



**SOUTHWEST  
CONNECTOR**



# Draft Problem Statement and Preliminary Purpose and Need Statement

Illinois Department of Transportation

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## Problem Statement

The Southwest Connector corridor between Waterloo and Murphysboro is a two-lane undivided corridor along Illinois Routes 3, 154, and 13/127 in Southern Illinois. The Southwest Connector corridor does not currently provide efficient or reliable travel times between local communities and the Greater St. Louis area, resulting in limitations in accessing healthcare, jobs, education, recreation areas, and services. Existing roadway geometry deficiencies and a lack of passing lanes create hazards and lead to an increase in crashes. Travelers encounter bottlenecks related to truck traffic, farm equipment, school buses, and at intersections through towns. Towns within the corridor have limited pedestrian and bicycle facilities and there are limited transit options. The lack of adequate highways for freight traffic has restricted the region's ability to attract and retain new industry and hampered the competitiveness of existing industry. Poor connectivity has limited the region's ability to leverage its human capital and natural and economic resources.

## Preliminary Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to address existing deficiencies along IL 3, IL 154, and IL 13/127 to improve safety, mobility, travel time reliability, and access to essential services; expand modal interrelationships; and support economic development initiatives in the 70-mile corridor connecting Southern Illinois communities. The project is needed to address the following issues:

- Increased number of crashes in 2019-2024 compared to 2012-2019;
- Roadway deficiencies, including sharp curves, narrow lanes, and areas without shoulders, turn lanes, and passing lanes;
- Traffic bottlenecks related to truck traffic, farm equipment, and school buses;
- Congestion and operational inefficiencies at intersections and through towns;
- Poor travel time and reliability between regional destinations, including healthcare, jobs, education, recreation areas, and services;
- Gaps in the regional transportation system;
- Limited pedestrian and bicycle facilities and transit opportunities; and
- Lack of infrastructure that promotes regional growth, including business development, freight travel, tourism, and housing.