

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT PLAN WILMINGTON – PEOTONE PEL STUDY

Version 2
February 2025

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Project Background

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 Dreckler Road. The Location Map is included in Figure 1.

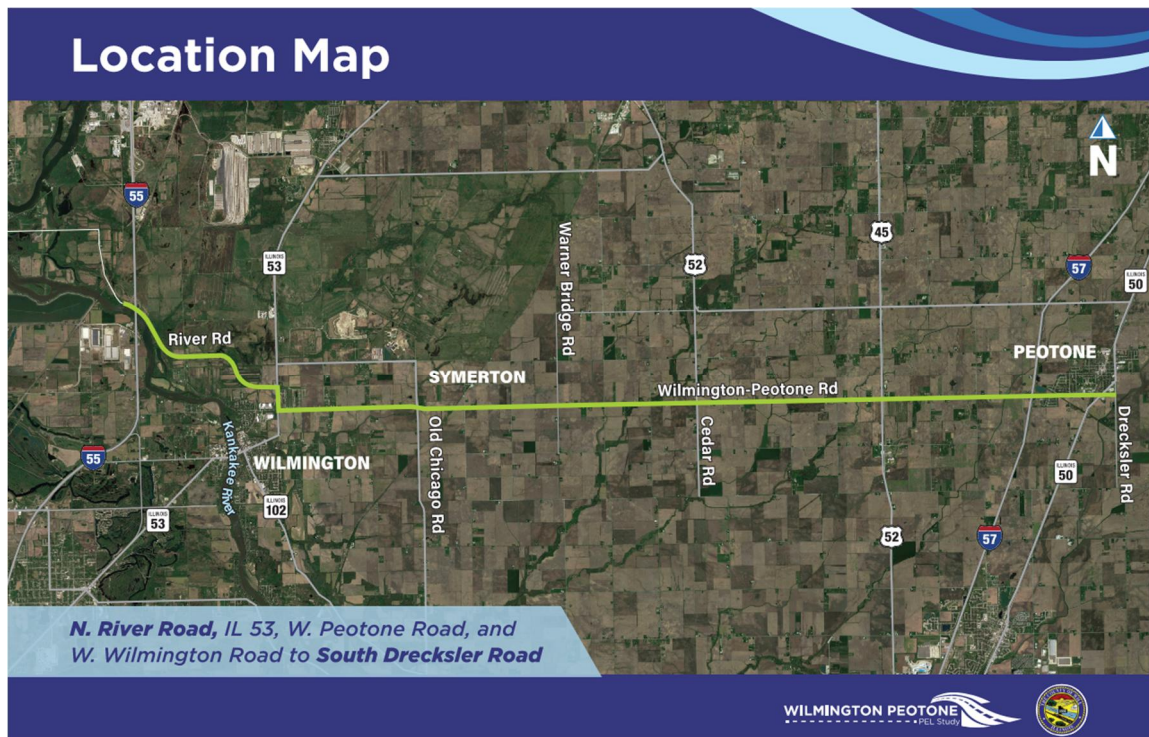


Figure 1 – Project Location Map

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 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 in a safe manner to support the economic vitality of the County.

1.2 Project Requirements

This project will be completed as a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study, a "pre-National Environmental Policy Act" (NEPA) planning study method to streamline the subsequent NEPA process developed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Work completed in the PEL study carries over into NEPA process, which provides additional time for Purpose and Need development, data collection, alternatives identification, alternatives assessment, and providing more opportunities for involvement of the agency, stakeholders, and the public. It is anticipated that the Will County Division of Transportation, with the assistance of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Bureau of Local Roads, will proceed with a formal NEPA study (Phase I) for the Wilmington-Peotone Corridor following the completion of the PEL study to satisfy NEPA requirements.

The legal requirements include the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), provisions governing the Efficient Environmental Reviews for Project Decision-Making as specified in U.S. Code Title 23, Section 139 (23 U.S.C. 139). This project will also use elements of the Illinois Department of Transportation Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Policy and Illinois DOT Bureau of Local Roads and Streets Manual (LR&S Manual) Section 48-06. The study process for this project will meet state and federal requirements for the assessment of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the project. Stakeholder involvement is critical to project success; the public involvement process will provide opportunities for all stakeholders to participate and comment. Our goal is to understand the key issues and concerns from those utilizing the corridor and find a solution to best address its unique needs.

2.0 Goals and Objectives

The purpose of this Stakeholder Involvement Plan (SIP) is to provide a guide for implementing stakeholder involvement for the Wilmington-Peotone Corridor Study. The SIP defines procedures and methods to inform and engage all stakeholders in the decision-making process for this study. Its primary goal is to ensure that stakeholders are provided ample opportunities to be informed and engaged as the project progresses. The various elements of the SIP, described in the following sections of this report, support the principles of CSS both by emphasizing the importance of community context, as well as planning for the early, consistent, and meaningful engagement of community stakeholders.

2.1 Stakeholder Involvement Identification

By definition, a stakeholder is anyone who could be affected by the project and has a stake in its outcome. This includes property owners, business owners, state and local officials, special interest groups, and motorists who utilize the facility.

Stakeholders for this project may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Illinois Department of Transportation
- Will County Forest Preserve
- Will County Sheriff
- Midewin and other Environmental Resources

- Will County Farm Bureau
- Will County Governmental League
- Will County Center for Economic Development
- Trucking industry organizations
- Freight Industry organizations
- Farming and agriculture organizations
- Residents
- Business owners
- Churches and schools within the vicinity of the project limits
- Elected/community officials
- Government, planning, and transportation agencies
- Transportation system users and organizations
- Telecommunications and Utilities
- Others outside the study area with an interest in or potentially affected by the project

The stakeholder list can be found in Appendix B and has been updated to reflect stakeholders engaged during the public involvement process.

3.0 Stakeholder Group Organization

3.1 Stakeholder Groups

It is imperative to identify the key stakeholder groups the study team will engage with throughout the project. The stakeholder groups consist of:

- Will County Agencies
 - Will County Division of Transportation (LPA)
 - Will County Land Use Department
 - Will County Farm Bureau
 - Will County Sheriff
 - Forest Preserve District of Will County
 - Will County Governmental League
- Local Agencies
 - West End
 - City of Wilmington
 - Village of Symerton
 - Florence Township
 - Wilmington Township
 - Wilmington Police Department
 - Wilmington Fire Department
 - Wilmington School District 209-U
 - East End
 - Village of Peotone

- Peotone Township
- Wilton Township
- Peotone Police Department
- Peotone Fire Department
- Peotone School District 207-U
- Community Group
 - Wilmington Island Park District
 - Peotone Park District
 - Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
- Business Group
 - Local Business Groups
 - Illinois Truckers Association
 - Will County Center for Economic Development (CED)

3.2 Stakeholder Involvement Ground Rules

Stakeholder Involvement will be conducted based on a set of ground rules that form the basis for the respectful interaction of all parties involved in this process. It is important that stakeholders agree to these rules, and therefore they could evolve over time. Initial ground rules include the following:

- Input from all participants in the process is valued and considered.
- The list of stakeholders is subject to revision at any time as events warrant.
- All participants must keep an open mind and participate openly, honestly, and respectfully.
- All participants should work collaboratively and cooperatively to seek a consensus solution. Consensus is defined as “when a majority of the stakeholders agree on a particular issue, while the remainder of stakeholders agrees its input has been heard and duly considered and that the process as a whole was fair.”
- Minutes of all stakeholder meetings will be maintained.

4.0 Project Development Activities

4.1 Step One: Stakeholder Identification, Development of SIP, Project Scoping

The first step begins with notifying various agencies, project organizational activities, and scoping activities. These activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Develop the stakeholder contact list.
- Develop the project website: WilmingtonPeotoneStudy.com
- Develop and make the SIP publicly available.
- Organize and initiate the first round of meetings with stakeholders.
- Conduct regulatory/resource agency scoping activities, specific to the PEL.

4.2 Step Two: Develop Project Purpose and Need

This step is key for identifying the transportation problems in the study area and developing project goals and objectives. Discussions involving the project purpose will focus on sharing known current issues and potential future concerns given the expected growth within the study area. This will help foster meaningful discussions around potential solutions. The information will be used as the basis for the development of the project Purpose and Need statement. Activities in this stage include the following:

- Conduct the first round of stakeholder meetings to explain the ground rules and gather input to begin developing a clear statement of the transportation problems that the project should solve.
- Define the project purpose and need
- Organize and hold Public Information Meeting #1 to inform the public of the project process, present the problem statement, purpose and need, and gather input
- Seek agency concurrence on the purpose and need
- Utilize the project website to communicate the project purpose and need

4.3 Step Three: Develop Alternatives

A variety of alternatives will be considered to address the purpose and need. The process for developing alternatives will be iterative as solutions are refined based on stakeholder input. It will be a priority to provide ample opportunities for stakeholder input for the development and evaluation of alternatives. The steps in this process include the following:

- Define alternative development procedures, planning and design guidelines, and alternative evaluation procedures. The information will serve as the general guidance for the alternatives development and evaluation process.

4.4 Step Four: Screen Alternatives

The PEL process will present a long list of alternatives for consideration, and therefore, will need to be screened for meeting the established purpose and need. The goal of this step is to define a list of alternatives that will be carried forward in the NEPA process, after the PEL is completed. Specifically, the alternative selection process will include these steps:

- Evaluate the initial alternatives
- Organize the second round of stakeholder meetings to discuss alternatives that meet Purpose and Need.
- Evaluate alternatives to be carried forward to project NEPA phase.
- Achieve consensus among stakeholders on the alternatives.
- Hold a second public meeting to present the alternatives to be carried forward and process taken to identify the alternatives.
- Identification of alternatives to be carried forward to project NEPA phase.

The purpose of this PEL is not to define a preferred alternative, but rather, a list of potential viable alternatives based on what is examined from the environmental, traffic, travel

demand, engineering, and stakeholder involvement perspective. A preferred alternative will be identified in the next project study phase as part of the NEPA process and the preliminary engineering process.

5.0 Stakeholder Involvement Plan Activities

5.1 Stakeholder Meetings

In an effort to meet the PEL Study schedule, two rounds of meetings were scheduled with the stakeholder groups identified in Section 3.1 during this PEL Phase of the Wilmington-Peotone Project: Will County Agencies, Local Agencies (West End), Local Agencies (East End), Community Group, and Business Group.

The first stakeholder meetings will be held in advance of Public Meeting # 1. The purpose of the first round of stakeholder meetings will be to familiarize the groups with the project goals and limits, present the findings of our initial data collection, and obtain feedback on the project. This information will help in the development the project Purpose and Need.

The second round of stakeholder meetings was held in August 2024 held in advance of Public Meeting #2 that was held in December 2024. The purpose of this round of meetings was to present the developed alternatives and gather feedback from the group. The full Project Schedule can be found in Appendix A.

5.2 Public Information Meetings

Two public meetings were held as part of the PEL study. Each public meeting was held twice, once near each end of the project limits, given the length of the corridor. The goal of the first meeting was to create awareness of the project, present the draft Purpose and Need, and gather data, questions, and comments from the public. The second meeting occurred after alternatives were developed and were presented for additional feedback. Opportunities for public comments were available at both public meetings in addition to having the opportunity to submit comments on the project website. All comments have been documented and made available on the project website. Meeting invitations were sent to stakeholders either digitally or in printed format via mail. Materials for the meeting were developed, including exhibit boards and other necessary summary documents then made available on the project website following the meetings.

5.3 Digital Outreach

5.3.1 Website

The team developed and maintained a website that provides project information and includes a form-based comment page for visitors to provide comments during the study. The site is reviewed frequently to ensure it reflects the most current and up-to-date project information. Project documentation and materials are posted to the website for public review.

5.3.2 Public Coordinate

An online mapping tool is available for collecting public feedback called PublicCoordinate. This mapping tool offers enhanced capabilities such as comment input, ability to add photos and informational callouts to locations on the map, toggling between multiple study alternatives and base maps, ADA web accessibility, custom branding, and survey integration. The online platform is mobile-friendly and can be translated into multiple languages making it easy for the public to provide input on the proposed improvements. The link and map are accessible on the project website.

5.4 Comment Response Protocol

Comments are anticipated from various sources including stakeholder meetings, the project website, and public meetings. Each source typically requires a different approach to respond in an efficient and timely manner. For stakeholder meetings, meeting minutes were prepared, and action items documented to solidify the various discussions for accountability.

Stakeholders and the public had the option to submit comments via the project website. The study team did not anticipate respond to each individual comment submitted on the website, but rather comments were categorized as necessary and general responses developed. An E-newsletter was completed for each public meeting to summarize comment responses by category and posted to the website. Additionally, newsletters were sent via email to the project distribution list. Contact information was gathered for individuals who engaged throughout the project over the course of the public engagement period based on surveys and sign-in sheets available at public meetings.

6.0 Plan Availability, Monitoring, and Updates

The SIP is a document that has evolved over the duration of the study and has been updated as appropriate through the public involvement process.

6.1 Availability of Stakeholder Involvement Plan

The SIP will be available to stakeholders for review on the project website. The stakeholder review period for the SIP will be 30 days from date of release. The SIP will be updated on a regular basis as the project progresses. Stakeholders will be notified on the project website when an updated SIP is released.

6.2 Modification of Stakeholder Involvement Plan

The SIP has been reviewed periodically and updated as appropriate. These updates have, at a minimum, included:

- Maintaining a current list of project stakeholders
- Maintaining a detailed public involvement record that includes records of all stakeholder contacts, meetings, and comments.
- Ensuring two-way communication and timely responses to stakeholders through formal and informal channels.

Revisions to the SIP may be necessary through all phases of the project. Updated versions of the SIP will be provided to all agencies involved, as necessary. SIP updates will be tracked in Appendix C.

APPENDIX A – Stakeholder Milestone Schedule

September 2023	Digital Outreach
	Develop project website and PublicCoordinate interface
October 2023	Initial Stakeholder Meetings
	Meeting #1 – Wilton Township
	Meeting #2 – Will County Center for Economic Development
	Meeting #3 – Will County Departments
	Meeting #4 – Local Agencies (East End)
	Meeting #5 – Local Agencies (West End)
November 2023	Initial Stakeholder Meetings
	Meeting #6 – Forest Preserve District of Will County
	Meeting #2 – Business Group
	Meeting #3 – Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
	Meeting #4 – Village of Symerton
	Meeting #5 – Illinois Truckers Association
December 2023	Public Information Meeting #1
	Goal of gathering additional data (one meeting at each end of the corridor presenting the same information)
March 2024	Additional Stakeholder Meetings
	Meeting #1 – Will County Center for Economic Development
August 2024	Follow Up Stakeholder Meetings
	Meeting #1 – Will County Departments
	Meeting #2 – Local Agencies (East End)
	Meeting #3 – Local Agencies (West End)
	Meeting #4 – Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

Meeting #5 – Will County Center for Economic
Development

Meeting #6 – Village of Symerton

December 2024

Public Information Meeting #2

Present alternatives to gather feedback. (one meeting
at each end of the corridor presenting the same
information)

Summer 2025

Begin Phase I

Evaluate public involvement requirements for the next
phase of the project.

APPENDIX B – Stakeholder List

Project Team				
Name	Title	Organization	Email Address	Phone Number
Christina Kupkowski	WCDOT Project Manager	Will County Division of Transportation		
Katie Leska	Consultant Team Project Manager	Burns & McDonnell		
Adam Kucharski	Public Involvement Lead	Kimley-Horn & Associates		

Stakeholder Groups				
Will County Agencies				
Name	Title	Organization	Email Address	Phone Number
Colin Duesing	FOIA Officer	Will County Land Use Department		
Nicholas Hernandez		Will County Land Use Department		
Mark Schneidewind	Manager	Will County Farm Bureau		
Hugh O'Hara	Executive Director	Will County Governmental League		
Jada Porter	Transportation	Will County Governmental League		
Ralph Schultz	Director of Planning & Operations	Will County Forest Preserve District		
Robert Denny	Sheriff of Will County	Will County Sheriff		
Kyle Lalcomiak	Undersheriff	Will County Sheriff		
Local Agencies (East End)				
Name	Title	Organization	Email Address	Phone Number
Peter March	Mayor	Village of Peotone		
John Hack	Highway Commissioner	Peotone Township		
Gene Younker	Township Supervisor	Peotone Township		
Ray Nugent	Highway Commissioner	Wilton Township		
David DeMik	Chief of Police	Peotone Police Department		

Steve Stein	Superintendent	Peotone School District 207-U		
Adrian Fulgencio	Administration	Peotone School District 207-U		
Bruce Boyle	Battalion Chief	Manhattan Fire Protection District		
David Demik	Police Chief	Manhattan Fire Protection District		
Local Agencies (West End)				
Name	Title	Organization	Email Address	Phone Number
Ben Dietz	Mayor	City of Wilmington		
Jeanine Smith	City Administrator	City of Wilmington		
Eli Giess	Mayor	Village of Symerton		
John Long	Township Supervisor	Florence Township		
Bill Long	Township Supervisor	Florence Township		
Andrew Robbins	Highway Commissioner	Florence Township		
Bill Weidling	Highway Commissioner	Wilmington Township		
Adam Zink	Chief of Police	Wilmington Police Department		
Tim Zlomie	Fire Chief	Wilmington Fire Protection District		
Kevin Feeney	Superintendent	Wilmington School District 209-U		
Community Group				
Name	Title	Organization	Email Address	Phone Number
Kirsten Van Duyne	Executive Director of Wilmington Park District	Wilmington Island Park District		
Barbara Sim	President	Peotone Park District		
Christina Henderson	Prairie Supervisor	Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie		
Bob Hommes	Prairie Engineer	Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie		
Shanna McCarty	Restoration & Planning	Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie		

Business Groups				
Name	Title	Organization	Email Address	Phone Number
Matt Hart	Executive Director	Illinois Truckers Association		
Rachel Eglar	Executive Director	Peotone Chamber of Commerce		
Steve Evans	President	Wilmington Chamber of Commerce		
Doug Pryor	President & CEO	Will County Center for Economic Development		
Kristin Erickson	Special Projects, Events, and Communications	Will County Center for Economic Development		

Elected Officials				
Name	Title	Organization	Email Address	Phone Number
Peter March	Mayor	Village of Peotone		
Ben Dietz	Mayor	City of Wilmington		
John Hack	Highway Commissioner	Peotone Township		
Gene Younker	Township Supervisor	Peotone Township		
Bill Weidling	Highway Commissioner	Wilmington Township		
Ray Nugent	Highway Commissioner	Wilton Township		
Andrew Robbins	Highway Commissioner	Florence Township		
Joe VanDuyn	Chair of Public Works & Transportation Committee, District 1	Will County Board		
Jennifer Bertine-Tarrant	Chief Executive Officer	Will County		
Anthony DeLuca	IL State Representative	80 th District		

APPENDIX C – Revision History

Stakeholder Involvement Plan History

- Original– December 2023
- Revision – February 2025