I-57 Access Study

South of Wilmington-Peotone Rd. to North of Manhattan-Monee Rd.

Newsletter No. 1 March 2025

Thank You!

This past November, our study team held the first public meeting for the I-57 Access Study on Wednesday, **November 13, 2024**. The meeting took place at the Will County Fair Atrium, 710 S West Street, Peotone, IL 60468 from 3 – 6 PM. Thank you to all the community members, elected officials, and members of the press who attended!

The meeting was an open house format featuring a variety of ways to review the study details. Offerings included exhibit boards for review, a continuous PowerPoint presentation, and a large-scale aerial map of the study area on which meeting attendees provided comments, suggestions, and concerns. Our team connected with community members to address questions and explain study details. The team encouraged all attendees to move through the room stopping at all stations to view the exhibit boards, the looping presentation, fill out the comment form and the survey, and for interested residents to fill in an application to join the Community Advisory Group (CAG).

The meeting was attended by approximately **117 people**, and **26 comment forms** were received. Some attendees elected to complete a written comment form, while others elected to speak directly to the study team members to voice their comments/concerns.

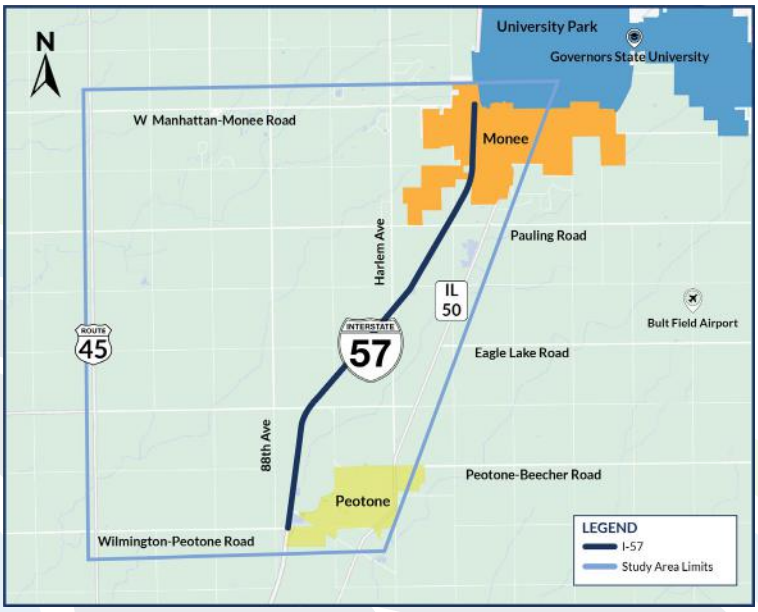
As many of the comments concerned similar issues, this newsletter will discuss those issues as well as provide an overview of other topics. Information and materials from the public meeting can be viewed on the study website at Tiny.cc/AccessI57.

Illinois Department of Transportation

Overview and Study Area

The study area extends from south of Wilmington-Peotone Road (south) to north of Manhattan-Monee Road (north) and US Route 45 (west) to 1-mile east of IL Route 50 (east). The study limits or termini were extended to adjacent arterial roadways that act as collectors to Interstate 57 (I-57). These termini allow for the potential improvements to extend to arterial routes and ensure improvements to I-57 would provide connections outside of the local roadway network. As the study moves forward, the study area will be refined through alternatives development and an ultimate selection of the Preferred Alternative.

While the eastern terminus of the study area is limited to 1-mile east of IL 50, the Travel Demand Model (TDM) will include a broader area to analyze both future conditions and anticipated development within the study area that could contribute to the operations at the existing interchanges and any potential new access proposed as part of the study. For future engagement, the maps will be expanded to include Bult Field Airport and freight cluster areas to the east of the study area for discussion and informational purposes.



Comments Received

Comments were accepted at the public meeting, and via email and standard mail. There was also an online interactive survey that was available concurrent to the public comment period which closed on December 4, 2024. Those comments were reviewed and will be used in the development of the Study's Purpose and Need. The responses for the comments are grouped by topic.

Safety & Operations

Many comments focused on the safety and operations along I-57 and adjacent roadways within the study area. The comments received are categorized below which include recommendations to improve the existing interchanges, address design deficiencies along existing roadways including drainage and roadway condition, pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, and safety related concerns including traffic speed and freight traffic within residential areas within the study area.

Existing Interchanges

Commenters noted that there were concerns at the existing interchanges, and that this study should focus on improving their safety and operation. As part of the study, the study team will analyze the existing I-57 interchanges at Wilmington-Peotone Road and Manhattan-Monee Road. A reasonable range of alternatives will be developed using traffic models, crash data, public input, and other relevant information collected as part of the study. It is anticipated that recommendations for Manhattan-Monee Road and Wilmington-Peotone Road interchanges would be included in the range of alternatives. Potential improvements might include geometric changes, access ramp improvements, and other operational changes including updated signal timings.

Design Deficiencies

Additional comments noted potential issues with existing drainage and roadway deficiencies. During the course of the study, data gathered from field site visits, surveys, and comments from the public meeting will be used to identify locations of potential design deficiencies that could be addressed as part of this improvement. This includes reviewing existing drainage conditions within the study area and roadway design to ensure it meets current design standards and criteria.

Safety

The last five years of available crash data (2018-2022) is under review and will be updated as the study moves forward and additional data is made available. A full crash analysis report will be developed prior to selecting the Preferred Alternative and be used to provide input on proposed improvements. In the interim, the study team will use the crash data to identify any areas of concern or crash concentrations where safety improvements could be implemented within the study area.

Truck Traffic

Will County has experienced continuous growth in truck traffic, due to the continuing influx of warehousing, distribution centers, and other freight activity in the area. Using information gathered from discussions with the local municipalities to understand anticipated development and land use changes, this study will analyze how freight is moving in the area and consider alternatives for potential new access to I-57 to allow for freight movement to the interstate and away from the local road network within residential areas.

Future Development & South Suburban Airport

There were a number of comments that included discussion about the future of the Bult Field Airport and the development of the South Suburban Airport. There is currently a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a Public-Private-Partnership (P3) for developing the airport. The RFQ process is a year-long process to help gauge interest in developing the airport. When available, its results will be considered and included in the analyses performed as part of this study.

Existing and future land use and zoning are important considerations in developing the Purpose and Need for the potential improvement. For the future condition, the study team has reviewed proposed development plans, comprehensive plans provided by the local agencies in the study area and coordinated with the local municipalities on anticipated growth in the study area. These inputs will provide the study team with projected traffic volumes to include in the build alternative options as well as the no-build alternative.

Environment & Impacts

As part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, the study team will analyze the effects of any potential improvement on the natural, cultural and human environment, and focus on how to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any impacts through alternatives evaluation and public input. Taking into account that the study area is comprised of agricultural and farmland, the study team will consider any potential impacts to farms and land use through the development of proposed improvements and alternatives.

As the range of alternatives is identified, screening methodology will be developed, creating metrics to evaluate and select the Alternatives Carried Forward and ultimately the Preferred Alternative.

Consideration of impacts to wildlife and threatened and endangered species is part of the NEPA process. The study team will engage and coordinate with environmental agencies with jurisdiction in the study area as the alternatives are developed, screened, and a preferred alternative is selected.

Engagement

This study is using Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS). CSS is an interdisciplinary approach to identify effective transportation solutions by working with stakeholders to develop, build, and maintain cost-effective transportation facilities that fit into and reflect the study area's surroundings. Stakeholders include anyone affected by, concerned with, interested in, or having jurisdiction in the study area.

The study team met with local agencies to introduce the study and listen to concerns within the study area. The study team will continue to meet with local municipalities and Will County throughout the study process to inform them of the status of the study and get their input at key milestones.

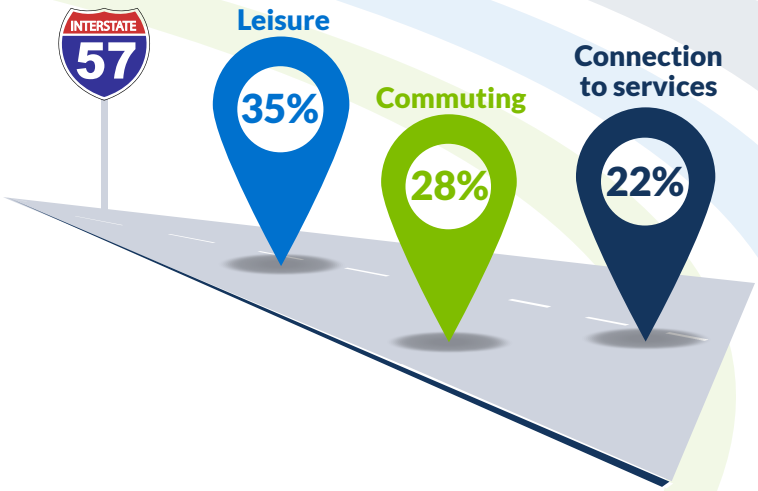
Similarly, there are multiple opportunities for the public to engage with the study. There will be additional public meetings as well as the Community Advisory Group (CAG) which provides an opportunity to stay informed of the study progress. In addition to in-person engagement, there will be online interactive surveys, a study website, newsletters to provide study updates, and an email to engage with the study team.

Survey Results

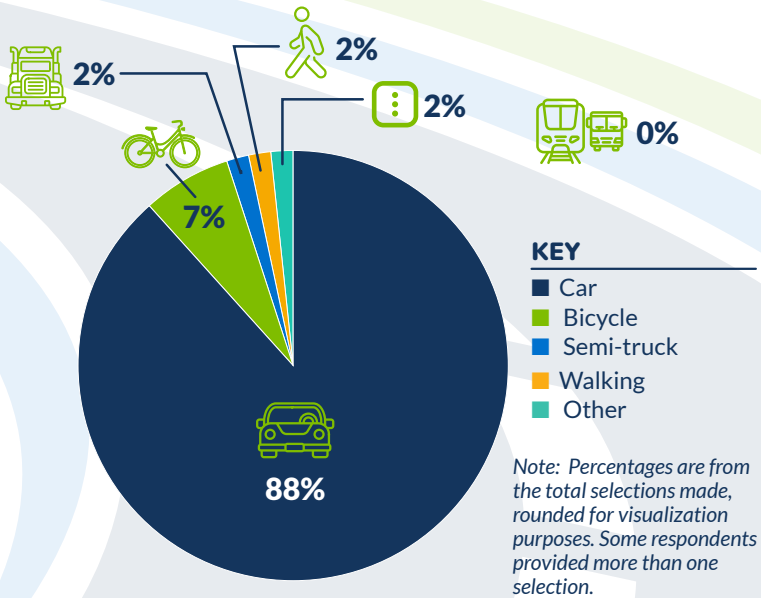
In addition to the comment forms, emails, and comments left on exhibits, an interactive online MetroQuest survey was available until December 4, 2024. A total of 59 responses were recorded for the online survey.

Information gathered from the survey include how people are using the corridor, frequency of travel, and condition of the roadways within the study area. The results from the survey showed travel by car as the primary form of transportation (88%).

Top Reasons for I-57 Use



Modes of Transportation

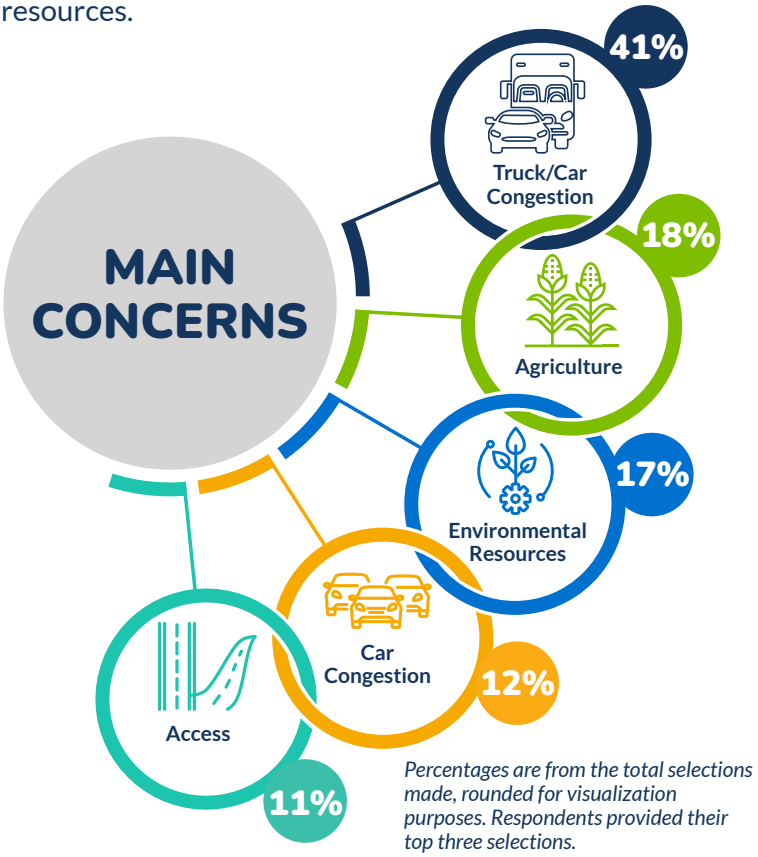


Note: Percentages are from the total selections made, rounded for visualization purposes. Some respondents provided more than one selection.

Top 5 Priorities

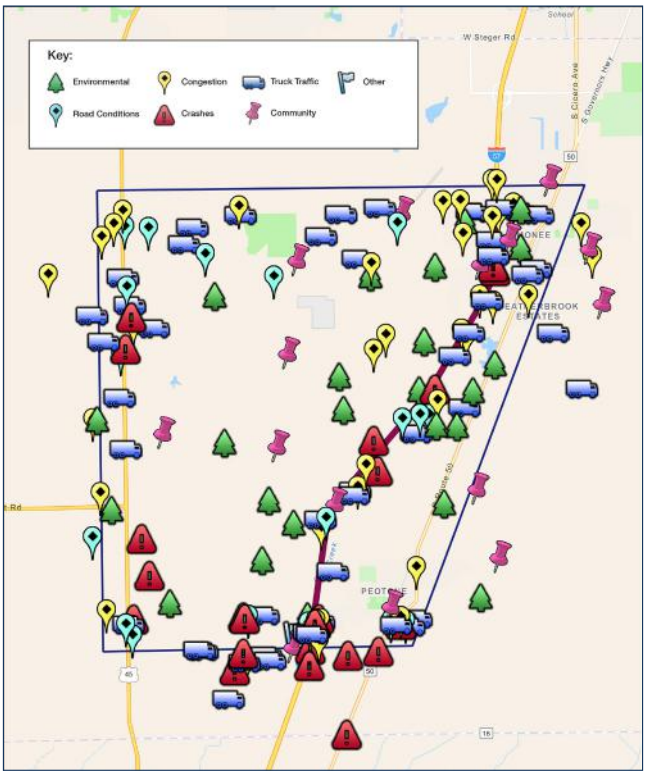
By community inputs

Respondents were asked what issues and concerns are considered most important to them. A majority of selections by the respondents indicated concerns about congestion and protecting agriculture and environmental resources.



Percentages are from the total selections made, rounded for visualization purposes. Respondents provided their top three selections.

Areas of Concern Map



When asked to identify the top five (5) priorities to be addressed by this study, the top five were:

- Safety 17%
- Traffic Congestion 16%
- Truck/Freight Traffic 13%
- Environmental Concerns 11%
- Agriculture 10%

This was reflected in the comments received, not only on the survey, but also comments heard at the public meeting.

This study will identify safety and operational concerns in the study area and consider alternatives to accommodate the truck and freight traffic that is prevalent in Eastern Will County along the I-57 corridor.

Other Priorities

Emergency services	8%
Environmental resources	6%
Access and Mobility	5%
Wetland/Waterways	5%
Future travel needs	5%
Development/Business Access	4%
Public Transportation	1%

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