



Multi-modal travel; less highway travel in our future

By Richard Skillings

Last year's editions of the Stop158 newsletter discussed both cultural and demographic trends that will impact transportation over the next 20-30 years, including changes in the way Americans shop, work, and live. Among the trends are more urban and less suburban living, an aging population with a rate of growth that is smaller with each passing decade, and a generation of eco-minded millennials entering middle age. Taken together, these trends signal a continuation of the decade-long trend toward multi-modal travel—more biking, walking, and public transit; less highway travel. This issue tackles transportation planning.

Transportation planning, theoretically, has four steps: (1) identifying goals and objectives (2) identifying problems in achieving the goals (3) generating alternative solutions and (4) selecting and implementing the plan.

In developing the Gateway Connector (GC) plan, the planners skipped from the first step straight to the last step, where they reverted to the classic "traditional" traffic demand modeling used from the 1940's to 1980's.

Planners simply modeled forecast growth to come up with four output parameters to describe what future travelers would do—trip generation (why travel would begin), trip distribution (where/when travelers would go), choice of transport modes, and route selection. The "predict and accommodate" output of the planning model was then used to validate the highway project, rather than to indicate what kind of alternatives might be studied further.

The model's limitations were ignored as well. There was no consideration of the model's performance record, no questioning of input data (which was often wrong/incomplete), no judicious application of the engineer's judgment on the output, and no validations of the output after actual data were available. In short, no real "planning" ever occurred.

Today, transportation planning is much more than just adding capacity to meet (often exaggerated) travel needs. The approach to highway planning began to change in 1998, and is

Continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Multi-modal travel
- 1 Time to cancel the GC
- 3 Calendar of Events
- 3 Meeting our Representatives
- 3 New uses for MidAmerica Airport
- 4 Population Change – or not
- 4 New IL Secretary of Transportation

Good time to cancel the GC?

Perhaps in view of our financial picture, past decisions about highway projects are being revisited all over the country.



In Illinois, the Rauner administration has reversed the position of the Quinn administration and now opposes the Illiana Expressway. Only last year it was touted as one of the state's eight mega transportation projects in the FY 2015-2020 Multimodal Transportation Plan.

That decision puts Illinois in concert with most of the major stakeholders. Not only did the Chicago Metropolitan Planning Organization oppose it, both the mayor of Chicago and the Cook County supervisor opposed it. The US Public Interest Research Group called it a "boondoggle" with cost estimates up to 400% too low, and economic benefits up to 500% too high. That sounds like a variation of the Gateway Connector analysis to us.



In North Carolina, a state Appeals Court found for the Kirby family who sued the NCDOT for "just compensation," when the state imposed corridor protection on their property. The court concluded the action was, in effect, an eminent domain taking and entitled the property owner to compensation. Following that decision, the state House of Representative repealed the Map Act, which statutorily established the corridor protection process. The state senate has yet to act on the legislation. In the meantime, the NCDOT has appealed the decision to the state Supreme Court. ●

still being formalized in Federal legislation. Central to the new concept is the belief that any transportation system must consider the social, economic, and environmental needs of the entire community. The statement of project goals has become more realistic and broader, as well, but more importantly, the alternatives assessed must include multi-modal options, aesthetics, and life-cycle costs. Such analysis employs transportation modeling, but does not rely on them exclusively and includes several kinds of models, among them land use models, which were available but not used in the GC process.

There's also an effort to diminish the value of political influence in the planning stage, and instead replace that with engaged citizens who will pay for and use the facility. Called "Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)," it's still being ironed out. Political influence is hard to give up; it's equally hard to ignore when you are an engineer who reports to the politician. In Illinois, there are lots of examples of the CSS process being documented away, rather than being honestly applied.

Rather than adding capacity to handle increased demand, planners now endeavor to "manage" travel demand. That means better signaling, adding turn lanes, improved signage, creating better local transport options (park and rides, ride sharing programs, added bike lanes/trails, bus and HOV lanes, intelligent transportation systems, tolling, and slowing speeds in dense areas). These are the things we see coming out of the East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWGCOG, the Federal St Louis planning organization), and the DOTs.

There is an increasing awareness among the professionals that "diminishing returns" is a concept that applies to the nation's highway system. Many acknowledge that the focus of planning should veer away from simply traffic "mobility," and address "accessibility" to transportation systems. The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Transportation Planning Council seems to concur. The Chairman, an engineer from St Louis, agrees, as well. She recently asked members to comment on accepting transportation goals "like access, optimize investments, prioritize transportation initiatives, support local [projects], and minimize fatalities," instead of simply using mobility as the goal. That EWG staff responded favorably signals this new approach is being accepted.

Already, both Belleville and O'Fallon are doing the things others are talking about. As early as 2006, the O'Fallon Comprehensive Plan recognized the relevance of smart growth principles. Several of the city's stated goals include "encouraging densities and mixed uses that support walking and non-motorized forms of transportation," "create alternatives to vehicular roadway connections," and recognizing the "economic value of the natural landscape..."

In its 2014 Comprehensive Plan, Belleville places an emphasis on infill of the existing community with both residential and commercial construction. That's expected to generate much of the city's new growth. Its transportation plan complements that by intending to "...improve the accessibility, connectivity and safety of all travel modes, including...transit," and by promoting growth which will "...result in the efficient use of infrastructure..." The city adopted "Complete Streets" principles, and is actively searching for ways to create them in the city. They have also added several roundabouts—proven means to speed up flow through an intersection safely.

Obviously, tomorrow's planning is becoming a reality in the region already. The Gateway Connector stands in stark

contrast to this modernization--a dinosaur in the new community-development context.

One reason could be bureaucracy. While local governments are nimble enough to adapt, the state is not. The Illinois Department of Transportation, and its Region 5, has been slow to respond to the new approaches; we suspect there are still some state-level and mid-level officials who believe that such construction stimulates economic activity. Of the only three listed objectives in Illinois' billion-dollar 2015-2020 Highway Improvement Plan (HIP), one is to "expand the system to enhance economic development." It seems the push is still to expand the system and hope for the best.

In assessing highway "needs," the 2015-2020 HIP asks planners to look at "preservation, increased capacity, and expansion" of the system. Two of these three seem to be redundant, and we are fearful that the Department intended it that way. Not only is such expansion not an effective way to stimulate the economy, but the guidance ignores the direction of the MPO and local governments to adopt the new planning (and traffic management) techniques. We remain hopeful that the new Secretary will correct that.

Despite expert advice from all sides, an acknowledgement that much spending is wasteful, and the end of spending for the Mississippi River Bridge and its approaches, more than 25% of funds in the 2015-2020 HIP for District 8 is still earmarked for system expansion--and that disregards the hundreds of millions of dollars for the expansion of high-speed rail. Most of that money is for widening US67, where traffic counts (under 10,000 vpd all along the route to Jerseyville, the most heavily traveled segments) show the existing road is still below capacity and where predictions still fail to justify the expansion; and to build a new interchange at Reider Road in St Clair County, where nothing but wetlands exist today.

So, that 25% of spending is still too much. Consider that one-third of the remaining maintenance funds are being used to replace but 10 major bridges, there is much other repair work that cannot be done.

This completes our three-part series, discussing the things transportation planners and experts are now saying about the future of highway construction. Nearly all expert analyses argue against building the Gateway Connector, in favor of system maintenance and much smaller expansion projects. We hope you will too. ●



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

STOP 158 STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Place: 866 Old Enterprise Farms, Lebanon, IL 62254
Regular meetings generally occur on the 3rd Thursday of each month, from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Meetings are open to all interested parties. Please call to confirm meeting time and reserve your seat: 618-632-3158.

EWGCOG

For the calendar of the **East-West Gateway Council of Governments** visit www.ewgateway.org

**Contributions to support
and this newsletter can be mailed to:**

**STOP158
22 Royal Oaks Dr.
Troy, Illinois 62294**

**Or visit our web site www.stop158.org and
contribute securely online.** This all-volunteer
not-for-profit organization needs your help! ●



UNITED IN OPPOSITION TO THE GATEWAY CONNECTOR

- Citizen's Against the Sprawlway www.sprawlway.org
- The EcoHawk Foundation
- The Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club
<http://illinois.sierraclub.org>
- United Congregations of Metro East www.ucmetroeast.org
- American Bottom Conservancy
- 47 Plus Coalition <http://47plus.org>
- Our Tax Money www.ourtaxmoney.org
- The Alliance www.alliance1820.com



Publisher: STOP158: Citizens for Smart Growth
22 Royal Oaks Drive, Troy, IL 62294

Editor: Marty Ganz (marty1115@gmail.com)

Director: Richard Skillings

Spokesperson: Richard Ellerbrake

Treasurer: Bob Kueker

Webmaster: Manny Arzavala

Communications: Annette Haines

Network Marketing: Bob Ramsey

Contributing Editors:

**Kathy Andria, Jan Daker, Amy Funk, Matt Hawkins,
Barbara Hertenstein Jacobitti, Thomas Joseph, Joe Maty,
Jack Norman, Joe Reichert, Ruth Smith, Jan Strasma**

Meeting with our representatives

On December 11, 2015, representatives from Citizens for Smart Growth: Stop158 joined state Senator Kyle McCarter to present a 118-page report to Jeffrey Keirn, the Area 5 Engineer (IDOT). The report, entitled *21st Century Realities—On Redirecting Transportation Resources*, details the case against building the Gateway Connector in the Metro East. That document, along with other input from the public, will be considered as the Department decides whether to keep the project on the books. A decision is due in the next few weeks. ●

St. Clair County officials still trying to make MidAmerica Airport viable

St. Clair County hopes to lure the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency to an area adjacent to MidAmerica Airport by offering to give them the land. The move would bring about 3,000 jobs to the county, although few of them would be available for local workers. Rather, current NGA employees would have to commute—many from south St. Louis. We expect the county to use that to further justify the Gateway Connector, suggesting it would be a necessary southern approach to the work area. However, an honest assessment would show that the Gateway Connector route would be longer and slower than the existing route along I-255 and I-64. And since the county pushed the Reider Road interchange, that access would shorten the commute even further. So, any effort to connect the NGA and GC would be deceptive. ●

Our Mission: Stop158 and the Gateway Connector corridor, encouraging instead alternative transportation options which strengthen existing communities where residents in all stages of life may safely live, work, shop, learn, and play, while preserving open space, farm land, and environmentally sensitive areas. ●

“The reality about transportation is that it's future-oriented. If we're planning for what we have, we're behind the curve.”

**Anthony Foxx
US Secretary of Transportation**

Minimal Population Change



The population of the Metro East continues to fluctuate, as one would expect. Back in 2010, the US Census Bureau concluded there were 572,295 residents in the three counties touched by the Gateway Connector. By 2014 the population had dropped by 6,284 to an estimated 566,011. Most of the decrease was seen in St. Clair County and around the Gateway Connector study area. Mark Kern, Chairman of the St. Clair County board, suggested reductions at Scott Air Force Base and the migration of families out of the area accounted for most of the loss in population. ●

New IL Secretary of Transportation

Governor Rauner named Randall S. Blankenhorn as Secretary of Transportation replacing Erica Borggren. After 20 years at IDOT in the Planning Agency, Blankenhorn moved to the Chicago area to become Executive Director of Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning in 2006.



Randall S. Blankenhorn

In May, he traveled the state on a “Listening Tour” to gather citizens’ priorities for the Department. We participated in a well-attended stop in Collinsville. Most audience members were local government or trade representatives who spoke to their particular interests. A panel of three included State Senator Kyle McCarter, who spoke of the importance of getting “value” from each transportation dollar spent. To us, that means more maintenance of the existing network. ●

Make your voice heard! Contact your state and federal Congress men and women, your local county councilman, and your mayor and tell them you oppose the Gateway Connector and want it removed from all short and long term plans. Visit www.STOP158.org to learn more. ●

Stop158: **Citizens for Smart Growth**

22 Royal Oaks Drive
Troy, IL 62294-2724

PLACE
STAMP
HERE