



Overview

The first of three Community Partner Meetings for the I-80 Ridge Road to US Route 30 project was held on Thursday, July 30, 2020 virtually via Microsoft Teams. The virtual meeting consisted of two sessions: 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM and 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

Both sessions started with an overview on the project background and status to ensure that participants understood the project details and the overall benefits of the project. The project team informed participants that the I-80 study area is approximately 16 miles and begins at Ridge Road to the west and ends at US Route 30 to the east and spans three counties and six municipalities, including the City of Joliet.

The project team discussed the timeline for public and stakeholder involvement. Participants were informed that the overall project is currently in Phase I which involves preliminary engineering and environmental study and should be completed by the end of 2020. The project team described the preferred alternative and provided details on anticipated benefits which include improvement of safety, facility condition and design, regional and local travel and pedestrian and bicycle access.

The project team reviewed potential impacts the I-80 Des Plaines River bridge replacement may have on the community and how those concerns may be addressed. For example, increased noise could be mitigated by adding noise walls. Participants were informed that the additional outreach is the result of needing to better understand the impacts that the bridge replacement would have on community members in the immediate area.

As part of the additional outreach process, the project team has mailed newsletters and community impact questionnaires in both English and Spanish to all community members to obtain input and to provide the opportunity to participate in the Community Partner Meetings.

The meeting ended with next steps and action items. The project team notified participants that content from the virtual meeting will be available online on the project website: i-80will.com. Additionally, an e-blast will be sent with meeting notes. Participants were advised to mark their calendars for the next two Community Partner Meetings which will be held in early September and late October. The project team also provided participants with contact information for the bilingual Outreach Specialist, Melody Carvajal which is (331) 233-3555 or melody.carvajal@I-80ej.com.

To engage with participants, the project team presented eight different polling questions during each session of the meeting. This resulted in discussion among the participants, which can be found on the second page. The team also provided ample time for general discussion with participants following each agenda item.

The first session of the meeting was attended by 39 individuals and the second session of the meeting was attended by 29 individuals.

Polling Questions and Comments

To encourage conversation, eight polling questions were asked during each session. Questions can be found below. Participants responded by speaking through the Teams microphone or utilizing the chat box. After each question, the comments from both sessions are noted.

1. Do you think the community sees these improvements as benefiting them?
 - 1) Yes
 - 2) Not
 - 3) Don't Know

Responses:

- 11 participants responded in total
- 7 responded Yes
- 3 responded Don't know
- 1 asked for project team to provide more information to the community on the improvements

2. What other benefits does the community expect the new bridge and the project will bring?

Responses:

- 11 participants responded in total – see comments below
 - New sidewalks and streets
 - New recreation areas
 - Repair city and state roads
 - Regular garbage cleanup under the bridge
 - Lights in impacted areas
 - Brings economic development on the Southeast side of Joliet and developers willing to come into the community
 - The area currently looks very unattractive and hoping to improve infrastructure
 - Hopefully jobs and economic development
 - Affordable housing to replace the homes taken
 - Affordable housing, specifically single-family homes in the east side of Joliet
 - Regarding the families and individuals whose homes will be acquired, what will IDOT do about taxes, which are higher in other areas in the city?

3. What do you think are the greatest needs for transportation improvements to these communities?
 - 1) New or better sidewalk connections
 - 2) Better road pavement
 - 3) Greater access to nearby bicycle connections
 - 4) Greater access to public transportation bus stops
 - 5) Others?

Responses:

- 22 participants responded in total
- 5 responded New or better sidewalk connections
- 4 responded Better road pavement
- 1 responded Greater access to nearby bicycle connections
- 4 responded Greater access to public transportation bus stops
- 8 responded Other – see comments below
 - Additional recreational space
 - Parks
 - Street lighting
 - Better and more recreational spaces
 - Concerns regarding noise walls impacting the community
 - The community already has issues with draw bridges, so how is IDOT going to help re-route traffic and how people get in and out of the community?
 - Because it is an underserved community all the above will be needed
 - What is traffic flow going to look like once construction starts and people are not going to be able to access Chicago Street?

4. What do you think are the greatest needs for other types of improvements to these communities?

- 1) More/better street lighting
- 2) Greater open space/park space
- 3) Neighborhood gateway signage/landscaping
- 4) Others?

Responses:

- 27 participants responded in total
- 5 responded More/better street lighting
- 4 responded Greater open space/park space
- 5 responded Neighborhood gateway signage/landscaping
- 13 responded Other – see comments below
 - Bike paths which the area has not had in so long
 - Recreational space
 - New sewer lines
 - Stricter laws against semi-trucks in residential streets
 - Too much noise
 - Concerns regarding air pollution
 - Maintenance program that includes repaving of roads and streets
 - Bike trails to be added
 - Adequate sidewalks, walking trails and amenities
 - Update or create new community center with wrap around services for the youth in the area which includes job training opportunities and other services throughout the community and not just one building or one location
 - All Nations COGIC has youth services
 - A bigger community center that is safe, clean and conducive to attracting young people

- Concerns regarding 700 S. Des Plaines Street

5. How is the bridge currently most visible to residents at the ground level?
- 1) Debris from existing structure
 - 2) Construction equipment/storage under structure
 - 3) Condition of existing bridge
 - 4) Not very noticeable
 - 5) Other

Responses:

- 11 participants responded in total
- 2 responded Debris from existing structure
- 1 responded Construction equipment/storage under structure
- 2 responded Condition of existing bridge
- 1 responded Not very noticeable
- 5 responded Other – see comments below
 - It is an eyesore
 - Noise from the trucks are bad
 - The noise vibrations have caused cracked walls in people's homes
 - Pieces are falling from the bridge and people can get hurt
 - Concerns regarding 700 S. Des Plaines Street being extremely close to I-80

6. In completing the new bridge replacement, what visual features do you believe are most desirable to the community?
- 1) Modest design/blend into the community
 - 2) Opportunities for public artwork/aesthetics
 - 3) Landscaping, greenery, or other materials
 - 4) No opinion/indifferent
 - 5) Other ideas?

Responses:

- 9 participants responded in total
- 1 responded Modest design/blend into the community
- 2 responded Opportunities for public artwork/aesthetics
- 3 responded Landscaping, greenery, or other materials
- 3 responded with additional comments
 - Aesthetics that recognizes and promotes diversity and enhances Joliet culture
 - Aesthetics that bring people into the city to visit
 - Beautification, such as landscaping and more greenery like adding flowerpots throughout the area

7. What impacts from the bridge replacement project are you most concerned about?
- 1) Potential displacements and relocations
 - 2) Street closures/new access roads
 - 3) Noise impacts/new noise walls
 - 4) Visual changes – height or look of new bridge
 - 5) Temporary construction impacts
 - 6) Others?

Responses:

- 12 participants responded in total
- 1 responded Potential displacements and relocations
- 4 responded Street closures/new access roads
- 2 responded Noise impacts/new noise walls
- 1 responded Visual changes – height or look of new bridge
- 4 participants responded with Other – see comments below
 - Very narrow areas for trucks to pass and the area is already congested enough
 - Where are trucks going to detour while the bridge is constructed?
 - The Jefferson Street bridge was noted to be closed until 2021
 - Brandon Road is closed and other bridges over the river are moveable and close periodically.

8. Did you feel like you had good ways to engage and provide your input during this virtual meeting?
- 1) Yes
 - 2) No
 - 3) I don't know/Indifferent

Responses:

- 6 participants responded in total stating Yes

Additional Comments

- Develop more outreach materials that are readily available to everyone.
- For previous projects in the community, no one asked residents what other types of improvements were needed such as bike paths, proper lighting on the sidewalks and recreational facilities for the youth.
- Concerns on impacts and necessary required properties and the process.
- Family and Friends Community Center should be included in the project's outreach map.
- Lack of grocery stores in the community.
- Impacts regarding homes on Kiep Avenue.
- Participants were directed to view the Environmental Assessment Appendix A (pages 94 and 96) that can be found on the project website at <http://i-80will.com/information/newsroom.html> for more information on the project's noise wall analysis summary and map.



- Concerns over increase of traffic during construction on McDonough and Chicago Streets.
- A summary of the results of the Air Quality Analysis was requested
- No signs that prohibit trucks from driving through certain residential areas and no tickets are being issued currently.
- Chicagoland Speedway traffic will be a headache for the area impacted by the bridge replacement project.
- Congestion already exists and as construction for the project occurs, there is concern that there will be even more congestion.
- The intersection of US 52 and Patterson Road should be examined due to the lack of visibility of the traffic light. The light that is currently there is unnoticeable because the overhead of the track cover it.
- Participants were informed that there is a study of IL 53 from West Arsenal Road to the railroad viaducts north of Doris Avenue. The study will involve intersection improvements as well as a bike path along IL 53 from Brandon Road to Midewin. The I-80 project will provide pedestrian and bike connections from Doris Avenue to north of I-80. Individuals can find more info about this project on IDOT's website.
- Two meetings will be held on August 8th for community members to complete the community impact questionnaire. The first meeting will be in the morning at 701 Abe Street in Joliet which is located outside of the outreach area. The second meeting will be after 3:00 PM at All Nations Church which is located in the community.

Attendees

Public Officials:

City of Joliet Mayor Bob O'Dekirk
Hilary Denk from Congressman Foster's Office

Local Government Representation:

City of Joliet

Additional Organizations:

All Nations COGIC
Fairmont Community Partnership Group, Inc.
Family and Friends Adult Day Center
FHWA
Glory International Harvest Church
Southland Black Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Southside Neighborhood Association
Spanish Community Center
VP Neighborhood Associations
Warren-Sharpe Community Center
Will County Center for Economic Development