



February 7, 2003

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Regional Transportation Authority
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Chicago, IL 60605

Jack Hartman, Executive Director
Illinois Toll Highway Authority
2700 Ogden Avenue
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Dear Directors:

It is the Village of Oak Park's understanding the IDOT and RTA have begun to meet to discuss how to coordinate the Phase I study regarding the proposed expansion of I-290 from Central to Mannheim with IDOT's and the North Central Council of Mayors' requests that RTA review transit alternatives in the corridor extending from Chicago to Lisle. I am writing to offer the Village's suggestions for how these studies should proceed, particularly by considering the entire I-290 / I-88 corridor as a fully integrated study area.

First, as a member of the North Central Council of Mayors, representing communities adjacent to I-290 west of Chicago, the Village of Oak Park supported the request to the RTA to create a multi-modal corridor study under the RTAP program from Chicago into DuPage County bordered by the Union Pacific West and Burlington Northern Metra Lines. This proposed study area, which the Village of Oak Park has also submitted to the Chicago Area Transportation Study, to be designated as such as part of the 2030 RTP process, would allow full consideration of options to address east-west corridor congestion between Chicago and western suburbs. The Village also supports the council's endorsement of an extension of the CTA Blue Line from Forest Park to Lisle, as well as Metra's proposal to double the capacity of the Union Pacific West line and PACE's proposal to create a Bus Rapid Transit Line from Cermak Road at the end of the Douglas Branch of the Blue Line to Downers Grove, all of which are under consideration as part of the 2030 RTP development.

The Village of Oak Park is particularly concerned that IDOT has been for over a year proceeding with engineering for its stated solution to east-west congestion in this corridor by expanding the I-290 Eisenhower Expressway to add High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes

without first objectively considering these and all other reasonable alternatives. In particular, transit options that may be best suited to use I-290 and I-88 right of way may be precluded by IDOT's HOV expansion and the Illinois Tollway Authority's 10 year plan to expand I-88 to four lanes from Lisle to Hillside. RTA's involvement in studying alternatives is an excellent step forward in this regard, and the Village wishes to offer its constructive suggestions on how this corridor study should proceed.

The Village of Oak Park believes that the entire I-290 / I-88 corridor needs to be examined on an objective, multi-modal basis, to determine the best possible methods or combination of methods to address east-west congestion. In correspondence with the Village, IDOT defined the current I-290 study area as the short stretch of I-290 from Central to Mannheim. However, decisions made in this several mile stretch will affect the future possibilities in the whole corridor. As a result, the project limits should be extended eastward into Chicago and west to Lisle. The proposed HOV lane concept would necessitate a flyover ramp at the merger of I-88 and I-290 and reconstructed and reconfigured highway lanes from there to Mannheim. It is also hard to see how the Tollway Authority's planned expansion of the I-88 into this same area will not replicate the congestion that the so-called "Hillside Strangler" improvements in recent years were intended to reduce, not to mention preclude the use of I-88 right of way for possible transit alternatives. To successfully incorporate a study of transit options and alternatives to Tollway and highway expansion along I-88 and I-290, all modes of transportation must be examined together in a coordinated manner and involve all of the relevant transportation agencies. The corridor plan should not be done in a piecemeal fashion by separate agencies on uncoordinated time frames.

Fortunately, federal transportation law provides guidance on how to proceed with planning such major corridor improvements, by conducting a Major Investment Study (MIS). As noted by the attached issue brief by the Metropolitan Planning Council, an MIS is the most appropriate way to address the needs of multi-modal corridors such as this. It is also required by federal law for major transportation investments such as the I-290 HOV proposal (23 CFR 450.318(a)). Such a comprehensive and objective look at how to meet the congestion problems on the entire I-290 / I-88 corridor -- instead of just adding a lane of highway on the stretch of I-290 from Mannheim to Central -- should lead to the most appropriate methods for addressing these problems while minimizing the potential adverse impacts on our communities. Until such study is completed, the Village believes that the region's long-term transportation plan should not reflect any specific mode of capacity improvement in this entire I-290 / I-88 corridor, but should be designated as a multi-modal study corridor. We urge your respective agencies to support this position during development of the recommended 2030 RTP.

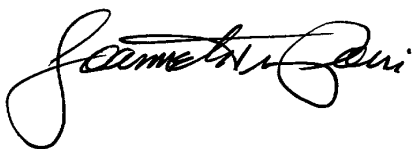
An MIS can and should be integrated into an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this entire stretch, which the Village of Oak Park believes is warranted even under the current scope of the study given the requirements of NEPA and considering potential impacts of highway expansion. The integrated EIS/MIS approach should also greatly improve public participation and outreach in the process and citizen support of the final solution(s) that are developed. It should also examine how the east-west corridor improvements can be integrated into transit system improvements, development and land use plans for

communities along the route. By incorporating the MIS with an EIS, the impacts and methods to mitigate the impacts on adjacent communities would be reviewed concurrently. This method of corridor planning has become the standard in many states, such as the State of Washington's I-405 and Trans-Lake Washington studies, for significantly congested corridors, and should be pursued here in Illinois. Since the communities in this corridor, particularly in Cook County are fully developed communities, all of the options considered should be approached and designed with sensitivity to the context of the communities within which these proposals will exist. We urge you to work with community stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources. It is important to develop new approaches to planning transportation projects that select and design improvements that are appropriate to and enhance the surrounding communities, instead of forcing the communities to make the transportation improvement fit.

With regard to specific alternatives to be reviewed, the Village of Oak Park recommends that the model similar to that the RTA used for studying the I-90 corridor be utilized, which publicly solicited more than twenty alternatives for initial examination. The Village recommends that all of the projects submitted to the 2030 RTP process be examined as part of this study, and also recommends a scope of analysis that would allow for the review of the attached preliminary alternatives compiled by the Village which represent a well-balanced range of reasonable alternatives typically studied as part of a major transportation corridor analysis. The attached options were generally not developed nor are they endorsed as preferred by the Village, but represent the broad range of projects that should be given consideration as part of a thorough alternatives study. Many of these alternatives can and should be grouped together for consideration, and the Village would be more than happy to assist with this and the entire study process, as I am sure other municipalities along the corridor would be.

The federal MIS regulations require that the range of alternatives to be studied must be developed through a "cooperative process" that includes consideration of the views of citizens, local officials, affected public agencies and other interested parties (23 CFR 450.318(b)). We look forward to participation in this process and we thank you for your consideration of these suggestions. The Village would appreciate the opportunity to review and comment upon the draft scope of the RTA/IDOT analysis and the Illinois Tollway Authority's plan before they are finalized.

Sincerely,
VILLAGE OF OAK PARK



Joanne E. Trapani
Village President

Oak Park Preliminary Recommended Alternatives for Analysis

SERVICE AND CAPACITY INTENSIVE ALTERNATIVES

EXPRESS BUS

- Express bus service from end of CTA Blue Line in Forest Park to Lisle in dedicated lane along I-290 and I-88 with bus-only ramps

BUS RAPID TRANSIT

- Bus Rapid Transit from end of CTA Blue Line Douglas Branch to Downers Grove or Lisle along arterial streets
- Bus Rapid Transit from end of CTA Blue Line Douglas Branch to Lisle along Cermak and I-88
- Bus Rapid Transit from end of CTA Blue Line in Forest Park to Lisle along I-290 and I-88 in dedicated lane with bus only ramps and stations
- Bus Rapid Transit into Chicago along Ogden and Cermak

LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT

- Light rail transit from end of CTA Blue Line EI from Forest Park to Lisle along I-290 and I-88
- Light rail transit from end of CTA Blue Line EI from Forest Park to Lisle not along existing highway and tollway ROW
- Light rail transit from end of CTA Blue Line Douglas Branch to Downers Grove or Lisle along arterial streets
- Light rail transit from end of CTA Blue Line Douglas Branch to Lisle along Cermak and I-88

TROLLEY

- Commuter trolley into Chicago along Ogden and Cermak

HEAVY RAIL TRANSIT

- Extend CTA Blue Line EI from Forest Park to Lisle along I-290 and I-88
- Extend CTA Blue Line EI from Forest Park to Lisle not along existing highway and tollway ROW
- Extend CTA Blue Line EI Douglas Branch from Cicero to Lisle along Cermak Road and I-88
- Extend CTA Green Line EI westward from Oak Park along existing rail corridor

COMMUTER RAIL

- Metra Union Pacific West Line Capacity Expansion, per FAST report
- Commuter rail from Forest Park CTA Blue Line El Station to Lisle along I-290 and I-88
- Commuter rail from Forest Park Blue Line El Station to Lisle not along existing highway and tollway ROW
- Commuter rail from end of CTA Blue Line Douglas Branch to Downers Grove or Lisle along arterial streets
- Commuter rail from end of CTA Blue Line Douglas Branch to Lisle along Cermak and I-88

HIGHWAY

- HOV lane in each direction from Lisle to Chicago along I-290 and I-88
- HOV lane in each direction from Hillside to Chicago along I-290
- Single reversible HOV lane from Chicago to Hillside along I-290
- Single reversible HOV lane from Chicago to Lisle along I-290 and I-88
- HOV lane in each direction from Lisle to Forest Park with direct access to Forest Park CTA terminal at Des Plaines along I-290 and I-88

STRATEGIC REGIONAL ARTERIALS

- Create direct access ramps from I-88, the I-290 Extension, and I-294 to existing east-west arterials designated as Strategic Regional Arterials (SRA) in the corridor such as North Avenue, Roosevelt Road west of I-88, and Cermak Road. Implement SRA plans to increase ease of traffic flow on these corridors such as traffic signaling improvements.

BIKE and PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

- Increase non motorized trips through creation of system of bicycle and pedestrian paths, parking and facilities in the corridor along the I-290 / I-88 corridor

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY INTENSIVE ALTERNATIVES

LAND USE AND TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENTS

- Adopt smart growth land use and zoning policies precluding urban sprawl and encouraging denser development along the entire corridor, including special attention to near existing and potentially new transit stations and existing and expanded services.

INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

- Implement variable message signs with improved traveler information noting travel times and alternate highway and strategic regional arterial routes, transit locations, park and ride or car pool opportunities along the I-290 / I-88 corridor at key points outside the loop on I-290 for westbound travelers, and at I-294, the I-290 extension and I-88 for eastbound travelers.

DEMAND MANAGEMENT

- Increase rideshare, park & ride and transfer opportunities to alternate modes of transportation along the I-290 / I-88 corridor

TRANSIT COORDINATION

- Coordinate schedules, improve routes, services, transfers, and fares, and provide better passenger information to increase transit ridership along the I-290 / I-88 corridor

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Attachment 2 – Metropolitan Planning Council Transportation Issue Brief
“Enhancing Transportation Corridor Decisions”

<http://www.metroplanning.org/resource.asp?objectID=168&categoryID=1>