



# Meeting Summary

Project: Southwest Connector PEL Study

Subject: Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting #1 Summary

Date: Tuesday, June 24, 2025

Location: World Shooting and Recreational Complex, 1 Main Event Lane, Sparta, IL 62286

Attendees: **IDOT Staff**

Christa Mahnken	Illinois Department of Transportation
Carrie Nelsen	Illinois Department of Transportation
Susan Poe	Illinois Department of Transportation
Michael Spanberger	Illinois Department of Transportation

**Consultant Staff**

Kylie Harris	HDR Engineering
Jamy Lyne	Kaskaskia Engineering Group
Scott Manning	HDR Engineering
Andrew Potthast	HDR Engineering
Paul Schneider	Stanley Consultants
Kelly Sims	HDR Engineering
Olivia Smith	HDR Engineering
Jeff Young	HDR Engineering

**Community Advisory Group**

Deborah Barnett	Southern Illinois NOW
Bob Caveny	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Virgil Chandler	Village of Baldwin
Darlene Chapman	Discover Downstate Illinois
Grant Deterding	Randolph County
Jeffrey Doherty	Illinois Municipal League
Jessica Gentry Schlimme	Monroe Randolph Transit District
George Green	Monroe County Board
Brooke Guthman	Egyptian Electric Cooperative

Susan Harbaugh	City of Red Bud
Jeff Harmon	Southern Illinois University
Chris Hespen	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Dave Holder	Randolph County Board
Christie Holland	East-West Gateway Council of Governments
Cheryl Houghlan	Randolph County Soil and Water Conservation District
Marc Kiehna	Randolph County
Skip Klinger	World Shooting and Recreational Complex
Saranya Konala	East-West Gateway Council of Governments
J.R. Landeck	City of Waterloo
Jill Landgraf	City of Red Bud
Dawn McClerren	Murphysboro Chamber of Commerce
Aaron Metzger	Monroe County
Cary Minnis	Greater Egypt Regional Planning & Development Commission
Darrell Mueth	Village of Baldwin
Brian Otten	Perry County
Corey Rheinecker	City of Sparta
Michael Rhodes	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Jason Schlimme	City of Sparta
Diane Schoenbeck	Randolph County Farm Bureau
Robert Spencer	City of Pinckneyville
Will Stephens	City of Murphysboro
Marilyn Thompson	Perry County Soil and Water Conservation District
Linda Tragesser	Southwestern IL Metro & Regional Planning Commission
Ed Weilbacher	Kaskaskia Regional Port District
Carter Wilkey	Federal Highway Administration

Mark Wilson	Randolph County Economic Development
Cindy Zipfel	Monroe County Soil and Water District

1. Welcome by IDOT - Carrie Nelsen
2. Introductions – Scott Manning
  - a. Study team
  - b. CAG members
3. Agenda Overview – Scott Manning
4. Community Advisory Group Role and Expectations – Scott Manning
  - a. Role
    - i. Provide input to the study team on behalf of the organizations you represent.
    - ii. Serve as a sounding board for the study information and discussion of topics.
    - iii. Function as a link to the community, sharing and discussing study information with the organization you represent and bringing feedback to the study team.
  - b. Expectations
    - i. Active participation throughout the study.
    - ii. Build relationships and partnerships.
    - iii. Respect and consideration for all ideas, comments, and concerns shared
5. Group Exercise #1 – Olivia Smith
  - a. How to use polling - Mentimeter
  - b. Mentimeter activity (**see polling results in the included presentation**)
    - i. How long have you lived or worked in the study area?
    - ii. How often do you use the corridor?
    - iii. Which segment of the corridor do you travel most frequently?
    - iv. What word or phrase best represents your vision for the area for the next 20 years?
6. PEL Study Primer –Jamy Lyne
  - a. What is a PEL Study?
  - b. Why conduct a PEL Study?
  - c. Why is PEL a good process for the Southwest Connector?
  - d. What is the PEL Study process?
  - e. Alternatives screening process
  - f. Project phases
7. Study Overview – Jeff Young
  - a. Study area
  - b. Study timeline
  - c. Milestones we are covering today
8. Existing Conditions Data – Jeff Young
  - a. Study data points
  - b. Deep diving into data
  - c. Study data example - StreetLight
9. Group Exercise #2 Problem Statement Development – Andrew Potthast
  - a. Mentimeter activity (**see polling results in the included presentation**)
    - i. Rose: What is working well along the corridor?

- ii. Thorn: What is NOT working well along the corridor that the study team should explore?
  - iii. Bud: What are potential opportunities for improvement along the corridor?
  - iv. Are there specific issues or areas along the corridor we should focus on when identifying opportunities to improve traffic and safety?
  - v. What improvements need to be made for bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users?
  - vi. What changes or improvements would enhance communities along the corridor?
  - vii. What industries do you see growing in the region in the next 5, 10, or 20 years?
  - viii. How can this corridor help facilitate that growth?
  - ix. How do you envision this corridor playing a role in stimulating economic development, particularly in untapped areas?
- 10. Group Exercise #3 - Purpose and Need Statement Development – Kelly Sims
  - a. Purpose and Need Primer
    - i. Purpose is “the why”
    - ii. Needs are “the problems or opportunities to be addressed”
  - b. Mentimeter activity (**see polling results in the included presentation**)
    - i. What ideas do you have for the purpose of the study?
    - ii. What ideas do you have for the needs in the study area?
- 11. Engagement Overview – Scott Manning
  - a. Keys to Success
    - i. Extensive stakeholder engagement
    - ii. Equitable engagement
    - iii. Project identity
  - b. Community profile
    - i. Data driven approach to public engagement
  - c. Tools
    - i. Website
    - ii. Social media
    - iii. CAG
    - iv. PWG
    - v. Public Information Meetings
    - vi. One-on-one or small group meetings
- 12. Next Steps – Jeff Young
  - a. Spread the word
  - b. Continuing data collection, preparing for Public Meeting #1 (Virtual) and CAG Meeting #2
  - c. How to reach us
    - i. Website
    - ii. Email address
- 13. Question and Answer Session – Jeff Young
  - a. Is there a previous iteration of a problem statement and/or purpose and need statement?
    - i. Previous studies and the report developed by the Four County Coalition include language that could inform a problem statement or purpose and need statement but don’t fully fit within the federal guidelines for those statements. For the PEL study to set future projects up to access federal funding, it is critical for the problem statement and purpose and need statement to follow NEPA and FHWA requirements. That said, work done as part of previous studies will be evaluated to save time and avoid duplication where possible during the PEL study.





- b. Have you used a geofence to see how many people are traveling the corridor daily and can that be shared?
  - i. IDOT provides existing annual average daily traffic volumes using the corridor which will be analyzed in the PEL study. Those volumes are also available to the public on IDOT's website. Beyond that, the study team is using location-based data to understand travel patterns in the study area and the team will also conduct traffic modeling and forecasting to explore potential growth in travel demand in the study area. The team will share the results of the traffic analysis throughout the study.
- c. Do you have a strategy based on how long this (project) has been going?
  - i. While the Southwest Illinois Tollway report in the 1990's and the Four County Coalition report in 2019 explored the needs in the area and potential options for highway improvements, those reports were not conducted as part of the NEPA or FHWA process. That said, insights collected, and momentum generated, particularly by the Four County Coalition report helped secure federal and state funding for a PEL study. The PEL study is an important strategic milestone as it provides a fully funded study for the 70-mile corridor that will make projects identified eligible for federal funding.
- d. What is the next phase? How long will that take? We will have to do this all over again?
  - i. The PEL study will identify potential projects. The next steps will be for IDOT to prioritize those projects as part of their statewide program and identify funding for preliminary engineering, design, and construction. Once a given project identified through the PEL study is initiated, the project delivery timeline is generally 5-6 years.
- e. Are there going to be any consultations with Waterloo and Columbia regarding any impacts with places that already have a 4-lane bypass?
  - i. The study team will be consulting with municipalities throughout the corridor, including Waterloo and Columbia, as part of the CAG and individually as needed to discuss potential traffic impacts and other aspects of the study.



# **Southwest Connector PEL Study Community Advisory Group Meeting #1**

*Tuesday, June 24, 2025*  
Carrie Nelsen (IDOT) – Speaker

## **SOUTHWEST CONNECTOR**



# **Welcome & Introductions**

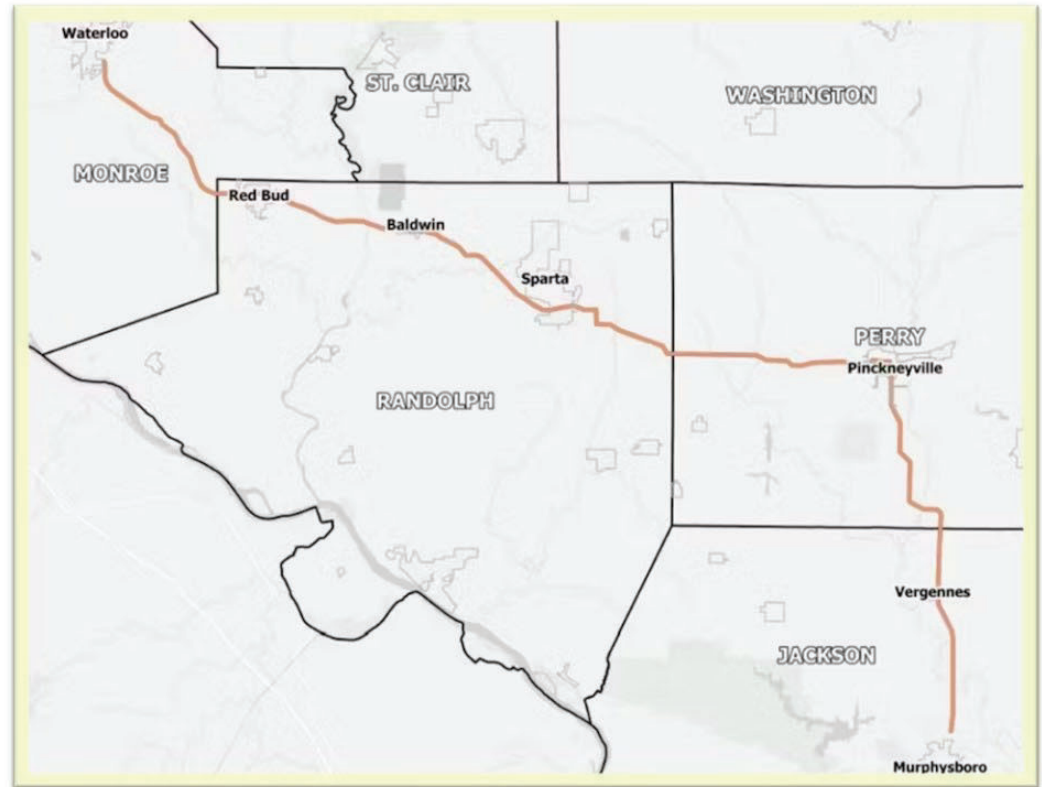


Carrie Nelsen (IDOT) – Speaker  
Scott Manning (HDR) – Speaker



# Study Team

Carrie Nelsen, IDOT District 9  
Sean Greenlee, IDOT District 9  
Michael Spanberger, IDOT District 8  
Scott Manning, HDR  
Andrew Potthast, HDR  
Jeff Young, HDR  
Olivia Smith, HDR  
Kelly Sims, HDR  
Jamy Lyne, KEG  
Tyler Grau, Stanley



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# Agenda

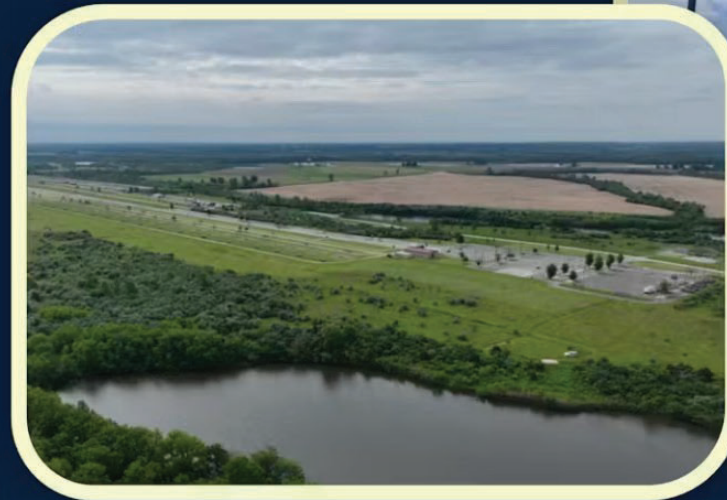
- 01** Welcome & Introductions
- 02** Community Advisory Group Role & Expectations
- 03** Group Exercise #1  
*Corridor Familiarity*
- 04** PEL Study Overview
- 05** Existing Community Conditions
- 06** Group Exercise #2  
*Problem Statement*
- 07** Group Exercise #3  
*Purpose and Need*
- 08** Engagement Overview
- 09** Next Steps



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# Community Advisory Group (CAG) Role & Expectations



Scott Manning (HDR) – Speaker



# Community Advisory Group (CAG) Members

## Role:

1. **Provide input** to the study team on behalf of the organization you represent
2. **Serve as a sounding board** for the study information and discussion of topics
3. Function as a **link to the community**, sharing and discussing study information with the organization you represent and bringing feedback to the study team





# Community Advisory Group (CAG) Members

## Expectations:

1. **Active participation** throughout the study
2. **Build relationships** and partnerships
3. **Respect and consideration** for all ideas, comments, and concerns shared







# Group Exercise #1

Corridor Familiarity



Olivia Smith (HDR) - Speaker

# How To Use Polling - Mentimeter

Join at [menti.com](https://menti.com) | use code **35796059**

How long have you lived or worked in the study area?

1. Go to [menti.com](https://menti.com) and type in the code displayed: **35796059**
2. Click “Submit” to get your responses directly to the Study Team!



A screenshot of the Mentimeter poll interface. The 'More than 20 years' option is selected, indicated by a radio button. Below the options is a blue 'Submit' button. A blue arrow points from the 'Submit' button in the instructions to this button in the screenshot.

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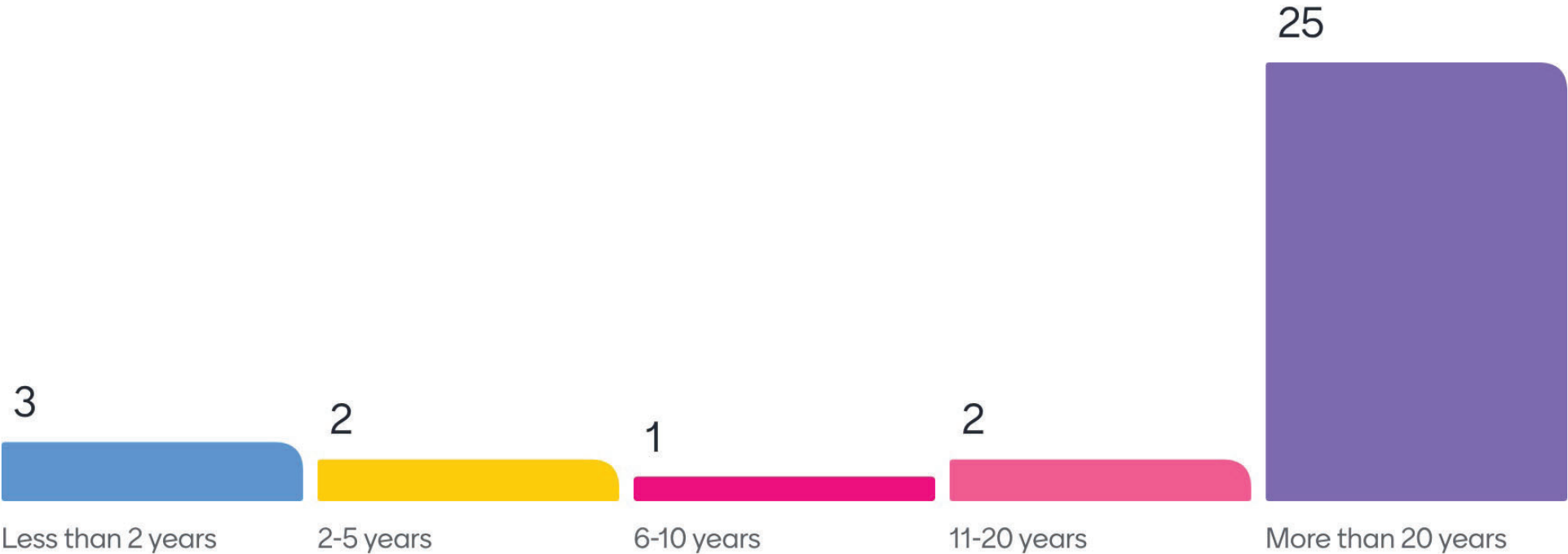
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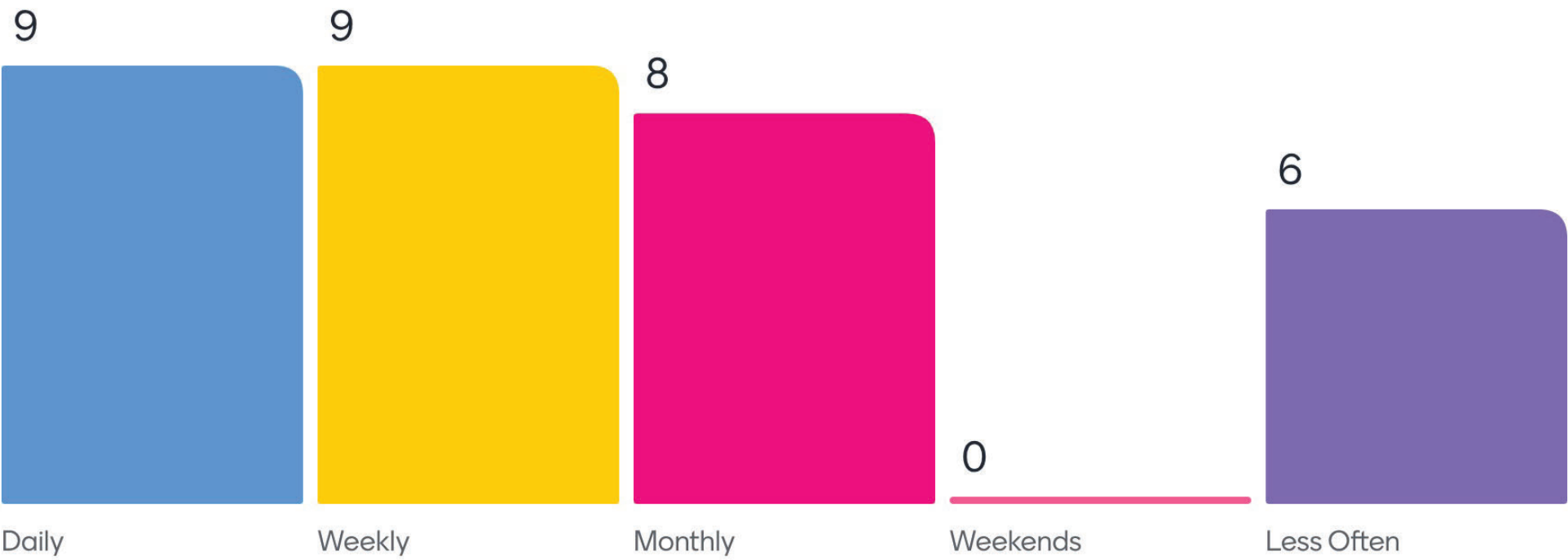
## Group Exercise #1: Corridor Familiarity

1. How long have you lived or worked in the study area?
2. How often do you use the corridor?
3. Which segment of the corridor do you travel most frequently?
4. What word or phrase best represents your vision for the area for the next 20 years?

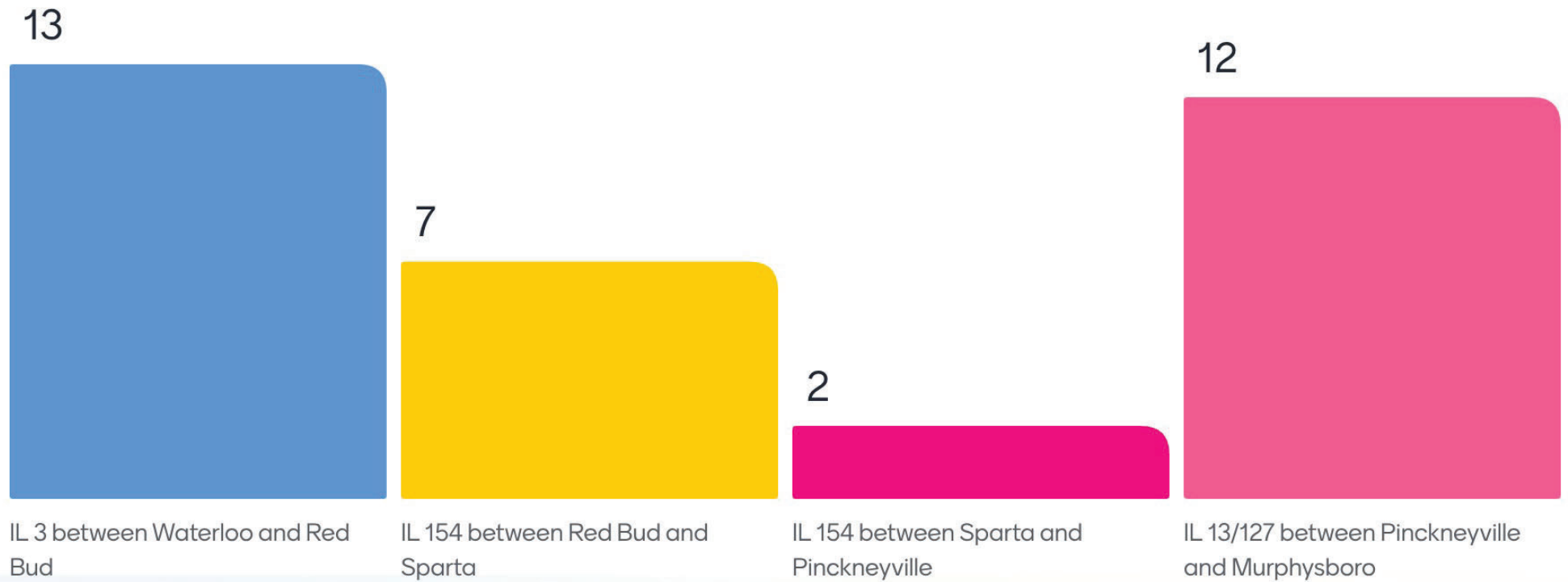
How long have you lived or worked in the study area?



# How often do you use the corridor?



Which segment(s) of the corridor do you travel most frequently?





What word or phrase best represents your vision for the area for the next 20 years?



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# PEL Study Overview

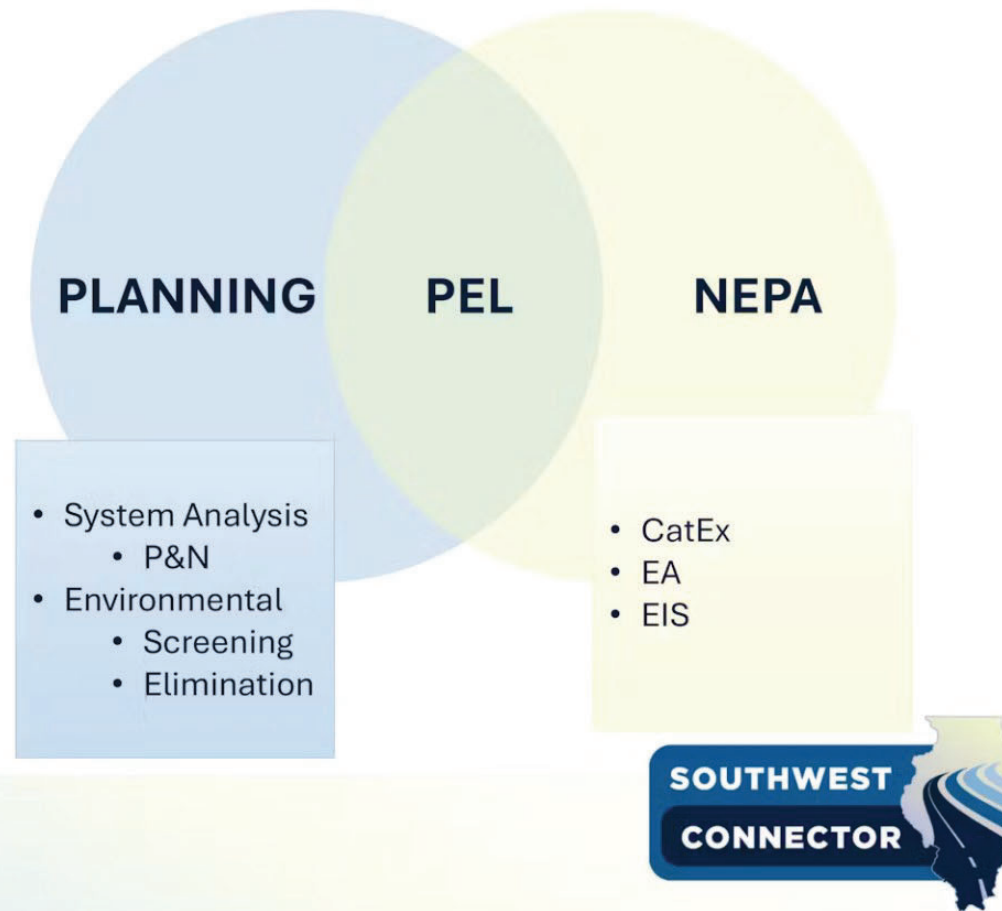


Jamy Lyne (KEG) – Speaker  
Jeff Young (HDR) – Speaker



# What is a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study?

- Collaborative and integrated approach
  - Considers environmental, community, and economic goals early in the process, before NEPA
- Information, analysis, and products during transportation planning
  - Adopted or incorporated by reference into the environmental review process (NEPA)
- Involves FHWA and Other Regulatory Agencies
  - NEPA Merger Meetings
- Apply to federal facilities or projects eligible for federal funding





**To help satisfy latest  
NEPA requirements**

## Why Conduct a PEL Study?

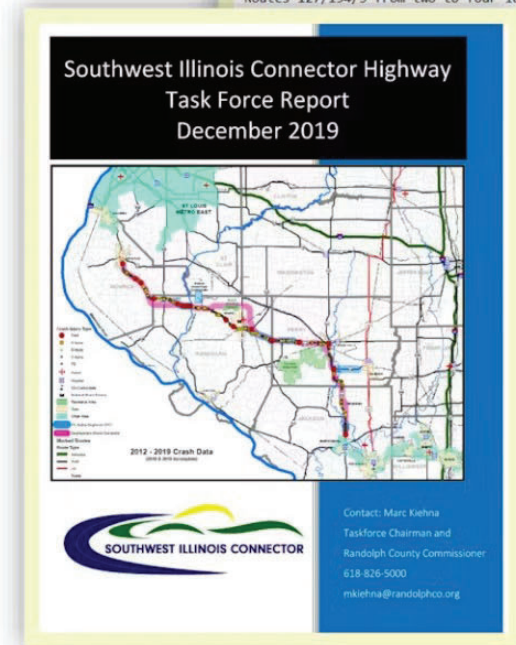
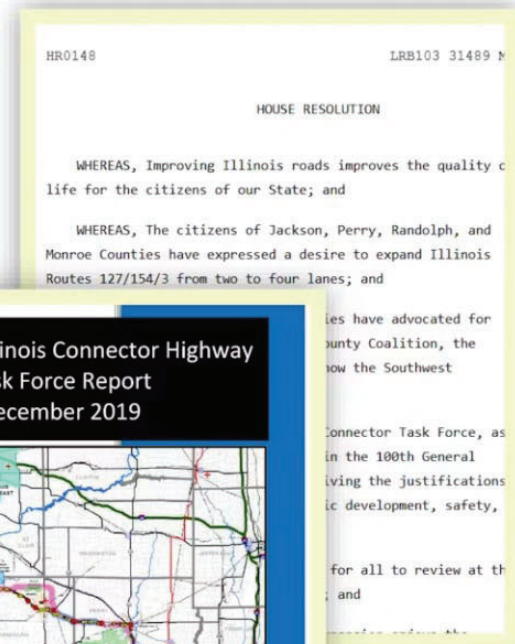
- CEQ requirements for NEPA:
  - NOI requirements
  - Time limits – EIS 2 years; EA 1 year
  - Page limits – EIS 150-300; EA 75
  - Single NEPA Document
- Benefits:
  - Develop products for NEPA
  - Uncover issues early
  - Help with funding, implementation planning and early actions
  - Build project support and agency relationships

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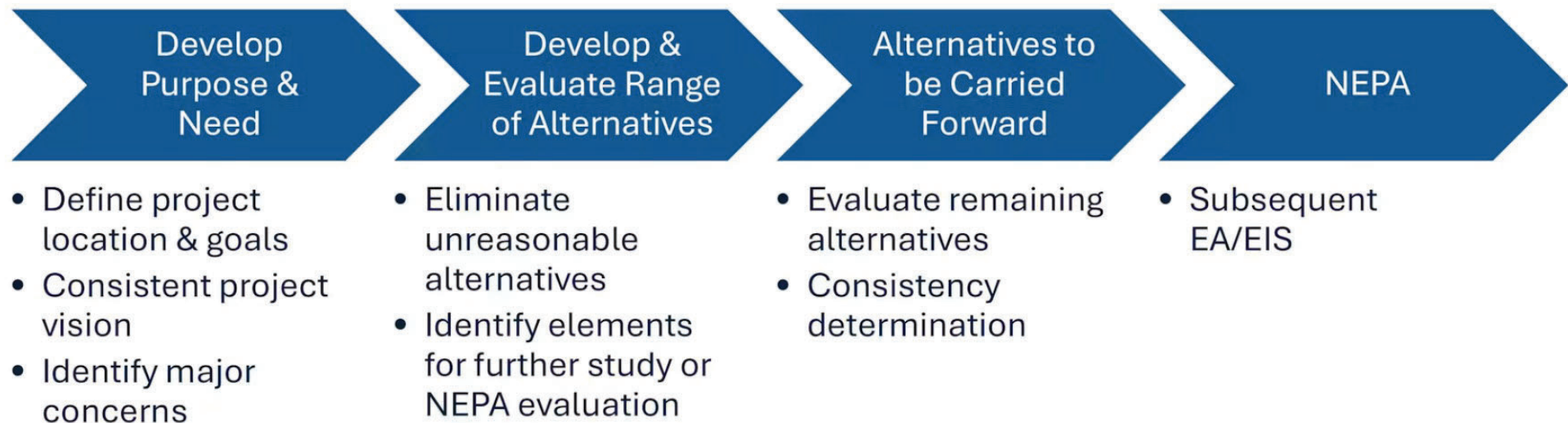
# Why is PEL a Good Process for the Southwest Connector?

- Utilizes and draws from previous studies including the Southwest Illinois Connector Highway Task Force Report (2019) and the EA from Pinckneyville to Murphysboro (2007).
- Helps define what the corridor community wants and needs before starting NEPA
- Smaller or discreet projects w/in larger can be broken out and advanced
- Supports development of project definition and stakeholder support, even though construction funds are not yet programmed





# What is the PEL Study Process?



# Screening Phases

Full Range of Alternatives



Feasibility and Purpose  
& Need

- Evaluates against needs and fatal flaws
- Assesses environmental constraints
- Eliminates alternatives that do not satisfy Purpose & Need

Initial  
Alternatives

- Evaluates Traffic and Travel Patterns
- Evaluates against needs and additional considerations

Refined  
Alternatives

- Analyzes alternatives against potential impacts
- Evaluates performance against detailed criteria

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# Project Phases

## PEL Study

Planning & Alternatives Identification



## Phase I

NEPA & Preliminary Design



## Phase II

Detailed Design & Permitting



## Phase III

ROW & Construction

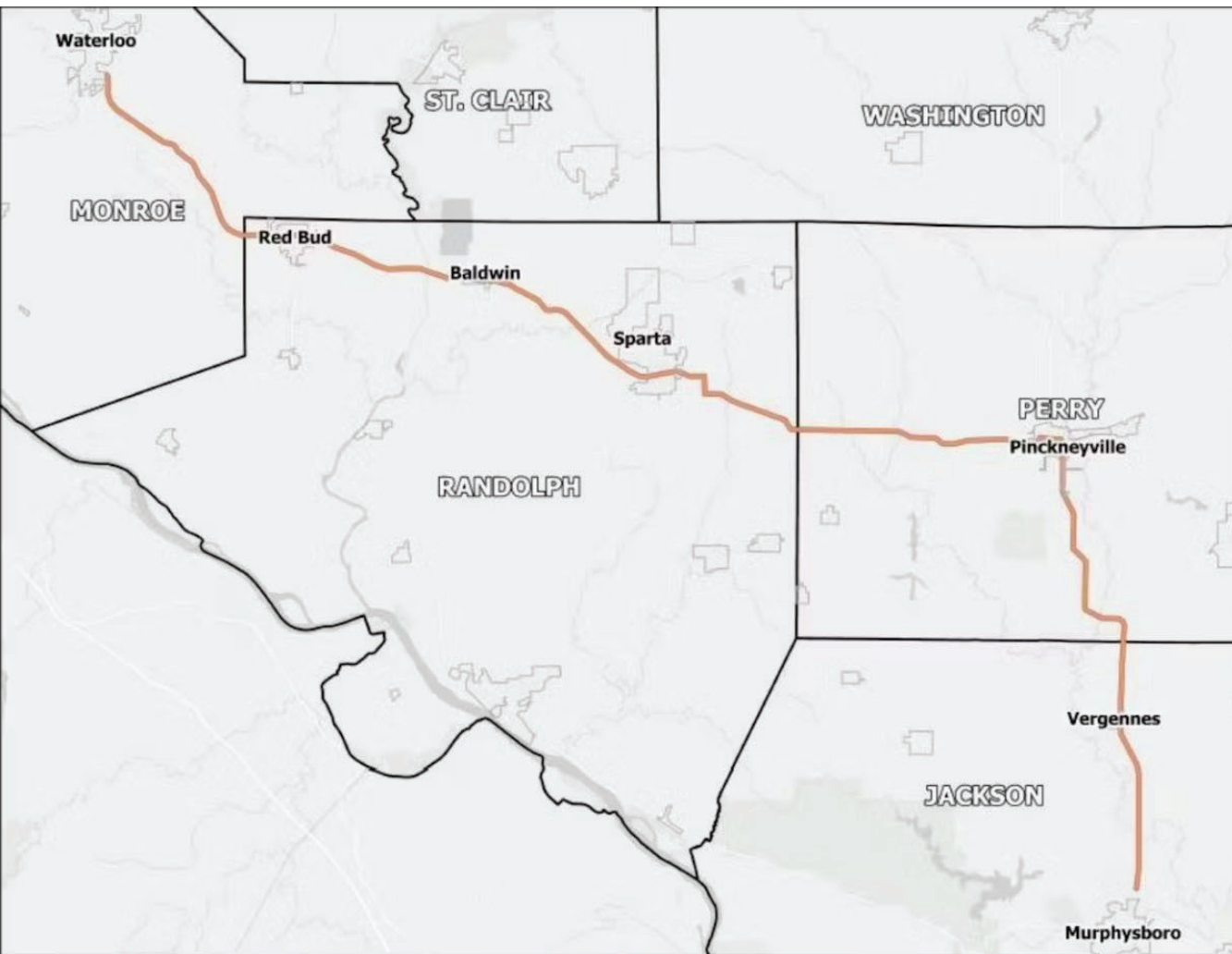
ADVOCACY & ENGAGEMENT



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## Study Area

- Two IDOT Districts (8 & 9)
- Four Counties  
(Monroe, Randolph, Perry, Jackson)
- Seven Municipalities  
(Waterloo, Red Bud, Baldwin, Sparta, Pinckneyville, Vergennes, Murphysboro)
- IL 3, IL 154, IL 13, IL 127





# Study Timeline

- **March – May:** Data Collection
- **June 2025:** CAG #1 – Problem Statement
- **Summer 2025:** Virtual Public Information Event #1 (On-Demand)
- **Fall 2025:** CAG #2 – Purpose and Need
- **Winter 2025/2026:** CAG #3 – Alternatives
- **Winter/Spring 2026:** Hybrid Public Meeting #2
- **Summer 2026:** IDOT/FHWA NEPA Merger Meeting
- **Fall 2026:** CAG #4 – Alternatives and Screening
- **Winter 2026/2027:** CAG #5 – Results of Level 2 Screening
- **Spring 2027:** Hybrid Public Meeting #3
- **Fall 2027:** IDOT/FHWA NEPA Merger Meeting
- **Fall/Winter 2027:** PEL Report







# Milestones We Are Covering Today

- Problem Statement
  - *Group Exercise #2*
- Purpose & Need
  - *Group Exercise #3*





# Existing Community Conditions



Jeff Young (HDR) – Speaker

# Study Data Points



# Deep Diving Into Data

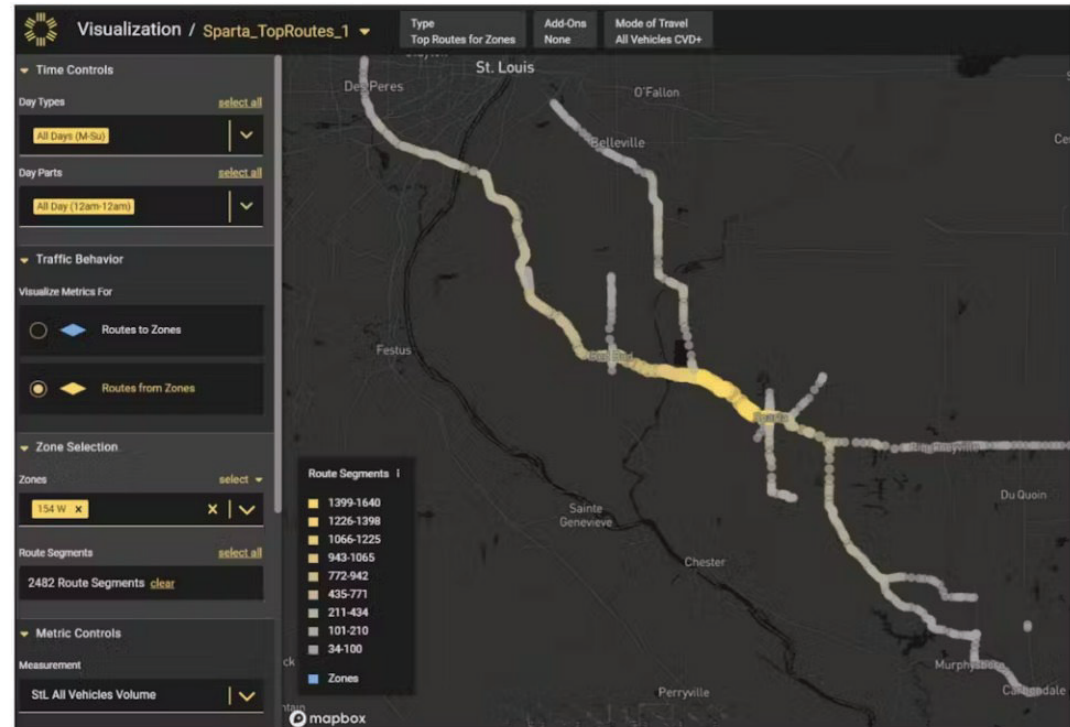
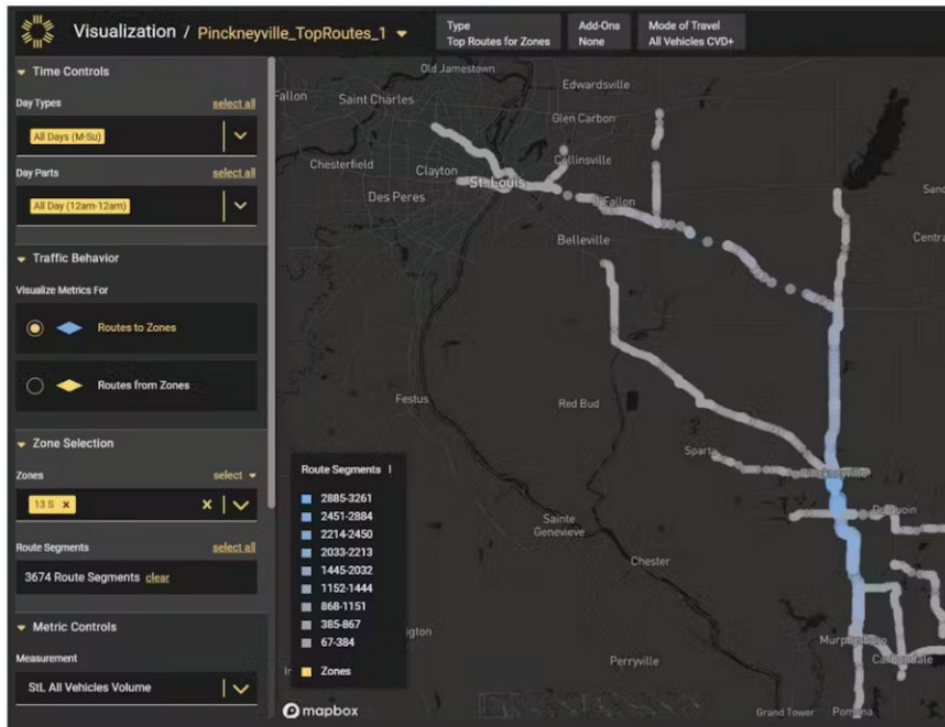
Example of what Study Team will be exploring pertaining to mobility, safety, and access

Travel Times	Congestion	Traffic Volumes	Safety Issues
Crash Severity	Crash Frequency	Economic Opportunity	Access to Employment
Access to Healthcare	Pedestrian/Bicyclist Issues	Transit Issues	Other?





# Study Data Example - StreetLight



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# Group Exercise #2

Problem Statement Development



Andrew Potthast (HDR) – Speaker



Menti.com

Use code: 35796059

## Group Exercise #2: Problem Statement Development

- **Rose:** What is working well along the corridor? What are valued areas?
- **Thorn:** What is NOT working well along the corridor that the study team should explore?
- **Bud:** What are the potential opportunities for improvement along the corridor?

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## Rose: What is working well along the corridor? What are valued areas?

Provides access to StL & Belleville/Fairview

Unsure?

Valued areas - small towns

Scenic drive

We are able to travel town to town. Old charm feeling. Farms in sight.

Better access to St. Louis

Connection between towns all be it slow.

Valued areas are the communities along the route.





## Rose: What is working well along the corridor? What are valued areas?

Employment opportunities

Roads need improvement

Overall traffic levels are not super high

The small cities and farms are valued. Not much is working well. The beauty is positive.

Easy access to local area Valued areas:  
Downtown Red Bud

Access to charming downtowns

Its a great alternative for me to avoid I-57. From where I live I can go either way to the Metro East.

Maintain Pyramid



## Rose: What is working well along the corridor? What are valued areas?

Keeping small towns

The corridor residents seem to have a shared desire for improvement. Valued areas are everywhere...charming towns, historic sites, industry, recreation.

Scenic drive across small towns

Natural environment and scenic drive

Small communities, agricultural areas

Need help

Some of the safety and intersection improvements.

Current route gets you to designated places.



Rose: What is working well along the corridor? What are valued areas?

Healthcare acces



Thorn: What is NOT working well along the corridor that the study team should explore?

Connectivity

Safety of road

The safety of the roads.

4 way stops

Slow traffic and blind spots make passing unsafe

Area lacks branding

Healthcare access

2 lane undivided highway





Thorn: What is NOT working well along the corridor that the study team should explore?

Congestion at intersections

Y turns near Sparta

Farm traffic

Ability for traffic to flow, ability to pass. Access to four lanes for commerce.

Many no passing zones. Hard to get around farm machinery and large trucks. Heavy volumes through residential and commercial areas.

Direct access to recreational facilities

No shoulders Two lane

Road conditions storm water flooding



## Thorn: What is NOT working well along the corridor that the study team should explore?

Congestion, commute times  
(small town traffic/farm  
equipment/school bus),  
safety

Slow traffic holds everyone  
up. Hard to get through all  
the small towns

Limited passing areas, views  
are obstructed due to hills  
and turns.

Not enough  
opportunities to pass  
slow moving traffic.

Difficult to drive, roads  
narrow, passing difficult,  
low speed

Truck trailer traffic

Slowing down through  
small towns

Relieve the congestion  
in smaller towns



## Thorn: What is NOT working well along the corridor that the study team should explore?

Economic growth will not improve without the corridor. The only grow is happening in Marion on 64. Forecast what kind of growth we could wxpect.

Coal trucking route to and from Knight Hawk Coal facility to Mississippi river

School bus safety

Pedestrian traffic vs commerce traffic. Both sides are frustrating

Farm equipment slows traffic and crosses the centeline. Not enough safe passing opportunities.

Congestion of large trucks and farm equipment

Oversize load routing

4 way stop in Red Bud



Thorn: What is NOT working well along the corridor that the study team should explore?

Safety through areas near towns.

The limited amount of connectivity from one end to the next. The lack of safety improvements, including intersections. Perhaps lack of education and driver safety.

154 & Prairie Rd intersection

Through traffic must traverse & slow down through each town.

154 & Buch rd intersection

balancing economic growth with a desire to maintain rural character





Bud: What are the potential opportunities for improvement along the corridor?

Speed & efficiency

Easier access to medical facilities

New businesses

Housing expansion

Reduce town congestion,  
quicker commute times,  
better access to STL and  
Carbondale

Intersections

Economic growth

Growth and economic  
development



Bud: What are the potential opportunities for improvement along the corridor?

Intersection and  
wayfinding  
improvements.

Multimodal Ease of  
travel

Controlled access

Manufacturing

This study, improving  
travel

Better intersection

Ease of getting around

Wider shoulders with  
safer access



## Bud: What are the potential opportunities for improvement along the corridor?

Better Roads , growth,  
housing

Allow more flow  
between pedestrian &  
commerce traffic

Safer roads

Multi lane divided  
highway

Complete the 4lane  
project, growth,  
economic development

Bringing more industry  
to the area

Improved traffic flow  
through/around towns  
along corridor.

Development & growth.



## Bud: What are the potential opportunities for improvement along the corridor?

Better access to STL for healthcare, airports, and recreation.

Increase travel times

The corridor itself the need to create many opportunities. The opps will follow. Improve standard of living.

Econ dev

Increase development, improve safety, eliminating congestion

Better traffic flow to/from St. Louis

Kaskaskia River





What are the specific issues or areas we should focus on when identifying opportunities to improve regional access, travel reliability, safety, etc.?

Waterloo to Red Bud to  
Sparta

Large trucks and farm  
equipment

Create a safe rural  
expressway

Kaskaskia River

Large shoulders

Turn radius at  
intersections for trucks

Speeding

4 lane roadway, wide  
shoulders, wide median  
& safe intersections



What are the specific issues or areas we should focus on when identifying opportunities to improve regional access, travel reliability, safety, etc.?

Small and large business locations

Rail crossings

Trucks, farm equipment

Safety and local accessibility to a 4 lane

Truck access, passing opportunities, safe road conditions

Intersection improvements and reduce sharp curves. Enhance traffic control.

Access to proposed and existing industrial parks

Bypassing around larger towns for large trucks and oversized loads



What are the specific issues or areas we should focus on when identifying opportunities to improve regional access, travel reliability, safety, etc.?

Getting through Sparta  
with equipment/semi's to  
Route 4

We need any improvement  
in infrastructure to create  
opps. The corridor and  
energy infrastructure are  
most important.

Town bypasses

Truck traffic

Shoulders



## What improvements or areas are needed for bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users?

Shoulders/bike paths for safety

Wider shoulders

Sidewalks in town

None

Off road paths away from traffic.

Walking and bike trails possibly connecting town to town

Wider shoulders. Park and ride lots.

Sholders





## What improvements or areas are needed for bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users?

Convenient pu/drop off areas

Many. No safe bike lanes. Almost no transit.

Wider roads with shoulders

Wider shoulders, designated pathways

Separated trail

Wide shoulders

Separate trails other than main roadways for safety.

Bike paths/sidewalks



## What improvements or areas are needed for bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users?

Safer roads, paths, sidewalks

Wide shoulders in the rural areas, and separated multi-use paths in Urban areas.

Bike paths and wider shoulders for safety.

Adequate sidewalks on both sides of the roadway with the Cities. Include share the road and or widened shoulders.

Designed designated areas for bikes and walking.

Incorporate bike lanes for both safety and outdoor economy/tourism advancement

SIDEWALKS WITHIN MUNICIPALITIES

Designated bike paths.



What improvements or areas are needed for bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users?

Connectors to small communities



## What changes or improvements would enhance communities along the corridor?

Wayfinding

Turn lanes

Industry, attractions,  
shopping

Walking/bike paths

Remove through traffic from  
communities so can enjoy  
small town feel.

Access to businesses

Better transportation in  
and out

Connectivity to a four lane  
highway to support  
economic development.





## What changes or improvements would enhance communities along the corridor?

Four lane would bring people to our area, better chance to fill empty jobs

Easier Access to the communities. It's not easy to get from STL to the SI wine Trails, shawnee, or SIU

Easier access for trucking to communities could bring more industry

Ease of transportation between communities.

Easier access for local businesses

Community entrance features

Quicker access to amenities/businesses

Wider shoulders, off road paths fir bikes and walkers, truck access to smaller towns



## What changes or improvements would enhance communities along the corridor?

Encourage pollinator and tree plantings for eye appeal.

Keeping small towns

Additional opportunities for businesses in the area to bring in additional business.

Manufacturing

Recreation



What industries do you see growing in the region in the next 5, 10, or 20 years?

Tourism.

Tech

Advanced  
manufacturing

Solar

Tourism in the Shawnee

Logistics

Solar farms, data  
centers

Recreation



What industries do you see growing in the region in the next 5, 10, or 20 years?

KRPD 2 Terminal

Tech

Port district growth  
along Kaskaskia River

Energy production,  
storage & distribution

Medical

Port-related industry

Manufacturing

Recreation



What industries do you see growing in the region in the next 5, 10, or 20 years?

Manufacturing.

Tech industry,  
alternative power

TMW

Recreation

Manufacturing

Tourism, ag, mfg

Recreation

SIUC





What industries do you see growing in the region in the next 5, 10, or 20 years?

Recreation, tourism and technology

Kaskaskia River travel

Education

Those manufacturing businesses located in Red Bud in Sparta.

Recreational opportunities

Hospitals

Manufacturing. Solar.  
Transportation hubs

SIU



What industries do you see growing in the region in the next 5, 10, or 20 years?

Make it easy to get to  
and from



## How can this corridor help facilitate that growth?

Access

Access

Easier access to the region

Expand workforce pool

Provide opportunities for expansion and access

Provides major transport mechanism

Bring quicker access to the area.

More inviting, easy access.



# How can this corridor help facilitate that growth?

Easy travel is much more attractive than what we have now

traffic flow

4-lane access

4 lane is used by site selectors

Could close a missing link between I-24 and StL

Safe, efficient 4 lane roadway

Employment/housing

Providing reason access from St. Louis to Marion.



# How can this corridor help facilitate that growth?

Reduce travel times.

Easier access for  
commodities to river  
travel

Provide infrastructure to  
move product to/from  
areas

Easy travel

Ease travel and help  
with commuting  
between communities.

Transportation is  
essential to economic  
development





How do you envision this corridor playing a role in stimulating overall economic development, particularly in untapped areas?

Providing better access  
to small towns

Great access

Providing regional  
connectivity

Opens up real estate for  
easier development

Access

Ease of getting here

Access to a four lane is  
key to bringing business  
to our area

Shorter/safer/easier  
commute times



How do you envision this corridor playing a role in stimulating overall economic development, particularly in untapped areas?

Create Excitement for growth

Tie St Louis area/metro area to the Route 13 corridor

It would provide access to a beautiful area as well as educational opps.

Access

Proving access to interstates for faster transportation of goods and services.

It will provide opportunities not available

Easier access. Not such a chore to get there

Believe this would help the growth over next 10 years.



How do you envision this corridor playing a role in stimulating overall economic development, particularly in untapped areas?

Bringing new jobs & families to the area

Levels playing field

It will help with transportation of goods and products to the area

Adds to the Variety of transport methods

Access to natural areas in Jackson county

Lower property costs to investors

If you build it, they will come



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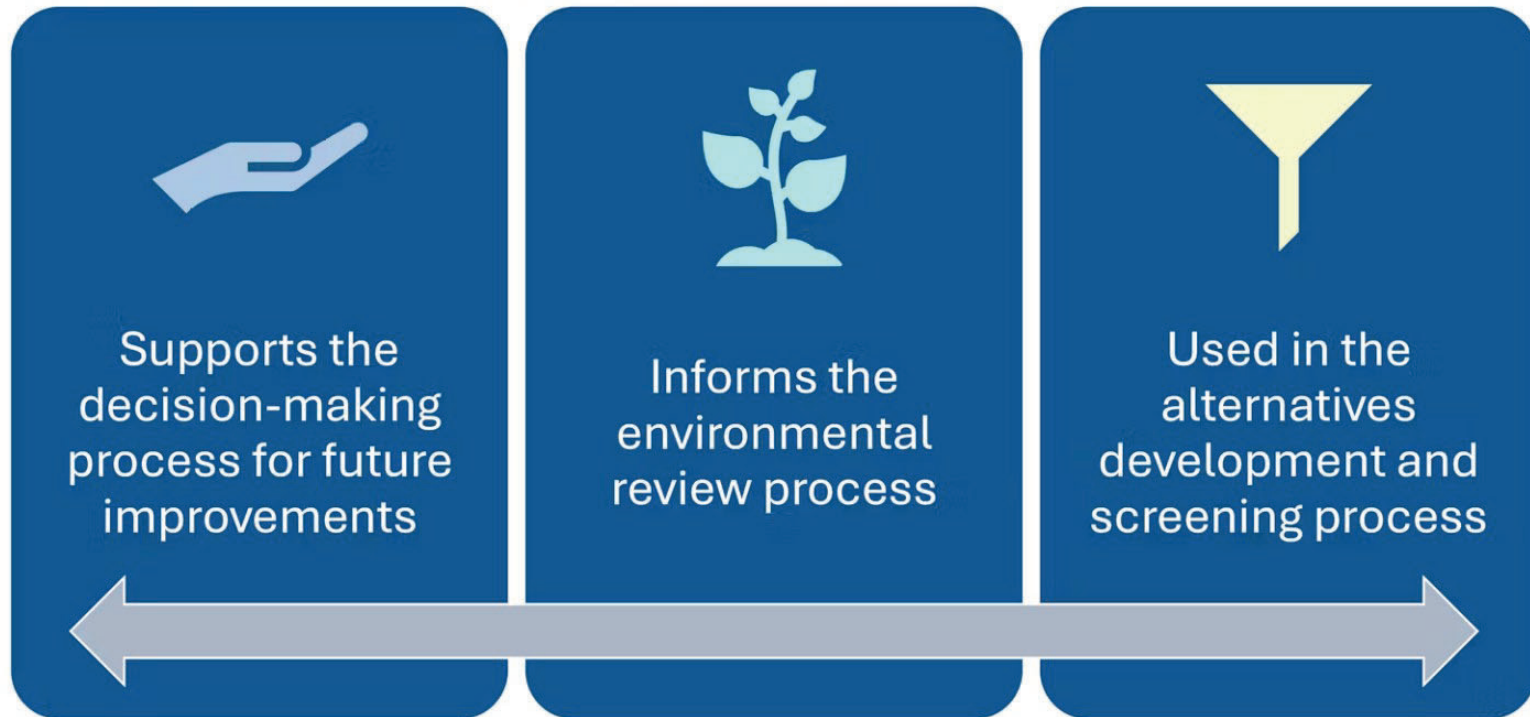
# Group Exercise #3

Purpose and Need Development



Kelly Sims (HDR) – Speaker

# Purpose and Need Statement







Menti.com

Use code: 35796059

## Group Exercise #3: Purpose & Need Workshop

1. What ideas do you have for the purpose of the study?  
*(the “why”)*
2. What ideas do you have for the need for the study?  
*(the problems we’re trying to solve)*

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# What ideas do you have for the purpose of the study?

Population growth We can't keep losing people

Solidify the need for the corridor with data and feedback.

Access and development

Expand use of shooting complex

Reduce travel times and accidents.

Improve access, economic dev & safety of transportation to SolL/from

Hasn't this been identified in previous studies and is this to just validate that purpose?

Identify Corridor



# What ideas do you have for the purpose of the study?

Increase access, provide transit users better access to stl & carbondale, medical access, employment access, commuter access

Provide a safe and accessible route for employers and commuters .

Major route through and to southern Illinois

Review current problems with road issues for all traffic for hopes of future development in the area.

Matching people to jobs

Bring southern Illinois into the 21st century

Provide greater access opportunities, eliminate congestion, increase safety, promote economic development

Provide a safe, efficient way for all road users to get from one point to another.



# What ideas do you have for the purpose of the study?

Regional connectivity in the 4 county region and STL. Better access to healthcare providers. Quicker to access to airports.

Multi modal

More local input is needed along the corridor.

Expand access to the region but also maintain safety for the traveling public and locals

Population stabilization and improved quality of life

Identify the need for the project

Connectivity, economic growth, community growth

Help food deserts with access to fresh food



# What ideas do you have for the purpose of the study?

Determining if a four lane highway is feasible through the entire corridor, or segments of the corridor, given the existing and projected traffic volumes.

Identify each communities needs

The purpose/need this project is to improve transportation safety, mobility, and regional access along a 70-mile corridor connecting the Greater St. Louis area to communities in Southern Illinois.

Environmental protection. Community no severance.

Provide safe movements for large farm equipment

Economic growth





# What ideas do you have for needs in the corridor?

4 way stop in Red Bud

Trucking, farm  
equipment

Y intersection in eden

Improved intersections

Avoid the 4 way  
intersection in Red Bud

Sparta 154 to Rt. 4

Stop signs, y curves,  
trucking/farm/amish  
transportation

Energy infrastructure  
Healthcare access



## What ideas do you have for needs in the corridor?

Divided highway

Access to the port

Bridge crossings

Intersection improvements, such as roundabouts.

Remove main through traffic through Pinckneyville.

More opportunities to safely pass slow moving traffic.

Il 154 and Conant Rd

Improved intersections



# What ideas do you have for needs in the corridor?

Turn radius at intersections not wide enough

Bypass Sparta, Red Bud for faster travel

4 lane access from C'dale to I-64

Address any sharp curves or high accident locations.

Enhance vehicle and farm equipment conflicts.

Roundabouts to help ease with accidents at stop light or stop sign intersections

Minimize intersections





# Engagement Overview



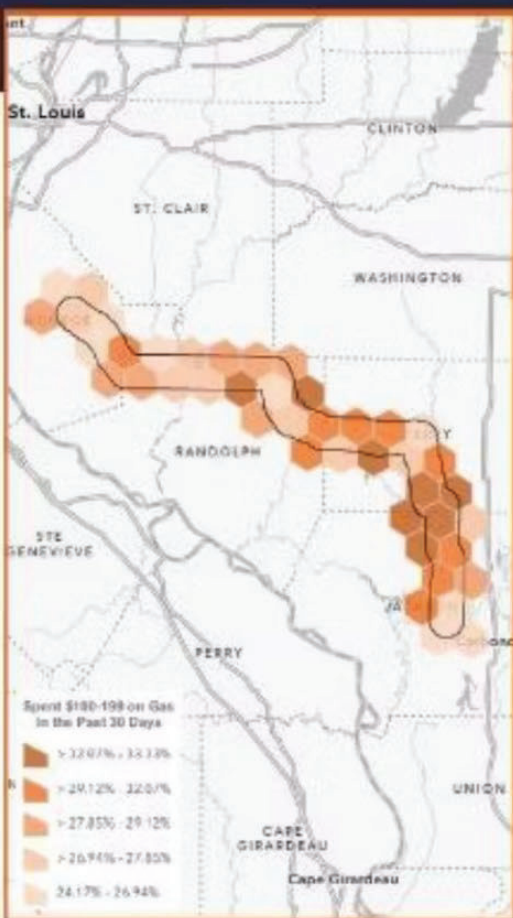
Scott Manning (HDR) – Speaker

# Public Engagement Keys to Success

- Extensive Stakeholder Engagement
  - Institutions | Partner Agencies
- Equitable Engagement
  - Many platforms | Advisory Groups
  - Meet people where they live/where they are online
- Project Identity
  - Messaging benefits







## Community Profile Southwest Illinois Connector - Two-Mile Buffer

### Population and Households (ACS)

<b>28,476</b>	<b>12,316</b>
Total Population	Total Households
<b>\$57,559</b>	<b>13%</b>
Median Household Income	Below the Poverty Level
<b>14%</b>	<b>4%</b>
No Internet Access	Pop 65+ Without A Computer

### Employment (ACS)

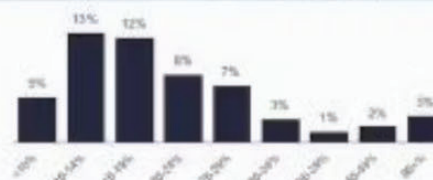
<b>4%</b>	<b>1,251</b>	<b>12,571</b>
Unemployed Age 18+ (Earl)	Businesses	Employees
<b>18.9%</b>	<b>29.5%</b>	<b>51.6%</b>
Services	Blue Collar	White Collar

### Race/Ethnicity (ACS)

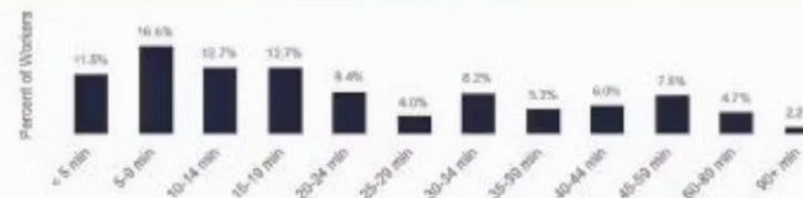
White Alone, Not Hispanic or Latino	97.9%
Black or African American Alone	0.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	0.0%
Asian Alone	1.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Is. Alone	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	0.2%
Two or More Races	1.7%
Hispanic or Latino	3.2%

Percentages should add up to 100% without including Hispanic or Latino. People of Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race (groups).

### Mortgage as Percent of Salary (ACS)



### Travel Time to Work (ACS)



### Educational Attainment (ACS) Population Age 25+

Doctorate	1%
Professional Degree	1%
Master's Degree	6%
Bachelor's Degree	13%
Associate Degree	12%
Some College/No Degree	29%
GED	6%
Highschool Diploma	35%
Some Highschool	6%
5-8th Grade	2%
1-4th Grade	0%
Kindergarten	0%
Nursery School	0%
No Schooling	0%

Source: This infographic contains data provided by ACS (2018-2022), Esri (2024), Esri-Data Axle (2024), Esri-MRI-Simmons (2024).

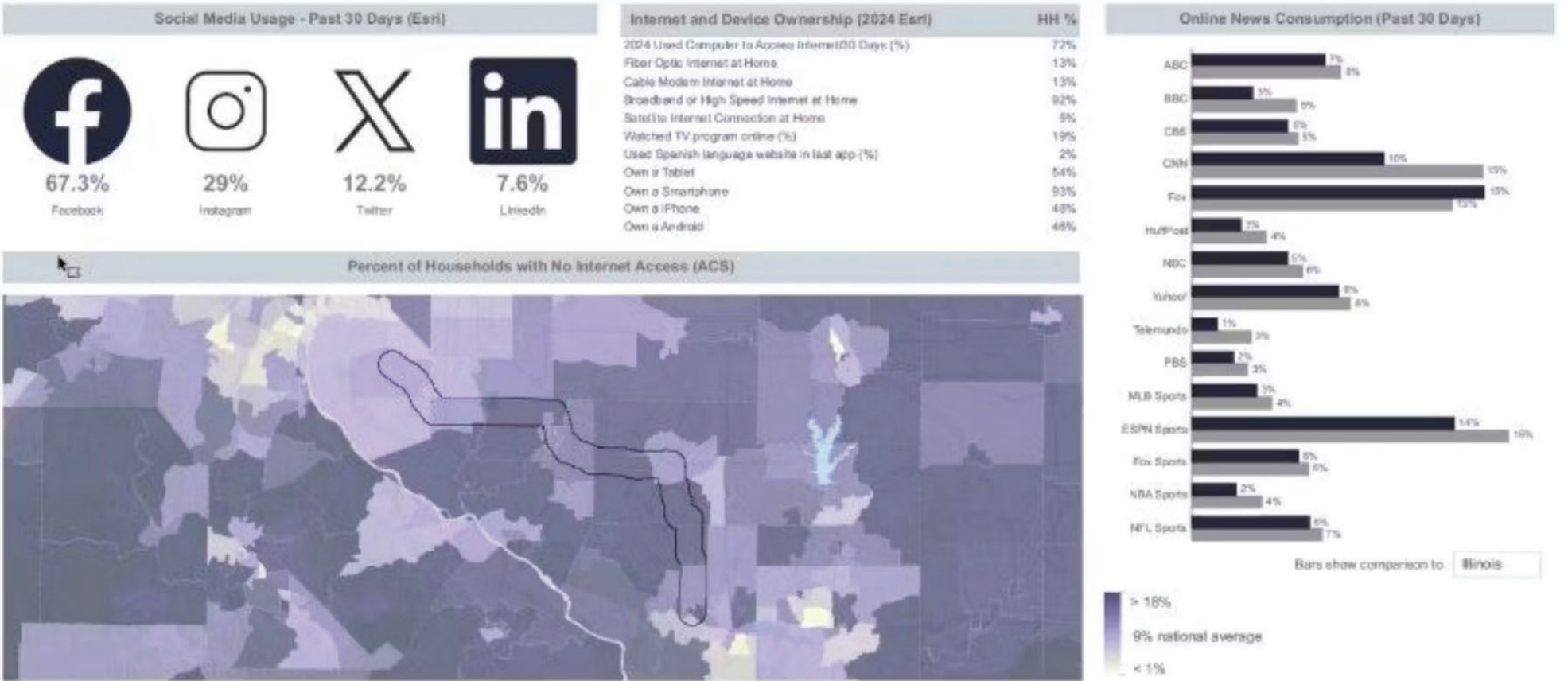
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# Digital Usage

## Southwest Illinois Connector - Two-Mile Buffer





Source: This infographic contains data provided by ACS (2018-2022), Esri (2024), Esri-Data Axle (2024), Esri-MRI-Simmons (2024).

#### Hard-To-Reach Stakeholders (ACS)



13%

Households Below the Poverty Level



2%

Owner Households with No Vehicles



17%

Percent Minority (2024 Est)



7%

Females 20-64 in Work Force with Child <6



16%

Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP



32%

Households with 1+ Persons with a Disability

#### Perceptions (MRI Simmons)

##### Political Outlook



##### Travel Options Lessen My Need For A Car



##### I Access Internet Mainly Through the Phone



##### I Trust Information Shared On Social Media



## Public Engagement Tools

- Project website with visual identity
- Social Media
- Online surveys
- Community Advisory Groups (CAG)
- Project Working Groups (PWG)
- Public Meetings and Self-Paced Virtual Meetings
- One-on-one meetings
- Pop-up Events
- Mail and e-mail
- Handouts





# Public Engagement - Study Website

## Join Our Email List

Name

First Name Last Name

Email

example@example.com

Submit

<https://southwestconnector.com/>



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## **SOUTHWEST CONNECTOR**



# Next Steps



Jeff Young (HDR) – Speaker



# Next Steps:

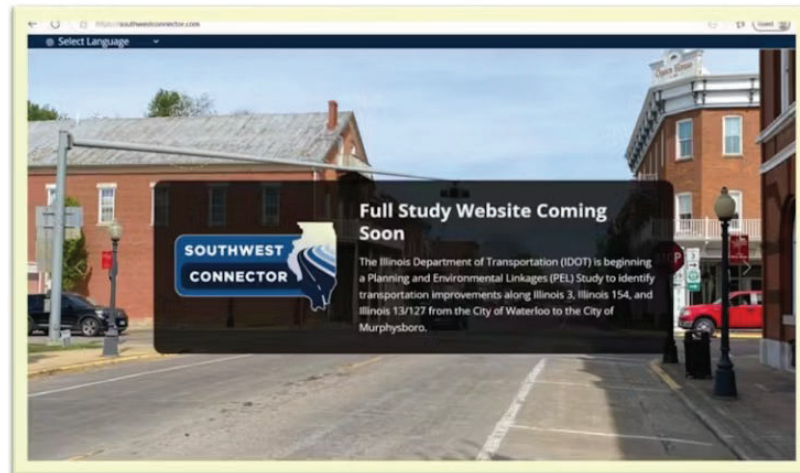
- CAG – **Spread The Word!** 
- Study Team – Continue Data Collection; Prepare for On-Demand Public Event; Prepare for CAG Meeting #2





## How to Reach Us

- [southwestconnector.com](https://southwestconnector.com)
- [contact@southwestconnector.com](mailto:contact@southwestconnector.com)



# Glossary

- CAG – Community Advisory Group
- CEQ – Council of Environmental Quality
- FHWA – Federal Highway Administration
- NEPA – National Environmental Policy Act
- NOI – Notice of Intent
- PEL – Planning and Environmental Linkages
- PWG – Project Working Group
- P&N – Purpose and Need