



City of Grand Island

Tuesday, July 25, 2006

Council Session

Item G3

Approving Minutes of July 18, 2006 City Council Study Session

Staff Contact: RaNae Edwards

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS

CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA

MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

July 18, 2006

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Study Session of the City Council of the City of Grand Island, Nebraska was conducted in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 100 East First Street, on July 18, 2006. Notice of the meeting was given in the *Grand Island Independent* on July 12, 2005.

Mayor Jay Vavricek called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following members were present: Councilmembers Meyer, Whitesides, Pielstick, Gilbert, Nickerson, Cornelius, Pauly, Hornady, Walker, and Haase. The following City Officials were present: City Administrator Gary Greer, City Clerk RaNae Edwards, Finance Director David Springer, Interim City Attorney Dale Shotkoski, and Public Works Director Steve Riehle.

INVOCATION was given by Pastor William Voelker, Peace Lutheran Church, 4018 Zola Lane followed by the PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

Presentation of Final Railroad Corridor Safety Study 2006 Report. Steve Riehle, Public Works Director reported that on September 28, 2004, the City Council approved a Consulting Engineering Agreement with Kirkham Michael to prepare a comprehensive Railroad Corridor Study for the City of Grand Island. Several public meetings were held to gather input from the citizens of Grand Island. The purpose of the study was the railroad noise, safety, and delays at the crossings.

Mr. Riehle introduced Randy ElDorado and Rick Haden representing Kirkham Michael who presented the Project Overview; Study Goals & Objectives; Project Approach; Public Involvement; and Recommendations.

Study Goals & Objectives:

- Develop a comprehensive plan for reducing railroad/road user conflicts across the community
- Determine feasibility of relocating UPRR around Grand Island
- Identify locations for future grade separations
- Identify improvements to at-grade crossings to reduce crash risks and train noise

Mr. ElDorado stated the number of trains per day was 60 for Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad and 75 for Union Pacific Railroad (UNRR).

Project Approach:

Consider All Options

- Feasibility of UPRR track relocation
- Alternative grade separations

- Quiet zones – at-grade crossing improvements

Feasibility of UPRR Track Relocation

- Grade Separation Bridges
South (Hwy. 281, Locust, Hwy. 34, BNSF & Hwy. 30)
North (Hwy. 30, Hwy. 2, BNSF, Hwy. 281)
- Maintain UPRR Service to Grand Island Customers

Mr. Rick Haden presented the following information:

UPRR Relocation Analyses – Route A North:

Benefits:

- Less delay and exposure at existing crossings
- Reduction in train noise
- Reduced exposure to hazardous materials
- Remove underpasses at Eddy and Sycamore Street
- Abandon 1/2 – 1 mile of current mainline corridor
- Close 3 crossings
- Pedestrian safety/comfort improved

Impacts:

- New viaducts/bridges (8-9)
U.S. highway 30
NE Hwy 2
U.S. Hwy 281
BNSP
4-5 County Roads
- Increase of 5.5 miles to UPRR corridor
- Impacts to Silver Creek, Prairie Creek, and Moores Creek Floodplains
- Severances of farmland
- Groundwater depletion issues – fill from borrow pits
- Right-of-Way acquisition of 395 acres, prime farmland
- Creates new railroad crossings on county road (Estimated 7)

UPRR Relocation Analyses – Route B South:

Benefits:

- Less delay and exposure at existing crossings
- Reductions in train noise
- Reduced exposure to hazardous materials
- Remove underpasses at Eddy and Sycamore
- Abandon 2 miles of current mainline corridor
- Close 4 crossings
- Pedestrian safety/comfort improved

Impacts:

- New viaducts/bridges (6)
South Locust
U.S. Hwy 34/2

U.S. Hwy 281
BNSF
70th Road L40C
Wood River Diversion Channel

- Increase of 2.5 miles to UPRR corridor
- Impacts to Wood River Floodplain
- Severances of farmland
- Groundwater depletion issues fill from borrow pits
- Right-of-Way acquisition of 375 acres, prime farmland
- Creates new railroad crossings on county roads (Estimated 5)

UPRR Relocation Analyses – Route C Current:

Benefits:

- Less delay and exposure at existing crossings
- Elimination of train whistles
- Little, if any, ROW acquisition for Railroad
- Closes 5-6 crossings
- Pedestrian safety improved
- Significant portion of funding from State and UPRR

Impacts:

- 4-6 new grade separations
- Rebuild 2 existing underpasses
- Acquisitions/Relocations caused by new grade separations
- Access and circulation impacted by grade separations and closures of at-grade crossings
- Potential flooding issues with underpasses

Conclusions:

1. Route C, (current UPRR Corridor) was recommended for improvements. Current route accomplished the major objective of eliminating railroad-crossing conflicts at the least cost to the City.
2. Establishing a new corridor would result in higher grade separation costs now and similar impacts in the future as the community continues to grow.
3. Funding sources for improvements to existing corridor available from State, Federal, and Railroad sources.

Mr. Haden presented the following Quiet Zone Evaluation:

- Diagnostic Team Review – City of Grand Island, Railroads, Hall County, and Federal Railroad Administration. (NDOR Invited)
- Long Range Improvements – Grade Separations
- Interim Improvements – Supplemental Safety Measures: Closures, 5 Quadrant Gates, Raised Medians, One-way Streets, Wayside Horns

The cost of wayside horns were \$50,000 and quadrant gates were \$150,000 with a cost to the City to maintain them.

Mr. ElDorado reported on the Public Involvement and recommendations. Reported was that for every viaduct built two crossings would have to be closed.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a Railroad Transportation Safety District (RTSD)
2. Initiate Improvements in Existing UPRR Railroad Corridor
3. Initiate Quiet Zone Improvements
4. Pursue Construction of Grade Separations

Next Steps:

- Presentation on RTSD to Joint City-County Officials Meeting
- Notice to UPRR of Intent to establish Quiet Zone (Provide Engineering Funds)
- Initiate Non-Railroad Improvements for Quiet Zones
- Pursue Grade Separation Funding Agreements with Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) and Railroads
- Begin Design of Initial Grade Separation(s)

Discussion was held regarding the Railroad Transportation Safety District (RTSD) which would be a funding mechanism county wide. Three county supervisors and three city council members would comprise the board and would be able to levy tax dollars to be used specifically for railroad crossing issues.

Councilmember Meyer and Walker recommended the City pursue work on the quiet zones. Councilmember Whitesides and Hornady stated we needed to wait on this due to other major projects the City was funding. Councilmember Hornady and Gilbert commented on looking into a RTSD.

Mayor Vavricek mentioned the Hall County Board needed to be informed of the RTSD and the importance of their support.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

RaNae Edwards
City Clerk