

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PERIOD 1 FAQs

The Will County Division of Transportation would like to thank you for your participation in the public involvement process for the Gougar Road Study.

Following the first Public Information Meeting held September 1st through September 30th, 2020, the Will County Division of Transportation in partnership with community representatives have reviewed and considered all public comments received. We appreciate you taking the time to assist us in developing a complete understanding of the needs of the surrounding community. Below you will find responses/clarifications to recurring topics brought forth during the online engagement period.

Study Limits

This study includes Gougar Road from Laraway Road to Francis Road. The northern study limit stops at Francis Road and does not continue north to US 6 because the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has already completed a study of the US 6 at Gougar Road intersection. Funding for that improvement is not included in IDOT's current Multi-Year Program (FY 2021-2026).

Functional Classification

Gougar Road (CH52) is a County Highway owned and maintained by the Will County Division of Transportation. It is classified as a Minor Arterial. The Federal Highway Administration defines a Minor Arterial as a route that provides service for trips of moderate length, serve geographic areas that are smaller than their higher Arterial counterparts, such as US 30, and offer connectivity to the higher Arterial system. At the February 2020 County Board Meeting, Resolution 20-44 designated Gougar Road from Laraway Road north to US Route 30 as a Class II Truck Route. IDOT is in the process of updating their maps to include the Class II Truck Route changes made in this resolution. Once these changes are completed they will be sent out to the various routing applications.

Traffic

A traffic study is ongoing for the Gougar Road corridor. Turning movement counts were collected for twelve consecutive hours, in 15 minute intervals and by vehicle class, at nine locations on Gougar Road. CMAP is the region's comprehensive planning organization for the northeastern Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. The agency has a variety of program activities that are distinct from and support the development and implementation of regional plans. These planning activities include Regional Economy, Livability Planning, Local Planning, Transportation Planning, and Transportation Programming. The existing turning movement counts were coordinated with CMAP to obtain a growth rate to year 2050. This growth rate was then applied to the existing turning movement counts to estimate the future peak hourly volume at the intersections. The following factors were considered when projecting out this project's future traffic: existing traffic counts, existing land use, future land use, growth that has been occurring over the last several years in Will County, and development growth. The proposed improvements will be developed based on the results of this study.

All intersections along Gougar Road will be evaluated to determine the need for a signal or other intersection improvements. In addition to the two high schools located on Gougar Road, Cherry Hill Business Park is one of the more notable generators of both passenger car and truck traffic on Gougar Road. The developments along the corridor are anticipated to experience significant growth by 2050.

Safety

The varying speed limit of Gougar Road between Francis Road and Laraway Road is being evaluated for a constant posted speed limit of 45 mph which is consistent with the speed limits as proposed along other similar county highways in the area. An ongoing safety study is being performed at all locations along Gougar Road and crash countermeasures will be considered to address the historical crashes that have occurred. Additionally, the ongoing safety study will address the expected crash increase if no improvements were to be made and what the safety benefits of the final proposed improvements are.

For the project, a raised concrete median is planned per Will County standards. The proposed median will separate opposing traffic and mitigate potential head-on or opposing direction sideswipe crashes. The raised concrete median can also act as a refuge island for pedestrians and bicyclists crossing Gougar Road.

Additionally, all existing pedestrian accommodations will be maintained and improved for safety. At this time earthen shelves will be considered along the length of the corridor for future development of pedestrian/bicyclist accommodation that the City of Joliet or the Village of New Lenox choose to install.

At the railroad at-grade crossings, the study proposed improvements will include recommended safety features as dictated by national railroad standards. These include crossing gates, signalization, and flashing lights.

The US 30 intersection is being studied to maintaining the safety of the railroad crossing. Additional benefits of added lanes at the intersection will include the additional lane for vehicles to maneuver into when special vehicles are required to stop at the railroad crossing, per state law.

Roadway Drainage

Drainage of the existing roadway and adjacent areas are being evaluated as part of this study. The proposed drainage features as part of this study will seek to improve upon the existing drainage conditions and provide adequate drainage for the new roadway improvements. Identified existing drainage issues will be mitigated to the maximum extent practicable.

Adjacent Projects

Below is a summary of projects, adjacent to or within the limits of the Gougar Road Study, that are in progress.

Gougar Road (CH 52) at Wisconsin Central LTD Railroad Grade Separation Phase I Study

This study is being conducted by the Village of New Lenox and includes proposing a Gougar Road grade separation over the Wisconsin Central (CN Railroad) at-grade crossing, located on Gougar Road just south of Lincoln Way West High School. At this time the Phase II (Engineering Design) and Phase III (Construction) of the project are not funded.

US Route 6 (Maple Road) at Gougar Road Phase I Study

This study is being conducted by the Illinois Department of Transportation. The project 4(f) De Minimis Documentation is posted on IDOT's website. From the 4(f) De Minimis Documentation the project

purpose “is to install a new traffic signal, add a left turn lane along each leg of the intersection, add a northbound and a westbound right turn, and provide 8 foot paved shoulders along both sides of U.S. Route 6 (Maple Road). As part of the improvement, the existing sidewalk south of the intersection along the west of Gougar Road will be extended to connect to the Spring Creek Greenway Trail at the northwest corner of the intersection. The traffic signal and the left turn lanes along with the right turn lanes at the intersection will provide a safer facility for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. This project is a CMAP Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funded improvement, which is intended to “improve mobility and reduce congestion which will in result improved air quality around the project location.”

I-80 from Ridge Road to US Route 30

The I-80 project included a Phase I Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Studies project and Phase II design plans for near-term improvements. The scope of these near-term improvements was developed based on the project’s bridge inspections and traffic and crash analyses. The near-term study focused on specific existing corridor conditions that needed correction, rehabilitation, or reconstruction before the long-term project can be funded for construction. Near-term conditions included operational and safety deficiencies, pavement deficiencies, and structure rehabilitation/reconstruction needs that are present due to effects of use, time, and weather. As part of the improvements is the replacement of the Gougar Road over I-80 bridge

Noise Study

A noise analysis will be performed along the corridor to evaluate the potential need for noise walls as part of the improvements. The noise study will follow IDOT’s policies and be evaluated against IDOT’s Noise Reduction Design Goals. If the results of the study indicate there may be benefited receptors, these owners will have the opportunity to vote for their inclusion in this project and provide comments.

Project Funding

Gougar Road between Laraway Road and US Route 6 is owned and maintained solely by the Will County Division of Transportation. The Gougar Road project is completely funded in the County’s 2021-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and includes all phases, including this study (Phase I), design (Phase II), right-of-way acquisition, and construction (Phase III). The TIP also discusses how projects are funded. The Will County FY 2021-2026 TIP can be found on the County’s website at: <https://www.willcountyillinois.com/County-Offices/Economic-Development/Division-of-Transportation/Transportation-Plans-Programs>.