

# Inter-LINK

Issue 1 • August 2010



## Message from IDOT

*I am pleased to announce that the Illinois Department of Transportation has initiated the I-80 Phase I Study. The study team will examine existing conditions and deficiencies of the corridor, safety and capacity issues, future transportation needs, and the impacts of any proposed improvements on the affected communities, counties and environment. Our study includes an extensive public involvement program that provides numerous opportunities for meaningful participation for all interested stakeholders and the public at large.*

*We look forward to beginning the process to identify and address the needs of this important regional section of I-80, a significant link in the nation's interstate system.*

Sincerely,

*Diane M. O'Keefe, P.E.*  
Deputy Director of Highways  
Region One Engineer

## I-80 STUDY STARTS, Public Input Encouraged

The Illinois Department of Transportation has recently initiated a Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Study (Phase I) for Interstate 80, from Ridge Road to U.S. Route 30. The I-80 study area begins at Ridge Road on the west and ends at U.S. Route 30 to the east, a distance of approximately 16 miles. The corridor encompasses three counties (Kendall, Grundy and Will), and traverses six municipalities (Minooka, Channahon, Shorewood, Rockdale, Joliet and New Lenox). The study area is both culturally and economically diverse, and consists of a mixture of land uses including agricultural, residential, commercial and industrial with rural, suburban and urban characteristics. The roadway crosses four waterways including the Des Plaines River, and includes eight interchanges.

Interstate 80 is an important link in the nation's interstate system, and is the second longest interstate highway in the U.S., connecting downtown San

Francisco, California to Teaneck, New Jersey, and the first to be completed coast to coast. Much of I-80 across northern Illinois was constructed in the early 1960's, with the route through south suburban Chicagoland opened to traffic by 1964. I-80 is also the interstate that most closely follows the previous Lincoln Highway route, the first auto trail to cross the country. The facility is a major route for interstate commerce, with a significant level of truck traffic.

The I-80 Phase I Study will take a detailed look at the current and future transportation needs of the corridor. The study will include an analysis of existing roadway and bridge deficiencies, safety and capacity issues, and future transportation needs, and includes an extensive public involvement process. IDOT will continue to reach out and engage stakeholders throughout the Phase I study process through a variety of opportunities and methods intended to maximize public participation in the identification of project solutions. ■



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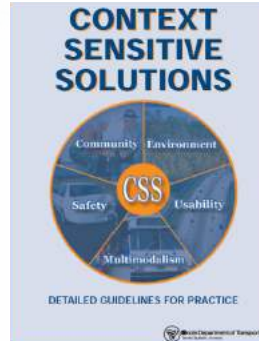
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# IDOT ENCOURAGES PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

## What is CSS and why is it important?

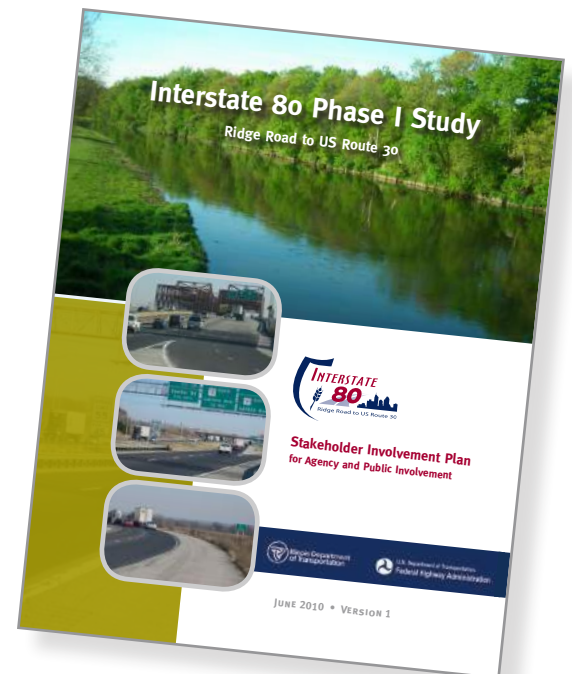
The I-80 Phase I Study has been designated by IDOT as a CSS, or Context Sensitive Solutions, project. CSS is a collaborative public involvement approach that engages all project stakeholders and uses a flexible, creative design approach to develop, construct and maintain cost effective transportation facilities. A stakeholder is defined as anyone who could be affected by the project and has a stake in its outcome. This inclusive process contributes to the selection of an improvement design that fits into its surroundings, or its "context". CSS addresses all modes of transportation, and strives to preserve scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources while maintaining safety and mobility.



The purpose of CSS is to gather and duly consider project input from all interested parties, by promoting extensive public involvement and frequent communication with stakeholders. A detailed program is developed and tailored to the specific outreach needs of each project, compiled in a document known as the Stakeholder Involvement Plan, or SIP. The information collected through the CSS process, coupled with detailed technical analysis, form the basis for ultimate project decisions made by the joint lead agencies for the project, IDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

## A plan promoting stakeholder involvement

As part of the overall CSS process for the I-80 Study, a Stakeholder Involvement Plan, or SIP, has been developed and sets forth the many opportunities for public involvement and participation in the study. The SIP serves as a blueprint for defining the outreach tools and methods, identifies the roles and responsibilities of study participants, and establishes the timing of activities planned throughout the study to engage the public in the process. The SIP also provides the forum for communicating the decision-making process between the public, local agencies and government officials to identify transportation solutions. The I-80 Stakeholder Involvement Plan is available for review on the project website at [www.I-80Will.com](http://www.I-80Will.com).



## Website provides detailed, current project information

An important and effective public involvement tool is the development of the project website at the onset of the study. The site is designed to communicate and share information about the project and study process in a timely manner, as it becomes available. It will be maintained and updated throughout the duration of the project and will include project and meeting information, project publications and reports, mailing list sign-up, and opportunities for the public to comment on the project via a comment page, throughout the study process. Please visit the project website at [www.I-80Will.com](http://www.I-80Will.com) to learn more about the project and the opportunities to stay continually involved as the study progresses. ■



*A critical element of project success and acceptance is effective stakeholder involvement, from the very early stages of the study, through and including the identification and approval of solutions.*

*When IDOT determines that potential improvements could have substantial local impact, the project receives a CSS, or Context Sensitive Solutions, designation.*

*This designation elevates the required level of public participation and stakeholder involvement.*

# Groups Created to Facilitate Input



## Project Study Group (PSG)

• IDOT • FHWA • Project Consultant Team

### Corridor Advisory Group (CAG)

- Community and County Leaders



### Technical Task Force (TTF)

- Environmental
- Transportation/Engineering
- Land Use/Economic Development



### Corridor Interest Group (CIG)

- Reflecting Diversity of Corridor



Due to the size and diversity of the I-80 study area, IDOT has created an overall Project Working Group structure intended to facilitate full participation and representation of the various communities and interests located throughout the corridor.

The Project Study Group, or PSG, is comprised of a multidisciplinary team of representatives from IDOT, the Federal Highway Administration, and the project consultant, HBP, and its sub-consultant team.

The PSG will guide the study and provide technical oversight and expertise for key project elements including study process, agency procedures and standards, and technical approaches. IDOT and FHWA will serve as the lead agencies for the project, and make ultimate project decisions.

#### Several important PSG responsibilities include:

- Managing the project development process;
- Identifying and resolving project issues; and
- Promoting partnerships with stakeholders to address project needs.

To assist with the development of the I-80 Phase I study, IDOT has created a Corridor Advisory Group, or CAG. The CAG consists of the chief elected officials or their representatives of the six municipalities (Minooka, Channahon, Shorewood, Rockdale, Joliet, and New Lenox) and the three

counties (Kendall, Grundy, and Will) within the study corridor. The purpose of the CAG is to provide input on the development of the Purpose and Need statement and the improvement alternatives to be evaluated.

#### CAG responsibilities include:

- Providing input to the study process;
- Assisting with the development of the project Purpose and Need; and
- Evaluating and screening the range of alternatives to be advanced for further study, including the recommended alternative.

In addition to the work of the CAG, a Technical Task Force, or TTF, has been created to provide a means for obtain-

ing structured input from a variety of technical experts. The TTF will generally be comprised of transportation and engineering officials, economic development organizations or councils, land use planning agencies, local municipal and county staff, and environmental groups.

#### Three TTF categories (Environmental, Transportation/Engineering and Land Use/Economic Development) will:

- Focus on technical aspects of the project development process; and
- Provide external subject-specific information and input with respect to the identified categories.



# One-on-One Meetings Held with Local Agencies

In an effort to gain the local, on-the-ground understanding of the I-80 study area and the issues important to key stakeholders, the study team has held one-on-one meetings to kick off the project with the following organizations:

- *The Villages of Minooka, Channahon, Shorewood, Rockdale, and New Lenox;*
- *The City of Joliet;*
- *The Townships of Joliet and New Lenox; and*
- *Kendall, Grundy and Will Counties.*

At these meetings the study team provided an overview of the project, requested specific data or information that the organizations may have that is pertinent to the project, solicited suggestions for participants on the various Project Working Groups, and encouraged discussion of specific issues and concerns. A significant amount of valuable information was obtained that will assist the study team with project development. Additional one-on-one meetings may be held throughout the study, if requested.

Due to the diversity of the study area, a Corridor Interest Group, or CIG, will also be established to provide opportunities for study participation by the region's culturally and economically diverse population. The membership could include:

- Neighborhood organizations;
- City Council/Village Board and County Board members whose districts serve the study area;
- Local community organizations;
- Special interest groups; and
- Residents

## The responsibilities of the CIG members include:

- *Representing the viewpoint of non-CAG or TTF project working group members; and*
- *To identify special interests within the I-80 study area.*

The Project Working Groups will generally meet as one group that will interface directly with the PSG. The meetings will be designed to encourage timely and meaningful opportunities for participation. However, based on need, there may be opportunities for these groups to meet independently from the entire group to provide specific policy input and technical data and analysis. ■

## GETTING INVOLVED!

There will be many opportunities for you to become involved in the I-80 Phase I Study. Project newsletters (like this one) will be distributed to all stakeholders and anyone requesting to be added to the mailing list to coincide with key project milestones, and public meetings will be held throughout the project.

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

- **Newsletters** • **Website: [www.I-80Will.com](http://www.I-80Will.com)**
- **One-on-One Meetings** • **Small Group Meetings**
  - **Project Working Groups**  
**(Corridor Advisory Group, Technical Task Force, Corridor Interest Group)**
  - **Public Meetings**

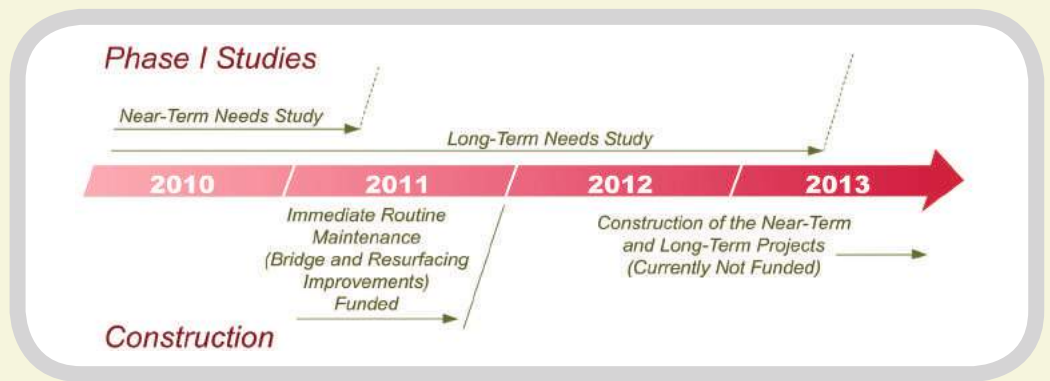


# Project Phases and Study Process

## I-80 Project Phases

This Interstate 80 study includes up to three separate components which include Long Term Reconstruction Needs, Near Term Rehabilitation Needs and Routine Maintenance Needs. The project will include Phase I Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Studies for both near term and long term improvements, and Phase II design plans for the identified near term needs. The Phase I study for the near term improvements is expected to take approximately one year and the long term improvement study approximately three years.

Interstate 80 was designed and built approximately 50 years ago. The roadway and bridges need to be reconstructed in order to provide additional long term service. As a result, a Long Term Reconstruction Needs preliminary engineering and environmental (Phase I) study will be prepared which will look to address the existing as well as future needs of the corridor. Any reconstruction of Interstate 80 is likely to cost 100's of millions of dollars and will likely require many years to implement. At this time, a Long Term Reconstruction Needs project is not included in the Department's Fiscal Year 2011 to 2016 Proposed Highway Improvement Program, but will be considered in future programs based on funding availability and project readiness. Completing the Phase I study is an important first step in securing future funding for long term improvements.



This long term needs Phase I study is anticipated to take three years to complete.

Given it may take many years to completely reconstruct Interstate 80, IDOT anticipates preparing a Phase I study identifying potential Near Term pavement and bridge rehabilitation as well as other safety and operational improvement needs to extend the useful life of the Interstate and improve safety. Since a scope of work is not yet known, all the potential Near Term Rehabilitation Needs are not included in the Department's Fiscal Year 2011 to 2016 Proposed Highway Improvement Program, but will be considered in future programs based on funding availability and project readiness. This Near Term Rehabilitation Needs Phase I study will occur simultaneously with the Long Term Reconstruction Needs Phase I study.

Over the years, routine maintenance including bridge repairs and pavement resurfacing has addressed the bridge and pavement surface needs. Additional routine maintenance

is required for Interstate 80 from the Grundy County Line to west of U.S. Route 30. The Department has initiated the contract plan preparation for highway resurfacing and bridge repairs within this segment of Interstate 80 and funding for this maintenance type improvement is included in the multi-year portion of the Departments Fiscal Year 2011-2016 Proposed Highway Improvement Program at an estimated cost of \$33 million Current engineering efforts are targeted to enable a contract letting in the spring of 2011 contingent upon plan readiness and funding availability in IDOT's current Fiscal Year 2011 Annual Highway Improvement Program.

The I-80 study is in the initial stages of Phase I, with the first Public Meeting on August 18, 2010 serving as the "project kick-off". The study will follow the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, and result in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment, or EA. ■

## I-80 Phase I Project Process



*The I-80 Phase I project process will include extensive stakeholder involvement during the development of several important and interrelated steps.*

**Step 1** is to analyze and understand the existing and future conditions of the corridor. The study team will collect information on current conditions, including traffic volumes, crash data and design standards and then projected future traffic volumes. IDOT and stakeholders will work jointly to identify issues and concerns and corridor deficiencies, information that will contribute to the beginning stages of the development of solutions along with a Project Problem Statement.

**Step 2** builds on the data gathered in Step 1, along with additional stakeholder involvement, and results in the preparation of the project Purpose and Need. The Purpose and Need is a document that will guide the development of project alternatives, and the evaluation of how those alternatives address the identified purpose of and need for potential I-80 improvements.

**The third step** in the study process involves the identification of possible improvement alternatives and the development of the criteria that will be used to evaluate those alternatives. This step will include outreach efforts to the general public and project stakeholders to assist with

the preparation of potential improvement solutions. This phase culminates with the selection of those alternatives that should be evaluated in further detail. NEPA requirements stipulate that "reasonable alternatives", including a "no build" scenario, will be examined during this process, and that impacts to the surrounding community and environment will be evaluated.

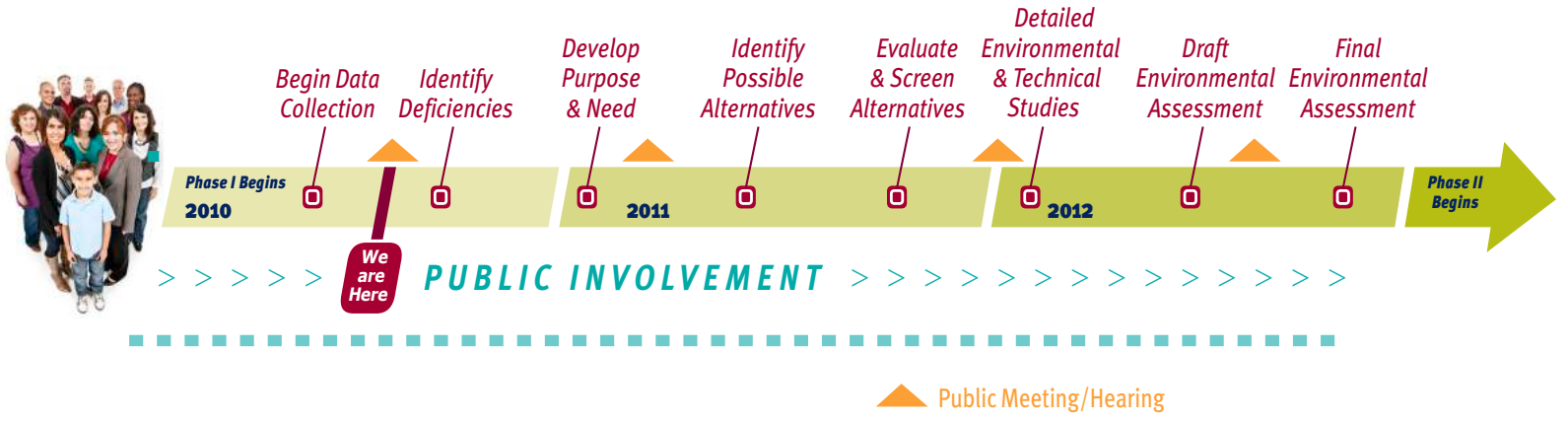
**The last step of Phase I** includes stakeholder involvement for detailed evaluation and analysis of a selected alternative. The findings of the entire study process are reported in engineering reports and environmental reports, culminating in Design Approval. IDOT will consider all project input and technical analysis as it makes its final decision on a Preferred Alternative. ■



# WHAT'S NEXT?

During the next several months, the study team will continue to meet with the Project Working Groups and interested parties to solicit feedback on corridor issues and concerns, and project goals and objectives. Work will continue with the existing conditions analysis, identification of corridor deficiencies, and the collection of technical and environmental data related to the study area. These efforts will contribute to the development of a Problem Statement, which will then in turn help guide the preparation of the project Purpose and Need. Using the public involvement process to identify issues and concerns, and general project goals and objectives will assist with the creation of the Purpose and Need.

It is this Purpose and Need that will be the basis for the development, evaluation and screening of potential project alternatives. ■



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