Illinois Department of Transportation

CREATE

CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Moving Forward Together

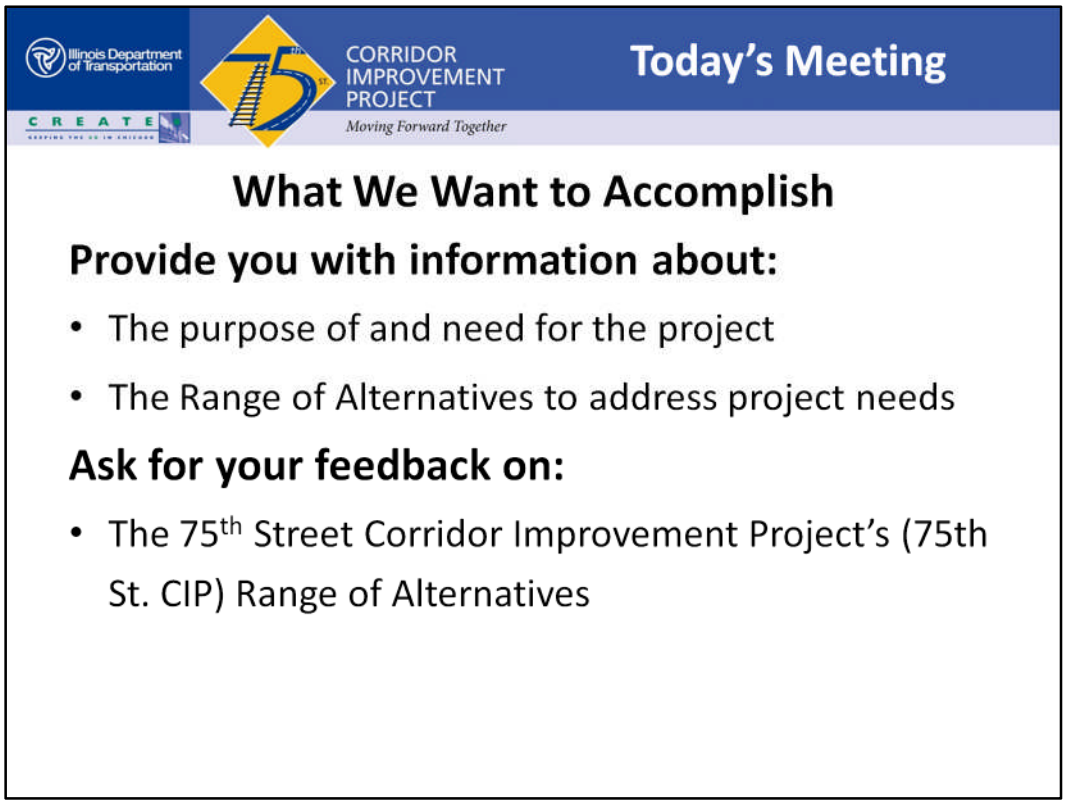
Range of Alternatives Public Meeting

October 27, 2011

4 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Freedom Temple Church of God in Christ

Welcome and thank you for spending time with us today to talk about the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project.



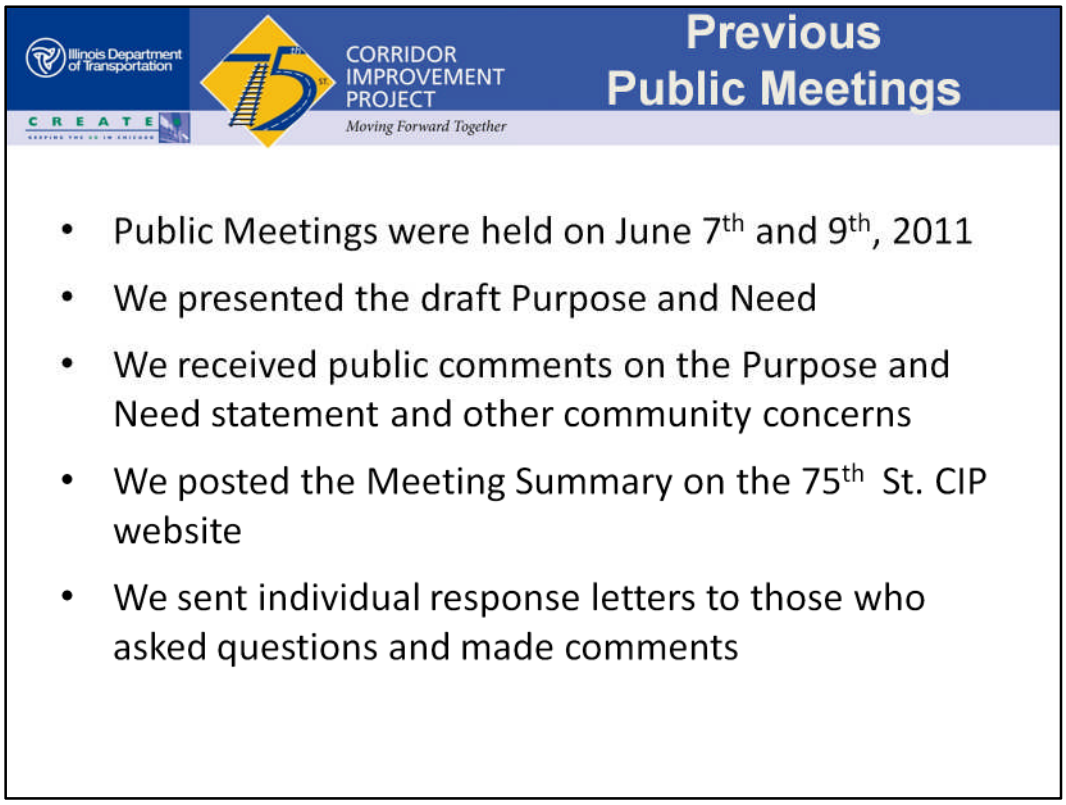
During this public meeting, we will explain the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project. We will spend time talking about:

•The goals of the 75th St. Corridor Improvement Project as described in the purpose and need statement,

•The build and no-build alternatives and some alternative alignments and design options within the build alternative.

•And, finally, we would appreciate your comments on the material presented tonight and ask you to voice any other project-related feedback you might have.

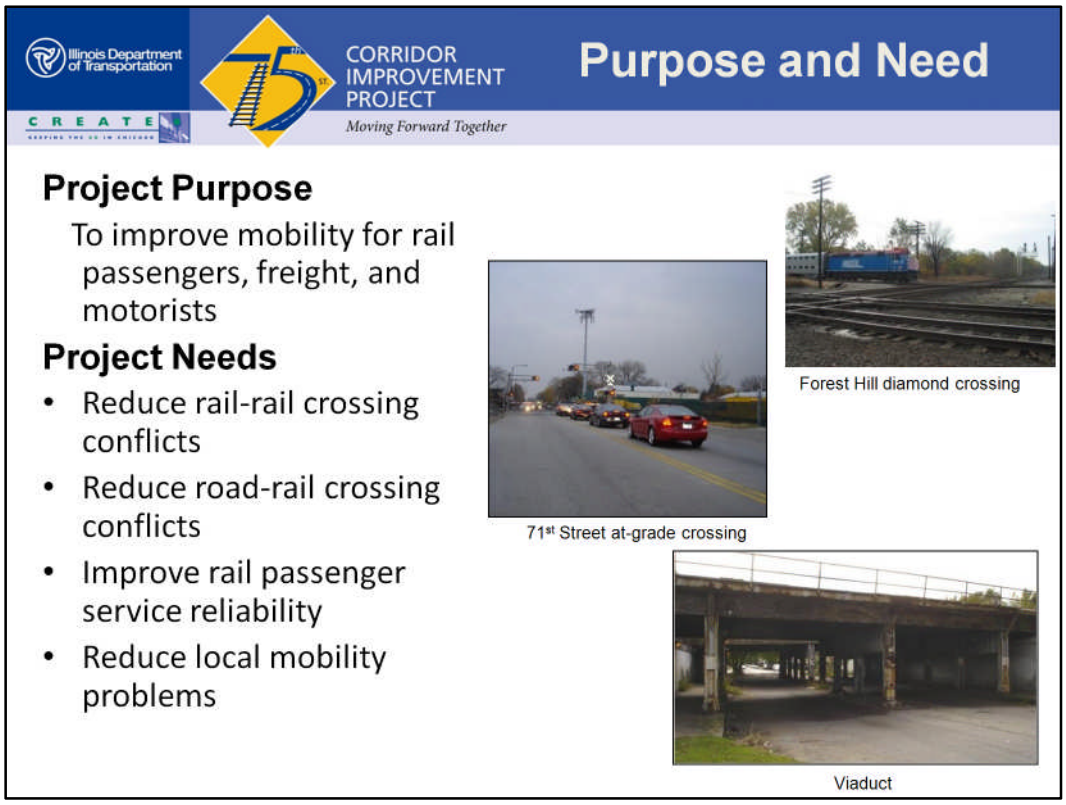
•This is one of the most complicated rail projects in the country. We are presenting a lot of information today, and we have worked hard to make it understandable. We appreciate your taking the time to understand and comment on this important project.



Previously, we held public meetings in June of this year to present a draft purpose and need statement for the project. We received comments on the purpose and need and other community issues related to the project.

We posted the meeting summary on the project web site and responded to all those who submitted comments and questions.

The comments we received helped us develop the Build Alternative we are presenting today.

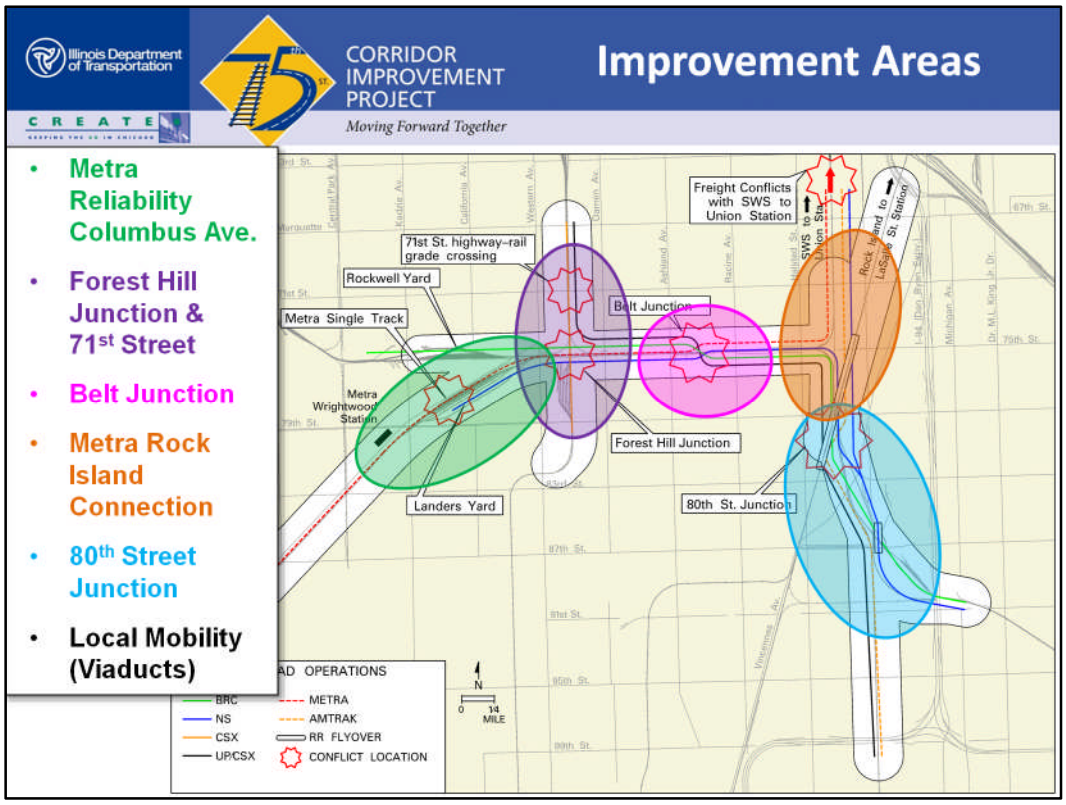


The purpose and need statement, which was developed with your input, states that:

The project's purpose is to improve mobility for rail passengers, freight, and motorists.

Four things need to be done to accomplish that purpose:

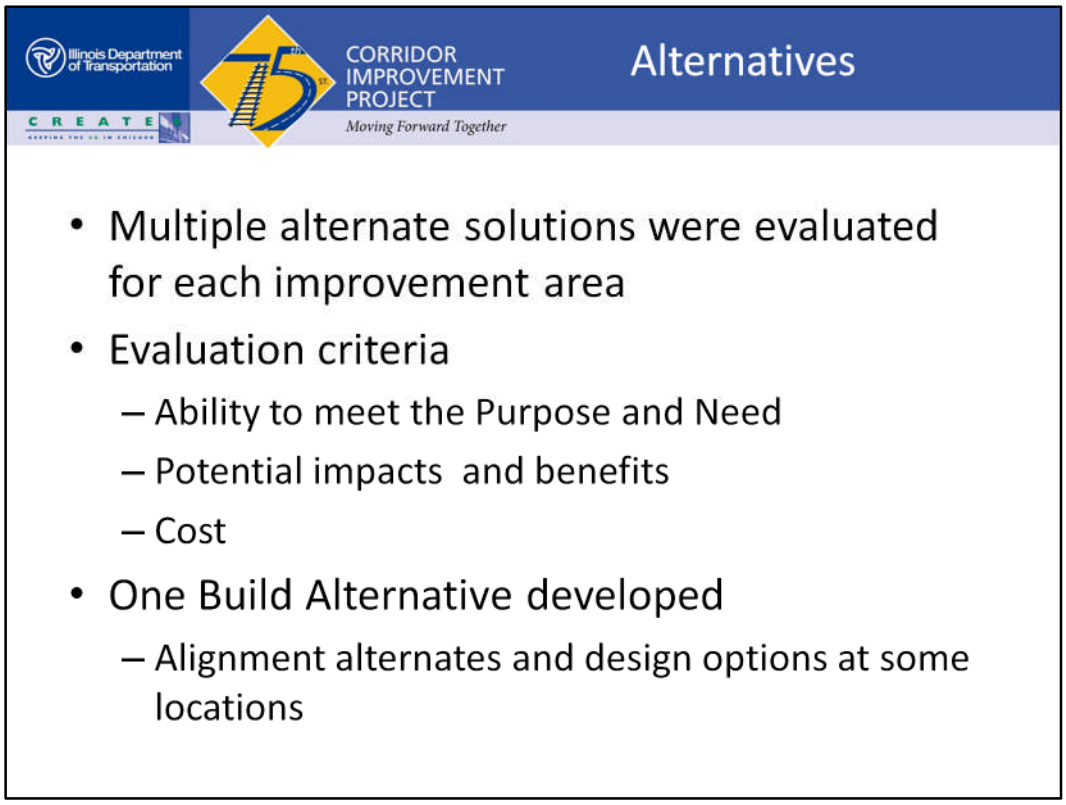
- First - Reduce conflicts at locations where rail lines cross
- Second - Reduce conflicts where roads cross railroads
- Third - Improve Metra's reliability by providing full double-track service
- Fourth - Reduce the problems at railroad viaducts that restrict local mobility



In evaluating solutions to the problems in the purpose and need, five improvement areas were identified: Metra's single track section along Columbus Ave., the Forest Hill diamond crossing together with 71st Street at-grade road crossing, Belt Junction, a connection from Metra's SouthWest Service line to Metra's Rock Island District line, and the 80th Street Junction.

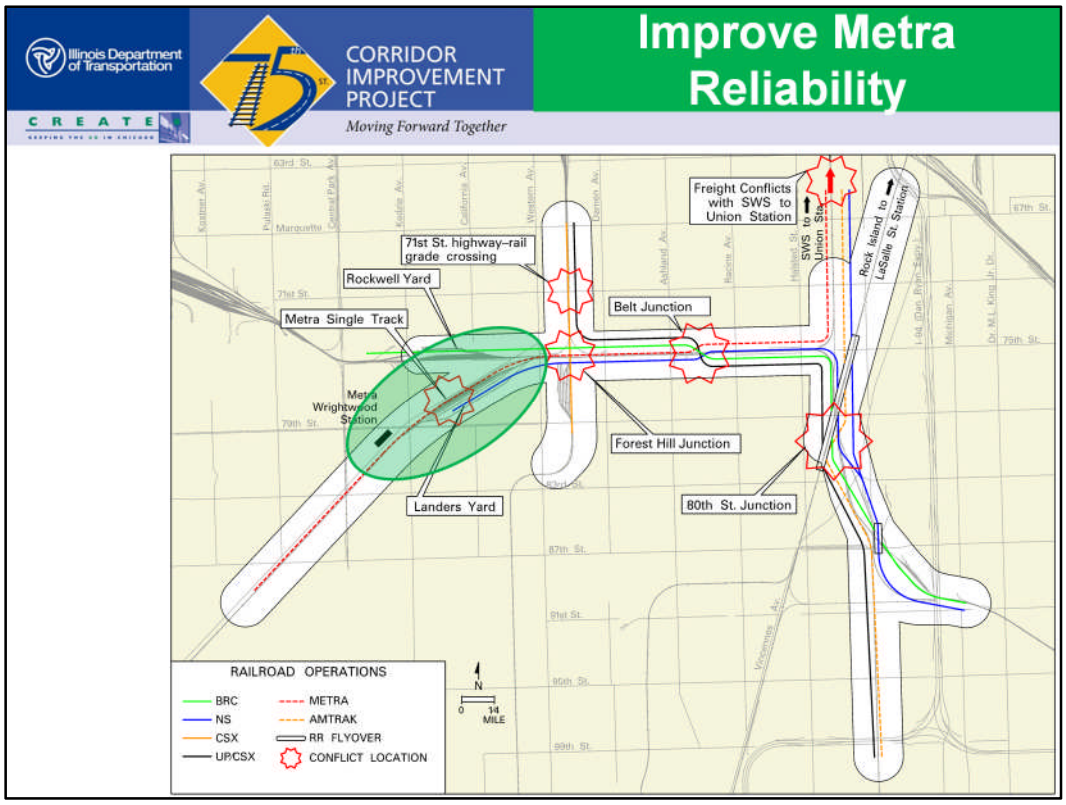
In this presentation and the exhibits we have color coded the improvement areas to help you find the information you need.

In addition to these improvement areas, the railroad viaducts throughout the project area were evaluated for safety and mobility.



For each of the areas, multiple alternate solutions were evaluated based on their ability to meet the purpose and need, the potential impacts and benefits, and the construction cost. In most locations, one alternate was clearly more effective or had fewer environmental or community impacts, and those alternates were developed into the build Alternative we are presenting today. In some locations, there were multiple ways of meeting the purpose and need, and we are presenting those today for your comments and input.

In the exhibit space, you will be able to view some of the other solutions considered and learn why they were not recommended for further analysis.



The first improvement area we evaluated is the section of Metra track along Columbus Avenue, where Metra's SouthWest Service line only has one track.

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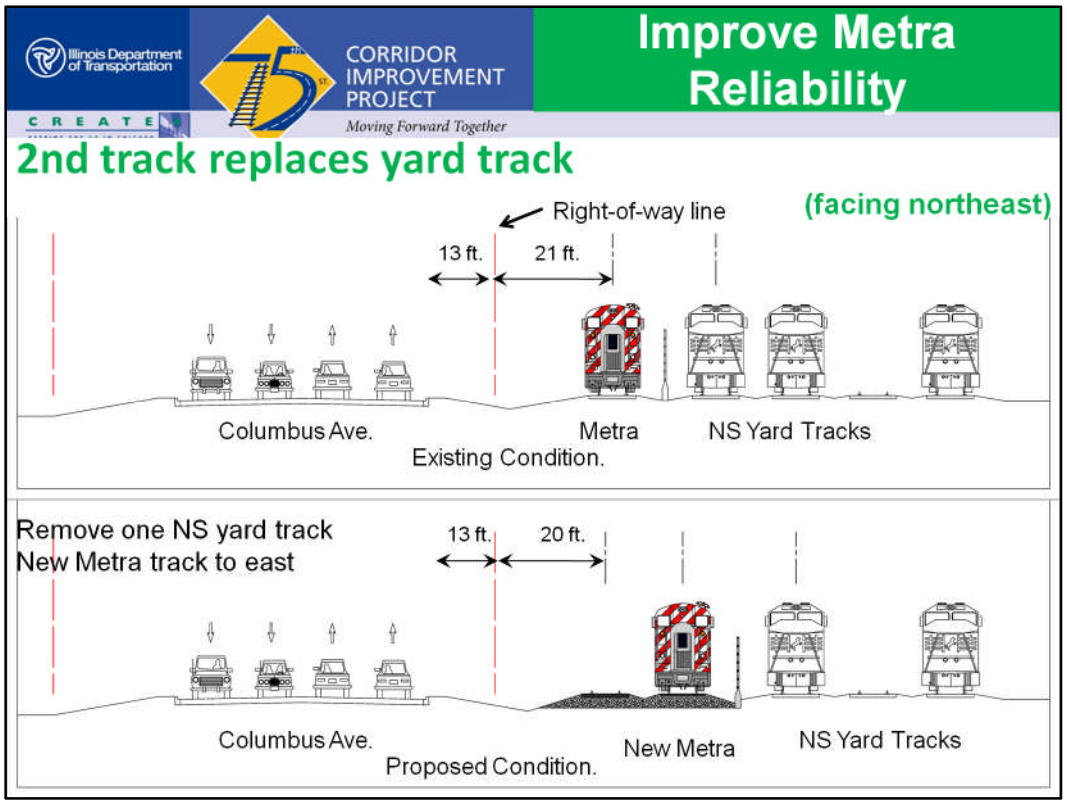
Improve Metra Reliability

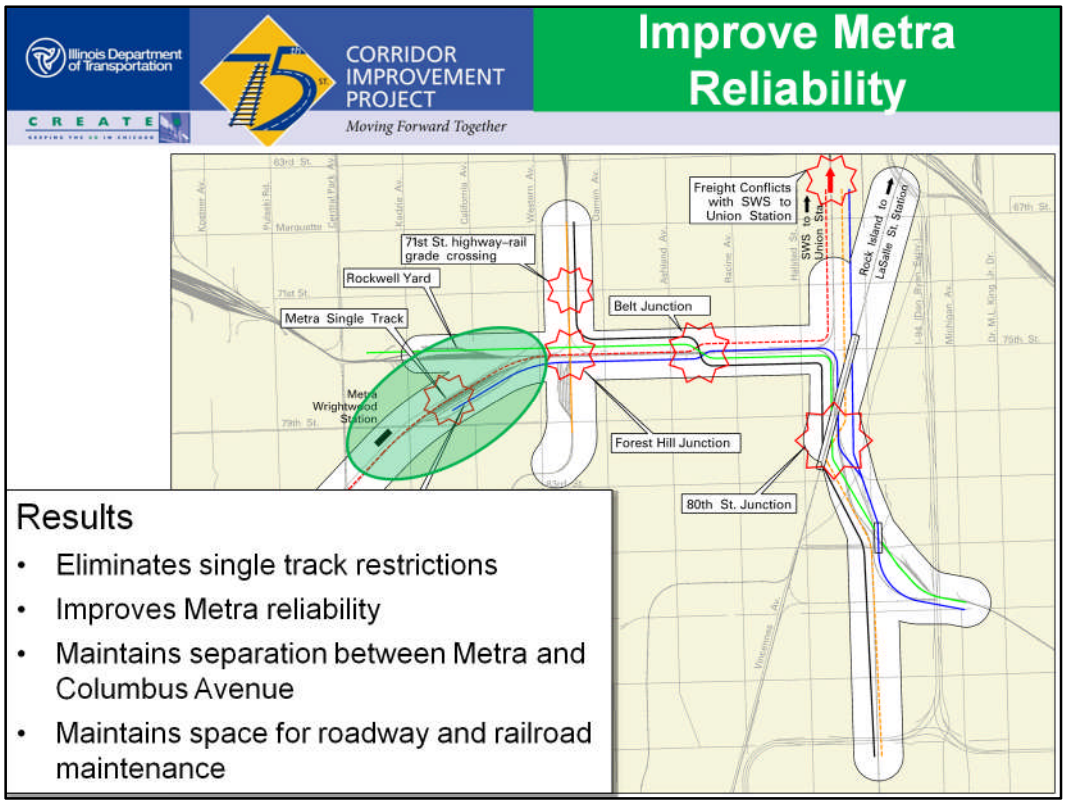
- Only one track is available for Metra's SouthWest Service from southwest of Wrightwood Station to Western Avenue
- Limits flexibility and reliability of service

This single track limits Metra's flexibility in scheduling trains and affects the reliability of the service.

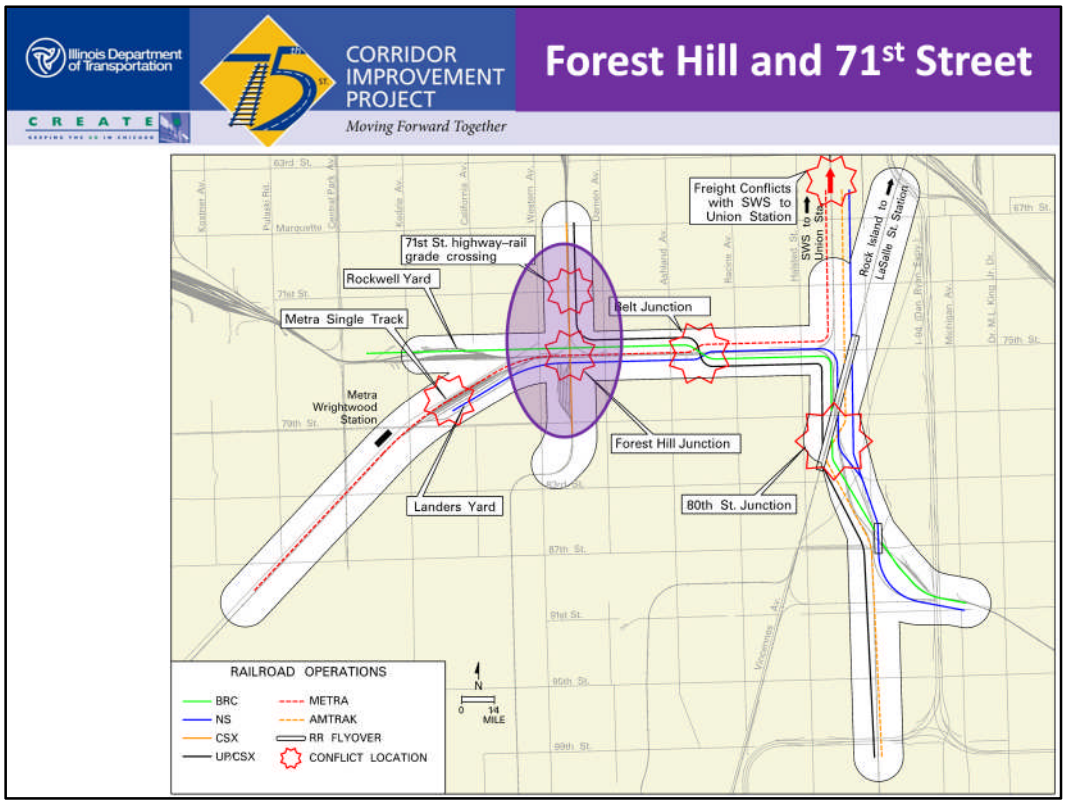
Let's look at the proposed solution at Columbus Avenue near 77th Street.



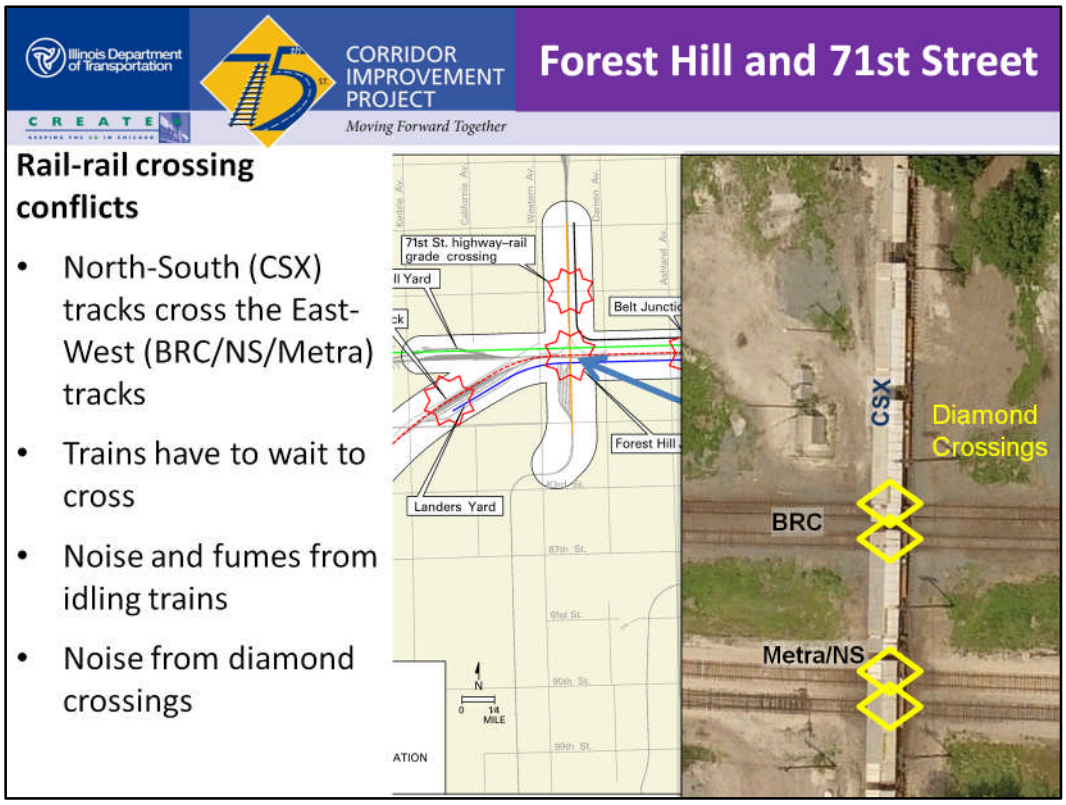
Because Metra's track is only 34 feet from the edge of Columbus Avenue, the Project Team decided that the best solution would be to remove one track from the Norfolk Southern yard and add the additional Metra track on the side away from Columbus Avenue, maintaining the separation of the tracks from the road.



The proposed solution in this location eliminates the single track restrictions and improves Metra's ability to provide reliable service while maintaining the separation of the tracks from Columbus Avenue. This solution would be just as safe for motorists, and it provides space for roadway and railroad maintenance.



Next, let's look at two locations that are very close to each other and were evaluated as part of the same improvement area: Forest Hill Junction and the 71st Street road-rail crossing.

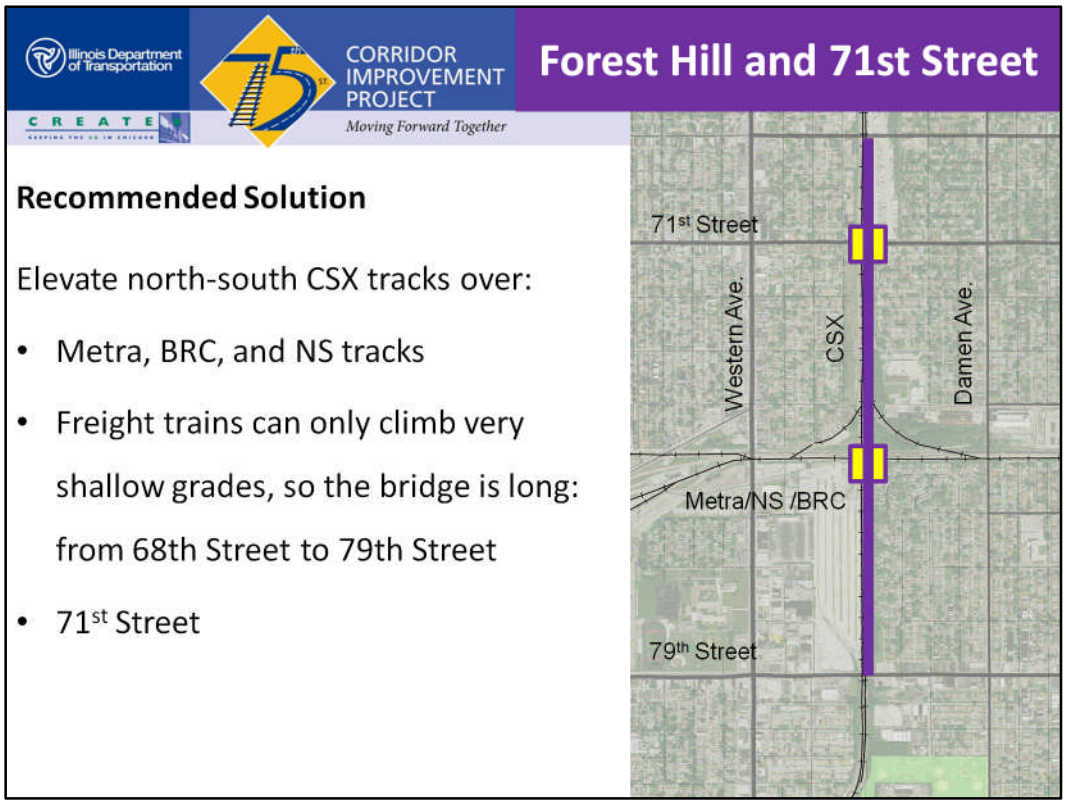


At Forest Hill, the CSX railroad tracks, which run north-south, cross three railroads running east-west: the Belt Railway, the Norfolk Southern, and Metra. At this busy location, trains have to wait their turn to cross. This causes delays as trains sit at the approaches idling. In addition, as the trains go across the other tracks at what is called a *diamond crossing*, they create a loud pounding noise that can be heard from far away.

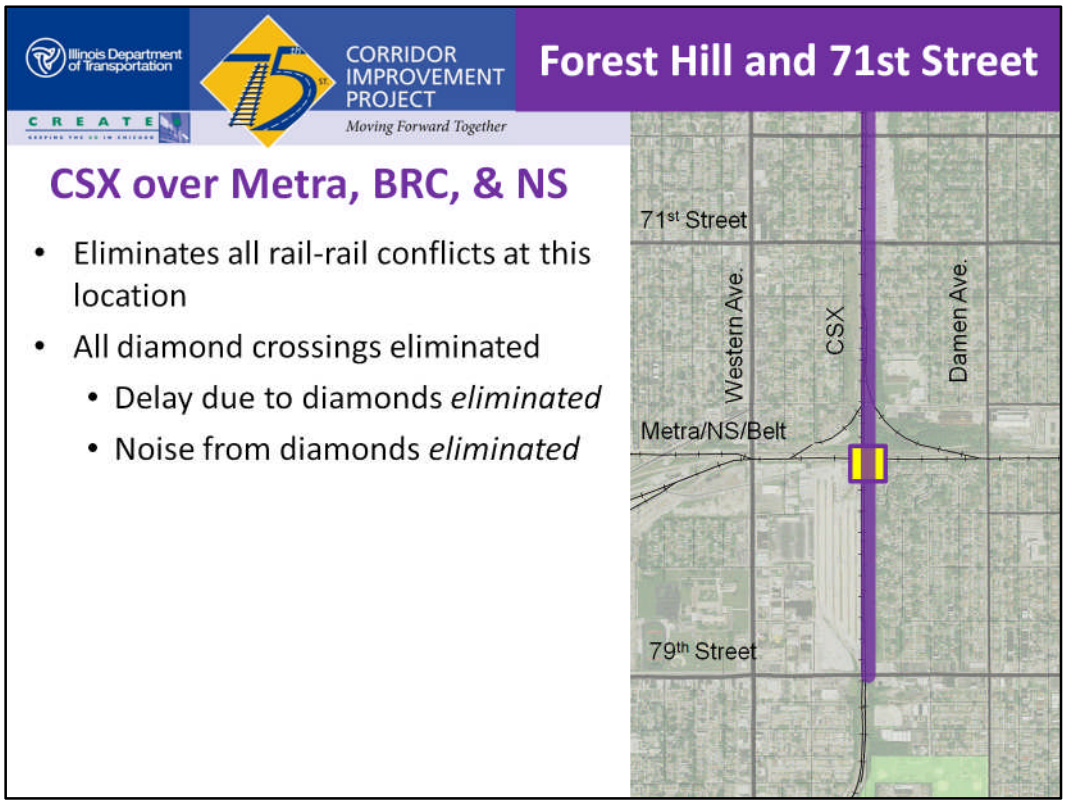
We have heard concerns from the community about the noise and fumes from these trains.

At the 71st Street crossing of the CSX tracks, drivers and pedestrians must wait for trains to cross. These trains are often slow moving and can block the crossing for up to 20 minutes at a time".

The crossing also presents a safety risk, especially when drivers or pedestrians become impatient or try to beat the train to the crossing.



The recommended solution is to raise the CSX tracks, which run north-south, over the three other railroads running east-west. Freight trains can only climb very shallow grades, so the bridge structure to get the CSX tracks over the other tracks would be long. The bridge would start north of 68th Street and would be high enough at 71st Street to go over the street there.



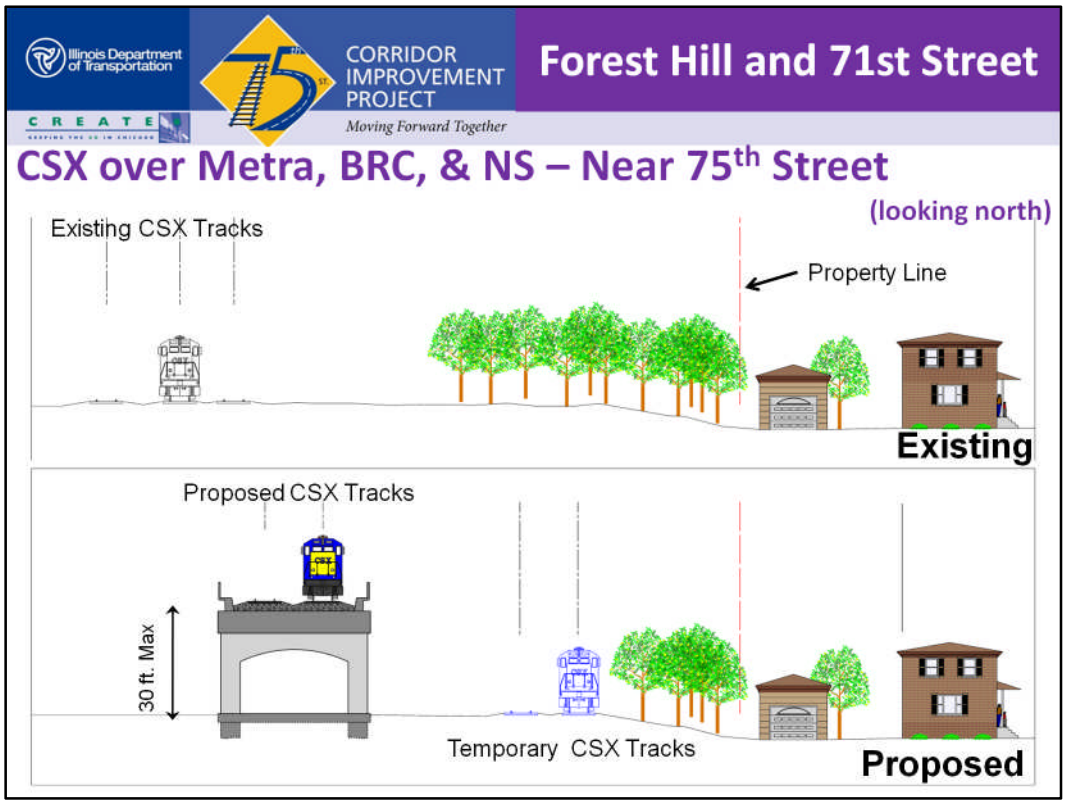
This has several advantages:

• First, it would eliminate all the rail-rail conflicts at Forest Hill Junction, fully meeting the purpose and need

• This means that all of the delays from those conflicts would be eliminated

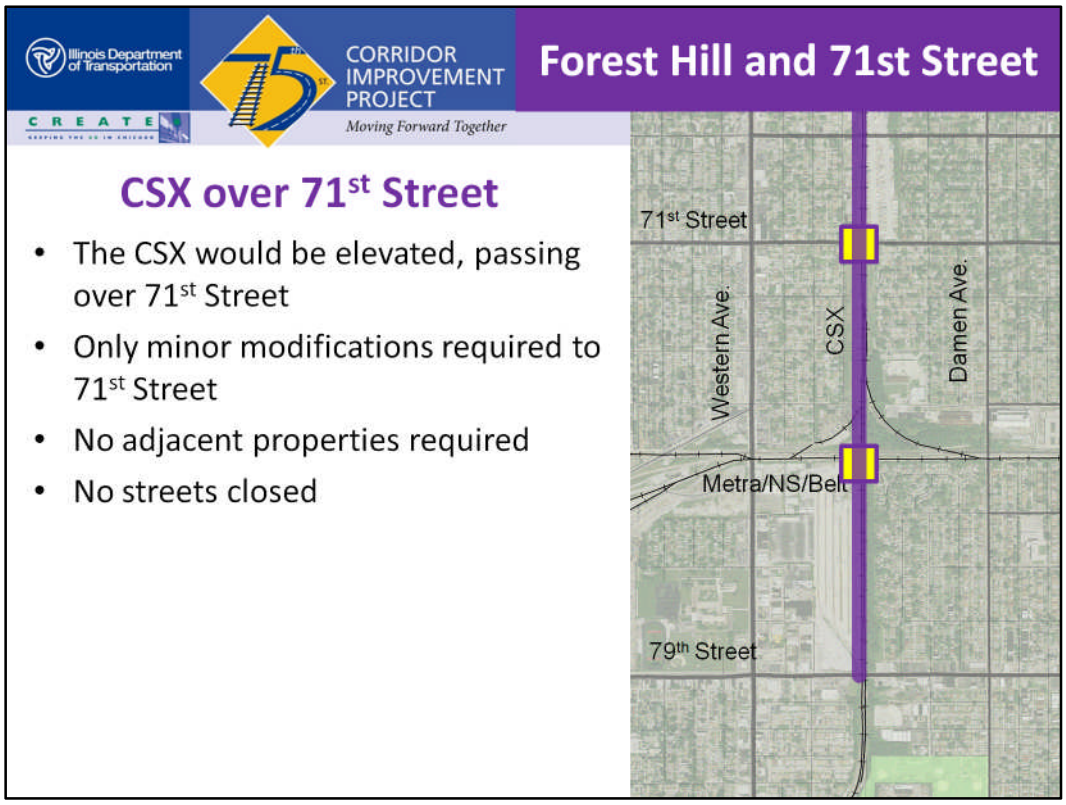
• As a result the noise and air pollution from the idling trains waiting to cross the diamond crossings would be eliminated

• The noise from the diamonds would also be eliminated.



The new CSX elevated tracks would be constructed close to the existing tracks. In order to allow the bridge to be built close to the existing tracks, temporary tracks would be built east of the existing tracks.

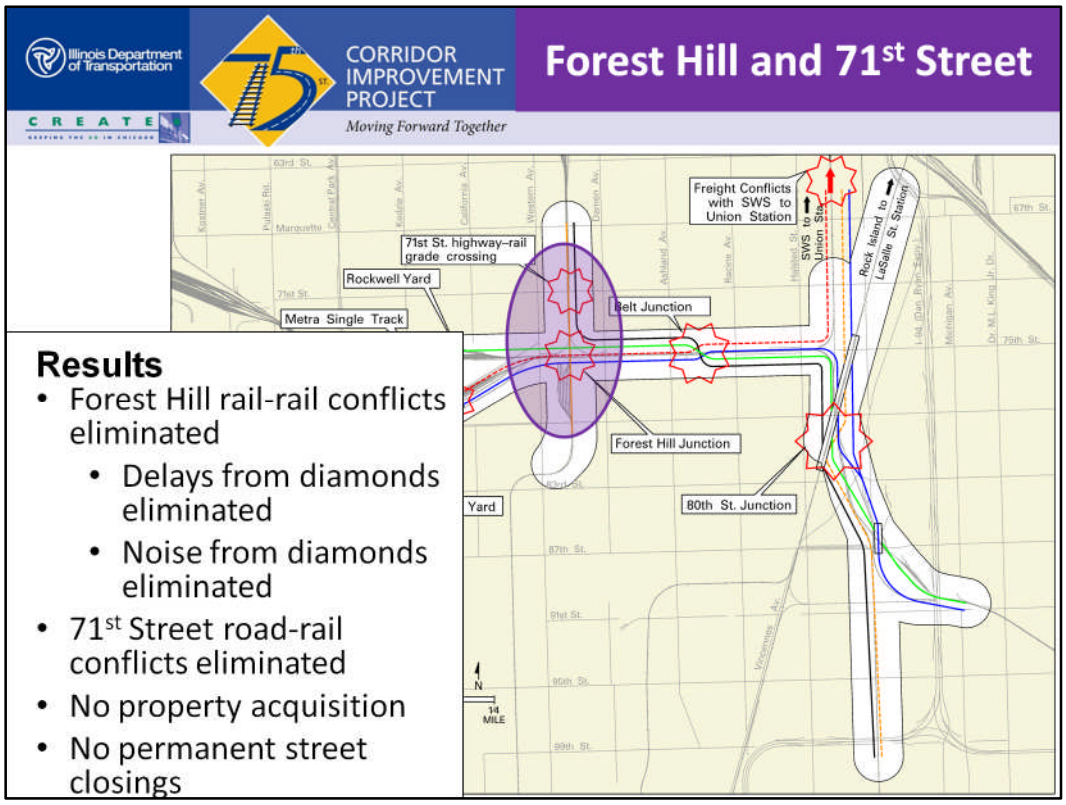
The new CSX tracks would be about 30 feet higher than the existing tracks as they go over the east-west railroads, and then would match existing tracks at the north and south ends of the project study area.



Because the CSX would be elevated over the tracks at Forest Hill, it would be high enough to pass over 71st Street too.

This would allow the creation of a railroad bridge over 71st street with only minor modifications to the street. No changes would be required to the street in front of homes and businesses. Also, no property would be required, and no streets would need to be closed.

This artist's rendering shows what the elevated north-south tracks might look like at Hamilton Avenue, north of 76th Street. Instead of train tracks at ground level, they would be on a flyover that would be similar to this.

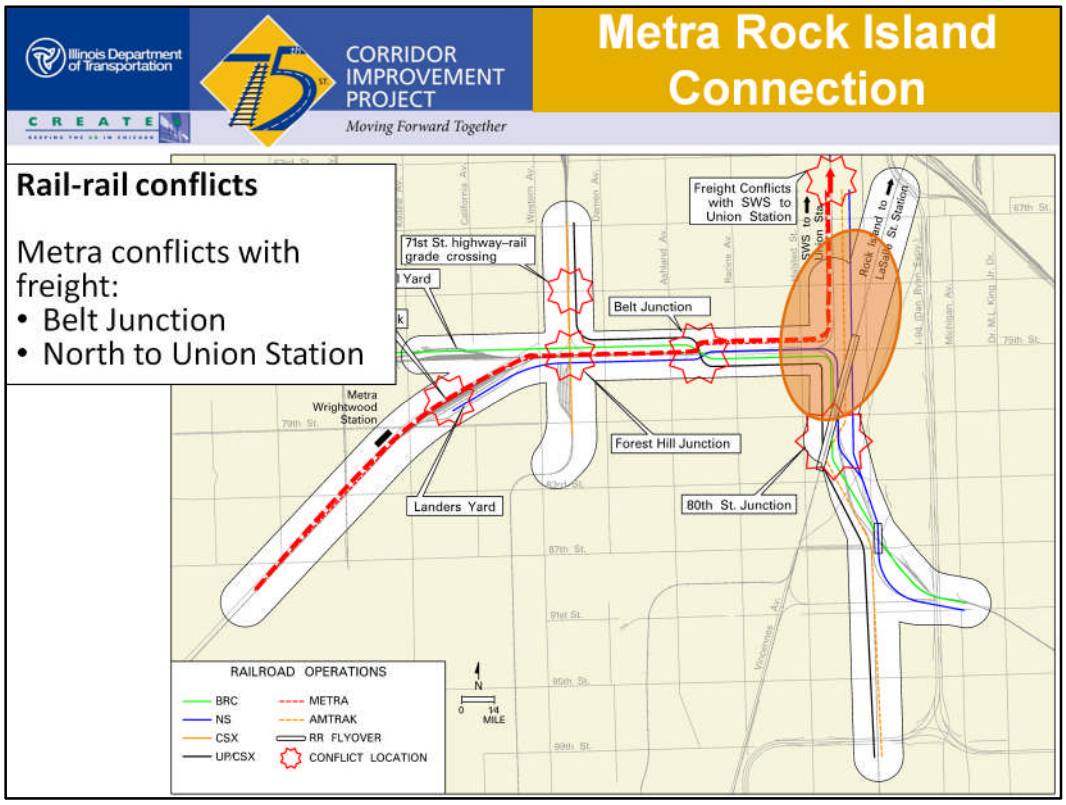


The results of this solution are:

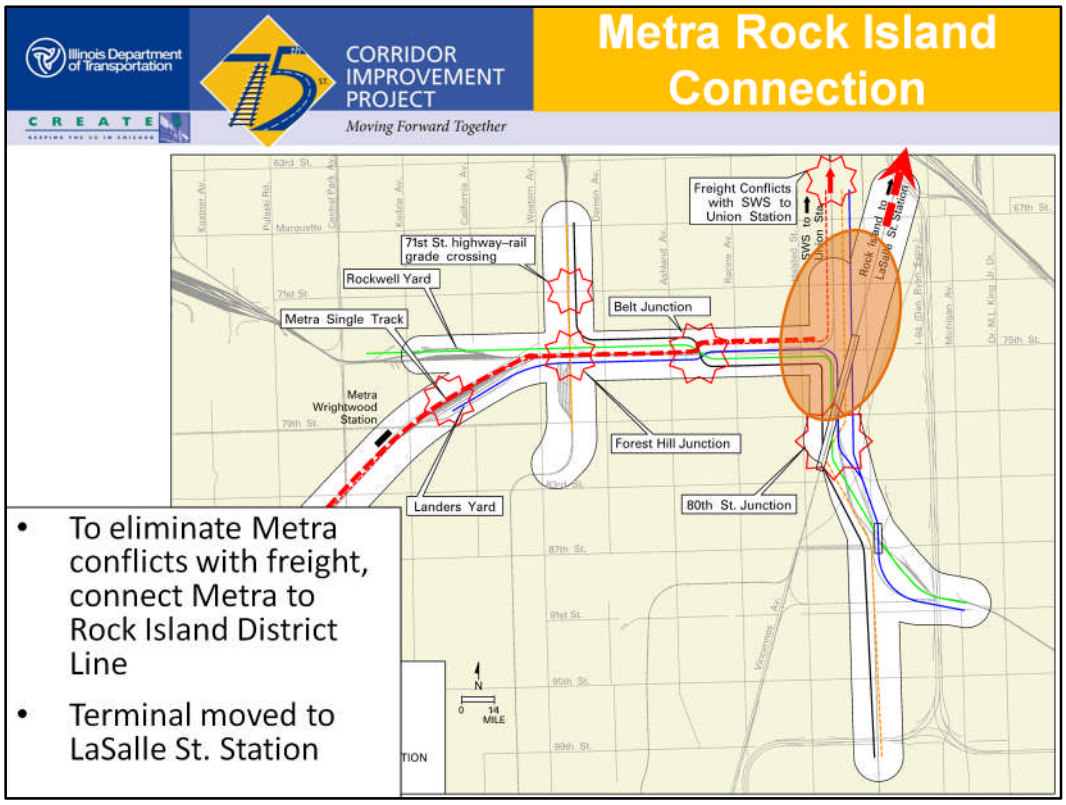
The Forest Hill rail-rail conflicts are eliminated, along with the train delays and idling it causes. The noise of the rail cars passing over the diamond crossings would also be eliminated.

The road-rail at-grade crossing at 71st Street is also eliminated, along with its delays to drivers and pedestrians.

This can be accomplished with no property acquisitions and no permanent street closings.

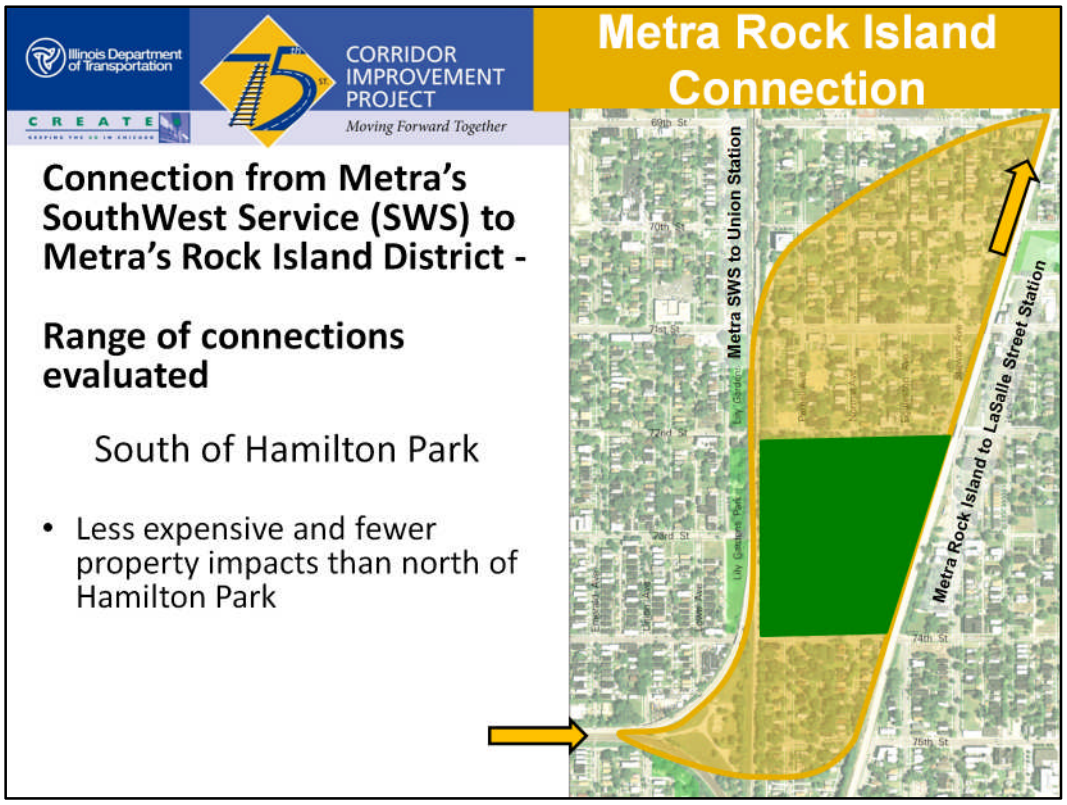


Currently there are some additional conflicts between Metra's SouthWest Service and freight trains. Metra crosses freight traffic at Belt Junction. As Metra continues north towards Union Station, it also crosses several more freight lines. Each of these crossings can delay both Metra and freight service.



A bridge over the freight lines and connecting to the Rock Island District would give the Metra trains a route to downtown that is almost completely free from freight interference.

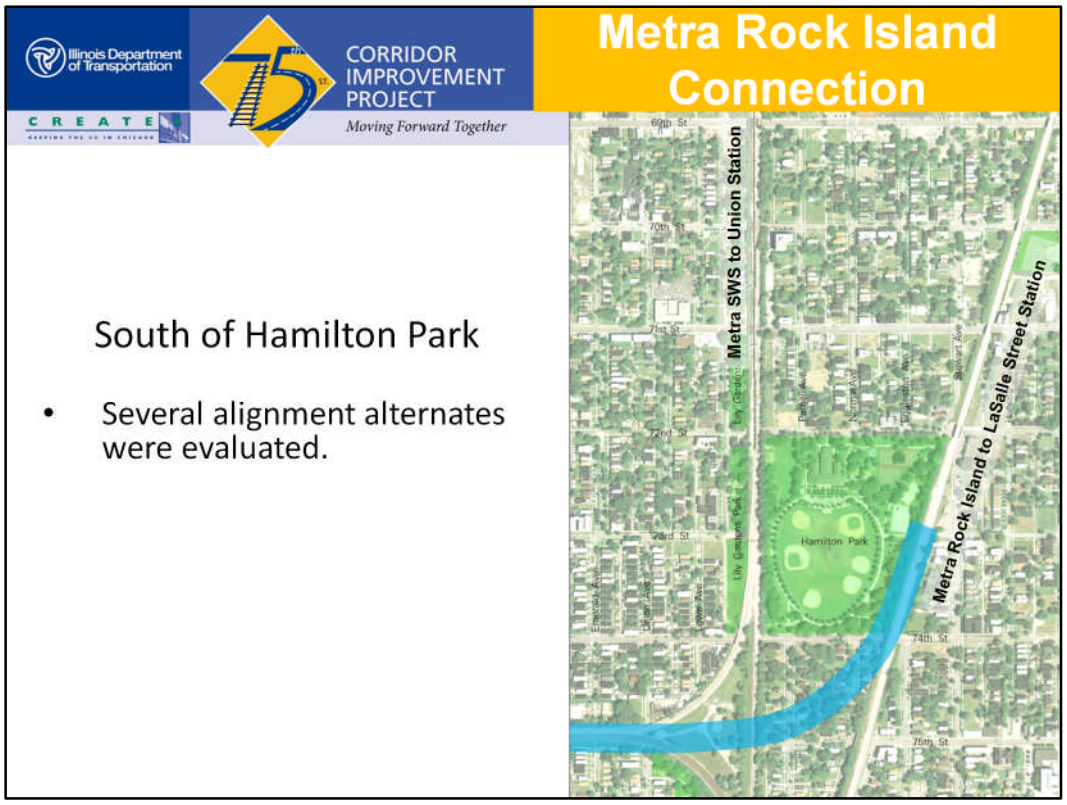
Metra's SouthWest Service would then go to LaSalle Street Station instead of Union Station. LaSalle Street Station has the capacity for these additional trains.



A range of alternate connections were evaluated for connecting the Metra SouthWest Service to the Rock Island District line.

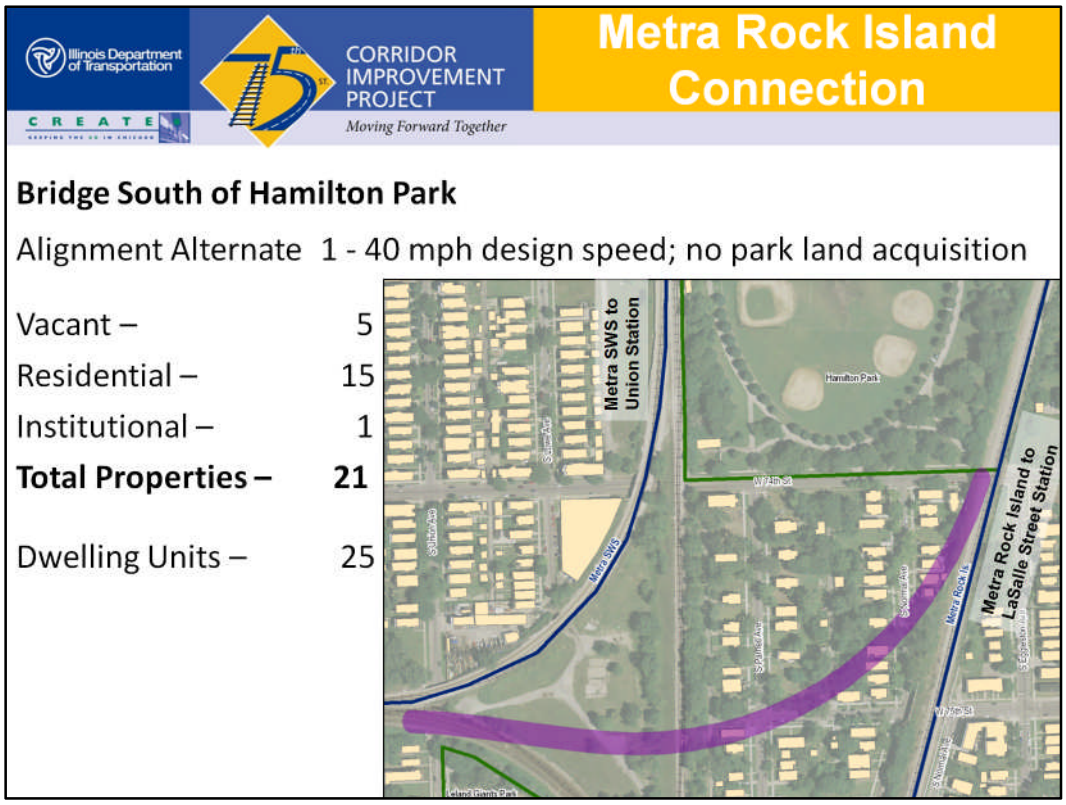
Hamilton Park lies in between the two lines. In addition to being a major open space and recreational resource, Hamilton Park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Hamilton Park is protected under federal law, both as a park and as a historic place.

Connections both north and south of the park were evaluated, but the ones to the south would be much shorter, less expensive, and would impact fewer properties.

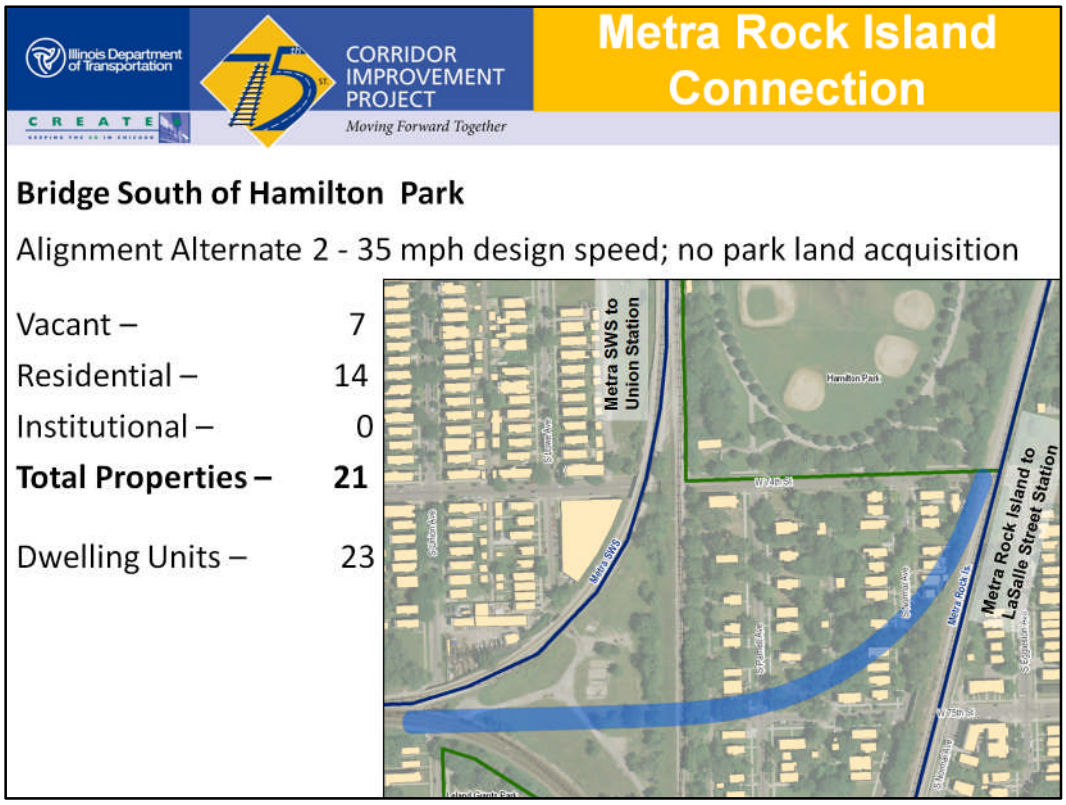


South of Hamilton Park, several alignment alternates were evaluated.

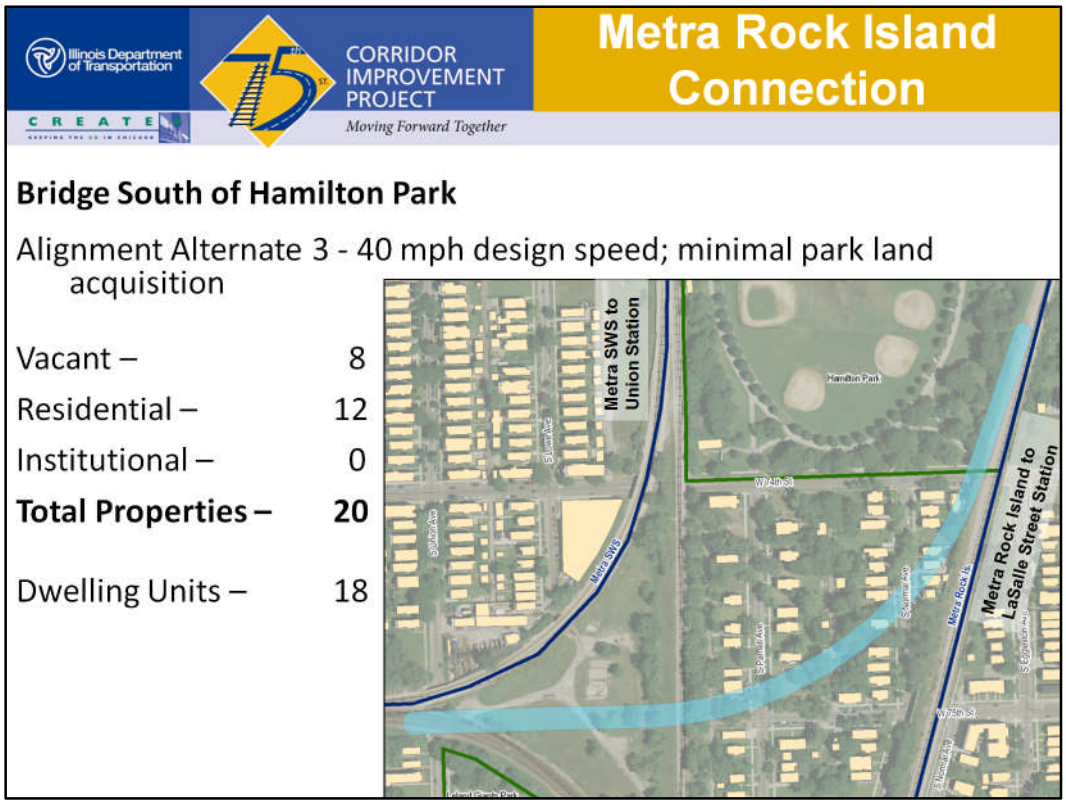
Each of the alignment alternates considered would have different impacts to the properties in the neighborhood.



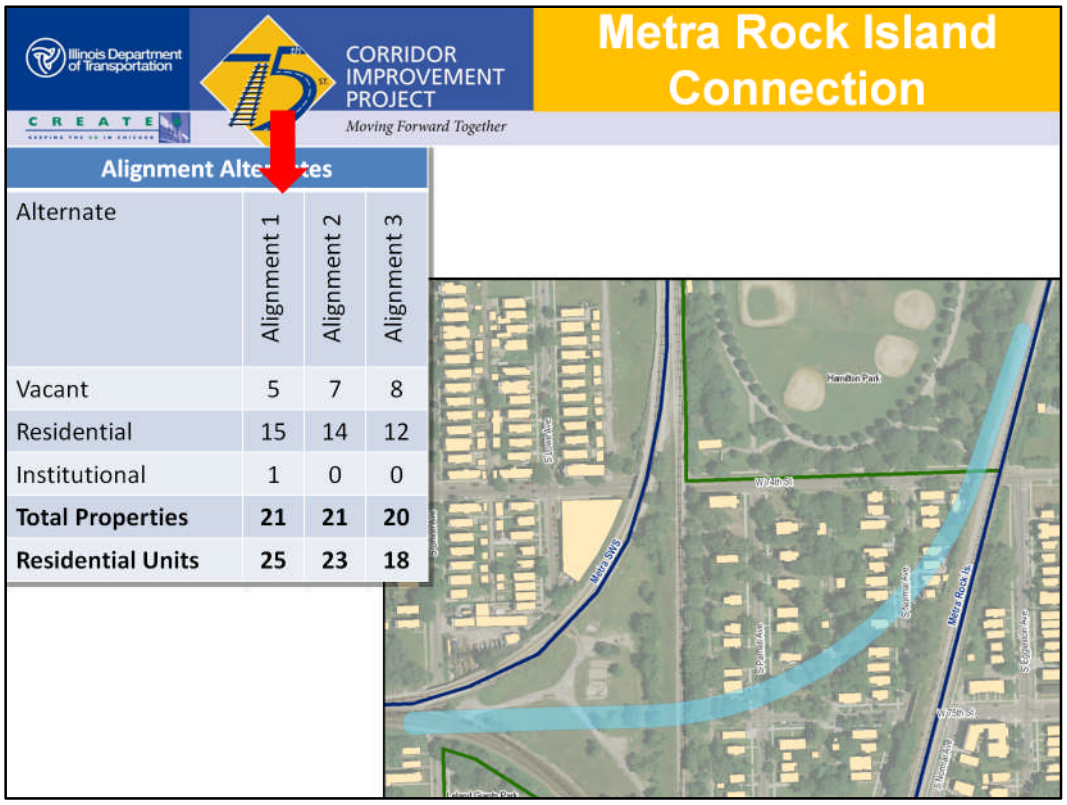
The first alignment alternate considered was a curve that would allow trains to travel at 40 miles per hour and take no property from Hamilton Park. The resulting curve is shown here along with the number of properties that would need to be acquired. Note that this alignment alternate would go south of 75th Street.



A second alignment considered would eliminate the sag in the previous curve while still staying entirely out of the park. This curve has a 35 mile per hour design speed and would require the same number of properties. Because more of the properties are currently vacant, the number of required relocations is slightly lower.



A third alignment considered was a 40 mile per hour curve that would take a small amount of land from the park (about 1,400 square feet). This alignment takes one less property overall and would require the fewest relocations.

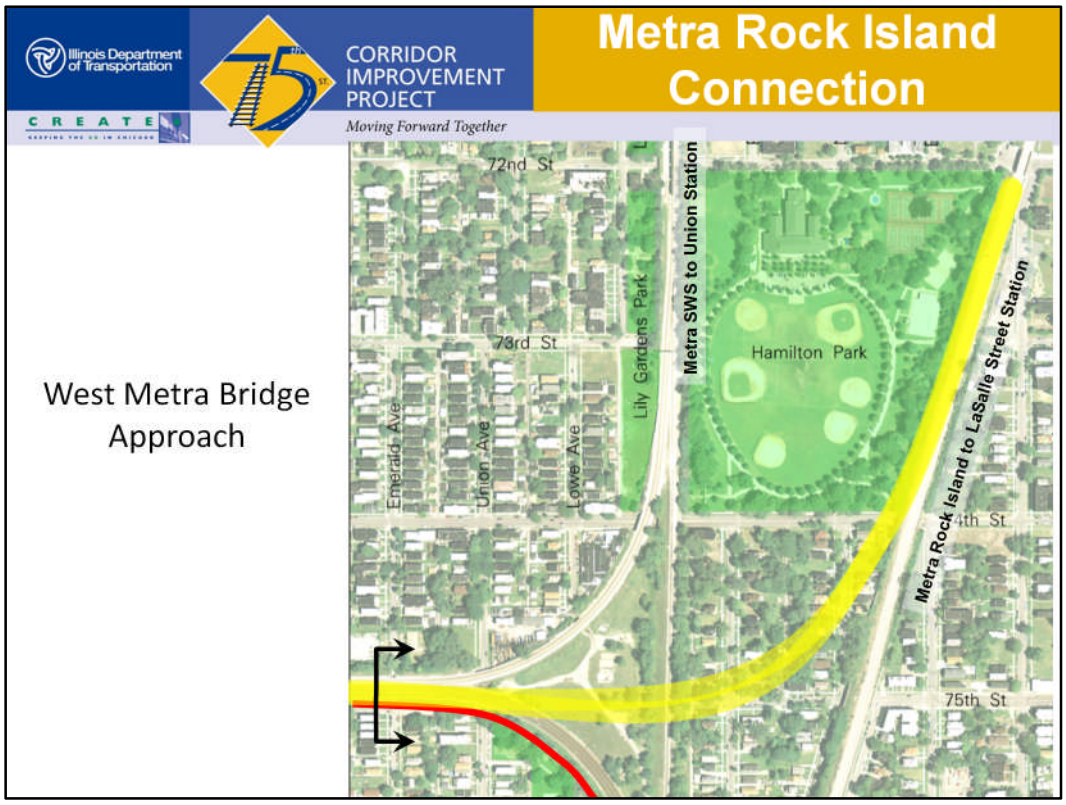


These three alignment alternates have different impacts on the community south of Hamilton Park.

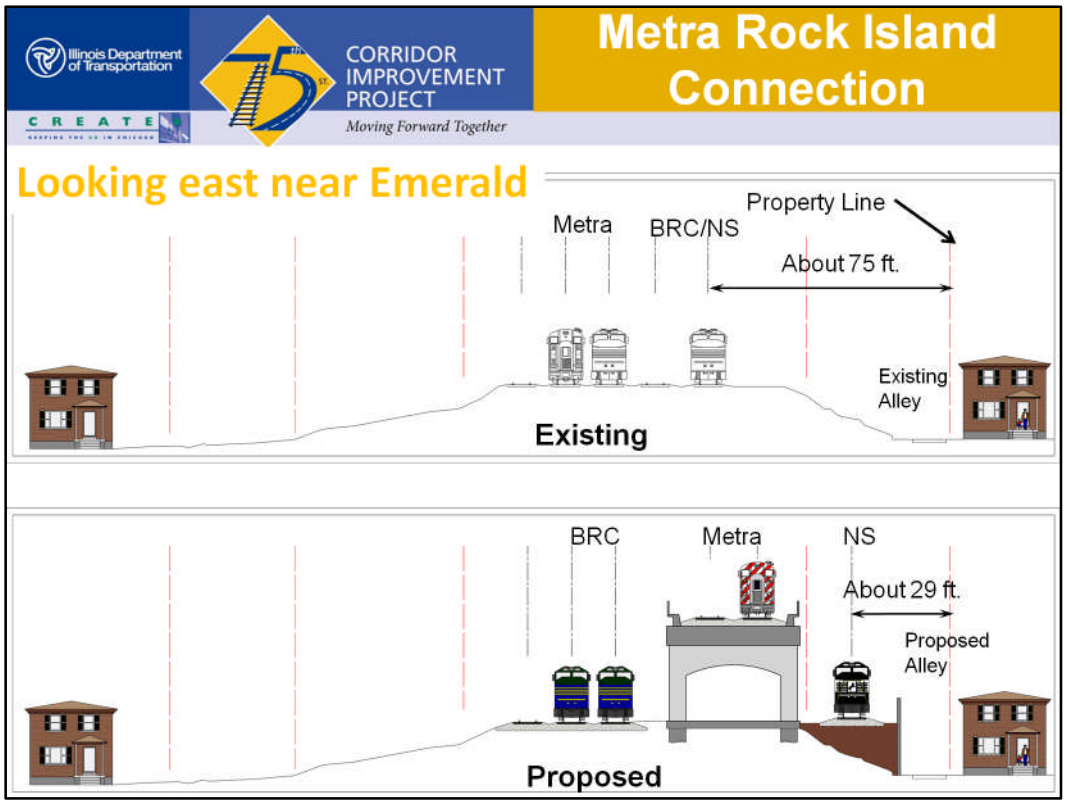
Please study these alignments in the exhibits and ask questions.

It is especially important that the residents of this area provide us feedback and input on these alignments.

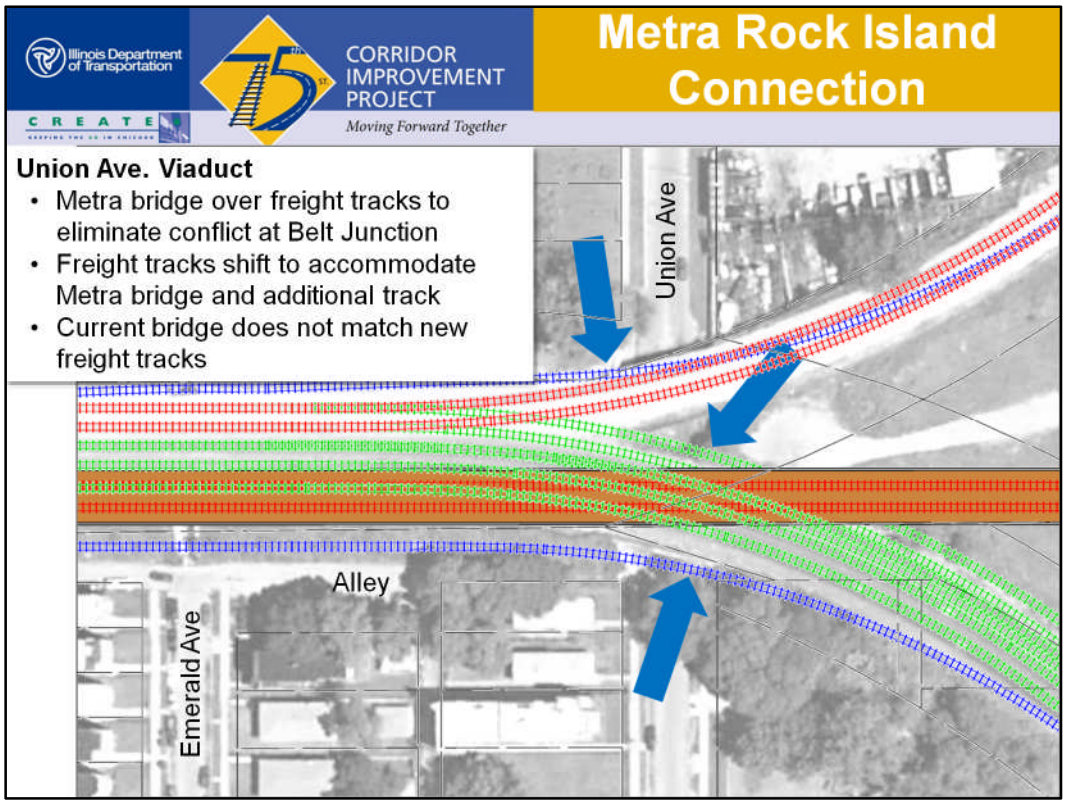
This artist's rendering shows what the new flyover tracks might look like at Parnell Avenue, south of Hamilton Park.



At the western edge of this connection, the corridor at 75th Street would need to be widened to allow for construction of the Metra bridge over the freight tracks. Let's look at that now.



The addition of the Metra bridge requires wider spacing of the tracks, which makes the entire corridor wider. A retaining wall would be required. At Emerald, this retaining wall would be immediately adjacent to the alley. The nearest train tracks would be closer to the residences south of the tracks.



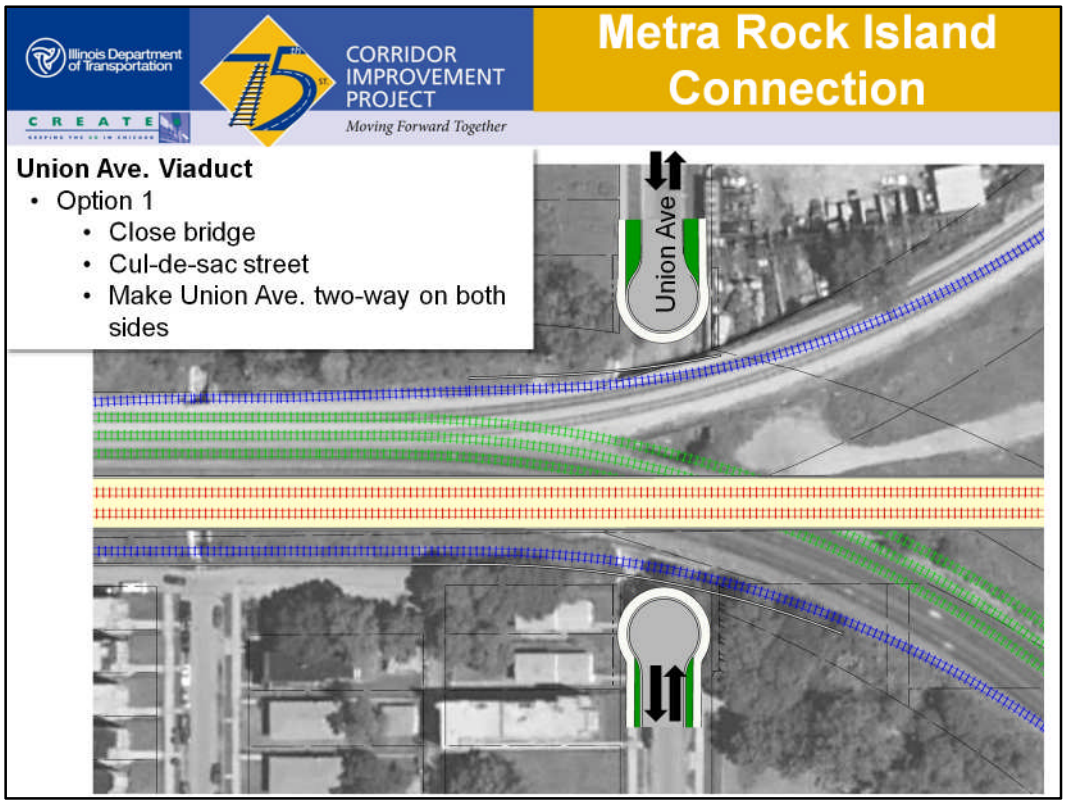
The Metra bridge would cross over the freight tracks as they curve to the south near Union Avenue. These freight tracks would need to be shifted for this new configuration.

The existing bridge would not line up with the new track locations, which means we would not be able to use the existing bridge.

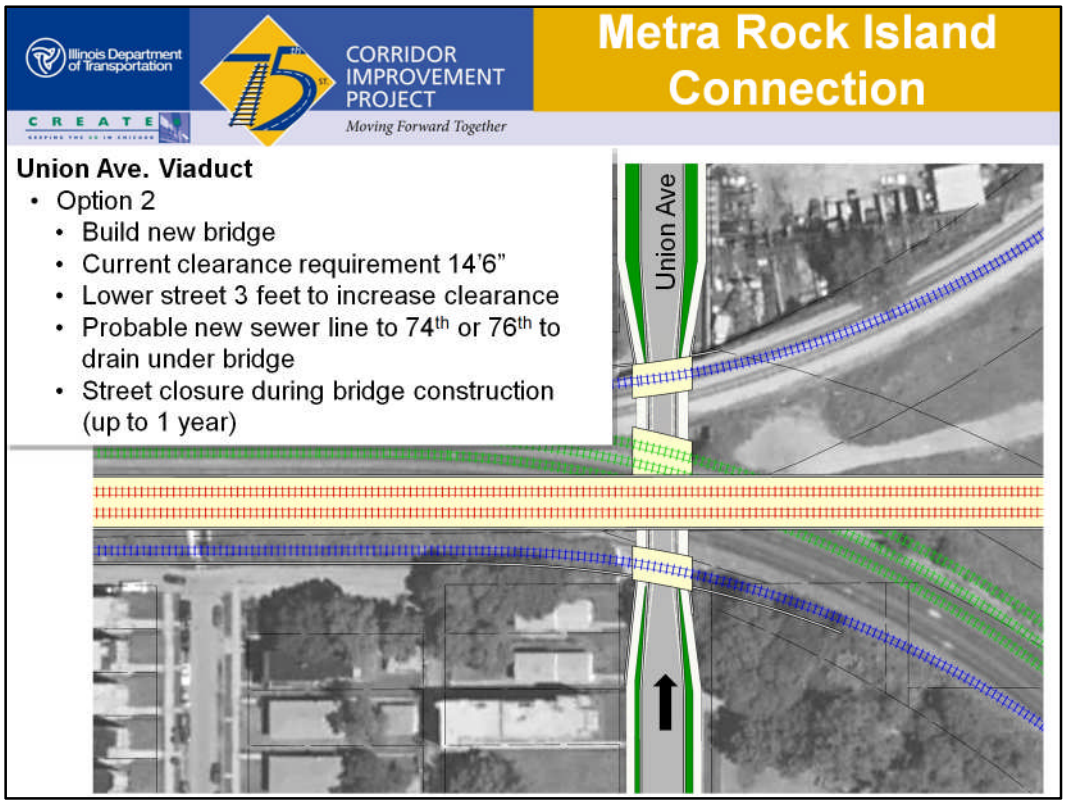
The existing bridge is very low, with only 11 feet, 10 inches of clearance. Due to the low clearance, the bridge still has brick paving underneath.

A new bridge at this location would need to provide the current clearance standards of 14 feet, 6 inches; an increase of 3 feet, 8 inches.

Two different design options were considered for this location.



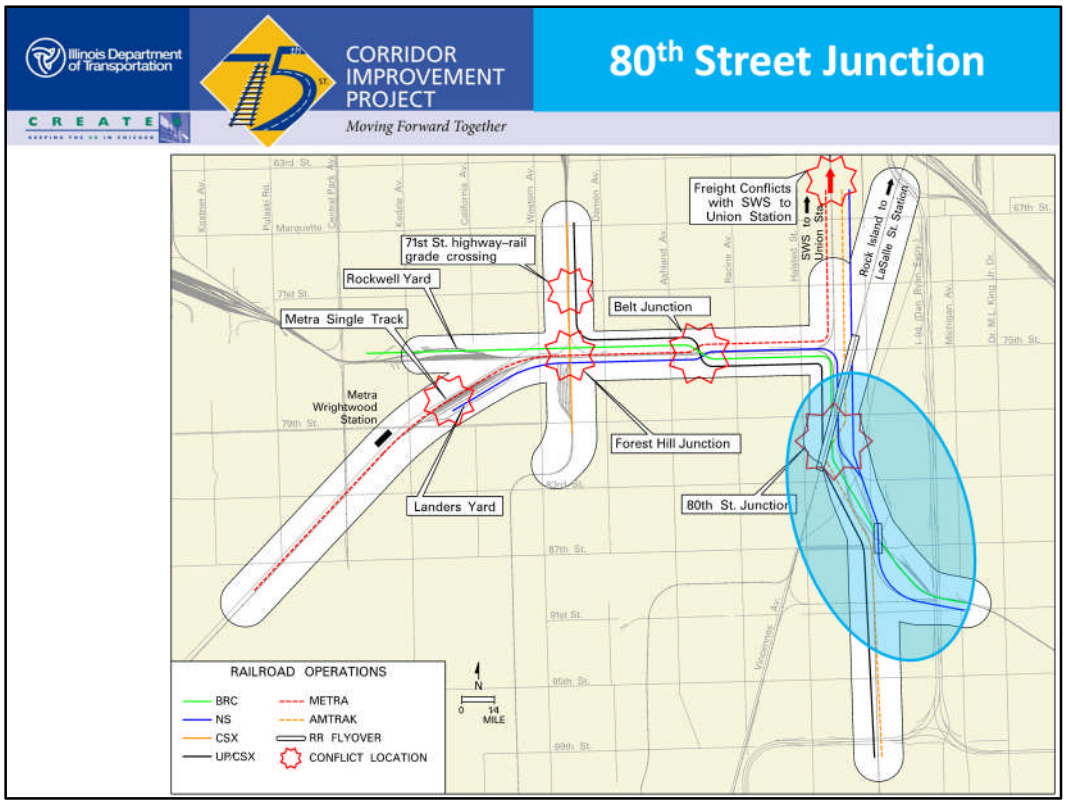
The first would be to eliminate the bridge and close Union Avenue. The street to the north and south would become two-way, ending in cul-de-sacs at the railroad tracks.



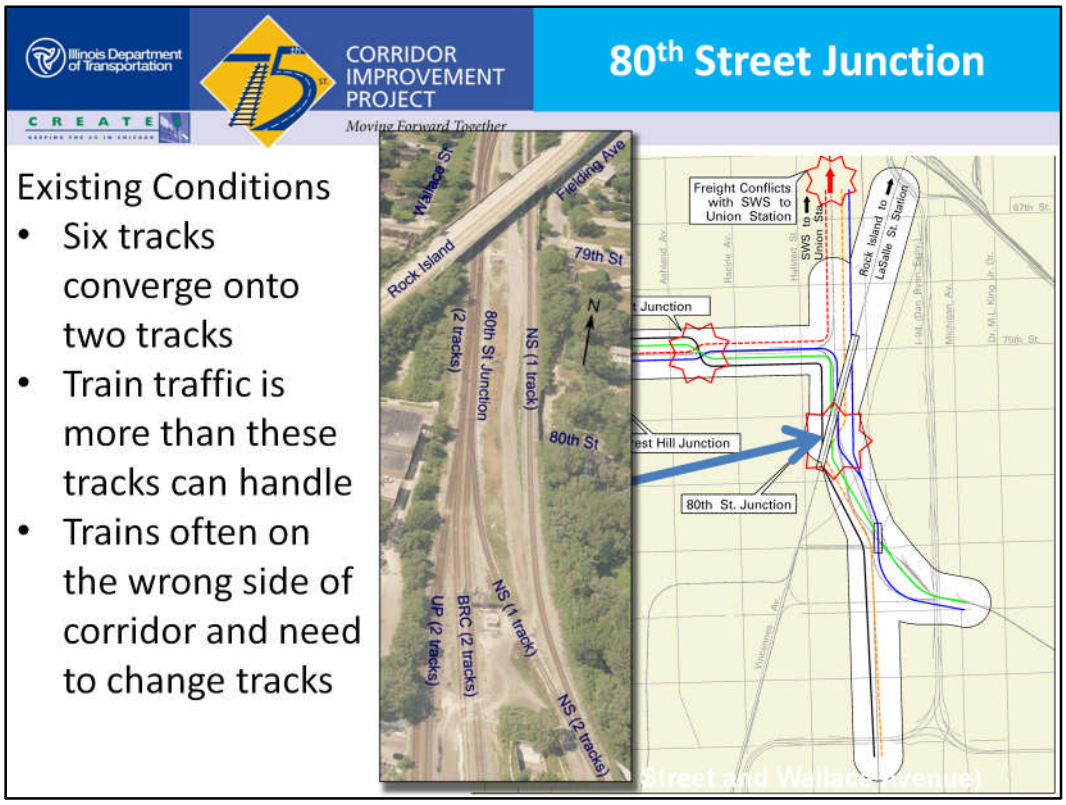
The second option is to build a new bridge, with increased vertical clearance. To meet the clearance requirements, the street would need to be lowered more than three feet. To drain the low area under the bridge, a new sewer line would be required.

Construction of the new bridge and the Metra bridge over it would take about a year. During that year Union Avenue would be closed to through traffic, and would operate as a two-way street north and south of the railroad tracks.

Changes to Union Avenue would have impacts to the residents along the street. It is important that you provide us feedback on the options at this location.



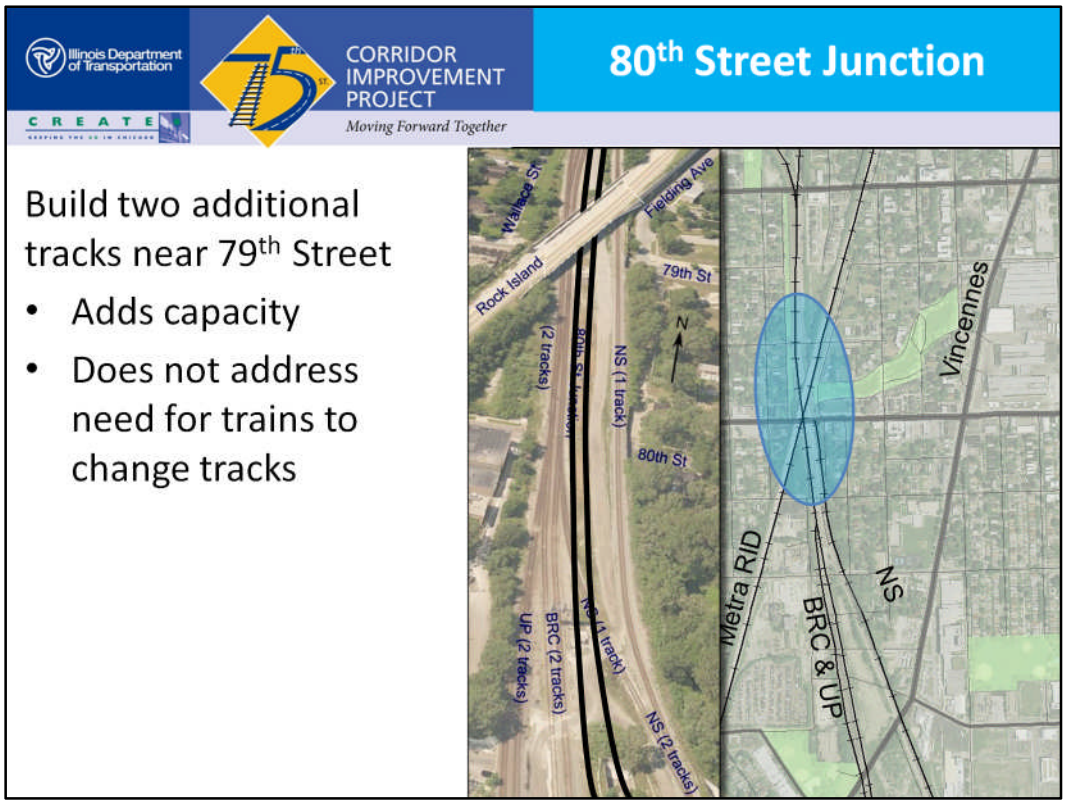
The next improvement area we evaluated was the 80th Street Junction.



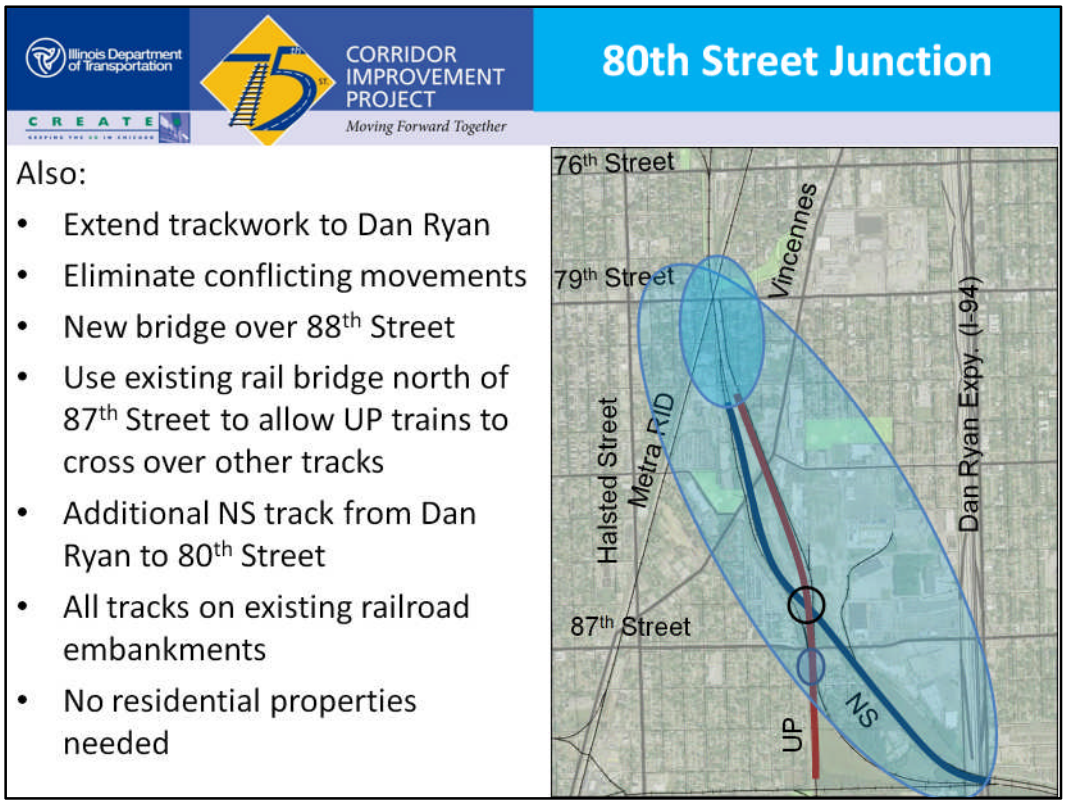
At this location, six tracks converge into two tracks, while another track runs alongside.

The traffic through the junction is more than the two tracks can handle.

The trains often enter the junction on the other side of the corridor from where they need to be and have to change tracks. It's much like cars changing lanes on an expressway.



Two additional tracks can be added between the existing tracks, which would increase capacity. But that alone would not eliminate the conflicts caused by trains needing to cross to the other side of the corridor.

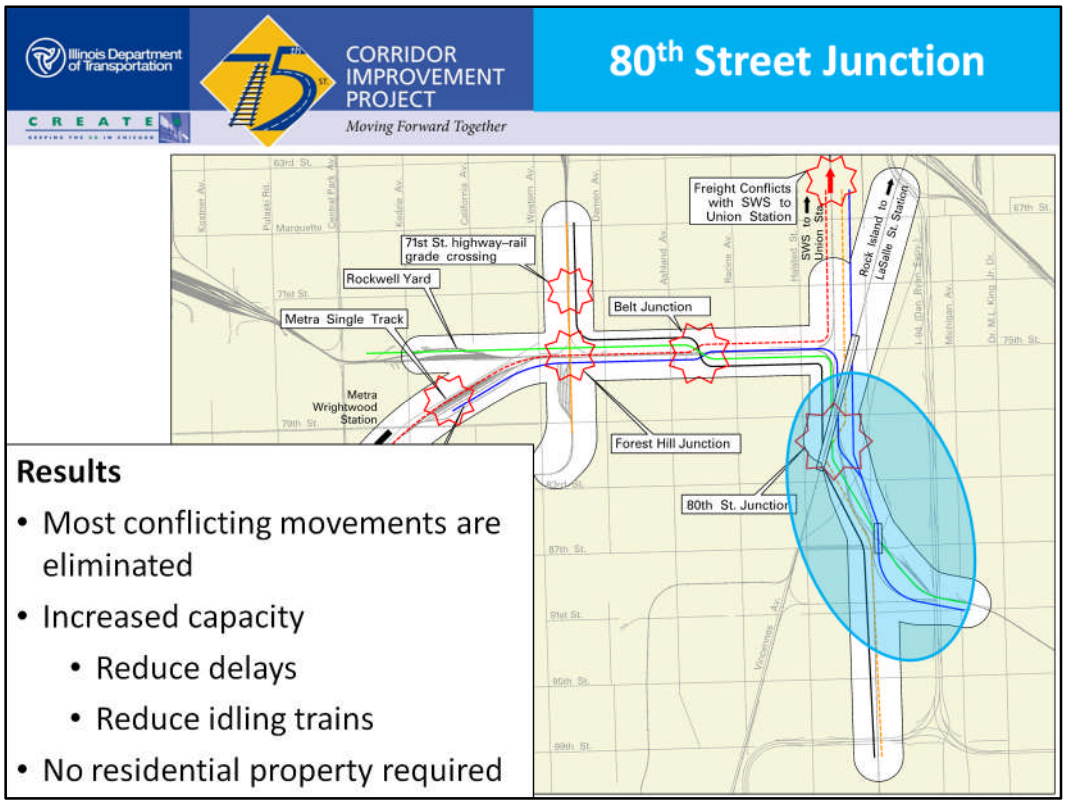


By expanding the project southeast to the Dan Ryan, we can make better use of an existing railroad bridge north of 87th Street to allow trains to approach 87th street on the correct side of the corridor.

Most conflicting movements at 80th Street can be eliminated by:

- Constructing a new bridge between two existing railroad bridges on 88th Street
- Using the existing bridge north of 87th to get UP trains to the east side of the corridor
- Adding a NS track under the bridge to allow them to get to the west side of the corridor

This can be done on the existing railroad embankments and no residential properties would need to be acquired.



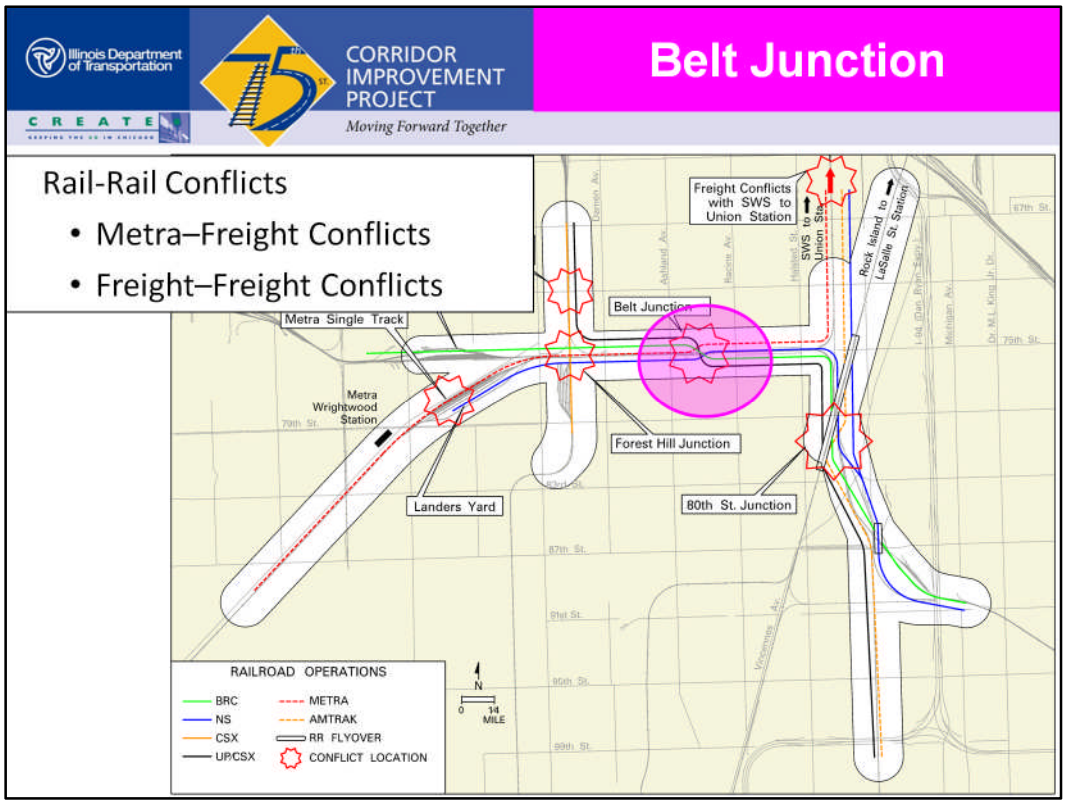
As a result of this solution:

• Most conflicting train movements are eliminated, resulting in increased capacity through 80th Street Junction, reduced delays, and reduced train idling.

• Trains can line up on the right track, eliminating the need to change tracks at both 80th Street and Belt Junction.

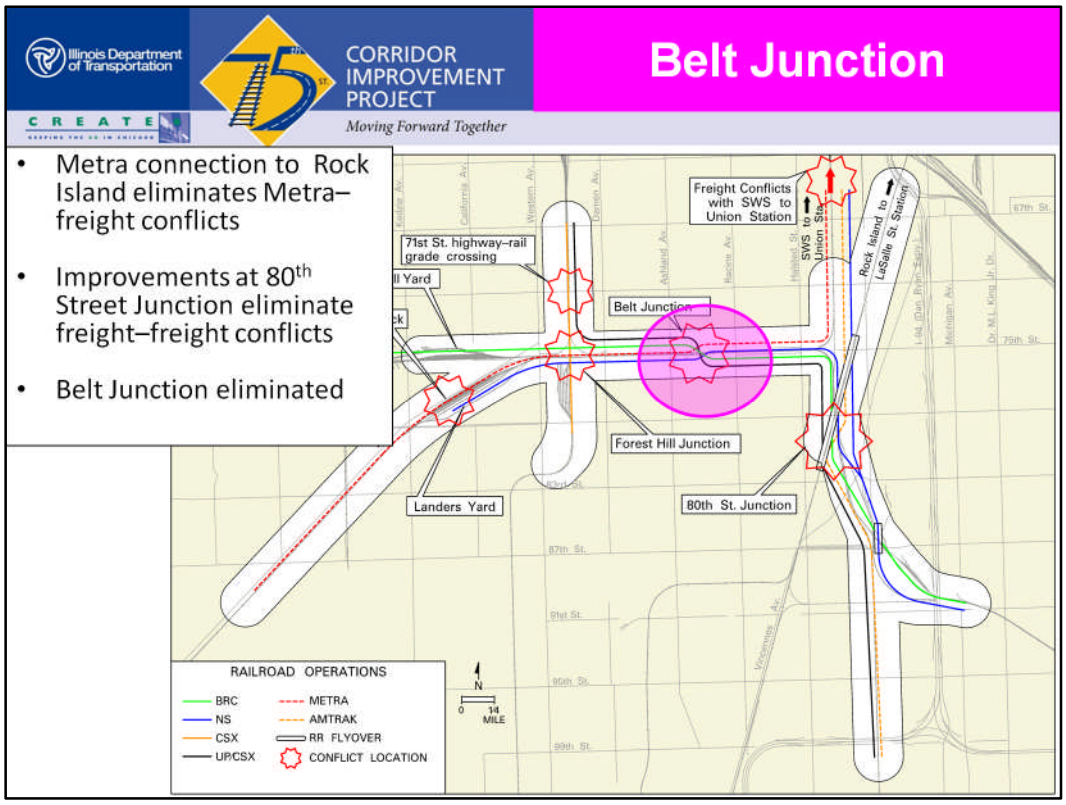
• Railroads have the flexibility to reduce delays with switches and crossovers.

• Work can be done on the existing embankments, with no need to acquire residential properties.



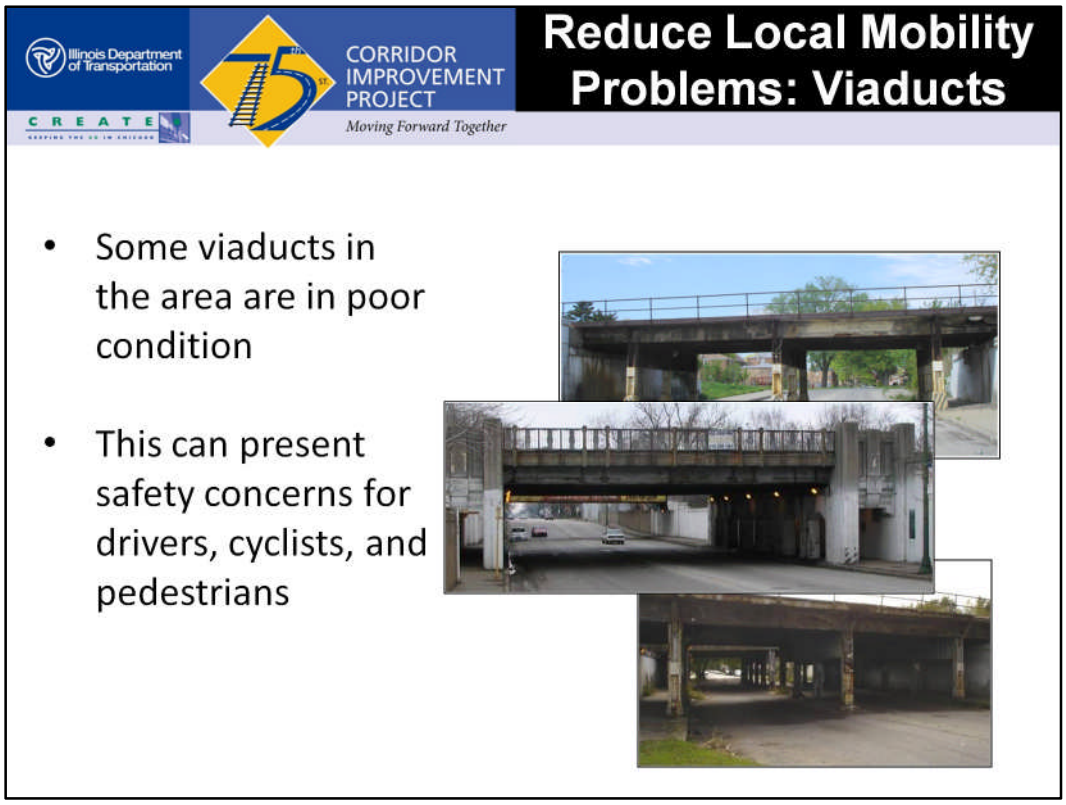
The final improvement area we evaluated was Belt Junction.

Today Belt Junction is a source of rail-rail conflicts, both between Metra trains and freight trains and between multiple freight trains.



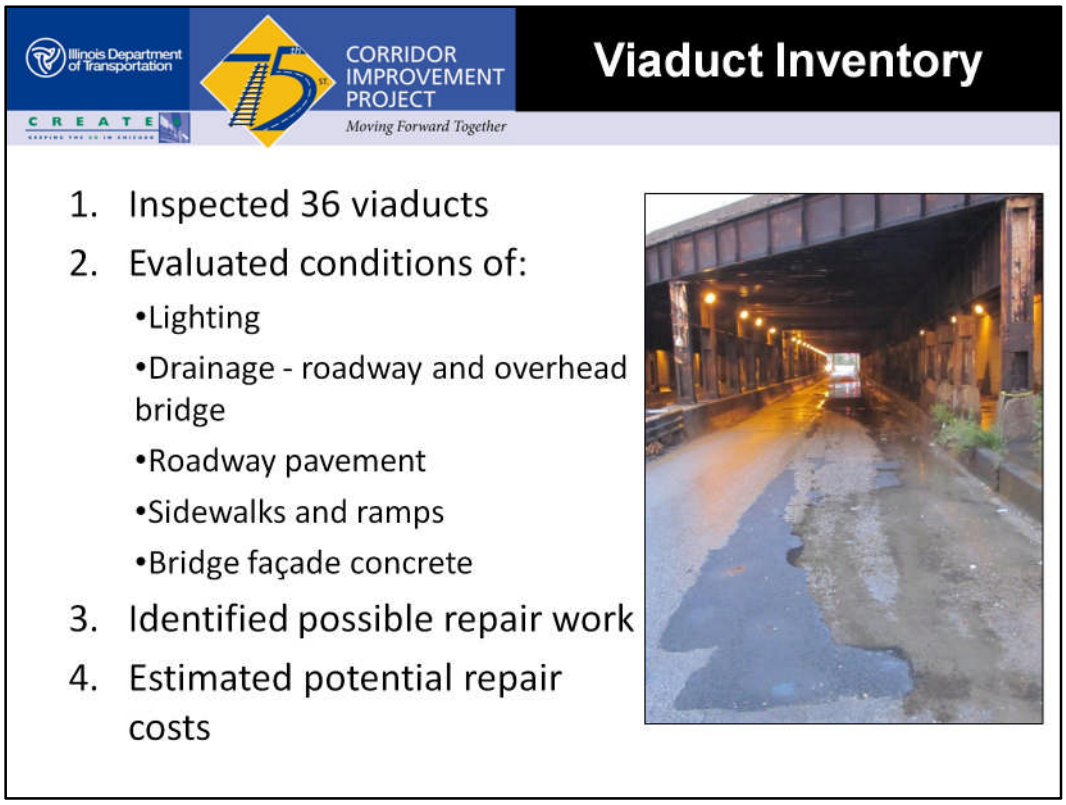
The Metra conflicts would be eliminated with the proposed bridge connection to the Rock Island line and the freight conflicts would be resolved with the 80th Street Junction solution.

As a result, Belt Junction and its conflicts and delays would be eliminated.



From community members, we heard concerns about the railroad viaducts, their condition, and how they affect travel within the community.

Poor conditions at some viaducts throughout the study area can cause safety issues for drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians, and make it more difficult to get around.



Responding to community concerns, we inspected the conditions at thirty-six of the viaducts in the project area. We looked at issues that affect the ability to safely use the viaducts and about which the community had expressed concern.

These included:

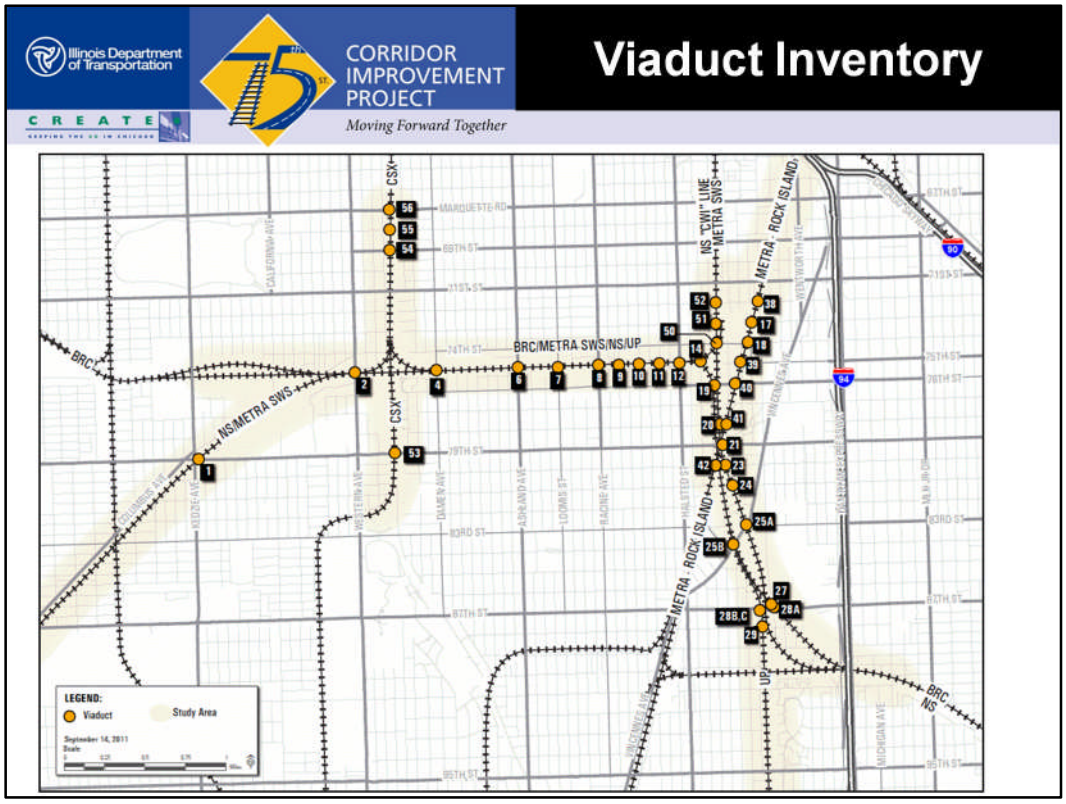
•Low visibility due to lighting conditions ,

•Poor drainage,

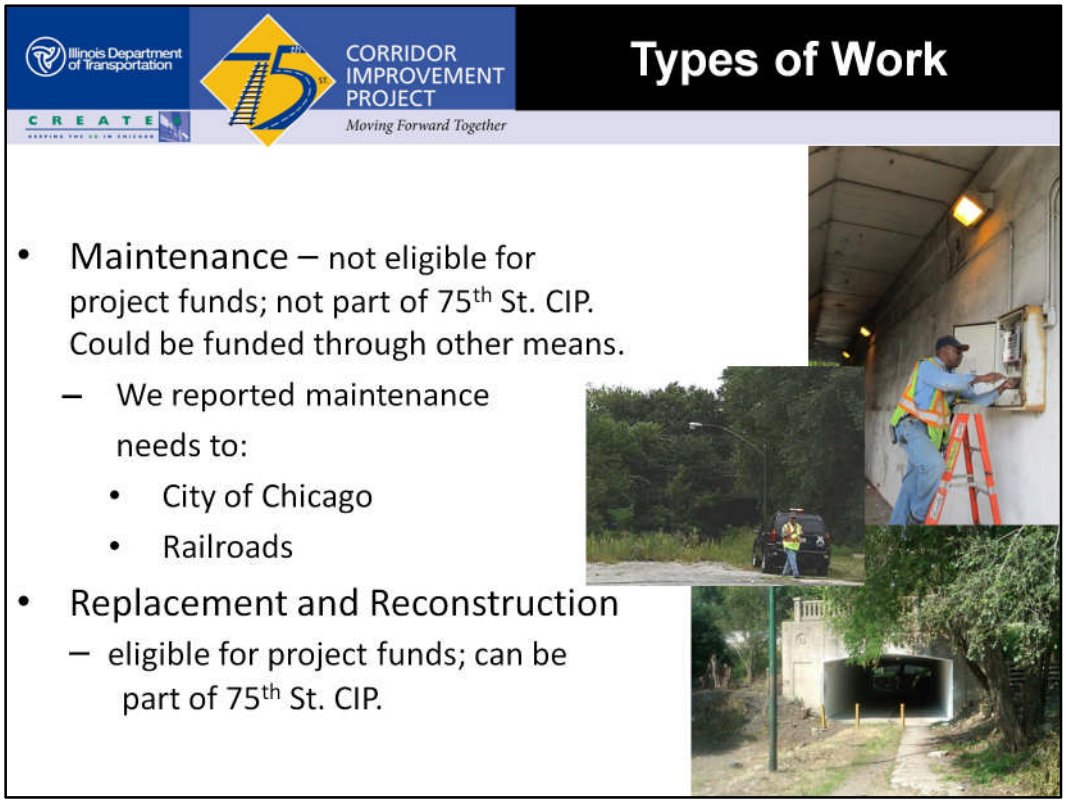
•Poor roadway and sidewalk pavement conditions, and

•Crumbling concrete.

We then identified possible repair work and estimated the costs of those repairs.



This map shows the viaducts that we inspected.

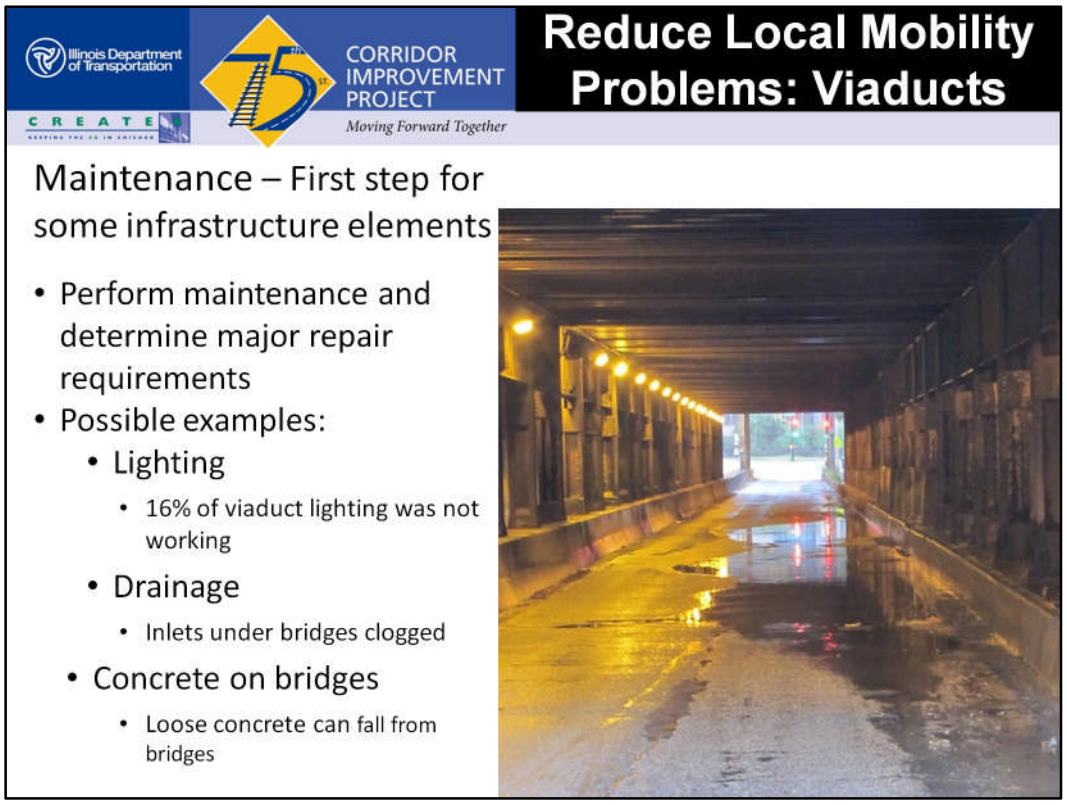


Two types of work were identified.

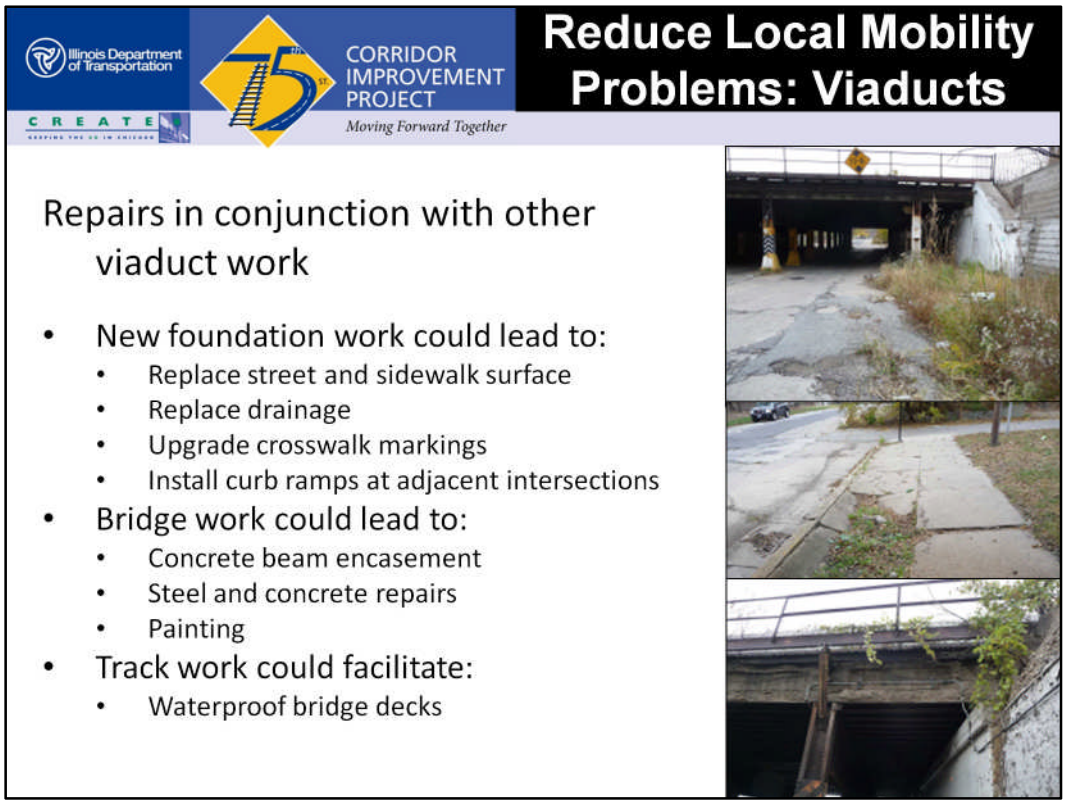
The first is maintenance work that can be done now, but is not eligible for funding through the project. The Project Team talked to the City of Chicago and to the railroads for their evaluation and action.

The Chicago Department of Transportation has already repaired 108 light fixtures on 26 viaducts. They also cleared vegetation from this viaduct entrance to Hamilton Park.

Where more extensive replacement or reconstruction is required, that work may be eligible for project funds and could be done as part of the 75th Corridor Improvement Project.



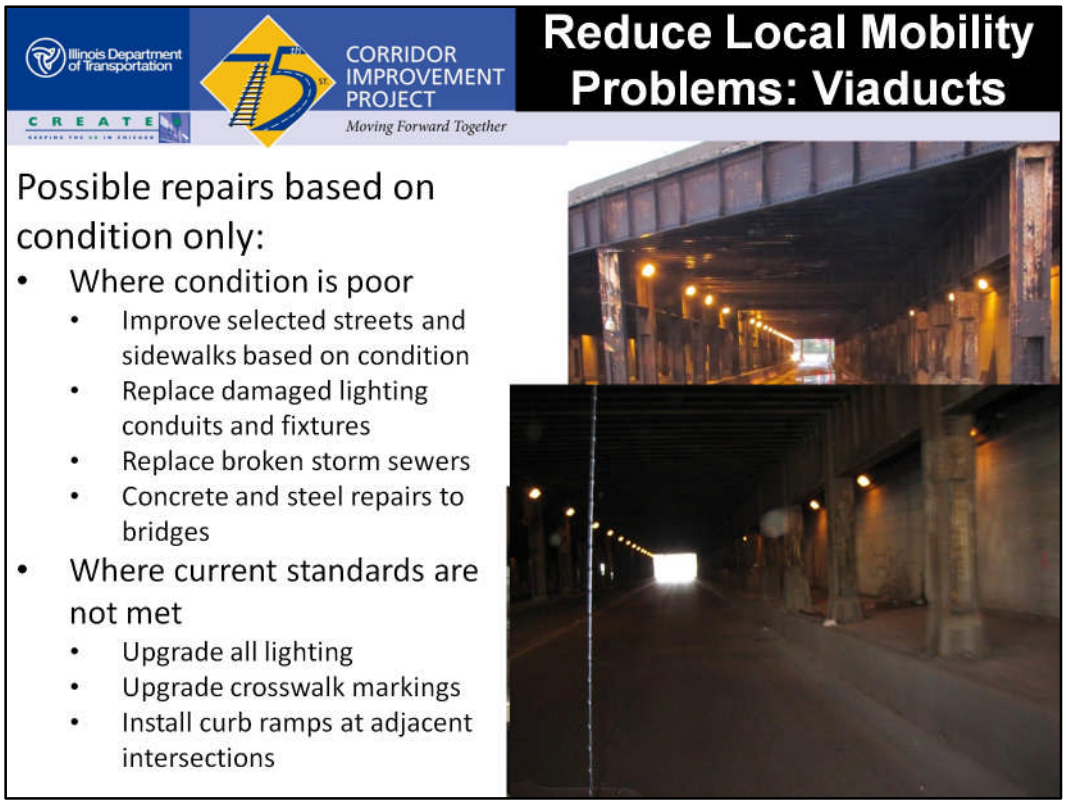
Maintenance tasks we identified included replacement of individual lights that are not working, cleaning drainage inlets, and removal of loose concrete from bridges.



Some of the needed work would be done in conjunction with other project-related work on the viaducts. Where portions of bridges would be widened or replaced, new foundations may be needed. In conjunction with that work, other work on the streets and sidewalks would be done.

That same bridge work could also include repairs and replacement of portions of the bridge itself.

Track work on the bridge may offer the opportunity to waterproof the deck of the bridge.

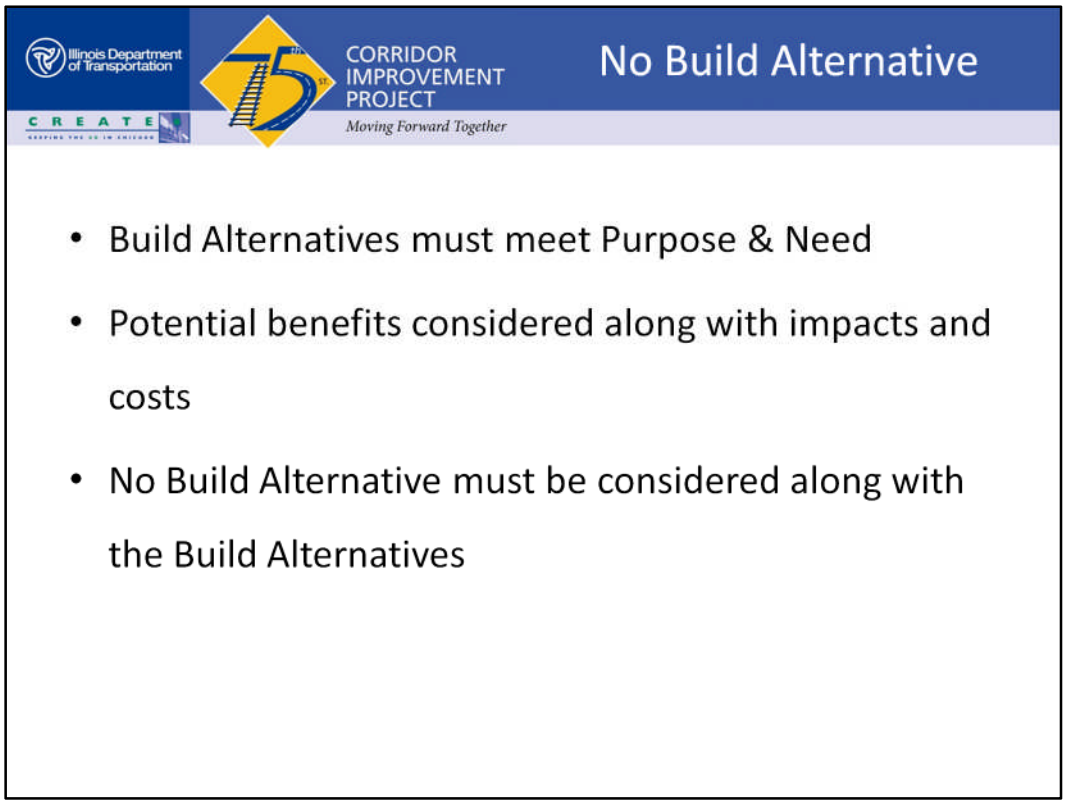


Other work may need to be done at viaducts where there is no work on the bridge itself. This could include improving or replacing the streets and sidewalks, replacing failed storm sewers, and repairing bridges.

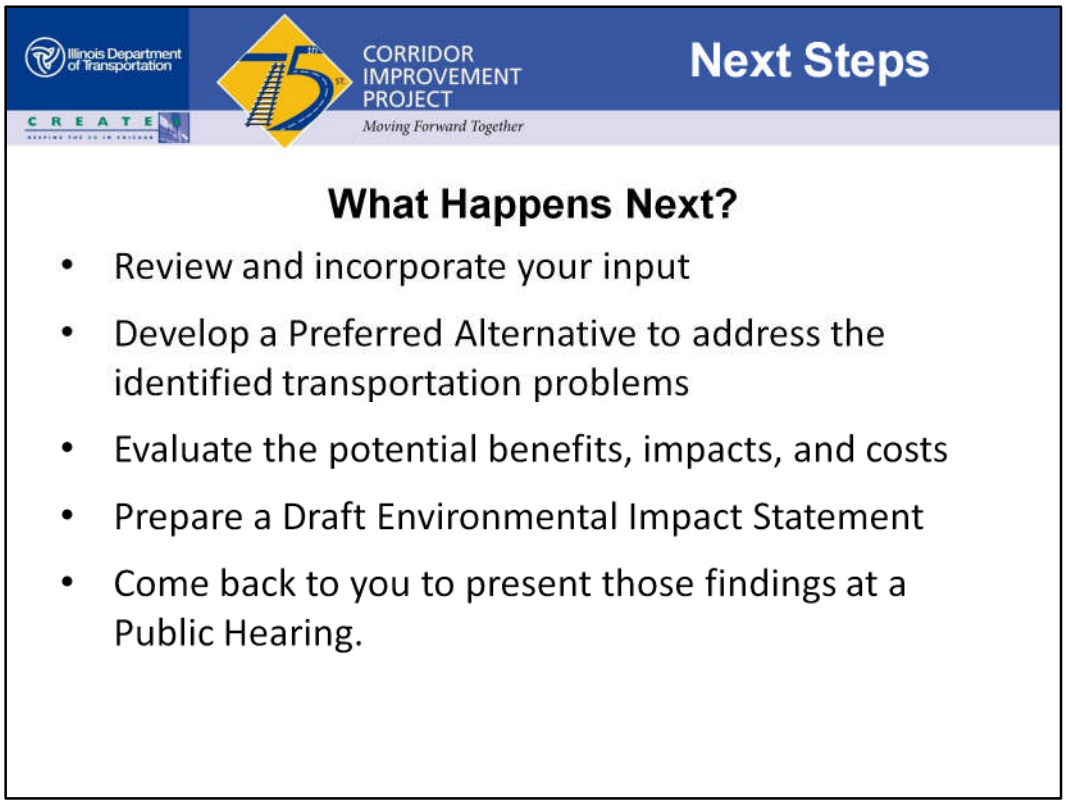
The bridge lighting is generally more than 20 years old, and consideration would be given to replacing the lighting with new higher efficiency fixtures.

As roadway work is done, crosswalks and sidewalk curb ramps would be replaced to meet current standards.

Any viaduct work that is completed as part of the project would have to wait until the project begins. This would not be until 2014 at the earliest



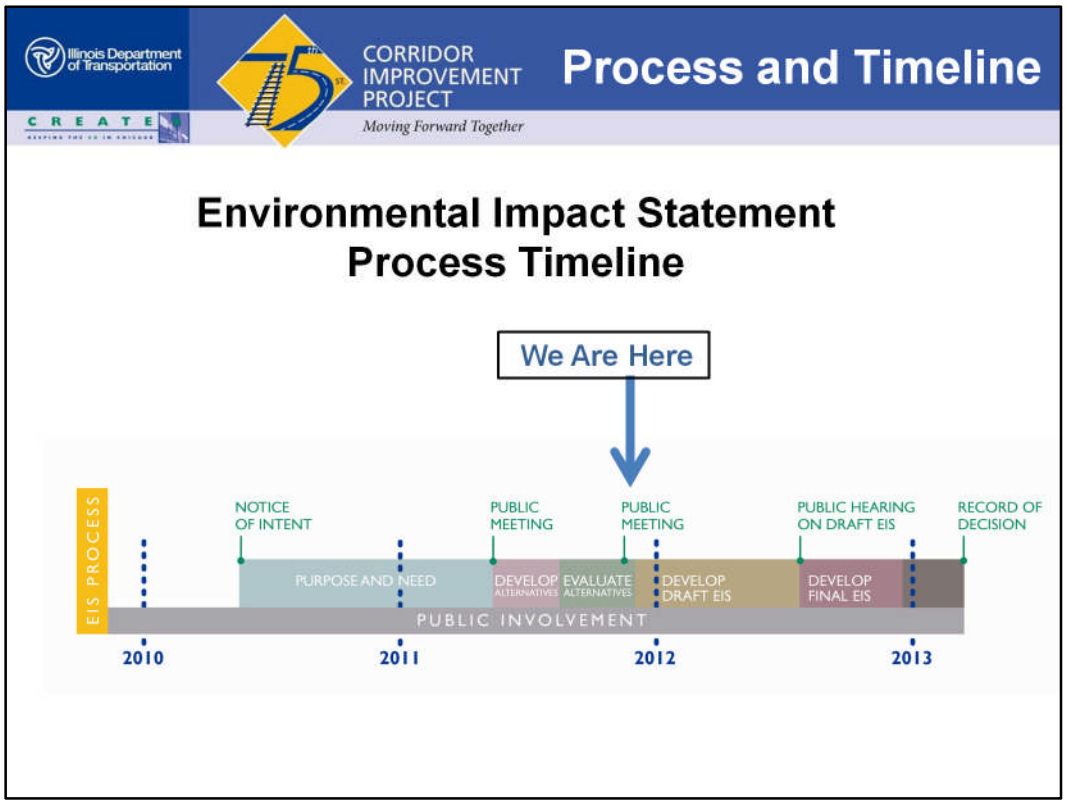
You have seen an overview of the Build Alternative for this project. As we consider the potential impacts and benefits of the Build Alternative, along with its ability to meet the Purpose and Need, we also will consider the No Build alternative – that of taking no action.



This is our second public meeting. We will review the input we receive from you tonight and in the next few weeks, and use it to develop a Preferred Alternative.

We will evaluate the potential benefits, impacts, and costs of that alternative, and determine any remediation that is required. We will document the results of our analyses and public input in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

We will present the findings at a Public Hearing next summer to seek your input and feedback. It will be announced and advertised in the same manner as this Public Meeting



This timeline shows where we are in the Environmental Impact Statement process. As you can see, we won't be finished until well into the year 2013. Working with the community, we will keep the 75th St. CIP "Moving Forward Together".

We want your input! We offer a number of ways for you to communicate with us.

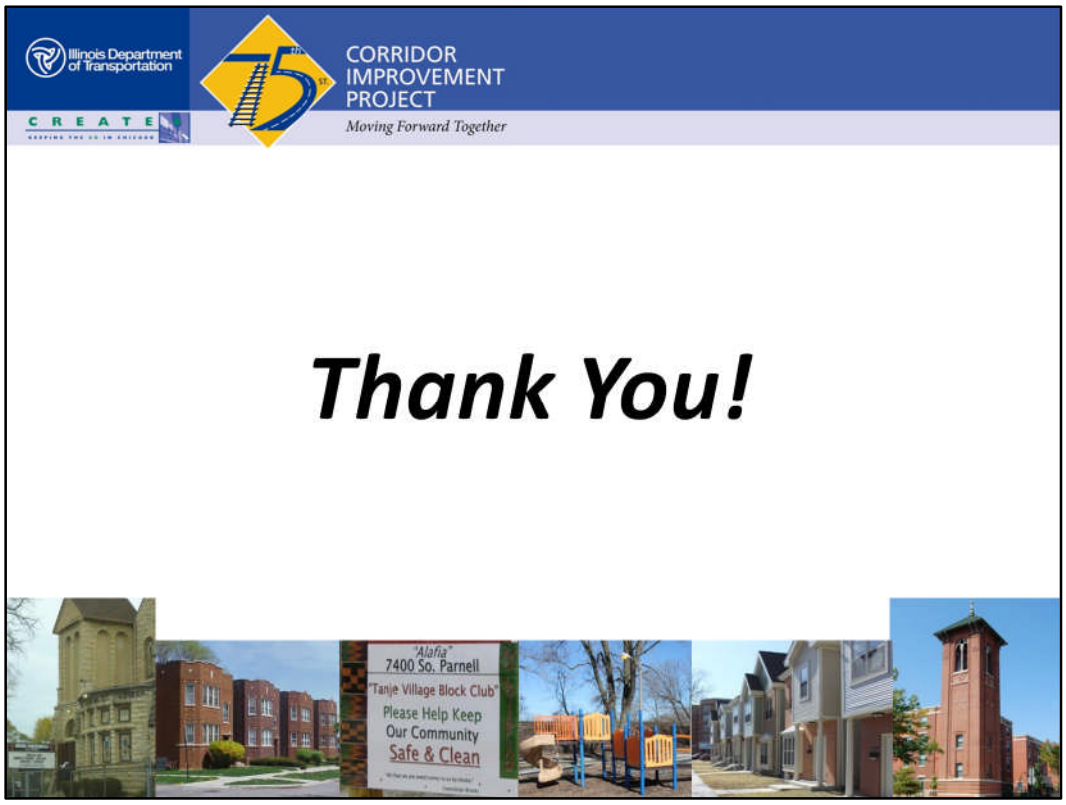
Please provide your comments on the information presented to you today.

Also, be sure to attend the Public Hearing next year. It will be announced and advertised in the same manner as this Public Meeting

If you represent a local group, community or neighborhood organization and would like a speaker to present at one of your meetings, please let us know. We would be glad to attend and make a presentation.

Read the brochure that is available today and material on the project web site.

We encourage you to send us comments at the web site, by email, or via mail.



Thank you for attending today's meeting.