

LCDOT Statement on US Route 45 Bypass Alternative Selection

The Lake County Division of Transportation (LCDOT) and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) have undertaken an extensive Phase I process that has led to the selection of a preferred US Route 45 west bypass alternative, Alternative A4. These preliminary engineering and environmental (Phase I) studies have provided a wealth of data and information on which the decision was based, all of which can be found on this website (www.route45project.com).

Stakeholder input has been an important and valuable consideration throughout the project development process. Project stakeholders included individuals, organizations, and agencies that expressed an interest in the project or that have a jurisdictional responsibility. As noted in the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) that was developed at the onset of the study, the Project Study Group (PSG) comprised of LCDOT and IDOT, in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), are responsible for the ultimate project decisions.

The study process was initiated with a Public Informational Meeting in March 2009 at which point considerable public input was received with respect to the project purpose and a full range of alternatives that should be considered. This was supplemented with additional information on the project purpose and alternatives to be considered at the initial Community Advisory Group (CAG) meeting held in June 2009. As a result of this initial project input, a project Purpose and Need Statement and an initial range of eighteen potential bypass alternatives were developed. Working with project stakeholders, including separate meetings with the CAG, the eighteen initial potential bypass alternatives were narrowed first to nine alternatives then to three finalist bypass alternatives that were presented at the second Public Meeting in September 2010. One of the finalist bypass alternatives was an east bypass, and two were a west bypass.

Some of the beneficial stakeholder input that has been obtained to date includes the acknowledgement of the need for a bypass, the importance of transportation performance, the location and importance of certain cultural and environmental resources in the study area and opportunities to minimize and/or avoid impacts, the no adverse impact finding with respect to a use of McDonald Woods property and the opportunities for regional trail connectivity to other Lake County Forest Preserve District properties, etc. While all finalist alternatives were viable alternatives, the PSG has determined that Alternative A4 is most responsive to this overall stakeholder input, best enhances mobility for all users, and best accommodates existing and future travel patterns along US Route 45 as well as Grass Lake and Millburn Roads.

The environmental and technical analysis that supported this decision is summarized on the Impact Evaluation Matrix comparing the finalist alternatives. The environmental and technical analysis included consideration of many categories, including the following:

Cultural Clearance for Historic Resources

Cultural and Historic resources review showed that the realignment of Grass Lake Road does not traverse any property deemed eligible for historic protection, meaning Alternatives A4 and C4 were viable. Alternative C4 would require 1.25 acres of property acquisition from the designated Millburn Historic District, and would disconnect the main historic district building (Strang House) from the remainder of the historic district buildings.

De minimis impact finding for West Bypass use of McDonald Woods

The West Bypass was found to not adversely affect the overall recreation activities of McDonald Woods, is compatible with the LCFPD Preliminary Trail Alignment Plan, traverses only low quality areas, and does not affect facility access. Therefore, both the LCFPD and FHWA concurred with a *de minimis* impact finding for a West Bypass use of McDonald Woods. This is consistent with a LCFPD resolution as part of the previous IDOT Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA) feasibility study.

Environmental Considerations

All three finalist alternatives received biological, archaeological, and cultural resource clearances from IDOT. Alternative A1 would displace two residences whereas alternatives A4 and C4 would displace three residences. Alternative A4 would have no wetland impacts whereas alternatives A1 and C4 would have minor impacts. Alternatives A1 and A4 impact approximately 2 acres of prime farmland while C4 impacts approximately 11.5 acres.

Transportation Performance

Transportation performance was the primary concern at the public meetings and the preferred alternative showed the best overall performance including the best performing main intersection (US 45 Bypass and Grass Lake/Millburn Road [LOS C versus LOS D]). Additionally, the West Bypass was most compatible with area travel patterns. The dominant northwest to southeast movement is served most efficiently in A4, then A1, and finally C4. This relates to the additional passage of traffic through the Millburn Historic District in the C4 alternative. Specifically, Alternative A4 results in 18% less total delay than the other alternatives. Additionally, total travel time within the project network would be 15% lower in A4 than, for instance, C4. Also, A4 has 4% fewer vehicle stops than C4. Further, A4 provides the greatest potential for pedestrian/bicycle accommodations and safety.

SRA Roadway (U.S. 45) Design Considerations

SRA design considerations for US 45 was a factor including some concerns with Alternative C4 relating to intersection spacing and horizontal curvature which are not issues with Alternatives A1 or A4.

Moving forward, the next steps in the project development process include developing detailed engineering plans for the US Route 45 Bypass and preparing the required Environmental Assessment report that will be reviewed by IDOT and FHWA in advance of an open house Public Hearing to be held Winter 2012. The Public Hearing will provide an opportunity for interested persons to review and comment on the proposed US Route Bypass plan, as well as concept improvements envisioned along US Route 45 north and south of the US Route Bypass area from Illinois Route 132 to Illinois Route 173 that will also be addressed in the overall Environmental Assessment for this project.