



MOVING WILL COUNTY

TRUCK ROUTING + LAND USE

Memorandum

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*From: Jacque Henrikson, Civiltech
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Date: April 9, 2021

Subject: Moving Will County Draft Land Use Strategy Public Commenting Period Summary

The following document is a summary of the community feedback that was received during the public commenting period for the Draft Moving Will County Land Use Strategy. Community members were encouraged to review the draft recommendations and either participate in a Community Workshop on February 24, 2021 (which included a presentation of the recommendations, polling questions and a questions and comments portion) or in an online survey that was open February 25 through March 21, 2021. The findings from each of these opportunities are summarized below in two different sections. The project team was unable to address every question received during the virtual community workshop, due to limited time and in some cases the need to follow-up with other team members and project partners, so a key goal of this document is to be a resource to answer outstanding questions that community members may have and address next steps based on the feedback received.

February 24, 2021 Virtual Community Workshop

MEETING STATS

- Number of registrants: 243
- Number of actual attendees: 118
- Number of questions and comments received: ~65
- Speakers (consultant team):
 - Civiltech (Moving Will County project lead): Jacque Henrikson

- Lakota Group (engagement lead): Abigail Rose
- Ginkgo (land use lead): Ferhat Zerin
- Affiliation of attendees (as self-reported in the chat box):
 - Municipal and Township residents: Elwood, Carillon, Romeoville, Joliet, New Lenox, Manhattan Township, Crestwood, Naperville, Crete, Wilmington, Manteno, Mokena, New Lenox Township
 - Agency representatives: Will County Board, Will County Land Use Department, CMAP, Green Garden Township, Jackson Township, WCGL, Laraway School District
 - NPOs and Associations: Illinois Sierra Club, Futurez NFP, the Conservation Foundation, Openlands, Will County Audubon, CED, Sugar Creek Hills Homeowners Association, Universalist Unitarian Church of Joliet
 - Other organizations and neighborhood groups: No to Northpoint, No to Loves, NOAP, No to Joliet Country Club Warehouses, V3 Companies, LaPorte Real Estate Partners, TranSystems, Working Families Joliet, Cullinan Properties, Will County Agriculture Sustainability and Conservation Initiative, Acreage43560, LLC, LDC/LMCC

INTERACTIVE POLLING QUESTIONS (completed during workshop)

Polling questions were utilized to engage participants throughout the presentation of the Draft Land Use Strategy. Below are the results. A significant number of participants indicated that they were “uncertain” in regard to the questions on TDL (Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics)/Industrial Land Uses. This highlighted the importance of having the presentation materials and an online survey (which asks the same questions) available after the meeting so that participants could have more time to review, consider, and provide feedback on the draft recommendations. For more details on the online survey, see page 9.

- Introduction:
 - Please describe yourself (check all that apply):
 - 59%: Residents of the study area
 - 36%: Represent an agency, organization or other entity impacted by the study area
 - 21%: Residents of Will County outside the study area
 - 17%: Work in the study area
- TDL/Industrial Land Uses
 - Do you agree with the gross acreage for and location of new TDL/industrial uses?
 - 40%: Uncertain
 - 32%: Yes
 - 28%: No
 - Do you agree with the criteria used to determine the locations of new TDL/industrial uses?
 - 62%: Yes
 - 22%: Uncertain

- 16%: No
- Do you agree with the exceptions to the criteria (where new TDL/industrial uses are not allowed)?
 - 78%: Yes
 - 13%: Uncertain
 - 9%: No
- Preservation Areas
 - Do you agree with the five proposed preservation areas?
 - 81%: Yes
 - 15% Uncertain
 - 4%: No

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FEEDBACK SUMMARY

This section includes a summarized record of the feedback received through the chat box, Q&A tool, and over the phone open comment period during the February 24 Public Workshop on the following topics:

Land Use

- Summarized comments:
 - Desire to build convention centers and hotels to attract trade shows.
 - The east and south sides of Joliet are already saturated with warehouse and truck traffic.
 - Consider proposing TDL/industrial developments on west side of Joliet.
 - There is already industrial/TDL just south of Cherry Hill subdivision, just west of Gougar Rd, and south of Rt 30.
 - Concerns regarding Joliet annexing unincorporated areas to generate tax revenue without the areas being compensated.
 - Need for an infrastructure plan so adequate roads are in place when zoning is changed to allow TDL/industrial.
 - Look at impacts to eastern Will County.
- Specific comments:
 - *Briggs Street is being used as a truck route and if these developments were not there Briggs Street would not be used as it falls into the exceptions - Residential housing, churches, schools and fire station - we are suffering greatly both in our quality of life and emergency responses. Briggs Street is also a major school bus route.*
 - *As a land trust with hq located in Will County, The Conservation Foundation would love to be a part of the land use discussion.*

- *I am absolutely terrified when I see the dark purple areas in comparison to where I live. Over 12,000 acres with the capacity of 4X's of what there is today.*
- *Too much dark purple, I agree. Roads already dangerous.*

- **Questions**

- *Q: Why is there so much dark purple?*
 - A: Without a plan that provides cohesive guidance, the outcome would almost certainly be far worse. There could be a lot more purple everywhere, developed in an unguided and a haphazard manner. This will study help restrict where that growth can occur.
- *Q. Does this plan show where industry will least conflict with other uses, or does this show what will be developed?*
 - A. The study is trying to show where industrial uses can be allowed. Land use is regulated by local zoning codes or comprehensive plans. Incorporated municipalities can decide where land use go based on zoning code. The team is trying to make sure that this plan actually has some legal basis and could be compatible to municipalities' actual codes.

Every community has a right to pursue economic development for themselves, but this plan is intended to help guide and limit where those uses can go. It shows where TDL/industrial land uses will have the least conflict and can be supported by the necessary infrastructure based on a variety of criteria. It does not show where they will be developed.

This project is not determining the future market for these sorts of uses, but based on previous trends, it is assuming that more private development will likely continue coming to Will County, so it is important to have a framework of criteria in place (agreed upon by all study area municipalities) to show where it should/should not go to avoid impacts.

- *Q: Can you review how the plan will impact Eastern Will County?*
 - A: one of things the plan is trying to do, in addition to adoption and approval by all the study area communities within the study area, is get consensus on the criteria being proposed. These criteria can be applied on a wider scale if desired by the County and communities outside of this project's study area.
- *Q: Who approved the land uses (warehouses) and routes by Briggs St?*
 - A: Nothing has been approved with the Land Use Strategy recommendations. These are all in draft format and won't be final until this fall. The TDL, industrial and preservation areas shown by Briggs are from existing municipal land use maps (these land uses were not developed as a part of this study). This plan is not recommending any change to the existing uses along Briggs.

- *Q: Seems like all this material concentrates on industrial and freight traffic, have we done any studies/research on alternative uses for land other than industrial and bringing in more freight traffic?*
 - **A:** Good point. A complete land use plan would look at all types of land uses. However, this project is focusing on TDL/industrial (purple) land uses because it is currently unclear where these types of land uses should go (so the plan helps provide guidance on limits, along with identifying key areas for preservation).

From extensive market research (conducted by the team early in the process) it was found that the housing market is down and commercial development isn't growing, but there is huge potential for other uses that the market can't support right now. This plan will ensure that there is enough land available for other uses to come in and develop, by helping communities restrict where TDL/industrial (purple) land uses can go.

Environmental

- General summarized comments:
 - Consider impacts to birds and other wild animals.
 - Concerns regarding pollution and the health-related issues.
- Specific comment:
 - *With future water quality trading programs and carbon capture programs unfolding, you may want to avoid designating on the map whether the land is "public" or not. There may not be enough public dollars to purchase all of the land needed to implement the entire strategy. Private property owners can implement the strategies and will be motivated to do so over time with upcoming water and carbon incentives. It is more important to designate "permanent" protection, as opposed to "public".*
- Questions:
 - *Q: How are you addressing the additional greenhouse gases produced by truck traffic from the 12,000 acres of warehouse development minus the loss of the carbon capture lost by the acres that was previously stored by the farms? Has an economic contribution study been done to show that this 12,000 acres is the right amount needed?*
 - **A:** We will be conducting an open space impact analysis later in the project, and we have already conducted a market study as a part of the project prior to the development of these draft recommendations. However, it is important to underscore that the Land Use Strategy is not proposing that every area indicated as purple should become TDL/industrial. As projects are proposed and communities consider future developments, environmental studies will need to be conducted, which could prevent development of specific parcels.

Conducting an economic analysis of the max acreage proposed is beyond the scope of this study, but is something that could be considered in the future. The goal of the Moving Will County Land Use Strategy is to develop a framework of criteria, agreed upon by the communities, to prioritize locations for new TDL/industrial development, identifying where it should—and should not—go. This will prevent dispersed and disorganized development, which leads to more environmental, community and infrastructure impacts. Additional environmental impact studies would need to be completed to determine suitability at specific locations, but adoption of this plan will provide criteria for each municipality when reviewing developments.

- *Q: Did you map prime soils, soils of statewide importance (USDA/NRCS); Ag Areas (I believe there is one) state of IL centennial and sesquicentennial farms prior to deciding new land use? 12,000+ removal of ag acres is significant. Are you accounting for the economic and environmental removal of those acres? A mitigation fee to compensate for those acres proposed to be removed to compensate for those to assist in preservation acres is one possibility.*
 - *[Follow-up Response] Looks like you did account for many of my concerns, that's great. Definitely look at the mitigation fee to help with implementation.*
 - A: As a part of the Land Use Existing Condition Report (located [here](#)), the team looked at many environmental datasets (e.g. CMAP Green Infrastructure Vision), including wetlands and farming areas.
- *Q: Primary concern, any studies concurrently being studied for negative impacts from pollution, etc, from heavy truck traffic?*
 - A: Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL) is a strong market, so this plan will help figure out a way to guide and restrict TDL uses in this area. This is the first step. And then if/when this plan is adopted, communities can figure out the rules/standards for developers that will help mitigate environmental problems, using this plan as guidance. They can also look at other solutions like technology improvements, building vertical, etc. The hope is that, in combination with the new best practices coming to this industry, this plan can help address the concerns with TDL uses coming into the area. Many in the TDL sector are adopting zero emissions goals, which could mitigate some of these concerns.

Community Livability and Placemaking

- Summarized comments:
 - Include opportunities for community art.
 - Concerns regarding low wage jobs with warehousing.

- Specific comments:
 - o *Nothing like positioning Will County to be the home of low wage no health insurance temp jobs in warehouses.*
 - o *Great idea on the preservation areas and bike trails.*

Truck Routing

- Summarized comments:
 - o Concerns about the following roadways: Rowell Ave, Briggs St, Cherry Hill (damaging existing agriculture and farm animals).
 - o Congestion: I-80/Rt 53.
 - o Bridge improvements needed at I-80 and the Briggs interchange bridge.
 - o Desire to reduce truck traffic and concerns about added truck traffic.
 - o Concerns regarding traffic fatalities with semi-trucks.
 - o Recommendation to contact IL Farm Bureau to receive input on IL and USDOT legislation related to farm use of roads and bridges.
 - o Safety issues at Rt 52/53 and Rt 52/US 6.
 - o Electric trucks are expensive and take a while to roll out.
- **Questions:**
 - o *Q: Were areas outside of the study that create truck loads, such as land in Kankakee County, considered?*
 - A: Datasets on truck routing, traffic, congestion, origins/destinations, crashes, etc. were considered as a part of the Truck Routing Existing Conditions Report (which was one of the components used to develop the truck routing network). While the focus area of this analysis was within the study area and the expanded “transportation network to consider,” most of these datasets were created by agencies at the County, Regional, or Federal level, and therefore reflects regional understandings as relevant to the study area. The Truck Routing Existing Conditions Report can be found [here](#).

Plan Adoption/Approval and Next Steps

- Summarized comments:
 - o Identify who decides how balance and prosperity will be defined, and how success will be judged.
 - o Include more specificity of how goals will be pursued.
 - o Desire for residents to lend a hand with helping to get the plan adopted by the County and local municipalities.

- **Questions:**

- *Q: Have the municipalities listed on the slide pledged to use this final document to guide their decision making with respect to developing their comprehensive plans?*
 - A: All communities within the study area were individually asked to be a part of the Steering Committee and/or review draft deliverables for the Moving Will County project, and most have participated. All invited communities and stakeholder agencies have been kept up-to-date, every step of the way, during the project. We hope that all impacted communities adopt or approve this study, but it is up to each individual municipality to do so at the local level.

- *Q: Who confirmed the truck routes and land usage for warehouses?*
 - A. The Moving Will County project includes two studies on two slightly different timelines, the Land Use Strategy and the Truck Routing Study. The Truck Routing Study will be complete this spring. The truck routes and draft land uses were developed based on an analysis of existing conditions and community feedback. All municipalities within the study area were invited to be a part of a Steering Committee and to weigh in as recommendations were developed. Additionally, other members of the Steering Committee included NPOs (such as Openlands) and other agencies (such as the County and State departments of transportation). There was also a public workshop in summer 2020 to review the draft truck routing network.

None of these recommendations have been confirmed yet. While the Truck Routing Study will be completed in spring, it will still be the responsibility of the municipalities, Will County DOT, and IDOT to implement the recommendations; in cases where a new truck route is recommended, further study would be necessary. The Land Use Strategy is on a longer timeline, to be completed fall of 2021. These recommendations have also not been finalized. What was shown at the community meetings was a draft for community feedback. The recommendations will be revised based on the feedback received.

The goal for both of these studies is to provide a framework that communities can build on, to target further study in terms of land use and truck routing issues within their municipality. The objective is to reach consensus among all the study area municipalities, so that everyone is working towards the same goals and considering their neighbors when revising/developing further studies and reviewing future developments.

Other

- Summarized comments:
 - Concern of Loves Truck stop near resident at I-80/Briggs.

- Better publicizing of meetings by County and municipalities: e.g. sending an automated message.
- **Questions:**
 - *Q: Northpoint and compatibility with the Land Use Strategy?*
 - A: The Truck Routing Study and the Land Use Strategy were never intended to focus on one particular development. They were intended to give the agencies and municipalities guidance on where trucks should and should not travel and structured to provide guidance on future land uses across the study area, including areas to prioritize the location of future TDL/industrial land uses and preservation areas. Adopting the proposed Truck Routing Study and Land Use Strategy will help protect the region's natural resources and provide a framework of criteria that will help municipalities and the County determine places for growth for future TDL/industrial developments in the future.

Online Survey

Community members who were unable to attend the Virtual Community Workshop, or who had attended but still needed more time to review the recommendations and provide comments, were encouraged to participate in an online survey. Below are the results. This survey was open from February 25 through March 21, 2021.

Note: It was possible that individuals could participate in both the Community Workshop polling questions as well as the online survey. About 14% (36) respondents indicated that they attended the virtual workshop

Responses to Online Survey Polling Questions

- Introduction:
 - Please describe yourself (check all that apply):
 - 73%: Residents of the study area
 - 21%: Residents of Will County outside the study area
 - 15%: Work in the study area
 - 7%: Represent an agency, organization or other entity impacted by the study area
- Preservation Areas
 - Do you agree with the five proposed preservation areas?
 - 72%: Yes
 - 18% Uncertain
 - 11%: No
- TDL/Industrial Land Uses
 - Do you agree with the gross acreage for and location of new TDL/industrial uses?
 - 51%: No

- 27%: Yes
- 22%: Uncertain
- Do you agree with the exceptions to the criteria (where new TDL/industrial uses are not allowed)?
 - 54%: Yes
 - 22%: No
 - 25%: Uncertain

Summary of Online Survey Findings:

- 255 People took the survey.
- Most people who took the survey, over 85%, did not attend the virtual workshop.
- The majority of the people who took the survey, almost 73%, are residents within the Land Use Study Area.
- Only 14.5% of the people work in the Land Use Study Area.
- 72% of the people agreed with the proposed Five Preservation Areas.
- The majority of people, 51%, did not agree with the amount and locations of new TDL/industrial uses, and only 27% did agree. However, almost 22% were uncertain.
- The majority of people, 54% agreed with the exceptions to the criteria. It should be noted that 25% were undecided.

Preservation Area Comments

Respondents were asked if they have more thoughts to their answers regarding the proposed preservation areas. A summary of key themes heard in the comments would include:

- Strong support for the preservation areas as shown in the Draft Land Use Strategy. However, there were many comments for adding more preservation areas and that the Strategy does not have enough. Some ideas included expanding existing park areas and forest preserves and preserving historical churches, equine properties, the cooling lakes (with the potential closure of Dresden Station), and more agricultural areas.
- Support to add buffers around existing and new preservation areas, such as public waterways, floodplains, Jackson Creek Greenway and several commented that Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery should be better protected.
- Several comments to add more preservation areas for the Sugar Creek and Spring Creek corridors.
- A few suggestions to add the former Joliet Country Club land for preservation.
- A few respondents also expressed confusion about where the NorthPoint Development's Compass Business Park is located in relation to the preservation areas.

TDL/Industrial Area Comments

Respondents were asked if they have more thoughts to their answers regarding the proposed TDL/industrial areas. A summary of key themes heard in the comments would include:

- General feedback seems to indicate that the Draft Land Use Strategy has too much land allocated to TDL/industrial uses (purple areas on map).
- Concerns over purple areas in Manhattan near Hoff Road.
- Concerns that TDL/industrial uses at US 52 and Cherry Hill are too close to residences and would create too much truck traffic on a route used by residents and school buses.
- Concerns that land for TDL/industrial use at the corner of Cherry Hill and Spencer is across the street from an elementary school. However, this land is already in Cherry Hill Business Park and the corner is planned as detention in the Cherry Hill plan.
- Concerns that TDL/industrial comes very close to the residential area south of Noel Road in Elwood.
- Requests that less farmland should be shown as purple.
- Several comments on changing the criteria for a ½ mile distance from existing schools, homes, civic uses etc. to 1 mile.
- Concerns regarding the impacts of increased TDL/industrial development on home values and quality of life and the costs of infrastructure falling on municipalities.
- A policy recommendation was for developers to be required to pay significantly higher development impact fees upfront for roadway infrastructure improvements.
- Concerns regarding the impact increased TDL/industrial would have on the water supply, congestion and pollution.
- Safety concerns regarding increased truck traffic that new TDL/industrial developments would bring were also expressed.
- Desire to keep TDL/industrial uses by interstates or existing truck routes and concentrate on infill development in existing purple areas.
- A recommendation to consider bike path connections across the various land uses, specifically the Wauponsee Bike Trail.
- Concerns regarding the deteriorating state of roads and bridges, especially in unincorporated townships, due to existing truck traffic and the concerns that increased traffic with more purple will exacerbate this.

Next Steps for Addressing Community Feedback

The project team will investigate potential revisions to the recommendations based on the feedback received and summarized above. Some specific action items include:

- The project team will follow-up with specific municipalities on comments/suggestions received regarding areas to add for preservation and areas that should not be designated for TDL/industrial use. Specific issues to address include:
 - o Elwood: With the potential closure of Dresden Station, can the cooling lakes be added to the preservation plan? Also, are TDL/industrial uses too close to the residential area south of Noel Road?
 - o Joliet: Should more preservation areas be added for the Sugar Creek and Spring Creek corridors? Can the former Joliet Country Club land also be added for preservation?
 - o Manhattan: Should the areas shown for TDL/industrial uses near Hoff Road be decreased in acreage?
 - o New Lenox: Are TDL/industrial uses at US 52 and Cherry Hill too close to existing homes? Would this create too much truck traffic on a route used by residents and school buses? Can we confirm that this area is already a part of the existing Cherry Hill Business Park and is potentially slated for detention?
- Many respondents suggested that the ½ mile residential/schools/civic/etc. buffer was too small and should be expanded to 1 mile. The project team will investigate the impacts of expanding the buffer to 1 mile on land designated for future TDL/industrial uses.
- Many environmental experts participated in the public commenting period and had specific ideas for incorporating best practices into the strategy regarding preservation. Participants also expressed the desire that developers take on more responsibilities regarding impacts to the community and needed infrastructure. The project team will consider how some of these ideas can be incorporated into high-level best practice design guidelines that municipalities and the County can implement.
- Concerns were expressed that residents and other stakeholders weren't engaged prior to recommendations being developed. The project team will include a section in the Land Use Strategy document that describes the community engagement process, and how there were opportunities for community and Steering Committee feedback throughout the plan development process.
- Some of the above concerns illustrated that there are misunderstandings that the Moving Will County project purpose is to designate more areas as TDL and industrial (purple) and to bring more truck traffic to Will County. The project team will clarify the purpose of the overall study in the planning documents, which is to improve safety and livability by limiting future TDL and industrial developments to areas with the least impacts—not to encourage more to come. The proposed plan would actually be a reduction in the purple areas in comparison to what is resulting from the current trends that are happening without a cohesive plan. Limiting the growth will lead to fewer impacts on water supply, congestion and pollution. Likewise the purpose of the Truck Routing Study is to improve transportation safety and community livability by directing truck traffic to specific routes with the fewest impacts rather than encouraging more truck traffic.