

Transit Development District Steering Committee meeting August 19, 2020

Location

Conducted via Zoom

Present

Scott Jefferson, AJ Monroe, Brian Poland, Carolyn Saxton, AJ Monroe, Richard Morrisroe, Michael Barry, Eric Reaves

Minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Regional Development Authority Update

RDA COO Sherri Ziller provided an update on the status of the West Lake and double tracking projects. She explained that a design/build contract for construction of the project had been approved for signing and that the signing process was underway. The project, she said, was on schedule to receive a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) from FTA in October.

On double tracking, FTA has set a goal of reaching a FFGA on double track by June of 2021. In the meantime NICTD has received a \$1.5 million grant for transit-oriented development planning and the RDA would be working with NICTD on that.

Discussion

The meeting then moved to a discussion of the public engagement process led by Eric Lucas of MKSK. He noted that the TDD legislation requires the RDA board to hold two public meetings to approve the boundaries of each TDD, but that the TDD team wanted to maximize the opportunity for public comment, especially in this pandemic.

In order to move the project forward and still dialogue with the community and receive feedback, the team will emulate steps taken elsewhere around the country and adopt a hybrid approach to public engagement that would offer both virtual and in-person elements, polls and discussions.

A question was raised regarding the cost of these public engagement sessions and who was going to pay, the answer being that while the RDA may ask a community to provide space in a public location for display and dissemination of materials, all costs would be borne by the RDA.

The public engagement sessions will be scheduled as study areas are processed and draft boundaries for each TDD are completed.

A question was asked about the impact of the pandemic on commuting and work-at-home patterns and whether this had been factored into the transit plans. Eric noted that the TDD plans rely on multiple components – residential, commercial, etc. – and a diverse blend of land uses intended to be stable and be able to react to market conditions over time. KPMG’s Oscar Bedolla added that his company was tracking the trends and seeing signs of great opportunity to attract new residents to Northwest Indiana.

A question was asked about the scope of NICTD’s TOD grant. The answer was that NICTD was building that out now and had in fact just held a vendor open house earlier this same day and was specifically encouraging DBE participation. The NICTD effort will likely be a continuation of what was done earlier in the Farr Report for stations on the existing line.

A question was asked about when the public engagement sessions would begin. The answer was that they would begin very shortly, in the fall of 2020.

A future meeting date of November 18 was set.

The meeting was adjourned.