

Chapter 1 Introduction

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This Environmental Assessment is being conducted to assess potential impacts that could result from a proposed widening of Illinois Route 47 (IL 47). The study area extends approximately eight miles along IL 47 from Reed Road to U.S. Route 14 (US 14) through the communities of Huntley, Woodstock, Lake in the Hills, Lakewood, and unincorporated McHenry County. See [Exhibit 1-1](#), Location Map and [Exhibit 1-2](#), Detailed Location Map. The proposed work would widen the existing roadway to two lanes in each direction, with a grassy median. It is located within the Kishwaukee River Watershed, an ecologically diverse watershed that contains sensitive plant and animal species, as well as highly permeable soils.

What is an Environmental Assessment?

An Environmental Assessment (EA) is a document prepared for a proposed project under the National Environmental Policy Act. The EA describes the purpose and need for the project, the alternatives considered, the existing socioeconomic and environmental conditions in the project vicinity, and any anticipated impacts on socioeconomic or environmental resources. The EA serves to advise the public and stakeholders on the project and help make a decision as to the desirability of the project.

If the EA determines that there are no significant impacts anticipated from the project, a Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) can be issued. If a FONSI cannot be concluded, additional studies or an Environmental Impact Statement may be warranted.

IL 47 is classified as a rural Strategic Route Arterial and is included as part of the National Highway System. IL 47 is important to the north-south transportation linkage because it provides access to residential, retail, commercial, agricultural, and recreational lands throughout the region, including Wisconsin. The nearest parallel state highway is IL Route 31 located seven miles east of IL 47. Other transportation studies along IL 47 have taken place or are ongoing. South of Reed Road, a Phase I Study/Categorical Exclusion was previously completed; the roadway was completed in the summer of 2011. North of US 14, a separate Phase I Study/Environmental Assessment has been initiated that will study improvements to IL 47 from US 14 to Charles Road.

The project would serve to address safety and capacity deficiencies along the existing facility. The rural land use between Huntley and Woodstock is planned for and experiencing residential growth, further adding to the capacity demands. The IL 47 improvements would be designed to address the needs of this growth allowing better access to US 14 and Illinois Route 176 (IL 176) and the employment centers to the south and east. In addition, an “Illinois Tomorrow” grant was awarded that provides a land use based study of the IL 47 corridor from within Kane County northward to the Wisconsin State line. This latter study is intended to evaluate current land use and provide a planning document that combines the comprehensive planning efforts of the communities along the corridor.

The speed limit along IL 47 within this study area is 45 mph south of Rainsford Drive, 55 mph between Rainsford Drive and Hercules Road, and 40 mph north of Hercules Road. The roadway consists of two twelve foot through lanes, widening to four twelve foot lanes in some commercial and residential subdivision areas, with gravel shoulders. The existing right of way is 80 feet throughout except for just south of US 14, where the right of way expands to 200 feet. There are four signalized intersections throughout the project area located at Reed Road, US 14,

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and both intersections with IL 176. In addition to these intersections, there are a number of intersecting roads that are controlled by stop signs.

If the proposed widening of IL 47 is undertaken, the following environmental impacts are expected.

- 25.77 acres of wetland impacts
- 1.49 acres of Waters of the U.S. impacts
- 76.93 acres of impacts to agricultural land
- 18.83 acres of floodplain impacts
- two business/commercial displacements
- three residential displacements
- four businesses will have portions of their property impacted

This Environmental Assessment discusses the purpose and need for the proposed improvements, summarizes the alternatives considered and reasons for choosing the preferred alternative, as well as discusses the environmental impacts that could be expected. Minimization and mitigation strategies are also included, where appropriate.