

Illinois NEPA/404 Merger Meeting

September 7, 2011

**Federal Highway Administration
Training Room
3250 Executive Park Drive
Springfield, IL 62703**

2 pm - 4:30 pm

- Eastern Bypass near Peoria (District 4, Tazewell, Woodford and Peoria Counties)
 - Information – Project Status Update

- North/South Corridor from IL 255 to Alton (District 8, Madison County)
 - Information – Project Introduction

- Chicago-St Louis High Speed Rail Projects
 - Information - This is an Illinois Department of Transportation-Federal Railroad Administration led project and they have asked to use the NEPA-404 Merger meeting as a forum to coordinate these projects with the resource agencies.

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September 8, 2011

**Federal Highway Administration
Training Room
3250 Executive Park Drive
Springfield, IL 62703**

10 am – 11:45 am

- Illiana Corridor (District 1 – IDOT and Indiana DOT; Kankakee, Will Counties in Illinois and Lake County, Indiana)
 - Information – Project Status Update
- I-80 study from Ridge Road to US Rte. 30 – (District 1, Kendall, Grundy and Will Counties)
 - Concurrence – Purpose and Need

11:45 am – 1 pm

LUNCH

1 pm – 3 pm

- Elgin O’Hare – West Bypass (District 1, Cook and DuPage Counties)
 - Concurrence – Purpose and Need
 - Concurrence – Range of Alternatives
- I-55 improvements at Airport Road and at IL 126/Essington Road (District 1, Will County)
 - Information - Project Introduction and draft Purpose and Need

Adjourn

NEPA/404 Merger Meeting
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IDOT District 1, Kendall, Grundy and Will Counties
I-80 from Ridge Road to US Route 30
Environmental Assessment
Concurrence – Purpose and Need

This was the second presentation for this project. The purpose of this meeting was to seek concurrence point #1, Purpose & Need. The topics discussed included a project overview and update, a presentation of the project Purpose & Need, and a discussion of the alternatives development process.

Self-introductions were made; the presentation was made by the Consultant HBP Illinois Partners (HBP) a joint venture of HNTB Corp., Bowman, Barrett & Associates, Inc. and Patrick Engineering Inc. A PowerPoint was used for the presentation.

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is undertaking a preliminary engineering and environmental (Phase I) study of the transportation needs within the Interstate 80 (I-80) corridor between Ridge Road (Kendall County Highway 11 and Grundy County Highway 5) and U.S. Route 30 (Lincoln Highway and Maple Street), a length of approximately 16 miles within Kendall, Grundy, and Will Counties.

This section of I-80 passes through six municipalities (Minooka, Channahon, Shorewood, Joliet, Rockdale, and New Lenox) and six townships (New Lenox, Joliet, Troy, Channahon, Aux Sable and Seward), encompasses nine streams, (Unnamed Tributary to DuPage River, DuPage River, Rock Run Creek, Unnamed Tributary to I&M Canal, Thorne Creek, Des Plaines River, Spring Creek, Hickory Creek and Sugar Creek) and includes nine interchanges (Ridge Road, I-55, Houbolt Road/Empress Road, Larkin Avenue (IL 7), Center Street/Meadow Avenue, Chicago Street (U.S. 52/IL 53), Richards Street, Briggs Street (Will County Highway 54), and U.S. Route 30). In general, the roadway cross-section consists of two through lanes in each direction of travel separated by an open grass median of varying width. Between the Center Street and Richards Street interchanges an additional lane is also provided in each direction. In some locations mainline bridges presently have minimal (2-3 foot shoulders). Within the corridor, the posted speed limit varies from 55 miles-per-hour (mph) at the east end of the corridor to 45 mph just west of the Des Plaines River to 65 mph on the western end of the corridor.

Thus far, study coordination meetings have been held with all six municipalities, the three counties, two townships, IDOT District 3, the Illinois State Police, the Will County Executive, and the Will County Center for Economic Development. Two Public Meetings have been held; the first one on August 18, 2010, at which the study team received input on study area concerns, and the second one on July 28, 2011, where the draft Purpose & Need was presented and input was received on project alternatives. Since this has been designated as a Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) project, a Project Working Group (PWG) has been assembled and has met four times as follows:

- PWG 1 – September 14th, 2010
 - Project overview, study area concerns, and goals and objectives
- PWG 2 – February 8th, 2011
 - Problem Statement, existing conditions and deficiencies
- PWG 3 – May 3rd, 2011
 - Purpose and Need, alternatives toolbox
- PWG 4 – May 20th, 2011
 - Alternatives Workshop

Through this stakeholder involvement process, the following issues and concerns have been identified:

- Capacity and congestion
- Design and aesthetics
- Multimodal options
- Des Plaines River bridge
- Noise

- Interchange design
- Environment
- Jurisdiction coordination and communication

As well, the following goals and objectives have been determined:

- Reduce congestion and improve capacity and traffic flow
- Improve safety
- Reduce noise
- Address Des Plaines River bridge
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Enhance quality of life with design

Based on this, as well as technical analysis of the existing conditions performed by the study team, the purpose of the proposed action is to provide an improved transportation system along Interstate 80 from Ridge Road to U.S. Route 30. This will be accomplished by addressing facility condition and design to improve regional and local travel and access, as well as safety for all users. Therefore, the identified project needs include:

- Improve regional and local travel and access;
- Improve facility condition and design; and
- Improve safety for all users

A chart of historical traffic volumes was displayed next. In general, between 1974 and 1999, traffic volumes grew at an annual rate of approximately 2.4% per year. Between 1999 and 2010, traffic volumes nearly doubled in some sections of the study area. The average annual growth rate during this period was approximately 4.8% per year. This growth limits the ability of I-80 to serve local, regional and cross-country users. The 2010 average daily traffic volumes along I-80 range from 38,900 to 112,700 vehicles per day.

A table depicting population growth in the study area was shown. In general, between 2000 and 2010, the majority of the municipalities in the project study area experienced high levels of population growth. The population of Joliet grew 38.8% between 2000 and 2010, propelling it ahead of Naperville as the fourth largest community in Illinois. Although some of the municipal growth can be attributed to annexation of existing population, during this same period, Will County grew as whole by nearly 35%. Therefore, true population growth was present. According to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) population projections, high rates of population growth will continue in the project study area and broader region into the year 2040. The growth of Joliet, as well as the other municipalities within the study area, creates travel demand and corresponding traffic congestion and reduces the ability of I-80 to serve local and regional travel.

Regional travel is defined as travel through the corridor that begins and ends outside the study area. The study team has performed capacity analyses to evaluate roadway operations which have yielded Level of Service (LOS) determinations. LOS is measured on an A to F scale, with LOS D depicting constrained, or limited, capacity and LOS E/F representing inadequate capacity. Aerial exhibits showing the project area with segments color coded to show the LOS for existing and 2040 no-build conditions were displayed. In summary, 7 of 8 freeway sections are projected to operate at LOS D (constrained capacity) or below by 2040 and 3 of 8 freeway sections are projected to operate at LOS E or LOS F (unacceptable) by 2040. One of the most congested areas falls within and serves Joliet. Congestion is worsened in this area due to lack of alternative east-west transportation routes and the limited number of options for crossing the Des Plaines River.

Local travel is defined as travel that either begins, ends, or occurs entirely within the study area. The study team has performed capacity analyses to evaluate operations of interchange ramps and arterial street intersections within the study influence area. These interchange analyses included merge analyses, diverge analyses, and weaving analyses. Intersection analyses were also done and included both signalized and unsignalized analyses. Aerial exhibits showing the project area with interchange areas color coded to show the LOS for existing and 2040 no-build conditions were displayed. In summary, the results of Interchange Analyses showed that under existing traffic conditions, 7 of 8

interchanges have one or more ramps operating at LOS D or below, 3 interchanges have one or more ramps operating at LOS E or F, and 2 of 3 weave interchanges have at least one weave area operating at LOS E. Further, under projected 2040 no-build conditions, 7 of 8 interchanges have one or more ramps operating at LOS D or below, 4 interchanges have one or more ramps operating at LOS E or F, and 2 out of 3 weave interchanges have at least one weave area operating at LOS E or LOS F.

The results of the intersection analyses showed that under existing conditions, all signalized intersections operate at an overall LOS D or better, however, 9 of 12 signalized intersections have at least one approach operating at LOS D or below. Further, under projected 2040 no-build conditions, all but two signalized intersections operate at an overall LOS D or better, however, 9 of 12 signalized intersections have at least one approach operating at LOS E or LOS F. Two unsignalized intersection analyses were performed. At the I-80 eastbound ramps intersection at Chicago Street, the LOS is A/B for existing conditions, however, the right turn movement degrades to E/F by 2040. At the I-80 westbound ramps intersection at Briggs Street, the LOS is E/F under existing and projected 2040 conditions. This latter intersection may be the subject of a near-term improvement that could include installation of a traffic signal at this location.

With respect to multi-modal connections and opportunities, 9 of 18 grade-separated crossings along the study corridor are designated "Not Recommended for Bicycling." Joliet is planning a new, regional multi-modal transportation center that would relocate 8 transportation modes to one central facility. Increasing the efficiency of I-80 would complement the transit center. Providing for improved connectivity between existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as well as facilitating connections to existing and planned transit and public transportation service areas would improve regional and local travel.

The second need is improving facility condition and design. The existing pavement and sub-base of I-80 is more than 50 years old and is currently in need of complete replacement. There are geometric deficiencies, as well. There is a need to update the interstate facility to current state and federal design standards to promote better operations, improved safety and increased performance. One identified deficiency is the alignment and profile of the roadway west of Des Plaines River Bridge where the 45 mph posted speed limit exists. IDOT's freeway design criteria specifies a 70 mph design speed. Another deficiency exists at the I-55, Larkin Avenue, and Chicago Street interchanges, where there are closely spaced loops ramps that do not meet design standards. This results in weaving sections that are too short in length and causes conflicts that affect traffic operations on I-80. Six of the nine interchanges also have ramp terminals that do not meet design standards. Another deficiency is vertical clearance at bridges. Eleven existing grade separated crossings do not meet vertical clearance requirements and impact damage has been observed at 3 of these locations. Lastly, I-80 is a major freight corridor and state-designated truck route that carries a high percentage of truck traffic which leads to advanced roadway and bridge deterioration. The truck percentages along I-80 range from 9% to 36%. Contributing to the truck traffic are the nearby UP Joliet Intermodal Terminal and the BNSF Logistics Park Intermodal Facility (CenterPoint). There is also a third intermodal facility proposed called the Ridgeport Logistics Center.

The third need is to improve safety for all users. Crash data has been analyzed for the four-year study period from 2005 to 2008. During this period, 1,548 total crashes occurred, with the predominant crash types as follows:

- Read-end crashes (38.8%)
 - Due to congestion, stop-and-go traffic
- Same direction sideswipes (26.5%)
 - Due to lane changes, merge and weave sections
- Fixed object crashed (22.1%)
 - Due to colliding with median barrier, guardrail, poles, trees

There were 298 total injury crashes, 65 incapacitating injury crashes, and 11 fatality crashes that resulted in 379 injuries and 14 fatalities. There are also six 2009 Illinois 5% Locations within the study area. The crashes, severe injuries, and fatalities are spread throughout the entire study area, with the majority occurring within the center section in Joliet and in the western rural portion of the corridor.

Soren Hall, USACE, asked that since the traffic volumes are much lower and the LOS is good in the sections west of I-55, is there really a need for additional lanes in this area. HBP responded that it has not yet been determined where additional lanes are needed and if they are, how many will be proposed. At this point, we are seeking to establish the need to further study this section of I-80. Once the alternatives development process begins, further details of reconstruction and additional lanes will be evaluated.

Norm West, USEPA, asked why the northbound to eastbound ramp did not show a poor LOS based on the analysis when he knows this ramp to be a capacity issue. HBP noted that the analysis did show an issue with the weave just upstream of this ramp along I-80, and that could be having a metering effect on the northbound to eastbound ramp merge, which results in the model depicting a better situation than actually exists.

Matt Fuller, FHWA, asked all the agencies present if they had any further questions or concerns and whether they could grant P&N concurrence. Norm wanted to see the noise issue addressed in the Purpose & Need since this was brought up extensively by the stakeholders. Matt responded that environmental impact issues are not traditionally included in the Purpose & Need, but rather assessed at the alternatives evaluation stage of the study. Norm agreed with that response. Norm also believed that additional information on the deficiencies at the Des Plaines River bridge should be added to the Purpose & Need document. Walt Zyznieuski, IDOT BDE, suggested that this can be added to Section 1.4.2 of the Purpose & Need document. Mike Hine, FHWA, commented that while the existing deficiencies at the Des Plaines River bridge area can be added to the Purpose & Need, there is a wide range of potential improvement alternatives that can be developed and evaluated at the Des Plaines River. This range in bridge alternatives would also include a wide range in possible construction costs. This information, once it is determined, will be addressed during the upcoming range of alternatives phase of the project and not as part of Purpose & Need. HBP will add the existing bridge deficiencies information to the Purpose & Need and resubmit it to IDOT and the FHWA. Matt will then distribute the revised document to the resource agencies for their review and solicit concurrence via email. All of the agencies agreed with this approach.

A brief overview of the alternatives development process was presented next. This process will combine the following:

- Stakeholder Input
- Project Need Elements
- Environmental Analysis
- Technical Analysis
- Cost

Thus far, stakeholder input on alternatives included:

- I-80 should add capacity (most specifically felt it should be 6 lanes east of I-55 and potentially 8 lanes in the middle) including managed lanes evaluation
- The Des Plaines River bridge should be reconstructed and realigned to provide a smoother alignment for the mainline through this area
- Include noise walls adjacent to residential areas
- Address high volumes of truck traffic
- Improve all interchanges through the project corridor to allow greater efficiency in entering/exiting I-80
- Provide additional non-motorized facility improvements addressing where I-80 acts as a barrier and providing regional trail linkages to supplement the street network
- Improve aesthetics and design of the mainline corridor

The Alternatives Framework for the I-80 study has been developed and incorporates four alternates, as follows:

- Freeway Alternates
 - Add General Purpose Lanes
 - Add Managed Lanes – HOT Lanes, Truck Only Lanes, Express Lanes

- Interchange Alternates
 - Ramp improvements and/or complete interchange reconfigurations
 - No improvements to U.S. 30 interchange (separate study completed)
- Des Plaines River Bridge Alternates
 - Maintain existing bridges or build a new bridge
 - Maintain existing alignment or construct a new smoother alignment
- Non-Motorized Alternates
 - Alleviate I-80 as a barrier to other modes of travel

IDOT anticipates the next project presentation at February 2012 NEPA Meeting to discuss alternatives.

There were no further formal questions or comments and the meeting was adjourned.

From: [Hall, Soren G LRC](#)
To: [Fuller, Matt \(FHWA\)](#)
Cc: [Chernich, Kathy G LRC](#); Shawn_Cirton@fws.gov; [Norman West](#)
Subject: I-80 (Ridge to U.S. 30) LRC-2011-103 (UNCLASSIFIED)
Date: Friday, September 09, 2011 1:00:17 PM

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Caveats: NONE

Matt,

I would like to make a request for additional information regarding concurrence for Purpose and Need for the I-80 project. During the meeting, I brought up the fact that the 2040 forecast for LOS west of I-55 was a C or better. I felt that this demonstrated that there was not a need for widening the roadway in this segment. I know that there are geometric deficiencies and safety issues that may be addressed and this need is supported in the document, but I think more information should be provided if there is a potential that this segment of roadway will be widened.

If I understand correctly, the presenters indicated that the LOS for the segment in question may be affected if widening occurs east of this segment. My understanding was that these types of calculations have not been completed. If it is possible that there will be alternatives that propose for a widening of the roadway west of I-55, I would like to request that additional information be provided to demonstrate that there is a need for the widening.

Thanks,
Soren

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Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Caveats: NONE