



## IOWA CITY GATEWAY

Public Meeting 1 – March 3, 2011

The first Iowa City Gateway public meeting was held from 4:30 to 7 p.m., Thursday, March 3, 2011, at the Parkview Church, 15 Foster Road, and is located just adjacent to the project study area in Iowa City. At the meeting, more than 150 attendees had an opportunity to learn about the project process, provide input regarding corridor needs, ask questions, sign up to receive project information, and see a short presentation about the project and its current status.

Stations were created around the room to provide information on:

1. Welcome and sign in
2. Project need
3. Project schedule and process
4. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process
5. Draft Project Purpose and Need
6. Draft Project Goals
7. Project Input – At this station, the team placed maps on tables and invited attendees to locate their properties if within project study area, provide input, ask questions, etc. Input was documented on flip charts.
8. Comment Station – Attendees were also provided an opportunity to provide written comments via comment forms.

The public meeting was publicized via:

- Postcards to nearly 2,000 addresses within and adjacent to the study area
- Paid advertising in six issues of the Iowa City Press-Citizen and via the paper's online edition
- Press releases sent to the local media and posted on the city web site

The following documents questions, comments and feedback received at and immediately following the March 3 meeting. Essentially duplicate comments have been condensed to one bullet.

### **Project Need:**

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Some meeting participants questioned the need for the project, including the following:

- *If one of the problems is intermittent flooding that was due to insufficient drainage, why can't we just widen the drainage from Dubuque and Taft all the way to the river?*
- *Dubuque has been closed under 90 days since the floods of '93, which is not that often in the overall picture.*
- *Construction impacts (two years) are far longer than total Dubuque Street closures due to flooding.*

- *Are the improvements worth the investment? Should not be as high a priority as the City says.*
- *Do not want levee, just allow flooding, natural course of river. Minimize any critical city facilities in flood plain.*
- *A brief inconvenience on Dubuque Street or Park Road Bridge is acceptable.*
- *If the bridge needs maintenance do, just do it. It was only inundated for 10 or 15 days in the flood of 2008.*
- *Too much money to protect non-public lands.*

Other meeting participants noted the importance of the project to the community:

- *This is a very important project, and we are very supportive of efforts to mitigate the impacts of future flooding.*
- *It is important to provide access to the water pumps located on the Lower Peninsula landing.*
- *It is going to be a huge hassle and expense, but worth it in the end. It was annoying and difficult to evacuate the Peninsula when we were high and dry.*

Other questions related to past and future flood events:

- *Why wasn't this done after '93?*
- *What happens during floods before this project is complete?*
- *What is the frequency of the flood events?*
- *Address periodic floods as well as historic events.*

#### **Notes on input received:**

This project has been identified by the City Council in the budget as a priority flood project, and supported by a tax increase approved by local voters. Although the inconvenience to drivers in the corridor is the most obvious reason for this project, the more important reasons for improvements include:

- Providing emergency access to Iowa City residents and from I-80 and points north;
- Eliminating Dubuque Street as an operational constraint to the Coralville Dam and reservoir due to its current low elevation;
- Reducing upstream backwater caused by Park Road Bridge. In the flood of 2008, the bridge trapped debris and acted as a dam, creating 14 inches of backwater immediately behind the bridge. In upstream neighborhoods, this accounted for approximately eight to eleven inches of additional flood water and the effects were felt as far as 2.5 river miles upstream, increasing the flood impacts to many properties;
- Rebuilding the existing Park Road Bridge. The current bridge was constructed in the 1960s, is functionally deficient for today's transportation needs and is in need of a deck replacement. Additionally, the existing bridge lacks adequate safety features for the many pedestrians and bicyclists that use it each day; and

- Rebuilding Dubuque Street. Along with replacing pavement that is 30+ years old, needed work in the corridor includes safety and traffic flow improvements at key intersections and better accommodation of pedestrians crossing Dubuque Street near the University of Iowa Mayflower Dormitory. Without the Iowa City Gateway Project, each of these issues would likely need to be addressed as separate capital improvement projects.

## Project Considerations

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The public meeting format allowed attendees to look at maps of the project study area and provide comments, questions and ideas to the project team, which were documented on flip charts, comment forms and team notes. Input included the following:

Overall Impacts:

- *The emphasis needs to be on making sure that any improvements do not cause damage to existing uses*
- *Remember the Englert Homestead and Stagecoach stop at Ridge and Dubuque*
- *Don't bury the garages south of Foster*
- *Integrate "gateway" into project purpose – this should be more than a bridge replacement project*
- *Concerns about widening Park Road west of Riverside Drive and impacts to front yards; stop before residential properties*
- *What are the impacts at Riverside Drive?*
- *What are the impacts to Idyllwild if Dubuque Street and the Bridge are replaced?*
- *What are the impacts to properties if facilities are raised? How will we tie road grades back to existing locations?*
- *Make sure your study incorporates the effects of Taft Speedway Levee and elevated Dubuque Street*
- *What about the home owners on Dubuque?*
- *What does "secondary goals" mean? For this to be a complete project, the secondary goals need to be addressed as well*
- *Do not use Parkview Terrace as a detention basin- no increase of water in the area west of the levee on elevated roads*
- *Define "multi-modal"*
- *Flood protection for properties on south end of Park Place and Parkview Terrace*
- *What are the impacts downstream?*
- *Think "green"*

Flooding:

- *Look at flood of '93 impacts*

- *Dredge the dam(Coralville Reservoir) to increase capacity upstream. What is the cost of this?*
- *Widen the flood plain to increase capacity*
- *Fill areas of Dubuque subject to frequent flooding*
- *Widen out the drainage from Dubuque and Taft all the way to the river and add storage for rainfall events on South side of Taft*
- *Why not trim back lower city park and dredge to widen the river?*
- *Why not construct a levee across east side of river (isolate boat house as well)?*
- *Address drainage backup east of Dubuque Street*
- *Analyze the effect of the Coffey dam*
- *Where will the water go if you raise the road and bridge?*
- *Why was the bridge engineer not contacted during the flood of 2008?*

Pedestrian access:

- *Sidewalks on both sides of Dubuque, especially east side from Mayflower to Kimball*
- *Improve pedestrian access from east of Dubuque Street to City Park (Northside Neighborhood)*
- *Maintain pedestrian access during construction*
- *Provide improved pedestrian access and crossing at Mayflower*
- *Install pedestrian crossing lights*
- *Ridge Road and Kimball need sidewalks*

Roadway components:

- *Dubuque Street - Maintain lower northbound lanes and raise only southbound lanes; this could save costs and stone garage*
- *Elevate hillside half of Dubuque and not the Riverside lanes to save \$\$*
- *Opposed to viaduct solution – higher maintenance costs, ices in winter*
- *Build Dubuque with five lanes; don't need median/gardens; four lanes not enough for existing morning/evening traffic*
- *Consider turning lanes for bus traffic at Mayflower*
- *Keep Dubuque Street open during construction*
- *Design to encourage lower speeds*
- *Move roadbed away from homes*

Bridge components:

- *New Bridge – include observation platforms, consider arch type, wide sidewalks*
- *Why not just make the new bridge create a wider opening?*

- *Could we dredge soil on west end and use shorter bridge to save existing bridge and/or dollars?*
- *Critical to keep bridge open during construction of new bridge*

Access and impacts to other roads or locations:

- *Provide access to Parkview Church during construction*
- *Access to Forest View Road is often flooded; need additional access.*
- *Maintain access to the trailer park during construction*
- *Foster Road provides access to Elks Club, golf course and dog park*
- *Crandic Bridge (Iowa River Dam Pedestrian Bridge) is intended as pedestrian bridge; consider use for emergency access*
- *Protect access to Ridge Road during construction*
- *Traffic on Park Road has increased as people use it to travel to hospital, etc. It is impacting the neighborhood.*
- *Concerned about traffic on Park Road backing up.*
- *How will Taft Speedway Intersection be impacted? Make it safe, right turn only onto Dubuque or signalized intersection, should facilitate construction of Taft levee*
- *Address intersection issue at Park Road & Riverside with City Park access / Templin Road*
- *Provide bus route/turnarounds at Mayflower*
- *Consider right turn on red from EB Foster to Dubuque*
- *What about Ridge Road intersection improvements?*
- *What are impacts to lower city park access?*
- *Make sure that the levee/road elevation will not result in additional backups onto Mosquito Flats*

Alternate routes:

- *If people need to use the Dubuque Street entrance why not route them up Bjaysville Lane?*
- *Consider traffic on Linder Road during construction*

Kimball Road:

- *Will Kimball Road access be maintained during construction*
- *Potential 'softening' of curve on Kimball – icy road and oncoming traffic concerns.*
- *Evaluate left turns from Kimball to Dubuque*

Fill:

- *If fill is needed, evaluate the impacts of fuel, hauling, wear on roads, etc.*
- *There may be free sources for fill dirt*

**Notes on input received:**

The evaluation of impacts is one of the key components of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, which is the first phase of the Iowa City Gateway Project. The work to be completed in Phase 1 includes looking at how rebuilding Park Road Bridge and Dubuque Street might impact:

- Flood plains and/or wetlands;
- Private properties;
- Historic sites;
- Parks and public properties; and
- The natural environment, habitats, etc.

The NEPA process also requires that the City look at alternative ways to meet the project Purpose and Need. That includes evaluating alternate routes or ways to minimize the impacts of construction. All of the reasonable alternatives will be evaluated in comparison to simply maintaining the roadway and bridge as is, called a “no-build” alternative.

Anything that might change how and where the river and run-off waters flow and collect will be carefully considered in terms local impacts, as well as upstream and downstream impacts. The hydrological study is a complex process and will be supported by an updated hydrology model using the most current information possible.

Likewise, impacts to the overall transportation system will be important consideration in the evaluation of alternatives. Access at intersections and property drives will be considered, as will the ability to maintain at least one lane of traffic in each direction during construction.

The draft project goals will help direct the project and ensure that pedestrian, bicyclists, transit and individual vehicles are all appropriately accommodated in the project. The draft project goals are:

- Reduce closures of Dubuque Street and Park Road Bridge due to (1) localized flash floods and (2) historic Iowa River flood events
- Minimize upstream flood backwater caused by the existing Park Road Bridge
- Better serve transit, pedestrians and bicyclists
- Preserve and enhance the natural entry to Iowa City from I-80

**Draft Project Purpose:**

Provide a reliable multimodal<sup>1</sup> transportation corridor that reduces the impact of flooding on the local transportation system and the Iowa River corridor

**Draft Project Need:**

- Maximize the reliability of the Dubuque Street corridor
- Maximize the reliability of the Park Road Bridge and corridor

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<sup>1</sup> Multimodal includes pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit/buses and private vehicles.

- Minimize upstream flood backwater caused by the existing Park Road Bridge

### **Draft Primary Goals**

- Minimize flood related closures of Dubuque Street
- Minimize flood related closures of Park Road Bridge
- Minimize backwater caused by the bridge
- Maximize access to downtown business district, neighborhoods and campus
- Maintain emergency access to north Iowa City and Johnson County

### **Draft Secondary Goals**

- Integrate with Hancher and Mayflower improvements
- Coordinate with other projects
- Accommodate bikes, pedestrians and transit
- Provide improved trail connectivity
- Maintain parkway and natural features of area
- Enhance access to neighborhoods, parks and university facilities
- Integrate utility and sewer relocations

The draft goals set for the project have been broken into “Primary” and “Secondary” goals. While each is important, the primary goals define those components under the direct control of the Iowa City Gateway team as it relates to the NEPA process.

### **Coordination with other projects and entities:**

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- *What does the Army Corps think about the project? What is their role?*
- *How do you know the specifics of the other projects? Will this effort limit options for those projects?*
- *Consider flood impacts to Mayflower*
- *Coordinate with new Hancher*
- *When will old Hancher be removed?*

### **Notes on input received:**

The Iowa City Gateway team has set up a Technical Advisory Committee to help ensure coordination and the sharing of information of projects that are in or near the study area. That team includes representatives from City staff (Engineering, Planning and Parks & Recreation), Metropolitan Planning Organization of Johnson County, the University of Iowa, Project Green and the Iowa Department of Transportation.

The team is also meeting regularly with University staff and design teams responsible for the new Hancher Auditorium, and those working on the Mayflower Flood Mitigation Project.

The Iowa City Gateway team has begun meeting with individual property owners and plans to continue these meetings as well as meet with neighborhood groups to discuss potential impacts and outcomes.

Lastly, the NEPA process includes formal coordination with other agencies in the area, including the Army Corps of Engineers, the Environmental Protection Agency and the State Historic Preservation office. That formal coordination includes four “concurrence points” where the study team provides information about the purpose and need, the range of alternatives, reasonable alternatives and the recommended alternative. Each agency will be provided information to review, and their comments and input will be incorporated into the decision-making process.

### **Public Input Process:**

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- *Why are there no concept drawings at these presentations?*
- *Why no question and answer session?*
- *Please do not hold the second meeting in August during the interim period and there is the fewest number of people in town.*
- *Keep process easy to follow on City web site.*
- *Can public comments be posted on the website?*

### **Notes on input received:**

The first public meeting was established to get input into the draft project Purpose and Need and goals, which will play an important role in the screening and evaluation of potential solutions. The open house format and presentation is an effective way to do this, while at the same time, introduce the project to the community and provide information about the process that we are required to follow.

The second meeting will present draft alternatives. Public feedback on those alternatives will help the team refine and evaluate those alternatives. The third meeting will outline the draft recommendation, including an assessment of impacts, mitigation plans as warranted and commitments from the City. Public input provided throughout the process will be included in the Federal Highway Administration’s review and approval of the recommendation.

The majority of the open house meeting (except for during the presentation itself) provided opportunities for the community to ask questions, make comments and suggestions. Public input was documented on flip charts, via comment forms and through team notes. These comments will be made public on the project website.

### **Taft Speedway:**

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- *Can Taft speedway not connect to Dubuque Street; use No Name as access – eliminate intersection*
- *Taft Speedway – Dubuque Street improvements shouldn’t preclude levee on Taft*
- *Would like to see Taft Levee*
- *Close access to Taft at church, share church road (parking) with Taft Speedway for access*
- *Concerns about land uses along Taft Speedway that could create more traffic*
- *How will Taft Speedway access/Levee be impacted?*
- *Keep the intersection at Taft and Dubuque*

- *City needs to protect Idyllwild and Peninsula from flooding*

**Notes on input received:**

The Taft Speedway Levee Project is separate from the Iowa City Gateway Project. Currently, the City is completing hydraulic studies to determine the impact of the levee on adjacent properties. If the Taft Speedway Levee Project does move forward, there will be public meetings specifically for that project. Design of the Iowa City Gateway will include careful consideration of the potential levee project where the two projects intersect.