

ILLINOIS MPO CAUCUS

Meeting Minutes
April 4, 2008

Opening:

The regular meeting of the IL MPO Caucus was called to order at 10:00 on April 4, 2008 in State House, Room by Interim Chair Cameron Moore.

Present:

Metropolitan Planning Organizations:

Jerry Blair, East West Council of Governments
Chandra Ravada, Dubuque MPO
Paul Russell, McLean County Regional Planning Commission
Norma Sims, Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission
Adam Aull, Danville Area Transportation Study
Rita Black, Champaign Urbana Urbanized Area Transportation Study
Jennifer Sicks, McLean County Regional Planning Commission
Deb Spencer, Consultant – Tri County Regional Planning Commission
Mark Smith, Decatur Urbanized Transportation Study
Terry Kohlbuss, Peoria Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
Brian Dickson, DeKalb-Sycamore Area Transportation Study
Mike VanMill, Kankakee Area Transportation Study
Bob Soltau, Stateline MPO (Beloit)
Randy Blankenhorn, Chicago Metropolitan Agency on Planning
Steve Ernst, Rockford Metropolitan Planning Organization
Cameron Moore, Champaign County Regional Planning Commission
Denise Bulat, Bi-State Regional Commission (teleconference)
Marta Perales, IL MPO staff.

Other attendees:

Jon-Paul Kohler, Federal Highway Administration
Les Nunes, IDOT, Bureau Chief of Programming & Planning
Jim Stack, IDOT, Bureau of Programming & Planning
Curtis Jones, IDOT, Bureau of Programming & Planning
Tom Kelso, IDOT, Bureau of Programming & Planning
Betsy Tracy, IDOT, Bureau of Programming & Planning
Norman Johnson, IDOT, Bureau of Programming & Planning

A. Welcome & Introductions

Interim Chairperson Cameron Moore welcomed the attendees and reviewed the formation of the Illinois MPO caucus and its role in advising the Illinois Association of Regional Councils (ILARC) Board of Directors on MPO related issues. He encouraged MPO's to provide their input and involvement to help the MPO Caucus move forward.

B. Introduction of Caucus Coordinator

Ms. Perales introduced herself, briefly highlighted her background and indicated that she looks forward to working with all of the MPO's.

C. Comments from Illinois Association of Regional Councils

Current ILARC President, Denise Bulat, Executive Director of the Bi-State Commission, stated that the ILARC Board of Directors met recently to approve and execute the necessary documents to enable the Caucus to get up and running. There are still some changes that need to be made to the ILARC by-laws. Representatives of the MPO Caucus and ILARC will work together on this and any other outstanding issues.

Cameron Moore provided a historical perspective of how the MPO Caucus was established through ILARC and noted that IDOT is providing \$80,000 in funding with the \$20,000 required match coming from the MPO's. He further indicated that invoices for the match have been mailed and encouraged each MPO to send in their Caucus dues as soon as possible.

D. Comments from Illinois Department of Transportation

Mr. Nunes, Bureau Chief of IDOT Office of Programming & Planning stated the MPO Caucus will be a good forum for the MPO's to communicate with each other and make it easier for the sharing of information.

E. Planning Dollars Distribution and Future Planning Funds

Mr. Nunes discussed the MPO's planning dollars for this upcoming FY09 year. Whatever MPO's received this year, they will see a 1% increase next year. There will be no differences in 5303 dollars from previous years.

F. Rescissions

Mr. Nunes informed the Caucus that IDOT is looking at \$2 million dollars of PL dollars going to rescissions. MPO's are expected to spend all their PL money. IDOT will take requests for additional dollars; but approval will not be based on if you had previous unused balances. IDOT will have some flexibility of allowing requests for additional PL dollars from year to year.

Mr. Kohlbus asked if calculations between the MPO and IDOT are consistent? He also asked if there are any special areas of inputs and emphasis that might be more attractive to IDOT as a justification for additional monies.

Mr. Nunes responded that the rescissions will not take into effect until 2010 with the expiration of SAFETEA-LU. IDOT will be evaluating what criteria supports getting extra PL dollars. As a result of this rescission, IDOT believes just about every single MPO is going to be zeroed out. SAFETEA-LU was written to require major rescission upon expiration.

Mr. Blankenhorn asked if all planning and SPR funds will be rescinded. Mr. Nunes did not have the information available.

Mr. Nunes distributed a brochure for the Enhancement Program as well as a concurrent solicitation for the Green Street Initiatives. The due date is May 5th for the applications and encouraged members to visit the website. There is \$20 million, which is significantly lower than a normal round. The Green Street Program is a \$5 million program.

Mr. Kohlbus revisited the topic of rescissions. He believes there should be some public understanding about how this process works and asked if IDOT could provide information to enable the MPO's to talk about it publically using accurate information.

Mr. Soltau asked IDOT if the decision regarding rescissions was made by IDOT or the federal government. Mr. Nunes stated, the decision was made by the federal government and it was by proportional. Jon Paul of the FHWA indicated they were proportional rescissions. He indicated that SAFETEA-LU authorization levels could potentially be lower and suggested the Caucus acquire additional information about financing of the State's infrastructure.

Mr. Blankenhorn informed the Caucus he received an article about rescissions for Illinois and asked the Caucus Coordinator to forward the information to the members.

Mr. Kohlbus suggested the Caucus put together an op-ed piece on rescissions.

Mr. Nunes requested the Caucus speak with their respective congressman first.

Mr. Moore suggested putting together a template letter that each member could customize to advise their member(s) of the IL Congressional Delegation of the impact of rescissions.

Mr. Blankenhorn recommended a letter to the entire delegation from the MPO Caucus.

Mr. Sims suggested informing mayors and county board members about rescissions and asked he Caucus prepare something that explains rescissions in simple terms

Mr. Moore suggested the following action items for the Caucus Coordinator: a letter from the caucus to the federal delegation and a few talking points regarding rescissions for the use of members.

Mr. Sims asked whether if this would be considered lobbying. Mr. Moore responded, stating educating, information sharing and communications do not meet the definition of lobbying. The Caucus is here to educate and inform policy makers and implementers regarding transportation planning and programming and provide a mechanism for policy makers and implementers to easily communicate with the MPO's responsible for transportation and programming at the local and regional level. The Caucus will also educate and inform members about changes in state and federal transportation policies and encourage best practices

Mr. Blankenhorn asked about the corridor planning grant program. Mr. Nunes stated IDOT is awaiting federal approval to extend the corridor planning grant program in some variation for at least another three years at similar levels to the Illinois Tomorrow of \$3 million per year.

Mr. Kohlbus made a motion that the Caucus actively support IDOT in continuation of the program. Mr. Moore entertained the motion. Mr. Blankenhorn seconded the motion. Motion passes unanimously.

Mr. Soltau asked if the new comprehensive regional planning funds can be used to pay the MPO Caucus dues. Mr. Nunes indicated they could be used because they are state funds, but PL funds could not be used because they are federal funds.

Ms. Bulat explained that the ILARC invoices for the MPO dues match is for six months ending June 30, 2008 and there will be another invoice in July 1st for a 12 month bill.

Mr. Paul commented that the FHWA fully support the MPO's working together in a collaborative manner. FHWA and staff are available for assistance in achieving the MPO's goals and to assist in the implementation that Congress has been put them.

G. Proposed Caucus Operating Guidelines

Mr. Moore presented the draft MPO Operating Guidelines for discussion.

Following discussion it was agreed that CMAP would have the permanent Vice-President slot which ensure active involvement form CMAP and also ensures that an MPO other than CMAP will always occupy the office of President position

Following discussion it was also agreed that:

the Executive Committee would be one member at-large plus the three officers;

the Executive Committee would include at least one TMA and one non-TMA.

Mr. Moore recommended that the meetings be held prior to the ILARC meetings to enable specific ideas or recommendations coming out of the Caucus meetings to be brought quickly to the ILARC board.

Ms. Bulat indicated the ILARC Executive Board meets at 9:30 a.m. on the last Friday of the month every other month preceding the ILARC Board meeting and typically meet for half hour or an hour later depending on the agenda. It was agreed that MPO caucus Meetings would be held prior to the ILARC Executive Board and Board meetings on the last Friday of the month every other month. It was also agreed to reduce the 30 day notice, down to 10 days to more easily accommodate meeting date changes.

It was agreed that language would be added that would enable a meeting to be called if a specific percentage of members request a meeting without officer approval.

Mr. Sims recommended the guidelines should specify that the ILARC Board of Directors reviews the Caucus Operating Guidelines annually to ensure the Caucus guidelines don't conflict with ILARC by-laws. It was agreed that this change would be made.

There are several items that require further clarification, for example who collects and receives dues, the Caucus or ILARC? Can or should the Caucus receive money directly? Mr. Blankenhorn and Mr. Sims suggested moving forward with the Operating Guidelines on an interim basis and Mr. Blankenhorn further indicated theses issues are close to be being resolved.

Mr. Moore reminded everyone that the Caucus was still in the beginning states and is subject to change and evolution. ILARC is currently acting as the legal entity on behalf of the caucus. Some of the changes will be in ILARC's by-laws which authorizes ILARC to have subsidiary groups like an MPO or other issue based caucuses. He also indicated that the one of the ILARC by-law changes discusses would enable the MPO Caucus President to serve on the ILARC board and executive committee to ensure there is good communication with the caucus.

Ms. Bulat agreed that the Caucus needed an interim Operating Guidelines and recommended the Caucus and ILARC find some agreeable middle ground. Members of the ILARC Board of Directors reviewed the Caucus Operating Guidelines were comfortable with them.

Mr. Kohlbus commended Mr. Moore for his effort into drafting the operating guidelines and Mr. Sims for his effort into thinking about the details. He recommended all Caucus members review the operating guidelines and to do their best to figure out what the issues are, focus on the solutions and as soon as possible get to an end point.

Mr. Moore agreed there were some organizational issues with ILARC and expects them to get resolved in the next couple of months. Whatever suggestions members have, the Caucus will act on those to make sure they are operating effectively.

Ms. Bulat agreed. She suggested a subcommittee with members from the Caucus and from ILARC work through the issues. She is hopeful that they will have some alternative language available for review for the Caucus and ILARC at the next meeting. Mr. Moore indicated the Caucus will work with ILARC to make sure that all issues are resolved as soon as possible.

Mr. Sims makes the motion to accept the interim operating guidelines. Mr. Kohlbus seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

H. Proposed Caucus Work Plan

Ms. Perales presented the work plan draft to members. She welcomed suggestions from the members since this is really their work plan.

It was agreed that additions and language clarifications were needed.

Mr. Nunes asked when the work plan was going to be submitted.

Mr. Moore suggested that the work plan will take a couple of months to finalize and predicts the work plan would take the Caucus through June 30th of 2009.

I. Nominating committee

Mr. Moore requested four volunteers for the nominating committee. Two volunteers are needed from MPO's that represent a population 200,000 and more, and two from MPO's that represent a population under 200,000. He plans on calling people in the next couple of weeks. His goal is to return to the next meeting with a slate of officers and formally go through that election process.

J. To/From Caucus members

Based on members input it was agreed that the next meeting will be scheduled for Friday, May 30th at 8:00 a.m. to accommodate various MPO and ILARC schedules.

The Caucus Coordinator was advised that any future meetings in Springfield, be someplace other than the Capitol due to parking restrictions.

Mr. Nunes announced that the IDOT Office of Planning & Programming (OP&P) recently created a website to make it easier for the planning folks to find information. He passed out a copy of the webpage to members.

Mr. Blankenhorn asked about the recent EPA emissions changed to .75 and whether this is an issue that the Caucus Coordinator should stay on top of.

Mr. Nunes responded stating it would probably only affect the Peoria MPO. He also informed the Caucus that IDOT has been working with the IEPA on what the impacts of this could be in case anybody else falls within the .75 range. For any MPO affected by this change IDOT will be relaying information about conformity.

Mr. Kohlbuss suggested that elections matter and that a different president may have different set of priorities to the cabinet folks. A year from today, we may be looking at a very different scenario in terms of air quality. He commended the Caucus would have great promise to know what are the issues at stake and to have an effective voice on those kinds of issues.

Mr. Blankenhorn recommended that this was the kind of information sharing that the Caucus should be engaged in. He also informed the Caucus that CMAP is having a briefing with the IL congressional delegation on the new transportation authorization. He is prepared to share with members the agenda and provide some of the slides that we will be using. Senator Durbin is setting it up the briefing and it will be done in conjunction with IDOT and the RTA at CMAP.

Mr. Nunes encouraged the Caucus to stay on top of the regional planning fund. It was in the Governor's introduced proposed budget. IDOT has had some discussion about putting something together to show how those funds are being utilized by these groups and that sounds like a good idea. There was some discussion about how the regional comprehensive funds are appropriated through the legislative process. Mr. Blankenhorn recommended MPO's tell their legislative members what they are doing with the monies through an announcement or two.

Mr. Moore indicated that there are some big issues on the horizon, both with the state budget and federal reauthorization. He stated there needs to be a really robust debate on federal transportation policy and funding.

Mr. Blankenhorn stated that CMAP is really interested in the freight component and the need for a national freight policy as a part of this legislation. There is a group out there called the Coalition for American Freight Gateway. It is a trade organization for freight. CMAP is not a member; but Mr. Blankenhorn had packets to pass out to members interested in the group. Mr. Nunes announced that IDOT was a member. Mr. Blankenhorn stated that the City and State are members. Mr. Moore indicated that NARC was a member as well.

L. Agenda for Next Meeting

Work plan for the MPO caucus and the revised operating guidelines

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m. by Cameron Moore. The next general meeting will be at 8:00 a.m. on May 30, 2008 in Springfield, Illinois at the Illinois Municipal League building.

Minutes submitted by: Marta Perales

Approved by: Cameron Moore