



Public and Stakeholder Involvement Plan

Southwest Illinois Connector
Planning and Environmental Linkages Study

May 22, 2025

**SOUTHWEST
CONNECTOR**





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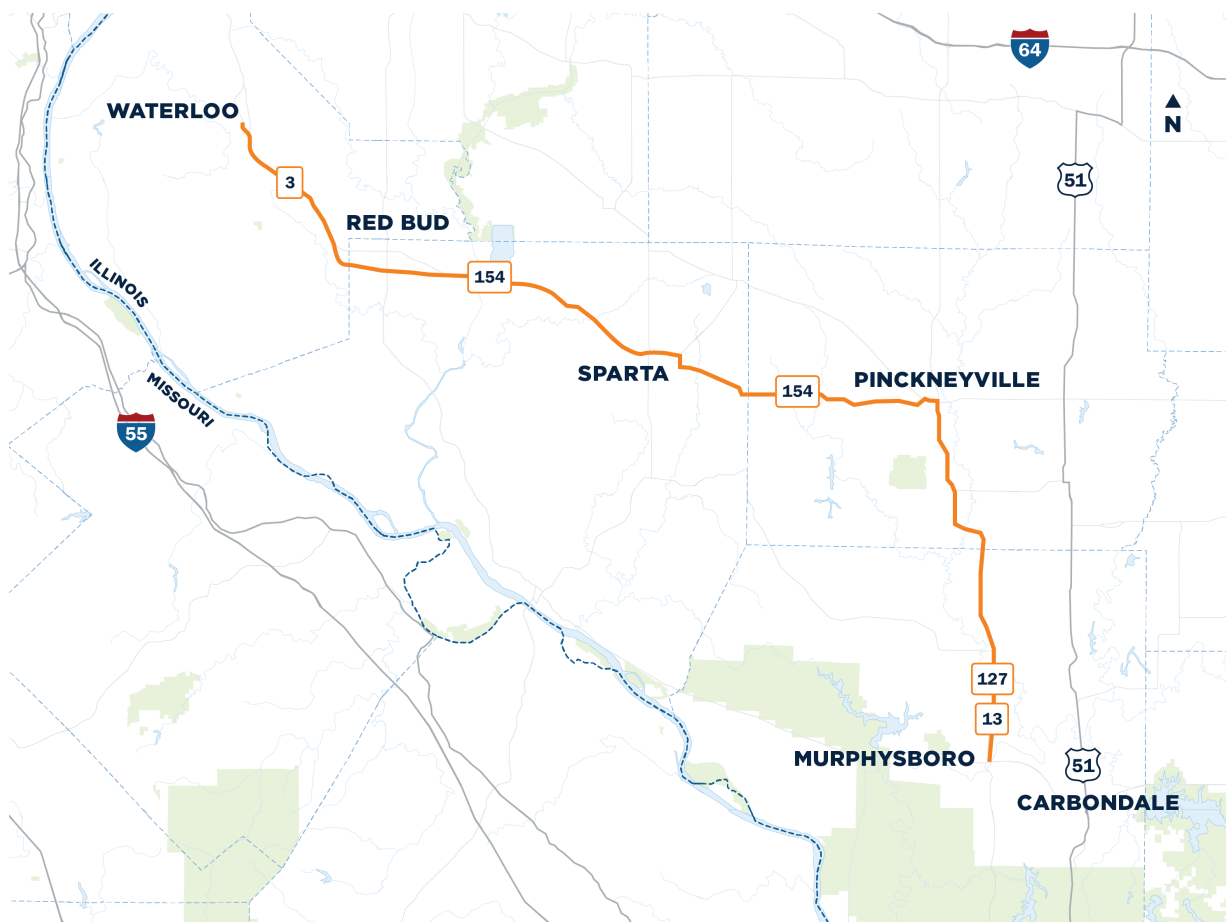
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1.0 Study and Communication Management

1.1 Introduction and Overview

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is conducting a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study of Illinois (IL) Route 3 / 154 / 13 / 127 (Corridor) through Monroe, Randolph, Perry and Jackson counties in Southwest Illinois. The study will create a plan to consider potential improvements to the route from the City of Waterloo to the City of Murphysboro. Specific tasks include planning, environmental studies, forecasting, travel demand modeling, developing a purpose and need, alternatives development, cost estimating, project phasing, and public involvement. **Figure 1** shows the Study area.

Figure 1. Map of the Study Area



This Public and Stakeholder Involvement Plan (Plan) has been developed to explain and summarize the public outreach that will be conducted in support of the PEL Study. The Plan is developed in accordance with IDOT and Federal Highway Administration public involvement policies.



The Plan outlines the Study's approach to and objectives for public and stakeholder involvement throughout the PEL Study. It will be implemented at the beginning of the Study and will continue to be used through the publication of the final PEL Study Report. This Plan may also be amended or updated throughout the PEL Study and will serve as a guide in the transition to the NEPA compliance process.

1.2 Study Background

The potential for improving the highway connectivity between Monroe, Randolph, Perry, and Jackson counties to the St. Louis Metro East area has been discussed for several decades. The Corridor has been previously studied in 1967, 1976, 1986, 1995, and 1996. During the 1990's, improvements to the corridor were considered as part of the proposed Southwest Illinois Tollway. In 2019, the Four County Highway Coalition, made up of municipal, government and business leaders from Monroe, Randolph, Perry and Jackson Counties, produced a task force report at the direction of the Illinois General Assembly detailing the need for Corridor improvements. In 2007, IDOT completed a Phase I study for upgrading approximately 23 miles of Corridor in Perry and Jackson counties from City of Pinckneyville to the City of Murphysboro. Phase II and Phase III for this portion of the corridor are pending funding availability. A federally required update to environmental documentation for this portion of the Corridor will be completed as part of the PEL Study.

2.0 Planning and Environmental Linkages Process and Communication

2.1 National Environmental Policy Act and PEL Communication

The PEL process is an approach to transportation decision making that considers environmental, community, and economic goals early in the planning stage to minimize redundancies, promote efficient and cost-effective solutions, and enhance project implementation. The PEL process also allows decision makers and stakeholders to narrow the range of alternatives to be considered and to identify and prepare for issues to be addressed in subsequent National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance and project design phases. Public and agency input at milestone stages of a PEL Study are key components that allow the study analyses to be incorporated into future NEPA documents.

The PEL process is a valuable approach for supporting project delivery. IDOT is engaging the public and stakeholders in the PEL Study to help guide the development and delivery of transportation investments in the Study area. A PEL Study allows IDOT to develop and screen improvement alternatives with committees, agencies, and the public to narrow down alternatives to carry forward into the NEPA and project design development phases.

The results of the PEL Study will be recommended solutions for improving overall safety, connectivity, and reliability throughout the corridor.

Feedback from the community and stakeholders is central to the development of design

concepts and is a requirement of the PEL process (23 United States Code [U.S.C.] 168 and 23 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 450.212 and 450.318).

Figure 2 depicts how public and stakeholder input is incorporated throughout the PEL process.

Figure 2. PEL Steps and Public Involvement Input Integration

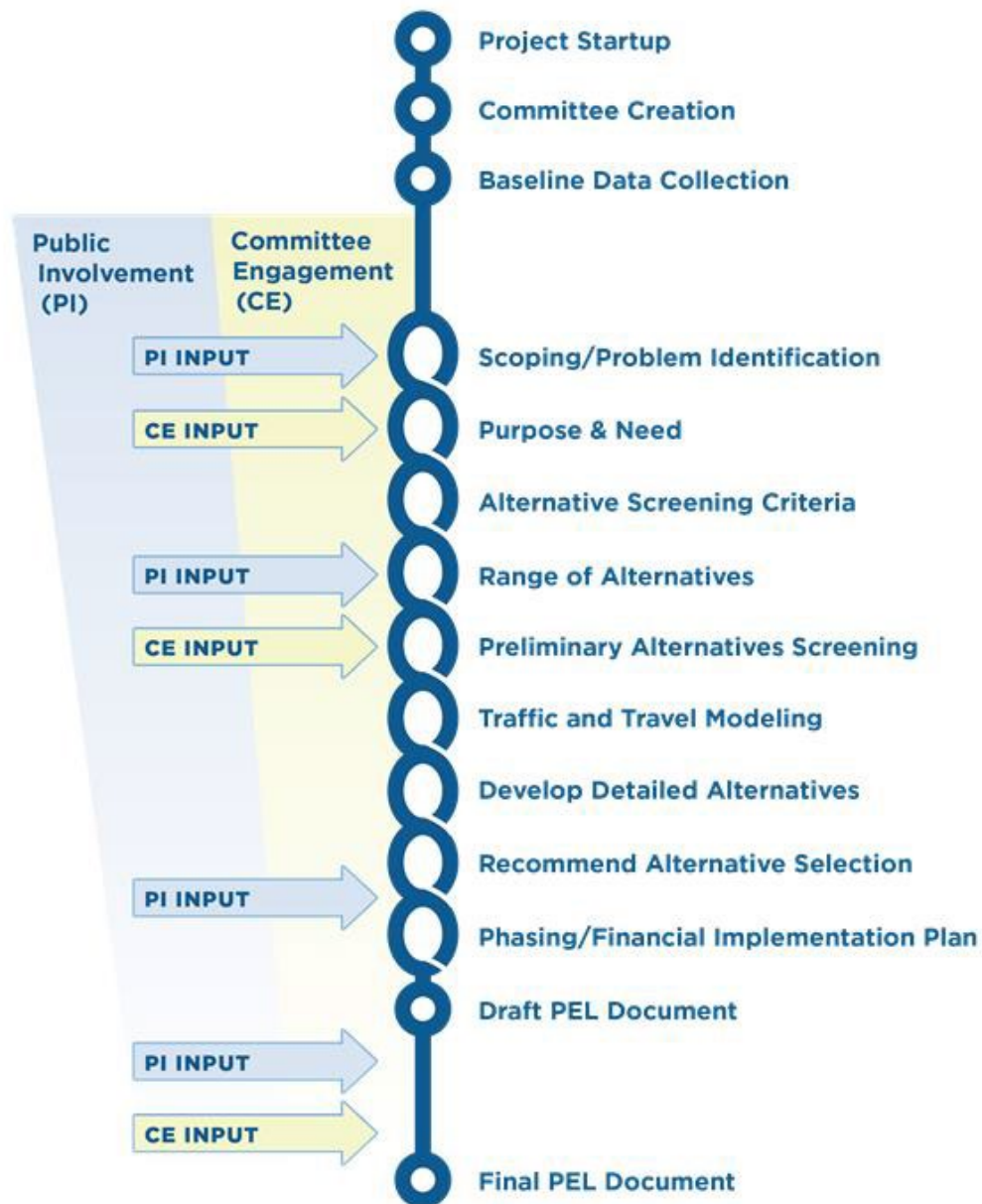






Figure 3 outlines IDOT and FHWA concurrence points during PEL Study development.

Figure 3. Concurrence Points During PEL Study

CONCURRENCE POINT	REVIEW
 Purpose & Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Purpose and need statement has a rational basis ▪ Uses up-to-date data ▪ Includes analytical methods ▪ Uses modeling techniques that are reliable, defensible, reasonably current, and meet data quality requirements
 Alternatives Development & Screening Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planned range of alternatives and the alternatives development process are reasonable, rational and logical ▪ Appropriate methodologies are identified ▪ Level of detail planned for alternatives development and evaluation is appropriate ▪ Stakeholder involvement plan is appropriate ▪ Planned screening process, including screening criteria, is rational and logical
 Alternatives Screening Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Results of alternatives development and screening ▪ Conclusions are reasonable and logical ▪ Sufficient documentation is provided to justify eliminating or advancing alternatives ▪ No alternatives are eliminated that are necessary for compliance with future NEPA or for compliance with a permit or approval from another federal agency
 Draft PEL Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public and agency involvement is adequately documented ▪ The ten conditions identified in 23 U.S.C. 168 have been followed ▪ Planning products and analyses are adequate for incorporation into future NEPA ▪ Impacts and mitigation are appropriately documented ▪ The basic description of the environmental setting is adequate ▪ The implementation plan contains reasonable steps for the project to move forward into the NEPA process ▪ The planning products are documented in such a form as to be easily identifiable and available for review during the NEPA scoping process and can be appended to or referenced into a NEPA document

3.0 Communication Objectives, Approach and Schedule

3.1 Objectives

This Plan will help accomplish two objectives:

- Provide opportunities for the public and stakeholders to be informed about and participate in the Study; and
- Engage the communities on the corridor in the development of alternatives during the Study

The Plan is a living document that will be updated as needed during the Study. The Study Team will assess the effectiveness of this Plan and adjust strategies and tactics as necessary to meet the Plan objectives. Measure of effectiveness may include:

- Social and/or digital media metrics;
- Survey results;
- Media engagement;
- Email open rates;
- Number of comments received; and
- Quality of comments received.

Open and transparent communications among the public and stakeholders will be necessary to:

- Gain productive input leading to well informed decision making; and
- Meet the PEL process requirements of 23 U.S.C. 168 and 23 CFR 450 for public, agency, and tribal involvement.

Throughout the PEL process, the Public Involvement Team will:

- Build awareness of the Study and PEL process through strategic communication, public involvement, and public relations tactics.
- Inform and involve a broad group of stakeholders, which includes residents of potentially affected areas; commuters; area businesses and employees; local, state, and federal agencies; community organizations; and others.
- Communicate study information and opportunities to comment in an open and transparent public involvement process that inspires trust in the Study team and the information presented. Participants should know that their input is heard and considered, and they should understand how their comments will be used.

- Provide a variety of opportunities for the public and stakeholders to stay informed and provide input.
- Comply with Title VI, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Respond promptly to Study-related inquiries, comments, and requests, and document feedback for Study consideration.
- Document and measure the progress and effectiveness of this Plan.
- Provide public notification that planning products may be adopted during a subsequent environmental review process.
- Obtain concurrence from state and federal permitting and approval agencies with the planning products that are developed.
- Demonstrate consideration of and timely response to input received.

3.2 Approach

The communication approach with the public and stakeholders in this Plan includes:

- Consideration – considering the opinions, actions, and relevant information from all parties.
- Cooperation – ensuring that the parties involved work together toward common goals.
- Consultation – conferring with other parties and considering their views before acting.
- Coordination – developing alternatives and recommendations, as well as refinements, in a cooperative manner striving for consensus.

The Study Team understands that individuals, stakeholder groups, committees, agencies, and organizations involved in the PEL Study may have competing priorities, preferences, and differing opinions. As part of the approach to achieving communication objectives and gathering the needed public input, the Study Team will address potential conflicts with a listening mindset and identify methods and processes to build agreements.

3.3 Schedule

The Study schedule is approximately 36 months. To meet this schedule, the Study has been divided into phases that coincide with PEL Study milestones and public outreach efforts. **Figure 4** provides a communication roadmap to demonstrate how the Study phases, PEL Study milestones, and public outreach efforts align with the overall Study schedule.

Figure 4. Communication Roadmap

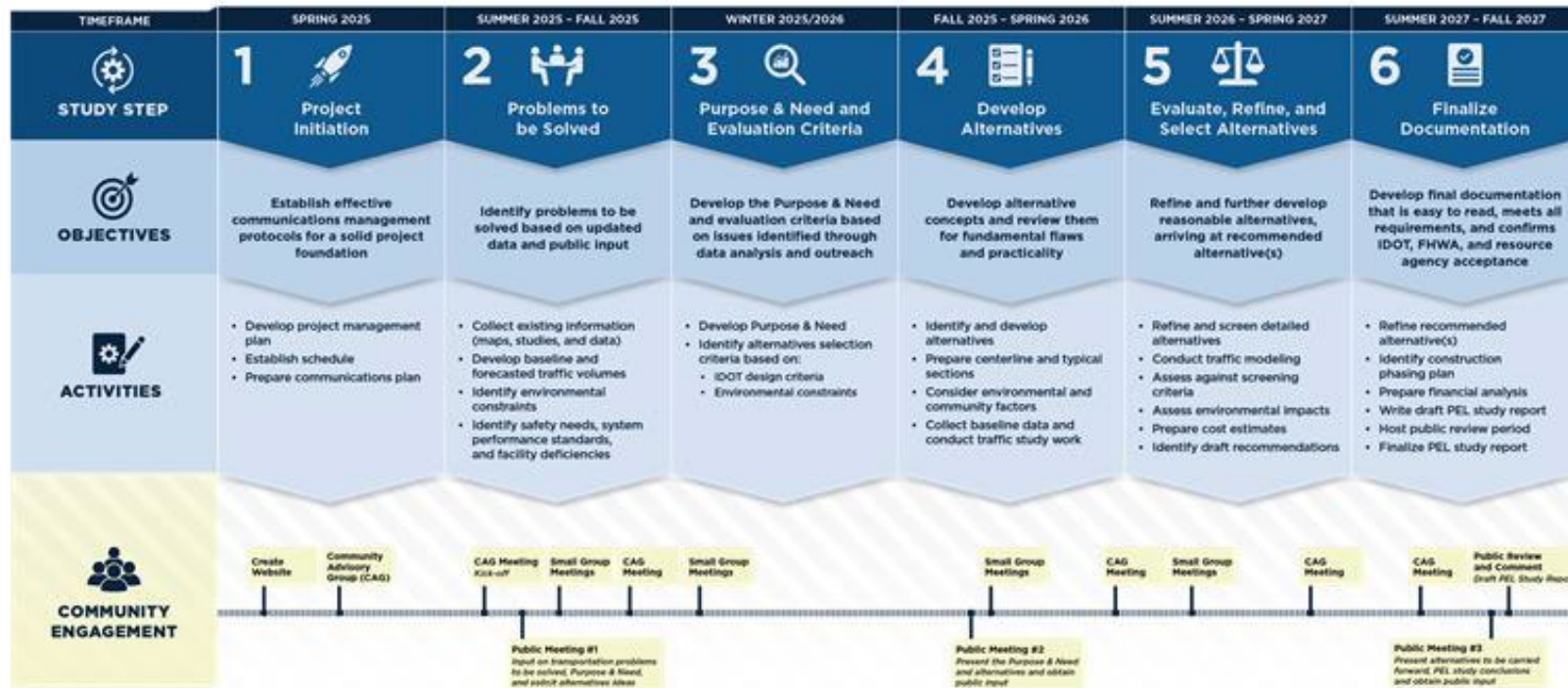


Figure 4 is subject to change. Actual dates will coincide with Study activities and deliverables. Refer to the Study schedule available on the website at www.southwestconnector.com.



4.0 Outreach Methods and Activities

The sections below outline the outreach steps, methods, tactics, and activities that will be used to encourage the public and stakeholders to meaningfully contribute to the PEL Study. The activities build upon each other to solicit public comments that will be incorporated into the PEL Study Report.

The activities described below are not listed in chronological order. Many will occur concurrently throughout the Study. Actual dates will coincide with Study activities, milestones, and deliverables, as shown in Figure 4 above.

4.1 Stakeholder Identification

During each phase of this PEL Study, the Study Team will engage several stakeholder groups, which are identified as:

- Nearby residents and businesses
- Committees
- Agencies
- Specific stakeholders (e.g., legislators, property owners, non-motorized users)

The communication strategies and tactics in this Plan will provide opportunities for all stakeholders to provide input and comments at each stage of the PEL process. **Appendix A** provides a report of the community analysis performed for the Study area.

Table 1 includes a brief management strategy for each major stakeholder group identified. See Section 4.2 for details on the communication approach to stakeholders.

Table 1. Stakeholder Group Management Strategy

Stakeholder Group	Management Strategy
Committee	Involve different stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how the public input influenced decisions.
Agencies	Partner with agency representatives for advice and innovation in forming solutions into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
Specific Stakeholders	Collaborate with specific stakeholders to incorporate input into each aspect of the decision making through individual stakeholder interviews and small group meetings.

4.1.1 Stakeholder Database

All potential Study stakeholders will be identified and listed in a stakeholder database, along with their contact information. Stakeholder classifications (see Section 4.1.2) will also be included in the database. The stakeholder database will be used as a mailing or email list and is a living document that will be updated over the life of the Study.



4.1.2 Stakeholder Classification

Stakeholders will be classified using three categories: affiliation, support, and issue(s). Each category includes several possible classifications for each stakeholder, and these will be included on the stakeholder register. The categories and classifications shown in **Table 2** will be applied for each stakeholder.

Table 2. Stakeholder Classification

Stakeholder Category	Stakeholder Classification
Affiliation	Public Business Government Agency Contracting Agency
Support	Supporter Neutral (default) Resistor
Issue(s)	Regulatory Economic Right-of-Way Environmental Safety Health Care Other

These are examples; classifications will be added as needed.

Again, communication techniques will be targeted to the various categories to maximize participation.

4.1.3 Stakeholder Categories

Stakeholders will also be grouped for use in developing stakeholder management strategies.

Table 3 provides a preliminary list of key stakeholders in each category for the PEL Study.

Additional agencies, tribes, businesses, and members of the public will be included and added to the stakeholder database as public outreach occurs.



Table 3. Preliminary Stakeholder Categories Chart

General Public
Residents
Property Owners
Roadway Users
Elected Officials
U.S. Senators
U.S. Representatives
State Senators
State Representatives
County Board Members
Mayors
Utilities
Power
Gas
Water/Wastewater
Phone/Broadband
Tribal Entities
Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation
Agencies
Federal Highway Administration
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
East-West Gateway Council of Governments
Historic Preservation Office
Community Partners
Southwest Connector Coalition
Greater Egypt Regional Planning
St. Louis Freightway
Randolph County Economic Development
Farm Bureau
Illinois Trucking Association
Illinois Municipal League
Illinois State Association of Counties
Illinois Realtors
County and Municipal Staff
County Administrator
County Engineer
City Engineer and/or Public Works Director
Emergency Responders
Illinois State Police
County Sheriff
Local Fire Districts
Ambulance Companies
Businesses/Organizations
Pinckneyville-Du Quoin Airport
World Shooting and Recreational Complex
Kaskaskia Port District
Southern Illinois University
Southwest Illinois College
Pinckneyville Community Hospital
Regional Hospital Networks
Knighthawk Coal Mining
Peabody Coal Mining
Railroads
School Districts



Transit Agencies (Jackson County Mass Transit, South Central Transit and RIDES) – Inform, Invite, Consult, Engage
Greyhound Bus – Inform, Invite
Tourism – Lakes, Rec Areas, Wineries – Inform, Invite, Consult, Engage

4.2 Outreach Methods and Techniques

Public and specific stakeholder outreach is planned to inform and solicit input during each stage of the PEL process.

The primary methods and techniques used for stakeholder management and communication for this Study are listed in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Primary Outreach Methods and Techniques

Community Advisory Group
Partnering Working Groups
Public Meetings (Hybrid and online-only)
Social Media
Website
Media Relations (News Releases, Media Briefings)
Emails
Postcards
Videos
Community Events
One-on-one/Small Group Meetings
Handouts

A description of each communication method, technique, and tactic is included in the following subsections.

4.2.1 Community Advisory Group (CAG)

This group will be composed of individuals that represent Study stakeholder groups, impacted communities, and specific entities who will provide feedback, ideas, and input to the Study team as a collective group. This committee will also serve as a sounding board for public information dissemination and as a community liaison for the PEL Study. **Appendix B** contains a list of organizations and individuals included in the Community Advisory Group.

4.2.2 Partnering Working Groups (PWG)

These groups will be composed of individuals that represent specific geographic areas within the Corridor or specific topics or issues of concern that inform or impact the Study. These groups will provide feedback, ideas, and input to the Study team on their specific areas of interest. **Appendix C** contains a list of organizations and individuals included in Partnering Working Groups.

4.2.3 Public Meetings

Public meetings will be held in a hybrid format (in-person meeting paired with an on-demand, self-paced virtual meeting available online at the study website) or online-only. It is anticipated that there will be three public meetings during the Study. The first public meeting will be online-only. The second and third public meetings will be hybrid. In-person public meetings will be held



in an open-house format. The format of the virtual public meetings will vary depending on the goal of each meeting and the desired outcome.

Each meeting will be easily accessible; visual- and hearing-impaired-compliant; widely communicated; and inclusive in its approach, with translation services available if needed. The goal of each meeting will be to provide every attendee with the opportunity to provide comments for the PEL Study.

The three public meetings are planned in conjunction with the Study milestones and are designed to solicit public input on PEL Study milestones. These meetings include:

- **Public Meeting #1 Vision/Purpose and Need/Call for Alternatives** – introduce the Study, educate the public, build participation, solicit input on study considerations, receive input on the draft Purpose and Need Statement, and request feedback to inform alternatives development based on existing conditions data.
- **Public Meeting #2 Alternatives Development and Evaluation** – present the range of alternatives and prospective evaluation criteria for the alternatives being considered.
- **Public Meeting #3 Recommended Alternatives** – present the recommended alternatives to be carried forward to the public and stakeholders for input.

Table 5 summarizes the planned messaging for each public meeting and the associated PEL Study milestones.

Table 5. Content/Messaging for Each Public Meeting

Public Meeting	Public Meeting Content/Messaging	PEL Study Components Coverage
1	Learn about the Study, provide initial potential impacts, contribute to purpose and need, generate possible alternatives and sign up for study updates/become engaged	Study introduction, Purpose and Need Statement, Alternatives Development
2	Learn alternatives for evaluation, provide screening criteria feedback	Screening Criteria Input; Alternatives Screening
3	Review recommended alternative(s), provide feedback	Alternatives Screening Results; Recommended Alternative(s) Detail; Draft PEL Study Report

In preparation for public meetings and committees, the Study Team will prepare detailed messaging to be communicated for each public meeting. Each public meeting will have specific objectives and measurements for success. In-person public meetings are expected to last up to two hours.

Public Meetings Advertising

Two newspaper legal notices to be published are planned for each public meeting, with additional communication methods planned to remind stakeholders of the comment period dates and opportunity to comment. The first newspaper legal notice will be published at least 15 days prior to the date of an in-person public meeting or the date an online public meeting

becomes available on the study website. The second newspaper legal notice will be published at least seven days prior to the date of an in-person public meeting or the date an online public meeting becomes available on the study website. Publication of each legal notice will be included as documentation in the PEL Study Report. Each legal notice will be published in at least one newspaper serving each of the four counties in the Corridor. To comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) standards, required legal language will be inserted into the newspaper legal notice. The newspaper legal notice will be submitted to the IDOT for approval prior to submittal for publication.

Advertising will begin at least 15 days prior to the public meeting date. Public meeting advertisements will include public meeting details, comment period, engagement opportunities and ways to comment. Beyond newspaper legal notices, each public meeting will be advertised using social media, newsletters, postcards, emails/e-blasts, study website, listening posts, handouts, and news releases. Specific communication and advertising technique details are also listed in Sections 4.2.6 through 4.2.11.

4.2.4 Website

The Study Team will develop, host, and maintain a Study website available at XXX. The Study website will be capable of hosting an on-demand, self-paced virtual meeting and receiving public comments. The study website will contain the following sections:

- Study description
- Map of the Study area
- Schedule
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Marketing Facts/Key Messages
- Final Study documents
- Public Involvement Activities:
 - Newsletters
 - Public Meeting Materials
 - Videos
- Submission Form to Join Email List
- Comment Submission Form
- Contact Information to Reach the Study Team
- Resource Links

All content and updates will be reviewed and approved by IDOT before being published to the website.

4.2.5 Social Media

All social media content will be reviewed and approved by IDOT prior to posting. IDOT will provide a member of the Study public involvement team with access to existing social media accounts for posting organic and paid social media posts and monitoring and responding to comments as needed. It is anticipated that Facebook and X(Twitter) will be the primary platforms for social media outreach. Social media content will include, but not be limited to

meeting notifications, meeting reminders, comment period reminders, and study information. Social media content will include links information and visuals whenever possible. Social media posts and comments are not part of the official public record. Specific details on public meeting advertising and content are provided in Section 4.2.3.

4.2.6 Videos

The Study Team will prepare videos to provide an overview of the Study, introduce Study deliverables, and support public involvement. These may include short videos such as interviews with Study Team members or longer videos with animation, infographics, visualizations, and longer-form interviews with Study Team members or stakeholders.

4.2.7 Postcards

Postcards will be used to provide notice of public meetings or other specific public events. The Study Team will design, print, and mail postcards for distribution to contacts on the Study mailing list. IDOT will review and approve postcards prior to printing. A local postcard mailing service will be utilized for printing and mailing. It is anticipated that postcards will be mailed at least two weeks prior to each public meeting.

4.2.8 Emails

Email may be used for information distribution in addition or as an alternative to newsletters and postcards. The Study Team will maintain the email distribution list and send emails or e-blasts as directed by IDOT. E-blasts are like emails but use a communication service to track engagement and provide analytics, including open rate, read rate, and reach. E-blasts will announce public meetings, include Study information, and support the Study communication strategy.

4.2.9 One-on-One/Small Group Meetings

The Study Team will participate in one-on-one meetings and small group meetings with stakeholders as needed during the Study. The intent of this effort is to keep Study Team members informed of changing issues and stakeholder perspectives as well as provide stakeholders with progress updates and answer questions as the Study progresses. Stakeholder meetings may be virtual, by phone, or in-person.

4.2.10 Community Events

The Study Team will participate in community events during the Study. The intent of this effort is to raise awareness of the Study and encourage public participation by meeting people where they are at medium and large events taking place in the Corridor, such as fairs, festivals, and community gatherings. At each community event, the Study Team will display informational exhibits, provide handouts, be available to answer questions, and offer opportunities for public input.

4.2.11 Media Relations

The Study Team will engage media outlets, such as newspapers, radio stations, television stations, and online publications in the Corridor to encourage public and stakeholder involvement in the study. The IDOT Public Information Officer will be the media contact for the

Study. The Study Team will support IDOT with news releases, media advisories, briefing materials, and talking points as needed.

4.3 Communications Support

Communications support for the Study consists of the tasks or deliverables mentioned above, as well as the following ongoing communication tasks:

- The Study Team will serve as the point of contact for public and stakeholder inquiries regarding the Study, regardless of the source, as directed by IDOT.
- The Study Team will provide written and oral responses to Study-related comments, questions, and requests for information, and will draft letters to stakeholders as requested by IDOT. The Study Team will also track all Study-related comments and responses on an electronic spreadsheet.
- The Study Team will maintain and update the stakeholder database, Study website, and public involvement materials, and will provide updates to IDOT.
- Major website updates are anticipated to correspond with key Study milestones; minor updates are anticipated monthly.
- The Study Team will provide ongoing strategic advice to IDOT on public communication over the life of the Study.
- The Study Team will direct media inquiries to the IDOT Public Information Officer and IDOT Project Manager.

4.4 Timeframe and Frequency of Communication Activities

Table 6 provides the timeframe and frequency of anticipated communication activities during the PEL Study.



Table 6. Timeframe and frequency of Communication Activities

Coordination Phase	Timing	Communication Tools	Purpose
Ongoing Participation	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mailing lists • Email/E-blast • One-on-one/Small Group meetings • Study Website • Social Media • Comment database • Study deliverables distribution review and comment • Meetings at key points with CAG and PWGs • Translation of meeting notices and vital documents into target languages and accessible formats, when applicable • Videos • Community Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration – considering the opinions, actions, and relevant information from all parties • Cooperation – ensuring that the parties involved work together toward common goals • Consultation – conferring with other parties and considering their views before acting • Coordination – developing alternatives and recommendations, as well as refinements, in a cooperative manner striving for consensus
Project Initiation	Spring 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and Stakeholder Involvement Plan • Stakeholder Database • CAG and PWG initiation • Website • Initial Study materials • Initial kick-off meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal planning, coordination, and planning for Study initiation and Phase 1 communications
Phase 1 – Purpose and Need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study introduction • Public meeting #1 (Vision, Purpose and Need, generate possible alternatives) • Identify Issues and Concerns • Initial alternatives development 	Summer 2025 – Winter 2025/2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish Legal Notice in local newspapers • Notification of public meeting #1 • Email/E-blast #1 • Offer media briefing • News Release • Hold public meeting #1 (Summer 2025); 30-day comment period • CAG and PWG meetings • 1-1/small group meetings • Respond to comments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate and explain the PEL process • Validate the preliminary PEL purpose and need statement • Clarify the audience and stakeholders • Solicit for concerns and issues • Build a robust and diverse contact list • Generate ideas for possible alternatives



<p>Phase 2 – Alternatives Development & Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identification of the Range of Alternatives• Initial Screening Criteria	<p>Spring 2026 – Winter 2026/2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publish Legal Notice in local newspapers• Notification of public meeting #2• Email/E-blast #2• News Release• Hold public meeting #2 (Spring 2026); 30-day comment period• CAG and PWG meetings• 1-1/small group meetings• Respond to comments• Publish Purpose and Need Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present the range of viable alternatives, based on the purpose and need statement established in Phase 1• Explain the impacts of each alternative• Present preliminary design and traffic analysis, as well as preliminary environmental and technical analysis of the alternatives• Solicit input for screening criteria• Identify alternatives impacts and benefits using screening criteria• Obtain concurrence from state and federal permitting or approval agencies
<p>Phase 3 – Recommended Alternatives to be Carried Forward & PEL Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Screening of Alternatives to Identify Recommended Alternatives to be Carried Forward	<p>Spring 2027 – Fall 2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publish Legal Notice in local newspapers• Notification of public meeting #3• Email/E-blast #3• News Release• Hold public meeting #3 (Spring 2027); 30-day comment period• CAG and PWG meetings• 1-1/small group meetings• Respond to comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present the screening criteria and results• Present and explain the Recommended Alternatives to be Carried Forward• Communicate next steps
<p>Draft PEL Study Report</p>	<p>Fall 2027</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CAG and PWG meetings• Make draft PEL Study Report available on the study website• Request comments during a 30-day period• Publish Notice of Availability (NOA) in local newspapers• Email/E-blast #4• News Release• Respond to comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present the draft PEL Study Report• Receive comments on the draft PEL Study Report• Communicate next steps



Final PEL Study Report	Winter 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CAG and PWG meetings• Make the final PEL Study report available on the study website• Publish NOA in local newspapers• Email/E-blast #5• Offer media briefing• News Release• Request comments during a 30-day comment period• Respond to comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present the final PEL Study Report• Receive comments on the final PEL Study Report• Communicate next steps
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Table 6 is subject to change. Actual dates will coincide with Study activities and deliverables.

5.0 Comment Management

5.1 Comment Tracking and Response to Comments

Comments received on the Study will be collected and collated in a summarized narrative format. Comments will be inserted verbatim into a tracking spreadsheet, which will include summarized responses. The Study Team will use an Excel spreadsheet to streamline the tracking of public, agency, and stakeholder coordination, comments, and responses.

The Study public involvement team will be responsible for identifying comments that require immediate responses and for soliciting information and feedback from Study Team members to prepare responses.

A systematic approach to involvement that increases the type and extent of involvement if an interested party has substantial concerns about the PEL study, as required by 23 CFR 450.210, is shown in **Figure 5**.

Figure 5. Approach to Involvement for Substantial Concerns



5.2 Comment Protocol

The following protocol (see **Table 7**) has been developed to streamline tracking, integration, and response to comments received from the public and agencies. This protocol will be managed by the public involvement team and implemented by all Study Team representatives. Compliance will be monitored, and the protocol can be adjusted as necessary throughout the Study.

Table 7. Comment Collection Protocol

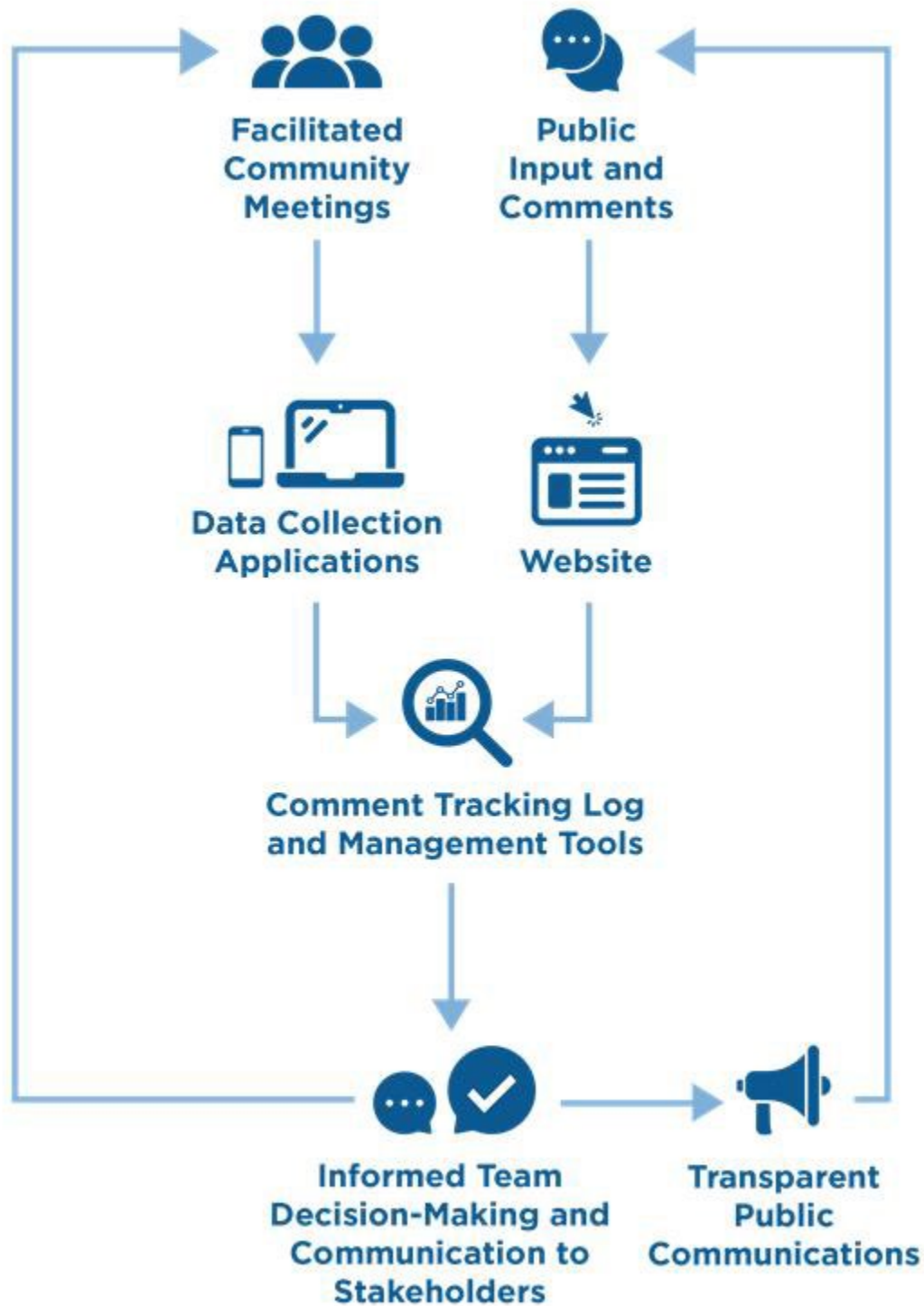
Comment Type	Procedure
Webpage and Email Inquiries	The web comment form will be programmed to submit directly to the public involvement team via the Study email address. Any emails received from the public or agencies will be forwarded to the public involvement team for inclusion in the comment tracking spreadsheet. Email will be converted to electronic, text-selectable Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files and stored in the Study files.
Inquiries Mailed to IDOT	Mail delivered to IDOT will be date stamped, scanned, and emailed to the public involvement team to enter into the comment tracking spreadsheet and will be stored electronically in the Study files.
Comment Forms	Comment forms mailed to IDOT will be date stamped, scanned, and forwarded to the PI Lead to be incorporated into the comment tracking spreadsheet. Forms collected at public meetings will be delivered to the public involvement team for entry into the comment tracking spreadsheet. Online comment forms submitted by email will be entered into the comment tracking spreadsheet.
Telephone Calls	The call receiver will summarize the call in the comment tracking spreadsheet.
Face-to-Face Conversations	Comments received in face-to-face conversations will be summarized in an email to the public involvement team.
Standard Responses	Standard responses to anticipated or frequently asked questions will be drafted to help facilitate the ease and consistency of responses to standard inquiries.
Media Inquiries	All media inquiries will be directed to the IDOT Public Information Officer.
Social Media Posts and Comments	Comments and questions submitted via social media will not be responded to or included in the comment tracking spreadsheet.

5.3 Comment and Communication Flow Charts

In each Study phase, public comments will be collected and recorded in the comment tracking spreadsheet and will be addressed or responded to, as appropriate upon prior written approval from IDOT. The Study Team will serve as the point of contact for public inquiries on the Study regardless of the source and will prepare and provide written and oral responses to comments, questions, and requests for information. The Study Team will prepare draft letters to stakeholders as requested by the IDOT. All comments received from various methods will be documented and captured in the comment tracking log and considered in the PEL Study.

Public comments and information received from the methods described in Table 7 will follow the communication flow shown in **Figure 6**.

Figure 6. Comment Flow Chart





5.4 Communication/Public Involvement Summary Reports

A summary report will be prepared within two weeks after the close of each public meeting comment period. The summary report will include the number of meeting attendees, key stakeholders present, outreach methods, materials, media mentions, results of communication efforts, staff notes, and the comment tracking spreadsheet. Each summary report will become an appendix to the PEL Study Report to document the communication and PI effort conducted throughout the Study and satisfy the PEL process.

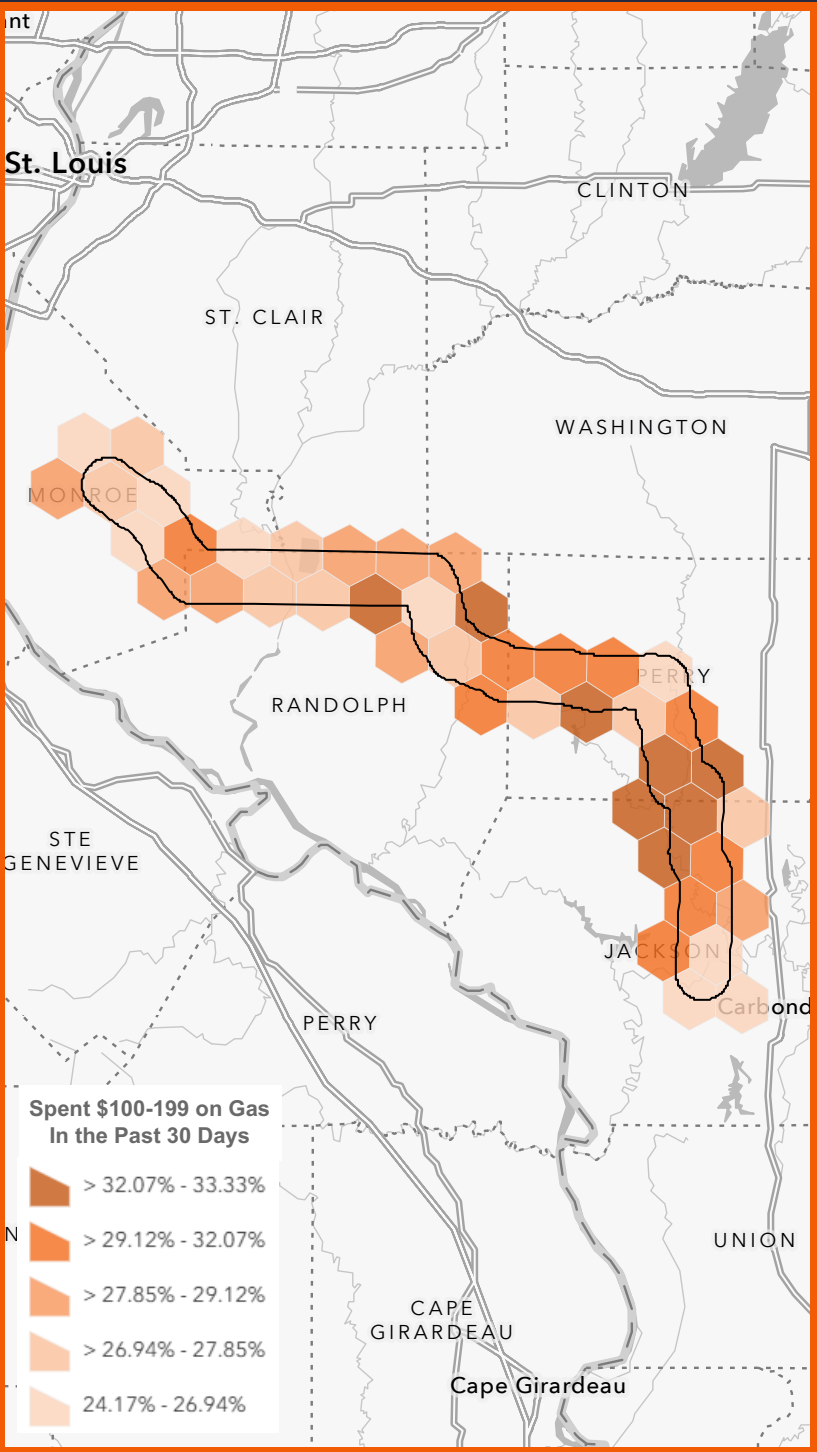


Appendix A: Community Analysis



Community Profile

Southwest Illinois Connector - Two-Mile Buffer



Population and Households (ACS)

28,476

Total Population

12,316

Total Households

\$57,559

Median Household Income

13%

Below the Poverty Level

14%

No Internet Access

4%

Pop 65+ Without A Computer

Employment (ACS)

4%

Unemployed Age 16+ (Esri)



18.9%

Services

1,251

Businesses



29.5%

Blue Collar

12,571

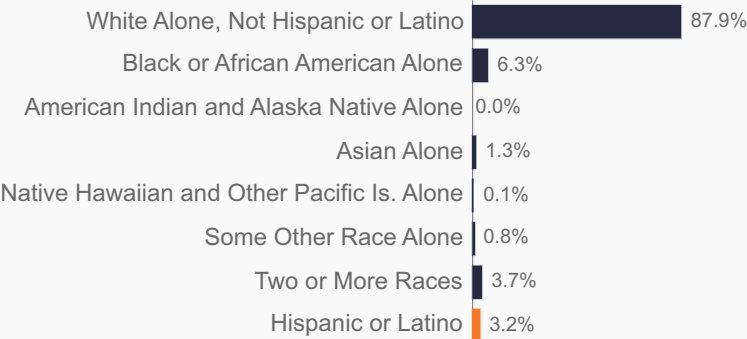
Employees



51.6%

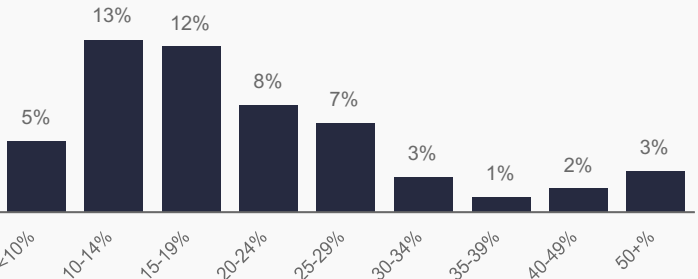
White Collar

Race/Ethnicity (ACS)

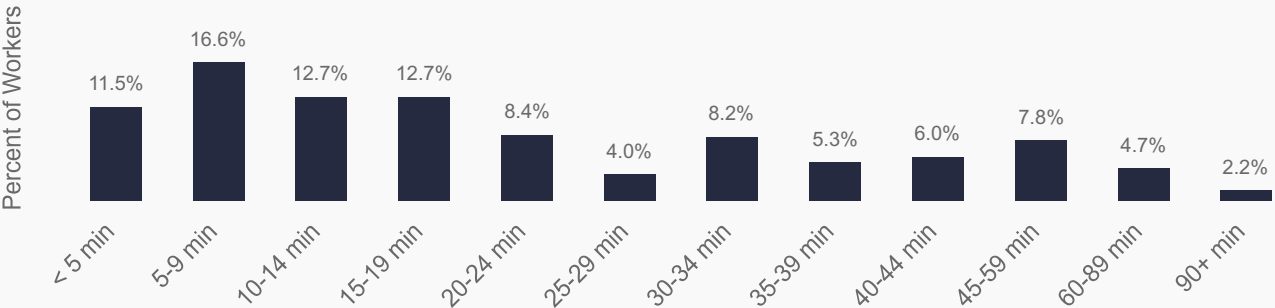


Percentages should add up to 100% without including Hispanic or Latino. People of Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race group(s).

Mortgage as Percent of Salary (ACS)

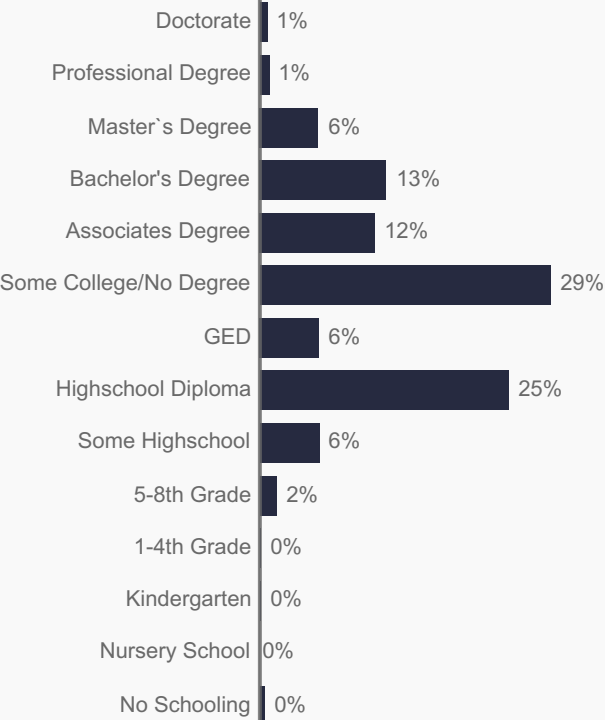


Travel Time to Work (ACS)



Educational Attainment (ACS)

Population Age 25+





Hard-To-Reach Stakeholders (ACS)



13%

Households Below the Poverty Level



2%

Owner Households with No Vehicles



17%

Percent Minority (2024 Esri)



7%

Females 20-64 in Work Force with Child <6



16%

Households Receiving Food Stamps/SNAP



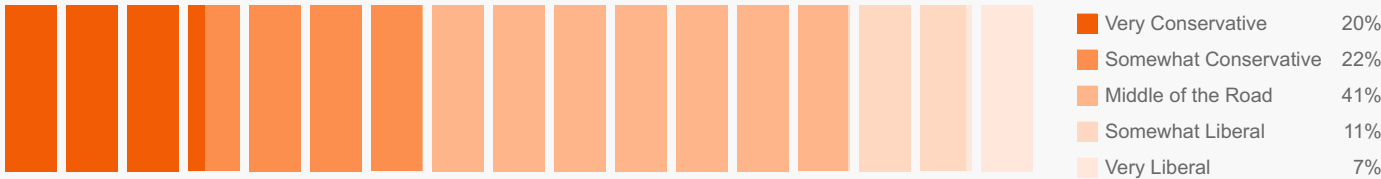
32%

Houeholds with 1+ Persons with a Disability

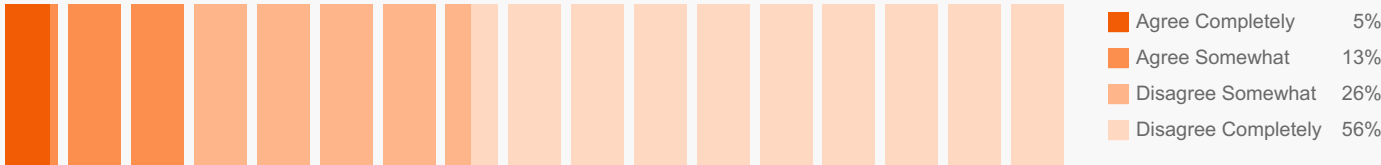
Language Spoken (ACS)	Age 5-17	18-64	Age 65+	Total
Spanish & English Not Well	0	7	8	15
Spanish & No English	0	73	0	73
Indo-European & English Not Well	0	0	5	5
Indo-European & No English	0	0	0	0
Asian-Pacific Isl & English Not Well	0	1	0	1
Asian-Pacific Isl & No English	0	0	0	0
Other Language & English Not Well	0	0	0	0
Other Language & No English	0	0	0	0

Perceptions (MRI Simmons)

Political Outlook



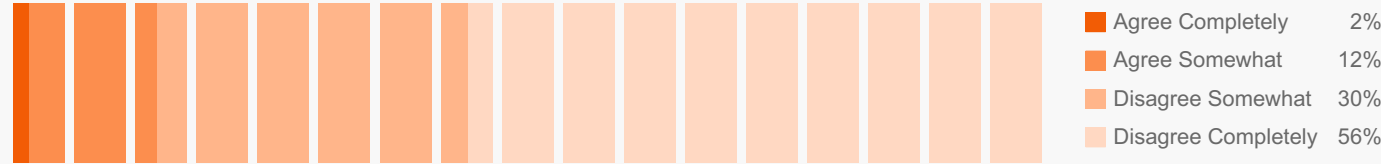
Travel Options Lessen My Need For A Car



I Access Internet Mainly Though the Phone



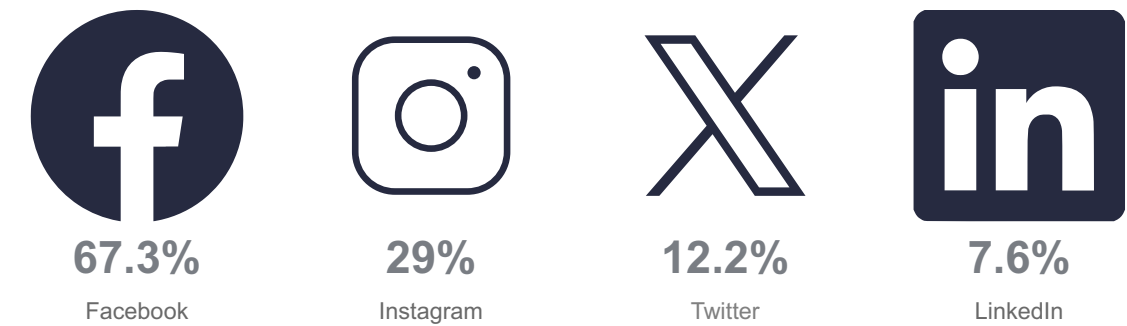
I Trust Information Shared On Social Media



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



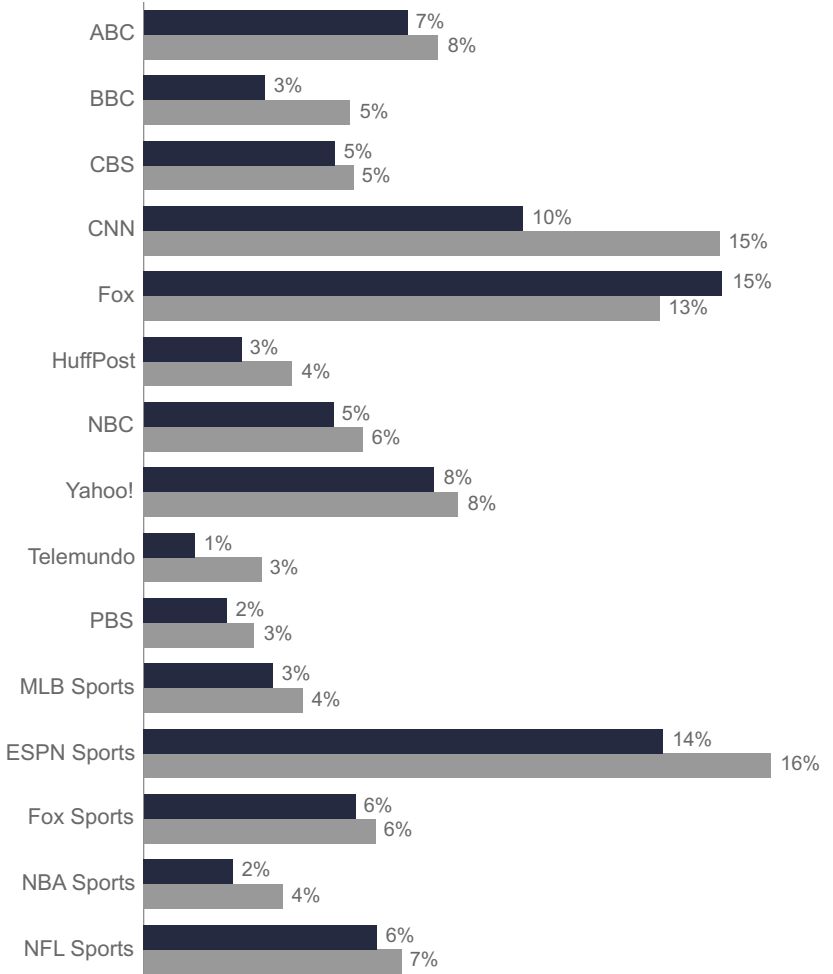
Social Media Usage - Past 30 Days (Esri)



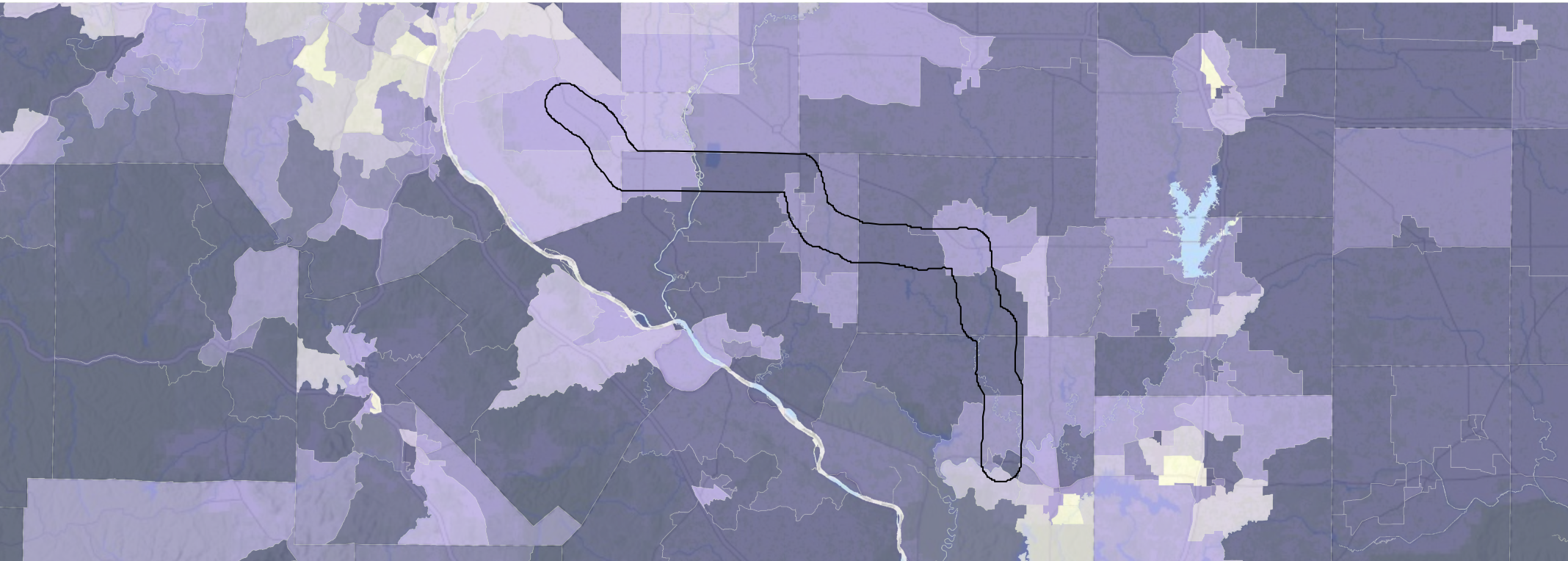
Internet and Device Ownership (2024 Esri)

	HH %
2024 Used Computer to Access Internet/30 Days (%)	72%
Fiber Optic Internet at Home	13%
Cable Modem Internet at Home	13%
Broadband or High Speed Internet at Home	92%
Satellite Internet Connection at Home	5%
Watched TV program online (%)	19%
Used Spanish language website in last app (%)	2%
Own a Tablet	54%
Own a Smartphone	93%
Own a iPhone	48%
Own a Android	46%

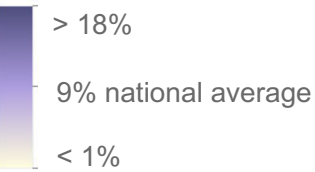
Online News Consumption (Past 30 Days)



Percent of Households with No Internet Access (ACS)



Bars show comparison to Illinois

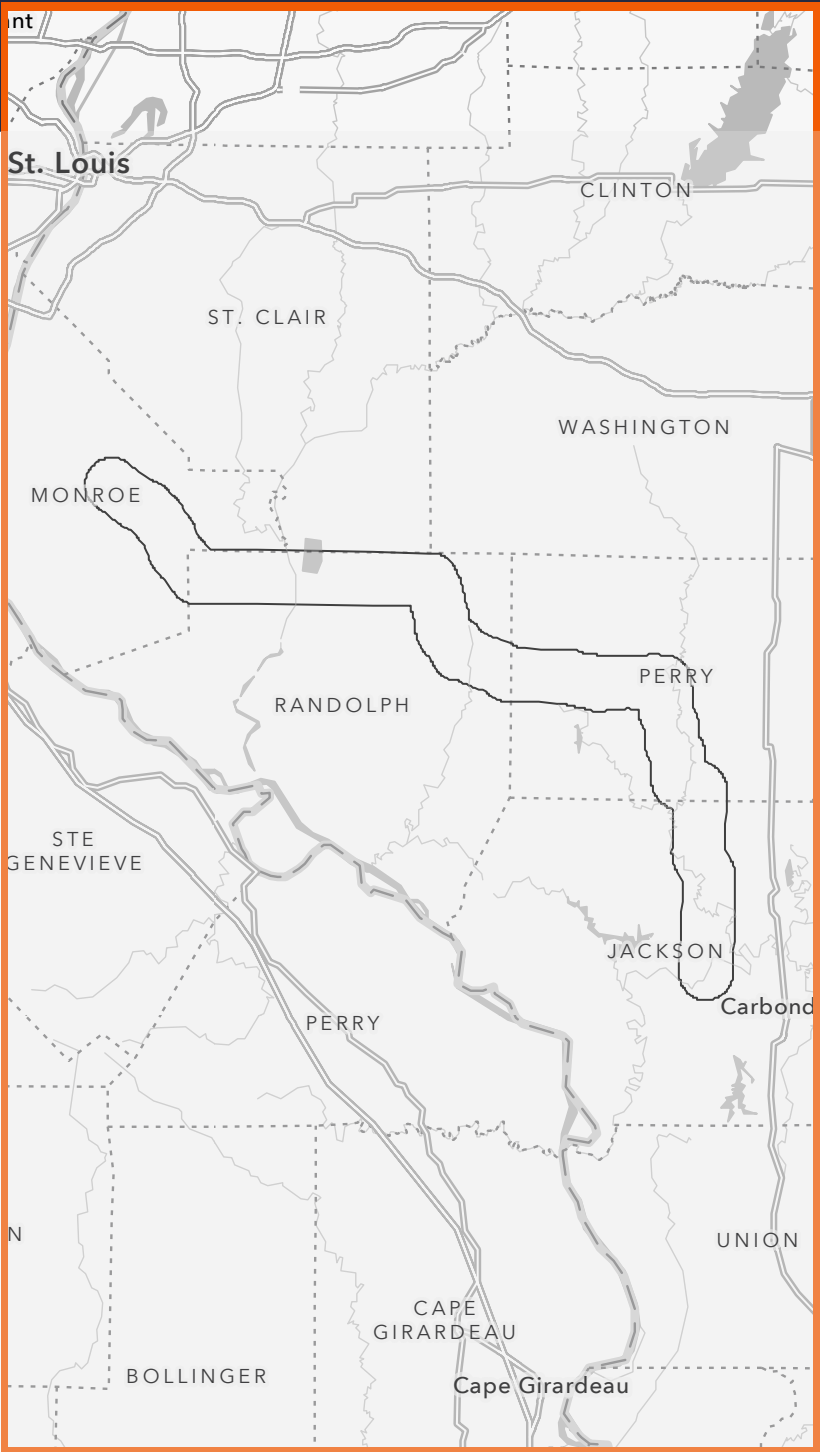


Source: This infographic contains data provided by ACS (2018-2022), Esri (2024), Esri-Data Axle (2024), Esri-MRI-Simmons (2024).



Community Profile

Southwest Illinois Connector - Two-Mile Buffer



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Unemployed Age
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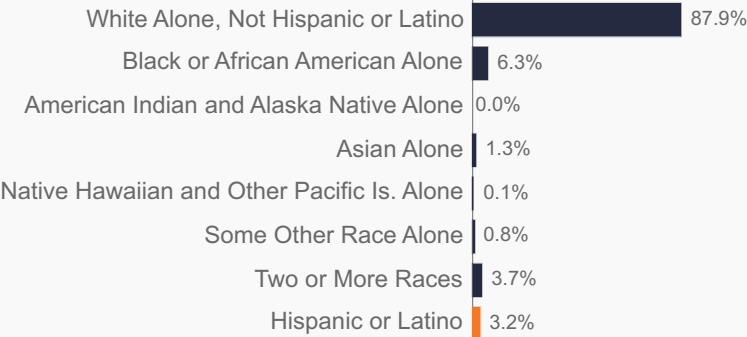
Blue Collar



51.6%

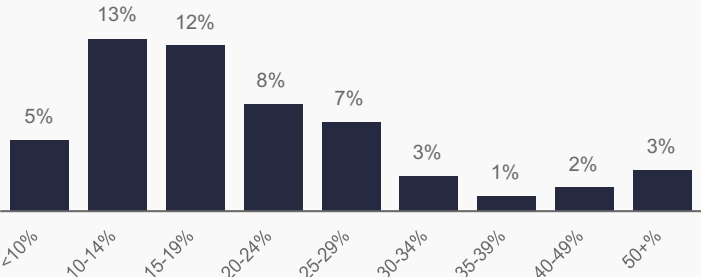
White Collar

Race/Ethnicity (ACS)

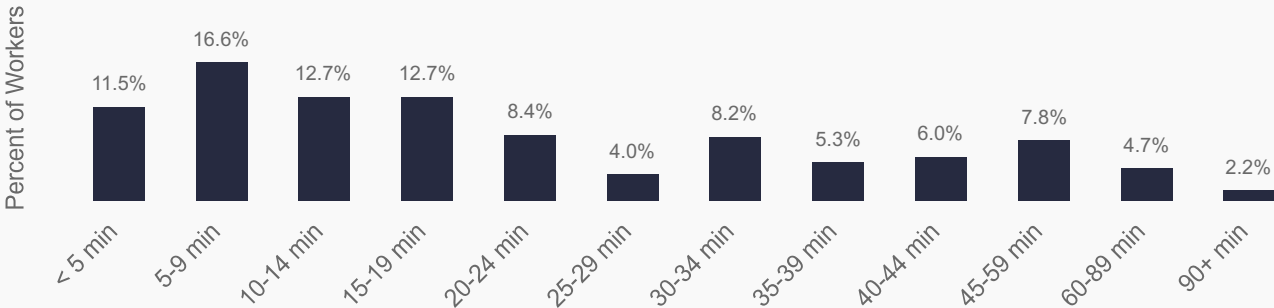


Percentages should add up to 100% without including Hispanic or Latino.
People of Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race group(s).

Mortgage as Percent of Salary (ACS)

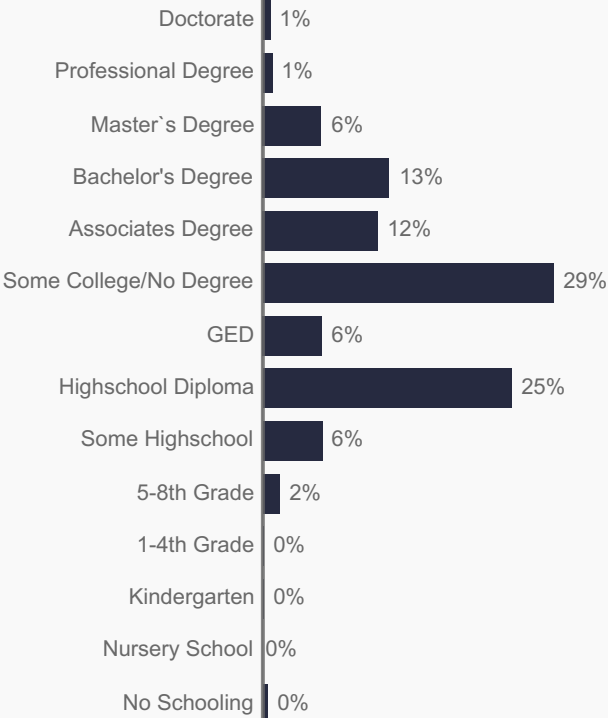


Travel Time to Work (ACS)



Educational Attainment (ACS)

Population Age 25+





Appendix B: Community Advisory Group List

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Agency</u>
Dave Holder	Board Chairman	Randolph County
Grant Deterding	County Engineer	Randolph County Highway Department
TBD	TBD	Randolph County Economic Development
Mark Kiehna*	Past Chairman	Randolph County/Southwest Connector Coalition
Chris Martin		Randolph County Progress Committee
Bruce Morganstern*	Board Chairman	Perry County
Brian Otten	County Engineer	Perry County Highway Department
John Rendleman*	Board Member	Jackson County
C.J. Calandro	Board Chairman	Jackson County
Mitch Burdick, P.E.	County Engineer	Jackson County Highway Department
George Green	Board Chairman	Monroe County
Aaron Metzger, P.E.	County Engineer	Monroe County Highway Department
Stanley Darter	Mayor	City of Waterloo
J.R. Landeck	Public Works Director	City of Waterloo
Susan Harbaugh	Mayor	City of Red Bud
Josh Eckart	Superintendent of Public Works	City of Red Bud
Jill Landgraf	Administrative Officer	City of Red Bud
Virgil Chandler	Village President	Village of Baldwin
Beverly Harms	Village Clerk	Village of Baldwin
Jason Schlimme	Mayor	City of Sparta
Angie Peters	City Clerk	City of Sparta
Robert L. Spencer	Mayor	City of Pinckneyville
Sam Peradotta	Commissioner of Streets and Public Improvements	City of Pinckneyville
Donald H. Wisely	Mayor	Village of Vergennes
Will Stephens*	Mayor	City of Murphysboro
Carolyn Harvey*	Mayor	City of Carbondale
Herbert Simmons	President	Southwest Illinois Metropolitan and Regional Planning Commission
James Wild	Executive Director	East West Gateway Council of Governments
Cary Minnis	Executive Director	Greater Egypt Regional Planning and Development Commission
Dawn McClarren	Executive Director	Murphysboro Chamber of Commerce
Mary C. Lamie	Executive Director	St. Louis Freightway



Margaret Onken	Chief Engagement Officer	Greater St. Louis Chamber of Commerce
Ed Weilbacher	Chairman	Kaskaskia Regional Port District
Alyssa Connell	Executive Director	Southern Illinois Airport
		Western Egyptian Economic Opportunity Council
Deborah Barnett	Executive Director	Southern Illinois NOW
Darlene Chapman	President	Discover Downstate Illinois
	Manager	Jackson County Farm Bureau
		Monroe County Farm Bureau
		Perry County Farm Bureau
Braylee Fink	Manager	Randolph County Farm Bureau
Michael McConachie	Chairman	Randolph County Farm Bureau
Skip Klinger	Executive Director	World Shooting and Recreation Complex
Jeff Harmon	Chief Communications and Marketing Officer	Southern Illinois University - Carbondale
Nick Mance	President	Southwestern Illinois College
Anthony Hebron	VP, Marketing and Communications	Illinois Realtors
Stephanie Redfield	Communications Coordinator	Illinois Municipal League
	Kaskaskia River State Fish and Wildlife Area	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Chris Hespen	Pyramid State Recreation Area	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Cindy Zipfel	Administrative Coordinator	Monroe County Soil and Water Conservation District
		Jackson County IL Soil & Water Conservation District
Martha Morgenstern	Resource Conservationist	Perry County Soil and Water Conservation District
Cheryl Houghlan	Administrative Coordinator	Randolph County Soil and Water Conservation District
Bill Graff	State Executive Director	U.S. Department of Agriculture
Andrew Schlichting		Natural Resources Conservation Service
Noralyn Kelly		Farm Service Agency
		Illinois Caverns State Natural Area
		Randolph County State Recreation Area
Adam Lach	Chief Executive Officer	Rides Mass Transit District
Jesica Gentry Schlimme	Executive Director	Monroe Randolph Transit District



Appendix C: Stakeholder List

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Agency</u>
Elected Officials		
Mike Bost	U.S. Representative	Congressional District 12
David Friess	IL State Representative	Illinois General Assembly - 115th District
Paul Jacobs	IL State Representative	Illinois General Assembly - 118th District
Terri Bryant	IL State Senator	Illinois Senate - District 58
Dale Fowler	IL State Senator	Illinois Senate - District 59
Richard Durbin	U.S. Senator	U.S. Senate
Tammy Duckworth	U.S. Senator	U.S. Senate
Stanley Darter	Mayor	City of Waterloo
Mechelle Childers	City Clerk	City of Waterloo
Susan Harbaugh	Mayor	City of Red Bud
Joanne Cowell	City Clerk	City of Red Bud
Sheila Wetzler	Administrative Assistant	Monroe County Board of Commissioners
Kelton Davis	Regional Superintendent of Schools	Monroe and Randolph Counties
Dave Holder	Board Chairman/Budget Director	Randolph County Board of Commissioners
Virgil Chandler	Village President	Village of Baldwin
Jason Schlimme	Mayor	City of Sparta
Angie Peters	City Clerk	City of Sparta
Robert L. Spencer	Mayor	City of Pinckneyville
Melanie Johnson	County Clerk and Recorder	Randolph County Clerk
Melissa Kellerman	City Clerk	City of Pinckneyville
Jennifer Martin	Commissioner	Perry County Board of Commissioners
Joseph Folden	Commissioner	Perry County Board of Commissioners
		Jackson County Board
Donald Wisely	Mayor	Village of Vergennes
Rochelle Robinson	City Clerk	Village of Vergennes
Will Stephens*	Mayor	City of Murphysboro
Gina Hunziker	City Clerk	City of Murphysboro
Carolyn Harvey*	Mayor	City of Carbondale
Matt Buettner	Alderman - Ward I	City of Waterloo
Joel Vogt	Alderman - Ward I	City of Waterloo
Jim Trantham	Alderman - Ward II	City of Waterloo
Jim Hopkins	Alderman - Ward II	City of Waterloo
Kyle Buettner	Alderman - Ward III	City of Waterloo
Tina Charron	Alderman - Ward III	City of Waterloo
Jordon Riley	Alderman - Ward IV	City of Waterloo
Gary Most	Alderman - Ward IV	City of Waterloo



Jeremy DeMond	Council Member - Ward I	City of Red Bud
Bryce Parsons	Council Member - Ward I	City of Red Bud
Kyle Donjon	Council Member - Ward II	City of Red Bud
Bill Hanebutt	Council Member - Ward II	City of Red Bud
Rodney Nevois	Council Member - Ward III	City of Red Bud
Curt Guebert	Council Member - Ward III	City of Red Bud
Alan Piel	Council Member - Ward IV	City of Red Bud
Patrick Mueller	Council Member - Ward IV	City of Red Bud
County and Municipal Staff		
Kevin Hicks	Commissioner of Public Health and Safety	City of Pinckneyville
Sam Peradotta	Commissioner of Streets and Public Improvements	City of Pinckneyville
Joshua Kuhnert	Commissioner of Public Property	City of Pinckneyville
William Stotlar	Commissioner of Accounts and Finance	City of Pinckneyville
Alan Young	Commissioner of Accounts and Finance	City of Sparta
Mike Kelley	Commissioner of Streets and Public Improvements	City of Sparta
Bobby Klausing	Commissioner of Public Property	City of Sparta
Gary Hanna	Commissioner of Public Health and Safety	City of Sparta
Core Rheinecker	City Manager	City of Sparta
Jance Curry-Witzman	Alderman - Ward I	City of Murphysboro
Barbara Hughes	Alderman - Ward I	City of Murphysboro
Rick Runge	Alderman - Ward II	City of Murphysboro
Michael Austin	Alderman - Ward II	City of Murphysboro
W. J. Pittman	Alderman - Ward III	City of Murphysboro
Angela Jackson	Alderman - Ward III	City of Murphysboro
Gary McComb	Alderman - Ward IV	City of Murphysboro
John Erbes	Alderman - Ward IV	City of Murphysboro
Don Gladden	Alderman - Ward V	City of Murphysboro
Scott Strack	Alderman - Ward V	City of Murphysboro
Carol Best	Randolph County Administrator	Randolph County
Grant Deterding	County Engineer	Randolph County Highway Department
Chris Martin	Director	Randolph County Progress Committee
Bruce Morganstern*	Board Chairman	Perry County
Brian Otten	County Engineer	Perry County Highway Department
John Rendleman*	Board Member	Jackson County
C.J. Calandro	Board Chairman	Jackson County
Mitch Burdick, P.E.	County Engineer	Jackson County Highway Department
George Green	Board Chairman	Monroe County
George Green	Chairman	Monroe County Economic Development Corporation
Aaron Metzger, P.E.	County Engineer	Monroe County Highway Department



J.R. Landeck	Public Works Director	City of Waterloo
Josh Eckart	Superintendent of Public Works	City of Red Bud
Jill Landgraf	Administrative Officer	City of Red Bud
Jeff Mueller	Code Administrator/City Engineer	City of Red Bud
Dawn McClarren	Executive Director	Murphysboro Chamber of Commerce
Carrie Gilliam	Economic Development Coordinator	City of Pinckneyville
Donald H. Wisely		Village of Vergennes
Stan Reno	City Manager	City of Carbondale
		Monroe County Electric Cooperative, INC
J.R. Landeck	Public Works Director	Waterloo Electric Department
J.R. Landeck	Public Works Director	Waterloo Gas Department
Eric Whitfield	Director, Economic Development	Ameren Illinois
		Harrisonville Telephone Company
		Reliable Sanitation
Kevin Liefer	President	Egyptian Electric Cooperative Association
		Southern Illinois Power Cooperative
Shawn Kirkland	Water Plant - Southeast Waste Water Treatment Plant	Water & Sewer Department
Other Agencies		
Deb Grapperhaus, BS, LEHP	Public Information Officer	Randolph County Health Department
Brian Eckert	Assistant Administrator	Monroe County Health Department
Margaret Ashmore	Interim Administrator	Perry County Health Department
Dr. Sherry Jones	Board President	Jackson County Board of Health
		Cartersville Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office
Pam Poetker	Executive Director	Monroe County Economic Development
		City of Red Bud Public Works Department
Vershun Tolliver	Division Administrator	Federal Highway Administration - Illinois Division
		U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
		Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
	Region V Office - Southern Illinois	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
James Wild	Executive Director	East West Gateway Council of Governments
Jayette Bolinski	Media Contact	Illinois Department of Natural Resources - Historic Preservation Division
Herbert Simmons	Treasurer	Southwest Illinois Metropolitan and Regional Planning Commission
Margaret Onken	Chief Engagement Officer	Greater St. Louis Chamber of Commerce
		Western Egyptian Economic Opportunity Council
	Monroe County Outreach Office	Western Egyptian Economic Opportunity Council
	Randolph County Outreach Office	Western Egyptian Economic Opportunity Council



	Perry County Outreach Office	Western Egyptian Economic Opportunity Council
	Jackson County Outreach Office	Western Egyptian Economic Opportunity Council
Deborah Barnett	Executive Director	Southern Illinois NOW
Darlene Chapman	President	Discover Downstate Illinois
	Kaskaskia River State Fish and Wildlife Area	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
	Pyramid State Recreation Area	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Cindy Zipfel	Administrative Coordinator	Monroe County Soil and Water Conservation District
		Jackson County IL Soil & Water Conservation District
Martha Morgenstern	Resource Conservationist	Perry County Soil and Water Conservation District
Cheryl Houghlan	Administrative Coordinator	Randolph County Soil and Water Conservation District
Bill Graff	State Executive Director	U.S. Department of Agriculture Perry, Randolph, Jackson, and Monroe County Farm Service Agencies
Andrew Schlichting		Natural Resources Conservation Service Murphysboro, Pinckneyville, and Sparta Service Centers
Noralyn Kelly		Farm Service Agency - Sparta Service Center
		Illinois Caverns State Natural Area
		Randolph County State Recreation Area
Community Partners		
Pat Vaseska	President	Monroe County Historical Society
Mark Kiehna	Past Chairman	Randolph County/Southwest Connector Coalition
Cary Minnis	Executive Director	Greater Egypt Regional Planning and Development Commission
TBD	TBD	Randolph County Economic Development
Mary C. Lamie	Executive Director	St. Louis Freightway
Matt Hart	Executive Director	Illinois Trucking Association
Stephanie Redfield	Communications Coordinator	Illinois Municipal League
		Illinois State Association of Counties
Anthony Hebron	VP, Marketing and Communications	Illinois Realtors
	Manager	Jackson County Farm Bureau
		Monroe County Farm Bureau
		Perry County Farm Bureau
Braylee Fink	Manager	Randolph County Farm Bureau
Emergency Responders		
Carla Heise	Director	Monroe County EMS
Kevin Scheibe	Public Safety Director EMA/911	Monroe County 911
Neal Rohlfing	County Sheriff	Monroe County Sheriff's Department
Jarrold Peters	County Sheriff	Randolph County
Chad Howard	Sheriff	Perry County



Doug Clark	E-911 Coordinator	Perry County
Kenton Schafer	Chief	Jackson County Ambulance Department Headquarters
Orval Rowe	Coordinator	Jackson County Emergency Management Agency
Robert Burns	Sheriff	Jackson County Sheriff's Office
		Baldwin Community Fire Protection District
Chief Tom Elliff	President	St. Clair/Monroe County Fire Chiefs Association
Joe Gregson	President	Hecker Fire Department
Tim Rucks	Fire Chief	Sparta Fire Department
Curtis Miller	Fire Chief	Pinckneyville Fire Department
		Vergennes Fire Department
Steve McBride	Fire Chief	Murphysboro Fire Department
Charlie Bargman	Coordinator	Randolph County Emergency Management Agency
		Perry County Emergency Management Agency
Businesses and Organizations		
Skip Klinger	Executive Director	World Shooting and Recreation Complex
		Red Bud Industries
Robert Spencer	Chairman	Pinckneyville-Du Quoin Airport Board
Ed Weilbacher	Chairman	Kaskaskia Regional Port District
Jeff Harmon	Chief Communications and Marketing Officer	Southern Illinois University - Carbondale
		Southwestern Illinois College - Red Bud Campus
Randall Dauby	Hospital Administrator/Chief Executive Officer	Pinckneyville Community Hospital
Jennifer Gregson	Chief Administrative Officer	Red Bud Regional Hospital
		Sparta Community Hospital
Craig Jesiolowski	VP, Administrator	SIH St Joseph Memorial Hospital
		Knight Hawk Coal, LLC
Mary Compton	Communications	Peabody Coal Mining
		Ill Central
Kelton Davis	Regional Superintendent of Schools	Monroe-Randolph Counties Regional Office of Education
Brian Charron	Superintendent	Waterloo Unit School District No. 5
Jonathan Tallman	Superintendent	Red Bud Community Unit School District 132
Chris Miesner	Superintendent	Sparta Community Unit School District 140
Brian Pasero	Superintendent	Pinckneyville District 50 Schools
Jerry Travelstead	Superintendent	COMMUNITY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT #204
Andrea Evers	Superintendent	Murphysboro Community Unit School District #186
Shawn Freeman	Director	Jackson County Mass Transit Administrative
		South Central Transit - Du Quoin



		Greyhound Lines, Inc
Adam Lach	Chief Executive Officer	RIDES Mass Transit District
		Waterloo Sportsman's Club
Bob Polansky	Executive Director	Camp Wartburg
	Perry County Soccer Association	Perry County Soccer Complex
		Columbia Quarry Co
		K-River Motel & Campground
		Gateway FS
		Sparta Walmart Supercenter #222
		Murphysboro Walmart Supercenter #302
Kenneth Hanshaw	President	Murphysboro Baseball Inc
Wayne Keller	Chariman	Illinois Rural Heritage Museum
		Acorns Golf Links
		Gander Hill Goose Club
Alyssa Connell	Executive Director	Southern Illinois Airport