



Central Harlem Avenue Corridor Study

Steering Committee Meeting #1 – January 18, 2018

Berwyn Public Library

First Name	Last Name	Organization
Cindy	Cambray	CMAP
Tony	Manno	CMAP
Jacob	Connor	CTA
Nicole	Campbell	City of Berwyn
Bob	Schiller	City of Berwyn
Brenda	McGruder	CDOT
Tomohiko	Music	CCDOETH
Nikolas	Davis	Houseal Lavigne Associates
Abigail	Robinson	IDOT
Thomas	Saint-Vil	IDOT
Allison	Buchwach	Metra
Demetrios	Skoufis	Metra
Larry	Pierce	Village of Bridgeview/Toyota Park
Paul	Volpe	Village of Elmwood Park
Kyle	Leonard	Village of Lyons
Bill	McKenna	Village of Oak Park
Jessica	Frances	Village of Riverside
Kevin	Kuratko	Village of Riverside

Sonya	Abt	Village of Riverside
Jerry	Hurckes	Village of Summit
Len	Cannata	West Central Municipal Conference
Michael	Fricano	West Central Municipal Conference
Project Team		
Cemal	Ayvalik	Cambridge Systematics
Ryan	Anderson	Metro Strategies
Tammy	Wierciak	Metro Strategies
Ryan	Ruehle	Pace
Erik	Llewellyn	Pace
Adam	Eichenberger	Pace
Charlotte	Obodzinski	Pace
Tom	Robbins	Pace
Jessica	Rybarczyk	Pace
Brian	Hacker	RTA
Michael	Groh	Sam Schwartz
Joe	Iacobucci	Sam Schwartz
Erica	Salutz	Sam Schwartz

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome and Introductions

Ryan Ruehle, from Pace, welcomed everyone and thanked everyone for attending and agreeing to participate on the Steering Committee. Introductions were then made by the attendees.

Brian Hacker, from the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), also welcomed the committee and explained RTA's role in funding this study. Brian also explained RTA's Community Planning and Access to Transit Programs which have helped not only fund studies but move them towards implementation as well.

2. Project Overview

Joe Iacobucci, from Sam Schwartz, introduced the project team and their roles: Goodman Williams (real estate analysis), the Lakota Group (community planning), Cambridge Systematics (data analysis), Metro Strategies (outreach), and Sam Schwartz (study lead).

Michael Groh, from Sam Schwartz, proceeded to go over the background information about the project. The project is a transit access and economic development study of the Harlem Avenue corridor from 71st Street to North Avenue. The corridor has been designated as a future Pace Pulse corridor which is Pace's rapid transit service.

The purpose of the study is to find ways to improve transit access and improve linkages and connections between land uses. The study will assess the current conditions to determine how the transportation network interacts with the adjacent land uses. A market analysis will also be conducted to identify opportunities for redevelopment and new economic development. All of this work will lead to an implementation plan that will include capital costs, a funding plan, and strategies for improving the corridor.

This study follows a similar study that was done previously on Harlem Avenue immediately south of this project's limits. That study was a collaborative effort between the RTA and Pace and was led by the Southwest Conference of Mayors.

3. Public Involvement Plan Highlights

Tammy Wierciak from Metro Strategies discussed the Public Involvement Plan (PIP). The PIP provides the public and stakeholders with opportunities to offer their experience and expertise that will improve the overall plan. There are three components of the PIP: the Steering Committee, stakeholder interviews, and public meetings. Tammy asked the committee for additional stakeholders that the project team should hold interviews with, and the two entities mentioned were the Brookfield Zoo and the Bedford Park Clearing Industrial Association.

4. Framing Workshop

Joe Iacobucci led the committee through a framing workshop to gather input and to share information about the corridor. Below is a summary of the topics discussed.

Key Issues and Concerns for the Corridor

- Right-of-way
 - Limited right-of-way
 - Shelter at 22nd Street and Cermak Plaza was desired but there was concern about the lack of available space
 - Pulse stations are 12 feet deep and 65 feet long typically
- Pedestrian Issues
 - Lack of crosswalks and countdown clocks
 - No paved sidewalks by Argo Community High School
 - Students from Morton West High School cross Harlem Avenue at 24th Street where there is no crosswalk
 - No countdown clocks at 63rd and 65th Street interchanges near rail lines
 - Businesses in Bedford Park have discussed walkability issues
- Bicycle Issues
 - Metra has seen an uptick in bike parking at their stations. There is a growing demand for additional bike parking at stations
 - Potential connections to the Forest Preserve trails should be reviewed
 - Riverside has a bike path on Longcommon Road that connects to Harlem Avenue
 - Path at 47th Street that goes into the Forest Preserve
- Land Use Issues
 - Small commercial parcels along the corridor with residential directly behind them limit opportunities for large retail redevelopment
 - Set backs in certain areas, both large and small, may be an issue
 - The future of the Sears site at Harlem Avenue and North Avenue is unknown
- Railroad Crossings
 - Cause substantial backups

- At the BNSF crossing, passenger trains have priority during peak times, causing freight trains to pile during the midday causing backups
 - [CREATE program has identified the BNSF crossing as a grade separation project and IDOT is currently conducting a Phase I study](#)
- [Oak Park, River Forest, and Forest Park are seeking a TIGER grant to replace the viaduct that carries the CTA green line over Harlem Avenue at South Boulevard](#)
- At the Milwaukee District West Line there are backup issues as well
- The CN often stops blocking traffic
- Freight
 - Near Toyota Park there is substantial truck traffic and it backs up onto the bridge
 - Truck traffic is heavy as you go over I-55 with the industrial park on the east side
 - There is not sufficient left turn lane capacity for the trucks in this area
- General Congestion
 - 290 Interchange: Northbound in the AM is the worst, but there is some southbound in the PM
 - 34th Street: Offset intersection with odd traffic flow that causes cars to back up on the tracks
 - 32nd Street: There is a lane drop going northbound that causes problems
 - Lake Street and Harlem Avenue is a busy intersection that has bad congestion
 - 26th Street and Harlem Avenue is a congested intersection
 - Congestion also occurs on Harlem Ave near Ogden Ave and 39th St

Strengths of the Corridor

- Access
 - Corridor connects to major roadways and residents can easily get to many parts of the region
 - Connections to two CTA lines: Green and Blue
 - Connections to Metra

- Bus routes including Pace Route 307 and a new Pace Bus-on-Shoulder Express Route from Toyota Park
- Ridership
 - Strong ridership numbers on the current Harlem Avenue service between 2,500 and 3,000 rides per day
- Land Use
 - High density
 - Already has some TOD: Oak Park has several new developments because of transit access
 - Diversity of land uses
 - Employers of all types
 - Corridor contains all kinds of trips
- Strong Stakeholders
 - Hospitals
 - Brookfield Zoo
 - Toyota Park
 - Universities
 - Cook County Forest Preserve

Measures to Define Project Success

- Increased ridership on Harlem Avenue and intersecting services
- Increased transfers to Metra and CTA services
- Communities adopting Pace's Transit Supportive Guidelines
- Improved connections to rail and bus along the corridor
- Decreased congestion
- Finding consensus on redevelopment opportunities
- Improved walkability
- Improved coordination between all the service boards in the area
- Getting everyone at the same table and on the same page for corridor goals
- Reduced accidents and increased safety

Fatal Flaws

- Unfunded mandates, funding uncertainty and funding shortfalls
- Maintenance
- Efficient allocation of dedicated resources
- Patchwork of priorities and jurisdictional differences
- Regulatory hurdles, i.e. curb height
- Enhancements that cause increased cut-through traffic

5. Discussion and Questions

Committee members were asked if there were any other stakeholders who should be considered for consultation as part of the outreach process. Responses included:

- Friends of the Forest Preserve
- Concordia University
- Dominican University
- Waldheim Cemetery

Erik Llewellyn and Adam Eichenberger from Pace explained the current service planning issues with the corridor. The tight spacing on the corridor means that it is difficult to do short turn arounds to accommodate demand in some segments that warrant it.

Ryan Ruehle asked if there were any additional projects in the area or planning documents that the project team should be aware of as they start this process. Responses included:

- I-290 reconstruction
- Cook DuPage Smart Corridors Study
- I-55 managed lanes project
- CDOT will be starting a Chicago Oak Park study
- CREATE is studying the 63rd and 65th Street crossing near Harlem Avenue
- Forest Park is implementing streetscape improvements on Roosevelt Rd between Desplaines Ave and Harlem Ave
- River Forest is working on a comprehensive plan
- CMAP will be starting a similar study on North Avenue from Austin Boulevard to Harlem Avenue

6. Next Steps and Schedule

The project team is already collecting data and will begin the existing conditions analysis. The next Steering Committee meeting will be a tour of the corridor. A Pace bus will take everyone along the corridor to look at the existing conditions and discuss many of the topics brought up today in more detail. More information about the tour will follow, but the dates in late February of early March are being explored. Pace will send out a follow-up email with links to the project website and the meeting materials.

7. Adjournment