

SECTION 1

Introduction

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Will County is one of the fastest growing counties in Illinois, and between 2000 and 2004, was the 32nd fastest growing county in the United States.¹ In the forecast released September 30, 2003, the Northeast Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) projects population to increase from 502,266 in 2000 to 1,107,778 in 2030. In order to plan for this extensive growth and to ensure that adequate transportation facilities are in place, a 2030 transportation plan has been developed by the Will County Department of Highways (WCDH).

This report describes the planning process to establish a transportation plan capable of supporting impending development in Will County. The report also highlights the effects of transportation improvements and provides an implementation plan, including revenue and expenditure forecasts, to assist in the determination of projects to be incorporated in the County's fiscal program. Coordination with prior planning initiatives and public and local officials was integral to this process.

1.1 Study Area

Will County is one of the six collar counties surrounding the Chicago metropolitan area. The study area for the Will County 2030 Transportation Plan consists of Will County and contiguous sections of Cook, DuPage, Kendall, Grundy, and Kankakee Counties, Illinois, and Lake County, Indiana (**Figure 1-1**). Will County is the 13th largest county in Illinois, covering 849 square miles of land. It is the second largest county in the Chicago metropolitan area, second only to Cook County.² Interstates 80, 55, 57, and 355 pass through the county, as do a network of U.S. and state highways. Will County is within commuting distance of Chicago and other regional employment centers such as Naperville, Oak Brook, and southern Cook County.

The county's land use is a mixture of agriculture to the south and more urbanized areas to the north. The Des Plaines River passes through the heart of the county. It is also home to the 19,000-acre Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Included within the county are many industrial centers such as the Centerpoint Intermodal Facility. To date, most growth has occurred within existing communities or through annexation, and much of unincorporated Will County remains rural and undeveloped. Just under half of the area of Will County that is not covered by water remains devoted to farming. However, some agricultural land in Will County is gradually transitioning to other uses. Between 1987 and 2002, the total number of farms in the County decreased by one-third, with nearly 20 percent less land devoted to farming, a trend that is likely to continue.³

¹ Table CO-EST2003-09 - Population Estimates for the 100 Fastest Growing U.S. Counties in 2003: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004. Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Release Date: April 14, 2005.

² Will County Demographics Fact Sheet. Source: Will County Land Use Department, Release Date: Spring 2005.

³ *2002 and 1987 Census of Agriculture*, National Agriculture Statistics Service.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

In May 2004, Will County contracted with the CH2M HILL team to develop a 2030 transportation plan for the County. The goal of the project is to develop a comprehensive transportation plan that addresses mobility, infrastructure, and revenue issues related to growth. The plan will respond to both existing deficiencies and future needs indicated by projected growth in the study area. An implementation plan and method of financing will be identified. Finally, the plan will be developed in a manner that facilitates future updating or modification as development continues and conditions change.

While one of the purposes of the study is to develop a comprehensive transportation plan for the County to address future transportation needs, it is not part of the study's scope to develop specific alignments for roadway facilities needed in the future. Representative alignments are shown within the plan map to highlight locations where proposed roadways are needed; however, actual alignment studies must be left for detailed engineering design studies by appropriate agencies, separately.

1.3 Plan Development Process

The transportation planning process consists of multiple sequential steps to evaluate the transportation system. The transportation plan is multi-modal, incorporating public transportation, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities along with roadways. Strategies will also consider alternative transportation choices encompassed by Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Transportation System Management (TSM) actions.

The principal steps involved in formulating the Will County 2030 Transportation Plan are:

1. Assemble data and consolidate ongoing (or recently completed) studies
2. Establish goals and objectives to guide the planning process
3. Develop a travel demand model calibrated to existing roadway performance
4. Extend the planning horizon from 2004 to 2030 and forecast the socioeconomic data required to establish future travel demand
5. Evaluate alternative transportation elements and select a set of strategies to comprise a recommended plan
6. Analyze financial resources available for plan implementation

Figure 1-2 shows the various steps of the overall transportation planning process.

The County established a set of goals and objectives that provided guidance as alternative transportation strategies were considered. Transportation improvement strategies are not a single type of action, but instead embrace a combination of techniques covering the full spectrum of improvement opportunities such as public transit, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, and transportation management strategies. Improvement strategies are identified in the boxes on the right-hand side of **Figure 1-2**. When available, plans and reports pertaining to each of these alternative strategies were reviewed, summarized, and incorporated into the plan development process.

The roadway plan development process began with formulation of a 2004 socioeconomic data set from Census 2000 information. This and subsequent 2030 socioeconomic data were the main drivers in predicting travel volumes and patterns. These socioeconomic data, along with other assumptions about the make-up of the existing transportation system, were input into a transportation demand model developed and calibrated for Will County. The resulting 2004 travel forecast portrayed existing conditions on the highway system, including locations of existing roadway deficiencies.

NIPC 2030 socioeconomic forecasts were input into the transportation demand model to predict future travel on the Existing plus Committed highway network (all existing facilities, plus any with committed construction funding). The resulting 2030 travel forecast identifies roadway deficiencies that would occur without further system improvement.

Since Will County is a high growth area, it was thought that the years separating the NIPC forecasts from the development of the 2030 Transportation Plan might result in significant changes to population or employment patterns. Therefore, an action-oriented socioeconomic forecast was created from NIPC's 2030 projection in order to account for changes in population and employment that had occurred since NIPC developed the forecast. The resulting forecast was also assigned to the Existing plus Committed highway network, and roadway deficiencies were re-examined based on the updated projection.

From prior studies and plans, as well as consultation with local staff and agencies, a compilation was prepared showing planned and potential highway improvement projects. An initial set of projects was selected from this list, and these were applied to the transportation demand model and evaluated based on a standard set of performance measures. Once this first round had been evaluated, a second round was selected and analyzed in the same manner. This process was repeated until a point of diminishing returns was reached. Because of the land area of the county, specific problem areas were analyzed separately before the county was analyzed as a whole.

The various potential alternatives and packages of improvements were evaluated for effectiveness in accommodating future travel demand and fulfilling the transportation goals. Costs were determined for each proposed project and the projects were screened and prioritized based on the performance related to a set of selected criteria. The prioritized projects were compared to available financial resources to guide the decisions on plan implementation. The planning process yielded a transportation plan that is financially attainable and can be implemented.

Public input was solicited at key points throughout the plan development process. Two rounds of public meetings were held at various locations throughout the county. Input from local agencies was solicited through a series of workshops where problems were identified and priorities established. Additionally, meetings with specific areas were solicited in order to gain more detailed information as needed. A project Web site was maintained, and a newsletter was mailed to interested citizens and posted in public locations throughout the county.

1.4 Overview of Document

The following document is organized to familiarize the reader with the process of developing the Will County 2030 Transportation Plan. Section 2 of the document covers the goals and

objectives which provide the framework for the rest of the plan. Section 3 provides an overview of the assumptions in the planning process and an overview of previous plans with an element relevant to transportation planning in Will County. Section 4 covers the existing transportation standards and policies that apply to Will County and include street cross-sections, and access management policy. Section 5 includes an inventory of the existing transportation system and reviews the operational performance of the system. Section 5 also covers the development of the travel demand model used to analyze the performance of the transportation network both in the existing conditions analysis and for the 2030 horizon year analysis. Section 6 discusses the performance of the 2030 transportation with only the projects that have a financial commitment to be completed. Section 7 reviews the methodology employed to develop the Will County 2030 Transportation Plan and the public and agency outreach that occurred throughout the development of the plan. Section 8 reviews the existing revenue and potential revenue options available to WCDH as well as anticipated annual expenditures. This section identifies the estimated revenue available for capacity enhancement projects. Section 9 includes the elements of the Will County 2030 Transportation Plan including project information. Section 10 includes a discussion of the plan implementation and ongoing management of the transportation plan.

1.5 Changes Since Study Began

The Will County 2030 Transportation Plan was completed between 2004 and 2008, allowing time for careful analysis and public involvement. While the plan was being developed, ongoing transportation system improvements in Will County continued. In order for analysis for the 2030 plan to proceed, a single base condition for the roadway network had to be defined. Since the study began, as part of an effort to increase funding for the RTA, the Illinois General Assembly adopted legislation that also authorized a 0.25 percent sales tax increase in the collar counties for infrastructure and safety improvements. During the near future, Will County has committed the additional RTA tax funds to capacity and safety improvements as part of a plan called “Build Will.”

1.5.1 Completed Transportation Improvements

Roads that were in existence at the time of the 2004 baseline were considered as “existing,” and were taken into account in the 2004 analysis. Roads that had committed funding but that had not yet begun or completed construction were considered as “committed” projects. These projects were included in the existing plus committed scenario for the 2030 analysis. By the time this study was published, some of the projects that were “committed” in 2004 had been completed. Likewise, projects that were in the planning stages during 2004 have progressed and now have committed funding for construction, in particular, the I-55 widening project between I-80 and the existing six-lane segment. However, definitions of these projects were kept for the 2004 baseline so that an accurate representation of the project process could be made. Examples of projects that were committed in 2004 and completed by 2008 follow in [Table 1-1](#).

TABLE 1-1
Projects Completed Since the Initiation of the Will County 2030 Transportation Plan

Project	Limits	Type
111th Street	IL 59 to Plainfield-Naperville Road	Widen to 4 lanes
191st Street	Wolf Road to U.S. 45	Widen to 4 lanes
191st Street	80th Avenue to Harlem Avenue	Widen to 4 lanes
I-355	I-55 to I-80	New 6-lane facility
Baseline Road		Widen to 4 lanes
New Lenox Metra SWS Station		New Metra Station
Manhattan Metra SWS Station		New Metra Station

1.5.2 Planning Agency Consolidation

NIPC and the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS) have combined to form the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). This new agency combines the previously separate transportation and land use planning agencies into a single entity designed to protect natural resources and minimize traffic congestion for the region. The updated 2030 forecasts were endorsed in September 2006 and the revised Will County population projection is 1,076,446, which is approximately 3% lower than the original 2030 projection from September 2003.

1.5.3 South Suburban Airport

Additionally, since this study began, layout plans for the proposed South Suburban Airport have continued to be refined. On December 19, 2006, a public meeting was held to discuss two alternative airfield layout plans: the *Draft Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Inaugural Airport Layout Plan (2006)*, and the *Draft Abraham Lincoln National Airport Commission (ALNAC) Inaugural Airport Layout Plan (2006)*. The IDOT inaugural layout plan is more compressed – with all development occurring in an area beginning approximately ½-mile north of North Peotone Road and extending northerly to ¼-mile south of Offner Road. The inaugural development area in the ALNAC plan basically shares the IDOT north boundary but extends an additional half mile south to North Peotone Road, altogether requiring approximately 50 percent more right-of-way and additional roadway closures as noted below.

Under both plans, a number of existing roadways would be affected by closures and relocations, as discussed below. Under both the IDOT and ALNAC scenarios, the north portion of Kedzie and Western Avenues within the airport boundary would be realigned to service new airport facilities and the southern segments would be closed within the airport limits.

IDOT Inaugural Layout Plan:

- North/south road closures – portions of Western, Kedzie, and Crawford, and all of Offner Road to approximately ½-mile north of North Peotone Road.
- East/west road closures – portions of Eagle Lake Road between Western Avenue and Will-Center Road.

ALNAC Inaugural Layout Plan:

- North/south road closures—portions of Western, Kedzie, and Crawford. All from Offner Road to North Peotone Road.
- East/west road closures—Eagle Lake Road from Western Avenue to ¼ mile west of Kedzie Avenue.

The IDOT Inaugural Layout Plan would require the closure of approximately 24 miles of roadways. The ALNAC Inaugural Layout Plan, with its larger footprint, would require the closure of approximately 34 miles of roadways.

The IDOT ultimate layout expands the footprint to roughly encompass an area from IL 50 in the west to the Union Pacific Railroad line in the east, and from Peotone-Beecher Road in the south to Ohlendorf Road in the north. The affected roads for both the IDOT and ALNAC ultimate layout plans are discussed below.

IDOT Ultimate Layout Plan:

- North/south road closures—portions of Ashland, Western, Kedzie, Crawford, Will-Center, Egyptian Trail, and Ridgeland Avenues. All from ½-mile south of Crete-Monee Road to Peotone-Beecher Road.
- East/west road closures—portions of Ohlendorf, Pauling, Offner, Eagle Lake, and Church Roads. Each with various portions closed from Racine Avenue to Ridgeland Avenue.

ALNAC Ultimate Layout Plan:

- North/south road closures—portions of Ashland, Western, Kedzie, Crawford, Will-Center, Egyptian Trail, and Ridgeland Avenues. All from ½-mile south of Crete-Monee Road to Peotone-Beecher Road.
- East/west road closures—portions of Ohlendorf, Pauling, Offner, Eagle Lake, and Church Roads. Each with various portions closed from Racine Avenue to Ridgeland Avenue.

Both ultimate layout plans would require the closure of approximately 85 miles of roadways. **Figure 1-3** shows the limits of the airport layout footprints and the affected roadways.

1.5.4 Transit Studies

In 2007, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) announced a strategic initiative called *Moving Beyond Congestion*. Part of that initiative identifies a series of bus service improvements in Will County. Pace has also developed a more specific program that combines service enhancements in some areas; restructuring some routes; and discontinuing non-productive routes, or portions of routes. At the present time, because of funding limitations, Pace's plan is on hold. Many elements of these plans, which were presented after the analysis for the Will County 2030 Transportation Plan was completed, focus on local service planning, whereas the Bus Concept Plan that is presented in this document stresses corridor and infrastructure improvements to accommodate future expansion of the bus system.

1.5.5 Intermodal Facilities

As cited in Section 1.1, the Centerpoint Intermodal Facility at Elwood occupies a portion of the former Joliet Arsenal Property in the Deer Run Industrial Park (1800 acres). An intermodal facility provides the transfer of cargo containers from railroad cars to highway units via semi-trailers and vice-versa.

2007 Will County traffic counts taken recently on Baseline Road south of Arsenal Road indicate an average daily traffic of over 6,700 vehicles per day. Single unit trucks (15.2 percent) and multi-unit trucks (59.8 percent) comprise the vast majority of the traffic and is attributable directly to the Centerpoint Intermodal Facility. Another Will County 2007 traffic count on Arsenal Road just west of Baseline Road yielded an Average Daily Traffic of 9,266 vehicles per day with a combined truck percentage of 58.6 percent . Thus, high percentages of traffic generated by this type of facility are heavy truck traffic.

Three additional intermodal facilities are in various stages of planning within Will County. They are:

1. Centerpoint Intermodal – Joliet; 3000 acres
2. Ridgeport Logistic Center – I-55 & Lorenzo Road; 3000 acres
3. Centerpoint Intermodal – Crete; 870 acres

Upon completion, these four facilities will comprise over 8000 acres of intermodal transfer facilities. The exact amount of traffic generated by these facilities is unknown. However, based on the current traffic cited above for the Centerpoint Intermodal – Elwood Facility, it is obvious Will County will experience a tremendous growth in heavy truck traffic.

Will County has experienced phenomenal growth in the past decade, both in population and vehicular travel. This trend is expected to continue, and the presence of the intermodal facilities will contribute substantially to the vehicular growth.

1.5.6 Canadian National Railway Acquisition of the Elgin, Joliet, & Eastern Railway (EJ&E)

In December 2008, the Surface Transportation Board approved the Canadian National Railway's proposed acquisition of the EJ&E Railway. This acquisition will route additional freight rail traffic through Will County and may impact roadway congestion at railroad crossings. The federal approval of the project noted that the acquisition is not expected to have a significant impact on the proposed STAR line.

SECTION 1

Figures

**Figure 1-1
Study Area**

**WILL COUNTY
2030 TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

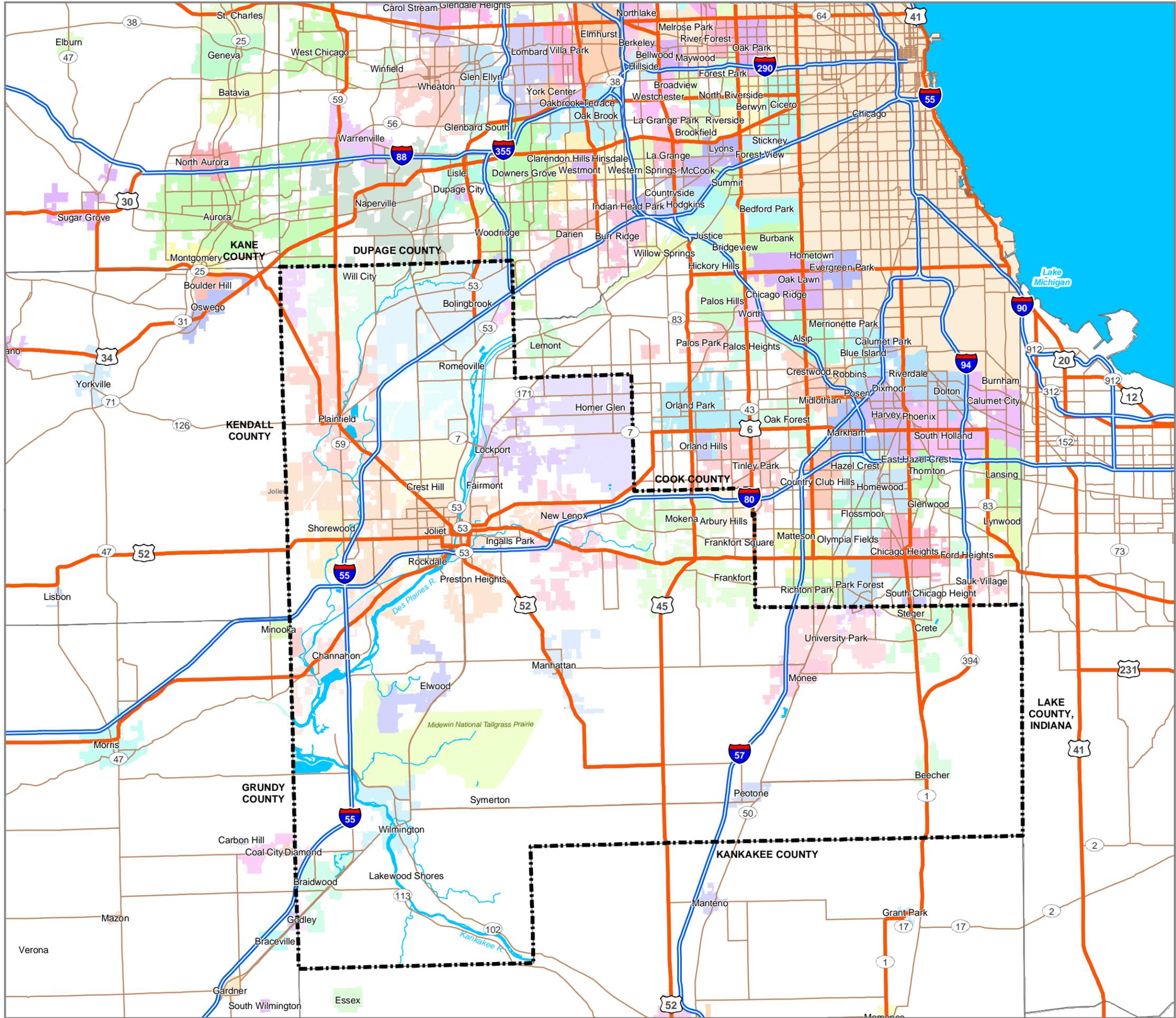
Legend

-  Will County Boundary
-  Limited Access
-  Highway
-  Major Road



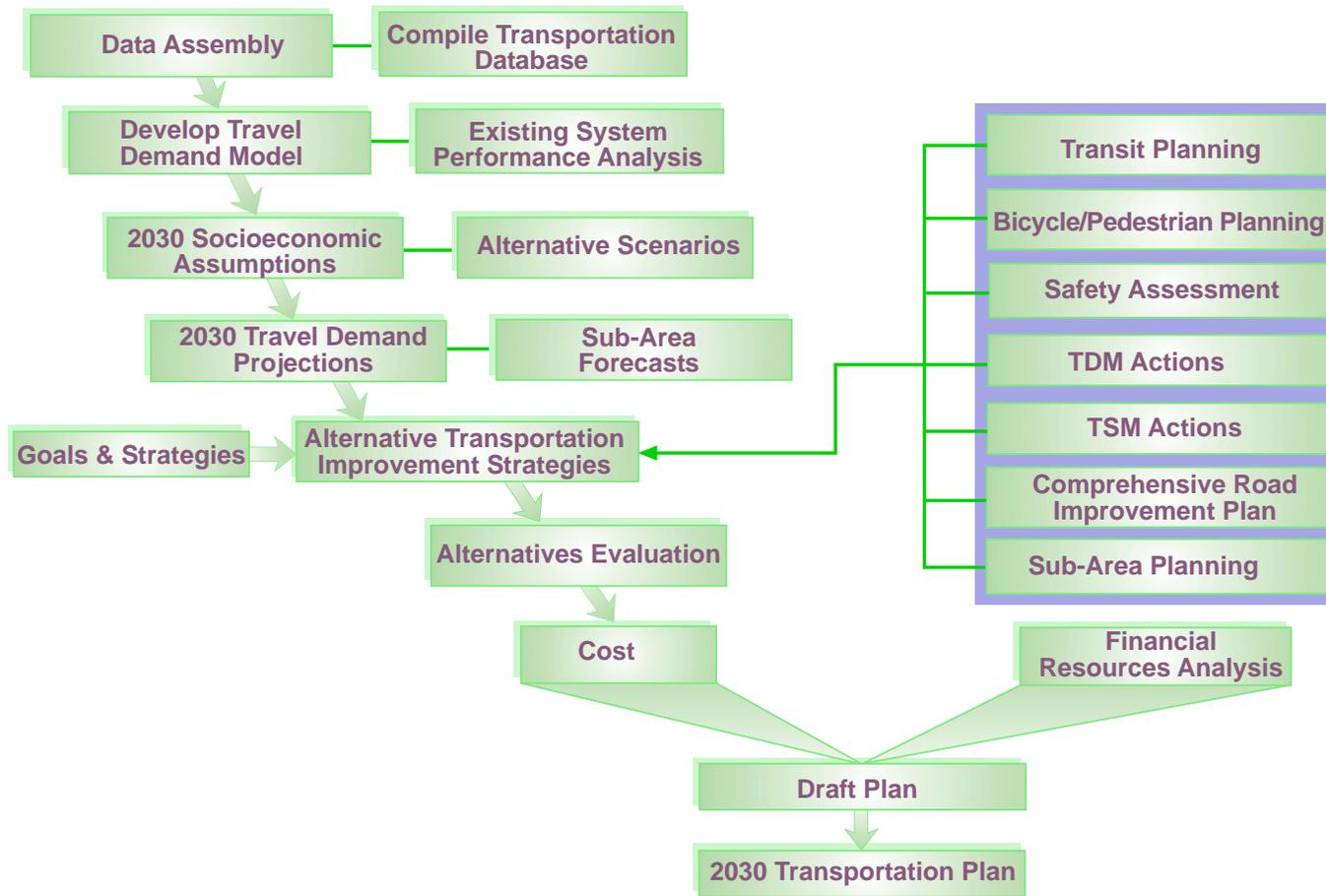
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**FIGURE 1-2
Transportation Planning Process
Schematic**

**WILL COUNTY
2030 TRANSPORTATION PLAN**



**Figure 1-3
Roadways to be Removed by Airport**

**WILL COUNTY
2030 TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

Legend

-  IDOT Inaugural Layout Plan
-  ALNAC Inaugural Layout Plan
-  Ultimate Layout Plan
-  Will County Boundary
-  Existing Road to be Removed



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