

Comment: The project will damage the natural & scenic beauty of the countryside

Response: Measures will be taken to minimize impacts to aesthetics along the corridor

The Visual Impact Analysis concluded that the proposed project, with appropriate landscaping as well as structural and roadway design, can be constructed to limit significant, adverse, and long term impacts to the existing aesthetic qualities of the project area. Visual impact reduction recommendations as identified in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be incorporated into the final design to ensure that the proposed highway will function to complement the natural landscape. All possible measures will be employed to enhance the views of the road and views from the road.

An analysis of roadway lighting indicates that full interchange lighting is not warranted at any interchange location. Only partial lighting at the ramp terminals and gore areas will be needed at each location. Lighting for mainline and sideroad bridges would also be proposed. The District has recently avoided using the 80-150 foot “high mast” lighting. The partial lighting would consist of the 40 foot (+/-) pole lighting that has been found to be more economical and easier to maintain. Full-cutoff lights are a possible solution to avoid spillover of light unto adjacent areas because they are designed to direct light only to the locations where it is needed, thus minimizing light pollution. The Department will commit to using a type of lighting that will minimize light pollution and uplighting along this project.

The U.S. 20 Advisory Council, made up of five Work Groups comprised of local citizens and officials, also recommended that the Department provide certain other aesthetic features. These include special signage along the freeway for tourism features, aesthetically pleasing retaining walls and bridges, and trees and vegetation planted to enhance views. The Preferred Alternate also reinforces both the JoDaviess and Stephenson County land-use plans by avoiding ridgetop construction to a large degree.

The Department has found that compared to the other Build Alternates, the preferred alternative:

- has the least negative impact on environmental resources such as natural areas and threatened and endangered species;
- best preserves prime and important farmland while minimizing adverse travel for farm operations and incompatible traffic mixing for farm vehicles;
- generally avoids construction on or near ridge tops, thus making it consistent with JoDaviess County land-use initiatives; and
- provides for the maximum use of existing U.S. Route 20 as a scenic route for travelers.