

RECORD OF DECISION

U.S. 67 (FAP 310)

Jacksonville to Macomb Morgan, Cass, Schuyler, and McDonough Counties, Illinois

FHWA-IL-EIS-00-02-F

March 6, 2003

1. BACKGROUND

History: The proposal for an improved highway between Jacksonville and Macomb has been considered for more than 25 years. In 1988, the U.S. 67 corridor was considered as an alternative for an improved 4-lane highway extending from St. Louis, Missouri to St. Paul, Minnesota (Avenue of the Saints). Although another corridor was ultimately selected for that improvement, there was sustained interest in improving U.S. 67 between Alton and the Quad Cities. In 1989, concerned business and community leaders formed a group called Corridor 67 to promote the need for a high-type highway in west central Illinois that would enhance the region's economic development potential.

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) initiated corridor feasibility studies for sections of U.S. 67 between Alton and the Quad Cities in 1990 and completed the study in 1995. The study concluded that an improved U.S. 67 would provide the route continuity necessary to maximize economic opportunity in western Illinois.

Purpose and Need: The purpose of the Proposed Action is to provide a transportation facility between Jacksonville and Macomb, Illinois that provides improved transportation continuity, enhanced economic stability and development, upgraded rural access, and improved travel efficiency while connecting the project area to other major transportation systems and communities in western Illinois. One of the major goals of the Illinois transportation system is to enhance the state's economic advantage, expand economic bases in urban and rural areas, and retain existing economic bases and employment. A system of new and improved roadway facilities that link major economic markets is planned to strengthen the regional and statewide economic future. The U.S. 67 improvement project between Macomb and Jacksonville is part of a statewide plan to improve regional transportation continuity and enhance the linkage of west central Illinois to major economic markets. This improvement will connect sections of highway to the north and south that are currently either under construction as 4-lane highways or are in the planning phase.

2. DECISION

The Selected Alternative is Build Alternative E as described below. The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) decision concludes that the Selected Alternative: 1) best satisfies Purpose and Need, 2) poses the least impacts to the natural and human environment, 3) has been selected based on

processes in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable requirements, and 4) may be advanced. The FHWA's decision is based upon full consideration of information contained in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), public input received at various public information meetings held over a period of years, and public hearings held on August 8 and 9, 2001. The decision is also based on public and agency comments pertaining to the proposed action, the other alternatives considered, the respective environmental consequences, and consideration of regional businesses.

The Selected Alternative involves an improvement to existing U.S. 67 in Morgan, Cass, Schuyler, and McDonough Counties, which extends about 99 kilometers (61.6 miles) from the Jacksonville West Bypass, east of Chapin, north to U.S. 136 near Macomb. The Selected Alternative includes the reconstruction and widening of existing U.S. 67 to a 4-lane divided expressway with partial-access control. Grade-separated interchanges would be provided at IL Route 104 near Meredosia; 6th Street at Beardstown; IL Route 103/100 north of the Illinois River; and U.S. 24 at Rushville. All other crossroads would have at-grade intersections with U.S. 67. The Selected Alternative would provide direct access to the expressway from homes and farm operations, except in the vicinity of grade-separated interchanges. Some movements to and from residences would be right-turn out/right-turn in only. Median crossovers would be provided at an average of about 800 meters (0.5 mile) apart to allow for U-turns. Commercial access directly to the expressway would not be permitted, but would be provided at the nearest crossroad.

The selected alignment varies slightly from the existing 2-lane highway to accommodate current geometric design standards, including a wider roadway cross-section, a higher design speed, and improved sight distances and safety conditions. It also varies from the existing alignment in order to avoid residences, natural resources, and cultural resources.

The typical roadway section would have two travel lanes in each direction separated by a grass median. The typical right-of-way width required for the proposed action would be 90 meters (295 feet); typical pavement width would be 7.2 meters (24 feet); and typical median width would be 15 meters (50 feet) and would consist of paved shoulders and grassed areas. The typical paved shoulder width would be 3 meters (10 feet) for the right shoulder and 1.8 meters (6 feet) for the left shoulder. Roadside ditches would be provided for drainage as appropriate. The overall right-of-way needs would be slightly greater in hilly terrain where larger roadway cuts or fills are required, as well as in low lying areas where sizable fills are required to raise the highway above flood level.

The proposed action is described in greater detail in Section 3 in the FEIS. The DEIS and FEIS are available for review at the IDOT office located at 126 East Ash, Springfield, Illinois 62704.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Alternatives Selected for Evaluation in the DEIS: Three alternatives were evaluated in detail in the DEIS and FEIS: 1) the No-Build Alternative, 2) Build Alternative A, and 3) Build Alternative E. (See Section 3.1 of the FEIS for a full description of these alternatives.)

No-Build Alternative: The No-Build Alternative would result in no new major construction. Improvements implemented under this alternative would be limited to short-term restoration activities (maintenance improvements) needed to ensure continued use of U.S. 67 between Jacksonville and Macomb. The design of the existing roadway, including location, geometric features, and current capacity limitations, would remain unchanged.

Under the No-Build Alternative, some minor improvements could be anticipated at high-volume intersections. Generally, there would be no need for any additional right-of-way for the No-Build Alternative. Under the No-Build Alternative, committed improvements (as detailed in the 1998-2002 Highway Improvement Program) would still be undertaken. Committed improvements include resurfacing and intersection improvements at U.S. 67 and its intersection with IL Route 100/104; and rehabilitation of the bridge over Mauvaise Terre Creek on U.S. 67.

Build Alternative A: Build Alternative A would begin 0.6 kilometer (0.37 mile) east of Arenzville-Concord Road. The roadway would extend north to the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad tracks. The alignment would parallel the tracks through Concord, then follow a northwestern path along the southeast side of Mud Creek, passing through the bluffs area, bypassing Arenzville on the west. The proposed roadway would intersect Arenzville-Meredosia Road about 2.4 kilometers (1.5 miles) west of Arenzville. The alignment would continue north until it rejoined the railroad tracks north of Hagener Road, paralleling the railroad tracks to a point south of Clear Creek. From there, it would continue in a north-northwesterly direction, cross over existing U.S. 67 south of Beardstown, and connect with the Beardstown Bypass in the vicinity of Drainage Road. Build Alternative A from Arenzville Road to the Beardstown Bypass is all new alignment. North of Beardstown, Build Alternative A would generally follow the existing U.S. 67 alignment to the northern terminus at U.S. 136 near Macomb. At-grade interchanges would be provided along Build Alternative A at several locations including the location that the alignment diverges from U.S. 67 on the south; 6th St. at Beardstown; IL Route 103/100 north of the Illinois River; and U.S. 24 at Rushville.

Build Alternative E: Build Alternative E generally follows U.S. 67 from east of Chapin to U.S. 136 near Macomb. Four grade-separated interchanges are provided at IL Route 104 near Meredosia; 6th St. at Beardstown; IL Route 103/100 north of the Illinois River; and U.S. 24 at Rushville. All other crossroads would have at-grade intersections with U.S. 67. Build Alternative E involves the total reconstruction and widening of existing U.S. 67. This alignment varies slightly from the existing 2-lane highway to accommodate current geometric design standards, including a wider roadway cross-section, a higher design speed, and improved sight distances and safety conditions. It also varies from the existing alignment in order to avoid residences, natural resources, and cultural resources.

Comparative Analysis of Alternatives: The project Purpose and Need serves as the basis for comparing the Build and No-Build Alternatives. The build alternatives selected for a detailed evaluation (Build Alternatives A and E) emerged from the screening process as the alternatives that best satisfy the project Purpose and Need. Both build alternatives would improve travel efficiency with a no-stop, 4-lane expressway that would relieve traffic congestion through small communities and along steep grades. The average crash rate for the total length of U.S. 67 within the study area for the three-year period of 1991 to 1993 was 1.23 crashes per million vehicle miles driven. This is 40 percent greater than the statewide average crash rate for 2-lane rural highways during the same three-year period. Illinois data indicates that the build alternatives would reduce total crash rates by approximately 26 percent by converting a 2-lane rural highway to a 4-lane divided facility. Additionally, the build alternatives would improve travel continuity through the project area and the region with an improvement that is consistent with an upgrade of the same type extending from Alton to the Quad Cities. Both of these build alternatives also satisfied the objective of improving north-south travel in a part of the state that is currently distant from high-type facilities (i.e. freeways or expressways). The build alternatives also improve rural access with improved travel times and access for the home to work trip, emergency response, and other essential trips. Lastly, the improved roadway would enhance the overall access to the area, thereby improving its economic stability and competitive position. The No-Build Alternative would not satisfy any of the Purpose and Need objectives.

A comparison between the features and impacts of Build Alternatives A and E is shown in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1
Comparison of Build Alternatives

Impacts	Build Alternative A	Build Alternative E
Length - kilometers (miles)	91.9 (57.1)	99.1 (61.6)
Total Right-of-Way Required - hectares (acres)	987 (2,440)	1068 (2,640)
Amount of Existing Right-of-Way Used - hectares (acres)	165 (410)	287 (710)
Amount of New Right-of-Way Required - hectares (acres)	821 (2,030)	781 (1,930)
Total Right-of-Way that is Agricultural Land – hectares (acres)	756 (1,870)	696 (1,720)
Total Affected Farms	153	169
Severed Farms	48	25
Displacements		
Residential/Farmsteads	19	40
Other Structures (sheds, barns, etc.)	54	83
Commercial	1	1
Public (Governmental) Facilities	1	1
Area of Wetlands Impacted - hectares (acres)	16.3 (40)	13.0 (32)
Natural Areas Impacted	2	1
Threatened and Endangered Species	8	5
Cost (\$ million) including new Illinois River Bridge	\$520	\$560

A summary of the key issues include:

- *Right-of-way* – Build Alternative E would utilize more existing right-of-way; the new right-of-way required for Build Alternative E would be 40 hectares (100 acres) (5%) less than for Build Alternative A.
- *Agricultural Impact* – Build Alternative E would require taking 60 fewer hectares (150 fewer acres) of agricultural land than Build Alternative A, but would affect 16 more farms than Build Alternative A. Farm severances would be 92% greater (23 more farms) with Build Alternative A.
- *Displacements* – Residential and farmstead displacements would be approximately twice as many with Build Alternative E than with Build Alternative A. There would also be a larger number of other structures (sheds, barns, etc.) displaced by Build Alternative E.
- *Environmental Impacts* – Build Alternative A would affect more wetlands, natural areas, and threatened and endangered species than Build Alternative E.
- *Length* – Construction of Build Alternative A would reduce the trip length between Jacksonville and Beardstown by 7.2 kilometers (4.5 miles).
- *Cost* – The total cost of Build Alternative A would be approximately \$40 million (7%) less than for Build Alternative E.

Selected Alternative: Following the circulation of the DEIS, public and agency comments were received and addressed. The selection of Build Alternative E was based on:

- Less new land would be required since Build Alternative E uses more of the existing right-of-way. Build Alternative E requires 40 fewer hectares (100 fewer acres) than Build Alternative A.
- Fewer hectares (60 fewer hectares or 150 fewer acres) of agricultural land would be taken by Build Alternative E.
- Fewer environmental impacts to wetlands, natural areas, and threatened and endangered species by Build Alternative E.
- Build Alternative E was the clear favorite among local communities and key resource agencies as well as being favored by the general public.

4. MITIGATION AND COMMITMENTS

All practical measures to minimize the potential environmental impacts caused by Build Alternative E will be taken. The mitigation measures proposed for this project are described in the following section.

Wetlands: In compliance with state and federal regulations, measures have been implemented to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands. However, there is no practical alternative to the Selected Alternative that does not result in some wetland loss.

Compensation of unavoidable wetland impacts through restoration or creation will be undertaken to offset project related losses. The mitigation ratio for each potential wetland impact for the U.S. 67 project is based on the approved IDOT *Wetlands Action Plan*. The project constitutes a Standard Review Action that has been coordinated with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and for which project-specific compensation criteria would be met. Preliminary wetland compensation goals have been developed for the U.S. 67 project following the guidelines stated in the Illinois Interagency Wetland Policy Act. Generally, the guidance establishes replacement requirements that vary depending on whether mitigation occurs onsite, offsite (in-basin), or offsite (out-of-basin). Other factors, such as the presence of state or federal-listed species, classification as an Illinois Natural Area, or a Floristic Quality Index (FQI) score of greater than or equal to 20, also determine compensation goals.

Wetland impacts occur within three drainage basins and involve several wetland types. Some wetland areas also contain state and federal listed species, which may be affected directly or indirectly.

Preliminary wetland compensation goals for the U.S. 67 project are as follows:

- In-kind wetland compensation will be provided on the basis of wetland function and type classification.
- Individual wetland impacts less than 1.2 hectares (3.0 acres) in size will be mitigated at a ratio of 1.5 to 1 (onsite), 2.0 to 1 offsite (in-basin), and 3.0 to 1 offsite (out-of-basin).
- Individual wetland impacts greater than 1.2 hectares (3.0 acres) in size will be mitigated at a ratio of 2.5 to 1 (onsite), 4.0 to 1 offsite (in-basin), and 5.5 to 1 offsite (out-of-basin).

- Wetlands that contain a state or federal-listed species will be compensated in-kind at a ratio of 5.5:1.
- Sites that have been designated state natural areas or have an FQI score greater than 20 will be compensated at a ratio of 5.5:1.

Wetland compensation needs, for the Selected Alternative, based on the proposed wetland goals, is estimated to be 56.69 hectares (140.07 acres), see Table 2.

TABLE 2
Wetland Compensation Requirements for U.S. 67

Wetland Unit	Compensation Area *	
	Hectare	Acre
Emergent	32.30	79.80
Palustrine Unconsolidated Bottom (PUB)	0.21	0.52
Forested	22.59	55.82
Farmed Wetland	0.00	0.00
Other	1.59	3.93
Total	56.69	140.07

* Compensation area based on total wetland impacts

The IDOT is proposing to compensate for the project’s wetland impacts at the LaGrange Wetland Bank. The LaGrange Wetland Bank is located in the northeast corner of Brown County, Illinois, and is currently under development. The property is approximately 666 hectares (1,645 acres) in size and is owned by IDOT. Additional site details can be found in Section 4 of the FEIS.

Much of the LaGrange Wetland Bank was converted from wetland to agricultural use prior to the Food Securities Act of 1985 and is creditable if restored to wetland function. The LaGrange Wetland Bank also has a number of natural attributes that make it an excellent candidate site for conducting a large-scale wetland restoration for the purpose of providing wetland mitigation for IDOT projects. The site contains the federal threatened decurrent false aster (*Boltonia decurrens*) and receives heavy usage from a number of shore birds, wading birds, and waterfowl.

A site development plan for the LaGrange Wetland Bank has been prepared. Under the plan, existing wetlands would be preserved and enhanced. Farmed wetlands would be enhanced and maintained as emergent wetlands. Prior converted land would be restored to either emergent, scrub-shrub or forested wetlands. The arrangement of wetland types is based on soils information, pre-settlement vegetation, and certified wetland determinations.

The site plan includes restoring wetland hydrology with a connection to the Illinois River. The connection would be opened and closed to emulate the original hydrograph of the Illinois River. The existing levee system would be retained and a number of spillways would be placed in the levee to convey peak discharges and prevent levee failure.

Threatened and Endangered Species: To the extent practical, areas supporting threatened and endangered species were avoided. Complete avoidance of listed species was not possible. Because the Selected Alternative would affect federal and state-listed species, IDOT prepared and submitted a Biological Assessment/Detailed Action Report for the U.S. 67 project in accordance with Section 7 of the

U.S. Endangered Species Act and Section 11 of the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act (520 ILCS 10/1 *et seq*) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and IDNR. Both IDNR and the USFWS reviewed the Biological Assessment/Detailed Action Report. The USFWS offered no additional comments pertaining to threatened and endangered species based on their review. The IDNR offered several comments concerning impacts to special habitat (i.e. Illinois Natural Area Inventory [INAI] sites). Among these included further efforts by IDOT to avoid direct impact. If such avoidance is not possible, IDNR has requested compensation in the form of funding for special management techniques that would enhance the habitat at a site near the project. Based on the information in the Biological Assessment and IDOT's commitment to explore special management techniques, IDNR has closed consultation under the Illinois Endangered Species Act.

The following steps will be taken to compensate for listed species that will be affected adversely by the Selected Alternative.

Decurrent False Aster: It has been determined that the population of decurrent false aster will not be affected directly by the Selected Alternative. However, decurrent false aster does have a tendency to appear at different locations on an annual basis and could appear at a shifted location at a later date. Before construction begins in this section, the project area will be surveyed for the species. If the species is found within the right-of-way, seeds and root stocks will be collected and transplanted to the LaGrange Wetland Bank. Coordination with IDNR and USFWS will occur if this action is undertaken.

Patterson Bindweed: Patterson bindweed, a state endangered plant species, would be impacted by the Selected Alternative. The species is a perennial from a deep taproot. One individual plant has been identified within the project area. Mitigation for this species would include transplanting the affected population to suitable habitat on the existing right-of-way. The transplant site will be identified and monitored, and the results coordinated with IDNR.

Illinois Chorus Frog: The Illinois chorus frog would be affected by the Selected Alternative. The sites that would be affected by the Selected Alternative are assumed to be breeding sites. The frogs spend more time in non-breeding habitats than in breeding habitats; any discussion of impacts is biased toward breeding habitat. The relationship between the frogs' movements and distance between their non-breeding and breeding habitats is unknown.

The distribution of the chorus frogs on the Illinois River floodplain south of Beardstown is mainly based on Beltz (1993) and limited surveys conducted for this project between 1995 and 2001. The actual dynamics of frog movement across the floodplain are unknown.

The IDOT will be changing the current state and condition of the areas where the chorus frogs are thought to occur with construction of the Selected Alternative. This activity will involve fill for a new highway and approach ramps to a new bridge structure over the Illinois River as well as excavation for drainage ditches. These activities may result in the Incidental Take (injury or death) of Illinois chorus frogs during the breeding or non-breeding part of the frog's life cycle. Some Illinois chorus frogs using the area could be buried and killed when fill is placed for the highway and approach ramps, or the frogs could be uncovered when the area is excavated for drainage ditches.

Under the Illinois Endangered Species Act, an Incidental Take Permit is required when a state action would result in the death or injury of any Illinois-listed animal species. An Incidental Take will be authorized by IDNR only after submittal of a Conservation Plan. The IDOT and IDNR have developed a Conservation Plan addressing a number of aspects: the impact of the proposed taking; measures to minimize and mitigate the impact; funding that will be available to undertake

environmental mitigation; alternative actions that would avoid potential takes; data and information that show the proposed taking will not reduce the likelihood of the survival of the species; and an agreement to carry out the elements of the plan. The following is a summary of the key elements of the plan.

Illinois Chorus Frog Conservation Plan: There are five areas of potential impact to the Illinois chorus frog. The number of frogs currently using the area is unknown. The IDOT will initiate further studies in the Spring of 2003. The monitoring efforts should help to estimate usage both for breeding and non-breeding portion of this species' life cycle.

Measures will be taken during the design phase to minimize the impacts to chorus frogs where the species are known to occur. The minimum safety standards will be implemented, which includes reducing the median width from 15 meters (49.5 feet) to 7 meters (23.1 feet) thereby reducing state right-of-way acquisition and construction limits. The horizontal curvature of the expressway design near the Beardstown Marsh will be reduced to the minimum safety requirement. These efforts will decrease the footprint and fill for the highway thus reducing potential impacts to the chorus frog habitat.

The IDOT will purchase property that contains suitable habitat for the chorus frog and transfer title to IDNR. The land acquisition is anticipated in 2003. The 23.6-hectare (59-acre) parcel is located approximately three miles south of the City of Beardstown adjacent to the Lewis Landfill, a registered Land and Water Conservation (LAWCON) site. This property is known to contain habitat for several threatened and endangered species including the Illinois chorus frog and the Illinois mud turtle, as well as similar habitat to that of the nearby Beardstown Marsh. Upon acquisition of this property, IDOT will provide \$20,000 to IDNR to assist with site rehabilitation and management responsibilities of the property (see attached January 21, 2003 letter from IDNR). A cooperative agreement between IDNR and IDOT for transferring the title of the property will insure preservation and protection of the site in perpetuity. The IDOT will purchase a strip of land along the west side of the parcel for right-of-way access to the 23.6-hectare (59-acre) parcel from Jett Road located to the north of the property.

Under the transfer agreement, a management and monitoring plan will be developed and administered by Natural Heritage Biologists with IDNR that have the knowledge and expertise capable of conducting projects of this magnitude. Management techniques will include periodic prescribed burning to encourage native plant vigor, herbicide use to eliminate woody encroachment, and management activities to maintain the integrity of the site. Monitoring will be performed every Spring for the entire site for a period of five years. The preservation of this parcel will correlate with two other adjacent LAWCON sites and will serve to protect the Illinois chorus frog species and increase the likelihood of its survival. This site will also be used for the compensation for the unavoidable impacts to the Beardstown Marsh, an INAI site.

Illinois Natural Area Inventory (INAI): The Beardstown Marsh, a designated INAI site, will be impacted by the Selected Alternative. The associated wetland impacts would be compensated as part of wetland mitigation. The IDNR has requested additional compensation for the balance of the INAI site impacts (1.1 Hectares, 2.8 acres). As mentioned, to mitigate for the unavoidable impacts to the INAI site, IDOT has agreed to purchase and preserve a 23.6-hectare (59-acre) parcel adjacent to the Lewis Landfill. This property contains habitat similar to the Beardstown Marsh Natural Area. Upon acquisition of this property, IDOT will ask for cooperation from IDNR to assist with management responsibilities to insure preservation and protection of the site in perpetuity. The IDOT will provide IDNR a total of \$20,000 for the purpose of site rehabilitation (see attached January 21, 2003 letter from IDNR). A cooperative

agreement between IDNR and IDOT will transfer the title of the property after land acquisition. The land acquisition is programmed for fiscal year 2004.

Construction: A traffic management plan will be developed and implemented during the construction phase of the project to provide reliable access to agricultural fields, residences, businesses, community facilities and services, and local roads. Local roads that will be intersected by the Selected Alternative will remain open to traffic with minor interruptions during construction. The IDOT will coordinate construction activities, sequencing, and traffic management plans with fire, police, and emergency rescue services to minimize delays and response times during the construction period.

Displacements: It is anticipated that there will be 40 residential relocations, 1 commercial and 1 public facility displacement. The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, provides for payment of just compensation of private property acquired for a Federal-aid project. Offers of just compensation for residential and business properties will be based upon approved estimates of fair market value supported and documented by professional real estate appraisals obtained by the acquiring agency, IDOT. In addition to the just compensation for the acquired property, the Act also provides for certain relocation assistance and payment to displaced homeowners, residential tenants, and businesses that are required to relocate because of the project. The IDOT will offer and provide relocation assistance to each displaced family and business. Each displaced family and business will be contacted by IDOT in order to address specific needs and problems that any displaced family or business may have. Displaced families will be eligible for moving costs and may also be eligible for replacement housing payments. Displaced businesses will be eligible for searching and moving costs to relocate to a replacement business site. The IDOT acquisition and relocation agents will be available to present and explain both the acquisition program and the relocation program to each displaced family and business.

Borrow and Disposal: Sizeable amounts of borrow will be required to build the roadway. Borrow sites are contractor-furnished prior to construction, and the use of dredge material from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers dredge disposal sites and dredge operations is being considered as an option where feasible. The contractor would dispose of unusable excavated material in accordance with state and local regulations and other special provisions to ensure protection of wetlands and waterways. All waste and demolition material from the project will also be disposed of in accordance with applicable regulations. All sites are screened for environmental resources via the Environmental Survey Request process.

Water Quality and Hydrology

Erosion and Sediment Control: According to the IDOT *Joint Design/Construction Procedure Memorandum on Erosion and Sediment Control*, proper erosion control methods would be employed to minimize erosion and sedimentation. Erosion control devices would be installed before the onset of construction work that could cause erosion. Temporary or permanent erosion control methods would include silt fences, retention basins, detention ponds, interceptor ditches, seeding and sodding, rip-rap on exposed banks, erosion mats, and mulching. Disturbance of streamside vegetation would be kept to a minimum. Disturbed areas would be seeded or stabilized upon completion of construction. Construction activities near special or sensitive streams and creeks could be conducted during low or normal flow periods if necessary.

Structure Size: Structure sizing would be performed in accordance with state and federal guidelines regarding floodplain encroachment and hydraulic capacity. All new structures would comply with these guidelines.

Drainage: Drainage systems, including ditches and farmland drain tiles, would be maintained,

restored, or re-established in a manner that would not impound water. Retention facilities may be considered in locations adjacent to streams, creeks, and wetlands to intercept highway runoff before entering the waterway. Construction staging areas would be selected in accordance with special provisions to ensure that the staging areas would not adversely affect water resources.

Hazardous Materials: Accidental spills of hazardous materials and wastes during construction or operation of the facility would require special response measures. These occurrences would be handled in accordance with local government response procedures. The first response is typically through the local fire departments and emergency service personnel to ensure public safety and to contain the substance to prevent harm to the environment. Depending on the nature of the spill, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency would be notified to provide additional instructions regarding cleanup.

Bridge Demolition: The method of demolition of the existing U.S. 67 bridge crossing the Illinois River has not been determined. Possible methods include cut and removal, or the use of explosives. The latter would require more extensive water quality protection measures including the containment of sediments and other materials to the smallest practical area. The dispersion of particulate matter with the use of explosives is a stated concern by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). Containing particulate dispersion from the explosive detonation is difficult; therefore, as a practical matter, removing the bridge with explosives in sections would control dispersion. Demolition of the bridge by cut and removal methods would use the following measures to protect the Illinois River's water quality:

- Protective shielding could be installed during deck removal to prevent debris from falling into the river.
- Truss spans could be cut and removed in sections by barges.
- Bridge girders could be cut and removed in sections.
- Piers and substructures would be removed to at least 0.3 meter (1 foot) below the ground line. Cofferdams, like those used for pier construction, could be used to access the existing piers and to minimize disturbance to the river bottom.

New Bridge Construction: During construction of the new Illinois River Bridge, care would be taken to minimize environmental impacts. As required in Section 107.01 of IDOT's *Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction*, contractors constructing the Illinois River crossing would at all times observe and comply with all federal and state laws, local ordinances, and regulations that in any manner affect the conduct of the work.

Waste Disposal: Waste materials generated during construction will be collected and disposed of in an environmentally sound manner. These materials could include waste concrete, asphalt, miscellaneous construction materials, and demolished bridge materials. Methods of disposal could include reuse, recycle, or permanent disposal. Asphalt materials may be stockpiled and reused for the new roadway overlay. Bridge steel may be sold to a recycler. In lieu of either reusing or recycling, material could be permanently disposed of at an approved landfill facility.

Agriculture: Each farm property adjacent to the Selected Alternative will be provided field access to and from U.S. 67. Median openings would be provided at all public road intersections as well as other locations to allow median crossovers.

5. COMMENTS ON THE FEIS

The Notice of Availability for the FEIS was published by the USEPA in the June 7, 2002 Federal Register with a close of public comments date of July 8, 2002. No substantive comments were received from the general public during the circulation of the FEIS. Two letters were received from federal agencies, one from the U.S. Coast Guard, and the other from the USEPA. Copies of these letters are in Appendix A.

U.S. Coast Guard Comments: The U.S. Coast Guard expressed concern regarding who is responsible for obtaining the Water Quality Certification (WQC). The U.S. Coast Guard states that they are responsible for ensuring that the applicant for a Coast Guard Bridge permit obtains the WQC from the appropriate issuing authority and that the applicant includes a copy of the WQC with the permit application.

Response to Comments: The comment has been noted. As the applicant, IDOT will ensure that the WQC will be included with the Coast Guard Bridge permit application.

USEPA Comments: The USEPA stated that they concur with the preferred alternative as described in the FEIS. Based on information in the FEIS, the USEPA has determined that their concerns regarding the Purpose and Need, the choices of the alignments, and the groundwater quality impacts were adequately addressed. However, they retain concern for surface water quality impacts that may be caused by the explosive demolition of the Illinois River Bridge. The USEPA recommends that a commitment be made to mitigating particulate matter releases from the demolition operation, and properly disposing demolition debris from the Illinois River Bridge. In addition, they remain concerned about the preferred alternative's alignment impacts on the Beardstown Marsh INAI site because of sensitive natural resources present at the site. They suggest that an alternate alignment be considered in order to avoid impacting the Beardstown Marsh INAI site. However, they state if an alternate alignment cannot be implemented, then steps should be taken to coordinate with IDNR in order to obtain funding for special management techniques for nearby sites.

Response to Comments: Demolition concerns have been addressed in Section 4 of this Record of Decision (ROD) under, **Water Quality and Hydrology** and **Waste Disposal**.

Concern about the Beardstown Marsh INAI site is noted. After extensive evaluation of all alternatives for the location of the interchange, the impact remains unavoidable. This determination has been made based on the following discussion. The IDOT has determined that the most recent conceptual plan to the highway adjacent to the Beardstown Marsh INAI site was designed at the request of the City of Beardstown. The city requested IDOT provide better access to the downtown economic area at this location. Great effort was taken to minimize impacts to the natural area without compromising the safety of the traveling public. All alternatives for the location of the interchange were evaluated, but were dismissed due to compromising safety standards and greater impact to sensitive habitats. Therefore, it has been determined that impacts to the Beardstown Marsh INAI site are unavoidable. However, IDOT and IDNR are developing a compensation plan for special management techniques, see Section 4 of this ROD under **Illinois Natural Area Inventory**.

6. CONCLUSION

The FHWA has reached its decision based upon information and analysis contained in the FEIS and outlined in this document. The FHWA's decision concludes the Selected Alternative, Build Alternative

E, as described in this document: 1) best satisfies Purpose and Need, 2) poses the least impacts to the natural and human environment, 3) has been selected based on processes in compliance with NEPA and other applicable requirements, and 4) may be advanced.

Date: March 6, 2003

Signed: /s/ Norman R. Stoner
Norman R. Stoner, P.E.
Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration

Appendix A
