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# Group considers bypass routes

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MORRISON - The Illinois Department of Transportation's plans to expand 24 miles of U.S. Route 30, from Fulton to Rock Falls, are cruising along.

IDOT representatives and a team of consultants met Thursday with the Community Advisory Group, to update its members on the U.S. 30 Corridor Project. Plans call for expanding that stretch of 30 from two lanes to four, and creating a bypass around Morrison to alleviate congestion and make city streets safer.

The first phase of the project began in July 2007, is expected to cost about \$7 million and take 40 months. It involves finishing an environmental impact study and deciding on the bypass route.

The environmental study will take the bulk of the time to complete; it must take into account the project's impact on farmland, wetlands, historic areas, existing architecture, noise levels, property acquisitions and a host of other issues, officials have said.

Mark Walton, a consultant with Volkert & Associates, of Collinsville, said Thursday's meeting was to gather opinions and recommendations on the bypass from the advisory group, which is made up of Morrison, Fulton, Sterling and Rock Falls city officials, as well as farmers and business owners.

"Basically, we want to hear their concerns on the project," Walton said. "There may be other issues that we hadn't considered when looking at these possible [bypass] routes."

Reducing truck traffic, preserving farmland and providing access to Morrison's industrial park are the advisory group's biggest concerns.

The majority favors building a bypass south of town, which would provide better access to the industrial park and allow for more growth in the future.

The same players mapped out potential routes in May, then the project study group, which is made up of representatives from state and federal agencies, narrowed the options and recommended several to the advisory group. Now the project study group will take the advisory group's recommendations and further study the options.

### What's next

An informational hearing will be held in July to gather public comment and update the community on the status of the Route 30 project. The specifics of the hearing have yet to be determined.

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