



Illinois 53 Phase I Study

Summary Report

PUBLIC HEARING

Open House with Public Forum

March 21, 2024

4:00 - 7:00p.m.

Stone City VFW

Joliet, IL

Will County



Illinois Department of Transportation



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1. OVERVIEW

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) conducted the public hearing for the preliminary engineering and environmental study (Phase I) of IL 53 from N. River Road to Patterson Road on March 21st, 2024, from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM at the Stone City VFW. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Describe the project development process
- Present the proposed improvements
- Present the Section 4(f) analysis for Nowell Park
- Present road closures at the east leg of Doris Avenue at the IL 53 intersection and the north leg of Nowell Avenue at the Mills Road/US 52 intersection
- Obtain public input

Project Description

The project consists of a Phase I preliminary engineering and environmental study for potential improvements to approximately 13 miles of IL 53 from River Road to Patterson Road. The project is located in Will County, the City of Joliet, and the Village of Elwood.

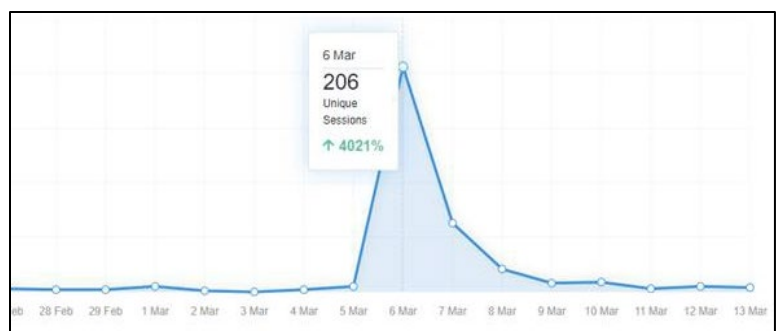


PROJECT LOCATION MAP

Hearing Announcements

The study team notified stakeholders of the hearing in the following ways:

- *Letters* - Sent to public agency officials and local administrators inviting them to attend the public hearing. These letters were distributed two weeks prior to the meeting. Please see Appendix A for a copy of the letter and a list of recipients.
- *Newspaper Ads* - Displayed in two local newspapers one and two weeks prior to the hearing. Please see Appendix B for a copy of the ad and the listing of the newspapers who published the ad. After the publication of the first newspaper ad, the project website received over 200 visits as shown in the image to the right.
- *Press Release* - Released to news sources and public officials within the project study area and surrounding vicinity. A copy of the press release is included in Appendix C.
- *Postcards* – 2,000 postcards were mailed to the public within the project study area. A copy of the postcard is included in Appendix D.
- *Website* - An announcement about the public hearing was posted to the project website.



Hearing Format

The hearing was held in the VFW hall and the room was divided with a partition. One half of the room was set up as an open house with the IDOT and consultant team members available to answer questions. This room included information on exhibit boards including a project schedule, study area, overall crash map, proposed intersection improvements, environmental impacts summary, Section 4(f) overview, and land acquisition. Large scroll maps of the project area were available to give the public the opportunity to place comments directly on the map. A court reporter was present to record verbal testimony from stakeholders. There were two (2) Spanish translators at the public hearing; however, there was no language translation requested.

The second room was set up to provide a continuous audio/visual presentation that included a project overview, project scope, environmental analysis, land acquisition overview, and discussion of next steps. At 5:30pm, this room was utilized for a public forum where stakeholders were invited to make a public statement to a court reporter. Participants were allowed 2 minutes to speak.

Hearing Materials

The following is a summary of the information provided at the meeting. The following are listed in the order that they were placed throughout the meeting location:

- **Welcome and Sign In:** Study team representatives greeted all attendees and explained the hearing process. Attendees were asked to sign in and were provided with a copy of the comment form and provided the opportunity to sign up for the public forum. Copies of the handouts are included in Appendix E.
- **Presentation:** A 20-minute, looped PowerPoint presentation with voice over, played continuously throughout the hearing. The presentation provided an overview of the project, including the project timeline, project purpose and need, engineering considerations, overview of the proposed improvements, environmental considerations, and next steps in the process. Please see Appendix F for a copy of the presentation.
- **Exhibits:** The following project information was presented with exhibits:
 - Study Area
 - Project Schedule
 - Crash Heat Map
 - Environmental Impacts
 - Section 4(f) Analysis
 - Land Acquisition
 - Comments
 - Aerial Map of IL 53 at Doris Avenue Improvements
 - Aerial Map of IL 53 at Mills Road Improvements
 - Aerial Map of Mills Road at Gardner Street (US 52) Improvements
 - Aerial Map of IL 53 at Zurich/Girard Improvements

- Aerial Map of IL 53 at Laraway Road Improvements
- Aerial Map of IL 53 at Manhattan Road Improvements
- Aerial Map of IL 53 at River Road Improvements
- Aerial Scroll Maps showing Corridor Improvements
- Comments

- Please see Appendix G for copies of these exhibits.
- All of these materials have been posted to the project website www.il53corridor.org

2. ATTENDANCE

Based on the sign-in sheet (Appendix H), the hearing was attended by 90 participants. The following tables show attendees representing various municipalities and groups/organizations.

Table 1: Municipal Representation	
City of Joliet	39
Village of Elwood	21
Village of Rockdale	2
Village of Shorewood	1
Village of Manhattan	1
City of Wilmington	1
Village of New Lenox	1
Village of Braidwood	1
City of Lockport	1
Other or Not Specified	22

Table 2: Organization*	
Public Agency	17
Citizen/Resident	33
Business	2

*Based on individuals who identified themselves with a group/organization

3. COMMENT SUMMARY

Stakeholders had multiple ways to provide comments:

- Comments to the project team or IDOT via letter, email message, or website
- Comment forms
- Post-it notes on the aerial maps
- Testimony to court reporter during the open house and public forum

The following summarizes the comments received:

Comments and Comment Forms

Fifteen comment forms were completed and submitted at the public hearing. Participants and those unable to attend were also provided the opportunity to mail the comment forms, access the comment form via the project website, or email comments to the project email address. The comment period ended 21 days after the hearing on April 11, 2024. Seven (7) additional stakeholders provided comments during the public hearing period. All of the comments received during the comment period can be found in Appendix I. The following topics were included:

- IL 53 at Millsdale Road: request for traffic signal
- IL 53 at Mississippi Avenue: request for traffic signal
- IL 53 at Manhattan Road: request for eastbound/westbound left turn lanes
- IL 53 pavement is in poor condition at the following locations:
 - Arsenal Road to Hoff Road
 - Patterson Road to 4th Street
- IL 53 at Doris Avenue: proposed cul-de-sac will impact existing trucking business
- IL 53 at Laraway Road: drainage improvements needed in northwest corner
- US 52 at Mills: support for proposed roundabout
- US 52 at Mills: concern with potential impacts to trees near Will County Farm Bureau building
- US 52 at Richards Street: drainage improvements are needed along US 52
- Shared-Use Path: general support
- Lighting needed along IL 53 north of Laraway Road
- IL 53 corridor has too much truck traffic
- IL 53 corridor has too much development



Post-It Notes

Attendees had the opportunity to write comments on post-it notes and place onto the aerial maps. Twenty-five comments were placed on post-it notes during the hearing. Pictures of these comments can be found in Appendix J. The following summarizes these comments:

- IL 53 at Doris Avenue: request for driveway improvements on west leg
- IL 53 at Laraway Road: drainage improvements needed in northwest corner
- IL 53 at Mississippi Avenue: request for traffic signal
- IL 53 at Ira Morgan Street: add pedestrian crossing on north leg
- IL 53 at Millsdale Road: request for traffic signal
- Millsdale Road and Sharp Road have experienced a substantial increase in truck traffic due to closure of Schweitzer Road
- Drainage improvements are needed near IL 53 Sta 535+00 to address ponding on private properties

Court Reporter Testimony

Attendees had the opportunity to provide testimony to a court reporter during the open house and the public forum. A total of seven (7) attendees provided comments to the court reporter during the open house and four (4) attendees provided comments during the public forum. The transcript for these comments can be found in Appendix K. The following summarizes these comments:

- IL 53 at Millsdale Road: request for traffic signal
- IL 53 at Millsdale Road: history of crashes
- IL 53 at Mississippi Avenue: request for traffic signal
- IL 53 at Mississippi Avenue: history of crashes
- IL 53 at Manhattan Road: request for eastbound/westbound left turn lanes
- IL 53 pavement is in poor condition at the following locations:
 - Arsenal Road to Hoff Road
 - Patterson Road to 4th Street
- IL 53 corridor has too much truck traffic
- IL 53 corridor has too much development



4. NEXT STEPS

The next steps in the IL 53 Phase I Study public involvement process will be to review and assess the input received and incorporate changes needed to the preferred alternative. The phase I process is anticipated to be completed in 2024