



Photos by Louis Brems/Gazette

Mike Walton, of Volkert and Associates, listens in as Dale Sterenberg, of Morrison, asks about possible routes for the new highway running from Sterling to Fulton Wednesday at the Odell Public Library in Morrison.

## Public chimes in on Route 30 expansion

BY ANDREW WALTERS  
GAZETTE REPORTER  
awalters@svmmail.com

**M**ORRISON — The public got its first look at the Illinois Department of Transportation's plans to widen U.S. Route 30 at an open house Wednesday at the Odell Public Library in Morrison.

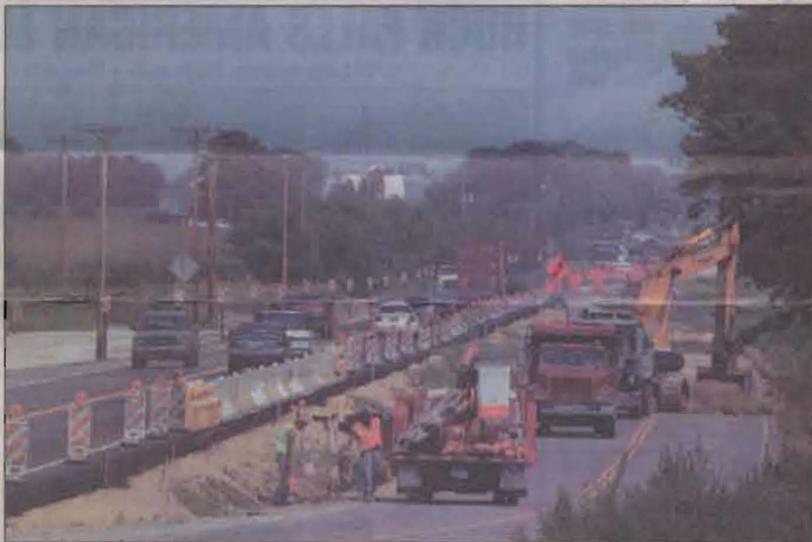
The preliminary plan, three years in the making, calls for making over the 24-mile stretch between Rock Falls and Fulton from two to four lanes, and possibly building a bypass around Morrison to alleviate congestion and improve safety on city streets.

Although the feasibility study shows that the high amount of traffic rumbling through Morrison only will continue to rise, several area residents are convinced the project is not necessary.

Allen Buikema was at the open house, gathering signatures on a petition opposing the project. "We got (Interstate) 88 just five miles south of Morrison. I don't think it is necessary," he said.

Buikema also worries that a bypass would steer traffic away from town and cripple Morrison businesses, which "depend on people coming through here."

"I was just wondering what the route was. I can't see what they have done in the last four years," said Laverne C. Schroeder, of Morrison, who was studying



Traffic is congested in the construction zone along U.S. Route 30 outside of Morrison, where state crews are widening the road.

project displays.

It will be at least three years before an exact route for the proposed bypass would be chosen, IDOT spokeswoman Dawn Perkins said.

What has been completed is the feasibility study, which simply indicates that widening the highway and building a bypass can

conceivably be done.

So far, \$2.5 million in state and federal grants have been spent on the project from 2003 to 2006, Perkins said.

Wednesday, people were invited to fill out comment sheets and sign up for a community

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advisory group, which will regularly meet with IDOT and its engineers, to provide input and ask questions as the project proceeds.

"We are trying to find people who represent different groups. We need to get the public more involved," Perkins said.

Now that the feasibility study is done, an environmental impact study and a design report must be completed.

"What I think should be done is to

upgrade Route 30 to a three-lane highway through town and take out some stop signs," said Harvey Zuidema, who owns land north and south of town.

He is concerned that his property will be affected, and "I'm not sure about taking up more farmland," Zuidema said.

"The primary impacts are directing traffic and taking farmland," said Vic Modeer, project manager for Volkert and Associates, a Collinsville engineering firm working on the project. "That is why we need to get people involved in the process."