

**Chicago Department of Transportation**  
**95<sup>th</sup> Street at Union Pacific Railroad Grade Separation Study**  
**Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting #1**

On Tuesday, April 16, 2019, the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) hosted the first [Community Advisory Group \(CAG\) meeting](#) at the Woodson Library at 9525 S. Halsted in Chicago to introduce the 95<sup>th</sup> Street at UPRR Grade Separation Study. The CAG meeting started at 10:00am and adjourned at 11:30am. The purpose of the first CAG meeting was to introduce the project, present existing conditions in the study area, provide an overview of the project process, and define the roles of the CAG. The study will evaluate several alternatives to grade separate 95<sup>th</sup> Street and the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) located east of Eggleston Avenue.

Attending the meeting were members of Congressman Bobby Rush’s office, representatives from State Representative Justin Slaughter’s office, attendees from Chicago State University, Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), Chicago Police Department (CPD), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Chicago Fire Department (CFD), Rotary Club of the Southeast, Chicago Park District, and several community and workforce development groups. See attached sign-in sheet for CAG attendance.

**Presentation Summary**

The first CAG meeting included a presentation followed by an open Q&A session and an opportunity for CAG members to comment on aerials of the project corridor’s existing conditions. The presentation’s agenda included:

10:00 – 10:15 a.m.	Welcome
10:15 – 10:25 a.m.	Introduction and Purpose of CAG Meeting
10:25 – 10:35 a.m.	CDOT GS21a Project Overview
10:35 – 10:40 a.m.	What is the CREATE Program?
10:40 – 10:50 a.m.	CDOT GS21a Project Details
10:50 – 11:00 a.m.	Stakeholder and Community Outreach
11:00 – 11:10 a.m.	CAG Roles and Responsibilities
11:10 – 11:15 a.m.	Next Steps
11:15 – 11:30 a.m.	Questions & Adjournment

**Meeting Summary**

Beaman Incorporated, the firm leading community engagement, opened the meeting with a safety moment and welcomed attendees. Beaman then started the PowerPoint presentation and provided background information on the CAG and the purpose of the first CAG meeting.

Soliman Khudeira, CDOT Section Chief of Major Projects, then reviewed the meeting agenda, introduced the project team and CAG members, and provided an overview of the Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Studies (Phase I Study) process and project. The project is being led by CDOT and currently undergoing the Phase I Study to be completed in 2020. Following the Phase I Study

is Contract Plan Preparation and Land Acquisition (Phase II) to be completed from 2021 to 2022 and Construction (Phase III) from 2023 to 2024. Phase II and Phase III are not yet funded.

The project is to improve safety and mobility for all users, including motorists, transit, pedestrians, cyclists, and the railroad, where 95<sup>th</sup> Street crosses two UPRR tracks. The project will separate the tracks from the roadway and provide uninterrupted travel for all modes of transportation. The potential alternatives for the grade separation include roadway over the railroad, roadway under the railroad, railroad over the roadway, railroad under the roadway, no build (do nothing), and relocating the Union Pacific Railroad. A Feasibility Study was completed for eliminating the 95<sup>th</sup> Street and UPRR at-grade crossing by relocating the Union Pacific Railroad to another railroad corridor to the east. This alternative was found not feasible due to railroad operations disallowing the relocation of current infrastructure from one railroad to another, impacts, and costs.

Jason Biernat, CDOT Planning Section Lead, introduced the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program. This public-private partnership between the nation's freight railroads, Amtrak, Metra, federal, state, and local governments aims to improve the efficiency of rail and roadway infrastructure and enhance the quality of life for Chicago-area residents. Currently, CREATE has 70 projects, 25 of which are grade-separation projects, and includes the 95<sup>th</sup> Street at UPRR project. The CREATE program identifies the 95<sup>th</sup> Street at UPRR project as GS21a.

Parsons, an engineering consultant, presented on project details, study area characteristics, average daily traffic, and crash data.

Next CDOT's Khudeira reviewed the stakeholder involvement process and stakeholder involvement plan. The stakeholder involvement plan for this project is included on the project website ([www.95thuprr.com](http://www.95thuprr.com)). CAG members' comments and questions about the Phase I Study were encouraged and can be directed to the project team either by email or the comment section on the website.

Beaman finished the presentation by reviewing the CAG roles and responsibilities and next steps. All stakeholder input in the process is valued and will be considered in order to produce the best solutions to any issues or problems identified by the process. CDOT seeks consensus of stakeholders on project decisions; however, the ultimate decisions remain in the hands of CDOT.

CAG members were encouraged to share the meeting information with others who might be interested in joining the CAG. The next steps included CAG 2 Meeting in June 2019 to introduce the grade separation alternatives; CAG 3 Meeting in August 2019 to discuss range of grade separation alternatives and the preliminary preferred alternative; and CAG 4 Meeting in November 2019 to present the final preferred alternative and review the Public Meeting material. The Public Meeting will be held in 2020 and will include CAG members and the general public.

Details of the meeting/presentation are included in the attached presentation.

## Summary of Questions and Comments

### Funding

The team shared that phase I of the project has been funded, but no funding has been secured for phase II or III. Towards the end of phase I, efforts will be made to fund the next phases. IDOT also stated a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) grant and state funds are being used for the Phase I study. IDOT is actively looking for available grants to fund future phases of this project. Endeleo Institute representative noted a federal grant may be possible for developing the 95<sup>th</sup> Street corridor from the 95th Red Line transit station to the Trinity United Church of Christ. Endeleo Institute has received Local Technical Assistance (LTA) for CMAP to identify planning priorities to revitalize the 95<sup>th</sup> Street corridor.

### Property Maintenance and Eminent Domain

Parsons and CDOT will evaluate the impact of the project on surrounding properties. If a building will be impacted by the project, the building could be subject to property acquisition.

### Traffic Congestion

An evaluation of vehicle delay and impacts on emergency vehicles will be conducted as part of the phase I study. Results of this evaluation will be presented at a future CAG meeting.

### Transit

PACE representative stated grade separating the crossing will provide a more reliable schedule for public transit.

### Job Opportunities

Will community members have access to jobs? What are the requirements to work on the CDOT project? Are certifications required (DBE, MBE, etc.)? The Washington Heights Workforce director has concerns that members of the community will not have comparable opportunities for jobs. The director stated funding could be available to train and prepare individuals for job opportunities if opportunities are known in advance. CDOT is required to fulfill disadvantaged business enterprises (DBE) requirements for Phase II and Phase III of this project.

### Coordination between CDOT and other agencies

Coordination with all agencies within the project corridor including public utilities will be conducted during Phase I. Utility relocation will be identified during coordination.

If any of the agencies on the CAG would like to obtain more detailed information regarding the GS21a Project, a separate meeting with CDOT and the project team can be arranged.

### Alternatives

IDOT noted the project will consider a no build option or do nothing as a project alternative. A feasibility study to evaluate the relocation of the UPRR tracks to another railroad corridor was determined not feasible. CDOT will consider the opinions of the project stakeholders before making a decision on the preferred alternative.

### Environmental Considerations

According to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), if project impacts cannot be avoided, impacts are to be minimized and mitigated to the extent practical.



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