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**ILLINOIS
HIGH-SPEED
RAIL**

CHICAGO TO ST. LOUIS

Chicago – St. Louis HSR

Elwood to Braidwood Track Improvement Project Public Hearing

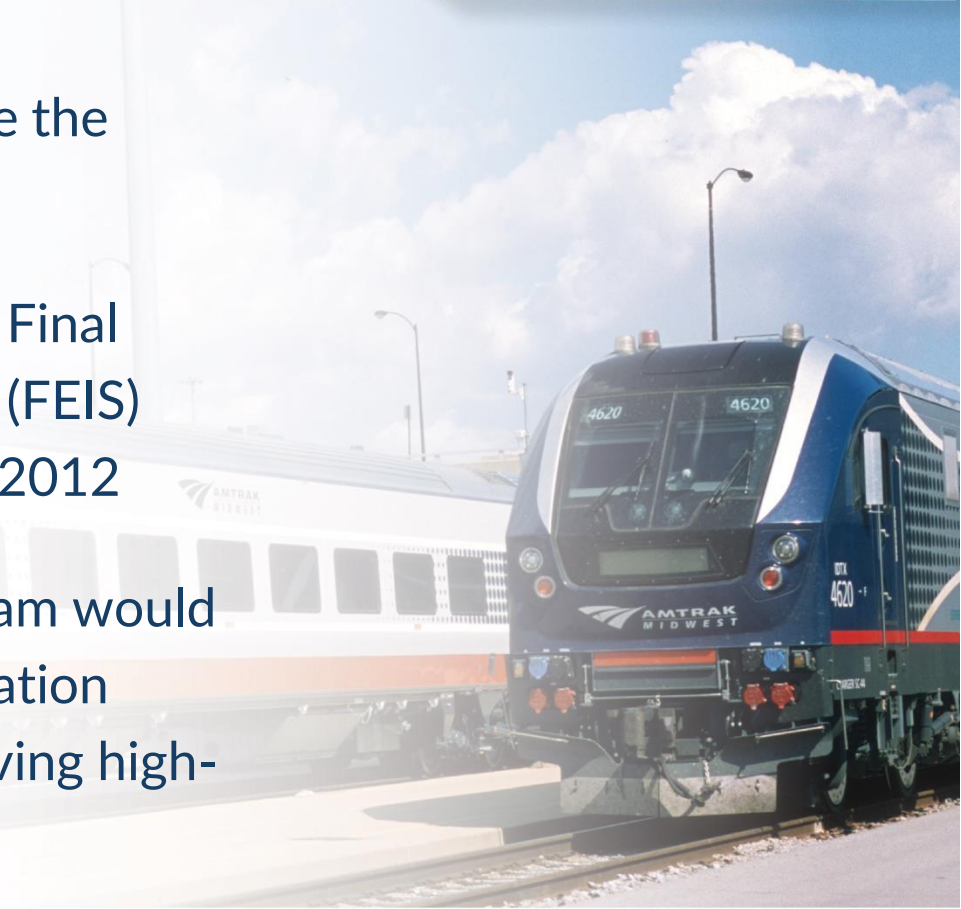
August 7, 2025

Chicago-St. Louis Corridor

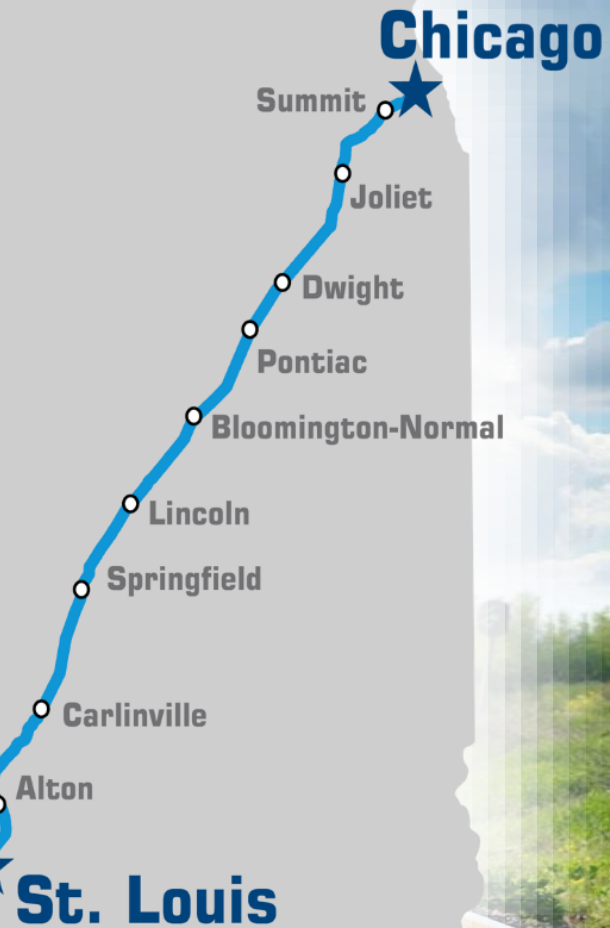
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- IDOT has actively developed the Chicago to St. Louis corridor since the mid 80's
- Previously completed National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) in 2012
- The High-Speed Rail (HSR) Program would enhance the passenger transportation network in the corridor by improving high-speed passenger rail service



**Chicago
to St. Louis
Corridor with
9 stops in
between**



13 Counties

Cook, DuPage, Will, Grundy, Livingston,
McLean, Logan, Sangamon, Macoupin, Jersey,
Madison, St. Clair, and St. Louis

Chicago to St. Louis HSR Project Components

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Increased passenger speeds
to 110 mph as of 2023

Install grade crossing
warning devices

Upgrade turnouts,
culverts, bridges, fencing, etc.

Upgrade main line track
including ties, rail, and
drainage

Construct grade
crossings

Purchase 6 new
high-speed train sets

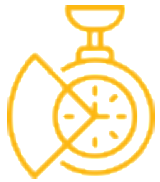
Construct limited new
second tracks and sidings

Implement train
control signaling

Construct 8 new/
renovated stations

Benefits

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Reduction in travel time



New/rehabilitated stations



Enhanced reliability



Safety improvements



New passenger cars and locomotives



Less damage to the environment



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Elwood to Braidwood Track Construction Project



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Project Area Map



Purpose

- Implement the HSR Program between Elwood to Braidwood by constructing a second track

Need

- Improve or replace deteriorating or functionally obsolete components
- Improve maintenance efficiency
- Discourage pedestrians from crossing tracks
- Improve Prairie Creek bridge at MP 49.52
- Correct existing track drainage problems

Project Components

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Project work includes:

- Construction of a second main line track adjacent to the existing main line track
- Construction of a railroad maintenance access facility parallel to the tracks
- Modifications of grade crossing warning devices
- Installation and improvement to culverts, bridges, fences, and signals



The Environmental Assessment (EA) identified two build alternatives and one no build alternative for analysis:

Alternative 1B

Includes 2nd track and railroad maintenance access facility with minimal use of retaining walls

Alternative 2A

Includes 2nd track and railroad maintenance access facility with use of retaining walls to reduce right-of-way impacts to Section 4(f) resources

No-Build Alternative

The 'do nothing' alternative that must be included in all EAs

Build Alternatives: Property Acquisition

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Both Build Alternatives require permanent and temporary right-of-way acquisition



This project does not require any full property acquisitions or displacements

	Alternative 1B	Alternative 2A
Right-of-Way Acquisition	16.0 acres	10.7 acres
Permanent Easements	0.5 acres	0.3 acres
Temporary Easements	11.5 acres	11.1 acres
IDOT Grading Permits (Rt 53)	1.0 acres	8.5 acres
	29 acres	30.6 acres

Build Alternatives: Biological Resources

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- **Potential impacts** to prairie and forested land adjacent to and within railroad right-of-way
- **4 threatened or endangered species** may be affected
- **Impacts to wetlands and waterways** may be associated with vegetation removal, discharge of clean fill material, and changes to hydrology

Build Alternatives: Section 4(f) Resources

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**Five Section 4(f)
properties** are
within the Project
study area



IDOT evaluated
**32 potential
avoidance
alternatives**



Analysis
determined there is
**no feasible and
prudent avoidance
alternative**



Build **Alternative
1B** was found to
have the least
overall harm to
Section 4(f)
resources

Build Alternatives: Cultural Resources

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- No retaining wall is required under Alternative 1B
- Alternative 2A requires retaining walls up to 20-feet tall
- EA concluded **Alternative 2A has adverse visual impacts** to Historic Route 66 (IL 53)

Existing Conditions



Alternative 1B



Alternative 2A



Required Permits and Approvals

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✓ Section 401
of the Clean
Water Act

✓ Endangered Species Act
of 1973 Section 7

✓ Permit for Construction
in Floodways of Rivers,
Lakes, and Streams

✓ Air
Permits

✓ Migratory
Bird Treaty
Act

✓ Bald and Golden
Eagle Protection Act

✓ Illinois Endangered
Species Act Incidental
Take Authorization

✓ Special
Use
Permits

✓ Section 404
of the Clean
Water Act

✓ Section 4(f) of the
USDOT Act

✓ Section 402
of the Clean Water Act
NPDES Permit



30-day public comment period of EA and Draft Section 4(f) ends August 15, 2025



Issue NEPA Decision Document with Final 4(f) Evaluation

Ways to Comment

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**Verbal Comments
to Court Reporter**



**Fill out a written
Comment Form**



**Submit your comment
online at [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov)**

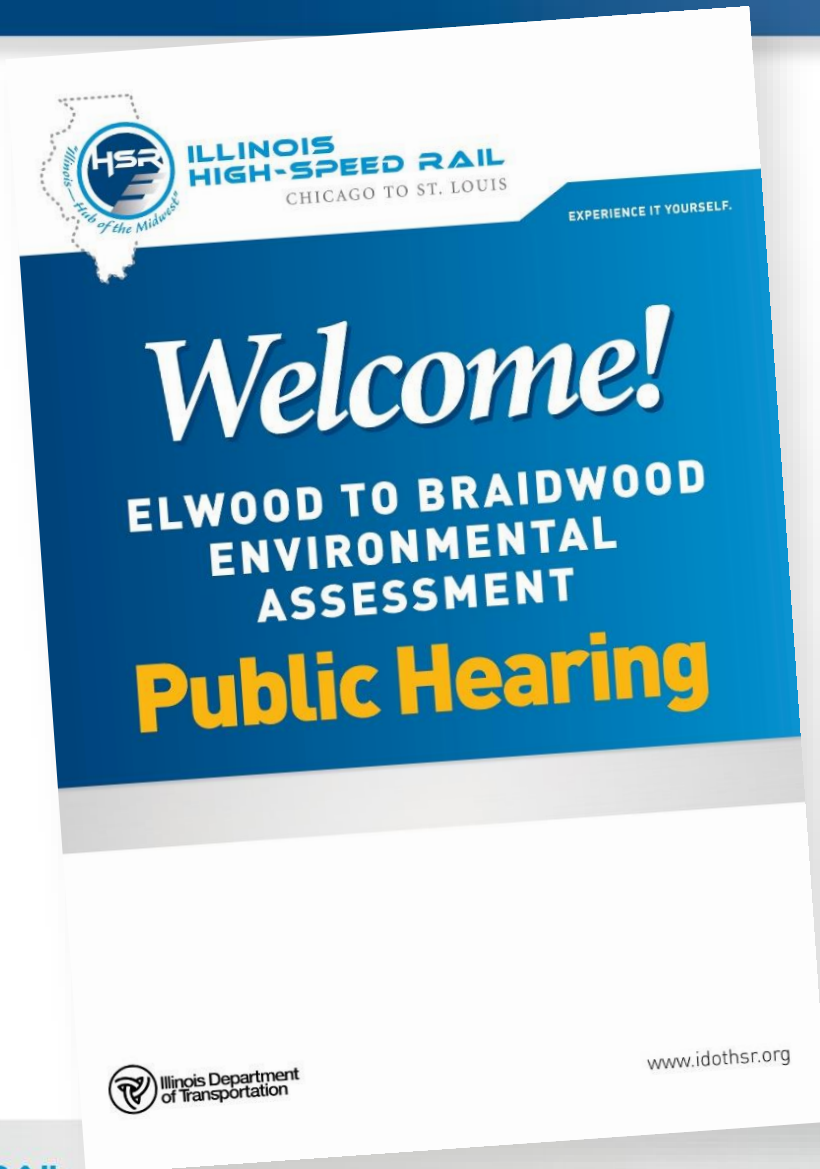


**Scan the QR
code to submit a
comment online**

Comments received through
August 15, 2025, will become part
of the public hearing record.

Exhibit Area

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Please visit the **exhibit area** for more project information and to **speak with representatives from IDOT and the HSR team.**

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Thank you



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