

NEPA/404 Merger Meeting
 March 1, 2012
 Chicago, IL

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NEPA/404 Merger Meeting
 March 1, 2012
 Springfield, IL

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NEPA/404 Merger Meeting
 March 2, 2012
 Chicago, IL

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NEPA/404 Merger Meeting
 March 2, 2012
 Springfield, IL

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FINAL
NEPA/404 Merger Meeting Summary
March 1, 2012

IDOT District 1, Lake County
Illinois Route 173 from IL 59 to US 41
Environmental Assessment
Concurrence – Purpose and Need
ESA – Anticipated “No Effect” Determination

DECISIONS:

IDNR gave concurrence on Purpose and Need

USACE and USEPA provided tentative concurrence based on agreement from the project team to semantic changes in the Purpose and Need and the inclusion of additional performance measurements.

NEXT STEPS:

IDOT will revise purpose and need and provide it to FHWA. FHWA will distribute to agencies and seek concurrence.

FHWA will follow up and seek concurrence from USFWS.

DISCUSSION:

This was the second NEPA/404 presentation of this project. The purpose of this meeting was to present the Purpose and Need on the Illinois Route 173 (IL 173) project and request concurrence from the agencies. In advance of the merger meeting, documents providing background information related to the project area were distributed to the agencies.

The project consultant made a PowerPoint presentation to the Merger Team.

Project Introduction

The Purpose and Need presentation covered three items which included: Project basics, Environmental Overview, and Purpose and Need for Project.

The presentation began with an introduction to the project, which is a Phase I study for the improvement of approximately 9 miles of IL 173 from Illinois Route 59 (IL 59) to US Route 41 in Lake County. Illinois Route 173 is a Strategic Regional Arterial that traverses Antioch, Old Mill Creek and Wadsworth. The western logical terminus is at the IL 59 intersection. The eastern logical terminus is at the US Route 41 intersection. There is an omission area for the interchange over I-94 which is currently under design in a separate Contract.

The project will follow IDOT's Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process for Public Involvement. To date there has been one (1) Public Meeting and two (2) CSS meetings.

Environmental Overview

A number of environmentally sensitive areas are located within the project corridor which includes Pedersen Park and Lake Antioch in Antioch and Redwing Slough State Natural Area just east of Antioch. Six (6) forest preserves maintained by the Lake County Forest Preserve District are in the vicinity of the project corridor, including the following: Sequoit Creek, Redwing Marsh, Raven Glen, Ethel's Woods, Van Patten Woods, and Wadsworth Savanna. Two (2) streams cross IL 173 within the project corridor:

Sequoit Creek (just west of Grimm Road) and Mill Creek (east of U.S. 45). The Des Plaines River flows just east of the project corridor, east of U.S. 41. Advanced Identification (ADID) Wetlands and other wetlands are located throughout the project corridor. An Environmental Survey Request was submitted in April 2011. To date, we have received the Wetlands and Endangered Botanical Species reports

PURPOSE AND NEED

Safety

The purpose of this project is to enhance safety. Crash data collected for a four-year study period from 2006 through 2009 shows that 885 crashes occurred within the project corridor. Rear-end collisions accounted for 46% of the total crashes, indicative of heavy traffic congestion. Turning and angle collisions accounted for a combined 29% of the total crashes, indicative of the number of intersections and access points within the project corridor. The State of Illinois prepares annual reports on the top Five Percent crash locations for submittal to the FHWA. The 2008 report included three sections along the project corridor: IL 83 to McMillien Road, U.S. 45 to the Antioch Corporate Center and the Hunt Club Road intersection. (The Antioch Corporate Center is an undeveloped commercial property located along IL 173 approximately two miles west of I-94.) The 2009 report included two sections along the project corridor: Deep Lake Road to the Antioch Corporate Center and Eagle Ridge Drive to Redwing Parkway.

Mobility and Operations

The purpose of this project is to improve mobility and operations. The two (2) mile portion from IL 59 to Deep Lake Road contains nine (9) intersections, one (1) at-grade railroad crossing, 40 commercial entrances and 12 residential driveways. These numerous cross roads and entrances in conjunction with a high incidence of crashes and below Level of Service (LOS) C represent a need for improved ingress and egress from IL 173.

Capacity

The purpose of this project is to increase capacity. According to IDOT criteria, intersections are required to operate at LOS D or better. However, through movements along an SRA route require LOS C or better. The sections of IL 173 between intersections were analyzed for LOS with existing 2010 and projected 2040 traffic data. Under the existing conditions, all sections for the six (6) mile stretch of Deep Lake Road to US 41 operated at below LOS C. The US 45 and IL 83 intersections operated at below LOS C. For 2040 traffic under no build conditions, all sections along IL 173 (except for a small section just west of Deep Lake Road) operated at a below LOS C. In addition, traffic queuing in peak hours is expected to extend 6 miles from IL 59 to Crawford Road.

Economic Development

The purpose of this project is to enhance economic development. CMAP developed the *2040 Forecast of Population, Households and Employment* in support of their *GO TO 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*. Based on these forecasts, the area surrounding the IL 173 corridor will continue to grow in terms of population and employment. An increase in population and employment will increase the travel demand on the IL 173 project corridor.

Conclusion

Existing conditions show multiple 5% crash locations within the corridor, poor mobility along the western half of the project, and existing capacity issues for a majority of the project limits. Future forecasts show an increase in population and employment surrounding the project corridor. Future land use plans call for higher density development along the project corridor. Without improvement, the IL 173 project corridor would likely experience an increase in vehicle crashes and elevated traffic congestion. An unimproved IL 173 project corridor would continue to inadequately serve other modes of transportation, such as bicycles and pedestrians. The purpose of this study is to address the project needs to reduce the likelihood of crashes, provide greater traffic capacity, mobility and serve all roadway users.

AGENCY QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS ON PURPOSE AND NEED

The USACOE (Hall) noted that the 5% crash slide provides more context than slides with numbers and collisions.

The USACOE (Hall) asked if there been consideration for interim improvement vs. ultimate improvement. Does the proposed improvement have to be completed at the same time? IDOT noted that it is highly likely that improvements would be handled proportionally. Part of the process will be to look at improvements to relieve congestion at critical locations as well as feasibility due to environmental constraints.

The USACOE (Hall) commented that rather than to “increase capacity”, the purpose and need should be rephrased to “relieve congestion”. FHWA (Fuller) noted that there are a few locations in the Purpose and Need where the wording can be switched.

The USACOE (Hall) also noted to avoid the word “enhance” for economic development. A more appropriate statement would be “accommodate economic development”.

The USACOE (Hall) asked how to measure success of the Purpose and Need? There are some indicators in the Purpose and Need; suggest adding LOS, queue length, review of 5% crash locations. IDOT noted that the new Highway Safety Manual software helps analyze proposed improvements and the potential impacts to safety and specific locations. This will be a helpful tool in measuring the potential success in proposed design elements.

The USEPA (West) and FHWA (Fuller) requested that “track changes” be used to changes made for easier review.

The project team acknowledged crossing the Red Wing slough will be an engineering feat (and an agency concern). USEPA (West) inquired what impacts this project will have on the US Route 45 Millburn Bypass project and vice versa - noting that much of this project is to accommodate large "economic developments" inconsistent with the Millburn Bypass project discussions.

IDOT Response: From our data collection, there isn't “large economic development” happening at the site. The traffic is planned to moderately increase. In our NEPA presentation, we showed traffic projections “pre-recession” and “post-recession” and demonstrated in the presentation that after careful review of the CMAP data and available economic planning reports that large growth economic development is not anticipated.

USEPA (West) notes that the Lake County Future Land Use Plan map was emphasized in the presentation that the Antioch Corporate Center would be a very large employment center and there is a very large red-office/research swath across the south side of IL 173 from US 45 to I-94.

CONCURRENCE

Concurrence on the Illinois Route 173 Purpose & Need was conditionally received from the Merger Team present. The USEPA (West), IDNR (Hamer) and USACOE (Hall) gave tentative concurrence with the Purpose and Need. USFWS was not present at the meeting. The Purpose and Need will be revised to accommodate the semantic changes within the document and include additional tools to measure success of potential improvements. The revised document will be submitted to FHWA and agencies for final concurrence.

**IDOT District 1, Will County
I-55 at IL 126/Essington Road and Airport Road
Environmental Assessment
Concurrence – Purpose and Need
ESA – “No Effect”**

DECISIONS:

Purpose and need concurrence was tabled until the “Next Steps” are completed.

NEXT STEPS:

IDOT will prepare a memorandum for the resource agencies explaining why this project is being completed separately from the Weber Road project.

FHWA, IDOT, and the resource agencies agreed to meet to discuss policy regarding purpose and need and inclusion of measurable objectives within the purpose and need statement.

DISCUSSION:

This was the second presentation of the potential I-55 improvements project at a NEPA/404 Merger meeting. The last presentation was on September 8, 2011. The purpose of this meeting is to review the project’s Purpose and Need (P&N) statement with resource agencies and merger meeting participants and obtain their concurrence to proceed with developing alternatives. The presentation was conducted by David Heslinga of V3 Companies of Illinois.

The I-55 project is being lead by local agencies. The Village of Romeoville is the lead agency and local co-sponsors are the Villages of Bolingbrook and Plainfield. V3 Companies is the project consultant on behalf of the Villages. The study area is located on a six-mile segment of I-55 between the US Route 30 and Weber Road interchanges in Will County. In this segment of I-55, there is a partial access interchange at IL Route 126 which provides east bound IL 126 traffic an entrance to northbound I-55 and southbound I-55 traffic an exit to westbound IL 126. The purpose of the project is to improve connectivity between the regional roadway network and potential I-55 access improvements and to provide for community and economic growth forecasted in the three villages and in unincorporated areas of northwest Will County.

The project was started in October 2010. An Environmental Survey Request (ESR) was submitted to IDOT in June 2010 and field work was completed by IDOT in August 2011. A review of the study corridor has identified environmental resources within the Lake Renwick Heron Rookery and Water Reserve on the west side of I-55 and wetland and floodplains areas along Lily Cache Creek and Slough. No threatened and endangered species or high quality natural plant communities were found within the study corridor and wetlands were found to be of low floristic quality.

The project is being conducted following IDOT’s procedures for Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS). A Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP) has been prepared and approved by IDOT and the FHWA. Public involvement and outreach activities will include a Community Advisory Group (CAG), Project Study Group, three public meetings, one public hearing, a project website, newsletters and individual meetings with stakeholders and community groups. A public informational meeting was held on February 22, 2011 to introduce the study process and solicit concerns of the study area and four CAG meetings have been held on May 17, 2011, July 19, 2011, September 21, 2011 and January 31, 2012. The September CAG meeting was used to obtain input on the Purpose and Need Statement and CAG member input into the range of alternatives to be considered. At the January CAG meeting, the process for evaluating alternatives was presented. The outcome of the first step of evaluation (the fatal flaw evaluation) was also reviewed. There are thirteen alternatives that will be carried into the next phase of evaluation.

Information explaining the need for the project was presented. CMAP projects that population and

employment in the three villages will grow by 79% and 53% respectively by the year 2040. CMAP also projects that the Average Daily Traffic (ADT) on I-55 will grow by an average of 34% by the year 2040. As traffic grows on I-55, the Level of Service (LOS) is expected to deteriorate at the interchange ramp junctions within the I-55 project study area to unacceptable levels of LOS F at some ramp locations.

Agency Comments

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US-EPA) questioned why the Phase I study being conducted by IDOT at the I-55 interchange at Weber Road was not being combined with the Village's Phase I study of potential access improvements on I-55 between US Route 30 and Weber Road. Any improvements done at the Weber Road interchange will have an impact on projected traffic volumes at other potential I-55 interchange locations within the Village's I-55 study area. The US-EPA also suggested that the I-55 corridor should be evaluated more rigorously following NEPA procedures for an environmental impact statement.

The study team responded that the Phase I study at the Weber Road interchange is a stand alone project that needs improvements independent of whatever other improvements are considered for the six-mile corridor between US 30 and Weber. There is significant safety and operational issues on Weber Road at the I-55 interchange that cause extended periods of delay and congestion at the ramp and frontage road intersections. The congestion leads to an unacceptably high accident rate and the Weber Road interchange has consistently been on the FHWA's Five Percent Report as having a pressing need for improvements.

The two studies are being coordinated with each other and 2040 traffic projections have been developed by CMAP considering Weber Road alternative interchange concepts in combination with various access improvements on the segment of I-55 between US 30 and Weber Road. The engineering consultants and IDOT have been attending PSG and CAG meetings for both projects so that communication between the study teams is open and direct. The Weber Road project was started earlier than the Village's I-55 study and has progressed into development and evaluation of alternatives. As the Weber Road project identifies alternatives to be carried forward, the Village's I-55 study will consider the traffic capacity available at Weber Road in projecting how much traffic will flow to other potential access locations within the study area.

It was offered that IDOT will prepare a memorandum for the NEPA/404 Merger agencies explaining why the two projects will be conducted separately rather than being combined into one study effort and why an environmental assessment is an appropriate level of evaluating impacts during the Phase I process.

The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) commented that the P&N needs to be modified to include measureable objectives that would be used to determine the preferred alternative. Though the presentation identified three objectives, the objective of "Improve Connectivity within Local Roadway Network" is vague and is not measureable.

There was extended discussion regarding if a P&N should include measureable objectives. The process for evaluating alternatives will look at a range of measureable factors such as traffic operations and capacity, safety, land use impacts, environmental impacts, construction cost, natural resource impacts and others. It was decided that IDOT, FHWA and resource agencies will meet separately to develop a policy agreement for the content of P&N statements and when measureable objectives should be addressed in the NEPA process.

With no further comments, the meeting was concluded.

**IDOT District 1, Will, Grundy, and Kendall Counties
I-80 from Ridge Road to US Route 30
Environmental Assessment
Concurrence – Purpose and Need
Information – Alternatives
ESA – “No Effect”**

DECISIONS:

USEPA and USACE concurred with the Purpose and Need.

NEXT STEPS:

FHWA will follow-up with USFWS and seek their concurrence on Purpose and Need.

IDOT will continue stakeholder coordination on the range of alternatives.

DISCUSSION:

This was the third presentation for the I-80, Ridge Road to U.S. Route 30, project. The purpose of this meeting was to seek concurrence point #1 for Purpose & Need (P&N) and discuss the Range of Alternatives being developed to address the project’s needs. The topics discussed included a project update, a description of the changes made to the project P&N based on comments received at the last NEPA/404 merger meeting, a discussion of the preliminary alternatives for the project, and next steps in the project schedule.

Matt Fuller facilitated self-introductions. Consultants for HBP Illinois Partners (HBP), a joint venture of HNTB, Bowman, Barrett, and Patrick Engineering, gave the PowerPoint (PPT) presentation on the I-80 project.

Since the last meeting in September 2011, the project study team has updated the Purpose and Need statement per agency comments, developed the Range of Alternatives to be further evaluated, and held a Project Study Group (PSG) meeting in December 2011 to discuss synergies between near-term rehabilitation needs and long-term reconstruction project.

The Project Purpose was stated as, “The purpose of the proposed action is to provide an improved transportation system along Interstate 80 from Ridge Road to U.S. Route 30. This will be accomplished by addressing facility condition and design to improve regional and local travel and access, as well as safety for all users.” The Project Needs are:

- Improve regional and local travel and access;
- Improve facility condition and design; and
- Improve safety for all users

In response to a comment received at the last meeting, the “Improve Facility Condition and Design” section of the P&N was revised to include bridge inspection data and current sufficiency ratings (0-100) for all the bridges in project study area. While 33 bridges have sufficiency ratings below 80 (indicative of the need for rehabilitation), three of these structures have ratings below 50 (potentially warranting complete replacement). These three structures are:

Bridge Location	Sufficiency Rating
WB I-80 over Des Plaines River & US 6 & CSX	16.9
EB I-80 over Des Plaines River & US 6 & CSX	39.0

The “Improve Safety for All Users” section of the P&N was revised to provide more detail on the crash data. Text was added assessing the five mainline I-80 sections indicated in the 2009 Illinois Five Percent Report. It was determined that the predominant crash types were rear end, fixed object and sideswipe same direction crashes and that these crashes could be attributed to high volume of traffic, short distance between interchanges, need for frequent weaving movements, and deficient ramp merge/diverge lengths.

Soren Hall, USACE, asked if the west section between Ridge Road and I-55 was planned for additional lanes. HBP responded that each section of the project will be evaluated on its own merit and the appropriate number of lanes will be proposed to achieve the desired level-of-service (LOS). Steve Schilke of IDOT noted that in a rural highway section, the target LOS is B and that LOS C was deemed unacceptable. The section west of I-55 would be classified as rural, due to the agricultural nature of land use adjacent to the expressway. In any case, the specific number of lanes for the reconstructed facility will be determined as part of the upcoming alternatives development process.

Reviewing the Purpose and Need Statement Norm West, USEPA, stated that he was not surprised to see a spike in crashes near the problematic interchange of Center Street. Steve Schilke noted that full Interchange Design Studies are planned at Center, Chicago, and Richards Streets.

Matt Fuller of the FHWA polled the agencies for concurrence on P&N. Norm concurred. Soren mentioned that he had a concern with respect to measurable objectives. The needs of the project were then reviewed and it was noted by the consultant team that improving regional and local travel could be measured by Level of Service (LOS), facility condition and design could be measured by replacing the 50 year old deteriorating facility with a brand new one that will meet current design standards (something that the existing facility does not). It was also noted that once you improve the LOS, the pavement surface, and design characteristics, improved safety would result, implying that the potential for crashes would be lessened. Based on this discussion, Soren granted his concurrence.

The Range of Alternatives was discussed next. Stakeholder input has guided the development of the range of alternatives for this project. Thus far, four Project Working Group (PWG) meetings have been held as follows:

- PWG 1 – September 14th, 2010
 - Project overview, study area concerns, and goals and objectives
- PWG 2 – February 8th, 2011
 - Problem Statement, existing conditions and deficiencies
- PWG 3 – May 3rd, 2011
 - Purpose and Need, alternatives toolbox
- PWG 4 – May 20th, 2011
 - Alternatives Workshop

Additionally, two public meetings have also been held as follows:

- August 18th, 2010 – Overview, concerns, goals and objectives
- July 28th, 2011 – Purpose & Need and Alternatives discussion

In addition to a No-Build Alternative that will be evaluated, the Build Alternatives are comprised of four alternates:

- Freeway Alternates
 - Add General Purpose Lanes
 - Add Managed Lanes – High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes, Truck Only Lanes, and/or Express Lanes
- Interchange Alternates
 - Ramp improvements and/or complete interchange reconfigurations

- No improvements to U.S. 30 interchange (separate study already completed)
- Des Plaines River Bridge Alternates
 - Maintain existing alignment or construct a new smoother, more direct alignment across the river
- Non-Motorized Alternates
 - Alleviate I-80 as a barrier to other modes of travel such as local bus transit, bicyclists and pedestrians.

Regarding the freeway alternates, adding general purpose lanes will be accomplished by widening within the existing median where practicable and widening outside the existing roadway in sections with reduced median width and geometric constraints. While subject to further refinement and analysis, thus far the project team identified that 6 lanes (3 in each direction) will be needed from Ridge Road to Larkin Avenue and from Richards Street to U.S. Route 30, while the middle section between Larkin Avenue and Richards Street would require 8 lanes (4 in each direction). Typical cross-sections were shown depicting these scenarios.

Adding managed lanes would be comprised of one of the following:

- HOT Lanes
 - Allow priority for High Occupancy Vehicles
 - Allow priority for Single Occupancy Vehicles with selectively applied tolls
 - Congestion pricing could be applied
- Truck-Only Lanes (in some locations, up to 1/3 of traffic consists of trucks)
 - Separate trucks from passenger vehicles
 - Improve safety
 - Move goods faster
 - Should limit truck access to/from most interchanges to be most effective
- Express Lanes
 - Limited access and/or traffic type restrictions for new laneage

Under any add lanes scenario, due to the existing development that lines the I-80 corridor in most locations, widening to the inside median area is proposed to minimize the overall impacts of the project. Given that the existing median is an open grass ditch, and the proposed action will likely replace this ditch area with lane and shoulder pavement, the study team has begun to identify areas along the corridor where potential open space exists for water quality BMP's (Best Management Practices). These areas will be focused on the streams where stormwater enters from the corridor including the DuPage River, Rock Run Creek, Thorne Creek, the Des Plaines River, and Hickory Creek. Norm West asked if widening to the outside of the existing lanes would have more impacts. The consultants noted that the alternatives evaluations have begun but findings were not yet available. An exhibit was shown in the PPT presentation depicting the identified BMP areas as well as the approximate drainage areas flowing to these waterways through the project limits. In other areas, stormwater leaves the I-80 ROW before entering one of these waterways. It will be the intention of the study team to maximize these BMP areas to the extent practicable to provide for a high level of water quality in the proposed build condition.

With regard to interchange alternates, improvements to existing interchanges will be evaluated to address geometric deficiencies, improve local travel and access, enhance safety, and accommodate existing and projected travel demand. These improvements could include improvements to arterials and local streets near each interchange. Potential improvements will be evaluated at these interchanges:

- I-55
- Houbolt Road/Empress Road
- Larkin Avenue (IL 7)
- Center Street
- Chicago Street
- Richards Street
- Briggs Street

Improvements could range from increased ramp turn-lane storage and channelization to interchange modification. No improvements are planned at Ridge Road and U.S. 30 interchanges as Ridge Road recently underwent a complete reconstruction and U.S. Route 30 was part of a recently completed study.

As mentioned earlier, the Des Plaines River truss bridges have low sufficiency ratings and are in need of complete replacement. As part of a Build Alternative, all freeway alternates will evaluate potential improvements to the Des Plaines River Bridge area. These alternates will address geometric deficiencies and provide additional capacity to accommodate existing and projected travel demand. These improvements will evaluate both existing and new alignment alternates. Norm West asked if one alignment has proven better than other alignments evaluated. An exhibit was displayed in the PPT showing the currently preferred new alignment for the Des Plaines River area. This alignment balances good geometrics with minimization of impacts. It also lies to the south of the existing alignment, which allows for the new bridge's complete construction while traffic remains on the existing truss bridges. A similar waterway opening will be provided in the proposed build condition due to the navigable nature of the Des Plaines River.

With respect to multi-modal connections and opportunities, 9 of 18 grade-separated crossings along the study corridor are designated "Not Recommended for Bicycling." As part of this study, on- and off-street facilities and connections would follow the Illinois Complete Streets law, would enhance connectivity to existing and planned multi-modal routes and destinations such as transit service areas or parks, and would be associated with work on freeway and interchange alternates, as well as other existing grade-separated crossings.

Joliet is planning a new, regional multi-modal transportation center that would relocate 8 transportation modes to one central facility. Increasing the efficiency of I-80 would complement the transit center. Two trails (the Illinois & Michigan (I&M) Canal Trail and the Wauponsee Glacial Trail) currently terminate at the I-80 project corridor and there is no current bikeway crossing of the Des Plaines River. A separate project, the Millennium Reserve Project's Calumet Core, will create a continuous bikeway from the Chicago Lakefront to the Joliet Multi-Modal Station. As such, there is the potential to connect this continuous bikeway from the Chicago Lakefront to these southern regional trails. Providing for improved connectivity between existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as well as facilitating connections to existing and planned transit and public transportation service areas would improve regional and local travel.

The next steps on this project include conducting stakeholder involvement on the Range of Alternatives, developing and screening the alternatives, and presenting the Alternatives to be Carried Forward at the June 2012 NEPA/404 Meeting. In general, the Phase I Long-Term schedule is as follows:

- Public Meeting on Alternatives – Spring 2012
- NEPA/404 Alternatives to be Carried Forward – June 2012
- NEPA/404 Selected Alternative – September 2012
- Environmental Assessment – Fall 2012

Norm West inquired as to how our freeway alternates might affect the Illiana study, especially if managed or toll lanes are proposed. Steve Schilke responded that the different freeway alternates for I-80 would have different resultant travel performance, and as such, may draw a slightly different demand from the region. However, this slight variation is unlikely to have a discernable effect on the regional modeling being done for the proposed Illiana project. Regardless, this will be further evaluated during the alternatives evaluation of this study. It was noted that the Illiana modeling currently assumes highway improvements for I-80 will be made.

Norm West also encouraged the study team to coordinate with the City of Joliet to enhance access from I-80 to their Multi-Modal Transportation Center, including ease of access and way-finding signage. John Baczek noted that this coordination is ongoing and will continue throughout the development of the respective projects.

It was also noted that the ESA (Endangered Species Act) involvement for this study is expected to be "No Effect." There were no further formal questions or comments and the meeting was adjourned.

**IDOT District 1, McHenry County
Illinois Route 31 from IL Route 176 to Illinois Route 120
Environmental Assessment
Concurrence – Purpose and Need
ESA – Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid studies in 2012**

DECISIONS:

USACE and USEPA gave concurrence on the Purpose and Need.

NEXT STEPS:

IDOT will refine the Purpose and Need to include mobility needs, per the request of USACE.

IDOT will refine the Purpose and Need to remove the drainage issues from the statement, per the request of USACE.

IDOT will provide an electronic version of the handouts to the agencies, per the request of USEPA.

FHWA will send out the refined Purpose and Need to the agencies after IDOT submits it.

FHWA will follow up with USFWS and seek their concurrence on Purpose and Need.

DISCUSSION:

This is the second presentation for this project. The purpose of this meeting is seek Concurrence Point #1 "Purpose and Need" and provide a brief overview of the range of alternatives being considered in anticipation of presenting at the next NEPA/404 Merger meeting in June of 2012. The presentation included a review of existing conditions, traffic and crash data, environmental issues, and a review of planned and completed public coordination activities.

Background

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has initiated a Preliminary Engineering and Environmental (Phase I) Study for Illinois Route 31 (IL 31) from Illinois Route 176 (IL 176) to Illinois Route 120 (IL 120), a distance of approximately seven miles. See attached Project Location Map. The project is located in McHenry County within the municipalities of Crystal Lake, Prairie Grove, McHenry, and unincorporated Nunda Township. This project is anticipated to be processed as an Environmental Assessment (EA) and is following the principles of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS).

IL 31 is a strategic route since it is one of only a few continuous north-south routes in McHenry County. IL 31 provides access to Interstate 90 south of the project, and connects to U.S. Route 12 in Richmond, south of the Wisconsin border. IL 31 is a Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA) route and Class II truck route. The immediate surrounding land use is residential, commercial, office, and agricultural scattered across the project limits. Much of the existing agricultural land is located in the middle section of the study within Prairie Grove. Mixed residential, commercial, and office uses are located in the north and south sections of the roadway in McHenry and Crystal Lake.

IL 31 currently carries 23,500 vehicles per day (vpd) north of IL 176 and 17,500 vpd south of IL 120. These traffic volumes are projected to increase to 32,000 and 21,000 vpd in Year 2040 without any highway improvements.

Within the project limits, IL 31 is currently one through lane in each direction, with sections of the roadway consisting of a painted median and bi-directional turn lanes, primarily north of Bull Valley Road. South of IL 176, IL 31 has two through lanes in each direction, with a raised median and dedicated turn lanes. At the north study limit, IL 31 intersects IL 120 from the south. East of the intersection, IL 120 is dual marked with IL 31 to just west of the Fox River. IL 31 then extends north from IL 120 at a three-legged intersection. The project limits include only the western IL 31 and IL 120 intersection.

There are several planned projects within or directly adjacent to the study limits. These include intersection improvement projects at IL 176, Ames, Edgewood, Bull Valley Road and the IL 31 (Richmond Road) and IL 120 intersection in downtown McHenry. The proposed scope of work for the IL 176, Bull Valley Road and IL 31 (Richmond Road) and IL 120 projects include the full reconstruction of the intersections to provide additional through lanes in each direction, and additional left turn lanes and right turn lanes. The intersection improvement project at Ames and Edgewood Road includes widening IL 31 to provide left turn lanes at each intersection. Construction is anticipated to begin in Fiscal Year 2012 for IL 176, Ames, Edgewood and Bull Valley Road. The IL 31 (Richmond Road) and IL 120 project is still in Phase II design.

Project Progress

Several key milestones have been achieved on the project in the past nine months. The project's first public meeting was held on June 9, 2011. The main comments received from that meeting included:

- Congestion/safety concerns
- Noise mitigation
- Immediate need for improvements at the intersection of IL 31 and Edgewood Road
- Mountable medians for commercial access
- Request for additional dedicated turn lanes throughout project
- Request to widen to four through lanes of traffic

On June 27, 2011, the first NEPA Merger Meeting took place for this project including an introduction to the project. After the NEPA Merger Meeting, three Community Advisory Group (CAG) meetings were held. On September 1, 2011, CAG Meeting #1 provided an introduction to the project and a project problem statement workshop was held. At this meeting, key transportation issues and concerns were developed. These included:

- Congestion (Existing and Future)
- Safety
- Accessibility
- Existing design deficiencies

That meeting was followed up with CAG Meeting #2 on September 22, 2011. At this meeting, the Project Study Group (PSG) presented the preliminary Purpose and Need statement, engineer's toolbox, evaluation criteria and a workshop was held to identify and map key project constraints. On November 3, 2011, CAG Meeting #3 was held to present the revised Purpose and Need statement and to conduct an alternatives development workshop and start developing the range of alternatives to be carried forward on this project. The revised Purpose and Need that was presented to the CAG is, as follows:

"The purpose of the proposed project is to improve safety, address roadway capacity and mobility, correct existing geometric deficiencies and encourage multi-modal transportation along IL Route 31 from the intersection of IL Route 176 to the intersection of IL Route 120, in eastern McHenry County."

Purpose and Need

Safety Deficiencies

The crash statistics from 2006-2009 indicate that there were a total of 913 reported crashes within the project study area. A total of 443 of these crashes occurred in roadway sections and were non-intersection related crashes. The distribution of crashes within study area is, as follows:

- 54% Rear End Collisions
- 21% Turning Collisions
- 5% Animal Collisions
- 5% Fixed Object
- 5% Sideswipe Same Direction
- 6% Angle Collisions

- 4% Other

There were a total of 6 fatalities, 54 incapacitating injuries and 350 total injuries occurred within the study area from 2006 – 2009. Three of the six fatalities were caused by head-on collisions. Two of the fatalities occurred in 2006 and four in 2007. The south portion of IL 31 from IL 176 to Gracy Road is in the top 5% of crash locations within the State of Illinois. Approximately 72% of all reported crashes occurred during dry conditions. Five of the six reported fatalities occurred during dry pavement conditions.

The highest percentage of intersection crashes occurred at Half-Mile Trail, Ames Road, Edgewood Road, Albany/Prime Parkway, Bull Valley Road, IL 31 at IL 120 and IL 120 & Millstream. There were also high percentages of crashes within roadway sections between IL 176 and Ray Street, Dayton Street to Dartmoor Place and along IL 120 between IL 31 (Front Street) and the existing Boone Creek bridge structure, east of Millstream.

Traffic Operations

The current roadway section Level of Service (LOS) calculations indicate that IL 31 is currently operating at a LOS E throughout the entire project corridor. In a No-Build scenario, traffic is projected to continue to operate at a LOS E to LOS F within the study area. Both 4-lane and 6-lane Build scenarios were analyzed. The Table 3-1 below summarizes the anticipated LOS for each option.

Illinois Route 176 to Gracy Road	Roadway Configuration	Existing Traffic Volume	2040 Traffic Volume (With Bypass)	2040 Traffic Volume (No Bypass)
	Existing Two Lanes	E (91.7 PTSF)	F (96.6 PTSF)	E (93.5 PTSF)
Proposed Four Lanes	-	-	D (27.4 pc/mi/lane)	C (24.3 pc/mi/lane)
	Proposed Six Lanes	-	-	B (17.4 pc/mi/lane)

Gracy Road to Bull Valley Road	Roadway Configuration	Existing Traffic Volume	2040 Traffic Volume (Bypass)	2040 Traffic Volume (No Bypass)
	Existing Two Lanes	E (88.2 PTSF)	E (91.1 PTSF)	E (92.5 PTSF)
Proposed Four Lanes	-	-	B (16.0 pc/mi/lane)	C (22.5 pc/mi/lane)
	Proposed Six Lanes	-	-	A (10.7 pc/mi/lane)

Bull Valley Road to Illinois Route 120	Roadway Configuration	Existing Traffic Volume	2040 Traffic Volume (Bypass)	2040 Traffic Volume (No Bypass)
	Existing Two Lanes	E (86.6 PTSF)	E (90.4 PTSF)	E (91.3 PTSF)
Proposed Four Lanes	-	-	C (18.2 pc/mi/lane)	C (18.2 pc/mi/lane)
	Proposed Six Lanes	-	-	B (12.1 pc/mi/lane)

Table 3-1

PTSF: Percent Time Spent Following
pc/mi/lane: Passenger cars per mile per lane

Likewise, the Project Study Group has prepared an analysis of anticipated Level of Service for various major intersections within the project study limits. In general, two existing intersections are operating at LOS F, one is operating at a LOS E and two are operating at LOS D. In a future No-Build condition, three of these intersections would be operating at a LOS F and three would be operating at a LOS D. Please refer to Table 4-1 below for additional information.

Intersection	AM Peak Hour				PM Peak Hour			
	Existing (2009)		Future No-Build (2040)		Existing (2009)		Future No-Build (2040)	
	Delay (sec/veh)	LOS	Delay (sec/veh)	LOS	Delay (sec/veh)	LOS	Delay (sec/veh)	LOS
IL Route 176	Intersection not included in study							
Half Mile Trail	767.8	F	23,570	F	761.7	F	17,554	F
Edgewood Road	126.4	F	87.3	F	70.5	F	110.6	F
Albany Street/Prime Parkway	16.2	B	24.9	C	27.5	C	48.2	D
Shamrock Lane	18	B	39.4	D	11.8	B	16.9	B
Bull Valley/Charles Miller Road	33.8	C†	39.4	D*	39	D†	18.9	D*
Lillian Street/Grove Avenue	32.3	C**	37.9	D	37.1	D**	39.5	D
IL Route 120	44.3	D**	51.4	D	78.1	E**	174.9	F

Table 4-1

† Based on 2007 Traffic Data * Based on 2030 Traffic Projections ** Based on 2011 Traffic Data
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Access Management

In general, no access management is provided along the IL 31 within the project study limits. There are 184 driveways and 33 intersections within the study limits. No barrier medians exist and right-in/right-out entrances are provided at only eight driveway locations within the study area.

Existing Design Deficiencies

There are several existing design deficiencies that currently exist within the study area. These include:

- Roadway Capacity
- Roadway Safety
 - Lack of channelization lanes
 - Insufficient storage lengths
- Vertical Curves
 - Stopping sight distance
- Roadway Superelevation
 - Horizontal curve at Bull Valley Rd.
- Intersection Sight Distance
 - Main Street and John Street

Pedestrian Accommodations

Currently, IL 31 lacks pedestrian accommodations throughout most of the study area. In areas where sidewalks do exist, connectivity between sections of sidewalk is spotty and alternates between the east and west sides of the street (especially in the northern section of IL 31 near downtown McHenry). Where sidewalks end mid-block, pedestrians are required to cross IL 31 in non-signalized locations if they want to continue walking on the sidewalk sections on the opposite side of the street.

Measurable Objectives

The PSG has established several measurable objectives as they relate to the project Purpose and Need. They are, as follows:

- *P&N Goal - Improve Roadway Safety*

- ✓ Measurable Objective - Substantial Reduction in Projected Crashes and Fatalities
- *P&N Goal - Expand Roadway Mobility (Capacity and Accessibility) and Address Traffic Issues*
 - ✓ Measurable Objective - Substantial Reduction in Projected Traffic Delays
- *P&N Goal - Correct Existing Roadway Design Deficiencies*
 - ✓ Measurable Objective - Meet All SRA Design Requirements as Practicable Based on Project Constraints
- *P&N Goal - Improve opportunities for multimodal connectivity*
 - ✓ Measurable Objective - Maintain and Improve Connectivity to Existing Mass Transit Facilities

CONCURRENCE

Based on the information presented, both the US Army Corps of Engineers and USEPA gave concurrence to the project Purpose and Need. USFWS, IDOA, and IDNR were not present at the meeting and will require follow up with the request for concurrence.

ADID Wetlands and Biological Surveys

IL 31 currently traverses an environmentally sensitive area north of Half Mile Trail within the Sleepy Hollow Creek watershed. IL 31 crosses two named streams within this area: Squaw Creek and Sleepy Hollow Creek. ADID wetlands are identified on both sides of IL 31 between the Squaw Creek and Sleepy Hollow Creek crossings. On the east side of IL 31, the wetland is identified as ADID 529, a High Quality Habitat wetland, the highest ADID designation. West of IL 31, the wetland is identified as ADID 525, a High Functional Value Wetland. Sleepy Hollow Creek is identified as a part of ADID 525.

In addition, a seep wetland located across from the Terra Cotta Facility was identified during the wetland delineations for the original project. The ADID complex that includes Squaw Creek extends for approximately three miles west of IL 31 to Oak Ridge Road. This complex extends east to the Fox River approximately 2½ miles east of IL 31. As IL 31 crosses this wetland, avoidance may not be possible. The FQI of this wetland is less than 20. East of IL 31, a relocated stream (Squaw Creek) and a high habitat value ADID wetland exists with an FQI of 22.6. Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid (EPFO) surveys will be performed the summer of 2012. Previously submitted Environmental Survey Requests in 2000 and 2007 have not indicated the presence of EPFO within the Sleepy Hollow Creek watershed.

A portion of Squaw Creek was relocated years ago and was directed along the east side of IL 31 for approximately 700 feet. This relocated section of Squaw Creek is generally highly eroded and lacks significant vegetation within the stream bank area. The relocated stream on the east side of IL 31 is fed through a series of smaller tributaries on the west side of IL 31. At one time, a single defined channel for Squaw Creek may have existed west of IL 31. However, land development activities have altered drainage patterns on properties west of IL 31, eliminating any single defined channel for this creek on the west side of IL 31. The City of Crystal Lake has indicated that effluent from their wastewater treatment plant discharges into Squaw Creek, west of the project site near the intersection of Knack Blvd. and E. Terra Cotta Ave.

Alternatives Development

The PSG is currently evaluating a range of alternatives to be considered for this project. When evaluating alternatives, the project has been divided into two areas, based on the current adjacent land use and available right-of-way for acquisition and roadway widening. These areas are, as follows:

- South Section
 - » IL Route 176 to High Street
 - » Agricultural and residential land uses
 - » Right-of-way acquisition does not require building takes
- North Section
 - » High Street to IL Route 120
 - » Urban and commercial land uses
 - » Right-of-way acquisition requires building takes

Additional sections may be considered as the project moves forward. The PSG has determined that a full build out of the intersection of IL 120 and IL 31 (Front Street) would require high number of full building acquisitions within the vicinity of this intersection. Careful consideration of potential impacts to these buildings as well as environmental resources throughout the project will be weighed when evaluating alternatives during the fatal flaw and purpose and need screening process.

Currently, the range of alternatives being considered includes:

- South Study Area
 - » Urban and rural sections, depending on current development
 - » 4 lanes with 30' median, 5 lanes with TWLTL median
 - » Multi-use paths and sidewalks

- North Study Area
 - » Urban section
 - » Wide range of lane and intersection configurations
 - » Minimize building removals while providing path and sidewalk
 - » Roundabout evaluations at Lillian/Grove and IL 120

Design Approval for this project is anticipated in June 2013. Funding for this improvement is not currently included in IDOT's Fiscal Year 2012 to 2017 Proposed Highway Improvement Program

AGENCY QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

USEPA and COE questioned the why the northern terminus does not extend to the IL 31 and IL 120 eastern intersection where IL 31 continues to the north. The eastern intersection is being undertaken as a separate project by the City of McHenry that will provide two through lanes on all three approaches, dual left turn lanes to northbound IL 31, and dual right turn lanes onto westbound IL 31 and a single left turn lane onto eastbound IL 31. These two projects will meet at the IL 31 bridge over Boone Creek, which was reconstructed in 1990 and has a sufficiency rating of 90.2 from 2010. Both approaches to the bridge are five-lane sections. This information will be added to the Purpose and Need. The eastern IL 31 and IL 120 intersection is a component in the traffic analysis of the IL 31 and IL 120 western intersection.

COE questioned if the drainage issues identified in the document result in safety or mobility issues. Since these issues did not, they will be removed from the Purpose and Need.

COE requested mobility needs be identified in the document. The Purpose and Need will be revised and resubmitted with mobility needs identified.

COE requested measurable objectives for each need be provided. Measurable objections were identified in the presentation, however the resource agencies will discuss if measurable objectives need to be addressed in the Purpose and Need.

USEPA requested an electronic version of the handouts or a printed full size set. The handout presentation will be e-mailed to each agency.

FHWA requested photos of the buildings identified to be avoided. Photos of the buildings along with an aerial plan identifying each building will be provided.

USEPA questioned if a couplet is being considered as an alternate to mitigate the high volumes of traffic along IL 31. Green Street/Barreville Road, located east of IL 31 was identified as a potential one-way couplet alternative in CAG Meeting #3, with potential east-west connections being Bull Valley/Miller Road, Kane Avenue and Anne Street. It is anticipated that this alternative will not pass evaluation screening since IL 31 and Green Street/Barreville Road are located over one-quarter mile away, and include residential areas and schools along the couplet routes.

March 2, 2012

**IDOT District 5, McLean County
East Side Highway, Bloomington, IL
Environmental Assessment
Concurrence – Range of Alternatives
ESA – Studies have not been completed**

DECISIONS:

Concurrence on the range of alternatives to be carried forward was given by USEPA, USFWS, USACE, IDNR, and IDOA.

NEXT STEPS:

None noted.

DISCUSSION:

The project received concurrence on the Purpose and Need Statement at the February 15, 2011 NEPA/404 Merger Meeting.

The purpose of this meeting was to seek concurrence on the Reasonable Range of Alternatives to be Carried Forward into the Environmental Assessment (EA). The Reasonable Range of Alternatives package submitted on December 20, 2011, was reviewed.

Jerry Payonk of Clark Dietz, Inc. facilitated the presentation. The following summary points were made:

- After receiving concurrence on the project Purpose and Need in February 2011, a range of reasonable alternatives was developed for the East Side Highway (ESH). The range of alternatives was based upon input from the Community Working Group (CWG), the Project Study Group (PSG) and included the corridors evaluated in the 2009 Corridor Report. The range of alternatives included:
 - o 129 Build Alternatives, including the corridors evaluated in the 2009 Corridor Report
 - o A Multiple East-West Arterial Expansion Build Alternative
 - o A Transportation Systems Management/Travel Demand Management Alternative
 - o A Transit Alternative
 - o A No-Build Alternative
- The comprehensive range of alternatives was screened for environmental and engineering impacts in a stepwise process. The alternative analysis screening process used four levels of evaluation: Initial Screening, Purpose and Need Screening, Macro Analysis, and Alignment Analysis. Each level of the alternative screening included a set of criteria to determine feasible and prudent alternatives for the ESH.
- The first level of evaluation, the Initial Screening, eliminated unrealistic or non-feasible options that satisfied one or more of the following criteria:
 - o Impacts State of Federally protected areas
 - o Does not meet horizontal and vertical clear zone requirements for the Central Illinois Regional Airport (CIRA)

- Divides or isolates a neighborhood or community

None of the alternatives impacted State or federally protected areas and all of the alternatives met the clear zone requirements for CIRA. However, 36 alternatives were eliminated that divided a residential area at the south end of the project (Brentwood Estates) bringing the total number of alternatives to 93.

- The second level of evaluation, the Purpose and Need Screening, eliminated options that did not meet one or more of the Purpose and Need criteria. The Purpose and Need criteria were as follows:
 - Accommodate managed growth
 - Improve local and regional mobility
 - Improve local and regional access

As a result of this evaluation, eight alternatives were eliminated bringing the total number of alternatives to 85.

- The third level of evaluation, the Macro Analysis, measured the potential effects to the human and natural environment of a 500 foot corridor and eliminated those with the greatest impacts. A total of 32 resources were considered, but only residential impacts and Prime and Important Farmland impacts were considered differentiating and used for corridor elimination. As a result of this evaluation, 45 alternatives were eliminated bringing the total number of alternatives to 40.
- The fourth level of evaluation, the Alignment Analysis, measured the potential effects to the human and natural environment of a 250 foot alignment and identified the range of alternatives to be carried forward into the EA. The Alignment Analysis considered the same 32 resources from the Macro Analysis with the addition of twelve new resources for a total of 44. Of these 44 resources, residences, prime and important farmland, tract severances, farms otherwise affected, termini connections, constructability, area of new pavement, riparian areas, highly erodible soils, and bike/pedestrian access were considered differentiating criteria and used to eliminate alternatives. As a result of this evaluation, 36 alternatives were eliminated bringing the total number of alternatives to four. These four alternatives were recommended to be carried forward into the EA.
- Three facility type options were considered during the evaluation process: Freeways, Expressways, and Arterials. The three facility types were evaluated on their ability to accommodate future traffic volumes, the type of traffic control and access control required, and safety factors. It was recommended that the ESH ultimately be constructed as a freeway rather than an arterial or an expressway.
- A summary of public comments after Public Information Meeting #4 (PIM#4) showed that of the 132 people who submitted comments, 19 were in support of the project and 113 were opposed to the project and/or proposed build alternatives. Of the 113 opposed to the project, approximately 50% came from two neighborhoods adjacent to the remaining alternatives. A copy of the responses to these comments was distributed at the Chicago presentation location and is attached to these minutes.

After the presentation, the following questions were addressed:

- Q:** Does the project go over Historic Route 66? And is there any way to avoid it?

A: Yes. Since Route 66 is parallel to I-55, the proposed alignment cannot connect to I-55 without crossing Route 66. However, the portion of Route 66 that is being crossed has not been designated as historic. The project team will re-examine this portion of Route 66 to make sure it has not been marked as historic.

USEPA (West) and USACE (Betker) commended the project team for the clear, understandable and complete presentation of a complex project.

Concurrence on the Reasonable Range of Alternatives to be Carried Forward was granted by the reviewing agencies. The goal for the next merger meeting presentation is to attain concurrence on the Preferred Alternative.

**IDOT District 2, Carroll County
Savannah Sabula Bridge
Environmental Assessment
Concurrence – Purpose and Need
ESA – Studies have not been completed**

DECISIONS:

USACE, USEPA, USFWS, IDNR, and IDOA gave concurrence on the purpose and need.

USACE, USEPA, USFWS, IDNR, and IDOA agreed with FHWA and IDOT to remove the project from the NEPA-404 merger process because the project lacks complexity that warrants taking the project through the process.

NEXT STEPS:

None noted.

DISCUSSION:

After concurrence on purpose and need was achieved, the discussion focused on the reasonable range of alternatives and whether the project should proceed in the NEPA-404 merger process. IDOT suggested that the reasonable range of alternatives include the “no-build” and building a new bridge near the existing location. USEPA asked if alternatives downstream made sense to pursue, however, due to topographical and natural resource features, those alternatives were not deemed to be reasonable to pursue.

Because the only reasonable alternatives are the “no build” and building a new bridge adjacent to the existing location, the agencies agreed the project was not of sufficient complexity to warrant going through the merger process.