



Archer Avenue at BRC Grade Separation Study

Public Meeting

September 18, 2018

6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Summary

The Archer Avenue at The BRC Grade Separation Study Public Meeting started at 6:00 p.m. on September 18th at in the lower-level of St. Richard Parish. Attendees were greeted at the entrance and guided to the sign-in table to fill in their information on a sign-in sheet and were offered a fact sheet with more project information. Elected officials and their office staff, as well as Community Advisory Group (CAG) members were offered a name badge at the sign-in table.

After stopping by the sign-in table, staffed by Morreale Communications and AECOM, attendees had the opportunity to walk around the room and visit thirteen exhibit boards. These exhibit boards detailed the project's purpose and overview, project benefits, Phase I plans, studies and a projected project timeline. Staff from AECOM answered questions attendees had about the exhibit boards. At 6:30 p.m. Berenice Vallecillos (Morreale Communications) announced the start of the presentation led by Soliman Khudeira (CDOT), Tim Whalen and Brent Sears (AECOM). Attendees filled the near 40 seats in the presentation area. Alderman Burke started off the presentation session with some general remarks regarding the community and the history and purpose of the project. The presenters then facilitated the presentation explaining key project details, including project benefits and need, alternatives considered, screened, and chosen and the public involvement process. The presentation, which lasted approximately 45 minutes, was extended in order to address comments raised by the attendees during the presentation.

After the presentation concluded, the team opened the floor to attendees for the questions and answer (Q & A) session. The team fielded nearly twenty questions answered by Mr. Khudeira, Mr. Whalen and Mr. Sears. At the end of the Q & A session, Ms. Vallecillos reiterated the importance of completing a comment card at one of three locations around the room, as only written comments will be included in the official project record. Additionally, attendees were also directed to submit a comment on the project website. A summary of written comments received at the meeting can be found on the third page.

The public information meeting wrapped up at 8:00 p.m. and the project team thanked the 55 attendees, including elected officials, stakeholders, business owners, CAG members and residents from Archer Heights, Garfield Ridge and surrounding communities, for attending the meeting.

Public Meeting Notifications

To reach the most people in the project area, our outreach efforts targeted residents, businesses, stakeholders and elected officials. Prior to the public meeting, an email was sent to CAG members to invite them to the meeting. Property owners received packets containing a formal letter introducing the project, additional project information and an exhibit map. To reach a broader audience in Archer Heights, Garfield Ridge and surrounding communities, three newspaper notices were published,



including one in The Gate Newspaper, one in the Archer Journal News and one in the Southwest News Herald. English and Spanish posters were hung at community locations across the project area, such as libraries, churches, community centers, cafes and Aldermen's offices. English and Spanish palm cards were also distributed to these locations, so the public could take more information with them. Digital media was also utilized to connect with communities online. Community representatives from UBAM, Garfield Ridge Chamber of Commerce, Archer Heights Civic Association, Garfield Ridge Neighborhood Watch, Aldermen's offices and Congressman Lipinski's office received recommended social media posts to disseminate to their audience. Since the beginning of the project, the project website (www.acherbrc.com) has been updated regularly.

Comment Forms

Public meeting attendees had the opportunity to complete a comment form and drop it into a comment box. If they wanted to complete their form outside of the meeting, attendees also had the option to mail the form back to the location typed on the comment form. If community members were unable to attend the public meeting, they have the opportunity to submit a comment to the project website to be included in the official project record. The project comment period was open until October 2nd. The comments that were received are documented below and accompanied by a response from the project team.



Public Meeting Comments and Responses

Comment 1:

Name: Curt Mazur

Date: September 18th, 2018

Method Delivered: Submitted at Public Meeting

Why are we spending more money to build another viaduct when we are not even maintaining current viaducts on 47th and 47th & Archer? Who is paying for property acquisition? What will be the result of bought property?

Response:

CDOT works with other city, regional, and state entities to develop concepts, seek public input, and explore funding options for a wide variety of transportation-infrastructure improvements. Maintenance and construction are each an important part of CDOT's work and priorities are continuously reviewed in conjunction with other entities who may have responsibility for a given improvement. The maintenance for this project is a key design consideration – Archer Avenue is expected to be maintained by the City of Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the railroad bridge is expected to be maintained by The Belt Railway of Chicago (BRC) subject to future negotiations.

The reason for the subject project is summarized in the Purpose and Need which states “Provide a transportation infrastructure improvement in the Archer Avenue corridor that increases operational efficiency and improves safety” and “Reduce congestion (increase operational efficiency) and Eliminate road-rail conflicts (improve safety)”.

The property acquisition will be handled as part of the project cost and the funding is expected to be a combination of Federal, State, and Local sources. The property to be acquired will be for the purpose of project implementation and construction. Any acquired property not permanently required for the proposed improvements will be evaluated for potential future uses during future phases of the project.

Comment 2:

Name: Larry Bernauer

Date: September 19th, 2018

Method Delivered: Project website

I attended the meeting last night; thank you. Please consider making the 'run-around' 4 lanes - 2 in each direction - to reduce the traffic diverted to 47th Street and through the neighborhoods. With the planned ROW acquisition of Ducky's Car Wash and Marlizdia Transport, the project appears to have sufficient land area to construct 4 lanes. Thank you.



Response:

The current version of the proposed run-around is conceptual; it will be designed in detail during Phase II (detailed design). Unfortunately, the Phase I (preliminary design) evaluation shows that due to impacts to the side streets and adjacent properties it is unlikely that a four-lane runaround would be feasible.

Comment 3:

Name: Thomas S. Baliga on behalf of the Archer Heights Civic Association

Date: September 20th, 2018

Method Delivered: Mailed

Dear Mr. Khudeira,

It was good to see you once again at the BRCGS Public Comment Session held Tuesday, September 18, 2018 at St. Richard Church Hall.

Although our civic association will continue to remain both very supportive of the entire project and actively involved in the future phases of the Belt Railroad Grade Separation for Archer Avenue at Knox/Kolmar, pursuant to discussions after the formal presentation. I wanted this letter to be a matter of record of our position on two issues brought up at the meeting.

During the presentation it was mentioned that 47th Street might have to be used as a detour route on the occasions where Archer Avenue may have to be completely closed during certain times of the construction. As both Stan Lihosit our Executive Director and I have stated at each of the Phase I planning sessions, the use of 47th Street as a traffic detour alternative to the closure of Archer Avenue is completely unacceptable for our community.

There are five schools (Edwards Elementary at 48th & Karlov, the Acero High School and two Acero Grammar Schools at Kildare, and the Global Academy School at Knox) that twice daily accept and dismiss hundreds of students into 47th Street. Couple that with the factories of the Crawford Industrial Area whose trucks use 47th Street for ingress and egress to their businesses, the use of 47th Street as a detour route would be a transportation nightmare for all of Archer Heights. These issues were the principle reason for incorporating the two-lane roundabout bypass to be constructed on Archer Avenue.

It was also mentioned that even with the roundabout, Archer Avenue may still need to be closed in certain instances. If that were to happen, the timing of the closure must be very brief and absolutely cannot occur during a normal business week.



Secondly, the need for a traffic signal at the Intersection of Archer and Knox Avenue, as was brought up by the residents closest to Archer, is a very valid issue that was never mentioned at any planning session. I, and several of our civic association officers, have firsthand knowledge of the current difficulty residents have when trying to turn onto Archer from Keating, Kilpatrick and especially Knox Avenue.

Once the grade separation is constructed the difficulty of ingress and egress to Knox and the other residential streets will only be exacerbated. Therefore, our civic association stands with the residents and request that a traffic signal be included in the final design for the grade separation. It is far better to address this issue now and get the separation built properly from the get-go, instead of having to tear up the pavement after project completion.

Obviously there will be more discussion of the aforementioned issues, and we look forward to working with you and all the involved parties to getting both of these matters resolved during the next Phase of this project.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
Thomas S. Baliga
President

CC: Alderman Edward M. Burke - 14th Ward
Alderman Silvana Tabares - 23rd Ward
Darrell Rudd, Chairman - Crawford Industrial Council
Timothy J. Whalen, P.E. - AECOM

Response:

In regard to the 47th Street alternate route that was presented at the Public Meeting, this proposed alternate route has not been finalized and will require approval from the City of Chicago during the next phase of the project. We expect to have further discussions regarding the alternate route as the project develops. The reason 47th Street was proposed is that roadways that are signalized, do not contain stop control signs, and are not subject to railroad at-grade crossings are generally preferred as they can typically accommodate increased traffic more effectively compared to other routes. 47th Street is the only route in the nearby vicinity of the project that meets these criteria. It should also be noted that the alternate route is only expected to be utilized as a full detour for very short durations to facilitate work along the Archer Avenue corridor. Any closures of Archer Avenue are expected to be limited to short duration, weekend closures. The traffic control remains under development, so the number of closures required is still to be determined.

The inclusion of a traffic signal at the Archer and Knox Avenue intersection was studied as a part of the project but none of the required criteria that would allow the construction of a signalized intersection at this location were met. Based on observations by the project team the expectation is



that the side street operations will operate similarly or slightly better at the completion of the project compared to the existing condition due to the gaps in traffic created by the nearby Cicero and Kostner Avenue traffic signals as well as the eliminated queuing due to the at-grade railroad crossing when a train is present. The possibility of adding stop signs on Archer at the Knox and/or Kolmar intersections was also investigated. Given the volume of traffic carried by Archer, the facility is classified as a Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA). As a result, the addition of a stop sign is not feasible since the design criteria for a SRA does not permit the installation of stop sign control on through lanes.

Comment 4:

Name: Dan Macak

Date: September 20th, 2018

Method Delivered: Mailed

With the current Midway Airport improvements, all the more reason to get this done! People want to get to the airport on time, either for flights, or to pick someone up or drop off. "If" there are any new traffic lights, they must be computerized, not only timed. They must favor the heavy, I would think. The lights could also star green, unless there is cross traffic.

Response:

Reducing the congestion on Archer Avenue, which is a heavily traveled Strategic Regional Arterial, will be a benefit to commuters and the surrounding community in line with the Purpose and Need for the project. The project team has investigated the possibility of including additional traffic signals as part of the project and it was determined that the locations studied do not meet the required criteria for installation at this time.

Comment 5:

Name: Patricia Cachur

Date: September 26th, 2018

Method Delivered: Emailed

At the meeting held on Wednesday 9-18-18 at St. Richard church to discuss the above subject, it was not mentioned as to how the 62 bus routes would be diverted for this project. Will they be diverted to 47th or 55th street? Both streets will be experiencing heavy traffic as it is - 47th has 2 schools and 55th also has railroad tracks. What's the tentative plan for Archer bus traffic? Thank you for your attention.



Response:

The No. 62 Bus Route is expected to continue operating along its current route along Archer Avenue for the duration of the project using either Archer Avenue or the proposed run-around. For the occasional weekend closure periods, if required, it is expected that the Bus will be detoured to an adjacent through street (such as 47th Street or 55th Street) but further investigation and discussion with CTA will be required before finalizing the Bus detour route. Some individual bus stops may be affected temporarily within or near the project limits.

Comment 6:

Name: Jose R. Fernandez

Date: October 1st, 2018

Method Delivered: Mailed

- 1) Traffic Signal at Archer/Knox
- 2) Design on the embankment walls. If maybe it could be the Chicago sports team logos (ie.) Bears, Cubs, White Sox, Bulls & Blackhawks
- 3) What are the assurances that as residents we won't be flooded out and who maintains the pumping station?

Response:

The project team has investigated the possibility of including an additional traffic signal as part of the project and it was determined that it does not meet the required criteria and will not be added at this time.

The underpass option does provide the opportunity to implement various surface treatments to improve the aesthetics of the project. These potential treatments and designs will be evaluated as part of the next phase of the project. These comments are considered part of the public record, and will be passed along to the design team for the next phase.

The drainage system will be designed with a pump station and underground storage system to accommodate rainfall. Overall, the proposed drainage system improvements will provide additional capacity to store stormwater prior to it entering the city's combined sewer system. The proposed pump station, like a number of other existing pump stations across Chicago, is anticipated to be maintained by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT).



Comment 7:

Name: Rich Adam

Date: October 2nd, 2018

Method Delivered: Emailed

I live at 5244 South Knox Avenue. The reply card states "The Archer Avenue at BRC Grade Separation Study is exploring alternatives to eliminate the existing at grade crossing..." This statement I believe is incorrect. I believe at the meeting at St. Richards you ruled out three of the four alternatives. The decision has already been made when you say three of the four are not possible. The one I had Inquired about was raising the tracks over Archer. I was told that this is not possible because of the rate of climb. However if you look at the grade of the tracks they are higher on 53rd and Knox and actually have to come down to meet the grade of Archer. My theory was that you would rather inconvenience the neighborhood rather than the (big money railroad lobbyist). I was told that this was not the case; but I was told also that this viaduct on Archer would be more convenient and safer for everyone. These Statements are not statements of truths. They are lies. It will not make it safer for the people on the 5200 block of South Knox avenue Since you will be eliminating the driveway that leads into ElCubano you would be routing all traffic that would enter ElCubano from Archer Avenue to Knox Avenue. We have more small children on this block now than in the 38 years I have lived here. How does more traffic make my street safer for the children? How does it make it more convenient for my neighbors and myself to get on Archer From Knox Avenue at an uncontrolled intersection. At the meeting we were told a traffic signal would not be possible. The traffic has to slow now for the tracks, once the viaduct is in place people will not be slowing. At 47th and Knox there was a traffic signal installed and they do not have the cars and trucks that we will have once ElCubano is in full operation. A car and a truck can not pass through Knox Avenue without one pulling to the side to let the other one pass. ElCubano is not even fully operational yet. They are planning a store on the north end of their property. More congestion, more traffic that would have mostly been absorbed by the Archer Avenue access driveway you plan on eliminating. I asked since you would be creating a large Problem for the people on Knox if there was any way the project would be willing to buy the affected properties. I was told no. I would not be looking forward to move But I don't think you have any idea on what a problem you are creating. This project didn't just originate a short time ago, it must have taken a long time to design and longer to get funded. Did anyone tell the owner of ElCubano of your plans to close his Archer driveway before he threw all that money in his place or even let him know before he bought it. That property was vacant for quite a while. And perhaps you did and he didn't realize what a traffic problem this would be.

I am including Alderman Ed Burke in this e-mail because He was the only elected official to attend.. My U.S. congressman, the 23rd. ward alderman, my state rep. and my state senator were all absent and did not even send a representative from their office to represent them.

Thank You Alderman Burke for caring about you neighbors in the 14 th . Ward



I cannot emphasize enough what a hazard this project will be for the people on Knox Avenue and have little doubt that it's not if but when someone will be hit by the increased traffic and an uncontrolled intersection. I do not want anyone to get hurt.

God's Blessings,

Rich Adam

Response:

A summary of the comment as it relates to this project is as follows:

1. Concern that the eliminated alternatives were not fully investigated.
2. Concerns about the safety impacts of the project on Knox Avenue south of Archer Avenue.
3. The project should consider adding a traffic signal at the Archer and Knox intersection.

The responses are provided below:

1. The project team fully vetted all the alternatives mentioned at the Public Meeting. A discussion of the alternatives was conducted as part of the Community Advisory Group meetings consisting of community and stakeholder representatives and there was a consensus regarding the selected alternative. The alternatives were checked against the project Purpose and Need and evaluated based on the screening criteria listed on the exhibit boards and in the presentation. There were significant issues with the other alternatives and the screening process showed that the Roadway Underpass is the preferred alternative that should be carried forward on the project as it meets the Purpose and Need and limits the impacts to the community compared to the other alternatives.
2. Safety is an important consideration for the project as stated in the Purpose and Need. The implementation of the roadway underpass is expected to improve safety in a number of ways including eliminating the potential for vehicular and train collisions, removing the potential for pedestrian and train collisions at the railroad grade crossing, and the elimination of crashes as a result of vehicles stopping and slowing at the railroad grade crossing. The elimination of the at-grade crossing will further reduce the amount of traffic that diverts through the adjacent neighborhoods during times when the crossing is blocked due to a passing train. As a result, the amount of traffic utilizing side streets such as Knox and Kolmar for diversion should be greatly reduced. Further, there is not expected to be a net increase in traffic along Knox Avenue due to the closure of the car wash and the significant reduction in diversions. The storefront space for El Cubano is not currently in use, however it is understood that this could change in the future. With the closure of the Archer driveway, any resulting increase in traffic using Knox to access the storefront space should be offset by the reductions mentioned above. Permanent acquisition of any portion of the El Cubano property is not expected to be included in the project. The design for the project will continue to be developed in future phases, and will include operational improvements for the side streets within the project limits where supported and approved by the City.



3. The inclusion of a traffic signal at the Archer and Knox Avenue intersection was studied as a part of the project but none of the required criteria that would allow the construction of a signalized intersection at this location were met. Based on observations by the project team the expectation is that the side street operations will operate similarly or slightly better at the completion of the project compared to the existing condition due to the gaps in traffic created by the nearby Cicero and Kostner Avenue traffic signals as well as the eliminated queuing due to the at-grade railroad crossing when a train is present. The possibility of adding stop signs on Archer at the Knox and/or Kolmar intersections was also investigated. Given the volume of traffic carried by Archer, the facility is classified as a Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA). As a result, the addition of a stop sign is not feasible since the design criteria for a SRA does not permit the installation of stop sign control on through lanes.

Comment 8:

Name: Rich Adam

Date: October 7nd, 2018

Method Delivered: Emailed

In addition to my other concerns submitted last week.

It was stated at the meeting that the railroad would be responsible for the upkeep of the viaduct. I am not sure that you were referring to the cleaning of the viaduct but I'm sure most of the residents were under that impression. It was mentioned that 311 complaints would be handled expediently. Though I retired recently from employment with the City of Chicago, there was a time that I was on the viaduct cleaning crew. There was one crew that would take care of the complaints for the entire city based at 1752 s. Clark Street, and that was done if the crew was not needed to perform other duties. The viaducts near Wrigley field and Cellular were maintained well during baseball season along with the viaducts along the Kennedy expressway. Other viaducts would not even see a yearly cleaning. In all my years working for the city I have never seen a railroad crew cleaning the viaducts. They barely keep up the maintenance on the falling concrete. People have a habit of throwing garbage out their car windows under the viaducts. Who is going to keep this viaduct clean, and how often and who will they report to. Most people I talk to are not happy with the 311 system. They take the complaint, hand it over to the department responsible to address the complaint, but no one calls you to see if the complaint was corrected. I made 2 complaints about the fire hydrant at 5240-5242 south Knox about the ground sinking down around it. but it has not been remedied and I just keep throwing dirt in the hole so no one gets hurt.

God's Blessings,

[Address and phone number omitted]

Rich Adam



Response:

Archer Avenue is under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and maintained by the City of Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT). The railroad bridge is currently anticipated to be owned and maintained by The Belt Railway of Chicago (BRC) subject to future negotiations. For questions involving the City of Chicago's 311 system, please visit the following website, which contains information on how to submit service requests and seek assistance: <https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/311.html>
