



FACT SHEET

Perception: *The ESH is not needed.*

Fact: The ESH EA is a planning study. The ESH is being planned to accommodate Year 2035 traffic. The goal of the EA is to identify a Preferred Alternative corridor. The intent is to preserve the corridor by limiting certain types of development in its proposed path. By planning for the ESH, if or when it is needed, community impacts and relocations will be lessened. The ESH will not be built unless the need for it exists in the future. At this time, there are no funds for construction.

Perception: *The ESH will not be used locally.*

Fact: The ESH is not intended as a bypass. The purpose of the proposed ESH is to serve both local and regional travel, increase mobility, and enhance transportation options on the east side with an emphasis on serving forecasted/expected growth in the Bloomington-Normal area. In the future (2035), congestion is expected to increase on portions of the existing local road system without an ESH.

Perception: *Widening Towanda Barnes Road is the best solution.*

Fact: Widening Towanda Barnes Road was included in the range of alternatives but resulted in disproportionately high impacts to residences, commercial buildings, and parks when compared to the other alternatives under consideration. Thus, alternatives using Towanda Barnes Road were eliminated. Even if Towanda Barnes Road were constructed to six lanes from I-55 (Towanda) to I-74 (Downs), the traffic congestion forecasted for 2035 would not be relieved without an ESH facility.

Perception: *The ESH should be located further east, such as along Lexington-Leroy Road.*

Fact: Numerous alternatives that were located to the east of the remaining alignments were developed and evaluated. These alternatives were eliminated for a number of reasons, including the inability to meet the Purpose and Need of the project, which is to accommodate growth on the east side and address both local and regional mobility and access. Locating the ESH further east, such as along Lexington-Leroy Road, would make the ESH less desirable for local traffic. Some eastern alternatives were eliminated due to a higher number of farmland impacts in comparison to other alternatives. The far eastern alternatives were less compatible with future land use plans and may have encouraged sprawl or other unintended negative land use consequences.

Perception: *The projected employment and population data is outdated or not realistic.*

Fact: The population and employment forecasts have been adjusted with the most recent data available (2013). The forecasts are obtained from national and state agencies (Woods & Poole Economics, HIS Global Insight, and Illinois Department of Employment Security) that have no stake in the ESH project. Based on the revised forecasts, there is continued need to plan for this project. Independent of the ESH project, population and traffic are predicted to increase within the study area. The transportation agencies have a responsibility to plan for orderly

improvement to the infrastructure to accommodate that growth or the result will be congestion, and the negative impacts that it brings. According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2012 data, both Bloomington and Normal are in the top five fastest growing cities in Illinois.

Perception: *The ESH will negatively impact residential areas and property values.*

Fact: Residential displacements and proximity to existing and planned residential areas are considered when planning the ESH. Both direct and indirect impacts of the ESH will be analyzed in detail. This analysis will include acquisition of residences, farmland conversion, safety, potential impacts to land use, noise levels, air quality, community impacts, and water quality. Generally, research has not yielded any definitive property value impacts from transportation projects. National research has found that property value benefits may occur for those living near a transportation facility that provides reduced travel times and increased accessibility. The impact of the ESH on property values may vary depending on the location of the property in proximity to the project.

Perception: *The ESH is being initiated by developers, the planning commission, or engineering firms.*

Fact: The ESH EA is being conducted through the joint efforts of McLean County and the communities of Bloomington and Normal, who recognize the need for additional future transportation capacity on the east and southeast sides of the communities to accommodate forecasted growth. The project team has not and continues to have no involvement with developers.

Perception: *This project will pave over some of the best farmland in the U.S. and result in agricultural impacts.*

Fact: Agricultural impacts, including adverse travel, severances, prime farmland acreage, farm outbuildings, farm residences, uneconomical remnants, and landlocked parcels were evaluated for the ESH alternatives. The alternatives with the highest agricultural impacts were eliminated during the alternative evaluation process. The 2035 Land Use Plan was considered during the alternative evaluation process. According to the 2035 Land Use Plan, it is expected that much of the area within the alternatives will be developed by 2035.

Perception: *The data used to assess impacts is outdated.*

Fact: Flights to obtain aerial images are not flown on a monthly basis due to cost issues. Therefore, the aerial images shown in public meeting materials may not show all of the recently constructed homes on the east side of Bloomington-Normal. However, the project team conducts field visits of the project area to gather data on location of new homes, schools, parks, etc. and update the proposed impacts accordingly. The future phases of the east side subdivisions are known and considered in the ESH project. Future parks and schools are included in the analysis; however these structures must be planned.



Frequently Asked Questions

How many alternatives currently remain for further consideration?

To date, two Build Alternatives remain that will be studied in detail in the Environmental Assessment Analysis. In addition, the No-Build Alternative will be included in the Environmental Assessment Analysis and compared against the Build Alternatives. The remaining alternatives will be evaluated and a Preferred Alternative corridor will be selected. The alternatives can be viewed on an interactive map on the project website (www.eastsidehighway.com).

When and how will a preferred alternative corridor be selected?

The results of the Environmental Assessment Analysis (which includes community, agricultural, cultural, environmental, and sustainability impacts and also assesses engineering design) and public comments will be considered when selecting a recommended Preferred Alternative corridor. The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and McLean County are responsible for making the final recommendation on the Preferred Alternative corridor. A summary of the public comments and the recommended Preferred Alternative corridor will be presented to the FHWA and the Federal and State resource agencies in November 2013. At the meeting, each agency representative must give concurrence on the recommended Preferred Alternative corridor in order for the project to move forward. The resource agencies can choose to select the No Build Alternative as the Preferred Alternative corridor if they find that the Build Alternatives have significant environmental impacts that outweigh the No Build Alternative's inability to meet the Purpose and Need. The project team will notify the public via the project website (www.eastsidehighway.com) after the November meeting to provide an update on the status of the Preferred Alternative corridor. The Preferred Alternative corridor will be presented to the public at a Public Hearing.

What type of roadway is recommended?

Three different facility type options were considered for the north-south Build Alternatives: Freeways, Expressways, and Arterials. The Freeway Option is recommended as the most appropriate facility type for the ESH. It is the best option to accommodate future traffic volumes, enhance mobility, provide appropriate access, and reduce crash potential.

When will the roadway be constructed?

At present, Phase II (Detailed Engineering) and Phase III (Construction Phase) are not yet funded. One of the reasons for performing the Phase I (Environmental Assessment) is to determine if the project should go forward. As such, construction funding is often not available for projects until the Phase I study has been approved by the FHWA. The source of funding for construction has not been determined, but funding can come from a variety of sources. There are many Federal programs which fund construction projects. Some State funds may be available, and some funding may come from the County or City.

Who is responsible for maintaining the ESH?

The agency (i.e. IDOT or McLean County) responsible for maintaining the ESH has not yet been determined. That will be determined later in the project process.

Could the money for the ESH planning study have been used for other purposes such as improving existing roads or schools?

The funding for this project comes from the "Illinois Jobs Now!" Capital Bill. The Illinois Jobs Now! program specifically identified funds for preliminary engineering on the ESH. Capital Bill funds can only be used for projects specifically identified by the legislature or the governor's office. If the McLean County Board would have voted against studying the project, the funds could not be used elsewhere in McLean County for any other purpose and cannot be reallocated for use on any other activity.

How will traffic noise be evaluated?

The EA will include a detailed noise assessment for the Preferred Alternative. A detailed noise assessment will identify all sensitive land uses (residences, parks, schools, etc.) where there is a potential for noise impacts. The assessment will identify existing noise levels and calculate the change in these levels associated with the preferred alternative. Where noise walls are found to be both reasonable and feasible, the public and immediate property owners will be notified. A public meeting or hearing will present the results of the traffic noise analysis and proposed abatement measures. The viewpoints on proposed noise walls will be solicited from residents who would benefit from the abatement, and the viewpoints determine if a noise wall will be constructed.