



STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUPS – OVERVIEW

Advisory Groups' Roles and Responsibilities

The Springfield Railroad Corridor Study's Stakeholder Advisory Groups are a critical component of the study's public participation program. Participants will help the study team obtain valuable community input; identify and address local concerns; and build public interest and involvement in the study's decision-making process. In short, advisory group participants serve as liaisons between the communities they represent and the study team, deepening team members' understanding of community conditions and values so that their findings are well informed and responsive to community needs.

Advisory group members have several responsibilities, which include: 1) reviewing important technical findings and offering feedback; 2) providing guidance on public information and engagement efforts; and 3) serving as program ambassadors to their constituents, colleagues and the community at-large. With the advisory groups' assistance and support, the study team will maintain open lines of communication with the community at-large and establish meaningful relationships with interest groups across Springfield.

Study Team's Role in Supporting Advisory Groups

The study team is responsible for providing technical assistance and administrative support to the advisory groups. Such support includes:

- Helping members to understand existing railroad corridor conditions, possible corridor changes to accommodate increased rail traffic, and the associated costs and benefits of such changes;
- Supplying the necessary information for advisory group discussions by developing agendas, meeting content and collateral materials;
- Creating a meeting environment in which members' range of opinions can be raised, discussed and thoughtfully considered;
- Reviewing input from advisory group members and demonstrating how this input will be incorporated into the study; and
- Responding to advisory group recommendations through reports back to its members.

An often overlooked but critical component of maintaining successful advisory groups is the provision of appropriate administrative support. This involves:

- Coordinating the meeting logistics;
- Sending meeting materials to advisory group members;
- Facilitating the advisory group meetings; and
- Developing and disseminating permanent records of meeting minutes.

Meeting Rules & Expectations

To ensure that advisory group meetings are highly productive exchanges of knowledge, insights and ideas, members will:

- Arrive prepared and complete the agreed upon agenda;
- Share the available speaking time;
- Avoid side discussions when others are speaking;
- Be respectful of differences of opinion and when possible, strive for consensus;
- Voice concerns and complaints inside meetings rather than outside of them;
- Ask questions to get clarity on meeting content, activities and follow-ups; and
- Put cell phones on silent.

Group Structure and Meetings

The study's four advisory groups – the Community Advisory Group, Business Advisory Group, Medical Advisory Group, and Public Officials Advisory Group – are standalone committees and will not be divided into sub-committees unless they are needed to improve the groups' productivity. At present, however, the advisory groups do not need to be subdivided and given their size, most work can be completed during a two-hour time period.

It is anticipated that the advisory groups will meet five times between February 2010 and May 2011. Meetings will be held on a quarterly basis with an allowance made for more or less frequent meetings given the needs of the study team. The initial schedule of meetings will be reviewed at the first meeting. Given the professional nature of the advisory groups' membership, meetings will likely occur during the workday, with the exception of Community Advisory Group meetings. These meetings will be held in the evening to accommodate neighborhood and community leaders' schedules. Light snacks will be provided at every meeting.

Meeting Materials

The study team will create a notebook for advisory group members to keep over the life of their project involvement. Initially, notebooks will contain study background documents as well as contact information for study team and advisory group members. However, the notebook will be updated at each session with meeting agendas, materials and minutes; relevant technical and project information; and other important study items.