

Chicago Department of Transportation
95th Street at Union Pacific Railroad Grade Separation Study
Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting #3

On Tuesday, July 28, 2020, the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) hosted the third [Community Advisory Group \(CAG\) meeting](#) online via Webex. The CAG meeting started at 10:00 a.m. and adjourned at approximately 11:35 a.m. The meeting began with introductions, providing a project overview, summarizing the previous CAG meetings, and presenting the CAG #3 meeting goals. Following this overview, the preliminary preferred alternative and potential impacts were discussed.

Attending the meeting were staffers from Senator Tammy Duckworth's office and representatives from Alderman Brookins' office, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Cook County, Chicago Park District, Pace, Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Union Pacific, the Association of American Railroads, and several community and workforce development groups. See attached attendance report.

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:

- Introductions
- Project Overview
- Previous CAG Meetings Recap
- CAG #3 Goals
- Preliminary Preferred Alternative
- Potential Impacts
- Questions and Feedback from CAG
- Next Steps

Tony Pakeltis of Parsons welcomed participants and provided an overview of how the CAG meeting through Webex would proceed.

Soliman Khudeira, CDOT Section Chief of Major Projects, 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 2021. Contract Plan Preparation and Land Acquisition (Phase II) will follow Phase I and is expected to be completed from 2021 to 2022. Construction (Phase III) is scheduled for 2023 and 2024. Phase II and Phase III are not yet funded.

Mr. Khudeira then provided an overview of the CAG #1 meeting held on April 16, 2019 and the CAG #2 meeting held on June 27, 2019. He also presented the goals of the CAG #3 meeting – identify the preliminary preferred alternative and discuss the potential impacts.

Tony Pakeltis of Parsons, presented the existing traffic and railroad conditions, crash data, project benefits, and the purpose and need. These items were covered at the previous CAG meetings and were summarized for this meeting. The purpose of the project is to provide a transportation improvement that addresses safety and mobility in the 95th Street corridor by eliminating train conflicts, reducing delay, and improving emergency response and air quality.

Soliman Khudeira and Tony Pakeltis discussed the development and evaluation of the alternatives, identification of the preferred alternative, and potential impacts to the project area. Eight alternatives were developed for this project which were introduced at the last CAG meeting:

Alternatives Considered

1. No Build
2. Eliminate UPRR Crossing
3. Railroad over 95th Street
4. Railroad under 95th Street
5. 95th Street over Railroad
6. 95th Street under Railroad
7. 95th Street under Railroad with Offset Alignment
8. Hybrid

Feasible Alternatives

Based on initial evaluation, Alternative 6 (95th Street under Railroad) and Alternative 8 (Hybrid) were identified as feasible alternatives that were the more cost effective with fewer impacts than the others. Both alternatives would include a new railroad bridge over 95th Street with a vertical clearance of 14'-9". Exhibits were shown to illustrate these alternatives and can be seen in the CAG #3 presentation.

With Alternative 6, 95th Street would be grade separated under the railroad by lowering the profile of 95th Street. 95th Street would remain on its existing centerline alignment. The railroad would remain at its same location horizontally and vertically.

With Alternative 8, 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.

Alternative 6 will require a pump station for stormwater. Alternative 8 would not require a pump station, but it would require a noise wall which is not recommended in urban areas. There would be much greater impact to the railroad for Alternative 8 with railroad modifications extending south past the 97th Street at grade intersection with the railroad.

Evaluation of Feasible Alternatives

Both alternatives were assessed in comparison to the evaluation criteria.

In terms of the performance criteria, both alternatives would eliminate the conflicts between trains and vehicles. Alternative 6 is a better alternative in terms of minimizing disruptions to 95th Street transportation as well as freight and passenger trains during construction; minimizing environmental resources impacts; and accommodating adjacent stakeholder and railroad access. However, Alternative 6 has slightly greater right-of-way impacts.

In terms of the acceptance criteria, Alternative 6 is a better alternative for enhancing the project corridor appearance and facilitating construction with minimal disruptions. Alternatives 6 and 8 are similar in terms of minimizing overall impacts and accommodating pedestrian and cyclist traffic along 95th Street.

In terms of cost, both alternatives are similar, with project costs for each alternative in the \$60 to \$70 million range.

Identification of Preferred Alternative

After evaluation, Alternative 6 was identified as the preferred alternative for the following reasons:

- Best achieved improving safety and mobility while limiting overall community impacts
- Avoids impacts to the 97th Street at-grade railroad crossing and adjacent residential properties
- Avoids noise impacts and noise barrier along railroad corridor.
- Avoids long-term impacts to railroad operations

Elements of the Preferred Alternative

The following summarizes the major elements of the preferred alternative (Alternative 6).

- Maintain two 12-foot lanes in each direction
- Provide 12-foot painted center median with left turn lanes at Eggleston Avenue and Harvard Avenue
- Provide new railroad bridge over 95th Street
- Provide retaining walls along 95th Street
- Provide pump station
- Provide new sidewalks
- Provide roadway lighting
- Potential new traffic signal at Eggleston Avenue (TBD)

Summary of Impacts

The following is a summary of the potential impacts with the preferred alternative (Alternative 6):

- Displacements/Relocation
- Closed Access
 - Eastern Eggleston Intersection which extends to the south of 95th Street

- Trinity United Church of Christ parking lot east access
- Construction Impacts
 - Fernwood Parkway Park – Temporary Easement
 - Trinity United Church of Christ parking lot - south side of 95th Street – Temporary Easement
- Historic Resources – Pending review by IDOT
- No impacts are anticipated in the following areas:
 - Natural resources
 - Air quality
 - Noise

Potential Right-of-Way Impacts

Exhibits showing the potential property impacts with Alternative 6 were also shown as part of the presentation. This included the identification of parcels where a temporary easement would be required and parcels where permanent acquisition would be required.

Temporary easements would be required from the following properties:

- Trinity United Church of Christ Parking (south side of 95th Street)
- Trinity United Church of Christ Garden/Storage
- Trinity United Church of Christ
- Fernwood Parkway Park
- Union Pacific Railroad
- Lowden Homes
- St. Matthew Gordon AME Church

Permanent acquisition would be required from the following properties:

- Allstate Office Building
- ABC Learning Center
- Durham Realty/A+P Tax
- Nywele Salon
- The Universal Church
- Park Island Jerk Chicken/Forever Photography
- Two single-family residences
- Several vacant buildings and lots

A fairly conservative estimate of potential impacts is being identified at this time. As the project advances, efforts to minimize property impacts will continue.

Maintenance of Traffic

Construction of the proposed improvements will last at least a year and a half. There are two options for maintaining 95th Street traffic during construction: 1) traffic shift option and 2) detour the 95th Street traffic entirely. Each option has advantages and disadvantages. The traffic shift option has been identified as preferred based on accessibility and stakeholder benefit. This option involves constructing temporary pavement to

accommodate two lanes in each direction with a 25-mph posted speed limit. It reduces traffic impacts compared to the detour option, but it does impact additional property. The detour option is not preferred because 95th Street would be closed entirely during construction which would require a four-mile detour to 87th Street. Although there would be less property impact, it is difficult to implement a four-mile detour given the traffic volume along 95th Street which includes heavy bus traffic. Even with the traffic shift option, there would still be some temporary periods, perhaps up to one week, where the roadway would have to be closed. CDOT will work to minimize the amount of time the roadway would be closed during construction.

Summary of Questions and Comments

Wilfred Bentley, Trinity United Church of Christ

- Wilfred asked for clarification regarding impacts at Eggleston Avenue. Parsons noted that the east Eggleston intersection which extends south of 95th Street would be closed to accommodate the roadway lowering of 95th Street. The west Eggleston intersection which extends north of 95th Street would require some lowering. A new traffic signal is also being considered at that location, but a final determination on a new traffic signal has not been made.
- Wilfred also noted that access to the church during construction will be a challenge, and access to the east of the church just west of the crossing will be cut off. The church will need to coordinate with the City to be able to route traffic to the church parking lot. CDOT responded details regarding access will be determined in Phase II. At that time, a detailed staging plan will be prepared to inform the contractor where and how access must be maintained. There will be sufficient time to work through these details and property issues before construction would begin. We will continue to coordinate with the church throughout all phases of the project. Additionally, CDOT is coordinating with IDOT regarding a new traffic signal at Eggleston Avenue. Preliminary analysis indicates that it is feasible, but formal approval from IDOT to proceed has not been received yet.
- Wilfred inquired if the presentation will be available after the meeting. He would like to share with other stakeholders as impacts are greater than he had originally anticipated. The church plans on following up with CDOT regarding this project. CDOT noted that meeting materials will be posted to the project website. CDOT looks forward to additional coordination with project stakeholders, including individual meetings. If you have any questions at any time, please reach out.

Melvin Thompson, Endeleo Institute

- Melvin reiterated Wilfred's sentiments that additional coordination would be beneficial. The Endeleo Institute worked with CMAP to develop a Planning Priorities Report for 95th Street between Halsted Street and the CTA Red Line Station. The Endeleo Institute recommends that any 95th Street improvements fit in with the surrounding context. Some of the potential impacts identified affect other projects the Endeleo Institute were planning, particularly at 95th and Harvard. The city is providing money for improvements to the property at Harvard, and the state is

providing funding for the property next door to the east. Melvin asked if the Hybrid Alternative would also impact property between Harvard and Princeton. Parsons responded that property impacts along 95th Street are slightly less with the Hybrid Alternative, but they would still extend past Harvard. CDOT also reiterated some of the reasons the Hybrid Alternative was not selected as the preferred alternative, including visual impacts associated with raising the railroad and the railroad's opposition to having their grade changed. Efforts to minimize impacts will continue throughout the project.

- Melvin also inquired if the No Build Alternative was still an option. CDOT responded the No Build Alternative always remains an option throughout the Phase I project. CDOT also again encouraged stakeholders to reach out to CDOT and the project team if they have any questions or concerns they would like to discuss.

Samuel Tuck III, Illinois Department of Transportation

- Sam noted that funding for the Phase I project was from the Federal Railroad Administration. Additionally, Cook County has identified some funding for the Phase II portion of the project. CDOT added that they are exploring options to fund the remainder of Phase II (final design) and Phase III (construction). Sam also added that the railroads would fund a portion of the construction of the grade separation.

Charlotte Obodzinski, Pace

- Charlotte asked what the plans for the bus stops were. CDOT noted that details of the bus stops are developed during final design. During construction, bus stops will most likely be removed through the construction area, but existing bus stops will be replaced along the final improved 95th Street.
- Charlotte also stated that Pace has decent ridership through this area and is considering adding a 95th Street Pulse line. However, Pace may not want to implement that service until after the 95th Street grade separation project is completed. Pace has provided the project team with ridership information. Pace encourages continued coordination throughout the project to ensure their access is maintained. Parsons responded that the project team will continue to coordinate with Pace and also noted that construction is not planned until 2023 for the 95th Street grade separation.
- Charlotte also suggested that renderings be provided in the future to help stakeholders visualize the improvement. Parsons stated that renderings are being prepared which should be shared at the next CAG meeting.

Dallas Gordon, Washington Heights Workforce Center

- Dallas asked what employment opportunities are expected from this project, especially for people in the community. Also, will members of the community have employment opportunities with the organizations that are helping to advance this project. CDOT responded the employment opportunities would be during construction – currently scheduled for 2023. It would be better to coordinate that when construction is closer.

- Dallas also asked if there were opportunities for work-based experiences. He offered to discuss it with the group at a later date. This would be a program that is paid for by the agency that would be supplying the trainees, and they have an opportunity to experience jobs that oftentimes they are not even exposed to.

Andrea Reed, Greater Roseland Chamber

- Andrea noted that one of the challenges facing her community are barriers to employment. This being an underserved community she is concerned about the jobs this project may be offering, and she wants to make sure that a good number of people have opportunities to actually gain employment. Will there be a job readiness training especially in the construction area to help to bridge that gap? CDOT understands this concern, and that this is a major project for the community. CDOT receives these questions on similar projects, and they understand that the community wants to ensure they are fully involved. However, with this project still in Phase I, there is not much detail available in terms of potential employment. We should continue to coordinate as the project moves forward. The City's Department of Procurement will advertise and control the bidding process, and there is still some time before that will begin.
- Andrea indicated concern that construction will be beginning, and there won't be enough time to prepare the community. She recommended starting now to try to identify any upcoming job opportunities and job training. CDOT responded that not much could be done as part of the Phase I project, but that coordination with the City's Department of Procurement could help to identify other projects where construction might begin sooner. Sam Tuck of IDOT noted there is a highway construction training program at Dawson Institute. He will pass on information to the project team.

Meeting Conclusion

Robin Beaman with Beaman Incorporated thanked everybody for participating and went over the project's next steps:

- A meeting summary will be posted to the project website.
- The fourth CAG Meeting is planned for late 2020 where additional project details will be provided.
- A public meeting is planned for Early 2021.
- The project website is located at: www.95thuprr.com
- The project point of contact is Tony Pakeltis: Anthony.Pakeltis@parsons.com; (312) 930-5268

Feedback through the CAG is critical to the project's success. Please reach out to the project team if you have any questions regarding the project.

**95th Street at the UPRR Grade Separation Study
CREATE Project GS21a**

**Community Advisory Group Meeting #3
July 28, 2020
ATTENDANCE ROSTER**

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