

# HINSHAW

& CULBERTSON LLP

February 15, 2010

**VIA EMAIL AND REGULAR MAIL**

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***Re: Willow Road Context Sensitive Solutions Issues***

Dear Rick:

I am writing to you to express the Village of Northfield's deep concerns with respect to the documentation of the Community Advisory Group ("CAG") meetings that are part of the context sensitive solutions proceedings that are ongoing with respect to the proposed Willow Road improvement in the Village. As I assume you are aware, the CAG is sort of the steering committee that will help shape and guide the context sensitive solutions analysis and proceedings.

The CAG has had two meetings, one on November 5, 2009 and a second one on January 14, 2010. To date, the Illinois Department of Transportation ("IDOT") and its consultants have only produced a set of minutes for the first CAG meeting on November 5, 2009. I have enclosed a copy of the purported minutes of the November 5, 2009 meeting for your review.

My client, the Village of Northfield, has advised me that there was an extensive amount of discussion at the November 5 meeting about the level of detail that will be provided to the Village to support future analyses, and the amount of time that will be afforded to representatives of Northfield and other communities serving on the CAG to evaluate and respond to draft reports and analyses. The attached minutes are virtually devoid of any reference to the issues that were raised, or the commitments that were made.

There also was more than an hour of the meeting devoted to public discussion and comment. Again, the attached minutes and attendance roster do not even reflect that the public was present, and make no reference to more than an hour's worth of public comments.

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Northfield believes that it is important to document what transpires at the CAG meetings, as the CAG meetings are the backbone of the context sensitive solutions proceedings. The attached minutes are woefully inadequate in that regard, and the CAG members were not even given a copy of the minutes to review to determine whether they were inaccurate.

If IDOT is serious about documenting the progress in the CAG meetings and the context sensitive solutions process, then Northfield believes that it is incumbent upon IDOT that a court reporter be present at and transcribe all future CAG meetings. Then the CAG members could review an accurate report of what happened at the last meeting, what decisions were made, what commitments were made and what issues were to carry over to the next meeting. The attached minutes accomplish none of those purposes because they do not accurately reflect what happened but instead appear to reflect the mantra of a consultant who could, and perhaps did, write the minutes without being present at the meeting.

Please let me know what decision IDOT makes with respect to the request for court reporter attendance and transcripts of future meetings. I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

HINSHAW & CULBERTSON LLP



Edward R. Gower  
egower@hinshawlaw.com

ERG:ljc  
Enclosure

cc: Fred Gougler, President of the Village of Northfield Board of Trustees  
Stacy Sigman, Village Manager, Village of Northfield

## Willow Road Study Minutes of CAG Meeting #1

Date: November 5, 2009  
Time: 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.  
Place: New Trier High School, Northfield Campus, Room C-234  
Attendance: See Sign-in Sheet (Attachment A)

The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the CAG members, review the CSS and NEPA Processes, introduce the Community Context Audit form, and begin discussions to identify the transportation needs.

- **Introductions (Pete Harmet and Chuck Stenzel)**
  - Mr. Harmet introduced IDOT staff.
  - Mr. Harmet noted that the planning history is long. However today is the start of a new study.
  - Mr. Stenzel introduced TranSystems team members.
  - CSS Description – State process that follows environmental law.
  - CAG Member Role – Provide input from the perspective of your communities, organizations, and interests.
  - Outline next four months – January 2010 CAG Meeting #2, February 2010 Public Workshop #1
  - Information from the Lakota Study will be referenced.
  
- **Meeting Process**
  - Technical Discussion – An overview of the topic or findings from the Project Study Group (IDOT and TranSystems) will be presented.
  - Facilitated Discussion – Follow-up to technical discussions.
  - Our goal is to listen and gain an understanding from the stakeholders.
  - We ask that we follow the 3 P's: Professionalism, Politeness, and Patience.
  - You live and work here so we need your perspective to make this project a success.
  
- **Community Advisory Group Definitions**
  - There was a presentation of the Ground Rules and the definition of Consensus.
  - CAG Members had questions about whether consensus would be considered a vote. It was explained that we wanted to receive input from the communities and may or may not achieve consensus; IDOT would make the final decision.
  
- **Overview of Planning Process**
  - When planning a roadway project, set Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidelines must be followed in addition to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).
  - By using the Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process, we are not here to sell you a solution, but to solve a problem. The guiding principles of CSS were discussed.
  - The process for identifying the stakeholders and then choosing the CAG members was presented. The responsibilities of the CAG members were discussed along with a presentation of the Stakeholder Involvement Plan.
  - The project website, [www.willowroadfuture.org](http://www.willowroadfuture.org), was introduced. Information regarding the CAG Meetings and other relevant data will be posted here.
  - An overview of project schedule was given.
  - As part of the CSS project, the context of the project must be identified. Various types of context were discussed.

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- **CAG Member Discussion**

- Question: Is the end of the Phase 1 a report?  
Response: Yes, there will be an Environmental Assessment report.
- Question: One meeting is not enough to define the problems along the corridor. Will there be opportunities to revise the schedule?  
Response: The schedule will be adjusted as needed to make sure all steps in process are completed while making sure project progresses.
- Question: This appears to be a regional problem. Will this study look at improving other locations to relieve congestion along Willow Road?  
Response: Yes, we will look at regional alternatives to determine the effect these changes would have on Willow Road traffic.
- Comment: CAG Members requested that all exhibits be technical in nature with exact dimensions provided to the extent feasible.

- **Community Context Audit (Exercise 1A)**

- Assignment provided to CAG Members to identify both the visible and invisible context of Willow Road
- CCA Form will be e-mailed out to members on November 6, 2009
- CCA Form is due back to Marie Glynn/IDOT by December 15, 2009
- TranSystems and IDOT offered assistance in how to fill out the Context Audit Forms.
- Comment section should be used when filling out form to clarify CAG Members considerations.
- Stakeholders are not obligated to fill out all line items in the form.
- Responses will be archived on the website and aggregate of group will be presented at next CAG meeting.
- On-line version is a word document so that you can add information as needed.

- **Initiate Understanding of Key Issues Related to Context (Exercise 1B)**

- The five key components of CSS were noted. To learn more about the group a facilitated exercise would be conducted. The first topic discussed was Safety.
- It was explained that members should write their safety issues. These were collected by consultant and placed on board. The goal of the exercise is to learn perspective of group. All safety issues were discussed.
- Below is bulleted list of some of the items that were noted on cards. A formal summary which groups these into categories will be prepared prior to CAG Meeting #2.
  - Intersections
  - Lack of school speed zones
  - Bicycle and pedestrian safety
  - Motorist safety
  - Lack of speed limit enforcement
  - Need for effective cross walks
  - Turn lanes
  - Bicycle lanes needed
  - No plan should adopted that affects safety for pedestrians along Willow Road
  - No passing lanes
  - Need more coordination for pedestrians at signalized intersections
  - Lack of walkable community
  - Need safe zone through 3 school areas
  - Reliability of traffic through the area
  - Congestion between truck and vehicles

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- Conflicts for turning vehicles - Need for designated left turn lanes, arrows,
  - Child Safety - School zones, pedestrian, crosswalks,
  - Lack of speed management
  - Lack of reliability - Signal timing (pedestrian and reliability)
  - Bicycle safety
  - Roadway design (roadside design, wider clear zones, shoulders, median width)
  - Congestion (reliability, road rage, automobile accidents)
  - Access management (exits at Edens Expressway, driveway and street side management)
  - Regional and local planning
- The Safety element discussion was completed. The remaining four elements will be completed at the next CAG meeting.
- **Next Steps**
    - The next CAG Meeting will be January 14, 2009 (2nd Thursday of the month). Location to be determined.
    - Materials will be provided in advance of the meeting. This will provide an opportunity for members to come prepared to ask questions and actively participate in the discussion.
    - February 2010 is the tentative date for Public Workshop #1.

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