



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

Agenda Item H
233 South Wacker Drive
Suite 800, Sears Tower
Chicago, IL 60606

312-454-0400 (voice)
312-454-0411 (fax)
www.cmap.illinois.gov

MEMORANDUM

To: The MPO Policy Committee

Date: March 13, 2008

From: Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Staff

Re: Public Comment on the RTP/TIP amendment

The following is a summary of the comments received on the proposed January FY 2008 Transportation Improvement Program amendments and staff notes on those comments. Two comments were received on the Prairie Parkway project. A copy of the comments are attached.

Prairie Parkway TIP # 09-02-9033

Ms. Vineyard stated that the planned construction of the Prairie Parkway will benefit very few and would prefer to see the available funding used to widen IL RT 47.

The comment was forwarded to the Illinois Department of Transportation. They responded by stating that the section of the Prairie Parkway from IL 71 to US 30 will be the most heavily traveled and constructing an additional Fox River crossing will benefit local and regional travel. They continued to state that the Department supports adding lanes to IL 47 to address local transportation needs and the segment of IL 47 between I-80 and Caton Farm Road is included in the Preferred Alternative for the project.

Prairie Parkway TIP # 09-02-9033

Coalition 47+ stated that building this section of the Prairie Parkway will divert funds for immediate transportation needs in the region. They stated that the project will spur unmanaged growth and sever or use up to 7,500 acres of farmland. They continued to state that the roadway would damage fragile and rare natural resources. Additionally, some referenda have been passed in opposition to the roadway.

The comment was forwarded to the Illinois Department of Transportation. They responded by stating the funding issue is separate from the purpose and need of the

Prairie Parkway project, which is to increase regional north-south mobility, to address local system deficiencies, to improve access to regional jobs, and to improve safety. The Department's studies of local road alternatives similar to 47+ proposal were found to address local system deficiencies, but were found to be deficient in addressing regional north-south mobility, job access, and safety in comparison to the Preferred Alternative. The Department is addressing many of the 47+ proposals for state routes with separate projects independent of the Prairie Parkway study, while proposals for other routes are the responsibility of local agencies not under the Department's direct control.

Furthermore, the Prairie Parkway study has encouraged local participation in the planning of the project and its associated land use, transportation and environmental implications by initiating the project's Corridor Planning Group (CPG), which is made up of local elected municipal and county officials in proximity to the project. Through the CPG's Land Use Task Force, discussions have resulted in draft corridor planning guidelines that promote managed growth and discourage conflicting development. Environmental features have been incorporated in the project with the assistance of the CPG's Environmental Task Force to reduce the project's environmental impacts, especially with regard to forested areas, wetlands and water resources. The CPG's Transportation Task Force has been instrumental in assisting the Department in choosing road closures and addressing property access issues to minimize impacts.

The Department recognizes the advisory referenda in the five townships in rural Kane and Kendall Counties, and remains sensitive to the needs and opinions of the township residents. The Department also considers the letters and resolutions of support of the Preferred Alternative from several counties and municipalities in the area, as this is a regional project with implications for the entire Chicago metropolitan area.

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From: Chrisi [<mailto:chrisivineyard@comcast.net>]
Sent: Saturday, February 02, 2008 10:01 AM
To: Tip
Subject: Prairie Parkway bad for KC

I would like for MY VOICE TO BE HEARD LOUD AND CLEAR regarding the Prairie Parkway.

The planned construction of 5 miles in the middle of the entire proposed PP, is not going to benefit but a very few. I was a participant in the 3 landfill hearings in Kendall County. At landfill hearing #2, under oath, the DOT said they worked HAND and HAND with the landfill owners, so the PP would be placed by the landfill. The DOT stated that the STATE Of Il. DOES NOT HAVE THE MONEY TO COMPLETE THE PP UNTIL AFTER 2030! The local residents of Yorkville, Oswego, & Plano desperately need and want to see this money used to widen Rt. 47 ASAP, and local everyday infrastructure. The PP will destroy the BEST FARM LAND AND WATER in our State.

Please listen to the local residents.

Thanks,

Chrisi Vineyard

39 Settlers Lane

Oswego, Il 60543

630-551-3701

Here is a response from District 3 to the public comment by Chrisi Vineyard.

"Thank you for your comments on the Prairie Parkway project."

"The intent of the Prairie Parkway project is to provide a connection between two interstate highways to increase regional mobility, improve access to regional jobs, address local system deficiencies, and to improve safety. Traffic projections for the year 2020 indicate the segment between IL 71 and US 30 will be the most heavily travelled, even when the full project is built. Constructing an additional Fox River crossing is also seen as a benefit for local and regional travel, as the river is a major barrier to regional travel today and in the future."

"The Department has worked closely with local officials, environmental groups, and agricultural interests in providing stormwater treatment, reducing pollution and runoff from entering area streams, and addressing farm access issues."

"The Department supports adding lanes to IL 47 to address local transportation needs. The segment of IL 47 between I-80 and Caton Farm Road is included in the Preferred Alternative for the project. Two separate projects are underway for other local segments of IL 47. Phase I Engineering and Right of Way Plans are completed, and Phase II plans are 90% complete, for the segment of IL 47 from south of IL 71 to north of Countryside Parkway in Yorkville. Preliminary survey work is currently underway for the segment of IL 47 from north of Countryside Parkway to Cross Street in Sugar Grove."

"Sincerely,

February 15, 2008

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
Attn: RTP/TIP Comments
Sears Tower
233 South Wacker Blvd., Suite 800
Chicago, Illinois 60606

RE: Request to Deny Approval of Prairie Parkway TIP Amendment #09-02-9033

To Whom It May Concern:

Coalition 47+ urges the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) to reject the proposed FY 2007-2012 Transportation Implementation Program (TIP) amendment for the Prairie Parkway. At this juncture, the request by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is premature, since it has not yet issued a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), addressing critical flaws in its analysis and providing a final assessment of the appropriateness of the proposed route.

In addition, approving the TIP amendment for the truncated 5-mile segment of the 37-mile project will divert critical funding from immediate transportation needs in the region, such as widening all of IL-47 to provide the benefit of an improved north-south connection between I-80 and I-88. With its exclusive focus on the small segment of the new roadway, IDOT has neglected funding for IL-47 widening in its FY2007-2012 plan. In fact, IDOT's 5-year program excludes any work on IL-47, beyond intermittent resurfacing and repair, south of U.S. 34 in Yorkville.

IDOT has demonstrated in its Draft EIS that this billion dollar project will ultimately spur unmanaged growth in areas designated in local land use plans as predominately agricultural and rural residential. It will take or sever up to 7,500 acres of some of the richest farmland in the world. IDOT failed to release the incredibly high Land Evaluation Site Assessment scores for the project area until after it closed the Draft EIS comment period. Farmland in the path of the highway scored 281 out of 300. IDOT did not give communities the opportunity to use these studies to determine whether farmland in their area was too valuable to destroy. This is underscored by the growing opposition in agricultural areas that would be adversely impacted by the project.

The Prairie Parkway would also damage fragile and rare natural resources. According to the Draft EIS, the four-lane highway will degrade pristine streams, such as Big Rock Creek and Aux Sable Creek, harm threatened and endangered species, and damage 57 jurisdictional wetlands. It will destroy 54 acres of forests, where 27 kinds of neo-tropical migrant birds are known to nest.

The natural areas surrounding the proposed 5-mile highway section between Illinois 71 and U.S. 34 are not immune to these effects. See Appendix A, "Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Prairie Parkway Study in Grundy, Kendall, and Kane Counties, Illinois (FHWA-IL-EIS-06-02-D)," Environmental Law and Policy Center, Openlands, Citizens Against

the Sprawlway, Illinois Chapter of Sierra Club, *et al.* (Feb. 27, 2007), pp. 24-28. The 5-mile segment would include a six-span steel bridge across the Fox River, approximately a mile east of Silver Springs State Park. The Fox River is designated as an Illinois Natural Area, qualifying as a Category II, III and IV Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) site because, in part, it is host to a number of state-listed threatened and endangered species, and is close to two Illinois Nature Preserves. The project corridor clips the edge of extremely high quality wetlands along the south bank of the Fox River, with a state-endangered plant found approximately 150 feet and 350 feet from the highway right-of-way, within reach of salt splash and spray. The highway would eliminate 6.3 acres of a forest stand that harbors 13 species of neo-tropical migrant birds, and is possible habitat for the state-endangered Osprey.

In return, the Prairie Parkway will provide little traffic improvement. IDOT's revised traffic study attempts to bolster the highway's effectiveness by including statistics for WiKaDuKe, a road not included as a part of the Prairie Parkway project. Its own data shows that construction of the highway will do little to reduce traffic on IL-47 through Yorkville. IDOT's projections showed 48,000 vehicles a day in 2030 at the Fox River in Yorkville if the Prairie Parkway is built, and 48,200 vehicles a day if the freeway is not built – a mere difference of 200 vehicles a day. (A noted increase in truck traffic on IL-47 is included in these figures.) Both projections assume that IL-47 will be widened to four lanes by that time. *See* Appendix C, IDOT Letter Concerning Traffic Projections (Nov. 27, 2007).

Opposition to the highway project has been steadily increasing. In referenda last April, residents of Kaneville and Big Rock townships in Kane County sent a clear message by voting to oppose the highway by 81 percent and 88 percent respectively. Three Kendall County townships added to the ranks by voting in advisory referenda to oppose the project on February 5, 2008. Lisbon Township, Fox Township and Seward Township would all be directly affected by the proposed Prairie Parkway. The five townships cover the proposed 37-mile route with the exception of the Plano and Yorkville areas. These constituents have the support of several Illinois legislators within the Districts of the project area.

There is a better choice for the region. Instead of spending over one billion dollars on a single north-south route predominantly running through rural areas, which IDOT admits in its Draft EIS provides “quite small benefits,” the State's limited funding can be used to widen all of Illinois 47 between I-80 and I-88, and improve a local network of roads where communities have planned for development. Investing in local infrastructure not only resolves traffic problems, but gives farmers a choice over the future of their land, and minimizes damage to irreplaceable natural areas.

We urge CMAP to deny support to IDOT's requested TIP amendment for this contentious and premature transportation alternative, and respectfully request that it recommends applying the \$207 million federal earmark to address immediate traffic problems along IL-47. This would better meet the transportation needs of the region, and squarely falls under the SAFETEA-LU funding mandate. IDOT openly stated at its road closure hearing that IL-47 is “a north-south connector between I-80 and I-88”, which is the language of the SAFETEA-LU provision. Three other projects on the SAFETEA-LU list are routes like IL-47 that connect two interstate highways. Despite IDOT's contention that unspecified legislative intent dictates that it devote the federal earmark to the Prairie Parkway, it has failed to substantiate that any documentation of such intent exists to support this contradictory premise. Since funding was secured well before

IDOT chose a route, and IL-47 falls squarely within the written legislative criteria for the \$207 million in federal funding, it is clear that the SAFETEA-LU line item can be applied to IL-47.

Coalition 47+ appreciates the opportunity to comment on this proposed TIP amendment. If you have any questions, please contact Stacy Meyers-Glen (312-863-6265), Jan Strasma (630-863-6669), or Nancy Wagner (312-780-7431). Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST



Anita M Zurbrugg
Assistant Director
American Farmland Trust
Center for Agriculture in the Environment
P.O. Box 987
DeKalb, IL 60115
815.753.9686
azurbrugg@niu.edu

CENTER FOR NEIGHBORHOOD TECHNOLOGY



Jacky Grimshaw
Vice President of Transportation Policy
Center for Neighborhood Technology
2125 W. North Ave.
Chicago, IL 60647

CITIZENS AGAINST THE SPRAWLWAY



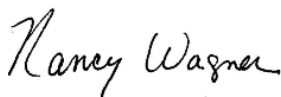
Jan Strasma
Chairman
Citizens Against the Sprawlway
P.O. Box 334
Big Rock, IL 60511

CITIZENS AGAINST THE SPRAWLWAY



Mike McCoy
Citizens Against the Sprawlway
P.O. Box 334
Big Rock, IL 60511

ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND POLICY CENTER



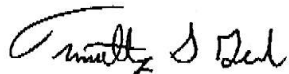
Nancy S. Wagner
Senior Policy Advocate
Environmental Law and Policy Center
35 East Wacker Drive, Suite 1300
Chicago, Illinois 60601-2110
(312) 795-3726
nwagner@elpc.org

FRIENDS OF THE FOX RIVER



Tom Schrader
President
Friends of the Fox River
P.O. Box 1314
Crystal Lake, IL 60039

KENDALL CITIZENS FOR FARMLAND PROTECTION



Tim Gerck
Chairman

Kendall Citizens for Farmland Protection

911 Edgelawn Drive
Plano, Illinois 60545
tgerk@mc.net

NATIONAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL



Shannon Fisk
National Resources Defense Council

Midwest Regional Office
101 North Wacker Drive, Suite 609
Chicago, Illinois 60606
312.780.7431

sfisk@nrdc.org

OPENLANDS



Stacy Meyers-Glen

Openlands

Policy Coordinator
25 E. Washington, Suite 1650
Chicago, IL 60602

PRAIRIE RIVERS NETWORK



Kim Erndt

Interim Executive Director

Prairie Rivers Network

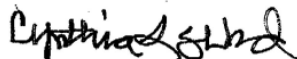
1902 Fox Drive, Suite G
Champaign, IL 61820

ph (217) 344-2371

f (217) 344-2381

www.prairierivers.org

SIERRA CLUB – ILLINOIS CHAPTER



Cindy Skrukrud

Clean Water Advocate

Sierra Club, Illinois Chapter

70 East Lake Street, Suite 1500
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Cynthia.skrukrud@sierraclub.org

AUX SABLE CREEK WATERSHED GROUP

Joan Kathryn Soltwisch

Acting Chairperson

Aux Sable Creek Watershed Group

P.O. Box 306

Minooka, IL 60447

(630) 323-4044

jksoltwischblue@yahoo.com

Appendices

Coalition 47+ has attached its February 2007 joint comment letter detailing the fundamental flaws in the Draft EIS, including transportation, land use planning, agricultural and environmental analyses of IDOT's proposal. The coalition has also attached as Appendix B a subsequent joint comment letter, which provides additional information on IDOT's revised traffic analysis. For clarification, Coalition 47+ provides a letter by IDOT with its own figures showing the difference of 200 vehicles a day on IL-47 if the proposed highway is not built. Finally, for reference, the coalition submits two maps and keys illustrating a more comprehensive local alternative to the highway and adverse impacts to natural areas that would occur if the Prairie Parkway were built.

Appendix A: Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Prairie Parkway Study in Grundy, Kendall, and Kane Counties, Illinois (FHWA-IL-EIS-06-02-D)," Environmental Law and Policy Center, Openlands, Citizens Against the Sprawlway, Illinois Chapter of Sierra Club, *et al.* (Feb. 27, 2007).

Appendix B: Coalition 47+ Joint Comment Letter on Road Closure Analysis (2007)

Appendix C: IDOT Letter Concerning Traffic Projections (November 27, 2007)

Appendix D: Illustrative Map and Key Showing a Local Transportation Alternative to the Prairie Parkway

Appendix E: Illustrative Map and Key Showing Impacts to Natural Resources (B5 route is the proposed Prairie Parkway.)



Illinois Department of Transportation

Division of Highways / Region 2 / District 3
700 East Norris Drive / Ottawa, Illinois / 61350-0697
Telephone 815/434-6131

February 21, 2008

Ms. Holly Ostdick
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
233 South Wacker Drive
Suite 800
Chicago, IL 60606

Prairie Parkway Phase I Study
Various Counties
File #1453-111

Dear Ms. Ostdick:

Reference is made to the CMAP Transportation Implementation Program (TIP) Amendment #09-02-9033 for the captioned project. This action would amend the FY-2007-2012 TIP to include the construction of the initial portion of the Prairie Parkway from IL-71 to US-34.

The timing of this action is not dependent on the preparation or approval of any environmental documentation. However, we do anticipate that the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed project, from I-80 to I-88 will be available for public review on or before February 29, 2008.

Following are our responses to the 47+ public comment letter dated February 15, 2008 as you requested in your email memorandum of February 19, 2008:

RESPONSE TO PARAGRAPH 2:

The initial portion of the Preferred Alternative from IL-71 to US-34, a distance of 5.9 miles, will be constructed utilizing two SAFETEA-LU National Corridor funding items totaling \$207 million. This segment of the highway is projected to carry the highest volume of traffic at completion and provides an additional crossing of the Fox River.

The Preferred Alternative includes the widening of IL-47 from I-80 to Caton Farm Road which will be constructed as additional funding becomes available.

Other projects planned for IL-47 between Caton Farm Road and I-88 are as follows:

From south of IL 71 to north of Countryside Parkway in Yorkville: Phase I design approval was granted August 24, 2006; right of way plans are complete; several properties have been acquired; Phase II Plans, Specifications and Estimates are 90% complete; and the project has been a candidate in the last two capital improvement initiatives, neither of which was approved by the General Assembly.

From north of Countryside Parkway in Yorkville to Cross Street in Sugar Grove: Programmed for Phase I Engineering in the FY 2008-2013 Proposed Highway Improvement Program at \$1.2 million; advance route survey work and Bridge Condition Reports are now underway utilizing Districtwide On-Call Engineering.

From Galena Road to Seavey Road in Sugar Grove: \$4.2 million of milling, resurfacing and associated improvements are currently under construction.

At I-88 in Sugar Grove: \$2.5 million of bridge superstructure replacement is currently under construction.

RESPONSE TO PARAGRAPH 3:

The Preferred Alternative will require the conversion of 2,593 acres of farmland, 43% of which is within current planned development boundaries for local municipalities. This represents less than 0.45 % of the farmland in the three affected counties.

The Land Evaluation Site Assessment scores were always planned to be part of the FEIS. The LESA score as determined by the Department of Agriculture is 266 out of 300. Even though the DEIS did not have this rating, it did disclose the location, type, and extent of the agricultural lands affected.

The Prairie Parkway study has been very proactive in identifying issues affecting local communities and working with them to minimize impacts and provide a blueprint so that growth *can* be better managed. The Department has encouraged local participation in the planning of the project and its associated land use, transportation and environmental implications by initiating the project's Corridor Planning Group (CPG), which is made up of local elected municipal and county officials in proximity to the project. Through the CPG's Land Use Task Force, discussions have resulted in draft corridor planning guidelines that promote managed growth and discourage conflicting development. Environmental features have been incorporated in the project with the assistance of the CPG's Environmental Task Force to reduce the project's environmental impacts, especially with regard to forested areas, wetlands and water resources. The CPG's Transportation Task Force has been instrumental in assisting the Department in choosing road closures and addressing property access issues to minimize impacts.

RESPONSE TO PARAGRAPH 4:

The Prairie Parkway was designed to minimize natural resource impacts. Included in the design of the Preferred Alternative will be measures to mitigate the effects of storm water runoff on water quality. Drainage from the right-of-way will be controlled and treated via a series of vegetated-swales and either dry detention basins, filtration basins, infiltration trenches, or wet detention basins with wetland plantings. For watersheds, such as Hollenbeck Creek, Fox River, Aux Sable Creek, Big Rock Creek, and Welch Creek, wet detention basins with wetland plantings will be used to achieve additional pollutant removal. These planned storm water control measures will maintain the general use water quality standards of the streams crossed by the proposed project.

Of the 57 field delineated wetlands within the corridor, only 14 are directly affected for a total of 2.31 acres. This is a reduction of 0.40 acres from the DEIS.

There are impacts to five state threatened or endangered species. The potential impacts to these species have been coordinated with the IDNR as required by the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act. Based on the proposed measures to minimize and mitigate impacts described in the FEIS, IDNR closed consultation on December 20, 2007.

The project will require 51 acres of forestlands, which is reduced from 54 acres in the DEIS. The inadvertent lost of nesting birds in the construction area will be avoided by the imposition of a tree clearing restriction. Tree removal will not be allowed between April 15 and September 1 of any given year.

The 51 acres will be mitigated on a 1:1 basis through cooperation with the Forest Preserve Districts of Kane and Kendall Counties.

RESPONSE TO PARAGRAPH 5:

At the Fox River the highway is located within the limits of an Illinois Natural Areas Inventory site. The wetlands on the south bank are referred to as Wetland 50 in the Prairie Parkway DEIS.

The Department will acquire conservation easements at Wetland 50 to mitigate for wetland and Illinois Natural Inventory (INAI) impacts associated with the Fox River. The conservation easements are expected to include the areas of forested seeps and recharge areas.

- *Wetland 50 Direct Impacts* – Wetland 50 impacts will be avoided during final design development.
- *Minimization of Salt Splash for Wetland 50* – Storm water collected on the Fox River Bridge will be directed to wet detention basins through piping to minimize potential impacts of salt.

Wetland 50 or the surrounding area was not identified as potential nesting habitat for the state endangered Osprey.

RESPONSE TO PARAGRAPH 6:

Regarding IL-47, the capacity is essentially the same in year 2030 with or without the addition of the B5 Freeway because it will have reached its saturation rate and cannot carry more than approximately 48,000 vehicles per day. The Prairie Parkway is projected to handle an additional 50,000 vehicles a day in the design year.

RESPONSE TO PARAGRAPH 7:

Five townships in Kane and Kendall County have held advisory referendums in which a majority of the voters were not in favor of the project. Generally, there was more support for the project in areas near the I-80 connection in Kendall County and less support for the project in areas near the I-88 connection in Kane County. The Department recognizes the opinions of those who voted in the non-binding

referendums, and remains sensitive to the issues involving rural residents who live near the route of the Preferred Alternative. However, the Department also recognizes the project as regional in scope, affecting the transportation performance of the entire Chicago metropolitan area. Resolutions or letters of support have been received from:

- City of Plano
- City of Sandwich
- City of Yorkville
- Grundy County
- Grundy County Board
- Kendall County
- Village of Channahon
- Village of Millbrook
- Village of Minooka
- Village of Montgomery
- Village of Sugar Grove

RESPONSE TO PARAGRAPH 8:

Regarding the preference for reconstruction of IL-47 instead of constructing the Parkway, detailed studies indicated that both local road improvements and a freeway component were required to address the project's purpose and need as follows:

1. Improve regional mobility by providing a transportation facility or facilities to serve the intended longer-distance travel; to serve the projected growth in north-south traffic in the study area; and to reduce regional travel times;
2. Address local system deficiencies by serving the study area's project growth in local traffic and by improving travel times;
3. Improve access from the study area to regional jobs by serving the growth in work trips and by improving mobility from the study area to current and future jobs; and
4. Improve safety by reducing existing and projected growth in motor vehicle crashes.

Regarding the reference to the DEIS and the benefits of the Prairie Parkway, even modest reduction in travel times and speeds translates to a reduction of over 325,000,000 vehicle hours of travel on the regional road system from year 2016 (assuming full construction) to year 2030. Based on this travel time reduction, the Preferred Alternative is projected to save \$4.5 billion in travel time savings over this period, using \$17.62 per hour as an adjusted value of travel time savings per person¹. This travel benefit is in comparison to the Preferred Alternative's estimated cost of \$909 million in 2007 dollars. It is also estimated that the inclusion of the Preferred Alternative in the regional transportation system would

¹National Cooperative Highway Research Program Report 456, Table 2.1, adjusted for 2006 dollars for the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area

Ms. Holly Ostdick
February 21, 2008
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result in the reduction of 10,700 highway crashes from year 2016 to year 2030 compared to the No-Action alternative (also assuming full construction).

RESPONSE TO PARAGRAPH 9:

As noted in the beginning of this response, initial construction will be funded through SAFETEA-LU National Corridor funding with the required state match.

The SAFETEA-LU National Corridor funding is restrictive in nature to meet a specified purpose, and in the Department's analysis cannot be automatically assumed to be applicable to any project that falls generically within the project description, namely "Construction of the U.S. I-80 to I-88 North-South Connector in Illinois" or "Construction of Route 34 Interchange and improvements in Illinois". The National Corridor portion of the SAFETEA-LU statute states priority will be given to projects that "...are a part of, or will be designated as part of, the...National System of Interstate and Defense Highways..." as well as "facilitate major multistate or regional mobility", among other items. A stand alone arterial improvement of IL 47 was found in the study's functional analysis to be deficient in addressing regional mobility in comparison to a combination freeway - arterial solution.

The Department continues to prepare for the widening of IL 47 to address local needs, as indicated in the above response to Paragraph 2, and continues to advocate for funding sources (such as a statewide capital improvement plan) which could readily be available to provide construction of this much-needed improvement. The segment from south of IL 71 to north of Countryside Parkway in Yorkville has been identified by the District as the highest priority expansion project currently unfunded for construction.

Please contact Rick Powell at (815) 434-8423 if you have further questions or clarification.

Sincerely,

George F. Ryan, P.E.
Deputy Director of Highways
Region Two Engineer



By: Rick Powell, P.E.
Studies and Plans Engineer

cc: Ed Leonard/Virginia DePriest/PB