

Illinois NEPA/404 Merger Meeting

June 27 and 28, 2011

**US Environmental Protection Agency
Ralph Metcalfe Federal Building
Room #328
77 West Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604-3590**

June 27, 2011

1:00 pm to 4:30 pm

- **CREATE Grand Ave Project (P4) (District 1, Cook County)**
 - **Information - Introduction and Scoping**

- **CREATE 75th Street Corridor Improvement (District 1, Cook County)**
 - **Information - Purpose and Need**

- **Illinois Route 31 from Illinois Route 176 to Illinois Route 120 (District 1, McHenry County)**
 - **Information – Project Introduction**

- **Illinois Route 173 from Illinois Route 59 to US Route 41 (District 1, Lake County)**
 - **Information – Project Introduction**

June 28, 2011

8:00 am – 10:00 am

- I-55 from Illinois Route 113 to Lorenzo Road (District 1, Will County)
 - Concurrence – Preferred Alternative
- US 45 from Illinois Route 132 to Illinois Route 173 including Millburn Bypass, (District 1, Lake County)
 - Concurrence – Alternatives to Carry Forward
 - Concurrence – Preferred Alternative

10:00 am – 10:15 am (Break)

10:15 am – 12:00 noon

- Illinois Route 47 from US Route 14 to Charles Road in Woodstock (District 1, McHenry County)
 - Concurrence – Purpose and Need
- Illinois Route 131 from Russell Road to Sunset Ave (District 1, Lake County)
 - Information – Preferred Alternative
- ~~• Pershing Road Realignment and Belvidere Street Bridge Extension, Waukegan (District 1, Lake County)~~
 - ~~○ Concurrence – Purpose and Need~~

12:00 noon – 1:00 pm (Lunch Break)

1:00 pm – 4:30 pm

- I-290 Eisenhower from West of Mannheim Road to East of Cicero Avenue (District 1, Cook and DuPage Counties)
 - Information – Purpose and Need
- Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass, Tier 2 EIS (District 1, Cook and DuPage Counties)
 - Information – Purpose and Need and Alternatives
- Illiana Expressway Tier 1 EIS (IDOT District 1, Will and Kankakee Counties and Indiana Department of Transportation, Lake County, Indiana)
 - Information - Project Introduction

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Terry Sauko on conference call for I-55 @ Lorenzo from IL
113 to Lorenzo Rd.

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FINAL
NEPA/404 Merger Meeting Summary
June 28, 2011

IDOT District 1, Lake County
Illinois Route 131 (Green Bay Road), Russell Road to Sunset Avenue
Environmental Assessment
Concurrence – Not applicable - Preferred Alternative Preview

This was the third NEPA/404 presentation of this project. The Purpose and Need (Concurrence Point 1) received concurrence from the attending agencies on June 11, 2010. The Alternatives to be Carried Forward (Concurrence Point 2) received concurrence on February 18, 2011. The purpose of this meeting was to present a preview of the Preferred Alternative for the Illinois Route 131 Improvements from Russell Road to Sunset Avenue. IDOT anticipates requesting concurrence on the Preferred Alternative from the participating agencies at the next regularly scheduled meeting in September 2011.

Project Overview

The meeting presented a recap of the Purpose and Need, Alternatives to Be Carried Forward that were previously approved, the changes made to develop the Refined Alternatives, and to discuss the potential Preferred Alternative.

Purpose and Need

The Purpose and Need was developed based on stakeholder input and the Problem Statement. It was used to develop alternatives and guide their evaluation and refinement. The project purpose addresses the needs to improve safety, capacity, and operations and mobility.

Summary of Alternatives

Preliminary Alternatives

The four build Preliminary Alternatives that addressed the Purpose and Need were reviewed. All four alternatives propose increasing capacity of the roadway by adding a through lane in each direction to create a four-lane highway. The median treatment, edge treatment, and bicycle/pedestrian accommodations differ amongst the four alternatives. The alternatives all propose alignment shifts at the forest preserve, park districts, golf courses, and cemetery along the route to minimize or avoid impacts to these sensitive resources.

Alternative A1 proposes a 13' flush median and 10' outside shoulders. This median allows the highest level of access to adjacent properties and the shoulder provides space to accommodate stranded motorists and emergency vehicles. Alternative A2 proposes the same flush median but reduces the required right-of-way by replacing the shoulder with

curb and gutter. Alternative B1 proposes a 22' barrier median and 10' outside shoulders. This median increases safety by providing a barrier between opposing directions of traffic and better manages access to minor streets and driveways. Median openings are proposed at one-quarter mile intervals to allow U-turns for passenger cars. Alternative B2 proposes the same barrier median but replaces the shoulders with curb and gutter to reduce the right-of-way requirement. In all of the Preliminary Alternatives, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations were provided through a combination of the following elements: 5-foot sidewalks to accommodate pedestrians and widened outside lanes or paved shoulders to accommodate bicyclists. Due to the state's Complete Streets Policy, which was adopted after development of the Preliminary Alternatives, some of the bicycle facilities proposed in the Preliminary Alternatives could not be carried forward to the Refined Alternatives.

The study team presented the methodology to develop the Refined Alternatives. The corridor is divided into three sections to meet more specific needs along the route:

- Sunset Avenue to Wadsworth Road. There is generally less right-of-way available in this segment, and many low-volume streets and driveways intersect IL Rte. 131. Land use is primarily residential with some commercial properties and the Waukegan Regional Airport.
- Wadsworth Road to IL Rte. 173. In this segment, there is more existing right-of-way and fewer intersecting streets and driveways. The Village of Beach Park has proposed a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Redevelopment area along IL Rte. 131 from 21st Street to Nemesis Avenue, which may affect the land use in these areas, which is primarily residential with many vacant parcels at this time.
- IL Rte. 173 to Russell Road. This segment has the fewest driveways and streets, as well as a comparatively greater amount of existing right-of-way. The existing land uses are generally industrial and agricultural, although the City of Zion has proposed a TIF redevelopment area in this section as well.

The Illinois Complete Streets Law requires the full consideration of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations into state highway projects. Under the new policy, pedestrians and bicyclists are best accommodated by an off-road shared-use path on roadways of IL Rte. 131's classification, traffic volumes, and posted speed limits.

To carry the alternatives forward, modified and/or additional bicycle and pedestrian accommodations were required, increasing the amount of right-of-way needed. The study team developed evaluation criteria, including the three identified needs; environmental impacts; accessibility; coordination with the Waukegan Airport study; property impacts; and project construction and maintenance costs. Using the evaluation criteria and combining comments received from agencies at the September 2010 404/NEPA meeting and stakeholder input from previous meetings, two Refined Alternatives were developed.

Refined Alternatives

Alternatives A1, A2, B1, and B2 were combined with the revised pedestrian and bicycle guidance from the Complete Streets Policy to form Refined Alternatives E1 and E2.

Alternative E1, Sunset Avenue to IL Rte. 173. The main distinguishing element of Alternative E1 is the shoulder and open ditch design. Similar to Alternative A1, the 13' flush median two-way left-turn lane accommodates full access to homes and businesses in this section of the project, since there are some areas with more than 30 access points per mile. A 10' shared-use path is located on one side of the highway, and a 5' sidewalk is on the other side. Shoulders and ditches are the preferred drainage method, but they will require comparatively more right-of-way than a curb & gutter alternative.

Alternative E1, IL Rte. 173 to Russell Road. In this section, Alternative E1 is based on the geometry of Preliminary Alternative B1, with 4 through lanes and a 22'- barrier median. The barrier median would be used because there are fewer driveways and intersections and it would provide access management for future development. A barrier median is also a safe design that eliminates many conflict points created by unrestricted left turns. The bicycle and pedestrian facilities as described for the previous section would be continued throughout the project.

Alternative E2, Sunset Avenue to Wadsworth Road. Refined Alternative E2 resembles Preliminary Alternative A2 in this section, proposing a 4-lane roadway with a 13' flush median two-way left-turn lane and curb & gutter on the outside roadway edge. As with Alternative E1, the two-way left-turn lane would provide access to the many businesses and residences in this segment, and the curb & gutter reduces right-of-way acquisition. A 10' shared-use path is proposed on one side of the roadway and a 5' sidewalk on the other to provide full access and mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Alternative E2, Wadsworth Road to Russell Road. In this section, Refined Alternative E2 is based on Preliminary Alternative B2, with four through lanes, a 22' barrier median and curb & gutter. The bicycle and pedestrian facilities would be continued throughout the project.

Refined Alternative Development

Since an open ditch drainage system is used throughout the project in Refined Alternative E1, comparatively more ROW, more potential relocations, and more environmental impacts would be required than with Refined Alternative E2. The shoulder provides the safety and operational benefits of dedicated space off the highway for emergency and stranded vehicles, and ditches help limit erosion and may be attributed to higher water qualities, but at a higher land acquisition and relocation cost. However, if curb and gutter were used instead of ditches, storm sewer would be necessary. While this would increase the cost of construction and maintenance, some of this cost may be offset by the reduced cost and impact of land acquisition and relocations.

Refined Alternative E2 would propose curb and gutter throughout the project. This will require less ROW acquisition and fewer potential relocations and other property and resource impacts than Refined Alternative E1. However, storm sewer would be required for drainage, which would increase construction and maintenance costs.

Refined Alternative E2 also would propose barrier median from Wadsworth Road to Russell Road, as opposed to only from IL Rte. 173 to Russell Road as in Refined Alternative E1. The continuation of the barrier median would provide access management benefits and increased safety for this area of the project, which is has experienced recent growth.

Kenosha Road Alternatives

The study team evaluated several alternatives to improve the skewed Kenosha Road intersection, which is a safety concern for stakeholders. Lake County Division of Transportation (LCDOT) has jurisdiction of Kenosha Road.

One alternative realigns Kenosha Road to intersect IL Rte. 131 approximately half-way between 21st Street and 29th Street. This alternative is not favorable because it would use property owned and planned for development by the Beach Park School District.

Another alternative would close Kenosha Road at IL Rte. 131 and route traffic north to 21st Street. This alternative would route extra traffic onto 21st Street, it would diminish the continuity of this county route, and it may cause potential negative impacts regarding access to residential areas along Kenosha Road.

A final alternative for Kenosha Road realignment creates an intersection approximately 1,000 feet north of 29th Street where Kenosha Road intersects IL Rte. 131 at a perpendicular angle. This alternative offers the best operations, improving sight distance, while minimizing environmental and residential impacts. LCDOT expressed their preference for this alternative for the Kenosha Road intersection realignment. The 1000-foot spacing is the minimum required spacing between signalized intersections, and while neither intersection is currently signalized, this spacing will ensure that future signalization could be implemented if warranted.

Waukegan Airport

An ongoing study at the Waukegan Airport influences the alternatives development of IL Rte. 131, which travels along the west side of the airport. The Waukegan Port District is conducting an Environmental Assessment study for the Federal Aviation Administration to provide improved and more efficient aviation facilities at the Waukegan Regional Airport. The Project study team is coordinating with the Airport study team to determine the potential impacts to IL Rte. 131.

One roadway design has been developed for both Alternative E1 and E2 that will satisfy the needs of the IL Rte. 131 study while minimizing impact to airport property in an effort to not preclude any future airport expansion plans. Preliminary feasibility alternatives that lower IL

Rte. 131 to cross under the proposed airfield designs have also been developed to determine feasibility and potential impacts. Coordination is ongoing with the FAA and FHWA regarding the two studies.

Preferred Alternative Development

Stakeholders commented on the Refined Alternatives at a Corridor Planning and Technical Advisory Group Meeting in November 2010. Issues raised included agency jurisdiction for pedestrian facility construction and maintenance, requirement of pedestrian facilities on both sides of the roadway, determination of partial acquisitions versus full relocations, TIF districts established in the project area, exclusive turn lane suggestions at various intersections.

At the fourth Public Meeting in March 2011, public comments included preferences of a ditch section versus minimizing right-of-way, barrier median suggested locations, alternatives for Kenosha Road realignment, and proposed traffic signal locations.

The preliminary recommendation for the Preferred Alternative is described as follows:

Sunset Avenue to Yorkhouse Road, and Beach Road to IL Rte. 173. The Preferred Alternative features two 12' through lanes in each direction separated by a 13' two-way left-turn lane flush median that provides access to the frequent low-volume streets and driveways in these areas. Curb and gutter is proposed along the outside edge of the roadway to minimize right-of-way acquisition. A shared-use path is proposed on the east side of the highway to connect with a proposed Lake County Forest Preserve trail, and sidewalk is proposed on the other side to provide full accessibility for pedestrians.

Yorkhouse Road to Beach Road. The Preferred Alternative narrows to two 11' through lanes in each direction and an 11' two-way left-turn lane with curb and gutter to stay within the existing right-of-way and avoid impacting the Waukegan Regional Airport property. Retaining walls are necessary to accommodate the improvements and eliminate the need for temporary construction easements. Because there are no properties to access, no pedestrian accommodations will be proposed on the east side. However, to provide continuity to the path system and direct access to the Waukegan Sports Park, the path will shift to the west side of the roadway, narrow to 8-ft, and be located as close as possible to the roadway, requiring barrier protection.

IL Rte. 173 to Russell Road. The Preferred Alternative proposes a 22' barrier median in this section. To minimize impacts to the adjacent residential properties, landfills, and wetlands, curb and gutter is proposed along the roadside from IL Rte. 173 to north of Stonebridge Drive, and from Ninth Street to north of the Shepherd's Crook Golf Course. The other areas, totaling approximately 0.83 miles, propose a paved shoulder and open ditch drainage system. The shared-use path is proposed on the west side of the roadway and sidewalk is proposed on the east side in this section. The facilities are located behind the curb and gutter or beyond the ditch where shoulder is proposed.

Impacts

The roadway elements from the Refined Alternatives that best satisfied the project needs and minimized impacts were integrated into the Preferred Alternative. Avoidance and minimization measures included shifting the roadway alignment away from sensitive resources and properties, proposing retaining walls, reducing roadway lane or shared-use path widths, and proposing a closed drainage system along much of the project area. Meeting handouts include a table comparing more detailed impacts of the Refined and Preferred Alternatives. Approximately 34 acres would be acquired to accommodate new right-of-way. Some impacts are unavoidable and they are summarized as follows:

- Wetlands. The Preferred Alternative impacts up to 2.55 acres of wetlands. Two sites totaling 0.11 acres of impact fall under USACE jurisdiction.
- Relocations. Many of the potential relocations are due to septic field impacts on small residential parcels. The Preferred Alternative potentially relocates up to 23 residences, two commercial businesses and one industrial property.
- Farmland. Up to 4.6 acres of farmland would need to be acquired in the northern half of the project. The Lake County Regional Plan for 2030 shows all of the agricultural land rezoned to commercial.
- Section 4(f) properties. The study team is working with the Waukegan Park District regarding right-of-way needs at the Waukegan Sports Park. The park plan and roadway improvements indicate right-of-way to be acquired by this project. Temporary construction easements are required for grading where the Zion Park District and Lake County Forest Preserve District golf courses abut the IDOT right-of-way.

Project Schedule

The Draft EA is currently being prepared. The project anticipates seeking concurrence on the preferred alternative at the September NEPA meeting. Publishing the EA and holding the Public Hearing is anticipated for this fall, and the FONSI and Errata is anticipated to be completed later in the winter.

Agency Questions and Comments

During and after the presentation, the following questions and comments were addressed:

Comment (FHWA – Fuller): If the Sports Complex plans show future accommodations for IL Rte. 131, then Section 4(f) may not apply. The study team has a follow up internal meeting to confirm applicability of Section 4(f) on the project.

Q: Why is there so much shifting of the shared use path along the corridor? (USEPA – West)
The team can re-examine the alignment. The path is located to best serve land uses along the corridor. For example, the Waukegan Sports Park is located on the west side of the road, but Beach Park Middle School is on the east side. In addition, the Waukegan Savanna Forest Preserve Master Plan indicates a regional trail planned for

the ComEd utility corridor (south of Yorkhouse Road and on the east side of IL Rte. 131) to connect with trails in the Forest Preserve, which is located on the west side of IL Rte. 131. To avoid a midblock crossing, the shared-use path would need to be on the east side of IL Rte. 131 to connect the utility corridor trail to a signalized crossing at Yorkhouse Road. Transitions from east and west sides of the road would occur at signalized intersections. The planned airport acquisitions on the west side of the road may affect the need to keep the path on the west side.

Q: How close to reality is the runway project? (USACE – Chernich and USEPA - West)

The airport study is due out in 2012. The IL Rte. 131 study team has coordinated with the Port District and FAA. The IL Rte. 131 study team and airport study team have developed a below-grade (a tunnel under a future extended runway and safety zone) alternative that would potentially accommodate the airport alternatives.

We don't know if the runway extension is happening; it's a very expensive project. The roadway study team's preferred alternative stays within the right-of-way and at-grade to avoid impacts to airport property, should the airport project not proceed. In the event that the airport project does proceed, the airport plans can be noted in the CDR.

There was discussion as to whether the depressed alternative should be considered an alternative in the EA. However the depressed alternative is related to the airport's action and should be part of the airport's NEPA document. The IL Rte. 131 design accounts for, and the NEPA document acknowledges the airport's action. The study team cannot control what will happen with FAA's decision, or the timing of this decision.

Q: Has FHWA asked FAA to be a Cooperating Agency? (IDOT BDE – Zyznieuski)

No, FHWA will do so. However, both the airport and FAA are part of the TAG and the team has coordinated closely with the airport study.

Q: Could IL Rte. 131 go west around the runway extension? (IDOT BDE – Zyznieuski)

Yes, the airport study team evaluated and dismissed this alternative in their Environmental Screening Study (March 2009).

Comment (USACE - Chernich): Get documentation on what airport wants to do.

IDOT received a determination of No Impact to air navigation from FAA regarding proposed roadway impacts.

Q: Why not build the north sections first to allow time for the airport to make a decision? (USEPA – Westlake)

That's possible. The IL Rte. 131 reconstruction is not programmed at this time, however we can add a commitment in the EA to coordinate with the airport when

funding for construction moves forward. The study team can re-evaluate the decision for the at-grade alternative at that time.

Q: Would the Kenosha Road intersection be signalized? (USEPA – West)

Traffic signal warrant analysis indicates that a signal is warranted at Kenosha Road based on existing traffic volumes. The preferred alternative proposes this realigned and signalized intersection 1,000-ft from the intersection of 29th St. and IL Rte. 131 to accommodate potential future signalization of both intersections. The traffic projections from CMAP indicate that the current roadway is at capacity. With improvements to IL Rte. 131, year 2040 traffic doubles; indicating pent up traffic demand for improvements.

Q: Can you label the Preferred Alternative E3? It would be less confusing. (USACE – Chernich)

Yes.

Q: Are there no hydrologic crossings connecting wetlands on the corridor?
(USACE – Chernich)

The study team will check this, but believe there are no such crossings. The alignment is unique in that it follows a ridgeline between two watersheds. *Note: It was determined after the meeting that no hydrologic crossings connect any of the wetlands.*

Comment (USACE)

Corps had planned a field jurisdictional determination before September 2011, but may defer since no construction is scheduled at this time.

Q: Are there any hazardous materials issues of note? (USEPA – West)

No, but the team will confirm that issues are related to USTs and ASTs.

Conclusion

IDOT will provide FAA documentation to Matt Fuller to forward to the agencies. The study team anticipates presenting the Preferred Alternative for concurrence at the next NEPA/404 Merger Meeting in September 2011.