Scoping is a process, not a meeting or an event

"Every comment made to date in writing and orally at the various public meetings is contributing to defining the scope and focus of the Study's Draft Environmental Impact Statement."

Scoping is an early and open process for determining the scope of a proposed action, such as a transportation improvement. Scoping usually focuses on the identification of potential enviromental impact issues and potential improvement alternatives. Scoping helps those preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to know which issues deserve greater emphasis and which should receive less emphasis. Both the public and state and federal resource and regulatory agencies participate in the scoping process.

No ending point for scoping is specified. As the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process progresses and potential transportation improvements are evaluated and refined, additional, more site specific issues and concerns are raised as a part of an on-going public involvement. *IDOT welcomes this input* and will continue to provide numerous opportunities for the public to participate in the process. The public is urged not "hang back until the process is complete and then spring forth with a significant issue or alternatives that might have been raised earlier." The reason for this statement is that it can be difficult and time consuming to give an issue or alternative the serious attention it may derserve if it raised after the DEIS is finished or nearly finished.

While the NOI was used as a means to announce the first meeting and scoping opportunity for the regulatory agencies, it was not intended to preclude public input. The agencies are expected to submit scoping comments in writing after this meeting. The agencies, as well as the public, will have other opportunities to contribute to the project's scope as the study progresses.

continued from page 1

The public can make comments in writing or at a Public Hearing. IDOT considers and prepares responses to all comments. Once comments are addressed, a preferred alternative is selected. It must be approved by IDOT, FHWA, and various state and federal environmental resource and regulatory agencies.

- **Final Environmental Impact Statement:** This document is a refined version of the DEIS. In particular, it lists the preferred alternative and why it was selected. It also includes comments received on the DEIS and IDOT's response to those comments.
- **Record of Decision:** The Record of Decision (ROD) documents the characteristics of the preferred alternatives and the reasons for its selection. Once approved, IDOT can proceed with final design and construction of the selected transportation improvement.

IDOT Schedules Public Informational Meetings for December

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has compiled the 150+ transportation improvement concepts, developed during the June workshops and other stakeholder and local official meetings. These ideas will be presented at the upcoming public informational meetings. IDOT will also detail their plan to evaluate the concepts and explain the federal scoping process, which is the beginning of the environmental review process. An initial step in the scoping process is to define the purpose and need for transportation improvements in the study area. The public will have the opportunity to comment on the various improvement concepts, the evaluation process and the draft purpose and need.

The open houses will be held at:

December 8, 2004
5:30 PM - 8:00 PM
Kaneland South Elementary School
85 S. Main Street
Sugar Grove, IL, 60554

December 9, 2004
5:30 PM - 8:00 PM
White Oak Elementary School
2001 Dupont Avenue
Morris, Illinois 60450

** At the open house, you will be updated on the study, have an opportunity to review exhibits and participate in a question and answer forum with IDOT representatives, which will begin at 6:30 p.m. each day.*

Both locations are accessible to persons with disabilities. If special accommodations are required, contact the District Engineer's office at 815-434-8435.

This newsletter is printed using soy based inks on recycled paper.

Get Involved:
Check out our website for project update, to sign-up for mailing list, and to send comments to us! Go to www.prairie-parkway.com or write to us at Illinois Department of Transportation Division of Highway-District 3, 700 E. Norris Drive, Ottawa, IL 61350-0697. Telephone 815-434-6131.

You're Invited to Public Information Meetings!
Wednesday, December 8 & Thursday, December 9

directions

Prairie Parkway Study
Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Highways and District 3
700 E. Norris Drive
Ottawa, IL 61350-0697

News from the Prairie Parkway Study • Issue 3 • Fall 2004

IDOT submits Notice of Intent to Federal government and kicks off NEPA Process

On September 10, 2004 the Federal Highway Administration published a Notice of Intent about the Prairie Parkway Study in the Federal Register. Publishing the Notice of Intent signals the start of the environmental review process under the terms of the National Environmental Policy Act. This act requires Federal agencies to consider the potential environmental consequences of major Federal actions, including transportation projects, to document the analysis, and to make this information available to the public for comment prior to implementation of the action. Under these regulations, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is prepared prior to the implementation of an action that could significantly affect the human or natural environment.

An Environmental Impact Statement is meant to be a concise, full, and fair discussion of the environmental impacts associated with the reasonable alternatives being considered by a study team. The EIS process, as applied to the Prairie Parkway Study, will consist of the following components:

- **On-Going Public and Agency Involvement**
- **Notice of Intent (NOI)**
- **Scoping:** Scoping establishes the issues that need to be addressed during a study. Scoping is an important process, and is discussed in more detail on page 2.
- **Statement of Purpose and Need:** This statement describes what goals the transportation improvements should achieve. The Statement of Purpose and Need must be approved by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); and is reviewed by various state and federal environmental resource and regulatory agencies.
- **Alternatives Selection:** This component focuses on identifying the alternatives to be evaluated in detail in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The alternatives are evaluated according to the criteria established in the Purpose and Need and in close coordination with local officials, the public and various state and federal environmental resource and regulatory agencies.
- **Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS):** The direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the alternatives selected for detailed evaluation in the DEIS are assessed in this document. It is called a "draft" because an Environmental Impact Statement cannot be finalized until it has undergone public and agency review.
- **Public Hearings and Draft Environmental Impact Statement Review:** The completed DEIS is distributed for public and agency review.

continued on page 2

A Message from Illinois Department of Transportation

In June we held public workshops to gain a better understanding of the purpose and need for transportation improvements in the study area, have the public identify possible solutions, and listen to what evaluation factors are important to you. As the study team and I interacted with the participants, I was pleased to see the patience and cooperation that everyone put forth. Whether one's interest was preserving farmland or getting to work in a reasonable amount of time, participants sat together at tables and worked out potential ideas to balance each others' desire. These differences of opinion seemed less important to most than the greater need to plan transportation improvements in the rapidly developing study area.

IDOT's mission is to provide regional mobility and to safely move people and goods in a reasonable time in and through the study area region. The suggested transportation improvements that came out of the public workshop and others that were identified by public officials and stakeholders are often focused on the area or routes familiar to the individual or community. This resulted in over 150 projects spread throughout the study area. Our study team has pieced together these projects into sets of initial concepts that serve the greater region and incorporate most of the suggestions we have received. I look forward to seeing the same level of participation by the public as we sort through the various concepts to find a solution that balances the mobility needs of the region and fits within the context of our communities.

Sincerely,

John P. Kos, P.E.
District Engineer

This publication provides a format to keep you informed about the new study developments.

In This Issue:

Communities Working Together... **Planning for the Future...**

Identify Concepts

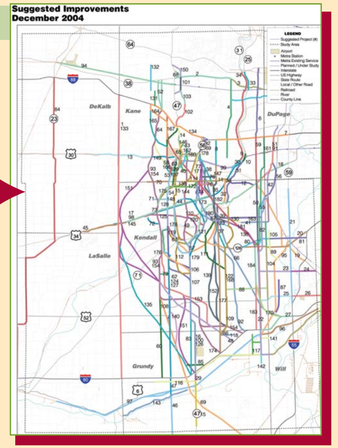


Figure 1

Potential Conceptual Alternatives

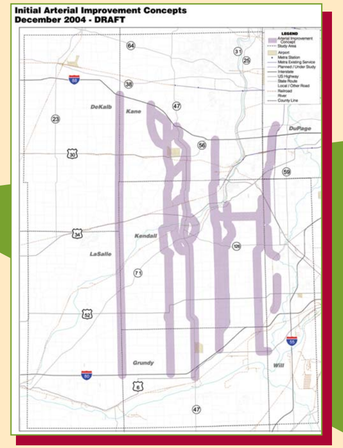


Figure 2

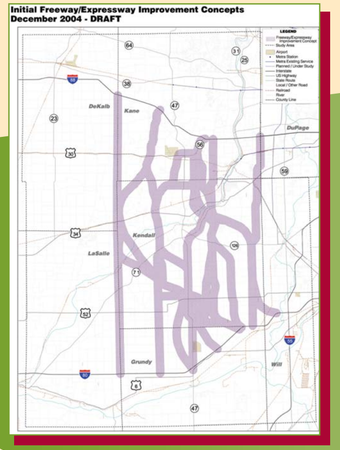


Figure 3

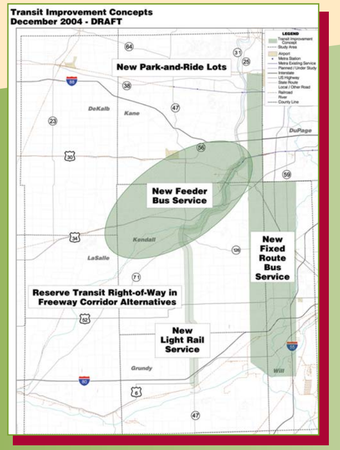


Figure 4

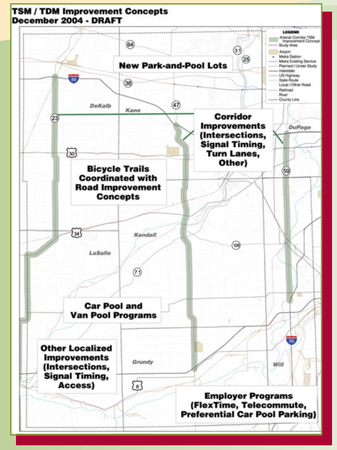
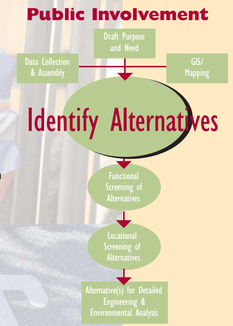


Figure 5

Part B Process

We are currently in Part B of the study, as identified in the timeline. Part B begins with the further development of the purpose and need for improvement, and identifies a wide range of possible solutions, such as transit, improving existing roads, new highway corridors, transportation system management techniques, or combinations of these solutions. Next, the possible solutions are assessed through a two-step process to determine how well they address the purpose and need for improvement. The first step is a functional review that assesses the performance of an alternative. The second step considers how well the location of a particular solution meets the identified needs. Those possible solutions that do not adequately address the purpose and need will be dropped from further consideration. Part B ends with the selection of an alternative(s) for further detailed evaluation.

Throughout Part B there will be continued public involvement, including public information meetings, community official meetings, and meetings with environmental resource agencies. The public will be kept informed on the progress of Part B through regular updates published in our project newsletters, fact sheets, and website.



Study Timeline

Identify Conceptual Alternatives – Possible solutions have been identified by using a number of resources, including the deficiency findings in the TSP, briefings with officials from state, county, and local governments, input from civic interest groups, public workshops, comment forms, and the website. To identify alternatives, it was understood that the ideas would eventually have to fit within the following characteristics:

- *Alternatives will be directly responsive to the purpose and need*
- *Alternatives may contain a possible mix of modes, physical facilities and operating strategies*
- *Each alternative will be defined to be fully competitive*
- *Each alternative should be significantly different from other alternatives*

Potential Conceptual Alternatives - Many different types of improvements were suggested. Some examples include:

- *Transportation System Management (TSM) improvements, such as timed traffic lights, tolls, high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes or car pool lanes*
- *Multi-lane street improvements, such as widening and access control*
- *New arterial streets, extensions or bypasses around congested areas*
- *New expressways to provide multi-lane, limited access, for longer trip with some traffic lights*
- *New freeways offering very limited access, higher speeds, longer distances, and no intersections or traffic lights*
- *New transit services and facilities, such as buses and trains*
- *Combinations of these solutions*
- *No action*

Over 150 improvement projects have been suggested (see Figure 1). This collection of solutions must be integrated into an overall plan.

To accomplish this, the projects were categorized into representative corridors, and sorted by type of improvement. Initial improvement concepts for arterials are shown in Figure 2, and for freeways and expressways in Figure 3. Transit and transportation system management (TSM) / travel demand management (TDM) improvement concepts are shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5. Nearly all project suggestions that appeared to meet the overall purpose and need criteria are referenced to one or more of the initial improvement concept corridors.

Functional Analysis – This is the first of a two-step process to narrow down the list of potential arterial and freeway/expressway improvement concepts. Those concepts having similar locations or addressing similar traffic concerns are grouped into corridors. With the traffic analysis model, we will assess how the corridor affects traffic operations problems identified by the purpose and need through the year 2030.

The goal of this step is to gain an understanding of how well the concepts meet the travel needs of the region. Using the current and year 2030 travel patterns, proposed solutions can be measured by improvement to factors such as:

- *Traffic volume, reported as Average Daily Traffic (ADT)*
- *Use of facilities by functional classification: arterials, local roads or interstates.*
- *Level of service and/or volume-capacity ratios*
- *Area-wide measure of travel activity, reported as Vehicle Miles of Travel (VMT)*
- *Travel time*
- *Accessibility to jobs*
- *Crashes*

Concepts that do not sufficiently meet the purpose and need will be eliminated and the remainder will be studied further. With the knowledge of how well the concepts address the traffic needs, we can either perform functional analysis of additional concepts, combinations of concepts, or begin the location review to assess issues that may override the traffic operation benefits of an improvement concept.

Location Review -The second step of the Part B evaluation process will be to assess the location factors of the remaining improvement concepts that pass the functional analysis process. In this step, the remaining concepts will be located within broad corridors to allow for further evaluation and screening based upon location. This is the first time that possible locations for improvements are reviewed in the study. The objective for this step is to further develop and identify the best alternative(s) through the following tasks:

- *Identify general location of potential improvement*
- *Develop an initial layout of the potential improvement*
- *Assess the general environmental impact*
- *Perform more detailed study of how traffic operates in the improvement area*
- *Develop initial cost estimates*
- *Evaluate how well the potential improvement addresses the purpose and need*

Purpose and Need

An important factor in selecting the best alternative is its ability to address the purpose and need for improvements. Therefore, it is important to have a good understanding of those needs as we identify possible alternatives. This initial summary of purpose and need will be refined as data is updated and the study team continues their coordination and interaction with the communities, technical agencies, and environmental resource agencies. Based on the technical analysis and public involvement findings, four key broad transportation needs have been initially identified:

1. Improve Access from Study Area to Regional Jobs

With households expected to increase faster than jobs in the study area, more study area residents are expected to commute out of the study area to reach their jobs. For example, work trips from Kendall to Will County are expected to increase by 175% and to Kane County by 150%. With growing traffic on roads, travel times will increase. With the expected increase in travel times and the growing need to travel outside the study area for jobs, the result will be a decline in job accessibility for the study area.

2. Improve Regional Mobility

Declining mobility throughout the region can be attributed to the lack of high capacity, multi-lane roads running north and south. Vehicle trips are projected to increase by 76% in the study area in the next 30 years, based on the forecasted 89% increase in population and employment. North-south travel across the study area is expected to increase by 119,000 daily vehicles by 2030. East-west travel is expected to increase by 69,000 over the same period. The level of service on almost all major roads in the study area is expected to decline during this period. Other mobility concerns are:

- The Fox River, which crosses the study area, limits the north-south movement of people and goods.
- There are no north-south multi-lane roads or interstates between IL-59 and I-39, a distance of nearly 50 miles.
- By year 2030, work trips from Kendall County to Will County are projected to increase by 175%, with trips from Kendall to Kane increasing by more than 150% and trips from Kendall to Grundy County increasing by more than 100%.

3. Address Local Roadway Deficiencies

There are increasing deficiencies on local roads. An overwhelming majority (85%) of the roadways within the study area are two-lane roads. With the lack of high capacity north-south roads to accommodate longer trips in and through the area, the smaller capacity local roads are being forced to serve this function, as well as provide access to property and higher capacity roads. Year 2030 forecasts show that daily traffic volumes will increase significantly, with traffic increasing anywhere from 30% to 230% on various roads.

4. Improve Safety

As traffic increases, so does the number of crashes. In the congested conditions, motorists seek alternative routes that are intended for lower speeds, lower volumes, and more frequent turns at intersections. This results in the increased possibility of more crashes and unexpected driving delays. Crashes are projected to increase between 51% and 81% on lower capacity roads in the study area.

Study Team has Assembled a Wide Range of Possible Improvement Concepts

Over the past year, IDOT's focus has been on examining the study area's transportation system and travel patterns. Part A of the comprehensive Prairie Parkway Study analyzed the existing and future transportation characteristics, performance, and improvements in an area that is experiencing the demands of growing regional development and increased traffic congestion.

The result of this work was published in the Transportation System Performance (TSP) report. With this information, IDOT identified transportation deficiencies and has begun the Part B planning process for developing regional solutions to address these deficiencies. The TSP report is available on the project website at **www.prairie-parkway.com**.