



A year of progress at IDOT in 2016

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A look back: new capacity, improved safety, innovative solutions

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Transportation, under the leadership of Governor Bruce Rauner and Secretary Randy Blunkenhorn, continued to strengthen the state’s status as the transportation hub of North America in 2016. The progress touched every mode of transportation and included new, innovative approaches to spur continued investment in infrastructure that will make the state a more attractive place to work, raise a family and do business in 2017 and beyond.

“Illinois’ transportation system is an asset that separates us from everyone else,” Blunkenhorn said. “The progress we made in 2016 will pay dividends far into the future, but also highlights the need to continually find new ways to invest in our infrastructure to ensure long-term economic growth.”

In 2016, IDOT wrapped up more than 700 highway projects, ranging from routine resurfacings of less than a mile to multiyear reconstructions of interstates, bridges and interchanges that will improve safety and positively impact travel for decades to come.

Northeastern Illinois Improvements

In northeastern Illinois, the new flyover ramp linking inbound Interstate 90/94 (Dan Ryan Expressway) to outbound Interstate 290 (Eisenhower Expressway) opened in December, the centerpiece of the much larger **Jane Byrne Interchange** reconstruction in Chicago. New bridges opened at Harrison, Halsted and Taylor streets to improve neighborhood mobility by providing enhanced pedestrian, bicycling and transit options.

Also in Chicago, progress continued on the reconstruction of the ramp system linking **Interstate 55 (Stevenson Expressway) and Lake Shore Drive**. The outbound section is tentatively scheduled to open this summer, with the inbound section done at the end of 2017.

In the suburbs, several improvements years in the making came to conclusion. The **U.S. 45** widening and reconstruction between 131st Street and 179th Street in Orland Park, Orland Hills, Palos Park and Tinley Park finished in the fall. Also wrapping up: a reconstruction project along **Illinois 171** and the Interstate 55 interchange in Summit, Lyons and McCook. The bridges along northbound Illinois 171 were rebuilt, as well as the interchange with I-55.

In Woodstock and Crystal Lake, a widening project finished on **U.S. 14** that added improved lighting and a path to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians. New overpasses were opened to eliminate conflict points between railroads and regular vehicle traffic on U.S. 30 in Lynwood, U.S. 34 in Aurora and 25th Avenue in Bellwood.

Downstate Illinois Improvements

Downstate, the **Interstate 57/70 expansion** came to conclusion in Effingham, one of the biggest projects in eastern central Illinois in several years. The project started in 2010 and improved safety and traffic flow, while rebuilding a key section of one the state's major freight corridors.

A widening and reconstruction project on **Interstate 74** in Morton and Tazewell County also finished. The project consisted of adding a lane in each direction, modernizing the interchange with I-155 into a safer configuration and improving the entrance and exit ramps at Morton Avenue. In 2017, IDOT is partnering with Iowa to start construction on the new I-74 bridge in the Quad Cities, one of the largest bridge projects in state history.

Innovating Financing

Under the governor and secretary, IDOT explored innovative financing solutions to invest in the state's infrastructure.

More than 17 investment teams, including both Illinois and international firms, took part in a workshop held by IDOT in the summer to solicit ideas on how to best deliver the **I-55 Managed Lanes project**. The state is pursuing the project, which would add an express tolling lane in both directions to one of the busiest commuter, freight and tourist corridors in Illinois, as a public-private partnership.

In Will County, IDOT reached a first-of-its-kind agreement between state and local governments and the private sector to build the **Houbolt Road bridge**. The project is estimated to include up to \$170 million in private investment to help alleviate congestion and encourage more economic growth in the country's largest inland port.

Other Achievements

IDOT realized many other exciting achievements for adding transit, bicycling and pedestrian choices across the state.

In October, IDOT announced it will be providing \$30.7 million through the **Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program** for 33 local improvements, including biking and walking paths, trails, streetscape beautification work and other projects designed to encourage safe travel across the various modes of transportation.

An IDOT project, the **Clybourn Avenue protected bike lanes**, was recognized by the Mayor's Bicycle Advisory Council for improving bicycling in Chicago.

A **new Amtrak station** opened in Dwight, the first of several more to come as IDOT and the Union Pacific Railroad partner to enhance passenger rail service between Chicago and St. Louis. Improved safety, reliability, rider amenities and higher speeds all are scheduled to arrive in 2017. In Joliet, funding from IDOT helped to break ground on a new multimodal transportation station that will revitalize its downtown and provide commuters with improved access to bus and rail options.

At airports throughout the state, IDOT administered funds to help improve aviation in Illinois. Among the top improvements were **airfield upgrades** at Peoria International Airport, Quincy Regional Airport and Chicago Executive Airport in Wheeling.

Also in 2016, IDOT branched out into new technology by testing **unmanned aircraft systems** to improve the safety of workers and the public, reduce costs and introduce new strategies on everything from bridge inspections to determining the appropriate responses to emergency incidents. This will continue to be an area of opportunity for the agency as it begins to integrate the technology into daily operations.

Looking Ahead

Moving into 2017, IDOT will continue to seek, evaluate and implement new, innovative ways to meet the public's transportation needs. In November, design plans were approved for the **I-55 Managed Lanes** project. Once approved by the General Assembly, the public-private partnership would be the first of its kind for Illinois and could serve as a model for future endeavors to leverage private resources when delivering transportation projects. Construction could begin as early as 2018.

Preliminary engineering for a lane expansion on **Interstate 290 (Eisenhower Expressway)** in each direction between Mannheim Road and Austin Boulevard is expected to be completed in 2017. Two public hearings to review the draft environmental impact report will take place Jan. 25-26.

Downstate, construction on an \$80 million replacement bridge linking Savannah to Sabula, Iowa, via **U.S. 52/Illinois 63**, will be substantially complete in 2017. The location of the bridge and its unique surroundings resulted in a 150-foot-shift of the navigation channel to the west, coordinated through the U.S. Coast Guard, and required the cooperation of the BNSF Railroad, which operates two heavily traveled tracks under the bridge. Progress also will continue on the replacement of a 75-year-old bridge that carries **Illinois 104** across the Illinois River in Meredosia. The bridge will open in 2018. This is the first tied-arch bridge IDOT has undertaken in decades.

Additionally in 2017, IDOT will explore opportunities to facilitate development of **autonomous vehicle** technologies to make Illinois roads safer.

“We are thrilled with the progress we made in 2016,” Blankenhorn said. “And I am confident we will see even more success in 2017 as we continue to seek innovative ways to provide safe, cost-effective transportation for Illinois that improves quality of life and economic prosperity.”