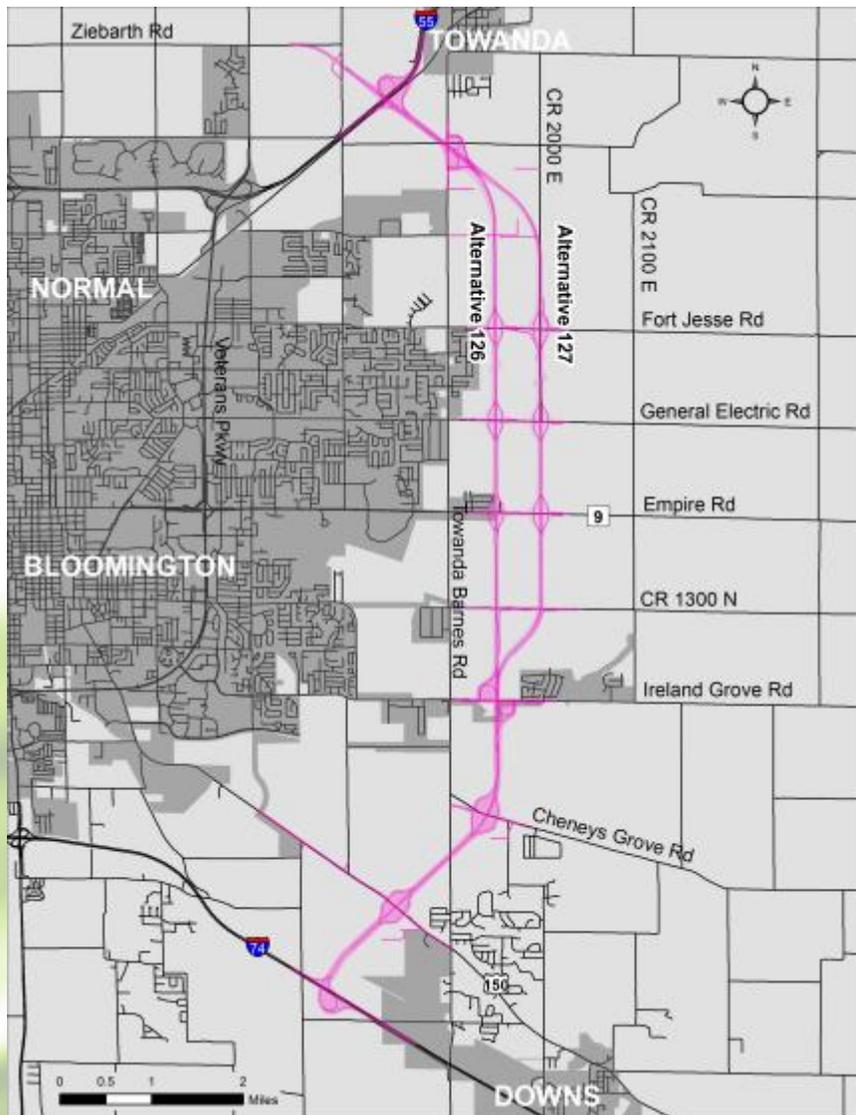




Introduction

The East Side Highway (ESH) Environmental Assessment (EA) is a transportation planning study administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and McLean County. The ESH is being planned to accommodate Year 2035 traffic.

The goal of the EA is to identify a Preferred Alternative corridor. The Preferred Alternative corridor is selected based on minimizing community and environmental impacts, as well as engineering feasibility, traffic models, and public input. 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, compared to what would occur if planning for the ESH corridor had not taken place. The ESH will not be built unless the need for it is present in the future.

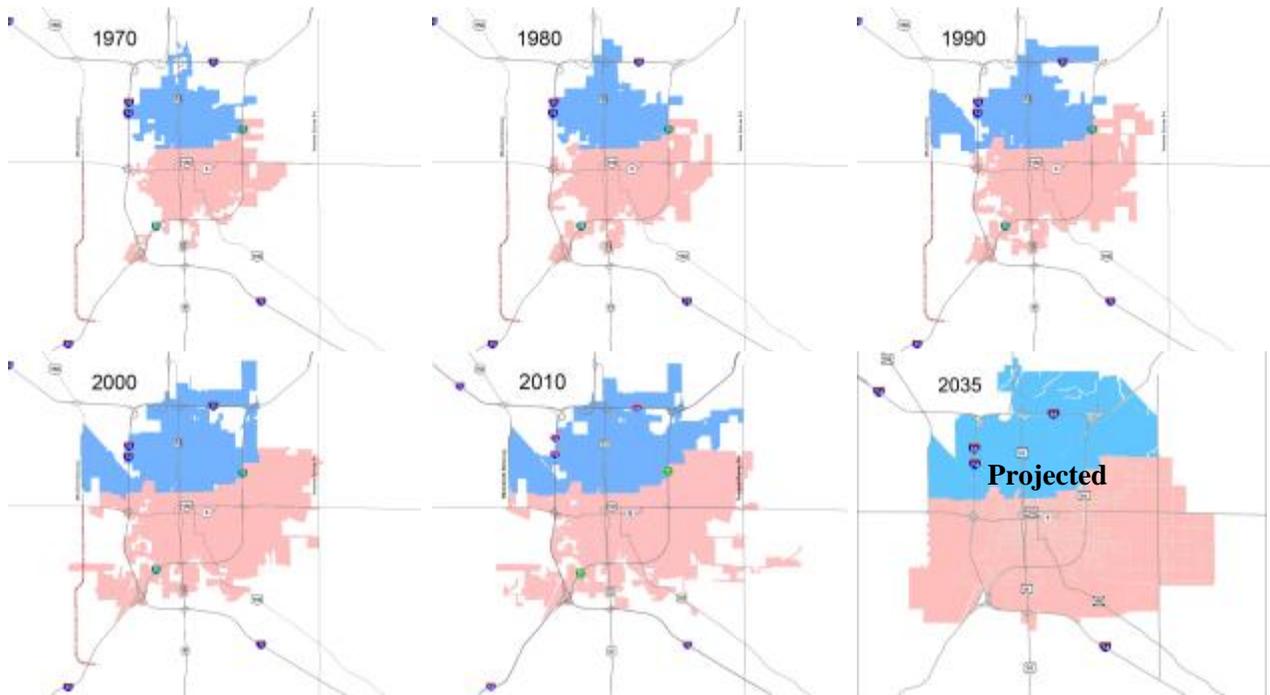


Two Remaining Alternative Corridors - Alternative 126 and Alternative 127

Bloomington-Normal Growth Projections and Project Need

- Since the 1970s, Bloomington-Normal has experienced continuous population and employment growth. The trend is expected to continue.
- There are various reasons for continued growth. The economy is diverse and includes agriculture, finance and insurance, higher education, and manufacturing. The economy is not completely dependent upon one business or industry to continue its strong growth in the future. Also, the region is in a desirable location, at the nexus of three interstates.
- The population and employment forecasts for the ESH have been and will continue to be adjusted with the most recent data available (2013).
- Forecasts and data from Woods & Poole Economics, IHS Global Insight, and the Illinois Department of Employment Security were used to forecast population and employment growth for the area. These forecasts were developed independently of the ESH project, and the preparers of these documents are not involved in the ESH analysis and have no stake in the project.
- The recession of 2008-2009 caused employment to decline in McLean County and throughout the U.S. However, the area is already recovering and the unemployment rate for McLean County is among the lowest in Illinois.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), Normal has the #1 fastest growing population of all Illinois cities, and Bloomington is ranked #4.
- The ESH is being planned to accommodate Year 2035 traffic and growth that is based on the region's adopted 2035 Land Use Plan. By planning for the future there is a transportation system in place or that has been planned for implementation that can accommodate the growth, should the need occur.
- If population and employment growth does not occur as anticipated, the ESH schedule can be modified or terminated.
- The existing roadway network currently does meet existing traffic needs; however, traffic is expected to increase in the project area with or without an ESH due to a projected increase in population and employment, and because the 2035 Land Use Plan for the region anticipates continued urban growth, especially on the east side of the metro area. The existing roadway network will not be able to accommodate the projected increase in traffic.

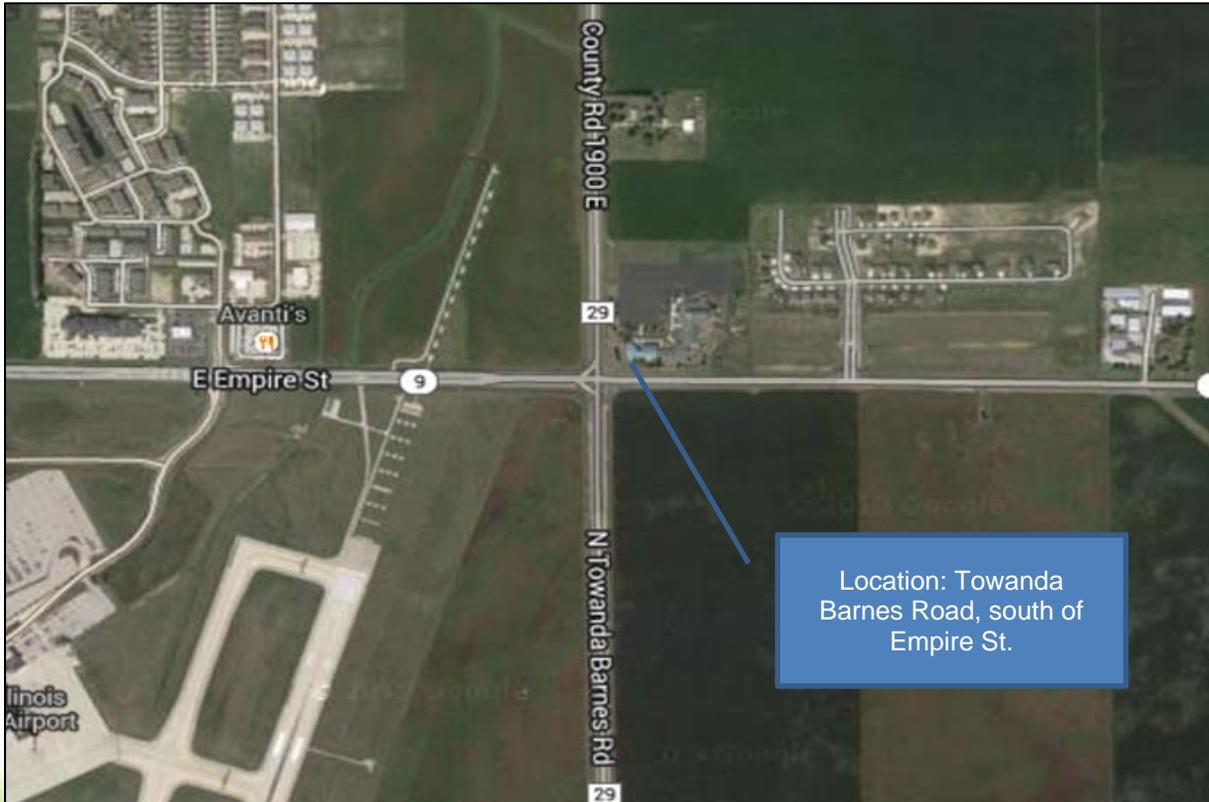
Historic and Projected Bloomington-Normal Corporate Limits, 1970-2035



Forecasted Traffic Increase

Traffic models indicate that roads in the study area would be operating over their capacities by 2035 even with planned and programmed improvements.

Towanda Barnes Road Future Traffic Operations



Existing Conditions:

- Four lane arterial (2 thru lanes in each direction + left turn lane)
- Existing Traffic = 12,700 vehicles per day (vpd)

PROBLEM (Purpose and Need): In 2035, traffic will increase by 30,000 vehicles per day (vpd), based on the 2035 Land Use Plan. Year 2035 traffic at this location is 42,200 vpd, with no improvements made. This is similar to the existing congestion experienced on Veterans Parkway (see photo).



PM Rush Hour Congestion on
Veterans Parkway (at
Clearwater)

SOLUTIONS to PROBLEM (Alternatives to Meet Purpose and Need)

A. Widen Towanda Barnes Rd. to 6-lane Arterial (3 thru lanes in each direction)

Result:

- 61,400 vpd on Towanda Barnes Road
- Congested conditions (similar to Veterans Parkway)
- Minimized footprint needed (1 additional lane in each direction)
- Some impacts to homes, businesses and churches

-OR-

B. Build Towanda Barnes Rd. as a 4-lane freeway (2 lanes in each direction), with interchanges

Result:

- 43,600 vpd on Towanda Barnes Road
- Better operations better due to free-flow conditions of freeway
- Wider footprint needed
- Airport flight path restricts height of freeway grade separation
- More impacts to homes, businesses and churches

-OR-

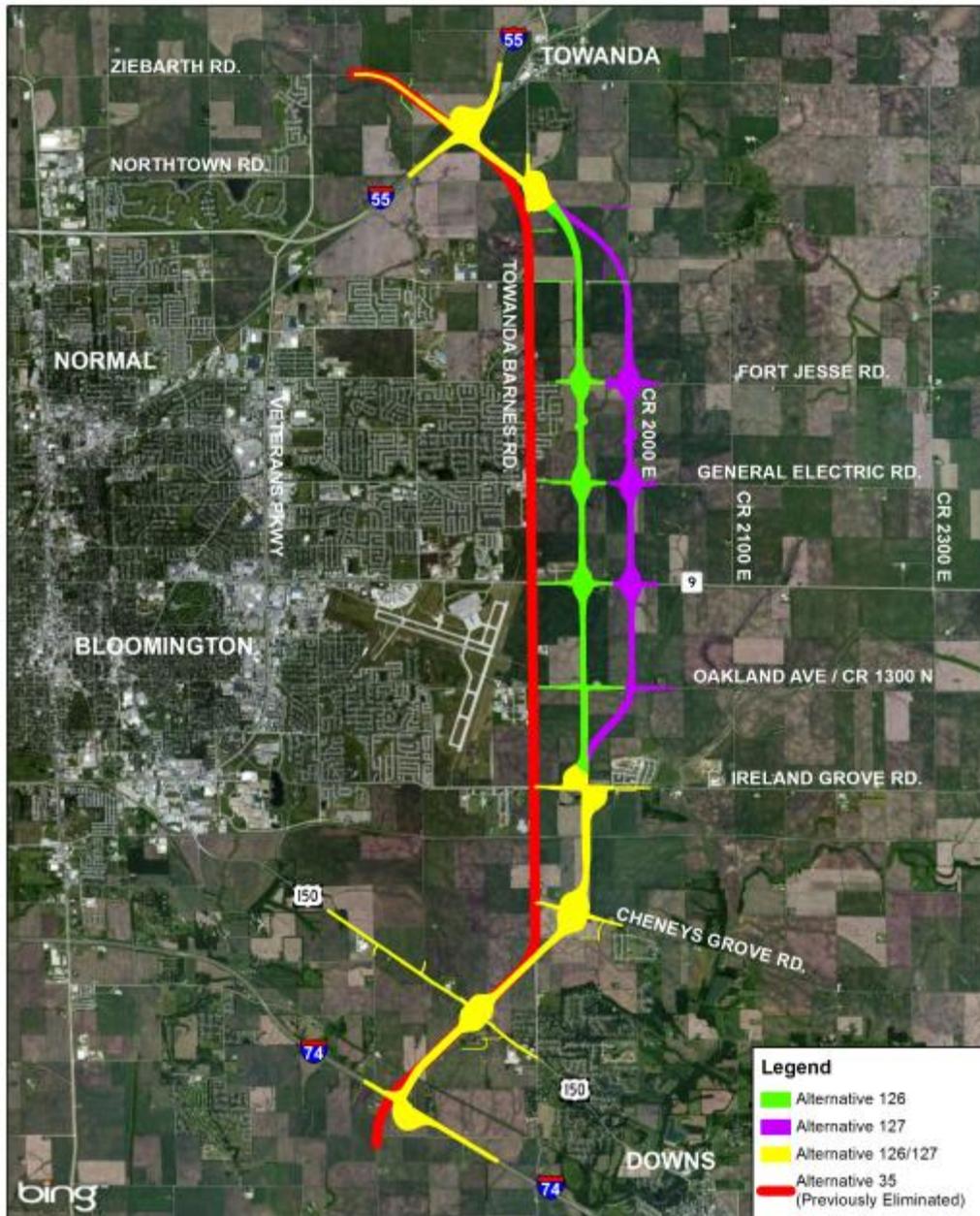
C. Build a new ESH, 4-lane freeway (2 lanes in each direction) in a location east of Towanda Barnes Rd.

Result:

- 31,700 vpd on Towanda Barnes Road
- Best operations
- Least impact to homes, businesses and churches

Alternative Comparison

Improvements to Towanda Barnes Road were included in the range of alternatives considered for the ESH but resulted in disproportionately high impacts to residences, commercial buildings, and parks when compared to the other alternatives under consideration. 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 a facility like the ESH. Alternative 35 (which uses Towanda Barnes Road) is shown in red in the figure below alongside the two remaining alternatives, 126 and 127.



ESH Alternatives
August 13, 2013

The table below compares the impacts resulting from Alternative 35, and the remaining two alternative corridors.

Category	Alternative			Description of Impacts
	35 (TB Rd)	126	127	
Wetlands (acres)	0.0	0.71	0.0003	A detailed wetland investigation was not completed along Towanda Barnes Road as it was eliminated in the screening process before detailed field studies were conducted.
Special Waste (number of sites)	4	18	15	Most special waste impacts are fuel storage tanks on farms. Alternative 126 has more impacts due to the impact at the Prairie Commercial Park along IL 9 (Empire Road).
Residential Displacements (number)	39	21	13	Alternatives that utilize Towanda Barnes Road impact significantly more residences. Five residences in Harvest Pointe are impacted by Alternative 126; no homes in The Grove or Eagle View are displaced by Alternative 126. Alternative 127 does not displace homes in any subdivision.
Business Displacements (number)	7	7	0	Alternative 35 displaces various businesses along Towanda Barnes Road. The business displacements for Alternative 126 occur at the ESH interchange with IL 9 (Empire Road), at the Prairie Commercial Park.
Parklands (acres)	11.0	0.0	0.0	Alternative 35 impacts two parks: Walt Bittner Park on the north and the baseball fields on the southwest corner of Towanda Barnes Road and Ireland Grove Road.
Noise Receptors (number within 500 feet of alternative)	256	141	120	Most noise impacts occur within 500 feet of the roadway edge. Noise levels will be projected for the Preferred Alternative, but the number of noise receptors (such as homes, parks, or schools) within 500 feet shows the potential for noise impacts by proximity to each alternative.
Agricultural Criteria:				Alternatives that use Towanda Barnes Road result in the fewest farm impacts, due to its higher level of urbanization. Alternatives 126 and 127 minimize farm impacts compared to the other alternatives evaluated, with the exception of Towanda Barnes Road alternatives.
Prime and Important Farmland (acres)	616	832	859	
Farm Outbuildings (number)	34	42	30	
Tract Severances (number)	17	14	12	
Tracts with Access Changes (number of tracts)	34	11	9	
Farms Otherwise Affected (acres)	56	100	109	
Total Right-of-Way (acres)	678*	1,053	1,078	

*Total does not include interchange right-of-way as Alternative 35 was eliminated prior to interchange development.