Will County Center for Economic Development

Inland Port Impact Study

Prepared for:

Prepared by:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

September, 2010
# Table of Contents

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ................................................................................................................................. 1

1.1. Project Background ............................................................................................................................. 1
1.2. Significant Findings .......................................................................................................................... 2
1.3. Policy Recommendations .................................................................................................................. 3
    1.3.2. Truck Traffic Interchanges ................................................................................................... 4
    1.3.3. Transportation Alignment with Indiana ............................................................................... 5
    1.3.4. Identify East-West Travel Corridors ..................................................................................... 5
    1.3.5. Evaluate Enhanced Public Transportation ........................................................................ 5
    1.3.6. Land Use Planning ................................................................................................................. 5
    1.3.7. Environmental Protection ..................................................................................................... 6
    1.3.8. Safety Management ............................................................................................................... 6
    1.3.9. Development of an Inland Port Authority ........................................................................... 6
    1.3.10. Development of a Regional Coordination System .............................................................. 7
    1.3.11. Capture a Global Perspective ............................................................................................... 7
    1.3.12. Municipal At-Grade Closure and Separation Program .................................................... 7
    1.3.13. Congestion Management ..................................................................................................... 7
    1.3.14. Trade and Freight Volume Information ............................................................................... 8
1.4. Role of the Impact Study ....................................................................................................................... 8
1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Project Background

Will County has always been at the crossroads of North American trade, starting with the early river trade on the I & M Canal in the 1800s and through the development of the transcontinental railroads and the federal highway system. Today, Will County lies at the crux of global import and export routes, due largely to its geographical location near the Chicago area trade hub and its extensive transportation and logistics assets. Exhibits 1 - 4 (see pages 11-12) contain maps showing the County’s transportation network, land use pattern, rail crossing and barge terminal locations.

Located in northeastern Illinois approximately 42 miles southwest of Chicago, Will County is 849 square miles and a mix of urban, suburban and rural communities. The City of Joliet is the largest of the county’s 37 municipalities.

Seeking to avoid the congestion that afflicts Chicago, the freight and logistics industry has recently selected Will County where there are multiple rail lines, highways, airports, and waterways in one region, developable land and an existing concentration of logistics-based businesses. Since 2002, the BNSF and UP, two Class I railroads serving western US coastal ports have developed modern intermodal yards in Will County. Combined, these intermodals are 1,750 acres in size and anchor 3,700 acres of industrial park development with unprecedented rail access. These intermodal facilities represent over $3 billion of private investment in local infrastructure and have both direct and indirect economic benefits for the community. Will County industrial space increased by 125% in the last decade. The majority of this new space is being used for distribution and logistics activities.
Will County’s success in attracting the logistics industry has been an important driver of its economic success, as evidenced by substantial recent and projected population and employment growth rates. In the last decade, Will County became the fastest growing county in Illinois gaining nearly 175,000 residents. In 2008, the total population of Will County was 681,097. By the year 2030, Will County’s population is projected to exceed 1.1 million.

Employment growth has been equally strong since 2000. The total number of jobs countywide in 2010 is 250,054 compared with 246,431 in 2000. Currently, the largest number of Will County jobs are in the government sector, followed by retail trade and transportation/warehousing/logistics (TWL)\(^1\) (EMS\(\iota\), 1\(^{st}\) Qtr. 2010). Employment in TWL, the primary industry sector for the Inland Port, totaled 28,281 in the first quarter of 2010. Average monthly wages for TWL employment increased between 2006 and 2009 by 1.89%, whereas average monthly wages in retail trade fell in the same period by 3.7%. The average monthly wage for TWL jobs in 2009 was between $1,305 and $2,284 more than retail jobs in the same year. Inland Port jobs in the TWL industry sector are projected to grow by 5.71% by 2020 with the addition of 1,580 jobs.

Currently, if compared with the nation’s top maritime ports, Will County’s Inland Port would rank among the Top Five in terms of Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEUs).

Unlike the maritime ports, however, the operating area in Will County is more dispersed and is without a single oversight authority providing coordinated investment and operational direction.

The build-out of privately owned freight-generating facilities such as intermods, industrial parks and other large distribution centers has been accompanied by some adverse impacts. Traffic congestion is one example. The recent Will County 2030 Transportation Framework Plan identified congestion as an issue critical to the region. The highest levels of congestion currently occur in the northern part of the County, particularly along the I-80 and I-55 corridors. Based on projected traffic growth, congestion is likely to worsen and spread to local arterial routes and other parts of the road network. Additionally, Will County interstates experience high traffic volumes as a result of through traffic that offers little local economic benefit.

The future of Will County as an Inland Port is likely to be dynamic. Major development projects identified and moving forward will bring added benefit to the community while at the same time create additional burdens on local transportation infrastructure, new workforce challenges and unexamined environmental impacts. The opening of the Joliet UP Intermodal in August, 2010, is expected to create 14,000 new jobs at full build-out. At the same time, it will add significantly to existing county-wide freight volumes and increase the number of conflicts at rail crossings and between trucks and passenger vehicles. Proposals for a new intermodal facility in eastern Will County and a transload facility in the far southwest will potentially facilitate the geographic spread of the impacts with implications for future infrastructure investment, land use policy and natural resources.
In order to address these issues, the Will County Center for Economic Development (CED) contracted with AECOM to provide an Inland Port Impact Study. This report discusses the findings of this study and makes recommendations for public policy that if implemented would influence the future direction of Will County’s Inland Port.

1.2. Significant Findings

The Inland Port Impact Study was conducted using a variety of methodologies, including research of other ports, data collection from various sources, multiple community stakeholder meetings, and close and frequent coordination with Will County CED staff and the Inland Port Steering Committee. Below is a summary of the significant findings that have evolved out of this study.

Will County has encountered sustained growth in both population and logistics/distribution facilities. As a result of this growth, traffic volumes have significantly increased, resulting in congestion and conflicts between passenger and freight vehicles.

The congestion is currently occurring most predominantly in the northwestern portion of the County, but is predicted to spread east and south due to anticipated growth. As a result, investments need to be made in the management of County infrastructure, including:

- development of alternate east-west routes between I-55 and I-57,
- management of truck traffic,
- closure/separation of at-grade railroad crossings,
- design of roads and bridges for heavier load limits,
- increased access to air service for existing and new logistics businesses,
- expansion of inland waterways as an alternate method of transportation,
- development of an Intelligent Transportation System to serve freight and commercial traffic, and
- development of design standards that incorporate higher weight/load limits for bridges and highways.

Due to the existing and anticipated future growth, Will County is in a position to:

- diversify the industrial composition of its economy,
- expand its tax base,
- offer more employment opportunities to its residents,
- link development incentives to employment, and
- establish an Inland Port Authority to maximize benefits and minimize impacts

Another outcome of the growth that is occurring is land use conflicts. Coordinated land use planning among multiple jurisdictions will become a critical component of Will County’s management of its resources as an Inland Port. The following tasks should be evaluated for possible implementation:

- Investment in areas of concentrated infrastructure and complementary zoning for commercial/industrial development,
- Prioritization of brownfield sites, former industrial sites, and transportation-accessible sites for redevelopment, and
- Creation of a county-wide committee to review development plans for adherence to local policies and ordinances.
job growth was 12.3% overall. Will County experienced 57.1% growth in that time period, on a base of 118,186 jobs. By comparison, Cook County job growth was 6.9%. Among the traditional collar counties, job growth was highest in Will County (CMAP, 2007). Region-wide, employment growth in transportation/logistics was strong between 2000 and 2007 and jobs in this sector are more heavily concentrated in northeast Illinois than in the nation.

The northeast Illinois region maintains its status as a national freight hub because of historical transportation assets as well as new investments in freight facilities throughout the region. Represented as intermodal facilities, barge terminals, distribution centers and warehouses, these new investments will not only ensure that the region can remain competitive in the future but tap a larger share of the nation’s freight growth. Freight moved by rail in particular, is projected to grow dramatically in coming years. Rail is increasingly viewed as a more efficient and environmentally-sound alternative to long-distance trucking.

The recent history, together with current and potential developments, shape the need for a greater sense of regionalism for northeast Illinois and northwest Indiana, with Will County as a major participant. The formation of an Inland Port Advisory Committee, as an external support for the appropriate Will County agency, would be one means to foster a collaborative environment.

1.3. Infrastructure Investments

Will County needs to evaluate land use and transportation infrastructure investments using a systematic evaluation of the alignment between local traffic volumes, circulation volumes, and impacts with county-wide traffic. The County should include access to industrial sites, recognizing characteristics within and across modes of transportation, when conducting this evaluation. Specific tasks should include:

- evaluation and revision of the Will County 2030 Transportation Plan to include an Inland Port Access and Mobility Appendix;
- identification of projects for legislative support in the federal Surface Transportation reauthorization;
- planning for the “Daniel Burnham Outerbelt” route, which includes the Prairie Parkway, the I-55/I-57

1.3.1. Infrastructure Investments

Traffic congestion and transportation related safety are two of the most significant concerns facing the businesses and residents of Will County, as well as the many visitors to the region. The County’s public and private sector stakeholders must develop strategies to reduce the impacts that have occurred as a result of traffic increases significantly outpacing transportation capacity improvements. In addition, these same Will County stakeholders should adopt public policies that will help the area collectively manage Inland Port facilities to the benefit of the community-at-large.

The following public policy issues have been identified and are recommended in order to align the future role and success of Will County as an Inland Port. These policies will have a direct impact upon the facilities, operations, infrastructure, and management for the private and public sector stakeholders in the County.

The growth in Will County’s population and employment in the last ten years elevates its role in and contribution to the six-county northeast Illinois region. Between 2000 and 2007, northeast Illinois
Interconnect, a new Des Plaines River bridge and the Illiana Expressway;

- higher priority and accelerated timetable for I-80 and I-55 add lanes projects in regional long-range transportation plan and IDOT multi-year program;

- designation for commercial corridors in Will County to serve primarily as freight corridors; Zoning changes could be implemented to encourage focused industrial development along those corridors; and

- investigation of the implementation of an Intelligent Transportation System to serve freight and commercial traffic.

### 1.3.2. Truck Traffic Interchanges

Congestion mitigation, safety improvements, and freight transportation capacity may be increased in a cost effective manner by accommodating freight operating characteristics in transportation infrastructure. Will County should evaluate taking the following steps to alleviate chokepoints:

- evaluate existing and planned roadway projects for opportunities to separate freight traffic from passenger traffic;

- locate freight dedicated interchanges within the interstate highway system; Locations to investigate for truck-only interchanges include Wolf Road at I-80 or Bolingbrook Drive/Joliet Road at I-55; and

- specify needed truck freight improvements in the I-80 study process currently being undertaken by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT).

### 1.3.3. Transportation Alignment with Indiana

Will County should evaluate and improve the transportation infrastructure alignment with Indiana, for each mode and corridor / site development. This evaluation should include local and arterial roads, as well as the proposed Illiana Expressway.

### 1.3.4. Identify East-West Travel Corridors

There is currently a lack of east to west thoroughfares between I-57 and I-55 in southern Will County. The County should identify potential corridors for serving east-west traffic, including arterial roads and potential interstate roadways.

### 1.3.5. Evaluate Enhanced Public Transportation

Will County should evaluate effective measures to enhance Metra and transit system development in the County, in order to provide transportation that services a diverse set of trip purposes, including travel to work. Metra service should be extended from Manhattan to CenterPoint Intermodal Center-Elwood/Joliet. Will County should also evaluate improvements in bus lines, such as Pace. Action items for this policy could also include:

- evaluation of the establishment of a Transportation Management Authority (TMA) in southwest Will County, as well as providing support for existing efforts where appropriate. A TMA would be responsible for public transit services, congestion management, specific highway improvement projects and county-wide transportation planning; and

- evaluation of the establishment of a TMA in eastern Will County, as well as providing support for existing efforts, where appropriate.

### 1.3.6. Land Use Planning

Will County should harmonize the alignment of building, zoning, and permitting ordinances between the various County levels of government, special purpose districts, and local municipalities. Will County should:

- identify specific geographic areas of concern and properties at risk;

- support additional intermodal and trans-load facilities along Class 1 railroads in Will County; and

- evaluate and identify areas with sensitive receptors and unique cultural, recreational, and ecological sources to be sustained.
1.3.7. Environmental Protection

Will County should identify the requirements, techniques, and resources needed to protect and preserve the pristine ecological reserves and watersheds of the Will County area, including the Kankakee River and the Plum Creek watersheds. In support of these policies, the appropriate Will County agencies, and state agency districts, could:

- evaluate amendments to the Will County Water Resource Ordinance for Unincorporated Will County;
- evaluate methods of protecting watershed quality, including conservation easements and site development / natural attenuation requirements;
- consider including the preference for natural features in stormwater management, and green practices for stormwater management on construction sites in the new Water Resource Ordinance update; and
- identify and describe existing conditions to maintain effective baseline information as the Will County area develops further.

The appropriate County government agencies may collaborate on incentives and requirements in support of Green Building efforts for renovation and new construction in Will County.

1.3.8. Safety Management

Will County should identify procedures and techniques to track and manage safety on a county-wide level, including the identification of proposed solutions.

The establishment of a county-wide tracking system would bring greater transparency to the safety impacts generated by the Inland Port. The County should establish data exchange protocols with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and IDOT.

1.3.9. Development of an Inland Port Authority

Will County should identify the methods needed to take advantage of an Inland Port Authority structure, suitable for the unique requirements in the County. Will County could also establish an Inland Port Advisory Council to expand public and private exchange in order to improve transportation services that would benefit port tenants and the community as a whole.

- Will County should identify key parcels with logistics, industrial, and distribution functions identified as strategic components of a multi-purpose inland port.
- Will County should identify areas of concentrated infrastructure.
- Will County should evaluate and consider expanding the role of the Joliet Regional Port District to establish a marine – intermodal port authority with operations between Brandon Road Lock & Dam, Mile Post 286, downstream to the I-55 Bridge near Mile Post 278.

In terms of air quality, the Will County area is rated as nonattainment for the 8-hour ozone standard (moderate) and for the 24-hour PM-2.5 particulate standard. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency will continue to be required to identify State Implementation Plans (SIP) to bring geographic areas into compliance with federally-mandated standards. The stakeholders in Will County will need to sustain their contribution to shaping the SIP alternatives.

The efforts may build upon existing safety, transportation, and building management practices in the County.
1.3.10. Development of a Regional Coordination System

Will County should explore ways to provide timely and critical input, as well as foster relationships with regional and state agencies that play a role in influencing Will County. Agencies within the Northeast Illinois / Northwest Indiana region should be included, such as the City of Chicago, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), Chicago Transportation Coordination Office (CTCO), and the Northwest Indiana Forum. The agencies and stakeholders in Will County should coordinate their efforts to identify critical projects to be proposed for the CMAP and IDOT five year capital programs, as well as the federal transportation programs. The existing Will County CED Transportation Blueprint may be one source to identify relevant projects.

1.3.11. Capture a Global Perspective

Will County should identify procedures and methods, as well as benefits and requirements, for capturing a global perspective for trade and infrastructure development as a part of the context for local decisions. The Will County CED should establish a global and regional trade component as a strategic element for use in the planning process by Will County agencies, similar to the Workforce Analysis efforts to date.

1.3.12. Municipal At-Grade Closure and Separation Program

Will County should evaluate the development of a Municipal At-Grade Crossing Closure and Separation Program. The Program could begin with a municipal self-assessment of land use and activity patterns to capture existing and planned traffic flows critical to the needs of the community. Next, an inventory of at-grade crossing s should be made that includes the type of infrastructure, signalization, and conflict history. This inventory would identify the areas of greatest concern and potential solutions involving land use and transportation elements.

1.3.13. Congestion Management

There are several congestion management strategies that jurisdictional Will County agencies can implement to relieve congestion on its roadways. Will County agencies may consider demand management options such as incentives to induce trucks to operate at off peak times, implementation of an integrated road damage overweight / overdimension truck program, institution of user fees, and the application of the Illinois Roadway Impact Fee. The final congestion management program will need to address the benefits, recovery, and uses of any fee program, as well as the appropriate and equitable distribution of any collected fees.

1.3.14. Trade and Freight Volume Information

The mix of industrial and logistics business in Will County creates a complex set of values that are difficult to capture and track over time. It is important for Will County / CMAP to begin a means of capturing representative trade and freight volume information, which will add dimensions and insights into the nature of the Inland Port. Maintaining the proprietary nature of this data will be critical.
1.4. Role of the Impact Study

The greater Will County area is one of the largest Inland Ports found across the globe. Its growth has arisen from a sequence of private sector investments built upon the region’s legacy as a transportation crossroads while remaining linked to the modern industrial and commercial marketplace. In order to protect and sustain the region’s assets and quality of life, it is imperative that the stakeholders in the greater Will County area forge a balance between the private and public sector for future land use and transportation infrastructure development.

Sections 1.2 and 1.3 of this report identify significant findings and policy recommendations essential to the future success for Will County residents living and working within the global marketplace. Two key elements for this success include the need for increased effectiveness of truck transportation in the County and the need for defining an enhanced contribution from freight transportation connected to the inland waterway system.

Fourteen policy recommendations are proposed, which focus on operational improvements for freight movement, including infrastructure investments, planning / programming, and administrative solutions such as the development of an Inland Port Authority and district.

This report fully documents existing conditions and identifies three transportation developments that are anticipated to prove critical for the greater Will County area; the South Suburban Airport, the Illiana Expressway, and the Panama Canal Upgrade. This report examines the benefits and impacts associated with the Inland Port’s presence in Will County. Policy Recommendations are explored in greater detail, as well as specific action items and marketing strategies. Section 5.2 of this report is devoted to workforce development initiatives in order to sustain the growth of quality employment for the area. This report concludes with a set of metrics for monitoring the future operations and growth of the global Inland Port present in Will County.

**Future Significance as an Inland Port**

- 2010 Economic Development Projects
- I-355 Corridor Development
- Future air cargo capacity with SSA
- Illiana Expressway a major new interstate freight corridor
- Add Lanes for I-80 & I-55
- New Des Plaines River Bridge
Exhibits 1 & 2
Exhibits 3 & 4
About AECOM

AECOM is a global provider of professional, technical and management support services to a broad range of markets, including transportation, facilities, environmental, energy, water and government. With approximately 45,000 employees around the world, AECOM is a leader in all of the key markets it serves. AECOM provides a blend of global reach, local knowledge, innovation, and technical excellence in delivering solutions that enhance and sustain the world’s built, natural and social environments. A Fortune 500 company, AECOM serves clients in more than 100 countries and had revenue of $6.3 billion during the 12-month period ended March 31, 2010. More information on AECOM and its services can be found at [www.aecom.com](http://www.aecom.com).