



# Technical Memorandum

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Date: September 4, 2024

To: [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Project: IL 2 (Byron to Rockford) Phase I

Subject: Environmental Justice Effort Summary

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## Introduction

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has developed a plan to better understand how the community will be impacted during and after construction of the IL Route 2 Project between IL Route 72 in Byron and Beltline Road in Rockford. The plan includes separate efforts to obtain input from directly and indirectly impacted properties.

## Directly Impacted Properties

The coordination effort to reach out and understand the impacts to these directly impacted properties includes mailing surveys with an exhibit showing the property impacts to the significantly impacted properties. IDOT and the Project Team defined “significantly impacted properties” as properties where proposed right-of-way and easement impacts involved 20% or more of a property and/or the proposed realignment of IL Route 2 will move significantly closer to a residential house. Surveys were mailed to a total of 36 properties along IL Route 2. As a follow up to the mailed surveys the project team went door-to-door to hand deliver surveys to non-responsive significantly impacted property owners. Surveys were left in weatherproof door hangers if there was no contact during the door-to-door surveys. Lastly, a second mailing of the survey and exhibit is being sent to the significantly impacted property owners in hopes to receive input.

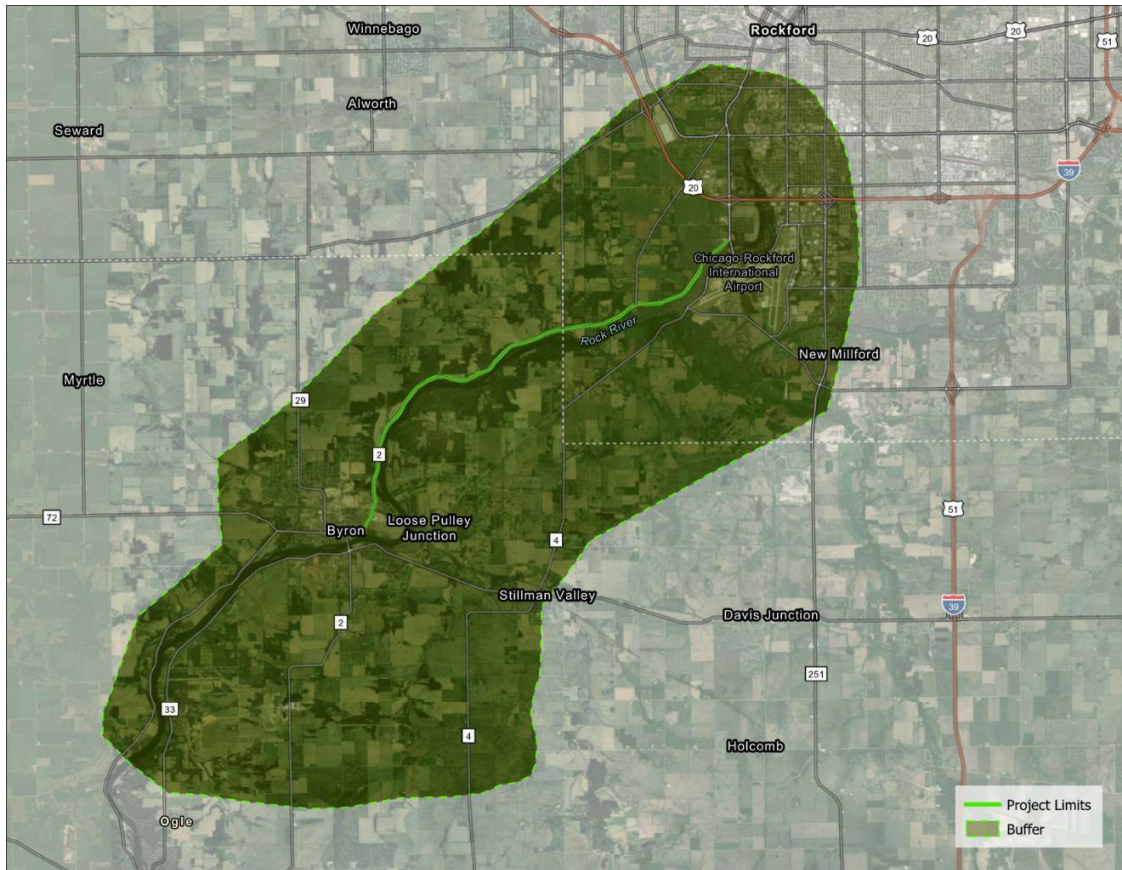
## Indirectly Impacted Properties

IDOT hosted a telephone town hall meeting on Thursday, August 15, 2024, from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM CST to discuss proposed improvements for IL Route 2. Residents participated through landline or mobile phone, in English or Spanish. The format was similar to a live talk radio show: participants listened to a description of the project, then were offered an opportunity to ask questions, share concerns and participate in live polling.

The telephone town hall format allowed IDOT to reach out to more than 12,000 residents and business owners in the vicinity of the Project. Phone numbers came from a telephone town hall service provider (Figure 1). The town hall was also promoted in advance through an IDOT-distributed news release, an email to the project Community Advisory Group (CAG), and a letter to directly impacted property owners. Event details and a registration link were included on the IDOT project webpage. WIFR, a local news station, covered the town hall and included an interview with project engineer [REDACTED]. Two days prior to the meeting, mobile numbers received text message notifications promoting the event. The message also directed recipients to visit the project website for more information.

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Figure 1: Dial out buffer of numbers provided by telephone town hall service provider.



The evening of the town hall, a total of 12,347 batch calls were dialed out. The batch calls consisted of 4,579 landlines dialed out and 2,800 of those landlines answered. 7,768 mobile numbers were dialed out and 1,634 mobile numbers were answered. In total, 1,800 landline and mobile participants accepted and joined the town hall. Two participants joined the Spanish simulcast.

Figure 2: Demographic Makeup

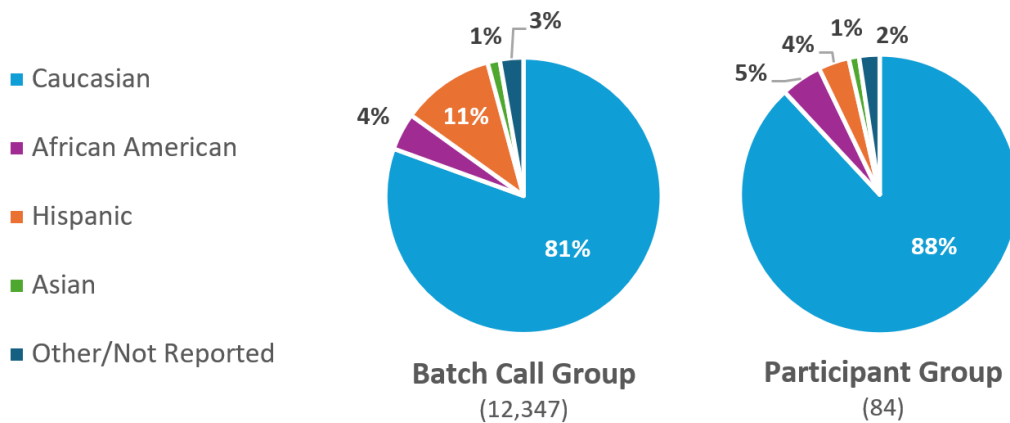


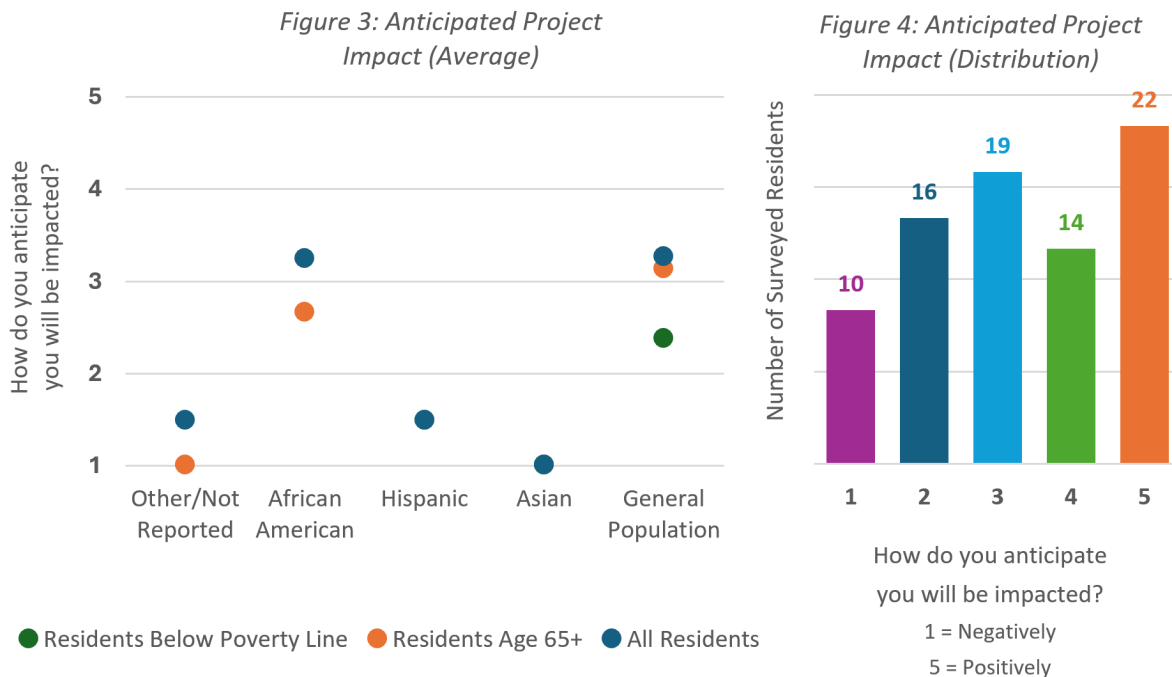
Figure 2 shows the demographic makeup of the 12,347 batch calls compared to the demographic makeup of the town hall participants. Though generally similar, the town hall participants reflected a significant decrease in its share of Hispanic representation in comparison to the batch call group. The town hall participants averaged higher incomes in comparison to the batch call group.

The main segment of the town hall was a 20-minute description of study progress, project design, construction and detour information, and next steps. At several stages, listeners could respond to poll questions about potential impacts. The project team then began a question and answer (Q&A) session, in which residents could also offer comments on anticipated impacts.

Telephone town hall live polling questions, derived from IDOT’s Environmental Justice Analysis Guidance, sought to identify three “EJ Populations”:

- 1) Minority Residents
- 2) Residents Over Age 65
- 3) Residents Under Federal Poverty Thresholds

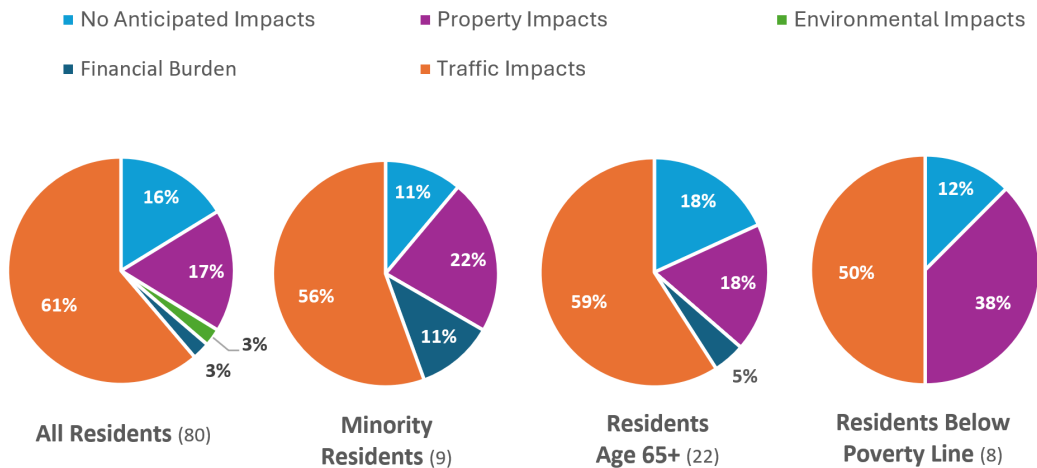
Subsequent analysis compared how EJ Populations anticipated effects from the proposed improvements for IL-2. *Figure 3* shows the average anticipated effect by racial group on a scale of 1 (“negatively affected”) to 5 (“positively affected”). *Figure 4* shows the distribution of anticipated impact responses.



The “General Population” column in Figure 3 indicates that the average resident and/or business owner anticipates a positive-to-neutral impact. In contrast, the average resident and/or business owner below the poverty line anticipates a negative-to-neutral impact.

EJ Populations across racial groups anticipated a more negative impact, when compared to the town hall participant group. Minority residents, except for African American residents, anticipated a more negative impact than all town hall participants.

Figure 5: Impacts of Highest Concern



In a third analysis, polling question responses were used to pinpoint specific concerns shared by EJ Populations. Figure 5 shows top concerns, as selected by town hall participants.

Across all groups, concerns about traffic impacts were most common. Relatively few residents were concerned with financial burden or environmental impacts. Compared to all town hall participants, EJ Populations were more concerned with property impacts.

**Conclusion/Recommendation**

Engagement efforts to better understand impacts to directly and indirectly impacted property owners, residents, business owners, and EJ Populations were successful. Each method offered an opportunity for feedback and education. The Project Team took an active outreach approach to connect with directly impacted property owners and offered a flexible telephone town hall format for indirectly impacted residents and/or business owners. Feedback highlighted a collective focus on traffic and property impacts, while EJ Populations expressed outlooks of less favorable impacts to their transportation and housing in relation to the construction of IL Route 2. The Project Team will review comments throughout the final design phase and work to deliver this project in a way that minimizes inconvenience and hardship.

