

Transportation News

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U.S. Approves Prairie Parkway Project to Improve Transportation in Kane, Kendall and Grundy Counties

OTTAWA – The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) announced that federal transportation officials have provided formal approval for the Prairie Parkway project that is intended to deliver major transportation improvements for fast growing Kane, Kendall and Grundy counties. A Record of Decision entered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation on Sept. 19 authorizes IDOT to use federal funds for the next phases of the project.

“This decision marks an important step forward as we work with our partners to provide congestion relief, lay the groundwork for future economic growth and improve access to regional jobs,” said IDOT Secretary Milton R. Sees. “The Prairie Parkway plan that was selected over other alternatives, and the no-action alternative, was developed through strong local and governmental support. It provides the best balance of addressing travel needs while minimizing environmental and community impacts.”

The Record of Decision represents the conclusion of a seven-year process that has included the environmental assessment, alternatives analysis, and preliminary engineering phases of the Prairie Parkway Study. The selected alternative includes building 37 miles of new four-lane freeway from I-80, west of Minooka in Grundy County, to I-88 near Kaneville in Kane County. Also included is widening twelve miles of IL-47 from I-80 to Caton Farm Road, where it will connect to other planned or programmed IL-47 widening projects. IL-47 will be a four-lane highway with two lanes in each direction.

“The ability to reach agreement on this milestone is a tribute to the extensive participation of community representatives, citizens, and agencies,” said George F. Ryan, IDOT Region 2 Engineer and Deputy Director of Highways. “This collaborative effort has resulted in an improved project that addresses both local and regional transportation needs for this dynamic region.”

The approved plan is based upon detailed analysis documented in the Prairie Parkway Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements. The decision reflects agreements, comments, and input received throughout the study period from the public, local officials, agencies, and other

organizations. The decision also addresses formal comments received in response to the public hearings held for the Environmental Impact Statement. The selection of the preferred alternative 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.

The approved route for the Prairie Parkway is consistent with the alignment recorded for the Corridor Protection that was revised and approved on November 7, 2007. All affected property owners within the protected corridor have been notified of the revised corridor protection. This land is considered protected in a manner that no one can incur development costs or place improvements in the protected area without first giving 60 days notice to IDOT. IDOT has 45 days to decide whether or not to purchase the property, and an additional 120 days to complete the purchase or start condemnation proceedings.

The construction of the Prairie Parkway and IL-47 will span over many years with the first section connecting IL-71 to US 34. This section will add a new Fox River bridge crossing, and provide an alternative route for IL-47 traffic through Yorkville.

IDOT will now move forward with necessary right-of-way acquisition, final design, utility relocations, environmental protection, and construction; however, construction is dependent on project readiness and funding availability.

Currently, the Fiscal Year 2009 to 2014 IDOT Proposed Highway Improvement Program has programmed \$182.4 million for utility adjustments, wetland mitigation, five miles of paving, grading, and new bridges from IL-71 to US-34 in Kendall County; and land acquisition from I-80 in Grundy County to I-88 in Kane County.

IDOT continues to promote active public participation for this project. Further information regarding the project can be found at www.prairie-parkway.com, or through contacting IDOT District 3 in Ottawa, Illinois.

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