

Interstate 90 Corridor Planning Council

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

April 5, 2012

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Introduction

Recognizing the opportunity to rebuild Interstate 90 (I-90) and address the mounting congestion and environmental issues that face the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway, the Illinois Tollway established the I-90 Corridor Planning Council in June of 2011. The Council was convened as a result of the Earth Day XLI Accord from April 2010, and in that light created to address the many future opportunities to improve the corridor and northern Illinois in the context of a new state-of-the-art I-90. The charge of the Council was to build consensus on plans for the I-90 Corridor from Chicago to Rockford, including the Kennedy Expressway and the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway. The Council was to assess how to combine the reconstruction of the Tollway's portion of I-90 with plans to reduce congestion and increase environmentally sound transportation options throughout the corridor. The Corridor Planning Council, made up of transportation and environmental experts, business leaders, local community and government officials, lawmakers, planners and engineers, has worked to build consensus on the future needs of I-90. This report summarizes the Council's work and lays out recommendations and next steps.

Background on Interstate 90

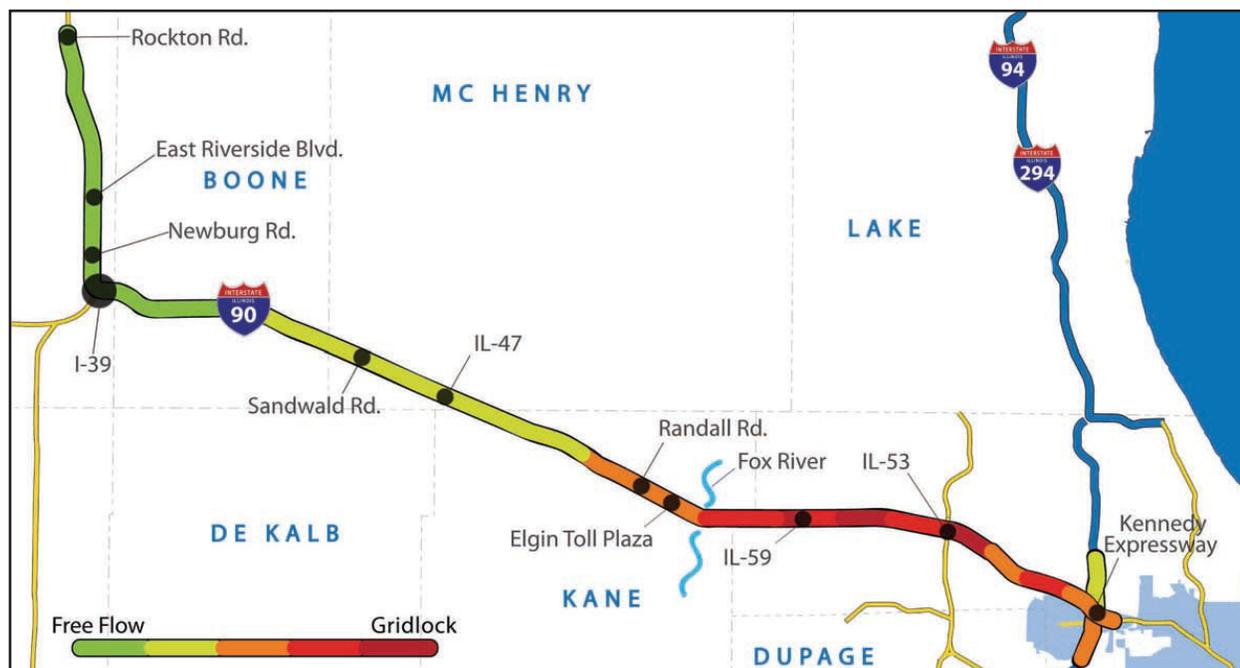
The rebuilding and widening of the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a 21st Century state-of-the-art corridor connecting Rockford and Chicago. The Jane Addams Memorial Tollway is part of I-90, the longest interstate in the United States and covering a 77-mile segment of the Illinois Tollway system. It extends from near the Wisconsin border to the Kennedy Expressway. It navigates through various communities including Rockford, Elgin, Hoffman Estates, Schaumburg, Rosemont and Chicago. The population along I-90 is a robust 800,000. In fact, if the I-90 Corridor were considered a city within itself, it would rank as the 15th most populous city in the nation. Furthermore, population is expected to grow over the next 20 years by more than 40 percent in Kane and McHenry counties, and 20 percent in Winnebago County. In addition to this rapid population growth, approximately 435,000 people are employed along the corridor, and 2040 projections suggest the employment number will also continue to grow. The corridor is home to two international airports, Chicago Rockford International Airport and Chicago O'Hare International Airport, as well as the headquarters to many national and international corporations like Ameritech, Motorola and Sears. The Corridor serves 335,000 vehicles and more than 3 million vehicle miles of travel daily.

Besides congestion, age has also caught up with the road. Most of the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway infrastructure is over 50 years old. Since it was originally built in the 1950s, residential and commercial growth has strained parts of I-90 beyond its capacity, increasing delays and weakening economic activity. Although the pavement has been periodically resurfaced and repaired, most of the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway's pavement is near the end of its useful life.

Reconstruction became possible when the Illinois Tollway Board of Directors approved a 15-year capital program, Move Illinois: The Illinois Tollway Driving the Future. Move Illinois will deliver a dramatic facelift to I-90 by widening the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway by one lane in each direction and providing the road with a new footprint designed to accommodate current and future transportation options that will increase regional mobility. For the first time, the Tollway has budgeted \$240 million under the Move Illinois plan for transit accommodations along the I-90 Corridor.

The Tollway has had a head start on recreating I-90 in recent years. On the western end of I-90 from the Wisconsin state border to I-39, the Tollway recently reconstructed and widened 16 miles of highway to three lanes in both directions. This will match Wisconsin's planned improvement of three lanes in each direction along I-90 beginning in 2014. Further, the new I-90/I-39 interchange has provided travelers in the Rockford area with congestion relief, reduced travel times and greater mobility. In addition, I-90s pavement and infrastructure have been improved at mainline toll plazas to incorporate open road tolling. But, there is still room for expansion moving southeast. The Tollway plans to widen I-90 from I-39 to the Elgin Toll Plaza, from two lanes to three, and from the Elgin Toll Plaza to the Kennedy Expressway, from three lanes to four. Along with that widening, plans call for interchange improvements at Elmhurst Road, Barrington Road and work is currently underway on a new interchange at Illinois Route 47. The Tollway has also examined improving modal connections at the River Road Station in Rosemont and the Northwest Transportation Center in Schaumburg.

The Tollway has acknowledged that increased mobility along the I-90 Corridor is not solely confined to car traffic. That is why the Tollway has continued to study various transit options in addition to roadway reconstruction. On the newly reconstructed Jane Addams Memorial Tollway, the Tollway has analyzed the option of implementing managed lane technology for cars and buses. Express bus service with median stations or possible park-and-ride stations off the highway could potentially use managed lanes or high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes in the median of I-90 from the Kennedy Expressway to the Elgin area. The Tollway has also continued to assess the addition of commuter rail transit in the median of I-90 from the Kennedy Expressway west. Given these options, the Tollway sought outside input from the Council to determine what would work best along the I-90 Corridor, and gain recommendations for other improvements to the Corridor.



Corridor Planning Council Activities

The Council met five times during the last six months of 2011 to review and discuss ongoing studies, prior plans, transportation options and funding opportunities for the I-90 Corridor. Meetings were held on:

- June 23, 2011
- July 13, 2011
- July 26, 2011
- August 18, 2011
- November 14, 2011

To ensure regional leadership and vision, the Council appointed the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and the Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning (RMAP) to serve as co-chairs of the Council beginning at its August 18, 2011 meeting.

Guiding Principles

To initiate its work, the Council began by creating a set of Guiding Principles. The group met with the understanding that the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway was not merely serving as a highway but an expansive and significant corridor that offered major benefits to commuters and communities. The Council also understood that there is as much an opportunity to move travelers more effectively as there is a chance to foster economic growth, develop sustainable practices and meet the region's future transportation needs. By endorsing these Guiding Principles, the Council members agree that a successful corridor plan can be developed to serve the critical infrastructure needs and the needs of residents, government, business, logistics, transportation and environmental interests across northern Illinois.

These Guiding Principles were introduced under the framework of a corridor plan that combines the reconstruction of the Tollway's portion of I-90 with plans to reduce congestion and increase environmentally sound transportation options throughout the corridor, such as express bus lanes and congestion pricing. These Guiding Principles were formally adopted at the Council's second meeting on July 13, 2011. Through its continuing meetings and discussions, the Council worked to advance these principles through the various planning and transportation options brought forward.

Guiding Principles

1. **Improve the performance of the Interstate 90 corridor to support the economic vitality across northern Illinois, thereby enhancing passenger, commuter, and freight mobility for the corridor.**
2. **Require cooperative planning among agencies and municipalities to guide future investments along Interstate 90 in a transparent and accountable manner.**
3. **Taken together, the Tollway, IDOT, CTA, Pace and Metra move more than one million people a day. Collectively, we need to plan for current and future levels of congestion by improving the overall throughput of the corridor by enhancing accessibility and providing transportation choices. Future transportation plans must take into account the broader impacts and benefits within the corridor.**
4. **Minimize the environmental impacts of transportation infrastructure and operations and promote sustainable practices.**
5. **Support financially viable solutions that protect the Interstate 90 corridor and allow flexibility for future growth.**
6. **Maximize the use and extend the lifecycle of the collective infrastructure assets along the Interstate 90 corridor.**

I-90 Working Group

The Council created a Working Group consisting of technical staff of some of the various Council member organizations and representatives of local governments. The Working Group was created to assist, inform and equip the Council in their work. The Working Group developed transit and roadway options for I-90 that could maximize use of the corridor and minimize right-of-way needs, while strategically considering future stations and access. The Working Group evaluated options of using a shared use lane with congestion pricing along with bus, bus rapid transit (BRT), and heavy rail options. It identified design elements, such as width, access and operations that must be considered for each option. It also discussed links to existing transit.

The Working Group agreed to develop near-, mid- and long- term solutions that would allow the Tollway to move ahead with reconstruction in a manner that does not preclude expansion, beginning first with bus options and then moving to rail.

In September 2011, the Tollway and the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) completed the I-90 Transit Value Planning Study. This study examined and evaluated transit options in the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) corridor. From this study, issues raised by the I-90 Working Group included placement of direct access ramps, potential park-and-ride stations and how to most efficiently move people in and out of O'Hare International Airport area on the east end of I-90. The Working Group researched flexible design options and managed lane characteristics, studied access points, transit linkages, station locations and developed cost estimates. These concepts were then introduced and explored at full I-90 Planning Council meetings.

Council Meetings

Presentations were given by various Council members at each meeting on topics as congestion pricing, I-90 Corridor options, Value Pricing Transit Study, Metra STAR Line, Pace's service plans, Northern Illinois Commuter Transportation Initiative's (NICTI) Express Bus Service Study and options for the Kennedy Expressway. Working Group updates were also presented. Council members were free to evaluate and discuss topics that would assist them in developing consensus on a regional vision for the I-90 Corridor.

Through the process, Council members were given ownership to develop a plan that meets their goals and Guiding Principles. In advancing these Guiding Principles, the Council discussed a wide range of topics including managed lane technology, congestion pricing, direct access ramps, all electronic tolling, intelligent transportation systems, car-sharing programs and high-occupancy vehicle discounts, park-and-ride stations, bus rapid transit, rail, bike and pedestrian access.

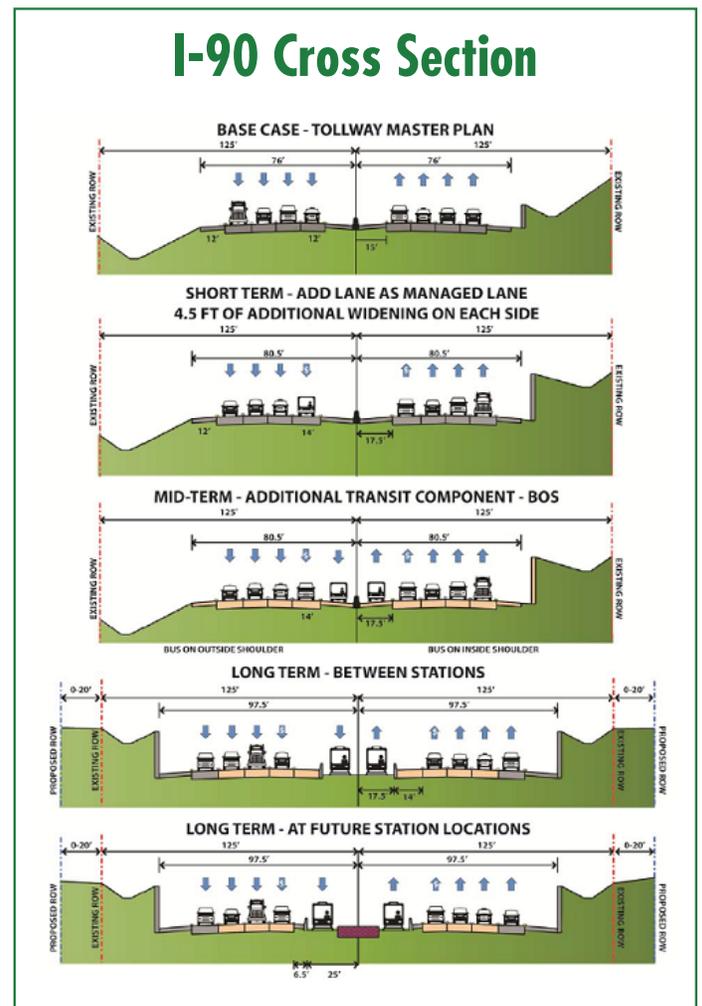
In addition, the Council discussed financing mechanisms, how to stimulate local and regional economic development and how to effectively move motorists, especially on the eastern end where congestion has often stymied the Kennedy Expressway. All meeting materials and presentations along with other relevant studies are posted on the Tollway's website.

Transportation Options for the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway

After many presentations and discussions, the Council considered short-, mid- and long-term plans to implement transportation options alongside the reconstructed Tollway. Using 4.5 feet of additional widening on each side of I-90 through existing right-of-way, the Council considered a short-term plan that would implement a managed lane in the inside lane of the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway. The managed lane, separated from other lanes by a painted buffer, would allow access to vehicles by a continuous and flexible ingress/egress. The Council proposed that each managed lane should have electronic toll collection and enforcement. There would be no need for direct center lane ramps under this configuration. In the managed lane plan, a number of current or potential ramps could be maximized and built. There will be an opportunity for a single in-line station to create a hub along the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway, but the initial plan calls for off-line stations. The short-term plan embraces the Council's Guiding Principles in that it improves efficiency, throughput, reliability, and prepares the corridor for transit in the near term.

As transit demand and congestion grow, meeting short-term plans would set the stage for mid-term plans that call for converting the inside shoulder into a dedicated bus lane.

The long-term plans will provide for rail construction on the inside lane and shoulder. Under these plans, highway capacity would be replaced with a new outside lane with the need for additional right-of-way. While additional right-of-way will be needed to accommodate this option, the cross section being built will make future construction of a rail option easier since existing lane lines will not need to change. Stations for a rail option could be accommodated in the same cross-section of I-90 with a reduced inside shoulder at station areas. By developing near-, mid- and long-term solutions, and agreeing upon a footprint that will accommodate all of these options, the Tollway will be allowed to move ahead in a manner that does not preclude expansion, beginning first with bus options and moving to rail.



Financing Alternatives

These ambitious plans do not come without a cost. Metra's STAR Line was to provide a connection from the CTA Blue Line at River Road in Rosemont to the northwest suburbs with an additional north-south link between Joliet and Hoffman Estates. However, reductions in federal funding impacted the implementation of this ambitious project. As a result, the Council looked to develop solutions that maintain flexibility.

The Tollway has budgeted \$2.2 billion for the I-90 reconstruction in its Move Illinois plan with \$240 million dedicated to transit accommodations. The research of the Working Group concluded that cost estimates for transit accommodations and managed lane operations loom at \$207 million for potential right-of-way, \$80 million for a direct access ramp, \$25 million for a typical park-and-ride station, \$50 million for new interchanges and \$4 to \$5 million per mile for the technology and equipment needed to operate the managed lane. With this information, the Council was challenged with serious financial decisions.

Determined to examine all funding sources on I-90 moving forward, the Council created a finance committee to assess the options. One way to usher in new revenue and confront demand is through congestion pricing, an option the Council and finance committee explored at length. The Council examined a proposed congestion pricing system that would be limited to weekdays only between 5 a.m. and 8 p.m., tolling all users in managed lanes which would be restricted to passenger vehicles only. No discounts were envisioned for carpoolers or low-emission vehicles.

The Council also considered financing options for the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway, ranging from federal funding, state and local funding, value capture and private investment. Additional analysis is needed to determine how to leverage private investment. This can come in the form of shared investments for new or enhanced access, transit facilities, stations, and park-and-ride lots, or various forms of public private partnerships.

Jane Addams • Kennedy Expressway Connection

One of the steepest hurdles the Council faced was addressing the eastern end of I-90 where the Kennedy meets the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway. Despite introducing many innovative strategies, the Council members acknowledged that few would be effective if traffic came to a standstill at the Kennedy. The six-mile stretch from the Edens Expressway junction northwest to where the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway begins is significantly limited in expansion opportunities. However, given the potential increases in traffic volumes associated with the Jane Addams widening, and the already congested conditions along the Kennedy Expressway, IDOT has developed a short term solution. IDOT is proposing to add a lane to the outside, from Cumberland to Harlem. This added lane will function essentially as a merging lane, and will help transition traffic flows between the Jane Addams and the west end of the Kennedy Expressway. Installing a continuous managed lane on the existing Kennedy, east of Harlem, would require the conversion of an existing lane, which would likely exacerbate current congestion problems. The existing shoulders also lack sufficient width to allow for their use as a managed lane. Further study is needed in order to determine a feasible solution for the entire Kennedy Expressway corridor.

The Council also addressed the east end of I-90 by considering improved access to the Rosemont CTA park-and-ride station at River Road. It was discovered that many transit users drive past the Rosemont CTA station on I-90 and exit the Kennedy to access the Cumberland park-and-ride station. By improving access at River Road and encouraging use of that station, some congestion in this area can be alleviated.

Many of these managed lane issues will be considered in greater detail in 2012 as part of a grant the Tollway received to participate in the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Value Pricing Pilot Program as well as in another partnership with the RTA. The \$528,000 grant will allow the Tollway to develop multimodal solutions for the integration and financing of transit services with managed lanes on the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway. The partnership with the RTA will allow for more in-depth market analysis to define transit demand. Thanks to Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding, Pace plans to connect several activity centers along the I-90 Corridor. Under the new plans, Pace will expand service on two bus routes, create four new routes, establish four new park-and-rides at major interchanges and add three new call-n-rides.

Targeted completion for I-90 work is 2016. Final managed lane and transportation option plans, funding alternatives and changes to the Jane Addams/Kennedy connection all need to be resolved by 2013.

Recommendations

The Council's achievements to date include the adoption of Guiding Principles and an agreed upon cross section for the I-90 Corridor allowing the Tollway to move forward with its reconstruction project. The work of the Council is included in the region's constrained Long Range Plan and is consistent with CMAP's Go To 2040 Plan. Remaining issues include implementation of a managed lane, transit use in the corridor, financing and the Jane Addams/Kennedy Connection.

The Council makes the following recommendations:

- All implementing entities along the I-90 Corridor follow the Guiding Principles when developing and implementing projects that impact the I-90 Corridor.
- The Illinois Tollway should implement congestion-priced, managed lanes as part of the planned reconstruction of the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway.
- The Illinois Tollway should facilitate transit use, in addition to car use, of the managed lanes.
- IDOT should consider continuing the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway's managed lanes, including enhanced transit accommodations, onto the Kennedy Expressway into the City of Chicago.
- Infrastructure improvements should include improved access to O'Hare International Airport, existing transit service, and bike/pedestrian facilities on bridge crossings.
- As the Tollway designs the eastern portion of I-90, it should coordinate access, transit, and impacts of its Elgin O'Hare West Bypass project, and the transition from the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway to the Kennedy Expressway.
- The Tollway and IDOT should conduct a joint study to resolve the issues of the eastern portion of I-90, making recommendations for improvements to connect the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway with the Kennedy Expressway, improve access to O'Hare Airport, connect to existing transit, and integrate all other plans and future projects for a seamless transportation system.
- Local governments are encouraged to plan for station areas, park-and-ride lots and other transportation amenities needed to support transit options. In addition, planning at the local level should include accessibility for full interchanges, pedestrian and bicycle crossings, and transit accommodations along cross roads.
- The Tollway and IDOT should consider right-of-way acquisition for park-and-ride lots, transit needs, and new/improved access.
- All implementing agencies should follow a consistent set of effective best practices in regard to environmental issues, including, but not limited to, stormwater, green technologies and management of invasive species.
- The two federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning (RMAP), should continue to examine issues relevant to the carrying out of the Guiding Principles including the development of regional policies for congestion pricing.

Conclusion

The findings of the I-90 Corridor Planning Council pave the way for instant returns to the region and long-lasting benefits. It is the hope of this Council that the reconstruction of I-90 will result in another meaningful and productive 50 years. It is also the hope of this Council that the newly reconstructed I-90 will dramatically improve the region by enhancing mobility and accessibility, creating new travel choices and providing a jolt in economic development through job and business creation. But this is only a starting point. The collaboration among this Council reflects a wide-ranging approach to regional transportation that is both transparent and environmentally sound. The rebuilding of I-90 represents a model in transportation planning and marks the beginning of a new approach to planning for and reconstructing major infrastructure facilities. The Guiding Principles established through this Council will affect not only I-90 but future roadway development; and the innovation, strategies and ideas that have come out of this Council will influence any new transportation facilities to come.