



The Village of Oak Park
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January 8, 2003

Governor-Elect Rod Blagojevich
161 North Clark Street
24th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60601

Dear Governor Elect Blagojevich:

I would like to thank you for honoring me with the opportunity to assist your transition team on transportation issues. These issues are extremely important to the citizens of Oak Park for many reasons.

As you may know, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has proposed expansion of the Eisenhower Expressway (I-290) to include two new high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes through the Village of Oak Park. The expressway already impacts the lives of Oak Park citizens on a daily basis, and the Village is deeply concerned with the impact an expansion of the Eisenhower would have upon its air quality, parks, businesses and homes. After several meetings, IDOT recently announced its intention to study other public transportation alternatives. However, IDOT continues to maintain that the proposed expansion initially does not require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), but only an Environmental Assessment (EA) to determine whether an EIS is necessary.

In prior correspondence with IDOT, I mentioned that the Village of Oak Park has convened a citizens committee to work with the Village residents and government to, in part, analyze the potential impacts of the proposed widening of the Eisenhower Expressway through the Village. I am pleased to enclose a copy of the committee's initial assessment, titled "Report on the Potential Impacts of the Proposed Eisenhower Expansion" (December 2002).

This preliminary effort has identified the following major potential impacts of expanding I-290 through Oak Park with 2 lanes of HOV traffic as generally outlined by the IDOT HOV feasibility study (1998):

- Significant potential to undermine the status of Village as a home rule community and to disrupt the Comprehensive Village Plan, and related zoning ordinance, for housing, transportation and parking, public facilities and services and economic development;
- Inconsistency with regional growth policies developed by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and plans of the Chicago City Government;

- Adverse impacts on energy requirements and conservation of depletable natural resources;
- Adverse public health and safety impacts, including potentially significant increases in the exposure of Village residents to ozone, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, particulate matter, hydrocarbons, noise pollution, diesel emissions and at least 20 other carcinogenic substances contained in particles or other emissions from mobile sources or road dust;
- Increased building and materials damage in a community that contains over 300 historically or architecturally significant buildings;
- Adverse impacts on visibility, wildlife and water quality;
- Significant potential for environmental injustice.

As expressed in our earlier correspondence, the Village believes that IDOT must meet the requirements for major investment studies and congestion management systems in proposing the Eisenhower expansion, and also must prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In a recent letter to me, IDOT confirmed that the requirements for congestion management systems and major investment studies will be satisfied, and that an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be performed to determine whether an EIS is required.

Our prior correspondence demonstrates that an EIS is required for the proposed project as a matter of law, because FHWA regulations require an EIS for any HOV lane requiring new construction. In addition, the Village believes, at least upon initial analysis, that the potential impacts identified in the enclosed report are clearly sufficient to justify preparation of an EIS for the proposed I-290 project.

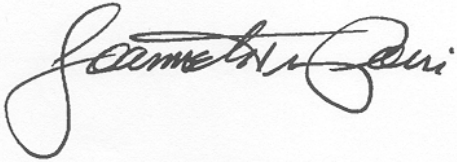
Apart from the issue of impacts, an EIS is required to ensure thorough evaluation of potential alternatives to the HOV proposal. The 1998 feasibility study prepared by IDOT for the proposed project deals only with HOV alternatives. Yet the Eisenhower Corridor includes three modes of transportation – expressway, CTA Blue Line and CSX rail freight tracks. Crossing the corridor are additional modes, including motor vehicles, PACE and CTA bus lines, pedestrians and bicycle riders. Any major project for the Eisenhower corridor should include evaluation of alternatives designed to improve conditions for all of these transportation modes, and transit alternatives that may provide means for addressing this area's congestion and mobility needs in a manner more sensitive to the environment and with less impact on our community than highway expansion.

A third function of an EIS is to consider measures for mitigation of potential adverse impacts. The Village was very pleased recently to learn that it has been selected to receive an "Illinois Tomorrow" grant to study the feasibility of a cap over the freeway in Oak Park. We have already taken preliminary steps to begin the study, and

comprehensive consideration of this and all other potential mitigation measures is yet another reason to prepare an EIS for the proposed I-290 project.

We trust you will give serious consideration to these and other points detailed in our Report, and we look forward to working with you as the process continues. If you have questions or would like to discuss any aspect of the enclosed report or the Village position on these issues, please contact Pete Dame of the Village staff at (708) 358-5778.

Sincerely,
VILLAGE OF OAK PARK

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joanne E. Trapani". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "T".

Joanne E. Trapani
Village President