September 2010

Illinois Forest Highway Program
Transportation Project Proposals-Selection Process

The Illinois Forest Highway Program is implementing an improved process to soliciting proposed projects for FY 2012, FY 2013, FY 2014, FY 2015 and FY 2016. All proposals are due on January 31, 2011. Attached with this letter are the Forest Highway Project Proposal form and evaluation criteria. The projects identified earlier do not need to be resubmitted. The primary interest at this time is the identification of those projects proposed for funding in FY2012 and FY2013. While nominations will be accepted during this cycle for proposed projects in FY2014-FY2016, these may also be submitted in response to the annual call for projects in subsequent years.

PROJECT NOMINATION PROCESS

Proposed projects must be located on, or in close proximity to, a designated Forest Highway Route. Please be advised that without a project sponsor, the project will not be eligible for the receipt of Forest Highway funding. A project sponsor is an agency with the authority to finance, build, operate, and maintain a public highway. The project sponsor is also responsible for right-of-way acquisition and long-term maintenance.

Proposed Projects can include, but are not limited to: bicycle and pedestrian facilities; interpretative signage, including hunting and fishing access signs; kiosks, viewpoints; culvert replacements for environmental mitigation; improvements for water quality and aquatic organism passage; adjacent vehicular parking areas; roadside rest areas, including sanitary and water facilities; and preservation of good public road surfaces that provide access to or are within a National Forest or Grassland. Funding is provided for the planning, design, construction, reconstruction, or improvement of designated Forest Highways—including bridges.

SELECTION OF PROJECTS

The Illinois Forest Highway Program Committee (also known as the Tri-Agency Committee)—with representatives from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and U.S. Forest Service (FS)—will evaluate the proposed projects using the criteria enclosed with this letter. After the proposals are evaluated and prioritized, the Tri-Agency Committee will select and program projects, considering such factors as availability of funds, project development delivery schedules, and time constraints for right-of-way and environmental work. The review timeframe for the selection and programming of the proposed FY2012 and FY2013 projects is 30 days following the nomination due date of mm/dd/yyyy.

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SELECTION CRITERIA

In an effort to improve coordination between the Forest Highway Program and the Illinois State Transportation Plan, the following criteria for project selection were chosen as a combination of the agencies' goals as well as Shawnee National Forest and Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie's top priorities:

1) ***Safety Goal*** – *Increase safety in the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.* Includes direct measures of safety along with data collection (i.e. Number of crashes; Crash locations; Hazardous locations; Crashes/location Ratios; Road receiving safety audits; Roads within the State Highway Safety Plans)

2) ***Accessibility, Mobility, and Reliability Goal*** - *Provide transportation users with the greatest mobility, accessibility, reliability, and flexibility possible within available resources.* This goal addresses tourism and recreational travel (i.e. Closing gaps of missing links in the transportation network (roads and trails); Needs identified in the State Transportation Plan, Forest Plan or County Comprehensive Plan; Explore expansion and enhancement of transit systems; Compatibility among different vehicle types)

3) ***Environmental Quality Goal*** – *The protection and enhancement of the environment and its renewable resources by utilizing and administrating them appropriately.* This goal focuses on resource protection, water quality enhancement and sustainability.
(i.e. Encourage programs to reduce use of single occupant vehicles; Improve and promote public transportation, bicycles and pedestrian opportunities, and demand management strategies to better utilize existing transportation systems (roads and trails) and reduce transportation-related energy consumption; Roadway improvements that reduce scour or improve water quality and fish passage; Improvements that enhance scenic or historic areas).

4) ***Preservation Goal*** - *Maintain infrastructure in "acceptable" condition by improving the transportation network operation and maintenance procedures.* This goal emphasizes the importance of maintaining and optimizing the investment on transportation related assets. (i.e. Reduces maintenance or operating costs; Improves pavement management systems; Preserves good pavement conditions; Improves National Bridge Inventory System rating; Minimize construction time periods)

5) ***Economic Development Goal*** – *Support cost effective transportation investments that enhance economic advantage or expand or retain economic development at the local, regional and national level.* This goal recognizes the linkages between forest highways and their economic impact on surrounding communities (i.e. Support investments that attract tourism and provide access to recreational, cultural, historic and scenic facilities)

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PROJECT SUBMISSION

Electronic project proposal applications are preferred. Applicants are to submit their proposals electronically to Robert A. Hommes at *rhommes@fs.fed.us.* Hard copies will be accepted via mail or delivery in person by **mm/dd/yyyy.** Proposals need to include all required maps and signatures. Letters of support may also be attached.

If the applicant is submitting proposals by mail or delivery in person, please send **five (5)** complete sets for **each** proposal to:

Robert A. Hommes
Prairie Engineer
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
30239 S. State Route 53
Wilmington, IL 60481

Should you have any questions regarding this process, please contact one of the following:

Shawnee National Forest	Cynthia Morris / (618) 253-7114) / cmorris02@fs.fed.us
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie	Robert A. Hommes (815) 423-6370 / rhommes@fs.fed.us
Illinois Dept. of Transportation	. .
FHWA-Illinois Division	Mike Staggs / (217) 492-4630 / mike.staggs@dot.gov
	JD Stevenson / (217) 492-4638 / jerry.stevenson@dot.gov
FHWA-EFLHD	Frances Ramirez / (571) 434-1558 / frances.ramirez@dot.gov

Enclosures:
FH Proposal Nomination Form
& Project Evaluation Criteria

cc: Cynthia Morris, USFS Shawnee
Jerry Stevenson, FHWA-IL
Mike Staggs, FHWA-IL
Frances Ramirez, FHWA-EFLHD
Norah Ocel, FHWA-EFLHD
Robert A. Hommes, USFS Midewin
David Payne, FHWA-EFLHD
Lewis Grimm, FHWA-EFLHD
Makayah Royal, FHWA-EFLHD

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