



## STAY INVOLVED

Stay involved in the IL 53 Phase I study by visiting the project website at [www.IL53Corridor.org](http://www.IL53Corridor.org). Stakeholders can sign up to receive project notifications and newsletters via mail or email. In addition, detailed information from public meetings and Community Advisory Group (CAG) meetings is made available on the project website after meetings are held.

### NEXT STEPS

The second CAG meeting is anticipated to be held in the first quarter of 2017. This meeting will include a review of the identified transportation issues from comments received and data collected, explain the completed screening and evaluation, and describe potential improvements.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Please visit the project website at [www.IL53Corridor.org](http://www.IL53Corridor.org). The project e-mail address is [IL53Corridor@ClarkDietz.com](mailto:IL53Corridor@ClarkDietz.com).

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## IL 53 PHASE I STUDY West Arsenal Road to US 52, Will County

## SPRING 2017 NEWSLETTER NO. 1



March 2017

## THANK YOU!

Thank you for your involvement at the first public meeting held on November 10, 2015 for the Illinois Department of Transportation's (Department) proposed improvement of IL 53 from West Arsenal Road to US 52, in Will County. Your comments have become part of the official public meeting record and will be included in the project report.

The meeting was attended by 195 individuals. A total of forty-four (44) comments were received during the three week comment period. Of the comments received, approximately twenty-six percent (26%) supported the need for improvements and suggested various alternatives, nineteen percent (19%) stated concerns about existing and future traffic, nineteen percent (19%) stated safety and access issues, fifteen percent (15%) expressed environmental concerns, twelve percent (12%) requested additional enforcement, and four percent (4%) noted drainage issues. The remaining five percent (5%) were various comments not related to any of the comments specified above. As many of the comments received concerned similar issues, this newsletter has been prepared to address those concerns as well as provide you with an overview of other topics. Information and materials from the public meeting can be viewed on the project website at [www.IL53Corridor.org](http://www.IL53Corridor.org).

## PROJECT OVERVIEW AND STUDY AREA

The IL 53 Phase I study was initiated in the fall of 2014 to address safety and operations along IL 53 from West Arsenal Road to US 52. The study area traverses the City of Joliet, the City of Wilmington, and the Village of Elwood, all of which are located in Will County, Illinois. The study area is in proximity to other studies and projects that include:

- Illinois High-Speed Rail – <http://www.idothsr.org/>
- Arsenal Road Jurisdictional Transfer
- ICC closure of Walter Strawn Drive at the UP Railroad At-Grade Crossing
- Illiana Corridor – [www.illianacorridor.org/](http://www.illianacorridor.org/)
- I-80 Improvements – <http://i-80will.com/>
- IL 53 at West Arsenal Road
- IL 53 at River Road
- IL 53 at Hoff Road Intersection Improvements (in conjunction with the High-Speed Rail Project)
- Sugar Run Creek Area Plan – <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/programs-and-resources/ita/will-county>
- Houbolt Road Bridge

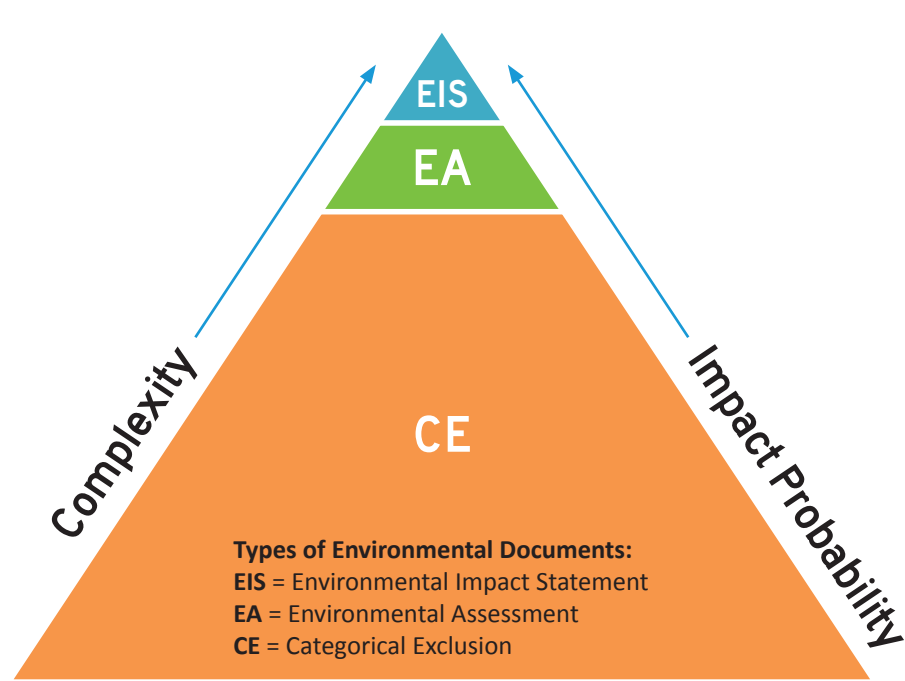
The IL 53 Phase I study is not meant to replicate the studies of nearby projects but supplement their findings. Furthermore, like each of the other projects, the IL 53 Phase I study has its own independent schedule. As part of the High Speed Rail project, construction of the IL 53 at Hoff Road intersection improvements is anticipated to begin in 2016. Adjacent projects and studies led by local agencies such as Will County and the City of Joliet are also considered during the development of the IL 53 study.

[www.IL53Corridor.org](http://www.IL53Corridor.org)



POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Public input and information received during the first Community Advisory Group (CAG) meeting, along with the data collection over the course of the study, has helped identify improvement needs along IL 53. Since the first CAG meeting in January 2016, the project has continued to progress. Due to the considerable size of the project (approximately 13 miles in length), the data collection process, including procuring traffic counts and land surveying, has been time intensive. However, alternatives are being developed, analyzed, and evaluated. Each alternative may include intersection improvements, evaluation of potential new traffic signal locations, additional pedestrian and bicycle facilities, access changes, and drainage improvements designed to improve safety and operations, minimize traffic conflicts, and reduce drainage issues within the project area. It is anticipated that additional through lanes are not needed on IL 53.



The IL 53 Phase I study is to be processed in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures. NEPA requires Federal agencies to incorporate environmental considerations in their planning and decision making. The Department has noted and understands the concerns of impacts to the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery. It is the goal of this improvement to minimize effects to these significant environmental and cultural resources. Effects to environmental resources will be evaluated and environmental impacts minimized during the design process. While significant impacts are not anticipated, the Department will coordinate as needed with the appropriate agencies. The project is being processed as a Categorical Exclusion (CE).

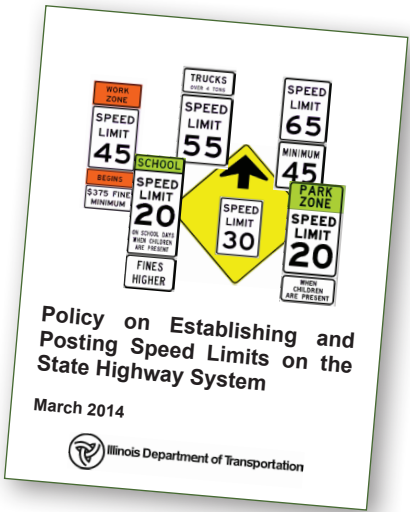
SPEED LIMITS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Speed limits on Illinois state highways are a matter of state law. They have been established by the Illinois Vehicle Code and the Department’s *Policy on Establishing and Posting Speed Limits on the State Highway System*. The current statutory speed limit on IL 53 ranges from 55 mph at the south end of the project limits to 45 mph at the north end of the project limits.

The Department has statutory responsibility for the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of Illinois’ extensive transportation network, while local law enforcement agencies are responsible for enforcing the traffic laws within their jurisdiction.

CONCERNS WITH TRAFFIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Within the project development process, the IL53 Phase I study is currently in the stage of developing transportation alternatives. As part of this stage, traffic counts, reports, and plans have been reviewed to analyze the existing conditions of the project study area. Projections for future impacts have also been considered for developing potential improvements. The Department strives to provide safe, cost-effective transportation for Illinois in ways that enhance quality of life, promote economic prosperity, and demonstrate respect for our environment. The Department works with local and regional planning agencies to design a transportation network to meet the requirements of the region.



HOUBOLT ROAD BRIDGE

In July 2016, it was announced that a public-private partnership has been created between the state, local governments, and CenterPoint Properties to build a new Houbolt Road bridge linking Interstate 80 and the intermodal facilities. The project’s intent is to alleviate traffic congestion on local roads, improve safety, and further strengthen the state’s economy. It is estimated to cost a combined \$170 million to \$190 million.

The agreement is the result of teamwork between the Illinois Department of Transportation, CenterPoint, the City of Joliet, and Will County. Under the agreement, CenterPoint will build and operate a new tolled bridge on Houbolt Road over the Des Plaines River and the BNSF Railroad tracks at a cost of \$150 million to \$170 million. Will County is required to pass a resolution allowing tolls to be issued and collected by CenterPoint.

An IDOT contribution of \$21 million will widen Houbolt Road and reconfigure the existing interchange with I-80 to accommodate the increased traffic demand. The City of Joliet will work with IDOT to implement and oversee the improvements.

When complete, the project will provide two lanes of traffic in each direction between I-80 and CenterPoint’s intermodal facilities. The new link will relieve congestion, answer safety concerns expressed by local communities, and make the intermodal facilities more efficient. Construction could start as soon as 2017, with the bridge opening to traffic in late 2018 or early 2019.

About 11,000 vehicles per day are expected to use the bridge initially, including more than 6,600 trucks. By

the year 2040, it is anticipated that traffic will grow to approximately 30,000 vehicles per day, including approximately 18,000 trucks.

TRUCK TRAFFIC

IL 53 has been a truck route since World War II, when this section of IL 53 was a strategic defense highway and had the designation of US 66. This section of IL 53 is currently designated a Class II Truck Route, which is a non-interstate roadway with a minimum lane width of 11 feet. It has the same vehicle weight and size restrictions of a Class I Truck Route specified in the Illinois Vehicle Code. Illinois enacted new truck weight laws on January 1, 2010. Prior to January 1, 2010, local governments designated roadways as Class II Truck Routes to allow trucks with higher weights into industrial and commercial transportation areas. After January 1, 2010, the local Class II Truck Route designation provides longer trucks a lawful way to access the same destinations.

In 1994, IL 53 from Peotone Road to Interstate 80 was designated as a Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA). The SRA system is a network of existing roads intended to supplement the existing and proposed expressway facilities by accommodating a significant portion of long-distance, high-volume automobile and commercial vehicle traffic in the region. In February of 1999, the Department completed SRA Report 512. This report developed a conceptual improvement plan to improve transportation mobility along the corridor, which was made available for local agencies to use in their land use planning activities. A link to the report is available on our project website.

FUNDING

As presented at the public meeting, highway improvements are typically developed in three distinct phases. Preliminary engineering and environmental studies, known as Phase I, involve coordinating with the public, developing geometry and drainage plans, identifying environmental concerns, and determining right-of-way requirements. The Department anticipates completing Phase I in 2017. After completion of Phase I, the Department can begin preparing contract plans and acquiring the necessary right-of-way (Phase II) once funding becomes available. Phase III represents the construction of the improvement.

This improvement is not currently included in the Department’s FY 2017-2022 Proposed Highway Improvement Program. However, this project will be included in the Department’s priorities for future funding consideration among similar improvement needs throughout the region.

