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Bensenville, Elk Grove say O'Hare plan includes bypass through both towns

By Sue Ter Maat Daily Herald Staff Writer
 Posted Thursday, November 18, 2004

Elk Grove Village Mayor Craig Johnson on Wednesday railed against an Illinois Department of Transportation map that he says shows a proposed highway cutting a path through roughly 700 businesses, about 20 percent of the village's business park.

The map, depicting a north-south route from I-90 to I-294, came into the village's hands at a recent meeting with IDOT, Johnson said at a news conference at the village hall.

During the meeting last week with the Elk Grove Village Police Department, one of the municipal agencies responsible for evacuating O'Hare International Airport in an emergency, the map was distributed in IDOT's Illinois Terrorism Task Force plan.

Johnson said the map outlines O'Hare with a highway that runs west of Elmhurst Road through Elk Grove Village's business park and Bensenville.

IDOT spokesman Matt Vanover said the village was exploiting a planning map that was designed to protect residents from possible terrorist attacks.

If the bypass road were built at that location, it would put the village in financial jeopardy, while Bensenville would be in worse shape because the highway runs through businesses, homes and its village hall, Johnson said.

"Bensenville will cease to exist," Johnson said. "We will be teetering."

Vanover said the map was not drawn to scale and it had been used for a theoretical discussion about possible exit routes from the airport.

Calling the line showing the road in question a "Post-it note," he said it served simply as a reminder that an access road might be built near O'Hare's western boundaries.

It did not necessarily mean it would be built or that it would be built in that exact location, as the map was not intended for that purpose, he said.

Other governing agencies have asked for a western bypass route on airport property, said Roderick Drew of the O'Hare Modernization Program.

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Most recently, the DuPage County Board approved several agreements with Chicago, IDOT and the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority in support of a western bypass route costing about \$2.6 billion. The location of the road would be up to IDOT, Drew said.

Bensenville Village Manager Jim Johnson said village officials don't know what the road would cost the village in terms of lost property and sales tax money.

He said the proposed road on the IDOT map would run close to the Bensenville village hall, 12 S. Center St.

"It certainly puts the village hall in jeopardy," he said.

For Elk Grove Village, the road's proposed location would financially compromise the village that depends heavily on its business park, which supports about 3,500 companies, Craig Johnson said.

Last year, the business park contributed about \$11.5 million in sales taxes to the village. Based upon village projections, the highway would cut the business park's equalized assessed valuation by a quarter, from \$2.6 billion to \$1.5 billion, Johnson said.

The loss of businesses would translate into about 22,000 jobs, he said. Loss of property taxes would mean village government, school districts, and Elk Grove's library and park district would receive collectively about \$12.2 million less annually, he said.

- Daily Herald staff writer Ames Boykin contributed to this report.

Bypass: State official says map is theoretical, not to scale

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