

Connections



Issue 4 • Fall 2014

I-290 Planning Process **ADVANCES** to the Next Round of Evaluation

Last fall, IDOT hosted the third round of public meetings to present the overall study progress, the alternatives for further study, next steps, as well as seek stakeholder comments. These meetings were held in conjunction with the CTA Blue Line Forest Park Branch Vision Study. IDOT presented mainline I-290 concepts, along with interchange concepts. Similar information was presented at Town Hall meetings hosted by State Senator Don Harmon last fall and State Senator Kimberly Lightford this past spring.

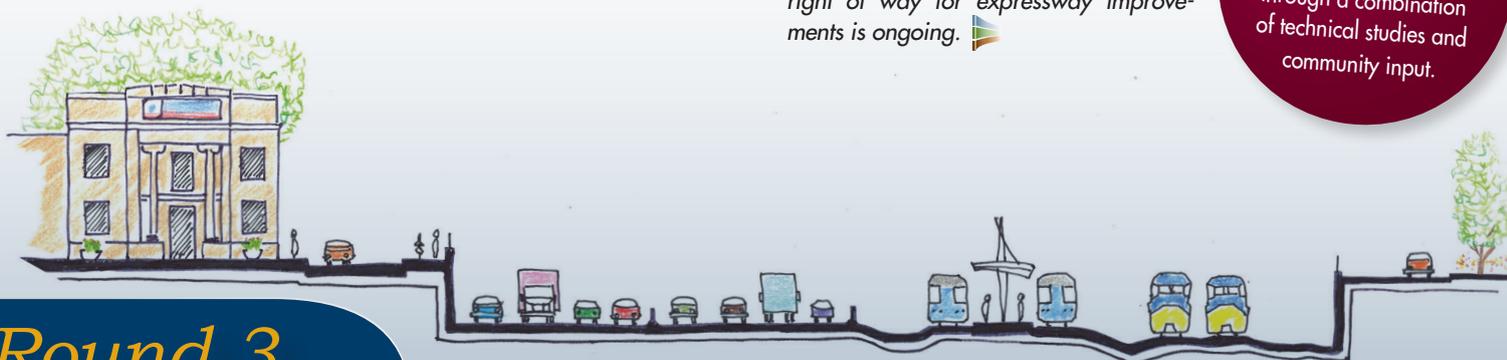
At each of these events, stakeholders provided valued input and asked questions regarding a variety of topics, including transit, safety, tolling scenarios, funding, construction and drainage issues. Materials from the public meetings are available on the project web-site at www.eisenhowerexpressway.com.

Since then, the Eisenhower Expressway Study Team has been engaged in a number of activities, including:

- **Reviews and responses to public comments**
- **Detailed analysis of existing drainage conditions**
- **Additional data collection and analysis**
- **Development of a preliminary design (i.e. geometry)**

A cross-section below of the proposed expressway design, in the most constrained section of the corridor, demonstrates how a 4th lane can be added in each direction while remaining within the existing right-of-way. An analysis of the availability of railroad right of way for expressway improvements is ongoing.

The goal of Round 3 is to identify a preferred alternative through a combination of technical studies and community input.



Round 3 Quick Facts

- » From summer 2014 to spring 2015
- » Detailed engineering and environmental studies
- » Corridor Advisory Group (CAG) meetings
- » Individual community, agency and other stakeholder meetings
- » Refine multimodal alternatives based upon technical studies, stakeholder input
- » Identify aesthetic treatments
- » Identify funding/financing strategies
- » Identify construction staging scenarios
- » Identify a preferred alternative

Community input key TO COMPLETING ROUND 3



As the alternatives evaluation becomes more detailed in Round 3, community input will further influence a preferred alternative. At the recent CAG meeting on July 30, 2014, the preliminary design (geometry) was provided to each community and agency in attendance, as well as a map of the entire corridor that summarizes the input we've received to date. The Study Team has initiated a series of community meetings that will continue into the spring of 2015, along with a continuous process of analysis, stakeholder feedback and refinements. The goal of the overall planning process is to improve all modes of travel in the I-290 corridor and, in doing so, create an asset for adjoining communities.

Connections

CTA Blue Line Vision STUDY UPDATE



In 2013, the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) initiated the "Blue Line Vision Study," in collaboration with the I-290 study, to identify the near- and long-term improvement goals for the Forest Park branch of the CTA Blue Line. CTA's Vision Study evaluated infrastructure and service improvements throughout the corridor, and is coordinating these findings with the Eisenhower Expressway Study Team for incorporation into the overall I-290 corridor plan. In addition, IDOT is working with CTA and Pace on options for a cost-effective and efficient transit extension, such as express bus service to Mannheim Road.

The Blue Line Vision Study started with an analysis of existing conditions and concluded that the tracks and stations are nearing the end of their useful life and need to be brought up to 21st century standards in terms of service, mobility and passenger facilities. The CTA has identified the following overall recommendations associated with a complete reconstruction and modernization for the Forest Park branch:

- Maintain existing station entrance locations
- Improve customer experience at stations
- Improve infrastructure and speed
- A new Forest Park terminal, yard and shop at Des Plaines Avenue
- Maintain existing service
- Work with IDOT on corridor improvements

The study will be completed in 2014, but the CTA will continue to evaluate and coordinate funding options and project phasing with IDOT, and will formally present the results in conjunction with the I-290 Public Hearing in 2015.

CONCEPTUAL RENDERING



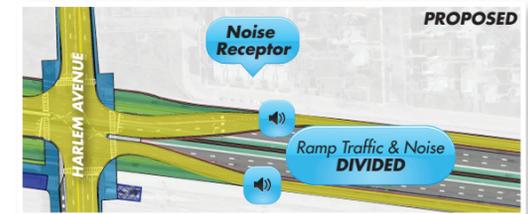
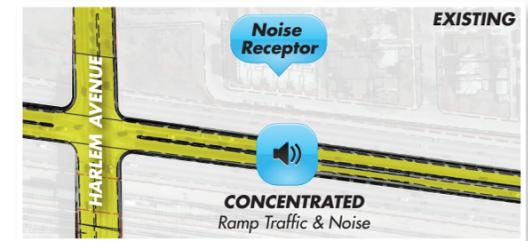
What are the ROUND 3 FINDINGS to date?

In addition to the development of geometry, more detailed engineering and environmental studies are underway to support the evaluation of the remaining alternatives. The findings from our technical studies will be presented over a series of CAG meetings.

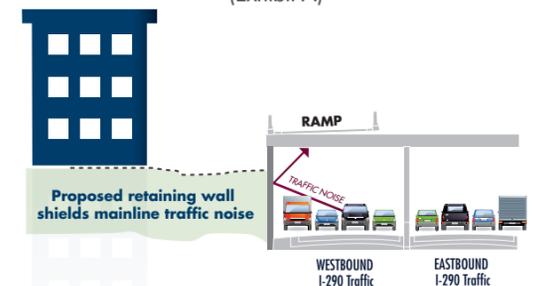


Drainage – the existing drainage system, which was constructed in the 1950's, was designed to accommodate a 10-year storm, but has endured much more, and is therefore deteriorating. This has resulted in an increasing number of road closures due to flooding. A proposed drainage system is being developed to handle larger, 100-year storms, which will reduce flooding and lane closures. Discussions are beginning this fall with adjoining communities and other stakeholders to develop and finalize a proposed drainage design.

Other areas to be studied in Round 3 include social and economic impacts, as well as air quality and noise. Updates will be provided on the project website and in future newsletters.



(Exhibit A)



Study Area Highlight: HARLEM AVENUE INTERCHANGE RECONSTRUCTION

As documented as part of the I-290 planning process, there are many safety, mobility, condition and design concerns related to left-hand ramps. The Study Team needed to address these multiple concerns as well as community concerns about the height and location of the ramps. The proposed interchange design has been guided by these factors, and although the ramps connect to I-290 on the right side, the intersection remains centered over the expressway, while also covering a portion of I-290. The following highlights the key features at the Harlem Avenue interchange.

Interchange Concept Addresses Deficiencies; Minimizes Footprint

I-290 will be shifted as much as 18 feet to the south, increasing the distance between the expressway and businesses and residences on Harrison and Lehmer Streets. The mainline will also be lowered by up to seven feet, with over 300 feet of expressway entirely covered by the reconfigured ramps. The lowering of the expressway allows for the proposed ramps to remain the same height or lower than the existing ramps.

Right-Hand Ramps Offer Noise Reduction Benefits to Community

A noise sensitivity test was performed to compare the effects of shifting the left-hand ramps to right-hand ramps. The test compared the effects of various design changes (location, alignment, heights and grades) using existing traffic.

The study found that the proposed right-hand ramp design acts as a barrier to mainline expressway noise, which is the primary generator of traffic noise at this location. Also, the ramp traffic will be divided, pushing the higher volume, eastbound on-ramp traffic further south, away from Harrison Street. These two features, as well as less steep grades, actually reduce noise levels, as compared to the existing left-side design. Further studies and coordination with the community will determine if there are noise impacts that require mitigation. (See Exhibit A)

Enhanced Transit Access

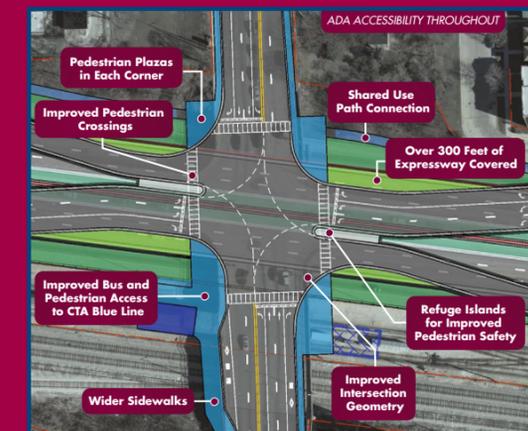
The I-290 Study Team has been working closely with both CTA and Pace on enhancing transit access and connectivity. Wider sidewalks in front of the existing CTA station are proposed, as well as a southbound bus pullout in front of the station. In the northbound direction, a bus stop is provided directly across from the station, with a well-marked and signalized pedestrian crossing.

(continued to page 4)

Bike and Pedestrian Improvements

The new interchange designs accommodate several bike and pedestrian amenities, including:

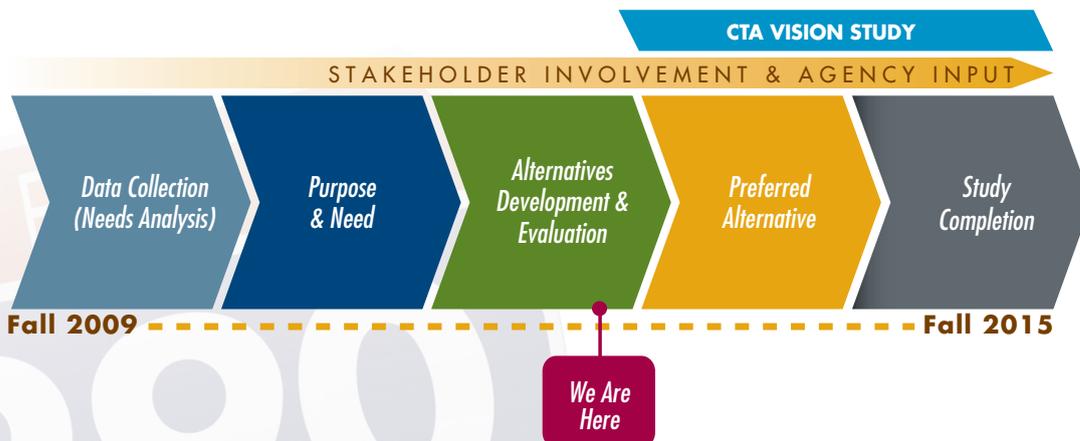
- » Wider sidewalks
- » Sidewalks and ramps compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- » Improved pedestrian crossings and signals
- » Pedestrian refuge islands between ramps
- » Large pedestrian plaza areas in each corner of the intersection
- » An east-west shared-use path accommodation under Harlem Avenue





NEXT STEPS

As we prepare for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, IDOT will continue to develop detailed environmental and engineering studies and meet with stakeholders for input and feedback on proposed concepts and designs.



(continued from page 3)

Improved Capacity/Operations

The proposed interchange design will substantially improve capacity and operations. With upgraded geometry and modern traffic signals, delay to motorists would be reduced by up to 80%, and vehicle stacking by up to 55%. At the same time, the proposed design will provide safer options for pedestrians.