

Attachment 2

Background Materials: Western Access to O'Hare International Airport

**Transportation Policy Committee
DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference**

October 23, 2007 – 2 pm



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OCTOBER 16, 2007

O'Hare Western Access Economic Development Vision Unveiled

WHEATON -- DuPage County Board Chairman Robert Schillerstrom presented "*Western O'Hare Corridor Economic Development Study- An Opportunity Analysis*"; an overview of the opportunities offered by the expansion of Chicago's O'Hare International Airport at today's meeting of the City Club of Chicago.

The year-long economic development study brought together many of the region's stakeholders, including IDOT, the Tollway RTA, Metra, Pace, CTA and the City of Chicago with 15 DuPage municipalities, to conduct a planning assessment related to the O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP) and Western Access. The study focused on the economic impacts of the OMP and its proposed transportation components.

The process emphasized a regional approach to reviewing development opportunities offered by the significant infrastructure projects affiliated with the OMP. The result is an unprecedented regional vision for growth and prosperity.

The study addressed roadway, transit and land-use issues and concluded that Western Access was the cornerstone for future economic opportunities.

"Western Access, and the accompanying North-South bypass, gives us a unique opportunity to have a vastly improved transportation network for the region, increased convenience for the traveling public and tremendous economic benefits to the region," Chairman Schillerstrom said. "But to truly relieve traffic congestion and revitalize this entire region, we also need to make a commitment to public transit. This study incorporates transit into the planning at this stage and does not try to retrofit it into existing roadways years from now."

The study also plans for the North- South bypass to be largely built along a 300 foot corridor on airport property, minimizing displacement of homes and businesses.

The study proposes that Thorndale, the route chosen for the Western Access to the airport, be expanded to a 400 foot corridor with frontage roads, three high speed lanes in either direction and substantial green space. The plan calls for very little displacement since much of this land is already protected.

The study envisions a transit hub outside the airport boundaries. It also calls for the extension of the CTA's Blue Line with the Star Line bringing a Metra line down the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway.

The study introduced a set of 'Opportunity Zones' that are areas where economic development, transportation, land use and environmental opportunities are likely to occur.

"To realize all the opportunities available, and ensure that we create corridors that offer high quality sustainable employment, we must have an overarching strategy that incorporates all the elements of a successful plan into the visioning process," Schillerstrom said.

"Theatres, hotels, convention centers, light manufacturing, assembly plants, possible foreign trade zones and corporate office parks can all be part of this exciting vision. The possibilities are limited only by our imagination and our will," said Schillerstrom.

An implementation team, comprised of all the transit agencies, IDOT, the Tollway, DuPage County and the municipalities will be announced next month to move the project to the next phase.

"We have created a shared vision. These projects can improve the quality of life for our region for generations to come and we cannot delay in moving to the next phase. To accomplish great things we must dream as well as act. Today I am proud to show you the dream. Now is the time to act. I made a promise to see these opportunities realized and I intend to keep that promise," Schillerstrom concluded.

West O'Hare Corridor Economic Development Study
Executive Summary
October 2006

Executive Summary

The West O'Hare Economic Development Study originated in 2004 with an agreement between DuPage County and the City of Chicago to conduct a planning assessment related to the O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP) and western access to the airport.

DuPage County Department of Economic Development and Planning developed a project scope in 2005 and contracted a team of consultants led by TranSystems, Inc. to assist the County with a multi-faceted economic development study. The study focused on identifying impacts to the communities of DuPage County resulting from the City of Chicago's OMP. The following elements comprised the scope of the study:

- Economic Development Impacts
- Transportation Impacts
- Land Use Impacts
- Population and Employment Impacts
- Environmental Impacts
- Quality of Life Impacts
- Community Outreach
- Corridor Visioning

The study was organized into three phases that were designed to maximize information gathering and exchange, community exposure to the study and technical analysis of the situation. The three phases included:

- State of the Area Assessment
- Opportunity Analysis
- Visioning

The State of the Area assessment included an initial stakeholder outreach meeting in December 2005 that was attended by leaders from more than 30 communities in DuPage and Cook Counties as well as the public transportation agencies. The meeting was successful in that it set a very positive tone for community outreach and information exchange. The meeting also established a core set of concerns that the community stakeholders identified and wished to be addressed as part of the project. The meeting was also used to introduce a set of "Opportunity Zones" or areas where economic development, transportation, land use and environmental impact would most likely be high as a result of the OMP and western access to the airport.

The Opportunity Analysis was a very ambitious effort to perform detailed assessments of transportation, economic and land use impact in the west O'Hare corridor and the balance of DuPage County. In this phase, the team undertook rigorous transportation and economic modeling tasks in order to begin to quantify the likely impacts of the OMP program. Additionally, the Opportunity Zones were delineated and draft development concepts were brought forward to the communities, using ideas that were generated through the December meeting and from subsequent interviews with members of

communities in the core impact area. This stage culminated in April with a second stakeholder outreach meeting.

The Visioning Stage was the final stage of the study process and put forth refined Opportunity Zone and Transportation Facility concepts discussed in Stages 1 and 2. The detailed economic impact analysis and a corridor fly through were presented at the final stakeholder outreach meeting in August. Stakeholders felt it important to outline a strategy to continue and build upon this process of outreach; to further investigate impacts to the communities and strengthen the position of the communities and the county regarding transportation system implementation, funding, economic development and corridor planning. To this end, positive feedback was received to a proposal to form an executive level implementation team comprised of community leaders, transportation agency leaders, County Board members, and various at-large interested stakeholders.

Key Findings of the Study

The key findings of the study can be grouped into two distinct categories: technical and policy.

TECHNICAL FINDINGS

1. Transportation Impact

Airport Impact will be measurable and significant

- Currently more than 100,000 daily surface transportation trips are made to the airport based on existing operations and enplanements
- If enplanements and operations increase as suggested in the OMP EIS, surface traffic trips will nearly double with almost 40,000 daily trips being generated by the operations out of the proposed western terminal.
- Traffic generated on the west side of the airport will cause widespread operational instability and failure in 2015 and 2030 under the present roadway and transit system in DuPage County.
- Necessary surface transportation improvements in the DuPage County area, including the Western Bypass and Elgin-O'Hare Expressway will cost more than \$2.5 Billion.
- West O'Hare Bypass and Elgin-O'Hare Express facilities prove to be of medium and long-term benefit to the airport and the existing facilities in the corridor under a limited transit expansion scenario.
- Transit service is not presently geared toward western terminal or corridor service in DuPage County; a more significant effort at planning corridor service must be made in order to mitigate road construction costs and impacts.

West O'Hare Corridor Roadways are not optimally configured for Western Access and Direct and Indirect Impacts of Added Airport Business

- Significant capacity issues exist on the present arterial and express roadway system.
- The present multi-modal business park layout with direct access to arterials such as Thorndale Avenue, IL 83, IL 19/Irving Park Road and York Road, limits the capacity of the system for transit and typical commuter traffic. Proposed Bensenville and Wood Dale Opportunity Zone concepts suggest significant renovation of intra and inter-community access allowing better circulation of traffic and reducing the need to use principal arterials as collector routes.
- Realignment of IL 19 due to OMP runways, IL 19 at Wood Dale Road, the UP RR and new designs for the Western Bypass and Elgin-O'Hare are likely to influence traffic patterns and some communities fear negative traffic impacts on community quality of life. Interchange location, facility access and conservation of engineering impact will be key components to local support of facility design and location.

2. Economic Impact

Economic Impact Analysis was built on a sophisticated Regional Economic Input model called REMI with a new feature called TranSight. This program calculates the added costs, benefits and multipliers of ports, airports, major capital (transportation) investments, etc. Economic impact results were based on a Build (full OMP build-out) and a No-Build (limited airport side development with an increase in operations and enplanements to the maximum capacity).

Economic Impact is Significant to DuPage County

- With the full OMP build-out, approximately 44,000 new jobs will be created
- With the full OMP build-out, approximately 46,000 new people will choose to reside in DuPage County
- Gross Regional Product will increase by over \$3 Billion per annum by 2015 with the OMP in place and by over \$10 Billion by 2030.
- Local Government Revenues are expected to increase significantly as a result of new business and will outpace expected expenses annually.

POLICY FINDINGS

Policy findings are the result of the team’s extensive interviews with communities and transportation agency executives. The policy findings have been grouped into seven topical threads and may serve as a basis for an Implementation Team agenda:

- 1. Western Access**
- 2. Community Stake and Continued Participation**
- 3. Business Retention and Attraction**
- 4. Airport Transit**
- 5. “Character” of Elgin/O’Hare Corridor and Western Bypass**
- 6. Development Opportunities and Implementation of Development Plans in Short and Medium Term**
- 7. Community “Gateways”**

1. Western Access: Regional and local access to west side of Airport is essential

- DuPage County has had general concurrence with its definition of *Western Access*. That definition includes:
 - i. Utilizing existing agreed right of way inside O’Hare boundaries for a Western Bypass
 - ii. Full access to and from the western terminal from all facilities including the Western Bypass, the Elgin-O’Hare Expressway, York Road and any transit facilities
 - iii. Minimizing local road access impacts relative to Thorndale Avenue and York Road
 - iv. Minimizing property impacts on the west side of York Road due to interchange construction, road widening, etc.
- Community sentiment was that western access not be a “hole in the fence” or an exclusive benefit to the airport. Access without Western Bypass, transit service and regional transportation linkages does not serve the corridor communities nor mitigate other highway transportation problems.

DuPage County and its communities must continue to work with the City of Chicago to not unduly limit options and to work with IDOT and ISTHA to promote full accessibility and creative thinking in terms of access and property impact mitigation.

2. Community Stake and Continued Participation

- Community Stakeholders and the County have emphasized throughout the interview process that they wish to maintain a presence “at the table” in talks

with IDOT, ISTHA, RTA and PACE regarding the design of the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway, Western Bypass, Western Access and transit projects.

- Community stakeholders are content to allow County leadership at the table, but do not wish to have the County represent their interests.
- County encourages this point of view but maintains that the County needs to be involved in the early design and environmental process to represent its interests as well.

It is recommended that an open forum process continue to be embraced, and that the Implementation Team provide such a forum to continue discussion of the findings of this study and the technical processes that accompany the EIS process in order to place concerns in front of the agencies.

3. Business Retention and Attraction

- Communities are concerned that the loss of some businesses would result in loss of higher paying jobs and that businesses might choose not to relocate in the community or even in DuPage County.
- Stakeholders were concerned about loss of businesses and jobs in the Southwest Acquisition Area of Bensenville, areas along Thorndale Avenue and the Western Bypass Alignments and along York Road.
- Business attraction has been hampered, in the opinion of the participating communities, by the air of uncertainty over airport build-out timelines, the type of facilities, access style and interchange locations related to the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway and redevelopment programs or packages in the communities.
- Without defined roadway plans, redevelopment locations outside of the corridor, the County or the region may be viewed more favorably.
- On the positive side, a strengthened Addison Township business climate should emerge with the infrastructure improvements and attract businesses.

A quick resolution to the alignment and facility design issues is urged, and the Implementation Team must work with transportation agencies to present a unified message to developers and those looking to redevelop in the corridor.

4. Airport Transit

- All communities at the Visioning Sessions supported transit options that are integrated into the Western Access design.
- No specific transit style or option was endorsed by all. Options ranging from CTA Blue Line rail to METRA STAR Line Light Rail, PACE Express Bus and Arterial Bus Rapid Transit have all been suggested.
- Transit Hub concepts were supported outside of the airport in conjunction with the Bensenville, WoodDale and Itasca Opportunity Zones.

- Community stakeholders appreciated and supported in general the concept of transit stops at regular intervals (in each community) as part of a line running from O'Hare to Schaumburg along the Elgin-O'Hare and I-290 expressways. Support was given on the basis that transit stops might encourage more transit oriented development and business density.

Staff recommends that members of the CTA, METRA, PACE and RTA meet with or be included on the Implementation Team and that community stakeholders, the County and the service providers develop a program to leverage serious consideration of transit in the corridor. A short to medium term solution that does not require New Starts funding or paperwork and that may involve the existing METRA services on the Milwaukee West Line or PACE programs should be developed simultaneously with the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway EIS.

5. Character of Elgin-O'Hare Corridor and Western Bypass

- Three communities in Addison Township felt very strongly about the design and character of the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway and the Western Bypass.
- Comments were directed at staff and IDOT that elevated expressways that bisect their communities and present a less than aesthetic look and feel were not welcome. All three communities emphasized location of interchanges and the need for full access to the Elgin-O'Hare.
- Bensenville argued that the Western Bypass alignment was not viewed favorably if it followed the East County Line/Mt. Prospect Road right of way to and from I-294. It was agreed that that particular alignment would further damage Bensenville's commercial tax base and a rail corridor alignment further east was supported.

Innovative design considerations should be employed and community cohesion, business impact mitigation and access questions should be fully explored.

6. Development Opportunities and Implementation of Development Plans in Short and Medium Term

- Communities all stated that, while a valuable industry, they did not want to perpetuate the notion of solely being the warehousing and distribution capital of DuPage County. They see the OMP and the various road and transit programs as a means to diversify their local economy.
- Hotel and retail opportunities are not likely to materialize until transportation and airport programs are closer to implementation.
- Many communities felt that obsolete properties or properties not fully utilizing the potential of the land might be redeveloped in favor of newer, more efficient businesses.

- Staff presented communities with a picture of allowable building heights according to O'Hare and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Modifications to local zoning regulations and densities would most likely need to occur in the short term to set the tone for redevelopment options.
- Communities felt that real world demands of investors and developers and the short-term need of the community is hard to reconcile against the long-term plan presented in the Opportunity Zone scenarios.

Strategies must be explored to balance short and long term goals, and encourage or entice developers to follow a broader corridor or community plan. Measures or corridor programs may need to be put into place to assist communities to overcome competitive disadvantages. This is a question that the Implementation Team should consider in the near term.

7. Community Gateways

- Municipalities stated unequivocally that gateways are marketing tools and important to their community as a means to help them announce the quality and character of their communities.
- Development of regional transportation corridors and ensuring appropriate access to expressways is perceived to help the communities develop less congested and more aesthetically pleasing gateways.

The gateway concept is a critical economic development tool for business attraction and retention.

Tuesday, October 16, 2007

...: FAQ :...



ELGIN O'HARE WEST BYPASS

communities. opportunities. solutions.

[Glossary](#)[FAQ](#)

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the Elgin O'Hare-West Bypass project?

A: With the goal of improving transportation in the region, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has begun a study to identify options of the Elgin O'Hare Expressway and a western bypass of O'Hare International Airport. Known as the Elgin O'Hare-West Bypass, the project includes engineering and environmental studies of both the potential extension of the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway to the east as well as a potential western bypass connecting I-90 and I-294. As part of this fresh approach, IDOT will also be embarking on a major effort to gather ideas and suggestions for the Bypass from residents and business and civic leaders in the 24-community study area.

Q: What area does the study encompass?

A: The study area is roughly bounded by three interstate highways—I-90, I-290 and I-294—to the west of O'Hare International Airport. The area includes several communities. IDOT will be inviting residents and leaders from these communities to offer their ideas and suggestions at different points throughout the study area depending on participation from residents and leaders from these communities to ensure that the study incorporates their feedback. Beyond the study area boundaries, it is notable that this study will be examining many possible transportation solutions. At this early stage of the study, every option is being examined including new roadways, improvements to existing roadways, bus, rail, mass transit, and bike/ped accommodations.

Q: When will this study be complete?

A: The first segment of the study is scheduled for completion in early 2010. The final product of this phase will be the IDOT's submission of a final statement and record of decision that states the preferred transportation system plan for the area. Once a preferred plan is identified, IDOT will begin construction, which involves detailed engineering and environmental studies for parts of the selected plan that are ready to move forward. This stage is expected to be completed by 2013.

Q: How much will this project cost?

A: Federal legislation designated this transportation corridor as a region of national significance and earmarked \$140 million to advance the Elgin project. This study will consume less than 10 percent of that total, leaving the rest for future phases of the project.

Q: What opportunities will the public have in determining the preferred plan?

A: IDOT needs robust public input to develop a plan that improves transportation while also recognizing the many economic and environmental impacts that the project's magnitude presents. The Elgin O'Hare – West Bypass team is committed to being inclusive, open-minded and transparent through this process. It is a key component of this study and is committed to providing opportunities for all interested parties to get involved in the project. In addition to the study team, the team will be holding several public meetings to discuss preliminary study findings and solicit feedback. Additionally, the study team is forming a Community Advisory Group made up of local officials who will provide ongoing feedback as the study moves ahead.

Q: What prior studies related to this issue will be considered during the Elgin-O'Hare West Bypass project?

A: This study, more than anything, represents a fresh start. We begin a new effort to solve an old problem with a blank slate. While prior studies have been conducted in the area, in this study, the main goal is to start anew to consider project alternatives and corridor locations. Further, a new study will take into account the amount of growth that has taken place in the area over the last two decades.

Q: When will the project be constructed?

A: At this point, there is no firm construction timeline. It is likely that construction on any proposed improvements would begin before 2016. Bas development process, studies and planning efforts come in advance of funding. Our study scope does include, however, development of potential

Q: How does this relate to the O'Hare Modernization Program?

A: This project is completely separate from the O'Hare Modernization Program. The OMP did set aside a 300 foot corridor that will be considered. However, the study team must still perform some design work to determine the best roadway location and configuration for the area, independent improvements at O'Hare.

Q: How will this study affect ongoing roadway improvements in the study area, such as IL 19 at W and IL 19 at York?

A: This project will not impact any of the ongoing improvements, and those projects will be considered as part of the baseline transportation network – West Bypass traffic analysis.

Q: Who is involved in the project?

A: IDOT and the Federal Highway Administration are the project sponsors. Smith Engineering has been retained by IDOT to serve as project manager working essentially as an extension of the IDOT staff. A consultant team lead by CH2M HILL and including Christopher Burke Engineering, Landru Webster Associates, DB Sterlin, Res Publica Group, STV, Images, Inc. and Vlecidis-Schroeder will perform the technical work associated with the

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Getting Around

State to hold talks on expanding roadway to O'Hare

State to holds talks with municipalities on western access

Jon Hilkevitch

Getting Around

October 1, 2007

Talks between the state and two dozen municipalities are scheduled to begin this week on extending the eastern portion of the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway now that the Chicago-versus-suburbs fight over expanding O'Hare International Airport is at least somewhat settled.

The benefits of finally addressing long-delayed plans to extend the Elgin-O'Hare are attractive to drivers as well as to the communities near the 6-mile expressway -- even the two remaining villages battling new runways at O'Hare.

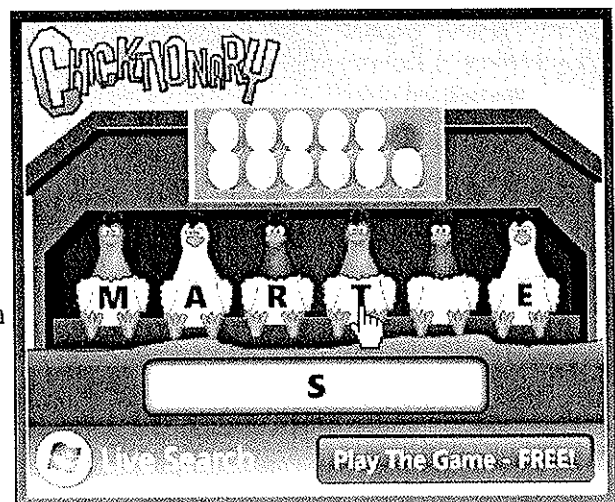
With the launch of a new state-sponsored study on the Elgin-O'Hare, attention will switch to where to route the expressway extension to the western edge of the airport, a process that, like the war over O'Hare expansion, can be expected to go on for years.

Foremost among the eventual potential gains is reducing traffic congestion by building a western-access road into O'Hare and a north-south bypass highway connecting the Northwest Tollway (Interstate Highway 90) and the Tri-State Tollway (Interstate Highway 294) for non-airport traffic.

Opportunities also exist to improve other nearby roads; augment mass transit services with a possible extension of the Chicago Transit Authority's Blue Line to the west side of O'Hare; enhance the concept of Metra's proposed suburb-to-suburb STAR Line; and for Pace to offer express buses to lure people out of their cars.

Safe and appealing travel routes for bicyclists and pedestrians also could be created along rights-of-way abutting the extended Elgin-O'Hare.

The potential upside is huge, but no one is downplaying how difficult it will be for state officials to broker a regional consensus on extending the Elgin-O'Hare into the airport from its current eastern terminus at the Eisenhower Expressway (Interstate Highway 290) and Thorndale Avenue.



The governments involved in the process are Cook County, DuPage County and 24 municipalities that are members of the IDOT corridor planning group.

"We are looking to put the past behind us and make a fresh start," said Pete Harmet, bureau chief of programming for the Chicago area at the Illinois Department of Transportation. "There is no one answer out there. The purpose of our study is to walk hand in hand with the transportation stakeholders and come up with a preferred set of solutions by 2010."

No timeline has been set for any construction, IDOT said. Even preliminary cost estimates also have not been developed, although conservative estimates peg western access to O'Hare and the bypass road at well over \$2 billion.

The driving force behind the IDOT-led study getting under way is reducing the traffic bottleneck on the only roadway into O'Hare, Interstate Highway 190, by building the western-access road.

Western-access to O'Hare is among 25 projects that Congress placed on a list of national and regional transportation infrastructure priorities. The number of jobs in the O'Hare area is second only to the Loop in northeastern Illinois.

A study that DuPage County commissioned last year stated western access would add \$10 billion annually from businesses along the corridor and 44,000 jobs in the county by 2030. The federal government has provided the state \$140 million for environmental studies and some land acquisition.

Several possible routes for western access were proposed through the years. It largely was a hypothetical exercise in the face of the reality that nothing would be built during the decades-long standoff between Chicago and the communities represented by the former Suburban O'Hare Commission over building new O'Hare runways.

The 2001 deal on O'Hare expansion reached between Mayor Richard Daley and then-Gov. George Ryan changed the political landscape, although two suburbs, Bensenville and Elk Grove Village, and religious groups trying to save a cemetery on the other side of an airport fence continue to challenge O'Hare expansion in court.

The route most often mentioned is to extend the Elgin-O'Hare via a corridor aligned with Thorndale Avenue, where it intersects the Eisenhower in Itasca.

Preliminary discussions also at the conceptual stage portray the north-south road as being a toll highway that bypasses the airport and connects I-90 and I-294. Officials at the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority have been involved in the talks on the Elgin-O'Hare extension and the bypass highway.

Chicago has preserved a 300-foot-wide corridor on the west side of airport property for the bypass road, but no specific proposals have been made to route the bypass to I-90 on the north or to I-294 on the south.

The state last year fueled tension over the potential route. IDOT apologized to Bensenville and Elk Grove Village after a map was made public that depicted the bypass highway slicing through the suburbs.

IDOT officials said the map was erroneous. It showed the bypass route following a straight line through the two suburbs about a half-mile west of Elmhurst Road, which becomes York Road. Officials later said that the map did not reflect a precise route, and that the proposed highway actually would run along

O'Hare's western edge east of York.

The Elgin-O'Hare, which had been on the drawing boards since the 1960s as a way to link Fox Valley communities with towns to the east and the tollway system, opened in 1993. By then, most of the open space in the corridor had been developed.

Previous proposals included extending the Elgin-O'Hare using York Road west of O'Hare into the airport, including via Irving Park Road and Mannheim Road in Schiller Park. Vacant airport property in the southwestern section of O'Hare -- not suburban lands -- would have been used.

But Chicago, hoping to one day build more runways, opposed those plans, and the city eventually took control of hundreds of suburban acres for O'Hare expansion.

A major controversy is whether more homes and businesses will be bulldozed to extend the Elgin-O'Hare and link up the bypass highway to the Northwest Tollway and the South Tri-State.

The Elgin-O'Hare and western bypass corridor planning group will hold its kickoff meeting at 7 p.m. Wednesday in the DoubleTree Hotel, 1200 N. Mittel Blvd., Wood Dale.

The meeting is open to the public, but IDOT said public participation will not be allowed until an informational meeting set for 4 to 7 p.m. Nov. 14 at the Oak Meadows Golf Club, 900 N. Wood Dale Rd., Addison.

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Daily Herald

Big Picture . Local Focus

Consultants will help Itasca map out development

By Justin Kmitch | Daily Herald Staff

Published: 10/3/2007 12:17 AM

For the next three years, state planners will be attempting to identify the primary transportation needs west of O'Hare International Airport.

Itasca officials say they hope it doesn't take three years for their needs to be recognized.

Village trustees Tuesday night approved a \$160,000 contract, to be divided between the village and Hamilton Partners, with consultants McDonough Associates to devise a plan outlining the village's wishes for the eastern extension of the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway.

"They'll be helping us plan for what we'd like to see in that corridor, which we should do soon if they're about to start reaching out to communities to get their input on what they want in that corridor," Trustee Jeff Pruyn said.

Rather than use decades-old plans, transportation officials will spend the next three years talking to local leaders and coming up with a variety of projects to address traffic issues. The final list could range from new transit to small expressways or large privately owned toll roads.

In 2011, state planners will then start working on how to pay for the projects and precisely where they would be placed. That means actual construction might not start until 2016 or later, nearly 30 years after the original battles over the Elgin-O'Hare extension.

The village's overall philosophy, they say is to develop where Itasca would like the access roads to be placed before the planners start working on their own plans. Key to Itasca's survival, they say, is at-grade crossings that would allow access to Hamilton Lakes Business Park from Thorndale and intersections at Prospect Avenue and Arlington Heights Road.

"We all realize this is a long-term project however the phase one planning is beginning even though it won't be done until whenever," Village Manager David Williams said. "They're moving ahead and they want input from the communities impacted."

Several village officials plan to attend tonight's "outreach meeting" with officials from the state department of transportation. They hope to learn what IDOT will be doing for 3 years and how village will participate.

Daily Herald

Big Picture . Local Focus

IDOT wants do-over to fix O'Hare traffic

By Justin Kmitch | Daily Herald Staff

Published: 10/4/2007 12:31 AM

Take everything you ever thought you knew about the much-hyped western bypass of O'Hare International Airport and the eastern extension of the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway and forget it.

State transportation planners Wednesday launched their multiyear "reach out" campaign to find and fix transportation woes west of O'Hare by meeting with the Elgin O'Hare-West Bypass Corridor Planning Group, an assembly of elected and transportation officials from 24 municipalities including Bensenville, Elmhurst, Wood Dale, Schaumburg, Arlington Heights and Cook and DuPage counties.

While promising to keep the last two decades worth of planning and research in consideration, planners believe the key to solving many of DuPage County's transportation headaches, is to start with a clean slate, blank maps and the input of the affected communities.

"We want to go through this from the ground up because if we have a good understanding of the transportation issues that are concerns to you, we can better come up with alternatives and respond to those concerns," said Illinois Department of Transportation project leader Peter Harmet.

Since 1990, state officials have not planned to connect the Elgin-O'Hare east to the Tri-State Tollway or the connecting western bypass, which would head south from I-90 along the western edge of the airport, creating a ring road with the Elgin-O'Hare. The projects are expected to relieve congestion on the Northwest Tollway and I-190, as well as major roads in between, like Route 83 and Arlington Heights Road.

For the next three years, the planners will be talking to community leaders and members hoping to find those solutions and others, whether they be small expressways, other forms of public transportation or new toll roads. Once a solution is selected and agreed to by a consensus of the group, they'll figure out how to pay for it.

In 2011, state planners will start working on how to pay for the projects and precisely where they would be placed. That means actual construction might not start until 2016 or later, nearly 30 years after the original battles over the Elgin-O'Hare extension.

During a 30-minute brainstorming session Wednesday night, group members broke off into teams to discuss and select what they believed to be the area's largest transportation concerns, many commenting that the same concerns exist today as in the 1970s and 1980s.

Regardless of what new construction were to take place, a majority of those attending Wednesday's meeting want to maximize the economic development in the corridor while minimizing impact on local home and business owners. Others stressed the need for, simply, better access to O'Hare.

"Build all the roads you want," Itasca Mayor Gigi Gruber said. "But if we still can't get to the airport from the west, none of this will matter."

The group will host a public-input meeting Nov. 16 before meeting again as a group to advance the ideas discussed Wednesday.