

C. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR IMPROVEMENTS

1. History of Project

A number of related issues made this study a priority at the local government level with the most important development the siting of a new interchange on I-57 between Bradley/Bourbonnais and Manteno. In the fall of 2000, the Planning Commission applied for and received a grant from the “Illinois Tomorrow Corridor Planning Grant Program” for the corridor study. In 2001, the Regional Planning Commission’s Transportation Subcommittee selected Bernardin-Lochmueller & Associates, Inc. to perform the corridor study.

Safety and transportation issues were developed by the Kankakee County Regional Planning Commission to serve as a foundation for the identification of alternates within the corridor and for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the build alternates relative to each other and the no build alternate. These issues represent transportation needs and ultimately the project’s goals for evaluating the effectiveness of roadway improvement alternatives for the corridor study. The issues were:

- Local road interconnection with the proposed interchange with I-57 at 6000N.
- Freight access in the corridor, both by train and truck.
- Vehicle–train safety issues prompted by the Amtrak accident in Bourbonnais and problems associated with access to the area between US 45/52 and IL 50.
- Preservation of a viable crossing of the Kankakee River at Warner Bridge Road.
- The potential of the South Suburban Airport to impact transportation in this corridor.

2. Need for Study

The need for the study is driven by the five transportation issues noted above.

In the year 2025, serious transportation congestion problems will exist in Kankakee County despite proposed highway projects in the next few years. The development of the South Suburban Airport has the potential to significantly increase traffic and adversely affect the transportation system in the northern part of Kankakee County. Not only will automobile traffic increase significantly, but also truck traffic carrying freight to and from the airport will combine with the already heavy truck traffic generated within the area to cause serious congestion on the transportation system. The new proposed interchange on I-57 at 6000N Road will provide increased accessibility to the commercial and industrial development already occurring along I-57 between Bourbonnais and Bradley on the south and Manteno on the north, and may accelerate the pace and magnitude of commercial and industrial development. As a result, traffic will increase significantly along I-57 between US 45/52 and IL 50 from the IL 50 interchange in Bradley to the CH 9 interchange in Manteno.

East-west connector roads serving this area will be needed to reduce the future congestion. From the current IL 50 interchange in Bradley, primary east-west access to Bourbonnais is provided by Armour Road, which is residential in character to the west of the Canadian National Railway tracks paralleling the west side of IL 50. There is no other arterial roadway from I-57 along the north side of Bradley and Bourbonnais to US 45/52, IL 102 and areas west of I-57. Likewise, all traffic bound to IL 17, IL 113 or the west side of the City of Kankakee must pass through downtown Kankakee. Further, the developing industrial area of southwest Kankakee to the west of the Canadian National Railway lacks direct access to I-57, and truck and employee traffic must pass through residential areas in south Kankakee to get to the US 45/52 interchange (Exit 308). Finally, due to existing development patterns and the Kankakee River State Park, the only existing crossing of the Kankakee River west of downtown Kankakee is the Warner Bridge on the Kankakee/Will County Line. Thus, preserving and using this river crossing is important to improving traffic circulation in Kankakee County.

3. Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to address the five transportation issues or needs mentioned above. These five transportation needs constitute five project goals for the evaluation of the performance of alternative roadway improvements.

To address the five transportation needs and assess the effectiveness of roadway improvement alternatives in addressing these needs, this Corridor Study is to address the purpose and need for a new Kankakee County transportation corridor, examine future land use patterns, forecast future traffic, identify and examine alignment alternatives, identify possible environmental impacts, develop project costs, and receive public input.