Meeting Summary

Special Meeting
Meeting Summary

A Libertyville Township Highway Department Special Meeting for the Rockland Road Phase I Study from the Des Plaines River Bridge to St. Mary's Road was held on Tuesday, May 23, 2017 from 7 P.M. to 8:30 P.M. at the Libertyville Township Building in Libertyville, Illinois. The purpose of the meeting was to hear comments and answer questions from the public regarding the Township Highway Department's proposed plan to reconstruct the deteriorating Rockland Road pavement east of the river and provide four-foot paved bicycle friendly shoulders.

Previous to this meeting, project staff has held two public meetings for this project. The first meeting was for Township residents in November of 2016 to present and seek input on the range of three alternatives for improving Rockland Road between the River and St. Mary's Road. Of the approximately 21 comments which included a preference for a particular alternative, approximately two-thirds included a preference for Alternative 2. Based on a careful consideration of all technical analyses, impacts, benefits, and public feedback, the Township Highway Commissioner selected Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative.

The second public meeting, held in March of 2017, was for both Village and Township residents to view and comment on the preferred alternative stretching from IL Route 21 to St. Mary's Road. Approximately 47 comments were received from 36 individuals, as some submitted multiple comments. Of all commenters, approximately 5 to 10 could be classified as opposing the preferred improvement plan.

In response to concerns heard at the second meeting from some residents within the Township jurisdiction regarding the proposed project, the Township Highway Department elected to hold one additional meeting as a final opportunity for public comment on the preferred alternative before completing the Phase I study. That is the May 23rd meeting which is summarized in this memo.

The meeting was conducted in a presentation format with exhibits on display for review. After an approximately 45-minute presentation by the Libertyville Township Highway Commissioner and consultant staff, attendees had the opportunity to come up to a podium and give comments or ask questions.

A total of 49 people recorded their names on the attendance register. A court reporter was present and prepared a transcript of the meeting. Twenty-three (23) members of the public provided verbal comments and questions at the meeting. Ten (10) written comments were received at the meeting and 27 written comments were received after the meeting through the end of the official comment period ending June 6, 2017, for a total of 37 written comments. Between the 23 verbal and 37 written comments, there were a total of 44 "commenters", as many of those who spoke also submitted written comments.

Meeting Summary

Of the 44 people who commented in writing or verbally, approximately 50% expressed support for the preferred alternative (with four-foot paved bike shoulders), and approximately 50% were opposed. Of those opposed, most preferred changing the preferred alternative to Alternative 1 (with two-foot paved shoulders), though some preferred the local agency-funded alternative (resurfacing or rehabilitating the roadway while maintaining the same widths as today).

A petition opposing the roadway plan including the four-foot bicycle shoulders was submitted at the meeting. It was signed by approximately 64 people; 46 east of the river, within the Township jurisdiction, and 18 west of the river, within the Village jurisdiction. Of the 46 east of the river who signed the petition, 21 are included among the 44 who commented in writing or verbally.

The following public agency representatives were in attendance:

- Libertyville Township Highway Department
  - Marty Neal
- Libertyville Township Board
  - Kathleen O'Connor
  - David Nield
  - Terry White
- Village of Green Oaks
  - Benjamin Metzler
  - Dan Sugrue
- Village of Libertyville
  - Fred Chung
- Lake County Division of Transportation (LCDOT)
  - Paula Trigg
  - Kevin Carrier
- Lake County Sheriff's Department
  - Sergeant Struck

The majority of public comments received addressed the following topics:

- Preferences for or against the construction of four-foot bicycle shoulders
- Community impacts of project (trees, aesthetics, etc.)
- Speed and volume of traffic
- Pedestrian/bicyclist safety

Meeting Summary

A list of common questions received during or after the meeting are listed below, with responses and/or clarifications following. Many of the questions and comments were similar to those received at the November 2016 and March 2017 meetings and as such, the summaries from those meetings are still valid and should be reviewed. The first seven items below correct inaccuracies contained in the text of the petition that was submitted.

1. **From Petition: "The Village of Libertyville and Libertyville Township have plans to widen Rockland Rd. from Milwaukee Ave. to St. Mary's Rd."**

   The Libertyville Township Highway Department is the agency making plans for improving the portion of Rockland Road east of the river, not Libertyville Township. The Highway Department and the Township Board are separate entities. Rockland Road between Milwaukee Avenue and the Des Plaines River (the Village of Libertyville jurisdiction) will not be widened; it will be reconstructed to the same width that exists today.

2. **From Petition: "The governing bodies plan to widen Rockland Rd. east of the bridge by 6-12 feet on each side for bike lanes, gravel shoulders, and "swales" (ditches)."**

   As shown on all exhibits presented to the public to date, the existing roadway east of the river varies from 24 feet to 30 feet in width, including paved and gravel shoulders. Alternative 2 (with four-foot paved bicycle shoulders) is 34 feet in width including the gravel shoulders. Alternative 2 widens the overall roadway 4 to 10 feet in *total*, not 6 to 12 feet on each side.

   No bike *lanes* are proposed in Alternatives 1 or 2. Alternative 2 includes paved *shoulders* that are four feet in width (the minimum standard width to accommodate bicycles.). Alternative 1 includes paved shoulders that are two feet in width (which when combined with two feet of gravel shoulders, is the minimum federal standard width for a basic roadway shoulder). Swales/ditches will generally be replaced where they exist today within the roadway right-of-way; no new swales are anticipated.

3. **From one version of the Petition: "70 to 90 mature trees will be cut down changing the beautiful green space into a busy suburban roadway." From the other version of the Petition: "If this happens, the county will cut down a minimum of 60 to 70 mature trees..."**

   The publicly reported tree removal estimates are a maximum of 60 to 70 trees, not a minimum. Not all trees are mature, and not all are in good health. East of the river, Rockland Road is under the maintenance and jurisdiction of the Libertyville Township Highway Department, not the county. The project will not increase the volume of traffic along the roadway.

4. **From Petition: "The project is anticipated to take 2 years and make Rockland Rd one way eastbound during that time."**

   The project is anticipated to take 12 to 18 months. The duration of the detour is anticipated to be one year. This will be confirmed during the design phase of the project (Phase II Engineering).

5. **From Petition: "Federal funding can be secured to cover this cost only by adding wider gravel shoulders, pedestrian/bike lanes, and additional drainage swales to both sides of the road."**

   Federal funding is not contingent on the addition of pedestrian/bike lanes or shoulders. Federal funding is also not contingent on additional drainage swales, and regardless, no additional drainage swales are proposed as part of the improvement.

   Federal funding will require the installation of a total shoulder width of four feet on each side of the roadway as proposed in Alternative 1. The four foot shoulder in Alternative 1 is comprised of two feet of asphalt and two feet of gravel on each side of the roadway. This four foot paved plus gravel shoulder begins at the white stripe, which is 11 feet from the centerline of the roadway.

6. **From Petition: "This will effectively widen the road space by 6-12 feet per side, giving W. Rockland Rd. a broader shoulder and pavement structure than St. Mary's Rd."**

   Neither Alternative 1 nor Alternative 2 widens the road by 6-12 feet per side as discussed in Item 2 above. The width of St. Mary's Road is highly variable south of IL Route 176 and continuing south of Rockland Road. It includes many stretches with auxiliary left and right turn lanes, which are not proposed on W. Rockland Road. St. Mary's Road also includes concrete curb and gutter along the west side for a stretch. Stretches with auxiliary lanes or curb and gutter are therefore not valid comparisons. The most comparable stretch of St. Mary's Road is perhaps the stretch between Old School Road and Oak Trail Drive. St. Mary's Road provides one 12-foot lane in each direction plus a two-foot paved shoulder on each side for a total paved width of 30 feet. Four-foot gravel shoulders exist on each side of St. Mary's Road for a total width of 38 feet. None of the proposed Rockland Road alternatives are wider than St. Mary's Road.

7. **From Petition: "This additional road space will be achieved by Right of Way Acquisition of homeowners' lots."**

   East of the river, the roadway right-of-way is generally 66 feet to 73 feet in total width, with a short stretch that is 80 feet in total width. As clearly stated at public meetings, all roadway work will be completed within the roadway right-of-way.

There will be no acquisition of homeowners' property outside of the roadway right-of-way.

8. **Alternative 2 is preferred. The four-foot bicycle friendly shoulders proposed in Alternative 2 will provide increased safety for pedestrians and bicyclists east of the river.**

   Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 both provide increased paved surface width. Alternative 1 widens the existing one to two foot paved shoulder on each side to a consistent two-foot width along each side throughout. Alternative 2 widens the existing one to two foot paved shoulder on each side to a consistent four-foot width on each side. Both Alternatives provide paved mailbox turnout areas which will, in many locations, provide more distance from the through travel lanes than exists today for residents to retrieve their mail. The current at-grade crossing of the Des Plaines River Trail across Rockland Road does not meet the latest traffic control devices standards. Under both Alternatives 1 and 2, this crossing will be upgraded to the latest pavement marking and warning signage standards.

9. **Alternative 1 is preferred over Alternative 2.**

   See the response to comment #8 above. ***After a careful consideration of all of the environmental, technical and cost analyses, and with further consideration given to public input from all three public meetings, the Township Highway Commissioner has revised the project's preferred alternative from Alternative 2 to Alternative 1.*** As the project moves into the design engineering phase (Phase II), detailed analyses will be performed to minimize any environmental impacts and including the number of trees that will need to be removed.

10. **A resurfacing of the existing pavement at its current width is preferred as opposed to Alternative 1 or Alternative 2. No trees should be removed.**

    The existing pavement is reaching the end of its design life, and thus it will continue to require patching and resurfacing at increased intervals as the overall pavement structure continues to age.

    If Federal funds are to be used for resurfacing, a widening of the pavement that is the same as the width of Alternative 1 will be required. That is, the cross-section will need to provide one 11-foot through lane in each direction, with one two-foot paved shoulder and one two-foot gravel shoulder on each side. Thus, a Federally-funded resurfacing will result in the same quantity of environmental impacts as the Alternative 1 reconstruction.

    If the pavement is resurfaced using the existing sub-standard shoulder widths, the project will need to be 100% locally-funded. Even if the locally-funded resurfacing

project was selected, an evaluation into the removal of roadside hazards would need to be completed.

In the interest of leveraging Federal roadway improvement funds and responsible stewardship of the Township residents' tax dollars, a reconstruction meeting Federal-aid criteria is the best course of action.

11. It would be desirable to continue the bicycle/pedestrian connection to the west between the Des Plaines River Bridge and the Des Plaines River Trail..

The Des Plaines River Bridge is approaching the end of its structural design life and will soon need rehabilitation or reconstruction. The Village of Libertyville and the Libertyville Township Highway Department, who share maintenance and jurisdiction responsibility for the bridge, recognize this and will be initiating a separate Phase I Study of the bridge in the coming years. As part of that study, alternatives for upgrading the pedestrian/bicyclist connection between the bridge and the trail will be evaluated. Until the bridge reconstruction project is planned, designed and constructed, residents will need to walk along the side of the roadway or use the northwest/southeasterly running spur off of the main trail to reach the bridge, as is done today.

12. A lane departure warning feature such as a rumble stripe would be desirable.

This option will be explored in more detail during the design phase of the project (Phase II Engineering).

13. Landscaping under any alternative should be a priority and it should be natural-looking.

The type and extent of landscaping will be determined as the project moves into the design phase (Phase II Engineering). Trees must be replaced at a 1:1 ratio within the project corridor.

14. Additional shoulder width will increase vehicle and truck traffic.

There is no increase in vehicle capacity proposed. There is currently one 11-foot lane in each direction today, and there will be one 11-foot lane in each direction under either alternative. This project will not increase vehicle demand. The Township Highway Department intends to maintain the existing vehicle weight limits on Rockland Road.

15. Additional shoulder width will increase vehicle speeds.

The potential for increased speeds as a result of the bicycle shoulders is one factor that was considered along with of other positive and negative technical and

environmental factors in the selection of the preferred alternative. Increases in vehicle speeds are possible, but not anticipated to be significant. The Highway Commissioner has been in contact with the Lake County Sheriff to communicate resident concerns about excessive speeds on Rockland Road. The Highway Department has contracted with the Sheriff to provide additional enforcement along Rockland Road. A review of the crash history along West Rockland Road found that excessive speed is not a significant safety problem today.

16. **Tree removal will result in increased traffic noise at the residences along Rockland Road.**

Trees and vegetation, if tall, wide, and dense/opaque enough may reduce traffic noise. However, it takes a row of dense trees that is at least 18 feet tall and 200 feet deep to result in a 10-decibel noise reduction. The removal of some of the trees along the roadway within the right-of-way will not result in a noticeable change in noise levels at adjacent residences.

17. **This project will result in decreased property values.**

We are not aware of any evidence that suggests that a project of this nature will affect property values negatively or positively. Some may view the improvement of bike or pedestrian access to the trail for the residents along the corridor a positive impact.