

ILLINOIS ROUTE 53/120 CORRIDOR LAND USE PLAN

Blue Ribbon Advisory Council Report Summary *Guidance for the Illinois Route 53/120 Corridor Land Use Plan*

After nine months of study by a diverse group of stakeholders, including public officials and representatives from business, labor, planning and environmental groups, the Blue Ribbon Advisory Council (BRAC) reached a consensus view that a right-sized Illinois Route 53/120 project, designed to be a 21st century “modern boulevard,” has sufficient merit and regional benefit to warrant further development.

The BRAC Resolution and Summary Report (BRAC Report) identified the following Guiding Principles that represent the values of the community and are critical to decision making and implementation.

1. Enhance mobility and accessibility, and relieve congestion, in the Central Lake County Corridor.
2. Seek innovative design solutions for a safe, integrated, multi-modal corridor that preserves the environment and the character of nearby communities, and enhances their economic vitality.
3. Analyze potential funding options and pursue corridor concepts to the extent that they are financially viable, fiscally sustainable and equitable.
4. Minimize environmental and long term development impacts of transportation infrastructure and operations.
5. Promote environmental enhancements and sustainable practices in all aspects of project development, implementation and operations, and strive to improve the overall environment.
6. Promote diversity in all aspects of project development, implementation and operations.
7. Develop and apply innovations in all aspects of the project to create a 21st Century modern boulevard that serves as a national and international model.
8. Cooperate with agencies and municipalities to deliver the Council’s work in a transparent and accountable manner.

Additionally, the Council prepared the following Key Recommendations for moving forward with the Illinois Route 53/120 facility. Within each of these recommendations, there are key standards and objectives that should be incorporated into the Corridor Land Use Planning process.

1. Create a Transportation System That Preserves the Environment and Nearby Communities and Enhances Connectivity. In order to achieve a modern, sustainable and innovative transportation system that meets the goals of the Guiding Principles, the Council recommends a set of essential roadway design standards and performance standards. These standards describe the physical elements and the core functions of the new roadway as the Council has agreed to.

In order to achieve a modern, sustainable and innovative transportation system that meets the goals of the Guiding Principles, the Council recommends a set of essential roadway and performance standards, including:

- Use of stormwater management techniques that mimic natural systems
- Improvements to bicycle and pedestrian connections
- Protection of open spaces to prevent further fragmentation of ecological systems
- Compensation for wetland and other impacts
- Reduction in neighborhood traffic

2. Design a Context Sensitive Roadway. The Council recommends specific context sensitive roadway designs for the proposed facility that directly respond to the environment and the communities around the right of way. A context sensitive approach ensures that the same design is not applied to the entire length of the roadway, but finds a balance between the goals of environment and open space preservation, mobility and accessibility.
3. Respect and Preserve the Land. The unique environment, habitat, and wildlife of Lake County require a comprehensive planning approach in order to reduce long-term and irreversible impacts from fragmentation and disturbance. The Council recommends creating restoration and monitoring plans, land preservation actions and further protection for priority sensitive areas.

Some of the key objectives to be achieved with the Corridor Land Use Plan include:

- Opportunities to preserve land to reduce fragmentation
 - Locations for stormwater management polishing areas
 - Priority sites for restoration and enhancement, including:
 - Almond Marsh
 - Squaw Creek Wetlands Complex
 - Indian Creek Marsh
 - Surrey Marsh
 - Heron Creek/Egret Marsh
 - Specific objectives for priority sites include:
 - Minimize impacts to slopes, oaks and slope stability
 - Minimize impacts to wetlands
 - Minimize direct and indirect impacts to preserves, rare species, hydrology, light, noise and stream channel instability
 - Restore areas of hydric soils that are now dewatered by tiles and/or ditches
 - Protect agricultural lands and consider options for growing crops for water cleansing and energy production
 - Minimize cut-through traffic in the Liberty Prairie Reserve
 - Slow vehicle average speeds down
 - Create and coordinate placement of wildlife crossings
4. An Innovative Funding Plan for an Innovative Road. Just as the Council recommends a truly innovative roadway design for environmental preservation and context sensitivity, the Council proposes a funding framework that is equally ground-breaking for an Illinois toll road. Instead of relying only on toll revenues from the extension and the core system, it combines the use of tolls along with contributed capital from promising local, state and federal sources that reflects strong local commitment to building a 21st century facility.
 5. Create a Corridor Plan and Implementation Strategy. A corridor plan that integrates land use, transportation, economic development and open space is vital to the success of the Route 53/120 project. New roadway development can often bring unwanted results without adequate prior planning because of a rise in traffic, disruptions to environmental systems and lack of forethought about desired future land uses. The Council recommends creating a corridor plan that is based on the integration and preservation of open space and natural areas, multi-modal connections, market-feasible development, and congestion relief.

With respect to the required next step, initiating the Corridor Plan, the BRAC Report explicitly states that the planning effort should accomplish the following:

- Utilize a market-driven approach to assess the feasibility of future land use change, including analysis of employment trends, potential commercial and industrial development, and the housing mix that is likely to occur if the proposed Route 53/120 is built.
- Balance economic development, open space, and community character goals across municipalities to encourage development of vibrant communities in central Lake County.
- Formulate a multi-jurisdictional economic development strategy to ensure the best possible economic future for central Lake County. Address planning for development desired by targeted industries as well as business attraction strategies.
- Provide strategies for communities to encourage mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly and/or transit-supportive land uses where feasible in order to reduce congestion, air pollution, vehicle miles traveled, and GHG emissions.
- Design the land use and transportation system to facilitate walking and biking, transit, increase local connectivity, and manage the increased local road traffic that will likely follow completion of the road and associated new development.
- Develop an integrated open space system that not only includes the protection and restoration of conservation lands, but also meets residents' and workers' needs for recreation and open space in the corridor.

The BRAC report included a future land use analysis that established the rationale for a coordinated multi-jurisdictional plan for the corridor. The analysis involved creating a composite of municipal comprehensive and strategic plans to present a “maximum” development scenario in which all land within the corridor designated for future development is built out. In the full build out scenario, the total amount of development allowed for by municipal plans is on par with, or exceeds, the level of development seen in the I-94 Corridor.

Local plans represent individual community desires, but they are not necessarily informed by market-based realities or coordinated with neighboring municipalities. The BRAC analysis goes on to suggest that:

- Individual community plans have a major impact when viewed as a combined whole
- The totality of planned land uses is out of scale with the preferred design of the road
- The volume of planned change proposes a considerable shift in community character
- The volume of planned change will not protect a network of high quality natural resources, nor agricultural areas
- The volume and pattern of planned change could exacerbate congestion and would not support transit

To achieve the goals of the people of Lake County, the BRAC, and GO TO 2040, the Illinois Route 53/120 Corridor Land Use Plan process is designed to cooperatively plan for the future of the communities within the corridor in a way that protects community assets, opportunities for transit, valuable land and water resources, economic potential, and quality of life.

