

SECTION 1

Purpose of and Need for Improvements

IDOT, the Illinois Tollway, FHWA, and FAA are evaluating the transportation system in an area just west of O'Hare Airport in the Chicagoland area. The proposed project will require federal approvals by FHWA, which may include funding authorizations and interchange access approvals on the interstate. The proposed project also requires federal approvals from FAA, which may include the approval of concurrent use of land on O'Hare Airport for use as the West Bypass corridor, an airspace determination, an obstruction determination, and an unconditional approval of the revised Airport Layout Plan depicting the proposed location of the highway.

1.1 Background

The project area encompasses the northwest edge of Chicago, the entirety of O'Hare International Airport, 26 suburban communities, and two counties (DuPage and Cook Counties) (see Exhibit 1-1). The project area contains critical local, regional, and national transportation facilities with more than 18 percent of all trips in the six-county region occurring in the study area. In 2010, mobility was adversely affected by severe congestion on 86 percent of the interstate and primary roads in the study area. Because of severely impaired mobility for this important regional transportation hub, the EO-WB project was identified as a regionally and nationally important project in SAFETEA-LU legislation, which requires a multimodal transportation solution to help address major congestion and mobility problems in the study area.

The project has been advanced in two parts or tiers; the second tier builds upon the first tier. The Tier One ROD, via unprecedented consensus, selected the type of improvement (roadway, transit, bicycle/pedestrian), identified the project corridor (location), and provided the opportunity for early acquisition of needed right-of-way (IDOT, 2010). Tier Two expands on Tier One with detailed engineering and environmental analysis that refine the project features, impacts, and right-of-way footprint within the preferred corridor.

The Tier Two Purpose and Need was updated by extending the planning period from 2030 to the year 2040 to be consistent with the region's recently adopted *GO TO 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan* (adopted in October 2010 and developed by the Metropolitan Planning Organization [MPO] for the area, CMAP). The update included development of the 2040 No-Build Alternative travel forecasts, an analysis of system travel performance using the 2040 No-Build forecasts, and a revision to the scope of the improvements in the No-Build Alternative to be representative of typical agency program investment levels. Based on the updated analysis, the Tier Two Purpose and Need continues to preserve the Purpose and Need statements presented in Tier One, and the re-analysis of travel performance supports the need for the proposed transportation improvements in the area.