



ELGIN O'HARE  
WEST BYPASS

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# Scoping Summary

Prepared for  
**Illinois Department of Transportation**

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# **Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass Study Scoping Summary**

## **A. Introduction and Background**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), will prepare a Tier One Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass study in Cook and DuPage Counties, Illinois. The study area is generally bordered by Interstate 90 (I-90) on the north, IL 53/I-290 on the west and south, and I-294 on the east, and covers an area of 104.8 square miles. The study area is densely developed with a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial land uses. The location of the study area, relative to existing employment centers and major transportation facilities, provides both unique benefits and challenges to each community. The area is home to thousands of local, national, and international businesses that employ hundreds of thousands of people.

The Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass study area has been the subject of needed transportation improvements for years. Past major transportation initiatives in the study area, include the following:

- The Elgin O'Hare Expressway was originally proposed in the early 1960s, and corridor approval was granted in 1970. Early design work commenced shortly thereafter, but was discontinued by 1972.
- Preliminary design and an EIS for the Elgin O'Hare Expressway project were completed in 1990. Construction of a section of the expressway between US 20 (Hanover Park) and I-290 was completed in the mid-1990s.
- The O'Hare West Bypass concept originated from a recommendation in the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority (ISTHA) 1987 Annual Toll Revenue Report to address growing congestion and capacity concerns.
- In 1989, the O'Hare West Bypass was identified in the 2010 Transportation System Development Plan for the region.
- In 1995, the Illinois Legislature authorized ISTHA to design and construct the O'Hare West Bypass.
- In 2005, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approved the EIS for the O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP) and associated Airport Layout Plan (ALP). The OMP EIS identifies a potential 300-foot corridor on the west side of the airfield for a future O'Hare West Bypass.

- In 2006, DuPage County completed the DuPage County West O’Hare Corridor Economic Development Study, assessing opportunities for development in this region and creating an overall vision for the area.

The current project constitutes a fresh look at transportation issues and community concerns through an open and comprehensive planning process. Although this project begins with a clean slate, stakeholder issues and objectives identified through earlier planning efforts will be acknowledged and appropriately considered as part of the current project effort.

Planning for this proposed project will meet state and federal requirements meant to integrate environmental values and public interaction into transportation improvements. The requirements include the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU),<sup>1</sup> and Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS).

To meet these requirements, an early and open “scoping” process, involving coordination with the public and environmental resource and regulatory agencies, was used to determine the scope of issues to be addressed and to identify significant issues for the Elgin O’Hare – West Bypass study. In addition, effort was made to identify key community issues and interests through early outreach with project stakeholders, community officials, and various community groups and municipalities in the area.

This document provides a summary of the public information process and scoping activities that were completed, and lists the core transportation problems raised by stakeholders through the scoping process.

## **B. Description of the National Environmental Policy Act & Scoping**

As a proposed federal action, the Elgin O’Hare – West Bypass project must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended. NEPA requires that federal policies, regulations, and laws be interpreted and administered in accordance with environmental protection goals, to the fullest extent possible. NEPA also requires that potential consequences to the social and natural environment as a result of a proposed action be considered, that analyses be documented, and that this information be made available to the public for comment prior to implementation.

FHWA and IDOT, acting as joint lead agencies will complete a Tiered EIS for the Elgin O’Hare – West Bypass project. The EIS will be advanced in two phases, or tiers, that build upon one another. A Tiered EIS is applicable to projects where a single transportation solution for the study area has not been identified with respect to mode (e.g., roadway or transit) and/or location. The Tier One EIS includes an examination of the overall transportation system improvement needs, a study of alternatives to satisfy them, and broad consideration of potential environmental and social impacts of the possible alternatives. The Tier One evaluation is completed at a sufficient level of engineering and environmental detail to assist decision makers in

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<sup>1</sup> Pub. L. 109-59, 119 Stat. 1144, Section 6002; codified as 23 USC §139

selecting a preferred transportation system alternative(s). Tier One includes preparing a draft and final EIS that will disclose potential environmental and social effects (evaluated at a planning level) of the proposed improvements. The final EIS will conclude with a Record of Decision (ROD) by FHWA that states the preferred transportation system alternatives to be carried forward into Tier Two.

The Tier One EIS will produce the following outcomes:

- Approval of the preferred transportation system alternative(s) for the study area; and,
- Identify components of the overall transportation system alternative that can be advanced independently by various agencies through Tier Two studies.

Following completion of the Tier One process, Tier Two environmental studies will focus on specific project corridors and modes. For each Tier Two project, detailed engineering and environmental studies will be performed to define the general layout, preliminary design and footprint of the project, as well as associated right-of-way requirements. Additionally, Tier Two will include detailed studies of possible methods to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts on environmental resources within the project footprint. The Tier Two environmental documents will serve as the basis for a decision on whether to proceed with the design and possible construction of each project.

The NEPA process requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision-making processes by considering the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and reasonable alternatives to these actions. The project development process is an approach to balanced transportation decision-making that considers both potential environmental impacts and the need for safe and efficient transportation.

NEPA requires “scoping” and encourages early and frequent coordination with the public and resource agencies throughout the project development process. Scoping facilitates public and agency participation and provides the opportunity for their input during preparation of the EIS. The scoping process for this project is following the scoping guidelines within the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations, 40 CFR § 1501.7, which provide that “there shall be an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to the proposed action.”

### **C. Description of Context Sensitive Solution Policies**

This project is being developed using the principles of Context Sensitive Solution (CSS) per the IDOT CSS Policy and Procedural Memorandum 48-06. CSS is an interdisciplinary approach that seeks effective, multi-modal transportation solutions by working with stakeholders<sup>2</sup> to develop, build, and maintain cost-effective

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<sup>2</sup> Per IDOT’s CSS procedures, a stakeholder is anyone who could be affected by the project and has a stake in its outcome. This includes property owners, business owners, state and local officials, special interest groups, and motorists who utilize the facility.

transportation facilities that fit into and reflect the project's surroundings – its “context.” Through early, frequent, and meaningful communication with stakeholders, and a flexible and creative approach to design, the resulting projects should improve safety and mobility for the traveling public, while seeking to preserve and enhance the scenic, economic, historic, and natural qualities of the settings through which they pass.

The CSS approach will provide stakeholders with the tools and information they require to effectively participate in the study process including providing an understanding of the NEPA process, transportation planning guidelines, design guidelines, and the relationship between transportation issues (needs) and project alternatives. In other words, using the CSS process should provide all project stakeholders a mechanism to share comments or concerns about transportation objectives and project alternatives, as well as improve the ability of the project team to understand and address concerns raised. This integrated approach to problem solving and decision-making will help build community consensus and promote involvement through the study process.

As identified in IDOT's CSS policies, stakeholder involvement is critical to project success. The CSS process strives to achieve the following:

- Understand stakeholder's key issues and concerns;
- Involve stakeholders in the decision-making process early and frequently;
- Establish an understanding of the stakeholder's project role;
- Address all modes of transportation; and,
- Apply flexibility in design to address stakeholder's concerns whenever possible.

Additional information regarding Stakeholder Involvement Methods is summarized below and is provided in greater detail in the Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP).

#### **D. Stakeholder Involvement Plan**

FHWA and IDOT developed a SIP to meet the requirements of CSS and to address the Coordination Plan requirements of 23 USC 139(g) within the context of the NEPA process. A copy of the SIP can also be viewed at <http://www.elginohare-westbypass.org>.

IDOT has invited stakeholders to participate in project working groups for the study, consisting of a Project Study Group (PSG), Corridor Planning Group (CPG), and Task Forces. Project working groups are described in detail in the SIP.

The purpose of the SIP is to provide a guide for implementing stakeholder involvement for the Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass project. The SIP will be used as a blueprint for defining methods and tools to educate and engage all stakeholders in the decision-making process for this project. The SIP has been designed to ensure that stakeholders are provided a number of opportunities to be informed and engaged as the project progresses.

The goal of the SIP is to actively seek the participation of communities, agencies, individual interest groups, and the general public throughout the project development process. The SIP provides the framework for achieving consensus and communicating the decision-making process between the general public, public agencies, and governmental officials to identify transportation solutions for the project.

## **E. Public Involvement Process**

### ***Public Outreach Meetings***

Stakeholder involvement for the Elgin O'Hare - West Bypass project will be an ongoing process from project initiation through completion. In addition to the Corridor Planning Group and Task Force meetings described below, various other meetings will be held throughout the project development process to provide outreach opportunities to all stakeholders. Additional meeting opportunities are listed below.

### ***Project Study Group and Project Management Team***

Per IDOT's CSS procedures, IDOT has formed a Project Study Group (PSG), an interdisciplinary team, for developing the Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass project. The PSG will make the ultimate project recommendations to the leadership of IDOT and FHWA (project decision-makers). This group consists of a multidisciplinary team of representatives from IDOT, FHWA, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), ISTHA, and the project consultants. The membership of the PSG will evolve as the understanding of the project's context is clarified.

The PSG has primary responsibility for the project development process. This group will meet throughout the study process to provide technical oversight and expertise in key areas including study process, agency procedures and standards, and technical approaches. The PSG also has primary responsibility for ensuring compliance with the SIP.

Other responsibilities of the PSG include the following:

- Expediting the project development process;
- Identifying and resolving project development issues;
- Promoting partnership with stakeholders to address identified project needs;
- Working to develop consensus among stakeholders; and,
- Providing project recommendations to the joint lead agencies.

IDOT has also formed a Project Management Team (PMT) comprised of representatives from IDOT, FHWA, and the project consultants. The PMT has primary responsibility for managing the project and setting the project schedule. This group will meet throughout the study process to track the project schedule, organize and set workshop agenda, define and assign deliverables, and oversee the preparation and review of technical documents. Based on stakeholder input and recommendations by the PSG and other working groups, the PMT will also be responsible for defining the project purpose and need, developing alternatives, and

considering the potential environmental and social impacts of the possible alternatives.

### ***Corridor Planning Group***

The Corridor Planning Group (CPG) is a group consisting of community leaders (one from each of the 25 communities in the study area) and representatives from DuPage County and Cook County. The CPG will represent the views of all of the communities and counties within and adjacent to the project study area. The responsibilities of this group include providing input to the study process and consensus at key project milestones (e.g., project purpose and need, range of system alternatives to be advanced for detailed study, and the recommended system alternative[s]). This group will consist of the Mayor or Manager from each community, who may also identify an alternate representative to attend the CPG meetings in the event of schedule conflicts. DuPage and Cook County, as well as the City of Chicago, have been asked to designate an appropriate department head for the CPG.

The CPG will meet both independently of, as well as jointly with, project Task Force groups during the course of the project. The meeting program will be designed to encourage timely and meaningful opportunities for CPG input, and to encourage information sharing and collaboration between the CPG, Task Forces, and the PSG. Details regarding the meeting program are provided in Section 5 of the SIP.

Any community outside the study area that shows interest in the project, that is not a part of the CPG, will be added to the stakeholder list upon request, ensuring they will receive newsletters, meeting invitations, and project updates. These communities also have the option to be on a Task Force as an at-large member. The project team will also be available to meet with any community on a one-on-one basis throughout the project. In addition, communities will be informed about the project website where they can access information and submit comments.

### ***Task Forces***

The project Task Forces provide a means for obtaining structured advisory input from a diverse set of stakeholders. Three Task Forces have been designated for the Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass study (i.e., Environmental, Land Use, and Transportation). The three Task Forces will focus on technical aspects of the project development process and will provide external subject-matter information and input with respect to environmental, land use, and transportation issues.

A description of the three different Task Forces is provided below:

- Environmental Task Force: The Environmental Task Force will assist in identifying, evaluating, and making recommendations with respect to various environmental issues and concerns within the study area. This includes providing advisory input to the development of environmental impact evaluation criteria and the evaluation of environmental impacts.



- Land Use Task Force: The Land Use Task Force will assist in identifying, evaluating, and making recommendations with respect to various land use and economic issues within the study area. This includes advisory input regarding existing land use patterns, the effects of various alternatives on existing land use and economic centers, and the compatibility of alternatives with the overall land use and economic development goals and objectives in the study area.
- Transportation Task Force: The Transportation Task Force will provide advisory input to help identify, evaluate, and make recommendations with respect to various transportation issues within the study area. This includes advisory input for the existing transportation system performance evaluation, transportation system performance measures to be used to evaluate alternatives considered, and evaluation of the performance of system alternatives.

The Task Forces will be comprised of stakeholders with expertise or a particular interest in these areas. The Task Force members may represent one of the communities or counties in the study area, an interest group, a resource agency, a transportation agency, or consist of an individual with a particular expertise or interest. Task Force members will be identified by the PSG, with input from the CPG. Other Task Forces may be formed for this project if determined necessary by the PSG.

Task Forces will meet throughout the project development process. Task Force input will be considered and will be shared with the CPG. Task Force members may be asked to address the CPG to help communicate technical subject-matter issues. The meeting program will be designed to provide timely and meaningful Task Force input into the project development process. Details regarding the meeting program are provided in Section 5 of the SIP.

### ***Other Mechanisms for Public Involvement***

In addition to the meeting opportunities described in the preceding sections, there will be several other methods for the public to obtain information about the project, such as:

- Media Briefings;
- Mailing List;
- Public Web site: <http://www.elginohare-westbypass.org>; and,
- Newsletters and Brochures.

These other methods will provide information and opportunity for feedback regarding upcoming public meeting events, project schedule, and general project status updates within the study area. Additional information on these other methods can be found in the SIP.

## **F. Notice of Intent to Prepare the Tier One EIS and Conduct Scoping**

In accordance with NEPA, FHWA published a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register for the Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass study. The NOI was issued on October 29, 2007. The NOI contained a brief description of the proposed project, provided an approximate date for the scoping meeting along with contacts for further information, and introduced the CSS policy.

## **G. Scoping Events**

### ***CPG Meeting #1***

The first meeting of the CPG for the Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass study was held on October 3, 2007, at the Doubletree Hotel, 1200 Mittel Boulevard, Wood Dale, Illinois, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The purpose of the meeting was to provide CPG members with an overview of the project and an opportunity for members to provide input regarding transportation issues and concerns in the study area. Members of the CPG were also asked to complete Part 1 of the Community Context Audit.

The Community Context Audit is a means to identify unique community characteristics. For the Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass project, this information helped to define the purpose and need of the proposed transportation improvements based on community goals and local plans for future development. The Community Context Audit was conducted in two parts. Part 1 addressed existing transportation features and transportation issues within the Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass study. Part 2 addressed existing and proposed community characteristics. Member communities and counties on the CPG were asked to complete Part 1 of the Community Context Audit at the CPG meeting on October 3, 2007, and were asked to complete Part 2 at the CPG meeting February 13, 2008.

### ***Public Information Meeting #1***

Public scoping was accomplished through Public Information Meetings. The first Public Information Meeting for the Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass study was held on November 14, 2007, at the Oak Meadows Golf Club, 900 N. Wood Dale Road, Addison, Illinois, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. A total of 394 people attended based on the meeting sign-in sheets. Based on the sign-in sheets, a majority of the attendees ( $\pm 91\%$ ) recorded their address as within a community that is either partially or entirely located in the Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass study area.

The meeting was publicized through advertisements in newspapers, on various municipality websites, and in a newsletter. Over 200 newsletters were mailed to individual public officials, organizations, and citizens. An additional 450 newsletters were sent to local communities and were made available to residents. An ad appeared in the Daily Herald on October 23 and again on November 6, 2007. There were also articles or calendar items in the following papers: Daily Herald, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times, Journal-Topics, and The Business Ledger.

The purpose of the Public Information Meeting was to provide an introduction and overview of the project and elicit information from the people who live and work in the area. Information regarding the study objectives, process and schedule was presented. Additionally, the public was invited to review aerial exhibits of the study area and to identify transportation issues, sensitive community features, and

sensitive environmental features on the exhibits (Public Information Meeting #1 Summary).

The meeting was an open-house format, preceded by an informational video that provided a brief project summary. Personnel from IDOT and their consultants were present to answer questions and receive comments about the project. An interpreter was available to accommodate Spanish speaking individuals, as necessary. A court reporter was also present and available to record verbal comments for the project record. In addition to the summary presentation, attendees received a handout and comment form and also had an opportunity to study and discuss the project exhibits with project staff. Meeting materials consisting of the handout, comment form, exhibits, and the presentation are included in Section 3 of the Public Information Meeting #1 Summary.

Comments were accepted through December 5, 2007. A total of 31 written comments were received, and those comments as well as the IDOT responses are included in Section 5B (Public Comments Received) of the Public Information Meeting #1 Summary. Several verbal comments were compiled by the court reporter (see Section 5A, Public Meeting Transcript). Additionally, a summary of transportation issues, sensitive community features, and sensitive environmental features recorded on the aerial exhibits was prepared and is included in Section 5C (Responses to Public Comments). A summary of public comments received is included in Section 5C of the Public Information Meeting #1 Summary.

Several articles were written after the public meeting took place. Articles appeared in the following newspapers: Chicago Tribune, Bensenville Press, Pioneer Press, and Journal-Topics. Copies of those articles are included in Section 4 (Media Coverage) of the Public Information Meeting #1 Summary.

### ***Agency Scoping Meetings***

An agency scoping meeting was conducted on December 12, 2007, at the IDOT – District One Office, 201 West Center Court, Schaumburg, Illinois, at 1:00 p.m. to approximately 3:00 p.m. A supplemental agency scoping meeting was conducted on January 11, 2008, at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Chicago District Office, 111 N. Canal Street, Suite 600, Chicago, Illinois, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The purpose of the meetings was to identify important environmental issues and concerns to be considered in the EIS for the Elgin O’Hare – West Bypass study. The agency scoping meetings each began with an overview of the project including a discussion of the project organization, purpose, study area, Tiered EIS process and results, CSS, schedule, and the SIP. Following the study overview, a presentation regarding the Geographic Information System (GIS) database developed for the project, its structure, and potential uses was shown.

At both agency meetings, individuals were provided the opportunity to comment on behalf of their agency/organization.

Additional comment regarding Special Flood Hazard Areas and the proposed Elgin O’Hare – West Bypass project was provided by the U.S. Department of Homeland

Security, Region V, FEMA, Chief Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Branch in a letter dated February 7, 2008.

In a letter dated April 10, 2008, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) stated that the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) is not likely present in northeastern Illinois and that specific transportation projects are not likely to adversely affect the species. USFWS will concur with individual (project) conclusions. This procedure is valid through the summer of 2012.

### ***Task Force Meeting #1 and Stakeholder Workshop #1***

The Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass Task Force Kick-off Meeting and Stakeholder Workshop #1 was held on December 13, 2007, at the Oak Meadows Golf Club, 900 N. Wood Dale Road, Addison, Illinois, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The initial Task Force Kickoff Meeting was a Joint Task Force meeting with all three Task Forces. The purpose of the meeting was to provide Task Force members with an overview of the project, to allow Task Force members the opportunity to provide input regarding transportation issues (problems), and to identify potential project goals based on the identified transportation issues.

Following the Task Force meeting, stakeholder workshop exercises were conducted in small groups. The stakeholder workshop was conducted as a means to obtain stakeholder input regarding various project issues and potential system solutions. Workshop group participants are listed on the sign-in sheet. Two exercises were completed. The first exercise (Exercise #1) would be an effort to expand, validate, and prioritize transportation issues in the study area. The second exercise (Exercise #2) was completed to identify potential project goals based on the results of Exercise #1.

Meeting attendees are listed on the sign-in sheet.

### ***CPG Meeting #2***

A second CPG meeting was held on February 13, 2008, at the Oak Meadows Golf Club, 900 N. Wood Dale Road, Addison, Illinois, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The purpose of the meeting was to provide CPG members with a project update, initial Transportation System Performance information, an overview of the Planning Framework and Alternatives Development Process, and to obtain their input on various alternatives development tools. Members of the CPG were also asked to complete Part 2 of the Community Context Audit, which focused on important environmental and social features within their communities.

## **H. Conclusion/Core Transportation Problems Raised by Stakeholders**

IDOT has reached out to stakeholders in the study area including community leaders, the public, other regional transportation providers, and regulatory agencies in an effort to gain their insight and perspective on transportation issues and concerns in the study area. Through initial outreach efforts, stakeholders identified forty-seven (47) key issues in the study area. By summarizing the top ranked issues, the project team developed the following nine (9) core transportation problems. These core transportation problems were presented for concurrence at

the CPG Meeting #2 and the Joint Task Force Meeting #2. The core transportation problems include:

- Public transit is not currently a realistic mode choice: enhanced service options and improved infrastructure is required (#1 most important issue identified by stakeholders);
- Need for a transportation solution that protects the quality and integrity of communities while maximizing the economic viability of the area;
- Poor access and connectivity in the study area;
- Lack of access to O'Hare Airport;
- Travel delays caused by at-grade railroad crossings;
- Congestion on major routes;
- Reduced truck/freight mobility;
- Improved pedestrian & bicycle access to transit stations; and,
- Increase emphasis on travel management strategies.

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- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Letter to IDOT. April 10, 2008.