

**Minutes of Meeting
SATS Communities Committee
January 27, 2016**

ATTENDANCE**Communities Committee Voting Members**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Village of Jerome	Lynda Chilton, Trustee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Village of Leland Grove	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Village of Riverton	Joe Bartley, Trustee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Village of Rochester	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Village of Sherman	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Village of Southern View	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Village of Spaulding	Brian Cuffle, Village President
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rochester Township	Darrell Maxheimer, Highway Commissioner

S-SCRPC Staff

Linda Wheeland – Senior Transportation Planner

Jason Sass – Associate Transportation Planner

Others

Robert Plunk – Resident, Clear Lake Township

Mike Lopez – President, Village of Jerome

Chris Isbell – IDOT Local Roads and Streets

Sue Graham – IDOT Local Roads and Streets

I. CALL TO ORDER

Linda Wheeland called the meeting of the SATS Communities Committee to order at 4:32 PM.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

The participants started the meeting with introductions around the room. Ms. Wheeland told the Committee that SATS invited the townships within the SATS planning area and the Springfield Park District to send a representative to the Communities Committee. Darrell Maxheimer, Highway Commissioner for Rochester Township was welcomed as a new member of the Committee.

III. APPROVAL OF 10/28/2015 MEETING MINUTES

Ms. Wheeland requested a motion to approve the minutes from the 10/28/2015 Meeting. Joe Bartley made a motion to approve the October 28, 2015 meeting minutes as submitted. Brian Cuffle seconded the motion. The vote to approve was unanimous.

IV. TRANSPORTATION PROJECT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Ms. Wheeland introduced Susan Graham and Christopher Isbell, IDOT Local Roads and Streets. She said that any roads and transportation funding from Federal or State sources are distributed through their office. They presented funding opportunities and processes the Committee Members' communities can leverage to complete transportation projects.

Mr. Cuffle told the Committee that the intersection of Main Street and Illinois Highway 54 has been evaluated by IDOT as a High-Accident Location. IDOT worked with the Village of Spaulding to outline possible improvements that would increase the safety of the intersection. There are multiple factors that decrease intersection safety, including sun blindness, railroad crossings, as well as another close-by intersection. He said that improving the intersection presented many challenges, because it does not meet modern engineering and safety standards, and cannot be reconfigured to meet those standards without complete reconstruction. The cost of intersection reconstruction and traffic signals was too high for a village the size of Spaulding. Most Highway Safety Improvement Program funding is 90/10 with the community providing 10% of the project cost. A multi-million dollar project, such as the proposed intersection reconstruction, would still prove too expensive for Spaulding to afford, even with the matching funds.

Mr. Lopez said that the Village of Jerome was in a similar situation. The Village of Jerome cannot afford the local match for its major road projects and Mr. Lopez has spoken to many people at IDOT who cannot tell him how communities with smaller funding bases get funding for large projects. He asked Ms. Graham if there was any money in the State budget for IDOT projects or Federal funding for local projects.

Mr. Lopez said that the Village of Jerome also had problems finding contractors willing to bid on smaller road projects within the village. He said that only one contractor bid on a road maintenance project, and it was much higher than the Village had budgeted. Mr. Cuffle concurred, noting that the Village of Spaulding received no bids for road maintenance projects this year. Mr. Lopez said that the lack of bids was due to State funding uncertainty and that larger contractors were pursuing larger projects.

Mr. Cuffle re-iterated that IDOT acknowledged that the intersection of Main Street and Illinois Highway 54 was a high-incidence intersection, but so far has not given the Village of Spaulding a way to fix the intersection. Mr. Isbell suggested that the Village request a Road Safety Assessment from IDOT. The process is a multi-level process that includes emergency services, law enforcement, and State and Federal Highway personnel. They RSA team evaluates the intersection from many different perspectives. A recent RSA study was done at the intersection of Clear Lake Avenue and Dirksen Parkway. It differs from other IDOT assessments in that it offers both short-term and long-term solutions for intersection safety problems from multiple perspectives, not just highway engineering. Ms. Wheeland added that she believes the City of Springfield had a Road Safety Assessment done for Lawrence Avenue between Walnut Street and MacArthur Boulevard. She asked Mr. Isbell whether a request for an RSA goes to IDOT or FHWA. Mr. Isbell said that communities interested in an RSA should contact him. Mr. Lopez asked if the assessment was granted based on traffic volumes or only safety concerns. Mr. Isbell said that the assessment is done as a response to safety issues at no cost to the community. He gave business cards to the Committee members for more information.

Ms. Wheeland asked Ms. Graham whether fatalities at a specific section of road were necessary for HSIP funding eligibility. Ms. Graham said that fatalities were not necessary to receive funding, but do weigh heavily in determining whether a project gets HSIP funding.

Mr. Lopez asked Ms. Graham if transportation projects that have been placed in the Transportation Improvement Program will have their funding delayed due to the lack of a budget in the State of Illinois. Ms. Graham told Mr. Lopez that IDOT has submitted its program for Federal funding and that at the time of the meeting there were no delays in disbursing federal funds for transportation projects. Ms. Wheeland added that one project which is receiving ST-U funding is moving forward from a FY2017 letting to a FY2016 letting.

Ms. Wheeland asked Ms. Graham at what stage a transportation project should be in to begin the process of applying for Federal grants. Ms. Graham said that the answer depends on the grant program. Some programs have different requirements as to when a project is eligible for funding and what municipalities and government entities can apply. Mr. Isbell added that many other factors are taken into account in the grant process, including jobs created and maintained, project scope, and project cost.

Ms. Wheeland said that all the communities at the meeting were involved in a joint HSIP application to replace road signs. She asked Mr. Isbell if that project was proceeding. Mr. Isbell said that the project is scheduled for an April 2016 letting. He said the consultant told him that there was a delay because new forms have to be drafted due to the project moving from a local letting to a state letting. Mr. Isbell said that the consultant for the project had changed and that the cover sheet for the project is still the property of the previous consultant. There could be further delay with the project if the previous consultant does not cooperate with the current consultant.

Ms. Graham told the Committee that they could use a joint application to apply for funding to complete road sealing projects. Mr. Lopez said that there are obstacles to this, as the previous experience he and other members of the Committee have had with the arrangement have not been optimal. Mr. Lopez said that he has spoken with members of his Village Council about combining resources with other communities in the future, as the Village of Jerome already has shared resources with Woodside Township. He said that there are limits to these arrangements, as the City of Springfield does not use MFT funds for projects and cannot share costs with communities that do. Ms. Wheeland asked if it was a problem for Springfield to share costs with other communities that use MFT funding. Ms. Graham was unsure of the answer. Mr. Bartley said that he thought the conflict was due to limitations MFT funding presents its recipients in choosing contractors and engineers for projects. MFT funding offers less flexibility and has more requirements that the City may not want to deal with.

Mr. Bartley asked about Safe Routes to School. He brought up an example of a project on the North and South sides of a set of railroad tracks within Riverton. He said that IDOT or FHWA told Riverton that the north side of the tracks was ineligible for SRTS funding because the tracks did not meet safety requirements for railroad crossing. He said that Riverton paid for the pedestrian crossing from its general fund, but asked if there was money to upgrade safety features at the railroad crossing. Ms. Graham told Mr. Bartley that the Illinois Commerce Commission would be the agency to speak to about railroad projects.

Ms. Wheeland asked Ms. Graham if she had any advice for communities regarding preparation and procedure in applying for transportation grants. Ms. Chilton asked if it would be advantageous for a community to hire or train someone to write grants specifically for transportation projects. Mr. Lopez and Mr. Cuffle said that, with regard to transportation grants, the engineering firm's writers were the best option to write grant applications. Mr. Isbell concurred that the agencies that review grant applications for transportation projects are looking for technical explanations that engineering firms have more expertise in writing.

Mr. Bartley asked Ms. Graham and Mr. Isbell whether there was still funding through the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP). They said that the program was still being funded, but the application process is very competitive, and many communities have not been approved for funding under the program. Some projects benefit from multi-jurisdictional applications, such as multi-use trails.

Mr. Lopez asked that the Committee put together a list of engineering firms that work for municipalities in the SATS planning area. He thought it would be advantageous to invite the engineers to a meeting to discuss transportation matters and get ideas for intergovernmental cooperation.

V. IDEAS FOR WEBSITE INFORMATION

Ms. Wheeland told the Committee that there were three ideas for website mapping applications that were received from the Committee during the October, 2015 meeting. One idea, mapping illustrative projects from the Transportation Improvement Program, was published in the eMap room on the SSCRPC website. Mr. Sass presented a brief overview of the map application to the Committee. Maps for Functional Classification of Streets and Funding Sources for Transportation Projects are in the development process.

Ms. Wheeland reminded the Committee that SSCRPC will be reviewing and updating the TIP for 2017-2020. Any projects that receive Federal funding must be placed on the TIP. She told the Committee that the current TIP does not have any illustrative projects from non-voting SATS communities. She asked the Committee to bring information on any projects they would like included on the Illustrative Projects List of the next TIP to the April, 2016 meeting.

Mr. Bartley asked if a map of current and future bicycle trails and facilities could be published. Ms. Wheeland told him that there was a map of the bike path network in the SATS planning area with amenities and nearby bus stops. Maps of the entire bicycle network and pedestrian network were in development and would be published in the future.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Robert Plunk, a resident of Clear Lake Township, expressed his dissatisfaction with the joint application HSIP project to replace road signs with more reflective, safer, replacements. He saw it as a case study of what could go wrong in the transportation project process, and as a potential teaching moment in correcting problems. As a member of the Citizens Efficiency Commission, he said that the process was not efficiently executed. There were multiple examples of breakdown in communication and collaboration. At the start, the funding for the project came from Federal sources with a local letting. He said there were procedures for Federal projects and that there should not have been changes when the project switched to State letting. In his opinion, the project should have stayed a local letting. He disagreed with the Village of Sherman, under the advisement of its engineering firm, to switch the project to a State letting. He said that the Village of Sherman has not been forthcoming with information. At the October, 2015 Communities Committee meeting, assurances were given that the project would be under a January, 2016 letting. Today, the project has been delayed to an April, 2016 letting. He asked if IDOT evaluated engineering and consulting firms based on project performance. He said that IDOT needed to evaluate these firms to provide leverage for smaller communities to ensure that engineers and consultants do a good job for their clients.

Mr. Bartley answered that smaller communities do communicate with each other about problems they have with their consultants and engineers. He said that the Village of Riverton had to recently discharge an engineering firm due to an employee's mistakes during the Safe Routes to Schools project. Communities refer to each other before hiring consultants and engineers to evaluate the firms' performances.

Mr. Bartley said that the joint application for the HSIP sign project was, for the most part, a good thing. It was execution after the grant was approved where the process broke down. Eventually, the Village of Sherman, which took the lead in the project process, had to discharge its engineer and hire a new firm. The new engineer is still in the process of catching up with previous projects and paperwork.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business. Ms. Wheeland asked the Committee to contact her if there were any topics the Committee members wanted to discuss at the April, 2016 meeting.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Lopez made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Cuffle seconded the motion. The vote to adjourn was unanimous. The regular meeting was adjourned at 5:26 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jason Sass
Recording Secretary