Illinois Department of Transportation Kicks-off Project

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has initiated a Phase I Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Study for Illinois Route 131 (IL Rte. 131)/Green Bay Road. The project will follow the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process and encourage extensive public involvement throughout the development process. The IL Rte. 131 Phase I project will prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) and will include an analysis of the primarily two lane rural roadway, drainage, intersection deficiencies, and an examination of the impacts that proposed improvements will have on the communities and the environment.

The study area is located in Lake County extending approximately 7.5 miles from Russell Road to Sunset Avenue. The corridor is developed with a mix of residential, commercial, and agricultural uses, forest preserve, golf courses and the Waukegan Regional Airport. The study area includes six communities: Gurnee, Waukegan, Beach Park, Wadsworth, Zion, and Winthrop Harbor, which are experiencing rapid growth with much of the agricultural area zoned for residential or commercial development.

Project to Follow Prescribed Phase I Process

The study process is expected to take 3 - 4 years to complete and will follow the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process. Extensive public involvement will be encouraged throughout the development process. There are a number of steps to complete the process which includes:

- Analyzing existing and future conditions
- Defining Purpose & Need
- Alternatives Analysis
- Assess Environmental Consequences
- Draft/Final Environmental Assessment

continued on page 3
**Message from IDOT**

I am pleased to announce that the Illinois Department of Transportation has initiated the IL Rte. 131 Project in Lake County. The study will include an analysis of the existing two lane rural roadway, an evaluation of drainage, intersection deficiencies, and an examination of the impacts that proposed improvements will have on the communities and the environment. A vital element of our study effort is a broad-based public involvement program. This program provides meaningful opportunities for all interested stakeholders and the public at large to participate in defining transportation issues and solutions for this project. We are looking forward to working with all communities, agencies, and interested parties to develop a comprehensive transportation system that fits into its surroundings and that will benefit the project stakeholders and the entire region.

Sincerely,
Diane M. O’Keefe, PE
Deputy Director of Highways
Region One Engineer

**Corridor Planning Group** to be Formed to Provide Input

IDOT realizes that feedback from potentially affected communities is important to ensuring that IDOT proposals are consistent with community goals and objectives. To provide a forum for discussions of details about potential improvements and design of IL Rte. 131, IDOT is forming a Corridor Planning Group. The Corridor Planning Group will include elected officials from the county and six municipalities located along the 7.5 mile corridor. These include Lake County, and the municipalities of Gurnee, Waukegan, Beach Park, Wadsworth, Zion and Winthrop Harbor.

The elected officials on the Corridor Planning Group are supported by Technical Advisory Groups, whose members are selected from transportation and land use planning agencies, economic development councils, forest preserve district, environmental conservation groups, and other civic groups. The task force members will have experience and knowledge of local issues related to transportation, environmental resources, and land use planning.

The Corridor Planning Group and supporting technical groups interact with the study team for discussions about the project needs, potential impacts and roadway footprint, opportunities to establish a corridor theme, and community responses to those proposed ideas.

The group also provides a framework for local government cooperation on land use and enhancements to the area. The technical groups may address project transportation issues, including crossroad design and adjacent property access, right-of-way width, accommodation of utilities, emergency vehicle access, non-motorized trail maintenance traffic, design standards; and environmental issues including preservation, storm water discharge, water quality, wetlands, home and business displacements, construction impacts, and secondary impacts stimulated by the project. Land use planning can be addressed by the technical groups by providing a framework for development of corridor land use and development plans.

When the group raises issues or has suggestions, IDOT and the project team will work hard to accommodate the request or reduce the impact. Often times this results in adjustments that eventually provide a good solution for all parties. These potential draft footprints may change based on public comments or new environmental conditions that are identified during the ongoing surveys. IDOT and the project team will also periodically brief other agencies, local jurisdictions, and interest groups on the study progress, as well as continue to hold public meetings and workshops.

**Project Working Groups Organizational Structure**

![Organizational Structure Diagram]

The diagram illustrates the organizational structure of the project working groups. The Project Study Group is at the top, with the Corridor Planning Group and Regional Agencies interconnected. The Corridor Planning Group is supported by several Technical Advisory Groups, including Environmental, Land Use, and Transportation Technical Advisory Groups.

These groups focus on different aspects of the project, ensuring comprehensive input and consideration of environmental, land use, and transportation issues. The diagram visually represents the collaborative effort to develop a corridor plan that is sensitive to the community’s needs and respects the environment.
The study then proceeds with developing the specific purpose of improvements. Needs assessment for the study area, deficiencies will be established, and developing solutions to address these deficiencies. Upon completion of the needs assessment, IDOT and stakeholders will identify conditions. With this information, IDOT and stakeholders will identify transportation deficiencies, and can begin the planning process for developing solutions to address these deficiencies. To ensure compliance of the needs assessment for the study area, deficiencies will be established, and the study then proceeds with developing the specific purpose of improvements. Those needs that will be addressed.

The next step in the study process is a screening step that begins with identification of a wide range of possible alternatives, and ends with the selection of an alternative for further detailed evaluation. Possible solutions will be evaluated by looking at preliminary alternatives that meet the purpose and need. A wide range of alternatives will be identified and evaluated against the needs that are found. The process of evaluating and selecting possible solutions to identify needs will follow the federally mandated National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and the purposes of the NEPA, “reasonable alternatives,” including a “no action” alternative, will be objectively examined during this process.

Public involvement activity will continue to be encouraged throughout the project process through a comment page on the website.

IL Rte. 131 Project Funds

The IL Rte. 131 Project is funded for design and construction in the Department’s Fiscal Year 2009-2014 Proposed Highway Improvement Program, however, it will be considered for inclusion in future programs as we identify possible alternatives.

For IDOT’s CSS procedures, a stakeholder is anyone who could be affected by the project and has a stake in its outcome. Stakeholders are individuals or organizations on all levels of the transportation system and those interested in the Intermodal Corridor Study, the study represented pre-phase one planning and did not include detailed engineering or an environmental assessment.

The IL Rte. 131 Project Study is designed as a Context Sensitive Solicitation (CSS) project using the procedures of the Illinois Department of Transportation CSS Policy. Public involvement is strongly encouraged throughout the Phase I study and will continue to proactively seek stakeholder involvement and CSS partnerships early and often in development of a consensus solution. Concerns are identified through the early involvement of stakeholders and the minority agreeing that their input was duly considered. However, IDOT is responsible for final project decisions. CSS is a collaborative approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a facility that fits into its surroundings and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources while maintaining safety and mobility. The purpose of CSS is to gather and duly consider input from all stakeholders.
Communities Curious About the Next Steps

The study team is at the beginning of the Phase 1 Study Process and includes a series of steps used to determine if there is a need for improvement and leads to the ultimate development of the Purpose & Need Statement. During the upcoming months, the focus is to define existing and future transportation needs in the study area. Several tasks need to be completed before any consideration is given to defining solutions.

Public Involvement Is Key

Public Involvement is an interactive process that provides information to the public so they may make informed decisions and offer important input into the solutions that address the community’s concerns. A public involvement program has been designed to encourage your participation throughout the study.

These tasks include:

- Meeting with community leaders and collecting transportation plans and capital improvement programs from local, regional and state agencies. It also will be necessary to learn what projects agencies have planned for the future.
- Verifying the existing transportation network
- Conducting traffic counts to determine travel patterns.
- Collecting available traffic and crash data and information on public transit, pedestrian, bike, and equestrian travel. Population and employment data will be collected, as well as community comprehensive land use plans, zoning ordinances, and other significant development proposals.
- Collect geographic data, including legislative districts and community boundaries, identify the transportation network and environmental issues.
- Future travel demand forecasts will use 2030 population and employment projections. The travel demand forecast will help identify where traffic congestion may happen in the future as well as predict how today’s travel patterns will change.
- The transportation system performance studies will result in data needed to understand existing and future transportation conditions. Based on the 2030 population, employment, and travel forecasts, the project team will have an understanding of travel demands and transportation system performance in the study area if no major improvements are implemented.

About IDOT

Illinois Department of Transportation

Illinois contains over 138,000 miles of highways, streets and roads. This system is owned and operated by four levels of government: state, county, township, and municipal. The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is responsible for the stated owned and operated portion of the vast system. The following is a listing of some of IDOT’s major responsibilities:

- Overseeing construction, operation and maintenance of 17,000 miles of highways
- Development and implementation of a comprehensive public transportation program
- Development and administration of airport improvement programs
- Administration of state assistance for rail lines and new facilities
- Advancement of transportation safety

Public Involvement Opportunities Include:

- Newsletters
- Website: www.I131Project.com
- Sign up for mailing list
- Small group meetings
- Invite us to speak at your event!
- Public Meetings: First meeting October 29, 2008

Public Meeting/Hearing

Data Collection

Population & Employment Forecasts

Travel Demand Forecasts

Transportation System Performance Analysis

Identify Transportation Needs

Public Meetings: First meeting October 29, 2008

Frequently Asked Questions

Will safety be addressed in this study?

One of IDOT’s primary concerns is providing safe, accessible transportation therefore; safety will be evaluated and addressed in this study.

How do you know what is needed – and who needs it?

There will be a number of factors involved in determining need. These factors could include, but are not limited to: Mobility, Accessibility, System Connectivity, Safety, and support for Economic Development. IDOT is seeking input from home owners, business owners, community officials, and commuters at the Public Meetings and Study Groups who have first hand knowledge of needs of the roadway.

What constitutes a Stakeholder?

Stakeholders for a project include any person or organization which has a direct stake in the project being considered. This can be anything from a small group of residents and businesses affected by the redesign of a rural intersection to thousands of individuals when a major roadway or transit extension is being built. Stakeholders can include residents and landowners near a project, advocates for policy, community and historic interests, elected officials, government agencies, and many others.

Will any homes or businesses be displaced?

Since a full range of alternatives have not been identified or analyzed, it is impossible to say, however, through the NEPA and CSS process, IDOT will strive to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts and ensure responsible planning in the area of increasing population growth and traffic congestion.

What happens to the comments I submit to the project team?

Ideas and recommendations from the public are vital to our efforts. The project team records your comments, which may be submitted via the website, at public meetings, or via letters. All feedback we receive from the public, along with technical analysis, will be considered throughout the project. Both will be especially valuable at key milestones, such as shaping the project’s “Purpose and Need” statement. Feedback will also be instrumental as we develop and evaluate project alternatives.

Is the Waukegan Airport Authority’s runway expansion study part of this study?

No. The Waukegan Airport Authority and the IL Rte. 131 study are two separate studies led by different agencies. The Waukegan Airport Authority is conducting an Environmental Assessment for a possible future runway expansion, whereas, this study is evaluating the roadway needs along a 7.5 mile section of IL Rte. 131. The Waukegan Airport Authority is a stakeholder in this study and IDOT intends to coordinate with their project plans throughout this study.

Anticipated Accomplishments:

- 53 miles of interstate maintenance
- 1,836 miles of non-interstate maintenance
- 46 interstate bridges
- 162 non-interstate bridges
- 4 law bridges
- 82 minor structure repairs
- 56 miles of highway congestion mitigation
- 1 highway expansion location
- 82 traffic safety improvement locations
IDOT Schedules First Public Meeting for October

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has initiated a Phase I Study for IL Rte. 131. This study will take an in depth look at current and future transportation needs along IL Rte. 131 in Lake County. The study extends approximately 7.5 miles from Russell Road to Sunset Avenue.

IDOT will present information regarding the study schedule and process, study area characteristics, public involvement opportunities, and basic information regarding the current conditions along the corridor.

The public will have the opportunity to comment on the current and future needs and conditions along the corridor.

This meeting will be an open house format and allow the public the opportunity to watch a PowerPoint presentation, review exhibits, provide comments, and meet with IDOT and study team representatives on a one-on-one basis.

Get Involved!
Check our website for project updates, sign-up for the mailing list, and to send comments to us. Go to www.IL131Project.com or contact us at the Illinois Department of Transportation Division of Highways – District One, 201 W. Center Court, Schaumburg, IL 60196. Telephone: Marty Morse at (847) 705-4107 Fax: (847) 705-4159.

The public open house will be held:
Wednesday, October 29, 2008
4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.
Beach Park Middle School
Multi-Purpose Room
40667 North Green Bay Road
Beach Park, IL 60099

*This meeting will be accessible to handicapped individuals. Anyone needing special assistance should contact Marty Morse at (847) 705-4107. Persons planning to attend who will need a sign language interpreter or other similar accommodations should notify the Department’s TTY/TTD number (800) 526-1264/TTY, or (800) 526-5222/TTY Users (Spanish) (800) 501-0864/or 711; and for Telebraille dial (877) 526-6670 at least five days prior to the meeting.