

I-55 AT IL 59 ACCESS PROJECT - COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP
SUMMARY OF MEETING AND WORKSHOP FINDINGS
MEETING NO. 3 – MARCH 15, 2018 (1:00PM – 3:00PM)

This was the third Community Advisory Group (CAG) meeting. The last CAG meeting was held on November 14, 2017. Local residents and representatives of various local agencies were in attendance to share concerns and identify problems with regard to current transportation, environmental, and community related items within the study area. The meeting consisted of a PowerPoint presentation followed by a group exercise/workshop. The presentation portion of the meeting included a summary recap of the second CAG meeting which included; community context audit / survey results, draft problem statement, and the project's Purpose and Need. The presentation also recapped the second meeting's workshops that were held to facilitate alternatives analysis evaluation criteria and brainstorming possible alternative solutions that will address the project needs. The presentation explained the travel demand model being used to forecast traffic volumes for different build conditions and provided an update of the environmental surveys completed to date. Following the presentation, members met in three groups for the workshop portion of the meeting. The first workshop group focused on interchange alternatives at IL 59 and I-55. The second workshop group focused on east-west connector alternatives, and the third group focused on route capacity improvement alternatives. After about 20 minutes each group rotated so everyone could participate in each of the three alternatives groups. Comments and concerns from each group were documented. After the workshop discussions were completed, the comments and discussion topics from each group were presented to the entire community advisory group.

PowerPoint Presentation

- Various comments were set aside or “parked” at the last CAG meeting in November, which were revisited during CAG #3. These parked comments and their dispositions are listed below:
 1. Truck traffic enforcement – Concerns were expressed regarding the enforcement of freight and semi-truck restrictions. Enforcement related issues should be communicated to the appropriate law enforcement agencies.
 2. Dedicated truck lanes – Will County is currently developing a Long Range Transportation Plan that is being reviewed by CMAP which identified and considers potential dedicated truck routes.
 3. Review of local plans – More information was requested by residents where there is growth and development. Links were provided at CAG #3 to websites for local growing communities where information can be obtained on community development.

- Two other project studies that overlap with this project's study area were presented at the meeting. IDOT hosted a public meeting for I-80, from Ridge Road to US 30, on January 31, 2018. Within that study, a preferred alternative was presented, which included a flyover ramp for southbound I-55 traffic onto eastbound I-80 to reduce truck weaving and congestion relief and capacity improvements with a widening of I-80 from 4 lanes to 6 lanes between I-55 and Houbolt Road. A second study was also identified by the City of Joliet and IDOT proposing a Diverging Diamond Interchange at I-80 and Houbolt Road.

- The project Purpose and Need was presented at the meeting. The purpose is: “To provide an efficient transportation facility for both interstate travel and for the regional and local roadway network accommodated by and affected by access to and from I-55 for existing and future transportation needs.”
Project needs determined by the technical evaluation include:
 1. Improve regional mobility and local connectivity
 2. Improve system linkage.

The first project need, to improve regional mobility and local connectivity, refers to the ability or inability of traffic to move through an interchange, intersection or roadway section. The first focus area of this project need is Existing Traffic Volumes and Future Growth. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, also known as CMAP, has projected strong and continued population and economic growth in this western Will County area resulting in a robust traffic volume growth of 30% or more along routes within the study area by Year 2040. The second focus area for this project need looks at the roadway capacity to accommodate traffic; both how traffic passes both through the study area from one end to another, as well as travel starting and ending within the project study area.

System Linkage refers to the ability to access higher functional roadways from local streets to arterial roadways such as state routes, to the interstate system. The US 52 interchange at I-55 is the only full access interchange located between US Route 6 and US Route 30. Because of the limited number of routes crossing I-55, traffic

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funnels to US 52, utilizing local streets and roadways, which includes truck traffic. This overburdening of US 52 has been noted by many stakeholders who have stated that the completion of the IL 59/Seil Rd interchange is a high priority to them and noted the lack of available pedestrian and bicycle crossing accommodations over I-55.

- The approach and methodology of the travel demand modeling was presented to project stakeholders. A four step model was used to analyze existing conditions and 2040 conditions. First, existing conditions are compared to year 2040 No-Build conditions. Next, 23 Build conditions were ran and compared to the 2040 No-Build conditions to determine where improvements are needed, and what Build alternates will address project needs. Large traffic growth is projected under the No-Build condition on Seil Road, Mound Road, and US 52 due to background population growth and available undeveloped land to the west of I-55. General findings from the travel demand modeling build conditions were summarized and presented.
- A status update was provided regarding the environmental surveys completed to date. Environmental constraints will be considered and an updated environmental inventory map was made available during the CAG workshop. Alternatives that provide the best travel performance while minimizing impacts to sensitive environmental resources are likely recommended to be carried forward.
- Due to the size of the project study area and the complex range of improvements which could be considered both as stand-alone improvements or combined improvements, the alternatives were divided into three distinct categories:
 1. Interchange alternatives: Six interchange types were evaluated at I-55 and IL 59.
 2. East-West connector alternatives: Nine east-west connector alternatives were evaluated.
 3. Route Capacity Improvements: Alternatives were presented for US 52, Seil Road, and Mound Road.
- Alternates were recommended for continued study or recommended for elimination for further study based on the primary following criteria:
 1. Effectiveness of traffic systems and operations
 2. Major utility impacts / conflicts
 3. Environmental Resources
 4. Cost

Breakout Session Workshop

Following the PowerPoint presentation a breakout session / workshop consisting of three groups was held. The groups provided comments and concerns regarding the three categories of alternates to be evaluated. Comments from each group are summarized below:

- **Group #1 Interchange Alternatives**

Interchange Alternate I-1: Does the interchange connect E/W, and how does it impact local residents? What is the value to collector/distributor exit to IL 59? The interchange is too confusing and might increase truck traffic on local roads. Access for first responders east of the highway is a concern.

Interchange Alternate I-2: This option seems simpler and cheaper. Is the Interchange at Seil really needed? Some in the group do not want a full interchange. This interchange is easier to follow than Interchange Alternate I-1. This alternative is the simplest to allow for the new development of land. The lengths of the entrance and exit ramps are a concern. The potential traffic back up at signals is a concern.

Interchange Alternate I-6: This alternative helps draw traffic away from the Fen and County Farm Road. Alternative I-6 appears to improve interstate access without impacting local roads and allows for fluid traffic flow. Another group also reiterated that this alternative does not draw traffic near the forest preserve or the fen. Some have a concern about east-west connectivity with this alternative. This alternative appears to require more land and land acquisition which may be an issue. There is some concern about Seil Road and IL 59 impacts with the added ramps, including congestion to local roads and the southern part of study area. Connectivity to regional system was a concern and is dependent on which E-W alternative is selected as the preferred.

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- **Group #2 East-West Connector Alternatives**

EW-1: Feedback generally was positive, which included that the design is good and does not dead-end into Houbolt Road. The stakeholders liked the use/expansion of an existing facility and the widening of current crossings of environmental features better than a new crossing.

EW-2: Has major environmental impacts and the group strongly supports the recommendation to dismiss for further study.

EW-2, EW-3, and EW-4: All of these alternatives have similar impacts to natural resources and the group agreed with the study's team recommendations to eliminate these alternates from further study.

EW-6: Members asked if the development to the west would be allowed to connect to this alternative. Some members felt that this alternative would feed development at I-55 and I-80, and may connect to Interchange Alternate I-6 shown and discussed in Group #1. This alternative was found to be generally more desirable because it is farther from homes and does not impact college and residential neighborhoods as much. Similar to EW-1, stakeholders were favorable to use of and the extension of an existing industrial street over construction of a new street.

General: Some group members favored alternates that use existing roads, primarily EW-1. There were questions on traffic speeds and speed limits. How much relief will the improvements provide? Comments included that east-west connection improvements will benefit development and not commuters. There was concern about improvement impacts on collector streets and freight trucks.

- **Group #3 Route Capacity Improvement Alternatives**

US 52 – Impacted businesses were a concern to some and was not considered a constraint by others. Many members of the group liked the alternative in which US 52 is widened all the way to River Road. The US 52 / I-55 Single Point Urban Interchange alternative appeared to be good option but was noted by others as more costly. Participants liked the longer left-turn bays and dual left-turn lanes, which would likely accommodate truck, turn capacity. Houbolt Road, south of US 52, currently has a lot of intersections and traffic signals which are a concern. Traffic builds up at I-55 / US 52 and capacity improvements at this location would be of benefit, and some stated that the improvements may make a need for an east-west bridge not necessary.

Seil Road – Many are concerned that there is no pedestrian access over the DuPage River. Are trucks prohibited on the bridge? Some stated they liked the roundabout over traffic signals and felt roundabouts would be more compatible with the neighborhood feel in the area. Some were concerned that trucks would get stuck in the roundabouts and block the road. Cost is important and should be considered. The four lane alternative is not realistic for this type of area. Who will be paying for the improvements? IDOT explained that funding would be a combination of local and federal money. Many were concerned with the induced demand that would be created when Seil Road is widened to 4 lanes, and feel Seil Road would become an “expressway” of traffic through the neighborhoods. The Green River trail currently crosses the DuPage River on the Seil Road as an on-street shared lane and would need to be incorporated with any alternative. A separate pedestrian lane or bridge (off-street path) is desired.

Mound Road – Many noted that there is a proposed warehouse in the area that would be in conflict with many of the alternatives presented. Truck access is currently needed and will be necessary in the future for this development. The nature of the neighborhoods needs to be considered. Which alternate has the least impact on quality of life? The group concurred with the evaluation matrix impacts that emergency response vehicle access needs to be a priority consideration for the Camelot residential subdivision. There was concern with the “landing points” or location where the elevated portion of the roadway needed for a bridge would meet the existing roadway and the impact this would have to surrounding businesses. Others mentioned the undesirable closely spaced intersections shown on the M-1 alternative.