Abstract

The Prairie Parkway project is located in Grundy, Kendall and Kane counties approximately 50 miles west of Chicago. The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) initiated a Preliminary Engineering Study to analyze the 1,500 square mile study area for future transportation improvements through 2020 because of the concerns about increased development demands and traffic congestion in the study area. Due to the pace of development in the area, a 36-mile long corridor between I-47 and I-80 was protected from further development using the state’s Context-Sensitive Solutions process in July 2002. The project has an overall construction cost of approximately $1 billion for the 36-mile long corridor between I-88 and I-80. The Prairie Parkway Study serves as a key part of IDOT’s Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) policy reflecting the need for an interdisciplinary approach that seeks effective, multimodal transportation solutions by working with stakeholders to develop, build and maintain cost-effective transportation facilities.

As a result of this process, the project was designed to allow for sufficient space and rough grading in the right-of-way for a continuous multi-use path along the length of the corridor, allowing for future non-motorized use for such activities as public biking and/or walking within the right-of-way. The intent is to provide adequate space for a path that will run parallel to the mainline alignment for the majority of the corridor, but where the mainline intersects a side road or interchange, to provide an alternate route that crosses the intersecting side street at a safe location.

Project Update

The Prairie Parkway Study is seven-year project that has included the environmental assessment, alternative analysis, and preliminary engineering phases of the Prairie Parkway Study. The selected corridor runs from north of Caton Farm Road, where it will connect to other planned or programmed IL 47 widening projects to Caton Farm Road, where it will connect to other planned or programmed IL 47 widening projects.

A Record of Decision entered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation in 2002 identified the selected corridor and defined the need for a shared-use path along the right-of-way for a continuous multi-use path along the length of the corridor, allowing for future non-motorized use for such activities as public biking and/or walking within the right-of-way. The intent is to provide adequate space for a path that will run parallel to the mainline alignment for the majority of the corridor, but where the mainline intersects a side road or interchange to provide an alternate route that crosses the intersecting side street at a safe location.

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The public involvement process identified interest in a shared-use path along Prairie Parkway. As a result, IDOT committed to providing the right of way and rough grading for a shared-use path along Prairie Parkway.

Proposed Shared Use Path

Sufficient space and rough grading will be provided in the right-of-way for a continuous multi-use path (to be built by others) along the length of the corridor, allowing for future non-motorized use for such activities as public biking and/or walking within the right-of-way. The intent is to provide adequate space for a path that will run parallel to the mainline alignment for the majority of the corridor, but where the mainline intersects a side road or interchange to provide an alternate route that crosses the intersecting side street at a safe location.

Design Criteria

The following criteria have been used to guide the development of the profile and alignment of the graded areas for this purpose and to ensure the sufficient right-of-way is provided:

- Design Reference: American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials’ (AASHTO) guide for the development of bicycle facilities.
- Radius = 100 feet (minimum) 150 feet (desirable) applies to cross road curves;
- Maximum grade lengths:
  - 5%: For up to 800 feet
  - 7%: For up to 600 feet
  - 9%: For up to 300 feet
  - 10%: For up to 100 feet
  - 11%: For up to 50 feet
- Desirable minimum grade for emergency and maintenance vehicle access < 6%;
- High Water Elevation (HWE): Design year – 10 years;
- Cross slope = two percent grading to the ditch between mainline and the trial; and
- Minimum tangent perpendicular to cross road crossings > 50 feet.

Study Timeline – Where Have We Been

The public involvement process identified interest in a shared-use path along Prairie Parkway. As a result, IDOT committed to providing the right of way and rough grading for a shared-use path to be used for non-motorized activities such as walking or bicycling.

Corridor Planning Group (CPG)

- Focus Groups/Surveys
- Sunshine Meetings
- Task and Corridor Planning Groups
- Public Meetings at Key Milestones
- Project website: www.prairie-parkway.com

Compareable Projects

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This is an abstract of the document. The full text contains additional details about the project and the context-sensitive solutions process. The project involves the development of a shared-use path along Prairie Parkway, which is a major highway corridor in Illinois. The project has been designed to accommodate non-motorized transportation, including walking and bicycling, by providing adequate space and rough grading along the right-of-way. The timeline and design criteria are important considerations for the development of such facilities. The study timeline outlines the progress made in the project, including public involvement, task groups, and key milestones. The comparable projects list provides examples of other highway bridges with bicycle/pedestrian crossings in the United States, illustrating how different approaches have been taken in various regions. The design criteria outlined are essential for ensuring the safety and functionality of shared-use paths along major highways.

In summary, the Prairie Parkway project represents a significant investment in improving transportation infrastructure by providing safe and accessible multi-use paths for pedestrians and bicyclists. The context-sensitive solutions process has been instrumental in guiding the project, ensuring that the design is responsive to the needs of the community and supports sustainable transportation alternatives.