

MEMORANDUM

TO: Village Board of Trustees, CAT Working Group
COPIES TO: Cara Pavlicek, Craig Failor, Bill McKenna, John Wielebnicki, Adrian Fisher
FROM: Rick Kuner
SUBJECT: Supplemental Comments to the Village Board on the Draft Letter of Intent between the Village of Oak Park and IDOT
DATE: July 29, 2016

This memo summarizes comments I made at the July 18, 2016 Village Board meeting along with comments by Adrian Fisher on sustainability. My intention was to supplement the CAT Working Group July 7, 2016 Memo to the Village Board.

1. **Extending the Blue Line Extension to 1st Avenue is desirable.**

- a. To explain why the CTA Blue Line is not being extended at least to 1st Avenue, Pete Harmet from IDOT said, “*the lack of supportive land uses that would generate ridership on the extended Blue Line is the driving issue*” and IDOT is leaving space for bus service. Good developers like rail transit much better than bus transit because bus lines are easy to move. Rail lines are hard to move. Oak Park is a great example because we have a density of more than 11,000 people per square mile. There are three major projects underway downtown: Vantage Oak Park, Oak Park Station, and at Harlem and South Boulevard near the CTA’s Green Line. If IDOT and the CTA say residential density is not high enough to generate enough ridership for rail transit to 1st Avenue and developers say they will not build higher density projects because there is no rail service, then the Blue Line Extension to 1st Avenue is not likely to happen.
 - b. PACE’s policy for providing a bus stop every 660 feet is a density of 4,000 or more people per square mile. Of the eight communities in the corridor, every community except Hillside meets this criterion. Based on the 2010 U.S. Census, the population per square mile in Austin is 13,683, Oak Park 11,038, Maywood 8,792, Bellwood 7,913, Forest Park 5,854, Westchester 5,128, Broadview 4,308, and Hillside 3,844.
 - c. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency’s (CMAP) GoTo 2040 Plan for the region supports investment in existing communities rather than outlying communities to reduce the spread of sprawl. Not extending the Blue Line undermines what CMAP’s plan wants to accomplish.
2. **The CSX Right-of-Way in Oak Park primarily serves the candy factory in Forest Park.** CSX can easily serve the candy factory with one track. We do not know how long the candy factory will be there. Being able to use part of the CSX right-of-way would reduce negative impacts, especially near the Austin and Harlem interchanges.
3. **Substandard Shoulder Widths** – Pete Harmet’s response to concerns about substandard shoulder widths on the expressway was Dynamic Lane Management

Signs, which provide timely information to drivers. These signs will help but still put emergency personnel and stranded motorists at risk.

4. **The proposed change to the Garfield – Railroad / Austin Boulevard intersection raises safety issues.** IDOT’s concept design shows Garfield having right turn in / right turn out only with either a traffic diverter or right-turn only signs.
 - a. Emergency personnel from the South Fire Station driving east on Garfield will want to turn left onto Austin and then turn onto the expressway. If they cannot turn left, their best option is exit the South Fire Station north on East Avenue across the expressway, turn east on Harrison, and south on Austin Boulevard to the expressway ramps.
 - b. Some eastbound motorists currently using Garfield want to turn left to go northbound on Austin. If these motorists divert to Harvard with the intention of turning north at Austin, they will find right turn only signs at Harvard and Austin. Diverting to Fillmore is not viable because Fillmore does not connect to Austin Boulevard.
 - c. From Ridgeland to Austin, both Harvard and Fillmore have stop signs at every intersection. Both streets are routes to Irving School. Residents report many drivers rolling through stop signs on Harvard and Fillmore.
5. **Oak Park has combined sewers, not separate stormwater and sanitary sewers.** IDOT’s Working Draft Letter of Intent (July 15, 2016) on Pages 9 and 10 contains a table for water and sewer costs. This table incorrectly shows sanitary sewers at Oak Park, East, and Ridgeland Avenues. IDOT should correct this table.

OTHER COMMENTS

1. **Exhibit 1: Base Concept** – The CTA and IDOT have agreed on the locations of bus stops at the CTA stations. The bus stops should be marked on Exhibit 1: Base Concept. This is an easy fix.
2. **IDOT Traffic Surveillance Building on Harrison** – IDOT says their building on Harrison is “*antiquated*.” If IDOT no longer needs that building, the Village should be granted the right of first refusal to buy it.
3. **To Be Determined Items** – There still many TBD items so the Letter of Intent should resolve them or describe a process to resolve them.
4. Define “**Urban Stitching**” on Page 3 of the Village resolution. The term “Urban Stitching” is not commonly used.
5. Adrian Fisher, an Oak Park resident and Sustainability Coordinator at Triton College noted that using the FHWA INVEST Sustainability Tool is included in the Village’s Resolution, but not the Working Draft of the Letter of Intent IDOT prepared. It should be.