



# Harlem Avenue Underpass Project

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Kickoff Meeting Presentation  
March 3, 2009





# Presentation Topics

- Description of the Proposed Project
- Need for the Project
- Project Background
- Description of the Current Study
- Public Involvement Opportunities
- Study Status and Next Steps
- Questions and Answers



# the **P**roposed **P**roject



# the Proposed Project

- to modify or replace the railroad bridge over Harlem Avenue





## the Proposed Project

- to modify or replace the railroad bridge over Harlem Avenue
- to reconstruct or modify various interconnected roadway and pedestrian facilities





## the **Proposed Project**

- to modify or replace the railroad bridge over Harlem Avenue
- to reconstruct various interconnected roadway and pedestrian facilities
- to improve the area through consideration of intermodal and aesthetic enhancements





# the **N**eed for the **P**roject

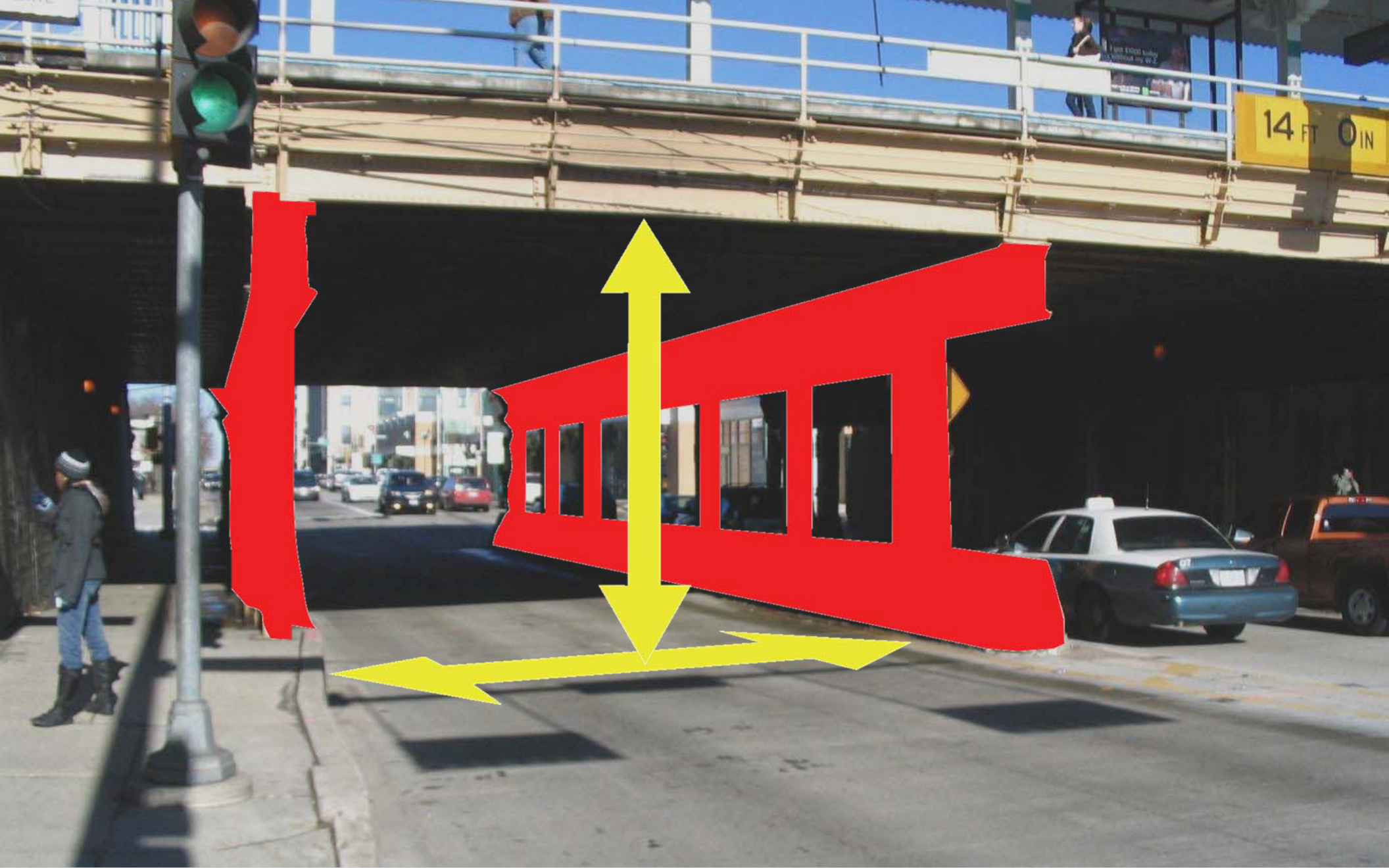


## the **N**eed for the **P**roject

- viaduct does not meet current design standards









## the **N**eed for the **P**roject

- viaduct does not meet current design standards
- these factors may influence the frequency of traffic accidents in the vicinity of the underpass





# the **N**eed for the **P**roject

- Traffic
  - area is heavily traveled
  - vehicular traffic on Harlem
  - pedestrian traffic along Harlem and the surrounding area
  - rail traffic over viaduct





**Railroad Tracks**

**Ha...ve.**



# Project **B**ackground



# Project Background

- railroad bridge over Harlem Avenue originally built in the 1920s to carry the Chicago and North Western Railway tracks





# Project Background

- only changes since then have been:
  - tracks added for CTA
  - roadway lowered as a stopgap improvement to increase clearance to 14 feet, which is still considered deficient





# Project Background

- 1990s: IDOT improvements to Harlem Avenue
  - issues associated with this viaduct caused its improvements to be deferred







# Project Background

- 1999: Villages conduct a feasibility study for for viaduct replacement
  - study explored various replacement schemes for the structure and reconfiguration of Harlem Avenue





# Project Background

- In 2007 River Forest, through the efforts of Congressman Danny Davis and Village President Frank Paris, received funding through the HPP program for a full planning study
- River Forest, in cooperation with Oak Park and Forest Park, hired a team of consulting engineers and planners to assist them in completing the planning study



# the **C**urrent **S**tudy



# the Current Study

- intended to meet several objectives:
  - determine the best design concept for a replacement structure that would meet current standards





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  - determine the best design concept for improving the roadway on this section of Harlem Ave





# the **C**urrent **S**tudy

- intended to meet several objectives:
  - determine the best design concept for a replacement structure that would meet current standards
  - determine the best design concept for improving the roadway on this section of Harlem Ave
  - explore ways in which non-motorized travel can be better accommodated at this location





## the **Current Study**

- will also examine the social, physical and environmental effects of these design concepts on surrounding area





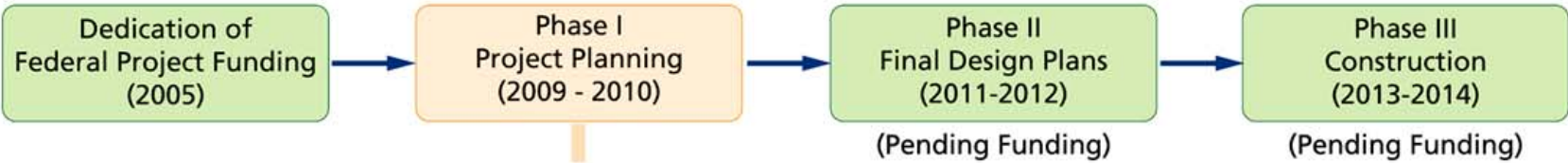
## the **C**urrent **S**tudy

- study objectives derive, in part, from NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act)
  - required when federal funding is involved
  - requires careful examination of impacts before decisions are made
  - this requires development of various alternative design concepts
- only after all the above has been analyzed will the final design concept be selected

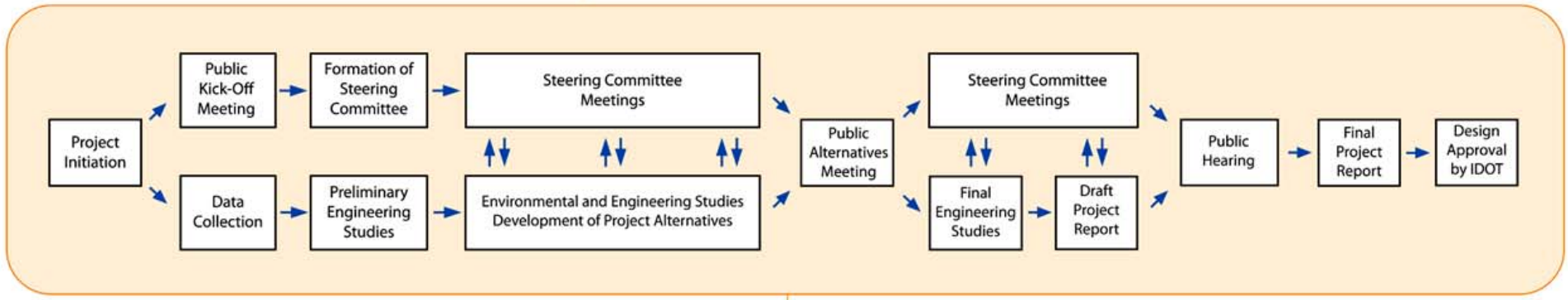




# the Current Study



Current Study



2009

2010



# Public Involvement



# Public Involvement

- public and agency involvement is essential
  - to understand the study area conditions from users' perspectives
  - to develop design concepts that best serve all users





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  - to better understand how the project would affect the community





# Public Involvement

- public and agency involvement is essential
  - to understand the study area conditions from users' perspectives
  - to develop design concepts that best serve all users
  - to better understand how the project would affect the community
  - to ensure that area residents and businesses are aware of the proposed project and the changes it might bring to the area





# Public Involvement

- basic public involvement objectives are:
  - to inform the public about the study, its objectives, and its progress
  - to hear from the public about the study area conditions and problems caused by the current viaduct and roadway design
  - to hear from the public about possible solutions to the problem that the study is addressing



# Public Involvement

- methods for achieving those objectives include
  - today's meeting
  - alternatives public meeting
  - formal public hearing
  - project web site\*
  - individual or small group meetings, as necessary
  - steering committee

\*[www.harlemunderpass.com](http://www.harlemunderpass.com)

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Harlem Avenue Underpass Project website. At the top left, there are logos for the Village of River Forest, the Village of Forest Park, and the Village of Oak Park. To the right of these logos is the title 'Harlem Avenue Underpass Project' and a subtitle 'Reconstruction of the Union Pacific Railroad Bridge over Harlem Avenue, River Forest, Oak Park and Forest Park, Illinois'. Below the title are navigation links for 'Home' and 'Contact Us'. A large photograph of the bridge underpass is featured in the center. To the right of the photo is a 'Study Documents' section with a PDF icon and the text 'Kickoff Meeting Announcement'. Below the photo, there are several paragraphs of text providing background information about the project, including the purpose of the reconstruction, the history of the bridge, and the selection of a study team.

**Harlem Avenue Underpass Project**  
Reconstruction of the Union Pacific Railroad Bridge over Harlem Avenue  
River Forest, Oak Park and Forest Park, Illinois

Home Contact Us

**Study Documents**  
Kickoff Meeting Announcement

The Village of River Forest — in cooperation with the Village of Oak Park, the Village of Forest Park, and the Illinois Department of Transportation — is conducting a study for the reconstruction of the railroad bridge that carries the CTA and Metra rail lines over Harlem Avenue just south of Lake Street. This bridge is also known as the Union Pacific, or UP, bridge over Harlem Avenue.

The purpose of the reconstruction project is to eliminate the congestion problems caused by the configuration of the existing structure, which has remained essentially unchanged since its construction nearly 100 years ago. Streetscape enhancements are also being considered as part of the project.

In 2000 the villages of Forest Park, Oak Park, and River Forest together conducted a feasibility study for the reconstruction of the UP bridge over Harlem Avenue. The bridge was originally built in 1915 to support the Chicago and North Western Railway tracks. With exception of adding additional CTA rail lines, it has not changed in almost 90 years, despite significant increases in traffic along Harlem Avenue.

The villages have selected a team of engineers, planners, and architects to conduct a study for the replacement of this structure. The primary objectives for the "Harlem Avenue Underpass Project" include widening the current four lanes on Harlem Avenue to five lanes, and to eliminate the center bridge piers.

As the study progresses, this web site will be expanded to include a variety of information related to the Project. Please visit often to access the latest information.



# Public Involvement

- the steering committee
  - will be formed in the weeks following tonight's meeting
  - invitees will comprise representatives from area stakeholders, including
    - the three villages
    - civic and other non-governmental organizations with a stake in the study
    - the business community
    - the railroads will also be invited







# Public Involvement

- the steering committee
  - will meet several times over the course of the study
  - will help in information exchange between the villages
  - will help our study team understand project issues from the user's perspectives
  - will help create the best possible solutions to the problem

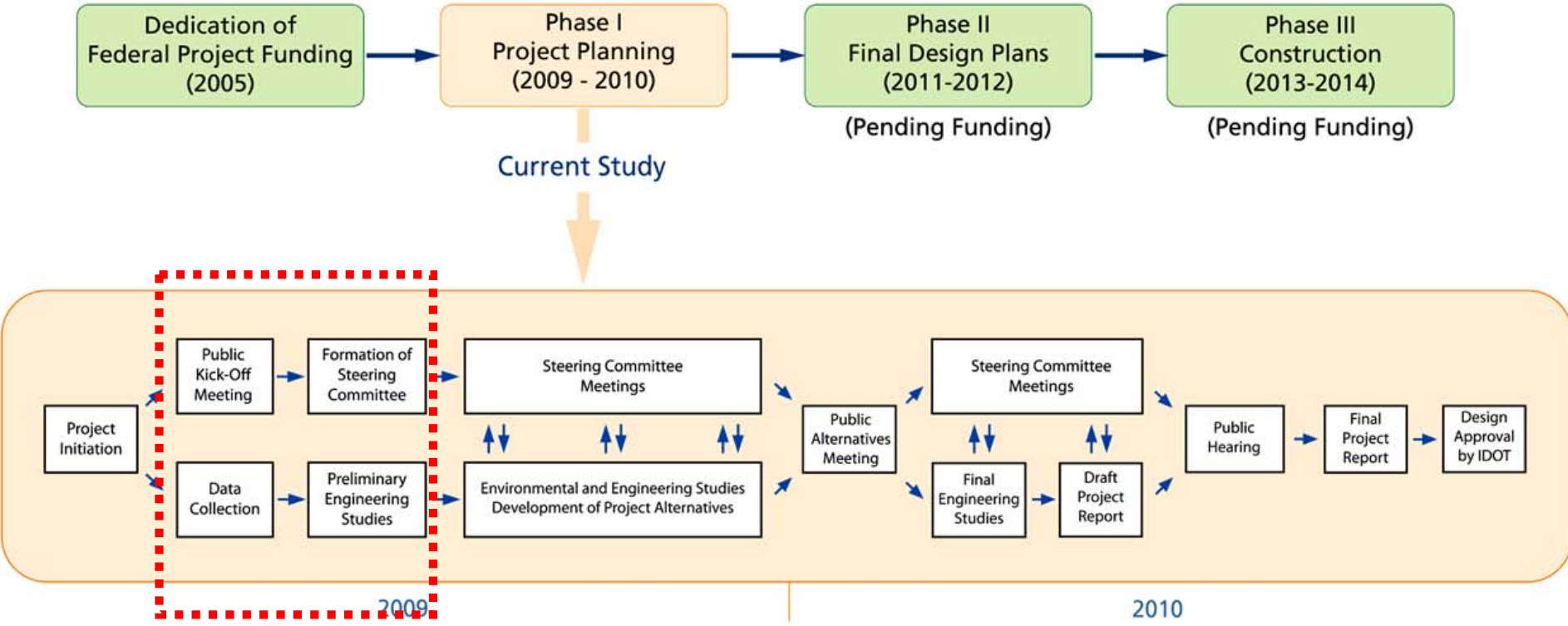




# **Study Status / Next Steps**



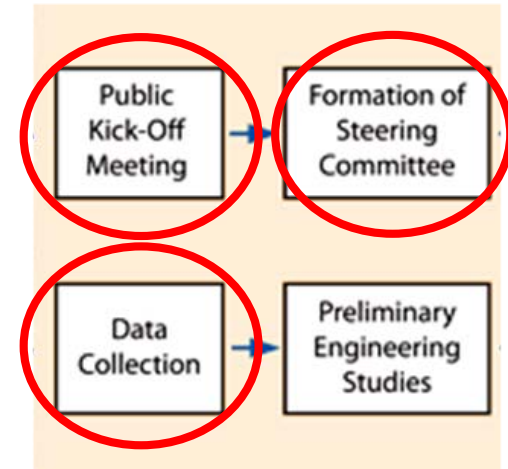
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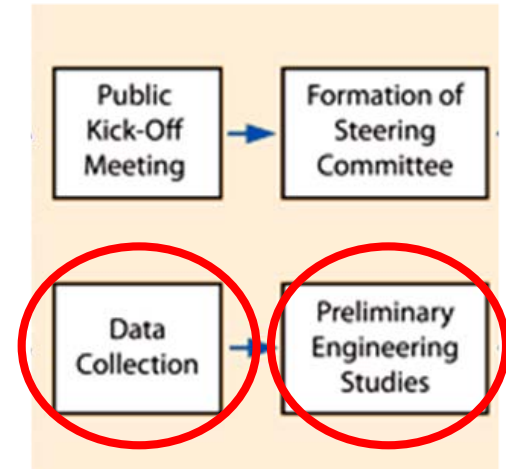
- tonight's meeting is the kickoff of our public involvement activities
- steering committee will be formed in next several weeks
- all required surveying to precisely locate existing conditions has been completed
- all required traffic counts have been collected





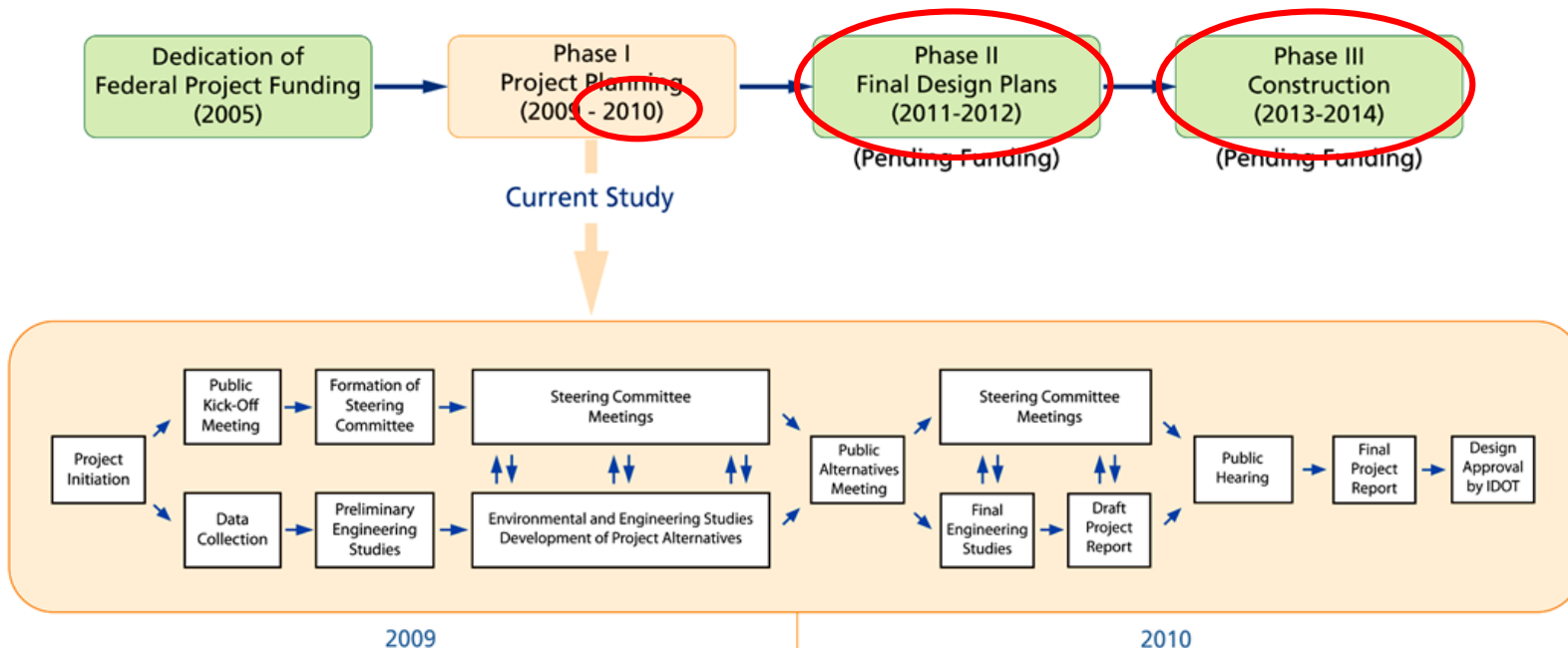
# Study Status / Next Steps

- crash (accident) data for the most recent 3-year period will be collected (since 2008 just ended)
- traffic and accident data will be analyzed to determine project problems and issues
- preliminary design concepts will be prepared



# Study Status / Next Steps

- study should be complete by fall of 2010
- followed by next steps in the overall process: design, ROW, and construction





# Questions and Answers