



ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION ROUTE 159 NEWSLETTER

Issue 6 - Fall 2008

IDOT CONDUCTS THIRD PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT MEETING

The third "open house" Public Involvement Meeting for the Illinois Route 159 Project was held on April 16, 2008 from 4:00 – 7:00 pm at the American Legion Post 365 in Collinsville. There were 265 individuals or couples who signed in at the meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to present to the public the preferred alternative for the south, center and north segments of the project. The preferred alternative was presented on aerial displays which identified the preliminary right-of-way lines and denoted the potential displacement properties. The meeting was once again an "open house" format to allow the participants to view the displays at their leisure and to allow informal discussions between the Project Study Team (PST) and the public.

The preferred alternative was chosen after presenting the various alternatives at the second Public Involvement Meeting in June 2007. The PST reviewed the comments and input that had been received from the public and the Community Advisory Group (CAG) members. They took these, as well as engineering and environmental factors, into consideration as they selected the preferred alternative.

A 3-dimensional visualization of the final design for the center segment was presented at this meeting. This visualization was computer generated and displayed on a large screen. It provided the public with an opportunity to experience what the final project would look like from the driver's perspective, as well as a view from overhead, for the section of roadway from Church Street to Wickliffe Avenue. A copy of this visualization can be downloaded from the project website at <http://www.dot.il.gov/ilroute159/events.html>.

The PST reviewed all of the comment forms and wrote letters back to the respondents answering any questions or concerns that they had. The feedback from these forms will be used to further refine the preferred alternative as this project moves into the next phase, final design.

Public views preferred alternatives



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A MESSAGE FROM IDOT:

I would like to thank everyone who has helped make this first phase of the Illinois Route 159 project a success. This includes the members of the Community Advisory Group, the Project Study Team, and the hundreds of concerned citizens who either attended one of the three public involvement meetings or contacted us through a letter or e-mail. We are looking forward to this project moving to the next phase and we hope that your interest in this project will continue as well.

Sincerely,

Mary C. Lamie, PE
Deputy Director of Highways
Region Five Engineer

BERT'S CHUCK WAGON OWNER EXCITED ABOUT MOVE

While the Illinois Route 159 project is sure to attract new businesses to the Collinsville area, it will also give some of the existing businesses an opportunity to relocate and expand.

One of those businesses is the well known "Bert's Chuck Wagon" located on the corner of Vandalia Street and Clay Street. Roger Conner, the owner of Bert's Chuck Wagon, graciously agreed to take time out of his busy schedule to answer some questions about how the project may affect him. The Project Study Team (PST) interviewed Mr. Conner to see how he feels about the project and get his opinion on how well the PST involved the public on the project.

The PST's questions (*in italics*) and Mr. Conner's responses are below:

How long has your business been located at this site?

I have a long history with this building. I believe that the building was constructed around 1965. I began working at the restaurant in the late 1960's for my brother-in-law, and then became the owner in 1980.

Will Bert's Chuck Wagon be relocating in the downtown Collinsville area after being displaced?

This is a resounding, YES. I have already purchased the former Glik's building at 101 East Main in Collinsville.

How will the move affect Bert's Chuck Wagon customer base?

Bert's Chuck Wagon customers are a mixture of residents who live or work nearby as well as customers who drive to his business. I don't feel that the move will greatly affect my customer base. Many of my customers are second and third generations of the original customers that frequented the restaurant. I hear stories from them about all the great memories they have of my restaurant. Now, they are bringing their children and grandchildren to the restaurant. This is a place that many hear about by word of mouth, so I intend to spread the word about my move from now until I am actually relocated.

What type of comments the Bert's Chuck Wagon's customers and fellow business owners shared about the Illinois Route 159 project?

My customers just wanted to be assured that I am going to re-open. They are excited to hear that the new place will be larger. I also intend to incorporate some of the features from my old restaurant into the new one. I really have not heard many comments from my fellow business owners since most businesses are not affected, or at least are not being relocated by the project. Some of them have commented that it is progress that is needed.

Has IDOT done a good job communicating information about this project?

IDOT has done an excellent job of communicating the project to the public. From the newsletters, to the Public Involvement Meetings and the website, all of these forms of communication have been very helpful in answering questions about the project.

From this interview and the feedback that IDOT has received throughout Phase I of this project, it appears communication can go a long way in improving the design and acceptance of a project. IDOT did as much as possible to minimize the impacts to the businesses, churches, schools and homeowners without compromising safety so that progress could occur without hurting the close knit feel of this community.

Remember, if you see Bert's Chuck Wagon has moved, check out the new location at 101 East Main!



IDOT GETS FEEDBACK

Over 265 comment forms were distributed at the third Public Involvement Meeting and 31 were returned. The comments were reviewed by the Project Study Team (PST) and replies were sent to each respondent. The following are some of the comments received:

- **Concerns were expressed over the loss of parking for the businesses.** IDOT worked closely with the City to minimize the loss of parking. The project provides a potential net gain of 10 parking spaces in the downtown business district.
- **Requests were made to ensure that the placement of the construction trailers and equipment will not eliminate available parking spaces.** IDOT recognizes the importance of maintaining the availability of parking spaces during construction and will work with the contractor in regard to the location of their equipment within the project right-of-way.
- **Comments on the loss of private property along with suggestions on how to minimize the loss were provided.** IDOT understands that property owners are concerned about specific impacts to their property and minimizing right-of-way impacts was one of the considerations in the selection of the preferred alternative.
- **Business owners were concerned about their entrances being impacted during the construction.** IDOT ensures that business owners are provided access at all times during construction.
- **Respondents were thankful that the project minimized the impacts to Saints Peter and Paul Church and School.** IDOT worked closely with representatives from the Church to develop a preferred alternative that addressed their concerns and serves the community as a whole.

The comment form also asked, "Do you feel that IDOT is coordinating with the public effectively?" Fifteen of the 31 forms answered "yes" and the remaining respondents did not provide an answer to this question. The PST was very pleased that the public believes the outreach efforts have been effective.

IDOT MEETS WITH DISPLACED PROPERTY OWNERS

One of the biggest concerns property owners along the route of a proposed project have is the impacts to their private property. These are just a few of the concerns that are expressed by property owners during the planning phase of a project. Due to the significant impact that a displacement has on a property owner, the Project Study Team (PST) conducted a meeting explaining what they could expect during the land acquisition process. IDOT representatives along with the consulting firm, Bernardin, Lochmueller and Associates held a meeting on May 15, 2008, with the owners of properties that had been identified as potential displacements during the development of the preferred alternative.

The meeting provided an overview of IDOT's Land Acquisition process. The topics of discussion included how IDOT determines how much right-of-way is needed for a project, an explanation of the three types of acquisitions (temporary easements, permanent easements and permanent right-of-way) and an explanation of the appraisal, negotiation, relocation, and eminent domain processes. By explaining the land acquisition process, the PST hoped to alleviate some of the concerns associated with a displacement. The meeting provided a group question and answer session and an opportunity for individuals to ask specific questions about their situation. IDOT received positive feedback about the meeting from the participants.

If a property owner has land acquisition questions or concerns, or if they would like to meet with the IDOT Land Acquisition staff, they may contact Mr. Mike Myler, IDOT Land Acquisition Manager, at 618.346.3120

For more information on the Land Acquisition Process visit the project website at www.dot.il.gov/ilroute159 and click on FAQ.





Illinois Department of Transportation

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WHAT'S NEXT?

The Phase I process for the project is coming to a close. The final step of Phase I will be the approval of the Preliminary Design and Environmental Study which is scheduled for January 2009. After this report is approved, the negotiations for land acquisition can begin if funding is available. IDOT intends, in the fall of 2008, to initiate preparation of appraisals on impacted properties where new right- of- way or easements are required. Preparation of the Final Design and Construction Bid documents are underway and are estimated to be completed in two years. Land Acquisition and Construction are currently not funded.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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

***Illinois Route 159 Project Team
c/o Volkert and Associates, Inc.***

***103 Lanter Court
Collinsville, IL 62234***

Or you may submit questions or comments on the project website at:

www.dot.il.gov/ilroute159



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