

# IDOT NATURAL RESOURCES UNIT

By Susan Dees

IDOT, Biological Resources Specialist, Bureau of Design and Environment



If you have a federally-funded local project, you will need biological and wetlands clearances for that project before Phase I design approval is granted and the project is able to proceed to letting. This article describes that process and with whom you coordinate within IDOT, in order to receive those clearances in the most expeditious manner possible. First, the "who": you will be coordinating with the IDOT Natural Resources Unit (NRU). It is part of the Central Bureau of Design and Environment, in the Environment Section, based in Springfield, Illinois. The Natural Resources Unit contains specialists who handle such areas of environmental concern as wetlands, endangered species, Natural Areas Inventory sites, dedicated Nature Preserves, and other high quality habitats. Examples of projects possibly involving any of those environmental concerns include local bridge replacements, bicycle and

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Bureau of Local Roads and Streets

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Please pass this on to other interested parties in your office.



## FROM THE DESK OF...



As Spring comes to an end, local highway agencies are gearing up for the summer construction season. Spring is also a time when many educational conferences are held. Illinois is fortunate to have several strong associations that plan excellent meetings for highway engineering, construction, and maintenance.

I recently returned from the 2007 National Association of County Engineers (NACE) Annual Conference in Milwaukee, WI at the invitation of the Illinois Association of County Engineers (IACE). IACE will be hosting the 2009 NACE Conference in Peoria, IL in April 2009. The Illinois Interchange will provide more details as this conference approaches. IACE also holds a Spring and Fall Conference each year in cooperation with Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) Bureau of Local Roads and Streets. At the recent Spring meeting in Mt. Vernon, IL, presentations included:

- Ecological Compliance Assessment Tool - IL Department of Natural Resources
- LRFD vs. LFD Bureau of Bridges & Structures
- Full-Depth Reclamation Christian County and Cummins Engineering
- Road & Bridge Solutions Contech Construction Products

• Bureau County Covered Bridge -Willett, Hoffman & Associates

Illinois is fortunate to have both the IL Chapter and Chicago Metro Chapter of the American Public Works Association (APWA). Both of the organizations hold an annual conference in May. The IL Chapter was responsible for bringing the extremely successful 2006 Snow Conference to Peoria, IL last year. Each chapter is also divided into branches that hold regular meeting with guest speakers. APWA - IL Chapter's web site is http://illinois.apwa.net. APWA -Chicago Metro's web site is http://chicago.apwa.net. Please visit their web sites for more information about upcoming events and membership information.

The Highway Commissioner Division of the Township Officials of Illinois (TOI) is divided into smaller regional groups - Northern Illinois Township Highway Commissioners Association, East Central Illinois Township Highway Commissioners Association, West Central Illinois Township Highway Commissioners Association, and Northwest Illinois Highway Commissioners Association. Each region offers several opportunities to attend conferences and meetings throughout the year. The four regions gather for the Summer Seminar each August in Peoria, IL. The Township Officials of Illinois are celebrating their 100th anniversary this year and the celebration will conclude at TOI's Educational Seminar in November. Information is available on TOI's website - www.toi.org.

Other associations such as IL Association of Highway Engineers (IAHE), IL Society of Professional Engineers (ISPE), and Illinois Municipal League (IML) also offer a variety of training and conference opportunities. I encourage you to get involved in at least one of these associations and use their resources. Please review the upcoming events listed in the below box.

Kivin Burke

Kevin Burke III, P.E. T2 Program Manager

### **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

July 10, 2007	APWA Chicago Metro Chapter Fox Valley Meeting
July 11, 2007	APWA Illinois Chapter Central Branch Luncheon
August 1, 2007	APWA Illinois Chapter District 8 Branch Luncheon
August 5-7, 2007	Highway Commissioner Summer Seminar
August 17, 2007	APWA Illinois Chapter Prairie Branch Luncheon
August 22, 2007	APWA Chicago Metro Chapter Lake Branch Meeting
October 3-5, 2007	County Engineer Fall Meeting
October 7-12, 2007	IPSI
October 16, 2007	APWA Chicago Metro Chapter Lake and Suburban
	Branch Meeting
Nov. 11-13, 2007	T.O.I. Fall Education Conference

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pedestrian trails, roadway widening, new roadways on new alignment, etc. Proposed borrow and waste sites are also reviewed by the NRU.



Now for the "how": first, an Environmental Survey Request (ESR) is submitted to the IDOT Environment Section. An ESR is required when any one or several of the following apply:

- new right-of-way and/or temporary or permanent easements
- in-stream work
- potential impact to wetlands, listed species, Natural Areas, or dedicated Nature Preserves.

Most of the time it is not possible to determine at the local level whether or not the latter resources may be impacted or are present, but the NRU will screen for those resources regardless.

Timing of the ESR's receipt by the NRU is critical. For example, wetland delineations can only be conducted during the growing season between April and the end of October, since plant identification is necessary. The Army Corps of Engineers may not accept wetland delineations performed outside the growing season and may deny the 404 permit. If a project is received by the NRU in November, is targeted to be let the following June, and wetland delineations are necessary, there is a good chance that the project will miss the June letting. By the time the wetland delineations are conducted, report written, reviewed by the NRU, transmitted to the appropriate people, impacts determined if any, and mitigation worked out, some time has elapsed. Other resources, such as endangered species, are present during an even narrower band of time, usually about three to four weeks in any given year. For example, the state listed Blanding's turtle is best trapped during its spring emergence of May and June. If an ESR is submitted in July and Blanding's turtle surveys are needed, they will have to be conducted the following year. The NRU will work with

you to the best of their ability, but please keep in mind Mother Nature's limitations.

Attachments that should come with the ESR package include location map, National Wetland Inventory map, topographic map, plan sheet, aerial photographs, and ground level photographs. Project survey limits should be clearly marked. If anything is missing or incorrect, it is usually obtainable by the NRU but slows processing time. Ground level photographs are especially useful and can often help to speed processing time. They are used to determine habitat quality in the project

area and are often indicators of whether or not wetland delineations are needed.

The NRU checks various sources of information to determine if biological and/or wetland surveys are necessary. Some of those sources of information are the attachments that come with the ESR. Others include soil maps and electronic databases. We are constantly finding ways to streamline our processes, and one such way was featured in the Spring 2007 issue of "Illinois Interchange:" Illinois Department of Natural Resources' (IDNR) new computerized database tool EcoCAT. Please note that this tool now replaces the IDNR Agency Action Report. One advantage of EcoCAT is the speedy response time if no sensitive resources are present in the project area. Another Continued on page 4





Continued from page 3 advantage of EcoCAT is that the consultant may submit the project through EcoCAT instead of the NRU submitting it. If that occurs, the NRU must be notified so that IDNR coordination doesn't accidentally occur twice. Also please attach a copy of the EcoCAT coordination with the ESR request.

When planning the project, the basic protocol regarding handling sensitive natural resources should be in this order: avoid the resource, minimize impacts, and if that is not possible, then finally mitigate the impacts. This order makes for prudent stewardship of the natural resources, plus it may be more cost-effective. For example, wetland mitigation ratios range from 1.0:1.0 for temporary impacts to 5.5:1.0 for impacts to high quality habitats. This means that for the highest mitigation ratio, for every acre of wetland impacted, 5.5 acres of mitigation acreage must be developed or purchased from a wetland bank. (Wetland banks are large Army Corps-approved developing wetland sites from which wetland mitigation credits may be purchased.) Land can be expensive, and the fewer the wetland impacts, obviously the less costly the mitigation. Also some resources, such as dedicated Nature Preserves, cannot legally be impacted or acquired. Finding that out before the land acquisition stage is best. The NRU assists in working with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission to work out potential conflicts regarding Nature Preserves.

If impacts occur, clearances take longer, as coordination must occur to work things out. Also if projects are more complex than the simple categorical exclusions, such as an environmental impact statement, they will naturally take longer in their processing. Coordination may occur between NRU, the District, and any of the resource agencies, such as IDNR or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

A few take-home tips that would enable the most expedient treatment of your project by the NRU are the following: submit the project with plenty of lead time in case impacts need to be addressed; make sure backup documentation is accurate and as extensive as possible. We will do our best to accommodate your needs and look forward to continue working with you.



# **Height Modernization** for Illinois

What is Height **Modernization?** 

 a datum-consistent vertical and horizontal statewide network of survey benchmarks



### How will it be used in Illinois?

**Protect the** environment



- Delineate drainage boundaries for retention ponds
- Erosion control structure design
- Wetland reconstruction
- Species habitat prediction





#### Prevent loss of life and property damage

resolution digital elevation model of

the earth's surface

- Floodplain mapping and flood prediction
- Determining evacuation routes
- Sinkhole mapping

#### Save money

- Road and culvert design
- Building projects
- **Fill estimation**
- Soils mapping for precision agriculture

### Proposed Funding

Approximately \$35 million is requested over ten years, with approximately half of the funding in the first four years. Funding would be through the Height Modernizaton Program of the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Geodetic Survey in partnership with the State of Illinois.

#### For more information contact:

**Beverly Herzog** Illinois State Geological Survey 615 E. Peabody Dr. Champaign, IL 61820 Phone: (217) 244-2788 Email: herzog@isgs.uiuc.edu

Amy Eller

Illinois Department of Transportation 2300 South Dirksen Parkway Springfield, Illinois 62764 Phone: (217) 782-4748 Email: Amy.Eller@illinois.gov

**Christopher Pearson** National Geodetic Survey 2300 S. Dirksen Pkwy Springfield IL 62764 Phone: (217) 524-4890 Email: PearsonCF@dot.il.gov

## **STATE TRANSPORTATION PLAN** IDOT kicks off activities for future transportation planning



Throughout Illinois history, transportation has held an important role in creating and shaping the state. This is evident today as business and leisure travelers rely on the transportation system to support and enable all manner of economic, social, educational and cultural activity. The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has a responsibility to assure that the transportation system can answer these needs and address future transportation demand.

The State Transportation Plan sets forth policies and goals that guide the development of the state transportation system. The plan identifies issues and key needs that will influence transportation decision making during the next 20 years or more. Instead of a specific list of projects, the plan provides the strategic framework for the future direction of transportation in Illinois.

The current State Transportation Plan, Connecting Illinois, was revised in December 2005, to comply with state law. Federal requirements now call for a further update by July 1, 2007. IDOT has begun outreach efforts, such as stakeholder meetings, focus groups, survey tools and other types of interaction, to educate Illinois stakeholders about the process, seek feedback and gather ideas. Technical amendments to the 2005 plan will be produced and submitted by July to meet these requirements. A final plan is scheduled to be published in December 2007.

#### Challenges in planning for the future

IDOT faces significant challenges in planning for the future. Prime among these challenges is assuring the wise and productive use of limited funding resources to preserve the state transportation system, provide for safe travel, and enhance quality of life for all Illinoisans. To this end, IDOT must consider how transportation investments can improve opportunities for Illinois businesses, how these investments impact the environment, and how they can enhance safety for business and leisure travelers.

The State Transportation Plan provides the policy framework for the difficult decisions that must be made to address current and emerging transportation problems and concerns. IDOT faces a daunting task to preserve the complex transportation system created by past Illinois investments in highways, transit, airports, waterways and railroads. This must be achieved while enhancing the system with carefully planned highway development, improved services in intercity rail and public transportation, and enhanced bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.





# Stakeholder involvement is crucial!

IDOT has created a website, **www.IllinoisTransportationPlan.org** designed to communicate and share information about the plan update process and product. Most important, it offers residents, visitors and businesses that use the transportation system an opportunity to comment on the plan through a comment page on the website.

Face-to-face stakeholder meetings and continued outreach with businesses, community leaders and other stakeholders will take place through 2007. Initial outreach meetings are tentatively scheduled for late April. Dates, times and locations will be posted on the website.

IDOT considers eight policy factors in the long-range development of the Illinois transportation system:

- 1. Managing the existing infrastructure to ensure efficient performance.
- 2. Accommodating future growth in population and employment.

- 3. Ensure global economic competitiveness.
- Providing transportation for underserved populations such as the elderly, children and the disabled.
- 5. Protecting the environment.
- 6. Assuring safety for all transportation users.
- 7. Securing adequate funding for maintaining the continued operation of the system.

The plan will address these issues through a set of special reports. Following formal acceptance of the update, IDOT will work on further refining the plan to develop a preliminary Strategic Transportation System.

### Did you know?

The Illinois transportation system includes:

- More than 140,000 miles of roads and streets, including over 16,000 miles in the state system
- 26,548 bridges greater than 20 feet in length, including nearly 8,000 bridges in the state system

- Nearly 108 billion miles of travel on Illinois roadways each year
- Illinois ranked 7th in bicycle trips across the nation, and 8th in walking trips
- 52 public transit systems
- 40 Amtrak trains per weekday (22 of which are state supported)
- Second largest rail freight system in the nation with nearly 8,000 miles of railroads within Illinois
- The fastest growing segment of intermodal freight transportation-logistics
- 29 National Highway System (NHS) truck-rail intermodal facilities
- Chicago O'Hare International Airport - one of the world's busiest airports
- 1.4 million tons of cargo and approximately 76.5 million travelers passing through O'Hare each year
- 138 public use airports, 280 heliports and more than 1,000 aviation facilities
- 1,118 miles of navigable waterways with 14 port districts in Illinois

## **EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM**

By Heidi Liske, Research & Technology Transfer Engineer, Federal Highway Administration Jason Cowin, ER Program Manager, Federal Highway Administration



Emergency situations often arise with unpredictable or little warning. A transportation agency's duty is to protect life and ensure the safety of the traveling public during these disastrous events, and communication and documentation can be the difference between smooth operations and absolute chaos.

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Emergency Relief (ER) program is for the repair or reconstruction of Federal-aid highways and roads on Federal lands which have suffered serious damage resulting from natural disasters or catastrophic failures due to an external cause. The term "natural disaster" encompasses floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, tidal waves, severe storms, or landslides, whereas a catastrophic failure is defined as the "sudden and complete failure of a major element or segment of the highway system that causes a disastrous impact on transportation services". To be eligible for ER funds, a

catastrophic failure must be determined to be external to the facility and also be "catastrophic" in nature.

There are two classifications of repairs in the ER program: emergency repairs and permanent repairs. Emergency repairs are made during and immediately following a disaster to restore essential traffic, to minimize the extent of damage, or to protect the remaining facilities. Permanent repairs are undertaken to restore the highway to its pre-disaster condition, typically after emergency repairs have been completed.

The Federal share for emergency repair work accomplished within the first 180 days following the disaster is 100-percent reimbursable. Permanent repair work is reimbursed at the normal pro rata share unless permanent repair is performed as an incidental part of emergency repair work. For facilities off the Interstate, the Federal share is 80 percent.

ER funds are not intended to cover all damage repair costs nor

repair costs that will restore the facility to pre-disaster conditions. Rather, they are intended to cover damage above heavy maintenance costs. Each damaged site must exceed \$5,000 in total damages, and the definition of a "site" should be discussed at the earliest possible point following an event.

Local and state agencies can establish three important functions prior to a disaster to insure the ER application process goes as smoothly as possible:

- A resource identification and deployment system can be established to efficiently delegate manpower, equipment, and materials resources in emergency situations. Mock drills can help agencies improve and fine-tune these procedures.
- Established tracking procedures provide the agency with documented records of all manpower, equipment, and materials usage for the ER application process. Proper documentation can simply be a foreman's log or diary showing the day's operations and can save processing time in the long run. It is important to document the facility/location of the work.
- A pre-determined method for cost estimation can simplify estimation procedures and provide consistency throughout a region. In the absence of any other documentation, the ER inspection teams will use IDOT cost figures not specific to the location or region. The preestablished cost data will aid in the ER application process.

## AUTOMATED RAILROAD GRADE CROSSING ENFORCEMENT SYSTEMS

By Jeff Harpring, P.E. Rail Safety and Program Engineer

Automated railroad grade crossing (RGC) enforcement systems monitor both the movement of traffic, and the status of the gate operation at designated highway-rail grade crossings. Typically, video detectors are used to determine if the gate is closed or is being closed, and to check for vehicles passing beyond the gates and into the crossing zone. Upon the detection of a vehicular violation, pole mounted cameras record pictures of the vehicle position and license plate.

Public Act 94-0771 which was signed on May 16, 2006, and took effect on January 1, 2007, allows local agencies to work with the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC), the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and local law enforcement officials, to establish an automated RGC enforcement system (photo or video enforcement system) at highway-rail grade crossings designated by local agency ordinance. It is required that these systems produce a clear recorded image of the vehicle, driver, and vehicle registration plate. Unlike previous legislation, the new act does not restrict the installation of the automated RGC enforcement systems to specific counties or municipalities in Illinois.

Automated RGC enforcement systems may be utilized at public highway-rail grade crossing locations experiencing excessive gate violations or significant crash histories when other safety measures such as automatic flashing light signals and gates, constant warning time circuitry, and enforcement by local law enforcement officials have not been



effective. Additionally, safety improvement projects to install an automated RGC enforcement system will only be considered at highwayrail grade crossing locations having a minimum of 1,000 vehicles per day and a crash history of at least 5 crashes in a 5 year period, or upon a recommendation from a diagnostic team review finding that photo enforcement is appropriate at that location. Documentation of local law enforcement efforts is also required.

If an automated RGC enforcement system is deemed to be appropriate by the diagnostic review team, the local agency must pass a local ordinance requesting the creation of such a system. Once these ordinances are in place, potential funding sources should be identified, and operation and maintenance responsibilities clarified. After these issues have been resolved, the ICC will issue a Stipulated Agreement for the parties to review. Following execution of the Stipulated Agreement by all of the parties involved, the ICC will issue an Order authorizing the proposed safety improvement.

Potential sources of funding may include the Grade Crossing Protection Fund (GCPF), local funds, or federal funds. State and/or federal funds will be limited to a maximum contribution of 50% of the cost of the materials and installation only, not to exceed \$200,000, with all remaining costs, including all future maintenance and operation of the system to be funded, and operated by the local agency.

When federal funds are being proposed for automated enforcement systems, eligibility for the reimbursement of federal funds is subject to the

#### Continued from page 8

Following an event warranting ER funding, a disaster declaration must be requested or made by the Governor or the President. In an emergency situation, IDOT, the traditional applicant, prepares a letter of intent to apply for ER funds that is acknowledged by FHWA. This acknowledgement is not a commitment on any part, but instead is a notice to proceed.

Once the notification to proceed is received, disaster assessments shall be completed and conducted by

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Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) providing approval and authorization of the federal funds for the project prior to the commencement of any federally reimbursable work items. Any project-related work done prior to federal authorization will not be eligible for reimbursement with federal funds. Additionally, federal rail safety funds are not available for projects with the sole purpose of establishing a quiet zone.

Local agencies with interest in automated RGC enforcement systems should provide a written notice to the ICC. Also, concurrence of the concept by the local law enforcement agency is required. All requests should be directed to: Mike Stead, Rail Safety Program Administrator at the Illinois Commerce Commission, 527 East Capitol Ave, Springfield, IL 62701, telephone 217/ 557-1285. Upon receipt of the request for automated RGC enforcement systems, the ICC will direct the local agency to schedule an on-site diagnostic team review to determine if installation of an automated RGC enforcement system is appropriate at that location.

For additional information on

teams of IDOT representatives, FHWA representatives, and any other pertinent specialist or sub-recipient. These teams review each site to determine eligibility, identify necessary repairs, and estimate costs using the Detailed Damage Inspection Report. IDOT then compiles all assessment estimates and prepares a Damage Survey Summary Report, which is transmitted to FHWA along with the Formal State Request for ER funding. The final determination is made by the FHWA upon review of the application. The entire ER appli-

IDOT's policy for automated RGC enforcement, visit www.dot.il.gov and click on the link for "Doing Business". Then click on "Bureau of Safety Engineering Programs & Policies", and then to "Automated Traffic Law Enforcement Systems: cation process takes approximately six to ten weeks, depending on staff availability and situation specifics.

For further information, please contact the Illinois FHWA ER program manager, Mr. Jason W. Cowin, at (217)492-4622 or your local IDOT district personnel. This article is intended to be only an overview of the ER program. The best source of information is the ER manual which can be obtained from the FHWA website (www.fhwa.dot.gov/programadmin/erelief.cfm) or in hard copy format at your local FHWA office.

Safety 2-07" to view the Public Acts as well as IDOT's entire policy on this subject. If you have any additional questions on this topic, please contact *Jeff Harpring, P.E. Rail Safety & Program Engineer at* 217/785-8542.



## **T2 TRAINING CLASS SURVEY** It's Time to Plan the 2007-2008 Training Program

The Bureau of Local Roads and Streets' Technology Transfer Center is soliciting local agency interest in classes for the October 2007 to April 2008 training program. Please look over the list and indicate those classes of interest to you or your personnel by filling in the blank with an approximate number of attendees your agency would send if the classes were available in your area. This survey will be used by the Center in scheduling the 2007-2008 training program. Every effort will be made to locate specific classes in areas showing the most interest. Classes lacking in interest will be dropped from this year's schedule.

Please complete this class interest survey and mail or fax it to the Center at (217) 785-7296 by June 29, 2007. If you have questions regarding class content, please call the Center at (217) 785-2350.

Bridge Construction Inspection (2 days)	 MUTCD (1 day)
Bridge Inventory Documentation (1 day)	 OSHA 10-Hour General Industry (1.5 days)
Bridge Piling (1 day)	 Pavement Construction Inspection (3 days)
Bridge Repair (1 day)	 Pavement Maintenance (1 day)
Bridge Safety Inspection (1 day)	 Reclaimed Asphalt Pavement (RAP) (1day)
Colors (1 day) (prerequisite before taking classes below)	 Rehab of Streets & Highways Seminar (1 day)
• Managing People Effectively (1 day)	 Response Handbook for Incidents, Disasters (1/2 day)
• Team Building (1 day)	 Seal Coats (1 day)
• Cultural Diversity (1 day)	 Small Drainage Structure Const. Insp. (2 days)
• Conflict Resolution (1 day)	 Snow & Ice Control (1/2 day)
Confined Space Awareness (2 hours)	 Street Sweeping (1 day)
Const. Materials Insp. Documentation (1 day)	 Structure Info & Management Systems (SIMS) (1 day)
Culvert Hydraulics (1/2 day)	 Surveying I-Beginning (3 days)
Context Sensitive Solutions (1/2 day)	 Surveying II-Intermediate (4 days)
Documentation (3 days)	 Surveying III-Construction Staking (3 days)
Erosion Sediment Control (Construction) (1 day)	 Surveying IV-Map GPS & St. Pl. Coord. (2 days)
Erosion Sediment Control (Design) (1 day)	 Team Building (1 day)
Flagger Training (1/2 day)	 Traffic Signal Maintenance (1 day)
Hazardous Material-First Responder Awareness (1 day)	 Trenching & Shoring Safety (2 hours)
HEC-RAS (3 days)	 Work Zone Safety-Crews (1/2 day)
Highway Jurisdiction/Transfers (1 day)	 Work Zone Safety-Design (1 day)
Highway Signing (1 day)	 Understanding Specifications (1 day)
Highway Engineering Principles (1 day)	 Urban Storm Mitigation/Tree Damage (1 day)
Low Cost Safety Improvement Workshop (1 day)	 Additional Classes
MFT Accounting and Auditing (1 day)	
Contact Person	

Agency \_

Phone Number

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

P& TTA

#### **Illinois Department of Transportation** Bureau of Local Roads and Streets



The Technology Transfer (T2) Program is a nationwide effort financed jointly by

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