

# Newsletters



### Did you know that US 51 is being studied?

The Illinois Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration are conducting a transportation planning study of US Route 51 from the Christian/Shelby county line to Illinois Route 177 south of Centralia. Many residents in the area can recall previous studies of the same route, but this study is a little different. This planning study is called an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and its goal is to determine whether improvement of US 51 will meet local and

regional travel needs while improving safety and enhancing mobility. Another difference from previous studies is that it is using Illinois' new public involvement process called Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS).

The planning process is long and this study will not be finished until 2012. This newsletter is a way to keep residents, businesses and anyone with a stake in the project informed of the project's progress. Inside, you will find helpful information about CSS, committee work by volunteers in your community, and a map of the project study area. Newsletters will be sent to stakeholders periodically throughout the project, but for more detailed and up-to-date project information, please visit the project website [www.us51-IDOT.com](http://www.us51-IDOT.com).



Tank Farms near Patoka & Vernon

### Public Involvement —the Context Sensitive Solutions Process

The US 51 Environmental Impact Statement Project is being developed using the principles of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) per the Illinois Department of Transportation CSS policy and procedures. CSS is a different approach to public involvement that seeks effective 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 the resulting projects should improve safety and mobility for the traveling public, while seeking to maintain the scenic, economic, historic, and natural qualities of the settings through which they pass. In the past, the public was not typically involved in a project until some level of engineering had already been performed. Through CSS, numerous meetings are held before pen ever hits paper.

Five Citizen's Advisory Groups (CAG) have been formed for the communities directly impacted by the US 51 alignment. These communities are Ramsey, Vandalia,



US Route 51 in Centralia

Vernon/Patoka, Sandoval, and the Junction City/Central City/Centralia/Wamac area. Through July, there have been three CAG meetings with each CAG working towards identifying their context, or what specifically is important to their communities. The groups will be meeting again starting in September and October to review some basic engineering fundamentals, and to start looking at potential alignment options through and around the communities.

#### Special Points of Interest:

- Public Information Meeting
- The EIS Planning Process
- Public Involvement — the CSS Process
- CAG Meetings
- Project Timeline
- Contact Information
- Project Study Limits

### How to get involved

Are you a stakeholder in the project? If you live, work or travel the corridor, you are a stakeholder. Opportunities for involvement in the US 51 Environmental Impact Statement are numerous and will continue throughout the project. An open house will be held Fall 2008 to update stakeholders on the project's progress. You can request a speaker for your group or organization or contact the study team or advisory group members. To get in touch with the project team call 217-373-8951.



Historic Vandalia State House

## What's the difference between a CAG and a RAG?

An important component of the Context Sensitive Solutions process is the development of the Advisory

Ramsey Citizen's Advisory Group is comprised of approximately 12 citizens of Ramsey who represent a diverse cross section of the community. These 12 representatives attend meetings where topics discussed range from existing transportation problems to community context, or what is important the community of Ramsey. By working with the communities through the CAG, we hope to identify potential positive and negative impacts.

woodland, and sparse residential areas. An advisory group is needed to look at these areas in addition to the individual communities. To accomplish this, a Regional Advisory Group or RAG was developed to assist in identifying US 51 expansion impacts to these areas outside of the separate communities. The RAG is made up of representatives of the various CAG's throughout the corridor. The diagram below depicts the relation between the CAG's, the RAG and agencies.



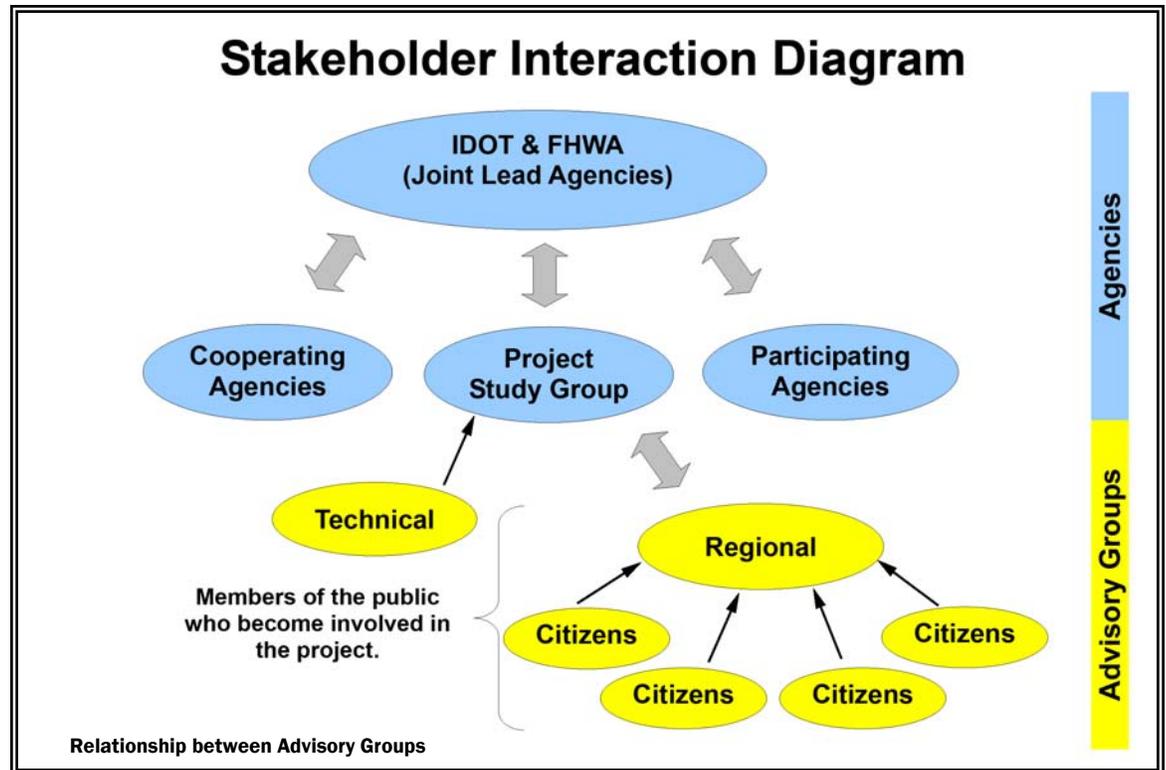
The CSS Process in action in Centralia

Groups. Advisory groups serve as representatives of the public or stakeholders. As an example, the

CAG's have been established for communities where expanding US 51 to four lanes could have significant impacts. The 70 miles of study corridor, however, are not comprised solely of towns, villages, and cities. A majority of the corridor runs through unincorporated farmland,

The first RAG meeting was held in late August.

To find out who is serving on the RAG or the CAG in your area call the project study team at 217-373-8951 or send an email to US51EIS@clark-dietz.com.



### Project Activities to Date



- January to March, 2008 – Public Information Meetings, gather public interest for and create Citizen Advisory Groups (CAG's)
- March to April, 2008 – CAG Meeting #1, discuss transportation problems
- May to June, 2008 – CAG Meeting #2, context audit, raise community issues
- June to July, 2008 – CAG Meeting #3, develop project problem statement
- September to October – CAG Meeting #4, workshops to develop possible alternatives
- July to October, 2008 – Develop project Purpose and Need

# Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) Meetings

Trusting the project process is not easy for the members of the CAG, but meeting after meeting, their active participation is shaping the project. Below is a brief overview of the meetings and how they fit into the project process.

Check out the CAG progress in the Public Information Forum/Advisory Group Information area of the project website: [www.us51-idot.com](http://www.us51-idot.com).

## Identifying Community Issues – CAG #1

The first step in the Project Process is to identify transportation problems and community issues. IDOT can identify a transportation problem by collecting and analyzing data, but a community's issues are best heard from the community themselves. The first Citizen's Advisory Group (CAG) meeting got people thinking and talking about transportation issues in their communities by posing the question, "What problems do you foresee by expanding US 51 to four lanes in your community?" Aerial photographs of the new bypass around Moweaqua were on hand to lend inspiration to the exercise. Existing problems with US 51 and future benefits of an improvement were touched on as the groups debated their answers to the question. The ideas shared by the CAG #1 participants were recorded and are available on the project website.

## Understanding Community Context – CAG #2

The next step in the Project Process is to try and understand what is important to a community. The characteristics that make a community unique are best identified by its residents. Representing a cross section of their neighbors, Citizen's Advisory Group members took a survey at CAG #2 to help IDOT better understand the context of their community. Participants taking the survey were given the opportunity to prioritize what characteristics in the survey they believe are most important to their community. Although each community's context is different, a passion for maintaining and improving the quality of life along the US 51 corridor was evident in each group. The results of each group's Context Survey and a list of important features can be seen on the project website.

## Defining a Problem Statement – CAG #3

The last step in the Project Process before defining and analyzing alternatives is to define a Problem Statement. The Problem Statement will be referred to throughout the rest of the project. The first measure as to whether an alternative should be studied is, "Does this solve the problem statement?" If yes, the alternative will be considered. IDOT's problem with US 51 starts with continuity and connectivity. If people, goods and services cannot efficiently get to where they need to go, problems also develop with economic development potential and safety. Using IDOT's problem as a starting point, at CAG #3 each group tailored a statement that was specific to their problems of continuity, connectivity, economic development, and safety. The Problem Statements for each CAG can be viewed on the project website.

## The Next Step – CAG #4 and beyond

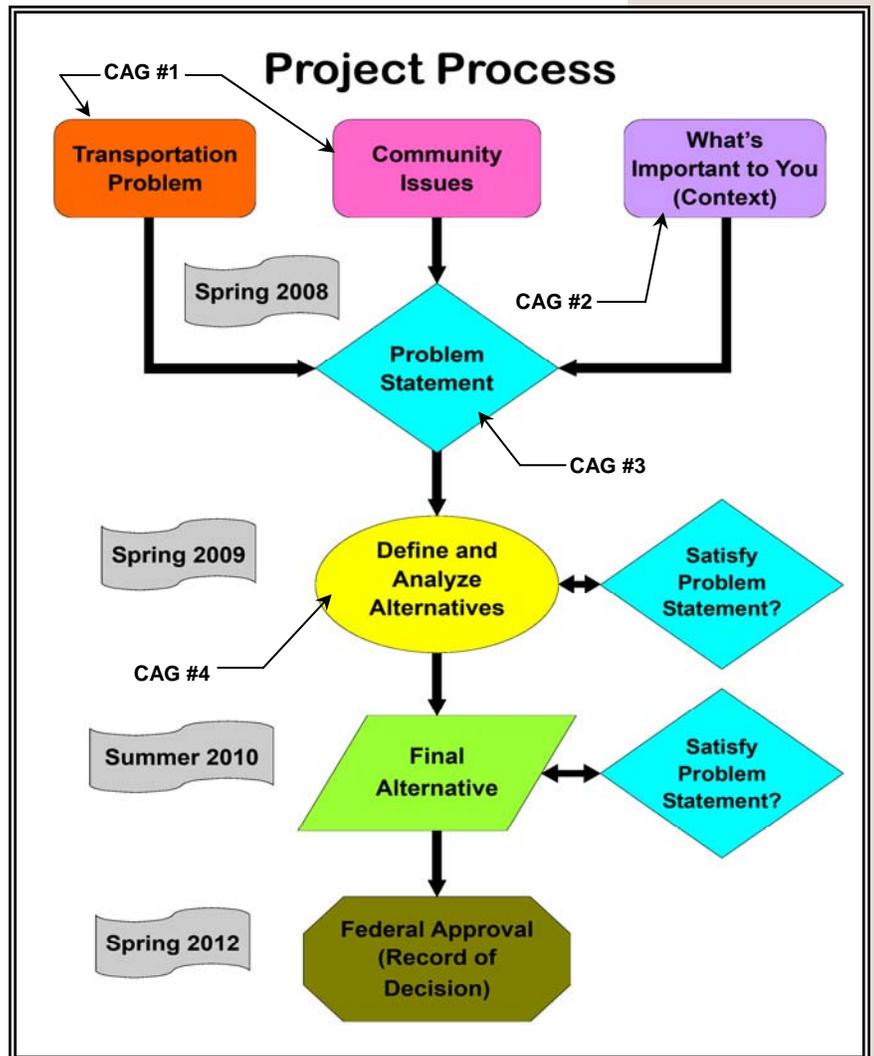
The next step in the Project Process is to define and analyze alternatives. Several workshop type meetings with the CAG's will take place over many months to develop alternatives. The first of the meetings to develop preliminary alternatives



The CSS Process in action in Vandalia

will include discussion on engineering considerations and is likely to take place in fall 2008.

If you do not have access to the internet and would like a copy of the CAG meeting output mailed to you, please call 217-373-8951 to request a copy.





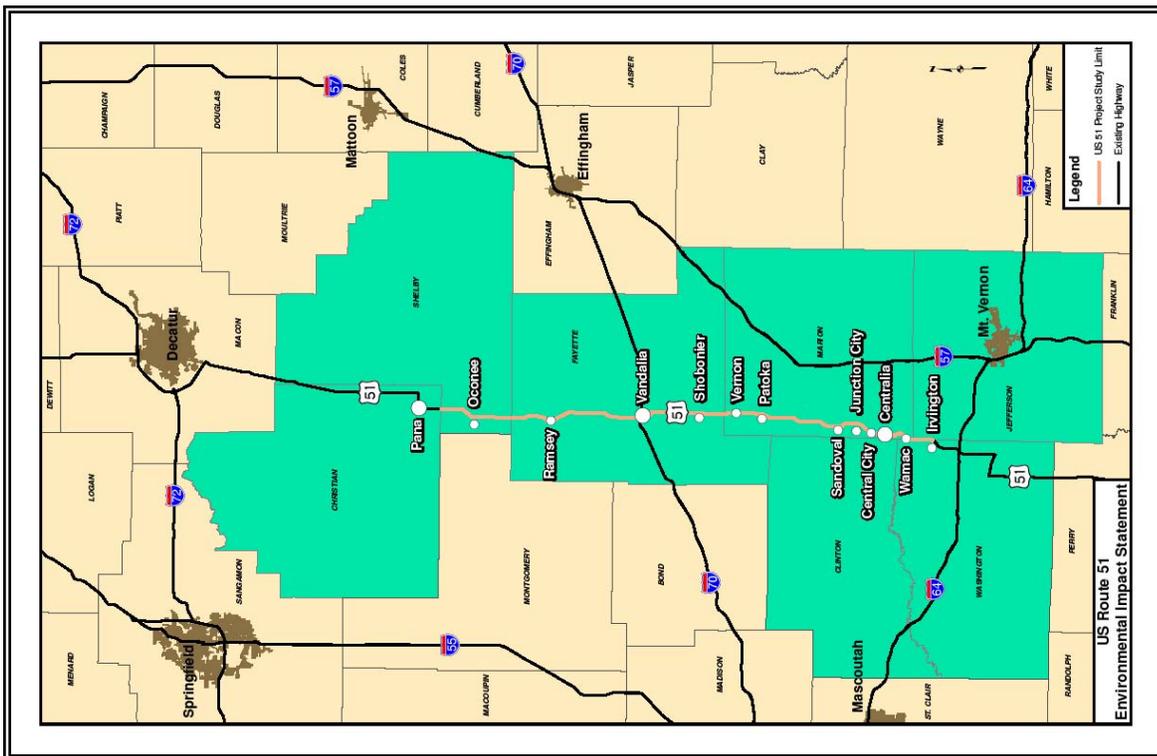
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## US 51 Project Study Limits



The US 51 study corridor is approximately 70 miles in length and extends from the Shelby/Christian County line to the Illinois Route 177 interchange east of Irvington. The existing route is shown in orange on the map.



### Special Points of Interest :

- Purpose and Need
- Crash Analysis Report
- Advisory Group Updates
- Environmental Data Collection
- New Website

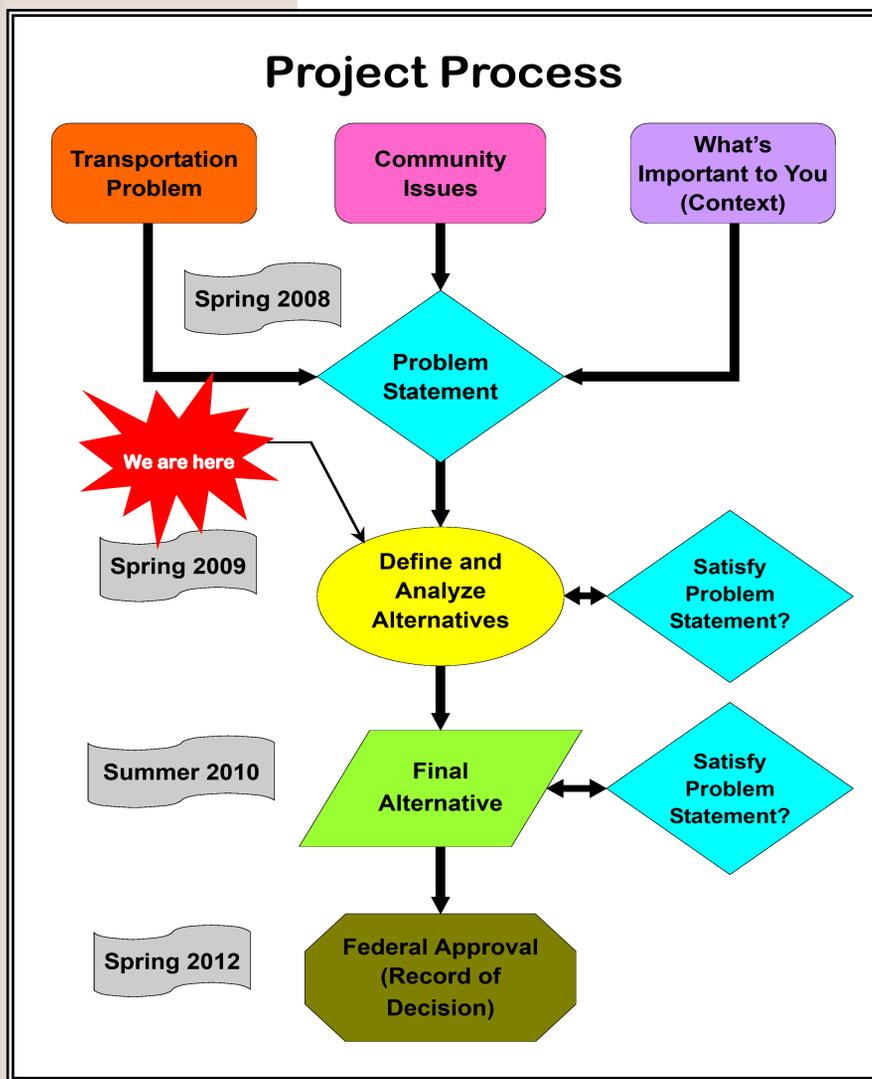
### Where is the Project now?

The US 51 Environmental Impact Statement is entering its second year of study. Over the course of the last year much has been accomplished by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and the project study team. The Project Process chart below shows the steps required in reaching Federal approval. This newsletter contains brief updates of the project's activities in 2008 and what is ahead in the remainder of 2009.

You may have seen members of the project team gathering data in the project study area on traffic, crashes, drainage structures, farmland, potential historic and archaeological data, and community economics and culture. Seeing project team members in the field does not mean a new roadway location has been se-

lected. We are looking for information in a large area and this work will continue through the end of the summer.

This newsletter is a way to keep residents, businesses and anyone with a stake in the project informed of the project's progress. Newsletters will be sent to stakeholders periodically throughout the project, but for more detailed and up-to-date project information, please visit the new project website at <http://us51eis-idot.com/>. If you missed the first project newsletter, it can be accessed at the new website created in February.



### Context Sensitive Solutions Update — Using public involvement to improve US 51

The project study team has met with the Citizen Advisory Group's (CAG) and Regional Advisory Group (RAG) numerous times to discuss transportation problems, community issues, and what is important to those who live and work in the project study area. Talking with project stakeholders before making decisions is a new process for IDOT called Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS).

Through CSS, conversations between the public and the project team have been beneficial in identifying common objectives for both the DOT and the individual communities. The meetings have also served as forums for gathering important information from the communities that would be difficult to obtain otherwise.

As an example, at a recent CAG meeting in Ramsey, it was brought to the project team's attention that a curve on US 51 north of town has been the location of numerous accidents. A CAG member indicated that a possible problem with the curve appeared to be a short passing zone stripe. This information was relayed to IDOT, the maintenance operations unit looked into it, and the roadway is being restriped to extend the no passing zone centerline.

Without CSS, this dialogue may never have occurred. CSS promotes the transfer of information that benefits all involved parties.

## Purpose and Need — Development and Concurrence

The Purpose and Need Statement (P&N) of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) establishes why a proposed improvement project is needed even though it may cause environmental impacts. The P&N of a project also establishes a basis for the development of reasonable alternatives and identifies the eventual selection of a preferred alternative.

The P&N requires approval through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The NEPA/404 merger process is lead by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and is designed to improve the efficiency of the environmental review process by using interagency coordination to focus efforts on reaching an environmentally sound project. Both the NEPA and Section 404

processes involve the evaluation of alternatives, the assessment of impacts to resources, and the balancing of resource impacts and project need.

The P&N for this EIS was developed with the project stakeholders through the CSS process. The CAGs identified transportation issues with the existing US 51 and developed a series of problem statements for their community. The Regional Advisory Group (RAG) summarized the individual community's problem statements into a single statement for the entire project. The preferred alternative must satisfy the project's problem statement as can be seen by the turquoise colored diamonds on the Project Process chart on page one.

The Project Study Group (PSG) used the problem statements from the advisory groups, data collected about the study area, and input from agencies to develop a draft P&N in November of 2008. In December of 2008 the P&N was made available to the advisory groups and the public. Comments received on the draft were incorporated in the final document and reflect concerns of those affected by a US 51 project. The final P&N was presented at the February NEPA/404 merger meeting and obtained concurrence by all government agencies involved. This concurrence gives the approval to begin development of alternatives for US 51.

*The approved P&N can be found on the US 51 website.*

### CAG #4 — Brainstorming Alternatives

At the fourth CAG meeting in each community, participants were asked to draw lines on a map for potential US 51 locations. The idea was to brainstorm without any limitations on where the lines could go. Prior to beginning the brainstorming of possibilities, members of the CAGs were presented with a series of preliminary criteria that engineers, planners, and scientists use when beginning to identify possible locations for a transportation improvement. The information presented as Engineering 101 and Environmental 101 was considered when the groups brainstormed ideas. The ideas developed at CAG #4, RAG, and PSG meetings were compiled and served as the starting point for the refinement of alternatives at CAG #5. The preliminary corridors for each community are posted on the project website on the advisory group pages.



### CAG #5—Consolidating Corridors

The fifth set of CAG meetings were held in late February and early March, 2009. The purpose of these meetings was to review the range of preliminary corridors for US 51 and eliminate or consolidate corridors that did not meet the project's P&N. The range of alternatives included the ideas brainstormed at CAG #4 in addition to corridor options added by the Regional Advisory Group (at RAG #2) and by the Project Study Group (PSG). Prior to beginning the review of corridors, the advisory groups reviewed the alternative analysis process and design criteria. The design criteria presented was similar to the information presented at CAG #4 but focused in more detail on specific roadway design elements. The corridors selected by the CAG for further evaluation will be reviewed by the RAG and PSG; additional corridors may be added by these groups to ensure that a reasonable range of alternatives meeting the project Purpose & Need is evaluated. The corridors will undergo an evaluation by the engineering team; these will consider environmental, cultural, community, agricultural, historical and operational impacts. At this time, each of the corridors under consideration is 500' wide. A narrower roadway alignment will be determined within the 500' corridor later in the project.



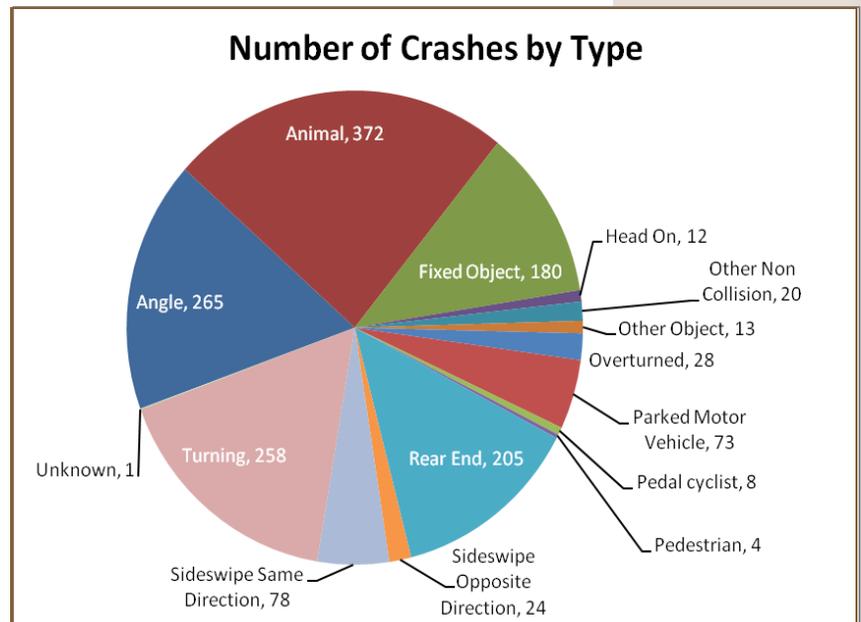
## Crash Analysis Study and Report

Part of understanding the transportation issues on existing US 51 is to study the crash or accident trends in the project study area. Crash data is collected by IDOT each year. IDOT looks at crashes with fatalities and serious injuries and compares them with similar roadway types with similar traffic volumes throughout the State. This method identifies areas that may be experiencing a higher number of crashes than expected. The US 51 study has looked at approximately 1500 crashes along the ~65-mile study area to see not only where the most serious injuries are occurring but if there are any other trends.

The pie chart to the right outlines fifteen crash types and frequencies throughout the project length. The five most frequent crash types involved animals, angled vehicles, fixed objects along the road, rear end, and turning vehicles. Collisions with animals occurred throughout the rural areas of the project. Nearly one-third of the non-animal accidents occurred in Centralia.

There are factors that affect crash conditions such as weather, roadway surface conditions, roadway geometry, and driver ability. The US 51 crash report hopes to identify if any of these conditions play a part in causing certain types of crashes to occur more often than oth-

ers. The report will be provided to IDOT for their use in determining if there are methods to reduce the crash tendencies (called countermeasures) prior to expansion of US 51 to a four-lane roadway.



## Environmental Studies

The environmental studies in the US 51 study area are ongoing and will continue through 2009. The Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) is conducting detailed field studies of threatened and endangered (T&E) species, birds, mammals, amphibians, fish, mussels, wetlands, vegetation, and high quality natural areas. Other resources, such as floodplains, soils, noise, historic sites, archaeological sites, agricultural resources, and air quality are also included in environmental studies. The Illinois State Geological Survey (ISGS) is assessing sites within the study area where the soil or groundwater may be contaminated.

Preliminary data from INHS indicates that US 51 crosses about 30 streams in the project area, including Ramsey Creek, which is a high quality stream. Over 50 wetlands have been identified. T&E species include all types of plants and animals which face possible extinction in the near future if steps aren't taken to protect them. Even though several T&E species have the potential to occur in the stream or wetlands, no T&E species have been identified in the study area to date. Areas of high quality natural areas exist near Ramsey and Vandalia.

The environmental data collection includes identifying cultural and economic resources of the region in addition to those within each municipality. Cultural resources include cemeteries, museums, historic sites like the Vandalia Statehouse, as well as archeological sites. Economic information on population, businesses, and future plans of communities is also being gathered.

Detailed information from the INHS regarding these resources surrounding existing US 51 is expected in summer 2009. Studies are continuing near Ramsey, Vandalia, Vernon, Patoka, Sandoval, and Centralia in summer 2009. You may see the biologists and scientists in the field. Their study area is expanded so that there is a good understanding of the natural resources in the general area. The environmental information being gathered plays a part in decision-making but to date no decision has been made regarding the future location of US 51.



Ramsey Creek

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## US 51 Frequently Asked Questions:

**Q:** What is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

**A:** An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) documents possible significant impacts to the natural and built environment as a result of a major transportation improvement.

**Q:** Where can I read more information about this EIS project?

**A:** More information such as project background, agency and public participation, advisory groups, and project development can be found in the Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP) which is available for download at the website.

**Q:** How long will the US 51 EIS process take?

**A:** The EIS process will take approximately 4 years. We anticipate completion of the study in the first half of 2012.

**Q:** Where will the new US 51 go?

**A:** The US 51 EIS is in the early stages of the study process. An alignment has not been developed. Public input along with the gathering of environmental and traffic data during the course of the study will help in identifying where the new US 51 will go.

**Q:** When will construction start?

**A:** Currently, there are no funds allocated to construct this studied

section of US 51.

**Q:** Has Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) been used on the previous sections of US 51?

**A:** CSS is relatively new to the State of Illinois. It became official policy for the Department of Transportation in August of 2005. The previous sections of Route 51 (Pana on north to Rockford) did not utilize CSS.

## How to get involved

Are you a stakeholder in the project? If you live, work or travel the corridor, you are a stakeholder. Opportunities for involvement in the US 51 Environmental Impact Statement are numerous and will continue throughout the project. An open house will be held in late summer 2009 to update stakeholders on the project's progress. You can request a speaker for your group or organization by contacting us. To get in touch with the project team call 217-373-8951.





### Special Points of Interest:

- Environmental Studies Update
- Project Process
- CSS Update
- Alternative Development Overview
- CAG #6
- Next Steps

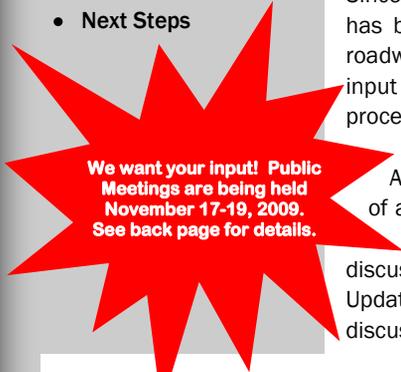
## What's New with the US 51 Study?

The US 51 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is completing its second year of study. The US 51 EIS is a transportation planning study administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The purpose of this planning study is to evaluate a transportation improvement that will meet local and regional needs while improving safety and enhancing mobility.

The project reached a milestone in February 2009 with the approval of the Purpose and Need statement. Since that time, the primary focus of the project team has been the development of a reasonable range of roadway alternatives for detailed study. Stakeholder input has been important throughout the entire project process from project kick-off through the alternative development phase. The project's Community Advisory Groups (CAGs) helped in the development of and narrowing to the reasonable range of alternatives. The process the CAGs went through is discussed in this newsletter under the CSS Process Update and the evaluation of the alternatives is discussed under the Alignment Process Overview.

This newsletter is one way the project team keeps residents, businesses, and anyone with a stake in the project informed of the project's progress. If you missed the first two project newsletters, want to learn more about the EIS process, or want to find out about CAG input, please visit the project website at [www.us51eis-idot.com](http://www.us51eis-idot.com).

If you do not have access to the internet and would like additional project information discussed in this newsletter, please call 217-373-8951.



Levee South of Vandalia

## Environmental Studies Update

The environmental studies of potential US 51 project corridors near Ramsey, Vandalia, Vernon, Patoka, Sandoval, and Centralia that began in 2008 have continued into 2009. The Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) conducted additional field studies of threatened and endangered (T&E) species. These include birds, mammals, amphibians, fish, mussels, and vegetation. Other resources, such as floodplains, wetlands, high quality natural areas, soils, noise, historic sites, archaeological sites, agricultural resources,

and air quality are also included in environmental studies. The Illinois State Geological Survey (ISGS) is assessing sites within the study area where potential soil or groundwater contamination may occur.

Results from the 2008 field studies indicate the following:

- 30 stream locations were evaluated for habitat and selected locations were sampled for fish, mussels, and water quality. There were 52 fish species collected at 16 sites during 2008. Mussels were searched for at 17 sites but only 5 sites contained live mussels. The stream environment for fish and mussels was rated as "poor" conditions at 28 of 30 sites and "fair" at two sites by INHS.
- 23 common species of mammals, and approximately 141 types of birds were encountered in the project area.
- T & E species include all types of plants and animals which face possible extinc-

tion in the near future if steps are not taken to protect them. One endangered fish species, the Western Sand darter, was found in the Kaskaskia River. Two endangered bird species, the Northern Harrier and Osprey, were also recorded in the project area.

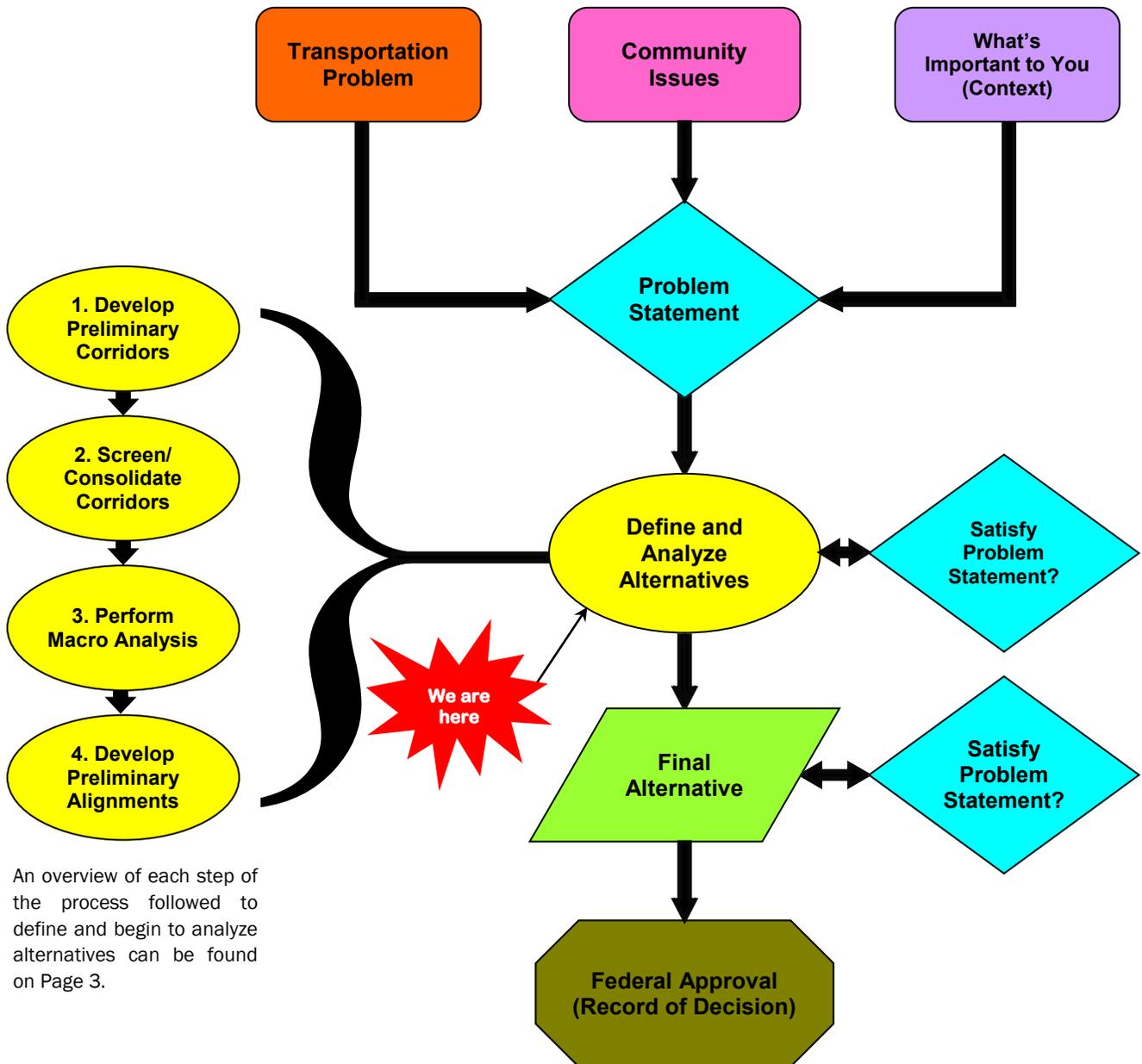
- There were 106 wetlands identified within the project limits totaling approximately 142 acres. Ten wetlands were identified within the project limits as being of high quality. No high quality forest stands were identified in the 2008 studies. The 2009 studies include higher quality areas near Vandalia.

The environmental data collection also includes identifying cultural and economic resources of the region and within each municipality. Cultural resources include cemeteries, museums, historic sites like the Vandalia Statehouse, as well as archeological sites. The environmental information being gathered plays a part in decision-making, but to date no decision has been made as to the future location of US 51.



Ramsey Railroad Nature Preserve  
Photo courtesy of INHS

# US 51 EIS Project Process



An overview of each step of the process followed to define and begin to analyze alternatives can be found on Page 3.

## Context Sensitive Solutions Update

The US 51 EIS is being developed using principles of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS). The CSS process seeks to ensure that stakeholders' views are carefully considered in the project decision-making process. The information gained from stakeholder communication with the project team is used by IDOT to develop feasible solutions and to plan and design transportation projects that "fit" into their surroundings. In the past, the public input was not typically considered in a project until some level of engineering had already been performed.

A recent example of how the CSS process is working in the project is in the development of alternatives around the City of Vandalia. The preliminary analysis of the corridors developed by the Community Advisory Groups (CAGs) and Regional Advisory Groups (RAGs) found that the location of some of the bypass corridors resulted in significant secondary impacts to the commercial property at I-70 and residences on the northwest side of Vandalia. A CAG meeting was held to discuss potential impacts to businesses and residences and get the community's input on the corridor loca-

tions. The result from meeting with the CAG was a new corridor to better serve the same purpose in that location.

Development of corridor and alignment alternatives relied heavily on stakeholder input. The alignment process overview details how the CAG and RAG has helped steer the project to date. Public Meetings to review the work done to date is another method of involving stakeholders. For more information on the CSS process and how it is working in Illinois, see IDOT's website: <http://www.dot.state.il.us/css/home.html>

# Alternative Development Overview

## 1. Develop Preliminary Corridors

After multiple meetings with the Community Advisory Groups (CAG), Regional Advisory Group (RAG), and a Project Study Group (PSG), a range of Alternatives were developed. These groups were given the opportunity to brainstorm potential corridors and draw their ideas on aerial maps. The potential corridors were then evaluated by the project team for possible fatal flaws, such as impacting Special Lands, State Parks, Natural Area Sites, or Threatened and Endangered Species. If any of these areas were impacted, the corridor was eliminated. Remaining corridors moved on to the Screening and Consolidation step.

## 2. Screen and Consolidate Corridors

The remaining preliminary corridors were drafted on maps, brought back to the CAGs, and evaluated as "Alternatives" for environmental impacts. Once again, the CAGs reviewed the Purpose and Need for each Alternative and modifications or combinations of corridors were created. The RAG and PSG evaluated the results of the CAGs and made modifications to the corridors based on which corridor would make a feasible and practical alignment and also meet the Purpose and Need. The end result was a range of Alternatives to be studied further in the Macro Analysis.



RAG #3



RAG #3



CAG #5 Sandoval



CAG #5 Centralia

## 3. Perform Macro Analysis

After the advisory groups narrowed the range of corridor alternatives to only those that met the Purpose and Need statement, the PSG began a large (macro) scale determination of potential impacts. This Macro Analysis considered the possible environmental, cultural, community, agricultural, historical, and operational impacts of each specific corridor alternative. A team of engineers and scientists collected field data and analyzed each corridor alternative using aerial maps, satellite imaging, and geographical information systems (GIS). The project study team evaluated impacts to wetlands, streams, residential, commercial and municipal buildings, prime farmland, and historical sites, as well as operational features, such as travel time, for each corridor alternative.

The resulting data was then compiled and analyzed in order to determine which corridor alternatives had the least amount of impacts. The remaining corridors were presented to stakeholders at CAG #6.

## CAG #6 - Corridor Review

After brainstorming at CAG #4 and consolidating and eliminating at CAG #5, the group members were given the opportunity to review the corridors that were undergoing the Macro Analysis. As the preliminary corridors that were developed during the previous CAG, RAG, and PSG meetings went through each step of the analysis process, some were modified or combined by the project team if they met the same intent as a similar corridor (or corridors), had the same beginning and end points, and were located in the same general area. From these efforts, a reasonable range of corridors was identified for preliminary alignment development. Public review of the preliminary alignments is scheduled for mid-November 2009. See the back page of this newsletter for dates and locations.

## 4. Develop Preliminary Alignments

A conceptual roadway alignment is currently being developed within each of the remaining corridors to minimize or avoid environmental resource impacts. The Alignment Analysis evaluates the alignments based on environmental criteria similar to the Macro Analysis. The Macro Analysis resulted in five (5) corridor alternatives in the Centralia and Sandoval area, three (3) in the Vernon and Patoka area, four (4) in Vandalia, and two (2) in Ramsey being recommended for preliminary alignment development. After the analysis of the impacts of each preliminary alignment, two alternatives in Centralia and Sandoval, one (1) in the Vernon and Patoka area, two (2) in Vandalia, and two (2) in Ramsey are being recommended for detailed study in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.



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## Project Next Steps - Review of Alignments

With lines finally drawn on paper, the next step in the project development process is to study the reasonable range of alternatives in further detail and write a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The project study team will be presenting the development process and asking for public input prior to seeking approval on the range of recommended alternatives from the Federal Highway Administration.

The preliminary alignments being recommended for further study around the communities of Ramsey, Vandalia, Vernon, Patoka, Sandoval, and Centralia will be presented at the meeting.

There will be a formal presentation\* starting shortly after six o'clock at all three locations followed by an open-house format where your questions can be answered by representatives of the project team. Comments on the preliminary alignments will be taken at the meeting, by mail, by email or by fax until December 4, 2009.

**We want your  
input!**

### How to Stay Involved

Are you a stakeholder in the project? If you live, work, or travel the in the study area, you are a stakeholder. Opportunities for involvement in the US 51 Environmental Impact Statement are numerous and will continue throughout the project. You can request a speaker for your group or organization by contacting us. To get in touch with the project team call 217-373-8951.

### Upcoming Public Meetings:

Tuesday, November 17, 2009 - 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM  
Centralia Recreation Complex  
115 E. Second Street  
Centralia, IL 62801

Wednesday, November 18, 2009 - 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM  
Vandalia American Legion  
321 S. 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Vandalia, IL 62471

Thursday, November 19, 2009 - 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM  
Ramsey High School Library  
716 W. Sixth Street  
Ramsey, IL 62080

\*[Content presented at each meeting will be identical]



### Special Points of Interest:

- Project Development Update
- CSS Update
- Resource Agency Coordination
- Updated Project Process

## What is the US 51 Study?

The US 51 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has entered into its third year of study. The US 51 EIS is a transportation planning study administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The purpose of this planning study is to evaluate a transportation improvement that will meet local and regional needs while improving safety and mobility. Public input is critical to the success of the study and this newsletter is one way the project team keeps residents, busi-

nesses, and anyone with a stake in the project up-to-date on the project's progress and informed of new information.

If you are new to the project or want to learn more about the study and the EIS process, please visit the project website at [www.us51eis-idot.com](http://www.us51eis-idot.com). If you do not have access to the internet and would like additional project information discussed in this newsletter, please call 217-373-8951.

## Project Development Update

At a series of Public Information Meetings (PIM #3) held in November 2009, the project team presented the preliminary alternatives recommended to be carried forward for further study. At that time, the project team indicated that additional environmental resource information from the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) had not yet been received, which could influence the recommended alternatives.

The additional information from the INHS was received in December 2009. The information identified natural resources along the bypass corridors around Centralia/Central City, Sandoval, Patoka, Vernon, and Vandalia. Information received from INHS includes the location of:

- Wetlands, including high quality wetlands
- Important habitat areas

No threatened or endangered species were found in these areas but the areas are considered important because they contain a diverse community of species.

After the additional information was received, the project team reviewed the data and met with environmental regulatory agencies to discuss minimizing wetland impacts. Once input from the regulatory agencies was received, the project team met with the Community Advisory Groups (CAGs) for the respective impacted areas. The meetings with the regulatory agencies and CAGs are discussed on the following page.

Preliminary alternatives presented at PIM #3 were modified based upon the continued avoidance of environmental impacts, resource agency input, and community input. In the Centralia-Sandoval area, in Vernon, and Vandalia, modified or additional alternatives are being considered. Modifications were not necessary in Ramsey because the alternatives presented in November did not impact high quality wetlands or important habitat areas.

The revisions to the recommended alternatives will be presented to the public via another series of information meetings, occurring in early May, 2010. Please see the back of this newsletter for meeting dates and locations.



*Winged monkeyflower (Mimulus alatus) is a native plant species that may be found within a high quality wetland (Photo by Dan Busemeyer, INHS).*

## What is a Wetland?

A wetland is an area of land where soil is saturated permanently or seasonally. The prolonged presence of water creates conditions that promote the growth of specially adapted plants and the development of characteristic wetland soils. Wetlands include a variety of habitats, including forested areas, wet meadows, and wet prairies.

The INHS identified wetlands within the study area, and provided information regarding the plant species composition of each wetland. High quality wetlands are those that contain an abundance of native plant species with specific habitat requirements. Numerous high quality wetlands were identified around the communities in the study area, particularly near Centralia.

Wetlands are protected by law. First, wetlands must be avoided if feasible; second, when wetland impacts are unavoidable, impacts must be minimized; and third, impacts must be mitigated.

Early May Public Information Meetings Scheduled - See Back Cover for Details

## Context Sensitive Solutions Update

### Public Information Meeting #3

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) held Public Information Meetings series #3 (PIM #3) in Centralia, Vandalia, and Ramsey on November 17, 18, & 19, 2009, respectively. The purpose of the meetings was to review the project study to date and to present the recommended alternatives for further study around the communities of Ramsey, Vandalia, Vernon, Patoka, the Sandoval-Centralia area, and along US 51 between these locations. There was a formal presentation followed by an open-house where questions were answered by representatives of the project study team. The Macro Analysis Screening Exhibits and Recommended Alignment Exhibits were displayed. At that time, the project team indicated that additional environmental resource information from the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) had not yet been received, which could influence the recommended alternatives.



### CAG #7 – Modified Corridor Review

After the project team reviewed the additional environmental information received from the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) and met with the resource agencies, several corridors were modified to avoid high quality wetlands. At CAG #7, the group members were given the opportunity to review the modified corridors, and were encouraged to provide input. After the CAG meetings, the project study team revisited the Macro and Alignment Analysis in light of the new environmental data (see project process chart on opposite page). The team used input from the meetings with the resource agencies and the CAGs to further evaluate the corridors and developing alignments within the corridors.

### Resource Agency Coordination

The project team, which consists of the FHWA, IDOT, and the engineering consulting firms, maintains ongoing coordination with state and federal agencies. The project team met with several environmental regulatory agencies that have jurisdiction by law and special expertise regarding wetland issues. The purpose of the meetings was to update the agencies on the project progress and to identify measures taken to avoid and minimize impact to high quality wetlands while balancing impacts to other environmental resources.

A summary of the meetings follows.

#### **United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)**

The project team met with the USACE-St. Louis District on February 3, 2010. Section 404 of the Clean Water Act gives the USACE federal jurisdiction over Waters of the U.S. (including rivers, streams, and lakes) and wetlands that about Waters of the U.S. The USACE is required to protect wetlands; however, due to the number and location of wetlands the USACE agreed it was not feasible to avoid all wetland impacts. The USACE considered the impacts to all resources, including community impacts, in making this determination. Since all wetlands cannot be avoided, mitigation will be required. The mitigation type and mitigation acreage will not be determined until the Final EIS.

#### **Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)**

The project team met with the IDNR on February 16, 2010. The Interagency Wetlands Policy Act of 1988 gives the IDNR jurisdiction



over wetlands when state funds are utilized. The INDR also has jurisdiction over Illinois Natural Area Inventory Area (INAI) sites. The INAI is a list of significant or unique natural resources in Illinois. INAI sites include high quality natural communities, habitats of endangered species, and outstanding geological features. There is one INAI site within the project study area, the Vandalia Geologic Area. The INAI site had been avoided by the alternatives presented at the November, 2009, PIM #3 meeting. Some high quality wetlands, however, could be avoided by traversing the INAI site. The IDNR indicated that complete avoidance of the INAI site is not required, if the integrity of the site is maintained. Therefore, alternatives that traverse a portion of the Vandalia Geologic Area INAI site were evaluated by the project study team.

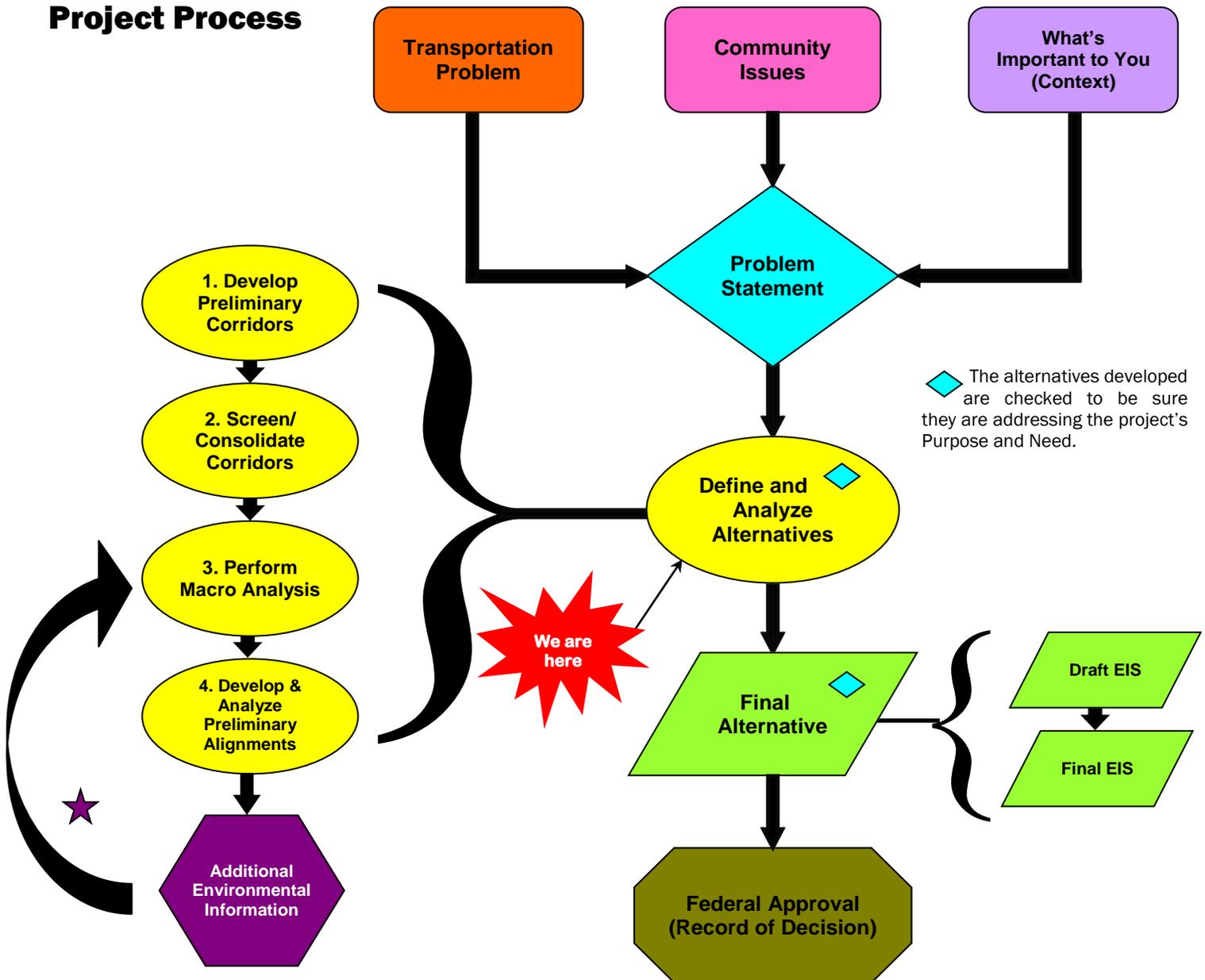
# New Information and the Project Process

The US 51 EIS is being developed using IDOT's Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) and the guidelines of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for public involvement. Stakeholder input is desired throughout the project process, especially before major decisions are made. The project team has been meeting with stakeholders and gathering input for the study at public meetings, through the Citizen's Advisory Groups (CAG), the Regional Advisory (RAG), and through coordination with agencies that have jurisdiction over resources in the study area since the project began in 2008. The Public Meetings held in November 2009 were to share information and gather input before a decision point: concurrence from FHWA and other signatory agencies on the range of alternatives to be studied further. Receiving new information that influences the range the alternatives to be studied was a halting point in

the project process while the project team re-evaluated the alternatives. The chart below shows the project process and the point we are at now. The previous newsletter and project website contain more detail on the project development process. The project team also met with resource agencies and the CAGs to share the new information and gather input. The resource agency and CAG meetings held in January and February of 2010 are included on the previous page.

The revised range of alternatives will be presented at upcoming public meetings. For those who have attended previous meetings, the revised range may look similar to what has previously been presented, but there are changes in the alternatives around Centralia, Sandoval, Vernon and Vandalia that will be presented.

## Project Process



★ The project team revisited steps three and four in the Define and Analyze Alternatives step of the project process. Modifications to the preliminary alternatives presented in November was required based upon updated environmental resources information and agency and community input. This has resulted in modified or additional alternatives being considered. As a result of CAG #7, the project team has developed alignments within the revised corridors and will present them at Public Information Meeting #4 in May 2010.



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 Engineering, Inc.  
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We're on the web! Find out more  
 information @ [www.us51eis-idot.com](http://www.us51eis-idot.com)

Sherry Phillips  
 IDOT Project Engineer  
 400 West Wabash  
 Effingham, IL 62401  
 Phone: 217-342-3951  
 E-mail: Sherry.Phillips@illinois.gov

## Public Meeting Announcement...

The modified preferred alternatives being recommended for further study around the communities of Ramsey, Vandalia, Vernon, Patoka, Sandoval, and Centralia will be presented at the fourth series of Public Information Meetings. There will be a formal presentation\* starting shortly after six o'clock followed by an open-house format where your questions can be answered by representatives of the project team. Comments on the preferred alternatives will be taken at the meeting, by mail, by email or by fax until May 20, 2010.

### Upcoming Public Meetings:

Wednesday, May 5th – 6:00 to 8:00 PM  
 Kaskaskia College – Vandalia Extension  
 2310 West Fillmore  
 Vandalia, IL 62471

Thursday, May 6th – 6:00 to 8:00 PM  
 America's Best Value Inn – Bell Tower  
 200 East Noleman Street  
 Centralia, IL 62801

Tuesday, May 11th - 6:00 to 8:00 PM  
 Patoka Civic Center  
 210 West Bond Street  
 Patoka, IL 62875

\*Content presented at each meeting will be identical



The preferred alternatives recommended for further study requires approval through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/404 merger process. The preferred alignments will be presented at the June NEPA/404 merger meeting, which will be attended by numerous governmental and resource agencies. The comments received from the public after the May Public Information Meetings are important, and will be discussed with the resource agencies during the NEPA/404 merger meeting. At the conclusion



of the meeting, concurrence on the preferred alternatives will be sought from all the agencies involved. Once concurrence is granted, the project team will begin the next step in the project process, the preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The preferred alignments will be studied in detail in the DEIS.

## How to Stay Involved

Are you a stakeholder in the project? If you live, work, or travel the in the study area, you are a stakeholder. Opportunities for involvement in the US 51 Environmental Impact Statement are numerous and will continue throughout the project. You can request a speaker for your group or organization by contacting us. To get in touch with the project team call 217-373-8951.



### Special Points of Interest:

- Alternative Development and Analysis
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)
- Community Updates
  - Centralia & Sandoval
  - Vernon & Patoka
  - Vandalia
  - Ramsey
- CSS Update

The US 51 EIS is a transportation planning study administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The purpose of this planning study is to evaluate a transportation improvement that will meet local and regional needs while improving safety and mobility.

### What's New with the US 51 Study?

The project reached a milestone at the June 2010 and February 2011 NEPA/404 merger meetings when the resource agencies approved the recommended alternatives to be carried forward for further evaluation in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). A description of the DEIS can be found below.

Public input is critical to the success of the study and this newsletter is one way the project team keeps residents, businesses, and anyone with a stake in the

project up-to-date on the project's progress and informed of new information.

If you are new to the project or want to learn more about the study and the EIS process, please visit the project website at [www.us51eis-idot.com](http://www.us51eis-idot.com). If you do not have access to the internet and would like additional project information discussed in this newsletter, please call Sherry Phillips, IDOT Project Engineer at 217-342-

### Alternative Development and Analysis

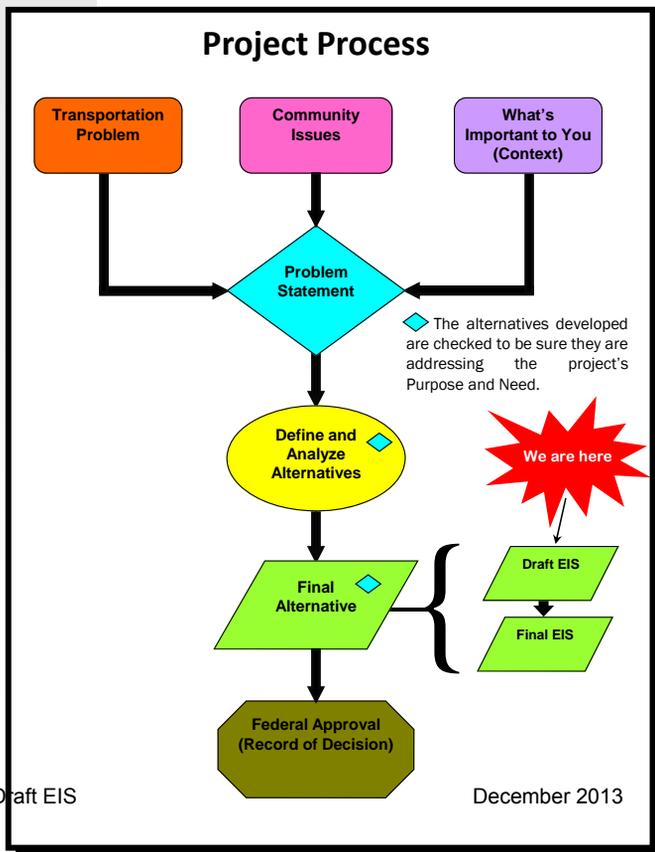
A range of alternatives were developed by the Community Advisory Groups (CAGs) that are composed of local residents and the project team. Alternatives that traversed west of existing US 51, east of existing US 51, and that utilized existing US 51 were considered, and were evaluated based upon meeting the project's Purpose and Need and environmental and cultural resource impacts. The environmental and cultural resources were unique to each community within the study area. As an example, threatened and endangered species were identified near Vandalia, but were not identified in Vernon or Patoka. There is a Nature Preserve north of Ramsey, but there are no Nature Preserves in the other communities within the study area.

The alternatives were narrowed down during a series of CAG meetings and presented to the public at meetings held in November 2009, May 2010, and November 2010. Public input received after the meetings was considered when selecting the recommended alternatives to be evaluated in detail. As part of the NEPA process, the project team presented the recommended alternatives to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the State and Federal resource agencies at the June 2010 and February 2011 NEPA/404 merger meetings. The FHWA and the resource agencies granted concurrence on the recommended alternatives described on the following pages. In addition to these alternatives, there are two options crossing over Ramsey Creek south of Ramsey and two options crossing over Opossum Creek north of Oconee. For the remainder of the area between communities, the improved roadway will follow existing US 51 and will be widened from two to four lanes. These alternatives will be studied in greater detail during the development of the DEIS. Detailed information on the alternative development and screening process can be found on the project website.

### Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

The next step in the US 51 study is to develop the DEIS. The DEIS is a document that provides comprehensive information about the project's Purpose and Need, proposed alternatives, and potential environmental impacts of the proposed alternatives in each community. Once the DEIS is completed it will be released to the public for review and comment.

As part of the DEIS development, the project team will continue environmental data collection throughout 2011. Field surveys will be conducted to identify additional environmental, cultural, and economic resources of the region and within each community. The data collection being gathered plays a part in decision-making, but to date no decision has been made as to the future location of US 51. 4B-887



# Centralia and Sandoval Area Update

For the Centralia and Sandoval area, over 120 alternatives that traverse west, east, or through the center of the City of Centralia and the Village of Sandoval were evaluated. The alternative alignments were developed with an emphasis on avoiding or minimizing environmental resource impacts to floodplains, streams, wetlands, residences, businesses, public facilities, parkland, prime and important farmland, and farm severances.



Centralia City Hall



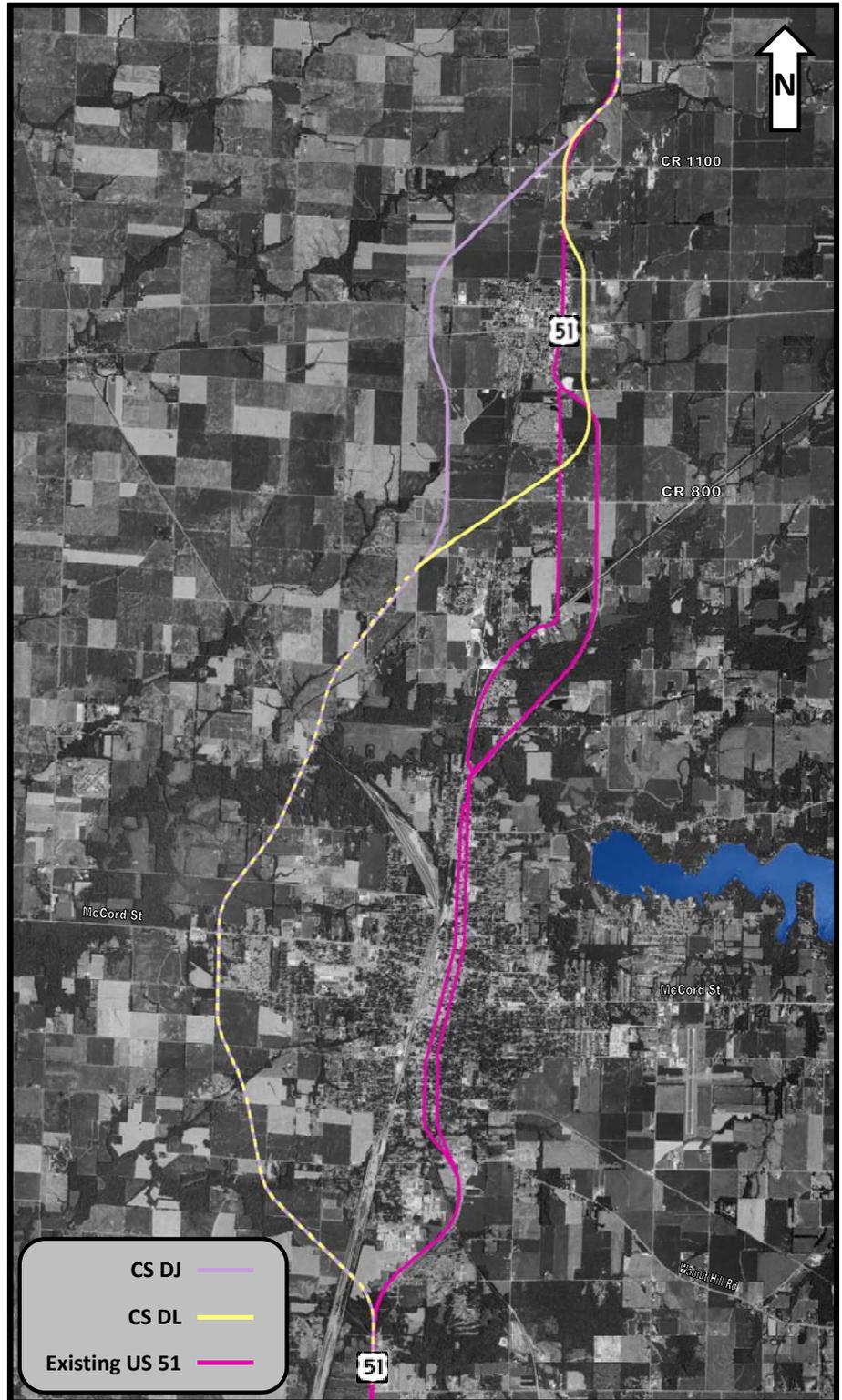
Existing US 51 through Sandoval

Alternatives that utilized existing US 51 through Centralia and Sandoval were eliminated due to high residential and business displacements. Alternatives on the east were eliminated in part due to impacts associated with crossing Raccoon Lake.

Two alternatives will be evaluated in further detail as part of the DEIS. The alternatives are labeled Centralia-Sandoval DJ and Centralia Sandoval DL. The alternatives are shown on the map to the right, and are described below.

**Centralia Sandoval DJ** is an alternative situated to the west of Centralia and Sandoval. At its furthest point, the alternative is approximately 2.3 miles west of existing US 51 within Centralia and 1.5 miles west of existing US 51 within Sandoval.

**Centralia Sandoval DL** is an alternative situated to the west of Centralia and east of Sandoval. At its furthest point, the alternative is approximately 2.3 miles west of existing US 51 within Centralia and 0.5 miles east of existing US 51 within Sandoval.



CS DJ	
CS DL	
Existing US 51	

# Vernon and Patoka Area Update

For the Vernon and Patoka area 24 alternatives that traverse west, east, or through the center of the Village of Patoka and the Village of Vernon were evaluated. The alternative alignments were developed to avoid or minimize environmental resource impacts to floodplains, wetlands, residences, and farmland.



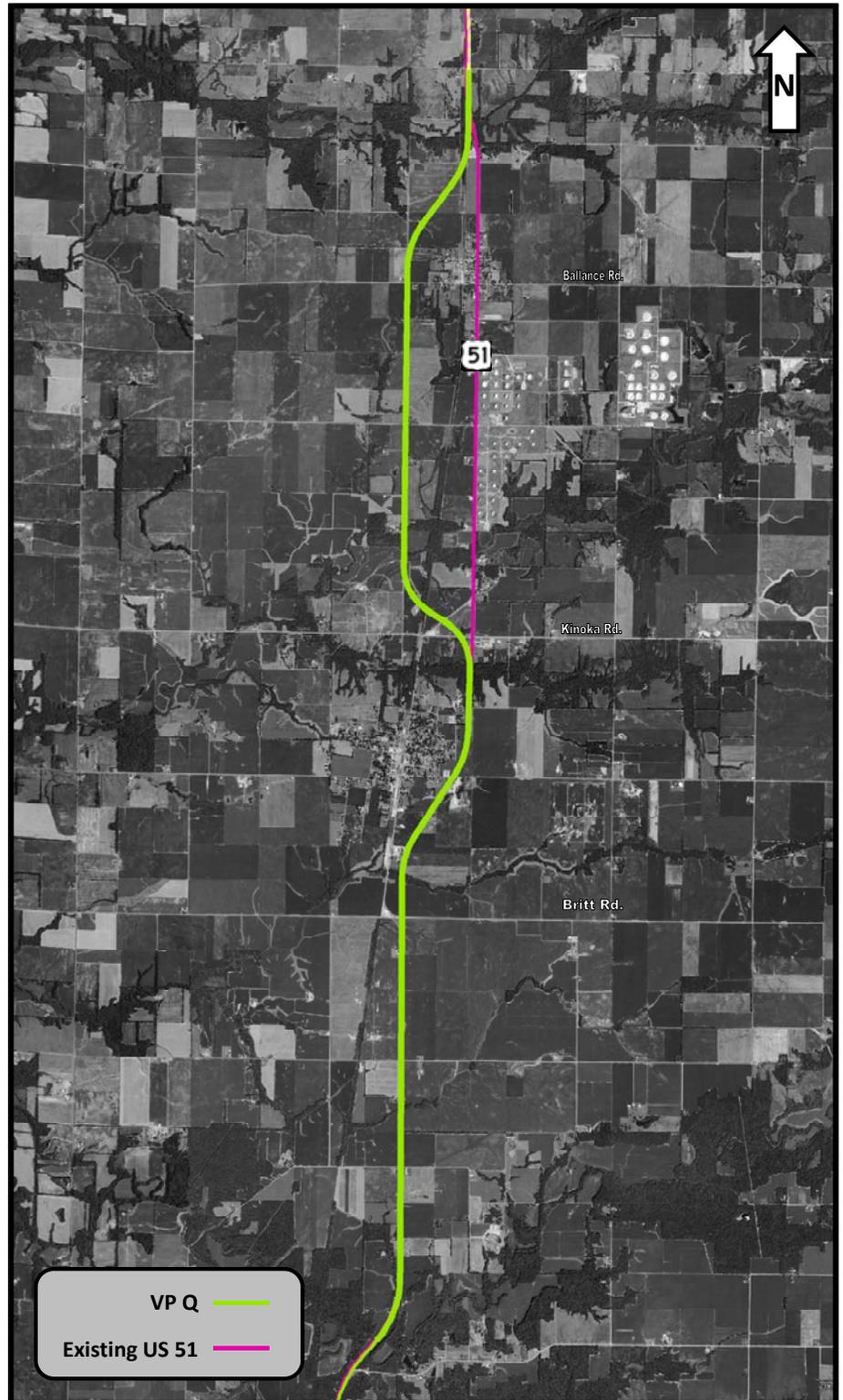
Agricultural facilities and Patoka Village Hall



Existing US 51 through Vernon

One alternative will be evaluated in further detail in the DEIS. The alternative is called Vernon Patoka Q. The alternative is shown on the map to the right, and is described below.

**Vernon-Patoka Q** is an alternative that utilizes existing US 51 through Patoka and is situated to the west of Vernon following the alignment of Willet Rd. between Patoka and Vernon. At its furthest point, the alternative is approximately 0.5 miles west of existing US 51 within Vernon.



VP Q	
Existing US 51	

**What is LiDAR?**

If you see a low flying airplane in your town, it just might be collecting data for the US51 project. Over the summer planes fitted with LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) instruments will be flying over the project area to collect survey and mapping data. The information collected from the LiDAR flights will give the project team a highly accurate survey of the project area and will assist in further refinement and design of alignment alternatives.

## Vandalia Area Update

For the Vandalia area, 91 alternatives that traverse west, east, along Interstate 70 (I-70), or through the center of the City of Vandalia were evaluated. The alternatives were designed to minimize impacts to resources within Vandalia. The resources considered for avoidance in Vandalia included homes, businesses, public facilities, parkland, prime and important farmland, farm severances, wetlands, streams, floodplain, threatened & endangered species, and unique geologic features.

Alternatives to the east of Vandalia were eliminated due to high floodplain, wetland, residential, and business impacts. Alternatives that utilized existing US 51 through Vandalia were eliminated due to high residential and business displacements.

Four alternatives in Vandalia will be evaluated in detail in the DEIS. The alternatives are called Western Bypass, Dual Marked, VS, and VU. The alternatives are shown on the map to the right, and are described below.

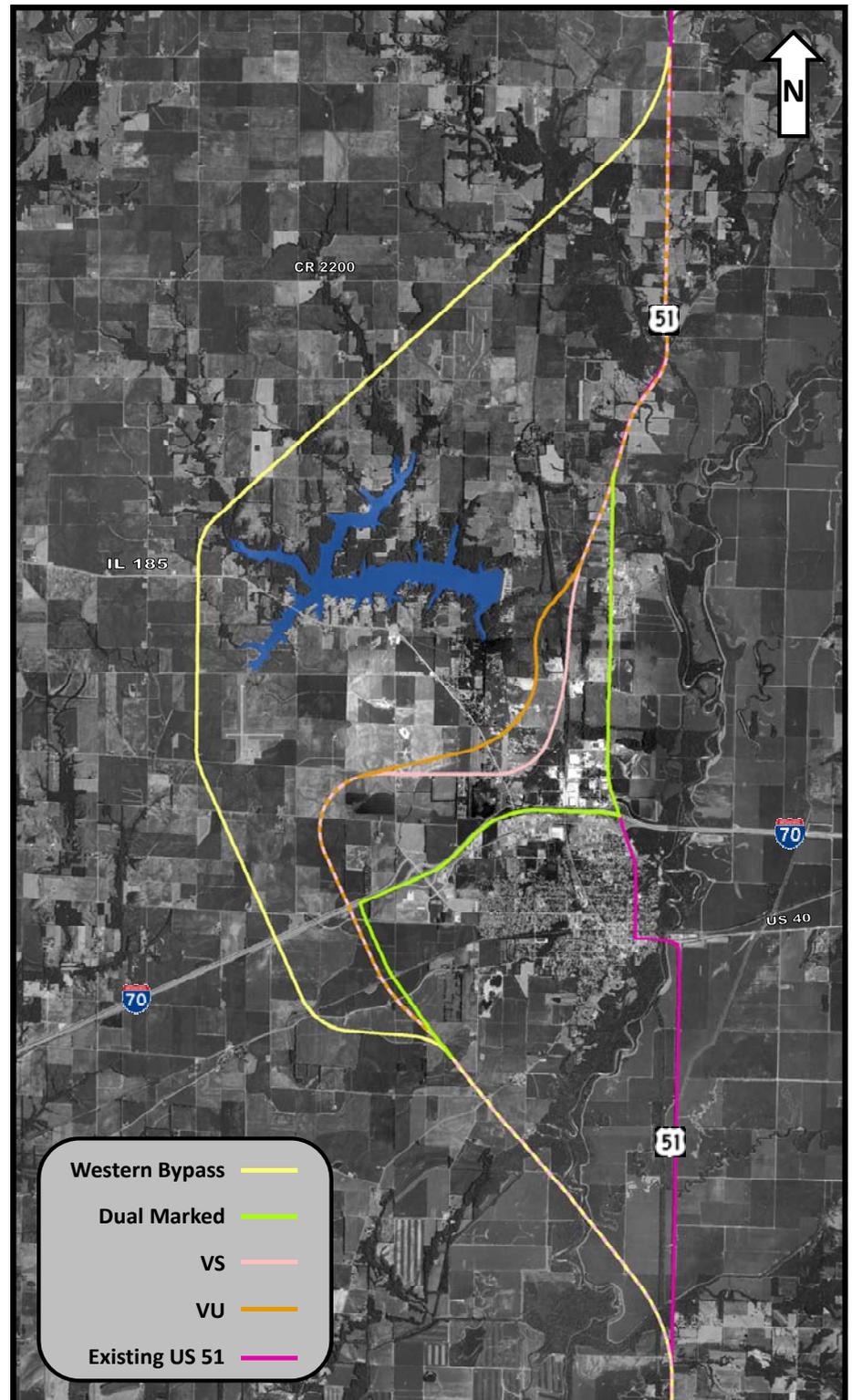


**Western Bypass** is an alternative situated to the west of Vandalia. The alternative crosses I-70 to the west of the existing interchange with US-40, and traverses west of the airport and around Lake Vandalia to join existing US 51 north of town.

**Dual Marked** is an alternative situated to the west of Vandalia until it reaches I-70. The alternative traverses along I-70 west for approximately three miles and then joins the existing I-70/ US 51 interchange east of town.

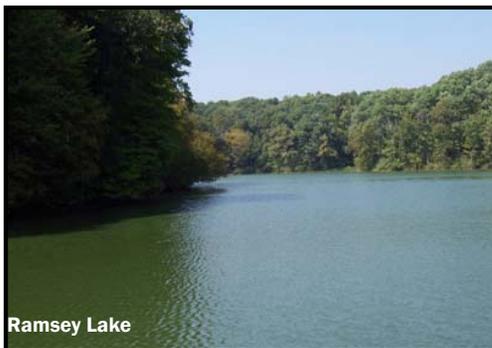
**VS** is an alternative situated to the west of Vandalia. The alternative crosses I-70 to the west of the existing interchange with US-40, and traverses northeast to join existing US 51 north of town.

**VU** is an alternative situated to the west of Vandalia. The alternative crosses I-70 to the west of the existing interchange with US-40, and traverses northeast, to the north/west of VS, and joins existing US 51 north of town.



# Ramsey Area Update

For the Ramsey area, 18 alternatives that traverse west, east, or through the center of the Village of Ramsey were evaluated. The alternatives were designed to minimize impacts to resources within Ramsey. The resources considered for avoidance in Ramsey included homes, businesses, public facilities, parkland, prime and important farmland, farm severances, wetlands, and streams.

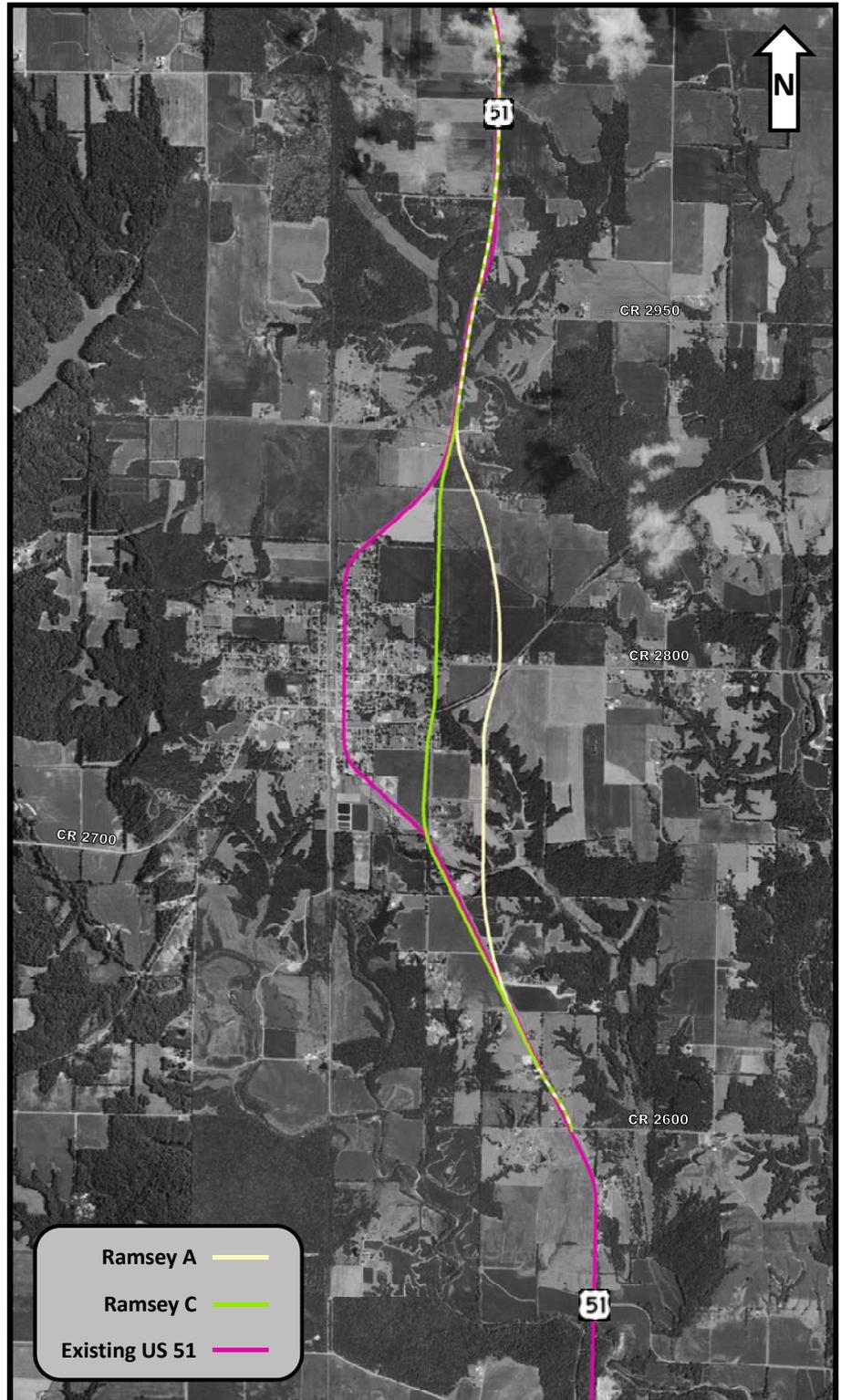


Alternatives to the west of Ramsey were eliminated to avoid impacts to the Ramsey Railroad Prairie Nature Preserve and Ramsey Lake State Park. Alternatives that utilized existing US 51 through Ramsey were eliminated due to high residential and business displacements.

Two eastern alternatives in Ramsey will be evaluated in detail in the DEIS. The alternatives are called Ramsey A and Ramsey C. The alternatives are shown on the map to the right, and are described below.

**Ramsey A** is an alternative situated to the east of Ramsey. The alternative is approximately 3,500 feet east of and parallel to existing US 51.

**Ramsey C** is an alternative situated to the east of Ramsey, and west of Ramsey A. The alternative is approximately 2,000 feet east of and parallel to existing US 51.





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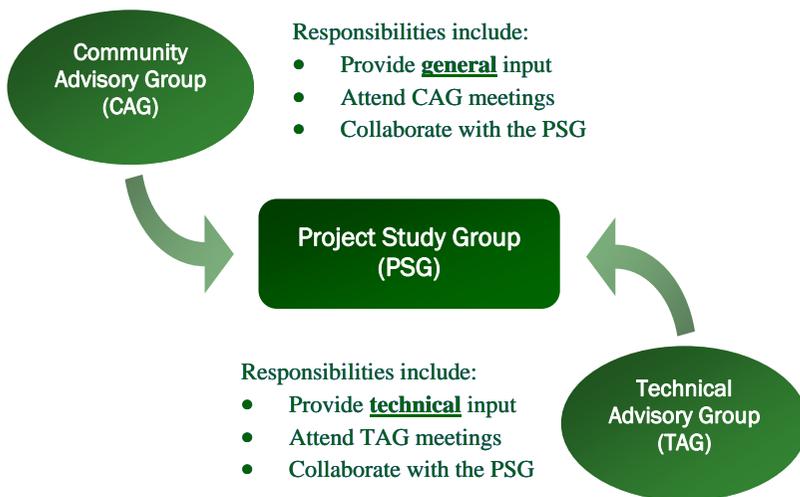
We're on the web! Find out more information @ [www.us51eis-idot.com](http://www.us51eis-idot.com)

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## CSS Update

Stakeholder input has been important throughout the entire project process from project kick-off through the alternative development and evaluation process. The project's CAGs helped in the development of and narrowing to the reasonable range of alternatives moving forward in the DEIS. Comments received from the Public Information Meetings held in May 2010 and November 2011 were considered when selecting recommended alternatives.

As the recommended alternatives are refined further for the DEIS, CAG meetings will be held less frequently, and will be scheduled on an as-needed basis. In addition, Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs) may be formed in 2011. The project team will form TAGs to assist the project team with evaluating the alternatives for specific issues during the study process. The TAGs are comprised of members with specific interests and knowledge, such as business owners or farmers. Members of the TAG will be responsible for providing technical input, attending TAG meetings, and collaborating with the project team. TAG members may or may not be members of the CAG.



## How to Stay Involved

Are you a stakeholder in the project? If you live, work, or travel the in the study area, you are a stakeholder. Opportunities for involvement in the US 51 EIS study will continue throughout the project. You can request a speaker for your group or organization by contacting the project team at 217-373-8951 or US51EIS@clarkdietz.com.

# Newspaper Articles

[Home](#) » [News](#) » [Local](#)

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Friday, January 18, 2008 12:34 AM CST

## Route 51 Coalition gears up for another year of fighting for expansion funding

By SHARON MOSLEY - For the Herald & Review

PANA - After nine years of work and less than 10 miles of road, former Pana Mayor Ken Mueller is frustrated with the pace of the U.S. 51 four-lane expansion.

"I've been at it for nine years, and we've gone six or seven miles," Mueller told the annual meeting of the Route 51 Coalition on Wednesday night. "It is completely unacceptable."

The Route 51 Coalition is a group of businesspeople, elected officials and landowners interested in completing the plan to make U.S. 51 four lanes from Decatur to Centralia. The current two-lane stretch, from north of Assumption to Centralia, is the only stretch of the highway, which runs from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico, that is not a four-lane road.

Members of the coalition heard from state Rep. Gary Hannig, D-Mount Olive, who said funding for future roadwork is hard to find.

"It may be that the governor's plan to expand gambling would give us the money we need," Hannig said. "If it goes ahead, it makes the second-largest gaming state after Nevada."

Secretary-Treasurer Jim Schwarz said the Illinois legislature has not had a capital improvement program for roads and bridges on its priority list for several years, and that Chicago's mass transit issues would serve to force the issue to the forefront.

"They (Chicago Mass Transit) need capital money as much as we do," he said. "They will play a part in getting it, and we can work with that."

Expanding the road to four lanes from Assumption to just south of the Shelby County line could cost \$110 million.

"I wish they would have said nine years ago, 'It's not worthy of the money,' " Mueller said. "I wouldn't have put so much effort into it. It is worth it, for economic development and for public safety."

Decatur Chamber of Commerce President Randy Prince said the group must be prepared to ask for money at both the state and national levels.

"I had a meeting with (U.S.) Sen. (Dick) Durbin's chief of staff and was told Route 51 is his top priority in the (federal) highway bill," Prince said. "We've got to set a goal of when we want the road done, and then we need to hold their (legislators) feet to the fire."

"Rep. Hannig said at dinner tonight that this year might be the last capital money we see for a while. Let's make sure we get it."

Sharon Mosley can be reached at [sharonhrnews@yahoo.com](mailto:sharonhrnews@yahoo.com).



www.ramseynewsjournal.com

# Ramsey News-Journal

RAMSEY, ILLINOIS 62080-0218 (USPS 455,000) VOLUME 127 - NO. 5 16 PAGE NEWS SECTION THURSDAY, JANUARY 31, 2008

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## Rt. 51 hearing well attended

Representatives of Illinois Dept. of Transportation worried if anyone would attend the Jan. 24 hearing on Rt. 51 study in RGS all purpose room. They expressed appreciation when nearly all seating was taken by interested local citizens.

A dismal showing of interest at Centralia was the source of their concern. Earlier on Jan. 24, however, the second of 3 hearings was well attended in Vandalia.

Having the four lane expansion as close as Assumption is an important subject from Pana to Vandalia where the expansion is anticipated in the future.

How far in the future? IDOT

representatives were not even guessing. Funding has dried up and there is no new construction even to Pana were some right-of-way has been purchased.

This meeting was a Phase I process of informing the public and asking for local input. Citizens were given an opportunity "to provide comments to the project team regarding the project's purpose along with social, cultural and/or environmental issues."

Some citizens wanted to keep abreast of the process and volunteered to be on a Citizen Advisory Group.

Corridors of the new highway



Citizens from Oconee, Ramsey and Vera areas attended the Rt. 51 hearing and were encouraged to point out social, cultural and environmental issues on large aerial maps. RNJ/bjm

## Vote on Super Tuesday

General Primary Election day is next Tuesday, February 5th. It is deemed Super Tuesday because several states are having primaries that day. Voters in County Board districts have races to be decided. Jean Finley is unopposed in District #1.

But it is important for everyone to vote because they will be indicating who they want for President, by voting for Delegates and Alternates. (Study your Voter Info sheet in last week's *News-Journal* again).

Polls are open 6 a.m. - 7 p.m. The County Clerk's office is open 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. this Saturday for in-person absentee voting. Monday is the last day to vote in the Clerk's office.

which were proposed 30 years ago are were discarded, one IDOT member told the *News-Journal*.

Phase I is expected to conclude by 2012, to be followed by the

design phase which could take 2 or 3 years, followed by another 2 years for property acquisition, then construction - if funding becomes available at each phase.

Those who were unable to attend one of these hearings can find information at [us51-idot.com](http://us51-idot.com) or register comments at [US51EIS@Clark-Dietz.com](mailto:US51EIS@Clark-Dietz.com).



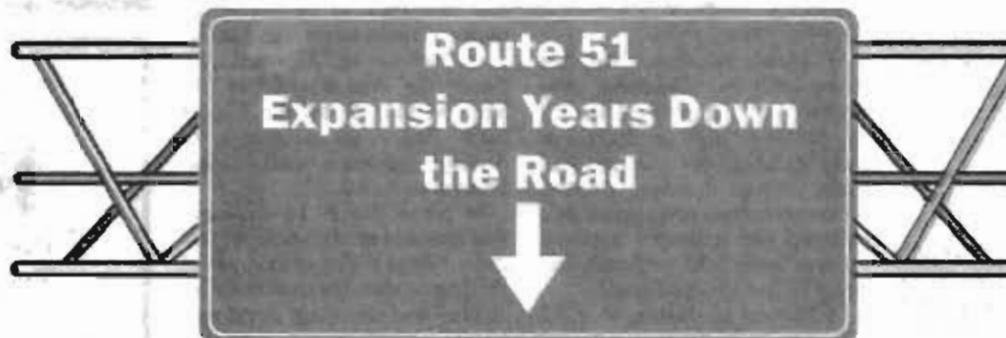
# The Leader-Union



Number: 5

Vandalia, Fayette County, Illinois 62471

38 Pages - 50 Cents - Thursday, January 31, 2008



Jerry Payonk of Clark Dietz Engineers, one of the consulting engineers for the Illinois Department of Transportation's Route 51 expansion, addresses the large crowd attending a public meeting last

Thursday afternoon at the Kaskaskia College Vandalia Campus. Payonk said a study on the four-lane expansion of Route 51 into Fayette County will take about four years.

## Engineer says Phase I study will take four years

By RICH BAUER  
Managing Editor

A large group of Fayette County residents turned out last Thursday afternoon to find out the possible path for four-lane expansion of U.S. Route 51 through the county. What they found out is that they can play a part in making that determination.

Jerry Payonk of Clark Dietz Engineers, one of the consulting firms working with the Illinois Department of Transportation on the Route 51 expansion project, told that crowd at the Kaskaskia College Vandalia Campus that the public meeting was being held to introduce the U.S. 51 Environmental Impact Statement Project.

In simple terms, that means that IDOT is beginning an engineering study that will "determine where it should go along this entire stretch," Payonk. That "stretch" runs from the southern border of Christian County (just south of Pana) to Interstate 64 at Centralia.

"One of the primary reasons you are here today is because we want you to attend future meetings as advisory group members, to help us determine where this project should go," Payonk said.

He said that studies regarding expansion of Route 51 have been ongoing since the 1970s, and that a planning study performed in 1987 recommended that the highway be expanded to four lanes between Decatur and I-64.

At this point, the four-lane expansion south of Decatur has been completed north of Assumption.

As far as the expansion in the Vandalia area, Payonk said there appear to be three options.

"Will it go through the historic district (the current path of Route 51)? Well, that might be kind of hard to do for four lanes," Payonk said. Other options are going to either the west or the east.

"There have been no lines on paper yet," he said. "We want you to help us determine where that will be."

Payonk invited local residents to serve on either a regional group that will consider the entire expansion area or on one of the citizen advisory groups that will be formed for each community along

the project area.

He said that IDOT is expecting the feasibility study to be completed within four years.

"At that time, we will move forward, potentially, with the construction plans," Payonk said.

THE SENTINEL • WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2008

## CENTRALIA &amp; REGION

# Little weather to clear and safe

at 5 this morning to start clearing roadways. We got an early start on ice removal, and I think we've done a pretty good job. After we got some of the ice broken-up, we ran the graters over the roads, and we've kept them pretty clear," Frietsch said.

The problem, though, is like Chief Evans said, the ice is building up on tree limbs and the weight is causing them to break, but Frietsch says that throughout the city, a number of large diameter limbs have been falling down.

"For us, the big problem is that we have these large diameter limbs coming down, and some are getting tied up on wires. We have six to eight people working, and we still don't have the time to be able to haul these limbs away," Frietsch explained.

As of Monday afternoon, city crews were only able to move fallen limbs out of the roads because the number of calls

they have received prevented them from staying in one place for too long, and Frietsch is expecting the crews to work even longer hours. "They're putting in 12 hour shifts right now, and some of them will probably end up doing a 16 hour shift," Frietsch said.

Frietsch also said that Centralia is facing the same problem that surrounding communities face in the form of salt shortage. "We've run through our salt supply already. We had to put in an order for our last 40 tons from the state, but that was 10 days ago, and it is expected to take two weeks to get here," Frietsch explained, but he went on to say that the city has a supply of cinders to use to melt ice; cinders, while messy, get the job done.

Frietsch said, "We'll be alright; though. Our crews are working hard to clear things up as they happen."

[mbarba@morningsentinel.com](mailto:mbarba@morningsentinel.com)

## NEWS BRIEFS

### U.S. 51 meeting in Centralia set

CENTRALIA — From 3 to 9 p.m. March 19 at the Centralia Recreation Complex, area residents can learn more about the U.S. 51 widening project.

The meeting was originally scheduled for Feb. 21, but had been canceled due to inclement weather. The new meeting will still allow anyone interested to ask questions and learn more about the project from Illinois Department of Transportation engineers and consultants in the event.

"This project is vitally important for the future economic growth of the communities along the U.S. 51 corridor," said State Senator Frank Watson.

### Creditors meeting for Grain Exchange is Thursday

CARLYLE — An informational creditors meeting is set for 6 p.m. Thursday at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 1471 Fairfax St., Carlyle. The purpose of the meeting is to explain the liquidation and claims process for The Grain Exchange LLC.

"If you are a depositor of grain and/or have sold grain to The Grain Exchange LLC for which you have not received payment, you should attempt to attend," according to the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

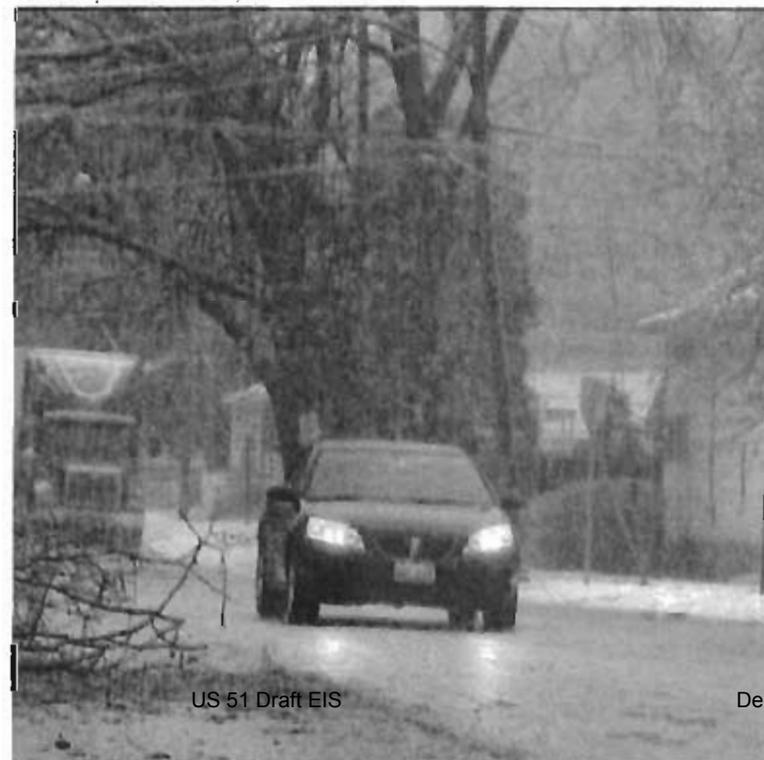
The grain dealer license and grain warehouse license of The Grain Exchange LLC, located at 1091 Methodist St. in Carlyle, with locations at 104 N. Washington St. in Bartelso, U.S. Highway 51 in Sandoval and 600 Market St. in Germantown, were revoked on Monday. The Grain Exchange LLC has been ordered to cease and desist doing business as a licensed grain dealer and warehouseman in the State of Illinois, according to a legal notice from the State of Illinois Department of Agriculture.

Any persons or producers of grain who has sold grain to the company and has not been paid or received final payment, or any depositor of grain who has grain stored and has not been paid may contact the Illinois Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Warehouses, State Fairgrounds, P.O. Box 19281, Springfield, IL 62794-9281, (800) 654-0882.

All producers and depositors who have not been paid by The Grain Exchange LLC must file a claim with the Illinois Department of Agriculture on or before the claim date of June 1 or seven days from the date notice was mailed to the claimant. Failure to file a claim within the time frame will result in the claim being denied.

Claims may be filed at 1091 Methodist St., Carlyle, starting Friday, or by mail with the Illinois Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Warehouses, State Fairgrounds, P.O. Box 19281, Springfield, IL 62794-9281.

— Compiled from Sentinel staff reports



US 51 Draft EIS



December 2013

4B-898

# Ramsey News-Journal

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VOLUME 127 - NO. 23

16 PAGE NEWS SECTION

THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 2008

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Volume IV - Part B

## Newest water well repaired

Delayed since early March by the muddy river flood plain, repairs to the pipeline of Ramsey's strongest water well are now complete, the council was advised during Monday's first meeting of June.

Water/sewer superintendent Reggie Eller reported repairing the new eight inch raw water pipeline to well #7 which appeared to be damaged by another pipeline contractor going through the river flood plain. Once the weather allowed him to get to the damage, Eller said he was also able to install a flush hydrant to stop the flow close to the well, rather than waste all the water in a 7.5-mile pipeline that may have been contaminated at the break with ground water.

Water customers have been served by well #6 since mid-March. Eller said the pipeline from well #7 had to be completely purged, treated, then samples sent to the state. When given a safe report, the village will be switched back onto the stronger #7 well.

The public library in Village Hall has or is being moved. Village Board members approved a

recommendation by the Library Board to move the library into the center portion of Village Hall and hold council sessions in the south room.

Board members gave approval to temporary closing of streets necessary for Ramsey Daze which usually includes Fourth Street between East and West Front Streets, and the 100 block of East Front where the Carnival caravan sets up.

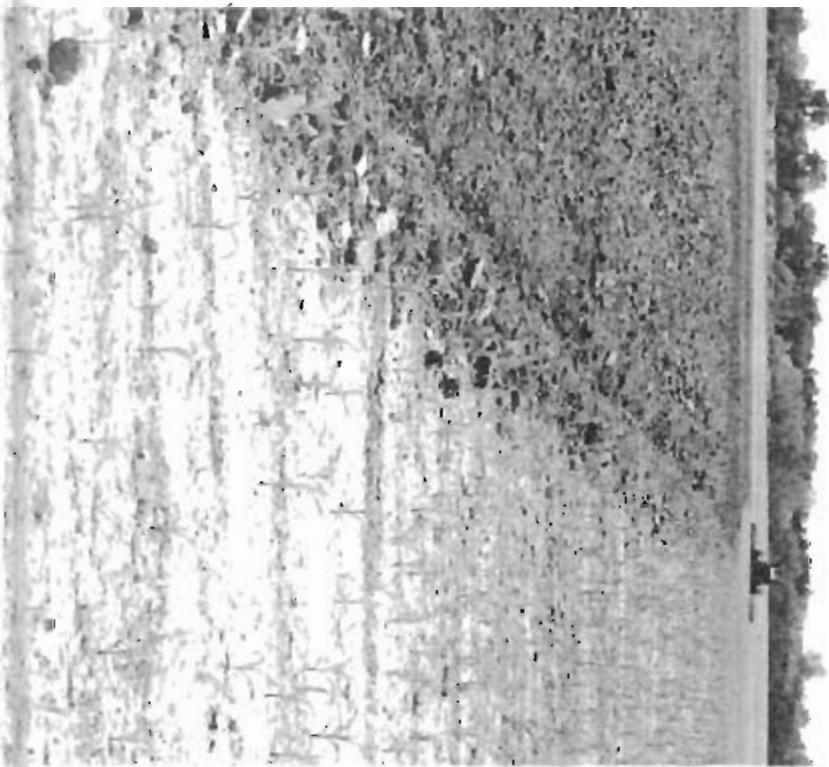
Health and Property committee members met prior to the regular June 2 council session. Roger Corrington reported that the committee has taken citizen complaints about leaf burning into consideration and will encourage afternoon burning only on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays this fall, rather than banning it entirely. Citizens will also be encouraged to bag leaves and take them to the old dump site west of town where they can be disposed of.

An improvement project estimated at \$150 was allowed for the Ninth Street building, to improve lighting and doors.

## Lawmakers pose budget and construction plans, then adjourn session

Like a proverbial rubber check, the eleventh hour efforts of Illinois lawmakers may bounce when it comes time to collect.

The legislative session ended on time late Saturday evening as the General Assembly sent a budget to the Governor.



## Patching In

Weather has allowed only a portion of corn to be planted and just a few days remain before farmers run short of growing days for this crop. This field, like many others, was planted on time but damaged by rain and cold nights. Bare spots and poor stands were being "patched in" on Monday. Corn in foreground was about six inches tall but sparse, growing in ground turned to concrete by heavy rain. The stand was even poorer in the distance toward the tractor. The planter was out of picture but not far behind the disc.

AK/ogm

## Archaeologists surveying Rt. 51 corridor

Survey crews have been seen off and on in recent months, taking readings along U.S. Route 51 and country roads between Pana and Vandalia.

Now a crew of five scientists with Illinois Transportation Archaeological Research Program are taking to the same section of R. 51, documenting any sites which should be chronicled before figure construction of a four lane expressway.

Archaeologists connected to the University of Illinois want landowners to know they will be inspecting a wide distance on each side of the present right of way, looking for prehistoric as well as historic locations, says I-TARP member Ryan Gifford who stopped in Ramsey last week, asking about any such known sites. Little known family grave sites will be of great interest, he emphasized.

Gifford said team members are only looking for information at this stage.

If you are aware of an important site not previously mentioned at one of the public hearings, Gifford asks you to call I-TARP at 217-244-4244. Or call the News-Journal which has a direct line to the archaeologist.

# Patoka, Vernon residents share concerns about Route 51 expansion

## Meeting with IDOT held on Monday

By **BRANDI SPELBRING**  
Staff Writer

Community members from Patoka and Vernon voiced the concerns of their communities Monday night to representatives of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) during the Route 51 Citizen Advisory meeting in Patoka.

Around 15 citizens from many walks of life showed up to the meeting representing a variety of interests, including firefighters, school administrators, Vernon and Patoka village board members, business owners and concerned citizens. These citizens presented issues which may affect their very way of life

if and when the expansion of Route 51 to a four-lane highway becomes a reality.

Along with IDOT representatives, members of the Clark Dietz Inc. engineering firm were also present to discuss the environmental impact statement currently being conducted by the Federal Highway Administration and IDOT. The purpose of the planning study is to evaluate a transportation improvement along Route 51 that will meet both local and regional needs.

Jerry Payonk, one representative of Clark Dietz Inc., a consulting firm from Champaign, explained the timeline set by IDOT for the process of Route 51. This timeline has spring of 2008 until spring of 2009 as the time for identifying the problem statement, which will include addressing the transportation problem, community issues and

**See ROUTE 51, Page 3A**

SALEM TIMES-COMMONER

## ROUTE 51

from page 1A

what is important to each community. After gathering information from these sources, the team will define and analyze in spring 2009 to determine whether the analysis satisfies the problem statement made in 2008. They then will present a final alternative in the summer of 2010, intended to solve the problem statement. With the project coming to completion with federal approval as a record of approval in the spring of 2012.

Though the representatives showed genuine concern for the issues at hand in the communities of Patoka and Vernon, they made sure to point out that the final decision regarding the path that and expanded Route 51 would take lies solely with IDOT. They explained that these meetings are being conducted to gain the input of all the communities affected by the upcoming change to Route 51 in order to build the best plan for the highway, but IDOT has all final approval, not the communities. So, while community interest would be considered, the decision can only be made by IDOT before seeking federal approval and funding for the project.

An icebreaker to lighten up the group had participants telling a rumor they had heard about the Route 51 expansion project. Though many of these rumors were outrageous, many more felt heavy with the intensity of the possible impact many are concerned about when it comes to the expansion. One woman feared the possibility of the loss of her home, as her sister did during a similar expansion further north in Illinois.

Payonk announced that IDOT has identified four issues facing the Route 51 transportation problem. First is connectivity of Route 51 with other highways, affecting commerce tremendously. Second, is economic development, such as trucking concerns. Third, the continuity of keeping four lanes, rather than going from two to four in some places, making for unsafe conditions. And last is the issues of reliability and safety. These four components of the traffic problem will be the driving force behind the Route 51 project.

The community members were asked to discuss in a workshop setting what they believed are the major problems which may arise by expanding US

Route 51 to a four-lane highway. The results varied from group to group, but many common themes rang out.

Nearly all the groups were concerned about school safety most of all. As the Patoka school sits along Route 51, citizens are concerned about getting buses across the highway safely. Another school safety issue was that many high school-age students in a rural setting tend to drive themselves, meaning more traffic to school, with possibly unsafe conditions. Traveling across a four-lane highway to get to school could pose some serious issues for safety.

Another similar traffic safety issue that arose was the concern of farmers crossing a four-lane highway with slow moving farm equipment. The farming concerns went beyond safety though, to include the splitting of prime farmland if the route was moved. This would especially affect centennial farms if the path of Route 51 was moved. Traffic issues in general were also addressed, as access points would be limited and drivers would be entering a fast-moving, increased volume of traffic.

Vernon representatives were concerned about their village becoming a ghost town if impacted negatively by the expansion. They also were concerned about whether they would have to move their water tower. Further making their list was the loss of businesses and the possible loss of their post office.

Major concerns for all in attendance was the possible loss of economic development and displacing homeowners. Many were concerned that older folks who have lived most of their lives in their homes would be very reluctant to leave their homes in their older years. This could pose a major emotional hardship on many homeowners affected by an expansion. Also, landowners in general could face problems if their property intersects with a new path for Route 51.

These citizen's advisory group meetings will continue throughout the year. For more information, citizens can contact Barbara Moore at (217) 373-8948. Moore is the transportation administrative assistant for IDOT. Information is also available online at us51-idot.com.



# Back on track

## IDOT begins new study on Route 51 path

By RICH BAUER  
Managing Editor

The last time that the Illinois Department of Transportation conducted a study on the four-lane expansion of U.S. Route 51 through Vandalia, more than a decade ago, there was a preference to taking the highway right through town.

But, as IDOT prepares to initiate another such study, those earlier findings – as well as all others performed in the past – are being thrown out the window.

As the four-lane expansion of Route 51 nears Assumption, IDOT is gearing up plans to determine the path of the highway through Fayette County.

And one of the factors it will use in making that determination is public input, according to Jerry Payonk, vice president of Clark Dietz Inc.

Clark Dietz Inc. is a Champaign engineering firm that has been hired by IDOT to conduct the Route 51 expansion study.

That study, according to Payonk and IDOT District 7 Plans Project Engineer Sherry Phillips, will take at least four years.

"The study is just commencing," Payonk told the Vandalia City Council on Monday evening.

"We have some previous reports and studies, and we're not saying that those will be scrapped, but to some extent, we are starting anew," he said.

As part of the study, IDOT will hold about 100 public hearings along the 65-mile stretch that will be covered. That stretch runs from Pana to Centralia.

Three of those public meetings will be held sometime this fall, one in Centralia, one in Pana and one in a community at the north end of the stretch.

"IDOT has a final say, but the public has a much greater hand in what is done here (in Vandalia)," Payonk said. "The public is going to become stakeholders in this project.

"We're trying to get the entire input of the community," he said.

Payonk asked city officials to encourage all residents of

## ■ 51

### Continued From Page 1

Vandalia who are interested in the four-lane expansion to attend the Route 51 public hearings.

"Usually, those who are in favor of the project understand that it will be done, and their input is not needed, and the ones who show up are ones who are against the project," he said.

"All of these people have a very important voice on where it (Route 51) should go and what's good for the community," Payonk said.

Through the last Route 51 study done, IDOT came up with three possible routes through Vandalia:

- One that took the highway around the city to the east.
- One that took the highway around Vandalia to the west.
- One that took the road on its current path straight south past Gallatin Street, with the highway winding back east south of town.

The third option was the one that was preferred at that time.

Alderwoman Barbie Elliott asked whether IDOT had conducted, or knew of, any

studies as to how routing a four-lane highway around a community impacting that community.

Neither Payonk or Phillips knew of any such study, but Phillips said city officials could get such information "by doing some of your own research."

She encouraged city officials to contact officials in towns – such as Clinton, Macon or Moweaqua – where Route 51 was rerouted outside the city.

The new study will include a close look at environmental issues, Phillips said.

"There are a lot of issues and a lot of questions we have to look at," Payonk said.

The stretch of Route 51 between Centralia and a point north of Assumption is the only part of the highway that is still a two-lane roadway.

Payonk said funding has been approved to make the four-lane extension to Pana from the north.

It's hard to say when the four-lane construction south of Pana will begin, Payonk said. But, he added, it's not in the near future.

"It (construction) is not even in the program at this point, it's so far off," he said.

# the Leader-Union



Vandalia, Fayette County, Illinois 62471

70 Pages - 50 Cents - Thursday, November 27, 2008

## Route 51 meetings are next week

The Illinois Department of Transportation will again seek comments from Fayette County residents as it continues to work on the four-lane expansion of U.S. Route 51 between Decatur and Centralia.

Representatives of IDOT and Clark-Dietz Engineers, which is serving as a consulting engineering firm for the Route 51 project, will be present at public meetings next Tuesday and Wednesday.

From 3-7 p.m. on Tuesday, those representatives will be at the Ramsey Village Hall. They

will also be at the Ramada Inn Ltd. in Vandalia on Wednesday from noon-6 p.m.

The purpose of these public meetings is to present to the public an environmental impact statement that has been prepared for future expansions of Route 51 to four lanes.

In addition to reviewing that statement, area residents can offer comments to agency officials.

Since the introduction of a study related to the expansion of Route 51 to four lanes between Decatur and Centralia in the late

1980s, 35 miles of the highway south of Decatur have been expanded to four lanes.

A four-lane section of Route 51 south of Moweaqua was opened to traffic in the fall of 2007.

The next section to be constructed is a four-mile-long bypass around Assumption.

Another four-mile, straight-line section from south of Assumption to north of Pana, as well as a seven-mile bypass around Pana, are being designed, and will be constructed when funding becomes available.

**NOTICE  
U.S. 51  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPACT STATEMENT  
PURPOSE AND  
NEED AVAILABLE  
FOR REVIEW**

Notice is hereby given that the Purpose and Need for the US 51 Environmental Impact Statement is available for public review and comment. The Illinois Department of Transportation will hold Public Information Meetings to accept comments on the Purpose and Need on December 2 and 3, 2008. The limits of the study are the Shelby/Christian County line to the U.S. 51/IL 177 interchange (east of Irvington). The meeting times and locations are as follows:

Tuesday, December 2,  
2008 - 12:00 to 6:00 P.M.  
Centralia Recreation  
Complex  
115 E. Second Street  
Centralia, IL 62301

Tuesday, December 2,  
2008 - 3:00 to 7:00 P.M.  
Ramsey Village Hall  
401 S. Superior Street  
Ramsey, IL 62080

Wednesday, December 3,  
2008 - 12:00 to 6:00 P.M.  
Ramada Inn  
2707 Veterans Parkway  
Vandalia, IL 62471

The Purpose and Need document will be available for review and comment at the meetings and project staff will be available to answer questions about the project. The Purpose and Need is also available to download and review on the project website at

[www.us51-idot.com](http://www.us51-idot.com)  
and comments will be accepted by mail, email or fax until December 17, 2008. For those without access to the internet, call 217-373-8951 to request a copy by mail. Persons with disability requiring special accommodations should contact Mr. Tim Jackson of the Illinois Department of Transportation (217-342-3951) to advise of planned attendance and needed accommodations.

# PANA NEWS-PALLADIUM

Containing More News About the Pana Trade Area Than All Other Newspapers in the World

Monday and Thursday

PANA, ILLINOIS 62557 - THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2009

## Representative Phil Hare Plans Pana Stop Tuesday

U. S. Representative Phil Hare (D-IL) will be in Pana for a Town Hall meeting on Tuesday, May 26, at 3:00 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Council Chambers of Pana City Hall.

Hare, of Moline, represents residents in Pana Township in Christian County and Cold Spring and Herrick townships in Shelby County. He also has Hurricane, South Hurricane and Ramsey townships in

Fayette County and townships in the southern half of Montgomery County.

Representative Hare will address residents and give them an update of the latest from Washington.

Immediately following that meeting, at 3:30 p.m., the U.S. Route 51 Coalition will hold a rally for Route 51.

See related story this issue.

## Rally For Route 51 Tuesday

Pana Mayor Steve Sipes, as President of the Route 51 Association is calling a U.S. Route 51 Coalition Rally for Tuesday, May 26, 2009 at Pana City Hall in the City Council Chambers at 3:30 p.m. Pana City Hall is located on the corner of U.S. 51 & 3rd Street in Midtown Pana.

U. S. Representative Phil Hare will be present as well as a representative from John Shimkus' Office. He will be out of the country that day.

The rally is seen as very important in the eyes of organizers. They say "the stars are in line in Washington" at a time when American Recovery Act projects are being funded.

If funding for Rt. 51 is going to be part of the package organizers say these communities must let Washington know their feelings.

When comparing the U. S. north-south national road system, U. S. 41, which runs north-south through Indiana and U. S. 61, in Missouri, are 4-lane highways. Both have been developed years ahead of the central Illinois portion of U. S. Route 51 to Centralia. The stretch of Route 51 from north of Assumption to Centralia is the only section of the Rt. 51-I-39 corridor which is not 4-lane. Safety as well as economic issues are at stake the organizers believe.

# CENTRALIA

# Sentinel

Volume IV - Part B

THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2009

## IDOT's highway program continues funding

*One of IDOT's  
Multi-year projects is  
U.S. Highway 51*

**BY MATTHEW M. BARBA**  
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

CENTRALIA — Illinois Department of Transportation announced an \$11 billion program yesterday that aims to preserve, maintain and upgrade the state's existing highway system of roads and bridges.

IDOT's Multi-year Highway Improvement Program will see an investment of \$11.25 billion from 2010 to 2015; various sources of funding will be used, including federal, state and local tax dollars.

The program will use \$7.499 billion in federal funds, \$3.047 billion in state funds, \$1.552 billion in bonds from the Illinois Jobs Now! capital program, and \$704 million in local funds.

Of the more than \$11 billion being used for the program, \$8.442 billion will be used for improvements to the state highway system, and \$2.808 billion for local roads.

One of the projects listed for Southern Illinois is U.S. Highway 51 from south of Decatur to Centralia.

According to a press release from IDOT, the first phase of engineering for locating, environmental and design studies from south of Decatur to south of Pana has been completed at a cost of \$2.6 million.

The first phase of engineering for the section of U.S. Highway 51 from

### **IDOT:**

*Continued From Page 1A*

south of Pana to Centralia is currently underway at a cost of \$3.5 million, according to IDOT, and the engineering is expected to continue through the next fiscal year at a cost of \$3.2 million.

Mayor Becky Ault explained the point of the project is to look at different routes for U.S. Highway 51 to take through Southern Illinois, including taking it from Poplar and Elm streets in Centralia to a different route around the city.

"There are two or three ways they are wanting to go. One of them is on the west side of town, which is the route that we are pushing for if they are going to change the highway. We'd prefer them to keep it going through downtown, but it doesn't look like that's going to happen," said Ault.

If IDOT redirects U.S. 51, Ault said it would go on the

west side of Sandoval by the high school, then go east of Kaskaskia College and Centralia Correctional Center, run west of Centralia and meet up with the existing highway south of Wamac.

Ault, who has been attending coalition meetings for communities affected by the change, said IDOT looked at Elm and Poplar streets in Centralia and determined that traffic flow on those streets is slowed by too much cross-traffic.

Admitting the route for the highway is probably going to change, Ault said the most important thing for Centralia is to keep U.S. 51 here.

"We're working as hard as we can, however we can, to make sure the highway stays here and is on the west side of town, near Centralia, if they're going to change it," said Ault.

Public hearings on proposed changes to the highway are being held at various locations along the route, and anyone is welcome to attend them, Ault said.

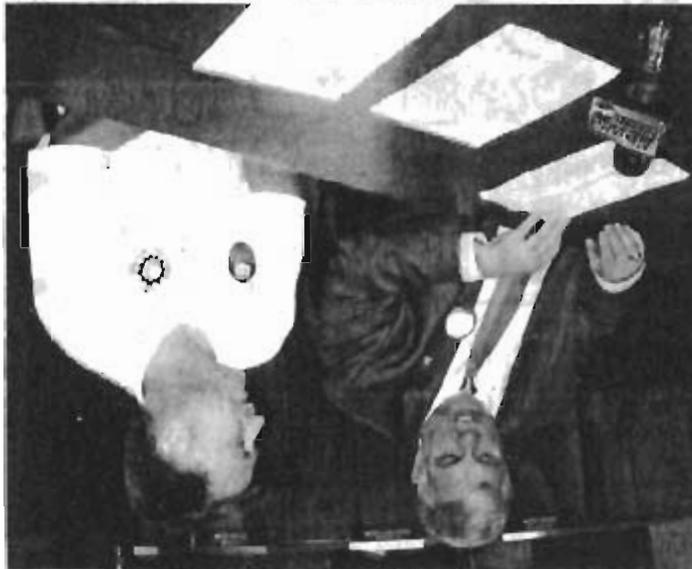
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# PANA NEWS-PALLADIUM

Containing More News About the Pana Trade Area Than All Other Newspapers in the World

PANA, ILLINOIS 62557 - THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2009

## Route 51 Coalition Holds Rally In Pana Tuesday Afternoon



U.S. CONGRESSMAN Phil Hare, left, converses with Pana Mayor Steve Sipes during a rally for the U. S. Route 51 Coalition. It was held on Tuesday afternoon, May 26, in Pana City Hall.

Hare and a representative for Congressman John Shimkus, Rodney Davis of Taylorville, pledged cooperation between the legislators on the project during the rally.

(Jim Deere Photo)

Rodney Davis of U. S. Rep-resentative Shimkus' office and efficiently move them to and from the markets in the north as well as to the Gulf of Mexico. Congressman Phil Hare of Rock Island, addressed the group on the funding possibilities and the avenues of requesting funds. Hare is a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and he is trying to get a \$450 billion transportation bill passed during the fall 2009 session. That bill could include an allotment for U. S. Route 51.

Hare also addressed the need for revenue to pay for the funding. The funding will also need dollars from the state to match the Illinois share for the Transportation allotment. Hare has met with the U.S. Secretary of Transportation and former Illinois Congressman, Ray LaHood, and discussed funding for Rt. 51 from Assumption to Centralia.

The U.S. Route 51 Coalition met at Pana City Hall on Tuesday May 26, 2009 at 3:30 P.M. Pana Mayor and President of the Route 51 Association Steve Sipes served as moderator of the session, opened the meeting and welcomed a standing room only crowd of over 55 members of the Coalition and interested parties.

Sipes introduced Jim Schwarz of the Dunn Company, Decatur, and Treasurer of the Coalition. Schwarz gave a summary of a recent request to U. S. Rep. Phil Hare (D-17) and a representative of U. S. Rep. John Shimkus (R-19) for funding for U. S. Route 51 from north of Assumption, to south of Pana at the Shelby County Line.

Phil Hazenfield of Homer Chastain and Associates, the firm contracted by the Illinois Department of Transportation to design the Assumption through Pana corridor, reported on the progress of the design of the project. He said the project has been split into three sections - the Assumption bypass, south of north of Pana; and the Pana bypass from north of Pana to south of Pana near the Shelby County Line. The three phases of design are near completion and could lead to the next phase of purchase of property and on to construction as soon as 2013, if funded. Randy Prince of the Greater Decatur Chamber of Commerce and Director of the Coalition reported on the needs of business and industry in Decatur as well as those communities as far north as Rockford to be able to transport their finished goods to the south.

Items used in the manufacturing process of companies in the Rt. 51 corridor, as well as the finished goods, need the portion of Route 51 from Assumption to Centralia.

# The Leader-Union



3 - Number: 23

Vandalia, Fayette County, Illinois 62471

26 Pages - 50 Cents - Thursday, June 11, 2009



## KC Phase II in capital bill *Legislators also add more funds for Route 51*

By RICH BAUER  
Managing Editor

All that's needed for the construction of the second phase of the Kaskaskia College Vandalia Campus is one signature.

That one signature will also help to bring the four-lane expansion of U.S. Route 51 closer to Vandalia.

But that one signature may be a little hard to get.

The Illinois General Assembly has approved a new capital construction bill, and it now sits on the desk of Gov. Pat Quinn.

The problem is that Quinn has told legislators that he's not willing to sign the capital bill until state legislators get on board with his proposed budget.

State Sen. Kyle McCarter (R-Lebanon) said on Friday evening that the capital

bill includes \$5.6 million for the construction of a second building at the Kaskaskia College Vandalia Campus.

Also in that bill is an additional \$20 million for the four-lane expansion of U.S. Route 51, McCarter said.

"I found out Sunday that it (the KC project) had been line itemed in (the capital bill)," McCarter said. "When I found out, I was one happy guy. I took it to the (legislative) leadership, and they agreed to support it."

"It helps to be a new senator, and it helps to follow someone, like Frank Watson," he said.

In fact, Vandalia Mayor Rick Gottman

said, Watson was continuing to work with his successor behind the scenes, explaining that he was faxing information about the KC project to both men in the recent past.

"Frank and I got together and talked about some of the programs that he had been pushing for some time, and this was one of them," McCarter said. "This is a great thing."

Kaskaskia College President Dr. James Underwood said college officials are anxiously watching the capital bill and budget movements in Springfield.

"We're patiently waiting for the legislative leadership and the governor to come to terms on a budget," Underwood said.

"We're pleased that there is a line item for the college, instead of this being in with the community college monies," he

said. "That's promising."

"We were always on the community college list (for state funds for the Vandalia Campus). Now, for the first time, we've got the project on the appropriations list," he said.

"What we don't know is what the state requirements will be, as far as such things as a match," Underwood said.

The college applied for state assistance when planning to build a KC Vandalia Campus, with the original plan calling for local funds to match the state grant.

As local funds were being raised for the project, the college broke the campus project into two phases. The college was able to complete the first phase of that project when nearly \$3 million of local monies were used in conjunction with

■ BILL PAGE 16

## **BILL**

### **Continued From Page 1**

\$4.5 million from the college. The college plans to include in the second phase of the campus project facilities that could be used for general, vocational and technical instruction.

Underwood said he and everyone else at the college are thankful for the support of both the current and former senator.

"This was one of Frank Watson's projects since it was first introduced," he said.

"We have always had great

support from Sen. Watson, and Sen. McCarter has been just as great.

"We're just so elated to see it get this far, and we're so grateful to Sen. Watson and Sen. McCarter for their encouragement and for getting the job done," Underwood said.

McCarter and Watson also talked about the new senator continuing to push for more Route 51 monies. That push netted considerable more funds for Route 51 construction.

McCarter said the funds included in the new capital bill are enough to expand the

highway to four-lanes to the Shelby County line south of Pana.

That construction will include bypasses around Assumption and Pana.

McCarter is "hopeful" that Quinn will sign off on the capital bill in the near future. A new budget is another story.

Quinn is pushing for an income tax hike, "but he can't get that passed," McCarter said.

"It passed in the Senate, but the House wouldn't even run it," he said.

Under Senate Bill 174, McCarter said, "Thirty-nine

products were going to be taxed, everything from dry cleaning to hair cuts. That would mean an additional \$300 to \$500 per family.

"We need to hold out for some real reform," he said. "You just can't dump irresponsible spending on the people."

"There is a lot of jockeying going on (in Springfield)," he said. "I'll do everything I can to be a part of the solution."

Quinn and the legislative leaders were scheduled to hold another meeting to discuss budget issues on Tuesday afternoon.

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# CENTRALIA

Volume IV - Part B

# Sentinel

TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2009

## HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS UNDERWAY



Sentinel Photo/BRYAN HUNT

**Motorists slow through the work zone of U.S. 51 South, just south of the Dix-Irvington Road exit Monday afternoon, as crews from Howell Paving, Inc., Centralia, apply the first asphalt lift to the exit ramp lane off the highway for the Illinois Department of Transportation project. The team had just finished a similar application north of the overpass, in Washington County.**

## State's highway plan gets Rt. 51 expansion nearer Pana

The first Capital Construction Plan for Illinois in more than a decade is now law and will infuse the economy by some \$31 billion over the course of the next six years.

Governor Pat Quinn and lawmakers envision putting 439,000 jobs on the payroll in what they call "Illinois Jobs Now!"

There are projects ready for bidding right now. The most pressing repair and maintenance projects to protect state property is next on the priority list. Schools promised funding for new buildings years ago are likely to see those funds now.

Lake Land College gets \$9.9 million for a workforce relocation center and \$7.5 for a rural development tech center.

Vandalia is to get \$5.6 million for infrastructure improvements at Kaskaskia College campus.

IDOT District 7 has a \$589,430,223 budget for the multi-year plan. It calls for Route 51 to be resurfaced 8.72 miles from the County line south through Ramsey for \$870,000.

Also bridge replacements over Caesar Creek north of Bingham (\$163,000); bridge replacement over Lynn Creek northeast of the Correctional Center (\$180,000); bridges over Moccasin Creek and Fanny Brook near Wrights Corner; and a bridge over Pole Cat Creek northwest of Cowden.

In District 6, several projects are posted for the expansion of Route 51 from Assumption south. Resumption of the freeway from 1.5 miles north of Assumption gets about \$30 million for paving, land acquisition and utility adjustment for the next 2.9 miles; \$2.5 million for land acquisition and utility adjustment another five miles farther south, and \$21.5 million for roadwork bringing the four-lane within 2.7 miles of Pana.

Route 51 will be resurfaced from Montgomery Co. line 9.44 miles north.

# CENTRALIA Volume IV - Part B Sentinel

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2009

## Florida man killed in Wash. Co. accident

BY JASON SILVEY  
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

IRVINGTON — A Sunday morning accident in Washington County claimed the life of an elderly out-of-state driver, according to local authorities.

Kenneth R. Rusher, 86, of Lakeland, Fla., was killed in a two-vehicle crash south of Irvington, Washington County Coroner Mark Styninger said in an official statement Sunday afternoon.

Information from Washington County Ambulance Administrator John Felchlia indicated 911 dispatchers were notified at 8:40 a.m. of the accident, which occurred on Route 51 just north of Interstate 64 at the exit ramp.

The Washington County Sheriff's Department and Irvington Fire and Rescue also responded to the scene, Felchlia said.

Rusher was driving a four-door passenger car which sustained

Please see **Accident**, Page 3A



Submitted Photo

**FATAL CRASH** — Authorities investigate the scene of a two-vehicle accident just north of Interstate 64 on Route 51 which resulted in the death of a Florida man Sunday morning.

## Accident:

*Continued From Page 1A*

major damage.

Styninger's report said Rusher was wearing his seat belt at the time of the accident and no passengers were in his vehicle.

While the cause of the accident has not yet been determined, Styninger stated, "It appears Mr. Rusher may have suffered a medical condition prior to the accident."

Rusher's death was caused by the blunt force impact of the crash, causing severe internal injuries. He was pronounced dead at 9:35 a.m. Sunday.

The sheriff's office and other agencies that responded said that the accident was still under investigation and more information would be forthcoming. The identities and extent of injuries of oth-

er parties involved in the crash were not available as of press time.

Styninger said he collected samples for toxicological testing, although no coroner's inquest will be scheduled.

Sunday's accident was the second major crash in involving interstate traffic in Washington County over the last week.

Felchlia said a Plano, Texas, man was critically injured in an another accident that occurred at 8:20 p.m. Thursday at westbound mile marker 57 on I-64.

In that accident, the vehicle involved rolled several times, trapping the driver after it came to a stop. Felchlia said crews worked for 25 minutes to extricate the driver from the vehicle.

Nashville Fire and Rescue also assisted at the scene. The driver, who was not identified, was transported from the scene by Air-Evac Lifeteam 45012 at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis.

[jsilvey@morningsentinel.com](mailto:jsilvey@morningsentinel.com)

# Ramsey News-Journal

## DOT to offer Rt. 51 corridors in Nov.

Illinois Department of Transportation will hold Public Information Meetings in November for the US 51 Environmental Impact Statement to accept comments on the project study to date. Limits of the study are the Shelby/Christian County line to the U.S. 51/IL 177 interchange, south of Centralia.

IDOT will conduct three meetings. The first will be November 17 in the Centralia Recreation Complex, then November 18, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. in Vandalia American Legion. On Thursday, November 19, IDOT will meet the public in Ramsey High School Library, from 6:00-8:00 p.m.

The purpose of each meeting is to review the project study to date and to present recommended corridors to move forward with for further study around the communities of Ramsey, Vandalia, Vernon, Patoka, Sandoval, and Centralia.

A formal presentation will start, followed by an open-house format where questions can be answered by representatives of the project team.

# CENTRALIA Sentinel

Volume IV - Part B

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2009

## U.S. 51 expansion public hearings held next week

BY MATTHEW M. BARBA  
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

CENTRALIA — Public hearings for the development process of an expansion of U.S. Route 51 will be held next week as members of the U.S. 51 Environmental Impact Statement present proposed corridors to area residents and community leaders.

The public hearings will consist of a presentation and exhibit, including maps with the proposed route changes, as the next step in the project development process to study reasonable alternatives in further detail and write a Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

The public hearing will give members of the project study team a chance to receive public input prior to seeking approval on the range of recommended alternatives from the Federal Highway

Administration.

Jerry Payonk, engineer with Clark Dietz Engineers, explained the public meetings being held next week in Centralia, Vandalia and Ramsey are the first chance for area residents to see the proposed alternative routes for the U.S. 51 expansion.

"This is the first time we're actually going to have lines on a map. People will be able to see the corridors where these routes would exist and ask questions on how the project will impact them," explained Payonk.

Clark Dietz is the lead engineering firm on the project to expand U.S. 51 to four lanes from south of Pana to east of Irvington and help relieve traffic in some congested areas and improve safety along the

Please see **U.S. 51**, Page 3A

## U.S. 51:

*Continued From Page 1A*

highway.

The Centralia public hearing will be from 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at the Centralia Recreation Complex. Other hearings will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday at the Vandalia American Legion and Ramsey High School Library, respectively.

All information presented at each of the meetings will be the same.

Project members are looking at the impact the changes to U.S. 51 will have on Ramsey, Vandalia, Vernon, Patoka, Sandoval and Centralia, and members of each community are encouraged to attend one of the public hearings, Payonk said.

According to information from U.S. 51 EIS, the environmental studies of potential U.S. 51 project corridors began in 2008 and continued into this year. In February, a Purpose and Need Statement for the project was approved.

Studies have been conducted by the Illinois Natural History Survey to determine what endangered and threatened species of wildlife and vegetation would be affected by the project. Information from these students will be included in the environmental impact statement.

According to U.S. 51 EIS, the environmental informa-

tion being gathered plays a part in deciding where the expansion of the route will be made, but no decisions on the future location of U.S. Route 51 have been made at this time.

After all of the alternatives for the route have been defined and analyzed, a final alternative will be chosen and a record of decision in the form of federal approval will be made.

More information is available from the U.S. 51 EIS project team by calling (217) 373-8951.

*mbarba@morningsentinel.com*

# Somewhere Down the Road



# Progress on U.S. Route 51 expansion plans explained

Volume IV - Part B

By RICH BAUER  
Managing Editor

It will still be some time before Fayette County residents will see U.S. Route 51 being expanded to four lanes, but they do now have a better idea of where the four lanes will run.

At public meetings last week, Illinois Department of Transportation officials and representatives of Clark Dietz Inc., a Champaign engineering firm partnering with IDOT on the Route 51 expansion, presented preliminary alignments showing the likely paths of the four-lane roadway.

Jerry Payonk of Clark Dietz said the Route 51 partners are halfway through the process of gaining federal approval for the completion of the Route 51 project.

Studies on the expansion of the highway began in 1970, Payonk said, with the first section of four-lane roadway built from Forsyth to Bloomington.

Another study on the expansion was undertaken in 1987, and an environmental study for expansion from Decatur to Pana was completed in 1987, he said.

Construction on the four lanes has progressed from Decatur to a point north of Assumption, and Payonk said there's money in the state's current capital bill for construction of two more sections - a bypass around Assumption and a section south of Assumption.



Photo by Rich Bauer

Some of the area residents attending a public meeting last Wednesday evening on the expansion of U.S. Route 51 to four lanes look over maps on projected corridors for the highway. Jerry Payonk of Clark Dietz Inc. talks with Vandalia Director of Economic Development and Tourism JoAnn Givens at the right of the photo.

## Ramsey map on Page 14A

The proposed corridors have been put together after a number of meetings involving community and regional advisory groups, Payonk said.

"Approximately 90 percent of the exhibits (maps) have been developed by representatives of your community," he said.

Factors that have been considered in developing those corridors, he said, include traffic safety, economic development, community issues and "what's important to you."

"We have been defining and analyzing alternatives," Payonk said.

In the macro analysis phase of the study, he said, those who have been involved have looked at such fac-

Next on the schedule, once more funds are approved, are the construction of two sections around Pana.

Presented at last week's meetings in Vandalia and Ramsey were Route 51 expansion maps for the current study area, from Christian County to north of Irvington.

Those maps show the proposed path of Route 51 in the communities of Ramsey, Vandalia, Vernon, Patoka, Sandoval and Centralia, as well as in the areas between those communities.

■ 51 Page 14

Current path of U.S. Route 51



Preliminary alternatives for 4-lane Route 51

The map showing the proposed alternative paths for U.S. Route 51 at Ramsey is shown above. Representatives of the Illinois Department of Transportation and Clark Dietz presented this and other Route 51 maps to Ramsey residents last Thursday evening. Comments on the proposed corridors for the four-lane highway are being accepted through Dec. 4.

# 51

## Continued From Page 1

tors as impact on wetlands, and business and residential displacement.

"We'd like to do this without any displacement of businesses and residences, but that's physically impossible," Payonk said.

In the Vandalia area, he said, "Interstate 70 created a challenge that none of the other communities had - connecting (Route 51) to Interstate 70."

The advisory committee came up with two corridors, both of which have Route 51 running around Vandalia to the west, a short distance west of the city's western I-70 interchange. (See map on page 1.)

One of the corridors has Route 51 running in its current path next to Vandalia Correctional Center, and the other has the roadway heading out to the west near the Vera Road.

The next step is to wind up the public input process. Clark Dietz will be accepting public comments through Dec. 4. A public comment form is available at the Route 51 Web site, [www.us51gis-dot.com](http://www.us51gis-dot.com).

"After receiving your input, we will be presenting this to the Federal Highway Administration in February," Payonk said.

Final alternative corridors will be developed by next summer, with federal approval of the corridors expected by 2012.

While that information is in the hands of the Federal Highway Administration, he said, an environmental impact study will be conducted.



## At the Rt. 51 impact hearing

Citizens join IDOT and engineering representatives to view maps showing proposed corridors for a Rt. 51 Freeway some 60 miles from Oconee to Centralia.

The group above are clustered in the vicinity of Vandalia-Ramsey corridors and hold opinion survey forms provided by the hosts.

At right is the aerial view of Vandalia with Interstate 70 entering from the west at the top and Rt. 51 passing right to left.

Kaskaskia River and its huge floodplain pose construction challenges to the east (bottom of map), sending most proposed corridors (white lines) around the city to the west.



# CENTRALIA & REGION

## Patoka intersection may soon be fixed

BY JOHN C. SCATTERGOOD  
FOR THE SENTINEL

SALEM — One of the main intersections into Patoka, which has been so sharp and narrow that local officials and business people have reported big semi tractor trailer rigs have sometimes failed to make the curve and fallen into the ditch, may soon see improvements, according to Illinois State Sen. John O. Jones of Mt. Vernon.

If there are improvements, owners of the town's convenience store say they may make a new business investments.

"I have talked with the Secretary of Transportation [Gary] Hanig," Jones said. "He's going to meet with me sometime in February to see if there's some way to resolve it."

The owners of Patoka Fast Stop, at the intersection of Clinton Street and U.S. 51, have been trying for years to get the village or state to take action to seek improvements to the intersection, according to one of the owners, Wade Mannino.

"We've always got a wreck coming down to pull somebody out," said Mannino.

It's a deep ditch that flanks the intersection, and the Mannino family suggested at the last village board meeting that the village look into having someone write a grant application to help fund a change to the intersection.

Mannino said the family had talked with former state

representative Kurt Granberg and had also talked with Jones since the convenience store opened seven years ago, but Jones said he is now hopeful that the intersection will be improved.

"Every district has some discretionary funds," Jones said.

"I've looked at it several times, including a couple of weeks ago while I was on my way to Vandalia," Jones continued.

"I'm not too sure that they have to extend the culvert," Jones said, but could make some changes so the truckers wouldn't have their vehicles dropping down the steep embankment.

"It's been an ongoing problem and it's such an asset to the community and the county, too," Jones said. "A lot of truckers like to stop there."

Jones mentioned the state's budget troubles and said work should be done to help such businesses.

"If we're going to be serious about keeping the revenue coming into the state, we've got to take care of the businesses that we have," Jones said.

Mannino expressed his happiness when told of the comments that Jones had made.

"It would probably be a win-win for the both of us [village and business]," Mannino said, if the intersection improvements were made, with an increase in sales to truckers who now skirt the store.

"We bought property across the street, a little over seven acres," Mannino said.

"We'd be willing to look at different opportunities if something could be done with the road there," Mannino continued.

APRIL 15, 2010 – PANA NEWS-PALLADIUM

# Steve Sipes Re-Elected President of Route 51 Coalition



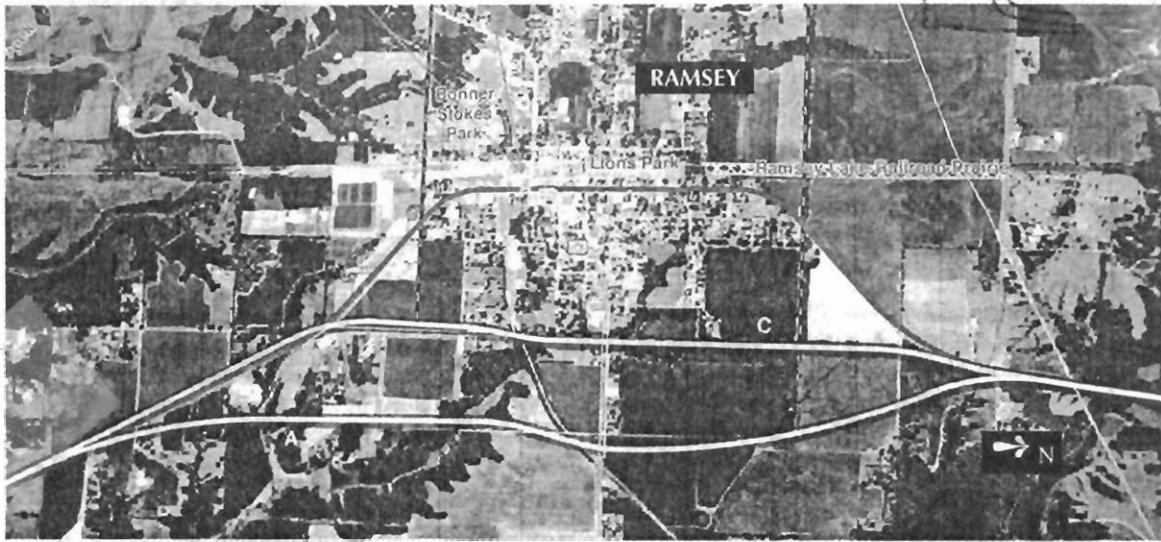
PANA MAYOR STEVE Sipes, center, was re-elected president of the Route 51 Coalition during their annual meeting held at Oak Terrace Resort Tuesday, Apr. 13.

Several Illinois Department of Transportation engineers presented updates on the project to continue to make U. S. 51 a four-lane highway to Centralia. The Coalition was excited to learn about IDOT's plan to "accelerate" construction of the project between Assumption and Pana. Construction work is expected to begin shortly on the Assumption by-pass and bids should be let shortly to begin the phase from south of Assumption to the "S" curve north of Pana.

They also discussed plans for the highway's continuation from the southern Christian County line to Centralia. Several public meetings are planned in May in communities south of Pana—including one in Vandalia for their residents and those in Ramsey—to discuss future plans.

From left are Rt. 51 Coalition Director Gary Mathisa, president, Mathias Development Corp., Macon; Becky Ault, Mayor, City of Centralia, 1st Vice-President; Pana Mayor Steve Sipes, President; James Schwarz, Coalition Secretary-Treasurer, vice-president, Dunn Company, Decatur; and Director David Cruitt, Shelbyville, Howell Paving Co., Shelbyville.

(Tom Latonis Photo)



## Two corridor choices remain for Ramsey and Oconee

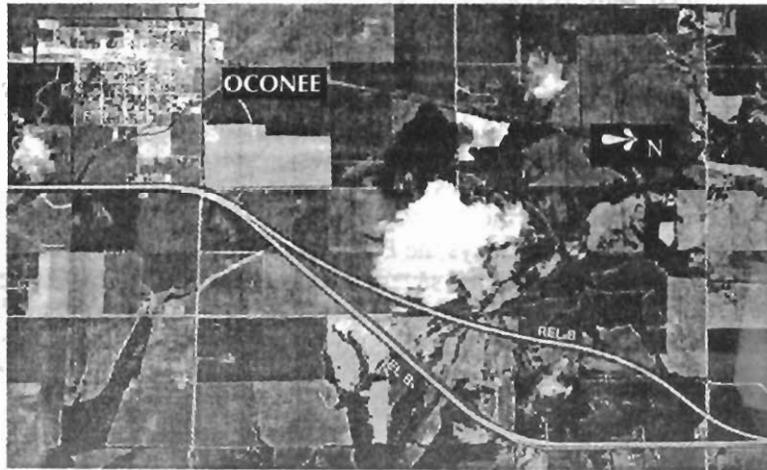
Illinois Dept. of Transportation hosted public meetings last week to review U.S. Route 51 updates and alignments recommended for further study around the communities south of Pana.

As seen at right, one proposed corridor (white lines) would straighten out the curve through the creek area north of Oconee, while the bottom corridor follows the existing highway and either one passes that village on the east where it does now.

Above, two proposed corridors have not changed from the previous study. The top one follows the east city limits from Ash Creek to just west of the WJLY-WTRH radio station. The bottom corridor is a quarter mile further east of the village. The S-curve north of Ramsey would be moderated somewhat.

These meetings continue to attract a lot of attention by citizens, even though no funding is foreseen, even for the Pana bypass.

RNJ/iam



## Rt. 51 study for Vandalia

This is the latest corridor study for a four-lane improvement of U.S. Route 51 at Vandalia. The new highway would leave the present roadway just south of the Vera road at a northwest angle, intersecting Thrill Hill road then swinging more westerly to fly around Vandalia, then turning sharply southeast to again connect with the present roadway near Wood Yard. Two corridors (white lines) indicate choices remaining. The highway expansion is not funded in the foreseeable future.

4B-922

RNJ/bjm

# The Leader-Union

Thursday, May 20, 2010

## Getting closer to final corridors



Current path of U.S. Route 51 **—————**  
Proposed alternatives for U.S. Route 51

Maps of Ramsey and Patoka/Vernon areas are available  
at [www.leaderunion.com](http://www.leaderunion.com)

## New Route 51 maps presented at recent public hearings

By **RICH BAUER**  
Managing Editor

The Illinois Department of Transportation is one step closer toward final four-lane corridors for U.S. Route 51 through Fayette County.

The proposed corridor alternatives were presented at recent public meetings in Vandalia, Patoka and Centralia. Those alternatives had changed only slightly since similar public meetings held in area communities last November.

"These will look very similar to what we presented last November," said Jerry Payonk of Clark-Dietz Inc., a

Champaign engineering firm working with IDOT on the expansion of Route 51 to four lanes from Decatur to the Centralia area.

"But there are a couple of subtle changes," Payonk said.

Those changes, he said, were made after the Route 51 partners received environmental impact information.

The current project area of the Route 51 expansion is the 65-70-mile section between the Christian County line south of Pana to Irvington.

■ **51 Page 13**

# 51

## Continued From Page 1

Throughout the process of developing the final corridors either in or around communities along Route 51, Payonk said, residents of those communities have been involved in the decision-making process.

The Route 51 partnership has had meetings with advisory groups in each of the communities, as well as meetings like the one held at the Kaskaskia College Vandalia Campus recently at which all area residents can submit

comments.

"Ninety-five percent of the corridors we probably looked at were developed by your communities," Payonk said.

"Your own communities came up with these ideas," he said.

In developing the corridors, "We could look at a bypass five or 10 miles to the east or to the west (of a community), so far out that people aren't going to use it.

"They're still going to travel through these towns," Payonk said.

The maps presented at recent public meetings reflect changes

made because of environmental impacts.

One of the areas where there are significant impacts is at Vandalia.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Payonk said, recognized that a four-lane Route 51 could not be built in the Vandalia area without having impacts on wetlands.

"The DNR and Corps of Engineers said, 'We know that you can't completely avoid impacts, but we want to see that you are minimizing them.'"

Vandalia is unique among

the communities being studied, Payonk said, because it has an interstate highway (Interstate 70) running through it.

He also noted a geological area northwest of town that earlier ruled out a corridor in that area.

Now, Payonk said, other agencies said the highway could go through that area as long as "we trim it or not get too deeply into it."

The Thrill Hill Road area, he said, was "not favored too much because there are a lot of residences in that area.

"This whole area is the most challenging area in the entire 70

miles of the study, because there are a lot of residences there," he said.

"We found an opportunity to kind of dance through a lot of these residences and minimize the impact to the area," Payonk said.

Talking about the Route 51 bypass at Ramsey, Payonk said, "If you go through Ramsey, you'd wipe out a lot of (the town)," he said.

The maps shown at the recent public meetings are being forwarded onto various agencies – including the Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency, IDNR and the Corps of Engineers – "for concurrence," he said.

"If we get concurrence, we can start moving into the actual draft and environmental impact statement," Payonk said.

"That will be the final determination (of corridors)."

He said the final draft should be available in 2012.

That's a ways off, Payonk said, "but you have to look at a lot of back-and-forth (discussions) between agencies, and any adjustments that have to be made.

"In the spring of 2013, we look for final approval, he said.

# Residents air concerns on Route 51 corridors

By DAVE BELL  
Publisher

Because of the number of letters they received after last month's unveiling of proposed U.S. Route 51 bypass routes around Vandalia, officials from the Illinois Department of Transportation decided to hold a meeting to hear from homeowners potentially affected by those routes.

They got an earful.

More than 100 residents showed up at last Thursday's informational meeting, and many were upset that the two remaining IDOT routes significantly impacted residential areas in the Thrill Hill, Zent Drive and Airport Road areas.

Those routes – as currently drawn – would swing west of the Vandalia Correctional Center at Vera Road, parallel the current Route 51 until they cross Thrill Hill Road and then start a gradual curve to the west – crossing Zent Drive just south of Deerwood Estates and continuing west along Airport Road.

All that way, the roadway itself would take a swath

at least 200 feet wide. The entire corridor, IDOT officials said, would be about 500 feet wide.

"This is the first time we've met with a specific neighborhood," said Jerry Payonk, a representative of Clark-Dietz Inc., a Champaign engineering firm that is working with IDOT on the expansion of Route 51 to four lanes from Decatur to Centralia. "But this is the most difficult area in the whole 65-mile stretch of the highway. We've known from day one that this was going to be a problem area."

He said that more than 220 notices of Thursday's meeting were hung on doorknobs in the affected neighborhoods.

"We felt obliged to come and meet with these people," he said after Thursday's meeting, "because we were getting so many comments. We thought that now is the time to meet with them."

Several citizens questioned both the process that was used to make the selection of the routes and the wisdom of the routes themselves.

■ 51 Page 6



Photo by Dave Bell

Some of the Vandalia residents living north of town look over a map showing the Illinois Department of Transportation's two proposed corridors for the four-lane expansion of U.S. Route 51 during a meeting last Thursday evening.

Continued From Page 1

"What we're concerned about is trying to keep down the impact on residential areas," said Troy Payne.

Others asked why all the routes seemed to favor the western side of town, when an eastern bypass would be shorter and more direct.

"Going east was a line that was never drawn by the community advisory committee," Payonk said, referring to a group of community residents that has been meeting with IDOT personnel to provide local input on the project.

"We're not allowed to go through a floodplain if there is a reasonable alternative," said Matt Hirtzel, one of about a half-dozen IDOT employees attending the meeting. "We have to look at the alternatives."

That position was countered by Chuck Forbes: "So what I'm hearing it that frogs in the floodplain are more important than people."

One person questioned the project's impact on area wells. Another asked if IDOT was aware of a Marathon pipeline in the area that's been proposed for the bypass route near Zent Drive and Ill. Route 185.

One route alternative that several people seemed to support would connect Route 51 with I-70 at its current intersection and use the interstate lanes (or additional lanes on the outside of the

Payonk warned that the "free flow ramps would create a monstrous intersection." Those types of ramps would have to allow traffic to flow at highway speed, and would require much more space for ramps and curves.

When asked when this part of the project is likely to be built, Payonk said: "A long time from now."

He noted that a draft environmental impact statement will be written by the second quarter of 2011.

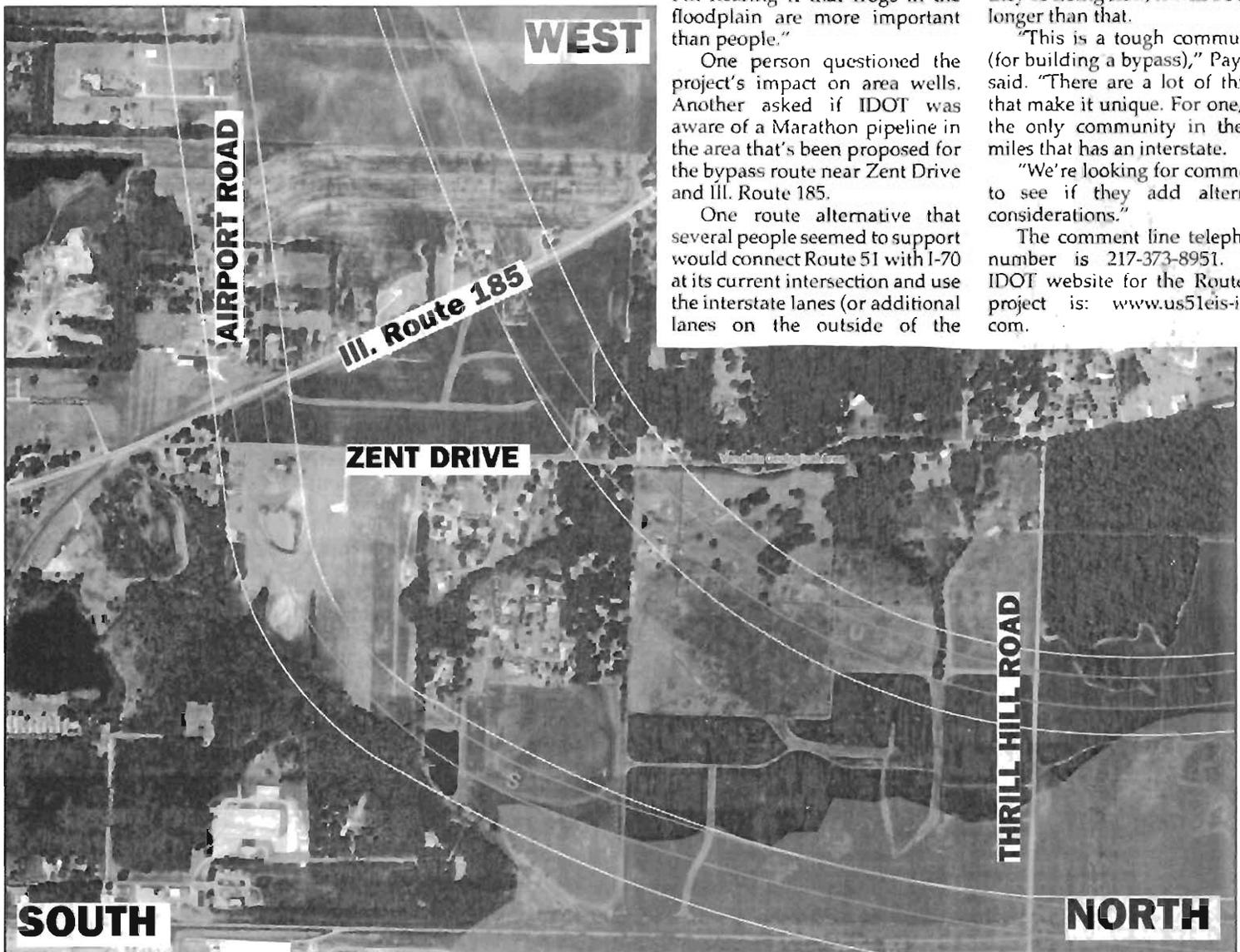
The final route alternative will be determined by the summer of 2012 and the final approval of the plan will be granted in early 2013.

Then land acquisition will begin - "and that can take years," he said. "We're talking eight to 10 years before we'd ever turn a shovel here. And if they continue moving south from Pana like they're doing now, it will be a lot longer than that."

"This is a tough community (for building a bypass)," Payonk said. "There are a lot of things that make it unique. For one, it's the only community in the 65 miles that has an interstate."

"We're looking for comments to see if they add alternate considerations."

The comment line telephone number is 217-373-8951. The IDOT website for the Route 51 project is: [www.us51eis-idot.com](http://www.us51eis-idot.com).



US 51 Draft EIS December 2013 4B-926  
This Illinois Department of Transportation map shows the proposed corridors for the expansion of U.S. Route 51 to four lanes at Vandavia. Both of the proposed corridors show the highway winding west around the city, going through some residential areas north of town.

# City reps head to D.C. to lobby for projects

BY MATT BARBA

SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

CENTRALIA — Representatives of the city of Centralia, including the mayor and the city manager, are hoping to make some progress in securing federal assistance for large capital projects the city plans to do in the future.

Mayor Becky Ault, City Manager Grant Kleinhenz and Councilman Howard Jones left Centralia Tuesday to fly to Washington, D.C. where they will meet with U.S. Sens. Dick Durbin, D-Ill. and Roland Burris, D-Ill. and Rep. John Shimkus, R-Ill.

While in Washington, the three will lobby for funding for the city to help pay for some of the most important projects in the city's Comprehensive Plan, including the construction of a new water treatment plant.

In an interview Tuesday morning before leaving for Washington, Ault said the yearly visit is important because it serves as a reminder to legislators of the needs of the local communities in Illinois.

"We feel like this is something you have to do to make your presence known in order to get funding," said Ault. "We have to go out and get the ball rolling on talking about these projects."

The three will return Thursday afternoon following a constituency breakfast with Durbin, Ault said.

A replacement for the city's aging water treatment plant, which was built in the 1920s, is considered a top priority for the city even though the city is not ready to begin construction; the

## Lobby:

*Continued From Page 1A*

city is still working out its plans for the location and size of the new plant.

"We're not ready for it but it's one of those when you go out there it will take three years of talking with them to start even getting funding considered," said Ault.

The city had planned to look at constructing a new water treatment plant in a few years and anticipates introducing a water rate increase at that time to help cover some of the costs of the facility.

Other projects the city representatives plan to push while in Washington are restoration and dredging of Raccoon Lake, which Ault said the city has made a priority for the last three years, and relocation of the south-side crossings in Centralia.

"We've always talked about Raccoon Lake restoration but we're going to put a greater emphasis this year on the Poplar and Elm streets [railroad] crossings," said Ault. "We either need an overpass/underpass or it [railroad crossing] needs to be relocated."

The city also plans to push realignment of South Hickory

Street where it meets Calumet Street, Ault said, because of an existing dogleg in Hickory that slows traffic and creates confusion at an offset four-way stop.

Another project the city will look at getting funding for in the future, Ault said, is extending Pleasant Street from its intersection with Rexford Street to the Gragg Street and Brick Hill Road intersection on the city's north side.

Ault said city representatives had tried to meet with Secretary Ray LaHood, head of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), to talk about the U.S. 51 Environmental Impact Statement, a primarily federally-funded project looking at making U.S. Highway 51 four lanes.

However, Centralia's representatives were not able to meet with LaHood while in Washington and Ault said the plan is to schedule a meeting with the DOT Secretary when he is back in Illinois.

The trip to Washington costs the city between \$2,000 and \$3,000, Ault said, but the return can be tremendous if multi-million dollar projects receive funding.

In previous years, the city had taken four representatives to Washington but because of budget concerns decided to only send three, Ault said.

[mbarba@morningsentinel.com](mailto:mbarba@morningsentinel.com)

Please see **Lobby**, Page 3A

The Leader-Union

# COMMUNITY

Thursday,  
July 15, 2010

## NOTICE

### Fayette County Residents 18 and Older

If you are AGAINST IDOT's proposed US 51 4-lane expansion through Vandalia northside neighborhoods in areas of Thrill Hill, Zent Drive, East View, Deerwood Estates, Forrest Hills, High Meadows Estates, Rt. 185 and Airport Road, PLEASE sign petitions. These routes have SEVERE DETRIMENTAL effects on our community, a significant one being taking traffic AWAY from DOWNTOWN businesses, as well as Kennedy Blvd. and Veterans Avenue.

If you have not been contacted, you will find petitions at Sunset 66, Stuff for Sale, L&M Antiques, M&M Antiques, Something Special and Sisters. PLEASE SIGN ASAP to voice your opposition. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

*Paid for by Concerned Citizens*

# OPINION

## YOUR OPINION

### Common sense needed on bypass route

**Editor:**

In response to the proposed routes (called S and U by the Illinois Department of Transportation) around Vandalia for the U.S. Route 51 expansion:

The two routes proposed seem to be trading several eco-systems to protect a single system. An eastern route around Vandalia would be a shorter route and would only affect a wetland eco-system. The area that would be impacted is less than 100 percent productive farm ground because of flooding.

The proposed routes not only impact wetlands but also 100 percent productive farmland, displace human habitat, duplicate highway systems, devalue present real estate and remove houses and farm property from the tax rolls.

The area of Thrill Hill is a glacier moraine and is a large percentage gravel, which is a poor base for a highway. Also, this area has a large underground

water supply.

Several reasons given for using the proposed routes did not fall within the parameters that have been used in the portion of U.S. Route 51 that has been constructed four lanes so far. Such items as traffic lights (S. Bloomington, one; Clinton, two; Forsyth, six), railroad crossings (Clinton, one), reduced speed limits (numerous), corporate limits (several), dual use of an interstate highway (Bloomington and Forsyth) and single-lane exits (several).

If the proposed routes are utilized, frequent users of the highway will chose to go through Vandalia on the present U.S. Route 51 because of the additional distance and added time required to bypass Vandalia. There would be an impact on the businesses in Vandalia if the proposed routes are used.

If an eastern route is used, I would suggest using the present four-lane at the north city limits, across the Interstate 70

interchange, direct U.S. Route 51 traffic onto I-70 going east across the river bridge, then have an interchange to take traffic south to intersect into the present U.S. Route 51. The southbound lanes would be constructed west of the present U.S. Route 51 roadway, using the present two lanes for northbound traffic. This would eliminate building a bridge across the river and building two lanes of highway. This would require an interchange on Rt. 70 after you cross the river. This would not require any home acquisitions, would not interfere with the present sewer plant and would utilize the present Exit 63 as is. It would not add anything additional to this route that is not already used on the Rt. 51 expansion between Bloomington and Assumption.

A comment about floodwater flow and floodwater receding: The proposed routes call for a river crossing south of Vandalia and crossing a wetland area. If

a bridge is built across the river south of Vandalia, this would, in essence, be a mini-dam, which would make the river rise higher than it presently does, creating more wetlands and possibly flooding the present U.S. Route 51. Plus, it would impede the floodwaters from receding. If an eastern route is used, the addition of the other two lanes would not impede floodwater flow or floodwater receding.

By the time you read this, petitions are being circulated to have IDOT to consider a less obtrusive route – preferably an eastern route – for the expansion of U.S. Route 51. These petitions will be presented to our political leaders and IDOT. Please support your neighbors by signing a petition.

It is about time common sense is used rather than political nonsense.

**William C. Friesner and  
Janet M. Friesner  
Vandalia**

# The Leader-Union

Volume IV - Part B

Vandalia, Fayette County, Illinois 62471

28 Pages - 75 Cents -

Thursday, July 22, 2010

## North end residents oppose Route 51 plans

By RICH BAUER  
Managing Editor

People living northwest of Vandalia have banded together to oppose the proposed plan for the expansion of U.S. Route 51 to four lanes through this community.

Next Wednesday, the members of the group that has informally become known as the North End Neighborhoods, will present their opposition - and the support they've gained for their cause - to those working on that proposed expansion.

The membership of that group includes residents of the Deerwood Estates and Forest Hills subdivisions, as well as people living along Zent Drive, Thrill Hill Road, Ill. Route 185 and Airport Road.

That group is challenging the Illinois Department of Transportation four-lane expansion plan because many residents would be displaced if it comes to fruition.

Members of the group have been circulating petitions since the plan was unveiled last month. Last Thursday, the group got the support of Fayette County Board members, and on Monday, it gained the backing of city officials during the Vandalia City Council meeting.

In voicing his support for the group, Vandalia Mayor Ricky Gottman said that not only do a number of residents stand to be displaced through the IDOT plan, the city and county would lose a considerable amount of property tax money.

And, he said, those residents who want to consider

## ■ 51

### Continued From Page 1

selling their homes could already see the value of their properties decreased because of the release of the IDOT plan.

The group's petitions will be

presented to IDOT officials and representatives of Clark-Dietz Engineers at a public meeting being held next Wednesday evening specifically as a forum for those local residents.

The meeting will be held from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Kaskaskia College Vandalia Center.

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# The Leader-Union

Volume IV - Part B

Vandalia, Fayette County, Illinois 62471

28 Pages - 75 Cents -

Thursday, July 22, 2010

## U.S. 51 Project Team Meeting

The U.S. 51 Project Team held a meeting for the residents of the Vandalia north side neighborhoods at Kaskaskia College on June 3, 2010. As a follow-up to that meeting, the Project Team is forming a focus group comprised of north side residents and businesses to address the unique concerns of the region. The Project Team will meet with the focus group on an as-needed basis as the project progresses. The purpose of the focus group will be to serve in an advisory role assisting in the evaluation of the remaining alternatives that will be studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

In order to better facilitate a working discussion, the focus group will be limited to approximately 20 members who will serve as representatives of the north side residents. Should more than 20 individuals volunteer for the group, participants will be selected at random from all volunteers.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the focus group, please meet the Project Team at Kaskaskia College at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 28, 2010. If you are unable to attend and are interested in becoming a member, please call Sherry Phillips at 217-342-8244 no later than July 27th.

The purpose of the July 28th meeting is not to discuss the project in detail, but to establish the focus group, cover ground rules and schedule the first meeting.

## County Board hears Route 51 petition and Health Department renovations

*RNJ/Heath Luster*

After perfunctory approval of last meeting's minutes and roll call given, the Fayette County Board was free to hear from persons wishing to address the council at last Thursday's monthly meeting.

Lisa Arenas, a representative for Deerwood Estates—a residential subdivision in Vandalia that will be affected by the current Illinois Department of Transportation Route 51-expansion plans—was first to speak.

Arenas explained that Deerwood Estates contains some very nice homes and that the county would be losing property tax revenue generated from these properties if the current Route 51 expansion plans were carried through in their current form. Arenas stated that she, along with other residents of the subdivision, have been working diligently to produce several alternatives to the current expansion plans. Deerwood Estates has formed a petition that has been gaining local support, and hoped to garner the additional support of both the County Board and Vandalia's Mayor, Ricky Gottman, before presenting their case formally to I.D.O.T.

Chairman Steve Knebel concurred with Arenas, stating that

Deerwood Estates has valid reason for concern and that he would also like to solicit the help of state representatives in bringing more attention to the matter.

Thursday's board meeting also saw a brief presentation by the architectural firm Quadrant Design on renovations to the Fayette Health Department's recently acquired property at the intersection of 4th & Edwards in Vandalia. The building—formerly Leo Brown Lumber—will be the new FCHD location when renovations are completed.

Michael Schneider and Jennifer Eckart, architect and project coordinator for Quadrant Design respectively, stated that the estimated 1.3 million project would include new roofing, mechanical, and plumbing, as well as the addition of a training classroom, a sixty-three space off-street parking area for employees and patrons, and new window and lighting elements. The renovated structure would be disability compliant and the vastly enlarged space would allow the Health Department to combine staff, forty-two employees currently working in two locations, into one single building.

Schneider added that because the building is already structurally sound, projects such as this are the equivalent of having 10-20% of the work completed before construction even begins. The project is expected to be out for bids this week, with construction prospectively beginning in late August or September. Under the current slated timetable, the renovated building will be available for move-in by January of next year.

In other business, the board accepted the resignation of Donna Chrisman, of Vandalia, from the Fayette County Board of Review. Through unanimous vote the council appointed Nelson D. Torbeck, also of Vandalia, to fill her vacancy in an unexpired term that will run through May 31, 2011.

The Council also voted and approved the low bid of \$208,658 from Depew & Owen Builders, Inc., of Centralia, to replace a bridge located 1.5 miles east, in Vandalia Township. Estimates for the project had climbed as high as \$235,000, with the accepted bid falling far short of that figure. Funding for the project uses a combination of federal, township and county monies, with federal covering about 80%.

THE SENTINEL • SATURDAY, JULY 24, 2010

### **Lane reductions on U.S. 51 start Thursday**

SANDOVAL — Lane reductions will be in place on Old U.S. Rt. 51 from U.S. 51 north in Sandoval to U.S. 51 in Central City and old U.S. 51 from Greenview Road to Greenview Church Road beginning Thursday during daytime hours, weather permitting.

These lane reductions are necessary to perform pavement patching and resurfacing, guardrail improvements, tree removal and curb and gutter removal and replacement. This project should be completed by Oct. 15.

Motorists are urged to use caution, obey work zone speed limits and allow extra time when traveling through the work zone. The contractor on this project is Howell Paving of Centralia.

The Leader-Union, Thursday, July 29, 2010 — 3

## **- NOTICE -**

Your attendance is urgently needed at a public meeting on **Thursday, August 5, at 6 p.m.** at Vandalia City Hall. This meeting is being held to present to Senator Dick Durbin, Representative John Shimkus, Illinois Senator Kyle McCarter, and Illinois Representative Ron Stephens concerns and petitions voicing opposition to the proposed Rt. 51 4-lane expansion through the areas of Thrill Hill, East View, Deerwood Estates, Forrest Hills, Zent Drive, High Meadows Estates, Rt. 185 and Airport Road.

We have the support of both our city and county governing bodies, as the proposed routes would have detrimental effects to not only the northside neighborhoods but to the city and county as well.

If you have concerns or are willing to show your support PLEASE attend. **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** Each person present makes a difference! THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT...

PAID FOR BY CONCERNED CITIZENS

# The Leader-Union

Volume IV - Part B

Thursday, July 29, 2010

Vandalia, Fayette County, Illinois 62471

18 Pages - 75 Cents -

## WE APOLOGIZE

The North End Neighborhoods group opposing the planned route of four-lane U.S. Route 51 were not going to present their petitions at meetings this Wednesday. They will present them when they are able to meet with area legislators. It was incorrectly stated in last week's issue.

We apologize for the error.

Illinois Department of Transportation officials had scheduled a meeting last Wednesday in Vandalia to explain to northside neighborhood residents why the two Ill. Route 51 bypass routes IDOT selected are the best alternatives for the city.

But opposition among local citizens and in the local media led them to rethink that plan before the meeting got under way.

"We decided it is in the best interest of the community to take a couple steps back," Matt Hirtzel, an IDOT engineer, told the crowd of about 100 attending Wednesday's meeting at the Kaskaskia College Vandalia campus.

"We're looking at reorganizing the community advisory group."

That group - one of five in the 65-mile stretch of Ill. Route 51 remaining to be upgraded to four lanes - consists of about 25 people.

But the scope and tone of the opposition to the two bypass routes took IDOT by surprise.

"Last week I noticed in The Leader-Union that the city and county had signed petitions against the two routes," Hirtzel said. "We don't like to see that. If people don't understand, then we messed up and didn't explain things very well."

Jerry Payonk, a representative of Clark-Dietz Engineering of Champaign, a firm that works with IDOT on the project, said that the decision was made to go back several steps in the process.

"We're not trashing what we've done; but we're going to develop some new information," Payonk said. "The Community Advisory Group is being reorganized. We're anticipating that the CAG will be meeting every other week for the next several months. That's quite a commitment."

The officials then told the crowd that they needed to choose three representatives to serve as new members on the CAG. To ensure that the local group - not IDOT - made those selections, the representatives of IDOT and Clark-Dietz left the room for about 20 minutes until the selections were made.

That meeting was moderated by Vandalia Mayor Rick Gottman and Fayette County Board Chairman Steve Knebel, both members of the CAG.

"Bringing people on from your area will be very important to the CAG," Gottman said.

## Route 51 community group reorganizes

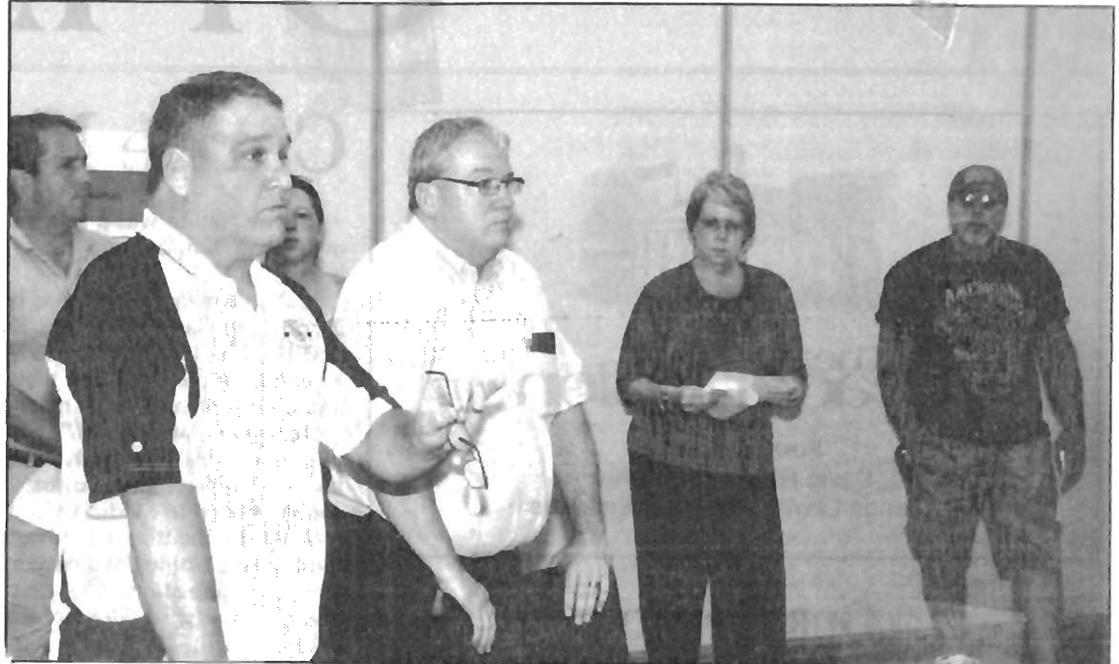


Photo by Dave Bell

Fayette County Board Chairman Steve Knebel, left, and Vandalia Mayor Rick Gottman moderate a meeting of local individuals who are opposed to the proposed path for the four-lane expansion of U.S. Route 51 through Vandalia.

## *Group to present opposition to IDOT plan to legislators Thursday*

"This process will be rapid; the group will be meeting every two weeks. The people chosen must have a commitment to be at every meeting."

Knebel added: "This is an opportunity for the northside neighborhoods to get some representation on the CAG. But these members can't be personal; it's not just to keep the road from coming through their property. It's to decide what's best for the whole community."

Picked by the citizens to represent the interests of the northside neighborhoods on the CAG were: Don Dolly (Deerwood Estates and Zent Drive), Kathy Trexler (Forest Hills and Ill. Route 185) and Janet Bright (Airport Road).

"What we have done here tonight is new territory for us," Payonk said. "We'll now meet with the re-formed CAG and determine which areas are not represented. This process is all part of getting everyone involved."

After the meeting, Roger Driskell, regional engineer from the Effingham IDOT office, said that he "wanted it to be a transparent process - that nobody was ignored and it was fair."

He also noted that when the new CAG first meets, the membership of that group will be reviewed to make sure all aspects of the city are represented - downtown, northside neighborhoods, farmers, historic groups, etc.

The challenge in Vandalia, he said, is that it's a larger community than many along the

route, and it has several unique aspects that must be considered. It has I-70 on the north, the Kaskaskia River on the east and south, farmland on the west and a historic area downtown.

"We'll start where we were six months or a year ago," Driskell said. "We'll draw lines on a map and see which routes emerge. It's a balancing act; you have to look at all the impacts."

The northside neighborhood group has scheduled a meeting this Thursday at Vandalia City Hall.

That 6 p.m. meeting, to which state and national representatives have been invited, will be an opportunity for residents of those neighborhoods to register their concerns and solicit help from their political representatives.

Among those who have been invited are: U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), U.S. Rep. John Shimkus (R-Ill., 19th District), State Sen. Kyle McCarter (R-Lebanon) and State Rep. Ron Stephens (R-Greenville).

Gottman said at Monday night's city council meeting that McCarter and Stephens plan to attend Thursday's meeting, and

that Shimkus plans to send a representative. Durbin will not have a representative present, Gottman said.

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## AREA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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### Thursday, August 5

✓ TOPS IL 2490 will meet from 9:30-10:30 a.m. at First Baptist Church in Ramsey. Weigh-in is from 9-9:30 a.m. For more information, contact Dovie Heaton-Bergin at 283-1729.

✓ Soroptimist International of Vandalia will meet at noon at Days Inn.

✓ A meeting on the proposed expansion of U.S. Route 51 to four lanes through Vandalia will be held at 6 p.m. at Vandalia City Hall. At the meeting, local residents who are opposed to the plan will present their case to area legislators. The public is invited.

✓ TOPS IL 1872, Ramsey, will meet at the Christian Church in Ramsey. Weigh-in is at 6:20 p.m., and the meeting is at 7 p.m. For more information, contact Donna Morell at 423-2916.

The Leader-Union, Thursday, August 5, 2010

## **U.S. 51 Meeting Community Representatives Wanted**

The U.S. 51 Project Team is seeking additional community representation to serve on the Vandalia Community Advisory Group (CAG). The role of the CAG is to assist the Project Team in the development of a location for an expanded four-lane US 51.

We are looking for community members to represent each of the following interests:

- The Historic District
- Local Business
- Agriculture/Farmers
- The Vandalia Correctional Center
- School District 203
- Vandalia Park District
- Emergency Services
- Homeowners within the Vandalia Corporate limits

If interested, please attend the US 51 CAG meeting on Wednesday, August 11 at Kaskaskia College - Vandalia annex at 6:00 p.m. The meeting will last until 8:00 p.m. The goal of this meeting is to develop a CAG consisting of approximately 20 representatives of the community. If you have any questions, please contact Sherry Phillips at 217-342-8244. For additional information about the US 51 Project, please visit the project website at <http://www.us51eis-idot.com>.

Thursday,  
August 12, 2010 **OUR OPINION**

## Keep up search for bypass plan

Though the Illinois Department of Transportation had already announced its intentions to "take a couple steps back" in the process of determining a route for a U.S. Route 51 bypass around Vandalia, a meeting last Wednesday with more than 125 northside residents gave the engineers a clear sense of the local concerns about the proposed bypass route.

It was, as state Sen. Kyle McCarter (R-Lebanon) described it, evidence that "democracy works."

The meeting was organized by residents to familiarize state and federal political representatives with the situation. Though only McCarter showed up for the meeting, the other three – state Rep. Ron Stephens (R-Greenville), U.S. Rep. John Shimkus (R-Collinsville) and U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Springfield) – had representatives at the meeting.

Residents from several neighborhoods impacted by the IDOT route expressed their concerns about the environmental, financial and quality-of-life damage that would result from the proposed route. Vandalia mayor Rick Gottman and county board chairman Steve Knebel also registered their concerns about the IDOT route.

Others proposed alternatives, such as using portions of Interstate 70 for either an east or west bypass. Putting bypass lanes adjacent to I-70 was suggested as an option to taking out neighborhoods.

Now that our political representatives and IDOT officials are aware of the depth of our concerns, it's time to restart the process. Two weeks ago, three representatives of the northside neighborhoods were picked by their peers to serve on IDOT's community advisory group. They will join about 20 others on the CAG, a group that gives IDOT local feedback on the U.S. Route 51 four-laning project. Those meetings resumed this Wednesday.

It's good to see the numbers of residents that have become active in this process. We need such involvement to make certain that the route selected for the bypass is the best one for our community.

With IDOT planning meetings of the community advisory group every two weeks, it won't take long to get back to the point of choosing a route for the bypass. As that decision is made, we must not allow IDOT to forget the roomful of citizens that assembled last week.

There are better alternatives that don't involve bulldozing neighborhoods or destroying the quality of life for residents. We must do the work to find them, and we must not settle for anything less.



Photo by Dave Bell

Lisa Arenas, a resident of Deerwood Estates, tells state Sen. Kyle McCarter (R-Lebanon), representatives of other legislators and representatives of the Illinois Department of Transportation why she opposes the proposed Vandalia bypass for U.S. Route 51.

## Lawmakers, IDOT reps hear opposition to Route 51 bypass

By DAVE BELL  
Publisher

About 125 people crowded into Vandalia City Hall last Wednesday to let their political representatives know that they are not happy with the path of the U.S. Route 51 bypass proposed by the Illinois Department of Transportation.

Though only one of the four invited state and federal politicians made the 90-minute meeting, each had representatives there. And they left the meeting with no doubt that the current bypass route – which goes through or near several north end neighborhoods – is not favored by local residents.

Also in attendance were Vandalia Mayor Rick Gottman, Fayette County Board Chairman Steve Knebel and several IDOT representatives.

"The neighborhood representatives presented their concerns with a good attitude," said state Sen. Kyle McCarter (R-Lebanon), the lone legislator at the meeting. "As a result, IDOT has accommodated them by restarting the process and looking at it again. Democracy works! We just have to find a real alternative that is good for all of Vandalia."

The meeting consisted of statements by representatives of various affected neighborhoods, as well as comments from Gottman and Knebel.

Lisa Arenas, a resident of Deerwood Estates, opened the meeting, saying, "We are not opposed to the Route 51 expansion in general, but feel that there are other viable alternatives to these proposed routes."

She said that more than 150 homes would be significantly impacted by the route proposed by IDOT.

In addition to the impact the proposed route will have on home values and quality of life issues, she said that possibly the most important impact would be on the water supplies in the area.

"Wells in Deerwood Estates are very shallow, some being only 10 feet deep," she said. "When construction (of the bypass) begins and this flow of underground water is disrupted, what's going to happen to our wells? Who is going to be responsible when our wells go dry?"

Tom Diveley, representing the Forest Hills subdivision, acknowledged that the bypass will have to come through somewhere, but challenged IDOT to "choose the best route that will serve the community with

■ 51 Page 12

## 51

### Continued From Page 1

the least disruption possible. This (the current proposal) would disrupt our community tremendously.

"We're putting our faith in the people on the committees. None of us wants to lose our homes, but if this is the best possible route for our community, then I'll live with it."

Jeff Hester, another Deerwood Estates resident, said, "It's not a pleasant thought to have a four-lane road coming through the neighborhood," adding that he's not convinced that a bypass that diverts traffic well west of town will be well used. "If I were a

truck driver, I wouldn't go several miles around town when I could drive a mile straight through."

Knebel said that he was concerned about taking property off the tax rolls – but even more about disrupting people's lives.

"If we eliminate housing, we lose the tax revenue. That's not a big deal. If we eliminate your livelihood, that's a big deal.

"There are great options out there. By proposing bypass routes that join with I-70, we eliminate the impact on the residential communities."

Though state Rep. Ron Stephens (R-Greenville) was not at the meeting, his wife, Lisa, did attend, and she read a statement from him.

"I submit my strongest

opposition to this project in its current form," Stephens said. "I hope a resolution can be found for the betterment of the community. The proposed expansion would not only displace residents living in the community but would also have a devastating effect on property tax for the city and county."

Joe Darnell, who lives along Ill. Route 185, favored an eastern bypass.

"Why aren't we skirting Vandalia to the east and connecting to the existing Route 51 east of downtown?

"Yes, it's a floodplain, but the current Route 51 is in a flood plain. I hate to see farmland eaten up by concrete. These other alternatives will disrupt hundreds of people's

lives. Plus, there are a lot of wetlands southwest of Vandalia where the proposed route would go."

After the local residents and political representatives had their say, Roger Driskell, a regional engineer for IDOT, said that the agency "wants to step back and reform the community advisory group in Vandalia.

"Three new members have been selected to represent the northside community.

"At the next CAG meeting (this Wednesday), we'll look at the group and make sure we have all the stakeholders represented. Then, we'll step back and start over with a blank sheet of paper.

"The route will have to meet our purpose and need criteria.

We'll go through the whole process.

"And there will be public meetings along the way."

He warned audience members that "it's a long and possibly painful process."

The four-laning process south of Decatur has averaged about one mile per year, and the continuation of the project depends on getting government funding.

After the meeting, Driskell told The Leader-Union that he was pleased with the public participation at Wednesday's the meeting.

"It's all about public involvement," he said. "This

particular process took a different twist than we'd anticipated, but there is still an opportunity to go back and take another look. When you go to the public, they may come up with some option we may not have thought of.

"You never know. We want to do what's best for the community.

"I-70 is definitely an option we'll look at – both east and west.

"Our goal is to narrow it down as quickly as possible, so people know what's going on."

Sherry Phillips, another IDOT engineer, also told The Leader-Union, "I think what we have now is a good solution, but if there's a better one, we want to find it."

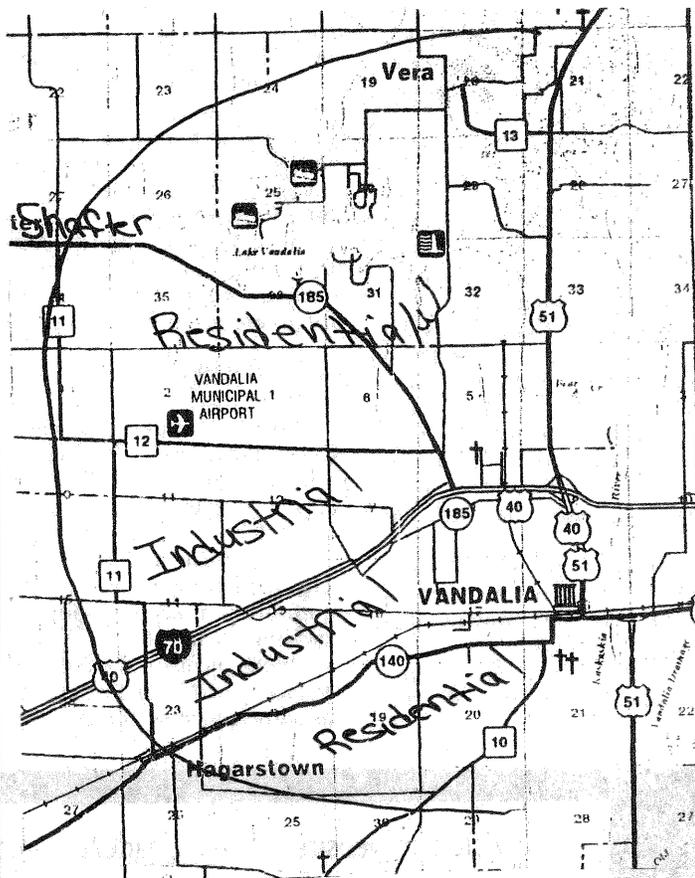
# The Leader-Union

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The Leader-Union, Thursday, September 2, 2010

## U.S. Rt. 51 as a Belt to Service Vandalia and Fayette County, Not a Bypass.



Looking at the past 50 years, present and future, this route would be the best for U.S. Rt. 51 for future businesses and residents without affecting any current businesses or residents, make lake more accessible and keep semis and large trucks off Thrill Hill Road.

-Gary Probst

**ATTENTION:**  
**Follow-up on Rt. 51 Belt**

The state plans an overpass at Hagarstown & I-70. In my ad last week, the location of the belt line was just an approximation.

My plan is better connected to Vandalia Airport and will help relieve traffic at Rt. 185 & Veterans Ave. I was asked to make this proposal public.

*-Gary Probst*

# The Leader-Union

## IDOT meetings on road plan are next week

Illinois Transportation Secretary Gary Harnig recently announced that the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) will seek early input into the development of its upcoming Multi-Year Road Program for Highway Improvements for Fiscal Years 2012-2017 by hosting informational and feedback sessions in communities throughout the state.

The public meeting for the IDOT District #7 area, including the counties of Clark, Clay, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Edwards, Effingham, Fayette, Jasper, Lawrence, Macon, Moultrie, Richland, Shelby, Wabash and Wayne, will be held on Monday, from 4-7 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Building, 1501 W. Fayette Ave., in Effingham, and next Thursday, from 4-7 p.m. at the Decatur Public Library Decatur Public Library, 130 N. Franklin St., Decatur, in the Madden Auditorium, to give residents and businesses in the area a chance to better understand and weigh in on project priorities over the next five to seven years.

"With a robust construction season in full swing, we want to

get an early start on our plans for our upcoming road program," Harnig said. "It is important to us that we hear from the public about the projects that are important to their communities."

The proposed Multi-Year Program (MYP) is based on conservative estimates of local, federal and state funding, including funding from Governor Pat Quinn's "Illinois Jobs Now!" capital program, enacted in 2009. The Multi-Year Program for the current FY 2011-2016 totals about \$12.84 billion and focuses on maintenance of the current road system.

The public meeting will be conducted on an informal basis and no formal presentation is planned. IDOT staff will be present to answer any questions related to the state highway program, planning and project development process.

The public will have an opportunity to comment on the development of the proposed MYP, existing programming, procedures and other information. The meeting also will provide information to prospective contractors about programs in

place to assist small business enterprises, including businesses owned and operated by minorities and women, and other programs undertaken by IDOT.

Comment sheets will be provided for those in attendance who wish to provide a written statement. Comments received at either meeting or sent to the District #7 Office by Nov. 1 will be included in the meeting record.



## New Pavement

Gleaming black asphalt gets covered by limestone chat on County Highway #24, from Rt. 51 east out of Ramsey to Wren Bridge. It took two trucks backing side-by-side to cover the wide highway. The next loaded truck approaches at right, ready to keep the white rock flowing near 'Fromm corner'. *RNJ/dym*

Containing More News About the Pana Trade Area Than All Other Newspapers in the World

Monday and Thursday

PANA, ILLINOIS 62557 - THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2010

## Hannig Announces Start of Assumption Rt. 51 By-Pass

Illinois Transportation Secretary Gary Hannig was joined by state and local officials to announce roadway improvements to upgrade US Route 51 to a four lane expressway and provide a bypass to the east of Assumption Wednesday, Oct. 27. The project is expected to create 300 jobs.

"This important roadway improvement will stimulate the local economy, improve safety, increase traffic capacity and provide better access to businesses, including the headquarters of Grain Systems and Sloan Implement," Secretary Hannig said. "US 51 is a critical corridor through central Illinois and its improvement will help farms, businesses and residents throughout the region."

The 3.98 mile stretch of roadway is located between Pana and Decatur, just 1.5 miles north and 1.4 miles south of Assumption. A new

4 lane expressway upgrade will expand traffic capacity, promote economic growth along the corridor and improve safety as vehicles will now be separated by a 50 foot median.

The scope of work consists of earth excavation, grading, lime modified soil, hot mix asphalt full depth pavement, hot mix asphalt shoulders, aggregate base course, bituminous concrete box culverts, pavement marking, signage, lighting, traffic control, seeding and additional miscellaneous improvements.

The project cost is estimated at \$22.8 million and is expected to be complete in the summer 2012. The project is supported by a mix of federal and state funds.

For more information about other road construction in IDOT's District Six, please visit [http://www.dot.state.il.us/projects.html#District\\_6](http://www.dot.state.il.us/projects.html#District_6)

Thursday,  
November 11, 2010

## **NOTICE**

### **US 51 Environmental Impact Statement Vandalia Public Information Meeting**

The Illinois Department of Transportation will hold a Public Information Meeting on Tuesday, November 23, 2010 for the US Environmental Impact Statement regarding potential US 51 alignments in Vandalia. The meeting will be held at the Mother of Dolours Parish Center located at 705 West St. Clair Street in Vandalia from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM.

The purpose of the meeting is to review the US 51 alignment considerations developed by the Vandalia Community Advisory Group. The meeting will be conducted in an open house format with exhibits for review and project team personnel available to answer questions. Interested persons are encouraged to attend anytime between 3:00 PM and 7:00 PM. Comments will be taken at the meeting or accepted by mail, email, or fax until December 10th, 2010.

Information presented at the meeting will be made available on the project website (<http://www.us51eis-IDOT.com>) following the public meeting. Persons with disability requiring special accommodations should contact Gary Welton of the Illinois Department of Transportation (217-343-3951) to advise of needed accommodations.

Thursday,  
December 2, 2010

The  
Leader-Union  
Volume IV - Part B  
**OPINION**



The  
**Leader-Union**

**Founded 1864**

David R. Bell, Publisher  
Glenda Lawler, Manager Emeritus  
USPS 656700

## OUR OPINION

# Give input on bypass options

After the process was backed up to give local citizens more input on possible routes for a U.S. Route 51 bypass around Vandalia, the public now has a set of six options to which it can respond.

The six represent a variety of ways that the bypass route could be configured to move traffic through the community efficiently and safely.

Is there one that's perfect? Not a chance. Is there one that has emerged as head and shoulders above the others? Not yet. They all have assets and liabilities.

The main challenge stems from the way Vandalia is situated – with the Kaskaskia River (and the associated flood plain) on the east, existing residential areas to the north and valuable farmland (and the lake) to the west. There's no route that will avoid all three of those areas.

But one must be selected. And that's where you come in. Public input is needed now in order for the best route to be selected. If you didn't get to the public meeting last Tuesday, you still have an opportunity to learn about the six routes by going on the Illinois Department of Transportation website to see the options. That website is: [www.us51eis-idot.com](http://www.us51eis-idot.com). Comments may be sent via e-mail to: [us51eis@clark-dietz.com](mailto:us51eis@clark-dietz.com).

If you want to have a say in the location of the bypass, you have until next Tuesday (Dec. 7) to do so. The more opinions we have, the better the decision will be.

# Leader-Union

20 Pages - 75 Cents - Thursday, December 2, 2010

Vandalia, Fayette County, Illinois 62471

## IDOT presents new set of Route 51 alignments

By DAVE BELL  
Publisher

A steady stream of citizens converged on the Mother of Dolors Parish Center last Tuesday to study six maps on display during a four-hour public information meeting hosted by the Illinois Department of Transportation.

The maps attracting all the attention showed six possible routes for a U.S. Route 51 bypass around Vandalia. Four of those options are variations of a route that hugs the northern city limits and connects with Interstate 70 west of the current exit 61 and angles back to the current roadway south of Vandalia, one is an eastern route that utilizes much of the current route but skirts the city to the east and one is a western route that goes around Vandalia Lake and connects with I-70 west of exit 61.

"It was a pretty good turnout," said Roger L. Driskell, deputy director of highways in the Illinois Department of Transportation's region four. "We want to hear what the pub-

lic likes - and why. It's important that we know the reasons behind their preferences."

The six options were arrived at by a community advisory

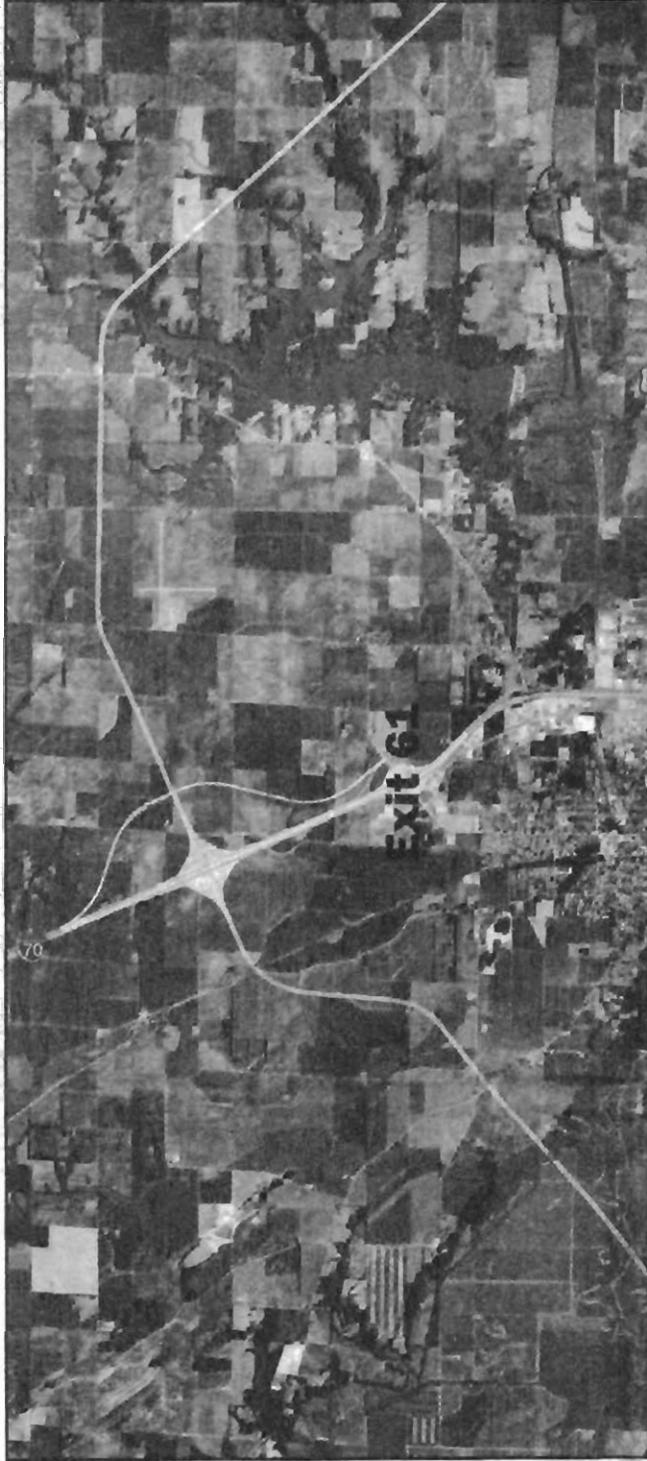
group comprised of about 20 area citizens. That group was reorganized last summer after a previous CAG came up with routes that drew fire from resi-

dents of Deerwood Estates and other residential areas just north of I-70. Three residents of that area were added to the advisory group, which has met five times

since August.

The advisory group reviewed 39 different alignments in the

■ IDOT Page 14



One of the potential alignments for U.S. Route 51 through the Vandalia area has the four-lane highway going west of Vandalia Lake and through a new interchange before heading southeast around town. All of the alignments can be viewed online at [www.us51eis-idot.com](http://www.us51eis-idot.com).

Vandalla resident Bruce Bowen, left, talks with IDOT engineer John Lazzara during last Tuesday's public information meeting. A good crowd attended the event, viewing the six options for a bypass around Vandalla

# IDOT

Continued From Page 1

choices that would work – but which is best for the community? We're trying to build a route that moves motorists through the area efficiently and safely. In doing that, we must find a balance between the natural environment, the human environment and the motoring public."

Tuesday's meeting was con-

ducted in what IDOT termed an "open house format," in which citizens were free to walk around the room and review the exhibits. IDOT personnel were positioned throughout the room to answer questions.

Participants also were given the opportunity to give feedback on the six bypass alignments and the process itself by filling out a comment form. Feedback on the project must be received by Dec. 7 in order to become part of the official public record on the issue.

Information on the project – including the six proposed route maps – is available at the IDOT website: <http://www.us51eis-idot.com/>. Comments also may be registered by sending an e-mail to [us51eis@clarkdietz.com](mailto:us51eis@clarkdietz.com) or by calling 217-373-8951.

The next meeting of the community advisory group will be held in January, and the final route (or routes) will then be sent off for review by federal agencies involved in the process.



56  
201

# Sentinel

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2010

## U.S. 51 project moving forward in Centralia, Vandalia

*Bypasses around area towns being considered to increase traffic efficiency*

**BY MATT BARBA**  
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

CENTRALIA — Plans for improvements to U.S. Highway 51 are moving forward with engineers most recently presenting possible routes around the city of Vandalia.

Please see **U.S. 51**, Page 3A



Submitted Graphic

**EFFICIENT ALIGNMENTS** — The U.S. 51 Environmental Impact Statement is a study being conducted to look at new routes for U.S. Highway 51 that would increase the efficiency of traffic moving north and south along the highway. This map shows all of the possible routes being considered for the Centralia/Sandoval areas.

## U.S. 51:

*Continued From Page 1A*

The U.S. 51 Environmental Impact Statement (51 EIS) is a project being conducted by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to determine the most effective means of upgrading portions of the highway from two to four lanes.

According to IDOT, the south central Illinois portion of U.S. 51 between Decatur and Interstate 64 are the only portions of the highway that are two lane.

In the early 1980s, the agency determined traffic levels along that portion of the highway was not enough to warrant upgrading it to four lanes at that time. A later study, conducted in 1987 by IDOT, showed economic growth in the area warranted the upgrade.

In 1992, an environmental impact statement, similar to the one being completed for the section of U.S. 51 from Pana to south of Centralia, was conducted for the area north of Pana to Decatur.

Work under the program that has already been completed includes a section of four-lane highway south of Moweaqua. Future plans include a four-mile bypass around Assumption in Christian County, a section between Assumption and Pana, and a seven-mile bypass around Pana.

Funds for the proposed

projects have not been appropriated and a timeline for completion has not been established at this time, according to IDOT.

The project's need is based on three underlying factors, including that the existing highway does not provide an efficient, safe connection between communities and commercial centers; the highway limits tourism by hindering travel by having varying speed limits and multiple traffic control devices; and the highway is not safe for use by pedestrians, bicycles, farm equipment, buses and cars to share the road.

Project developers are wanting to create a free-flow condition for traffic that includes a limited number of speed limit changes and no traffic control, with traffic exiting the highway and entering from intersecting roadways through interchanges.

Engineers with Clark Dietz Engineers has been working to establish possible alternate routes for the U.S. 51 corridor as part of the 51 EIS.

Most recently, during a November meeting in Vandalia, the engineering firm presented six possible routes, or alignments, that could be used to redirect U.S. 51 around that city.

Several of the proposed routes for the Vandalia portion of the project would take the highway west of the city and include an interchange with Interstate 70. Other proposed routes would alter the highway slightly along its current course.

All of the proposed align-

ments remove right turns, like are present at the intersection of U.S. 51 and U.S. Highway 40.

Possible alignments for the Centralia area include four routes that take the highway west around the city, one that goes east around Centralia and another that modifies the existing Elm and Poplar streets route. Alignments being considered for Centralia will be dependent on which route is chosen as a bypass for Sandoval.

For the alignment to Centralia's east, a bridge would have to be constructed as that route currently crosses Raccoon Lake. That route would include a bypass to Sandoval's east.

One of the preferred alignments on the city's west side would also include a bypass that takes the highway west around Sandoval, as well.

All of the proposed bypass routes for Centralia would converge with existing four-lane U.S. 51 south of Wamac.

Members of the Illinois State Archaeology Survey have been surveying the area around Centralia for potential archaeological sites that might be in the project corridor.

In addition to potential archaeological sites, the 51 EIS and the proposed alignments resulting from the study are being considered with which will have the least impact to existing wetland areas, homes and farms, according to IDOT.

A timeline for when the bypass around Centralia would begin construction has not been released and no funds have been allocated for the project at the state or federal level.

*mbarba@morningsentinel.com*

# Ramsey News-Journal

RAMSEY, ILLINOIS 62080-0218

(USPS 455,000)

VOLUME 130 - NO. 13

16 PAGE NEWS SECTION

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2011

## Rt. 51 surveys

Survey crews spent a few weeks in early March surveying all waterways in this county along the proposed Rt. 51 Expressway. Pink ribbons flutter in fields along those surveys.

This week, IDOT announced survey crews will be setting "targets" on the ground from Ramsey and the Vera road to collect aerial data for the Environmental Impact Statement currently underway.

IDOT engineer Gary Welton asks citizens, "Please do not disturb the targets." Crews will be back to remove them, once information is collected.

## **Route 51 Coalition Meeting In Pana**

The Route 51 Coalition will meet in Pana at 7:00 p.m., Thursday Apr. 28, at the Oak Terrace banquet hall.

Members of the Coalition including mayors, Chambers of Commerce, developers and interested parties make up the group that have actively promoted the four lane construction of Route 51.

The Communities in the group include Decatur, Macon, Moweaqua, Assumption, Pana, Oconee, Ramsey, Vandalia, Vernon, Patoka, Sandoval and Centralia.

Topics include an update on the Assumption Bypass and on the next 4.3 mile section of the expansion that will take the four-lane highway to 2.7 miles north of Illinois 16; funds for this \$39 million project is budgeted for the 2011-2016 financial period.

The Annual election of officers will also be held during the meeting. Pana Mayor Steven D. Sipes is the current President.

For More information contact the Pana Office of Development at 217-562-3109.

## Costs see sharp increase, but U.S. 51 expansion to Pana continues

By SHARON BARRICKLOW - For the Herald & Review | Posted: Friday, April 29, 2011 12:01 am

PANA - Rising prices for everything from asphalt to design have raised costs for the planned four-lane expansion of U.S. 51 between Decatur and Centralia, but supporters learned Thursday night the work is continuing.

Members of the Route 51 Coalition held their annual meeting at Oak Terrace Resort south of Pana. Illinois Department of Transportation regional engineer Roger Driscoll told the group that the 3½-mile Moweaqua bypass cost \$14 million in 2007.

"The Assumption bypass under construction now is four miles at \$22.8 million," he said. "You can see how prices continue to increase."

Construction of the next section, four miles south of Assumption toward Pana, is scheduled to begin after the bypass is finished and should cost \$39 million for four miles. After that, engineers will begin acquiring property to bring the four lanes to Illinois 16 near Pana.

The Pana bypass itself is not currently funded but is expected to cost \$55 million. Pana Mayor Steve Sipes serves as president of the coalition, maybe a strange position for a mayor whose town will be bypassed by the four-lane road.

"Unfortunately, the decision to bypass Pana was made before I was mayor," Sipes said. "To try to change it would set the entire project back years and cost enormous amounts of money."

Instead, Sipes and Jim Deere, Pana Economic Development director, are concentrating on making sure infrastructure is in place to encourage new business development near the bypass.

"It could be a very good thing for us," Sipes said. "We just want to make sure we're ready when it comes."

Coalition Secretary-Treasurer James Schwartz of Decatur introduced new board member Mirinda Rothrock, president of the Greater Decatur Chamber of Commerce, and said the coalition continues to be successful in expanding U.S. 51.

"We just keep plugging away," Schwartz said. "For Decatur, this should be a No. 1 priority. Caterpillar has identified it as a high priority. GSI in Assumption has made it a high priority. It will benefit the entire region."

[sharonhrnews@yahoo.com](mailto:sharonhrnews@yahoo.com)

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*US 51 Partners, A Joint Venture***Meeting Notes**

Subject: <b>Centralia Rotary Club</b>	
Client: <b>Illinois Department of Transportation, District 7</b>	
Project: <b>US 51 Environmental Impact Statement</b>	Project No: <b>I0020360 (CDI Number)</b>
Meeting Date: <b>July 28, 2008</b>	Meeting Location: <b>Marilyn's Restaurant</b>
Notes by: <b>J. Payonk (CDI)</b>	

**Project Team Attendees:** Jerry Payonk (CDI)

**Topics Discussed/Notes:**

The purpose of the meeting was to present the Centralia Rotary with an overview of the project.

Jerry Payonk made a brief presentation summarizing the project process. The US 51 Environmental Impact Statement will look at expanding 51 to four lanes from the Christian County line south of Pana to the Centralia area where existing 51 is already four lanes just north of Irvington – approximately 65 miles. To date the project has established Citizen Advisory Groups (CAG's) at 5 locations where US 51 directly impacts local communities. These CAG's exist in Ramsey, Vandalia, Vernon/Patoka, Sandoval, and Centralia. The CAG's consist of local citizens from each community. The purpose of the CAG's is to assist the project team in developing alternatives.

The CAG's will help develop a problem statement (why does US 51 need to be expanded?), and develop, define and analyze alternatives. The project schedule anticipates Federal Approval for a final alternative in spring of 2012.

*US 51 Partners, A Joint Venture***Meeting Notes**

Subject: Presentation to Vandalia Rotary	
Client: Illinois Department of Transportation, District 7	
Project: US 51 Environmental Impact Statement	Project No: I0020360 (CDI Number)
Meeting Date: January 13, 2010	Meeting Location: Ponderosa Steakhouse
Notes by: J. Payonk (CDI)	

Project Team Attendees: Jerry Payonk (CDI), Sherry Phillips, Matt Hirtzel (IDOT)

Topics Discussed/Notes:

The purpose of the presentation was to present an overview of the US 51 process to date for the Vandalia area.

Jerry Payonk presented a condensed Powerpoint of the November PIM presentations that were given in Ramsey, Vandalia, Vernon/Patoka, Sandoval and Centralia. This presentation was edited to provide information on only the Vandalia area.

The Vandalia alternatives began with 21 corridor combinations. The alternative alignment development process consisted of four steps: development of preliminary corridors, screening to consolidate and eliminate corridors, macro analysis of the remaining corridors, and development of preliminary alignments within the corridors. These four steps reduced the number of corridor combinations from 21 down to two. The variable impacts to resources that were used to eliminate corridors Vandalia were:

- High quality wetlands
- Floodplain impacts
- Commercial displacements
- High quality woodlands

The remaining alternatives (S & U) each cross I-70 at similar locations west of the existing I-70/US 40 interchange.

Questions asked after the presentation:

Q: Why was the alternative east of Vandalia eliminated?

A: Several alternative combinations were proposed early in the corridor development process but were eliminated due to longitudinal impacts to the Kaskaskia floodplain. Since early elimination, the Corps of Engineers and the Department of Natural Resources have indicated they would not have permitted alternatives on the east side.

Q: When will the project be constructed?

A: The project is only funded for the current phase of study. Following the completion the EIS, final construction plans will need to be developed, and right-of-way will need to be purchased. With no funding available, construction is at least 10 years away.

*US 51 Partners, A Joint Venture***Meeting Notes**

Subject: Discussion of US 51 Alternatives with Murray Developmental Center	
Client: Illinois Department of Transportation, District 7	
Project: US 51 Environmental Impact Statement	Project No:
Meeting Date: 02/22/2010	Meeting Location: Murray Developmental Center, Centralia, IL
Notes by: S. Dovalovsky (Clark Dietz)	

Attendees: Ron Eversgard, Rick Starr, Sherry Phillips (IDOT D7), Matt Hirtzel (IDOT D7), Jerry Payonk (US 51 Partners), and Stacie Dovalovsky (US 51 Partners)

**Topics Discussed:**

The purpose of the meeting was discuss how alternate alignments for a proposed US 51 might impact the residents of the Murray Developmental Center.

**Action/Notes:**

The Murray Developmental Center houses and cares for approximately 295 developmentally handicapped residents. The residents live at the Center and participate in on-campus and off-campus activities depending on the nature of their handicap. The Center employees almost 600 staff members. On the north side of the property there is a house used by families that must travel a long distance to visit a resident. The southwest corner of the campus has a baseball diamond that was once leased to the City of Centralia for youth baseball but is not used any longer.

The US 51 study is analyzing numerous preliminary roadway corridors around the Centralia area; two are adjacent to the Center property, one on the east and one on the west. Murray Developmental Center staff indicated that the west side would be preferred as the baseball field facility is not used, but as long as the campus was not severed, an alignment on either side of the Center would not impact their operations.

US 51 Coalition Meeting  
April 13, 2010

# US 51 Environmental Impact Statement



## Agenda

- Project History
- Alternative Development and Analysis
- Next Steps





## Project History

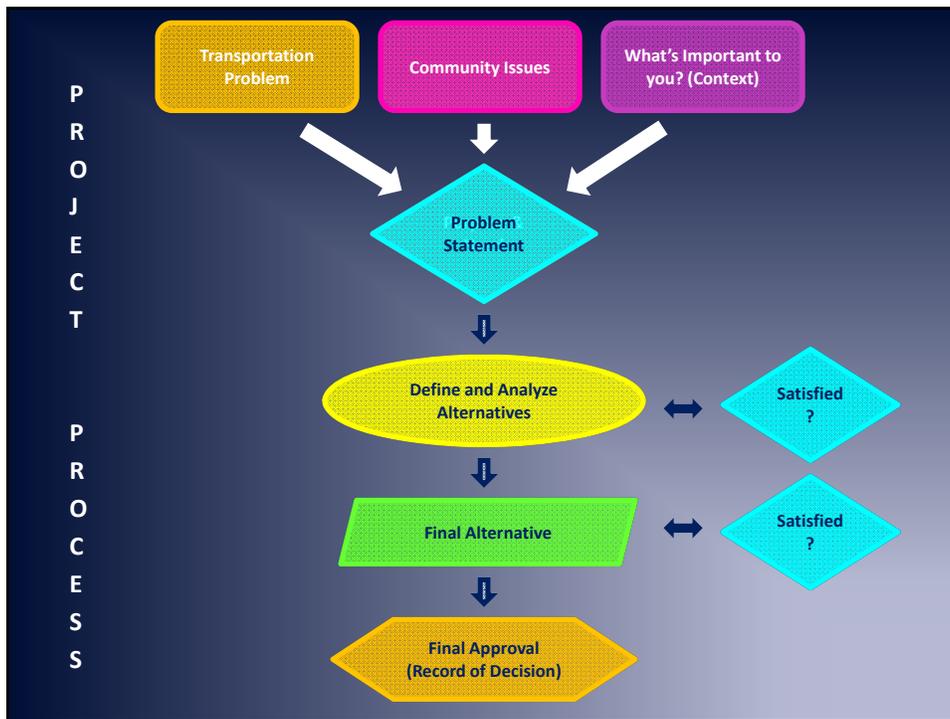
- Studies of the corridor have been ongoing since 1970
- Planning study in 1987 recommended expansion to four lanes from Decatur to I-64
- EIS from Decatur to Pana approved in 1992
- US 51 from Decatur to Pana in various stages of design and construction
- US 51 from Irvington to I-64 is already four lanes



## Agenda

- Project History
- **Alternative Development and Analysis**
- Next Steps





## Problem Statement

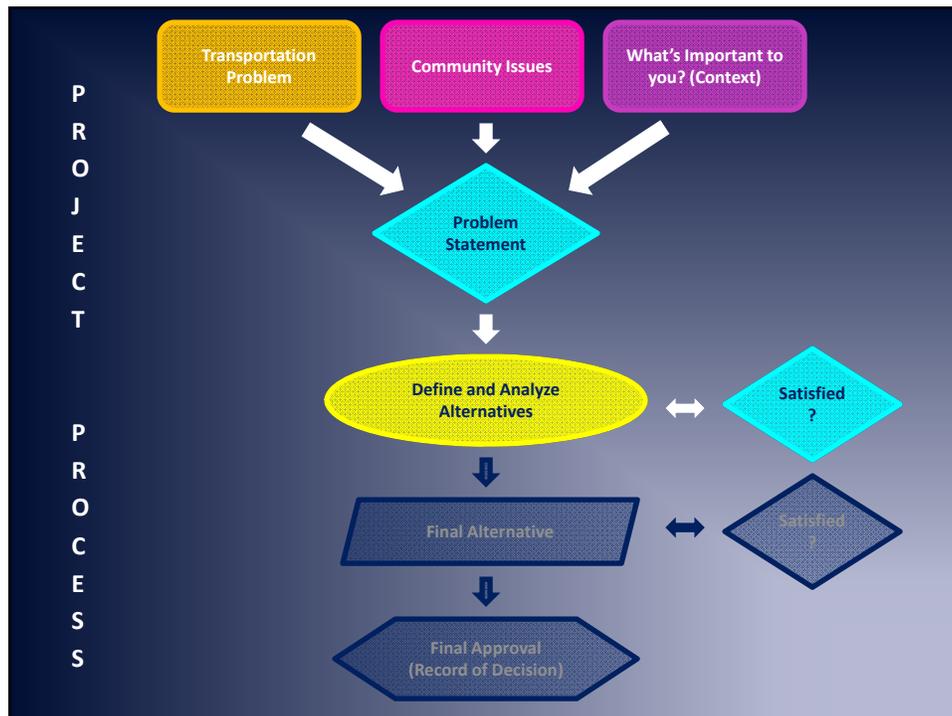
The existing US 51 highway does not provide an *efficient* and *safe connection* between local communities and commercial centers, and does not encourage long distance travel.

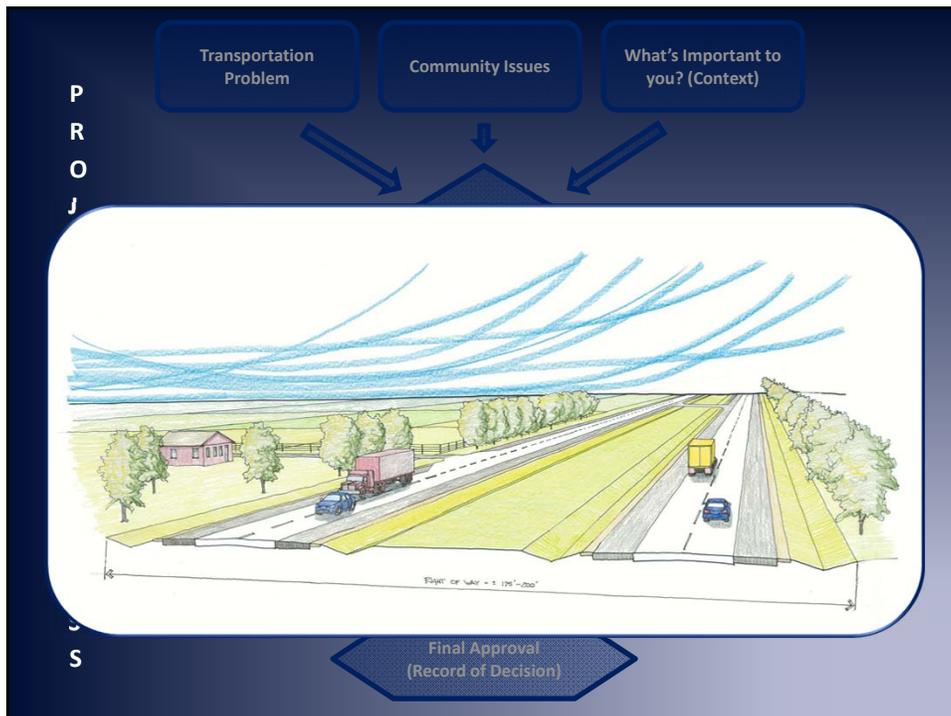
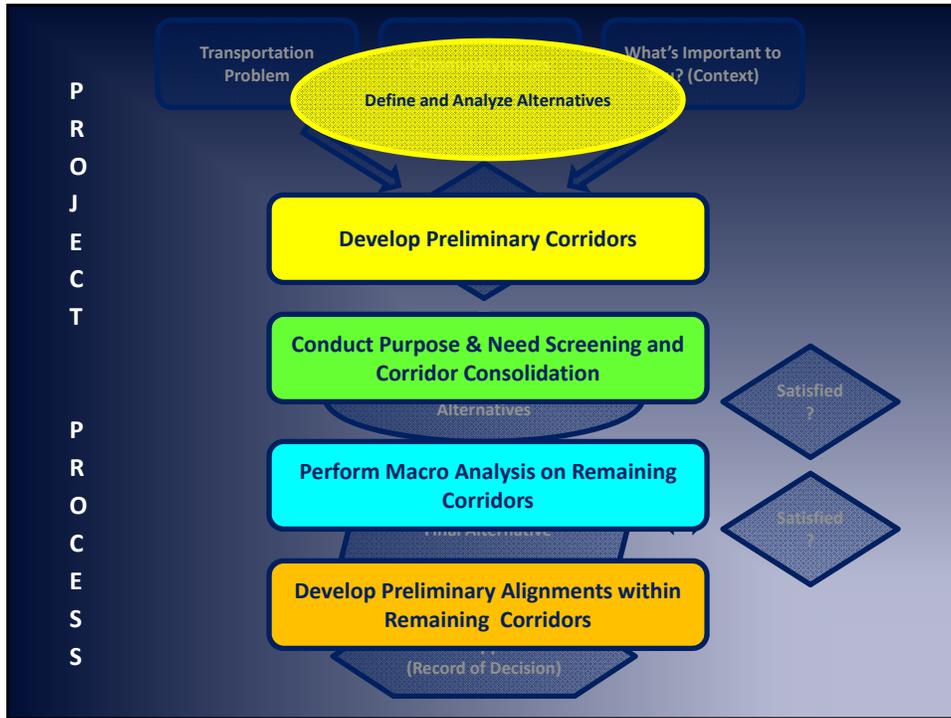
The US 51 highway *hinders* travel and the *movement* of goods and services, *limits* tourism and commerce, and limits residential, commercial, and industrial *growth*.

The existing US 51 highway is *unsafe* for cars, trucks, buses, pedestrians, bicycles, and farm equipment to share the road at the same time.

## Purpose & Need Statement

The purpose of the US 51 project is to improve the connectivity within the south central Illinois region and to enhance the highway system continuity. The region needs a centralized roadway that effectively connects communities as well as local and commercial centers, while also providing a roadway that promotes safe and efficient travel in the region for a wide variety of transportation users.

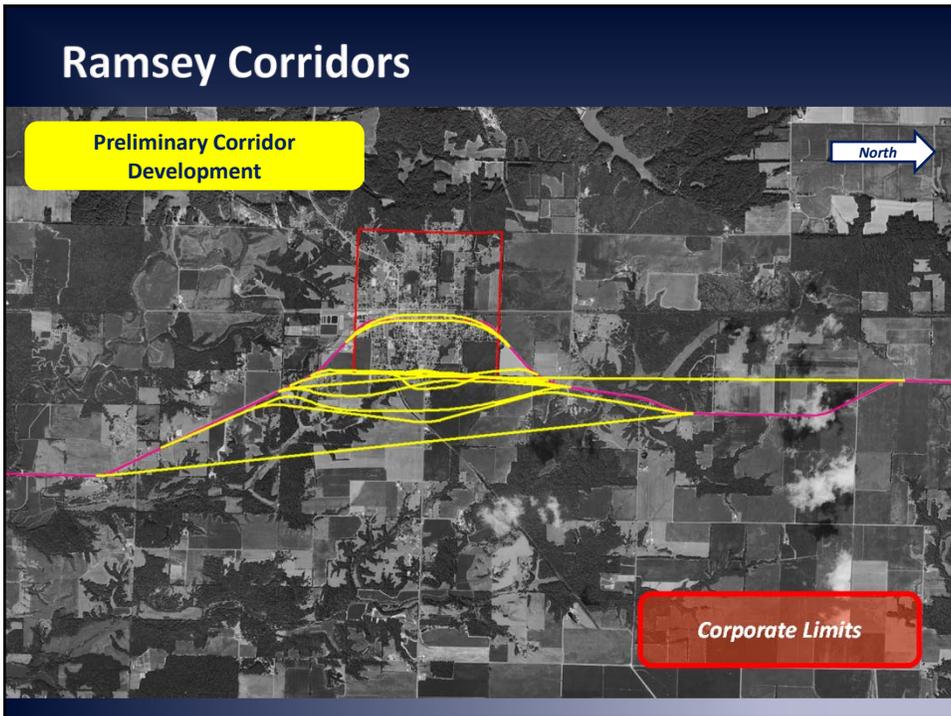


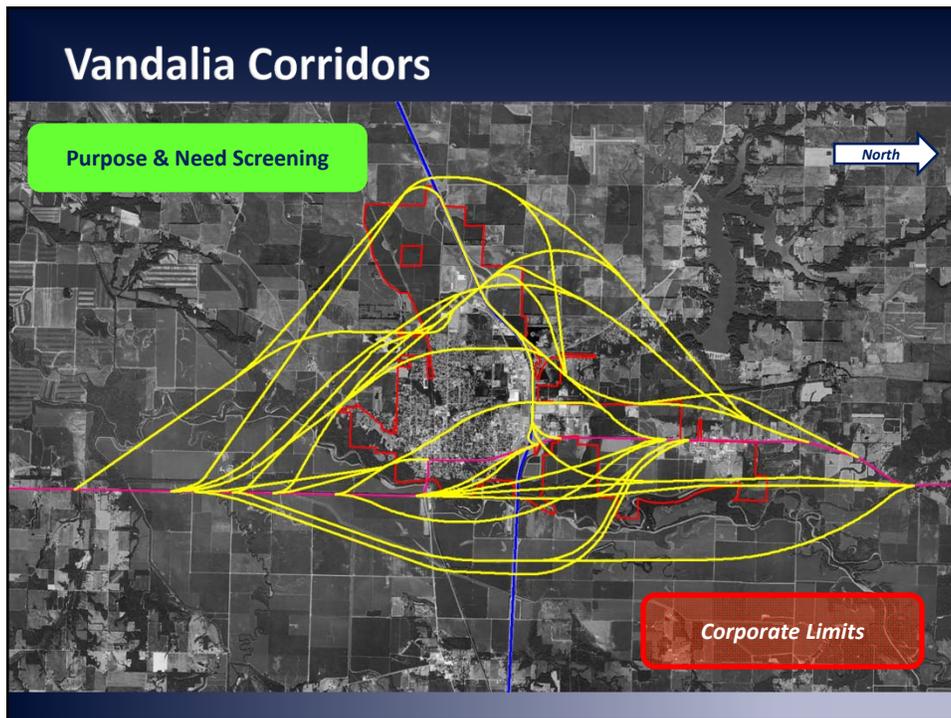
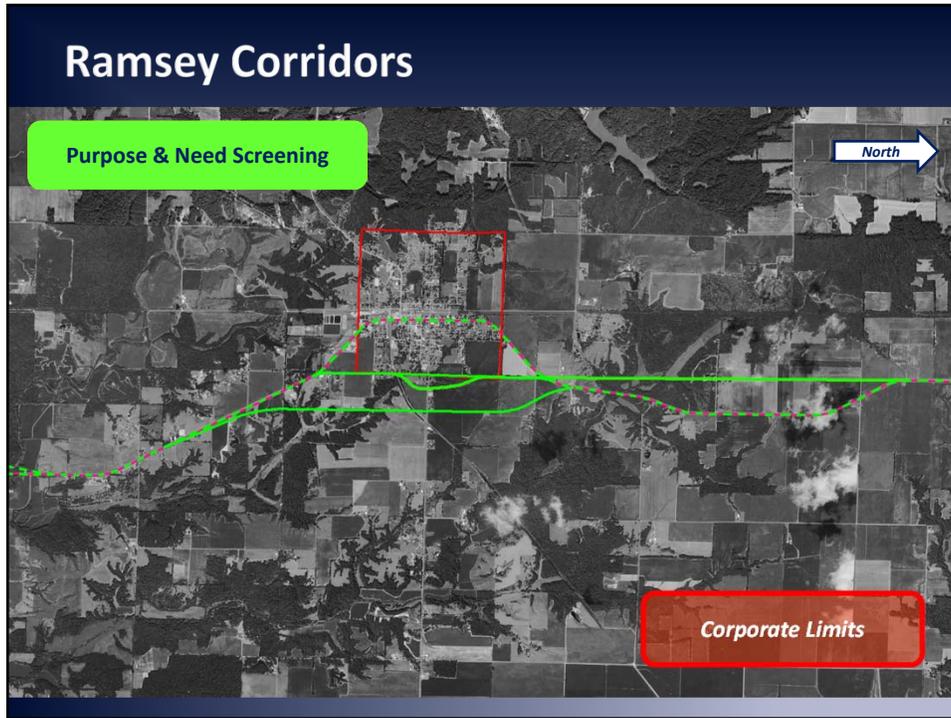


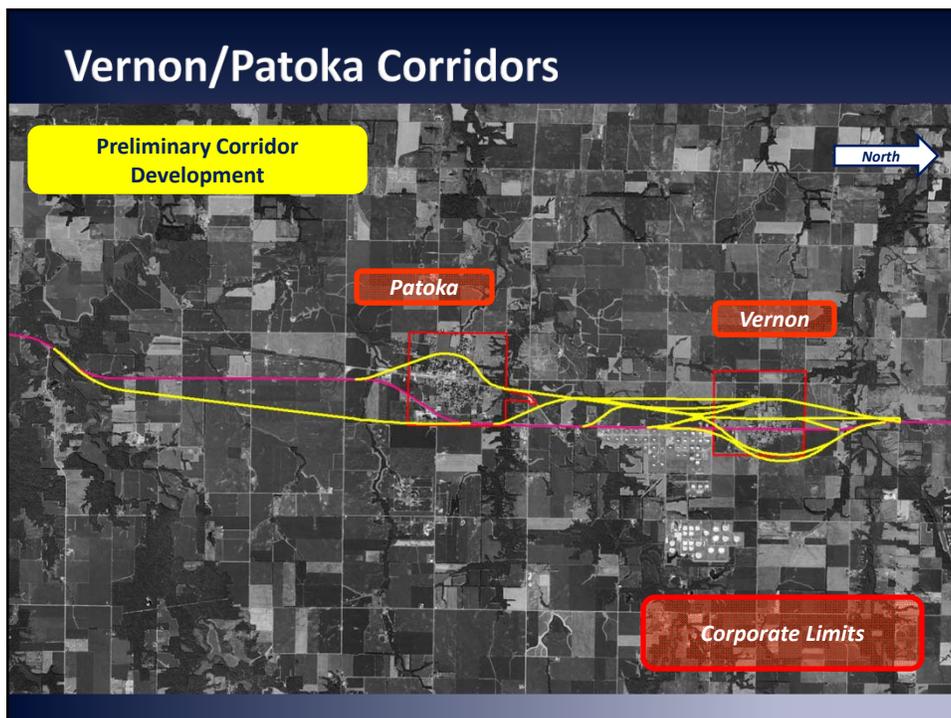
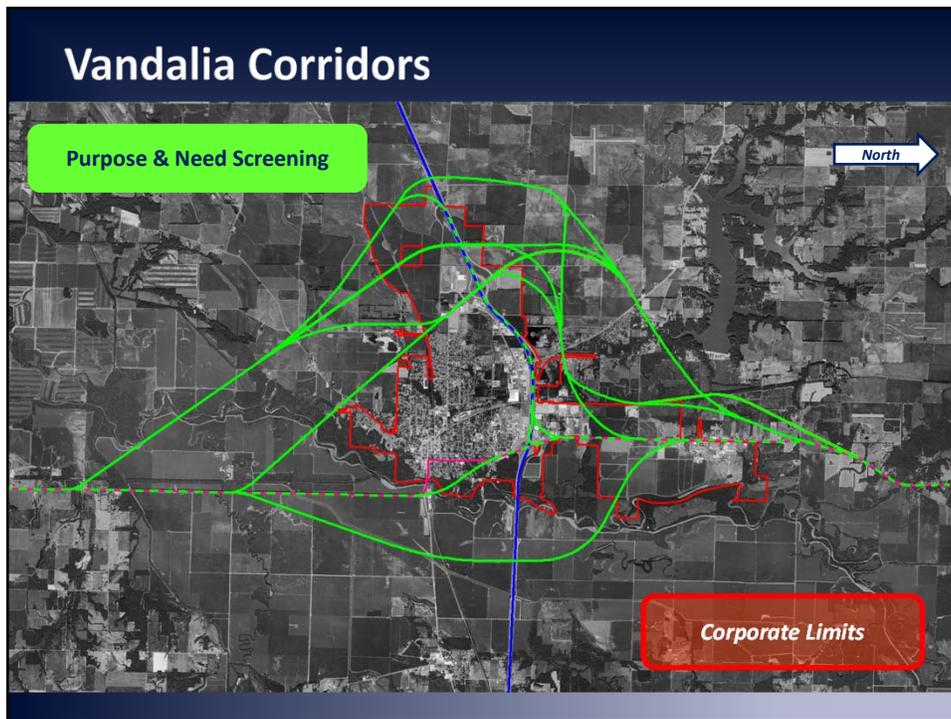
## CAG, RAG & PSG Meetings



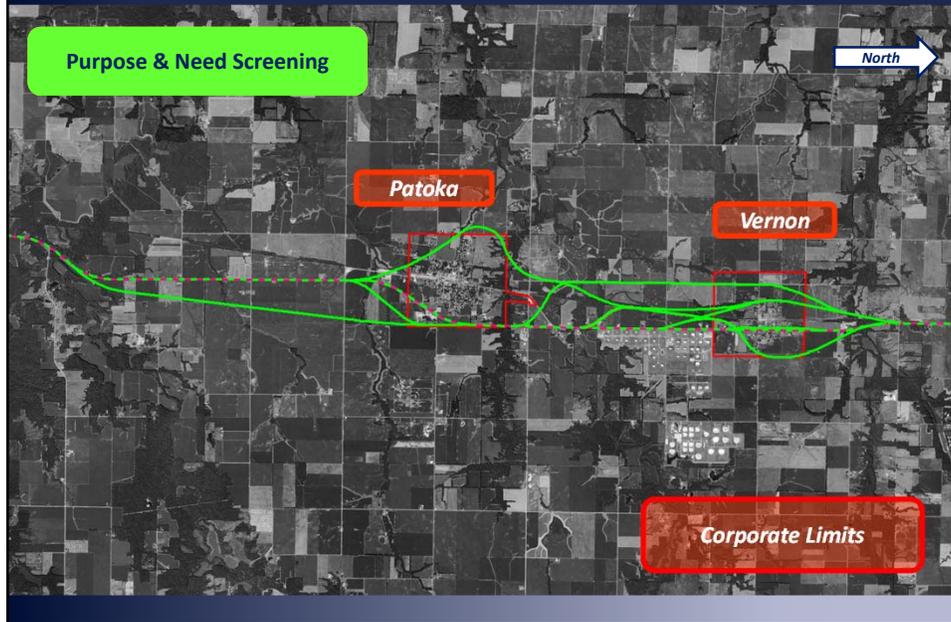
## Ramsey Corridors



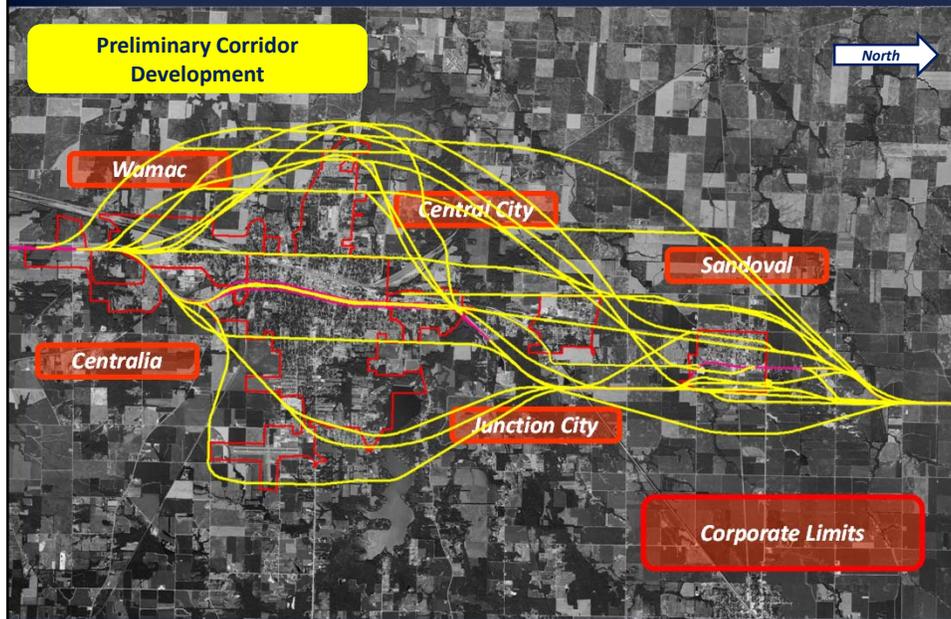


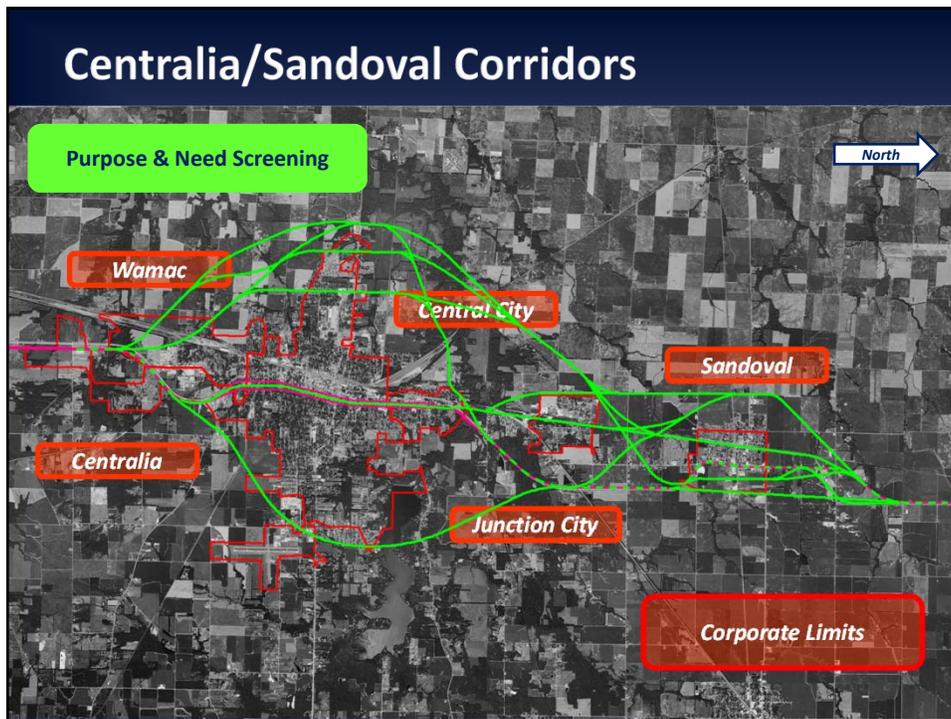


## Vernon/Patoka Corridors



## Centralia/Sandoval Corridors

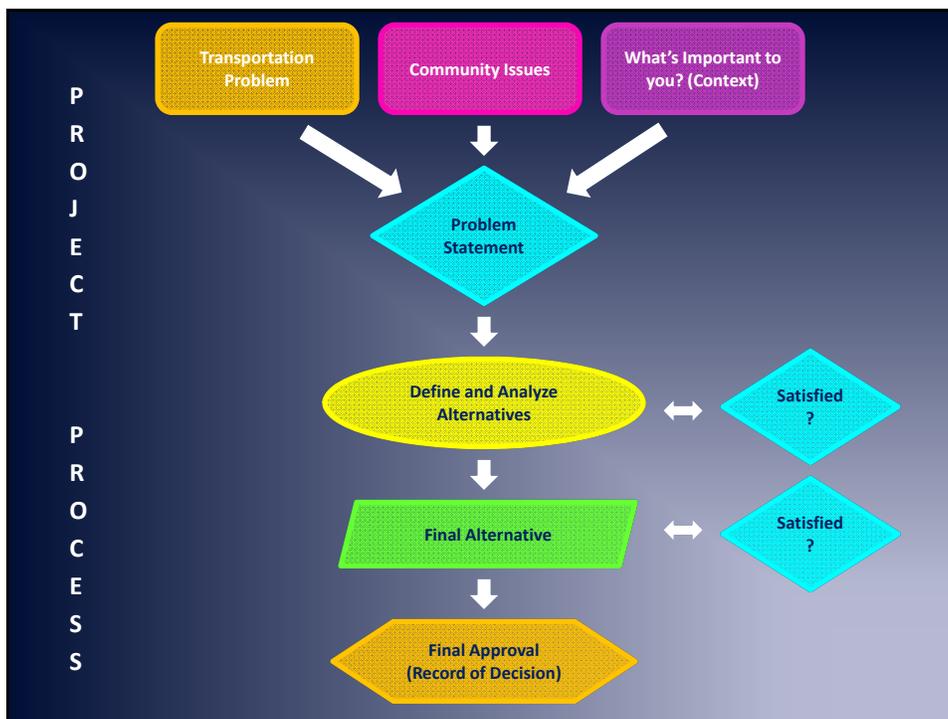




## Agenda

- Project History
- Alternative Development and Analysis
- **Next Steps**





## How do you contact us?

Website:

[www.us51eis-idot.com](http://www.us51eis-idot.com)

E-Mail:

[us51eis@clark-dietz.com](mailto:us51eis@clark-dietz.com)

Comment Line:

217.373.8951



US 51 Coalition Meeting  
April 28, 2011

# US 51 Environmental Impact Statement

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The bottom section of the cover features three logos. On the left is the Illinois Department of Transportation logo. In the center is the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration logo. On the right is a circular logo for the US 51 Environmental Impact Statement, featuring a green tree and the number 51.

