

CCNet
Transportation Discussion Group
Meeting Notes
4/28/10
15 attendees
Location: M2 building, 4th floor

Introductions

This being the first meeting of this group, we began with introductions and quick statements on *Why are you here; what motivated you to come to this discussion?* and *What topics would you like to see covered in this discussion group over time?*

Here is a quick run-down of the responses:

1. Transportation is linked to everything – how our community is put together, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, health. We need to get away from the single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) mode of transportation, use more active forms of transportation to help combat obesity. Also look at moving to electricity to power our vehicles instead of fossil fuels. Find safe routes to school for our children (see CU Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) Project <http://www.cu-srtsproject.com/>)
2. Champaign County Bikes <http://www.champaigncountybikes.org/>. Thousands of people bicycle in this community. It's kind of an invisible phenomenon. Driver and bicyclist education is much needed.
3. Working on an electric vehicle (EV) conversion. Uses also gas generation to extend range and a lithium ion battery. EVs are much quieter than combustion engines. UI students are working on this project – good opportunity to teach teamwork. How else can we use students as a resource? EV conversions as a way to create jobs, capture tax credits.
Illinois EV Club – check them out on Facebook! <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=151564836019>
To learn more about this topic, see CCNet's YouTube videos on local EVs:
<http://www.youtube.com/champaigncountynet#p/u/8/M6wHY7CEXjM> and
<http://www.youtube.com/champaigncountynet#p/u/9/0vfCsMShrGg>
4. Bicyclist's story – by looking at how a bicyclist gets around, we can learn a lot about efficiency. Bicyclists travel at a slower pace, but rarely come to a complete stop. How can we begin to change our infrastructure for autos to be more like this? – light timing, roundabouts in place of intersections (See item #16), yield signs and slow-n-go stops instead of complete stops at stop signs.
5. Rural commuters – there's lots of them! Only half of the students and faculty who work on campus live in the urban area defined by MTD district boundaries. That's about 25,000 people.
6. Using natural gas for transportation, especially commercial fleet conversion. See Clean Energy Fuels Company <http://www.cleanenergyfuels.com/> - 167 natural gas filling stations. The challenge with this is to meet the demand with the supply – requires new infrastructure in fueling stations. Idea is to start with fleet conversion here to reach a tipping point to enable personal vehicle conversions. How do we get over the inertia of our gasoline infrastructure?
7. U of I Transportation Demand Management – ride share, zip car programs, bus passes for all students and staff, bicycles, etc. Other ideas for things that could be implemented – Van pool for outlying cities, or a Park n Ride program (see #5). Ride matching on weekly commute patterns. One of the issues with these programs is that people need to be able to get home in the case of emergency. MTD would be willing to offer a guaranteed ride home program within their district boundaries (see example from Arlington, VA here: <http://www.commuterpage.com/ridehome.htm>). How can we expand programs like these to the community at large? What do you need to do to encourage and enable people to give up their auto?
8. Active transportation and mode shift – What strategies will work in our community? Active Transportation includes things like biking and walking, and help improve health and combat obesity. Strategies can be bundled together to have a major impact. See Moving Cooler Study <http://www.movingcooler.info/>. People will choose a different transportation mode if ordered a viable option. How can we effectively provide those choices? It's not about forcing people out of their cars, its about offering them choice.
See also Active Transportation Alliance in Chicago <http://www.activetrans.org/>
9. Federal policy shift around transportation – how can we better position our community to receive grant \$\$\$? Need transportation alternatives analysis study:
http://www.fta.dot.gov/printer_friendly/planning_environment_2590.html
10. Passenger Rail – How can we better position our community for high-speed rail? (rail at 220 mph connecting Chicago, Champaign, Decatur, Springfield and St Louis). Champaign County FIRST initiative – coalition of

municipalities, private sector. Read more in the Feb 2010 Commerce Connection <http://www.champaigncounty.org/pdf/febwebcopy.pdf>. Midwest High Speed Rail Assoc (<http://www.midwesthsr.org/>) says that high-speed rail will create 40,000 permanent jobs – and more during construction. Would improve the traffic at regional airport.

11. We cannot accommodate the same amount of growth in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) with our current infrastructure. History shows that the more you expand the infrastructure, the more people drive. We still have to fix what we have.
12. Batteries – IN is developing the manufacturing capacity for batteries. <http://green.autoblog.com/2010/01/22/enerdel-shows-off-battery-production-facility-plans-for-237-mi/> . With regard to electric vehicles, how do we build capacity in the power grid to charge all the cars? See Electrification Roadmap Publication <http://www.electrificationcoalition.org/electrification-roadmap.php>
13. Transportation and bulk concentration (ie – trucks and rail freight) – how do we become more efficient in these areas? Natural gas as one intermediate step, also renewable fuels and EV.
14. Walking matters – how do we ensure that our infrastructure is designed to accommodate pedestrians? Most transit riders begin and end as pedestrians. There are some crossings in town that require a pedestrian to cross many lanes of traffic without a safe stopover (such as a median). Students on campus are doing a walkability study. Connectivity of pedestrian paths to transit and also snow removal impact the walkability of our community.
15. Traffic patterns and light timing – very complex issue! If you time all the lights perfectly for an auto at a certain speed and then a pedestrian hits a crosswalk button, all that timing goes out the window. We have a “hurry up and stop” model of car transportation. See this book and blog: Why We Drive the Way We Do and What It Says About Us <http://www.howwedrive.com/>
16. Roundabouts – a way to manage intersections without requiring complete stops. Also performs a traffic slowing function. Challenges with Illinois Dept of Transportation (IDOT) approval of these designs. Cheaper to operate – no signal device maintenance, energy savings. Also mini roundabouts as a way to retrofit existing intersections – don’t take up much space. See these resources (provided by Gary Cziko – thanks, Gary!): Video clip showing mini roundabouts in the U.K.: <http://www.2pass.co.uk/mini-roundabout.htm> The voice-over explanation will likely appear very complicated to most Americans, especially because the Brits are driving on the left. But you can see how efficient these are by just watching how the traffic moves through. And once you learn the rules, these are easier to handle than busy all-way stops (and much safer than signalized intersections). I rode these on bike in Ireland a few years ago. The busy mini roundabout shown at 2:10 to the end of the video shows about 30 cars moving through from four directions within 1 minute and 20 seconds. Of these, only 6 have to stop at all, and then only for a few seconds. Here's a photo of the first mini roundabout in the U.S. in Dimondale, MI. <http://www.roundaboutsusa.com/images/miniround.jpg>
17. Can the U of I lead/innovate our road infrastructure? They don’t own many streets, and not the ones in the heart of campus.
18. Idling buses and trucks as one way to reduce fuel consumption. See EPA resource on a model for idling reduction: <http://www.epa.gov/smartway/documents/420s06001.pdf>
19. Twike manufacturer might be here next week. Matt will keep us posted on this. See more about the Twike here: <http://www.twike.us/> and CCNet’s interview with Matt here: <http://www.youtube.com/champaigncountynet#p/u/3/dPINJLkKleA>
20. Transportation for America would like to make a visit to town and present to this group. Melia is working on setting this up for early June. Visit www.t4america.org for more info about this group.