

Technical Memorandum #2 – Route Options Development

Introduction

The purpose of this Technical Memorandum is to explain the route options development process used for the Illinois High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study and identify potentially feasible routes that could support a high-speed rail (HSR) line between Chicago, IL and East St. Louis, IL.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Illinois High-Speed Railway Commission (HSRC) is:

“To create a statewide high-speed railway network for Illinois through actionable, achievable recommendations engaging governments on the local, state, and federal levels. Our efforts will support connecting the state with high-speed trains integrated with other modes of transportation linking additional communities into the passenger rail system. Our plan will benefit the people of Illinois through enhancements to both passenger and freight rail mobility, positive environmental benefits, potential economic development, and positioning Illinois for future funding opportunities.”

Further, the legislation that formed the HSRC states:

“The High-Speed Railway Commission Act created the High-Speed Railway Commission to create a statewide plan for a high-speed rail line and feeder network connecting St. Louis, Missouri and Chicago, Illinois that includes current existing Amtrak and Metra services, connects the cities of Rockford, Moline, Peoria, and Decatur, and uses inter-city bus service to coordinate with the rail line. The Commission shall conduct a ridership study and shall make findings and recommendations concerning a governance structure, the frequency of service, and implementation of the plan.”

The Mission Statement and the High-Speed Railway Commission Act set the parameters for the Illinois High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study and answer the questions of what, why, and where.

- What? – an HSR line and feeder network
- Why? – enhance mobility, environmental benefits, and economic development
- Where? – the Chicago, IL to St. Louis, MO corridor

Project Study Area

The first element of route development is to identify the project study area. The project study area spans almost the entirety of the state of Illinois, from Chicago in the northeast to East St. Louis, IL in the southwest. Cities located in the project footprint include Kankakee, Peoria, Bloomington, Champaign, Decatur, Springfield, and East St. Louis. Land use outside of city centers is mostly farmland. East St. Louis and Chicago are connected by a system of interstates and railroads, the rights-of-way (ROW) of which are considered during route options development. Figure 1 shows the project study area.

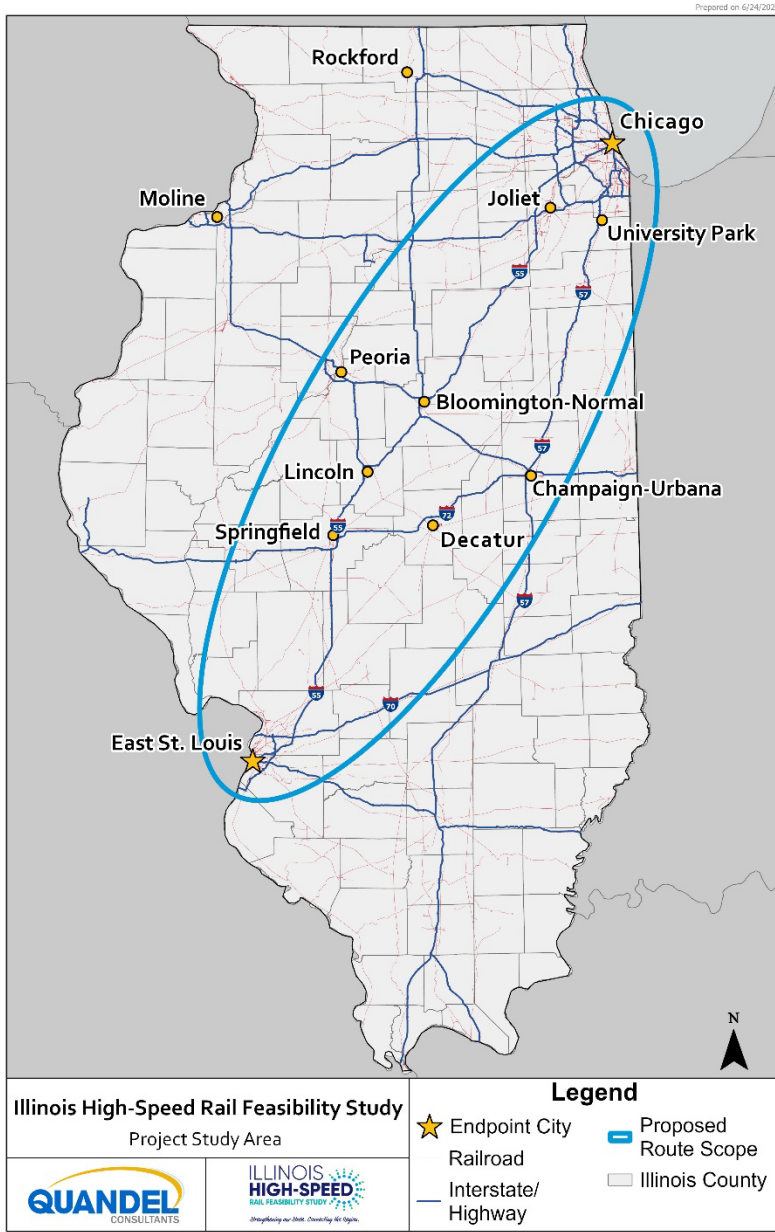


Figure 1 - Project Study Area

Initial Range of Route Options

An initial range of route options was identified that includes highway/interstate ROW, greenfield (new) alignments, and existing or abandoned railroad ROW for consideration as HSR route options. The initial range of route options was evaluated for feasibility based on the following questions:

- Does the route serve major population centers in the Chicago, IL to East St. Louis, IL corridor?
- What is the potential for multimodal connectivity?
- Is the route compatible with existing transportation corridors?

For the purpose of analysis, the Chicago – East St. Louis corridor was split into two segments:

1. Chicago Suburbs – East St. Louis Suburbs (spine)
2. Chicago Access

Initial route options were identified separately for each of the segments.

Chicago – East St. Louis Spine

The spine of the HSR corridor serves as the central connection between suburban Chicago and East St. Louis, IL. As the most critical segment of the route, the spine encompasses the majority of the track mileage, links the intermediate station stops, defines the key physical characteristics that influence operating speeds, and will ultimately shape the broader future network.

Two suburban Chicago municipalities—University Park, Illinois, and Joliet, Illinois—have been identified as the northern endpoints of the spine. These locations were selected based on their access to existing rail ROW, proximity to interstate highways, and strong multimodal connectivity via Metra commuter rail service. East St. Louis, IL, was identified as the southern terminus due to its direct access to interstate highways and its multimodal linkage to the MetroLink light rail transit system.

Existing Interstate Rights-of-Way

Three routes were identified along existing interstate ROW:

- I-55 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Bloomington/Normal-Joliet
- I-57/I-70 – East St. Louis-Champaign/Urbana-University Park
- I-55/I-72/I-57 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Champaign/Urbana-University Park

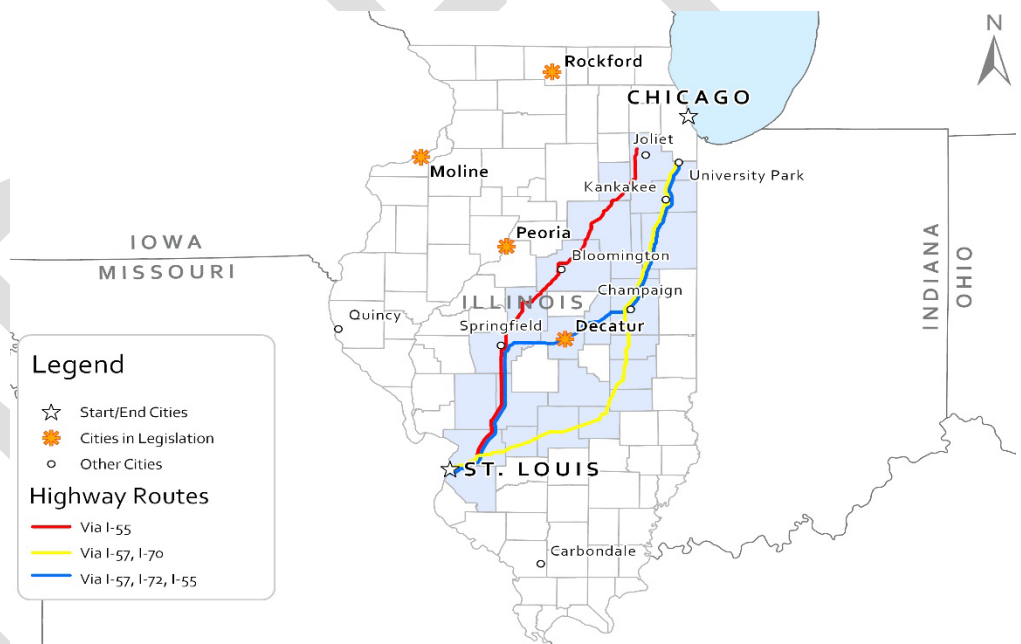


Figure 2 depicts the route options traversing existing interstate ROW.

Figure 2 - Route Options over Existing Interstate ROW

Existing Railroad Rights-of-Way

Five route options were identified using existing railroad ROW:

- The existing Amtrak Lincoln Service's route over Union Pacific track between Joliet and St. Louis
- An alternative route on Union Pacific tracks on the east side of the state
- A route on CN and NS via Decatur
- A route on CN and UP via Springfield
- A route on CN and UP via Tuscola

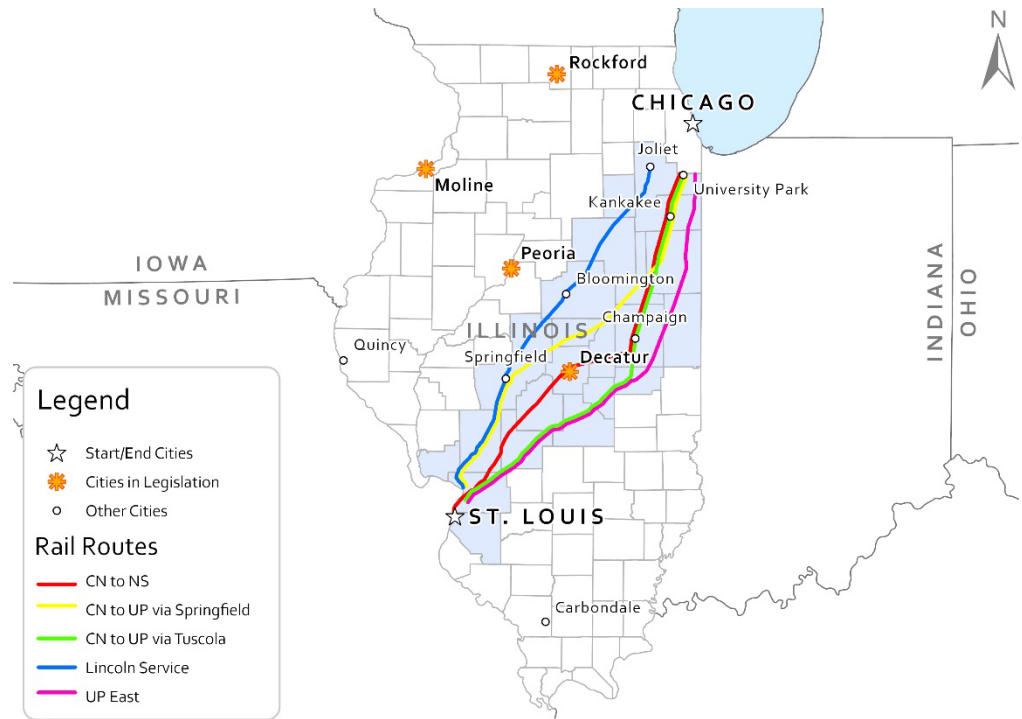


Figure 3 - Route Options over Existing Railroad ROW

Figure 3 depicts the route options traversing existing railroad ROW.

Greenfield Route Options

Greenfield route options were developed independently of existing right-of-way (ROW) constraints, with an emphasis on establishing direct and efficient connections between key population centers within Illinois. The objective of these routes is to maximize statewide connectivity and accessibility rather than to rely on existing transportation corridors. The following potential north-south Greenfield route options were identified based on connections between major metropolitan areas along the Chicago-St. Louis corridor:

- East St. Louis – Springfield – Decatur – Champaign/Urbana – University Park
- East St. Louis – Springfield – Bloomington/Normal – Joliet
- East St. Louis – Springfield – Decatur – Bloomington/Normal – Joliet
- East St. Louis – Springfield – Decatur – Champaign/Urbana – Bloomington/Normal – Joliet
- East St. Louis – Springfield – Peoria – Joliet

Figure 4 depicts the greenfield route options.

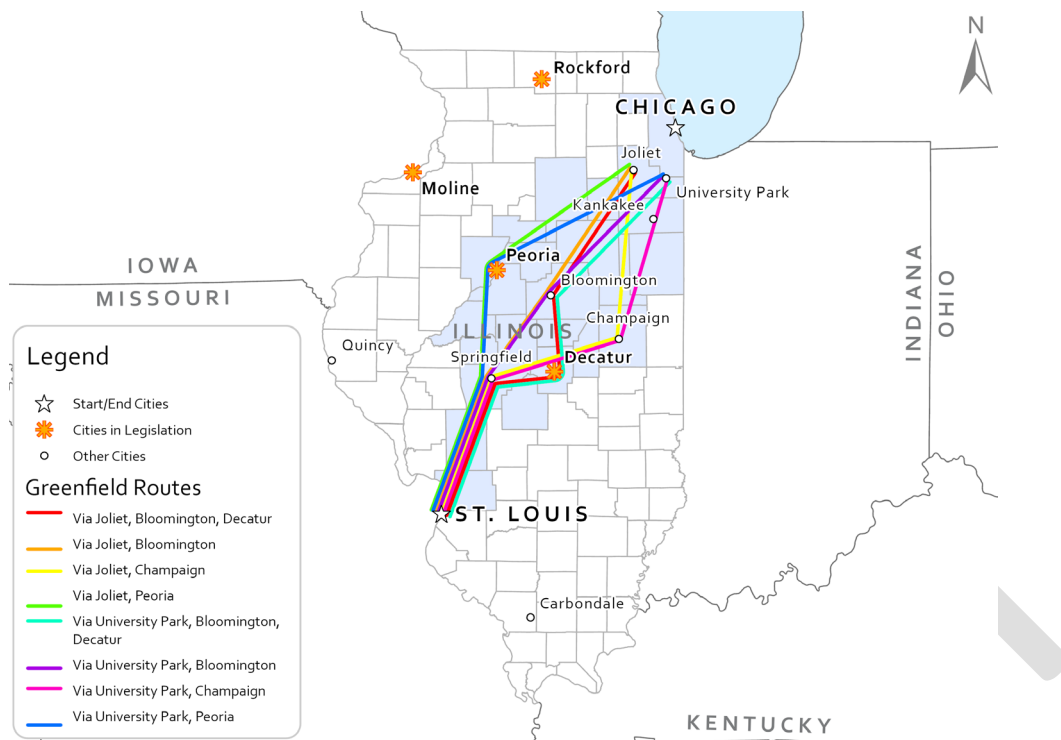


Figure 4 - Greenfield Route Options

Chicago Access

Chicago has one of the most complex rail networks in the nation, accommodating freight, commuter, and intercity passenger rail operations. Due to the region's dense urban development, opportunities to construct a dedicated HSR line are largely constrained to existing rail and utility ROW to minimize community and environmental impacts. Access to Chicago was evaluated from two suburban entry points: Joliet and University Park. Potential alignments connecting these locations to downtown Chicago were reviewed as part of this study to assess the feasibility of accommodating HSR service but a decision about a downtown Chicago terminal was not made.

Joliet to Chicago Routes

Metra Rock Island District

The Metra Rock Island District (RID) connects Joliet Gateway Center to LaSalle Street Station in downtown Chicago. This 40-mile corridor consists primarily of a two-track mainline, expanding to three tracks north of 17th Street in Chicago.

Metra Rock Island Intercity Improvement Project

Metra, in partnership with Amtrak, is advancing the Rock Island Intercity Improvement Project (RI3 Project) to improve operations, add capacity, rehabilitate existing infrastructure, address maintenance needs, and increase reliability of service for riders.¹ The RI3 Project is divided into three primary sections (Northern, Middle and Southern sections) as shown in Figure 5 and described below.

¹ [Rock Island Intercity Improvement Project | Metra](#)

Northern Section (17th Street to 74th Street)

This section includes construction of a third mainline track, replacement of nine existing railroad bridges, construction of 10 new railroad bridges, and installation of retaining walls and access roads. Track and signal upgrades are also planned.

Middle Section (47th Street Yard)

The 47th Street Yard will be reconfigured to accommodate train maintenance and midday equipment storage, improving operational flexibility.

Southern Section (74th Street to Joliet Gateway Center)

This section includes modernization of signals, grade crossings, interlockings, and crossovers. Additional crossovers and new platforms at Joliet Gateway Center will also be constructed.

Currently, Metra operates 80 weekday trains along the RID. Upon completion of the RI3 Project, the corridor will accommodate an additional 30 SouthWest Service (SWS) and 10 Amtrak intercity trains per day. These improvements will not only enhance Metra operations but will also enable Amtrak to transition its services from the Canadian National (CN) Joliet Subdivision to the publicly owned and dispatched RID, improving reliability and operational control.

75th Street Corridor Improvement Project

Another major initiative affecting the RID is the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project (CIP). The 75th Street CIP, a group of four projects that are part of the Chicago Regional Environmental and

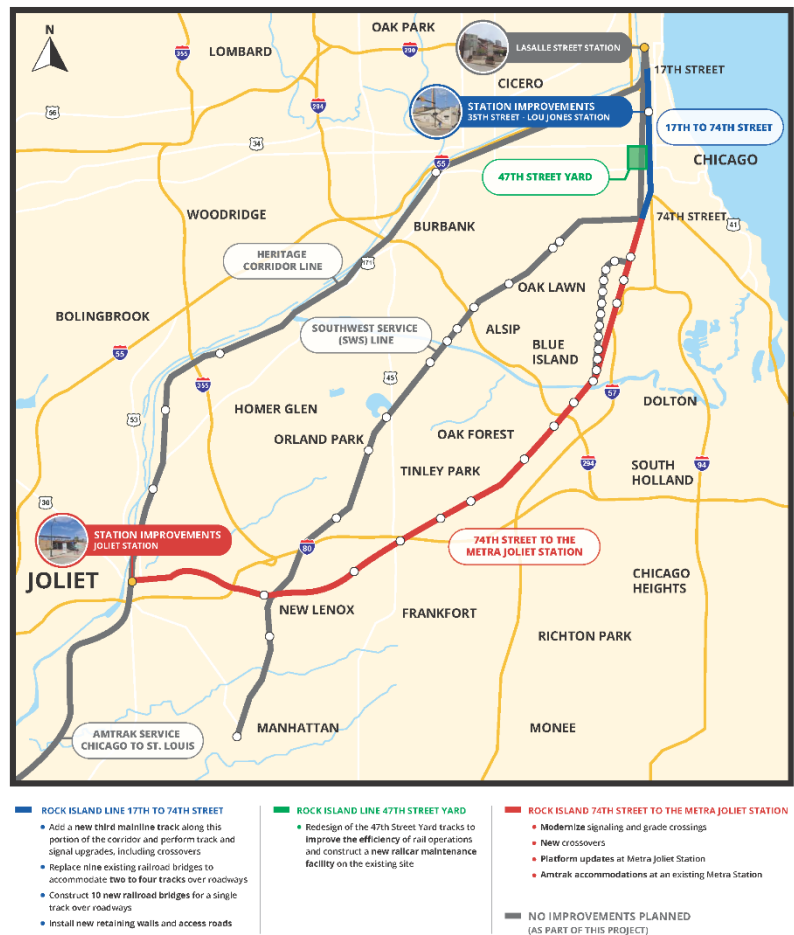


Figure 5 - RI3 Project Location Map

Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program, is shown in Figure 6. The purpose of the 75th Street CIP is to reduce conflicts between freight and passenger operations and to eliminate the at-grade crossing at 71st Street. Key elements of the project include:

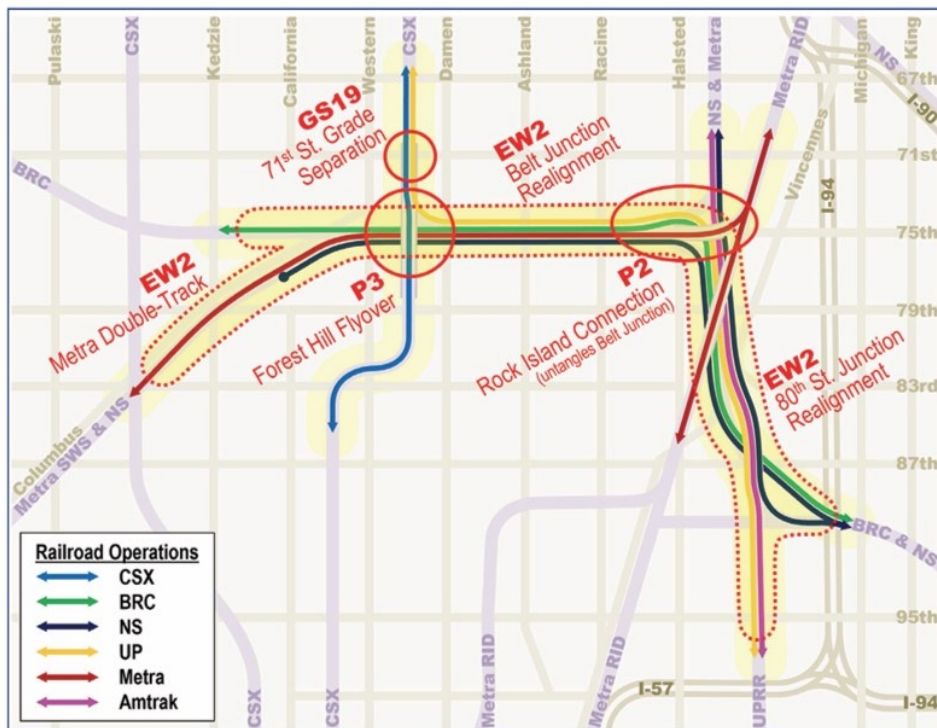


Figure 6 - 75th CIP Projects Location Map

- Construction of a flyover structure to separate Metra and freight movements.
- Reconfiguration of the Belt Railway Company of Chicago (BRC) main tracks.
- Addition of a second main track for the Metra SWS line.
- Construction of a flyover structure connecting Metra's SWS line to the RID
- Grade separation of CSX tracks and 71st Street.

The 75th Street CIP directly impacts the RID by facilitating the relocation of Metra's SWS operations from their current route onto the RID at 75th Street.

Implications for High-Speed Rail

Together, the RI3 and 75th Street CIP will add dozens of new commuter and intercity trains to the RID on a daily basis. To accommodate HSR operations, a dedicated HSR track would need to be constructed between Joliet Gateway Center and a future HSR station in the Chicago terminal area. Within the RID ROW, sufficient space exists between Joliet Gateway Center and Gresham Station to support an additional mostly elevated track on structure. A flyover would be constructed over the EJ&E east of Joliet. North of Gresham through 74th Street constructing a new mostly elevated track on structure would require the reconstruction of retaining walls to support a new track. North of 74th Street, available ROW is extremely limited due to existing infrastructure and the planned RI3 improvements. Implementation in this section would require elevated track on structure and likely necessitate property acquisition, potential residential displacements adjacent to the RID, and construction of a major flyover structure to span the Dan Ryan Expressway (I-90/94) and Norfolk Southern Railway.

HSR operating speeds within the RID corridor are anticipated to be limited to 79 mph due to the shared-use nature of the corridor.

Metra SouthWest Service/Norfolk Southern

Another HSR route from Joliet Gateway Center to Chicago would follow the alignment currently used by

Metra's SWS along Norfolk Southern (NS), shown in gray in Figure 5. From Joliet Gateway Center, trains would travel along the RID for almost 7 miles until they intersect NS in New Lenox, IL. Trains would then continue along the NS to access Chicago Union Station. NS is single track from its intersection with the RID to W. 143rd Street in Orland Park and primarily double track from W. 143rd Street into Chicago.

Currently, Metra operates 30 weekday SWS trains along this alignment. Upon implementation of the 75th Street CIP, shown in Figure 6, SWS trains will depart the NS line at 75th Street and utilize the RID to access downtown Chicago. This transition potentially creates capacity for HSR operations north of 75th Street. To accommodate HSR service along the NS line, additional infrastructure would be required. A flyover would need to be constructed at the RID/NS line intersection, a second mostly elevated track on structure would need to be constructed along the single-track segment between the RID intersection in New Lenox and 143rd Street in Orland Park, and a third mostly elevated track on structure would be required from 143rd Street to 75th Street.

A key operational constraint of utilizing the NS line for HSR is that HSR trains would be subject to freight dispatching, since the line is owned by NS. This limitation is a primary factor motivating the SWS rerouting to the RID. This routing was not carried forward into the feasibility study.

Metra Rock Island District to Metra SouthWest Service

An alternative route connecting Joliet Gateway Center to Chicago Union Station is via the RID to the Metra SWS/NS Chicago Line. Under this alignment, trains would travel along the RID from Joliet Gateway Center, flying over the EJ&E east of Joliet, to 79th Street, where the RID crosses over the NS Chicago Line, the BRC, UP, Metra, and Amtrak routes. A flyover would be constructed to connect the elevated RID to the SWS/NS Chicago Line.

The SWS/NS corridor leading into Chicago Union Station currently accommodates 14 Amtrak trains and 30 SWS trains per day, in addition to freight traffic.

One significant challenge with this route is that the RID/NS Chicago Line intersection is scheduled for complete reconstruction under the Rock Island Connection (P2) Project, which is part of the 75th Street CIP, as shown in Figure 7. It may be possible to construct the proposed HSR flyover above the SWS flyover onto the RID; however, this presents engineering



Figure 7 - Rock Island Connection (P2) Project Maps

complexities. Additionally, HSR trains on the NS Chicago Line would be subject to freight dispatching since the corridor is freight-owned, potentially limiting schedule flexibility. One benefit is that the SWS transition to the RID potentially creates capacity for HSR operations north of the RID/NS Chicago Line intersection. Infrastructure would be required to support HSR operations.

Canadian National/Metra Heritage Corridor

The Canadian National (CN) Joliet Subdivision/Metra Heritage Corridor connects Joliet Gateway Center to Chicago Union Station in downtown Chicago. This 37-mile corridor is primarily a two-track mainline owned and operated by CN. The line supports a mix of freight and passenger services including six weekday Metra Heritage Corridor commuter trains and ten daily Amtrak trains, including the *Lincoln Service* and *Texas Eagle*.

The CN Joliet Subdivision is a busy freight corridor, with CN serving multiple important customers, including petroleum customers. BNSF and UP also hold operating rights and utilize the route. In addition, a proposed \$800 million intermodal terminal south of Joliet² could further increase traffic volumes on the line.

The RI3 Project, discussed above, would relocate *Lincoln Service* and *Texas Eagle* trains to the RID corridor once completed, potentially freeing capacity on the CN Joliet Subdivision for HSR operations. While this shift could create opportunities for additional passenger service, operation within a freight-controlled corridor would pose capacity, reliability, and operational challenges.

University Park to Chicago Routes

Metra Electric District/Canadian National

The Metra Electric District (MED) connects University Park with Millennium Station in Chicago. The MED begins at University Park with a single main track, expanding to two main tracks at Richton Park, and four main tracks at Kensington. From Kensington to Millennium Station, the corridor maintains four tracks. The CN Chicago Sub runs parallel to the MED. Its configuration consists of two main tracks from University Park to Vollmer, three tracks from Vollmer to Homewood, four tracks from Homewood to 82nd Street, and two tracks from 82nd Street to the McCormick Place area.

Metra operates 129 MED trains per weekday along this route, in addition to 58 South Shore Line trains per weekday between Kensington and Millennium Station, and 6 Amtrak trains (*Illini/Saluki* and *City of New Orleans*) from University Park through McCormick Place. In 2026, 12 additional South Shore Line trains will be added between Kensington and Millennium Station due to the 8-mile southern extension of the South Shore Line's main Lakeshore Corridor, known as the Monon Corridor.

HSR service could be accommodated on a new dedicated track from University Park to the McCormick Place area, requiring reconstruction of either the MED or the CN corridor. Construction in densely developed segments presents significant challenges, particularly in:

- Richton Park, where Matteson Yard is located;
- Homewood, where Markham Yard is located;
- Kensington, where the South Shore Line connects with both the MED and CN.

Additionally, reconstruction of either corridor may impact existing Metra stations along the MED,

² [Home - Chicago Logistics Hub](#)

necessitating careful planning to minimize service disruptions and maintain operational capacity.

Metra Electric District/Canadian National to Norfolk Southern

An alternate route connecting University Park to Chicago Union Station would utilize the MED/CN corridor and the NS Chicago Line. Under this alignment, trains would travel along the MED/CN from University Park to Grand Crossing, where the NS Chicago Line crosses over the MED/CN. A flyover would be constructed to connect the MED/CN to the elevated NS Chicago Line.

The flyover is proposed as part of the CREATE Program's Grand Crossing Flyover (P4) project.³

The NS Chicago Line currently accommodates 14 Amtrak trains per day, in addition to freight traffic. Due to the high volume of freight traffic, a dedicated track for HSR would need to be constructed along the NS Chicago Line from Grand Crossing to the Chicago Union Station area to ensure reliable HSR service.

HSR trains on the NS Chicago Line would be subject to freight dispatching since the corridor is freight-owned, potentially limiting schedule flexibility.

Challenges and Considerations

There are other challenges and considerations that must be addressed when planning for HSR access into Chicago. The following sections outline these issues.

NS/UP Merger

In July 2025, NS and Union Pacific (UP) announced plans to merge, creating the nation's first transcontinental railroad. Both railroads have a significant presence in the Chicago region, and their merger is expected to bring substantial changes to the rail network. Increased traffic on NS and UP lines and greater congestion in yard areas are possible outcomes. Because this study explores the potential for HSR operations over NS infrastructure, the NS–UP merger could have important implications for HSR service planning.

ONE Central Project

Landmark Development Company proposed a real estate project known as ONE Central to the State of Illinois. The proposal envisions a mixed-use, transit-oriented development constructed above existing Metra tracks west of Lake Shore Drive, south of Roosevelt Road, and north of McCormick Place in Chicago, IL. A feasibility study was completed in May 2025 to assess the State's potential participation in the ONE Central project by evaluating the associated benefits and risks.

The transportation portion of the proposal includes construction of a transit station, relocation of MED tracks and the 18th Street maintenance facility, development of a new South Shore Line station at platform at 18th Street, and additional track, signal, and infrastructure improvements. The proposed transit station would serve Amtrak *Illini*, *Saluki*, and *City of New Orleans* services, as well as Metra BNSF service that would be extended from Chicago Union Station to the new station.⁴

The proposed development will be considered in future phases of the project.

³ [Grand Crossing Flyover - CREATE Program](#)

⁴ [ONE Central Feasibility Study 2025](#)

Farpoint Development

Farpoint Development has proposed redevelopment of the former Michael Reese Hospital site that could include construction of a new stadium for the Chicago Bears along with a mixed-use development on a 48.6-acre site adjacent to the MED/CN between 26th and 31st Streets in Chicago.⁵ The proposed development would not directly affect the feasibility of HSR but should be considered in future phases of the project.

Selection of Chicago Access Routes

For the purpose of conducting this feasibility Study, access into downtown Chicago was considered from two suburban gateways—University Park and Joliet—using existing commuter and freight rail corridors. Because of Chicago's dense urban development and complex rail network, construction of an entirely new high-speed rail corridor is not considered practical. Instead, the study focused on opportunities to leverage existing railroad rights-of-way while identifying where dedicated HSR infrastructure would ultimately be required.

For the University Park gateway, the preferred approach is the Metra Electric District (MED) / Canadian National (CN) corridor to a future HSR station in the Chicago terminal area. This corridor provides the widest and highest-capacity passenger rail approach into downtown Chicago, with up to four main tracks over much of its length and direct access to the central business district. Although additional dedicated HSR infrastructure would be required and reconstruction would be needed at constrained locations such as Matteson Yard, Markham Yard, and Kensington, the corridor avoids dependence on freight-owned main lines approaching downtown and provides the most direct passenger-oriented route into Chicago.

For the Joliet gateway, the preferred approach is the Metra Rock Island District (RID) to a future HSR station in the Chicago terminal area. The RID is publicly owned and dispatched by Metra and is undergoing significant capacity and reliability improvements through the Rock Island Intercity Improvement (RI3) Project and the CREATE 75th Street Corridor Improvement Program. These projects will shift Amtrak service from the CN Joliet Subdivision to the RID, increase corridor capacity, and improve operational reliability. While accommodating HSR would require construction of a mostly elevated dedicated track and additional improvements north of Gresham, the RID provides greater operational control and fewer freight dispatching conflicts than the SWS/NS or CN alternatives.

Alternative access routes using the NS or CN freight corridors were not preferred because they would subject HSR operations to freight dispatching, increasing the risk of reduced reliability and limiting schedule flexibility. Although these routes could potentially accommodate HSR with substantial new infrastructure, their operational constraints make them less desirable than the MED/CN and RID corridors for future high-speed passenger service.

Evaluation of Initial Route Options

The feasibility of initial route options outside the Chicago Access (Chicago suburban station to East St. Louis) was considered using the following criteria:

- Population centers served

⁵ [Farpoint Development unveils \\$3.2 billion stadium plan for Chicago's South Side | Chicago Construction News](#)

- Potential for multimodal connectivity
- Compatibility with existing transportation corridors

Existing Interstate ROW

The following existing interstate ROW route options were carried forward for further study:

- I-55 Corridor
- I-55/I-72/I-57 Corridor

Both options meet the goals of the study, connect with major population centers, offer the potential of multimodal connectivity, and provide opportunities for utilizing the interstate median ROW. The I-57/I-70 Corridor route option does not serve Springfield and would not serve the same level of major population centers as the I-55 and I-55/I-72/I-57 Corridors.

Existing Railroad ROW

None of the existing railroad ROW route options are carried forward for further study, as described below.

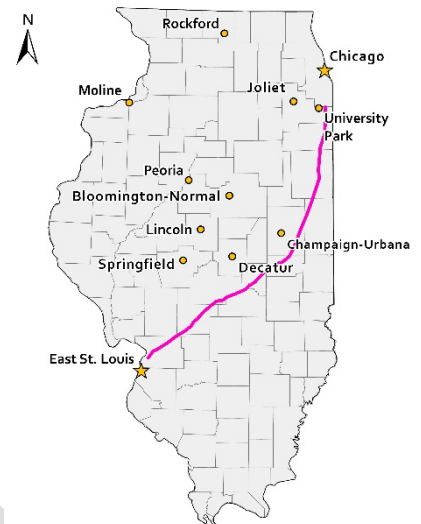
Lincoln Service Route over Union Pacific

A segment of this route option between Bloomington/Normal and Joliet was studied as part of the feasibility analysis. Along this segment, the alignment passes through a series of smaller communities, many of which include multiple at-grade crossings. To satisfy HSR safety standards, these crossings would need to be avoided, necessitating extensive elevated or grade-separated construction. Such measures would significantly increase project costs and introduce potential impacts to the surrounding communities. The corridor also includes industrial operations in Towanda, Lexington, Pontiac, and Odell, which could be affected by the addition of HSR infrastructure through operational disruptions, right-of-way acquisition, or constraints to existing freight rail movements. Considering the cumulative engineering challenges, community and industrial impacts, and high capital investment required for this segment, the route option was determined to be unreasonable to advance further in the feasibility study for high-speed rail capable of operating at speeds up to 220 MPH.



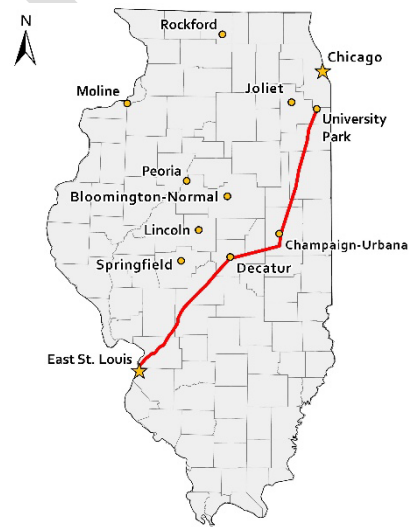
Union Pacific East Route

The Union Pacific East Route does not intersect any major populations along its alignment and therefore offers limited potential for multimodal connectivity. The route passes through numerous small towns, many of which contain multiple at-grade crossings that would need to be avoided. Avoiding these crossings would require constructing elevated track through town centers, significantly increasing project costs and potentially causing community impacts. For these reasons, the route option was determined to be unreasonable to carry forward in the feasibility study for high-speed rail capable of operating at speeds up to 220 MPH.



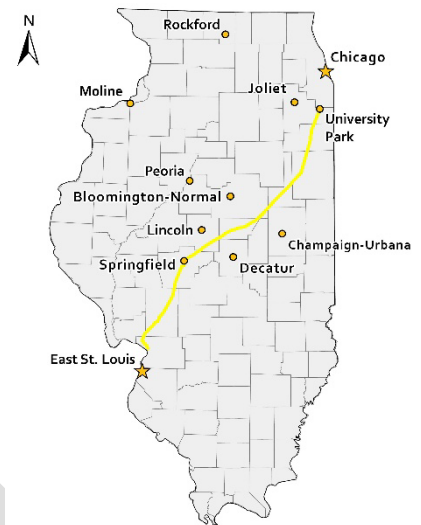
Canadian National to Norfolk Southern via Decatur

A segment of this route option between Champaign and Kankakee was studied as part of the feasibility analysis. The route traverses numerous smaller communities, many of which contain multiple at-grade crossings. Avoiding these at-grade crossings to meet HSR safety and operational requirements would require construction of elevated track, resulting in substantial cost increases and potential community impacts. In addition, industrial facilities are located along the corridor in Thomasboro, Paxton, Onarga, and Gilman. The introduction of HSR infrastructure in this area could disrupt existing industrial operations, require property acquisition, and complicate freight rail access. Given the combination of engineering constraints, community and industrial impacts, and elevated capital cost associated with this segment, the route option was determined to be unreasonable to advance further in the feasibility study for high-speed rail capable of operating at speeds up to 220 MPH.



Canadian National to Union Pacific via Springfield

A segment of this route option between Springfield and Gilman was studied as part of the feasibility analysis. The route passes through numerous small towns, many of which contain multiple at-grade crossings that would need to be avoided. Avoiding these crossings would require constructing elevated track through town centers, significantly increasing project costs and potentially causing community impacts. In addition, industrial facilities are located along the corridor in Cornland, Lake Fork, Mt Pulaski, Chestnut, Kenney, Clinton, Farmer City, Bellflower, Gibson City, Melvin, and Roberts, which could be affected by the addition of HSR infrastructure through operational disruptions, right-of-way acquisition, or constraints to existing freight rail movements. For these reasons, the route option was determined to be unreasonable to carry forward in the feasibility study for high-speed rail capable of operating at speeds up to 220 MPH.



Canadian National to Union Pacific via Tuscola

The southern portion of this route option is shared with the Union Pacific East Route. While it intersects some major populations along its alignment, like Champaign/Urbana, it does not serve Springfield. The route passes through numerous small towns, many of which contain multiple at-grade crossings that would need to be avoided. Avoiding these crossings would require constructing elevated track through town centers, significantly increasing project costs and potentially impacting communities. For these reasons, the route option was determined to be unreasonable to carry forward in the feasibility study for high-speed rail capable of operating at speeds up to 220 MPH.



Greenfield

The following greenfield route options are carried forward for further study:

- Greenfield via Bloomington/Normal and Joliet
- Greenfield via Peoria and Joliet
- Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park
- Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet

These greenfield route options were selected to advance further in the feasibility study because they each serve major population centers in the state and serve several of the cities in the Illinois High Speed Railway Commission Act legislation.

Route Development

Route development followed a three-phase process. The first phase evaluated potential intermediate markets, assessing both their unique characteristics and their suitability as origin–destination (O–D) pairs for HSR service. The second phase identified feasible corridor connections between these

intermediate markets. The final phase involved the preliminary design and evaluation of route alignments based on engineering, operational, and environmental considerations.

Intermediate Markets

Preliminary intermediate markets were identified to align with Illinois' six metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) within the Chicago-East St. Louis corridor with populations over 50,000:

- Chicago-Naperville-Elgin (Joliet)
- Peoria
- Bloomington-Normal
- Springfield
- Champaign-Urbana
- Decatur

These population centers represent significant potential markets for HSR service and it was assumed that an HSR station would be located in each.

Once intermediate markets were identified, they were combined to form the following market connections:

- East St. Louis-Springfield-Bloomington/Normal-Joliet-Chicago
- East St. Louis-Springfield-Peoria-Joliet-Chicago
- East St. Louis-Springfield-Champaign/Urbana-University Park-Chicago
- East St. Louis-Springfield-Champaign/Urbana-Joliet-Chicago

Route alignments were developed to connect each intermediate market.

Route Assessment

Routes were considered to a level that allowed for the continued assessment of feasibility through ridership and revenue forecasting, travel time estimating, and planning-level cost estimating. The engineering of route alignments was done at a planning level – meaning, route alignments were developed based on high-level horizontal and vertical geometry and railroad typical sections.

Interstate Rights-of-Way

Following the Brightline West design precedent, HSR alignments within interstate ROW were planned primarily within the interstate median. The design of horizontal geometry adhered to AREMA standards, encompassing requirements for superelevation, curve parameters, tangent and spiral lengths, catenary clearance, and passenger comfort criteria.

Key assumptions for the design of alignments within interstate medians include:

- A single-track cross-section is assumed as the baseline configuration.
- A double-track cross-section is applied at locations incorporating passing sidings for one-hour headways
- Access roads to the medians are not included in the feasibility study.
- Horizontal geometry is planned to accommodate maximum operating speeds of 220 mph.
- All highway bridges constructed over the interstate along the corridor are assumed to be reconstructed to meet clearance and alignment requirements.

- In locations where the median is insufficient to accommodate the single-track footprint, interstate reconstruction is assumed to increase median width.
- Induced wind mitigation measures are not considered as part of the feasibility study.

The geometry of HSR alignments within interstate medians is inherently constrained by the curvature of the underlying interstate. Tighter curves within the median result in reduced allowable train speeds, consistent with operational safety and comfort standards.

Interstate-Adjacent Routes

HSR alignments adjacent to interstate corridors are designed using the same engineering standards applied to routes within interstate medians. Unlike median-aligned routes, however, adjacent routes are not constrained by the curvature of the underlying interstate. The horizontal geometry is therefore optimized to support higher operating speeds by reducing curvature and maximizing the length of tangent track sections, consistent with railroad design standards for superelevation, curve radii, and passenger comfort.

Greenfield/County Road Routes

Greenfield alignments were developed using a Least Cost Path (LCP) methodology, in which preliminary routes were generated algorithmically to minimize environmental impacts, avoid sensitive resources, and reduce overall construction costs. These alignments are currently represented within a 5-mile planning swath, indicating that the exact alignment will be refined as the project advances through subsequent design and environmental review stages.

Key assumptions for the design of greenfield and county road-adjacent alignments include:

- Double-track cross-section is assumed as the baseline configuration.
- Access roads are not included in the preliminary design.
- Horizontal geometry is designed to accommodate maximum operating speeds of 220 mph.
- Partial overpass reconstruction is anticipated where required to maintain alignment and clearance standards.
- At-grade crossings are prohibited on track segments with speeds exceeding 110 mph.
- For routes paralleling county roads, alignments are assumed to be constructed approximately 2,000 feet from the roadway centerline to avoid impacts to existing intersections and roadway operations.

This methodology ensures that greenfield and county road alignments balance operational efficiency, passenger safety, and environmental stewardship while providing a framework for more detailed design refinement in future project phases.

Feasible Route Identification

A total of eight routes were identified that represent the range of potentially feasible routes. The route options are presented in Table 1.

Route Option	Intermediate Station Stops	ROW Type
1 – I-55 Corridor	Springfield-Bloomington/Normal-Joliet	Interstate Median
2 – Greenfield via Bloomington and Joliet	Springfield-Bloomington/Normal-Joliet	Greenfield
3 – I-57/I-72/I-55 Corridor	Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-University Park	Interstate Median
4 – Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park	Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-University Park	Greenfield + County Road
5 – Greenfield and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet	Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-Joliet	Greenfield + County Road
6 – Interstate Adjacent and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet	Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-Joliet	Interstate Adjacent + County Road
7 – I-55/I-155/I-74 Corridor	Springfield-Peoria-Bloomington/Normal-Joliet	Interstate Median/Adjacent
8 – Greenfield via Peoria and Joliet	Springfield-Peoria-Bloomington/Normal-Joliet	Greenfield
9 – Interstate Median and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet	Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-Joliet	Interstate Median (East St. Louis-Champaign/Urbana) + County Road (Champaign/Urbana to Joliet)
10 – Interstate Median and Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park	Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-University Park	Interstate Median (East St. Louis-Champaign/Urbana) + Greenfield (Champaign/Urbana to University Park)
11 – Interstate Median and Greenfield/County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet	Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-Joliet	Interstate Median (East St. Louis-Springfield) + Greenfield (Springfield to Champaign/Urbana) + County Road (Champaign/Urbana to Joliet)
12 – Interstate Median and Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park	Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-University Park	Interstate Median (East St. Louis-Springfield) + Greenfield (Springfield to University Park)

Table 1- Range of Potentially Feasible Routes

These routes are described in detail in the following sections.

Route 1 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Bloomington/Normal-Joliet-Chicago (I-55 Corridor Route Option)

The I-55 Corridor Route Option connects the cities of East St. Louis, Springfield, Bloomington/Normal, Joliet, and Chicago via I-55 ROW and Metra Rock Island District ROW. Route 1 is presented in Figure 8. Attachment 1 shows a route map on aerial imagery, including locations where the route is at-grade, on a 30-foot “Level 1” structure, and on a 60-foot “Level 2” structure.



Figure 8 - I-55 Corridor Route Option

East St. Louis to Springfield

The southern terminus of the route segment between East St. Louis and Springfield is assumed to be the East Riverfront MetroLink station. From this station, the alignment proceeds east adjacent to the MetroLink corridor, then transitions to a greenfield alignment to enter the I-55 median, where it remains for approximately 80 miles until reaching a location just south of Lake Springfield, Illinois.

Lake Springfield Crossing Constraints

Lake Springfield represents a significant geographic constraint for any alignment entering Springfield. The existing I-55 crossing of the lake occurs within a narrow 130-foot ROW, which accommodates six travel lanes and four roadway shoulders, flanked by residential development along the lakeshore, rendering ROW expansion infeasible. Additionally, the corridor includes three consecutive horizontal s-curves that would impose severe speed restrictions for HSR operations. These factors necessitate the evaluation of an alternative lake crossing.

Alternative Alignments Considered

Several alternatives were evaluated to bypass the I-55 constraints, including:

- State Route 4
- Union Pacific Railway
- Iron Bridge Road
- Canadian National (CN) Railway Gilman Subdivision

Of these options, the Canadian National Railway alternative is preferred, as it minimizes property acquisition requirements. I-55 intersects the CN line approximately 4 miles south of Lake Springfield, enabling a more efficient transition from interstate median to existing rail ROW. The other alternatives would require substantial greenfield connections to reach the interstate corridor.

Canadian National Gilman Subdivision Considerations

The CN route is part of the Gilman Subdivision, a branch of CN's core Chicago–Gulf Coast network. The proposed high-speed passenger alignment would share the line with two existing freight customers, which CN must continue to serve. During a June 17, 2025 meeting, CN shared that the City of Springfield is interested in purchasing CN's ROW in this area and that CN would potentially be interested in selling the ROW. CN recommended that discussions be held with CN and the City of Springfield.

Proposed Alignment

The proposed alignment departs I-55 onto the CN ROW and follows it for approximately 8 miles until intersecting I-55/I-72 in the southeast quadrant of Springfield. The alignment then continues within the I-55/I-72 median around the city. For the purposes of this feasibility study, a suburban Springfield station is assumed near the I-55/I-72 and IL Route 97/East Clear Lake Avenue interchange.

Reconstruction of I-55/I-72 is proposed to add lanes and rebuild interchanges. Ongoing coordination with IDOT will be required to verify available median width and assess future constraints.

Springfield to Bloomington/Normal

The route segment between Springfield and Bloomington/Normal on I-55 has numerous curves that shift the interstate outside of the downtown areas of small cities on the route. The route continues north of the Springfield station at-grade and transitions to outside of the median for approximately 2.2 miles to avoid a sharp curve in the interstate in Sherman, IL. The route continues within the I-55 median until it transitions outside of the median in Shirley, IL to avoid a sharp curve in the interstate. The route continues in the I-55 median until it reaches a suburban Normal station northwest of the city, near the I-55/I-39 interchange.

Bloomington/Normal to South of Joliet

The route segment between Bloomington/Normal and Joliet is like the Springfield to Bloomington/Normal segment in that I-55 deviates from a straight line to curve around small cities. The route utilizes the I-55 median for 84 miles, until just south of Joliet.

Approach to Joliet

To enhance multimodal connections, the future station must integrate into the Joliet Gateway Center, which currently hosts two Metra Lines and two Amtrak services, and Pace Bus. This is a unique station located at the intersection of the CSX, BNSF, CN, and Metra railroads. Figure 9 displays the station location.

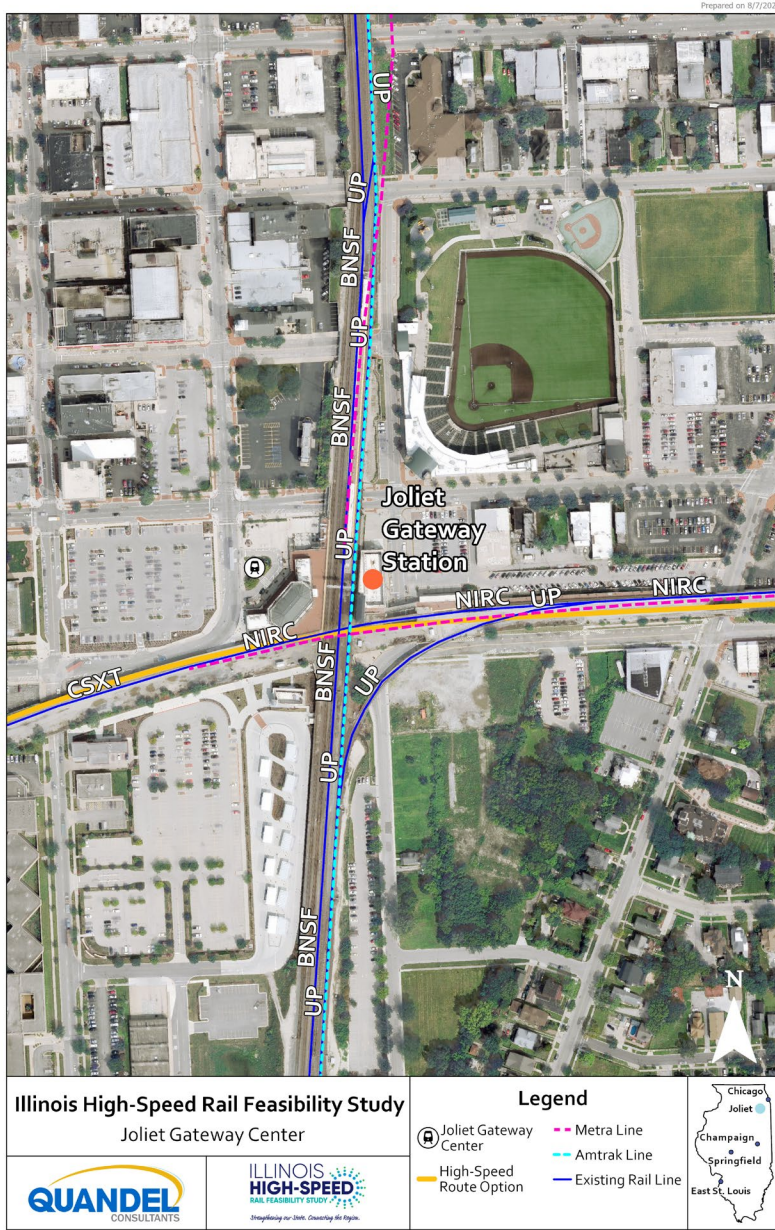


Figure 9 - Joliet Gateway Center

By establishing HSR platforms at the existing station, both rider transfer times and disturbances to the surrounding area are minimized. To do this, the proposed HSR service must be established on, or adjacent to, the BNSF or CSX routes approaching from the south and west. The two options are discussed below.

Joliet Approach Option 1 – BNSF

The BNSF Chillicothe Subdivision provides convenient access to the Joliet Gateway Center, with the option of utilizing either the CN Joliet Subdivision or the Metra Rock Island District to travel to Chicago. Figure 10 depicts the BNSF option.

The BNSF Chillicothe Subdivision intersects I-55 near Wilmington, IL. The HSR line could be constructed to the west of the existing tracks. This option includes five at-grade crossings which require grade separations, along with the need to expand the I-80 and Arsenal Road underpasses. There are also numerous industries along the BNSF ROW that are served by BNSF. The line could also be constructed on a structure on top of the BNSF tracks which would avoid at-grade crossings and impacts to industries.

Joliet Approach Option 1 encounters several protected areas near Channahon. These areas are depicted in Figure 11.

The protected areas include:

- Joliet United States Army Reserve Center/Joliet Training Area
- Joliet Army Ammunition Plant Superfund Remedial Site
- Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie

The alignment also borders the following protected areas:

- Osgood Park

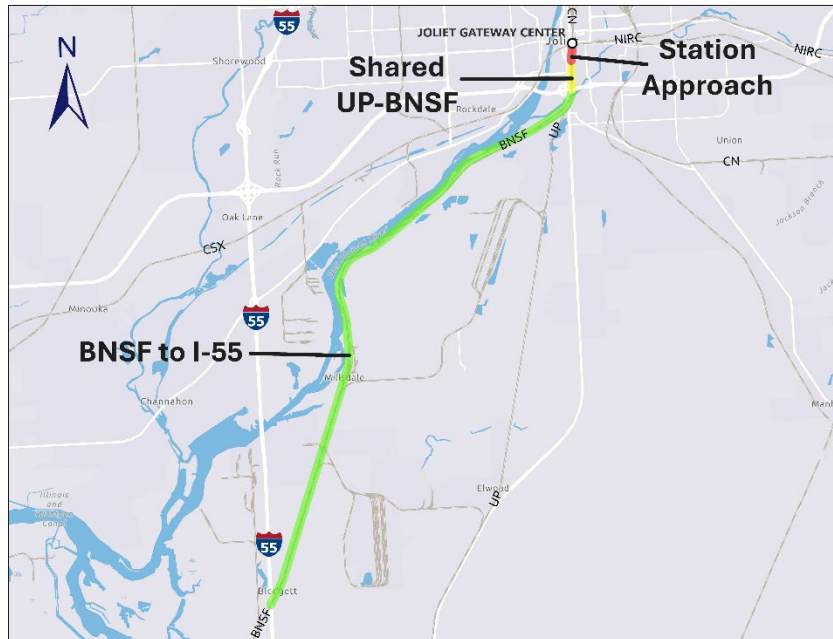


Figure 10 - BNSF Access to Joliet



Figure 11 - Joliet Approach Option 1 Protected Areas

- Des Plaines State Fish and Wildlife Area

Constructing adjacent to these protected areas is a concern due to the level of permitting that would be required.

Joliet Approach Option 2 - CSX

The CSX New Rock Subdivision approaches the Joliet Gateway Center from the west and directly connects to the Metra Rock Island District via a diamond crossing of the BNSF and UP tracks. Figure 12 depicts the CSX option.

Like the BNSF option, there are challenges to establishing a high-speed railroad using this option. Challenges include proximity to protected areas, residential impacts, preserving existing industrial assets, and crossing the Des Plaines River. These challenges are detailed below.

The CSX New Rock Subdivision intersects I-55 near its I-80 interchange in Minooka, IL. The HSR line could be constructed to the south of the existing tracks. This option includes four at-grade crossings which require grade separations and three overpasses. Constructing an elevated track on top of CSX would avoid the impacts to grade crossings and industries. Figure 13 shows an example of a passenger route constructed on elevated track over a freight railroad in Miami, FL.



Figure 12 - CSX Access to Joliet



Figure 13 - Example of Elevated Track Constructed Over a Freight Railroad

A new HSR bridge will need to be constructed over the Des Plaines River adjacent to the existing CSX bridge. CSX crosses the river over a bridge constructed in 1932 that was designed to raise into the air to provide clearance for maritime traffic when not in use by the railroad. The new HSR bridge will provide enough clearance under it so that maritime traffic can travel without needing to raise the bridge.

Joliet Approach Option 2 encounters several protected areas just southeast of Joliet. These areas are

depicted in Figure 14.

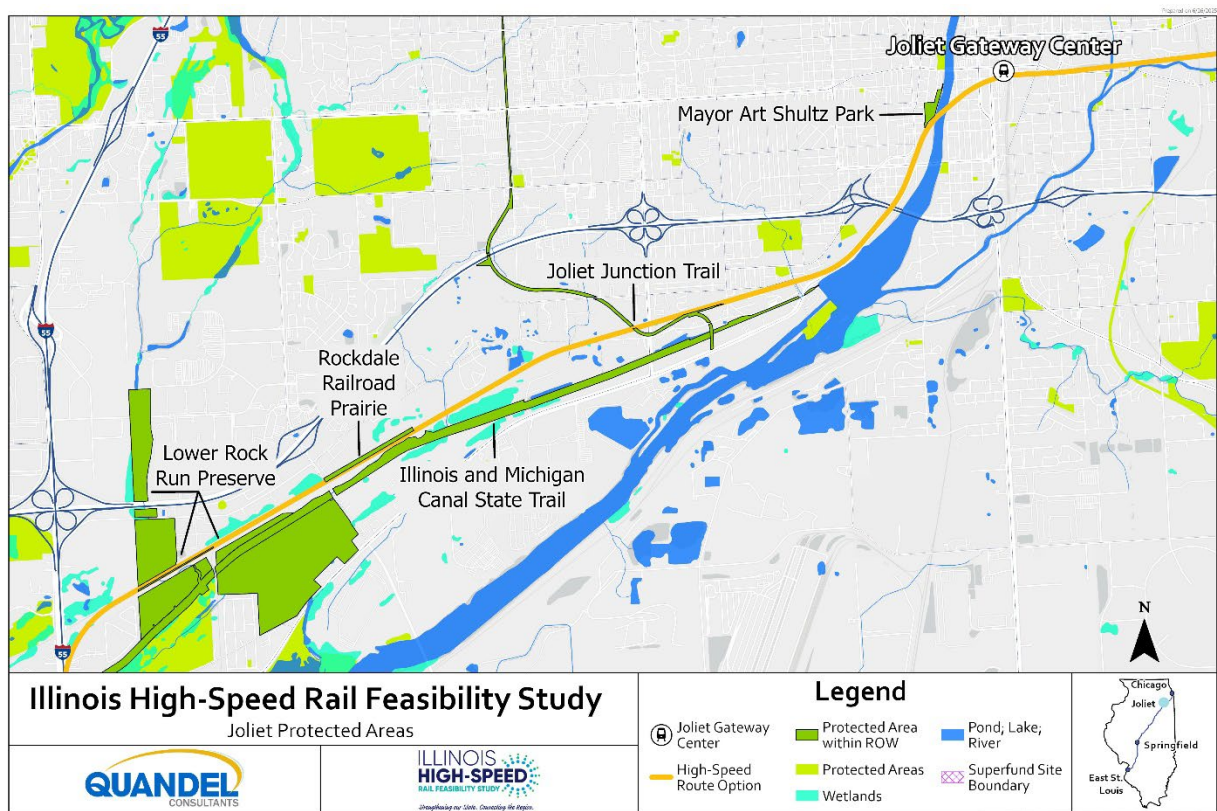


Figure 14 - Joliet Approach Option 2 Protected Areas

The protected areas within or crossing the CSX ROW are listed below:

- Joliet Junction Trail
- Rockdale Railroad Prairie
- Lower Rock Run Preserve

Protected areas adjacent to the CSX ROW are listed:

- Bluff Plaza (Joliet Park District)
- Illinois and Michigan Canal State Trail

CSX services many customers on this line, and rail links between these facilities and CSX must be maintained by constructing elevated track over the CSX.

Preferred Joliet Approach Option

The preferred HSR connection between I-55 and Joliet Gateway Center is on CSX's New Rock Subdivision, Joliet Approach Option 2. This alignment minimizes impacts to the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. This route is also expected to have the most available ROW and could be partially constructed at-grade. For these reasons, this study assumes that the CSX New Rock Subdivision will provide the connection to Joliet Gateway Center.

Joliet to Chicago

From the Joliet Gateway Center, the route travels to Chicago over the Metra Rock Island District. The

Metra Rock Island District is approximately 40 miles long. The HSR service would operate on dedicated mostly elevated track and would operate at maximum speeds of 79 MPH. Refer to the Chicago Access section above for more information.

Route 2 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Bloomington/Normal-Joliet-Chicago (Greenfield via Bloomington/Normal and Joliet Route Option)



Figure 15 - Greenfield via Bloomington/Normal and Joliet Route Option

the west side of I-55 near the East St. Louis end of the segment to minimize potential impacts on residential areas and sensitive environmental resources, including the Shoal Creek Conservation Area and nearby water bodies.

The Greenfield via Bloomington and Joliet Route Option connects the cities of East St. Louis, Springfield, Bloomington/Normal, Joliet, and Chicago via a greenfield alignment and Metra Rock Island District ROW. Route 2 is presented in Figure 15. Attachment 1 shows a route map on aerial imagery, including locations where the route is at-grade, on a 30-foot “Level 1” structure, and on a 60-foot “Level 2” structure.

East St. Louis to Springfield

The southern terminus of the route segment between East St. Louis and Springfield is assumed to be the East Riverfront MetroLink station. From the station, the route heads east adjacent to MetroLink, and then uses a greenfield alignment to enter the I-55 median. The route stays within the I-55 median for 5 miles until it curves northward in the I-255 median for 1.5 miles before exiting the interstate ROW. From that point, the route continues in a northeasterly direction generally parallel to I-55—alternating between the east and west sides of the interstate—for approximately 83 miles to Springfield. The alignment is situated primarily on

As the alignment approaches Springfield, it transitions to the east side of I-55 to facilitate entry into the city from the southeast. The segment terminates at a proposed suburban Springfield station, located near the I-72/Mechanicsburg Road interchange.

Springfield to Bloomington/Normal

The greenfield route continues northward along an alignment east of I-55 for approximately 9 miles before crossing over to the west side of I-55, where it remains for approximately 48 miles en route to Bloomington/Normal. The route is situated on the west side of I-55 to avoid the city of Lincoln and to position the route for a southwestern approach to Bloomington/Normal. The Bloomington/Normal HSR station is assumed to be located in the vicinity of the I-55/I-39 interchange.

Bloomington/Normal to Joliet

North of Bloomington, the route continues in a northeasterly direction along an alignment west of I-55 for approximately 60 miles. This route location minimizes impacts to Route 66 and Union Pacific, both of which are situated adjacent to and east of I-55. Near the interchange with State Route 53 in Gardner, IL, the route transitions to the I-55 median. From this point, the route continues both within the I-55 median and immediately adjacent to the interstate for 21 miles before transitioning to the CSX New Rock Subdivision.

From there, the route follows Joliet Approach Option 2 over the CSX to reach Joliet Gateway Center.

Joliet to Chicago

From the Joliet Gateway Center, the route travels to Chicago over the Metra Rock Island District. The Metra Rock Island District is approximately 40 miles long. The HSR service would operate on dedicated mostly elevated track and would operate at maximum speeds of 79 MPH consistent with the speed of the Metra service. Refer to the Chicago Access section above for more information.

Route 3 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Champaign-University Park-Chicago (I-55/I-72/I-57 Corridor Route Option)

The I-55/I-72/I-57 corridor route option connects East St. Louis and Springfield via I-55, Springfield and Champaign via I-72, Champaign and University Park via I-57, and Chicago via the MED/CN corridor. Route 3 is presented in Figure 16.

East St. Louis to Springfield

The East St. Louis to Springfield segment is the same as for the I-55 corridor as described for Route 1.

Springfield to Champaign/Urbana

The Springfield to Champaign/Urbana segment departs from the suburban Springfield station in the median of I-72 heading northeast. The route continues in the median of I-72 around Decatur for 75 miles until it is just west of the I-72/I-57 interchange. Instead of utilizing the interchange to transition from the I-72 median to the I-57 median, an alternative greenfield route was selected. The curvature of the interstate and the neighborhoods built immediately adjacent to the interchange are such that a rail line cannot be constructed.

Once this interim greenfield alignment transitions onto I-57, the route stays in the median for 1 mile until it reaches the Champaign/Urbana HSR station, assumed to be located near the I-57/County Road 1900 N interchange.

Champaign/Urbana to University Park

The route continues in the I-57 median for approximately 104 miles until just south of the I-57/W. Stuenkel Road interchange. The route exits I-57 and curves eastward to the median of W. Stuenkel Road. The route follows W. Stuenkel Road for 1.2 miles until it reaches the Metra Electric District tracks. From there, the route curves northward onto the Metra tracks and stops at the University Park Metra Station.

University Park to Chicago

From University Park, the route follows the MED/CN corridor into Chicago. The MED/CN corridor is approximately 30 miles long. It is assumed that the HSR service would operate on a dedicated mostly at-grade track adjacent to Metra's/CN's tracks, operating at a maximum speed of 79 MPH. Refer to the Chicago Access section above for more information.

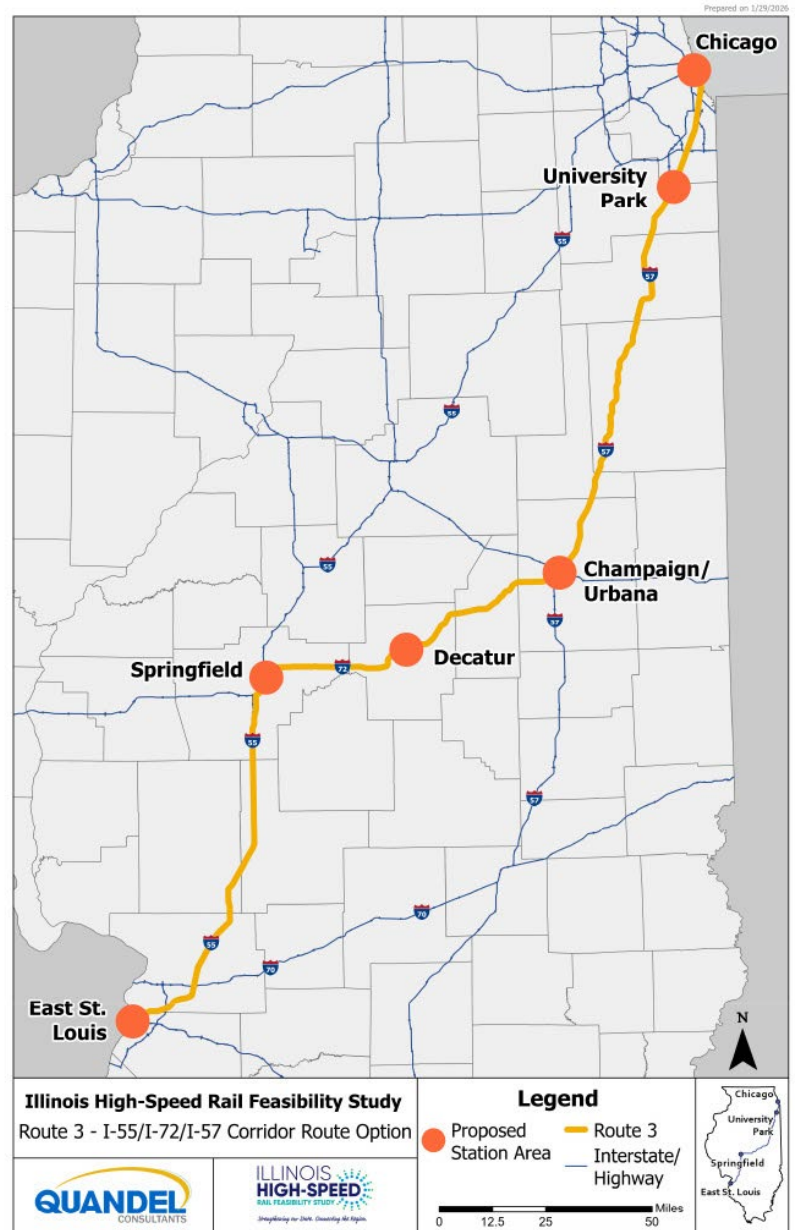


Figure 16 - I-57/I-72/I-55 Corridor Route Option

Route 4 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-University Park-Chicago (Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park Route Option)

The Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park Route Option connects the cities of East St. Louis, Springfield, Decatur, Champaign/Urbana, University Park, and Chicago via a greenfield alignment and the MED/CN corridor. Route 4 is presented in Figure 17.

East St. Louis to Springfield

The East St. Louis to Springfield segment is the same as the Greenfield via Joliet and Bloomington Route Option.

Springfield to Champaign/Urbana

From the Springfield station, the route travels in an east-northeasterly direction approximately 72 miles to Champaign, generally paralleling I-72 and I-57. At the west end of the route segment, the route is located north of I-72 to avoid the Sangamon River. East of Decatur, the route crosses to the south side of I-72 and back to the north side of I-72 to provide the straightest alignment. The route continues on the north side of I-72 to be able to access Champaign/Urbana from the west. The station is assumed to be located near the I-57/I-74 interchange.

Champaign/Urbana to University Park

The route departs from the Champaign/Urbana station heading northeast. It crosses over I-57 north of Champaign and travels east until it meets County Road 2400 N. The route will parallel County Road 2400 N on either the north side or south side of the road for 14 miles until it is just west of Collision, IL. From there, it curves and travels northward, meeting N 990 E Road. The route heads northbound, paralleling N 990 E Road, N 1900 East Road, and County Road 1900 E on either the east or west side of the roads for 24 miles. It then uses a greenfield alignment for 44 miles to S. Ridgeland Avenue near Peotone, IL and then traverses S. Ridgeland Avenue for 4 miles. It then utilizes a 5-mile segment of CN ROW on dedicated track until it reaches the University Park Metra Station.

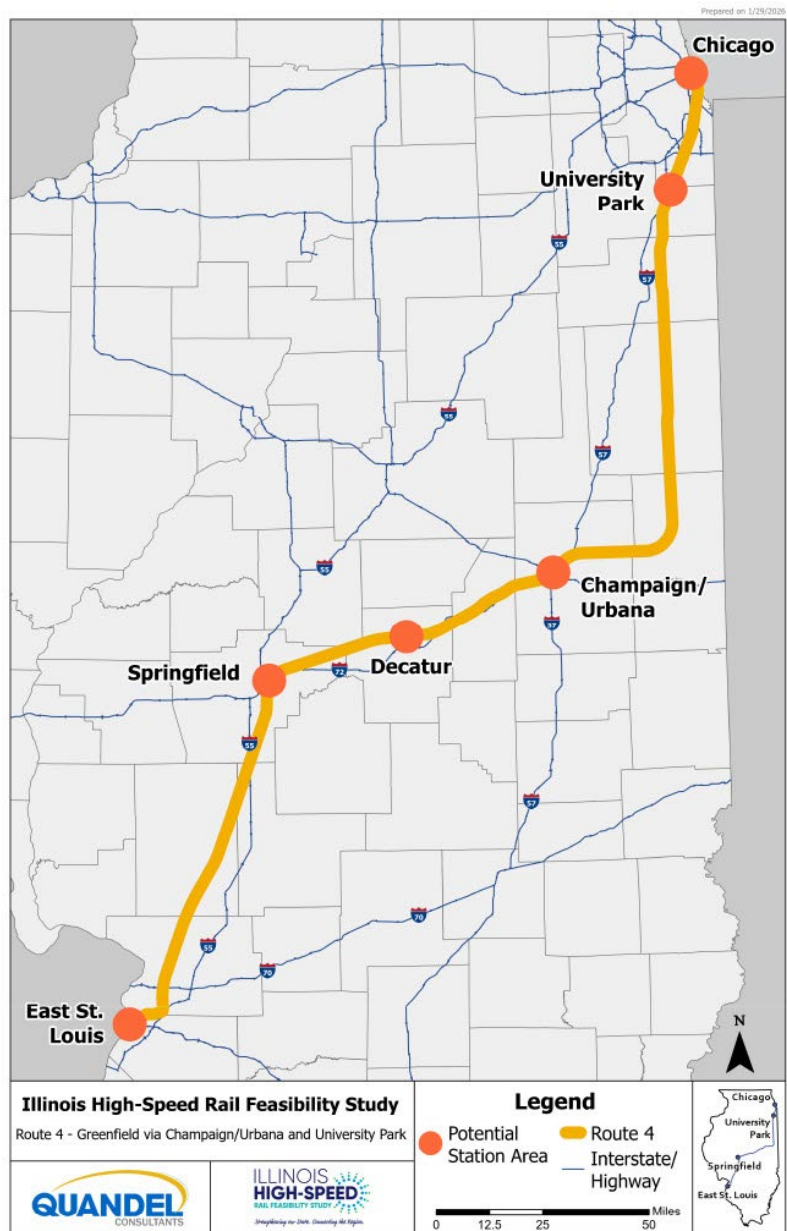


Figure 17 - Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park Route Option

University Park to Chicago

From University Park, the route follows the MED/CN corridor into Chicago. The MED/CN corridor is approximately 30 miles long. It is assumed that the HSR service would operate on dedicated mostly at-grade track adjacent to Metra's/CN's tracks, operating at a maximum speed of 79 MPH. Refer to the Chicago Access section above for more information.

Route 5 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-Joliet-Chicago (Greenfield and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option)

The Greenfield and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option connects the cities of East St. Louis, Springfield, Decatur, Champaign/Urbana, Joliet, and Chicago via a greenfield alignment, county road, and the Metra Rock Island District. Route 5 is presented in Figure 18.

East St. Louis to Springfield

The East St. Louis to Springfield segment is the same as the Greenfield via Joliet and Bloomington Route Option.

Springfield to Champaign/Urbana

The Springfield to Champaign/Urbana segment is the same as the Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park Route Option.

Champaign/Urbana to Joliet

From the Champaign/Urbana station, the route heads north on a greenfield alignment for 6 miles until it reaches County Road 1200 E. The route continues parallel to County 1200 E as it transitions to N 3600 E Road for a total of 58 miles either on the east or west side of the county roads. At the intersection with State Route 17 in Reddick, IL, the route follows a greenfield alignment for 15 miles until it transitions to the I-55 median in Wilmington, IL. The route continues both within the I-55 median and adjacent to I-55 for 12 miles until it transitions to the CSX New Rock Subdivision. From there, the route follows Joliet Approach Option 2 over the CSX to reach Joliet Gateway



Center.

Joliet to Chicago

From the Joliet Gateway Center, the route travels to Chicago over the Metra Rock Island District. The Metra Rock Island District is approximately 40 miles long. The HSR service would operate on dedicated mostly elevated track and would operate at maximum speeds of 79 MPH. Refer to the Chicago Access section above for more information.

Route 6 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-Joliet-Chicago (Interstate Adjacent and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option)

The Interstate Adjacent and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option connects the cities of East St. Louis, Springfield, Decatur, Champaign/Urbana, Joliet, and Chicago via interstate adjacent ROW, county road, and Metra Rock Island District. While developing the I-55/I-72/I-57 Corridor Route Option, opportunities were identified to increase train speeds. An interstate-adjacent route option was developed that generally follows the interstates but straightens out speed-limiting curves by utilizing adjacent ROW. Route 6 is presented in Figure 19.

East St. Louis to Springfield

The southern terminus of the route segment between East St. Louis and Springfield is assumed to be the East Riverfront MetroLink station. From the station, the route heads east adjacent to MetroLink, and then uses a greenfield alignment to enter the I-55 median. The route stays within the I-55 median for 13 miles until it exits the interstate ROW and runs adjacent to and east of I-55 for 29 miles. Then, it crosses over the interstate to avoid impacting the City of Litchfield, IL and runs adjacent to and west of I-55 for another 36 miles before it crosses to the east side of I-55 and uses a greenfield alignment to reach the CN Gilman



Figure 19 - Interstate Adjacent and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option

Subdivision. From there, it uses the same alignment as the I-55 Corridor Route Option to reach the Springfield station near the I-72/Mechanicsburg Rd interchange.

Springfield to Champaign/Urbana

From the Springfield station, the route continues in the I-72 median for 5 miles. At the I-72/Overpass Road interchange, the interstate begins to have curves in its alignment that would reduce train speeds. For 23 miles, the route continues outside of and adjacent to the interstate ROW and achieves maximum operating speeds of 220 MPH for 18 miles. Just west of Decatur, the route begins to slow as it traverses back-to-back S-curves around Decatur. The route continues for 47 miles, running adjacent to I-72 on the north and south sides of the interstate until just west of the I-72/I-57 interchange. The route follows the same greenfield alignment described in the I-57/I-72/I-55 Corridor Route Option to transition from I-72 to I-57. Once on I-57, the route stays in the median for approximately 1 mile until it reaches the Champaign/Urbana station, assumed to be located near the I-57/ I-74 interchange.

Champaign/Urbana to Joliet

The route follows the same alignment along the county road as the Greenfield and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option.

Joliet to Chicago

From the Joliet Gateway Center, the route travels to Chicago over the Metra Rock Island District. The Metra Rock Island District is approximately 40 miles long. The HSR service would operate on dedicated mostly elevated track and would operate at maximum speeds of 79 MPH. Refer to the Chicago Access section above for more information.

Route 7 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Peoria/Morton-Bloomington/Normal-Joliet-Chicago (I-55/I-155/I-74 Corridor Route Option)

An interstate median alignment was developed to access Morton, IL, a suburb east of Peoria. The I-55/I-155/I-74 corridor route option connects East St. Louis and Springfield via I-55, Springfield and Peoria/Morton via I-155, Peoria/Morton and Bloomington/Normal via I-74, and Bloomington/Normal and Joliet via I-55. Route 7 is presented in Figure 20.

East St. Louis to Springfield

The East St. Louis to Springfield segment is the same as for the I-55 Corridor Route Option.

Springfield to Peoria/Morton

The Springfield to Peoria/Morton segment follows the same alignment as the I-55 Corridor Route Option for 29 miles until it reaches the I-55/I-155 interchange. The route continues onto the I-155 median for 32 miles until it enters the I-74 median and reaches the proposed Peoria (Morton, IL) station located near the interchange of I-74 and US Hwy 150.

Peoria to Bloomington/Normal

From the Morton station, the route continues in the I-74 median for 26 miles until it reaches its interchange with I-55. The Bloomington/Normal station is assumed to be located near the I-55/I-39 interchange.

Bloomington/Normal to Joliet

The route follows the same alignment as the I-55 Corridor Route Option from Bloomington/Normal to Joliet.

Joliet to Chicago

From the Joliet Gateway Center, the route travels to Chicago over the Metra Rock Island District. The Metra Rock Island District is approximately 40 miles long. The HSR service would operate on dedicated mostly elevated track and would operate at maximum speeds of 79 MPH. Refer to the Chicago Access section above for more information.



Figure 20 - I-55/I-155/I-74 Corridor Route Option

Route 8 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Peoria/Morton-Bloomington/Normal-Joliet-Chicago (Greenfield via Peoria/Morton and Joliet Route Option)

The Greenfield via Peoria and Joliet Route Option connects the cities of East St. Louis, Springfield, Peoria, Bloomington/Normal, Joliet, and Chicago via a greenfield alignment and the Metra Rock Island District. Route 8 is presented in Figure 21.

East St. Louis to Springfield

This segment follows the same route as the Greenfield via Bloomington/Normal and Joliet corridor.

Springfield to Peoria/Morton

The greenfield route extends northward along an alignment east of I-55 for approximately 9 miles before crossing to the west side of I-55 for 15 miles, where it continues adjacent to and along the east side of I-155. At Lincoln, IL the route follows I-155 for 29 miles before reaching the I-155/I-74 interchange. The station is assumed to be in Morton, IL, located near the interchange of I-74 and US Highway 150.

Peoria/Morton to Bloomington/Normal

From the Peoria/Morton station, the route proceeds eastward, generally adjacent to and outside the I-74 ROW for 23 miles. East of the I-74/US 150 interchange, the route crosses I-74 and continues toward Bloomington/Normal, terminating at a proposed station near the I-55/I-39 interchange.

Bloomington/Normal to Joliet

The route follows the same greenfield alignment as the Greenfield via Bloomington/Normal and Joliet Route Option.

Joliet to Chicago

From the Joliet Gateway Center, the route travels to Chicago over the Metra Rock Island District. The Metra Rock Island District is approximately 40 miles long. The HSR service would operate on dedicated mostly elevated track and would operate at maximum speeds of 79 MPH. Refer to the Chicago Access section above for more information.



Figure 21 - Greenfield via Peoria and Joliet Route Option

Route 9 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-Joliet-Chicago (Interstate Median and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option)

Route 9 is a hybrid interstate median and county road route option. The Interstate Median and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option connects the cities of East St. Louis, Springfield, Decatur, and Champaign/Urbana by interstate ROW, Champaign/Urbana and Joliet by county road, and Joliet and Chicago by the Metra Rock Island District. Route 9 is presented in Figure 22.

East St. Louis to Springfield

The East St. Louis to Springfield segment is the same as for the I-55 Corridor Route Option (Route 1).

Springfield to Champaign/Urbana

The Springfield to Champaign/Urbana segment is the same as for the I-55/I-72/I-57 Corridor Route Option (Route 3).

Champaign/Urbana to Joliet

The Champaign/Urbana to Joliet segment is the same as for the Greenfield and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option (Route 5).

Joliet to Chicago

From the Joliet Gateway Center, the route travels to Chicago over the Metra Rock Island District using mostly elevated tracks. Refer to the Chicago Access section above for more information.



Figure 22 - Interstate Median and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option

Route 10 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-University Park-Chicago (Interstate Median and Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park Route Option)

Route 10 is a hybrid interstate median and greenfield route option. The Interstate Median and Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park Route Option connects the cities of East St. Louis, Springfield, Decatur, and Champaign/Urbana by interstate ROW, Champaign/Urbana and University Park by greenfield, and University Park and Chicago by the MED/CN corridor. Route 10 is presented in Figure 23.

East St. Louis to Springfield

The East St. Louis to Springfield segment is the same as for the I-55 Corridor Route Option (Route 1).

Springfield to Champaign/Urbana

The Springfield to Champaign/Urbana segment is the same as for the I-55/I-72/I-57 Corridor Route Option (Route 3).

Champaign/Urbana to University Park

The Champaign/Urbana to University Park segment is the same as for the Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park Route Option (Route 4).

University Park to Chicago

From University Park, the route follows the MED/CN corridor into Chicago using mostly at-grade tracks. Refer to the Chicago Access section above for more information.

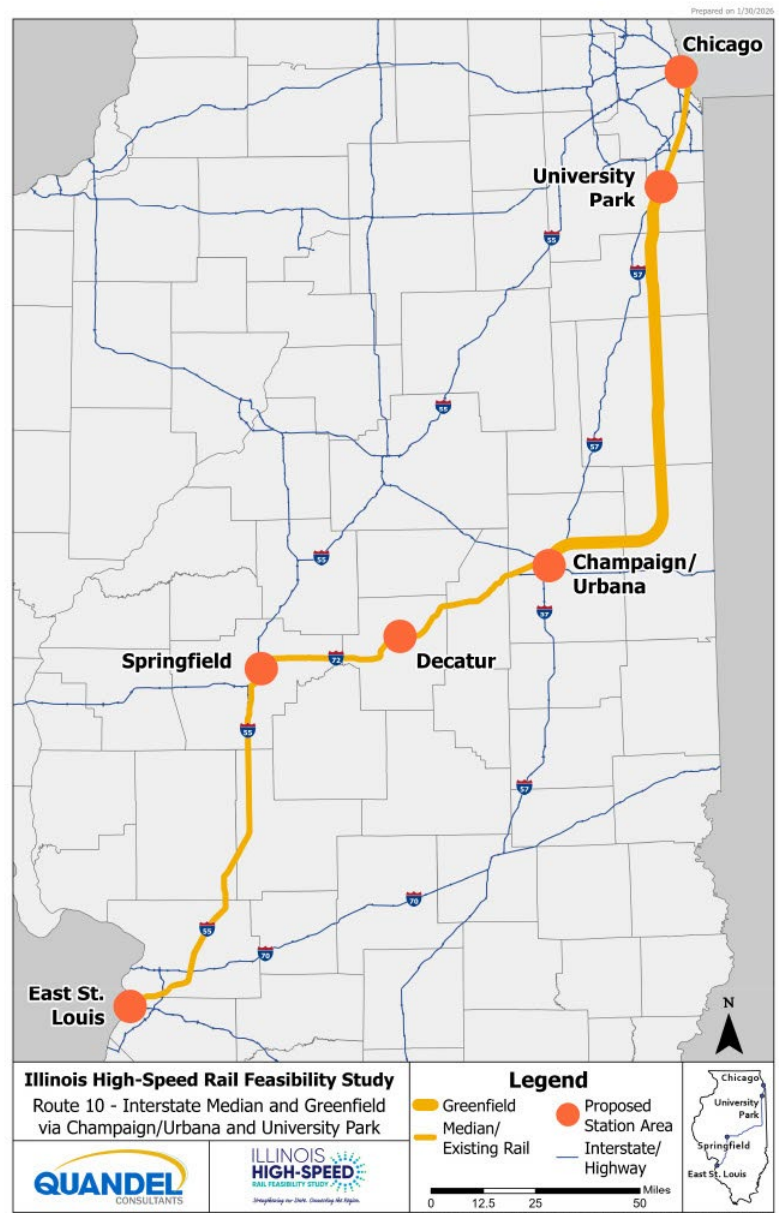


Figure 23 - Interstate Median and Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park Route Option

Route 11 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-Joliet-Chicago (Interstate Median and Greenfield/County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option)

Route 11 is a hybrid interstate median, greenfield, and county road route option. The Interstate Median and Greenfield/County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option connects the cities of East St. Louis and Springfield by interstate ROW, Springfield, Decatur, and Champaign/Urbana by greenfield, Champaign/Urbana and Joliet by county road, and Joliet and Chicago by the Metra Rock Island District. Route 11 is presented in Figure 24.

East St. Louis to Springfield

The East St. Louis to Springfield segment is the same as for the I-55 Corridor Route Option (Route 1).

Springfield to Champaign/Urbana

The Champaign/Urbana to Joliet segment is the same as for the Greenfield and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option (Route 5).

Champaign/Urbana to Joliet

The Champaign/Urbana to Joliet segment is the same as for the Greenfield and County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option (Route 5).

Joliet to Chicago

From the Joliet Gateway Center, the route travels to Chicago over the Metra Rock Island District using mostly elevated tracks. Refer to the Chicago Access section above for more information.

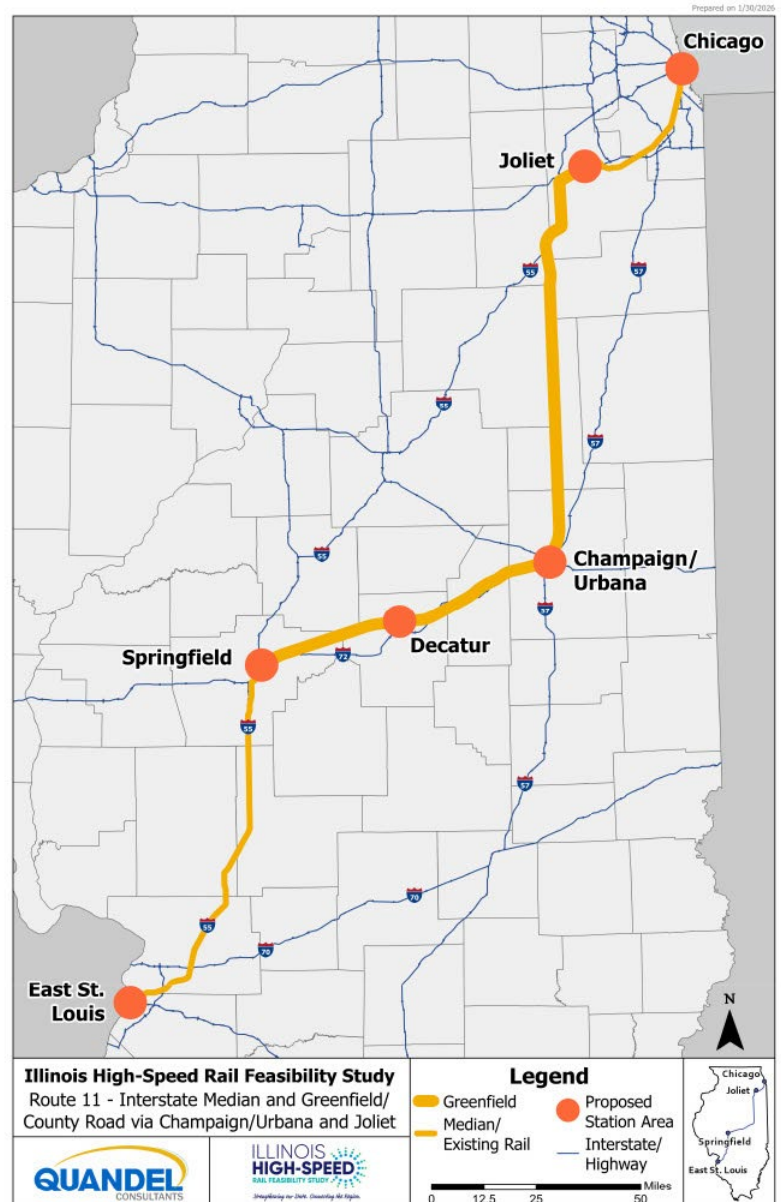


Figure 24 - Interstate Median and Greenfield/County Road via Champaign/Urbana and Joliet Route Option

Route 12 – East St. Louis-Springfield-Decatur-Champaign/Urbana-University Park-Chicago (Interstate Median and Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park Route Option)

Route 12 is a hybrid interstate median and greenfield route option. The Interstate Median and Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park Route Option connects the cities of East St. Louis and Springfield by interstate ROW, Springfield, Decatur, Champaign/Urbana and University Park by greenfield, and University Park and Chicago by the MED/CN corridor. Route 12 is presented in Figure 25.

East St. Louis to Springfield

The East St. Louis to Springfield segment is the same as for the I-55 Corridor Route Option (Route 1).

Springfield to Champaign/Urbana

The Springfield to Champaign/Urbana segment is the same as for the Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park Route Option (Route 4).

Champaign/Urbana to University Park

The Champaign/Urbana to University Park segment is the same as for the Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park Route Option (Route 4).

University Park to Chicago

From University Park, the route follows the MED/CN corridor into Chicago using mostly at-grade tracks. Refer to the Chicago Access section above for more information.

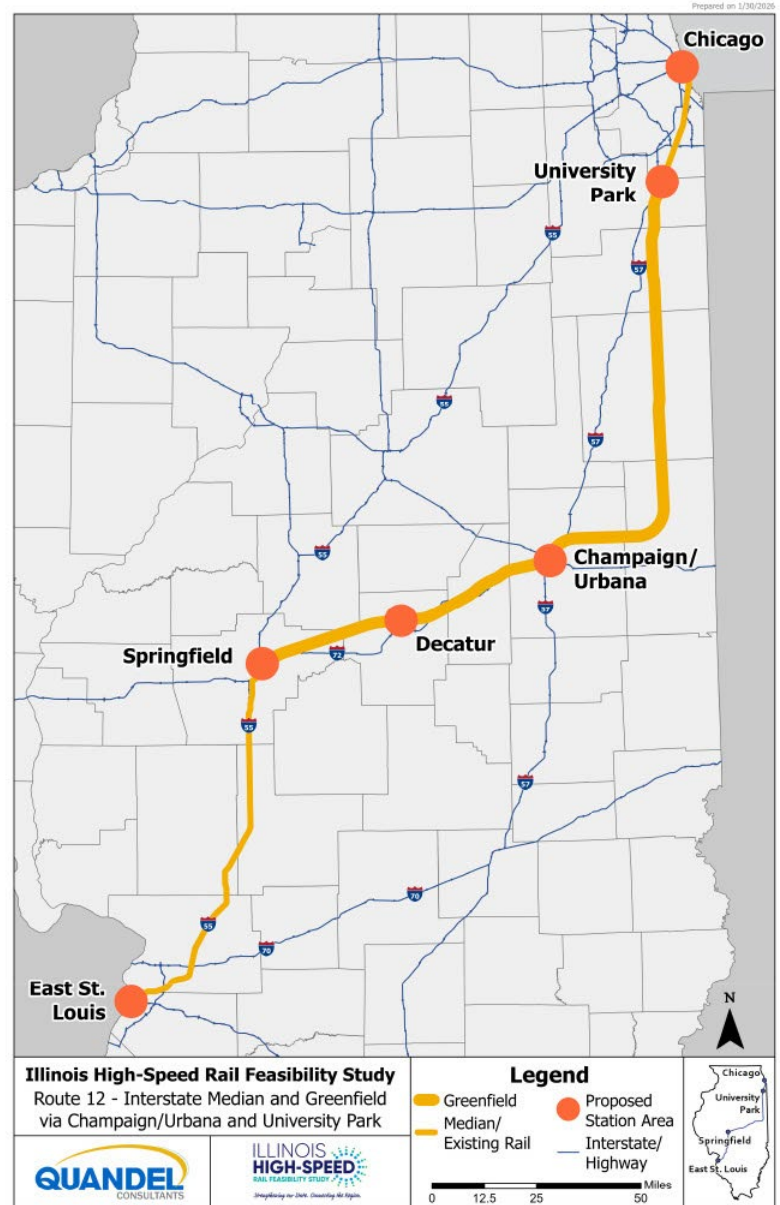


Figure 25 - Interstate Median and Greenfield via Champaign/Urbana and University Park Route Option

Conclusion

A total of twelve potentially feasible routes were identified for accommodating HSR service between Chicago, Illinois, and East St. Louis, Illinois. These routes will advance to the Service Options Planning phase, during which detailed operational analyses will be conducted. This next phase will include the development of preliminary service timetables, consideration of rolling stock and equipment

requirements, preparation of ridership and revenue forecasts, and refinement of capital and operating cost estimates.

DRAFT