

KEDZIE AVENUE

 CORRIDOR STUDY

Public Involvement Plan
Kedzie Avenue
Vollmer Road to 159th Street
Phase I Study



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Cook County’s long-range transportation plan *Connecting Cook County*, the Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways (CCDOTH) has initiated the Kedzie Avenue Phase I Study. The study area includes the Kedzie Avenue corridor from W 159th Street (US Hwy 6) to the north to Vollmer Road to the south (see Figure 1). This study will include an assessment of pavement condition, traffic, multi-modal facilities, drainage, safety, and environmental conditions and needs along this roadway corridor. The overall goals of the project are to address existing deficiencies and improve safety and mobility for all users. The study will be conducted in accordance with *Connecting Cook County*, Cook County’s Complete Streets guidelines, and the Illinois Department of Transportation’s Bureau of Local Roads and Streets Manual.

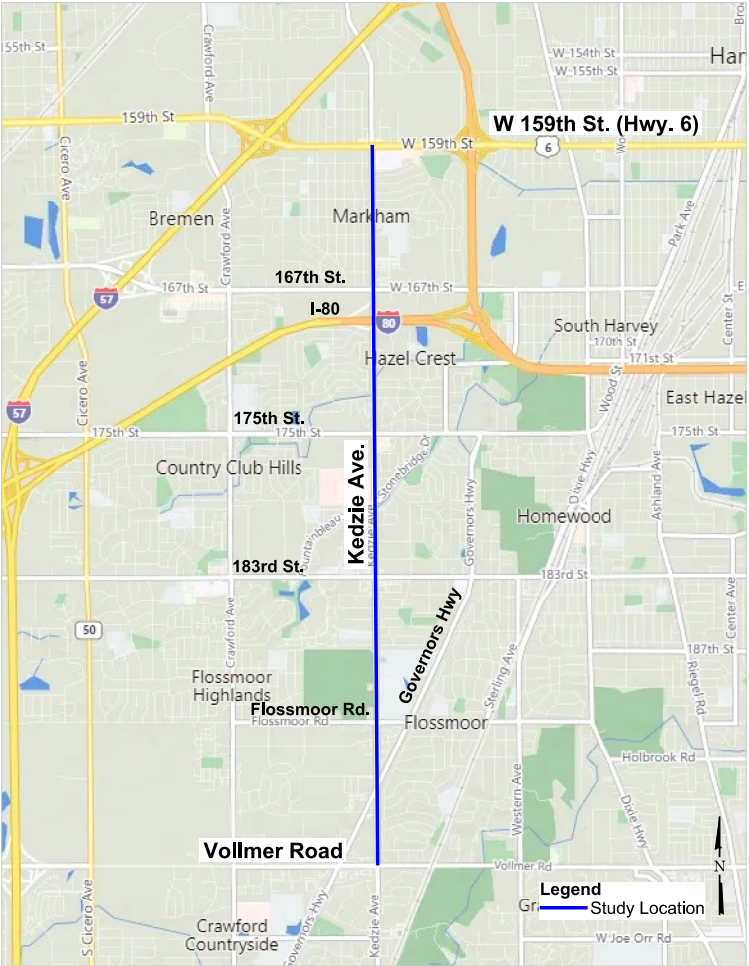


Figure 1. Map of the Kedzie Avenue Phase I Study Area.

The Kedzie Avenue Phase I Study is a major undertaking by the CCDOTH. Public involvement activities will be conducted via a thoughtful and comprehensive approach that combines engineering analysis with stakeholder input to identify a preferred alternative that improves the quality of life of the community.

This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) lays out the project team’s plan for engagement with the many community stakeholders within this 5-mile stretch of corridor. This PIP is a working document that will be revised and updated as needed throughout the project, with all content changes outlined in a revision history table. The PIP is designed to articulate the role that public involvement will have in shaping this study and its outcomes, and to guide seamless communication between the project team, CCDOTH, and the public. Public involvement will play several roles in the study, including guiding the development of the purpose and need and proposed improvement alternatives, providing feedback on project team recommendations, and identifying local champions who can assist with community coordination and support future implementation efforts.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF OUTREACH PROGRAM

This PIP outlines the goals, types, activities, and timelines of stakeholder outreach for the Kedzie Avenue Phase I Study. This document also educates stakeholders and project team members on project goals and deliverables. The project team will use the framework established in the PIP to guide the collection and organization of input from all stakeholders, as well as the incorporation of input into the project team’s recommendations.

Stakeholder input will be used to identify the project’s purpose and need and guide the development of improvement alternatives throughout the Phase I Study. This study will define geometric, drainage, and other opportunities to improve the capacity, safety, access, and physical and environmental conditions for vehicular and multi-modal users, adjacent landowners, and the overall community this corridor serves. The project team will seek input from the public on these improvements.

The community will also be interested in opportunities to make improvements to promote safety, access, economic development, environmental stewardship, and livability. The Phase I Study will seek to understand these sometimes-competing requirements, as well as balance them with cost and feasibility, to develop recommended improvements and define a roadmap for further design development and ultimately, construction. A robust and inclusive public involvement process will be undertaken to build consensus and excitement within and between the affected communities in the study area.

A variety of outlets and methods for engagement will be used to ensure that key issues, input, and ideas from the public and stakeholders are captured and taken into consideration. Communication will also include how the community input received will be used in the Study process. All public information meetings will be accessible to people with disabilities, and materials will convey technical information to the public in clear and easy-to-understand language and graphics.

This PIP aims to:

- Identify key stakeholders and establish a Corridor Advisory Committee;
- Provide a clear process for thoughtful and effective two-way communication with communities;
- Create opportunities for timely, relevant, and actionable community input; and
- Inform communities of how their input will be incorporated into the Study’s recommendations.

The engagement goals for this project include:

- Educate communities and stakeholders about the individual and community benefits of the Study’s recommended improvements to Kedzie Avenue
- Explore opportunities for collaboration and alignment with community wants, needs, and desires
- Incorporate community input into the Study’s recommendations

Types of engagement that the project team plan to use in this project include:

- Inform – communicating information about the project to the community or governing body
- Gather – asking the community about existing issues in the study area
- Consult – soliciting feedback from the community about the purpose and need for the project as well as project team-developed designs

Table 1. Matrix of Engagement Activities by Type.

	Inform	Gather	Consult
Stakeholder Meetings	X	X	X
CAC Meetings	X	X	X
Virtual Info Sessions	X	X	X
Public Information Meetings	X	X	X
Website	X	X	X
Survey		X	X
Contact List	X		
Newsletters	X		
Social Media Outreach	X		

3.0 STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

The Kedzie Avenue Phase I Study will be led by CCDOTH. Communication with elected officials, regional agencies, municipalities, key stakeholders, and the public will be essential. Outreach will include a variety of methods including providing informational materials and participating in meetings with stakeholders. Stakeholder meetings will be established with individuals, an advisory committee of key stakeholders, regional agencies, and groups representing the public.

While in-person meetings are preferred, any or all stakeholder meetings may be conducted virtually due to public health guidelines outlined by the State of Illinois or stakeholder preference. Any virtual meetings held for the project will include a web meeting or conferencing platform and dial-in information option. During virtual meetings, participants will have the ability to ask questions and collaborate with the project team in a way that is comparable to traditional CCDOTH in-person meetings.

3.1 Individual Stakeholder Meetings

Individual meetings will be held with each of the five (5) municipalities adjacent to the study corridor (Olympia Fields, Flossmoor, Homewood, Hazel Crest, and Markham) and any other key external stakeholders to provide information and updates on the project, as well as to gain information specific to each stakeholder. Project kick-off meetings will be held in-person with each municipality early in the process and will help inform CCDOTH in identifying any other key stakeholders for the study. This PIP anticipates that up to three (3) one-on-one coordination meetings will be held with each of the key external stakeholders identified.

The purpose of these meetings will be to introduce the project, receive input specific to each community, solicit recommendations for CAC membership, seek their recommendations about how best to engage with their communities, and request information to form a comprehensive view of existing issues in the study area. It is anticipated that most if not all stakeholder meetings will be held virtually on a web conferencing platform with dial-in information. Additional follow-up meetings will occur, as needed, throughout the study.

Some stakeholder meetings may engage a group of topic-specific stakeholders related to geographical areas of the corridor such as the following:

- Governmental complex between 163rd and 166th Streets;
- Advocate South Suburban Hospital area;
- Commercial area at 183rd Street;
- Recreational area from Mallard/Monterey to Flossmoor Road; and
- Various residential communities between major crossroads.

3.2 Corridor Advisory Committee

As part of this Study, a Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) will be established and comprise a group of up to approximately twenty (20) key stakeholders, such as subject matter experts, to act as a sounding board and knowledgeable source of corridor-related information. The CAC will generally be comprised of elected officials, local businesses, community organizations, residential groups (e.g., condo associations), and regional transportation and planning agencies. A list of recommended CAC members is included at the end of this document (7.0 Appendix).

The CAC will meet throughout the project to advise on project needs. Engaging and soliciting feedback from the CAC will help to ensure that the analysis and subsequent recommendations correspond to local conditions and solutions. Additionally, CAC members will be able to provide guidance and support for issues within their area of expertise. CAC members will also be encouraged to promote public information meetings to their communities and members.

The project team anticipates meeting with the CAC up to three (3) times at key points in the project development process. These key points will include initial project introduction to receive input on current issues and needs, review initial improvement alternatives, and review of the preferred alternative.

It is anticipated that most if not all CAC meetings will be held virtually on a web conferencing platform with dial-in information. All meeting materials will be provided to CAC members via email and presentation materials will be shared on the project website.

3.3 Regional Agency Coordination

With a study area corridor that stretches over five miles and as many municipalities, there are many agencies with jurisdiction, service operators, and property owners on or near the corridor. Ongoing communication and coordination with regional agencies including the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Illinois Tollway, Pace, Metra, Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) will be needed. Many of these agencies will also be engaged through the CAC. Additional coordination will be in the form of phone calls, e-communications, and virtual meetings. All regional agency coordination meetings are expected to be conducted virtually or via phone unless the agency expresses a preference for an in-person meeting.

3.4 General Public

The project team will engage the public through a variety of opportunities, including public information meetings, a project website, and an online survey. A total of two (2) public information meetings are anticipated; these meetings are described in more detail in Section 4.0.

4.0 PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS

Two (2) public information meetings will be held during this project. If, at any point during the study it is determined in coordination with IDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that the project impacts warrant a public hearing, the second public information meeting may be modified to a public hearing. If this occurs, the PIP will be updated with revised procedures which will be followed for the public hearing.

At the first public information meeting, participants will hear a project overview and be introduced to the project, team, process, and expected outcomes. They will also have opportunities to learn about, discuss, and provide input on initial design considerations and alternatives generated by the project team. Material will be developed for CCDOTH approval and CAC information prior to any material being released to the public ahead of the public information meetings. At the second public information meeting, the Preferred Alternative will be presented to participants for their feedback.

Participant goals of Public Information Meeting #1:

- Understand the process and how their voices will contribute to it
- Learn results of preliminary technical analyses, stakeholder conversations, and survey responses
- Understand the tradeoffs associated with initial alternatives
- Provide feedback on initial alternatives
- Have clear understanding of next steps/how to continue to engage and participate

Project team goals of Public Information Meeting #1:

- Provide project overview/introduction
- Set expectations for what this study will accomplish
- Present study findings to date
- Present initial alternatives, and how technical analyses and early engagement shaped those alternatives
- Obtain feedback on initial alternatives that will shape subsequent designs

Participant goals of Public Information Meeting #2:

- Understand the process and how their voices will contribute to it
- Learn about the recommendations in the preferred alternative
- Provide feedback on the preferred alternative
- Have clear understanding of next steps/how to continue to engage and participate

Project team goals of Public Information Meeting #2:

- Provide information on how the preferred alternative was developed, including how alternatives were generated, how the alternatives/designs may have changed since PIM #1, and the process for decision-making between PIM #1 and PIM #2.
- Set expectations for what will happen based on this preferred alternative

- Present preferred alternative content
- Obtain feedback on preferred alternative that will shape the Final Report
- Provide information on what will be in the Phase I Final Report

To supplement the public information meetings, the project team will also host two (2) virtual information sessions, one (1) during the day and one (1) in the evening, to provide an additional opportunity for community members and stakeholders who were unable to attend the public information meeting to get information about the project and ask questions.

Public information meetings conducted by the project team will follow the guidelines presented in the Illinois Department of Transportation Bureau of Local Roads and Streets Manual Section 21-3.03: Format Options of Public Meetings and Hearings.

[4.1 Public Information Meeting Locations](#)

While the project team aims to have as much in-person engagement as possible, the public information meeting formats (virtual vs. in-person) will be determined closer to the date of the meeting in compliance with the latest public health guidance established by the State of Illinois. If a public information meeting is conducted virtually, it will be conducted via a web meeting or conferencing platform with dial-in information for those who prefer or who are unable to connect via the web. All virtual meeting materials will be available on the project website and physically at pre-determined locations along the corridor.

If a public information meeting is conducted in-person, the project team will look to hold the meeting at a location within or near the corridor, for example a school or other public facility. The location chosen will meet the following criteria: available on date of presentation; hold at least 100 people; ADA accessible; near public transportation; and low cost or free of charge.

[4.2 Public Information Meeting Materials](#)

Public information meeting materials will be clear and concise. Fact sheets will include general information, such as study goals, map, and timeline. The project team will ensure all handouts and materials are available on the Phase I study website after the meeting has occurred and physically at pre-determined locations throughout the corridor.

[4.3 Public Information Meeting Announcements](#)

The project team will use a variety of methods to notify the public about the meeting. Public notification will be made in area newspapers at least three (3) weeks in advance of the scheduled meetings. The project team will also send postcards to property owners along the corridor. Information about the public meeting will also be included in an e-newsletter that will be sent to stakeholders, local elected officials from the affected communities, and relevant agencies; posted on the website; and shared on social media. CAC members will also be encouraged to conduct outreach and promote the public information meeting within their communities.

Announcements will highlight meeting topics and invite the public to attend. If possible, announcements will include what type of engagement participation the community can expect (inform, gather, consult). CCDOTH will approve meeting announcements, potential locations, materials, and format. Other special accommodations will be utilized if requested in advance. The meeting announcements will provide avenues to request those accommodations.

[4.4 Public Information Meeting Presentation Format](#)

The public information meetings will be designed to accommodate as many people as possible while still providing the opportunity to have one-on-one conversations and follow-up with individuals. This will be an important opportunity for people to interact creatively with alternatives and the project team. While the exact agenda of the meetings will be determined closer to the meeting date, exercises that allow people to interact with a map, a model, a game, etc. will be considered for this meeting.

An in-person public information meeting will be approximately three (3) hours, tentatively 4pm-7pm, and include a pre-recorded PowerPoint presentation with voiceover at the beginning of the meeting. Exhibit images, boards, and/or large-scale printed maps will be on display for attendees to view and participate in exercises related to each, as well as ask questions. The open house format is intended for participants to provide input on several aspects of the project through several different ways of engaging with the material. There will be several opportunities that will facilitate public comment. For example, written comment cards will be available at each meeting.

A virtual public information meeting will include a similar format that allows for informational materials to be shown and provide various opportunities for public comment, such as question and answer functions, polling, and the opportunity for attendees to provide comments via a chat function or via phone.

[4.5 Virtual Information Sessions](#)

In conjunction with the Public Information Meetings, the project team will host two virtual information sessions, one during the day and one in the evening, to provide the opportunity for community members and stakeholders who were unable to attend the public information meeting to get information about the project and ask questions.

[4.6 Public Information Meeting Follow-Up](#)

Following the public information meeting, a three (3)-week comment period will be provided to be part of the official meeting record. Comments will be recorded and individual written responses will be sent as needed. Additionally, an e-newsletter communication will be drafted and sent to project stakeholders summarizing the meeting, the information gathered, and next steps. Print copies may be provided at designated locations along the corridor.

5.0 ADDITIONAL OUTREACH METHODS

5.1 Phase I Study Website

The project team will create, host, and maintain a project website (www.improvekedzieavenue.org) for public-facing information about the project. This website will be up and running prior to the first CAC meeting. The site will be a hub for project updates, materials, and public input summaries. Summaries of the public information meetings will include meeting highlights, such as attendance, activities, and themes of comments received. The website will have a clear and easy to navigate design and will include links to an interactive web-based survey, social media, past e-newsletters, and ways to get in touch. The project team will employ best practices for accessibility to ensure the project information is available to all. This website will be hosted separately from the CCDOTH website, but a link will be provided on the County website directing interested parties to the Phase I study website and vice versa.

5.2 Web-Based Survey

The project team will develop and conduct an interactive web-based survey to solicit public opinions related to this project. The survey will gather information about how people use the corridor, the purpose(s) it serves in the community, how they perceive it now, and how they hope it could change for the better in the future. The survey results will help define what success for this project looks like to the community.

Results from the survey, along with feedback received from the CAC and other stakeholders, will also directly inform the project's purpose and need as well as the project team's development of initial design alternatives for the Kedzie Avenue corridor. These initial alternatives will be presented at Public Information Meeting #1. Material will be presented to the CAC prior to any Public Information Meetings.

The survey will be designed to take less than ten (10) minutes to complete, with clear and concise language and a voluntary demographics section. The launch of the web-based survey will be announced in an e-newsletter, through the Phase I study website and on social media. Paper surveys may be used in specific locations (for example the Waterford Estates retirement community) to capture all types of community members, including those with little or no access to the internet.

5.3 Contact List

A thorough contact list of individuals and stakeholder groups will be generated and maintained. It will include community organizations, elected and appointed officials, special interest groups, businesses, property owners, other key stakeholders, and members of the public that expressed interest in staying informed about the study. Meeting attendees and additional interested parties will be added to the list throughout the project. Individuals on the contact list will receive announcements about the public information meetings.

5.4 Newsletters

Newsletters will be widely distributed updates of the project. They will include summaries of the overall project process and current stage, as well as include next steps and additional ways to connect with the project. Newsletters will be sent electronically to members of the contact list at the following points of the process:

1. Announce Survey Launch
2. Announce PIM #1
3. Announce PIM #2

5.5 Media Outreach

The project team will provide CCDOTH staff and the Cook County Public Information Officer with information regarding public information meetings. This information will be appropriately disseminated by CCDOTH to news organizations, community papers, and special interest publications.

6.0 DRAFT OUTREACH SCHEDULE

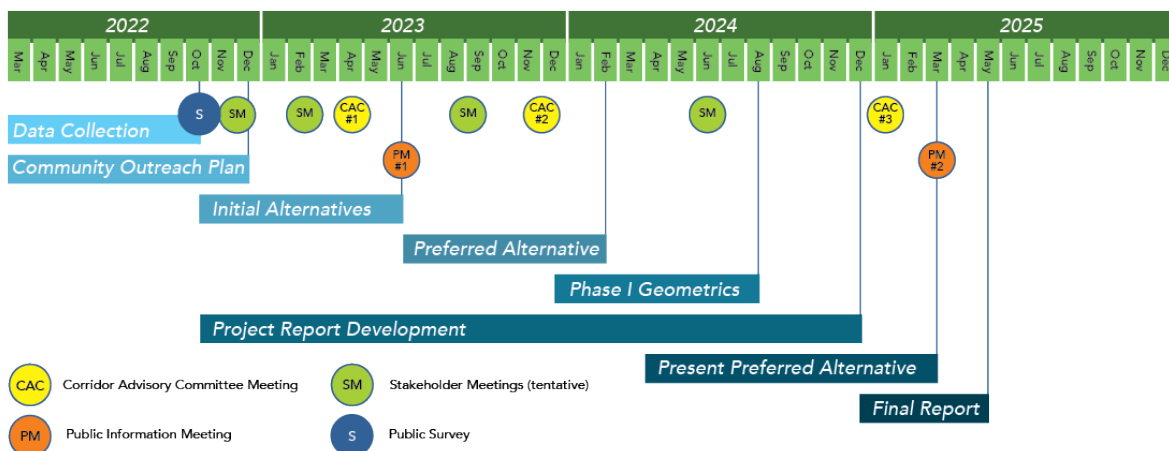


Figure 2. Timeline of Kedzie Avenue Phase I Study Project Stages.

7.0 APPENDIX

The following organizations will be contacted by the project team early in the study to solicit their interest in becoming a member of the CAC:

- Village of Olympia Fields (elected officials and/or village staff)
- Village of Flossmoor (elected officials and/or village staff)
- Village of Homewood (elected officials and/or village staff)
- Village of Hazel Crest (elected officials and/or village staff)
- City of Markham (elected officials and/or village staff)
- Municipal Police and Fire Departments as identified by the municipalities
- Markham Public Library
- Prairie Hills Elementary School District 144 (Prairie Hills Junior High School)
- Homewood-Flossmoor District 233 (Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School)
- Homewood-Flossmoor Park District (Coyote Run Golf Course, Homewood-Flossmoor Ice Arena)
- Advocate South Suburban Hospital
- Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources (Gensburg-Markham Prairie Nature Preserve)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Pace Bus
- Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD)
- Homewood Area Chamber of Commerce
- South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA)
- Chicago Southland Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation

In addition to this list, the project team will also solicit feedback from the municipalities on other organizations they believe should be included in the CAC and the project team will reach out to the identified organizations and update the CAC list as needed.