

RAILROAD STUDY GROUP

The concept is to convene a group representing various interests whose purpose is to pursue a study process that looks at four things : (1) to assure safe crossings of the railroad in the residential neighborhoods, the Aragon neighborhood and the Industrial Mill neighborhood and the business neighborhoods of downtown Rock Hill and the Textile Corridor; (2) how to reduce the blocking of railroad intersections in the textile corridor, downtown and adjoining neighborhoods; (3) to study the railroad crossings at White Street, Main Street and one crossing within the residential neighborhood for ways to comply with the federal laws leading to the establishment of a "Railroad Quiet Zone" and (4) to accomplish this study process by reviewing existing research information and through dialogue that attempts to reach reasonable accommodation of concerns of the parties while achieving the goals of safety, noise reduction and economic development.

The group is conceived to be comprised of eight persons drawn from a diversity of interests and background. The following interests and backgrounds are suggested followed by the name of a person in some cases who could represent that interest and background:

1. Business property owner interested in economic development :
2. York County government/Pennies for Progress :
3. Aragon Neighborhood Association President :
4. Industrial Mill Neighborhood Association :
5. Norfolk Southern Railroad - Station Master or designee
6. City Council representative :
7. Business property owner future investor/developer :
8. Rock Hill Neighborhood Council :

9. Rock Hill Planning Commission :

It is anticipated that there would be professional staff support for the Railroad Study Group. The City of Rock Hill would serve as lead staff support and would be assisted by HDR Engineering. York County and the SCDOT would provide technical assistance cooperatively with the City. It is further expected that there could be a need for other assistance to the Railroad Study Group from organizations like Norfolk Southern among others.

Once the Railroad Study Group is organized, there would likely be a timetable of meetings for the group over a period of approximately six months. The meetings which could occur at least once each month would address the following suggested topics leading to a thorough study process as defined earlier :

Meeting # 1 - This meeting would consist of reviewing background information which exists in order to position the Railroad Study Group to be informed about prior research and commitments by the parties up to the present time.

Meeting # 2 - This meeting would consist of presentations by the neighborhood association(s) and the business interest representatives. There could also be a presentation by government(s). The purpose would be to identify the concerns of the respective representatives so that each understands the primary issues that are at stake in order to provide a framework for exploring possible solutions.

Meeting # 3 - This meeting would attempt to prioritize the stated issues by the neighborhood association(s) and the business interest representatives. The goal would not be necessarily to eliminate a particular concern from further consideration but rather to ultimately rank order the issues and concerns so that the parties understand what are the really key goals that could represent the focus of preliminary efforts to develop a plan of action.

Meeting # 4 - This meeting would be designed to conceive a draft document that reflects the priority goals and the development of strategies that would move toward action steps to achieve the goals over a stated period of time. The plan of action would include input from technical resources to include such things as engineering feasibility, safety and cost of a design and construction for a particular project or projects.

Meeting # 5 - This meeting would finalize agreement among the Railroad Study Group representatives as to the priority goals and action steps to implement the goals over an agreed upon timetable. The Study Group, with professional staff support, would prepare a report to be presented to the Mayor and City Council. The expectation would be that the goals and action steps if adopted, would become the City's road map for the following outcomes : (1) achieving safe crossings of the railroad in the neighborhoods, (2) to encourage and/or protect economic development in the downtown and the Aragon and Industrial Mill neighborhoods and (3) study the railroad crossings at White Street and Dave Lyle and Main Street and Dave Lyle and one crossing within the residential neighborhoods for possible application of the federal laws that could lead to the establishment of a " Railroad Quiet Zone."

Meeting # 6 - This meeting would involve a presentation to the Mayor and City Council which would involve a request for approval by the Railroad Study Group of the proposed Study Group report.

Essentially, this process model builds on past research and findings and does not attempt to return to a clean slate. It assumes that crossing safety, reducing time where intersections are blocked by trains and achieving a quiet corridor for trains to operate are public interest issues and should be pursued. Therefore the model provides for a way to satisfy those public interest issues with due regard for the ideas and concerns of those most directly affected and the community at large.