

Will County Transportation Blueprint

Approved by the CED Board of Directors March 16, 2007

Case Statement: The business leadership of Will County through the Will County Center for Economic Development (CED) is committed to improving the quality of life for Will County residents and those who work and travel in Will County, while also advocating a business climate supportive of the expansion and attraction of business and industry to the County.

The emergence of Will County as a Global Transportation Center has dramatically increased our County's positive economic impact on the economy of the Chicago Region and the State of Illinois.

To this end, working with all key constituencies that have a stake in furthering this critical economic activity, the CED has developed a Transportation Blueprint that will serve as a guide for transportation planning and improvements throughout Will County through the year 2030.

A. Goals

The Will County Center for Economic Development adopts this Transportation Blueprint to ...

1. Insist on a higher state and federal priority for transportation in Will County;
2. Raise the awareness among Will County residents and leaders regarding the significance of an adequately and properly funded regional transportation system;
3. Maximize business-community involvement in Will County transportation planning;
4. Develop funding mechanisms to complete the transportation improvements presented in the Blueprint;
5. Prioritize the management and development of all current and future transportation projects to ensure the safety of those who live and travel through Will County.

B. Will County Transportation Blueprint

The Will County Center for Economic Development calls for...

Roads

1. Recognition that the surface transportation situation is at "crisis point" in Will County, potentially affecting the entire Midwest region;
2. The state to honor its commitments to Will County transportation projects;
3. Improvement of local roads to maximize the benefit to Will County that will come with the opening of I-355;
4. Elimination of surface transportation "choke points" that impede or threaten the safe and efficient movement of goods and people;
5. Identification of rights-of-way for future major local arterial routes, and adequate funding to protect them;
6. An increase in the state priority for development of Interstate and U.S. routes through Will County;
7. Evaluation of how the region's public transportation agencies can best serve the needs of Will County;

Rail/Transit

8. Identification of regional and local rail infrastructure projects to improve Will County's position as a RailPort;
9. Support of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) to reduce rail and motorist congestion and improve passenger rail service;
10. Identification and support for transit initiatives which are necessary for continued economic growth in the region;

Water

11. Evaluation of the waterway system, including locks, to ensure adequacy for the efficient movement of barge traffic;
12. Adoption of a strategic approach to the efficient interface between waterway and all surface transportation;

Air

13. Acceleration of the Environmental Impact Study and land acquisition leading to construction of the South Suburban Airport;
14. Insistence that Will County control ownership and operation of the South Suburban Airport;
15. Insistence that the Will County transportation plan includes adequate access to the airport while accommodating the needs of all modes of local transportation.
16. Support the expansion of Lewis University Airport and other area general aviation airports to serve the increasing corporate aviation demand throughout the County.

C. 2007 Priority Transportation Action Steps

The Will County CED intends to...

1. Develop a Will County Highway Plan with specific project priorities;
2. Identify funding solutions for the Will County Transportation System;
3. Conduct a series of meetings with area legislators and transportation officials to call attention to transportation "choke points" and their negative impact on the region's economy;
4. Host a Transportation and Logistics "Summit" in 2007, bringing together all of the stakeholders in the Global TransCenter;
5. Develop and distribute educational materials that tell the logistics and transportation story of Will County;

Summary of Key Transportation Projects for Will County

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(Includes modifications made on April 4, 2007 by the CED Executive Committee)

A. Introduction

What follows is a compilation of transportation projects, which the CED deems essential to the economic development process.

B. General Issues

There are two developments that may negatively impact federal road money for Illinois and Will County. One is the ousting of Dennis Hastert as house speaker and the shift of our two congressional representatives to the minority party as the result of the November election. The other is a threat that Congress will sidestep guarantees in SAFETEA-LU by holding state allocations to present levels, which, in effect, reduces the amount of money states were planning on receiving.

Secondly, we do not know how state funding of highway projects will fare in the FY08 state budget, which will be debated this spring. Finally, Will County has not finalized work on the 2030 transportation plan update, nor has the county's road impact fee committee completed its work.

C. State Road Projects *(priority is based on next best available funding source)*

- Construct new interchange at I-55 and Arsenal Road.
- Widen Route 59 from Shorewood to Plainfield/I-55.
- Widen Route 30 from Joliet to Harlem Avenue.
- Improve state highways that feed into the I-355 Extension (Rte. 6, Rte. 7/159th St.)
- Construct new interchange at I-55 and Route 59.
- Construct new interchange at I-57 and Manhattan-Monee Road.
- Identify and preserve the route of the "Daniel Burnham Outerbelt" which includes the Prairie Parkway, the Illiana Expressway and the I-55/I-57 Interconnect.
- Phase I engineering to add lanes on I-80 from Route 45 to the proposed Prairie Parkway southern terminus.
- Initiate engineering and land acquisition to widen I-55 from I-80 to the county line.
- Construct full interchanges at I-55 and Lockport Road and I-55 and Route 126.
- Reconstruction of the Rte 6 and I-55 interchange.

D. Local Road Projects

- Improve arterial roads along the I-355 corridor to handle the influx of traffic.
- Improve primary county arterials, e.g. Laraway Road, Cedar Road, Wilmington-Peotone Road, Weber Road, etc. as identified in the County's 2030 Transportation Plan.
- Continue work on planning critical corridors such as the Caton Farm Road/Bruce Road corridor.

E. State and Federal Aviation Projects

- Complete airport master plan and Tier II EIS for South Suburban Airport.
- Designate Will County as the airport co-sponsor with IDOT.
- Create the authority to build and operate the airport.

F. Local Aviation Projects

- Identify and provide infrastructure that will be required in the areas adjacent to the airport.
- Implement development district plan.

G. Rail/Transit Projects

- Create multiple trans-load facilities along Class 1 railroads in Will County.
- Weigh in on rail freight congestion throughout the Chicago metro region.
- Extend Metra service from Manhattan to CenterPoint.
- Initiate Metra service on the Rock Island line west of Joliet.
- Extend Metra service from Chicago Southland to Will County.
- Initiate Metra service on the Star Line.
- Support Pace in their planning to improve bus service throughout the region.
- Identify and promote non-traditional transit alternatives such as van/carpooling, Arterial Rapid Transit and locally based bus service.

H. State and Federal Water Projects

- Initiate CED research on conditions and need for improvements to the lock and dams on the Des Plaines and Illinois Rivers.
- Identify other issues that may negatively impede the flow of commerce on the rivers.

I. Funding

Proposed projects without funding have zero impact on the quality of life and business expansion in and around Will County. The CED believes the public and private sectors must act now to take advantage of all funding mechanisms that are available today for the priority transportation projects:

- **Capital Bill:** The CED will work with the County and local units of government to maximize our allocation from a capital projects bill being considered for the current legislative session;
- **County Motor Fuel Tax:** The CED supports the adoption of a county-wide motor fuel tax to fund capital road projects in the county, to be used as a match for state and federal transportation dollars, and leverage other available sources of funding for transportation. These funds can only be used on County owned highways;
- **User Fees:** The CED urges the County and local governments to explore all user fee options to fund needed road improvements. These include toll roads and special assessments on roads especially impacted by new industrial, commercial and residential growth.