



Citizens for Appropriate Transportation (CAT) Issue Brief
Eisenhower Transportation Corridor
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Eisenhower Expressway. An EIS has five requirements that help us.

1. EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE AND NEED OF THE PROJECT

An EIS must explain the underlying purpose and need IDOT is meeting by improving the expressway. The Purpose and Need Statement should clearly explain to decision-makers and the public why a major expenditure of funds is necessary and worthwhile. The Purpose and Need statement should compare present conditions with future build and no-build conditions. The Purpose and Need statement provides a basis to evaluate alternative solutions.

2. IDENTIFY ALL REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES

An EIS requires IDOT to analyze all prudent and feasible alternatives. Federal regulations require that an EIS "rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives" including the No-Action (No-Build) Alternative. The intent is to avoid or minimize adverse effects on the quality of the human environment. IDOT should consider the full spectrum of alternatives. Possible alternatives that should be analyzed include extending the CTA Blue Line further west, improving service on Metra's Union Pacific West Line to Geneva and the Burlington Northern Line to Aurora, and digging deeper in the ditch so that the Ike is further down. If IDOT must rebuild the Ike, then they should consider ways to better connect neighborhoods on both sides of the expressway. Better designed and wider bridges will be better for pedestrians and bicyclists.

3. ANALYZE ALL ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

An EIS requires a hard look at the environmental consequences. On an average weekday, the Ike carries about 200,000 vehicles a day. Some environmental impacts are air and noise pollution, traffic, impact on property values, property acquisition, vibration from the freight trains, community cohesion, and environmental justice. Vibration is not normally analyzed in a highway project, but it should be studied in this case because of the rail freight tracks in the Ike Corridor. Environmental Justice is a public policy goal intended to ensure that any adverse human health or environmental effects of government projects do not fall on minority or low-income populations in a disproportionate manner.

4. COMPREHENSIVE AND FAIR EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidance documents require a comprehensive and fair evaluation of the alternative solutions using all criteria, including transportation, economic, social, environmental, and financial impacts.

5. ENCOURAGE AND FACILITATE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

An Environmental Impact Statement requires IDOT to provide information to the public, which may in turn assist IDOT in making better decisions through the public comment process. IDOT must prepare both a Draft and a Final EIS and make both available to the public. The public must have the opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS, and IDOT must respond in writing in the Final EIS to all comments. Then the Federal Highway Administration has the ultimate responsibility to ensure compliance with all requirements.