



ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED RAIL

CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS

EXPERIENCE IT YOURSELF.

Welcome!

ELWOOD TO BRAIDWOOD
ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT

Public Hearing



Illinois Department
of Transportation

www.idothesr.org

Elwood to Braidwood

Environmental Assessment (EA)

EXPERIENCE IT YOURSELF.

BACKGROUND

- > IDOT has actively developed the Chicago to St. Louis High-Speed Rail (HSR) corridor since the mid '80s.
- > Elwood to Braidwood is one component of the Chicago to St. Louis HSR Program.
- > An Environmental Assessment (EA) was recently completed for Elwood to Braidwood per National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements.



**ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED RAIL**
CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS



www.idothsr.org

Elwood to Braidwood

HSR Corridor Map

EXPERIENCE IT YOURSELF.



**ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED RAIL**
CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS



**Illinois Department
of Transportation**

www.idothsr.org

Elwood to Braidwood

Purpose and Need

EXPERIENCE IT YOURSELF.

PROJECT PURPOSE:

- > Implement the HSR Program from 2012 between Elwood to Braidwood.
- > Improve or replace deteriorating or functionally obsolete components.
- > Improve maintenance efficiency.
- > Improve Prairie Creek bridge at MP 49.52.
- > Discourage pedestrians from crossing tracks.
- > Correct existing track drainage problems.

OVERALL PURPOSE AND NEED FOR TIER 1 CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS HSR PROGRAM

PURPOSE:

Enhance the passenger transportation network in the corridor by improving high-speed passenger-rail service.

NEEDS:

- Improve current modal imbalance within the corridor.
- Improve on-time performance for rail.
- Accommodate existing and projected freight and passenger train traffic.
- Provide safer alternative mode to car or bus along the corridor.



**ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED RAIL**
CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS



www.idothsr.org

Elwood to Braidwood

Renderings of Proposed Typical Improvements

EXPERIENCE IT YOURSELF.

Alternative Route 66



Alternative Route 66



Milepost 47.99
Overhead Bridge
Looking South
(Alternative 1B)



Milepost 49.91
Damian Mills
Looking South
(Alternative 2A)

Railroad Maintenance Access Facility



ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED RAIL
CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS



www.idothsr.org

Elwood to Braidwood

Evaluation of Alternatives

EXPERIENCE IT YOURSELF.

DESCRIPTION	NO-BUILD ALTERNATIVE	BUILD ALTERNATIVE 1B (PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE)	BUILD ALTERNATIVE 2A
New Track Location	N/A	West side of existing track	
Railroad Maintenance Access Facility	Access only via rail line	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- East side (Elwood to Hoff Road)- West side (Hoff Road to Damien Mills Road)- East side (Damien Mills Road to Kankakee River Road)	East side (entire length)
Retaining Wall	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 1,500 foot retaining wall constructed on the west side of the proposed railroad maintenance access facility, at MP 48.15 to avoid affecting an existing gas line that parallels the tracks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 18,000 feet of retaining walls to minimize encroachment on Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie (MNTP), avoid impacts to Industry tracks, and minimize encroachment on IL-53
Other Elements	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Constructs a new Prairie Creek railroad bridge- Removes 3,203 track feet of previously abandoned track between Wilmington and Braidwood- Would accommodate the new second track by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modifying grade-crossing protection devices• Installing fencing• Replacing or lengthening culverts and other drainage improvements	
Likely Construction Period	N/A	18 to 24 months	24 to 30 months



**ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED RAIL**
CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS



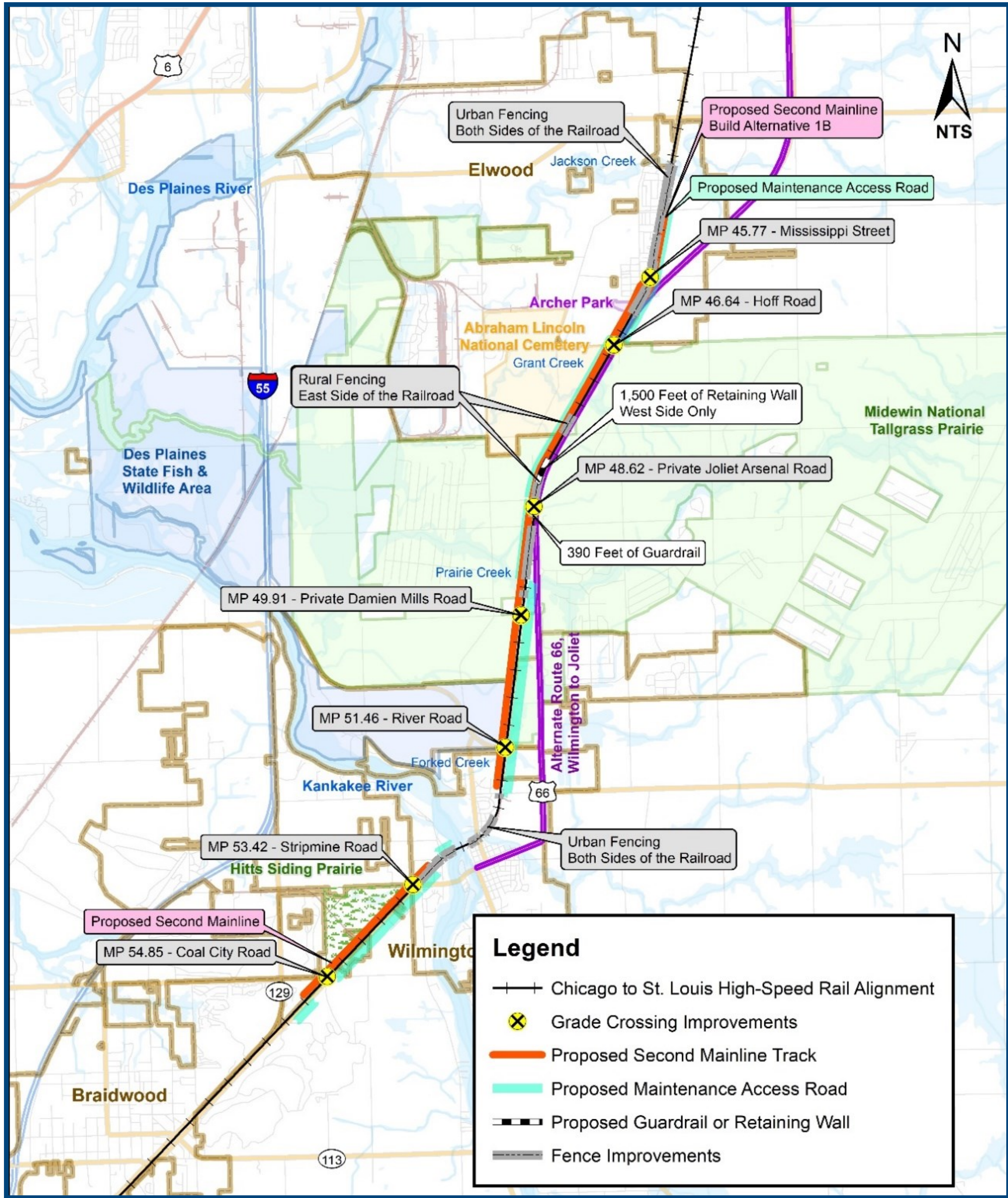
www.idothsr.org

Elwood to Braidwood

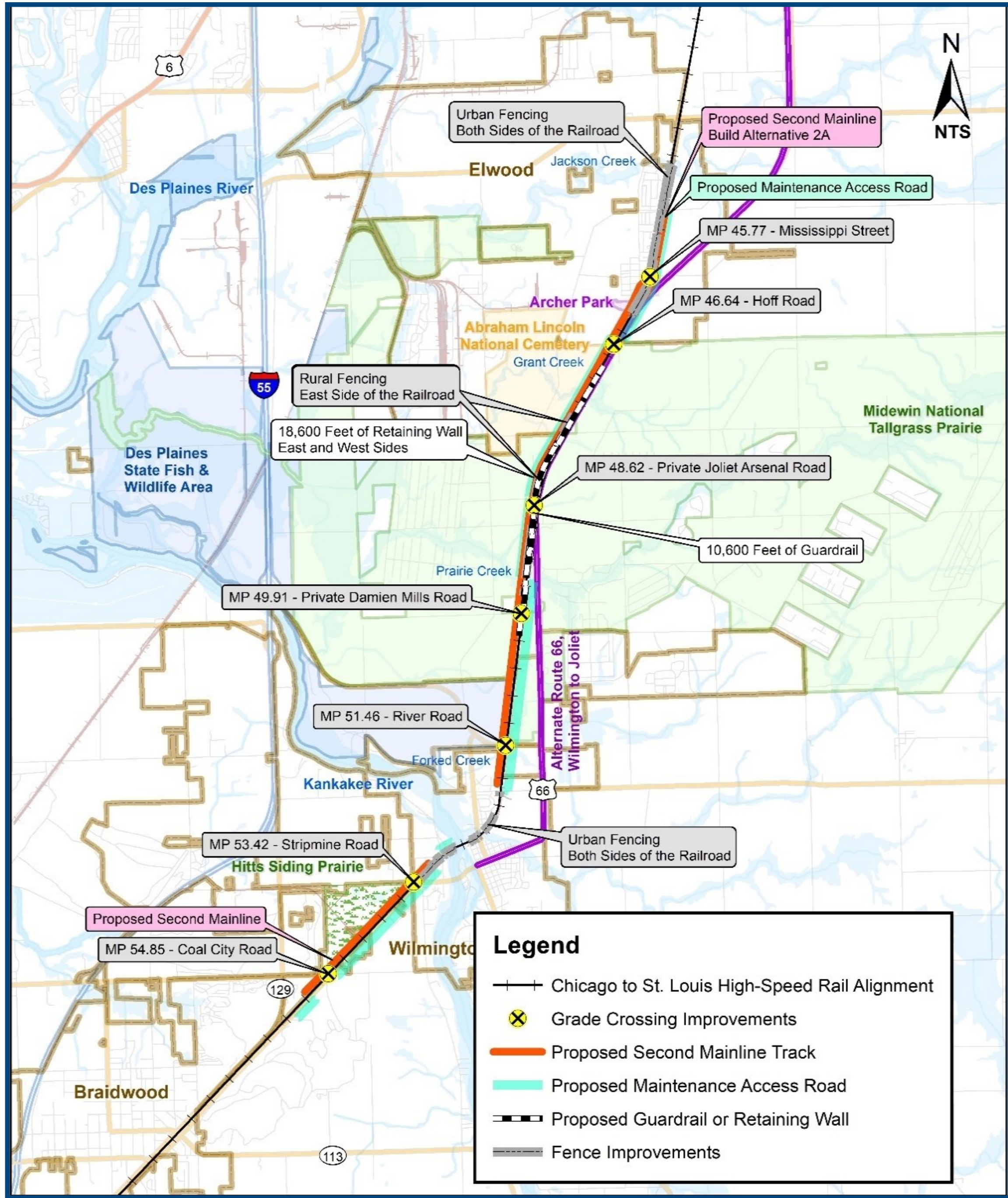
Comparison of Alternatives Evaluated in EA

EXPERIENCE IT YOURSELF.

BUILD ALTERNATIVE 1B



BUILD ALTERNATIVE 2A



ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED RAIL
CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS

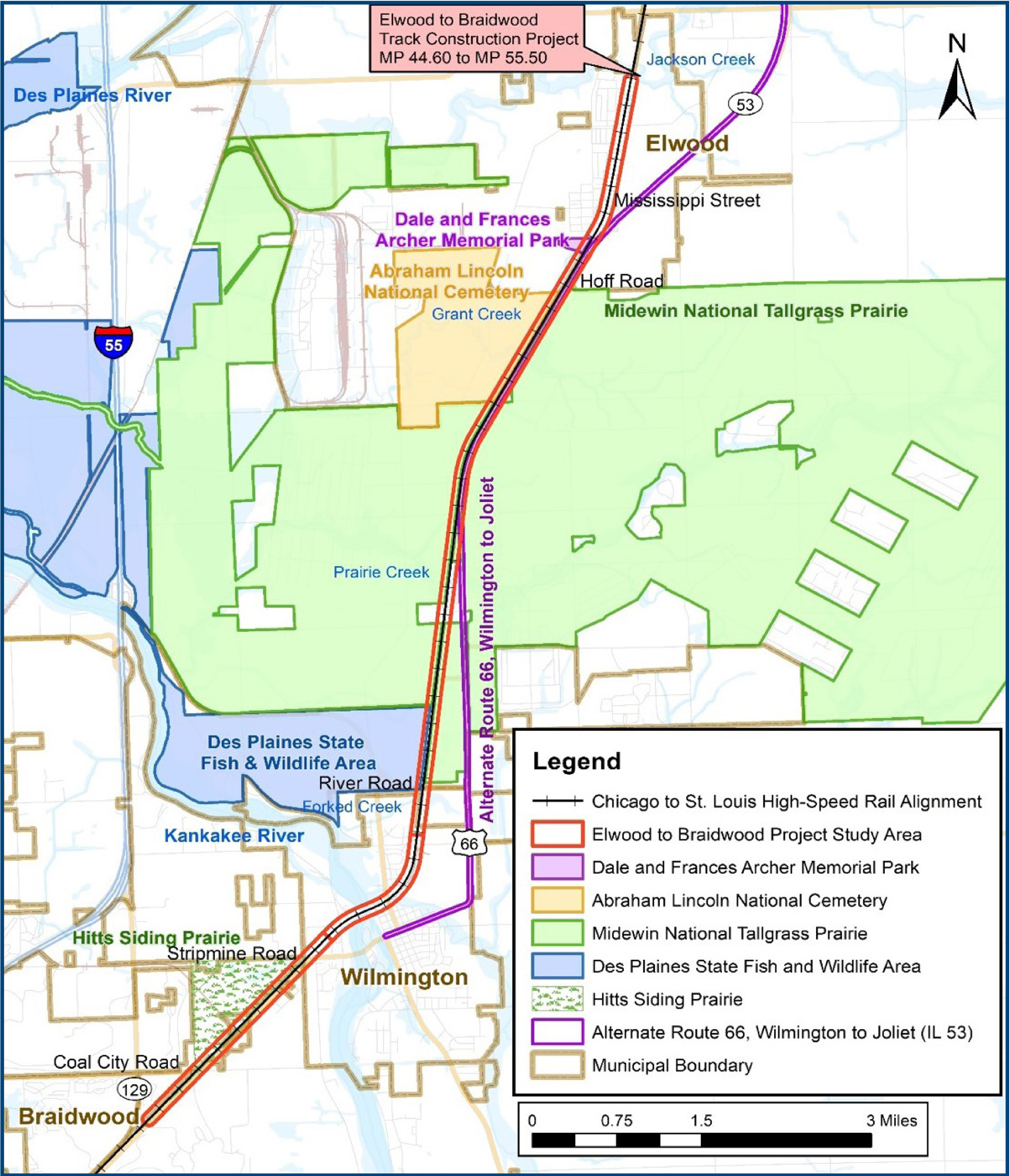


www.idohtsr.org

Elwood to Braidwood

Section 4(f) Properties

EXPERIENCE IT YOURSELF.



*Section 4(f) properties include significant publicly owned public parks, recreation areas, and wildlife or waterfowl refuges, or any publicly or privately owned historic site listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Section 4(f) requires special efforts be made to avoid these properties unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative and all possible planning to minimize harm has been undertaken.



**ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED RAIL**
CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS



www.idothsr.org

Elwood to Braidwood

Build Alternatives Impact Summary Table

EXPERIENCE IT YOURSELF.

	ALTERNATIVE 1B	ALTERNATIVE 2A
Permanent Right of Way (ROW) Acquisition	16.0 acres	10.7 acres
Permanent Easements	0.5 acres	0.3 acres
Temporary Construction Easements	11.5 acres	11.1 acres
IDOT Grading Permit (Rt 53)	1.0 acres	8.5 acres
Total Floodplains Affected	3.4 acres	3.7 acres
Fill Volume at Floodplain Crossings	10.2 acre-feet	8.1 acre-feet
Total Agricultural Land Impacted	23.0 acres	25.1 acres
Visual Impacts	No notable change to views	Changes historic views of the railroad from Alternate Route 66
Total Vegetation Impacted: Prairies	2.15 acres	2.45 acres
Total Vegetation Impacted: Forests	16.35 acres	16.8 acres
Total Wetland Impacts	18.22 acres	17.66 acres
Total Grassland Bird Suitable Habitat Impacts	17.99 acres	12.15 acres
Total Northern Long Eared Bat Suitable Habitat Impacts	14.61 acres	13.42 acres
Total Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Suitable Habitat Impacts	18.7 acres	20.2 acres
Section 4(f) Use	<i>De minimis</i> findings: Alternative Route 66, Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, Des Plaines State and Fish Wildlife Area Use greater than <i>de minimis</i> : Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie	<i>De minimis</i> findings: Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, Des Plaines State and Fish Wildlife Area Use greater than <i>de minimis</i> : Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, Alternative Route 66
Cultural Resources	No adverse effects to historic properties	Adverse effect to Alternative Route 66
Parks and Recreation	MNTP: 3.5 acres of temporary easement and 6.0 acres of permanent easement DPSFWA: 0.9 acres of temporary easement	MNTP: 6.1 acres of temporary easement DPSFWA: 0.9 acres of temporary easement



ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED RAIL
CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS



Illinois Department
of Transportation

www.idothsr.org

Elwood to Braidwood

Retaining Walls

EXPERIENCE IT YOURSELF.

- Build Alternative 1B uses retaining walls minimally.

ALTERNATIVE 1B



- To minimize impacts to Midewin National Tallgrass Impacts, Build Alternative 2A would include retaining walls upwards of 20 feet high.

ALTERNATIVE 2A



**ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED RAIL**
CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS



Illinois Department
of Transportation

www.idothsr.org

Schedule and Next Steps

EXPERIENCE IT YOURSELF.

Preliminary Engineering and NEPA Completion

2026



Final Design (Funding to be Determined)

2027

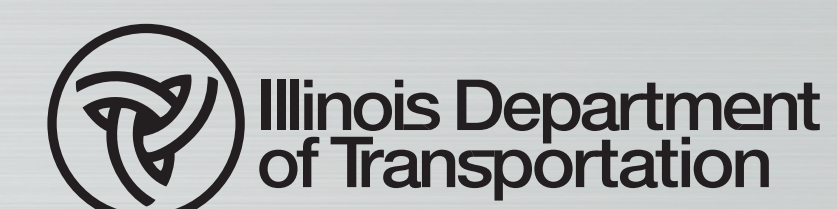


Construction (Funding to be Determined)

2028-2029



**ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED RAIL**
CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS



www.idohtsr.org

Elwood to Braidwood

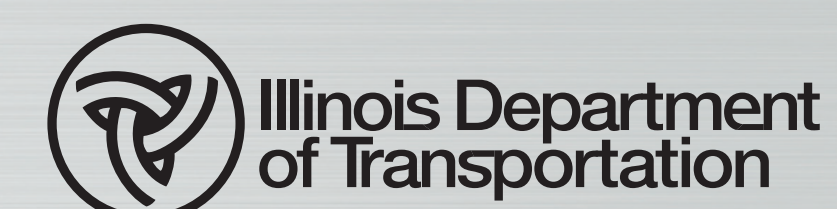
Land Acquisition Process

EXPERIENCE IT YOURSELF.

- > The program's land acquisition process would comply with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act.
- > Land acquisition will be performed by Union Pacific Railroad.
- > If necessary, a Union Pacific Railroad representative will contact you directly.



**ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED RAIL**
CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS



www.idothsr.org

Elwood to Braidwood

Submit Comments

EXPERIENCE IT YOURSELF.

THE STUDY TEAM IS INTERESTED IN HEARING YOUR IDEAS AND OPINIONS

Comments on the Elwood to Braidwood Environmental Assessment will be accepted through **August 15, 2025**.

If you have questions or comments about the project, please fill out the comment form in person, via the web, or write to us at:



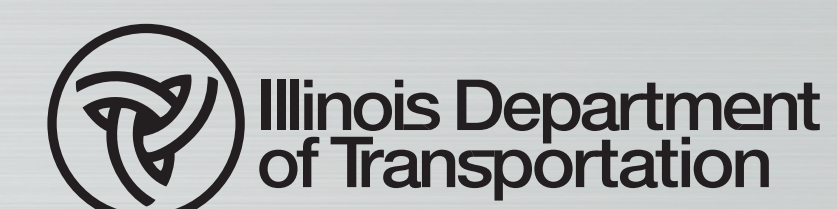
Illinois Department of Transportation
Office of Intermodal Project Implementation
69 W. Washington St, Suite 2100
Chicago, Illinois 60602



Scan the QR
code to submit
comments online



**ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED RAIL**
CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS



www.idothsr.org