Illinois Department of Transportation

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT and PHASE I DESIGN REPORT

ISSUE 4 - FALL 2009 NEWSLETTER

A Message From IDOT:

Quite some time has passed since I have addressed the community about the progress of the US 30 Project. Over the past ten months IDOT and the Project Study Group (PSG) have been meeting with various stakeholders and stakeholder groups. We have hosted the 2nd Public Informational Open House and the 5th Community Advisory Group (CAG) meeting; both of which aided in achieving major milestones. One of these major milestones is the selection of six alignments. These alignments were developed based on the Purpose & Need of the project, engineering feasibility, avoidance of environmental resources, and public input.

I know from the comments received throughout the project thus far that there is considerable concern regarding the potential disturbances to agricultural land and the environment, and impacts to commercial and residential properties. Please be assured that as IDOT continues to refine the alignments, every effort will be made to minimize these impacts as much as possible. As you read through this newsletter you will gain more information on the six alignments that are currently being considered and the project's next steps. As always, I encourage you to visit the project website at www.dot.il.gov/us30/ index1.html and contact the project hotline at 1-866-ROUTE30 (1-866-768-8330) to remain updated on the project's progress and to provide the project team with your comments and/or questions.

Sincerely,
George F. Ryan, P.E.
Deputy Director of Highways

IN THIS ISSUE

This publication is dedicated to keeping the community informed about the US 30 Environmental Impact Statement and Phase I Design Report.

WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING WITH THE PROJECT?

In January 2009, IDOT presented the original sixteen corridors developed by the CAG and the two general corridors that had been determined to be carried forward for further study. Two-hundred thirty-seven (237) people attended the Public Informational Open House in Morrison. The public's main concerns included impacts to agricultural land, displacements, development and environmental disturbance. The many comments and concerns were summarized and kept as part of the project file.

Shortly following the Public Informational Open House, IDOT staff and the consultant team presented the proposed project corridors and the views of the public to various environmental regulatory agencies. The agencies considered the information presented to them and requested additional corridor areas be studied further.

ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATORY AGENCIES
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Illinois Department of Agriculture
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

The PSG then set out to meet with various stakeholders to update them on the next steps of the project and the corridors within which alignments would be developed. Stakeholders voiced concerns that included a request to use existing US 30 as much as possible for the final alignment, closure of the roads during the construction of US 30, and the timeframe in which the actual construction phase will begin.

With the input received from these various stakeholders, at the Public Informational Open House and from the CAG, in addition to considering the project's Purpose & Need, engineering feasibility, and the environmental resources, six alignments were developed. Please see the "US 30 Alignments" map included in this newsletter. These alignments will continue to be refined and will be presented at a **Public Informational Open House tentatively scheduled for the early 2010** for comment. If you would like to view a larger depiction of this map, please visit the website and click on the "US 30 Alignments Map" link.

Should any stakeholder or stakeholder group like for a representative to present to your group, please contact the project hotline at 1-866-ROUTE 30 (1-866-768-8330).

A **corridor** is an area(s) that is established early in a project that identifies potential locations for a future transportation facility. For this project, the corridors were 1400 feet wide.

An **alignment** is developed *within* a corridor. For this project, an alignment is 200 feet wide, which approximates the width of a four-lane expressway.

FOUR - LANE EXPRESSWAYS

With each project undertaken by IDOT, the Department strives to meet the needs of the traveling public. For US 30 in Whiteside County, this is certainly at the forefront of everything being done as a part of the study and is in keeping with the project's Purpose & Need, which includes the following goals:

- Reduce Traffic Congestion
- Improve Traffic Capacity
- Improve Safety
- Accommodate Freight
- Establish Roadway Continuity

In an effort to achieve these goals, the type of facility being considered in this study is an expressway. What does this mean? An expressway is a highway that provided a higher level of mobility and safety than a typical highway. It does this with higher design standards, fewer access points and more lanes of traffic. It typically has two or more lanes in each direction with ample paved shoulders and a median separating the two directions of travel. The median is most often a ditch with relatively gentle slopes and measures approximately 50 feet between lanes of travel. Sometimes the median is narrower, but this is usually within urban areas where adjacent development makes a wider facility difficult to achieve. In that instance a concrete barrier replaces the ditch.

Expressways strive to limit access but not to the extent of an interstate highway. For instance, where a side road meets an interstate, the side road is provided with access via an interchange, overpass or dead end. With an expressway, however, a fourth option is typically available: at-grade intersections. As long as projected traffic volumes on the side road are under a certain level, the fourth option can be implemented. This is the case with most, if not all, the intersections within the US 30 study area. Another important distinction for expressways is that private access points such as agricultural field entrances and driveways for single-family homes are allowed. This is not the case for interstate highways. With either type of highway, however, direct commercial access to the highway is prohibited.

While expressways provide increased flexibility when it comes to direct access, it is still important that access be managed and spaced appropriately. We recognize the importance of access for the properties along the proposed highway. At the same time we understand the need to provide a safe and efficient highway facility. IDOT's policies for expressways strike a balance for these things through prescribed spacing requirements for access points with median crossovers and for private access points. All of these issues will be considered during the planning for access along US 30.

Typical expressway with grassed median, right and left turn lanes and broad, paved shoulders.

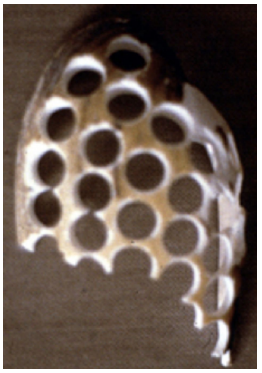
RESOURCES OF THE US 30 STUDY AREA: The Black Sandshell Mussel

IDOT is committed to protecting and enhancing the environmental resources of the State of Illinois. The first step in determining the environmental impacts of different alternatives for improving US 30 was to conduct a detailed inventory of environmental resources within the project study area. This inventory included surveys of streams and rivers by the Illinois Natural History Survey. Aquatic surveys included water quality, fish, mussels, and other invertebrates.

Historically, the Midwest boasted the most diverse collection of mussels in the world. But today, Midwestern states list more than half of their 78 known mussel species as endangered, threatened, or requiring special concern. Scientists estimate that 43% of the 300 species of freshwater mussels in the continental US are in danger of extinction.

Mussels are important food sources for many other animals and are natural water filters. As filter-feeders, they clean water and store toxins in their tissue. Many species also act as good indicators of ecosystem health because they remain essentially in one place for long periods of time and require good water and sediment quality to survive.

Threats to freshwater mussels include degradation of their habitat by dams and impoundments, channelization and dredging, pollution, sedimentation, fish kills that eliminate potential host fish or mussel larvae, and introduction of non-native species.

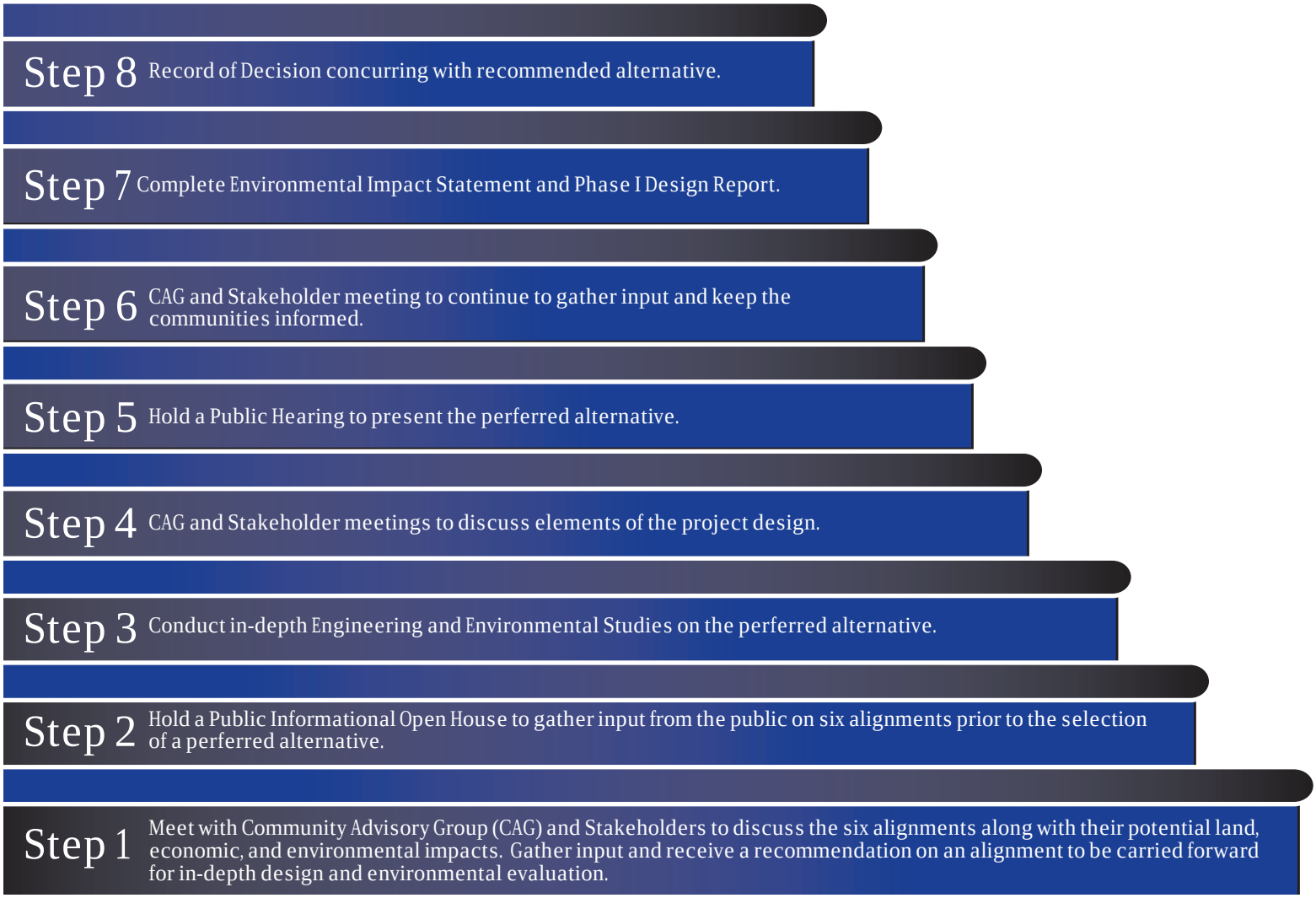


One of the mussel species found in the project area is the Black Sandshell (*Ligumia recta*). The Black Sandshell is listed as threatened in Illinois. The Black Sandshell has a dark, elongated, slightly compressed shell that may grow up to 8 inches long. It is usually found in riffles of medium to large rivers. The mussel, like many others, was once abundant in Illinois but was heavily harvested during the late 1800s to the 1930s for button making. The button industry nearly wiped out many of the mussel resources in Illinois and other states. Mussel harvesting slowed when plastic became the preferred button material, but in the 1950s it regained momentum when it was discovered that freshwater mussel shells could be used to culture pearls.

Though it is unknown if the black sandshell mussel will be found in the project study area, it is a prime example of a natural resource that IDOT will work to protect, as well as any other resources found.

Next Steps

The US 30 Project Team has been working diligently over the last few months evaluating the environmental studies that have been conducted for the project and developing design alternatives. Great progress has been made in refining the alternatives so that in the next few months those alternatives can be evaluated and an alignment that serves the surrounding community's needs while minimizing the environmental effects can be determined. Ultimately with the public's input, a preferred alignment will be selected and become the focus of an in-depth design and environmental evaluation. We still have numerous steps to complete in order to get to the selection of a preferred alternative. The following lists the steps that remain in the Environmental Impact Statement and Phase I Design process. In an effort to assure that the public remains an integral part of this process, the public will continue to be asked to be involved in each of these steps.



An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is a document required by the National Environmental Policy Act for federal government agency actions affecting the quality of the environment. For U.S. 30, the federal action is a new transportation facility. A federally approved EIS is required in order to move on the next phase of design.

A Record of Decision (ROD) is a formal decision document which is recorded for the public that identifies the selection of a preferred alternative. The ROD is signed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) after the EIS is signed.

A Public Informational Open House are meetings that are held in an open house format to provide project information and gather input from the public in order to aid in the development of a transportation facility. These meetings are not required but are an integral part of the overall project process.

A Public Hearing is similar to the Public Informational Open House in regard to format, providing project information, and gathering public input. The difference is Public Hearings are required and the hearing process, information presented, and comments received become part of an official public record for the project.

Project Team

Lead Agencies

Federal Highway Administration
(FHWA)

Illinois Department of Transportation
(IDOT)

Consultant Team

Volkert, Inc.
Project Management Consultant
(Joint Venture)

Howard R. Green Company
Project Management Consultant
(Joint Venture)

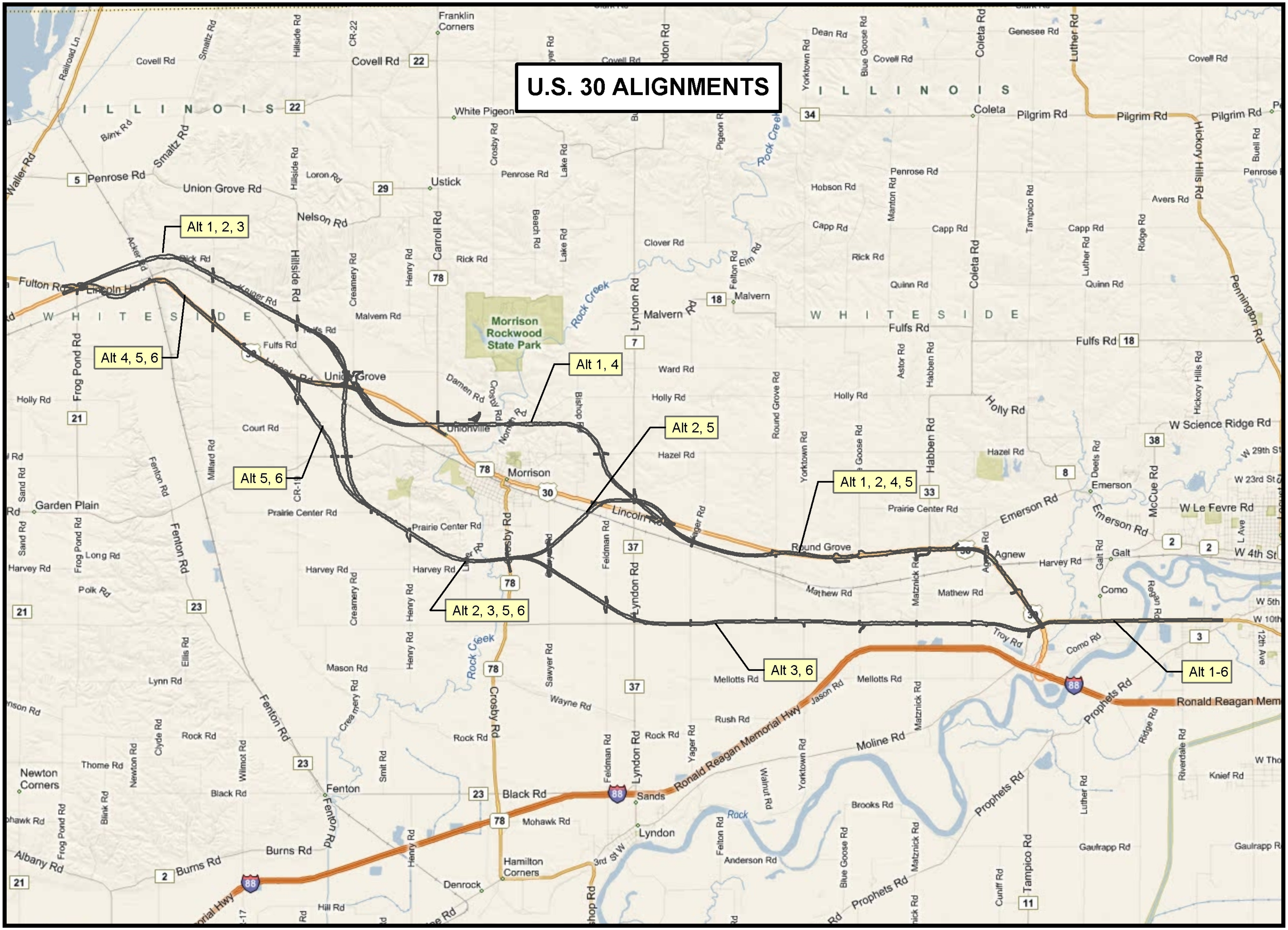
Hudson And Associates, LLC.
Context Sensitive Solutions/Public Involvement Consultant

Kaskaskia Engineering Group
GIS/Mapping and Environmental Consultant

Illinois Department of Transportation

US 30 Environmental Impact Statement and Phase I Design Report
US 30 Joint Venture Team
C/O Volkert, Inc.
103 Lanter Court
Collinsville, IL 62234

US 30 PROJECT TIMELINE


U.S. 30 ALIGNMENTS
Alt 1, 2, 3
Alt 4, 5, 6
Alt 5, 6
Alt 1, 4
Alt 2, 5
Alt 1, 2, 4, 5
Alt 2, 3, 5, 6
Alt 3, 6
Alt 1-6
I L L I N O I S
W H I T E S I D E
Morrison Rockwood State Park
Morrison
Union Grove
Unionville
Round Grove
Agnew
Emerson
Galt
Como
Malvern
Ustick
Coleta
White Pigeon
Franklin Corners
Garden Plain
Fenton
Sands
Lyndon
Hamilton Corners
Denrock
Newton Corners
Lincoln Hwy
Ronald Reagan Memorial Hwy
Rock Creek