



March 25, 2002

Hon. Norman Y. Mineta  
Secretary of Transportation  
Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the Village of Oak Park, Illinois, I am writing to express our deep concern about the impact of a proposal by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to use federal funding to rebuild the I-290 Eisenhower Expressway corridor between Mannheim Road (U.S. 12/45) and Cicero Avenue (IL Route 50). The Eisenhower Expressway uniquely burrows right through our Village and already impacts the lives of our citizens everyday.

According to IDOT, the use of the Eisenhower Expressway has greatly exceeded its design capacity and is often congested with traffic. One solution under consideration by IDOT is to expand I-290 from three to four lanes in each direction and create High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes. Since Oak Park already straddles the divide of I-290, any project of this type would have serious consequences to our citizens both during and after construction.

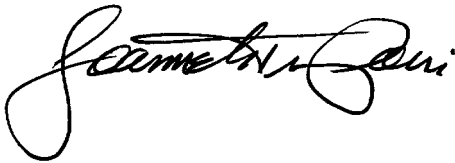
Assuming IDOT continues to pursue I-290 expansion as a means of solving congestion problems, Oak Park requests that you personally ensure that the government agencies involved comply with all federal requirements for major highway projects, which, we have been advised by counsel, you authored during your service in the U.S. House of Representatives. Considering that this proposed expressway expansion would run through the heart of our Village renowned for its architectural heritage, I am sure you can appreciate our extreme concerns about the serious impacts of this project on our air quality, parks, businesses and residences. The possibility of the expansion of the highway through purchase of properties is particularly disturbing. As you know, in this case, the objective of the required "major investment analysis and related procedures" would be: to consider all options before proceeding with a highway expansion; fully explore the environmental impacts of a highway expansion; mitigate any impacts on the surrounding communities if the Eisenhower Expressway eventually is expanded; and fully include the public with opportunity for early, continued, and meaningful involvement in all aspects of the planning processes.

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There are three immediately apparent alternatives or mitigation options that I bring to your attention at this point for consideration. The first is a proposal to examine extension of the Chicago Transit Authority Blue Line as a full or partial alternative to the expansion of the Eisenhower Expressway. The second option would be to update an IDOT feasibility study of various Oak Park Cap options to cover over the below grade expressway through Oak Park. A cap would have the effect of reconnecting the Village from the chasm caused by the original I-290 construction, creating a measure of protection from noise and air pollution caused by the highway, and providing the potential for parks, public transit hubs, and public parking facilities at Oak Park grade level. On March 7, 2002 Oak Park submitted a proposal to the Chicago Area Transportation Study organization to update this Oak Park capping option with funding from the federal Congestion Mitigation Air Quality program. A third option is to enhance the capacity of existing Metra commuter rail lines from Chicago to Dupage County to serve more people through physical improvements. This could also serve as a full or partial alternative to the highway expansion proposal.

Many thanks for your personal attention to this most serious matter for Oak Park. Like many Americans, I suspect you may be familiar with our fine Village, which is the birthplace of Ernest Hemingway and has many fine examples of Frank Lloyd Wright architecture. Perhaps during a future visit to the Chicago area, you could stop in Oak Park for a brief tour to see the impact of the Eisenhower Expressway on us now and for a personal briefing on our concerns about its expansion problems for us.

Sincerely,

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

Joanne E. Trapani  
Village President

JT:pjd