

F. ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY

1. Environmental Footprint

An inventory of significant environmental features was prepared for Kankakee County as shown in Figure 9. This information was used in the development of recommendations for the east-west corridor centered on 6000 N Road (study area bounded in red dashed lines) and the north-south corridor centered on Warner Bridge Road and 3000 S Road (study area bounded in green dashed lines).

The environmental footprint shows significant components of the environment including:

- Parks and nature preserves,
- Churches and cemeteries,
- Major transmission lines and utility towers,
- High archaeological potential areas,
- Mineral and energy resources such as quarries,
- Wetlands, and
- Streams and floodplains.

Rivers and streams were the focus of historic and prehistoric settlement and migration patterns. Prehistoric villages, religious sites, and population centers are often found in close proximity to perennial water sources. Therefore, the areas surrounding rivers and major streams are mapped as areas of high archaeological potential. Specific archaeological sites are not shown in Figure 9 to protect the integrity of the sites.

Land use in the Corridor Study Area is primarily agriculture except in the vicinity of I-57. Quarries and the interstate rest areas are significant land uses in the vicinity of I-57 within the east-west corridor. Industrial land use, centered around the Kankakee Industrial Park in the area of the I-57/US45-52 interchange, is the most significant non-agricultural land use in the north-south corridor.

While farmland and stream crossing impacts are common to both corridors, the most significant environmental feature limiting corridor options is the Kankakee River State Park. IL 102 on the north side of the Kankakee River and Warner Bridge Road pass through the State Park, and IL 113 abuts the south side of the State Park. Because parks are among the federally protected lands, any roadway improvement that requires park right-of-way can only go forward if there are no other prudent and feasible options.

2. Warner Bridge Improvement Environmental Issues

Because the Corridor Study Area passes through the Kankakee River State Park, a special meeting was held with Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) on October 31, 2001, to discuss purpose and status of the study, to obtain information on critical park resources, to determine the Department's position concerning the acquisition of park property for road right-of-way, and to establish a communication framework for the study. A key purpose of the meeting was to identify environmental limitations on an alignment of the corridor within

Kankakee River State Park. Within the Kankakee River State Park, any roadway improvement would probably use the existing Warner Bridge Road alignment because this is the only crossing of the Kankakee River through the State Park and the first river crossing west of IL 17 (Court Street) in downtown Kankakee. Up to an additional 120 to 150 feet of right-of-way would be needed for the improvement of the Warner Bridge Road passage through the park, and the additional right-of-way could be added east and/or west of the existing alignment to minimize impacts to adjacent natural areas and environmental resources.

An earlier Kankakee River crossing study examined alignments for a new bridge east of the Kankakee River State Park. This study determined that no location could be identified where the need for the project outweighed the significant adverse socioeconomic impacts. In the case of an abandoned railroad crossing through the State Park, the railroad right-of-way has reverted to the State Park and can no longer be used for public access.

The known resources within the State Park include:

- Numerous wetlands;
- The Kankakee River and its banks are designated Natural Areas;
- A large prairie area on the south bank is a designated Natural Area that includes Illinois listed endangered plant species;
- Portions of the park along Rock Creek are also designated Natural Areas; and
- Mussel beds and fish spawning areas in rocky shallows near existing bridge piers.

IDNR is also concerned that increased traffic volumes through the park could impact park activities and infrastructure, including the equestrian/snowmobile trail that crosses Warner Bridge road south of the Kankakee River. Because the Kankakee River is a candidate Wild and Scenic River, any impacts on the river would have to be coordinated with the National Park Service. Any right-of-way acquisition would also need to be coordinated through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) under Section 4(f) for a federally funded project.

According to IDNR staff, no 6(f) resources would be impacted by the potential widening of Warner Bridge road through the park. In addition, archaeological surveys conducted for the area surrounding the roadway did not encounter any potential significant historic or prehistoric archaeological resources.

While the IDNR is not opposed to the principal of widening Warner Bridge Road, all impacts (including cumulative impacts) would need to be fully assessed in any environmental documentation concerning a federal action under the National Environmental Policy Act, and adequate mitigation measures would be needed for unavoidable impacts. Potential mitigation measures may include:

- Acquisition of new property to compensate for any areas lost to the roadway project;
- Construction of new parking lots;
- Development or enhancement of wetlands within the park;
- Construction of new boat ramps;
- Installation of right-of-way fencing to protect park visitors and hunting dogs; and
- Construction phasing to reduce impacts to recreational uses.