Existing Transportation System Performance Report Findings—Study Reaches Key Milestone

In August 2010, the I-290 study team completed the Existing Transportation System Performance (ETSP) Report, a comprehensive evaluation of existing transportation conditions, needs and deficiencies in the study area — both those that exist today as well as those that are anticipated to exist in the future without any major improvements in the study area. This technical analysis included an evaluation of socioeconomic features and land uses, corridor travel patterns, public transportation, roadways, freight railroads, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

I-290 Corridor Characteristics

The Eisenhower Expressway (I-290) transportation corridor was one of the first multi-modal facilities constructed in the United States. First opened to traffic in the mid to late 1950’s, this facility was designed and constructed according to early standards that were newly created for the interstate highway system and transit facilities, and it has remained almost entirely unchanged since its construction over 50 years ago.

I-290 is a gateway between the Chicago central business district and northwest Cook & DuPage Counties, and connects to the Reagan Memorial Tollway (I-88) and the Tri-State Tollway (I-294) on the west, and I-90/94 (Kennedy and Dan Ryan Expressways) on the east. The I-290 Phase I study area is centered along I-290 in Cook County, extending approximately 7.5 miles from west of Mannheim Road (US 12/20/45) to east of Cicero Avenue (IL Route 50). The study corridor is a very mature, urban environment that includes eight urban municipalities: Chicago, Bellwood, Broadview, Forest Park, Hillside, Maywood, Oak Park, and Westchester. Through much of the study area, rail transit and freight railroad lie adjacent to I-290, with commercial and residential properties, cemeteries, and parks, bordering the existing expressway.

Other Characteristics:

- 32 bridges and 11 interchanges are in the study area.
- I-290 is bordered by three large cemeteries that flank each side of the corridor.
- Multiple freight rail and commuter rapid transit tracks cross over I-290.
- Two waterway crossings are within the study area, Addison Creek and the DesPlaines River.
- There are three non-motorized multi-use facilities along I-290— Illinois Prairie Path, DesPlaines River Trail, and a path through Columbus Park.
The technical analysis of how transportation performs in the study area was complemented by stakeholder input on their perceptions of the transportation problems. Information from and perceptions of travelers, residents, area officials, transportation agencies, and other stakeholders were gathered at nearly 30 one-on-one stakeholder briefings, six Corridor Advisory Group Meetings, and a public meeting supplemented the technical analysis for the corridor and region. Stakeholder input was also gathered using break out groups, post-it notes on study area maps, and comments. A public meeting supplemented the technical analysis for the corridor and region.

Using break out groups, post-it notes on study area maps, and comments, a number of key study issues were identified. These issues included congestion, traffic, deficient transit, multimodal needs, safety, pedestrian and bicycle accommodation, economic development, environmental impacts and sustainability, land use compatibility, and funding/cost.

**Stakeholder Input**

**STAKEHOLDER GOALS FOR THE STUDY INCLUDED:**
- Improve mobility (capacity and efficiency).
- Improve safety for motorists, transit users, bicyclists, and pedestrians.
- Coordinate with planned land uses and area developments.
- Facilitate economic growth.
- Minimize impacts to the surrounding environment.
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**Technical Analysis Findings**

- I-290 is congested approximately 17 hours per day during peak hours.
- Interchange Intersections have inadequate capacity and storage.
- Crossroads and arterials, frontage roads operate inefficiently because of traffic volume diversions.
- Bus Transit: Slow bus travel times, multiple transfers, varying service hours & frequencies.
- Over the past three years I-290 corridor has experienced over 5 crashes per day.
- Crash ‘hot spots’ – near Mannheim East Bound, Austin and Harlem West Bound.
- Stop and go conditions, congestion, and existing designs contribute to crashes.

**Existing Transportation System Performance Report Findings: STUDY REACHES KEY MILESTONE**

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By understanding the existing conditions and problems of the corridor and how they affect the region, solutions can be developed that can address the deficiencies and enhance the overall transportation performance in this region. The report concludes a one-year effort and identifies a number of existing transportation system problems in the study area. The transportation system within the I-290 study area is a critical component of the overall Chicago regional transportation network.

**Key Findings of the ETSP report include:**

- The I-290 pavement base and bridges have age and condition deficiencies, having been in place over 50 years and reached their expected service life without a major rehabilitation. There are also age and condition deficiencies for the adjacent CTA Blue Line facilities which were built at the same time. Drainage facilities are also inadequate for major storm events.
- Major parallel arterials in the study area (North Avenue, Lake Street, Madison Street, Roosevelt Road, and Cermak Road) operate at very congested conditions. Due to traffic congestion on I-290 and major arterial roads in the study area, accessibility to the study area and regional jobs is constrained.
- Over the past three years I-290 corridor has experienced over 5 crashes per day.
- Crash ‘hot spots’ – near Mannheim East Bound, Austin and Harlem West Bound.
- Stop and go conditions, congestion, and existing designs contribute to crashes.

**Transportation Needs**

- Limited and poor bicycle accommodations.
- Improve safety of pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- Improve roadway safety.

**Stakeholder and Technical Team Identify TRANSPORTATION NEEDS AND DEFICIENCIES**

The technical analysis findings and stakeholder input indicate that all modes of transportation were found to have deficiencies that negatively affect performance and do not serve regional or local mobility needs.

**Technical Analysis Findings**

- Over the past three years I-290 corridor has experienced over 5 crashes per day. This crash rate is higher than comparable regional facilities.
- ADA non-compliant ramps and sidewalks and unsuitable bicycle facilities.
- Crash ‘hot spots’ – near Mannheim East Bound, Austin and Harlem West Bound.
- Stop and go conditions, congestion, and existing designs contribute to crashes.

**Improve Local and Regional Travel**

- I-290 is congested approximately 17 hours per day during peak hours.
- Interchange Intersections have inadequate capacity and storage.
- Crossroads and arterials, frontage roads operate inefficiently because of traffic volume diversions.
- Bus Transit: Slow bus travel times, multiple transfers, varying service hours & frequencies.

**Improve Safety for All Users**

- Limited and poor bicycle accommodations.
- Improve safety of pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- Improve roadway safety.

**Improve Modal Connections and Opportunities**

- Lack of reverse commute transit options & access.
- Improved connectivity and accessibility for pedestrians and bicyclists.

**Improve Facility Condition and Design**

- Poor Infrastructure condition.
- Improved physical and community cohesion.

**Improve Public Involvement**

- Inadequate storm sewer system serving I-290, CTA and CBB; obsolete pump station.
Over the past year, IDOT’s focus has been on examining the study area’s existing transportation system and travel patterns. This comprehensive study has analyzed the existing and future transportation characteristics and performance in an area that is experiencing the demands of growing regional development and increased congestion.

The study team has been working hard gathering information and communicating with stakeholders. Over 30 meetings have been held with municipalities and counties to discuss their project goals including Corridor Advisory and Task Force Groups consisting of a variety of stakeholders and engaging hundreds of residents, business owners, as well as facility users through the project website, letters, and public meetings.

Understanding the corridor’s transportation needs and deficiencies is an important first step in working towards identifying a solution (or solutions) that can address those needs. The findings from the ETSP and stakeholder input will be used to craft a transportation purpose and need statement, and will help guide the identification and evaluation of solutions (alternatives) to address the transportation needs and deficiencies of the I-290 corridor.