

INTER AGENCY CONSULTATION GROUP
Tuesday, October 28, 2014
East-West Gateway Board Room

Members Present:

Michael Coulson, Chair - East-West Gateway Council of Governments
Joe Winkelmann - Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Mike Henderson - Missouri Department of Transportation
Tiffany Brase - Illinois Department of Transportation, District 8
Brad McMahon - Federal Highway Administration, MO
Mike Rogers - Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (telephone)

Others:

Curtis Jones - Illinois Department of Transportation, District 8
Kevin Jemison - Illinois Department of Transportation, District 8
Stacy Allen - Missouri Department of Natural Resources

Staff:

Mary Grace Lewandowski Larry Grither Jason Lange Lubna Shoaib
Carol Lawrence

1. Call to Order

The meeting of the Inter Agency Consultation Group (IACG) was called to order by Mike Coulson, East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWG) .

2 Mid-Year Conformity Determination for Amendment to FY 2015-2018 Transportation Improvement Program and Related Amendments to Regional Transportation Plan 2040 - East-West Gateway Council of Governments

Mr. Coulson, EWG, said that EWG will be conducting a Mid-Year Conformity Determination for the Amendment to the FY 2015-2018 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Earlier this month, an e-mail announcing this was sent out. Four projects are being amended into the TIP. One project is the addition of a lane on eastbound Page Avenue between Schuetz and Lindebergh in St. Louis County and the Cortex MetroLink station in the City of St. Louis.

Mr. Lange, EWG, said that EWG recently received additional information on two other projects already in the TIP. In July, the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) informed EWG that an eastbound lane would be part of the Page Avenue project in addition to a westbound lane. METRO has received a TIGER grant to add a new MetroLink station.

EWG will begin running the travel demand model and the MOVES model shortly. Once the modeling is completed, EWG will be able to send out a preview draft Mid-Year Conformity Determination for IACG review. The review period will probably be less than two weeks. The draft Mid-Year Conformity Determination and Amendment to the FY 2015-2018 TIP and

related amendments to Regional Transportation Plan 2040 (RTP 2040) will be released for public comment on December 12, 2014. The comment period runs from December 12, 2014 to January 22, 2015 (42 days). There will be an open house on Tuesday, January 13 at EWG from 4:00 p.m - 6:30 p.m. The comment period and the open house has been advertised in local newspapers and EWG's electronic Local Government Briefings. Other transportation items will be addressed at the open house. After the open house and the end of the comment period, the Mid-Year Conformity Determination and Amendment to the FY 2015-2018 TIP will be taken to the EWG Board of Directors for approval at their January meeting.

Ms. Shoaib, EWG, said that two other projects (David Hockle Parkway in St. Charles County and I-270 in St. Louis County) are to be amended into the Regional Transportation Plan 2040 (RTP 2040). The David Hockle Parkway in Wentzville was included in the Conformity Determination but the scope has changed. It is like an outerbelt linking I-70 and State Route 61. It has a higher functional classification, adding lots of capacity with two interchanges. The I-270 Environmental Assessment (EA) is to be approved by the Board on October 28 and then this project can be added to the transportation modeling network. EWG is waiting for more information from MoDOT so that the different project elements can be placed in the appropriate analysis years and then run the models. The information from the EA is different from what was in RTP 2040 (terminus has been extended, additional lane in each direction).

Mr. Winkelmann, Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MoDNR), observed that the group has worked hard to be consistent with the definition of Regionally Significant. He asked what triggered the Page Avenue and MetroLink Projects being classified as Regionally Significant (include in Regional Emissions Analysis). Believed transit station would be exempt since it would be way to encourage transit use.

Mr. Coulson, EWG, said that the Page Avenue lane additions are one mile long. Mr. Henderson, MoDOT, commented that distance was not to be a consideration. Mr. Coulson, EWG, stated that distance of a project is mentioned in the Interrogatory section of Regionally Significant Project Screening Criteria document. It is not a hard-and-fast rule. Mr. Lange, EWG, said that EWG is erring on the side of caution and including this project as the REA for Conformity was already occurring. Mr. Coulson, EWG, added that staff do not expect the REA outcome to materially change. Ms. Shoaib, EWG, added that with the I-270 project there might be some change.

Mr. Winkelmann, EWG, asked what made the MetroLink station project Regionally Significant. Ms. Shoaib, EWG, said that as to the Cortex MetroLink station, typically would consider such a project to be exempt. However, a lot of development is anticipated to occur around in this area (commercial, bio-medical) which the new station will serve it. METRO received a TIGER grant for a new station and to upgrade the Central West End station. Would call for change in transit service, could have localized impact on personal travel patterns and involves an existing station

Mr. Lange, EWG, pointed out that page A-6 of the Regionally Significant Project Screening

Criteria document lists that new Rail or Fixed Guideway station or terminal may be Regionally Significant. Ms. Shoaib, EWG, added that this station could spur economic development and bring people to the area. Staff felt that this made the Cortex station Regionally Significant. Mr. Lange, EWG, said that for clarity, staff decided to err on the side of caution and identify this project as Regionally Significant.

Mr. Winkelmann, MoDNR, observed that these actions show that the process and criteria the IACG developed is working. It was a good decision to include the project in the REA. Ms. Shoaib, EWG, added that staff asks the IACG for feedback on projects to be amended into the TIP and their REA classification. Staff wants to make sure projects are in the transportation modeling network.

Mr. Coulson, EWG, added that staff do not expect the outcome of the REA to change. Ms. Shoaib, EWG, added that with the I-270 project there might be some change.

Mr. McMahon, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), remarked that in the past the IACG has discussed Regionally Significant project descriptions, and who is completing project level conformity determination and how plus hot-spot analyses. Observed that the Environmental Program at MoDOT now states in the NEPA document that a project has gone through conformity determination with a sign-off and that a hot-spot analysis is not needed. A federal action is needed to approve NEPA document. Have to have completed project level analysis and project has to be in the long range transportation plan.

With David Hockle Parkway project, found that the EA contained statement that the project had been included in the Conformity Determination and was referenced in that document's Appendix. But when look at the project scope in EA and in the Appendix, they do not match up. All along the way they have been saying one thing, but it had not been done or confirmed that the scope of work in the NEPA was run through the Conformity analysis.

Ms. Shoaib, EWG, said that the EA for the I-270 project was almost done when MoDOT realized that the scope had changed and asked EWG what needed to happen so the project could keep moving forward. It was a similar circumstance for the David Hockle Parkway project.

Mr. McMahon, FHWA, said that between a consultant doing the EA and MoDOT, someone needs to confirm what was run in the REA was consistent with the project scope used in the NEPA. Project sponsor is ultimately seeking federal sign-off on an EA or Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or Record of Decision(ROD.) He asked for suggestions.

Mr. Henderson, MoDOT, suggested that he would ask the MoDOT Environmental section to inform him when they start a new EA or EIS and he would bring the project before the IACG and at that time double-check the project scope. Ms. Shoaib, EWG, pointed out that is what happened with the I-270 project as Mr. Henderson flagged the differences. Mr. Henderson, MoDOT, added that with the limited funding, for the time being there are not going to be as many projects.

Ms. Lawrence, EWG, said that the IACG needs to come to a consensus that the start date for the Mid-Year Conformity Determination process was today. **Mr. Henderson, MoDOT, made a motion that the IACG would find that start of the Mid-Year Conformity Determination would be October 28, 2014. Mr. McMahon, FHWA MO, seconded the motion. The motion was approved and stands.**

Mr. Coulson, EWG, said that staff hopes to have a draft for preview ready the week of November 24. The draft will be transmitted by e-mail.

3 Conformity Determination Regional Emissions Analysis for Connected 2045: Long Range Transportation Plan and FY 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program - East-West Gateway Council of Governments

Mr. Coulson, EWG, said that the Conformity Determination process for Connected 2045 will begin in January 2015. Board action on the Conformity Determination and the RTP will take place June 30, 2015. At the last meeting there was a discussion about REA analysis years, budgets and baseline emissions to use in the Conformity Determination. It was mentioned that there was the possibility that the Missouri PM_{2.5} motor vehicle emissions budgets from the Missouri PM_{2.5} Maintenance Plan could be approved during the 2015 Conformity Determination process. For Missouri PM_{2.5}, staff has decided to perform both the Action/2002 Baseline test and the Action/Budget test. By doing that, will not have to redo any analyses.

4 Other Business

There being no other business, the meeting of the Inter Agency Consultation Group was adjourned.