

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) awarded Yorkville funds through the Illinois Tomorrow Corridor Planning Grant to complete this Integrated Transportation Plan (ITP). The purpose of this study is to improve and encourage bicycle and pedestrian transportation within Yorkville, and to plan for connections to the surrounding area. This ITP addresses community transportation issues, potential for economic opportunities, protection of natural resources, and improving non-vehicular public access and mobility.

The ITP is designed to achieve the goals set forth by the Illinois Tomorrow Corridor Planning Grant Program. Tasks completed as set forth by the Grant Program and Yorkville are summarized below;

Data Collection and Analysis

Collect data such as demographics, corridor statistics, traffic maps, orthophotos, land use, and other relevant information from forest preserve districts and municipalities; conduct site visits and evaluate the corridor's present condition.

Public Involvement

Conduct a series of open and ongoing public meetings involving local, county and state officials, businesses, land developers, property owners, forest and waterway authorities, citizens, and other stake holders, to present the plan, gather input, identify and deliberate issues, and formulate a context-sensitive solution.

Coordination and Partnership

Coordinate with the Kendall County Highway Department and IDOT's District 3 Office regarding its road capacity assessments, zoning changes, and walking and bicycle paths. Establish a partnership with waterway authorities, adjacent communities, the Kendall County Forest Preserve District and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) regarding its plan affecting the Fox River, wildlife, and wetlands; coordinate with land developers on land use management.

Concept Development

Assess the performance and effectiveness of existing transportation plans; develop specific plans for non-vehicle access, "bike-friendly" streets, pathways and parking areas; enhance land-use design in the target corridor, including complementary amenities; recommend changes to zoning codes and sign standards; promote the preservation of open space; and build multi-faceted

transportation guidelines and policies.

1.2 STUDY AREA

The United City of Yorkville, Illinois (founded in 1830) is located 50 miles southwest of Chicago and lies along the Fox River in Kendall County, Illinois. The community has experienced tremendous growth in the past decade both in terms of population as well as expansion of physical area. A 2008 report by the United States Census Bureau identified Kendall County as the fastest growing county in the nation from 2000 to 2007, with a 77.5% increase in population during that period; the greatest growth having taken place from 2005-2007. During the period from 2000 to 2005, the City expanded its territory by more than 13 square miles. The study area is the same as the City's planning area used for the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. The Shared Use Trail Plan and the Downtown Streetscape Plan study areas are described below and are shown on the referenced exhibits.



The Fox River is a valuable natural resource within the study area.

Shared Use Trail Plan – Study Area

The study area for the Shared Use Trail Plan includes approximately 74.6 square miles. The boundaries are, generally, U.S. Route 30 (to the north), Helmar Road (to the south), Eldamain Road (to the west), and Grove Road (to the east). The Study Area encompasses significant transportation routes such as U.S. Route 34, Illinois Routes 47, 71, and 126, Galena Road, Baseline Road, Caton Farm Road, Kennedy Road, and the proposed Prairie Parkway (see Exhibit A - Study Area).

Downtown Streetscape Plan – Study Area

The Downtown Streetscape Plan addresses a study area within the Shared Use Trail Plan area, generally bounded by Somonauk Street (to the north), Mill Street (to the east), Illinois Route 126 (to the south), and Morgan Street (to the west) (see Exhibit 'C' - Downtown Study Area). This includes the "core" downtown area as well as the Fox River, which traverses in an east-west direction, just north of Hydraulic Street. Other significant physical features within this study area include the Yorkville Intermediate School, Town Square Park, Bicentennial Riverfront Park, the whitewater recreation facility and the Historic Kendall

County Courthouse and campus.

1.3 PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THE ITP

The ITP project was prepared to achieve the goals set forth by the Illinois Tomorrow Corridor Planning Grant Program, and addresses items targeted by Yorkville community leaders:

- Community-wide transportation issues
- Impact on economic opportunities
- Natural resources protection
- Public access and mobility improvement

The ITP builds upon Yorkville's current Comprehensive Land Use Plan approved in 2008, the 2008 Park and Recreation Master Plan, and the Downtown Vision Plan created in 2005.

Shared Use Trail Plan – Purpose and Benefits

The purpose of this Shared Use Trail Plan is to guide Yorkville in the planning of current and future non-vehicular transportation facilities, in order to meet the demand of citizens. In 2004, the Yorkville Parks and Recreation Department completed a conceptual trail development plan, as part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, outlining the location for major trail alignments throughout the study area. The original plan was further refined and detailed to indicate trail connections and links in the 2008 Parks and Recreation Master Plan revision and update. This ITP project utilizes that plan as a base and provides a more comprehensive Trail Plan with recommendations. The benefit of completing this study and implementing the recommendations are many. As Yorkville's population continues to grow, the overall goal is to create a livable community that offers non-vehicular transportation options that are convenient, reliable, safe, and efficient. If implemented successfully, residents will be able to travel from the places where they live to the places they, work, shop, learn, dine, and recreate, without requiring the use of a vehicle.

Economic, Health and Safety Benefits

Economic

A well-planned and well-constructed trail system offers potential economic benefits, including higher real estate property values, increased tourism and recreation-related revenues, and cost savings for public services. Trails and greenways are viewed as amenities by residential, commercial, and office park developers, who realize higher property values when in close proximity of these features.

Additionally, open space, trails and greenways can help manage community storm water issues, by utilizing the open space areas for storm water management. The ITP promotes this idea in order to assist in minimizing flooding, improve water quality, protect wetlands, conserve habitat for wildlife, and buffer adjacent land uses.

Health



A well-planned and integrated trail system throughout the Yorkville region can have extensive health benefits. Daily exercise (bicycling, walking, etc.) significantly improve mental and physical health. Safe and convenient trails and greenways encourage people to walk and utilize bicycles.

Additionally, it provides opportunities for people to travel to their workplace, retail shopping, or to simply enjoy the outdoors for recreational purposes.

Safety

Safety for residents of all ages in Yorkville and the immediate area is another important reason to implement the ideas and principles set forth in this ITP. The consequences of bicycle/pedestrian accidents with vehicles are often serious and sometimes fatal. Children are especially vulnerable, because their movements are often unpredictable, and they are inexperienced at riding in traffic. Young children often ride their bikes or walk across busy streets and highways to schools, parks, neighbors' houses, or other destinations in Yorkville. The addition of any new bicycle or pedestrian facilities indicated in this plan will immediately increase the safety of residents and children who use them.

Downtown Streetscape Plan – Purpose and Benefits

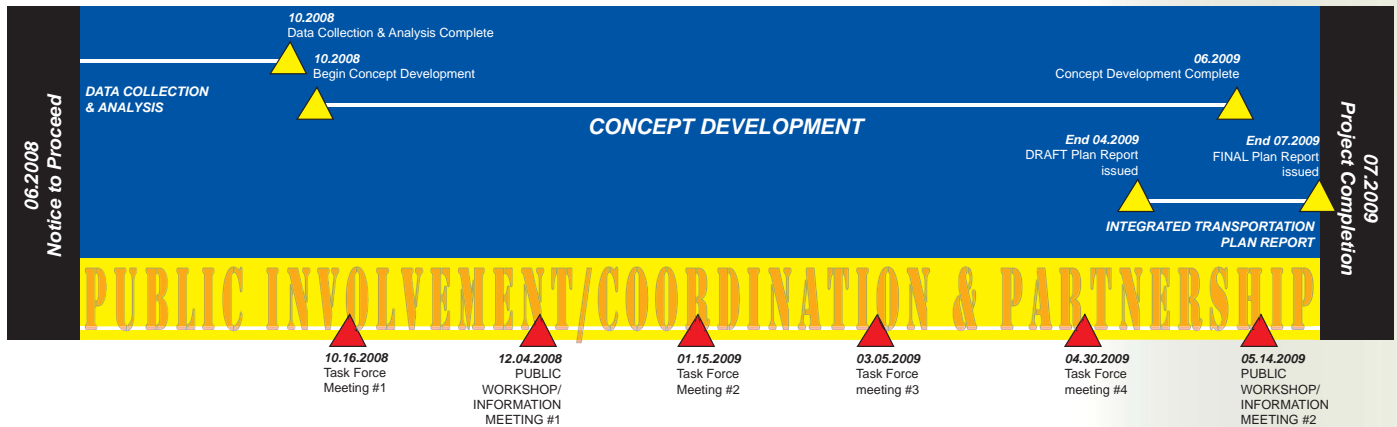
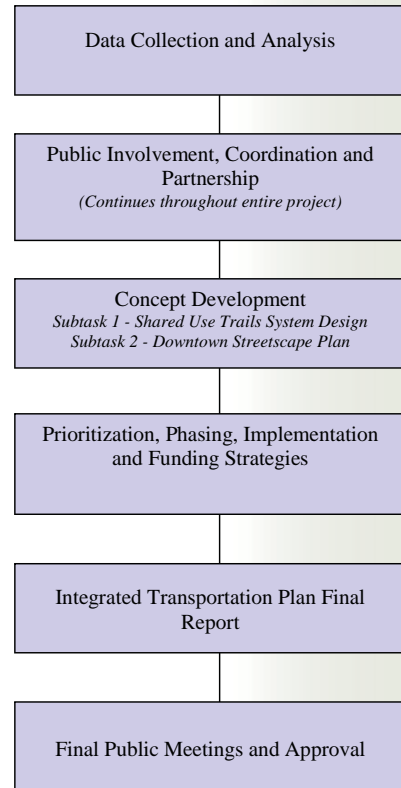
As a part of the Integrated Transportation Plan, a Downtown Streetscape Plan has been prepared, including a Downtown Pedestrian Analysis and Design Standards for Streetscape Elements. The focus in these areas is to provide standard guidelines for an improved pedestrian environment, helping to re-create a vibrant downtown for years to come. This can be achieved by building upon the vision set forth by the Downtown Vision Plan created in 2005. The ITP specifically recognizes the Downtown Vision Plan, and incorporates its overall concepts and ideals, as set forth. The Vision Plan established the "ultimate vision" or "big picture" for Yorkville, while the ITP Downtown Streetscape Study focuses on

tangible and more immediate goals to improve walkability and bikeability. Therefore, the primary focus is to set the stage for a better pedestrian environment and providing streets that are safe, pedestrian-friendly, and aesthetically pleasing.

Implementation of the Downtown Streetscape Plan will help to create an overall environment that encourages existing businesses, residents, and institutions to stay and prosper in Yorkville, as well as attract new businesses and new residents to the downtown. Creating this plan is merely the first step to creating a more successful and vibrant downtown. Forging long-lasting partnerships among private investors, local businesses, property owners, public agencies, and community representatives will also be crucial for success.

1.4 ITP TIMELINE AND STEPS

The following table provides an overview of the general timeline followed while preparing this ITP project. Also a diagram is provided representing the various steps taken in order to complete the study. For a detailed description of each step, see the associated sections in this report.



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