

## Lake County DOT Presents Facts around Selected Realignment of US Rte 45

There has been increased public interest in a proposed project to realign U.S. Route 45 at Millburn Road and Grass Lake Road. It's important for the public to have accurate information, rather than relying on hearsay and innuendo. Here are the facts around this project:

The section of U.S. Route 45 near Lindenhurst, Historic Milburn, and Old Mill Creek is one of Lake County's worst congestion trouble spots, hence the nickname "the Millburn Strangler." Back in 2005 and 2006, when County and State leaders established our list of priority road projects with the public's input, this was at the top of the list of priorities. Now, several years later, the project is moving forward and a much needed improvement is coming, but many people are questioning why the selected realignment of US Rte 45 was chosen over the other possible alternatives.

The Lake County Division of Transportation (LCDOT), the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and Federal Highway Administration are the transportation agencies involved in this project, and since US Rte 45 is an IDOT route, it must adhere to a strict federal process. While LCDOT is the lead in managing the project, all three agencies were part of the selection process and agreed that the western alternative with the realignment is the best possible solution. *Why?*

There are numerous factors that went into making this selection. Over the last three years, we went through an extensive review process that included federally regulated environmental studies, traffic engineering studies, public input, and many other components. Based on all of this data, and driven by facts, we selected the west realignment option because it is the best solution. The primary reasons are:

- It provides the best transportation benefit/improvement in regard to safety and travel times. It will result in 18% less total delay than the other alternatives, 15% lower total travel time within the project network, and 4% fewer vehicle stops.
- It has the greatest potential for pedestrian/bicycle accommodations, and improved safety.
- It does not adversely impact the Lake County Forest Preserves (LCFPD)/McDonald Woods. LCFPD is in support of this improvement because a western route will provide an opportunity for trail connectivity north to Ethel's Woods/Raven Glen Forest Preserves. In addition, the LCFPD has concurred that there are no adverse impacts to McDonalds Woods due to the highway corridor being reserved since their resolution of July 7, 1994
- The western option is also preferred over the east option because the east realignment would bisect the Milburn historic district and result in a significant road curve because of wetland considerations, and other environmental concerns

LCDOT takes the issue of safety very seriously, and we consider safety in everything we do. So, for some people to allege that we are putting children at risk because of the proximity to Milburn West School simply is not factual. The road will be a safe distance from the school, as it is now.

One thing we all seem to agree on is that Lake County motorists *NEED* this improvement. While not everyone from the public agrees on the final selection, the team ultimately came to its decision based on multiple factors and study data. We focused on fact-based information, used our professional experience and expertise in the area of transportation planning and engineering, and selected the best solution that will provide the best overall public benefit.

*Marty Buehler, Director, Lake County Division of Transportation*