

**IDOT District 1, Lake County
IL 131 from Russell Road to Sunset Avenue
Environmental Assessment
Concurrence: Preferred Alternative**

DECISIONS:

The agencies in attendance (USEPA, USFWS, IDNR, IEPA, and IHPA) issued concurrence on the Preferred Alternative. The USACE deferred until additional information regarding wetland impacts is provided.

NEXT STEPS:

- Fall 2016 – Environmental Assessment released for public comment
- Winter 2016/2017 – Public Hearing
- Update E1 and E2 with wetland impacts
- Include an exhibit showing wetland impact per alternative.

DISCUSSION:

This was the fourth NEPA/404 presentation of this project. The Purpose and Need (Concurrence Point 1) received concurrence from the attending agencies on June 11, 2010. The Alternatives to be Carried Forward (Concurrence Point 2) received concurrence on February 18, 2011. The Preferred Alternative (Concurrence Point 3) was presented for information only on June 28, 2011. The purpose of this meeting was to present the Preferred Alternative for the Illinois Route 131 Improvements from Russell Road to Sunset Avenue for concurrence.

Project Overview

The meeting presented a project overview, review of the Purpose and Need and Alternatives to Be Carried Forward that were previously approved, the Preferred Alternative, Impacts, Overview of BMP's, and Project Schedule.

Purpose and Need

The Purpose and Need was developed based on stakeholder input and the Problem Statement. It was used to develop alternatives and guide their evaluation and refinement. The project purpose addresses the needs to improve mobility and safety and to upgrade roadway features to meet current design standards. A project goal is improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Preliminary Alternatives

The four Preliminary Alternatives that addressed the Purpose and Need received concurrence at the September 2010 Merger meeting. All four alternatives propose increasing capacity of the roadway by adding a through lane in each direction to create a four-lane highway. The median treatment, edge treatment, and bicycle/pedestrian accommodations differ amongst the four alternatives.

Refined Alternatives

The preliminary alternatives were combined to form Refined Alternatives E1 and E2. The

primary differences between them include how drainage is accommodated and the center median treatment.

Alternative E1

The main distinguishing element of Alternative E1 is the shoulder and open ditch design. Ditches help limit erosion and promote higher water quality. However, they do require more ROW, which impacts more adjacent properties. Alternative E1 includes 10-foot paved shoulders with open grass ditches, flush 13-foot two-way left turn lane from Sunset Avenue to IL 173, and 22-foot raised barrier curb median from IL 173 to Russell Road. Median breaks would be spaced approximately every ¼ mile. The raised median is proposed in sections with fewer driveways and intersecting streets. It provides greater access management and eliminates many conflict points created by unrestricted left turns.

Alternative E2

Alternative E2 includes curb and gutter and storm sewers, requiring less ROW and fewer impacts, but increased costs. Alternative E2 also includes a flush 13-foot two-way left turn lane (TWLTL) from Sunset Avenue to Wadsworth Road, and a 22-foot raised barrier curb median from Wadsworth Road to Russell Road. Median breaks will be provided approximately every ¼ mile, similar to Alternative E1.

Preferred Alternative

The project working groups and general public showed varying reactions to the different center median and roadway edge treatments. Based on the feedback received, the project team combined features from both alternatives and added further refinements to address the comments received and provide the best balance of benefits, impacts and costs. Features such as retaining walls, curb and gutter, roadway shifts and narrower medians were added to minimize impacts to several sensitive areas.

A summary of the median and edge treatments for the preferred alternative was presented. In general, building a 10-foot paved shoulder and open grass ditch is preferred where there is enough room in the ROW. Building curb and gutter is preferred to minimize property impacts in areas where the ROW is narrow. In these areas, the extra cost to build the storm sewer is justified when compared to the potential property impacts.

The resources that were studied during the development of the preferred alternative included land acquisition, community impacts, cultural resources, air quality, noise, special waste, farmland, public lands/parks, plant communities, wildlife, T&E species, water resources, and wetlands.

Several measures were incorporated into the design to avoid and minimize impacts to adjacent properties and other resources. Before these measures were put in place, the project was going to require 23 relocations; these relocations have now been reduced to five.

Waukegan Airport

Coordination has been ongoing with the Waukegan Port District, FAA, and IDOT Aeronautics for the proposed extension of their existing runway that impacts IL 131. A separate NEPA study is being completed for their proposed improvements. This extended runway and taxiway impacts

the existing alignment of IL 131.

Two options were developed for modifying the alignment. Option 1 shifted the alignment 2000 feet west to skirt around the extended runway and remains at grade. However, this had several resource impacts including Lake County Forest Preserve property.

Option 2 allows the planned new runway and taxiway to cross over a lowered and realigned IL 131 with a runway and taxiway bridge. To accommodate the runway expansion, Option 2 shifts IL 131 approximately 90 feet west and lowers the roadway 25 to 30 feet. Widths are reduced to minimize property impacts and the length (and therefore cost) of the airport bridges. An 8-foot shared-use path on the west side will allow it to tie in with the Waukegan Sports Park to the north. Pedestrian/bicycle facilities are not included on the east side to minimize the total width required. This option was selected for the Preferred Alternative.

Impacts

Lowering the roadway will restrict local access to several roads on the west side of IL 131, and locking existing homes. These homes are within the footprint of the ultimate airport boundary, and the airport intends to buy the remaining properties impacted by lowering IL 131. Impacts to these properties will be evaluated, coordinated and approved through the environmental process for the airport project with FAA as the lead federal agency. IDOT and FHWA are working with the Waukegan Port District (owner/operator of the airport) and the FAA to coordinate the IL 131 and airport projects.

The evaluation process also looked at impacts to environmental justice and Title VI populations. There are no areas with high concentrations of low income households. As shown, nearly all the block groups adjacent to the project corridor have minority populations 50% and above. Hispanic populations make up a large portion of the minority groups.

The CSS process provided numerous opportunities for local residents to be involved in the decision making.

- The CPG/TAG meetings were opened up to any interested party, which provided opportunities for involvement and a day-time meeting for residents who may have been unable to attend a night-time public meeting.
- Project materials such as newsletters and meeting invitations were provided to Hispanic organizations and publications.
- Based on comments received at the first public meeting, key information on the project website was translated to Spanish, and a Spanish translator was present at the remaining public meetings.

The project's planning incorporated measures to avoid and mitigate impacts to local communities.

- The raised median will improve safety and mobility, which will benefit all residents. Some increases in travel distance to make U-turns will occur, but increased safety and possible time savings will be a benefit.

- A new shared use path and sidewalk will also improve safety and provide different mode options for persons wishing to connect to the larger transportation system, including public transportation.
- PACE suburban bus routes and stops will be maintained during and after construction.

The proposed improvements will achieve an appropriate balance of benefits and burdens, which is a key consideration when looking at environmental justice. As a result, the preferred alternative is not expected to result in disproportionately high and adverse impacts to environmental justice populations.

No historic properties, archaeological or architectural, will be affected as a result of this project. IL 131 is included in CMAP's regional conformity determination and no significant project-level impacts are anticipated. There were noise impacts predicted at 77 receivers, 4 noise walls were practicable, and 2 were found to be feasible and cost-effective. IDOT will gather feedback about whether or not the walls are desired by the affected residences through the public hearing process

Nine active farms totaling 226.72 acres are located in the project area. The project is currently being coordinated with the Illinois Department of Agriculture and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Four publicly owned parks and recreation areas are located in the project area.

- Impacts to the ThunderHawk Golf Club and the Waukegan Savanna Forest Preserve were avoided by shifting IL 131, using curb and gutter instead of shoulders, and building retaining walls.
- The preferred alternative requires a small amount of temporary easement from Shepherd's Crook Golf Course.
- The preferred alternative requires 1.06 acres of permanent land and 0.14 acres of temporary easement from the Waukegan Sports Park. They have agreed to donate 0.99 acres of this land.

IDOT coordinated with IDNR to determine there were no state listed species in the project area. Only the Eastern prairie fringed orchid (EPFO) had the potential to exist in the project area. A field survey concluded that EPFO does not exist in the project corridor.

USFWS concurred with the finding of "May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect" for the northern long-eared bat.

The project is located on a ridge, or high point, between the Upper Des Plaines River watershed to the west and the Lake Michigan direct drainage area to the east. The Des Plaines River is generally located about 2-4 miles west of IL 131 and Lake Michigan is about 3-4 miles east of IL 131. Since the project area is generally located on the crest of a drainage divide, IL 131 does not cross any permanent or named streams.

IDOT coordinated with the INHS to complete wetland field surveys for the IL 131 project area. A preliminary Jurisdictional Determination of the wetlands by USACE has been made. The

preferred alternative will permanently impact 3.21 acres of wetlands, including 0.36 acres of jurisdictional wetlands.

Overview of Best Management Practices (BMP's)

A coordination meeting was held with USACE on November 6, 2015. Due to the overall size of the project, USACE stated they would have to review BMP's on a case-by-case basis based on the outfalls that outlet to a wetland rather than on a watershed-based approach.

Further guidance from IDOT indicated that BMPs should be considered for any outlet in a high - quality wetland, regardless of jurisdictional status. Because of the proximity of several adjacent land uses which include commercial, residential, Industrial, Waukegan National Airport restrictions, the space available for BMPs is limited, so consideration will be given to the surrounding area with respect to BMP type.

Since the nearest tributary is 2-4 miles from the project site, overland flow is the dominant type of conveyance method found in the existing drainage conditions. The design of BMPs will utilize existing overland flow patterns and establish practices that will retain water and allow it to evaporate. It is preferred to establish these BMP infiltration areas upstream of cross road culverts by widening ditches (where feasible) that outlet to (or near) a wetland if possible. Phase II will specify planted materials to help with water quality. All detention/retention facilities within the vicinity of the Runway Safety Away must maintain a maximum 48-hour detention/infiltration period per standard criteria.

The Proposed drainage plan (PDP) has been coordinated with the local agencies to solicit comments as part of the standard design process. IDOT is in the process of addressing those comments and will provide an updated PDP to USACE to review when available.

Agency Questions and Comments

During and after the presentation, the following questions and comments were addressed:

Question (USEPA – Westlake): Will the FAA use their own EA?

IDOT noted that the airport is still working on their plan and has not started their EA yet.

Comment (USACE – Hall): The preferred alternative (E3) has more wetland impacts than the 2 refined alternatives E1 and E2. USACE asked for the impacts associated with these two alternatives be updated to compare with the Preferred Alternative. HNTB replied that the project has been on-going for some time, and Alternates E1 and E2 were from several years ago before the wetland delineations were updated. The updated wetland study resulted in additional wetlands. The more refined analysis of the preferred alternative resulted in more impacts. The E1 and E2 impacts were based on the old delineation and the E3 alternative impacts were based on the new delineation. All impacts will be updated and based on the new delineation.

Comment (USACE – Hall): The proposed drainage systems (and outlets) should not impact wetlands unless impacts are to a low quality wetland to preserve a high quality wetland. HNTB replied that the example shown in the presentation has been updated subsequent to the development of the NEPA presentation. The update follows this direction.

Comment (USACE – Hall): Requested that the forthcoming wetland/BMP exhibit identify wetland number and the wetland impact area be hatched to better show the impact area. HNTB will update the exhibit.

Comment (USACE – Hall): A statement was made during the presentation that stated wetland impacts were increased due to BMP's, this is an undesirable condition.

Post meeting note: The drainage plan will be modified to ensure wetlands are not impacted solely to provide BMP's.

Comment (USACE – Hall): In a 2012 email, they noted the following high quality wetlands as concerns for BMP's: 19, 33, 40, 41 and 50. The Project is impacting wetland 19 due to roadway widening and a new regional detention basin. Wetlands 33 and 50 are impacted by roadway widening only.

Kenosha Road improvements are being completed as a separate break-out project. The Phase I study has received design approval and the project is included in IDOT's program.

Sign-in Sheet
NEPA-404 Merger Meeting
September 7, 2016

District 1 - IL 131 from Russell Road to Sunset Avenue (Lake County)
Concurrence: preferred alternative

Name	Agency	e-mail address	Participation Location
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NEPA – 404 Merger Meeting Decision Register

September 7, 2016

Project	Decisions	Next Steps
IL 83/137 from IL Rte 132 to just east of U.S. 45 (District 1, Lake County) Concurrence – Alternatives to be Carried Forward	USEPA – Concur USACE – Concur USFWS – Concur IDNR – Concur IEPA – not on the phone IHPA – Concur IDOA – not on the phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project team to revise the report and send to agencies. • 9/2017 – Preferred alternative concurrence. • 4/2018 – Environmental Assessment • 9/2018 – EA conclusion
IL 173 from IL 59 to US 41 (District 1, Lake County) Concurrence – Preferred Alternative	USEPA – Concur USACE – Concur USFWS - Concur IDNR – Concur IEPA – Concur IHPA – Concur IDOA – not on the phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a wetland exhibit in the document. • 4/2017 – Environmental Assessment for public comment
IL 131 Russel Road to Sunset Avenue (District 1, Lake County) Concurrence – preferred alternative	USEPA – Concur USACE – deferred until additional info is received on change in wetland impacts. USFWS - Concur IDNR – Concur IEPA – Concur IHPA – Concur IDOA –not on the phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2016 – Environmental Assessment released for public comment • Winter 2016/2017 – Public Hearing • Update E1 and E2 with wetland impacts • Include an exhibit showing wetland impact per alternative.

Project	Decisions	Next Steps
<p>Potential I-55 improvements at Airport Road and IL Rte 126/Essington Road (District 1, Will County)</p> <p>Concurrence – preferred alternative</p>	<p>USEPA – concur USACE – concur USFWS - concur IDNR – concur IEPA – not on the phone IHPA – concur IDOA – not on the phone</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer 2017 – EA for public comment
<p>Quentin Road from Dundee Road (IL Rte 68) to Lake Cook Road (District 1, Cook County)</p> <p>Information – preferred alternative</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 2017 – Alternatives to be carried forward
<p>North Lake Shore Drive (District 1, Cook Co)</p> <p>Information – range of alternatives</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 2017 – Shoreline protection discussion of alternatives