



**ARCHER AVENUE AT BELT RAILWAY COMPANY OF CHICAGO GRADE SEPARATION STUDY  
COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP (CAG) MEETING #4**

Thursday, April 5, 2018

10:30 a.m.

St. Richard Catholic Church

5030 S. Kostner Ave, Chicago, IL 60632

Meeting Minutes

The Community Advisory Group (CAG) meeting began at approximately 10:35 a.m. and ended at 12:00 p.m. with the following people in attendance:

Soliman Khudeira, Chicago Department of Transportation  
Joe Alonzo, Chicago Department of Transportation  
Jakita Trotter, Illinois Department of Transportation  
Nestor Reina, Illinois Department of Transportation  
Malika Hainer, Chicago Department of Aviation  
Jason Biernat, Chicago Transit Authority  
Michael Kowalczyk, Federal Highway Administration  
Stanley Lihosit, Archer Heights Civic Association  
Thomas Baliga, Archer Heights Civic Association  
Christopher Steinway, Belt Railway Company of Chicago  
Mark Ferguson, Belt Railway Company of Chicago  
Michael Hurley, HNTB Corporation  
Christopher Gasiorek, AECOM  
Timothy Whalen, AECOM  
Brent Sears, AECOM  
Melodie Cole, AECOM  
Berenice Vallecillos, Morreale Communications  
Mary McIlvain, Morreale Communications

**Presentation Summary**

The CAG meeting included a presentation followed by a breakout group discussion. The agenda of the presentation (attached) included:

- Welcome-Berenice Vallecillos, Morreale Communications
- Introductions- Soliman Khudeira, CDOT
- Meeting Agenda- Soliman Khudeira, CDOT
- CAG Recap- Soliman Khudeira, CDOT

- Community Updates- Soliman Khuderia, CDOT
- Overview of Preferred Alternative- Tim Whalen, AECOM
- Construction Staging Alternatives- Brent Sears, AECOM
- Evaluation of Impacts- Tim Whalen / Brent Sears, AECOM
- Breakout Session-Berenice Vallecillos, Morreale Communications
- Closing Remarks/Next Steps- Soliman Khuderia, CDOT

## Meeting Summary

### The Presentation

- Berenice started with a safety moment and welcomed attendees to the meeting. The safety moment included information about “Scott’s Law” and the Give Them Distance campaign reminding drivers to slow down and change lanes if they see a vehicle with hazard lights on the roadway.
- Soliman then started by having the attendees introduce themselves, provided an overview of the meeting agenda and started the presentation.
- Soliman gave a recap of **CAG Meetings** one, two and three:
  - Provided a review of CAG #1, which included introducing the project, project team, existing conditions, an overview of the Phase I design process and defined the role of the CAG.
  - Reviewed the project implementation process which includes three project phases. The project is currently in Phase I - the preliminary design stage.
  - Provided a CAG #2 review, which included the purpose and need of the project, alternatives considered and screening, as well as, construction considerations.
  - Provided a review of CAG #3, which introduced underpass design considerations, construction staging concepts, and potential reasons for impacts.
- Tom Baliga provided a **Community Update**:
  - 47<sup>th</sup> Street has become more congested with traffic especially heading east and near Acero Major P. Garcia High School during pickup and drop-off times.
  - Red Barrel restaurant re-opened on Archer Ave. and is viewed as an important addition to the community. (located at 5216 S Archer Ave)
  - He explained the Southwest Gateway to Midway program: includes 24 points of improvement including signage and infrastructure. They have met with the Alderman regarding that project.
  - On April 24<sup>th</sup> they are hosting a bus tour for Commissioners going from 55<sup>th</sup> St. to the Stevenson.
- Tim Whalen presented the **Overview of Preferred Alternatives**:
  - The project has received environmental clearance from IDOT, which permits the project to be presented –to the public.
  - Tim also reviewed the road underpass and the impacts to the side streets and some cross streets
  - The sidewalk path elevation and geometry was discussed:
    - The elevated path design was selected because it minimizes impacts by reducing the project limits.
    - The path is planned to be an 8ft. wide elevated sidewalk on both sides. The width will accommodate both bicycles and pedestrians.

- Information on the proposed pump station and underground storage was presented:
  - The desired location for the pump station is currently occupied by Ducky’s Car Wash.
  - Q: CAG member asked if the 51<sup>st</sup> street sewer will be able to accommodate the drainage from the project?
    - Tim explained that the project will include underground storage for stormwater, which will limit the release rate to the existing sewer.
  - Q: CAG member asked about the size of the underground detention storage?
    - Brent and Soliman responded with an estimate of 20ft x 50ft (horizontal limits)
- Concluded the overview of preferred alternatives section with an explanation of other improvements which includes drainage and utility improvements, roadway and underpass lighting, opportunities for aesthetic enhancements and landscaping improvements.
  - Q: CAG member asked about the retaining walls and if there is a plan to have the wall coated with an anti-graffiti treatment? The CAG member also added that they have witnessed graffiti in the project area in the past.
    - The response is that it will be a consideration because of the potential for graffiti given the project location. However, these coatings can create maintenance issues in the future. The determination will be made during the next project phase (Phase II) .
- Brent Sears presented the **Construction Staging Alternatives:**
  - Reviewed the temporary run-around alternatives.
  - Q: CAG member—Have land owners been contacted yet?
    - Brent responded that they have not been contacted yet.
  - The temporary roadway run-around was presented as the selected design alternative for several reasons detailed in the presentation.
  - Reviewed the Shoofly concept.
- The last portion of the presentation was the **Evaluation of Impacts:**
  - Tim reviewed balancing project trade-offs and showed that the benefits/positives outweighed the negatives/costs based on the screening analysis performed on the different alternatives.
  - He also explained the potential impacts the project may have which can be temporary or permanent including land acquisition and access impacts such as: driveway closures, roadway closures and sidewalk closures
  - Brent concluded this section with an overview of the right-of-way (ROW) acquisition and the properties that may potentially require some type of acquisition, which include Ducky’s Car Wash, Moran Auto Repair, All Seasons Car Wash and S&L Cartage Inc.
- Berenice explained the Breakout Sessions and directed CAG members to their assigned tables/groups.

## Summary of Breakout Group Sessions

### **Group 1 (Blue Group)**

Brent Sears, AECOM

Jason Biernat, Chicago Transit Authority

Thomas Baliga, Archer Heights Civic Association

Malika Hainer, Illinois Department of Aviation

Soliman Khudeira, Chicago Department of Transportation

Joe Alonzo, Chicago Department of Transportation

Jakita Trotter, Illinois Department of Transportation

Michael Kowalczyk, Federal Highway Administration

Mary McIlvain, Morreale Communications

### **Facilitator-Brent Sears, AECOM**

Brent asked for initial reactions to anything that was presented.

#### Questions & Comments:

1. **CAG member expressed that community members are anxious.** He explained that the community wants to see this project happen because this is something that's been talked about for 40 years.
2. **CAG member asked about a visual in the presentation-there is an 11ft. mark-is that 11ft. per lane?** Brent responded, it is 11ft. per lane.
3. **CAG member gave an on overview of what's happening in the community.** CAG member mentioned that there will be two boutique hotels built at 53<sup>rd</sup> St. and Cicero. The developers are going back and forth with IDOT about a traffic signal and median being built. In addition, the southwest corner of Archer and Cicero has been majorly developed with the construction of a Chipotle, Panera, or Corner Bakery, and a Starbucks. Residents can learn more at [AHCivic.org](http://AHCivic.org). The Archer Civic Association also wrote a letter to CTA to eliminate the 47<sup>th</sup> St. turnaround because it ties up three lanes of traffic heading south and three lanes of traffic heading north. The association is asking that the terminal be shut down and relocated to the Midway transit station.
4. **CAG member asked if certain buildings within the triangles on the map are being impacted by this project?** Brent explained the specific businesses within or near the triangles that may or may not be impacted. There was a discussion about certain access points for businesses on the map and making sure businesses impacted by construction will have access while also keeping in mind maintaining ADA compliance throughout the project construction.
5. **CAG member asked if business owners have been contacted yet?** Brent replied that they have not been contacted at this point.
6. **CAG members pointed out several problematic areas in the project area that have been congested.** One significant area that was pointed out by a CAG member was an area where cars and trucks are getting stuck on the tracks while the gates were coming down. There were several past attempts by community members to get steel guards or emergency paddles installed but it has been an "uphill battle." Brent expressed that the currently proposed design should help resolve the problem.
7. **CAG member expressed concern that affected businesses may raise their property prices and therefore cause a prolonged legal battle delaying this project.** Soliman explained that there is a

procedure for acquiring land that follows federal guidelines. CAG members continued to explain the details of going through the land acquisition process.

8. **Will there be marked bicycle lanes?** Not at this time. Archer Avenue is designated as a Spoke Route, which indicates that dedicated bicycle lanes will be considered in the future.
9. **If a bicycle network were installed along Archer Avenue in the future would this plan allow for bike lanes to be installed?** Brent explained that the current plan accommodates bicycles on the proposed 8' wide sidewalks through the limits of the underpass. The improvement would not prohibit the installation of dedicated bicycle lanes east and west of the project improvements.
10. **When you say elevated sidewalk, what do you mean?** On both North and South sides of Archer Ave. the sidewalk will not be at the same elevation as the vehicular travel lanes.
11. **CAG member said he noticed that there is not a pedestrian crossing on the inner part of the project-is there a reason for that?** Brent explained that this project has no signalized crossing point within the project limits, and given the traffic on Archer introducing an unsignalized crossing is not desirable. . There are also ADA issues with providing the additional crossing locations within the limits of the underpass. CAG member expressed that many times people cross where they are not supposed to and may not take the extra steps to cross as intended.
12. **CAG member expressed that vehicles tend to drive faster when there is a grade separation and it tends to create a tunnel effect and are then entering pedestrian crossings.** The CAG member observed that there are bump-outs but expressed that there may be a need for additional signage. He also mentioned that there are CTA stops nearby and pedestrian traffic should cross safely to their bus stops. Additionally, it's important to keep in mind pedestrians crossing in wheelchairs.
13. **CAG member asked if Knox and Kolmar will still be accessible?** Brent responded that after going through the design they will still be able to maintain operation.
14. **CAG member pointed out an area on the map and asked if it would be depressed?** Brent responded that it would be slightly depressed. Brent continued to review the map and explained the project design relative to the map.
15. **Does this project include adding signage (in reference to bicyclists)?** The CAG member explained that riders may be riding on the road and may not realize they have to get onto the sidewalk. Soliman explained that the signage will be looked into more in Phase II.
16. **CAG member had a question about site acquisition- Is there a plan for how the property will be used in the future: will they be demolished, vacant?** Brent used the map to explain which portions of the land may be used and said that there may be an opportunity to re-utilize and release property. Soliman continued to explain how the process works.
17. **A CAG member asked if it would be possible to include a community mural on the retaining wall?** A CAG member expressed that they are not big on it but can discuss it. The wall provides an opportunity for a potential aesthetic treatment such as stamped concrete or formliners which will be explored in Phase II.
18. **Is this on the IDOT five-year plan?** This was a question that would require the project team to look into further.

## **Group 2 (Green Group)**

Michael Hurley, HNTB

Mark Ferguson, Belt Railway Company of Chicago

Chris Steinway, Belt Railway Company of Chicago

Stanley Lihosit, Archer Heights Civic Association

Nestor Reina, Illinois Department of Transportation

Chris Gioressek, AECOM

Melodie Cole, AECOM

Tim Whalen, AECOM

Berenice Vallecillos, Morreale Communications

### **Facilitator- Chris Gioressek, AECOM:**

Purpose of the breakout is to guide the team in reviewing the alternatives and to provide any opportunity for input or any questions you might have or additionally what you may have already expressed.

#### Questions & Comments:

- 1. CAG member asked if both streets would be lowered.** Chris answered question that the side roads will be slightly lowered at the intersection with Archer Ave. Closures will be temporary, only necessary during construction. Idea is to construct new driveways and have new access points to businesses where able.
- 2. CAG member asked what does it mean that the elevated sidewalk design will minimize impact?** Tim By elevating and separating the proposed sidewalk from the mainline roadway, the grade of the road can be increased which reduces the project limits.
- 3. CAG member asked what is the expected length of construction?** Total duration expected to be approximately 18 months with work occurring over two construction seasons.
- 4. CAG Member: How long will the runaround be in operation?** Tim responded that one year is currently estimated, but that is subject to change depending on the final staging approach. .
- 5. CAG Member asked if the shoofly will affect the diamond located south of the project area?** The existing diamond is not currently impacted by the temporary shoofly.
- 6. CAG member asked if the project team has met w/ the pipeline company?** Tim replied that we are coordinating with the BRC but have not yet set a meeting.
- 7. CAG Member asked about the pipeline and if it is an issue for the project.** Tim responded that the pipeline was installed fairly deep with the anticipation of a future underpass, approximately 40 – 50 ft. below grade. The key challenge will be the construction of the retaining wall which will be located above the pipeline. A soldier pile type retaining wall is anticipated for the project, which features a concrete wall surface supported by steel piles that are driven into the ground. This type of wall acts as its own earth retention, which helps to minimize impacts outside of the wall limits. The supports for the retaining wall in the vicinity of the pipeline will need to be coordinated with the pipeline operator.
- 8. CAG member asked if the retention facility for stormwater is an underground tank.** Tim responded that it will be an underground system, because the project falls within the height overlay ordinance for Midway Airport. Due to the proximity to the airport, a surface ponding situation, which might attract birds, should be avoided. An underground storage system is also preferred for use within urban areas.

9. **CAG member asked if the Ducky's land parcel has been considered as a parking lot?** Tim answered that we don't have that answer yet, and that the land could be potentially be repurposed / redeveloped for a different use. It is very common for developments with an underground detention to be underneath a parking lot.
10. **CAG member asked if the railroad tracks will be heightened.** is the current alternative is based on the tracks remaining at their current elevation. Due to the existing conditions, any increase in elevation would be very costly.
11. **CAG member asked about the next steps for public involvement.** Tim explained that the property owners within the direct project limits will be contacted directly about the public meeting with an invitation. Additional outreach will be conducted to provide notification of the meeting to the public. The purpose of the public meeting will be to inform the community about the project and to solicit input and feedback.

### **Closing Remarks/Next Steps**

- The CAG came together after their breakout sessions and a spokesperson from each group explained what their groups talked about.
- Soliman reviewed the project schedule and what to expect in each phase.
- He concluded the meeting with the project team's next steps, which includes a public meeting later this year (schedule is TBD).