



IRON COUNTY RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

ICRTEC CHAIR—MAYOR CONNIE ROBINSON • ICRTAC CHAIR—TOM STRATTON • PLANNING MANAGER—CURT HUTCHINGS

MINUTES

Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC)

July 1, 2015, 1:30 p.m.

Iron County Offices

82 N. 100 E., Cedar City UT

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Rob Dotson
Mr. Steve Platt
Mr. Kit Wareham
Mr. Monte Aldridge

REPRESENTING:

Enoch City Manager
Iron County
Cedar City
Utah Dept. of Transportation

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Mayor Connie Robinson
Mr. Tom Stratton
Mr. Shayne Scott
Mr. Stoney Shugart

REPRESENTING:

Paragonah Town
Brian Head Town
Parowan City
Kanarraville Town

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Dave Demas
Mr. Reed Erickson
Ms. Brooklyn Shotwell
Ms. Michelle Campeau
Ms. Elizabeth Burghard

REPRESENTING:

Five County Assoc. of Governments
Iron County
Bureau of Land Management
Bureau of Land Management
Bureau of Land Management

I. Quorum Declaration

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Steve Platt in the absence of Mr. Tom Stratton. Mr. Platt welcomed all present and he declared that there was not currently a quorum present.



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II. Minutes of May 6, 2015

Mr. Platt asked for a clarification regarding the last line of Item III – Project Discussion on page 2 of the May 6, 2015 minutes. He did not recall that he would be involved in putting the concept report together for the Westview Drive project. It was discussed and determined that due to the location of Westview Drive, Mr. Platt and Mr. Wareham would be the best individuals to complete the concept report.

Since there was not a quorum present, it was decided to postpone the approval of the minutes until later in the meeting in the event other members arrived.

III. Project Concept Update

A. Westview Drive

Mr. Demas informed the members that this agenda item has been included in order to get updates on the status of the project. He has been keeping Commissioner Miller updated on the project as well. Once the concept report is completed the project can be added to the priority list so it can then be prioritized.

IV. Discussion – Belt Route Alignment

Mr. Platt thanked the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) representatives for coming to the meeting and turned the time over to Mr. Erickson for his presentation. The committee members provided the BLM representatives a brief explanation of the purpose and responsibilities of the Rural Planning Organization (RPO), Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) and Rural Transportation Executive Committee (RTEC) and explained how the committees work together with the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT). It was noted that the RTAC functions as a planning group that presents recommendations to the Executive Committee to makes the decisions to move the issues forward.

Mr. Erickson began his PowerPoint presentation entitled “Critical Decision Path” by providing a short explanation of the 3 sections of the belt route. He explained that although they were originally identified as Phase 1, 2 and 3, it would be better to refer to them as sections as they may be completed in a different order. The first section is from I-15 at Kanarraville to Highway 56 and is approximately 5.5 miles. It is under construction and all right-a-ways have been acquired. The second section is from Highway 56 up to Midvalley Road and is approximately 6.6 miles. The third section is from Midvalley Road to I-15 at Summit or at a proposed Enoch location and



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is approximately 12.7 miles. The total route will be approximately 24.93 miles of which about 5.5 miles have been completed.

Mr. Erickson noted that the first mention of a belt route was in the 1995 General County Plan and, at that time, the lower section was identified as aligning with 5300 West. In 2005 the County hired CH2MHill to do an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for section one and it was determined it should be aligned at 5700 West, which is where it is currently being constructed. A BLM Representative asked the reason why an EIS was required. Mr. Erickson explained that the EIS was required in order to qualify for the Federal Highway funding for the acquisition and construction. He remarked that part of the future discussion regarding the route will be to determine if there is an advantage to planning/building on our own and if so, can we qualify for federal funding on the other phases if we don't do an EIS. Mr. Erickson provided a quick overview of the maps and documents of the past planning efforts from 2007 to 2013.

Mr. Erickson emphasized the need to identify where the belt route will be located due to the large size of the proposed solar power plants. Currently, there are still options available as the power plants are not too far into their design. Also, in conjunction with the solar power plants, there are generation tie lines that will take corridors up through 4700 West. That is the reason why the BLM representatives were invited to this meeting. Mr. Erickson identified some of the BLM land that will be affected by the gen-tie lines. He noted that it is important to work together; as they are doing the gen tie line permits, the planning for the corridors can be completed at the same time.

Mr. Erickson noted the need to determine what is driving the need for the belt route - both long term and short term. Alternatives for both need to be identified. Mr. Erickson would like help from this committee to articulate, for the decision makers and the public, the need for the belt route. We know that residential growth will occur so we must preserve right-of-ways in advance. There are also industrial and commercial routing issues to be identified. One of those is the Alton Coal Mine. There are various factors to consider regarding the belt route including growth, population, avoiding traffic congestion and also the development of commercial and industrial opportunities. Mr. Erickson reviewed some of the possible short term alternatives using sections of existing highways temporarily.

Another item to be determined is whether a needs/demand analysis is necessary. And if so, should an engineering firm be hired to do modeling, growth and traffic numbers. Or, do we do the planning ourselves now, identify the corridors and begin



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ICRTEC CHAIR—MAYOR CONNIE ROBINSON • ICRTAC CHAIR—TOM STRATTON • PLANNING MANAGER—CURT HUTCHINGS

acquiring the right-a-ways. There is funding available to acquire right-a-ways. Once we begin using the funding, one question to be addressed with the decision makers is have we demonstrated sufficient need both short term and long term to move forward with the project.

Mr. Demas remarked that the belt route is similar to the Southern Parkway in St. George that was first discussed about 15 years ago. At that time it was just a concept to identify a corridor in that area; there was nothing driving the project. The local cities thought that it would be a needed transportation facility. It was not necessarily growth, directly, that prompted the development of the route, it was the relocation of the airport that sparked the major interest in the road. Originally it started as a city road however, in the process of funding and constructing, UDOT recognized the importance of the route all the way to SR-9 in Hurricane and UDOT eventually took over the road and it is now a state corridor. The Parkway is being built a segment at a time. He pointed out that once the momentum and desire for a road picks up, the road can drive itself, growth may not be the only driver. Mr. Erickson noted that one question that will need to be discussed is where we go for funding for the belt route project. If we will be seeking federal funding a needs assessment may be needed. Mr. Demas agreed that if federal funding is pursued or if the state becomes interested in the belt route there will eventually need to be an EA completed in order to move forward.

A discussion ensued regarding growth projections, the population of Cedar City and the potential for residential and commercial development.

Mr. Erickson moved on to discuss the 4700 West corridor and identified the corridor on the map. He noted that there are currently two power lines (138 kv) on 4700 West, one has been built and the other is in the application process. He identified areas of the proposed belt route that could possibly cross BLM property. It is his understanding that the applicants for the Iron Springs solar plant have requested to go on the west side of the existing utility corridor. The belt route is proposed to run along the east side of the corridor. Mr. Platt asked for clarification regarding the two 138 kv power lines. BLM representative #1 clarified that the existing power line is a 230 kv and the proposed line is a 138 kv. Mr. Erickson asked about the right-a-ways that have been applied for. BLM representative #1 responded that it is 100 foot for both. The existing is 100 feet wide and they are applying for 100 feet so it will be 50 feet from center, 100 feet total. Mr. Platt asked for confirmation that the BLM has the application in their office. BLM representative #1 confirmed that they do have the application and that they are very close to offering the right-a-way grant. Mr. Erickson asked her if the 2 right-a-ways would be allowed to be adjacent to each



IRON COUNTY RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

ICRTEC CHAIR—MAYOR CONNIE ROBINSON • ICRTAC CHAIR—TOM STRATTON • PLANNING MANAGER—CURT HUTCHINGS

other. She replied yes, from center to center it would be 100 feet. She indicated that the road would have to meet their transportation standards. The belt route would probably have to be 100 feet off the existing 230 kv power line. Mr. Erickson asked for clarification if that meant 100 feet off the power line or off the corridor. BLM representative #1 responded that it was probably off the power line however she would need to double check the standards. She explained that, if the belt route was proposed and BLM received an application, the requirements would all be brought out during the NEPA process.

Mr. Erickson asked if an Environmental Assessment (EA) would be required in the planning for the belt route corridor. BLM representative #2 responded that if the BLM were going to do rights-of-ways and if Iron County envisions the use of federal funding, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) would probably be the lead agency and they would look at the project as a whole. There would be no reason for the BLM to do an environmental assessment and issue a right-of-way and have the same thing evaluated for an EIS. BLM would use the FHWA document to issue the right-of-way instruments. She noted that one other item to consider would be the small pieces of property that would be isolated due to the utility corridors and highway. If they are just going to be public use corridors, it may be a situation where disposal may be appropriate. It was agreed that the small strips of property would be of no use.

Mr. Platt asked if disposal was appropriate, could everything go through an RP&P and include a highway. The BLM representatives agreed that would not be an option. Even though the highway is for public purposes it does not meet the specific guidelines of the RPP. BLM representative #2 mentioned that they could consider a straight up sale. They would need to take a look at their existing land use plan to see if they are covered or wait for their plan revision to be completed. BLM representative #1 pointed out that due to the Three Peaks Recreation Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), the boundary of the plan may need to be modified on the east side. She explained that right-a-ways are allowed within the SRMA so Iron County could pursue the right-a-way or it could be a disposal. BLM would need to review the options. They may need a buffer zone for management of the area so that may be a reason to do a right-a-way.

Mr. Erickson remarked that determining whether federal funding will be involved is a big question. The EIS that is required for federal funding is very expensive and may not be necessary if federal funding is not needed to acquire rights-of-way. If Iron County can do the planning and acquire the right-of-ways, we may not need the same level of EIS to seek federal funding for construction of the project. Mr. Platt provided



IRON COUNTY RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

ICRTEC CHAIR—MAYOR CONNIE ROBINSON • ICRTAC CHAIR—TOM STRATTON • PLANNING MANAGER—CURT HUTCHINGS

a quick overview of the process that was required for the south leg of the belt route that eventually required an EIS costing \$500,000.

Mr. Aldridge arrived and joined the meeting at this time.

BLM Representative #2 noted that it appears there should be further discussions of these issues. Yes, the BLM can do an EA for rights-of-way crossing BLM land. However, they would definitely need to consider the scope and connected actions and reasonable foreseeable future actions. The scope of the EA could 'creep' so they would be cautious about taking on something with an EA. They would definitely be considering impacts along the entire route the way it ties into BLM. Mr. Erickson asked if an EA was required if it was determined for disposal; or could the disposal be done through the RMP. BLM Representative #2 confirmed an EA would be required and the decision for disposal could not be included in the RMP. All planning decisions are kept separate from the RMP. BLM Representative #1 added that all disposals must go through the Federal Register and that disposals are a much longer process than getting a right-a-way.

Mr. Erickson confirmed that the BLM right-of-way process would be a Title 5. BLM Representative #2 suggested possibly doing a right-of-way first and later on look at disposal. Mr. Erickson asked about the cost to the County for the Title 5 right-of-way versus disposal. It was identified that the County would pay for the evaluation for the Title 5 versus the full cost of appraised value for acquisition of the disposal. BLM Representative #2 remarked that although it would be significantly cheaper to do a Title 5, the advantage of the disposal is that the County would have title to the property. Mr. Aldridge asked if the length of the Title 5 right-of-way was 20 or 30 years. BLM Representative #2 responded that it is generally for 30 years. Mr. Platt noted that they have had perpetual right-of-way. BLM Representative #1 explained that if the FWHA applied it would be authorized as a Title 23 and the right-of-way would be perpetual. However, that would require that the belt route be identified as a highway. Per Mr. Aldridge, it is unlikely that UDOT would make the route a highway. A short discussion ensued regarding the possibility of future FHWA involvement in the route and the Title V being replaced by the Title 23.

Mr. Aldridge explained that there was a decision made to do a federal/state exchange on all of the federal funding received for the project. All federal funding would be exchanged for state funds upfront to make things easier. BLM Representative #1 noted that sections 1 & 2 of the route could be completed independently. However, if federal funding was involved in section 3, they would need to have cultural wildlife surveys and would need to consider the entire third



IRON COUNTY RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

ICRTEC CHAIR—MAYOR CONNIE ROBINSON • ICRTAC CHAIR—TOM STRATTON • PLANNING MANAGER—CURT HUTCHINGS

section. Mr. Aldridge clarified that if the funding remained local/state only and goes through a Title 5, the only requirement would be a BLM EA.

Mr. Erickson clarified that the Enoch alignment from I-15 to the west side of the hills could all be done on private property. It would only be 6800 North going out to Summit through Braffits Creek that would involve the BLM.

Mr. Erickson explained that there is still a question regarding where the route will terminate on the north end. He quickly reviewed the 2 possible options. (1) Summit – with an existing interchange that aligns with the utility corridor and makes sense for traffic flow. (2) Enoch – which would require a new interchange. Both options are on the map for planning purposes. Mr. Erickson also reviewed some of the short term alternatives. The committee discussed the proposed location of the Enoch interchange. It was agreed that it makes sense to include both the Summit and Enoch options on the plan.

Mr. Erickson pointed out the 2 possible North Hills crossing. He remarked that it is a fairly difficult area to cross. Staying on 6800 North and cutting into the mountain would be very difficult and is probably not a viable option. Following the Braffits Creek drainage is probably the best option and he identified that alignment on the map. The committee discussed possible options and transitions required due to pivots and topography and the locations of the solar farms. He noted that the 7200 north location at the interchange is better for meeting the 1320' spacing from the interchange to the first access point but it would probably need to swing down to one of the other routes. The other crossing at 6400 North to the proposed Enoch interchange would be an easier crossing due to topography.

Mr. Erickson took a few minutes to explain the history of the local corridor preservation fund. He noted that the current fund balance is \$2.8 million and is now held locally in the county fund. He remarked that it makes sense to use the money now to acquire property as land values will only increase in the future. He explained that the solar power plants are aware of the right-of-way needs and the parameters have been identified in their leases. So the corridor has been preserved but not actually acquired. The committee had a lengthy discussion regarding the use of the corridor preservation funds, alternative routes, how to identify willing sellers and when to start acquiring property. Mr. Wareham noted his concerns about using all the preservation funds and or construction funds for this project where there are so many needs. Mr. Demas noted that preservation funds are for use with future routes and not necessarily for projects that are nearly to construction.



IRON COUNTY RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

ICRTEC CHAIR—MAYOR CONNIE ROBINSON • ICRTAC CHAIR—TOM STRATTON • PLANNING MANAGER—CURT HUTCHINGS

BLM Representative #2 noted that it would be very important for them to know if there are unwilling sellers before they began issuing right-of-ways. If property could not be acquired and the route needed to be altered, they do not want to go back in to amend the right-of-ways. They will need to know up front if access has been granted to make it easier for their analysis. One of the questions Mr. Erickson has is when or should the county start contacting owners looking for willing sellers. There is still a lot of decision making before they move ahead with right of ways.

Mr. Erickson moved on to discuss the question of railroad crossings. He explained that currently there is not a crossing at 5700 West. The only existing crossing is at 5300 West; it was not designed as a belt route crossing and it provides access into Port 15. There was discussion regarding the possibility of trading two existing crossings for an at-grade crossing. It was agreed that the best long term alternative would be a grade separated crossing at 5700 West. It would be very expensive and when the crossing would be needed would have to be clearly identified. Mr. Erickson asked Mr. Wareham about the possible use of the 5300 West crossing in the interim. Mr. Wareham explained that the Port 15 industrial park negotiated the limited use of the 5300 West crossing with the railroad. It was determined that the County would have to discuss with the railroad and Port 15 regarding the possibility of short term use of the 5300 West crossing.

Mr. Erickson noted that another issue to be discussed is fencing. Fencing was not included in the right-of-way acquisition with section 1 of the route. We could certainly make the argument that fencing is part of the right-of-way acquisition, especially if it is part of the negotiation of the property and acquired with fencing in mind. However, he is not sure that the corridor preservation funds could be used for right-of-way fencing. Mr. Wareham asked if the requirements were reduced when the funds were transferred to the County. Mr. Erickson and Mr. Platt stated that they are not sure; the process has not been established yet. Mr. Erickson noted that the corridor does need to be fenced and that it could possibly be considered in the cost of construction. Mr. Aldridge commented that UDOT did not do fence building because it was considered a ground disturbing activity and could not be done unless there were environmental documents. Mr. Erickson remarked that is why it is tied to construction. Mr. Aldridge emphasized the point that if a single federal dollar of funding, the entire project will become federalized.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the planning process, if or when federal funding would be sought and the environmental work that would be needed if federal funding was secured. It was agreed that, because of the high likelihood of having a federal/state exchange of funds, it would be best to move forward using



IRON COUNTY RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

ICRTEC CHAIR—MAYOR CONNIE ROBINSON • ICRTAC CHAIR—TOM STRATTON • PLANNING MANAGER—CURT HUTCHINGS

local funding for as much work as possible until it was determined if federal funding was going to be used. At that point environmental documents would be needed.

The meeting concluded with a lengthy discussion on how to proceed with the planning process for the belt route - who guides the process, how much local involvement, do we enter into a formal planning process, when to present information to the RTEC.

Mr. Platt asked how much involvement Five County AOG could provide in the planning process. Mr. Demas replied that we would be involved in the process but as far as the actual work on the alignment it would likely be a small part as there is minimal funding in the RPO and he is basically the only resource available, he could attend meetings and provided input and would love to be involved as much as he can. Mr. Demas explained that in similar situations in St. George, they have hired a qualified consultant to put together an analysis that could optimize an alignment. The analysis would not be at the NEPA process level, but would look at options for alignments and come up with a preferred alignment. That analysis could be reviewed by each of the cities, approved and locked in on their master plans. Mr. Erickson asked for an estimate on the cost to the County for that type of analysis. Mr. Demas and Mr. Aldridge felt it would be at least \$50,000 – \$100,000.

Mr. Wareham expressed that he was still not entirely convinced of the need of the belt route. He felt that I-15 provided a route to the same locations as the proposed belt route. Mr. Demas explained that UDOT would like additional routes in order to get the commuters off the interstates. He has suggested in the past about possibly getting a better CUBE model for the valley in order to get data on future transportation issues and projected growth. It would be very helpful to have the information when making these decisions.

Mr. Aldridge suggested planning to the degree to allow the County to present to the community in order to establish a master transportation plan. He noted that transportation will look substantially different by 2040. It would be very wise to develop a master transportation plan and acquire corridors.

Mr. Demas stated that he will contact Walt Steinvorth at UDOT to see if there are more traffic analysis zones in this area. He will check to see if it would be possible to do even a small update and hopefully find some funding for planning. He believes that some of the corridor preservation funds may be able to be used for the planning study.



IRON COUNTY RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

ICRTEC CHAIR—MAYOR CONNIE ROBINSON • ICRTAC CHAIR—TOM STRATTON • PLANNING MANAGER—CURT HUTCHINGS

Mr. Erickson asked if the committee thought there would be value in having the same discussion with the RTEC or should we expand on the information before presenting to them. There are still many unanswered questions as to what the next step will be. Mr. Demas recommended keeping the RTEC up-to-date with a short version of this discussion. They need to understand that there is a process to go through before the public funds are used.

Mr. Aldridge remarked that he felt that a certain amount of the corridor preservation funding could be used for planning studies. Mr. Demas thought it might be possible to obtain a planning grant or perhaps the corridor preservation funds could be used as the matching money needed for a grant. He felt it was important to acquire properties if it is certain that they will be on the alignment. In his opinion, the proposed alignment makes sense from a transportation planning perspective. In addition, it appears that it would be very easy to work with the BLM to obtain the right-of-ways.

Mr. Erickson thanked the committee for their thoughts and suggestions. Mr. Platt expressed the committee's appreciation to Mr. Erickson for providing such an informative presentation.

V. Approve Minutes for May 6, 2015

With the arrival of Mr. Aldridge, Mr. Platt announced that there was a quorum present and asked that a motion be made to approve the minutes.

A motion was made by Mr. Kit Wareham, seconded by Mr. Rob Dotson, to approve the May 6, 2015 Minutes of the Iron County Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (ICRTAC).

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

VI. Other Discussion Items

A. Next meeting will be held on September 2, 2015 in Brian Head.

VII. Adjourn

A motion was made by Mr. Rob Dotson, seconded by Mr. Wareham, to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY