Marr who will present the names at the June meeting. Members will be committed to 2 ½ years of semi-regular meetings depending on the phase of the update process staff is working on. **Ms. Montgomery moved to approve the UPWP. Mr. Russell seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Roach commented that perhaps the railroad crossing for Herzog should be added.

Bridge Deck Policy. Mr. Clements said the Technical Committee added some items to this supportive statement that any new construction has 5' sidewalks on both sides. Mr. McGaughy asked what appeal process is in place if documentation doesn't support sidewalks. Mr. Capell said this resolution is considered the preferred solution rather than a commitment. The final decision could be made at the MPO level as was the case for the Mitchell Bridge deck project. Mr. Clements said there was some confusion regarding preserving the pedestrian corridor. It referred back to the LRTP which referred to it generally. The Board's pleasure was to put it in black and white for reference so if a problem came up they could provide background information. Mr. Capell asked how we keep track of the resolutions. Mr. Clements said this is only the second one we have had, but they are posted on the MPO website. They are also in the back of the LRTP. It has been suggested that they be added to the TIP. **Ms. Montgomery moved to adopt the bridge deck resolution. Mr. Bozarth seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.**

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Ms. Marr said an attempt is being made to streamline the cycle of updating the TIP. Two documents have been created to submit with the projects. One of the two documents is an MPO policy statement that says the project sponsor will

comply with all processes and plans of the MPO. The second sheet is in regards to Title VI/Environmental Justice and which commits to considering minority groups and low-income populations by requiring proper Title VI/EJ documentation with their project listings that are submitted to the MPO staff.

Transportation Investment Meeting. Ms. Marr said she attended a March 12 statewide meeting in Jefferson City. The purpose was to bring districts together to come up with a plan if future funds become available to the state and how they were to be used. April 2<sup>nd</sup> she met in the District I MoDOT office to discuss improvements that could be made within District I. They are interested in talking with District II to create a basic plan based on taking care of existing roads, safety, and community connectivity.

Mr. Clements said a senator from St. Louis has been suggesting that he may have enough support next year to float a ½ -1 cent statewide sales tax to improve I-70. Others have said there is more to Missouri than the I-70 corridor. In St. Joseph's case, an additional 1 cent tax would make our city sales tax 8.5%. Mr. Capell remarked that would make any other local tax out of the question. He asked why not add a fuel tax? Mr. McGaughy said you have a better chance of getting something up here if you look at a broader scope.

Rt. AC Extension Update. Mr. McGaughy said grading and drainage work is underway. Pickett will start a 60 day closure in May.

## **OTHER/ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2007, at 12:00 noon.