



NEWSLETTER

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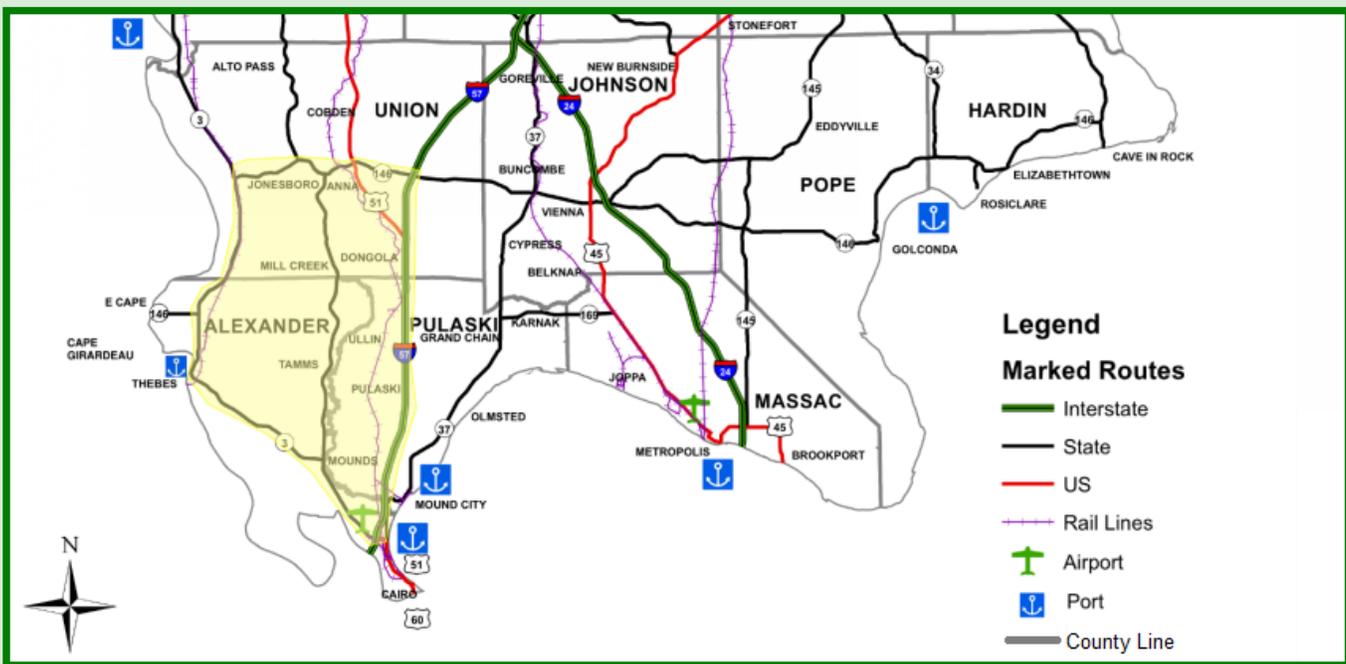
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IDOT BEGINS THE SHAWNEE PARKWAY STUDY

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are initiating a Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Study (Phase I Engineering) to analyze improving the east-west travel ways between the intersection of IL Route 3 and IL Route 146 and Interstate 57 in Alexander, Pulaski, and Union Counties. This study, referred to as the Shawnee Parkway, will take a detailed look at the transportation system within the study area to address the lack of east-west roadways, reduce travel times, improve traffic safety, and provide for economic opportunities.

This engineering and environmental study will be balanced with the input of stakeholders including farmers, residents, business owners, environmental groups, economic organizations, educational facilities, health care services and local government to determine the best possible solution for the area.

SHAWNEE PARKWAY STUDY AREA (shown in yellow)



SHAWNEE PARKWAY NEWSLETTER



Message from IDOT

I am pleased to announce that the Illinois Department of Transportation has initiated the Shawnee Parkway Study. The study team will examine current and future transportation needs of the area. A crucial component of our study is an extensive public involvement program that provides opportunities for meaningful participation for all interested stakeholders and the public at large. We look forward to working with the local community, agencies, and interested parties to develop a comprehensive transportation system that fits into its surroundings, and benefits project stakeholders and the region.

Sincerely,

*Jeffrey L. Keirn, PE
Deputy Director of Highways/
Region Five Engineer*

WHAT IS A STAKEHOLDER?

Any individual or group with an interest or stake in the outcome of a project.

WHY IS THE STUDY NEEDED?

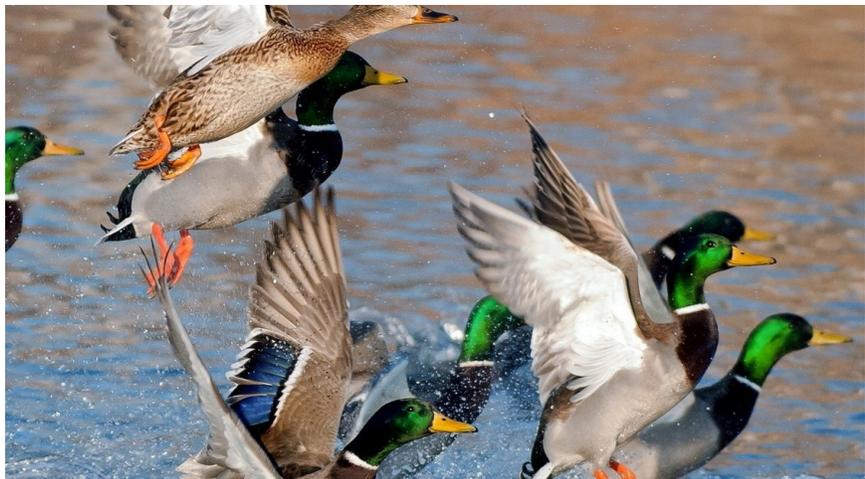
The Shawnee Parkway study area lacks adequate east-west roadways to move people as well as goods and services through the area. The current transportation system requires motorists to use winding, indirect roadways to travel east and west. These roadways result in excessive travel times and compromise the safety of the motorists.

Illinois Route 146 is currently the only east-west arterial roadway within the 350 square mile study area. There are other east-west roadways but they are county roadways with low-to-moderate-capacity. These roadways were not constructed to move people and freight efficiently and they are the site of frequent serious crashes (fatal and injury). Without an adequate east-west roadway, there is limited opportunity for economic development and access to jobs, adequate healthcare, and educational opportunities in this area.

WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY?

The Shawnee Parkway study will analyze a range of roadway alternatives to address the needs of the study area including and compared to the no build alternative. The alternative development process will be repetitious in nature, providing progressively greater detail in each step. Stakeholders will be provided several opportunities during the alternative development to provide input. It is anticipated that several alternatives will be presented to be carried forward. The alternatives to be carried forward will be further developed to screen additional environmental and design issues. These issues will be summarized and presented to the stakeholders for their consideration, evaluation, and input on the final decision. The objective is to achieve consensus on a single preferred alternative.

The Phase I engineering aspect of the study will culminate with an environmental document, called an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS will be prepared to analyze a full range of alternatives, including a no-build alternative, and will document potential effects to natural, community, and cultural resources.



CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS

A key planning tool for this study will be a public involvement program based upon the principles of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS). CSS is an interdisciplinary approach that seeks effective, multimodal transportation solutions by working with stakeholders to develop, build and maintain cost-effective transportation facilities which fit into and reflect the project's surroundings, its "context". Through early, frequent, and meaningful communication with stakeholders and a flexible, creative approach to design, the resulting project should improve safety and mobility for the traveling public while seeking to preserve and enhance the scenic, economic, historic, and natural qualities of the settings through which they pass. Due to the difficulty and sensitive nature of providing a roadway through this area, IDOT will be utilizing the CSS Guidelines for the Shawnee Parkway study.

For more information on IDOT's CSS process, please visit their website:

<http://www.idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/transportation-management/context-sensitive-solutions/index>

SHAWNEE PARKWAY COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

As part of the CSS process, IDOT forms a Community Advisory Group (CAG) to obtain input and feedback from stakeholders about project studies. The CAG is an advisory group and is responsible for gathering concerns from groups they represent and sharing those concerns at the CAG meetings. The CAG consists of members from local government, businesses, environmental groups, economic development groups, agriculture and commuters from within the Shawnee Parkway Study Area.

The first CAG meeting for the Shawnee Parkway study was held on October 21st at the Egyptian Community Unit School. The purpose of the first CAG meeting was to introduce the Shawnee Parkway study, listen to concerns, explain the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, develop a problem statement for the study and discuss the draft Purpose and Need. A summary of this meeting has been posted on the study website.

A Problem Statement is a short narrative that focuses on existing perceived transportation issues within a study area. The Problem Statement formed at the CAG meeting for this project is:

"There is no efficient east/west roadway between the IL Route 146/IL Route 3 intersection south of McClure and I-57 that adequately and safely connects multi-modal routes to efficiently move local and regional motorists and freight through an economically challenged area in an environmentally and culturally sensitive region."

A draft Purpose and Need was presented to the CAG. A Purpose and Need is a formal document that requires approval by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for this type of study. This document defines the needs of the study and is used to evaluate potential alternatives.

Members of the CAG raised several important issues during the meeting. One concern was that the general public is not aware of the Shawnee Parkway study. It was explained that the study is just starting and that a variety of efforts will be taken to keep the public informed about the study and allow for the public to provide their input. These efforts will include a website, newsletters and public involvement meetings that will be open to the general public. Another concern was whether environmental justice will be considered as part of the study. The CAG was advised that as part of the NEPA process, environmental justice will be considered when alternatives are developed and addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

The next CAG Meeting is tentatively scheduled to be held in the spring 2016.

Stay Informed & Get Involved!

Your participation and input are important to the success of the study. The study includes multiple opportunities to get involved:

- Visit the study website at: www.shawneeparkway.org
- Join our mailing list
- Submit comments
- Attend a public meeting

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

IDOT is aware of the many environmental resources that exist in the area; including but not limited to, the Shawnee National Forest, Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge, Cache River, and historic/archaeological sites.

IDOT will conduct an environmental analysis to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA is a federal law that requires potentially federally funded projects, such as the Shawnee Parkway Study, to analyze alternatives and identify potential effects of those alternatives on the environment. The term “environment” refers not only to the natural environment (e.g., air, water, ecology), but also to the human environment (e.g., social, cultural and economic issues). These efforts help to ensure that environmental values and other factors are integrated into project decisions. The results of the study will be presented in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Design Report.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND TITLE VI

The National Environmental Policy Act ensures that impacts to the human environment are also considered during a planning study. In addition, there are two policies that protect minority populations and low-income populations: the Executive Order on Environmental Justice and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. A review of the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau information for Alexander, Pulaski, and Union counties revealed the population and employment has decreased and persons living in poverty has increased. In addition, there are multiple areas within the region that consist of minority populations. In order to adhere to these policies, as part of the Shawnee Parkway Study, IDOT will conduct the appropriate research to identify these populations throughout the study area through the use of various resources, including the public. In order to ensure disproportionately high impacts do not take place on the minority or low income communities within the study area as a result of this study, IDOT and FHWA will ensure that the public and these communities have multiple opportunities to participate in the study process and provide input on the study’s objectives, goals, and alternatives.

GETTING TO KNOW THE SHAWNEE PARKWAY STUDY AREA

Numerous work and recreational activities occur within or near the study area. Both residents and visitors work in the region and enjoy these activities. Over 106,000 acres of farmland were planted and harvested throughout the 3 county study area in 2014; yielding an estimated revenue in excess of \$51 million. Key crops in this region include corn, soybeans, wheat, and hay. Harvested crops in this region are either transported to local grain elevators in towns such as Anna, Jonesboro and Ullin or to the larger, regional grain elevators in Mound City, Cairo and Cape Girardeau (MO) to access barge transportation for shipping.

Outdoor recreational activities within the study area include biking, camping, fishing, hiking, horse riding, hunting, and nature viewing. Semi-annual bird migrations of many species of birds along the Mississippi Flyway may be viewed at Shawnee National Forest, Horseshoe Lake, the Union County Conservation Area, the Least Tern Habitat, the Thebes Area, or the nearby Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge. Various types of hunting and trapping in this region take place at specific times throughout the calendar year.

One of the goals of the Shawnee Parkway study team is to not only provide a convenient travel way to get to these places, but to also preserve as much of the environmentally and culturally sensitive areas as possible. In order to accomplish this, the Project Team looks forward to receiving input from the stakeholders who live, travel and work in the area. This presents an intriguing opportunity to approach the project using Context Sensitive Solutions that will integrate the input of a remarkable number of citizens and stakeholders, multidisciplinary teams and resource agencies in an early and continuous manner. The Department feels that sound environmental strategies incorporated from the project’s inception can make this project a model for economic and environmental compatibility.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

1. What is the status of the 66 Corridor Study?

The 66 Corridor Study was discontinued. This does not preclude any future 66 Corridor studies from being conducted.

2. What are the limits of the study area?

The study area is located in the counties of Alexander, Pulaski, and Union. It is bounded by Illinois Route 146 to the north, Interstate 57 on the east, and along Illinois Route 3 to the west and south.

3. Where will this new roadway be constructed and what type of roadway is being planned?

This study is currently in the preliminary planning stage. The location or type of roadway has not been determined at this time. As the study progresses, engineering and environmental analyses will be performed. This information along with public input received will be used to determine the alignment and type of roadway.

The name "Parkway" has been assigned to many different kinds of roadways in many states, including two lane and four lane highways that allow commercial vehicles. The use of Parkway is merely a way to name the study at this point.

4. Is the Shawnee Parkway study funded?

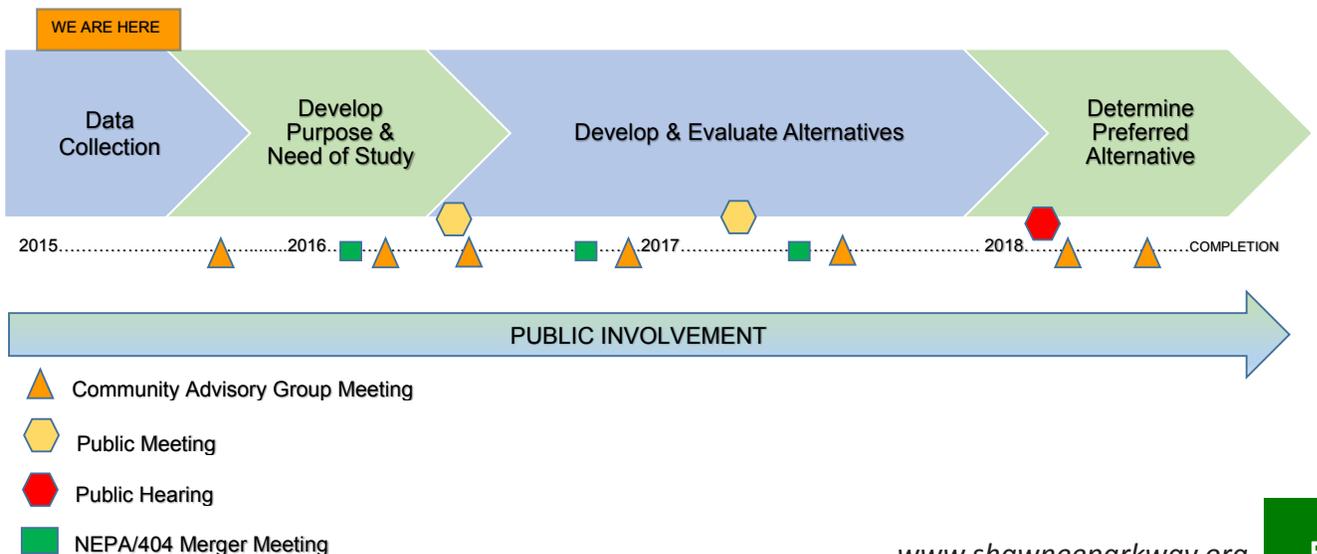
Phase I (Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Study) is currently funded. Phase II (Final Design & Construction Bid Documents), Phase III (Construction), Land Acquisition, and Utility Relocation are not funded at this time. Contingent upon the result of the Phase I Study, additional funding will be considered in the future based on fund availability and project readiness.

5. How can I participate in the Study?

There will be many opportunities for stakeholders to provide input during the study. Public participation activities will include public meetings, the study website, and newsletters. Please join our mailing list to receive updates on the study, newsletters and notices regarding upcoming public meetings.

IDOT will issue public notices about upcoming events as they are scheduled

WHAT IS THE STUDY SCHEDULE?



CONTACT INFORMATION

We welcome your questions and comments.

Please submit by mail to:

**Shawnee Parkway Study Team
Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Highways/Region 5/District 9
P.O. Box 100
Carbondale, Illinois 62903-0100**

By email to:

shawneeparkway@hornershifrin.com

Submit comments through the study website at:

www.ShawneeParkway.org

(on the "Contact Us - Send Us a Comment" Tab)