

Foreword

This document presents the latest renewal of the Will County Transportation Plan, which is an element of the Will County Land Resource Management Plan. This update builds from and amplifies previously developed transportation plans and studies. This plan is subject to public input and should be revised every five years.

This plan reflects a collaborative effort among municipalities, townships, regional agencies, and the State of Illinois. The Year 2020 Regional Transportation Plan, being managed by the joint efforts of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) and the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS), has been used as a framework for the current Will County plan. It is based on the same year 2020 population and employment forecasts. The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Metropolitan Rail (Metra), Pace suburban bus service, and the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) provided assistance and direction during the planning process. The county also asked each municipality, township, and state agency to participate. Each agency was asked for input and guidance throughout the process.

This plan is intended to be more detailed than previous plans. It is multimodal in content and includes roads, public transportation improvements, and railroads, and also provides the foundation for later studies on bikeway, pedestrian, equestrian, and airport transportation. The plan has also tried to be responsive to the possible development of a third regional airport in the Peotone area. The results are a recommended transportation plan described in terms of two scenarios: with a new airport and without a new airport.

The plan is written to guide transportation improvements through the year 2020. It also takes an even longer view. The opportunity for facilities such as bridges or rights-of-way for roadways or public transportation needs to be protected for the post-planning period. As development continues, transportation improvements will be needed for the long range. Because of the rapid growth the county is anticipating, with population that is projected to more than double by the year 2020, this plan should be continually managed and updated.

Transportation facilities and services are essential for Will County's economic well-being and the quality of life of its citizens. While this relationship is recognized by most people and organizations, the reality of achieving the desired level of transportation infrastructure falls short of this goal. Lack of financing, the inability to acquire right-of-way, lack of coordination between land use and development activities and transportation needs, and differences concerning the need for transportation improvements are factors that impact the implementation of an optimal transportation system.

The presence of these factors is not new in the process of urban change affecting Will County. The significant fact is that change in Will County is accelerating. Growth is occurring at a faster pace. The longer-range forecasts, as discussed in this report, describe a situation that will generate a significantly higher level of transportation needs.

These conditions mean that a long-range transportation plan has a vital role to play. It has the opportunity to define the unique series of actions that would serve the increasing transportation needs of Will County. Because this plan has a countywide agenda, in geographic terms, it can address key considerations:

1. Program coordination between many agencies: state, regional, and local.
2. Facility planning and design coordination to respond to the fact that growth will increase the urbanized area and bring local communities closer together.
3. Identification of long-range facility needs, viewed in a system fashion, with provision to protect or preserve transportation right-of-way opportunities.
4. Increasing the value and benefits from transportation investments through the use of system planning concepts that identify opportunities to serve multiple needs or accommodate the needs of more than one agency.
5. Enhancing the use of limited funding for transportation investments.

The preparation of this plan has provided for the engagement of a wide spectrum of agencies and interests involved in planning activities that affect Will County. These agencies and interests were initially organized into four committees (Policy, Board, Planning, and Citizen) that met quarterly to guide the early stages of the study. These committees are identified in the Appendix of this report. The recommended plan and the process used to define the plan, described in this report, reflect a consensus of these participants. The plan needs to be transformed into a living document to realize the vital role it can play. This requires commitment.

Will County will need to be an active partner with other organizations to achieve this use of the plan. In this sense, the preparation of the plan summarized in this report is only the beginning.