Technical Memorandum #9 – Station Access Development

Introduction

This Technical Memorandum (TM) documents the feasibility-level development of proposed high-speed rail (HSR) station access concepts and multimodal connectivity for the Illinois High-Speed Rail Feasibility Study. The analysis identifies general station areas and access strategies intended to represent viable locations within each metropolitan market rather than specific parcels or final station sites.

Station planning reflects service plan requirements, projected passenger volumes, and established best practices for intercity passenger rail facilities. Station areas were defined to evaluate operational feasibility, ridership potential, and multimodal integration while preserving flexibility for future environmental review, stakeholder coordination, and detailed engineering. Final station siting will be determined in subsequent project phases following corridor selection, local coordination, environmental documentation, and early preliminary engineering.

General Station Area Identification Approach

Station areas were identified at a planning level to represent feasible access zones within each metropolitan market. These areas reflect locations with:

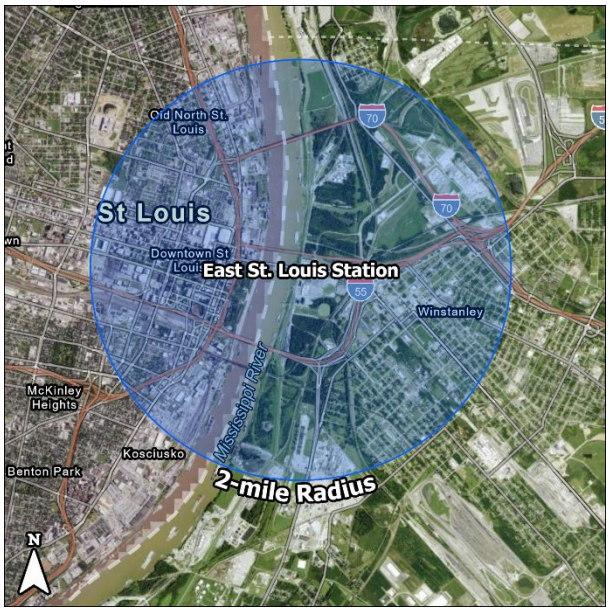
- Strong highway accessibility for regional catchment markets
- Existing or potential transit connectivity
- Adequate space to accommodate station infrastructure at a conceptual level
- Compatibility with anticipated HSR alignment geometry

The purpose of station area identification is to evaluate service performance, ridership potential, and rough order of magnitude capital costs rather than to define precise station footprints or right-of-way requirements.

Suburban station locations were considered for this feasibility study. While routes serving suburban stations may have shorter in-vehicle train travel times than routes serving downtown stations, overall travel times may be comparable when considering the additional time required to travel between a suburban station and downtown. Downtown station locations may provide more direct access to employment, educational, and other destinations, potentially reducing the need for an additional connection or transfer.

Specific station site selection will occur in later project phases. Station areas are described below independent of an individual route and represent metropolitan areas which could support a station as part of a potential HSR corridor. Suitable metropolitan areas were identified as part of the Technical Memorandum #2 - Route Options Development.

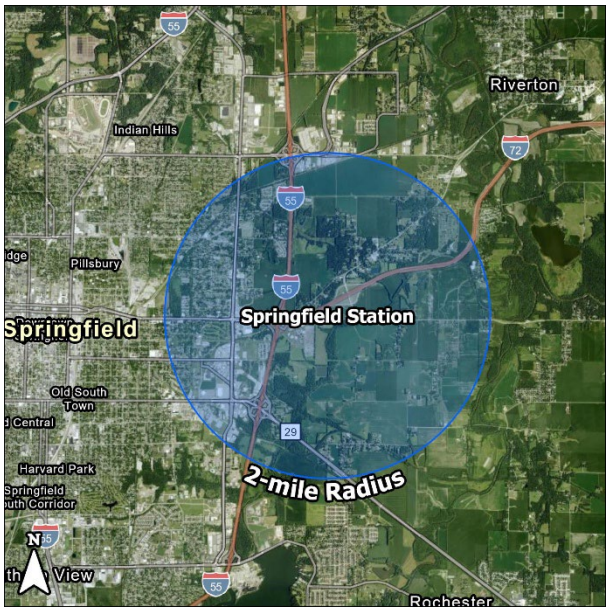
East St. Louis Station Area



For this feasibility study, the East St. Louis station area was considered in proximity to existing MetroLink infrastructure to represent a feasible multimodal access zone within the metropolitan area. While no specific station site has been selected, the general area enables rail-to-rail connectivity to the Red Line and Blue Line, providing direct access to downtown St. Louis, major employment centers, and Lambert International Airport via the MetroLink system. It also provides access to the MidAmerica St. Louis Airport in nearby Mascoutah, IL.

Local and regional bus services operated by Metro Transit provide additional first- and last-mile connectivity within the East St. Louis metropolitan area. The proximity to Interstate 64 further supports park-and-ride access for riders originating throughout southwestern Illinois. Available surface parking near the existing transit facility supports park-and-ride demand, establishing East St. Louis as a primary southern gateway for HSR service.

Springfield Station Area



For this feasibility study, a Springfield station was considered near the I-55/I-72 interchange to provide convenient highway access while maintaining connections to downtown via East Clear Lake Avenue. The area is located near major interstate corridors serving the regional market, supporting efficient automobile access and connectivity to downtown Springfield and major employment centers. The general area offers a combination of regional accessibility, compatibility with the conceptual HSR alignment, and flexibility for future station siting and access planning.

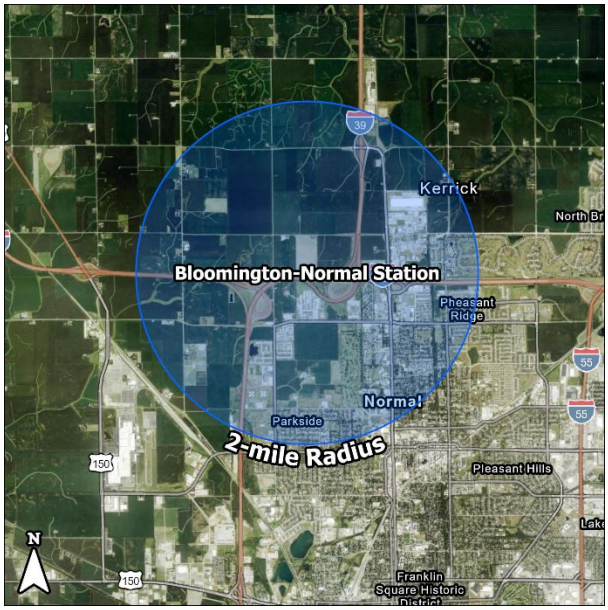
Proximity to Interstate 55 and Interstate 72 enables park-and-ride access for riders originating throughout Sangamon County and surrounding communities, expanding the station's catchment area beyond the urban core. This regional access function is critical given Springfield's role as a statewide government center and major employment hub.

The Sangamon Mass Transit District operates local and regional bus services that could be modified to provide direct station area connections, facilitating non-auto access from downtown, state government complexes, and residential districts.

A new Amtrak station is under construction in downtown Springfield on 10th Street as part of the Springfield Sangamon County Transportation Hub. The Hub will include the Amtrak station, a food/beverage vendor, a new parking garage, and other amenities. Visitors will be able to access the new Sangamon Mass Transit District bus transfer station and Greyhound via a connection over the railroad tracks.[1] Future studies may include an evaluation of this station for HSR use.

Bloomington/Normal Station Area

For this feasibility study, a Bloomington/Normal station area was considered in proximity to the regional highway network near the I-55 and I-39 interchange to support strong automobile access while maintaining connectivity to the Bloomington–Normal urban core. While no specific station site has been selected, the general area provides sufficient space to accommodate HSR infrastructure and associated access facilities at a feasibility level.



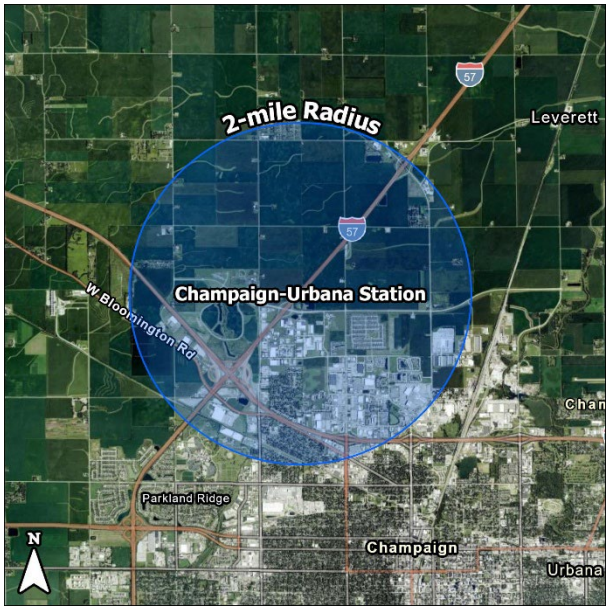
The area enables integration with Connect Transit bus routes serving downtown Bloomington, Normal, Illinois State University, and major employment centers. Transit service modifications could provide direct station access. Park-and-ride access from the interstate network expands the station catchment area across McLean County and surrounding communities.

An existing Amtrak station is located in Normal. Known as Uptown Station, it serves as a multi-modal transportation center connecting the community's aviation, rail, bus, automotive, and pedestrian facilities. Future studies may include an evaluation of this station for HSR use.

[1] The Hub

Champaign/Urbana Station Area

For this feasibility study, a Champaign/Urbana station area was considered near the I-57 corridor to balance regional automobile access with multimodal connectivity to the two cities and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus. This general area allows feasible interface with the HSR alignment while preserving flexibility for future site selection.



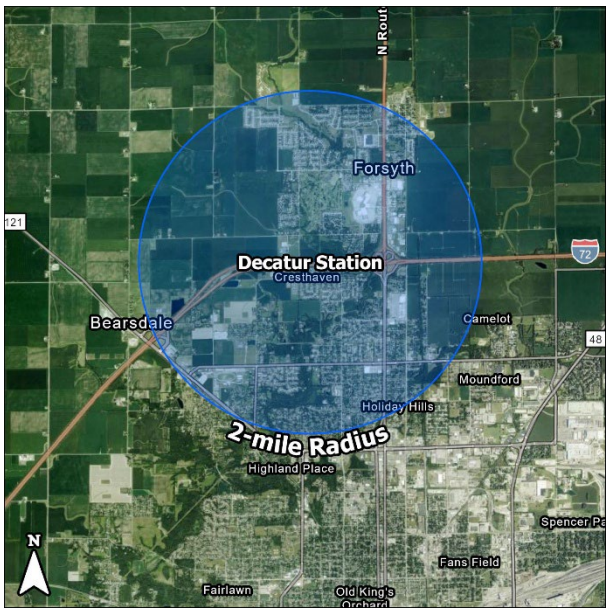
The Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (MTD) operates one of the highest-ridership bus systems in the state, offering frequent service linking the university campus, downtown Champaign, downtown Urbana, major research parks, and residential neighborhoods. Modifications to MTD operations to provide direct bus connections to the station area would enable higher non-auto mode share.

Highway access supports park-and-ride demand from Champaign County and surrounding rural communities, expanding the station's catchment area beyond the urban core.

An existing Amtrak station is located in downtown Champaign. The facility, known as the Illinois Terminal, is an intermodal passenger transportation center, providing multimodal access to Amtrak, MTD bus, Danville Mass Transit bus, and intercity bus. Future studies may include an evaluation of this station for HSR use.

Decatur Station Area

For this feasibility study, a conceptual station area was considered near major roadway corridors serving the Decatur metropolitan area to support efficient regional access and integration with local transit services. The general area provides convenient access to downtown Decatur, major employment centers, and the surrounding region while preserving flexibility for future station planning.

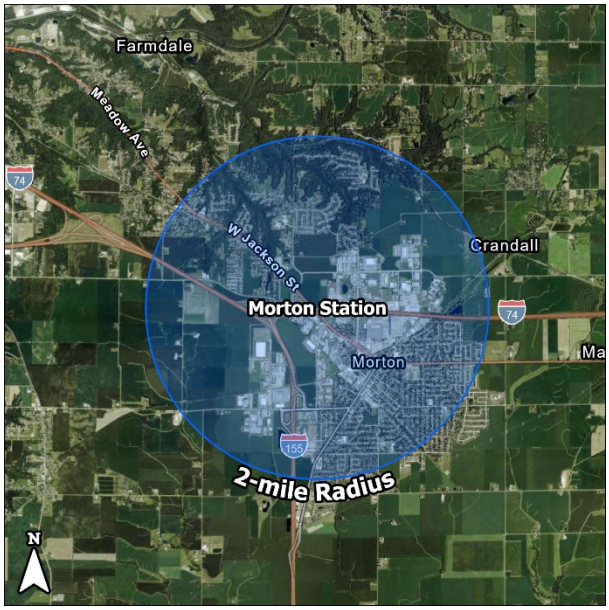


Arterial roadways and proximity to I-72 enable park-and-ride access for riders originating throughout Macon County and neighboring communities, making Decatur a regional access hub rather than solely a city-centered station.

Local bus service operated by Decatur Public Transit System provides coverage throughout the city and could be modified to include direct station area access.

Morton Station Area (Peoria Area Access)

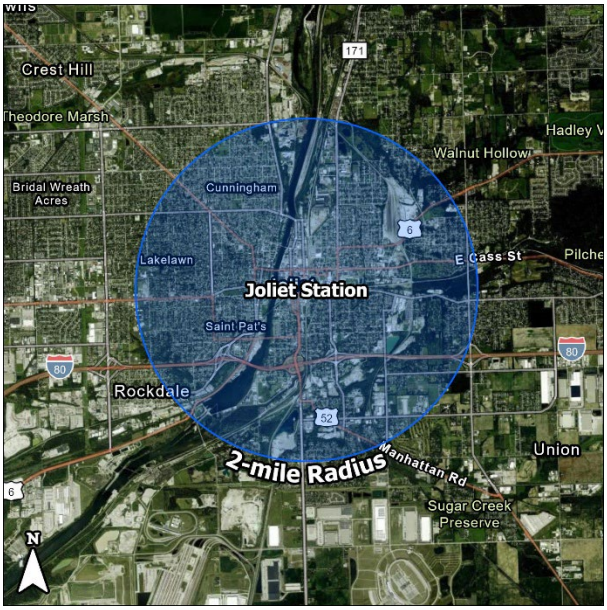
For this feasibility Study, a conceptual station area was considered near the I-74 corridor in Morton to provide HSR access to the Peoria metropolitan region, including Peoria, East Peoria, Pekin, and surrounding communities. The Illinois River, local geography, and existing development make access difficult in this region. This general area enables efficient automobile access from across the regional highway network while remaining compatible with HSR alignment geometry.



While Morton currently has limited fixed-route transit service, the proximity to major highway infrastructure allows strong park-and-ride access for travelers from Peoria, East Peoria, Pekin, and surrounding communities. Future coordination with the Greater Peoria Mass Transit District (CityLInk) could support feeder bus connections to the station area.

Joliet Station Area

A conceptual station area was considered connected or adjacent to the existing Joliet Gateway Center Station. The general area was considered because it is located within an established transportation corridor that provides opportunities for connections with Metra commuter rail, intercity passenger rail, and regional bus services. Consistent with the feasibility-level scope of this study, no specific station site was identified, preserving flexibility for future station planning.

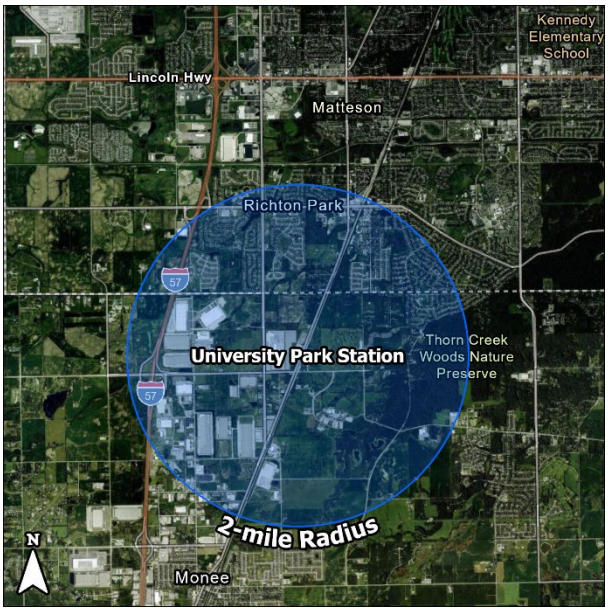


The Joliet Gateway Center currently serves multiple Metra commuter rail lines, Amtrak intercity passenger rail, and Pace bus routes serving the southwestern Chicago metropolitan area. This existing multimodal transportation network provides convenient access to downtown Chicago, suburban employment centers, and surrounding communities.

Highway access from Interstates 55 and 80 supports strong park-and-ride demand, allowing the Joliet station area to function as both a regional transfer hub and a major access point for travelers originating throughout Will County and adjacent communities.

University Park Station Area

A conceptual station area was considered adjacent to the Metra Electric District commuter rail corridor in University Park. This area provides access to an established transportation corridor within the southern portion of the Chicago metropolitan area, benefits from existing rail infrastructure, and offers the potential to support regional connectivity.



The Metra Electric District provides frequent electric commuter rail service between University Park and downtown Chicago, while local Pace bus routes provide additional first- and last-mile connectivity within southern Cook County and neighboring communities. These existing transportation services contribute to the area's regional accessibility and multimodal transportation network.

The Village of University Park has adopted transit-oriented development strategies that encourage mixed-use development near the commuter rail corridor, creating long-term opportunities for transit-supportive land use surrounding the conceptual station area.[2]

Chicago Terminal Area

Final Chicago terminal location selection remains subject to future capacity analysis and stakeholder coordination. Preliminary terminal areas considered include Chicago Union Station and McCormick Place area terminal with available right-of-way and strong multimodal integration potential.

These general terminal areas should provide connectivity to existing or future:

- CTA rail and bus services
- Metra commuter rail network
- Regional intercity rail services
- Pedestrian and micromobility access

Further evaluation and coordination will be required in future phases to determine a suitable location and to ensure compatibility with existing and planned rail operations in Chicago's dense downtown rail network.

Summary

The station access and connectivity framework establishes feasible station service areas across the corridor that will support efficient HSR operations and strong ridership capture. By focusing on general station areas rather than specific sites, the study preserves flexibility while providing a realistic foundation for service planning and cost estimation for this feasibility study.

[2] https://www.rtachicago.org/uploads/files/general/Communities/University-Park-TOD-Final-Plan-Report-002.pdf

Final station siting and detailed access design will be addressed in future project phases as corridor alignments are refined and stakeholder coordination advances.