



# Reinvent Veterans Parkway

*Our Community Vision*

## Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Prepared for the McLean County Regional Planning Commission by TYLin, Chicago, IL



# Executive Summary

The Preliminary Alternatives Analysis Report is the fifth in a series of project reports and covers work completed following the Corridor Segments Analysis Memo. Previous reports include:

- Current Conditions Report
- Opportunities & Needs Report
- Phase 1-2 Engagement Report
- Corridor Segments Analysis Memo

The Preliminary Alternatives Analysis report includes the following components:

- Intersection Design Guidance
- Corridor Segment Design Alternatives
- Network Improvement Guidance
- Additional Feasibility and Impacts Analyses

## Intersection Design Guidance

This section provides corridor-wide intersection design guidance intended to apply to any corridor intersection, including all of the segment design alternatives. The guidance provides the following best practices:

- Implement pedestrian crossings at all legs
- Provide single-phase pedestrian crossings
- Install high-visibility crosswalks
- Reduce corner radii (leveraging large vehicle far-lane steering as permitted by IDOT standards)
- Remove channelized turn lanes where possible
- Consider net safety benefits of right-turn lanes
- Utilize single left-turn lanes where possible
- Optimize signal timing/phasing

Implementing these best practices provides safety and access benefits for all users, and particularly for corridor users outside vehicles. For instance, applying reduced corner radii that still preserve large vehicle operations could reduce pedestrian crossings distances by 25-50%.

## Corridor Segment Design Alternatives

This section provides detailed design and impact analyses for six segment design alternatives, including traffic modeling impacts, safety impacts, and cost estimates. Safety impact analyses were based on research from FHWA's Crash Modification Factor (CMF) clearinghouse. All driver time impacts and cost estimates are based on the portion of Veterans Parkway between Ireland Grove Road and Shepard Road (although cost estimates do not include the Empire Street intersection).

### A Note on Modeling Data and Population Growth Projections

The McLean County Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC) utilizes IDOT’s statewide model for traffic impact analyses. This statewide model has a built-in assumption of a 16.7 percent population increase in McLean County between 2025-2045. However, the Bloomington-Normal Metropolitan Long-Range Transportation Plan 2050 document published by MCRPC in 2022 projects countywide population decline between 4.1 percent and 14.8 percent by 2050. This report includes modeling results based on 16.7percent growth. For this reason, traffic impact modeling results may be highly conservative with respect to growth in vehicular traffic.

### Alternatives Overview

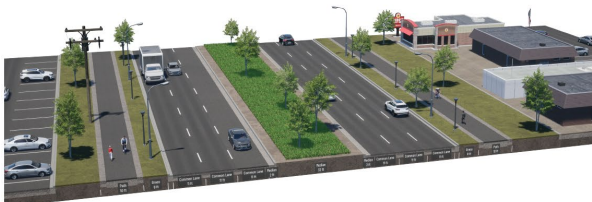
#### Typical Existing Conditions

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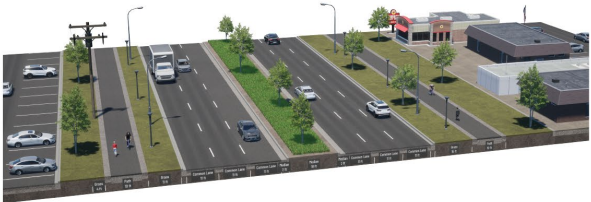
#### Alternative A1

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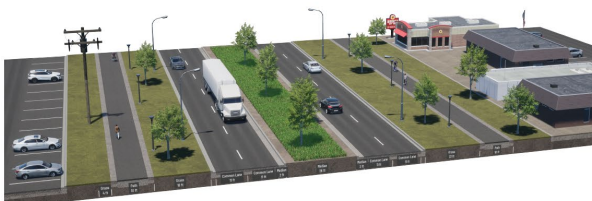
#### Alternative A2

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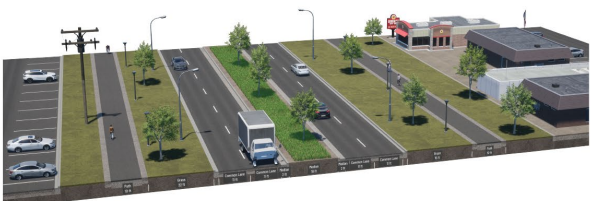
#### Alternative B1

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#### Alternative B2

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#### Alternative C

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## Alternative A1: Six-Lane Upgrade

Alternative A1 maintains the existing number of travel lanes while right-sizing travel lane width, widening the median, and adding pedestrian and bicycle shared-use pathways on both sides. Alternative A1 maintains outside curb locations as a cost efficiency effort and would be expected to have a high positive impact on pedestrian and cyclist safety, driver safety, and pedestrian and bicyclist access. Travel time increases for drivers largely result from implementing single-phase pedestrian crossings and the removal of some dedicated right-turn lanes.

- Peak hour driver travel time impacts: +0.9-3.2 minutes (Relative to No-Build condition)
- Intersections at overall LOS D or better during the weekday morning and evening peak hours: 100%
- Full cost estimate: \$77.9 million

## Alternative A2: Six-Lane Upgrade, Narrow Median

Alternative A2 maintains all characteristics of Alternative A1 except that it features a median designed to the narrowest possible width to accommodate a single left-turn lane, per Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) guidance. Dual left-turn lanes would not be feasible at this median width. Preliminary modeling efforts projected that a significant portion of left-turn lanes on Veterans Parkway would operate over capacity, creating 95<sup>th</sup> percentile queues that would exceed storage. Queue spillback would in turn be expected to impede through volumes and create potential gridlock within portions of the study network. As a result, no further modeling was completed, as this alternative would be considered to have a substantial adverse impact on vehicular operations with modest additional pedestrian and cyclist safety and access benefits relative to Alternative A1.

- Peak hour driver travel time impacts: n/a
- Intersections at overall Level of Service (LOS) D or better, weekday morning and evening peak hours: n/a
- Full cost estimate: \$89.7 million

## Alternative B1: Four-Lane Conversion

Alternative B1 converts the roadway to a four-lane configuration, while adding pedestrian and bicycle shared-use pathways. Alternative B1 provides high gains in pedestrian access paired with shifts in vehicle volume across the area roadway network. Traffic modeling projects decreases in Veterans Parking daily traffic volumes of 3-21%, while portions of Hershey Road and Towanda Avenue could see daily traffic volume increases of up to 16% (and lesser impacts on other roadways). Alternative B1 would be expected to have very high positive impacts on pedestrian and bicyclist safety and access and high positive impacts on driver safety.

- Peak hour driver travel time impacts: 1.9-4.0 minutes (Relative to No-Build condition)
- Intersections at overall LOS D or better, weekday morning and evening peak hours: 96%
- Full cost estimate: \$90.3 million

## Alternative B2: Four-Lane Conversion, Narrow Median

Alternative B2 maintains all characteristics of Alternative B1 except that it features a median designed to the narrowest possible width to accommodate single left-turn lane, per IDOT guidance. Dual left-turn lanes would not be feasible at this median width. Preliminary modeling efforts projected that a significant portion of left-turn lanes on Veterans Parkway would operate over capacity, creating 95<sup>th</sup> percentile queues that would exceed storage. Queue spillback would in turn be expected to impede through volumes and create potential gridlock within portions of the study network. As a result, no further modeling was completed, as this alternative would be considered to have a substantial adverse impact on vehicular operations with modest additional pedestrian and cyclist safety and access benefits relative to Alternative B1.

- Peak hour driver travel time impacts: n/a
- Intersections at overall LOS D or better, weekday morning and evening peak hours: n/a
- Full cost estimate: \$89.0 million

## Alternative C: Intersection Focus

Alternative C leaves existing roadway segments and medians in place while upgrading intersections and adding shared-use paths. Research indicates that intersection improvements would likely have a disproportionately large positive impact on safety outcomes compared to segment improvements. Alternative C would be expected to have high positive impacts on pedestrian and bicyclist safety and access and moderate impacts on driver safety. Alternative C would offer relatively minimal opportunities for landscaping improvements. Travel time increases for drivers largely result from implementing single-phase pedestrian crossings and the removal of a portion of dedicated right-turn lanes.

- Peak hour driver travel time impacts: +0.9-3.2 minutes (Relative to No-Build conditions)
- Intersections at overall LOS D or better, weekday morning and evening peak hours: 100%
- Full cost estimate: \$43.3 million

## Alternative D: No-Build/ Existing Conditions

Under No-Build conditions, the geometric design and regulation of the roadway would remain unchanged relative to existing conditions. Even if no modifications to the corridor are implemented as a result of this project, changes in traffic volumes and operations can be expected in future years relative to existing conditions. The model projects an average 14 percent increase in traffic growth on Veterans Parkway regardless of any future intervention.

- Peak hour driver travel time impacts: n/a
- Intersections at overall LOS D or better, weekday morning and evening peak hours: 100%
- Full cost estimate: \$0 million

## Network Improvement Guidance

Improving safety and accessibility for all users in the Veterans Parkway corridor extends beyond Veterans Parkway itself. This project is scoped to evaluate the area within a quarter-mile of the roadway to provide guidance on broader network improvements. The project team developed high-level guidance focused on improving safety and access for all users that is based upon Complete Streets principles as well as national best practice. Guidance covers:

- Sidewalk and trail networks
- Non-intersection crossings
- Grade-separated crossings
- Transit stops
- Bicycle facilities
- Roadway right-sizing
- Lane widths
- Private property pedestrian networks

The report illustrates how implementing the guidelines would impact networks and infrastructure in the corridor study area. Some benefits include:

- The percentage of the corridor study area within a 10-minute walk of a transit stop increases by 70 percent (from one-third to over half).
- The number of grocery stores accessible within a 5-minute walk of a transit stop more than doubles. Within a 10-minute walk of a transit stop, the number nearly triples.
- The number of jobs accessible within a 5-minute walk of a transit stop increases more than 140 percent—an increase of nearly 8,000 new jobs.

## Additional Feasibility and Impacts Analyses

### Local Pollution & Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Impacts

To estimate the effects of each alternative on air quality, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Motor Vehicle Emissions Simulator (MOVES4) emissions model was used to obtain pollutant emission factors. Alternative B1 is expected to result in slightly fewer total emissions than Alternatives A1 or C. This is likely a result of lower overall traffic volumes due to diversions, despite lower projected travel speeds. However, the difference in emissions between all alternatives and a future No-Build condition should be considered relatively low. Additionally, all alternatives are projected to have fewer total emissions than the existing condition due to anticipated shifts to higher efficiency vehicles, which are expected to produce fewer emissions than older generation vehicles.

### Disadvantaged Communities Impacts

Veterans Parkway's nature as a corridor with high auto reliance disadvantages communities who have lower vehicle access and higher reliance on transit, walking, and cycling. The proposed pedestrian, bicycle, and transit network improvements as well as roadway design alternatives all feature substantial upgrades in safety and access for people not traveling via a personal vehicle. These improvements should be expected to have a disproportionate positive impact on disadvantaged communities. The higher the positive impact on pedestrian, bicycle, and transit safety and access, the higher the positive impact on disadvantaged communities.

### Land Use and Economic Development Impacts

While research on the economic impacts of Complete Streets interventions is relatively limited for corridors that match Veterans Parkway's precedent, research on the most comparable corridors generally indicates strong potential for positive economic impacts. Additionally, healthy businesses rely on a large labor market pool with reliable access to transportation. Improving reliable, multimodal access to transportation for residents in the region can boost the success of corridor businesses. Finally, Veterans Parkway is currently the highest-volume surface roadway in the region, with more than 40,000 vehicles/day at its busiest segments. Even in a scenario with moderate reductions in peak-hour and daily traffic volumes, Veterans Parkway would remain the highest-volume surface roadway in the region, likely maintaining its status as a key attractor of major retailers and employers.

### Utilities Impacts

Utilizing the currently available information, the project team believes that a stormwater ditch is not feasible within the right-of-way (ROW) for the proposed corridor segments design alternatives. As a result, the project team included estimated costs for a composite sub-standard ditch with a closed system that could be used if the proposed shared-use path can drain towards the roadway. Properly assessing the full differentiating drainage impacts of the corridor segment design alternatives would need to be evaluated in further stages of design.

Electrical utilities are generally located in IDOT ROW and not in exclusive easements. Electrical distribution lines run along most of the corridor, while transmission lines cross the corridor in three locations. It is not anticipated that corridor design alternatives will impact transmission lines. Electrical distribution lines would likely need to be relocated (at least partially) under all corridor segment design alternatives, although greater flexibility may exist in Alternatives A2 and B2 to maintain existing placement.

## Corridor Alternatives Impact Matrix

While each corridor design alternative involves detailed analysis in multiple areas, the table below attempts to distill impacts into high-level qualitative summaries to aid in comparing alternatives. Rows in the table below should not be read to be weighed as equal impacts compared to each other.

	Alternative A1	Alternative A2	Alternative B1	Alternative B2	Alternative C
	<i>6 Lanes, Maintain Outside Curbs, Wider Median, Resurface</i>	<i>6 Lanes, Narrower Median, Reconstruct</i>	<i>4 Lanes, Wider Median, Reconstruct</i>	<i>4 Lanes, Narrower Median, Reconstruct</i>	<i>6 Lanes, Intersections + Paths Only</i>
<b>Ped/Bike Safety</b>	High impact	High impact	Very high impact	Very high impact	High impact
<b>Driver Safety</b>	High impact	High impact	High impact	High impact	Moderate impact
<b>Ped/Bike Access</b>	High impact	High impact	Very high impact	Very high impact	High impact
<b>Driver Delays</b>	Moderate impact	Very High impact	High impact	Very high impact	Moderate impact
<b>Cost Estimate</b>	\$77.9 million	\$89.7 million	\$90.3 million	\$89.0 million	\$43.4 million
<b>Landscape Opp.</b>	High impact	Moderate impact	Very high impact	High impact	Neutral
<b>GHG/Pollution</b>	Low impact	Low impact	Very low impact	Very low impact	Low impact
<b>Disadvantaged Communities</b>	High impact	High impact	Very high impact	Very high impact	High impact

## Summary

This report provides design interventions to improve intersection operations and safety, with particular positive impacts on people walking, cycling, or using transit. Further, this report outlines five corridor segment design alternatives with varying impacts on vehicle travel times, traffic diversion, safety improvements, landscaping opportunities, and costs. All design alternatives provide substantial access and safety improvements for people walking, cycling, and using transit. Alternative A1 provides the lowest-cost opportunity for segment redesign but offers lower overall safety benefits compared to Alternatives A2, B1, and B2. Alternatives A2 and B2 introduce substantial adverse impacts on vehicular traffic operations due to the inability to accommodate dual left-turn lanes. Alternatives B1 and B2 introduce traffic diversions during peak hour periods; if either Alternative is carried forward in future stages of the corridor redesign, further analysis would be needed to fully understand the tangible outcome of those impacts on area roadways apart from Veterans Parkway—including how those roadways would handle increased volumes. Alternative C provides the lowest-cost option but does not include the safety improvements that come with segment redesign. Finally, this report provides broader network design guidance, illustrates the impacts of implementing that guidance, and quantifies the access benefits of implementation for people walking and using transit.

## Comparing Trade-Offs

Veterans Parkway is a corridor of competing needs, and no single solution comes without trade-offs. This report offers a range of interventions and alternatives that all conform to technical design standards, provide proven safety benefits, and provide for acceptable traffic operations. Evaluating impacts and comparing trade-offs ultimately then requires identifying community priorities and an overall community vision for the future of the corridor.