



U.S. HIGHWAY 14 CORRIDOR STUDY

NEW ULM TO NORTH MANKATO

PAC MEETING NOTES

July 1st, 2004
2:00 to 4:00 PM

Attendees: Wayne Stevens – Brown County Engineer, Dick Seeboth – Brown County Commissioner, Colleen Landkamer – Blue Earth County Commissioner, Paul Engel – Nicollet County Commissioner, Mike Wagner – Nicollet County Engineer, Tina Rosenstein – Nicollet County Environmental Services Director, Bob Schabert – Courtland Mayor, Dan Wietecha – Courtland/Nicollet City Administrator, Ken Saffert – Mankato City Engineer, Steve Koehler – New Ulm City Engineer, Tom Zellmer – Belgrade Township Supervisor, Florence Arbes – Courtland Township Supervisor, Wes Judkins – Region 9 Development Planner, Perry Wood – Minnesota State University Mankato Professor, Ed Idzorek – MNDOT, Rebecca Arndt – MNDOT, Mary Dieken – MNDOT, Peter Harff – MNDOT, Howard Preston – CH2M Hill, Doug Aberer – CH2M Hill, Jon Huseby – Bolton & Menk, Gina Mitchell – Bolton & Menk

Item 1 – Introductions**Discussion:** Peter Harff, MNDOT Project Engineer, welcomed the PAC members and thanked them for their continued participation in the TH 14 project.

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Action: None.

Item 2 – Overview

Discussion: Jon Huseby explained the purpose and role of the PAC. Doug Aberer explained the purpose of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the EIS development process. Howard Preston reviewed background on the EIS scoping process for the corridor.

A discussion followed regarding whether it is more expensive to construct interchanges right away or at a later time. Mr. Preston explained that it is a balance between funding and the safety and operational needs of the roadway. Local governments can help to preserve a corridor for the future improvements through such means as zoning or Official Mapping.

It was questioned whether alternatives not included in the scoping document would be considered in the EIS. It was stated they would be considered, but most likely they would be dismissed, because they wouldn't be consistent with the identified purpose and need.

The "shelf life" of an EIS was discussed. It was explained that the rule of thumb is generally 3 years. In this corridor, the "shelf life" could be longer, because things do not appear to change as quickly as in, for example, the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. If there is no action for more than 3 years, it isn't necessary to start over. Rather, a supplement to the EIS can be prepared to document the changes. If progress continues to be made, for example the purchasing of right-of-way, the EIS would be considered current.

Action: None.

Item 3 – Updates and Current Work Highlights

Discussion: Mr. Huseby highlighted the public involvement plan for the Corridor Study. Mr. Abern explained that an interchange design workshop was held on June 17th. He also noted that an environmental agency workshop will be held on July 21st to solicit agency input early in the EIS process by having participants identify their key issues. Invited agency participants include: Department of Natural Resources (New Ulm and St. Paul representatives), Swan Lake Wildlife Management Area, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (Regional Environment Management Division and Minnesota River Basin), Corp of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, Board of Water and Soil Resources, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation District (Nicollet County), Department of Agriculture, Nicollet County, State Historic Preservation Office, and US Fish and Wildlife. Invitations were also extended to each community along the corridor.

Rebecca Arndt and Mr. Harff extended an offer to PAC members stating that a presentation could be given to a community or civic group if desired. Interested communities or groups should contact Mr. Harff.

The group discussed posting summary notes from the PAC meetings on MNDOT's website to share information and identify areas for future action.

Action: PAC meeting minutes will be posted on the project web site.

Item 4 – Development and Screening of Alternatives

Discussion: Mr. Preston explained design differences in the interchange concepts developed at the June 17th workshop. A discussion occurred regarding the illustrated interchange design concepts near Highways 14 and 15 in New Ulm.

Action: None.

Item 5 – Other

Discussion: Mr. Huseby discussed with PAC members the timing of the first Public Information Meeting, which is expected to occur in mid to late October. Members expressed holding the meeting at the Courtland Community Center on a Thursday would be desired. The next PAC Meeting will be held September 23rd from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. At this meeting, members will screen alignment alternatives and review presentation materials for the Public Information Meeting.

Mr. Harff explained that following today's PAC Meeting the public was invited to attend an informal open house to review several different corridor alignments.

Action: The next PAC Meeting will be held September 23rd from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

The Public Information Meeting will be scheduled for mid to late October in Courtland, likely on a Thursday.

END