

# Illinois Infrastructure Transportation & Telecommunication

Illinois' modern transportation system utilizes air, ground transportation, rail, waterways and telecommunications technologies to provide direct routes to every U.S. market and also international ports.

## Illinois Interstate Highways

Illinois lies at the heart of the nation's interstate highway system. Three coast-to-coast interstates (I-70, I-80, and I-90) pass through Illinois. These are joined by major north-south interstates, including I-39, I-55, and I-57; major east-west interstates that include I-24, I-64, and I-74; as well as I-72, I-94, I-88 and I-155. In all, 2,164 miles of interstate highway serve Illinois. Only two states have more interstate miles. Illinois also benefits from major east/west/north/south interchanges located in more than a dozen communities around the state. Augmenting the interstates are over 35,000 miles of state highways, making the interstate routes accessible from every region of Illinois. It's no wonder that Illinois is home to more than 5,700 trucking companies.

## Illinois Railroads

Illinois is the center of the nation's rail network. Chicago is the largest U.S. rail gateway, and another major rail center is located in East St. Louis. In all 56 railroads are able to provide service from Illinois to every part of the United States.

## The Illinois Air Transport System

Illinois' central location makes it a natural hub for air travel. Home to Chicago's O'Hare International Airport (the world's busiest airport), as well as a major commuter hub at Midway Airport and with more than 118 public use airports, 273 heliports and over 1,000 aviation facilities, Illinois is a convenient location for those needing air transport. In fact, an airport with commercial airline service or the capability to handle business jets serves virtually every Illinois city with a population exceeding 30,000. With over 1.6 million tons of cargo and approximately 69 million travelers passing through O'Hare each year and more than one arrival or departure every minute, it's obvious that travelers have maximum scheduling flexibility in Illinois.

## Illinois Waterways

Illinois has 1,118 miles of navigable waterways bordering or passing through the state. These waterways provide Illinois with a link between the Atlantic Ocean (through the St. Lawrence Seaway and Great Lakes) and the Gulf of Mexico.

The Port of Chicago offers terminals that handle ocean and lake vessels, as well as barges. Owned by the Illinois International Port District, the Lake Michigan port is served by seven railroads and has direct access to Interstates 90 and 94. There are also 12 other port districts in Illinois. Both the Illinois International Port District and the Tri-City Regional Port District near St. Louis are Foreign Trade Zones, providing low-cost production and warehousing facilities for imported and export-bound products. (Foreign trade zones also are located in Peoria, Lawrenceville, Rockford and the Quad Cities.)

## Data Transport

Illinois is a leader in telecommunications technology. The state is the birthplace and testing ground for many telecommunications systems; in fact, the first electronic switching system in the United States was introduced in 1960 in Morris, Illinois and the first commercial installation of an Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) was implemented in Oak Brook in 1986. Since then, Illinois has continued to lead the way in fiber optics, digital switching and cellular service.

Today, virtually the entire state has digital switching. Digital switching allows information to travel as digital signals between the originating and receiving exchanges, thus providing high quality, high speed, secure voice, data and image communications at lower operating costs, as well as making possible services such as digital Centrex and switched video conferencing. Hundreds of thousands of miles of fiber optic cable have already been installed. These hair-thin filaments of glass, which use light instead of electricity to transmit voice, video and data at high speeds, make it possible to send broadband transmissions of television images and help ensure clear, high-speed, secure and reliable service. Furthermore, all of the major inter-exchange carriers have points of presence in the state, which ensures that businesses from rural

# **Illinois Infrastructure**

## **Transportation**

communities as well as metropolitan areas can access their services. Yet even with these state-of-the-art services, Illinois offers some of the lowest phone rates in the nation -- a point not lost on businesses looking at the bottom line. Illinois has the transportation and telecommunication infrastructure to help businesses continue to grow and prosper in the future.

Updated: February 2004