

I-80 Mississippi River Bridge

Public Meeting Summary / October 27, 2022

The third Public Meeting for the I-80 Mississippi River Bridge study was held at 4 p.m. on October 27, 2022, to provide study information to date, present a narrowed list of potential improvement alternatives, and receive public feedback. Nearly 300 participants joined the interactive online meeting at i80mississippibridge.com, which included a video presentation, review of study exhibits and discussion with representatives of the Illinois and Iowa departments of transportation, and the project consultant team.

BY THE NUMBERS:

- **454** Registrations
- **282** Participants
- **2** hours, **28** minutes: total meeting time
- **50** questions and comments submitted*
 - *175 questions and comments were submitted through the Public Meeting Comment period concluding on November 10, 2022

STATE/FEDERAL ELECTED OFFICIALS (or representatives):

- Representatives for:
 - US Senator Dick Durbin (IL)
 - US Representative Cheri Bustos (IL)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTED OFFICIALS & STAFF:

- Rock Island County, IL
- Bettendorf
- East Moline
- Hampton Township
- LeClaire
- Moline
- Port Byron
- Rapids City

MEDIA PARTICIPANTS:

- WHBF (CBS/FOX)
- WQAD (ABC)
- QC Times/Dispatch-Argus
- WVIK
- QC Business Journal

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED:

- Bi-State Regional Commission
- Visit Quad Cities
- Quad Cities Chamber
- LeClaire Chamber of Commerce
- Living Land & Waters
- Bison Bridge Foundation

QUESTION/CONCERN/COMMENTS TOPICS INCLUDED:

- Economic and business case for bridge replacement
- Interchange & Bridge reconstruction
- Multi-use path, re-use of existing bridge
- Weighting of impacts
- Alternative #1 as a baseline
- Demolition of existing bridge
- Timing of construction
- Impacts of construction
- Environmental impacts
- Project timeline
- Interchange construction
- Pedestrian accommodations
- Criteria for Alternatives 4 & 5
- Consideration of Option 6
- Noise barriers
- Bike/Pedestrian accommodations
- Interchange Option D adjustments
- Maintenance of bridge if re-used
- Tourism and economic development impacts
- Further lane expansion along I80/existing parallel I80 study
- Potential demolition of bridge
- Environmental impacts on marinas, residential docks
- Coordination of bridge navigation
- Bridge funding
- Property acquisition timeline
- Property relocation, disruption guidelines

QUESTION AND ANSWER PANEL:

- **The submissions received during the public meeting were grouped into 29 questions that were asked during the Question & Answer session, which lasted for approximately 1 hour and 10 minutes**
 - Similar topics and questions were grouped to address all subject matters
 - Comments submitted with no questions were acknowledged during Q&A, with confirmation they would be included in the public record
 - Follow-up communications were sent to all who submitted comments or questions during the meeting, confirming receipt of the submittal and providing direction to the project website for more information and to submit additional comments
 - Any questions and comments received outside of the meeting but during the official comment period received an acknowledgment or response as appropriate

The following is a report of questions posed to the panel and their responses. Responses have been edited for clarity:

QUESTION: *Has the business case for the bridge replacement been professionally vetted or validated, not just a high-level statement?*

BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:

Anytime that we are evaluating the potential expenditure of funds, or any project for that matter, it must adhere to the specific policies of the Departments of Transportation, as well as the Federal Highway Administration. There is a significant amount of analysis that occurred before funds were even identified for this study, as well as the other phases of the projects, including construction, that are currently funded within both Illinois and Iowa DOTs' multi-year programs. Without going into a super-detailed level of analysis of the bridge condition, it was mentioned during the presentation that the existing structure has very narrow shoulders. This poses significant safety issues for the high truck percentage on this bridge.

For those who live in the area, they may recall several years ago we had to do an emergency closure of the eastbound lanes because folks who were out doing inspection in that moment identified that there were potential critical issues with the structure. Since then, various successful repairs have been made to the existing bridge.

When a structure of this nature, that takes so much traffic, gets to a certain point in its life, we must consider the potential for replacement or other treatment. We've analyzed options for potential re-use of substructure elements and have determined that those do not meet the Purpose and Need for the current project.

Additional problems arise when looking to address the existing width of the bridge. Due to how the structure was previously widened, it is not feasible to widen this existing structure.

TODD UDE, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

Excellent characterization of the bridge condition and how and why we think about replacement. I would just note that the question was a business case for it, and for projects of this magnitude, I just don't think it's that simple. I don't think the DOT sits down and makes a dollars and cents comparison of this project versus a different project and says "what's the business case?"

But, along those lines, you could acknowledge that I-80 and the Mississippi River are both arteries of the nation and the nation's economy. As Becky said, the bridge is aging, it's getting harder and harder and taking more and more money and investment to keep it safe and in good repair. As these things get to 60, 65-years-old, you need to be thinking about what your next step is going to be. That's the way I think about the need for this project.

PHIL MESCHER, Iowa Department of Transportation:

I think you both iterated that very nicely. There are a lot of different things that go into this process. Again, this bridge was originally designed back in the 60s, and the age of it, it just keeps getting older. Updated design standards have also been developed over the last decades in order to promote more capacity, a higher degree of safety, and other things of that nature.

And like Todd said, this is a Transcontinental Corridor that is vital to freight transportation across the US. These are the main things we look at when determining how necessary this project is.

TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

I would also like to add: Becky mentioned previous studies, and one of those includes a 2017

Feasibility Study. That document is available on the Project website if you'd like to read more about that. We've also touched on the Purpose and Need during the presentation, but our full Purpose and Need document is available on the website, where you can read more detail on these issues.

QUESTION: *What is the reason for including the I-88 Interchange within the planning boundaries of the I-80 Bridge project?*

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

Part of the reason that the I-88 Interchange was included is that when we first looked at the Purpose and Need, we were looking at this corridor as a whole, from into Iowa over to I-88, We were looking at the possibility that we were going to have six-lane warrants. These termini, including the I-88 Interchange, were included in that.

Looking at the interchange, as we go through here, we are identifying that there are certain movements within the interchange that have a higher crash history. Most noted is the eastbound I-80 to eastbound I-88 loop, the southwest loop ramp, if you will. We are carrying that through to identify what is the best approach to try and improve the safety of that interchange while also updating it to meet current design standards.

MARK PETERSON, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

I think you hit it right on the head. We had originally considered the need for six lanes, but we identified so many safety issues, as you mentioned, that could be corrected and brought up to policy standards. It just seems like those needed to be addressed.

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

And again, as we noted in the previous meeting, we did look at the need for six lanes, and we did identify that those increases in traffic did not happen in the time period that we were expecting. It was a little bit of a surprise to all of us when we were looking at it, but that was the case. Now, with that being said, we didn't shrink down the scope of the project, we kept those limits, and we're trying to identify what other options we can do with this interchange as part of this project and carry it through.

QUESTION: *I notice no mention of plans for a multi-use facility at any of the new River Crossing proposals. Why not? Also, are you going to use the Bison Bridge for fulfilling the provision for the multi-use and ADA requirements?*

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

As Tony noted in in the presentation, we must follow the NEPA process for this. That involves the existing stakeholders along this section. The Bison Bridge proposal is not considered part of this evaluation.

We are looking at this from a completely transportation-based standpoint, with no consideration to some future proposed alternative on it. Now, in the last meeting that we had in May, questions were brought up about possible multi-use paths, bicycle and pedestrian facilities along this corridor. We understand that there is the Grand Illinois Trail on the Illinois side going through Rapids City, in addition to the trail on the LeClaire side.

What we're proposing to do is to look at pedestrian multi-use path facilities associated with this new proposed bridge structure on it. We'd probably carry that through, once we've determined the final design or the final alignment option, and then carry it through from there.

BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:

Just to clarify, we're going to evaluate the potential for whether a path can be included. I know a

lot of folks in the area are very familiar with the I-74 bridge, which does include bike and pedestrian accommodation, and it's a very unusual thing for an Interstate structure. But, knowing that those facilities are there, and we've gotten quite a few comments from stakeholders who have an interest in that, we are going to continue to evaluate this option. No, we haven't specifically indicated that on the designs that we've shared within the presentation today, but it is a factor that will continue to be evaluated, and we'll be looking at that more directly once we determine the preferred alternative.

QUESTION: *In regards to impacts, why aren't the impacts weighted for importance?*

TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

As part of this process, we must look at all social, economic, and environmental impacts. It is not a typical approach to weigh those impacts. Everyone may value impacts differently, so this would be difficult to do. The idea is that we assess all the impacts and then determine the alternative that we believe to have the least impacts. And sure, there could be some subjectivity to it in the end, but there's no way to rank, "one potential impact is higher than the other."

Certainly, impact to property is an issue and something that we're concerned about and try to avoid, but we're trying to avoid or minimize all impacts. There are different federal and state resource agencies that have concerns related to wetlands, floodplains, and streams. We look at all potential impacts, and then must make a judgement call at the end as to which one is least impactful. And then there are other factors, as we talked about – engineering – that we must consider as well. All that gets rolled into the decision-making process as we move forward.

QUESTION: *Why not keep Alternative One as a baseline with the rerouting as a problem?*

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

We did present Alternative One to the local communities during the Summer and spoke to multiple people about it. One thing that we heard with Alternative One was that there was an overwhelming concern about the time-period that the bridge would be closed, henceforth, really restricting access to both LeClaire and Rapids City. As such, being that there is a potential of a multiple year complete closure of the bridge, this would have been detrimental to the cities. Multiple residents stated that this was not something they wanted to see. Now, could we carry it as a baseline? Yes, but realistically, we're trying to narrow down the options to our ultimate alternative that we want to proceed with. So, it really would not be much of a benefit for us to carry it on.

PHIL MESCHER, Iowa Department of Transportation:

It's the length of time of the closure that we would not want to have in place. It really would affect the local economy and trip making patterns, so that was highly undesirable from the cities and from the Iowa DOT side.

QUESTION: *In regards to Demo, in what manner shall the existing bridge be demolished, hopefully not dropped in the Mississippi?*

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

We did look at the possibility of demolition to a bridge structure of this size and type. We looked at what the cost would be of a demolition of the existing structure. As we noted in the previous meeting, it's somewhere in the \$2 to \$4 million range. Just to throw that out there, I know there were some questions in previous meetings regarding that issue. But in terms of details on how the bridge would be demolished, I'll kick it over to Todd.

TODD UDE, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

Yes, it's an interesting academic question. I want to preface it by saying how the bridge will be demolished is way beyond the scope of the NEPA process – the Phase One, the selection of preferred alternates. But yes, hopefully not dropped in the river, that's a nice sentiment in practice. In practice, a lot of times they are dropped in the river and fished out, of course they can't be left there. But it really gets driven by a mixture of the state's standard specifications for how contractors are allowed to do this. You give them certain freedom to do the optimum means economically, and that gets married up against all the permitting regulations you have.

With a regulated waterway, you have the Coast Guard looking out for navigation, and you have the Corps of Engineers looking out for certain water quality aspects. There will be permits in place that will be evaluated similar to other permitting aspects of a new project. Those restrictions will be put on the contractor. If it turns out that doing it quick, getting it done with explosives and fishing it out with a very limited closure is the right way to go, then we'll do that. If it turns out there are endangered species or some resource that just can't permit that, then that will be prevented. But that will all be studied more in what they call the Phase Two, detailed design. We'll put those requirements in the contract, and then address that during Phase Three: Construction.

QUESTION: *Will the I-88 interchange construction occur at the same time of the I-80 bridge construction. The timeline for both projects – is it approximately four years?*

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

Excellent question. We're early in the stages of this project, so we don't have those answers quantified at this point in time. Realistically, an interchange by itself usually takes at least a year, maybe two years. The bridge, depending on how we go about doing this, that's going to take several years as well. Roughly independently, we're talking a couple of years, potentially, on each piece here. But as far as timing goes, we have not gotten to that point on it, and it will depend on how we package the construction contracts – Do we package them together? Do we package them separately? Do we really want to be doing those at the same time? We'll have to look at that as we continue in the process.

QUESTION: *Your slides showing the impact analysis and recommendations from here, where the bridge doesn't match up for relocations? On 2 and 3 options, you show 3 and 5 relocations, and on the next slide showing the recommendations, you say nothing about relocations.*

TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

On the slide, we're listing all the impacts for all the alternatives. As noted, Alternative 2 has 3 relocations, Alternative 3 has 5 relocations. And then when you go to the next slide, we don't list the relocations here – we're just trying to summarize.

We're trying to take all the information from the previous slides and summarize it in some words on a different slide. We list the relocations for 6 and 7, because these high impacts were the primary reason that we dismissed those alternatives. I don't think it's a matter of inconsistency so much as that we couldn't repeat all the information from this exhibit on to the next. I hope that clarifies it for you.

QUESTION: *Roughly, when would earliest site work begin? Asking on behalf of Mid Am utilities.*

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

The project is in IDOT's six-year, multi-year program. Realistically right now, we're trying to finish this Phase One into late 2023.. Once we're done with Phase One, we have to spend several years, probably closer to three years, completing Phase Two. That puts us at least five years out from that standpoint. Realistically, we're leaning more towards the end of that six-year multi-year

program at this point in time.

QUESTION: *When will a final decision be announced?*

TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

By final decision, I assume they're discussing or referring to the identification of the preferred alternative. At this point, we're targeting the middle of 2023 for the recommendation of the preferred alternative, and to have that fourth public meeting. Then ultimately we will work to provide all the necessary documentation and get the required approvals of that preferred alternative by the end of 2023.

QUESTION: *Considering the extensive commercial and private traffic on Routes 67 and 84, as well as that on the river, why wasn't demolition of the old bridge not significant enough to be a fatal factor in this round of the selection process?*

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

Realistically, we should be able to construct the proposed improvements and demo the bridge (if recommended) and still be able to maintain traffic.. If there are closures because of bridge demo, it would be to try to minimize the duration to prevent impacts to the community and traffic.

QUESTION (follow-up): *I think they're also referring to analysis and how, the demo of the Old Bridge is not significant enough to be a fatal factor in this round, meaning, removed from consideration?*

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

We have two options on the table right now that would require demolition of the existing bridge. We have two options that do not specifically require demolition to finish the project. So, we have both options out there at this point in time.

TODD UDE, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

I would encourage the questioner to submit a follow up in writing. We will address everything that we receive in writing, as well as addressing these questions that Tracy is summarizing for us tonight. I'll just say hearing the question, I took that the comment to mean the difficulty of taking the existing bridge down should have killed off any option that required taking it down. And I would just say as important as 67 and 84 are, that's not how transportation projects work.

We must build new bridges over existing roadways, and we also have to replace existing bridges over existing roadways. The contractor can sneak in overnight and lift those sections out over the roadway and be out by morning. It's just not a fatal flaw. We're not going to be beholden to having that bridge there forever, because we couldn't afford to disrupt 67 or 84. We must be able to work and maintain structures that cross other roadways.

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

It should also be noted that maintenance of the existing structure is a multi-thousand dollar to million-dollar endeavor. That's one thing we noted in the previous meeting, it takes a lot of money to maintain an existing bridge, so that should be a consideration as well.

BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:

Another element that we must consider is impacts to our railroads. It's not an infrequent thing to demolish bridges, for example the I-74 bridge is being demolished right now, and we had the Savannah Sabula Bridge that was demolished a few years ago. So, this is something that the DOTs frequently have to manage, and we do have ways of ensuring that we're coordinating and managing those things appropriately.

QUESTION: *How has Pedestrian and Bicycle mobility been addressed in the study so far?*

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

Again, we do recognize that we have the Grand Illinois Trail on the Illinois side, and we have a proposed multi-use path on the Iowa side as well. As we carry through and develop the preferred alternative, we will look at possibilities of potentially doing some sort of multi-use pedestrian facilities on the new bridge. Again, this is an Interstate bridge, and it's not typical to have pedestrian and bicycle accommodations along an Interstate bridge, but we will evaluate it with the recognition that we currently do have multi-use paths on both sides of the river, and there has been an interest in it.

QUESTION: *Bridge options 2 & 3 seem best. What criteria are keeping 4 & 5 as a consideration due to the fact they will add 2 years to the construction?*

TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

The reason we've kept 2, 3, 4, and 5 is that in terms of impacts, everything is pretty similar amongst those alternatives. With 4 and 5, considering we're going to put one of those directions of travel back on the existing alignment, that's ultimately going to provide, or has the potential to provide, a narrower footprint for the improvement, which would mean fewer impacts.

At this level, we felt that we wanted to advance those four alternatives for more detailed engineering so that we can refine the potential impacts prior to deciding to eliminate one of the alternatives amongst 2 through 5. Yes, 4 and 5 appear to be less favorable in terms of constructability and maintaining traffic during construction; however, there are feasible solutions there, so we didn't want to dismiss any one of these alternatives too soon.

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

Alternatives 4 and 5 provide the opportunity to reduce the impacts just a little bit more than 2 and 3. Now, 6 and 7, those have significant impacts throughout the corridor, with multiple relocations — homes, businesses being removed. That was a significant factor on why those were eliminated versus these with far less impacts being carried forward.

QUESTION: *In the slide showing environmental issues, it suggests option 6 was best from an environmental impact. It also appeared to have good constructability. Please explain further why option 6 is not recommended for further consideration.*

TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

From our perspective, the impacts with Alternatives 6 and 7 were just both disproportionately higher than what we saw with Alternatives 2 through 5. As noted on the next slide, Alternative 7 had the highest impacts in these areas, but then Alternative 6 had the second highest. With Alternative 6, we're looking at 15 relocations versus the high of any of the retained alternatives being five; or 95 acres of right of way impact, versus the highest of any of the retained alternatives being eight. You can also look at the prime farmland, 91 acres of impact versus a high of 11 amongst the retained alternatives. It came down to what we defined as disproportionately high impacts compared to the retained alternatives.

QUESTION: *With any of the bridge alternatives being recommended, are noise barriers being discussed as a part of the project? Specifically, where I-80 and the exit ramp are near the developed residential areas on the eastbound Iowa side?*

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

With respect to the noise barriers, yes, when we pick a preferred alternative, we're going to look at a noise analysis and look at the need for noise barriers.

PHIL MESCHER, Iowa Department of Transportation:

We do the same thing. We have a noise analysis specialist at the DOT for a lot of our projects that

are going to be next to residential areas. They will go out and do measurements of traffic noise and delineate some boundaries of where the decibel levels might be high, and then from that, a design of noise panels or recommendations will be developed for consideration.

QUESTION: *Can a bike and pedestrian path be included on the new I-80 Bridge, similar to what was done with the new I-74 bridge?*

BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:

I think we have covered that topic thoroughly, but it is something we will analyze. As we determine the preferred alternative, we will analyze the potential for inclusion of a bike/pedestrian facility. I'll just restate what I mentioned earlier: I know folks in the area are familiar with the I-74 bridge that does include a bike/pedestrian accommodation. It is unusual for an Interstate structure to have a bike or pedestrian path. With this being said, we obviously recognize that there are pedestrian and bike facilities on either side of the river. We've heard from folks who've attended previous meetings, as well as other input from stakeholders, that there is some interest out there. We will be analyzing that and working with Federal Highway Administration to determine what is feasible for bike/pedestrian accommodations.

QUESTION: *Interchange D seems to have the best final result. Are considerations being made to use temporary easements for traffic flow during construction, so the final product has a smaller footprint?*

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

As we move forward, we will be looking at these options, in addition to any traffic control measures that will need to be put in place in order to keep everything open.

QUESTION: *How can the public be assured that the old bridge will not be a hazard in the future -- especially if it is taken over by a private organization?*

BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:

At this point, we have certainly not made any determinations. First, we haven't determined a preferred alternative; we're just narrowing down alternatives and that's what we're presenting today.

If it came to the point where there was a feasibility and interest in retaining the existing structure, given this is allowable with the preferred alternative, I think there would have to be a substantial amount of structural analysis, legal agreements, and a variety of steps that would have to be taken to ensure that any undertaking of that nature was feasible and safe. And as Todd mentioned in one of the discussions we had earlier about demolition of the structure, similar coordination would need to occur with the Corps of Engineers and Coast Guard to ensure that all the necessary standards were being met for navigation, for flooding, etc.

TODD UDE, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

You hit it on the head. It's not a DOT function to make sure that an abandoned structure remains safe or that it is not a hindrance to navigation. That's a US Coast Guard function. I'm not going to go out on a limb and speak for them, but we are coordinating with them through this project, and they will be the ones to address it. If the existing bridge passes into private hands, they're definitely going to have an interest in that, and they're going to have a long list of requirements, because they are mandated to look out for and protect commercial navigation. That will be them, not the Illinois or Iowa DOT, at that point.

QUESTION: *Does tourism and economic development factor into the decision of where the new*

bridge will be placed?

BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:

Per NEPA requirements, economic development is not an allowable consideration as part of the development and analysis of impacts for a project. The focus is to evaluate what elements in the human and natural environment would potentially be impacted by a proposed improvement. That's the objective and the requirement from the NEPA standpoint, in the evaluation of alternatives.

PHIL MESCHER, Iowa Department of Transportation:

You hit it on the head. That is the requirement that we must follow, and we certainly don't want to get crosswise regarding that requirement. That basically sets the premise there.

TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

I concur. Nothing further from me. Thanks.

QUESTION: *Isn't there talk about making I-80 a six-lane road from LeClaire to Iowa City? Should I-80 be a six-lane from highway from 84 to I-88?*

PHIL MESCHER, Iowa Department of Transportation:

The Iowa Department of Transportation has a concurrent study going on along I-80 through Scott County and that exists from just west of 280 all the way to 35th Street SW. It's basically the same kind of PEL study at this point. And timewise, I would say it's probably maybe just a little bit behind this Mississippi River Bridge Project.

We're going through the same analysis and looking at future travel. What's the volume of vehicles going to be into the future? And so right now, we're looking at that intently and trying to come up with some recommendations of what we're going to need for the number of lanes. This was mentioned earlier, but the projections we are seeing are not quite what we thought they would be by the horizon year for the project. Through Iowa, there may be some spot locations that we would expand some lanes maybe around the 61 or 74 Interchange.

But at this point in time, I think it's going to be a while before we would put six lanes through the whole Scott County Corridor and to the west. I think that will take a little bit longer just in terms of the growth that we're seeing.

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

And again, we're just a little bit ahead of the overall study on it, and we're using the same 2050 traffic forecasts that were provided to us from the Bi-State Metropolitan Planning Organization. Our forecasts are the same on the Iowa and Illinois side. We were expecting to see that the 2050 traffic forecasts would warrant the six lanes, but they fall short of that. We even projected out further to see where a six-lane warrant would be met, and it was quite a bit further out than what the horizon year. Usually, we look about 20 years past construction, but to reach the six-lane warrant went well beyond 20 years. It was far further out than what we had anticipated.

QUESTION: *If the bridge is deteriorated enough to need replacement, why not resolve to demolish it to ensure public safety with no ongoing impacts?*

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

Right now, we have two alternatives that would require the demolition of the existing bridge as part of constructing the new bridge pair. The other two alternatives do not require demolition of the existing bridge. As we pare down the alternatives, then we'll know what the options are with this existing bridge.

BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:

At this juncture, our Purpose and Need does not involve whether the existing bridge remains in place or not. I certainly understand and appreciate the concerns within this question. As we go through the process of the NEPA evaluation, we're identifying alternatives that meet the Purpose and Need that has been established for the project. Once we get to the point where we say, "OK, this was the preferred alternative... this is the one that's being carried forward" - at that juncture, if that alternative allows for the bridge to remain in place, and there was some private interest in it, that would have to require additional investigation and study. Currently, we are not at that point within this study. The study Purpose and Need is to manage the transportation facility explicitly.

QUESTION: *The I-74 bridge resulted in silting issue at the downstream marinas like Lindsay Park. Is there going to be an assessment of the impact on any marinas or residential docks?*

TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

I'm assuming that this is an impact related to construction activities and how that gets managed and handled will be more detailed during the Phase Two portion of the project. During Phase One, as part of our environmental document and Phase One engineering reports, we're going to identify what best management practices are out there to minimize that type of impact from construction. But, those details won't be developed until you get into Phase Two design. That's something that will be looked at as the project moves forward. We're just not at the point where we're thinking about those details.

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

Both the Iowa and the Illinois Department of Transportations have criteria to follow to ensure that we're not going to be putting any silt into the river or streams. That is why you see silt fence everywhere. We will put different erosion control measures on slopes. That's a requirement that both Iowa and Illinois have, and the EPA requires us to make sure that we're not silting into the river, or streams, or any other waterway.

QUESTION: *If the current bridge is allowed to stand, would aligning the new bridge up with the current bridge be more of a challenge to barge traffic?*

TODD UDE, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

Certainly, if you're a pilot of a 1,000-foot-long tow and you're lining up to come through the bridge and try to get over to the lock, you'd rather have fewer bridges than more bridges. It definitely is an issue, and as I mentioned before, that's right in the Coast Guard's sweet spot. They're already talking to the navigation industry groups and they're commenting on the different alignments.

Part of this process and evaluating these different alternatives is the DOTs and Parsons talking to groups like Coast Guard. They're aware of that. And the issue – what they call a preliminary letter of clearance determination that accounts for that – they're the watchdogs for navigation interests and they're making sure that we're not going to preclude navigation and make things more difficult.

QUESTION: *The Corps of Engineers has indicated an interest in a wider river navigation channel. If that is needed, would demolition of the existing bridge be needed for Alternatives 2 and 3?*

TODD UDE, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

Technically, the Corps of Engineers maintains navigation, like if dredging is required or if the channel is silting up or shifting. The indications we've received from them is the river's basically running over exposed bedrock here, and they did not have any advice or request for us in our early planning stage about, "make it wider" or "the channels moving account for that. Put your new

opening over here or over there.” It's been much more the Coast Guard and their concern for commercial navigation, and they are requesting that there be an increase in horizontal clearance. The current opening – I shouldn't guess it on the fly but maybe it's 350 or 370 feet – they're proposing to widen that somewhat but not a tremendous amount.

They do want it wider. They do want it a foot higher. We're accounting for that in our planning studies. And they recognize and are on notice that there may be this issue about whether the existing bridge stays or not, and they're factoring that into the advice that they're giving the DOTs about what the clearance requirements are going to be.

QUESTION: *Is the proposed I-80 bridge project funding possibly tied to the proposed I-88 interchange project funding?*

BECKY MARRUFFO, Illinois Department of Transportation:

The project is funded as a whole, so the funds that are included in the multi-year program include all the studies for the entire corridor. There's also funding allocated for the replacement of the bridge. I believe that the funds that were programmed– and I might need to double check that – for construction relate to the bridge replacement.

In any case, we are doing the study as a whole. Mike was talking earlier about the various termini for the project and why those termini were determined. But the construction of those two elements, and I'm not sure if this is what the question was getting to, they're not necessarily inter-dependent. At this point, we are not looking at an increase to six lanes. Therefore, it's not anticipated that the pavement between the I-88 interchange and the Bridge would have to be built concurrently - they can be built and funded as separate projects.

QUESTION: *What is the timeline on acquiring existing homes/properties, i.e., when would residents have to vacate?*

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

With respect to land acquisition, we cannot start the land acquisition purchase process until we have finished the Phase One report. And we're looking to end the Phase One report by the end of 2023 at the earliest. With respect to having the land acquisition – and say there is someone that needs to be relocated – that typically happens in that period when we're working through the Phase Two of the project, when we're getting the plans together. Again, that is going to be a multi-year process in itself. At that point in time, land acquisition would be meeting with the property owners, talking with them, trying to figure out timing and everything for a potential relocation.

PHIL MESCHER, Iowa Department of Transportation:

You are right about the timing of when that starts. For property acquisition, we usually consider about a two-year timeframe for that to happen as a buffer. That's all I would add.

QUESTION: *What are the guidelines for property between east and west? In particular, strip map #6?*

MARK PETERSON, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

I'm not sure of the reference to strip maps. The theory behind alternative 6 was to look at something that was a little bit outside the corridor. We were trying to identify vacant and agricultural parcels that we could use to align the Interstate. That was one of the most practical ones: it was upriver, but it has a lot of impacts associated with it which was shown on Tony's slide with the matrix and all the impacts. There are a lot of right-of-way impacts associated with Alternative 6.

QUESTION: *Can you remain if you split 43rd Avenue North?*

TONY PAKELTIS, Project Consultant Team / Parsons:

I think maybe the reference here is to this street that's between the rest area and the rest area ramp – there's an east-west street there and you can see where Alternative 7 cuts across that street. So obviously if you're in the path of the proposed improvement, you would be displaced. And the question is: if you're outside of that area, could your property be saved?

At this point, we don't recommend retaining Alternative 7, but whether those properties outside the proposed footprint would have to be acquired is something we would look at further in our detailed studies. Just on the surface it seems feasible, but the key is that access is maintained to properties. If there is no access, then the property must be acquired. I hope we covered that question but certainly if there is more follow up, we can get your questions addressed here tonight or in a follow up e-mail.

MIKE KUEHN, Illinois Department of Transportation:

One thing to note, you can see that with both options 6 and 7, the further we spread out much beyond the general footprint, the more we get into impacts, both on the LeClaire side and the Rapids City side. There are residential developments on both sides of the river and if we start veering too far from the existing alignment, we start getting into residential and business impacts.

MEDIA**QC TIMES****Transportation officials narrow field of I-80 bridge improvements from seven to four**

Brooklyn Draisey/October 27, 2022



The I-80 Mississippi River Bridge will not be replaced in its current location, but it still could be demolished, depending on further study.

Officials with the Illinois and Iowa departments of transportation and engineering consultants from Parsons

Transportation Group held a third virtual public meeting Thursday for the Interstate 80 bridge study to discuss realignment options and to take public questions and comments.

The group narrowed the field of proposals to improve the I-80 bridge corridor from seven bridge-improvement alternatives to four, along with two I-80/I-88 interchange alternatives.

Bridge alternatives two, three, four and five were recommended to move forward by the group.

Plans two and three include building the new bridge 50 feet to the east or west of the existing structure, both of which would not require demolition of the existing bridge.

Alternatives four and five, which would build two side-by-side companion structures 20 feet to the east or west of the existing span, would require bridge demolition.

Tony Pakeltis, with Parsons, said the group found that the first, sixth and seventh alternatives would have created substantial impacts to the area in terms of prime farmland, potential forest

habitats and the number of relocations that would be necessary.

Replacing the bridge at its existing alignment brought up considerable concern, given the 38-mile detour that would be required throughout the four-year construction period.

"With alternatives two and three, the impacts are similar among the recommended alternatives, and these alternatives are more favorable in terms of constructability and have the least impact on traffic during construction," Pakeltis said. "With alternatives four and five, the impacts are similar amongst the recommended alternatives, and while they do present some challenges in terms of constructability and maintenance of traffic during construction, we determined that these issues did not warrant dismissal at this stage of the study."

Several factors are compelling the project: The I-80 bridge is outdated, increasingly costly to maintain, has a high number of crashes and was designed well below current standards when it was built in 1967.

WQAD-TV

<https://www.wqad.com/article/news/local/illinois-department-of-transportation-i80-bridge-meeting-plans-bison-bridge/526-45e874db-1cd7-4b7b-b295-ed4f1ad01f0f>

IDOT narrows down options for new I-80 bridge

Of the four options that remain, two would require the current bridge to be demolished.

RAPIDS CITY, Ill. — The Illinois Department of Transportation has narrowed down potential options for plans to build a new I-80 bridge from seven to four.

[IDOT previously revealed the seven options at a public meeting in May.](#) The four options that will move forward for further evaluation were revealed on Thursday at IDOT's third I-80 public meeting.

All of them include four 12-foot traffic lanes, two 12-foot auxiliary lanes, 12-foot outside shoulders and 6-foot inside shoulders. Each alternative would also require the U.S. Highway 67 and Illinois Highway 84 interchanges to be reconstructed to fit current design standards.

While evaluating the options, IDOT said it took impacts to the environment and traffic into consideration. The remaining options also most closely align with the 327 questions and comments the department received following the last meeting.

The options no longer being considered were referred to as options one, six and seven. Option one involved building the new bridge on top of the existing alignment. It would have meant traffic detours to an alternative crossing for at least four years.

Option six proposed building a new bridge 600 feet to the east of the current bridge, while option seven proposed building 2,100 feet to the west.

"The primary reason for that is that they would have the greatest impact on the environment," said Tony Pakeltis, a representative of [Parsons Corporation](#) and a member of the I-80 bridge panel that hosted the public meeting. "Alternative seven has the greatest relocation, right of way and habitat and prime farmland impacts and alternative six has the second highest impact in those same categories."

Taking those options out of consideration is the "best case scenario" for Rapids City Village President Harold Mire Jr.

"I didn't think they were feasible," Mire said. "I thought they had the most negative impact amongst residents on both sides of the river, so I was very pleased that those three were eliminated... It would impact residential areas, it would impact property tax rolls, it would impact businesses."

Two of the options that remain involve placing the new bridge 50 feet to either the east or west of the existing structure. In this scenario, the current bridge doesn't necessarily have to be demolished.

The other two options both require demolition. In these scenarios, a companion bridge would be built 20 feet to the east or west of the existing structure. During construction, traffic would continue to utilize the current I-80 crossing and would not need to find an alternative route. After phase one is complete, traffic would be switched to the finished companion bridge while the existing I-80 bridge is torn down and a replacement is built instead.

Mire favors the options that involve building a new bridge to the west of the current one.

"As the village president, it's my duty to advocate for the least disruptive options for our citizens, which include quality of life factors, safety factors, minimization of adverse economic impacts, amongst others," he said. "And so far as the 20 or 50 foot west, that would have the least disruptions to our residents."

At this point in its study, IDOT is not taking the proposed [Bison Bridge project](#) into consideration, and won't be used as IDOT moves forward to identify the preferred location of the new bridge.

"The development and analysis of alternatives for this project is based on the purpose and need, as well as an evaluation of resulting environmental impacts as is expressly required by the National Environmental Policy Act," Pakeltis said. "A potential Bison Bridge or park is not an existing environmental resource and cannot be used to mitigate any impacts to environmental resources that currently exist."

Two of the options that IDOT is moving forward with, however, don't mean the Bison Bridge proposal is dead yet. The plans to build 50 feet to the east or west of the existing structure don't require demolition, leaving the Bison Bridge a viable option in the future.

Chad Pregracke, the founder of the [Bison Bridge Foundation](#), told News 8 after the meeting Thursday night his team is happy with how it went. He remains hopeful for the future of the project.

As far as Mire's preference for demolition or not, he said the timeline would need to be taken into consideration. Options that require demolition could take an extra two years to be completed.

"Let me say this about the Bison Bridge project: it has a long way to go. It has many, many hurdles to overcome," Mire said. "If the state of Illinois were to say that they were going to choose one of the options that did not use the current location of the bridge, I would be in favor of not using taxpayer dollars to demolish it... Why spend \$2 or \$3 million if you have a project that you will be

able to show you can fund and sustain years and years into the future and maintain all the safety factors?"

During this phase of the I-80 bridge project, the cost of each design isn't being taken into consideration, per NEPA law requirements.

Project leaders expect to host another public meeting next year to present a preferred location proposal. A final report and recommendation of the project's preferred location option is expected at the end of 2023.

Between now and Nov. 10, you can submit your opinions, comments and questions about the location proposals [here](#).