



Illinois Department of Transportation

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IDOT Selects Route for Prairie Parkway with I-80 Connection West of Minooka

Decision is a key step forward for plan to relieve congestion and improve access to jobs in Kane, Kendall and Grundy Counties

OTTAWA, Ill. –The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) today announced that a route has been selected for the proposed Prairie Parkway. The route, which has broad public and governmental support, is projected to save drivers around \$4.5 billion by significantly reducing travel delays, and will improve access to jobs in the area. After a series of public hearings, IDOT has selected Alternative B5 along with the widening of IL-47 as the preferred alternative for the Prairie Parkway Preliminary Engineering Study.

“This is a significant milestone in the Prairie Parkway Study,” Acting IDOT Secretary Milt Sees said. “The selection of Alternative B5 with IL-47 widening could not have been made without the input from people who judged for themselves which alternative was the most effective in addressing congestion and is most compatible with their communities.”

The preferred alternative consists of 37 miles of new four-lane freeway that begins on its south end with an interchange at I-80 west of Minooka and ending on the north with an interchange at I-88 near Kaneville. The freeway will also have interchanges with US-52, IL-47, IL-71, US-34, and US-30 to provide access to the local road system. The IL-47 widening to four-lanes is 12 miles in length from Caton Farm Road on the north to I-80 on the south.

Alternative B5 with IL-47 widening is projected to deliver these improvements:

- Save drivers \$4.5 billion by reducing the hours of travel delays from 2016 to 2030.
- Reduce vehicle hours of travel by 66,000 hours per weekday (19,800,000 hours per year) in 2030. From 2016 to 2030, its estimated drivers will save a total of 325,500,000 hours of driving in their vehicles.
- Reduce congested miles of travel by 695,000 hours per weekday (208,500,000 hours per year) in 2030. From 2016 to 2030, drivers will experience a total of 3,338,900,000 fewer hours of congested travel time.

- Reduce travel delay by 45,000 hours per weekday (13,500,000 hours per year) in 2030. From 2016 to 2030, it is estimated that drivers will save a total of 210,900,000 hours.
- Provide access to an estimated 58,000 more jobs located within 60 minutes of study area residents in 2030.
- Reduce estimated crash costs by a total of \$254,308,000 from 2016 to 2030.
- Result in fewer trucks traveling arterial routes like Sherrill Road, IL-47, US-52 and Caton Farm Road.

The selection of Alternative B5 with IL-47 widening followed the analysis documented in the Prairie Parkway Draft Environmental Impact Statement that was released on November 17, 2006. The decision reflects comments and input received throughout the study period from the public, local officials, agencies, and other organizations, including formal comments received in response to the public hearings held for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on December 6 and 7, 2006 and February 13, 2007.

The selection of Alternative B5 has the concurrence of state and federal environmental oversight agencies including U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Department of Agriculture and Federal Highway Administration.

Alternative B5 with IL-47 widening was selected as the preferred alternative over Alternative B2 with IL-47 widening (Alternative B2 is generally a straight north-south freeway between I-80 and I-88 located four miles west of existing IL-47 connecting to I-80 near Morris, Illinois) and the No Action Alternative because of strong local and other governmental support, meeting the purpose and need for the project, and the environmental resources affected.

Public opinion strongly favored Alternative B5 with IL-47 widening. When local governments indicated a preference for either alternative, it was overwhelmingly in support of Alternative B5, with nine local governments in favor of Alternative B5, versus one for Alternative B2. Alternative B5 is also more compatible with local land use plans, following the boundaries of planned development areas. It avoids segmenting agricultural areas in south Kendall County that local land use plans want to preserve. In addition, Alternative B5 has already been adopted in several local land use plans.

Alternative B5 better met the purpose and need of the project: to improve regional mobility; to address local system deficiencies by developing a transportation system that serves projected growth in local traffic and reduces travel times; to improve access from the study area to regional jobs; and to improve safety. Alternative B5 performed especially well in improving regional mobility and improving access to regional jobs.

The environmental impacts of Alternatives B5 and B2 were very similar, both in terms of resources affected and the extent of the impacts. This included less than three acres of wetlands and 22 displaced residences for both alternatives. Alternative B5 was also considered to be consistent with State Farmland Preservation policy, which was not the case with Alternative B2.

The Prairie Parkway Preliminary Engineering Study began in 2002. IDOT has placed a high priority on extensive public involvement as an important aspect to guide the study. IDOT has made significant realignments to the corridors throughout the study area that resulted from public involvement and other findings.

IDOT is addressing comments and completing the Final Environmental Impact Statement which should be completed in late 2007. In July, IDOT will host another round of public hearings for road closures, air quality studies, and revisions to the corridor protection. The Record of Decision, also expected in late 2007, provides the Federal authorization to proceed with the project. Land acquisition could start in 2008. Depending on project readiness and funding availability, construction could start as soon as 2009.

IDOT acknowledges the contribution of the Corridor Planning Group in this project, which is a volunteer group led by elected officials of the counties and municipalities affected by the improvements. These officials are supported by technical task forces members from farm bureaus, economic development councils, forest preserve districts, and environmental conservation groups with experience and knowledge of issues related to land use planning, environmental resources, and transportation. They bring a local perspective to the effects the alternatives may have in their own communities. IDOT has worked with them to develop alignments that best blend factors such as providing the most travel benefits, compatibility with future land use plans, and minimizing impacts to the scenic, economic, historic, and natural qualities of their communities.

Further information regarding the study can be found at www.prairie-parkway.com.

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