



Illinois Route 159 Newsletter

Volume 2 Summer 2006

IL Route 159

This is the second newsletter for the IL Route 159 project through Collinsville, Illinois. IDOT appreciates your interest and participation as the study develops. Please visit the project web site for updates throughout the project.

www.dot.il.gov/ilroute159

Since the first newsletter, published in the winter of 2005, an open house public involvement meeting was conducted. This newsletter provides a summary of the information presented at this meeting, a summary of comments received from participants at this meeting, as well as IDOT's responses to these comments.

Public Involvement Meeting

The public involvement meeting was held on February 15, 2006 from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the American Legion Post 365 in Collinsville. There were 232 people/couples who signed in to the meeting and over 300 comment forms were distributed.

Participants were able to walk around and see the various exhibits showing the project location map, existing typical roadway sections, traffic and accident data for this section of IL Route 159, an enlargement of an aerial photograph of the historically significant section of Vandalia Street, and aerial photographs of existing IL Route 159 with property lines and Right of Way limits. Members of the project study team were available to answer questions, explain exhibits and take comments from the community.

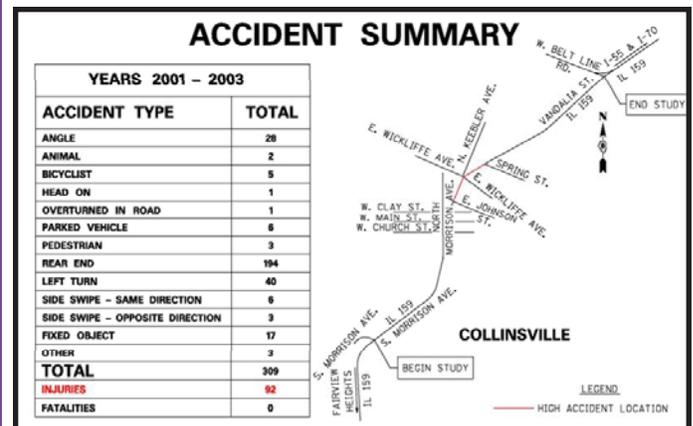
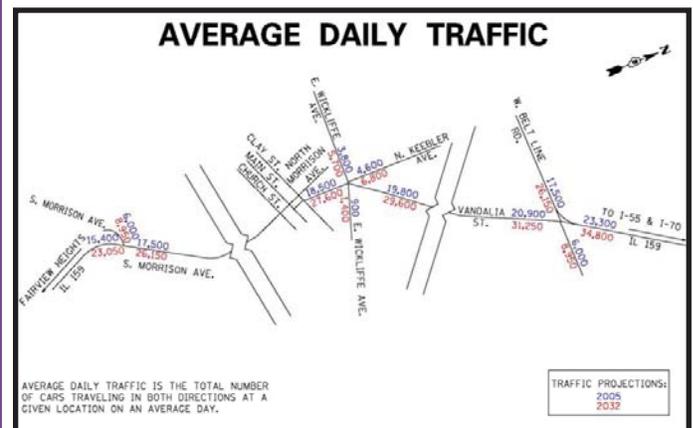
Exhibits provided corridor accident data, and existing and projected traffic data. IDOT uses this data in addition to other information to assist with making decisions regarding potential improvements to state routes.

Comment boards were displayed at the public involvement meeting for members of the community to share comments and suggestions regarding possible improvements to Illinois Route 159.

One of the boards was titled, "What should the purpose of this project be?" People were encouraged to provide comments about corridor interests that were important to them. Comments included: improve safety; improve congestion; minimal to no affect to adjacent property owners; improve traffic flow at rush hour; historic and scenic value retained or enhanced; low speed facility; walk-able community and street crossing safety; reduce air pollution; school safety at Saints Peter and Paul; Webster and Son-Life; good bus

service; preserve sidewalks; maintain access to existing businesses; maintain trees and small town aesthetics; and keep traffic flowing through downtown.

The other board was titled, "Improvements for Consideration." Community member suggestion for ways to improve IL Route 159 included: bypass downtown Collinsville; bypass Vandalia Street; do nothing; four to five lanes where possible; limit tractor trailer traffic on 159; police enforce speed limits; remove 90 degree turns downtown by the bank; remove one-way streets; improve residential access between Loop Street and Church Street; and some suggestions both for and against a north-south coupler on Morrison and Vandalia.



Comment Form Feedback

Many comments were received from the community following the public involvement meeting. All of the comments were reviewed and a letter was sent responding to each individual's comments if an address was provided. Four questions were asked on the comment forms. The comment form asked respondents four questions. The first asked whether the respondent was a homeowner along the

project route, used the route to commute, a business owner along the project route, or an interested party. The second question simply provided a general comment section. The third question asked what IDOT should try to accomplish with this project; essentially, what the purpose of this project should be. The fourth question asked whether the respondent felt as if the Department was coordinating with the public effectively, and if not, how IDOT could improve. A summary of the data collected, the general comments, and IDOT's responses are shown below.

We received the following responses to the first question.

Homeowners – 16 Business owners along the route – 11
 Commuters – 19 Interested Parties – 19

(Respondents were directed to check more than one box if it was applicable.)

We received the following responses to the question of whether or not IDOT was coordinating with the public effectively. Yes - 21 No - 5

The public communicated various interests within the comment section of the form

A number of residents were interested in preserving the older and scenic sections of Vandalia Street.

IDOT appreciates the community's desire to preserve or maintain this scenic section of IL Route 159. The study team has actively coordinated with the Collinsville Historic Preservation Commission and the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. The area designated by the Collinsville Historic Preservation Commission as significant has not yet been listed or determined to be eligible to be listed on the National Historic Register. However, IDOT recognizes the importance of this portion of the route to the City of Collinsville and will work to develop alternatives that minimize impacts to this area while providing a design that is consistent with the character of the area.

Some respondents asked that the project study team preserve the character and aesthetics of downtown Collinsville.

IDOT understands how important the character and aesthetics of downtown Collinsville to the community. IDOT will strive to develop project designs that are consistent with the aesthetics of the community. The study team will coordinate closely with the City of Collinsville and the residents to develop a project design that reflects the community image.

Several residents raised questions about property that may be required for this project and IDOT's use of eminent domain.

IDOT recognizes that the state's need to acquire property from some residents and business owners can be very unsettling. When additional right of way to construct a roadway project is required, IDOT appraises the property and assesses the damages to that property in order to negotiate a fair purchase price with a land owner. Only when an agreement cannot be reached does IDOT use their eminent domain authority to purchase this right of way through the court system. This authority is granted to IDOT for the construction of projects that are for the good of the public. IDOT provides informational brochures on this topic including "Highway Improvements and Property Rights" and "A Land Owners Guide to Land Acquisition by the State and Eminent Domain." State agencies must comply with federal regulations regarding land acquisition and citizens can download the Federal Highway Administration's Publication No. FHWA-HEP-05-031, Your Rights and Benefits as a Displaced Person under the Federal Relocation Assistance Program from their web site at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/realestate/rights/index.html>.

A number of comments suggested a bypass around Collinsville.

A previous feasibility study for potential bypasses around downtown Collinsville considered various alternatives and included recommendations for a bypass alternative and to make improvements to existing IL Route 159. IDOT's focus is to make improvements to existing IL Route 159 in order to improve safety and capacity. However, if it is determined that an additional roadway corridor is required in the future, the City, the County, or IDOT may study a bypass.

Many respondents requested improvements to safety and congestion on IL Route 159.

IDOT has determined through engineering studies and feedback from the community that there is a need to improve safety and congestion along Illinois Route 159. IDOT will be studying alternatives intended to achieve the goals set forth in the engineering study and received from public input. Once developed, the alternatives will be presented to the public for review and comment.

The issue of speeding on IL Route 159 was mentioned by many citizens.

IDOT is aware of the potential dangers related to speeding on IL Route 159. Speeding can be influenced by the design of

Illinois Route 159 - Project Time Line



a roadway and controlled by law enforcement. The project design team will establish a design speed and will evaluate elements that may be incorporated into the proposed design to discourage high speeds. After construction, the route must be properly posted and enforced by local law enforcement.

Several residents and business owners expressed a desire to maintain access to businesses and residences during construction.

IDOT will require its contractor to maintain access to businesses and residents throughout the construction process. In addition, the project study team is working with IDOT's construction section on concepts to reduce the time required for construction activities as they occur throughout the limits of the project.

A few respondents wanted to know how air and noise pollution would be addressed.

The project study team will study the proposed project's impact to air and noise pollution as part of the environmental impacts evaluation. The related studies will be made available to the public for review near the end of Phase I (Preliminary Plans and Environmental Study) and the topic will be addressed in a future project newsletter.

The Public Involvement Process

IDOT's public involvement effort for this project will be conducted in three (3) steps.

1. The first step will be to reach out to as many stakeholders (users) as possible to generate project awareness and to share project information. This step will also involve gathering input from the stakeholders to identify stakeholder interests and community needs for the project. From this input, the project study team will develop a formal purpose for the project. This purpose will address safety and mobility (IDOT's goals) and issues submitted by the public at large.
2. After the purpose for the project has been established, the project study team will develop alternatives incorporating the public's input. These alternatives will focus on improving mobility and safety and at the same time address community needs. These alternatives will then be presented to the public for feedback. This step involves sharing both project information and public input used in decision making.
3. Based on the feedback received during step two (2), the project study team will select an alternative that best meets IDOT's objectives and the community's needs. This solution will be presented to the public for additional feedback and further refinement.

Upcoming Public Involvement Activities

- The project study team will work with the Community Advisory Group (CAG) to continue to provide feedback to IDOT as the project continues and as alternatives are developed.
- Newsletters like this one will be published on approximately a quarterly basis. To be added to the mailing list, please visit the project website at www.dot.il.gov/ilroute159
- Additional meetings will be held with stakeholder organizations to keep them updated on the progress throughout the study. If you are part of an organization that may be interested in a project briefing, please contact Jason Watters at 618.288.4665 to schedule a time.

Do you or someone you know want to be added to our mailing list? Please complete the following form and mail it to:

IL Route 159 Project Team
c/o Bernardin Lochmueller & Associates, Inc.
3 Oak Drive
Maryville, IL 62062

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____
Zip _____
Email _____

Please check this box if you would like the newsletter emailed to you instead of standard mail.

Contact Information

You may submit questions or comments about this project by writing us at:

IL Route 159 Project Team
c/o Bernardin Lochmueller & Associates, Inc.
3 Oak Drive
Maryville, IL 62062

Or you may submit questions or comments on the project website at: www.dot.il.gov/ilroute159

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Where are we in the Public Involvement Process?

The project study team is currently in step 2 of the public involvement process. The effort to date has been focused on public awareness of the project and in gathering initial public input. This has been accomplished by developing a mailing list of interested parties to assist in making people aware that the project has started and that information is available on the project web site at www.dot.il.gov/ilroute159.

The public involvement meeting was held on February 15, 2006. Many comments were received from members of the community and the public had an opportunity to have one-on-one conversations with project team members. IDOT and the project study team are currently addressing those comments.

Additional step 2 public involvement efforts include the development of a Community Advisory Group (CAG), maintaining the project web site, and the publication of this newsletter.

Community Advisory Group (CAG)

The project study team and IDOT are in the process of developing a Community Advisory Group (CAG) comprised of members of the Collinsville community. The CAG will serve as a conduit of information to and from various stakeholders, organizations, and members of the community. The committee will address questions and feedback, and advise the project team of local matters of interest as the process develops. Serving as an advisory panel, this committee will provide valuable input to the professionals on the project team. Responsibility for final decisions remains with IDOT and the project team after considering the advice and input from the committee members, other stakeholders, and the public at large.