

PUBLIC MEETING #1 NEWSLETTER

The Will County Division of Transportation (WCDOT) is performing a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study over approximately 22 miles along Wilmington-Peotone Road between Interstate 55 and Dreckles Road. Growth is occurring rapidly across Will County as evidenced by new freight clusters along the Wilmington-Peotone corridor that are challenging the roadway infrastructure. The purpose of this project is to provide safe, efficient east-west mobility for all users throughout the corridor. A systematic approach is necessary to understand the existing and future travel demand and develop a corridor that can handle demand to support the economic vitality of the County.



The first of two public meetings was held in December 2023 in an open house format. Given the size of the corridor, separate meetings were held in both the City of Wilmington and Village of Peotone on December 6th and December 13th, respectively. Each meeting included the same information and the general public had the opportunity to select which meeting location to attend.

The outreach prior to the meetings included newspaper advertisements and postcards mailed to residents along the 22 mile long corridor. The project team worked with the City of Wilmington, Village of Peotone, and the Will County Division of Transportation to advertise through additional public outlets. Outreach was also held virtually on the project website www.wilmingtonpeotonestudy.com. It included exhibits, an interactive map with an option for visitors to provide comments, and a survey for visitors to complete. The public outreach was conducted starting November 17, 2023, when postcards were mailed and the formal comment period extended from December 6, 2023 through January 12, 2024.



Public Feedback Summary

A summary of public feedback is as follows completed during the period of December 6, 2023 to January 12, 2024:



76 people attended

the City of Wilmington meeting on December 6, 2023



35 people attended

the Village of Peotone meeting on December 13, 2023



53 surveys completed

- 21 in-person handwritten responses
- 32 completed online



96 comments received

- 41 submitted on the project website via the interactive map
- 28 submitted at the public meetings, handwritten on the corridor exhibit
- 27 submitted as part of the comment section within the survey



3,706 website visits

- From the time postcards were mailed until the comment period ended (November 20, 2023 through January 12, 2024)



Open-House Meeting Information

Project information was provided in an open-house format without a formal presentation. Exhibit boards presented at the meetings included an overview of the study and defining the PEL process, an introduction to the project and its schedule, and a summary of existing traffic data and crash data. A corridor roll plot was also available with post-its available for attendees to provide comments on specific locations along the corridor. An important part of the open-house meeting is to discuss concerns and questions with visitors. The project team was available to answer questions and gather handwritten comments on the corridor map. Additionally, an area was set aside for visitors to complete a survey. The same survey was available on the project website.



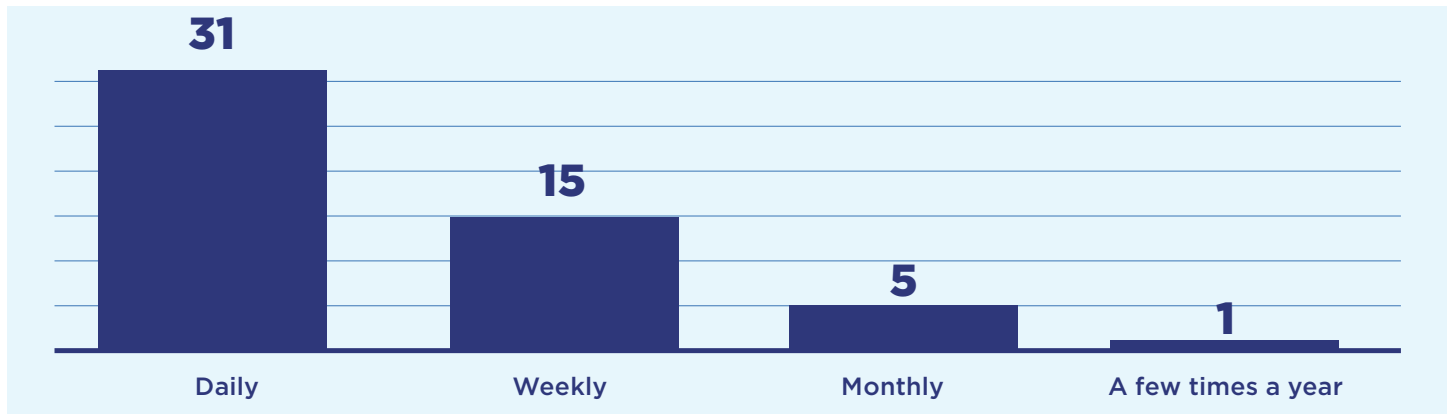
Survey Results

A survey with seven questions was provided on the project website and available in-person at each of the public meetings for attendees to complete. The goal of the survey was to better understand how the corridor is utilized and identify users' priorities and concerns. A total of 53 survey responses were recorded. It is important to note that not all respondents completed all of the questions. Therefore, the total number of responses may not equal 53 for each question. Below is a summary of the results.

Question 1:

How often do you travel on any segment of River Road/Wilmington-Peotone Road between Interstate 55 and Drecksler Road?

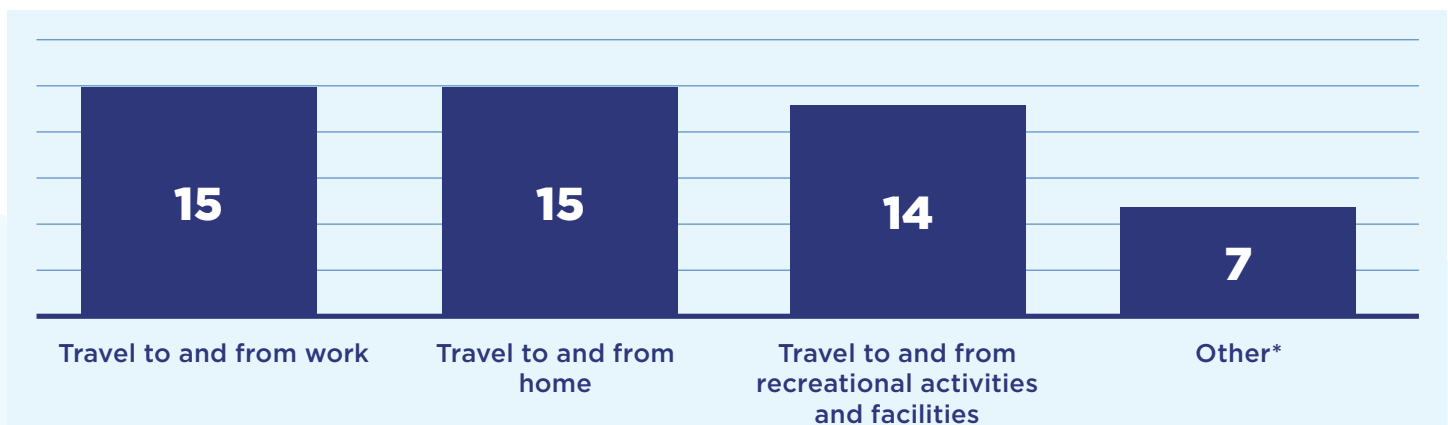
The total number of responses has been recorded as:



Question 2:

How do you use River Road/Wilmington-Peotone Road between Interstate 55 and Drecksler Road?

The total number of responses has been recorded as:



**Responses for 'OTHER' mostly included access to farmland or selecting a combination of the other three options..*

Question 3:

Please provide input regarding your experience while traveling River Road/Wilmington-Peotone Road between Interstate 55 and Drecksler Road.

The majority of responses (80%) indicated that there are concerns about this corridor and improvements are needed now.

I do have concerns about this corridor and improvements are needed now.	80%
I have no concerns about the corridor now, but this could change in the future should traffic and/or population increase. Improvements could be necessary in the future.	14%
I have no concerns. No future improvements are needed.	2%
This question does not apply to me.	4%

Question 4:

Rank the following factors we should use when evaluating alternatives/options.

Out of 50 responses to the question, **76% of respondents** selected Improve Safety as the most important factor. The remaining factors are in order of importance based on the responses received.

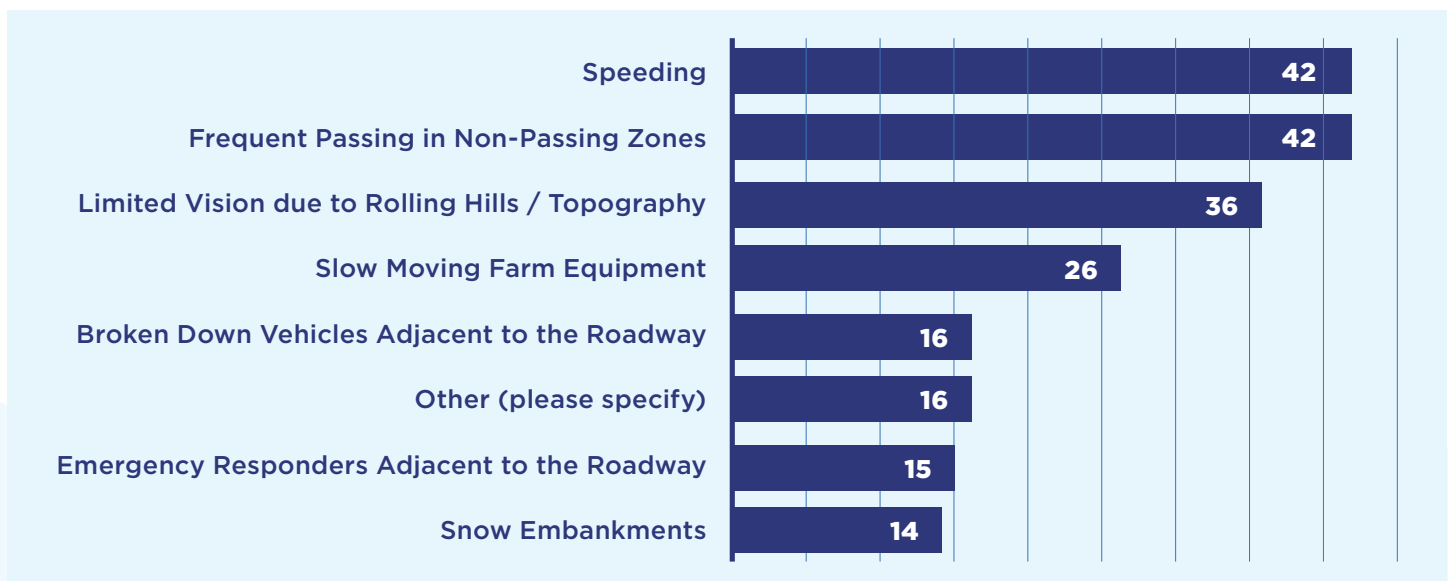
1. Improve safety
2. Maintain access for businesses/farmland
3. Reduce long wait times and/or traffic congestion
4. Protect our environment
5. Minimize project costs
6. Accommodate future developments
7. Improve bicycle and/or pedestrian access

Question 5:

Please select safety concerns you have experienced along the corridor (check all that apply).

The top three responses included:

- Speeding
- Frequent passing in non-passing zones
- Limited vision due to rolling hills / topography



Question 6:

Please list any other factors we should consider during our evaluation.

A variety of responses were received and many reiterated concerns covered in previous questions. New factors to consider included:

- Drainage
- Increased noise pollution
- Consider farm equipment and access to farmland
- Congestion and safety at stop-controlled intersections
- Homes, residences and buildings along the corridor

Question 7:

Please provide any additional comments.

Open ended responses have been reviewed and incorporated into the Summary of Comments section.



Summary of Comments

A total of 96 comments were received in-person at the public meetings and via the project website. Comments and questions received were primarily related to the following topics:

- Intersection Safety
- Concerns related to the increase in truck traffic
- Speeding
- Alternate Routes / Roadway Realignment
- Typical Section: Number of Lanes / Passing Lanes / Turning lanes at Intersections
- Farmland Access and Land Acquisition
- Drainage Concerns

All comments received are included on the [project website](#) within the interactive map for reference. Versions of the following questions were asked most frequently at the public information meetings or on the project survey.

Intersection Safety

Comments expressed concerns with a variety of intersections throughout the corridor. Input included adding a signal or stop-control at a variety of locations due to congestion and frequent accidents or near misses. The comments indicated that the following intersections had the most concern: Wilmington-Peotone Road at Old Chicago Road, Cedar Road, Center Road, US Route 45, and the Interchange at I-57.

Analysis will be conducted utilizing existing and projected traffic volumes to determine if all-way stop control or traffic signals are warranted for the intersections in question. Turn lanes will also be evaluated which could help to alleviate rear end as well as angle/turning crashes. The US Route 45 intersection experienced the highest number of crashes of any intersection along the corridor and will be a priority to evaluate safety improvements during alternative analysis; the I-57 interchange similarly was identified as a hot spot with a high occurrence of both rear ends and turning crashes. While the other noted intersections did not experience a high number of crashes compared to others along the corridor, this only identifies those reported and there could be occurrences or near misses that can't be seen. Analysis will be performed for all noted intersections by the traffic team in combination with the crash analysis to improve safety and intersection operations.

Increase in Truck Traffic

The corridor has experienced an increase in truck traffic along the corridor that has raised several concerns:

Safety

Passenger vehicles regularly attempt to pass slow moving trucks. Excessive speeding to complete passing movements, especially in blind spots given the topography, has caused accidents involving injuries. The number of near misses related to these events is also a concern.

Roadway Condition

Additional trucks have caused the roadway to deteriorate and damage property adjacent to the roadway

Noise

Excessive noise has become more prevalent, especially during overnight hours.

Traffic data has been collected and shows that single unit truck volumes (including buses) are 2% – 5% of the total traffic volume among various segment of the project corridor. Combination unit trucks are in the range of 12% – 28%, with most segments exceeding 20%. Truck volumes are anticipated to increase given the current and future planned developments in the vicinity of the corridor. The purpose of this study is to identify solutions that will accommodate and provide a safe experience for all users of the corridor. Additionally, the County must design the road for all legal users in order to pursue federal funding for this project. Design criteria used for alternative development will include accommodations for this increased truck traffic as well as large farm equipment that utilizes this corridor. Improvements to the typical sections, horizontal and vertical alignments, and intersections/interchanges will be developed to alleviate these concerns. The addition of passing lanes will also be evaluated. A formal noise analysis is not part of the scope of this early PEL study but will be considered as part of concept development given the environmentally sensitive areas in the western portion of the project and the rural nature of the area. Noise Analysis will be conducted during future Phase I studies when environmental clearances are obtained.

Speeding

The primary concern is related to speeding near hills and blind spots causing dangerous situations. Traffic queues often occur in blind spots where sight distance is limited. Vehicles traveling at higher speeds are unable to stop given the limited visibility. Additionally, excessive speeding occurs as vehicles attempt to pass one another. This is especially dangerous when it occurs near hills in the topography where drivers are unable to see oncoming traffic.

The study team recognizes the high vehicular and truck speeds experienced along the corridor. A change in posted speed limit on a roadway requires additional traffic studies to warrant any change. It is also important that the posted speed limit is not abruptly changed along a corridor. Additional comments referred to the existing 45 mph posted speed limit approaching the Village of Peotone. A reduction in the posted speed will be considered given the land use characteristics in the location. No change in posted speed limit elsewhere in the corridor is being considered along the corridor at this time. A review of the vertical profile is being conducted to identify specific areas of sight distance limitations and modifications will be evaluated during concept development. The study team has also met with law enforcement as part of this data collection who also shared this concern and noted that there are limited locations to safely stop and enforce the speed limit. This study will evaluate options to address both the geometric concerns and addition of shoulders to meet current standards which would provide a location to safely enforce the current speed limit.

Alternate Routes/Roadway Realignment

Several comments were made referring to potential alternate routes that could or should be considered including brand new alignments for a different east-west corridor or realigning specific sections of the Wilmington-Peotone corridor.

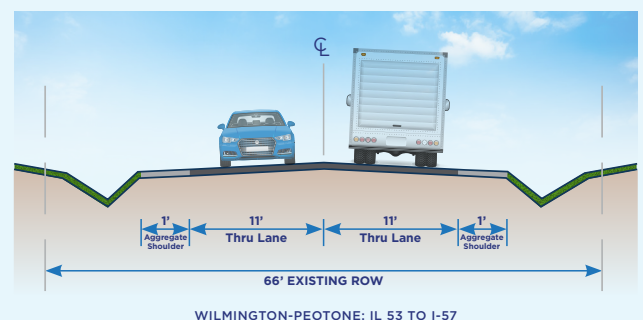
Alternative analysis is the next step in the study process. This PEL study is being conducted by the WCDOT and improvements are focused on the roadways under County jurisdiction. Meetings have been held and coordination continues with IDOT, the townships, the City of Wilmington, and Village of Peotone to understand current and projected future traffic patterns throughout the influence area of the corridor. With this in mind, the study team will evaluate potential roadway realignments, within County jurisdiction limitations, to address mobility and safety concerns that will be presented in the next phase of public outreach.

Typical Section: Number of Lanes / Passing Lanes / Turning lanes at Intersections

A variety of comments referred to the proposed number of lanes, the addition of passing lanes, and operational challenges at different intersections.



Analysis of future traffic demand will be conducted and will include current and future developments having an effect on traffic volumes through 2050. This analysis in conjunction with safety improvement considerations will help determine the preferred typical section to accommodate future demand. Intersection operation analysis will also be conducted to determine if additional turn lanes are warranted. Alternatives will be presented in the next round of public outreach to obtain additional feedback.



Existing Typical Section: Wilmington-Peotone Road

Farmland Access and Land Acquisition

A majority of the adjacent land to the corridor consists of farmland and farm equipment is frequently traveling along Wilmington-Peotone Road during harvest season. Comments expressed concerns with providing safe access to farms and concerns surrounding acquisition of farmland.

The study team understands the importance of farmland and access for farm equipment along this corridor. Developing safe, adequately sized, and appropriately spaced farm access locations will be included in the alternatives analysis. Land acquisition is only considered if it is needed to meet the purpose and need of the project. The County will minimize ROW acquisition when and where possible, while still providing a safe roadway for all users. Alternatives will be developed and presented in the next round of public outreach to obtain additional feedback and may or may not include land acquisition.

Drainage Concerns

Comments received included concerns with localized flooding and field drain tiles adjacent to the roadway for a majority of the corridor.

The study team has been in contact with the Will County Farm Bureau and will continue to coordinate on concerns related to field drain tiles. Specifically, it is a priority to obtain as much existing information on the location of the tiles in order to address drainage concerns for each alternative that is developed. Localized flooding will be addressed utilizing available flooding reports to further identify locations with consistent flooding and develop solutions to address the issues.

Next Steps

The goal of the first public meeting was to obtain additional data to help develop the project purpose and need. The data obtained will also be used to develop proposed alternatives which will then be presented at the second public meeting in Summer 2024.



Stay Involved

The project website will continue to be updated throughout the study. Sign up for updates or send comments via the study website at www.wilmingtonpeotonestudy.com.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Christina Kupkowski, WCDOT, at 815-727-8476 or via email at ckupkowski@willcountyillinois.com.