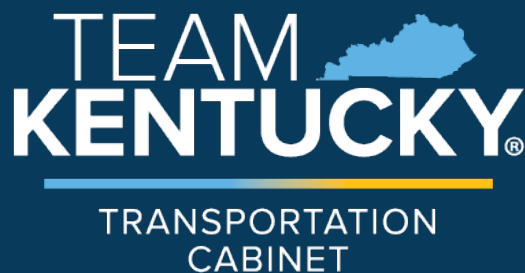




Executive Summary

US 60 Connectivity Study

Item 1-80250



Prepared by:



Stantec



**C2 STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATIONS**

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Executive Summary

The US 60 Connectivity Study (KYTC Item Number 1-80250) was initiated by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) to examine a more direct corridor between US 60 in western Kentucky and I-57 in southern Illinois. The study area, shown in **Figure ES-1**, overlaps with highly environmentally sensitive areas flanking the Ohio River.

Given the known environmental resources within the study area, this study was completed as *Planning and Environmental Linkages Study* (PEL Study),¹ which takes a collaborative and integrated approach to the transportation decision-making process by considering potential environmental benefits and impacts during the planning phase.

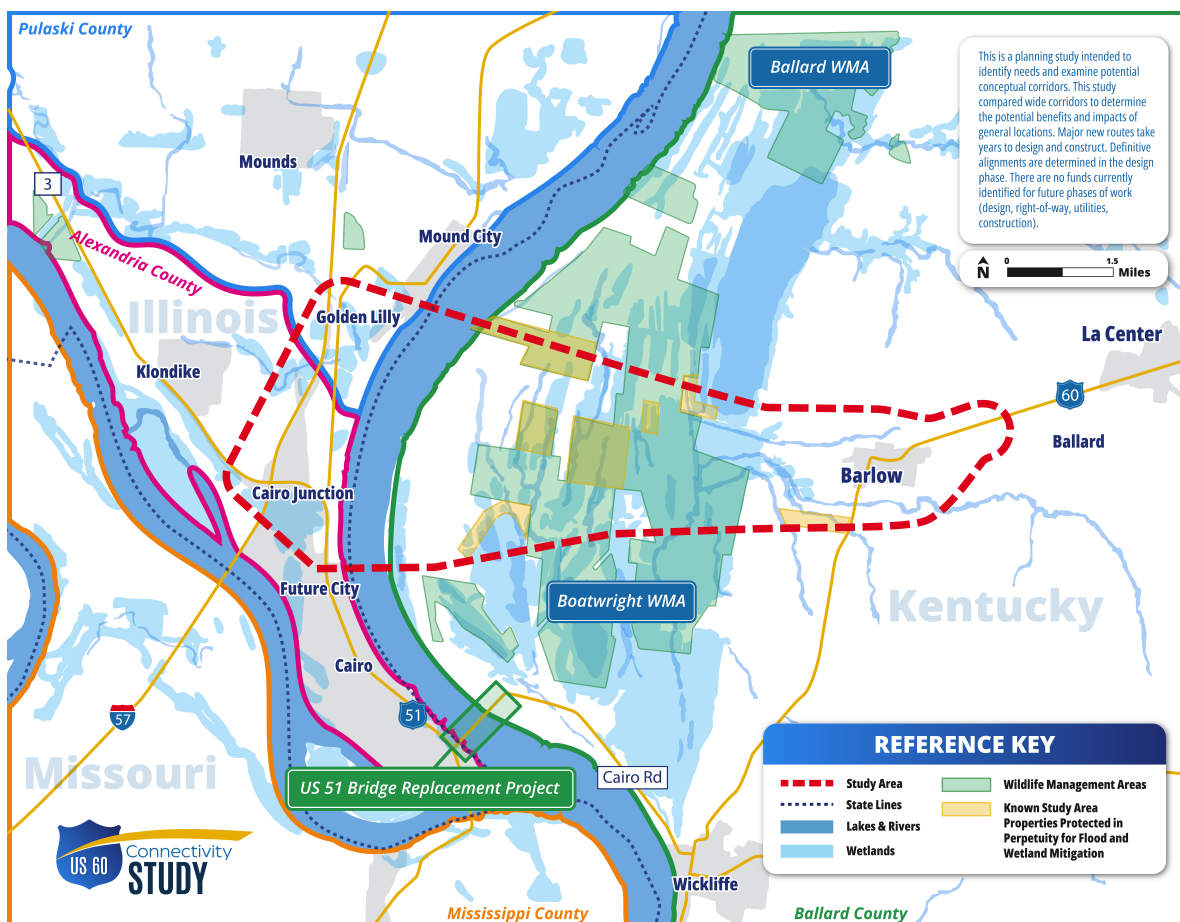


Figure ES-1. Study Area

¹ https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_initiatives/PEL.aspx



Purpose and Need

South of the US 60 study area is the existing 86-year-old narrow two-lane structure carrying US 51, US 60, and US 62 across the Ohio River between Wickliffe, Kentucky and Cairo, Illinois. The US 51 Bridge Replacement Project (Item No. 1-1140)² would replace the crossing immediately north of its current alignment. As the US 51 project has advanced, questions have arisen concerning whether a more northern Ohio River crossing might provide advantages over the currently proposed crossing location. Because major river crossings are generational projects and remain in service for many decades, the US 60 Connectivity Study is being conducted to determine if relocating the Ohio River crossing to this study area would offer more short and long-term value for the local communities, region and state.

Traveling between I-24 in Kentucky and I-57 in Illinois using the existing US 51 Ohio River Bridge is approximately 13 minutes longer than a potential connection in the US 60 study area. For the 5,500 vehicles per day using the existing US 51 connection, travel speeds are reduced to 25 mph through Wickliffe and 30 mph through Cairo. A new corridor in the US 60 study area would allow for a 55-mph speed limit.

Local Officials and Stakeholders helped identify the primary objectives of the US 60 Connectivity Study. This effort resulted in the following three project goals for this study:

- Enhance Regional Mobility
- Provide Economic Development Opportunities
- Remain Sensitive to Environmental Resources

The purpose and need statement identifies the merits of the project. By defining why the expenditure of public funds is necessary and worthwhile, it allows decision makers to weigh the proposed action against the potential impacts.

The purpose of the US 60 connectivity project is to improve regional mobility by providing a more direct east-west cross-river corridor between I-24 in Kentucky and I-57 in southern Illinois.

Insufficient east-west mobility supports the need for this project.

² <https://us51bridge.com/>



Conceptual Corridors

Conceptual corridors were explored within the study area in a two-phase screening effort. Three (2,000 foot wide) initial corridors were identified to serve as a screening tool for identifying environmental red flags before focusing on two (1,000 foot wide) conceptual corridors to better assess the potential benefits and impacts. The conceptual corridors, shown in **Figure ES-2**, were developed to an approximate 15-percent design level so actionable cost estimates could be developed. Traffic forecast and economic development analysis estimates 10,000 to 12,700 vehicles per day would likely travel within the study area in the year 2045, so cost estimates and impacts are based on a two-lane roadway with a 55-mph design speed.

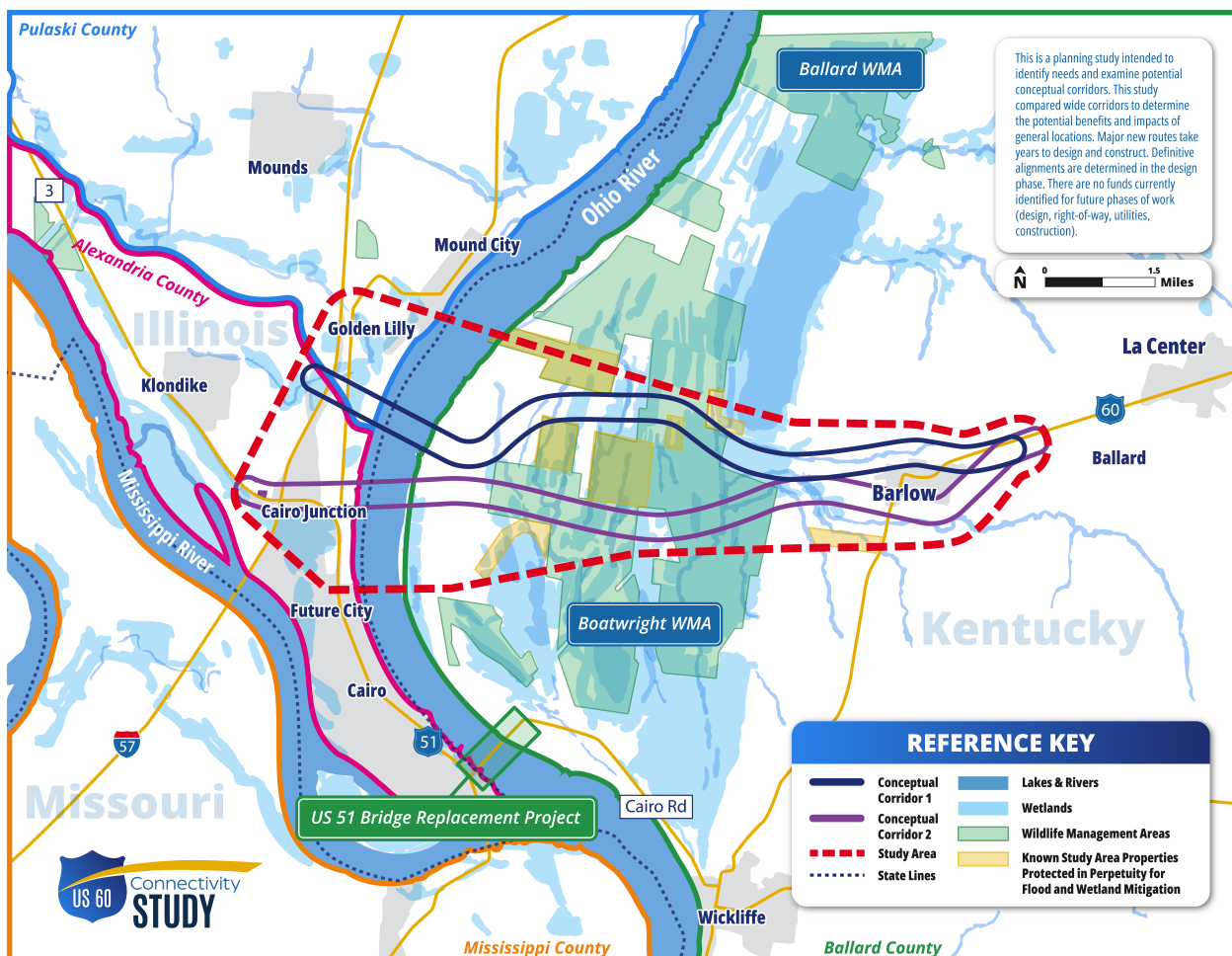


Figure ES-2. Conceptual Corridors



Both conceptual corridors begin at US 60 in Barlow, Kentucky and end at US 51 or I-57 just north of Cairo, Illinois. Corridor 1 takes a more northerly route through the study area before connecting to I-57 north of the Cairo Junction (SR 3/US 51) interchange, and Corridor 2 takes a more southerly route and ultimately connects to I-57 at the Cairo Junction interchange.

Table ES- 1 compares the environmental impacts of the two US 60 conceptual corridors. Conceptual Corridor 1 would have the fewest impacts to businesses, archaeological resources, Boatwright Wildlife Management Area, and public hunting lands. Conceptual Corridor 2 would have the fewest impacts to residences, farmland, Indiana bat habitat, streams, wetlands, and the 100-year floodplain. Both corridors would increase travel times for Environmental Justice (low-income and minority) persons in Cairo and Wickliffe should they need to cross the Ohio River.

Table ES-1: Environmental Impacts

Environmental Resources within Conceptual Corridor	Conceptual Corridor 1	Conceptual Corridor 2
Residences	6	3
Businesses	0	3
Cultural Historic Resources	0	0
Archaeological Resources	0	1
Cemeteries	0	0
Farmland (acres)	177	137
Trees/Indiana Bat Habitat (acres)	83	56
Streams (linear feet)	4,972	4,118
Wetlands (acres)	91	55
100-Year Floodplain (acres)	196	113
Parks (acres)	0	0
Boatwright WMA (acres)	23	68
Boatwright Properties Protected in Perpetuity (acres)	0	0
Illinois DNR Property (acres)	0	0
NRCS Properties Protected in Perpetuity (acres)	0	0
Public Hunting Lands (acres)	23	68
USACE-Owned Lands (acres)	0	0

Conceptual Corridor 1 would have **fewest impacts** to:

- ❖ Businesses
- ❖ Archaeological Resources
- ❖ Boatwright WMA
- ❖ Public Hunting Lands

Conceptual Corridor 2 would have **fewest impacts** to:

- ❖ Residences
- ❖ Farmland
- ❖ Indiana Bat Habitat
- ❖ Streams
- ❖ Wetlands
- ❖ 100-Year Floodplain

Both corridors would increase travel times for Environmental Justice (low-income and minority) persons near the study area.



The Boatwright Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is publicly owned, primarily by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR). As the Boatwright WMA intersects the central portion of the study area, impacts to it would be unavoidable. The entire WMA is available for public hunting. Per Kentucky Revised Statue (KRS) 150.0241, Kentucky has a “No Net Loss” policy that requires the state to “maintain at least the same level of available public hunting land that currently exists.”³ Replacement hunting lands have not been identified as part of this study. Considering the quantity of the impact, finding replacement acreage of this magnitude within the same commission district and consistent with the same hunting discipline would be difficult, time consuming, and costly.

“This project would have significant impacts to fish and wildlife, public property, and the sportsmen and women of Kentucky. We also do not feel that any mitigation could compensate for such losses.” ~ Feedback from the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources on the US 60 Connectivity Study

Considering the impacts to environmental resources, the potential for significant adverse impacts to the human and natural environment, and known public opposition, should a major project advance from the US 60 study area, the level of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation is anticipated to be an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the highest level of NEPA documentation. Federal agencies prepare an EIS if a proposed major federal action has potential to significantly affect environmental resources. The regulatory requirements for an EIS are rigorous and typically take multiple years to complete.

Public Outreach

Public involvement was an integral part of the US 60 Connectivity Study. As shown in **Figure ES-3**, KYTC and its partners engaged key stakeholders, including elected officials in Kentucky and Illinois, regional leaders, agencies, and economic development parties that would be most impacted by the potential project.

³ <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/262/20784/Oct%2020%202022%20KDFWR%20No%20Net%20Loss%20of%20Hunting%20Land%20Report.pdf>

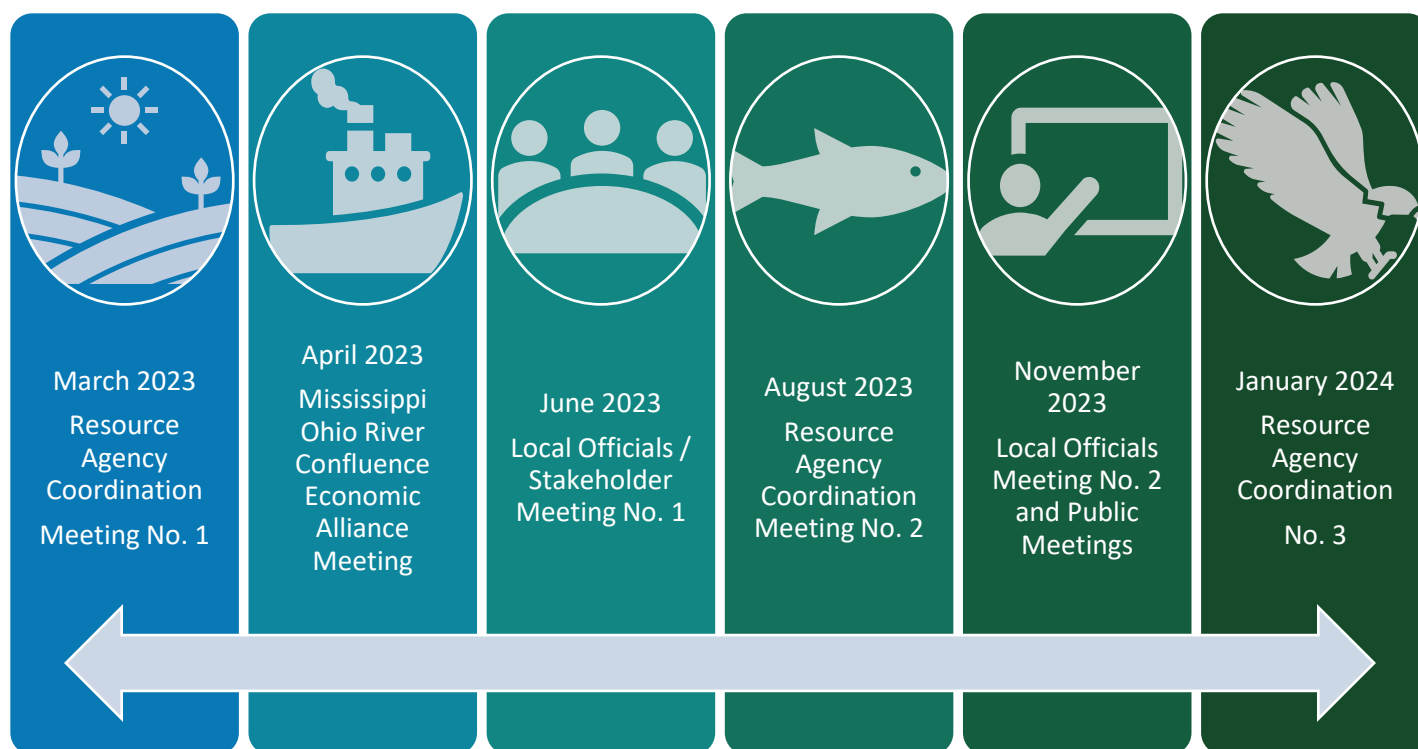


Figure ES-3. Public Outreach Meetings

Public information meetings were held on November 29, 2023, in Barlow, Kentucky and November 30, 2023, in Cairo, Illinois to share information and solicit input on the US 60 Connectivity Study. **KYTC received 815 total responses about the project, 83 percent of which were against the idea of relocating the Ohio River crossing from the US 51 corridor to the US 60 study area.** Most who submitted comments do not believe the relocation of the Ohio River crossing to this study area would enhance economic development opportunities or regional mobility. Additional qualitative comments against the US 60 Connectivity Study shared common themes concerning local wildlife preservation and recreational use within the study area. Project cost and overall economic impact of the region were also cited as recurring concerns.










Conclusions

The US 60 Connectivity Study was conducted to evaluate the feasibility of constructing a new US 60 corridor and Ohio River crossing between Barlow, Kentucky, and I-57 north of Cairo, Illinois.

Table ES-2 compares the estimated project costs, travel times, and environmental impacts of the two US 60 Connectivity Study Conceptual Corridors and the US 51 Bridge Replacement Project.

Table ES-2. Summary Table

 US 60 Connectivity STUDY	US 60 Conceptual Corridor 1	US 60 Conceptual Corridor 2	US 51 Bridge Replacement
 Total Project Cost (2023 dollars)	\$1.3 billion	\$1.2 billion	\$383 million
 Travel Time*	13 minutes	11 minutes	24 minutes
 Project Lengths	9.9 miles	10.5 miles	1.9 miles
IMPACTED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES			
 Boatwright WMA (acres)	23	68	0
 Streams (linear feet)	4,972	4,118	598
 Wetlands (acres)	91	55	9
<i>*from US 60 (Barlow, KY) to I-57 (Exit 1, IL)</i>			



In addition to the cost comparisons and impacts cited in Table ES-2, the two projects show stark timeline differences to satisfy Federal NEPA documentation. To advance a major project in the US 60 Connectivity Study area, an EIS would likely be required, which involves rigorous requirements (including enhanced public involvement required to navigate the opposition cited by the public and local groups) and typically takes years to complete. In contrast, the US 51 Bridge Replacement Project completed the NEPA requirements in 2022, as well as all necessary federal, state, and local regulatory processes.

Along with the environmental regulatory hurdles, the US 60 Connectivity Study identified potential disproportionately high and adverse effects to Environmental Justice populations and received stated opposition for this project from several stakeholder groups including the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR), Kentucky Division of Water (KDOW), Western Kentucky Wildlife Association, Ducks Unlimited, mayors from the Disadvantaged Communities of Wickliffe and Cairo, Director of the Ballard County Chamber of Commerce, and 83 percent of the public comments.

Given the myriad environmental challenges, opposition from IDOT, and the \$1.3 billion needed to construct a project within the US 60 study area, KYTC does not recommend funding future phases of this project. Instead, *Kentucky's FY 2024 – FY 2030 Enacted Highway Plan* includes additional funding for the advancement of the US 51 Bridge Replacement Project (Item No. 1-1140).



Full Report and Appendices are located on the KYTC Division of Planning Website:



<https://transportation.ky.gov/Planning/Pages/Project-Details.aspx?Project=US%2060%20Connectivity%20Study>