

## Illinois Tomorrow Corridor Planning Grant Program

<b>Name of Tool:</b>	Corridor Planning
<b>Implementing Agency:</b>	Illinois DOT
<b>Scale of Application:</b>	Corridor/subarea planning
<b>Description:</b>	In 2000, the Illinois Department of Transportation launched a grant program to help urbanized areas across the state fund planning activities that integrate land development, transportation, and infrastructure needs.

### Purpose and Need

In the 1990s, Illinois was struggling against vanishing open spaces, decaying urban infrastructure, increased traffic congestion, and declining quality of life in many of its communities. A lack of balanced growth was seen as the key to the problem. All too often, new transportation projects failed to take into account their impact on nearby land uses, while new development projects failed to take into account the heavy demands they would place on the existing transportation system. "Collectively, we didn't see how far-reaching the impacts of our actions could be until it was too late," recalls Carl Mikyska, Corridor Planning Grant Program Manager at the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT).

To address these concerns, Governor George Ryan created the Balanced Growth Cabinet in April 2000. The cabinet was intended to serve as an advisory group to the governor regarding growth and planning strategies. One of its first actions was to launch the Illinois Tomorrow Initiative, a smart growth initiative designed to ensure existing state programs affecting growth were effectively implemented, and new solutions to growth-related problems were given serious consideration. Under the initiative, a grant program was established to assist community land development and growth projects. "Urban areas have experienced phenomenal population and economic growth and that trend is projected to continue," Governor Ryan announced in January 2001 press conference. "We not only have an opportunity but a responsibility to direct that growth in a way that promotes livable communities."

### Description

The Illinois Tomorrow Corridor Planning Grant Program is a balanced growth initiative that helps local communities fund plans and studies that integrate land development, transportation, and infrastructure needs. The force behind the initiative is the Governor's Balanced Growth Cabinet, chaired by the Governor's Senior Advisor for Environment and Natural Resources. The permanent membership of the Cabinet consists of the Secretary of IDOT and the directors of the state's Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, Development Finance Authority, and Housing Development Authority.

The program is providing \$15 million in grant funding over five years to counties and municipalities in urbanized areas to support planning activities that promote the integration of land use, transportation, and infrastructure facility planning in transportation corridors in Illinois. Grants typically range from \$20,000 for a bicycle path study or intersection improvement to \$500,000 for corridor-wide planning.

Applications for corridor planning grants are evaluated based on how well they address the following goals:

- Preserve open space
- Relieve congestion
- Promote cooperative inter-jurisdictional relationships
- Promote economic development policies
- Promote contiguous and infill development and redevelopment
- Promote development in areas with existing transportation and utility infrastructure
- Promote development in areas with currently available housing
- Enhance travel choices
- Create public-private coalitions
- Promote collaboration among local governments
- Promote development of industry, labor, public interest, and environmental organizations
- Minimize infrastructure cost to taxpayers

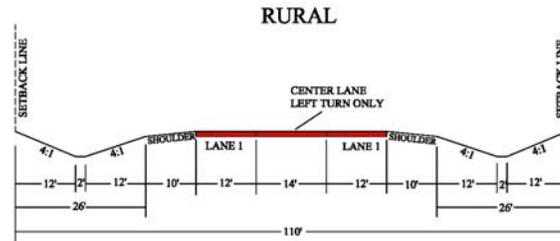
## Application Examples

To date, IDOT has awarded 105 grants to urban areas across Illinois. The projects have been wide-ranging in nature. Three examples of funded projects follow.

- **Kankakee County – Development Policy Plan Corridor Grant Study (\$200,000)**  
 – Kankakee County is located about 30 miles south of Chicago and has a population of 105,000. For more than two years, staff of the Kankakee County Planning Department have been developing a Corridor Preservation Plan. Using 21 different factors, the plan has analyzed every rural roadway segment in the county and assigned a tier ranking for the 1,331 miles of roadway in unincorporated areas. These tier rankings are determined by a hierarchy of four tiers or cross sections that have “clear corridors” to be protected for future transportation uses. The grant study will examine every roadway segment and its tier designation and suggest what development policy is suitable for that segment in accordance with the tier designation. The study will compare that suggested development policy with the county’s current land use plan, and determine where conflicts might exist. The end product will be a Development Policy Plan that is consistent with the transportation needs of the Corridor Preservation Plan. Ultimately, a county-wide development policy plan will be produced that integrates land use planning with the transportation infrastructure. Carl Mikyska notes that while Kankakee County applied for funding for this study under the Illinois Tomorrow Corridor Planning Grant Program, IDOT opted to provide separate funding because a portion of the study area lay outside the planning boundaries of the metropolitan planning organization. “Nonetheless,” he insists, “this is an excellent planning project that fits the criteria of the program and so we felt obligated to fund a good planning activity.”

<b>508 Description</b>
This diagram illustrates a “tier 2” rural road cross-section from the Kankakee County Corridor Preservation Plan. It includes two 12 foot travel lanes, a 14 foot center left turn lane, 10 foot shoulders, and 26 foot ditches contained within a total right-of-way of 110 feet.

## TIER 2



Credit: Kankakee County Regional Planning Commission

FIGURE 1 – A TIER 2 CROSS SECTION FOR A RURAL AREA, SHOWING A 26-FOOT CLEAR CORRIDOR ON EITHER SIDE OF THE ROADWAY.

- **Mc Henry – Riverwalk Phase I Study (\$45,000)** – McHenry is a small city with a population 22,000, located about 30 miles northwest of Chicago on the banks of the Fox River. In the spring of 2000, the City of McHenry formed a Riverwalk Committee to help plan a downtown riverfront walk along the river and Boone Creek that would connect the Green Street and Riverside Drive retail areas of the downtown. With the help of an Illinois Tomorrow Corridor Planning Grant, the city hired a design firm to gather data, conduct workshops, and seek input from community leaders, property and business owners, and elected officials. As a result of this effort, several main goals were identified: update the image of McHenry, revitalize the downtown area, provide future redevelopment opportunities, and improve the quality of life for the city's residents. A schematic design of the riverwalk was approved in October 2003 that calls for a one-mile pedestrian pathway that begins at Weber Park, follows the west bank of the Fox River parallel to Riverside Drive, crosses Boone Lagoon via a new pedestrian bridge, then proceeds west following the south side of Boone Creek to Route 120. The project is now in the design development phase, with construction expected to begin in 2005, once an estimated \$9 million in state, federal, and private funding has been secured.



Credit: VOA Associates, Inc

*FIGURE 2 - PROPOSED MILLER'S POINT PAVILION ON THE FUTURE MCHENRY RIVERWALK*

- **Alton – Applying New Urbanism Concepts to an Existing Mature City (\$25,000)**  
– Alton is a small city with a population of 31,000, situated on the Mississippi River less than 10 miles north of St. Louis, Missouri. Although its quaint downtown area is rich in history, Alton has suffered badly from the loss of its industrial base. Today, Alton suffers from high poverty and unemployment rates, a declining population, deteriorating housing stock, and the effects of urban sprawl. In an effort to reverse its fortunes, the city has begun to revitalize its downtown. With the help of a Corridor Planning Grant, Alton is developing its first comprehensive plan since the 1960s. The plan focuses on applying new urbanism concepts to the existing land use pattern to redevelop traditional neighborhoods and business districts. When the plan is completed, incentive programs will be prepared in conjunction with other public and private sector programs to encourage job creation, business and residential redevelopment, and tourism. The former Owens-Illinois Glass Company property is already being transformed into the Alton Center Business Park. The 153-acre site, abandoned since 1993, is located adjacent to Alton's downtown area. Infill housing projects and the rehabilitation of historic structures are underway in the Mexico and Hunterstown neighborhoods. In the downtown area, a new hotel is planned. Like McHenry, the city is also developing its riverfront. A new marina has been built, and future development calls for an amphitheater, a riverboat landing for paddle-wheelers, an outdoor ice rink, bike trails, and other recreational amenities. Funding for Alton's various redevelopment projects is coming from a mixture of private and public investment and from a tax increment financing district created in 1994.



Credit: Illinois Department of Transportation

FIGURE 3 - ALTON CENTER BUSINESS PARK IS A REDEVELOPMENT SITE ADJACENT TO DOWNTOWN.

## Successes and Lessons Learned

IDOT understood early on in the process that when it came to smart or balanced growth, the communities themselves were in a better position than IDOT to decide what was in their best interests. Mr. Mikyska explains: “When ‘smart growth’ became part of the transportation language, IDOT looked at what we could do to be part of the solution and utilize these concepts. As IDOT looked at this more, we decided that we could best assist communities by letting them decide what they needed. IDOT understands the concepts... well enough to know that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to balanced growth. What works in one community may not work in another.”

IDOT also found that meeting with the recipients of the grant money to explain how the contracting process worked, how to bill the department, and how to handle other administrative details helped minimize mistakes and reduce the likelihood of future problems. This, in turn, contributed to successful outcomes and encouraged more grant applications. “The administration of the grant was, and still is, the most important part,” observes Mr. Mikyska. “By being customer-friendly, we have generated increasing levels of interest each year.”

More than three years after the first grant money was awarded, the grant program remains popular. Mr. Mikyska concludes: “Looking beyond a community’s borders and considering

what impacts [transportation decisions] can have on adjacent communities makes this experience invaluable. I hope that the Illinois Tomorrow Corridor Planning Grant program will continue to be funded during these tight financial times. The communities I deal with have the same hope. This has been a great success."

## **For Further Information**

### **Contacts:**

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### **Publications:**

- Illinois Tomorrow Balanced Growth Clearinghouse at [Balanced Growth Links](#) page.
- Alton PowerPoint presentation: Available from the [Illinois Department of Transportation](#)
- Balanced Growth Cabinet, "Balanced Growth for a Better Quality of Life: Accomplishments and Future Focus," August 2002. Available from the [Illinois Department of Transportation](#)
- [City of McHenry, "The Riverwalk" Synopsis](#)
- [Kankakee County Regional Planning Department, "Corridor Preservation"](#)