

**Chicago Department of Transportation**  
**95<sup>th</sup> Street at Union Pacific Railroad Grade Separation Study**  
**Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting #2**

On Thursday, June 27th, the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) hosted the second [Community Advisory Group \(CAG\) meeting](#) at the Woodson Library at 9525 S. Halsted in Chicago. The CAG meeting started at 10:00 a.m. and adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The meeting began with introductions, providing a project overview, summarizing the CAG #1 meeting, and presenting the CAG #2 meeting goals. Following this overview, the purpose and need statement and grade separation alternatives were introduced, and the evaluation criteria were presented to CAG members.

Attending the meeting were staffers from Senator Dick Durbin’s office and Congressman Bobby Rush’s office and representatives from Alderman Brookins’ office, Chicago State University, Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), Chicago Police Department (CPD), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Chicago Fire Department (CFD), Chicago Park District, Pace, Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), and several community and workforce development groups. See attached sign-in sheet for CAG attendance.

**Presentation Summary**

The CAG meeting included a team presentation followed by an open Q&A session and an opportunity for CAG members to comment on the project and any concerns they might have. The meeting agenda was as follows:

10:00 – 10:10 a.m.	Welcome and Light Refreshments
10:10 – 10:20 a.m.	Presentation Begins: Introductions
10:20 – 10:30 a.m.	CDOT GS21a Project Overview
10:30 – 10:35 a.m.	CAG #1 Recap
10:35 – 10:40 a.m.	CAG #2 Goals
10:40 – 10:50 a.m.	Introduce Purpose and Need Statement
10:50 – 11:10 a.m.	Introduce Grade Separation Alternatives
11:10 – 11:20 a.m.	Evaluation Criteria
11:20 – 11:25 a.m.	Next Steps
11:25 – 11:30 a.m.	Questions, Comments, & Adjournment

Beaman Incorporated, the firm leading community engagement, opened the meeting with a safety briefing and welcomed attendees. Robin Beaman began the PowerPoint presentation with the agenda for the CAG meeting.

Soliman Khudeira, CDOT Section Chief of Major Projects, had everyone introduce themselves, introduced the project team, 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. Khudeira emphasized property acquisition, if necessary, will not occur until Phase II.

Tony Pakeltis of Parsons, the project engineering consultant, presented the existing traffic and railroad conditions, crash data, and project benefits.

Anne Marie Jensen of Parsons provided an overview of the CAG #1 meeting held on April 16, 2019, presented the goals of the CAG #2 meeting, and introduced the project's purpose and need statement. The purpose of the project is to provide a transportation improvement that addresses safety and mobility in the 95<sup>th</sup> Street corridor by eliminating train conflicts, reducing delay, and improving emergency response and air quality. The two principal needs in the study area are to improve mobility and enhance safety. CAG members had an opportunity to comment on the project's purpose and need.

Charlotte Obodzinski of PACE offered that PACE has two upcoming projects in the 95<sup>th</sup> Street area—the Pulse Halsted Line and the Pulse 95<sup>th</sup> Street Line. The projects are two of their rapid transit projects that will bring their high frequency Pulse service and amenities to the area. Both lines will service the 95<sup>th</sup> Street corridor. Pace's project website provides additional information about the program (<https://pulse.pacebus.com/>). Pace anticipates the construction for the Halsted Line will start in 2023 or 2024 and the 95<sup>th</sup> Street Line will follow starting in 2025. Pace is considering a Pulse station at 95<sup>th</sup> Street and Eggleston and will want to review the 95<sup>th</sup> Street design and configuration to ensure their station design is consistent with the proposed improvements along 95<sup>th</sup> Street.

Next, CDOT presented the grade separation alternatives in detail. Mr. Khudeira emphasized that as part of the Phase I process, CDOT will study the problem, develop and evaluate possible solutions, and choose the alternative that best solves the problem. In an attempt to consider all possible solutions, the project team initially identified a wide initial range of alternatives. Some of the identified alternatives may not be feasible.

The initial range of alternatives include:

- Alternative #1: No Build (Do Nothing)
- Alternative #2: Eliminate UPRR Crossing
- Alternative #3: Railroad over 95<sup>th</sup> Street
- Alternative #4: Railroad under 95<sup>th</sup> Street
- Alternative #5: 95<sup>th</sup> Street over Railroad
- Alternative #6: 95<sup>th</sup> Street under Railroad
  - Median
  - No Median
- Alternative #7: 95<sup>th</sup> Street under Railroad with Offset Alignment
- Alternative #8: Hybrid (Includes both lowering 95<sup>th</sup> and raising the railroad)

**Alternative 1: No-Build (At-Grade Crossing)** — The No-Build alternative includes no improvements to the 95th Street/UPRR grade crossing and keeps the two facilities at the same grade. This alternative does not meet the project’s purpose and need.

**Alternative 2: Union Pacific Railroad Relocation** — This alternative would relocate the Union Pacific railroad to another railroad corridor to eliminate the at-grade crossing at 95th Street. A previous feasibility study completed by CDOT concluded this alternative is not feasible due to a cost of \$1.2B, roadway impacts along Cottage Grove Avenue, and current railroad operations that do not allow the relocation of the current infrastructure from one railroad to another.

**Alternative 3: RR over 95th Street** — With this alternative, the RR would be grade separated above 95th Street by raising the profile of the RR. 95th Street would remain on its existing centerline alignment at the existing profile. Major impacts associated with this alternative include significant changes to the railroad vertical profile resulting in potential cross-street closures or an additional grade separation at 97th Street, impacts to the railroad bridge over I-57, and extensive retaining walls.

**Alternative 4: RR under 95th Street** — With this alternative, the RR is grade separated below 95th Street by lowering the profile of the RR. 95th Street would remain on its existing centerline alignment and at the same profile. Major impacts associated with this alternative include significant changes to the railroad vertical profile resulting in potential cross-street closures or an additional grade separation at 97th Street, impacts to the railroad bridge over I-57, and extensive retaining walls.

**Alternative 5: 95th Street over RR** — With this alternative, 95th Street is grade separated over the RR by raising the profile of 95th Street. 95th Street would remain on its existing centerline alignment. Major impacts associated with this alternative include significant changes to the roadway vertical profile resulting in potential effects to additional cross-streets. This alternative would also require greater residential and business displacements and extensive retaining walls, when compared to the 95th Street under RR alternative.

**Alternative 6: 95th Street under RR with Median and No Median** — With this alternative, 95th Street would be grade separated under the RR by lowering the profile of 95th Street. 95th Street would remain on its existing centerline alignment. The 95th Street under RR without Median alternative would reduce the cost for the railroad bridge, pavement, and right-of-way for maintenance of traffic compared to the 95<sup>th</sup> Street under RR with Median alternative.

**Alternative 7: 95th Street under RR with Offset Alignment** — With this alternative, 95th Street would be grade separated under the RR by lowering the profile of 95th Street. The 95th Street alignment would be offset 38 feet to south from existing alignment. This alternative would avoid closing Trinity United Church of Christ’s driveway at 95th Street. However, it would require various utility relocations and more right-of-way acquisition/displacements than Alternative 6.

**Alternative 8: Hybrid** — With this alternative, 95th Street and the railroad would be grade separated by raising the railroad by 11 feet and lowering 95th Street by 11 feet. 95th Street would remain on its existing centerline alignment. This alternative potentially eliminates the need for a pump station. However, it could require noise walls adjacent to railroad tracks.

The 95<sup>th</sup> Street under RR and the Hybrid alternatives have been preliminarily identified as the most cost effective with fewer impacts. CDOT has performed two other similar grade separation projects in urban areas at Archer and Belt Railway of Chicago and Columbus and Western. Both these projects have identified the roadway under the railroad as the preferred alternative given the urban environment.

Pakeltis then discussed how the alternatives will be evaluated and what factors will be considered for determining the preferred alternative. These factors include:

- Performance – How well does an alternative perform;
- Acceptance – Feedback from stakeholders, advisory group members, and the public;
- Costs – How much does it cost to build these alternatives including property acquisition.

All alternatives will be evaluated, and efforts will be made to avoid or minimize disruption and right-of-way and environmental impacts. Environmental impacts may include noise and impacts to the park. CAG members had an opportunity to comment on the project's evaluation criteria.

Pace requested adding transit access to acceptance as part of the evaluation criteria. PACE has existing service in the corridor (Routes 352 and 381), and on an average weekday, there are about 200 passengers boarding at 95<sup>th</sup> and Eggleston in the westbound direction. The eastbound direction has about 40 passengers boarding buses.

Beaman finished the presentation by thanking the participants for their feedback. All stakeholder input in the process is valued and will be considered when developing the preferred alternative. Beaman identified Tony Pakeltis as primary point of contact and provided the project website address.

The next steps include the CAG #3 Meeting in August or September 2019 to present the preliminary preferred alternative and CAG #4 Meeting in November 2019 to provide a project update and public meeting preview. A Public Meeting is currently scheduled for early 2020 and will include CAG members and the general public.

## Summary of Questions and Comments

Melvin Thompson, Endeleo Institute

- Endeleo Institute is a grant funding recipient seeking support to develop planning priorities for the 95<sup>th</sup> Street corridor. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning has recognized 95<sup>th</sup> Street corridor and the surrounding neighborhood area for transit-oriented and economic development opportunities. 95<sup>th</sup> Street is a residential neighborhood, but it is an auto-oriented thoroughfare. Any plans to change the corridor should include making it more walkable for the residents and should accommodate bicyclists. Mr. Thompson recommended that the preferred alternative have minimal impact on businesses and residents. CDOT responded the project will be developed using CDOT's Complete Streets guidelines. CDOT is committed to building Complete Streets to ensure that everyone – pedestrians, transit users, bicyclists, and motorists – can travel safely and comfortably along and across a street. As the project design is developed, pedestrian and bicyclist accommodations will be shown on the proposed plans.
- Endeleo Institute wants to coordinate on the streetscape for this project. When first built, I-57 cut through neighborhoods, and the neighborhoods never recovered. Mr. Thompson wants to avoid this same negative impact along the 95<sup>th</sup> Street corridor and believes the project alternatives will make 95<sup>th</sup> a high-speed thoroughfare. Mr. Thompson noted 95<sup>th</sup> Street and Ashland Avenue in Beverly as arterials that are more pedestrian friendly, and that is what he recommends for this project. Mr. Thompson does not want the grade separation to turn 95<sup>th</sup> Street into a high-speed thoroughfare. The Endeleo Institute's research found Washington Heights neighborhood has a high rate of lung cancer, and they suspect it is due to vehicle and train exhaust. Mr. Thompson asked for CDOT to be thoughtful and respectful to the potential impacts to pedestrians from the project.
- Trinity Church has 10,000 members, and their members were displeased with two recent weeks of construction at the church. Mr. Thompson recommended that construction schedules be coordinated with the public well in advance of construction activity. CDOT will coordinate with major stakeholders during Phase II to determine accommodations during construction.
- Mr. Thompson inquired if temporary construction impacts will be evaluated. CDOT responded that Phase I will evaluate the impacts of maintaining traffic during construction, whether that be along 95<sup>th</sup> Street or through a detour route. During Phase II, CDOT will develop the engineering that will detail how the project will be constructed.

Bob Wordlaw, Endeleo Institute

- Has any thought been given to job opportunities for the community? Can we project the type and number of jobs that might be available such as in masonry, concrete, and framing? With this information, the community can try to be prepared through training before construction starts. Also, can a timeframe be provided for when these jobs will be available? CDOT responded that they will prepare a list of the types of jobs that will likely be required for construction of this project.

Dallas Goidon, Washington Heights Workforce Center

- Goidon emphasized the importance of identifying potential job opportunities for the community and community contractors well in advance of construction. If this information only becomes available right before construction, it is too late for the community to be prepared.

Robyn Grange, Congressman Bobby Rush's Office

- Where is the project as it relates to funding through construction? CDOT responded that funding is secured for Phase I. When 80% of the Phase I is completed, around early 2020, CDOT will apply for funding for Phase II. Possible funding may come from FHWA, FRA, and/or IDOT. The project is roughly nine months away from funding subsequent phases.
- Do you foresee any issues with not receiving funding to complete the project? CDOT is optimistic that the project will obtain funding for Phase II if a feasible alternative is identified during Phase I.
- Ms. Grange also complimented the team on the level of detail being provided given the project is in Phase I.

Zubair Haider, IDOT

- Asked if there are sidewalks on both sides of 95<sup>th</sup> Street? Is there a bike lane? CDOT responded that currently a sidewalk exists on both sides, but there are no bike lanes.
- Mr. Haider went on to explain that CDOT, with the support of IDOT, will evaluate the alternatives to identify a feasible solution. As part of identifying the preferred alternative, the following will be considered:
  1. Does the alternative meet the purpose and need?
  2. Does the alternative minimize potential social, economic, and environmental impacts?
  3. Does the alternative mitigate unavoidable impacts?

Jason Meter of CTA spoke with the project team after the meeting and recommended that potential conflicts between buses and the proposed bike lanes be analyzed as this has been an issue in other locations in the City.



95<sup>th</sup> Street & Union Pacific Railroad Grade Separation

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Thursday, June 27, 2019 – 10:00 am

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