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PREFACE

FAP Route 340 from Interstate Route 55 to Interstate Route 80 is a project originally envisioned and proposed by the local Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Chicago Area Transportation Study. The initial planning efforts anticipated a freeway and as such, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as Lead Agency along with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) as local agency began to develop the project.

In July, 1993, the Illinois State Legislature passed legislation enabling the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority (ISTHA) to develop FAP Route 340 as a tollway. ISTHA is now involved in the development of a highway facility in the FAP Route 340 corridor and is a cooperating agency.

The transition of the project from IDOT to ISTHA necessitated decisions regarding the applicability of federal laws. Any project that uses federal funding must comply with federal laws. ISTHA normally does not use federal funding for their projects. However, ISTHA has agreed to design and construct FAP Route 340 in accordance with the commitments set forth in this **Final** Environmental Impact Statement and Section 4(f) Evaluation (**F**EIS).

SUMMARY

[paragraphs deleted]

There are no changes in this section of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Section 4(f) Evaluation from those presented in the *Supplement to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Section 4(f) Evaluation (SDEIS)*, except as noted by the use of boldface type. The changes are primarily editorial, with the exception of the wetland mitigation portion of the text.

Recommended Action

The **Recommended** Action is the construction of a north-south 12.5-mile multi-lane, divided highway designated as Federal Aid Primary (FAP) Route 340 from Interstate Route 55 to Interstate Route 80. The **Recommended** Action is located about 25 miles southwest of downtown Chicago, Illinois and passes through Cook, DuPage, and Will Counties. The southern two-thirds of FAP Route 340 is in Will County, with the northern one-third in Cook County. A portion of the interchange ramps at Interstate Route 55 is in DuPage County (see Exhibit 1-1).

The typical roadway cross section will consist of one twelve foot and one twelve and one-half foot traffic lane in each direction with a twenty-eight foot median from Interstate Route 55 to Interstate Route 80. Additional width will be initially constructed over the Des Plaines River Valley to minimize future construction impacts to the environmentally sensitive land in the valley. The typical section is consistent with Illinois State Toll Highway Authority (ISTHA) standards. The ramps and overpasses will be built to accommodate the future addition of an outside lane. The right-of-way width will be sufficient to accommodate the roadway and all necessary tollway features. Interchanges are being considered at six locations: Interstate Route 55; 127th Street; 143rd Street and Illinois Route 171 (Archer Avenue); Illinois Route 7 (159th Street); U.S. Route 6; and Interstate Route 80.

Two different types of toll collection facilities are included in the analysis: a mainline toll plaza and ramp toll plazas. The mainline toll plaza includes dedicated I-Pass lanes, manual and automatic lanes and support buildings. The ramp plazas typically consist of two automatic lanes. **See Section 3.6 for locations of plazas.** A maintenance yard will be located adjacent to the mainline toll plaza and consists of a garage, parking lot and salt storage dome.

Other Proposed Actions in the Area

A third Chicago area airport site is being considered in the vicinity of Peotone (see Exhibit 1-1). Studies indicate the earliest date for opening would be after the year 2000. The Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) has identified FAP Route 433, the South Suburban Expressway, as a corridor of the future. The corridor is proposed from Interstate Route 80 to Interstate Route 57 and possibly on to Indiana. Due to the vicinity of the third airport site, the South Suburban Expressway

has been targeted for preliminary studies. The studies for the third airport indicate that the South Suburban Expressway would be necessary in approximately year 2010.

The first stage of a major expansion project at Lewis University Airport in Romeoville was completed in the Fall, 1991. The airport plans to continue to grow by extending its main runway, adding a terminal and control tower, and acquiring nearby open space.

The Argonne National Laboratory located just northeast of the FAP Route 340 alignment near Interstate Route 55 has made a commitment to local growth. The nationally recognized facility is expanding their local campus, creating more employment opportunities in the project area.

There are no other currently proposed federal actions in the project area.

Alternatives Considered

In the approximately 30 years since the original design studies for the FAP Route 340 corridor were completed, a number of changes have occurred that required reevaluation of the selected design and alignment. First, development has occurred within the corridor, including housing, a fire station, and some commercial developments. Second, environmental regulations and procedures have changed. In addition, the evaluation process had to determine if a freeway was still the appropriate solution to the regional and local transportation needs. Therefore, several alternatives were evaluated to determine the type and location of transportation improvements appropriate for the corridor. The project alternative evaluations include:

1) No-Action
2) No-Action With Transportation System Management (TSM)
3) Mass Transit
4) Build Alternates

The No-Action, No-Action with TSM, and Mass Transit Alternatives were determined to be inadequate as they did not address the identified purpose and need for the project. These alternatives were eliminated from further consideration. The Build Alternates were studied to determine which would provide a safe, efficient transportation system that met the purpose and need requirements.

Three Build Alternates have been studied for the **recommended** project: further improvements to the existing highway network, an expressway alternate, and a freeway alternate. The alternate that only considered improvements to the existing highway network was evaluated and found to be deficient from a regional perspective (no system continuity) as well as from a local perspective (major residential and business impacts within urban centers). This alternate has been eliminated from further consideration.

The expressway build alternate was evaluated and found not to be prudent or feasible. Due to requirements for interchanges at marked routes, interchanges would need to be constructed as part of the facility. In addition, the terminals north and south are at freeway type facilities. A user might anticipate freeway operations, and signalized intersections would present a safety concern. The stop and go operations characteristic of an expressway would raise noise and air pollution concerns, as

well as reduce the facility's attractiveness as a circumferential route to the Chicago area. For these reasons, the expressway alternate was eliminated from further consideration.

The freeway/**tollway** build alternate was studied in detail. The first alignment developed was based on the centerline recorded in Will and DuPage Counties in 1968. Options to it were developed based on an assessment of environmental impacts, engineering criteria, area characteristics, and the existing roadway network.

Preferred Alternative

Three public informational meetings and a Public Hearing were held in the project area. These meetings allowed the public to review and comment on the project. Also, local regulatory and environmental agencies were provided technical background on the project. Their comments together with public comments helped to select the preferred alternative. The preferred highway configuration is a freeway/**tollway** that follows the recorded centerline as modified to meet current needs and minimize environmental impacts.

Environmental Impacts of the Preferred Alternative

The regional benefits of the construction of FAP Route 340 are summarized below:

- Completion of an intended and regionally planned for link in the Interstate system.

- Completion of a third through route tying Interstate Route 80 and the Northwest Tollway (Interstate Route 90).

- Relieving a portion of the congestion experienced at system ramps such as Interstate Route 90/94 to Interstate Route 290 and Interstate Route 294 to Interstate Route 290.

Locally, FAP Route 340 will provide additional north-south capacity and decrease traffic demands on parallel routes such as Illinois Route 53 and Lemont Road/State Street.

The adverse impacts caused by construction of the preferred alternate are as follows:

- Relocation of **52** residences and three businesses will be required.

- Traffic generated noise will adversely impact 25 receptors which affects 14 locations along the project.

- Approximately **10.4** acres of wetlands will be filled. **[sentence deleted] The wetland mitigation for the project occur in three different areas. The first area will be along Spring Creek (Exhibit 4-7) and satisfies Section 404 of the Clean Water Act; the second area occurs within the Lockport Prairie Nature Preserve (Exhibit 4-7a) and satisfies agreements with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Forest Preserve District of Will County; and the third area at a location determined by the Illinois**

Department of Natural Resources and satisfies the regulations issued under the Illinois Interagency Wetland Policy Act of 1989. See Section 4.10.3.6 for more details.

- One displacement and possible relocation of a structure that is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Lustron House).

Areas of Controversy

Two general areas of controversy have been generated by this project. The first, and most significant, is the environmental impacts to the north bluff of the Des Plaines River Valley. The second is related to interchange locations.

The north bluff area of the Des Plaines River Valley has a diverse habitat that supports a variety of plant and animal species. The quality of this area is reflected by the presence of the Black Partridge Nature Preserve, Black Partridge Forest Preserve, and Keepataw Forest Preserve. Concern has been raised about edge effects to Black Partridge Nature Preserve, water quality impacts to Black Partridge Creek, and impacts to threatened and endangered species.

In response to the edge effect concerns, alignment shifts were investigated both east and west. The **preferred** alignment is shifted 350 feet to the west of the Nature Preserve, minimizing edge effects. In addition, the property between the alignment and the Nature Preserve has been purchased and will **[words deleted] act** as a buffer. Mitigation for edge effect impacts is **recommended** to be a reforestation effort coordinated with the Forest Preserve District of Will County.

The water quality impacts to Black Partridge Creek were addressed, in part, by a hydrogeological study performed on the north bluff area. The study analyzed the compression of the underlying soil strata and the impact on the transmission of groundwater. The study concluded that impacts to the creek would be minor. Additionally, a water quality monitoring program will be implemented that will allow observation of variances in water quality. The water quality monitoring program will be a joint effort between **Illinois Department of Transportation (**IDOT**)**, ISTHA, and the Illinois Natural History Survey.

Two joint studies have been **recommended**. The first is a study of the Hine's emerald dragonfly. This study is intended to increase the knowledge base of this species. The knowledge will be applied to this and other projects. The other joint study, on salt use for highway maintenance, has only a secondary relationship to threatened and endangered species. Knowledge gained from this study is anticipated to benefit a variety of corridor elements including threatened and endangered species. Comments to the ***S****DEIS* have been received from several agencies on biological issues, with the responses contained in Appendix A.

The second area of controversy relates to an interchange at Davey Road, an interchange at Bruce Road, an interchange at 135th Street, the interchange at 127th Street, and the interchange at Interstate Route 80. Support has been expressed for interchanges at Davey Road, 135th Street and Bruce Road. However, interchanges are not **recommended** at these locations. Warrants justifying interchanges at Davey Road and Bruce Road are not currently met. Should conditions change, nothing has been included in the project that would preclude these interchanges from further consideration. The design does preclude an interchange at 135th Street.

The Village of New Lenox is opposed to a South Suburban Expressway that would bisect the Village. Their concern is that the corridor of the future will bisect the Village, destroying community cohesiveness. The South Suburban Expressway is not part of FAP Route 340 nor has it been included in any of the studies performed.

Other Federal Actions Required for the Project

There will be permit requirements for construction of the **preferred** alignment associated with the crossing and filling of water resources and wetlands. Section 404 permits will be needed from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for wetlands where filling occurs. In addition, a Section 401 water quality certification will have to be obtained from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. Floodway permits will be required for Spring Creek and the Des Plaines River since these are regulated floodways. These floodway permits will be processed by **Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) - Office** of Water Resources.

Recently promulgated federal regulations require the issuance of a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System stormwater permit for construction areas of greater than five acres. FAP Route 340 will require this permit. Erosion control methods will be required as part of this permit.

In addition, a U.S. Coast Guard permit is required for the crossing of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal as a "navigable water of the United States." Correspondence with the U.S. Coast Guard (November 2, 1988, September 22, 1988) has identified the jurisdiction and clearance requirements for the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. Minimum horizontal and vertical navigational clearances will be maintained to assure that there will be no navigational impacts.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the Lustron House and the Illinois and Michigan (I&M) Canal has been prepared **and signed** by the Federal Highway Administration, ISTHA, the Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. A program of sub-surface evaluation has been completed for **[word deleted]** sites discovered during Phase I survey. The MOA **[words deleted]** include**s** coordination for the relocation of the historic structure (Lustron House) **(see Appendix B under Illinois Historic Preservation Agency)**.

The National Park Service **has** approve**d** a Section 6(f), Land and Water Conservation Act (LAWCON), Conversion Request **[phrase deleted]**. **[sentence deleted]** The replacement property for the land purchased from Keepataw Forest Preserve **is** at least **of** equal market value and similar utility. **[sentence deleted] (See Appendix B under U.S. Department of Interior)**