



# Illinois Route 31

ROUTE 176 TO ROUTE 120

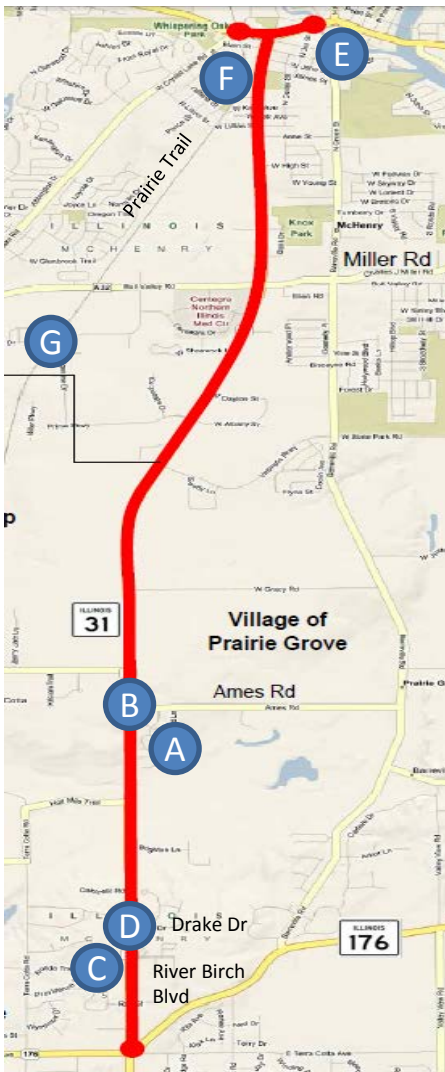
[www.idot.illinois.gov/projects/il31](http://www.idot.illinois.gov/projects/il31)



## Public Hearing Newsletter

January 2018

Thank you for your attendance at the public hearing held on February 8, 2017 for the Illinois Department of Transportation's (Department) proposed improvement of IL 31 from IL 176 to IL 120 in McHenry County. Your comments have become part of the official public hearing record and are included in the Combined Design Report and Environmental Assessment Errata. There were 169 people that attended the hearing. A total of 92 comments were received during the comment period that lasted through March 10, 2017. The comments were evaluated and the plans modified where feasible. As many comments concerned similar issues, this newsletter has been prepared to address your concerns as well as provide you with an overview of topics. Please visit the project website at [www.idot.illinois.gov/projects/il31](http://www.idot.illinois.gov/projects/il31) for future project updates.



### Construction

*Comments – When will construction start and how long will it take?*

Unfortunately a specific or even general timeline is not available. Funding for land acquisition and construction is **not** included in the Department's FY 2018-2023 Proposed Highway Improvement Program (referred to as the multi-year program). Each fall, the Department solicits feedback on the upcoming multi-year program which is taken into consideration in developing the next year's program. In years past, the Department's outreach efforts included meetings, displays at fairs, traditional town hall meetings, and webinars. Details regarding outreach efforts will be updated on the Department's website, [www.idot.illinois.gov](http://www.idot.illinois.gov) as soon they are finalized. The new multi-year program is then published every spring.

The duration of construction depends on several factors, many of which are not know at this time. The Department advertises construction projects (lettings) seven times a year which determines when a project will start. Other factors include private utility relocations, and the number of construction contracts. Due to the project length and cost, the project may be divided into smaller contracts. In addition, advance contracts for items such as tree removal or stream restoration may be let separately to expedite construction.

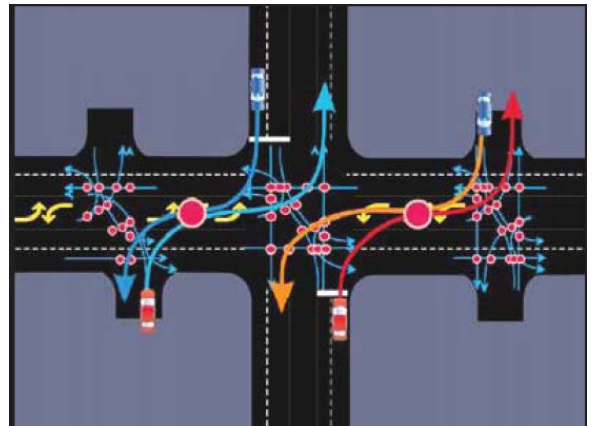
## Barrier Median and U-Turns

*Comments – A flush median should be provided instead; why such a wide median between IL 176 and Bull Valley/Miller Road; how do trucks make U-turns or access properties*

Most of IL 31 within the project limits is a top “5% percent” location meaning that it experiences higher severity and frequency of crashes than similar roadways statewide. Access management, such as raised medians, is a method to control access to highways and is a proven safety countermeasure. Access management principles are applicable to roadways of all types, but are especially important on Strategic Regional Arterials such as IL 31. The benefits of access management include improved movement of traffic, reduced crashes, and fewer vehicle conflicts. Raised medians improve safety by managing access points so that turning and crossing movements occur at fewer locations, and allow drivers to predict where other drivers will turn and cross. Median openings are generally spaced at quarter-mile intervals to provide frequent U-turn opportunities for passenger vehicles and locations for police enforcement. Trucks would need to alter their route to access properties on the opposite side of the roadway.

A wide median is proposed to accommodate dual left turn lanes into some existing side streets and for the potential growth of large undeveloped parcels along IL 31. A flush two-way left-turn lane was considered, but was dismissed since the raised median is expected to provide a higher reduction of crashes as analyzed using methodologies in the Highway Safety Manual. In the northern section of the project there was not enough right-of-way available to provide full access to properties via U-turns so a flush median is proposed. Near IL 120 the right-of-way was so constrained that any median could not be proposed without substantial building impacts so turning restrictions on streets near the intersection will be implemented.

The FHWA considers left turns into and out of a driveway less safe than a U-turn, as they comprise the majority of driveway crashes. Studies have shown that providing a U-turn at a median opening to get to the opposite side of a busy highway rather than a direct left-turn from a side street or driveway can result in a 25% reduction in crashes.



Conflict points with a flush median

### Cross Access

*Comments – Need direct left-in and left-out. The Department should work with businesses to mitigate raised median impacts*

The Department encourages adjacent properties to work together to form a combined entrance at a currently proposed median opening. Combined entrances reduce potential conflict points and are a public safety benefit. The Department can construct a combined entrance as part of the project if a signed cross access agreement between the properties is provided. Additional information on cross access, including an example agreement, is available on the [project website](#).

### Additional Lanes

*Comments - Projected traffic doesn't warrant additional through lanes; bus service should be expanded instead; why are existing right turn lanes not being replaced.*

The existing average daily traffic on IL 31 varies between 17,100 and 24,600 vehicles per day (vpd) and is projected to increase up to 39,000 vpd in year 2040. A roadway with one lane in each direction, like IL 31 today, functions appropriately with 15,000 to 18,000 vpd. The Department works closely with Pace and local municipalities to provide multi-modal transportation opportunities. Bus user pads are currently proposed along northbound IL 31 at Gracy Road and southbound IL 31 at Edgewood Road. The proposed improvements are compatible with future bus service expansion. Right turn lanes require additional right-of-way and increase impacts to adjacent properties and the environment, and are only proposed where warranted. With the addition of a second through lane, right turning vehicles can utilize the outside through lane to make turns.

## Oak Grove Subdivision



*Comments - Avoid impacting the landscaped berm near Ames Road; the shared-use path should be on the west side of IL 31; a traffic noise abatement wall should be constructed; verify the project is compatible with the subdivision's drainage features; the subdivision was not informed of the project.*

The proposed plan has been revised to maintain the landscaped berm south of Ames Road by reducing the width of the path from ten to eight feet, reducing the depth and width of the adjacent drainage swale, and steepening slopes to the berm. Shifting IL 31 to the west was considered, but is constrained by buildings located on the west side and would not provide a noticeable benefit.



When the subdivision was platted a 40 foot strip of land was dedicated for roadway purposes. The proposed shared-use path is located within this dedication. The path is a benefit to the subdivision by providing direct access to multi-modal accommodations along IL 31 and connections to signalized intersections to cross IL 31.

A noise abatement wall was evaluated along the subdivision; however it did not meet the criteria to be included in the project. Please note the construction of a noise abatement wall would have required additional right-of-way and potentially increase impacts to adjacent properties. The updated traffic noise analysis can be viewed on the [project website](#).

The proposed drainage plan is compatible with the modifications made by the subdivision to the exiting flow routes. The Department resurveyed the swale and berms between the existing culvert (Outfall 12) and the existing detention basin near Thunderbird Lane to ensure the roadway widening would not alter current flow paths.

This study has been following the Context Sensitive Solutions process which strives to involve stakeholders to ensure that the social, economic and environmental concerns of the surrounding community are considered. Membership to the Community Advisory Group (CAG) was open to all individuals and solicited at the first public meeting in 2012. Property owners and occupants adjacent to IL 31 were notified of the public meetings via post card. To increase involvement, ads were placed in the Northwest Herald newspaper and municipalities were coordinated with to expand notification lists through email lists and websites. The Department will continue to work with the subdivision throughout the project development.

### Property Impacts

*Comments – The proposed plan will impact my septic field, parking lot, or business sign*

The Department is working with several property owners to address specific property issues. Revisions to the proposed plans have been made at many of these locations to minimize or avoid the impact. In other locations, additional coordination will occur during the land acquisition process when property impacts will be evaluated and potential mitigation measures, such as parking lot modifications or septic field relocation, are more closely evaluated.

## Ames Road Intersection

*Comments – Realign Ames Road to Edgewood Road or add a traffic signal at Ames Road because it is/will be dangerous to turn left onto IL 31; add a northbound right turn lane at Ames Road*

Ames Road is under the jurisdiction of the Village of Prairie Grove. The realignment of Ames Road to Edgewood Road at IL 31 is identified in the Village's Comprehensive Plan. The Village could initiate engineering and construction for the realignment through either the Department's Bureau of Local Roads and Streets or the Bureau of Traffic Operations Permit Section. As requested, the Department performed traffic counts after the public hearing at the intersection of IL 31 and Ames Road to determine if a traffic signal is warranted. The results determined that a traffic signal is not warranted. Likewise, traffic volumes do not warrant an exclusive right turn lane. The right turn lane would impact the landscaped berm that has been requested to be maintained. It should be noted that Ames Road connects to Barreville Road which runs north-south between IL 176 and IL 120 and provides access to other east-west roadways that are signalized at IL 31.



### North Ridge Professional Center (600-630 N. IL Route 31)

C

*Comments – Need direct left-in and left-out.*

The current entrance to the office complex is in such close proximity to the proposed median opening at River Birch Boulevard that another opening cannot be provided. In situations such as this, the Department encourages adjacent properties to work together to form a combined entrance at a currently proposed median opening. Please refer to the cross access discussion on Page 2 for additional information.

### Drake Drive Intersection

D

*Comments - There are many crashes; no gaps to make turns; add traffic signal*

After the public hearing, the Department reviewed crash data from 2010 through 2015 at the intersection of IL 31 and Drake Drive, and determined a near-term improvement is not merited. In addition, the Department performed traffic counts and a traffic signal analysis after the public hearing. The results show a traffic signal is not warranted at the intersection. A traffic signal is proposed at the IL 31 and River Birch Boulevard intersection by the development along the east side of IL 31. Access to River Birch Boulevard will eventually be allowed to Drake Drive via Purdue Place.



### Boone Creek Riverwalk

E

*Comments – The proposed detention basin near Boone Creek will prohibit the City of McHenry's future Riverwalk*

The proposed detention basin was coordinated with the City of McHenry and is compatible with the future riverwalk plans. The basin can include enhanced native landscaping to compliment the riverwalk. Landscaping plans will be developed during contract plan preparation. Depending on the enhancements, funding and maintenance may be required by the City of McHenry.

### Historic Buildings in McHenry and On-Street Parking

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*Comments – Concerns of historic buildings being impacted and removal of on-street parking*

Building displacements and impacts were minimized to the extent possible. The building located at the northwest corner of IL 31 and Main Street (right) was identified as a structure to avoid because of its local importance. As a result, the lanes along IL 31 were reduced to 10 feet wide, no median was proposed, and the on-street parking along IL 31 was removed. The removal of on-street parking also has safety benefits by removing vehicle conflict points. On-street parking is not recommended along Strategic Regional Arterials such as IL 31 and IL 120.



## Landscaping & Tree Replacement

*Comments – Landscaping should include native grasses; impacts to oak and hickory trees should be minimized; retaining walls should be considered to save trees; tree replacement should be in accordance with the species and caliper removed, and be locally grown.*

Landscaping plans will be developed during contract plan preparation. The intent is to utilize the Department’s native seed mix to match the area and minimize maintenance needs. Measures to further minimize oak and hickory tree impacts were evaluated after the public hearing. Adjusting ditches and sidewalk /path were effective methods that were implemented. Retaining walls were evaluated and could save approximately 40 trees between Drake Drive and Shady Oaks Lane; however their high construction and long term maintenance costs were not reasonable. In lieu of retaining walls, the Department will work with adjacent municipalities and the McHenry County Conservation District to identify replacement areas near the project. Mitigation for tree removal will follow the Department’s Preservation and Replacement of Trees Policy, which is available on the [project website](#).

In locations where the raised median is wide enough, grass will be planted unless a local agency requests trees or enhanced landscaping. Depending on the treatment, the local agency may be required to help fund the additional cost, and will be required to provide maintenance.

### Drainage Design

*Comment - The proposed plan will change stormwater flow.*

The drainage design has taken into account existing drainage patterns and analyzed impacts of the proposed improvements on the surrounding properties. Runoff from the widened roadway will be conveyed through oversized pipes to new detention basins. Furthermore, nine acres of additional right-of-way is proposed to retain runoff created by the new impervious surfaces within the project. This is accomplished with retention basins, widened ditches and an infiltration basin.



## Pedestrian and Bicyclist Accommodations



*Comments – The shared-use path is a duplication of the Prairie Trail, improve accommodations on east-west streets such as Ames Road and Edgewood Road.*

While the proposed path and Prairie Trail are parallel, they support different uses. The proposed path will provide opportunities for both short and long distance trips along the corridor to connect to residential, commercial and industrial areas along IL 31. In addition, the proposed path will collect users from the east side of IL 31 and provide crossing opportunities to the west at the eight signalized intersections along the project. Streets under local jurisdiction such as Edgewood Road, Bull Valley Road, and Lillian Street provide a direct connection to the Prairie Trail. The Prairie Trail is a regional trail that connects McHenry County communities and other regional trails such as the Fox River Trail.

## Wetland and Special Waste Mitigation

*Comments - Wetland mitigation should be in watershed, what are the special waste disposal procedures*

Wetland mitigation will be coordinated during contract plan preparation, and is expected to be attained at a wetland bank within the watershed. The Department also intends to work with agencies such as the McHenry County Conservation District to identify other potential wetland mitigation sites. Regarding special waste procedures, the Department conducts extensive soil testing during the design process and manages excavated soil in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations in a manner that protects human health and the environment. Requirements for disposing excavated materials can be found in Title 35, Part 1100 of the Illinois Administrative Code.

## Construction Concerns

*Comments – Businesses will be impacted during construction, minimize construction duration*

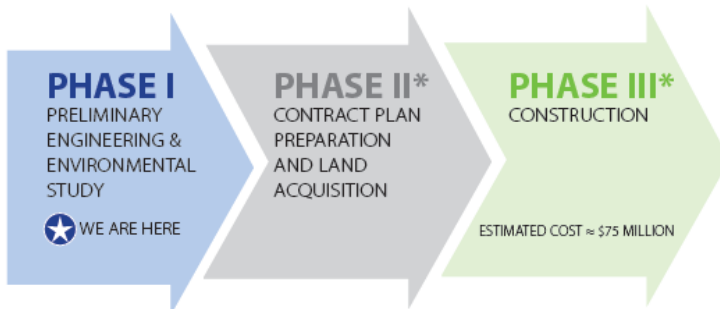
The Department will continue to work with adjacent businesses and property owners prior to and during construction. Representatives from local municipalities will be invited to attend the contract progress meetings where they will be given information that they can share with their communities about the current and upcoming activities.

Access to each property will be provided during construction. Driveways will receive a “Driveway Entrance” sign with an arrow directing traffic from both directions. If a property has two driveways, the contractor will provide access through one of the driveways while the other is being constructed. If a property has only one driveway, it will be temporarily widened during construction while the new driveway is being built or it will be built ½ at a time. Two-way traffic will be maintained along IL 31 at all times.

## Property Values

*Comments – My property value will decrease as a result of the project*

Any property acquired or easements secured will result in compensation by the Department to the owner of that property. With respect to potential property value changes, the value of property is based on numerous factors and is a highly subjective matter, which is not easily quantifiable, either in a positive or negative sense.



## Traffic and Construction Noise

No substantial changes in traffic-generated noise levels are expected as a result of this proposed improvement. Trucks and machinery used for construction will produce noise that may affect some residents and residential area activities during the construction period. Impacts resulting from construction noise are likely to occur during daylight hours and be temporary. The construction documents will include noise specifications, and the contractor will need to comply with any local noise ordinances.

## Other Recent Improvements

*Comments - Why do this since other projects were just completed*

This is a long-range improvement designed to meet current and year 2040 needs. Other recent improvements such as roadway resurfacing and adding the bi-directional median between Ames Road and Edgewood Road were maintenance and near-term safety improvements. Please note that the recent intersection improvements at the IL 31 intersections of IL 176, Bull Valley Road, and IL 120/Richmond Road are compatible with the proposed improvements.

## Next Steps

The Department is nearing completion of the Phase I study as we incorporate comments from the public hearing and refine the engineering studies, right-of-way requirements, and environmental documents.

\* Funding for contract plan preparation is included in the Department’s FY 2018 - 2023 Proposed Highway Improvement Program. The remaining elements of the project (land acquisition and construction) are not included, but will be considered for future funding among similar improvement needs throughout the region.